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Article

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of food reviewers on user engagement and purchase intention in the food and beverage (F&B) sector. Findings indicate that food reviewers positively impact both user interaction and purchase intention, with three key factors emerging: reviewer reputation, video content, and video quality. However, the reviewers' expertise showed no significant effect on engagement or purchase intention. User engagement was also found to mediate the relationship between food reviewers and purchase intention, underscoring connections within the value chain linking food reviewers, user engagement, and purchase intention. The study provides theoretical insights by offering a framework to assess how TikTok food reviews affect young Vietnamese consumers' engagement and purchasing behaviors. It highlights user interaction's mediating role between food review components and purchase intention and supports the relevance of affiliate marketing theory in the F&B industry. Practical implications include strategies to enhance brand visibility through affiliate marketing with food reviewers and implementing food reviewer-driven marketing communication initiatives tailored for the F&B sector.

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SUBJECTS

Business, Management and Accounting;
Consumer Psychology;
Economics; Digital Marketing

1. Introduction

The food and beverage (F&B) sector is expanding in diversity and dynamism, catering to the sophisticated demands of modern customers (Smith & Bugni, 2018). Global revenue of F&B industry has increased from 6,729.54 billion USD in 2022 to 7,221.73 billion USD in 2023, a growth rate of 7.3% (New York, 2023). In which, Asia-Pacific is the largest market, followed by Western Europe in 2022. In recent times, the F&B sector has continuously undergone changes and improvements to accommodate changes in customer tastes and needs, with increasingly improved form and quality. Thanks to the developments mentioned above, creative cuisine was born. The birth of creative cuisine entails diversifying menus and new eating forms to suit consumer needs. In addition to changes in form, the marketing and communication activities of the F&B industry also fluctuate. Modern marketing communication methods on digital platforms have replaced antiquated marketing campaigns that took time to reach consumers (Dwivedi et al., 2021). The sector's growth and competitiveness depend heavily on the integration of marketing and technology.

One of the social networks with the largest user bases worldwide is TikTok, where the bulk of members are young people. TikTok has more than 1.1 billion people monthly active (2021). Vietnam has more than 67.7 million TikTok users, according to recent sources (Statista, 2024). These users include a sizable fraction of Gen Z, or those between the ages of 15 and 30. More than 81% of Gen Z respondents to a study of Vietnamese consumers performed in the third quarter of 2023 acknowledged using TikTok (Statista, 2023). Vietnam is among the top 5 countries with the most TikTok users worldwide. Users of this platform may

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make and share short films and photographs using TikTok's algorithm and mechanism. Food reviews actively evaluate and share opinions about food-related products or service providers. Food reviewers, through videos, provide information in the form of reviews and recommendations related to food consumption (Briliana et al., 2020; Lacsina, 2023; Luong & Ho, 2023). Reviews of food may be shared on social media sites, particularly TikTok, as text, photos, and videos. According to Hanifawati et al. (2019), customers benefit from the influence of social media influencers. In particular, this positive impact substantially impacts Gen Z and the Millennial generation. Therefore, reviews of food-related products on social networks may influence potential customers interested in those items. Food reviewers can influence consumers' consumption intentions by providing information, ratings, and product comments (Chua & Banerjee, 2015; Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Several elements affect a reviewer's quality, including their reputation, video content, level of expertise, and video quality. The combination of these elements forms a multifaceted framework within which food reviewers operate, influencing how they consume content and how they shape participation, engagement, and consumer intention in the field of culinary experiences. However, there are also limitations to social networks. Due to the limited capacity of social networking organizations to monitor content, there is also a lot of media content that is untrue or fraudulent, causing harm and affecting consumers. Therefore, the peer review mechanism is encouraged for the online community to participate and evaluate the authenticity and usefulness of content on social networks to contribute to providing multi-dimensional information for users to consider when referring to information provided on social networks. There was research indicating that influencer content on platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram frequently includes references to nutritionally deficient foods and beverages, which tend to garner higher positive engagement (Winzer et al., 2022). Unhealthy food and beverage brands strategically utilize TikTok to promote their products, encouraging users to create content featuring their branding and product imagery. This strategy is particularly influential among children due to TikTok's popularity within this age group (Brooks et al., 2022). These observations highlight the urgent need for policies and regulations to shield children from the detrimental effects of food marketing on social media platforms like TikTok. So, in studies related to food reviewers, researchers have paid attention to the reputation and expertise of food reviewers, as well as user interaction with content created by food reviewers, to contribute to ensuring the authenticity of content and limiting negative impacts on society as well as consumers.

Currently, many studies have evaluated the impact of influencer marketing on social networking platforms on interactions and consumption intentions of users (Le, 2022; Nofela & Saputri, 2022). However, very few studies still specifically evaluate the impact of food reviewers on TikTok on user interaction and purchase intention in the Vietnamese market. Therefore, through analyzing related subjects, this research aims to determine how food reviewers on TikTok influence young consumers' purchasing intentions and interactions in Vietnam. This study provides a conceptual framework to evaluate TikTok food reviewers' effects on user interaction and the intention to use F&B services of young consumers in Vietnam. Through this, we can test the level of self-directed influence of TikTok food reviewers on consumption intention. Besides that, how does user interaction mediate the relationship between food reviews and purchase intention on TikTok? Through the review, we have not found any research that has conducted related to this topic in Vietnam. So, this study also aims to evaluate the mediating role of user interaction on the relationship between food review TikTok and food consumption intention. The research results are expected to make theoretical contributions related to affiliate marketing, social network marketing communication, and contributions to businesses in building and implementing marketing communication programs on social networks with food reviewers.

2. Literature review

2.1. Purchase intention

Purchase intention encompasses the willingness to purchase goods or services and the possibility of making plans (Wu et al., 2011). Choice commitment is the last step in buying, which includes determining requirements, gathering information, weighing product possibilities, and comparing alternatives (Mustikasari & Widaningsih, 2019). The hedonic message and positive valence of the reviews also increase purchase intention (Putra et al., 2023). Food reviewers on TikTok have the power to impact their followers

on several different levels. They can raise awareness of the business by showcasing various culinary items and eateries (Briliana et al., 2020; Wibisono et al., 2021). Food reviewer recommendations positively impact purchase intention on TikTok (Prianika & Bertuah, 2023). These reviews may influence customers' opinions of the goods and their buying decisions (Liu et al., 2022). Positive reviews from reputable food critics influence how food quality affects customer experiences (Lasne et al., 2021). Additionally, the quality of the reviews and the usefulness of the information they provide positively impact consumers' attitudes towards the reviews and their adoption of the information (De Figueiredo Marcos & Alves, 2020). Trust in the reviewers and the ease of use of the reviews also contribute to the usefulness and adoption of the information, affecting purchase intention. Therefore, food reviewer reviews on TikTok can significantly shape consumers' purchase intentions for food products. The caliber of a food video can also influence user interaction on TikTok. Song and Zhao (2023) discovered a strong correlation between the short food movies posted on websites like Douyin and TikTok and popular food culture, eating habits, and emerging food trends. Apart from offering enlightening and comprehensible material, these films enable audiences to fully engage with the traditions and cultures of other regions via gastronomy (Tao, 2023). Through videos on TikTok, we aim to investigate how food reviews affect user interaction and purchase intention in this study. Furthermore, user engagement is anticipated to be critical in the link between food reviews and TikTok purchase intention.

2.2. User interaction

Interaction has been defined by Liu and Shrum (2002) as the degree of mutual influence based on messages or media exchanges that two or more people have with each other. Food reviewers significantly impact user engagement on TikTok. Customers are drawn to and influenced by their reviews and content marketing techniques (Fahimah & Munfarida, 2023). Influencers' reviews contribute highly to the visibility of the content, making it more likely to be seen by consumers (Brooks et al., 2022). Interactions on TikTok are optimized through hashtag challenges to encourage users to create and share content (Song & Zhao, 2023), which can lead to more user-generated interactions. In response to these challenges, user-generated content often features branding, product images, and branded effects, with most of the content portraying a positive or neutral sentiment (Tarigan et al., 2022). Effective management of digital marketing activities is demonstrated based on users' assessment of consumption intention. Through consumer reviews, it is possible to create positive feedback and strongly impact online consumers. Food critics' reviews have a higher impact on customers' experience than the direct effect of food quality alone (Goswami et al., 2017). User interaction has a significant impact on purchase intention. The interaction between users and sellers during the purchasing process can stimulate positive purchase intentions (Jiang, 2023). Based on Zhu and Zhang (2022), network interaction, community reputation, and user-generated content can influence consumers' purchasing intentions. Additionally, the level of user engagement while interacting with a product or service can provide valuable information about their purchase intention (Castiblanco Jimenez et al., 2022). Whether online or offline, social interaction also plays a vital role in increasing consumers' purchasing intentions (Zhang & Zhang, 2023). Furthermore, user experience in live-streaming marketing directly impacts consumers' intention to purchase, and customer trust acts as a mediating variable in this relationship (Liu, 2023). Videos containing marketing content by food reviewers distributed on social networking platforms will widely contribute to increasing user interaction if users rate the videos. Positively, this interaction will bring significant benefits to the brand, increasing brand awareness and interaction and promoting consumption intention.

2.3. Food reviewer

Food reviewers offer suggestions or critiques and share their thoughts and evaluations of meals, eateries, and other food-related destinations (Briliana et al., 2020; Lacsina, 2023; Luong & Ho, 2023). Their reviews may be spoken or written, and they may be published online or in videos, among other forms of media. Reviews of those items may influence potential customers interested in acquiring food-related products or services. Food reviewers can influence the purchasing decisions of potential customers by providing

information, offering recommendations, or commenting about the product being reviewed (Chua & Banerjee, 2015; Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). The helpfulness rating of those reviews indicates how helpful, pertinent, and reliable they are thought to be by other users, which can also be used to evaluate them (Ghose & Ipeirotis, 2011; Korfiatis et al., 2012). Food reviewers can shape the preferences and decisions of a broad audience by using platforms, especially TikTok, which is the leading platform for this subject. Numerous factors impact the caliber of reviews, such as their reputation, the content of their videos, their level of expertise, and the quality of their videos. The reputation of food reviewers refers to how well they have a track record of creating engaging videos that other viewers find valuable. Their badge, followers, views, comments, or likes on TikTok might all be indicators. Their authority and credibility will increase, and their videos will become more helpful and influential to their viewers (Chua & Banerjee, 2015; Wang & Kuchmaner, 2024).

A thorough analysis of the literature on food reviews has revealed several essential elements that contribute to their power and influence in the digital sphere. These variables come in various forms, influencing how people interact with and uniquely perceive food material. The reputation of a food reviewer, as elucidated by Chua and Banerjee (2015), includes elements such as badges, followers, views, comments, or likes that serve as visible indicators of a reviewer's standing within the digital culinary landscape. The expertise of the food reviewer, as encompassed by the level of proficiency and knowledge by Luong and Ho (2023) and Rozamuri et al. (2022), serves as a testament to a reviewer's credibility and authority. Furthermore, video content-related factors, including sidedness, factuality, emotional appeal, length, depth, and readability, as highlighted by Fan et al. (2022) and Mudambi and Schuff (2010), contribute significantly to the effectiveness of food reviewers. Lastly, video quality, including resolution, sound quality, lighting, editing, camera angles, and visual effects, as identified by Laccina (2023), significantly affects the viewing experience. In essence, the amalgamation of these factors constitute a multifaceted framework within which food reviewers operate, influencing how their content is received and how they shape consumer engagement, brand equity, and decisions in culinary experiences. Therefore, factors related to food reviewers, including reputation, expertise, content, and quality of videos created by food reviewers, is expected to impact user interaction on TikTok and promote customers' consumption.

2.3.1. Reputation

A food reviewer's reputation is based on how well they have produced interesting videos that other viewers found helpful in the past. They may use their TikTok badge, followers, views, comments, or likes as indicators. Their credibility and authority will grow, and viewers will find their films more beneficial and influential (Chua & Banerjee, 2015; Wang et al., 2023). A well-known food reviewer, for instance, might raise consumer perceptions of a product's quality and brand awareness (Karagiannis et al., 2022). According to Frank et al. (2014), a reputable food reviewer can significantly increase brand awareness and perceived quality, fostering brand loyalty for a food product. The burgeoning role of food reviewers on TikTok presents a unique ecosystem where their reputation directly impacts customer interaction, influencing engagement and conversion. Highly respected reviewers whose credibility is established through factors like consistent quality, engaging content, and audience trust (Chua & Banerjee, 2015; Wang & Kuchmaner, 2024) boast loyal follower bases. As a result, reviews develop into potent recommendations by fostering a sense of community and shared trust (Briliana et al., 2020; Peng et al., 2023). These recommendations drive vibrant discussions with comments, reactions, and shares (Andik & Rachma, 2022), elevating brand awareness and consideration (Khrisnanda, 2021). Viewers often flock to taste the featured food and beverage selections, resulting in real-world action (Bareille et al., 2021). However, negative reviews significantly diminish the likelihood of product purchase, particularly when they contrast with high average ratings. They also reduce the likelihood of consumers continuing to seek information about the product and increase the probability of them considering alternative products (Varga & Albuquerque, 2024). Furthermore, negative reviews can trigger a reverse domino effect, eroding trust and prompting a surge of critical comments, which can damage brand reputation of the food retailer and deter potential customers (Pee, 2016). Therefore, food reviewers on TikTok walk a tightrope; their ability to shape customer interaction hinges on maintaining a reputation for authenticity, expertise, and

balanced critique. This dynamic environment provides rich soil for more studies to unravel the complex relationships among reviewer reputation, online engagement, and offline consumer behavior in the constantly changing social media food trends. Proposed research hypotheses

H1. The reputation of the food reviewer has a direct positive impact on user interaction through their videos on TikTok.

H2. The reputation of the food reviewer has a direct positive impact on purchase intention towards the brand appearing in their videos on TikTok.

H3. The reputation of the food reviewer has an indirect positive impact on purchase intention towards the brand appearing in their videos on TikTok through user interaction.

2.3.2. Expertise

Food reviewers are specialists in many facets of the culinary arts, including methods, ingredients, history, and culture. These characteristics characterize their expertise and raise their audience's regard for them and their credibility, competence, and trust (Luong & Ho, 2023; Rozamuri et al., 2022). In addition, they must produce relatable and exciting material that appeals to their audience and stay current with food trends, like plant-based and wellness-focused options (Tarigan et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Furthermore, as a crucial component of customer preferences, they must be thoroughly aware of food quality. Food quality is influenced by several variables, including flavor, sensory qualities, and overall quality (Kunekar et al., 2022; Medeiros & Salay, 2013; Vaclavik & Christian, 2013). Individuals possessing extensive experience in the culinary field are highly esteemed for their dependability, and their professional opinions and insights impact customer choices, brand perception, and standing (Ikachoi & Kenyatta University, 2023). TikTok influencers who produce videos on food tourism in Pakistan discovered that users' intention to return is increased by travel influencer endorsement and memorable local food experiences (Davis et al., 2023). According to a study on short video media fatigue, concerns about information redundancy, social image, information disclosure, and content value variation motivate users' negative interaction behaviors on TikTok (Shoukat et al., 2023). Li et al. (2023) studied food, nutrition, and weight-related postings on TikTok. They discovered that most posts promote a weight-normative conception of health and lack authoritative voices offering dietary advice. Davis et al. (2023) suggested that popular food-related material, such as videos like 'What I Eat in a Day,' may encourage disordered eating behaviors and the slim ideal, which can harm young individuals already at risk. Furthermore, many posts on TikTok lack expert perspectives and promote a weight-normative conception of health, raising questions about the veracity of the platform's nutrition-related material (Shoukat et al., 2023). As a result, even if food videos can positively impact user interaction on TikTok, it is essential to promote responsible content creation and consumption and be mindful of any potential negative impacts. The food reviewer's culinary expertise is significant. In addition to ensuring the authenticity of the video content, it also affects the attitudes and behaviors of users towards food. The level of proficiency and knowledge that food reviewers have in various food-related topics, including cooking, nutrition, culture, and history, is their expertise in the field. The food reviewer's expertise is examined in user interaction and purchase intention using the following hypotheses:

H4. The expertise of the food reviewer has a direct positive impact on user interaction through their videos on TikTok.

H5. The expertise of the food reviewer has a direct positive impact on purchase intention towards the brand appearing in their videos on TikTok.

H6. The expertise of the food reviewer has an indirect positive impact on purchase intention towards the brand appearing in their videos on TikTok through user interaction.

2.3.3. Video content

Food reviewers play a crucial role in shaping culinary experiences through their content. These reviews encompass various factors, as highlighted by Fan et al. (2022), Mudambi and Schuff (2010), and Zhang

and Zhang (2023), considering biases, accuracy, emotional resonance, length, depth, and comprehension. Viewers consider diverse elements such as food variety, service quality, ambiance, price, menu diversity, and presentation style, as Andilolo and Ranteallo (2017) suggested when engaging with this video content. Primarily, these reviewers provide insights into food quality, taste, and distinctive characteristics, aiding consumers in making informed decisions, in line with the sentiments echoed by Yang et al. (2017). As noted (Briliana et al., 2020), online evaluations are growing, mainly food vlogs on platforms like TikTok, which significantly impacts customers' perceptions of value and brand recognition. Chakraborty and Bhat (2018) claim that the existence of food critic evaluations significantly increases the effect of food quality on the customer experience, which in turn raises the brand's value. The content crafted by food reviewers on TikTok is a potent catalyst for rich and diverse customer interactions, weaving a complex web that influences online engagement and offline behavior. These reviews, encompassing sensory descriptions, emotional authenticity, and visual storytelling (Hidalgo-Alcázar et al., 2014), go beyond mere factual assessments. They ignite empathy and relatability, resonating with viewers' culinary experiences and desires (Shi, 2023). This resonance fuels a cascade of interactive behaviors: lively comments and discussions around the featured food and restaurant, vibrant reactions and shares, and even collaborative recipe recreations (Wibisono et al., 2021). Furthermore, reviewers who excel at weaving compelling narratives and showcasing unique presentation styles spark a sense of wonder and discovery, drawing viewers deeper into the culinary journey (Aras, 2023). This immersive experience can culminate in decisive offline actions, with viewers flocking to try the reviewed establishments, fueled by the reviewer's trusted recommendations and the desire to replicate the depicted experience. However, the interactive landscape has its challenges. Biases, inaccuracies, and overly promotional content can erode trust and stifle engagement (Moody et al., 2022). Therefore, understanding the intricate relationship between reviewer content, emotional resonance, and interactive behaviors on TikTok is crucial for researchers and industry stakeholders seeking to leverage the platform's potential for driving user interaction, culinary exploration, and purchase intention for the brand. The hypotheses built for video content are as follows:

H7. The video content of the food reviewer has a direct positive impact on user interaction through their videos on TikTok.

H8. The video content of the food reviewer has a direct positive impact on user interaction through their videos on TikTok.

H9. The video content of the food reviewer has an indirect positive impact on purchase intention towards the brand appearing in their videos on TikTok through user interaction.

2.3.4. *Quality video*

Food vloggers demonstrate their culinary expertise and viewpoints using various video techniques and effects. Creating a food movie's visual and technical aspects include lighting, editing, camera angles, visual effects, sound quality, and video resolution. These elements influence how viewers perceive their films to be compelling, clear, and engaging (Lacsina, 2023). Because of this increased participation, people are more likely to remember the brand and its message, which raises brand recognition and perception. Brands may make their customers feel certain and create unforgettable experiences by employing appropriate music in their videos (Ljunggren, 2023). Using visual storytelling approaches to establish emotional and deeper connections with their target audience, marketers may deliver their messages more successfully via videos with sharp images. According to Taylor (2023), this can assist companies in building a solid brand presence. Furthermore, a customer's perception of a product will be more favorable the more familiar the brand's product is to them in a promotional film, claim Lu et al. (2014). In addition to the usefulness and authenticity of the video content, video quality is an equally important factor because it will directly create the appeal of the video, camera angle, sound, voice, light, image effects, and more. Food reviewer films on online platforms will significantly influence drawing viewers, boosting user interaction and sharing videos, ultimately enhancing the efficacy of the brand's message. Accordingly, the hypotheses proposed as follows:

H10. The video content of the food reviewer has a direct positive impact on user interaction through their videos on TikTok.

H11. The video content of the food reviewer has a direct positive impact on user interaction through their videos on TikTok.

H12. The video content of the food reviewer has an indirect positive impact on purchase intention towards the brand appearing in their videos on TikTok through user interaction.

The correlation between components is systematized by the research model in [Figure 1](#).

3. Research methodology

3.1. Measurement scales

The video content (Con) scale is defined based on Mudambi and Schuff (2010), Andilolo and Ranteallo (2017), Fan et al. (2022), and Zhang and Zhang (2023), the video content scale includes variables: objectively present aspects of food (Con1), show factual and reliable information about the food (Con2), convey their emotions and feelings about the food effectively (Con3), video content is concise and easy to follow (Con4), the video content covers various aspects of the food in depth (Con5), and content is well-written and readable (Con6). According to Luong and Ho (2023), Rozamuri et al. (2022), and Ikachoi and Kenyatta University (2023), the expertise (Exp) component is designed with items: deep understanding of cuisine (Exp1); accurate and relevant information about the nutritional value of the food (Exp2); and deep understanding of the cultural and historical background of the food (Exp3). The video quality scale is determined based on the Lacsina (2023), Ljunggren (2023), and Taylor (2023), with 6 items: high resolution and quality (QV1), clear and audible sound (QV2), good lighting and contrast (QV3), smooth and professional editing (QV4), appropriate camera angles and shots (QV5), and creative and appealing visual effects (QV6). Reputation of reviewer scale (Chua & Banerjee, 2015; Wang & Kuchmaner, 2024), he badge of a food reviewer (Rep1), the number of followers (Rep2), the number of views (Rep3), comments (Rep4), and likes (Rep5). The user interaction scale is based on Goswami et al. (2017), Liu and Shrum (2002), Fahimah and Munfarida (2023), and Song and Zhao (2023), it is measured by the following variables: Like (Int1), interact (Int2), share (Int3), and follow the reviewers (Int4). Finally, purchase intention scale (Mustikasari & Widaningsih, 2019; Wu et al., 2011): Have the plan to consider using the service (PI1), become a customer of the brand (PI2), and prefer to choose the brand recommended by the reviewer (PI3). To answer the questions built from the above measurement scales, respondents must be the people who have experienced F&B services based on having watched videos of TikTok food reviewers.

3.2. Research sample, data collection

This study was conducted on users with TikTok social network accounts who use social networks frequently; the main purpose of using social networks is entertainment, information search and consumption. Especially on the TikTok platform, there is the participation of a large number of influencers, key opinion leaders (KOL), reviewers, etc., these people attract a large number of followers and have an impact

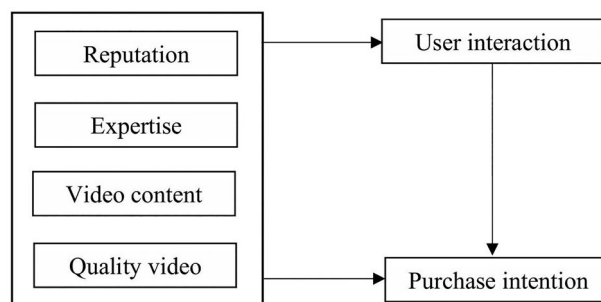


Figure 1. The conceptual framework.

on the needs and consumption behavior of TikTok network users. Their service usage behavior is closely linked to social network interactions between celebrities and consumers. Recommendations from influencers or comments from social network users can influence their purchasing intentions. We thoroughly evaluated the observed variables using many methods to get the most precise information and data.

All participants in the study were asked to provide information through a pre-designed structured questionnaire. In the initial section of the questionnaire, the study included the following statement: 'All information collected in this research is solely for research purposes, and the data will be aggregated and analyzed for academic papers, which may be published publicly by journals that accept our submission. If you agree to voluntarily provide information for this research project, please proceed with answering the questions below'. Participants reviewed and verbally consented to provide information before completing the questionnaire. This method of primary data collection is widely used in Vietnam as it ensures the voluntary participation of respondents, maintains objectivity in the provision of information, and offers convenience for study participants. Based on this context, individuals with TikTok social media accounts participating in this study were selected based on their willingness and voluntary agreement to participate in the study through a pre-designed questionnaire will participate in providing information through the Google form platform. The results recorded that 473 people participated in providing information. After the process of screening the quality of the answers, samples that did not meet quality requirements such as incomplete information provided or information provided that was not authentic were eliminated. As a result, 408 samples still met quality requirements, suitable for analyzing research results.

This independent study was conducted at a time when there was no ethics committee at the institution where we are employed. The research focuses on examining the impact of TikTok food reviewers on consumers' intentions toward culinary services, falling under the domains of business and marketing. Data were collected regarding the characteristics and attributes of the reviewers and the content of their posts on TikTok. This study is classified as low-risk. Furthermore, the research team ensured compliance with ethical research principles, including: (1) Clearly explaining the purpose and objectives of the study to participants who provided information for the research project; (2) The questionnaire content was developed based on scientific foundations, with the questions constructed from scales designed by referencing and building upon previously published studies; (3) Participants voluntarily agreed to provide information for the study, with their consent implied through their submission of personal and relevant information via a pre-designed Google Forms questionnaire; (4) Personal information related to participants was encrypted and anonymized, with the analysis results reflecting the overall sample and not individual opinions or viewpoints; and (5) The data were used solely for research purposes and managed according to confidentiality and ethical guidelines.

3.3. Data analytical method

The internal consistency of each scale was evaluated using reliability metrics such as the average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach Alpha test. The sample data is described using the frequency analysis approach. Several model variables might have multidimensional interactions, which is why structural equation modeling (SEM), or SEM was developed. Complex connections between variables can be represented using a variety of simple and complex regression equations. Quantitative data and associated assumptions are included in the model through linear structural modeling. This study investigated the links between the several components of the research model, such as reputation, expertise, video content, quality video, user interaction, and buy intention, using the SEM technique. In addition, SEM analysis technique provides good support for analyzing models with intermediate variables. In this study, the intermediate variable is user interaction, which is expected to have a mediating role in the relationship between components of food reviewer (reputation, expertise, content, and quality of videos created by food reviewers) and purchase intention.

4. Result and discussion

Statistics from 408 research samples in [Table 1](#) show that 45.34% are male and 54.66% are female. The level of TikTok usage is recorded as regularly (every day) with the highest rate (74.02%), followed by

occasionally (a few days in a week) with 17.89%, and the rest is sometimes (a few days in a month) with 8.09%. TikTok social network attracts a large number of users in Vietnam, of which young people make up the majority. The main purposes of TikTok social network users are entertainment (40.93%), searching and discuss information (31.86%), and shopping (27.21%).

4.1. Test for measurement scale

The data recorded in Table 2 notes that Cronbach's alpha coefficients (α) of all components (reputation, expertise, video content, video quality, user interaction, and purchase intention) are more significant than 0.80 (0.81–0.94). The standardized regression weights (λ) of all items are more significant than 0.5; the composite reliability (CR) of all components is more significant than 0.80 (0.80–0.94), and the average variance extracted (AVE) is more significant than 0.5 (0.53–0.77), proving that the scales are reliable and convergent validity.

4.2. The impact of the food reviewer on user interaction and purchase intention

The SEM method is used in the study to evaluate the relationship between the elements in the model. Table 3 is the collected data proving that most of the model components have a statistically significant positive correlation at a confidence level of 90% or higher; the detailed results are explained as follows.

Table 1. Respondent information.

	Male		Female		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
TikTok usage frequency						
Sometimes (a few days in a month)	22	5.39	11	2.70	33	8.09
Occasionally (a few days in a week)	39	9.56	34	8.33	73	17.89
Frequently (every day)	124	30.39	178	43.63	302	74.02
Total	185	45.34	223	54.66	408	100.00
Purpose of using TikTok network						
Search and discuss information	61	14.95	69	16.91	130	31.86
Consumption	50	12.25	61	14.95	111	27.21
Entertainment	74	18.14	93	22.79	167	40.93
Total	185	45.34	223	54.66	408	100.00

Table 2. Results of testing the reliability and convergent of the scales.

Components	Items	λ	CR	AVE	α
Video content (Con)	Con1	0.75	0.90	0.59	0.90
	Con2	0.78			
	Con3	0.67			
	Con4	0.81			
	Con5	0.81			
	Con6	0.80			
Expertise (Exp)	Exp1	0.79	0.85	0.65	0.85
	Exp2	0.81			
	Exp3	0.82			
Interaction (Int)	Int1	0.87	0.81	0.53	0.84
	Int2	0.61			
	Int3	0.61			
	Int4	0.79			
Quality video (QV)	QV1	0.85	0.94	0.72	0.94
	QV2	0.86			
	QV3	0.87			
	QV4	0.82			
	QV5	0.84			
	QV6	0.86			
Reputation (Rep)	Rep1	0.78	0.88	0.58	0.88
	Rep2	0.82			
	Rep3	0.74			
	Rep4	0.72			
	Rep5	0.76			
Purchase intention (PI)	PI1	0.90	0.91	0.77	0.90
	PI2	0.85			
	PI3	0.89			

The detailed findings of the study have revealed a robust correlation between reputation (Rep) and user interaction (Int), substantiated by a 99% confidence level ($\lambda=0.30$, $P<0.01$), and reputation (Rep) and purchase intention (PI), substantiated by a 90% confidence level ($\lambda=0.10$, $P=0.08<0.10$), supporting the validation of hypothesis H1 and H2. These suggest that the reputation of food reviewers significantly positively impacts user interaction and purchase intention. A one-unit increase in the reputation of a food reviewer leads to a 0.30 and 0.10 unit rise in user interaction and purchase intention. This research result is similar to previous studies such as Chua and Banerjee (2015), Briliana et al., 2020; Lasne et al. (2021), Andik and Rachma (2022), Wang and Kuchmaner (2024), Peng et al. (2023), and Prianika and Bertuah (2023). The reviewer's reputation significantly drives consumer engagement and intent toward brands through videos on TikTok. The higher the reputation of food reviewers, the better it contributes to positively influencing and stimulating user interaction and purchase intention.

With a 95% confidence level, the table shows a positive and statistically significant relationship ($\lambda=0.10$, $P=0.05$) between user involvement and the culinary reviewers' expertise. Accordingly, user interaction rises by 0.10 units for every unit increase in food reviewers' experience level. As a result, food reviewers who possess better knowledge and credibility tend to garner more interaction from their audience, exemplified by likes, comments, shares, and the like. Hypothesis H4, which states a positive correlation between the reviewers' expertise and user interaction, is accepted by the information provided; the substantial and favorable direct path supports this (Luong & Ho, 2023; Rozamuri et al., 2022). When evaluating the impact of the food reviewer's expertise on consumption intention, the data results can be seen not to influence each other ($\lambda=0.00$, $P=0.98>0.05$). Because expertise factors do not impact young consumers' consumption intentions, hypothesis H5 is rejected. Thus, consumption intention remains the same when the degree of skill rises by one unit. The results of this study differ from previous studies such as Ikachoi and Kenyatta University (2023) and Davis et al. (2023). In the context of food retailers in Vietnam, most focus on creating video content aimed at young users, mentioning check-in places to eat, prices, unique flavors, the taste of regional dishes, and more. Video content related to in-depth expertise in cuisine and dietary health has not been exploited much, so there is not enough basis to authenticate that the expertise of a food reviewer's cuisine motivates consumption intention.

The analysis supports the relationship between video content and user interaction ($\lambda=0.45^{***}$), video content and purchase intention ($\lambda=0.11^+$), robustly verifies hypotheses H7 and H8, demonstrating that the video content sourced from a food reviewer directly and favorably impacts on user interaction and purchase intention. This suggests that the content that the food reviewer shares has a significant impact on improving user engagement and purchase intent. A one-unit enhancement in the caliber or essence of the video content results in a 0.45-unit escalation in user interaction and 0.11-unit in purchase intention. Engaging and informative video content catalyzes user interaction (Andilolo & Ranteallo, 2017; Aras, 2023; Wibisono et al., 2021). In addition to improving user experience, this creates a lively sense of community. Through this, it contributes to promoting customers' consumption intentions (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018; Le, 2022; Wang et al., 2021). Overall, well-curated video content contributes to more user interaction and connected user community, fostering a more robust and thriving platform ecosystem and purchase intention for the bands appearing in videos created by food reviewers on TikTok.

In Table 3, there are positive and statistically significant with a 99% confidence level in the relationship between the quality video (QV) and user interaction ($\lambda=0.38^{***}$), and quality video and purchase intention ($\lambda=0.21^{***}$), so H10 and H11 hypotheses are accepted. As a result, every one-unit increase in the quality of food reviewer videos is associated with a 0.38-unit and 0.21-unit increase in user

Table 3. Results of direct correlation analysis of components in the model.

	Direct path		λ	P	Hypotheses test
Rep	→	Int	0.30	***	H1: accepted
Rep	→	PI	0.10	0.08	H2: accepted
Exp	→	Int	0.10	0.05	H4: accepted
Exp	→	PI	0.00	0.98	H5: rejected
Con	→	Int	0.45	***	H7: accepted
Con	→	PI	0.11	0.06	H8: accepted
QV	→	Int	0.38	***	H10: accepted
QV	→	PI	0.21	***	H11: accepted

interaction and purchase intention. In other words, higher-quality videos lead to more user interaction (likes, comments, shares, and other forms of engagement from viewers) and purchase intention. Based on the information, high-quality videos will significantly promote interaction, increasing good brand impressions and consumption intentions (Lacsina, 2023; Ljunggren, 2023; Taylor, 2023). Today's trend is that users on social networks prefer watching videos over other types because of their visuality, combination of sound effects, lighting, and more; thus, ensuring the technical quality of the video is an important issue affecting its attractiveness.

4.3. The mediating effect of user interaction on the relationship between food reviewer and purchase intention

The results of the correlation analysis of components in the model recorded in Table 4 confirm the indirect impact on purchase intention through user interaction of reviewer's reputation ($\lambda=0.12^{***}$), video content ($\lambda=0.18^{***}$), and video quality ($\lambda=0.15^{**}$), accordingly hypotheses H3, H9, and H12 are accepted. Combined with the direct analysis results, recognize the part mediation role of user interaction in the relationships: reviewer's reputation and purchase intention, video content and purchase intention, video quality, and purchase intention. Another point in the research results is that food reviewers' culinary expertise is not meaningful in the research model. The expertise of food reviewers has a negligible impact on consumption intention directly ($P=0.98$) and indirectly through user interaction ($P=0.41$). Summarizing the results of direct and indirect correlation analysis of the components in the model, exciting results from this study have confirmed the positive correlation of the relationship between food reviewer (reviewer's reputation, video content, and video quality)—user interaction—purchase intention. These value results affirm the role and importance of using food reviewers to promote user interaction on TikTok and consumption intention towards the brand.

The results of analyzing the interrelationships of the components in the model systemized in Figure 2 show that video content created by food reviewers and posted on the TikTok network platform explains 44% of the units for user interaction, video content has the biggest impact, followed by video quality, and the popularity of food reviewers also contributes significantly to attracting user interaction on TikTok. Meanwhile, the food reviewer's expertise factor does not have much impact on community interaction. Research results predict 35% of consumer intention for brands in the food and beverage field. In which the mediating role of user interaction contributes the most to promoting consumption intention (0.40 units). Food reviewer factors such as popularity, video content, and video quality have a direct positive impact on purchase intention at a moderate level. Research results have shown the very important role of user interaction on social networks (TikTok), helping to increase brand awareness, brand engagement, and promote consumption intention towards the brand.

5. Theoretical contributions

The research results have contributed to further confirming the role of food reviewers in promoting increased efficiency in affiliate marketing and brand communication activities in Vietnam's food and beverage industry. This further demonstrates the usefulness of using the theory of food reviewers to guide businesses' marketing and communication efforts through videos posted on social media platforms

Table 4. Result of analysis of the mediating effect of user interaction on the relationship between food reviewer and purchase intention.

Direct path	λ	P	Indirect path	λ	P	Hypotheses test	Mediation effect
Rep \rightarrow PI	0.10	0.08	Rep \rightarrow Int \rightarrow PI	0.12	0.00	H3: accepted	Part mediation
Exp \rightarrow PI	0.00	0.98	Exp \rightarrow Int \rightarrow PI	0.04	0.41	H6: rejected	Not mediation
Con \rightarrow PI	0.11	0.06	Con \rightarrow Int \rightarrow PI	0.18	0.00	H9: accepted	Part mediation
QV \rightarrow PI	0.21	***	QV \rightarrow Int \rightarrow PI	0.15	0.00	H12: accepted	Part mediation

*** $p < 0.001$.

** $p < 0.01$.

* $p < 0.05$.

[†] $p < 0.10$.

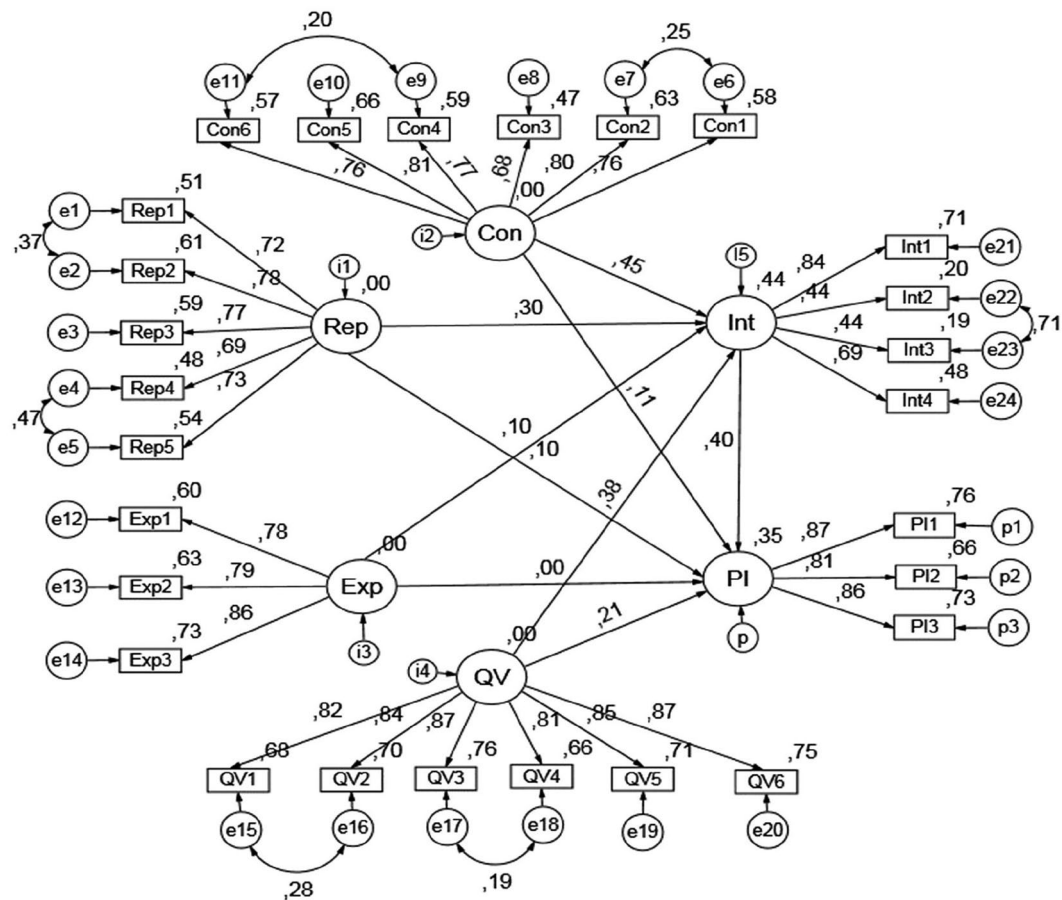


Figure 2. Results of correlation analysis between components in the model.

(Briliana et al., 2020; Lacsina, 2023; Luong & Ho, 2023). It also positively affects user interaction on these platforms, encouraging users to plan to consume the brand (Liu et al., 2022; Putra et al., 2023; Song & Zhao, 2023). Research results have confirmed that food reviewer is one of the valuable marketing partners for businesses in the food and beverage industry. This partner, making a significant contribution to joint marketing activities between brands and food reviewers in the digital business era, promises to grow even stronger in the coming time.

Research results validate three essential attributes of food reviewers, which are the reputation of food reviewers (Andik & Rachma, 2022; Bareille et al., 2021; Briliana et al., 2020; Chua & Banerjee, 2015; Frank et al., 2014; Karagiannis et al., 2022; Khrisnanda, 2021; Pee, 2016; Peng et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023), video content (Andilolo & Ranteallo, 2017; Aras, 2023; Briliana et al., 2020; Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018; Fan et al., 2022; Hammedi et al., 2015; Hidalgo-Alcázar et al., 2014; Moody et al., 2022; Mudambi & Schuff, 2010; Shi, 2023; Wibisono et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2017) and quality of videos created by food reviewers (Lacsina, 2023; Taylor, 2023; and Ljunggren, 2023). The factor of expertise of food reviewers has not been validated in its impact on user interaction and purchase intention in the context of the Vietnamese market. The research findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge on food reviewer marketing in the food and beverage industry, particularly within the Vietnamese context. Interestingly, our findings suggest that in Vietnam, the number of followers might play a slightly stronger role than reviewer badges, potentially reflecting a preference for authenticity among Vietnamese viewers.

Theoretically, the study has validated a set of scales for food reviewer-related components that have a direct impact on purchase intention in the F&B industry, including: (1) Reputation of food reviewer, with the items: the badge of a food reviewer, the number of views, likes, comments, and followers of the food reviewer (Andik & Rachma, 2022; Bareille et al., 2021; Briliana et al., 2020; Chua & Banerjee, 2015; Frank et al., 2014; Karagiannis et al., 2022; Khrisnanda, 2021; Pee, 2016; Peng et al., 2023; Wang

et al., 2023); (2) Video content, with a set of scales including objectivity of the content (both positive and negative aspects of the food), factual and reliable information, conveys their emotions and feelings about the food effectively, the reviewer's video is concise and easy to follow, various aspects of the food in depth, and the reviewer's video is well-written and readable (Andilolo & Ranteallo, 2017; Aras, 2023; Briliana et al., 2020; Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018; Fan et al., 2022; Hammedi et al., 2015; Hidalgo-Alcázar et al., 2014; Moody et al., 2022; Mudambi & Schuff, 2010; Shi, 2023; Wibisono et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2017); and (3) The quality of video needs to focus on high resolution and quality video, clear and audible sound, good lighting and contrast, smooth and professional editing, appropriate use of camera angles and shots, and creative and appealing visual effects (Lacsina, 2023; Ljunggren, 2023).

The study has validated the mediating role of user interaction in the relationship between food reviewers (Reputation of food reviewer, video content, and video quality) and purchase intention towards brands in the food and beverage field. The mediating role of user interaction between food reviewers and purchase intention is a key finding. This aligns with broader influencer marketing research, where user engagement (likes, comments, shares) is known to strengthen the connection between influencers and consumers (Nofela & Saputri, 2022). The research results have proven the intermediary role and importance of user interaction on social networks, not only helping to increase the spread of brand awareness and promoting consumption intention towards the brand but also Mediating and connecting the relationship between food reviewers and purchase intention to be more positive. A chain of relationships, including food reviewer-user interaction-purchase intention, will provide a theoretical basis for planning strategies, plans, and affiliate marketing communication programs between reviewers and businesses.

6. Managerial contributions

One marketing tactic that will continue to be successful in the future is affiliate marketing, given the unavoidable expansion of digital technology. When two parties cooperate, they all benefit. For example, restaurant reviewers who grow their social media following and earn a fixed income also enhance their reputation. Companies may accomplish their communication objectives by fostering customer intention toward the brand and raising brand awareness and engagement. Companies must use various marketing strategies, particularly in the competitive food and beverage industry. One of the marketing strategies that adds significant value to businesses in communications and marketing that this study has validated is the one connected with food reviews. As an audience of affiliate marketing communication strategies, consumers can see these marketing strategies as a reference source so they can make their consumption intentions in the future. However, there are still some obstacles in consulting this source of information to make decisions. Businesses can hire TikTok food reviewers to give reviews that are beneficial to the business. And those reviews may not be true and negatively affect consumers. Therefore, users also need to be cautious and consider factors related to food reviewer's popularity, expertise, authenticity of content, interaction between users, to selectively receive information, reference for consumption decisions.

In the strategy of affiliate marketing communications with food reviewers, businesses need to pay attention to the reputation of the food reviewer (number of views, likes, comments, shares, followers, and the badge of a food reviewer). Food reviewers' popularity significantly impacts attracting user interaction through videos on social networks and positively promotes consumer intention towards the brand. In addition, businesses must also set requirements for brand communication videos created by food reviewers to ensure video content and quality. Requirements from users who care a lot about video content ensure objectivity, video content that is realistic and trustworthy, video content that must convey viewers' emotions towards the food, brevity, and ease of understanding, in-depth, covering many different aspects related to cuisine, dishes, and good writing. Video quality must be guaranteed to attract viewers, including requirements for resolution and brightness. Image quality in the video must be good, straightforward, easy to hear, have a recording angle, and have diverse recording scenes. However, affiliate marketing creates activities where food reviewers earn commissions for purchases made through their links. Therefore, food reviewers can be sponsored by restaurants or brands, posting appealing

information about the brand's products and services to attract more customers, which impacts the authenticity of the content being communicated. This can affect the objectivity of the information that food reviewers convey, it is important for consumers to be aware of potential biases when consuming online content, be selective and make smart purchasing decisions.

User interaction through videos created by food reviewers published on social networks is one of the critical criteria for evaluating the success of affiliate marketing communication programs between businesses and food reviewers. Therefore, businesses need to precisely quantify the results related to interaction, number of views, likes, comments, shares, and followers for each video, linking brand communication with food reviewers. Customers frequently repurchase products from brands, indicating that the brand stays relevant in their minds and that customers consistently remember them. As a result, interaction with users on social networks will significantly impact brand awareness, strengthen the bond between customers and brands, and, from here, significantly impact consumption intention. That brand will have the opportunity to be chosen by customers for future consumption.

Research results provided a comprehensive dataset for studying how TikTok food reviewers impact brand equity, engagement, and purchase intentions among young Vietnamese people. The results may not be as applicable to other regions, though, due to the cultural differences and unique media-consuming behaviours of these youthful Vietnamese consumers. Country-to-country variations can be observed in TikTok's penetration rate and user engagement levels. According to recent reports, TikTok has over 67.7 million users in Vietnam (Statista, 2024). In a survey of Vietnamese consumers conducted in the third quarter of 2023, over 81% of Gen Z respondents confirmed using TikTok (Statista, 2023), demonstrating the platform's high relevance in this demographic in Vietnam. Global generalisation, however, might be more difficult because social media usage habits and cultural environments differ.

7. Conclusion

Affiliate marketing is a form used by many brands in recent times. Results from this study have confirmed that a marketing alliance with food reviewers in the food and beverage industry brings positive results for the brands, such as increasing user interaction on the TikTok platform, thereby promoting consumption intention towards the brand. Research results have recorded three aspects of food reviewers that impact attracting user interaction and consumption intention: the popularity of food reviewers, video content, and video quality created by food reviewers. Meanwhile, the food reviewer's expertise factor has a negligible impact in attracting people's interaction on TikTok and consumption intention towards the brand. In addition, the study confirmed the mediating impact of user interaction on the relationship between food reviewers (reputation, video content, and video quality) and purchase intention. This exciting result further confirms the role and importance of user interaction on social networks; it helps increase brand awareness, brand interaction, and customer engagement and promotes the consumption intention of the brand from customers.

The research results also contribute to consolidating and expanding theories related to brand marketing communications, that is, affiliate media marketing with reviewers and social network media marketing. A set of scales for components related to food reviewers was also established, including the food reviewer's reputation and content and quality of the videos created by the food reviewer. The research results have confirmed the positive link between food reviewer-user interaction - and purchase intention in affiliate marketing programs on social networks. Based on the research findings, several recommendations have been made for company brands in the food and beverage sector. These include developing brand communication and marketing collaborations with food reviewers. Selecting a food reviewer for affiliate marketing communication requires careful consideration of factors, including the reviewer's popularity, the content's distinctiveness, and the caliber of the videos they produce. One of the critical criteria for evaluating the success of affiliate marketing programs with reviewers is user interaction on social networks through videos created by reviewers. Therefore, brands need to be specific and quantify the results related to user interaction on social networks, that is, the number of views, likes, comments, shares, and followers while negotiating with reviewers in brand marketing communication cooperation.

8. Limitations and future research

Besides the effort to conduct research using the above theories, this research still has certain limitations. However, future research may address these limitations. Firstly, the relatively small sample size (408 Vietnamese participants) may limit the representativeness of the findings for the broader population. This constraint challenges the generalizability of the results, particularly given the focus on Vietnamese consumers familiar with the TikTok platform. Furthermore, including merchants from other countries would enrich cross-cultural comparisons, enhancing the study's analytical depth. Secondly, the study's narrow focus on the food and beverage (F&B) sector may restrict the applicability of its conclusions to broader industries. Future studies could broaden their scope to include sectors such as fashion, electronics, or public services, thereby increasing the relevance and utility of the research findings across various domains. Finally, there are numerous underlying factors related to the food reviewer that could influence user interaction and consumer purchase intentions, which were not included in the analysis of this study. These factors encompass the influence of trustworthiness, ethics, suitability, attractiveness, and more. Therefore, in future research, additional components should be added to the research model to understand better how they can impact food reviewers on user interaction and consumer use intention. Considering these limitations alongside the empirical findings, future research should systematically address these concerns. This approach will not only refine the practical implications for marketers within the F&B sector but also extend insights into diverse industry contexts. By doing so, subsequent studies can develop targeted strategies tailored to each respective field.

Authors' contributions

Conceptualization, methodology: Vo Minh Sang, Bui Duy Khuong, Ly Yen Nhi, Luong Gia Han, Thach Minh Giau, and Nguyen Thi Tuyet Ngoan. Formal analysis, investigation writing: Vo Minh Sang. Review and editing: Vo Minh Sang, Bui Duy Khuong, Ly Yen Nhi, Luong Gia Han, Thach Minh Giau, and Nguyen Thi Tuyet Ngoan. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Data availability statement

The data will be made available on request from the corresponding author.

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