



Revisiting Source Credibility Theory in Live Commerce: The Effects of Host Expertise, Trustworthiness, and Attractiveness on Digital Customer Engagement

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Abstract The widespread adoption of live commerce has fundamentally reshaped digital interactions between businesses and consumers by enabling real-time communication and product promotion. Nevertheless, customer participation within these platforms remains largely transactional, indicating that meaningful Digital Customer Engagement (DCE) has yet to be fully achieved. This study investigates the influence of host live expertise, host live trustworthiness, and host live attractiveness on Digital Customer Engagement in live commerce environments. An explanatory quantitative research design was employed, and data were obtained through a structured questionnaire administered to 100 respondents with prior experience watching or interacting with live commerce sessions. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, while multiple linear regression analysis was applied to examine the proposed relationships after confirming the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument. The empirical findings demonstrate that host live expertise, host live trustworthiness, and host live attractiveness each exert a positive and statistically significant effect on Digital Customer Engagement. Moreover, the three dimensions collectively provide a substantial contribution to explaining customers' engagement behavior during live-stream shopping activities. These findings highlight that consumers become more actively involved when hosts are perceived as knowledgeable, credible, and personally appealing, thereby encouraging stronger cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. This study extends the application of Source Credibility Theory within the live commerce context by demonstrating that multiple dimensions of host credibility simultaneously shape digital customer engagement. From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that organizations should prioritize the development of hosts' professional competence, credibility, and interpersonal appeal to create more engaging live commerce experiences and strengthen sustainable customer relationships.

Keywords: digital customer engagement; host live attractiveness; host live expertise; host live trustworthiness; live commerce.

Abstrak Pesatnya perkembangan *live commerce* telah mengubah pola interaksi antara pelaku usaha dan konsumen, namun tingkat *Digital Customer Engagement* (DCE) masih belum optimal karena sebagian besar interaksi masih berorientasi pada pencarian informasi produk dibandingkan pembentukan hubungan emosional. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh *host live expertise*, *host live trustworthiness*, dan *host live attractiveness* terhadap *Digital Customer Engagement* pada pengguna platform *live commerce*. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain *explanatory survey*. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner kepada 100 responden yang pernah menyaksikan atau berinteraksi dalam sesi *live commerce*, dengan teknik *purposive sampling*. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan regresi linier berganda setelah instrumen dinyatakan valid dan reliabel. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *host live expertise*, *host live trustworthiness*, dan *host live attractiveness* masing-masing berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap *Digital Customer Engagement*. Secara simultan, ketiga variabel tersebut juga memberikan pengaruh yang signifikan dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan pelanggan selama sesi *live commerce*. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa kompetensi host dalam menyampaikan informasi, kemampuan membangun kepercayaan, serta daya tarik personal menjadi faktor penting dalam mendorong keterlibatan kognitif, emosional, dan perilaku konsumen. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan *Source Credibility Theory* dalam konteks *live commerce* sekaligus menawarkan implikasi praktis bagi perusahaan untuk mengembangkan strategi pemilihan dan pelatihan host yang tidak hanya

berorientasi pada kemampuan menjual, tetapi juga pada penciptaan pengalaman interaksi yang mampu memperkuat keterlibatan pelanggan secara berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: *digital customer engagement; host live attractiveness; host live expertise; host live trustworthiness; live commerce.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of live commerce has fundamentally transformed the interaction between firms and consumers by integrating real-time communication into the online shopping experience. According to Cevher (2024), digital marketing has evolved to create more interactive and personalized customer experiences through various digital channels. Unlike conventional e-commerce, live commerce enables consumers to communicate directly with hosts, obtain instant product information, ask questions, and participate through live chats, comments, and reactions during broadcasts. These interactive features position live commerce as an effective digital marketing strategy for fostering Digital Customer Engagement (DCE), which reflects customers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement in digital environments (Islam, 2025). Bapat and Hollebeek (2023) further argue that higher levels of digital customer engagement enhance customer value while strengthening customer-based brand equity.

Despite these advantages, increased adoption of live commerce has not necessarily resulted in stronger customer engagement. Survey findings from Katadata Insight Center show that most consumer interactions during live shopping are still dominated by questions about product specifications, promotional offers, and product availability (Katadata, 2024). In contrast, only 33% of consumers frequently engage in casual conversations with hosts, while the remaining 67% rarely or never do so (Katadata, 2024). These findings indicate that customer participation remains largely functional and transaction-oriented rather than developing into emotional engagement capable of fostering long-term customer-brand relationships. Kamyabi et al. (2025) emphasize that sustainable digital marketing performance depends on maintaining continuous customer engagement, whereas Liu et al. (2025) demonstrate that digital customer engagement strengthens brand attitudes and purchase intentions.

The limited emotional engagement observed in live commerce suggests that interactive technological features alone are insufficient to encourage meaningful customer participation. Instead, the effectiveness of live commerce largely depends on

the characteristics of the live host, who functions as the primary communicator between brands and consumers. During live-streaming sessions, hosts present products, respond to customer inquiries, establish interpersonal relationships, and maintain audience interest throughout the broadcast. Brinson and Lemon (2023) explain that host characteristics strongly influence consumers' perceptions of credibility, trust, and communication effectiveness. Similarly, Ke et al. (2025) argue that trust established through host-consumer interactions is fundamental to building sustainable relationships in live-streaming commerce.

This phenomenon can be explained through Source Credibility Theory, which proposes that persuasive communication depends on the credibility of the message source. Ohanian (1990) conceptualized source credibility through three dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Sharma and Jha (2024) reaffirm that these dimensions consistently influence consumer behavioral intentions across marketing contexts, while Nwokolo and Asemah (2024) highlight the continuing relevance of Source Credibility Theory within integrated marketing communication. In digital environments, Kim et al. (2024) demonstrate that source credibility enhances influencer marketing effectiveness, whereas K1yak et al. (2025) show that credible communicators improve the effectiveness of social media marketing.

The first dimension, host live expertise, reflects consumers' perceptions of a host's knowledge and competence in presenting product information. Hosts with higher expertise are better able to explain product features, answer customer questions, and reduce purchase uncertainty. Sun and Lee (2022) found that host expertise strengthens the positive effect of interactivity on purchase intention in live commerce, particularly for products requiring detailed explanations.

The second dimension, host live trustworthiness, refers to consumers' perceptions of the host's honesty, sincerity, and reliability. Consumers are more likely to trust product recommendations and actively interact with hosts whom they perceive as transparent and credible. Ke et al. (2025) found that trust serves as a key mechanism through which host characteristics influence consumer behavior in live-streaming e-commerce. Likewise, Brinson and Lemon (2023) reported that trust in hosts significantly improves communication effectiveness in digital marketing contexts.

The third dimension, host live attractiveness, includes physical appearance, communication style, personality, and the ability to create enjoyable viewing experiences. Ohanian (1990) argues that attractiveness is a critical component of source credibility because attractive communicators are more successful in capturing audience attention and facilitating message acceptance. Supporting this view, Liu et al. (2025) found that host credibility combined with visual cues enhances consumers' responses to digital services, while Kim et al. (2024) demonstrate that attractive communicator characteristics improve audience involvement across social media platforms.

Although previous studies consistently report that host credibility positively influences purchase intention, purchase decisions, consumer trust, and impulse buying in live commerce, most of these studies remain transaction-oriented. Bhisana et al. (2024) found that host credibility significantly affects fashion purchase decisions on TikTok Live. Similar findings have been reported by Krisnawati (2025), Jadwa et al. (2025), Zikri and Yasri (2025), Lestari and Melatie (2026), and Refendita and Reza (2024), all of whom identify host credibility as a key determinant of purchasing behavior. However, relatively few studies have examined how host live expertise, host live trustworthiness, and host live attractiveness contribute to Digital Customer Engagement rather than solely influencing purchase outcomes.

This gap is particularly important because success in digital marketing is no longer measured solely by sales performance but also by firms' ability to cultivate sustainable customer engagement through continuous digital interactions. Mohammed (2024) identifies customer engagement as a key indicator of digital marketing effectiveness, whereas Islam (2025) considers it the foundation of long-term customer relationships. Complementing these perspectives, Febisatria (2026) identifies communicator characteristics as one of the emerging predictors of Digital Customer Engagement across digital platforms.

Based on the empirical evidence and the existing research gap, examining the influence of host live expertise, host live trustworthiness, and host live attractiveness on Digital Customer Engagement is both timely and relevant. This study is expected to extend the application of Source Credibility Theory in the context of live commerce while providing empirical evidence on how different dimensions of host credibility contribute

to strengthening customers' digital engagement and fostering sustainable customer-brand relationships.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Effect of Host Live Expertise on Digital Customer Engagement

Host live expertise refers to consumers' perceptions of a live commerce host's knowledge, competence, and ability to provide accurate, comprehensive, and useful product information during live-streaming sessions. According to Source Credibility Theory, expertise is a fundamental dimension of source credibility because consumers are more likely to pay attention to, trust, and interact with communicators who demonstrate high levels of knowledge and professional competence (Ohanian, 1990). When hosts effectively explain product features, answer consumer questions, and provide informative recommendations, consumers are encouraged to participate more actively, resulting in stronger digital customer engagement. Kim et al. (2024) further argue that communicators with higher perceived expertise enhance consumers' cognitive evaluations and increase interaction within digital marketing environments.

Previous studies consistently support this relationship. Sun and Lee (2022) found that host expertise strengthens the effectiveness of interactivity in live commerce by increasing consumers' willingness to engage with product information. Similarly, Brinson and Lemon (2023) reported that knowledgeable hosts improve communication effectiveness by increasing audience involvement during digital content consumption. Kiyak et al. (2025) also demonstrated that source expertise enhances consumer responses to social media marketing activities, while Dema and Mutiarawati (2025) confirmed that credible communicators positively influence consumer participation in digital marketing environments. Because Digital Customer Engagement reflects consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral interactions with brands in digital platforms (Islam, 2025), hosts who demonstrate greater expertise are expected to encourage higher levels of engagement throughout live commerce sessions.

H1: Host Live Expertise has a positive and significant effect on Digital Customer Engagement.

2.2 The Effect of Host Live Trustworthiness on Digital Customer Engagement

Host live trustworthiness refers to consumers' perceptions that a live commerce host is honest, reliable, sincere, and communicates product information transparently. Within Source Credibility Theory, trustworthiness represents one of the most influential determinants of persuasive communication because consumers tend to rely on information delivered by communicators they perceive as credible and trustworthy (Ohanian, 1990). In live commerce environments, trustworthy hosts reduce consumers' uncertainty, strengthen confidence in product information, and encourage continuous interaction throughout live-streaming sessions. Consequently, consumers become more willing to participate, communicate, and develop stronger relationships with both the host and the brand.

Empirical evidence consistently supports this relationship. Ke et al. (2025) demonstrated that host-driven trust construction plays a central role in shaping consumer behavior within live-streaming e-commerce. Likewise, Brinson and Lemon (2023) found that host trust significantly improves communication effectiveness and audience engagement in digital media. Kim et al. (2024) also confirmed that trustworthiness strengthens consumers' responses toward digital communicators, while Sharma and Jha (2024) concluded that trustworthiness remains one of the strongest dimensions of source credibility influencing consumer behavior across marketing contexts. Since Digital Customer Engagement depends heavily on consumers' willingness to establish meaningful interactions with brands (Bapat & Hollebeek, 2023), trustworthy hosts are expected to stimulate stronger engagement during live commerce activities.

H2: Host Live Trustworthiness has a positive and significant effect on Digital Customer Engagement.

2.3 The Effect of Host Live Attractiveness on Digital Customer Engagement

Host live attractiveness refers to consumers' perceptions of a host's physical appearance, personality, communication style, charisma, and overall ability to create enjoyable live-streaming experiences. According to Source Credibility Theory, attractiveness increases message acceptance because consumers naturally pay greater attention to communicators they perceive as appealing (Ohanian, 1990). In live commerce, attractive hosts can capture viewers' attention, create emotional connections,

and encourage consumers to remain actively involved throughout the streaming session, thereby strengthening Digital Customer Engagement.

Previous research provides substantial empirical support for this relationship. Liu et al. (2025) found that host credibility supported by positive visual cues significantly enhances consumers' responses in digital service environments. Similarly, Brinson and Lemon (2023) reported that attractive and authentic hosts improve audience engagement within digital communication settings. Kim et al. (2024) also showed that communicator attractiveness enhances the effectiveness of digital marketing communication by increasing audience involvement. Furthermore, Kiyak et al. (2025) demonstrated that attractive communicators generate stronger consumer engagement in social media marketing activities. Therefore, hosts who possess higher levels of attractiveness are expected to create more engaging live commerce experiences, leading to greater Digital Customer Engagement.

H3: Host Live Attractiveness has a positive and significant effect on Digital Customer Engagement.

2.4 The Simultaneous Effect of Host Live Expertise, Host Live Trustworthiness, and Host Live Attractiveness on Digital Customer Engagement

Digital Customer Engagement in live commerce is unlikely to be influenced by a single host characteristic. Instead, consumers simultaneously evaluate multiple aspects of host credibility before deciding whether to actively participate in live-streaming activities. Source Credibility Theory proposes that communicator effectiveness results from the combined influence of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness rather than any individual dimension alone (Ohanian, 1990). Consequently, these three dimensions collectively shape consumers' cognitive evaluations, emotional attachment, and behavioral participation during digital interactions.

Previous studies suggest that the combined dimensions of source credibility provide stronger explanatory power than individual dimensions when predicting consumer responses. Sharma and Jha (2024) concluded that expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness jointly influence consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions across various marketing contexts. Similarly, Kim et al. (2024) emphasized that source credibility should be viewed as a multidimensional construct affecting consumers'

interactions within digital environments. Studies conducted in live commerce by Jadwa et al. (2025), Krisnawati (2025), Lestari and Melatie (2026), Bhisana et al. (2024), and Zikri and Yasri (2025) also demonstrate that host credibility significantly influences consumer responses during live-stream shopping.

Because Digital Customer Engagement reflects consumers' active participation, emotional connection, and ongoing interaction with brands in digital environments (Islam, 2025), host live expertise, host live trustworthiness, and host live attractiveness are expected to jointly provide a more comprehensive explanation of Digital Customer Engagement than each factor individually (Febisatria, 2026).

H4: Host Live Expertise, Host Live Trustworthiness, and Host Live Attractiveness simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on Digital Customer Engagement.

2.5 Research Model

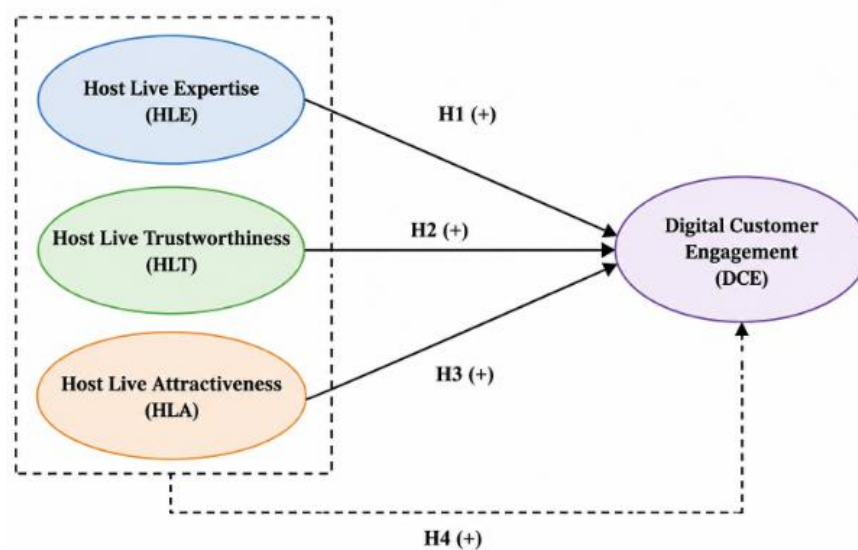


Figure 2. Research Model

Source: Author (2026)

3. METHODS

This study adopted a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey design to examine the effects of Host Live Expertise, Host Live Trustworthiness, and Host Live Attractiveness on Digital Customer Engagement in live commerce. The research model was grounded in Source Credibility Theory (Ohanian, 1990), which explains that consumers' responses toward a communication source are determined by perceptions of

the source's expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Within live-stream shopping, these credibility dimensions are expected to stimulate consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement.

The target population comprised Indonesian consumers who had participated in live commerce activities on platforms such as TikTok Shop Live, Shopee Live, Tokopedia Play, and LazLive. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that respondents possessed relevant experience. Eligible participants were at least 17 years old, had watched live commerce sessions within the last six months, and had actively interacted with the host by posting comments, asking questions, reacting, or purchasing products during the live stream. Because the population size was unknown, the minimum sample requirement was determined using the Lemeshow formula, resulting in a minimum of 100 respondents (Lemeshow et al., 1997). This sample size is considered sufficient for multivariate analysis and robust parameter estimation (Hair et al., 2019).

Primary data were gathered through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The measurement items for Host Live Expertise, Host Live Trustworthiness, and Host Live Attractiveness were adapted from Ohanian's (1990) Source Credibility Scale, which has been widely validated in advertising, influencer marketing, and live commerce research (Brinson & Lemon, 2023). The Digital Customer Engagement construct was adapted from Bapat and Hollebeek (2023). These instruments were selected because of their established validity and strong conceptual relevance to digital consumer engagement.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Result

Table 1. Age Distribution of Respondents

No	Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	17–22 years	24	24%
2	23–28 years	35	35%
3	29–34 years	21	21%
4	35–40 years	13	13%
5	>40 years	7	7%
	Total	100	100%

Source: Processed Data (2026).

The demographic profile reveals that respondents were primarily concentrated within the young adult segment. Individuals aged 23–28 years constituted the largest proportion of the sample (35%), followed by those aged 17–22 years (24%) and 29–34 years (21%). Participants between 35 and 40 years represented 13%, whereas only 7% were above 40 years old. The dominance of respondents within productive age groups indicates that the sample adequately reflects consumers who actively engage with digital technologies and frequently participate in live-stream shopping, making them highly relevant for examining Digital Customer Engagement.

Table 2. Live Commerce Platform Frequently Used

No	Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	TikTok Shop Live	42	42%
2	Shopee Live	37	37%
3	Tokopedia Play	10	10%
4	LazLive	7	7%
5	Others	4	4%
	Total	100	100%

Source: Processed Data (2026).

Respondents reported using a variety of live commerce platforms, with TikTok Shop Live emerging as the most frequently accessed service (42%). Shopee Live ranked second, accounting for 37% of respondents, whereas Tokopedia Play represented 10% of platform usage. LazLive and other live-streaming platforms contributed relatively small proportions of 7% and 4%, respectively. This distribution demonstrates that respondents possess diverse experiences with different live commerce ecosystems, thereby providing a comprehensive basis for evaluating the influence of host credibility on Digital Customer Engagement.

Table 3. Validity Test Results

Variable	Indicator	Pearson Correlation	Description
Host Live Expertise	HLE1	0.846	Valid
	HLE2	0.832	Valid
	HLE3	0.859	Valid
	HLE4	0.815	Valid
	HLE5	0.837	Valid
Host Live Trustworthiness	HLT1	0.824	Valid
	HLT2	0.842	Valid
	HLT3	0.851	Valid
	HLT4	0.833	Valid
	HLT5	0.846	Valid
Host Live Attractiveness	HLA1	0.818	Valid
	HLA2	0.847	Valid
	HLA3	0.836	Valid
	HLA4	0.854	Valid
	HLA5	0.829	Valid
Digital Customer Engagement	DCE1	0.863	Valid
	DCE2	0.845	Valid
	DCE3	0.856	Valid
	DCE4	0.838	Valid
	DCE5	0.861	Valid

Source: Processed Data (2026).

The construct validity assessment demonstrates that every measurement item achieved satisfactory statistical performance. Pearson correlation coefficients ranged from 0.815 to 0.863, substantially exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold ($r = 0.195$). These findings confirm that all indicators exhibit strong convergent relationships with their respective constructs and are therefore appropriate for subsequent regression analysis.

Table 4. Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.952	20

Item Statistics		
Variable	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Host Live Expertise	5	0.917
Host Live Trustworthiness	5	0.923
Host Live Attractiveness	5	0.911
Digital Customer Engagement	5	0.926

Source: Processed Data (2026).

The internal consistency analysis indicates that the measurement instrument possesses excellent reliability. Cronbach's Alpha values for the individual constructs ranged between 0.911 and 0.926, comfortably exceeding the recommended benchmark of 0.70. Moreover, the complete instrument yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.952, suggesting that the questionnaire consistently measures the underlying constructs with a high degree of precision and stability.

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination Results

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	0.887	0.787	0.780	0.291

Predictors: (Constant), Host Live Expertise, Host Live Trustworthiness, Host Live Attractiveness
Source: Processed Data (2026).

The regression model explains a substantial proportion of the variability in Digital Customer Engagement. Specifically, the three dimensions of host credibility jointly account for 78.7% of the observed variance, while the remaining 21.3% may be explained by additional variables not incorporated into the present model, including entertainment value, social presence, platform quality, consumer involvement, or individual motivational factors. The magnitude of the coefficient of determination indicates that the proposed model possesses strong explanatory capability.

Table 6. Partial Hypothesis Testing Results

Coefficients					
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.438	0.242	—	1.810	0.073
Host Live Expertise	0.318	0.066	0.329	4.835	0.000
Host Live Trustworthiness	0.351	0.071	0.358	4.957	0.000
Host Live Attractiveness	0.269	0.063	0.284	4.287	0.000

Dependent Variable: Digital Customer Engagement
Source: Processed Data (2026).

The regression results provide robust empirical evidence that each dimension of host credibility exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on Digital Customer Engagement. Host Live Trustworthiness emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.358$; $t = 4.957$), indicating that consumers are more inclined to interact actively when they perceive hosts as honest, reliable, and credible. Host Live Expertise also demonstrated a substantial contribution ($\beta = 0.329$; $t = 4.835$), suggesting that consumers become more engaged when hosts possess extensive product knowledge and

communication competence. Meanwhile, Host Live Attractiveness produced a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.284$; $t = 4.287$), implying that appealing personal characteristics and communication styles enhance audience participation during live-stream sessions. Since all significance values were below the 0.05 criterion, H1, H2, and H3 are empirically supported.

Table 7. Simultaneous Hypothesis Testing Results

ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	29.417	3	9.806	118.951	0.000
Residual	7.913	96	0.082		
Total	37.330	99			

Dependent Variable: Digital Customer Engagement

Predictors: (Constant), Host Live Expertise, Host Live Trustworthiness, Host Live Attractiveness

Source: *Processed Data (2026)*.

The overall regression model was found to be highly significant ($F = 118.951$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the three dimensions of host credibility collectively influence Digital Customer Engagement. These findings suggest that consumers' engagement in live commerce is not shaped by a single host characteristic but rather by the combined perceptions of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. When these dimensions are simultaneously perceived positively, consumers are more likely to participate actively through viewing, commenting, asking questions, reacting, and maintaining continuous interaction throughout live-stream shopping sessions. Consequently, the empirical evidence provides full support for the proposed simultaneous hypothesis (H4).

4.2. Discussion

The findings indicate that host live expertise has a positive and significant effect on Digital Customer Engagement. Consumers are more likely to participate actively, interact continuously, and remain engaged throughout live commerce sessions when they perceive the host as possessing extensive product knowledge, professional competence, and the ability to communicate product information effectively. According to Source Credibility Theory, expertise constitutes one of the primary dimensions determining a communicator's persuasive capability because knowledgeable sources reduce consumers' uncertainty and facilitate informed decision-making (Ohanian, 1990). The importance of expertise has been widely acknowledged across digital communication contexts, where

audiences rely heavily on competent information providers (Bogoevska-Gavrilova, 2022). Sharma and Jha (2024) further emphasized that source expertise consistently shapes favorable consumer attitudes and behavioral responses, while Wellman (2024) argued that audiences perceive knowledgeable communicators as more credible in digital environments. Similarly, Cohen et al. (2022) demonstrated that expertise strengthens source credibility by enhancing audience confidence in the quality of information, whereas Haidari et al. (2025) explained that expertise improves individuals' judgments because competent sources are perceived as more reliable.

These findings are supported by previous empirical evidence. Sun and Lee (2022) demonstrated that host expertise improves purchase intention by enhancing interaction quality during live commerce sessions. Jadwa et al. (2025) likewise reported that consumers evaluate live shopping experiences more favorably when hosts exhibit strong professional competence. Ke et al. (2025) further explained that hosts who successfully establish professional identities are more effective in building consumer trust within live-stream e-commerce. Consistent with these findings, Kim et al. (2024) showed that expertise strengthens communicators' persuasive power by reinforcing source credibility. Liu et al. (2025) also found that consumers place greater confidence in hosts who demonstrate superior product knowledge during online experiences, while Brinson and Lemon (2023) concluded that knowledgeable hosts substantially increase audience confidence in digital promotional content. Beyond influencing purchase decisions, expertise also encourages customer engagement because consumers actively seek accurate, valuable, and credible information before participating in digital interactions (Yan et al., 2023). Rasul et al. (2024) similarly argued that expertise enriches customers' digital experiences by improving the quality of interactions, whereas Srivastava et al. (2025) identified high-quality information as one of the strongest antecedents of Digital Customer Engagement.

The results further reveal that host live trustworthiness positively and significantly influences Digital Customer Engagement. Consumers become more willing to communicate, participate, and maintain long-term interactions when they perceive the host as honest, dependable, transparent, and sincere during live-stream sessions. Source Credibility Theory proposes that trustworthiness enhances message acceptance because audiences naturally rely on communicators whom they perceive as truthful and reliable

(Nwokolo & Asemah, 2024). Trustworthy communication has also been recognized as a key mechanism for strengthening audience confidence in digital environments (Serman & Sims, 2023). Roy et al. (2024) further demonstrated that source trustworthiness significantly shapes users' behavioral intentions across online platforms, while Lee (2026) emphasized that trustworthiness remains one of the strongest dimensions influencing digital marketing effectiveness. Likewise, Yuen et al. (2023) found that trustworthy communication strengthens stakeholder engagement by increasing perceptions of credibility and social presence in digital interactions.

The present findings are consistent with previous studies conducted in live commerce. Brinson and Lemon (2023) found that host trust significantly enhances audience confidence toward promotional messages delivered through digital media. Ke et al. (2025) similarly reported that personalized host communication strengthens consumer trust throughout live-stream shopping sessions. Refendita and Reza (2024) demonstrated that host credibility directly improves consumers' responses toward Shopee Live broadcasts, while Krisnawati (2025) confirmed that host credibility significantly influences consumers' purchasing decisions. Comparable evidence was presented by Zikri and Yasri (2025), who found that host credibility encourages purchase intention through stronger social presence. Likewise, Bhisana et al. (2024) concluded that trustworthy hosts positively influence purchasing decisions during TikTok Live Shopping. Beyond transactional outcomes, trustworthiness also stimulates broader customer engagement because consumers are more comfortable participating in digital interactions when perceived uncertainty is minimized (Li et al., 2024). Abdullah and Zeebaree (2025) further argued that trust-building strategies are fundamental for sustaining customer engagement in digital marketing, whereas Cevher (2024) emphasized that trustworthy communication represents the foundation of long-term digital customer relationships.

The findings also confirm that host live attractiveness has a positive and significant influence on Digital Customer Engagement. Attractive hosts are more capable of capturing consumers' attention, stimulating emotional involvement, and encouraging audiences to remain actively engaged throughout live-stream sessions. Within Source Credibility Theory, attractiveness extends beyond physical appearance and encompasses communication style, charisma, personality, and interpersonal appeal that collectively

generate favorable consumer perceptions (Ohanian, 1990). Alam et al. (2024) demonstrated that attractive communicators strengthen consumers' emotional attachment toward digital content, while Ni-Ying et al. (2026) reported that attractive endorsers significantly enhance responses toward marketing communications. Likewise, Kiyak et al. (2025) found that source attractiveness reinforces audience engagement by creating more favorable perceptions of communication quality.

Previous empirical findings consistently support this relationship. Kim et al. (2024) observed that attractive influencers generate stronger engagement because audiences perceive them as more credible and persuasive. Liu et al. (2025) likewise found that visual cues associated with hosts significantly influence consumers' behavioral responses during online experiences. Haritza et al. (2026) reported that host credibility enhances impulse buying behavior within TikTok Shop live commerce, while Lestari and Melatie (2026) found that attractive and credible hosts strengthen consumers' impulsive purchasing tendencies during live shopping. Similarly, Ma and Kim (2023) concluded that host credibility and presentation characteristics positively influence purchase intention in TikTok Live Commerce. Lin and Nuangjamnong (2022) further demonstrated that influencers who successfully engage audiences during TikTok live streaming substantially increase customer engagement and purchase intention.

From a broader Digital Customer Engagement perspective, Yu and Zheng (2022) showed that emotionally appealing live-stream experiences stimulate stronger customer engagement. Zheng et al. (2022) likewise confirmed that engagement developed during live streaming significantly influences consumers' subsequent behavioral responses. Comparable conclusions were reported by Zaini and Salim (2023), who highlighted the important role of live streaming in fostering customer engagement. Silalahi et al. (2025) further explained that customer value and social interaction jointly strengthen engagement behavior within live commerce environments. Zhang et al. (2025) also emphasized that interactive AI-assisted live-stream hosts substantially increase customer engagement, whereas Mupeta (2026) concluded that entertaining live experiences reinforce long-term customer engagement and customer loyalty.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that host live expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness jointly strengthen Digital Customer Engagement. Expertise enhances the informational value perceived by consumers, trustworthiness builds confidence and

relational commitment throughout digital interactions, whereas attractiveness stimulates emotional attachment and sustained participation. Collectively, these three dimensions provide a comprehensive explanation of customer engagement behavior within live commerce platforms. The findings reinforce Source Credibility Theory by confirming that consumers are more willing to engage cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally when live-stream hosts are perceived as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and attractive (Sharma & Jha, 2024).

This conclusion is further supported by recent Digital Customer Engagement literature, which emphasizes that meaningful engagement emerges through credible communication, interactive customer experiences, and sustained relationship quality (Rasul et al., 2024). Srivastava et al. (2025) similarly argued that Digital Customer Engagement is driven by multiple credibility-related factors operating simultaneously throughout digital interactions. Consistent with this perspective, Islam (2025) highlighted that engagement represents the foundation of digital business sustainability, while Febisatria (2026) identified source credibility as one of the most consistent antecedents of Digital Customer Engagement across various digital platforms.

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the influence of host live expertise, host live trustworthiness, and host live attractiveness on Digital Customer Engagement in live commerce. The findings confirm that all three dimensions positively and significantly enhance customer engagement, indicating that consumers are more willing to interact, participate, and sustain engagement when hosts are perceived as knowledgeable, reliable, and appealing. Among these factors, host live expertise exerts the strongest influence, highlighting the importance of professional competence and effective product communication. Trustworthiness reinforces consumer confidence and long-term relationships, whereas attractiveness strengthens emotional involvement and audience attention. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that successful customer engagement in live commerce depends not only on platform capabilities but also on the credibility of live-stream hosts. This study extends Source Credibility Theory by demonstrating that expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness jointly explain Digital Customer Engagement within live commerce, rather than merely influencing purchase-related outcomes. It also enriches

the Digital Customer Engagement literature by emphasizing that engagement is driven not only by technological features but also by credible and meaningful interpersonal communication during live-stream interactions.

Practically, the findings suggest that live commerce platforms and businesses should prioritize the development and selection of hosts with strong product expertise, trustworthy communication, and effective interpersonal skills. Investing in professional training and authentic customer interaction can strengthen engagement and improve the effectiveness of live-stream marketing strategies. Future studies are encouraged to incorporate additional antecedents, such as interactivity, perceived authenticity, entertainment value, social presence, and customer experience, as well as mediating variables including trust, perceived value, and satisfaction. Comparative research across different live commerce platforms and longitudinal studies are also recommended to capture engagement dynamics over time. Furthermore, examining AI-powered virtual hosts and AI-human collaborative hosts may provide valuable insights into the future development of Digital Customer Engagement in live commerce.

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