



The Impact of Tiktok Content on Purchase Behavior among Generation Z in Urban Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

In the digital age, TikTok has emerged as a powerful social media platform not only for entertainment but also for shaping consumer behavior, particularly among Generation Z (Gen Z). This study aims to investigate the impact of TikTok content on the purchasing behavior of Gen Z in Vietnam, a demographic segment that is both technologically savvy and highly influenced by online trends. Based on ideas about how media affects people and how consumers behave, this research suggests a model with three main factors: how entertaining the content is, how much people trust it, and the impact of KOLs/KOCs (Key Opinion Leaders/Key Opinion Consumers), all believed to influence Gen Z's shopping habits. We employed a quantitative approach, collecting data from 250 Gen Z respondents using a structured questionnaire and a 5-point Likert scale. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to test the relationships among variables. The results reveal that content trust and KOL/KOC influence have significant positive impacts on purchasing behavior, whereas entertainment value shows no statistically significant effect. This study contributes to the growing literature on social commerce by offering an empirical framework that links content characteristics on TikTok with consumer decisions. Practically, it provides insights for marketers and brands on how to leverage influencer marketing and authentic content to effectively engage Gen Z consumers on social media platforms.

Keywords: TikTok Content, Gen Z Consumer Behavior, Social Media Marketing, Influencer Impact (KOL/KOC), Purchase Decision

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, TikTok has rapidly emerged as one of the most influential social media platforms, especially among Generation Z (Gen Z)—those born between 1997 and 2012. With over 68 million users in Vietnam, the platform has evolved beyond mere entertainment to become a significant space for product discovery, user-generated reviews, and impulse-driven purchasing behavior. Its short-form video format, powerful recommendation algorithm, and viral trend dynamics make TikTok a compelling channel for shaping consumer decisions in the digital age.

Despite TikTok's growing role in consumer influence, academic research remains limited in examining how specific characteristics of TikTok content affect Gen Z's purchasing behavior—particularly in the context of developing markets like Vietnam. Existing studies often generalize across platforms or fail to distinguish the psychological and social nuances associated with content on TikTok. Moreover, behavioral factors such as trust in content, emotional resonance, and the persuasive power of influencers are underexplored in quantitative models. This gap underlines the urgency and relevance of investigating TikTok's content impact on consumer behavior through a localized, theory-informed framework.

This study seeks to determine the influence of TikTok content on the shopping behavior of Gen Z, focusing on three core content attributes: entertainment value, perceived trustworthiness, and influence of Key Opinion Leaders/Consumers (KOLs/KOCs). A conceptual model is proposed and empirically tested using a quantitative research design. The study collects data from 204 Gen Z respondents living in urban areas of Vietnam via an online survey. To check how reliable the measures are and to see if the suggested relationships are important, the study uses tools like Cronbach's Alpha, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and linear regression with SPSS 27. By addressing a critical research gap and providing practical recommendations, this study offers valuable insights for marketers seeking to optimize content strategies on TikTok and more effectively engage Gen Z consumers in the digital marketplace.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The growing impact of **TikTok content** on consumer behavior—particularly among **Generation Z**—has attracted significant attention in marketing and consumer psychology. Gen Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is a digitally native cohort that values personalized experiences, peer validation, and authentic communication. Their buying decisions are increasingly shaped by interactive and algorithm-driven platforms like TikTok.

Several theoretical frameworks underpin the exploration of digital consumer behavior. The **AIDA model** (Attention – Interest – Desire – Action) explains how marketing stimuli transition consumers from awareness to purchase. Likewise, the **SEE-THINK-DO-CARE framework** captures the nonlinear,

multi-stage interaction between consumers and online content. These models help explain why TikTok, with its short-form, engaging videos, can stimulate both **impulse purchases** and sustained consumer loyalty.

Three key content-related factors have been found to influence Gen Z's purchase behavior: **entertainment, trustworthiness, and the influence of KOLs** (Key Opinion Leaders) and **KOCs** (Key Opinion Consumers). Entertaining content increases viewer retention and emotional engagement, but may not always lead to purchase actions unless combined with product-related cues. Trustworthiness—rooted in authenticity and transparency—encourages Gen Z to act on reviews from relatable individuals rather than from traditional advertisements. Meanwhile, KOLs and KOCs function as social proof, guiding preferences and purchases through curated experiences and viral trends.

While existing literature affirms the relevance of TikTok in shaping digital consumption, research in the Vietnamese context remains scarce. Few studies have empirically measured the **specific impact of content types** on consumer behavior or examined **platform-specific user dynamics**. Additionally, despite TikTok's widespread adoption for entertainment, further exploration is necessary to understand its **commercial implications**, particularly for younger consumers in emerging markets. This study bridges the gap by synthesizing prior literature and proposing a research model that evaluates how the three aforementioned variables affect Gen Z's shopping behavior. It provides both a **conceptual foundation** and an **empirical base** for further investigation into TikTok-based marketing strategies.

3. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

To investigate how TikTok content influences the purchasing behavior of Generation Z, this study proposes a conceptual model informed by relevant theories and empirical findings in digital consumer behavior. The model is based on two main ideas: the **AIDA model** (Attention–Interest–Desire–Action), which explains the steps consumers go through when responding to marketing, and the **SEE–THINK–DO–CARE framework**, which focuses on what users want to do and how they engage online. In addition, the model integrates concepts from **social influence theory**, highlighting the role of interpersonal persuasion through influencers.

The model is built on previous research and what we've seen about how people behave online, and it includes **three main factors—entertainment value, content trustworthiness, and the influence of KOLs/KOCs**—that are expected to impact how **Gen Z users buy things on TikTok**.

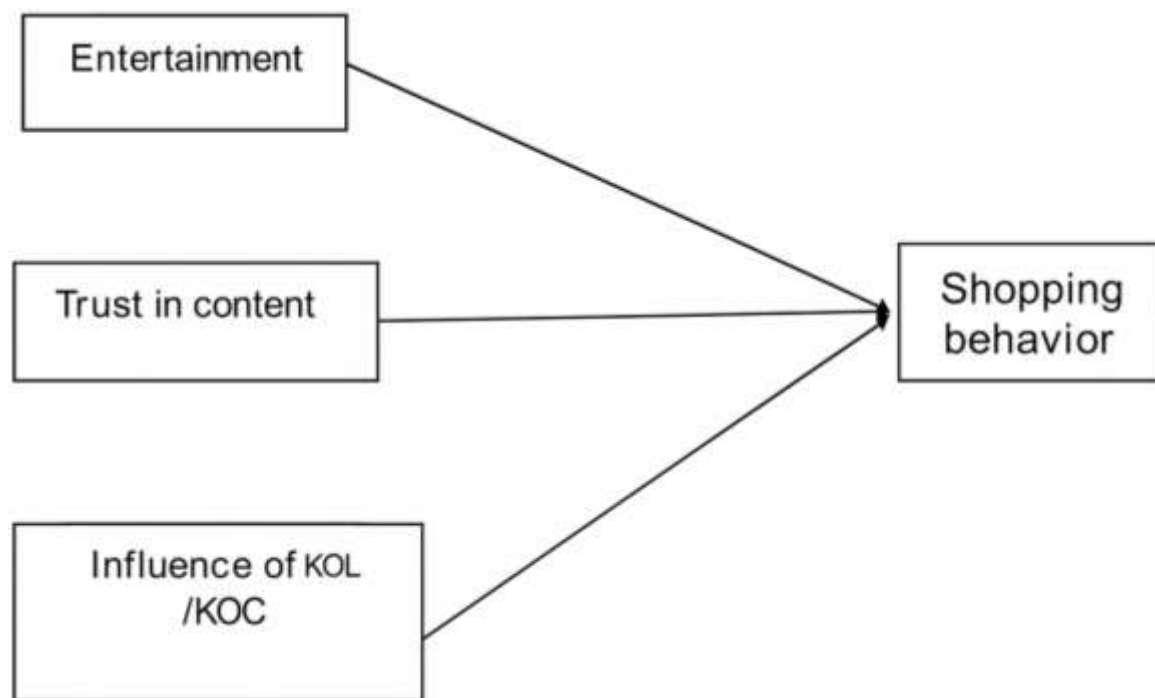


Figure 1. Conceptual Research Model

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Entertainment Value: Refers to the degree of enjoyment, amusement, or emotional engagement a user experiences while watching TikTok content. Content that entertains is more likely to retain attention and evoke positive affect, potentially increasing openness to product messaging.

Content Trustworthiness: Encompasses users' perceptions of the credibility, authenticity, and reliability of TikTok videos, especially those containing product-related content. Trustworthy content reduces psychological resistance and enhances purchase intention.

Influence of KOLs/KOCs: Represents the persuasive power of social media influencers (KOLs) and micro-influencers or regular consumers with credibility (KOCs), whose opinions and reviews shape follower attitudes and drive purchase behavior.

The study seeks to test the following hypotheses:

H1: Entertainment value of TikTok content has a positive effect on Gen Z's purchasing behavior.

H2: Trustworthiness of TikTok content positively influences Gen Z's purchasing behavior.

H3: The influence of KOLs/KOCs significantly enhances Gen Z's purchasing behavior.

This research model provides a structured framework to analyze the psychological and social mechanisms through which TikTok content affects consumer decisions, serving as a basis for empirical validation in the subsequent sections.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine how TikTok content influences the purchasing behavior of Generation Z consumers in Vietnam. The research process consists of four main phases: research design, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of findings.

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine how TikTok content influences the purchasing behavior of Generation Z consumers in Vietnam. The research process consists of four main phases: research design, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of findings.

The research model was developed based on a comprehensive literature review and refined through expert consultations. The conceptual framework includes three independent variables — **Entertainment Value**, **Content Credibility**, and **Influence of KOLs/KOCs** - with **Purchase Behavior** as the dependent variable. Measurement scales for each construct were adapted from previous studies and modified to suit the TikTok context.

4.2 Sampling and Data Collection

A **non-probability convenience sampling method** was used to gather data. The survey was administered online using Google Forms, targeting Vietnamese Gen Z individuals (aged 18–27) who frequently use TikTok. A total of **204 valid responses** were collected. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: demographic questions and Likert-scale items (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) assessing the research variables.

4.3 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS 27.0. The analysis process included the following steps:

- **Reliability Testing:** Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate internal consistency, with thresholds set at ≥ 0.6 for new constructs. Items with item-total correlation < 0.3 were eliminated.

- **Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA):** Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation was conducted to verify construct validity. Factors with loadings ≥ 0.5 and KMO ≥ 0.5 were retained.

- **Multiple Linear Regression Analysis:** This procedure was used to test the hypothesized relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The model's performance was checked using R^2 , Adjusted R^2 , and ANOVA (F-test), and we looked at multicollinearity with VIF values.

This methodological design ensures both **reliability and validity** of findings, offering a robust basis to evaluate the influence of TikTok content on Gen Z's purchasing decisions.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The empirical analysis of this study utilized data from 204 Gen Z respondents, focusing on the influence of TikTok content on purchasing behavior. The data underwent rigorous analysis using SPSS 27, applying techniques such as **Cronbach's Alpha**, **Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)**, and **multiple linear regression**.

Reliability Analysis confirmed high internal consistency across all constructs. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for **Entertainment (EN)**, **Trust in Content (TC)**, and **Influence of KOL/KOC (INF)** were 0.884, 0.830, and 0.900 respectively, all exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.7.

EFA results identified three clear factors corresponding to the theoretical model. Factor loadings were above 0.4, and the total variance explained was 70.6%, indicating a strong structural validity. The three factors kept—Entertainment (EN1, EN2, EN3, EN5), Trust in Content (TC1–TC5), and Influence of KOL/KOC (INF1–INF5)—were analyzed to see how well they could predict **Shopping Behavior (SB)**.

The **regression model** showed it was very effective, with $R^2 = 0.682$ and Adjusted $R^2 = 0.677$, meaning that 68.2% of the changes in Gen Z's shopping behavior can be explained by the three independent variables. The model's statistical significance was confirmed by the **ANOVA test** ($F = 143.023$, Sig. < 0.001).

In terms of impact strength, **KOL/KOC influence** was found to be the most important factor affecting purchasing behavior, showing that Gen Z strongly depends on influencers when making buying decisions. This aligns with previous literature that acknowledges the emotional and social credibility of KOL/KOC figures. The second most influential factor was **Trust in Content** (Beta = 0.301, Sig. < 0.001), confirming that authentic and informative content significantly shapes consumer confidence and intent. Interestingly, **Entertainment**, despite being a key characteristic of TikTok, did not have a statistically significant effect on purchase behavior (Beta = 0.014, Sig. = 0.790). This suggests that, although entertaining content attracts attention, it does not necessarily translate into purchasing decisions.

The findings underscore that **persuasive authenticity and social influence** outweigh mere entertainment in influencing Gen Z's shopping behavior. Brands aiming to convert TikTok viewers into buyers should prioritize **trusted content** and **collaborations with influential figures**, rather than relying solely on amusing content. Moreover, the unexplained 31.8% variance hints at other psychological or contextual factors (e.g., FOMO, impulse buying, social norms) that warrant further exploration.

6. CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive understanding of how TikTok content influences the purchasing behavior of Generation Z—an increasingly influential consumer segment in today's digital economy. Drawing from both theoretical frameworks and empirical analysis, the research highlights that **content trustworthiness** and **influencer (KOL/KOC) impact** are the most significant determinants of Gen Z's buying decisions on TikTok. While entertaining content garners attention and engagement, it alone does not substantially drive purchasing behavior.

The findings show that Gen Z values authenticity and relatability in content, particularly in the form of product reviews and real-life experiences shared by micro-influencers or everyday users. These elements foster trust and emotional connection, which are key drivers in converting passive viewers into active buyers. The regression analysis confirmed that KOL/KOC influence had the strongest effect (Beta = 0.580), followed by content trustworthiness (Beta = 0.301), whereas entertainment value showed no statistically significant impact (Sig = 0.790).

From a theoretical standpoint, this research extends the literature on digital consumer behavior by validating the roles of social proof, perceived authenticity, and influencer credibility in the social media era. Practically, the study suggests that marketers should prioritize partnerships with trusted influencers and develop transparent, relatable content strategies to resonate with Gen Z consumers.

However, limitations remain. The study focused on a specific sample of Vietnamese university students, limiting its generalizability. Additionally, psychological drivers such as FOMO, impulsive buying tendencies, or the effects of algorithmic personalization were not explored in depth. Future research could incorporate behavioral tracking, AI-driven analytics, or cross-platform comparisons to broaden the insights and identify hidden patterns in digital consumption.

In conclusion, TikTok has evolved beyond a platform for entertainment—it is a **powerful marketing channel** shaping consumer behavior. Understanding the nuances of content influence on Gen Z empowers brands to design more effective, targeted strategies and fosters deeper engagement in the fast-evolving landscape of digital commerce.

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