



# **How TikTok Has Impacted Generation Z's Buying Behaviour and Their Relationship With Brands?**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of MSc in Digital Marketing is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.

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## ABSTRACT

**AIM:** This research aims to explore the new phenomenon of TikTok and how using this application has impacted Generation Z as consumers. The study contributes to further identify if this social media platform has had any change in attitude towards brands by gaining comprehensive views and mindset into the evolving needs and expectations of iGen.

**DESIGN:** Due to the subjective nature of the study, a qualitative design approach has been utilised to discuss the experiences and opinions of Generation Z on TikTok. For data collection, semi-structured interviews have been conducted with participants who were in the 18- 23 age group.

**METHOD:** To analyse the data, thematic coding by Braun and Clarke (2006) has been employed and the six-phase assisted in uncovering several patterns and themes. The findings and insights could offer academic researchers and practitioners to implement marketing strategies to engage with these younger consumers.

# 1. CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. BACKGROUND

With the constant change in the digital landscape, the way users consume content online has altered the paradigm of traditional marketing. The emergence of new platforms has accelerated the way individuals communicate and share consumption experiences irrespective of geographical location (Dahl, 2018, p.26) ultimately shifting the way consumers interact with brands. Consumers want personalised messages as they find value — emotional or functional — while interacting with that content (Bradey, 2019) and TikTok’s algorithm successfully delivers videos based on the users’ interactions (Herrman, 2019), and ‘each person's feed is unique and tailored to that specific individual’ (TikTok, 2020). Technology Times reported that the revenue by the quarter of this year on TikTok may surpass 300 percent plus US revenue on this app is expected to reach US Dollar 500 million in 2020 (Naqvi, 2020). This video-sharing app has become a cultural phenomenon with 42 per cent of the users falling between the age of 18-24 (Sehl, 2020). Generation Z is becoming a lucrative market segment (Meola, 2020) and examining the success of TikTok amongst this cohort can provide insights into how today’s youth interprets cultural trends and their cross-generational dialogue with brands (Mintel, 2019).

TikTok's short video format and its playful nature force brands to capture consumer attention within the first few seconds (Meola, 2020) and they are showcasing their products through user-generated content to get more engagement. The main driver of Gen zers' content consumption is the entertaining element and unlike its former predecessor, this younger generation exactly knows what they want and they value honest portrayal. So marketers working with video creators on TikTok can help bring authenticity in their brand communications (Poelking, 2019).

What is TikTok? It is a social networking platform for short-form mobile video and the foundation of this app is creative expression and gives users the tools to produce fun, joyful content (TikTok, no date). Users have the ability to search for sounds from an array of music options to score into the video and engage with other individuals through response or duets. They could join a challenge, or participate in a dance meme, or make humour (Herrman, 2019). TikTok consists of audiovisual controls to make looping 15-second videos. These editing features contain “in-camera speed controls, image-tracking composites, collaborative split-screens, and a shortened video timeline” (Bresnick, 2019, p.1). The simplicity and ease of using these facilities help users produce enjoyable and stimulating content that is why this app appeals to many content creators across the world. The entertainment style of this social media platform sets it apart from other channels attracting many users worldwide (Mohsin, 2020). This form of communication is redefining the relationship between audience and brands as user-generated content (UGC) format has given individuals to create and share experiences

which is why influencer and content marketing on social media platforms have become powerful marketing tools.

## 1.2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The new way of marketing communication which is predominantly on social media poses opportunities and new challenges for brands as purchase decisions are highly influenced by social media interactions (Dennhardt, 2012, p.91). Due to its massive engagement rate, brands have started to focus their marketing campaigns. For Instance, Mac Cosmetics collaborated with three TikTok influencers for a hashtag challenge called #YouOwnIt. In the span of 6 days, a total of 635,000 videos were created and had an approximate total of 1.6 billion video views (Meola, 2020). Advertising age (2019) on the other hand mentioned that TikTok lacks in reach but it does make up for in its effectiveness and relevance with young viewers which could make it attractive for many brands wanting to resonate with younger audiences (Sloane and Rittenhouse, 2019). But the gap in reach could be examined as TikTok surpassing the 2 billion download mark and becoming bigger than Instagram (SensorTower, 2020)

Post Millennials will become a fundamental group in the marketing sector as the Mckinsey (2019) report stated that by 2020, Generation Z will account for 40 per cent of global consumers (Amed et al. 2019). The rise in popularity of TikTok within the current youth has skyrocketed dramatically and the application has been downloaded more than 2 billion times globally (SensorTower, 2020). It continues to outperform Instagram and Snapchat (Mediakix, 2020) impacting Generation Z's consumptions ultimately a change in their attitude towards brands. For

instance, E.L.F. cosmetics hashtag challenge #eyeslipsface on TikTok received 1.7 billion views in just over a week. The challenge broke several TikTok records, including having the most users participating in a branded hashtag challenge (Liffreing, 2020). Gen Z appreciates the entertaining and transparent narratives of real-life which are projected online (Poelking, 2019) and the essence of TikTok is the authenticity and originality of the content from users (Mintel, 2019). Comprehending this global phenomenon could provide deeper insights into the minds of younger consumers and their viewpoints, preferences, and buying behaviour. This research study could provide a better understanding of the role TikTok plays and why it appeals to 800 million users worldwide (Mintel, 2020).

### 1.3. RESEARCH GAP

The popularity of TikTok has been investigated by Liqian (2018) where product positioning and original content variety were proven to be the significant contributors on this application but the type of user-generated content that influence users to engage with brands have not been explored. The motivation of participating in hashtag challenges on TikTok has been captured by Ahlse, Nilsson and Sandström (2020). As Gen Z gravitates toward genuineness, TikTok could be an instrumental platform to engage fan relationships, tapping into new audiences, and promoting branded content (Su et al., no date). Further Qiyang (2019) identified that TikTok allows more interactive features than Instagram enabling users to co-create and share videos. This interactive feature permits users to showcase talents and skills but this could have more negative impacts than positive towards the younger age group due to its unfiltered and illicit content (Jaffar, Riaz and Mushtaq, 2019, p.193). Moreover, Khattab (2020) studied to analyse the self-representation

of the body image and sexuality on TikTok. The subject area of the social and psychological effect of TikTok on users have been deeply scrutinised while there have not been any studies on their shift in buying pattern. Further, the impact on the younger demographic's attitude towards brands has not been elucidated on any reported study. This gap could exhibit an opportunity for marketers and researchers to harness the potential prospects of the platform.

#### 1.4. RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

RO1: The purpose of this study is to understand if the usage of TikTok has had any positive or negative impact in attitude, concerning a brand.

Several companies have started to use TikTok as a new marketing tool and the likes of Sony Pictures, Pull & Bear, Clarins, Adidas, Nike and Samsung have already set a firm foothold on this platform (Barker, 2019). These brands are participating to entice these consumers and analysing the effect it had on TikTok users by conducting semi-structured interviews. This will help understand Generation Z's opinions on brands or product consumptions via TikTok with the help of this exploratory research.

RO2: Another aim of this study is to identify if and how this platform has influenced users to purchase or consume products.

The essence of TikTok and its content is mostly based on authenticity and other unfiltered commentaries (Mintel, 2020) and since generation Z consumers seek recommendations from family and peers and also draw inspiration from social media bloggers before deciding what to buy (Accenture, 2017). This statement could be analysed to gauge into their purchase pattern

when it comes to trust and authenticity of products being reviewed or recommended by content creators.

RO3: To further get an insight into their preferred type of content while interacting with a brand. Generation Z has been stamped to have 'attention span of approximately 8 seconds' in a survey conducted by SXSW (Arthur, 2016) which was argued by a recent Nielson (2019) report indicated that the issue is not the attention span but it's more about the quality of content and in general the experience as a whole. This argument could be explored to understand patterns of content consumption and further scrutinised the current trends and why TikTok is the most popular channel amongst the youth. This study could provide relevant and informative insights into this elusive section of the market.

## 1.5.CONTRIBUTIONS

The study can contribute to both academic and practitioner as it expands more on generation Z's motivational factors of interacting or engaging with brands.

### 1.5.1. ACADEMIC IMPLICATIONS

A study on generation Z showed that they make educated online purchase decisions faster than millennials (Lauring and Steenburg, 2019) and social media influencers persuasion has been broadly labelled trustworthy and viewed as being more powerful (Lim et al. 2017, p.22). By investigating further onto this phenomenon, we would be able to gauge if these younger consumers would like to hear directly from the brands or would they value user-generated

content. Additionally, the implications of this relatively new platform towards Generation Z's behaviour would provide some contribution to the literature. This study can further add to other studies about their characteristics and behaviour. This topic could inspire other researchers to incentivise and explore the subject further.

### 1.5.2. PRACTITIONER IMPLICATIONS

Mintel (2020) reported that user-generated content is evolving and will continue to become more important to the digital media space. It further mentioned that brands will develop collaborative partnerships with content creators (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2020). To determine the preferred content which they deemed valuable and ultimately affecting their purchase intent. This could be studied for its great impact on the marketing space and help gain comprehensive views and mindset into the evolving needs and expectations of iGen.

The application is utilised by 90 percent of users on multiple occasions in a day. The data stated that 68 percent of TikTok users view videos of other creators, while 55 per cent of them upload their own content. Last year, TikTok videos were viewed more than 1 billion each day (The Influencer Marketing Factory, 2020). This indicates that brands can leverage this app and could provide opportunities to reach millions of viewers across the globe. Marketing week stated that TikTok has been marked as the top 100 most valuable brands globally valuing at USD 16.9 billion (Barker, 2020) and with Gen Z becoming a booming demographic, understanding this platform can help marketers deliver smarter content strategies.

Based on all findings, this study can additionally identify the main indicators that inspire TikTok users to respond to product consumptions. How this can impact their perception of brands and eventually could help direct marketers in facilitating future campaigns. This research paper could help explore and showcase the app's potential and provide valuable data allowing marketers and interested parties to extract meaningful information.

## 2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital progression with Web 2.0's evolution has brought undefiable change to the way businesses are run, slowly transitioning from only a brick-and-mortar model to fostering intricate web platforms (Lin et al. 2017, cited in Henninger et al. 2019, p.18). Tim O'Reilly defined Web 2.0 as "leverage customer-self service and algorithmic data management to reach out to the entire web, to the edges and not just the centre, to the long tail and not just head" (O'Reilly, no date), in a nutshell, it means the development of Web 2.0 has made the internet dynamic and robust. This technological advancement has resulted in the growth of various User-Generated Content and the formation of many social networking channels.

### 2.1. USER GENERATED CONTENT

"User-generated content comes from regular people who voluntarily contribute data, information, or media that then appears before others in a useful or entertaining way, usually on the Web" (Krumm, Davies and Narayanaswami, 2008, p.10). The evolution of network

technologies, along with the accessibility and acquisition of smartphone devices has exponentially increased user-generated content (UGC) and these photos and videos are generated to be uploaded in order to share on social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and TikTok ( Li et al. 2020, p.1). Social media is thereby defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological foundations of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 63). The primary power of social media is the ability to get visibility and share information helping many creators around the world with opportunities to interact with the general population.

#### 2.1.1. WORD OF MOUTH

Word of mouth has been defined “Oral, person-to-person communicating between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver concerning a brand, a product, or a service offered for sale” (Arndt, 1967, p.190 cited in Oetting, 2009, p.40 ) It is one of the oldest marketing technique and traditionally WOM was used by dispersing or transmitting the information was transmitted without any immediate feedback (Zinkhan et al., 1996 cited in Gligorijevic, Bruns and Luck, 2013, p.22). In modern time, technology has allowed users to communicate and receive feedback instantaneously. With the current soaring rise of user-generated content, there is a rise in need to understand the effect of word of mouth in the online space (Oetting, 2009, p.40). Consumers now immensely respect and signify self-expression and brands should have the ability to capitalise on user-generated products as much as user-generated content (Kelly and Kotler, 2016 p.290)

## 2.2. IMPACT OF USER GENERATED CONTENT

The growth of social media has resulted in user-generated content to be one of the main driving and influential forces of online information today (Dennhardt, 2014, p.57). Users now have the capabilities to share opinions on brands, products and services, UGC has started to perform as the connective tissue between a brand and its consumers as the audience now takes informed purchase decisions by reviewing products online (GatherVoices, no date). Authenticity has become a pivotal part of every stage of customer experience. According to a survey conducted by Social Media Today, 57 percent of candidates felt that less than half of brands create content that comes across as authentic. The same report indicated that 70 per cent of the time, consumers are able to differentiate between consumer-created content and brand-created content (Cassidy, 2017) and user-generated content produced by the consumers ‘ beside the potential to inform or entertain, the content gives a glimpse into real data from other people, unsanitized by regular media outlets’ (Krumm, Davies and Narayanaswami, 2008, p. 10).

## 2.3. USER-GENERATED BRANDS

This term is defined as “brands that are created - originally unintentionally - by communities of users or single users outside of their professional routines in social media environments, where their products are publicly available and show a creative effort” (Dennhardt, 2014, p.8). Social media has allowed users to demonstrate or discuss the products they are consuming. This is

allowing brands to get traction organically (Pitt et al. 2006; Scbroll et al. 2010; von Hippel et al. 2011 cited in Dennhardt, 2014, p.8). Social networking platforms have become the hub for content marketing as it allows individuals to share and disburse content to their networks. These networks help spread content virally (Ramos, 2013, p.97). As uploading massive amounts of data becomes possible, internet users find sharing media online to be a convenient way to express and communicate and bring people closer (Mahon, 2019). As a result, internet influencers or creators have emerged and started to become a bridge between consumers and brands.

### 2.3.1. INTERNET INFLUENCERS/CREATORS:

Influence, however, can “be broadly defined as the power to affect a person, thing or course of events” (Brown and Hayes, 2008, p. 49). The modern version of influencer on social media has been interpreted as users on social networking platforms with the likes of Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, or Twitter, and who have thousands or even millions of followers (Baker, 2020). Freberg et al (2010) further define social media influencers as people or creators who “represent a new type of independent third party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media”.

### 2.3.2. ADVOCATES

Advocates, on the other hand, can be defined as individuals with strong brand associations and they are best known for their consistent, strong support of causes and policies they believe in. These individuals are the spokesperson for the brands they believe in and their campaigns. They have the true brand energy of advocacy and conceivably motivate others with their involvement (Leland, 2016, p.53).

## 2.4. TIKTOK

TikTok ‘provides a variety of full-screen vertical short-form video content, pioneering the trend of video consumption around the world’ (TikTok, 2020). As the main component of this application is User-generated Content (UGC) where TikTok users generate their own creative short looping video (Ahlse, Felix and Sandström, 2020, p.6). The social media app was launched as Musical.ly in 2014 but it became known as TikTok in 2017 after it was acquired by a Chinese company ByteDance (Meola, 2020). Before the app was introduced and made accessible worldwide, the Chinese version of TikTok which is called Douyin was launched in 2016, by its parent company ByteDance. Both Douyin and TikTok not only look and feel the same but have the same software. However, in order to comply with Chinese censorship restrictions, the apps operate on separate networks (Koponen, 2020).

### 2.4.1. FUNCTIONALITY AND FEATURES

The application has been built with some compelling editing features enabling users to incorporate songs and effects onto their videos. The videos are ranked and recommended to the users by analysing their interests. The recommendation algorithm calculates the tag for each video, “which is designed to classify videos according to category characteristics and then, it maps the tag of the video to the users who have the same tag” (Chen et al. 2019, p.2). In simplest terms, the videos TikTok viewers are watching on their feed have been filtered out based on their interactions, making it more personalised and engaging. The recommended algorithm based on

big data helps meet the diverse users' needs and goals while personalised and vertical content meets the individual needs (Yu, 2019, p.33).

The uniqueness about this social media application is the ability to browse, watch content without actually registering it, allowing users to consume content as soon as they install the app. The video feed appears instantaneously when a user opens TikTok which allows them to consume video after video by only swiping up. Due to this, studies have found that many users consume these media as mere lurkers, meaning that they are passive users who watch, share and browse only without actually producing or participating in it (Omar and Dequan, 2020, p.122). Furthermore, this platform has the characteristics to cross-promote TikTok content onto the other social platforms via Facebook, Whatsapp, Instant messaging, Email, Twitter and more (Fleming, 2020, p.41) giving brands the opportunities to promote videos to get more engagement.

#### 2.4.2. MARKETING ON TIKTOK:

Marketing is about identifying and meeting human and social needs. One of the shortest good definitions of marketing is “meeting needs profitably.” (Keller and Kotler, 2016, p.27). Video formats is a powerful approach for companies to stand out from the crowd and this could be from funny to educational, inspiring, or motivational videos. Videos could offer the personal touch, grab attention, and resonate with viewers in a way other mediums cannot (Walter and Gioglio, 2014, p.34).

TikTok users have given myriad features to create unique content, unlike any other social media apps. They showcase their creativity through filters, duets, audio or visual effects and even challenges, and making TikTok an app where users swipe through an endless stream of addictive videos (Mediakix, no date). A research study indicated that social interaction and escapism motives have led individuals to consume and participate and social media users viewed and participated in TikTok to relax and entertain (Omar and Dequan, 2020, p.131). The essence of the community collectively seemed to be more interactive and supportive on this application than some users might find on Instagram as individuals are always trying to portray their best version of themselves (Mediakix, no date). Furthermore, Long (2020) affirms to state that TikTok doesn't work because it is entertainment but because it's the community and it addresses a "basic human need—deeper, even than the need to be entertained or amused or diverted".

## A. CREATORS

This could further be proven to be the reason why this platform's top creators or the influencers have more followers combined crossing more than 1.2 billion which is higher than the population of the African continent (Mediakix, 2020). Influencer Marketing in the modern-day could be explained when brands collaborate with influential people on the internet to put their brand across to the consumers. Influencer Marketing Hub (2020) defined the term as 'the power to affect the purchasing decisions of others because of his or her authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with his or her audience'. Similar to all the other social networking channels, typically, several brands on TikTok collaborate and work with influential people along with

having their own page so that the content of their products are steered to a larger audience (Fleming, 2020, p.81). Influencers or ‘Creators’ a preferred term on TikTok – relatively low risk, affordable and an effective entry point for brands into the platform but the application’s algorithm can lead to much greater unpredictability than other channels and trending could take up to a week or more (Horowitz, 2020). Increasingly, various brands are partnering with micro-influencers on TikTok to market themselves to more focused, niche audiences and this could ultimately to increase brand awareness or sales, and to boost their authenticity (DigitalMarketingInstitute, no date). Marketing by tying up with influencers can help reach out or disperse more widely as viral videos on TikTok attract thousands of comments and millions of views, likes and dislikes, thereby resulting in a monthly engagement rate to be over 70 per cent (Mediakix, 2020).

## B. HASHTAG CHALLENGES

There are a variety of challenges that can be regularly featured in the application’s trending hashtags (Rajgor, 2018) and TikTok videos have started to go viral not just on the platform itself but it has gone beyond, racking up millions of views on Twitter and Instagram (Lorenz, 2018). TikTok challenges can be both sponsored and organic, are mostly an amalgamation of three elements: text, sound, and movement; dance or otherwise which could be started by users, usually TikTokers influencers with massive followers, or by brands that have invested in TikTok advertising (Paul, 2020). Hashtag challenges on TikTok play an integral part of its community appeal, and popularity and users encourage each other to participate in ‘challenges’ named with a hashtag (Mediakix, 2020). Challenge called the #RaindropChallenge - where users appear to be

controlling a downpour of rain with the help of a new filter - has over 1.1 billion views and still ranks as one of the best examples of popular TikTok challenges (TikTok, 2020). Another popular hashtag challenge called #InMyFeelings challenge, which was originally introduced on Instagram, but it was more popularised on TikTok with its own rights and picked up roughly 5 million videos compared to Instagram's 1.7 million (Mediakix, 2020).

### 2.4.3. MUSIC ON TIKTOK

Social Media Examiner highlighted that the driving force of a good challenge is the audio and this application offers a diverse sound to choose from - which have been uploaded by users, both influencers and everyday users of the app (Paul, 2020). The hit song 'Old Town Road' went viral on the short-form video app and made the 20-year-old artist 'Lil Nas X' rise to fame in the year 2019 and therefore making his song became No. 1 on Billboard Hot 100 (Leskin, 2020). Similarly, several other aspiring artists seemingly had a similar jump in their music career. For instance, these two music artists called Y2K and Bbno\$, whose song "Lalala" went viral on TikTok before it even came out and till this date, three different versions of "Lalala" have been utilised in over 1.1 million TikTok videos (Leight, 2019). The importance of audio on TikTok videos have inspired many individuals to leverage this platform. Adam Friedman, a music producer has started to produce music only for influencers and designed or modified after and he thereafter proclaimed that "we start with the snippet, and if it does well on TikTok we'll produce the full song," (Tolentino, 2019). Singer-songwriter Ava Max's song "Not Your Barbie Girl" was under the grid or didn't receive much prevalence for around six months until it went viral on

TikTok and miraculously women were singing along to her lyrics. Her next song Sweet but Psycho soared even bigger on the app, which helped the song receive more than 550 million streams on Spotify (Chow, 2019).

#### 2.4.4. BRANDING ON TIKTOK

Branding helps to distinguish from one producer to another and according to AMA, branding is intended to distinguish goods and services from several sellers to stand out from the competitors (Keller, Aperia and Georgson, 2008, p.2) Brands and consumer relationship can be explained when consumers regard brands as special meaning depending on their past experiences which could be the product or the way brands have marketed over the years (Keller, Aperia and Georgson, 2008, p.7). Brands need to position well to differentiate from others and consistently communicate by maintaining their core associations across all elements. Finally, brands must comprehend what they represent to consumers (Dennhardt, 2014, p.35).

With the introduction of TikTok for Business, it can provide brands with marketing solutions to reach out to younger demographics. The company is positioning this as a place where brands and advertisers can create content that progresses and evolves to be a part of the TikTok community. Several campaigns on this platform have become so successful that users have also created their variation of the campaigns (TechnologyTimes, 2020). There are several ad formats the brand can explore: Brand Takeovers also called TopView is where an ad immediately appears when a user opens the app and this splash screen has helped to increase awareness of the challenge campaign for Guess Brand (TikTok, no date). In-feed Ads are the types of advertisement which are

integrated into users' 'For You' feeds. This type of format allows users to like, comment, share and follow the videos (DigitalMarketingInstitute, no date). In-Feed Video duration has the potential to run up to one minute and can be played with the sound on (TechnologyTimes, 2020). Hashtag Challenges can join in with the TikTok community by tapping into users' creativities and encouraging them to create content around a specific hashtag (DigitalMarketingInstitute, no date) and a new feature hashtag Plus can allow brands to add a shopping feature (TechnologyTimes, 2020)

#### 2.4.5. BRANDS ON TIKTOK

With 41 per cent of the users on TikTok is a young audience that marketers simply cannot ignore this channel and it is likely to continue to grow (Koestsier, 2019). On an average people spend 45 minutes on the app and open 8 times every day (Mediakix, 2020) that's why many brands have unleashed the power of TikTok in order to get organic reach, drive substantial traffic, and also to express a unique and valuable brand personality (Socialbakers, no date).

#### CHIPOTLE

Chipotle became the strongest performing brand on TikTok with help of the challenges and collaboration with influencers like David Dobrik (Ciment, 2020). David Dobrik has 19.8 Million Followers and 640.5 Million likes on this video sharing app (TikTok, 2020). The hashtag challenge #ChipotleLidFlip generated 230 million views whereas the #GuacDance challenge, urging users and fans to demonstrate their avocado-themed dance moves inspired by Dr Jean's "Guacamole Song" (Kelso, 2019). The campaign managed to receive 250,000 video submissions

and the promotion resulted in Chipotle's biggest guac day in history, with over 802,000 sides of guac served. Chipotle used an additional 7,500 cases, roughly 187,500 pounds of avocados to meet the demand of the holiday. In total, that's 18,500 cases, over 420,000 pounds of avocados just on National Avocado Day (Chipotle, 2019).

## THE ORDINARY

A TikTok user shared her impressive results after using The Ordinary AHA 30% + BHA 2% Peeling Solution to treat her acne. She sparked an uproar for the product and has involuntarily helped the beauty brand earn over \$1 million and in just a few weeks, the brand has sold 100,000 bottles (Scanlan, 2020). Her video has 3.5 million views (TikTok, no date) and the representative of the beauty brand stated that the video spurred the sale of over 52,000 units of the serum in just two weeks. Moreover, the peeling solution has over 1,000 almost perfect reviews and around 160,000 hearts on Sephora (Reilly, 2020).

## GUESS

For their Fall'18 Denim Fit Collection launch, Guess performed a 6-day hashtag campaign on TikTok and this helped the brand produce over '5,550 user-generated videos, 10.5 million video views, 14.3% engagement rate and over 12,000 additional followers for Guess' business account on TikTok'. Guess also partnered with influencers, where the brand gave creative freedom to the content creators to do their work, which yielded attention and inspired 1,629 user-generated videos (TikTok, no date).

## TOOFACED

Cosmetics company 'Too Faced' witnessed a sudden surge in sales after a challenge on TikTok went viral, where young users were consuming the brand's Lip Injection Extreme plumping lip gloss. The product started selling out six years after its 2013 release and Too Faced quickly leveraged the opportunity and partnered with TikTok creators for their next product launch. The hashtag campaign #TFDamnGirl generated 821 million views and currently, the company's own TikTok account has 27,000 fans and 262,000 likes (Ypulse, 2019). Another branding strategy was the utilisation of Brand Takeover and this ad format made 7.6 million impressions and received 1.3 million clicks. Ultimately acquiring an 18.38% click-through rate, exceeded the benchmark for the UK market (TikTok, no date).

## PRODUCT REVIEWS ON TIKTOK

Product review can be categorised into: good review and bad review. A good product can be explained as detailed convincing information provided about a product to help other readers with their purchase decisions. While Bad review offers only a little information about a product and sometimes incorrect specification. It could also be considered as spam or fake by others (Zhiguo, et al, 2011, p.330) There is a growing trend on this platform called 'TikTok made me buy it'. This hashtag has over 3 million views (TikTok, no date). Users upload videos of their recent purchases of certain products that they have encountered on the app and they showcase, review the items and how they work (Weinand, 2020). A 22 years old university student claims to have purchased several items and admitted to making videos of the purchase on the platform

(Brady, 2020). Similarly, #productreview videos of TikTok users reviewing various products and brands which has collectively around 121.2 million views (TikTok, 2020). The products can range from skincare to home improvement items. These videos have gone viral and impacted purchase intent for the product.

#### 2.4.5. TIKTOK'S PRIVACY AND OTHER ISSUES

The major concerns with this platform are allegations in regards to its data collection. The popularity of TikTok and the platform being developed in Beijing, China is raising concerns mainly with the possibility of data sharing with the Chinese government. Furthermore, the application has been investigated by the US Government over national security concerns and censorship of politically sensitive content (Walker, 2019, p.14). The company argues that it collects fewer personal data than the US companies like Facebook or Google but subsequently confirms to the collection of 'users' location, Internet address, and browsing history; it can also store phone numbers, age, and payment information if users opt-in' (Elegant, 2020). Another worry is the personalisation and recommended algorithm could be used to distribute news that manipulates the public's opinion and eventually could be proven to control societal impact (Libby, 2020, p.28). India has banned TikTok due to the geopolitical issue between India and China, losing hundreds of millions users (Doffman, 2020). Similarly, United States are in talks of banning the app but the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) cannot prohibit citizens to not use TikTok, but the committee has the power to force some changes to minimise data privacy concerns (Barnes, Park and Weems, 2020). The pressure from the White House to ban TikTok has been argued to be the reason for its geopolitical war with the US and

China, not because of its security threat. The Trump administration claims that the TikTok user's data is transferred to China and it threatens but the TikTok executive denies the statement (Bursztynsky, 2020). The other issue in hand is the concerns with the type of content shared on this video-sharing app, which can be damaging for the younger generation due to vulgarity (Awan, 2020). New York Times mentioned that many users in the US are under the age of 14 and the issue is if the company is acknowledging its responsibility and doing something about it (Zhong and Frenkel, 2020).

## 2.5. CONSUMERS BEHAVIOUR

Consumer behaviour "is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires" (Solomon, Bennett and Previte, 2013, p.3). Keller and Kotler (2016, p.179) stated that a consumer's buying behaviour is affected or influenced by factors including cultural, social, and personal. These elements can influence consumers to buy or consume goods and services and most importantly cultural factors can push the deepest influence. Purchase intent of consumers is some form of preference they have depending on the quality, time, pricing, and they may identify all these variables to conclude or have the intention to buy the most preferred brand (Keller and Kotler, 2016, p.198).

## 2.6. GENERATION Z AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

### 2.6.1. DEFINITIONS

Who is generation Z? Individuals born from 1995 to 2010 (loosely) and they are the true digital natives and have been exposed to technology from their earliest youth. Gen Zers grew up with the internet, social media, and mobile systems (Francis and Hoefel, 2018). Pew Research Center (2015) stated that generational research may be studied by different factors ‘including demographics, attitudes, historical events, popular culture, and prevailing consensus among researchers’. Study of generations cannot predefine every person but it relies on generalities. There is a big play of individual variation within every group and to consider that generations exist on a continuum is pivotal (Miller, 2018). Generation Z is the first of its kind to have entirely grown up in the post-digital era. They have absolutely no sense of a world without smartphones, living outside of social media (Fromm and Read, 2018, p.9).

### 2.6.2. CHARACTERISTICS

The Center for Generational Kinetics (no date) mentioned that millions of generation Z revealed that social media defines their happiness, well-being and self-esteem and this platform will show defining results in the coming five years. One of the key characteristics of generation Z is the authenticity and they crave for a real connection with brands (Handley, 2018). Irregular Labs survey report on Generation Z highlighted that this cohort grew with YouTube stars not celebrities with mass followings and appreciate the prospect to engage with authentic, imperfect

art (Handley, 2018) which could have a correlation to why Instagram micro-influencers have positively proven credible on consumer behaviour (Gupta and Mahajan, 2019). Another study on this cohort highlighted the desire or the need to escape which is likely caused by technological trends like entertainment products, exposure to social networks 24-7, and offer greater mobility in devices that offer escapism this may underlie the increasing trends in virtual relationships (Wood, 2013, p.4)

## 2.7. GENERATION Z AS CONSUMERS

Consumers take many forms and in marketing, it is best to further categorise based on their interests rather than just looking into their descriptive characteristic or demographic (Solomon, Bennett and Previte, 2013, p. 2). Generation Z individuals are more liberal than generations before them. They are ultrafast in seeking out and assimilating information, as well as more deliberated over political, economic and social issues. Another study on generation z showed that they make educated online purchase decisions faster than millennials (Lauring and Steenburg, 2019). They will “consume more, travel more, create more and work in more jobs in their lifetime than their predecessors” and will not retire before 2074 (Madden, 2019, p.26). Dorsey, president The Centre of Generational Kinetics stated that based on the 2018 report on gen Z ‘today’s online influencers don’t have to demonstrate proven expertise in an area or a high-profile endorsement deal. Instead, when it comes to shaping the views of Gen Z consumers, it’s enough for today’s influencers to have an online following around a specific topic, lifestyle, experience, product, service, or outcome’ (The Central generational Kinetics, no date). Social

media influencers persuasion has been broadly labelled trustworthy and viewed as being more powerful on their followers' behaviours (Lim et al., 2017, p.22) and moreover Instagram micro-influencers have positively proven credible on consumer behaviour (Gupta and Mahajan, 2019). This was further stated that generation Z consumers seek recommendations from family and peers and also draw inspiration from social media bloggers before deciding what to buy (Accenture, 2017). These young individuals will look for convenience while consumer goods and services because of the increase in dependency on convenience in regards to both product attributes (e.g., mobile devices), product delivery, experience and product messaging (Woods, 2013, p.2).

## 2.8. LITERATURE REVIEW CONCLUSIONS:

After reviewing the findings of several studies, the literature indicates that TikTok enables users to create and consume entertaining videos. The application motivates generation Z to participate in viral videos and hashtag challenges but the argument on whether using TikTok impacts their buying behaviour is yet to be explored. The platform is considerably new and given that the application grew exponentially in recent years, there are not enough academic studies executed in the marketing field. This new revolutionary application is still untouched by several brands and warrants further investigation to better understand the platform for marketing strategies. The literature section outlines psychological factors of TikTok users and social media influencing buying behaviour have been researched extensively but TikTok as a social media application affecting the perception of brands which inevitably impacts the purchase intent process of Generation Z are yet to be highlighted. Examining this theory could provide us with rich data on

how trending hashtags, viral challenges and other factors can drive engagement and impact users' buying decisions eventually giving us a peek into the way brands are perceived.

### 3. CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Kumar (2019, p.12) stated that “research is a process for collecting, analysing and interpreting information to answer research questions. But to qualify to be called research the process must have certain characteristics and fulfilled some requirements”. This methodology section will provide detailed descriptions of how the study has been undertaken in order to achieve the research objectives and uncover variables involved which could have a direct or indirect relation to TikTok users' buying behaviour. This study design required formulating a process from the collection of data on relevant variants to deciphering and coming to conclusions either by finding a solution or generalisation (Bhattacharyya, 2006, p.12).

#### 3.1. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY:

Venturing this research study, understanding research philosophy helped address problems as it developed new knowledge and “the term research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge” (Saunders et al, 2019, p.130). Essentially the four branches of research philosophy which are: pragmatism, positivism, realism, interpretivism have been carefully considered. Since the study examines the social behaviour of generation Z and how each individual interprets meanings and expresses opinions differently on social media,

interpretivism philosophy aligned into this research design perfectly. Interpretivism highlights that all humans create different meanings (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 2019, p.148) and to further gauge into the subjective phenomenon, interpretive research design has been carried out. This design implies that reality is socially constructed and several realities are meaning there are several interpretations of a singular incident. Thus researchers construct knowledge instead of finding it (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p.9) as humans cannot be examined scientifically solely because different individuals will respond in different ways.

### 3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN:

Research design is defined as a “procedural plan that is adopted by the researcher to answer questions validly, objectively accurately and economically” and it seeks answers and defines which path to take during the research journey (Kumar, 2019, p.47). This study on generation z’s interpretations and their relationship with brands on TikTok and to recognise the importance of this application as a marketing platform is relatively a new phenomenon. The suggestive theory requires a deeper investigation to strengthen the concept of this new connection which indicates that the topic is still in the nascent stage (Edmonson and MacManus, 2007, p. 1158). Because of this phenomenon being in the initial stage, rich, meaningful and detailed data are required to shed light on the trend. Interviews, open-ended questions are some of the methods to learn more with an open mind and it helps enable researchers to identify and establish key variables throughout the study (Edmonson and MacManus, 2007, p.1162). The functionality of this study emphasises the validity and objectives (Kumar, 2019, p.155) and these questions are relating to

understanding subjects' experiences and hence called for a qualitative design (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p.6). Babbie (2016, p.90) confirms that a qualitative approach particularly applies when the researcher seeks a new emergence or the subject is relatively new.

The foundation of this study is to pursue and infer the meanings that humans generate to their own actions, instead of describing certain regularities or numerical associations between 'variables' (Payne and Payne, 2004, p.176). Even though quantitative data offers statistics which are considered to have more power than words but it extends the drawback of the potential of losing out in the richness of meaning (Babbie, 2016, p.26). Research strategy can be formulated in such a way that is connected and fits into the study's aims and objectives since the question is exploratory in nature. As a result, the appropriate tools have been applied to fit into the study. The level of theory instructs qualitative design as it requires discovering the individuals' behaviours and consumption of content/brands on TikTok and further generates insights into this phenomenon.

Exploratory is worthwhile when some questions are to be answered whether to find a solution to problem or leverage in on an opportunity and this process could provide aid to identifying the problem, analysing the situation and so on (Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree, 2014, p.15). This approach was taken in order to help fill the gaps in previous research on generation Z's buying behaviour and type of interactions they want from the brands on TikTok by having an open-ended discussion with the participants in a natural setting without any manipulation and any bias expectations (Johnson and Christensen, 2008, p.388).

### 3.3. RESEARCH CHOICES: MONO METHOD

Greene (2008, p. 20 cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.32) suggested that multiple methods could be explored in order to investigate a certain phenomenon. However, after analysing mixed methods, multi methods and mono-method, single method suited the best in the context of this study. The monomethod studies are working exclusively within one predominant paradigm either purely qualitative or quantitative (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p.17). This study design deploys mono-method, exclusively using qualitative data collection technique “to distinguish between causes, reasons, motives, determination and entailment” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.54). The single method approach could provide some superior results as it focuses on well-executed study design. Erickson (no date cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p.87) stated that “it identifies meaning-relevant kinds of things in the world—kinds of people, kinds of actions, kinds of beliefs and interests—focusing on differences in forms of things that make a difference for meaning”. The utilisation of this qualitative could help achieve valid outcomes by understanding Generation Z’s views, opinions on TikTok as a marketing Platform.

### 3.4. RESEARCH TIME FRAME

This section engages the time frame required while collecting data and there were two designs carefully considered while constructing the framework: longitudinal evidence or cross-sectional studies. Longitudinal could be used when data collection processes are done for two or more

distinct periods and have repeated measurements (Miller and Brewer, 2003, p.181). On the other hand, cross-sectional collection of data is solely done once and in a “short period, sequences of action and social change over time can be analysed” (Payne and Payne, 2004, p.143). Due to time hindrance and nature of the study, the cross-sectional design has been followed. Babbie (2014, p.109-110) suggested that longitudinal studies have the advantage of describing information overtime over cross-sectional but it often is expensive and time-consuming. Cross-sectional study during this research relies on a sample of individuals (TikTok users) which were investigated and that the sole comparisons are only between members of that sample.

### 3.5. RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION:

The goal of exploratory qualitative research is to explore informed predictions in regards to their relationships, identify characteristics towards the usage of TikTok by using an interview method. Interviews allow participants to freely share their views of the reality they habited, and to further express how they reflect situations. “In these senses, the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is life itself; its human embeddedness is inescapable” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.506).

The essence of an in-depth interview is the curiosity to understand the lived experience of individuals and how they defined that experience (Seidman 2016, p.24) and in-depth interview majority of the time is semi-structured in nature in order to guide the responses to dictate the direction of the interview (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.533). To gather data on this

theory, the conversation has been used as a learning tool (Leavy, 2017, p.139) and before the interview, an interview guide has been prepared which eventually does not tightly enforce to it, in terms of the exact wording or the order of the questions (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.204) has been kept fluid in nature depending on the flow of the interview. The semi-structured interview format along with projective techniques have been implemented. Projective techniques also known as enabling techniques are used to unlock participants' deep motivations and attitudes by showcasing TikTok videos, brand personalities type questions etc. These techniques put relatively less pressure on participants and furthermore, adopting a multitude of techniques as opposed to direct questioning could enhance engagement (Parry, 2018).

Although, focus groups could have developed more data in a short period but they tend to generate less data or information than one-to-one interviews with the same number of individuals (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.532). The semi-structured interviews with the subjects have been carried out to cover key questions and themes and the advantage of this type of interview is the freedom to change the flow while omitting or adding questions depending on the conversation (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012, p.374).

Moreover, the interviews are recorded and this tactic gives researchers the freedom to think creatively during the interviews while participants are speaking and the method of recording can aid to fill in gaps in case of any missing information (Given et al., 2008, p.190). This process helps to compare the interviews with previous statements allowing researchers to make required changes.

### 3.5.1. SAMPLE CRITERIA:

The eligibility and attributes of the sample population have been filtered out to individuals between the age of 18 - 23 years. The main requirement of this research was that the subjects are active TikTok users.

### 3.5.2. SAMPLING STRATEGY

For the purpose of this research, nonprobability sampling has been used to select the candidates. Two sampling techniques have been utilised to get information-rich data; a purposive sample where the premise of this sampling is to seek out the best subjects which suit the study and to produce the best data (Patton, 2015 cited in Leavy, p.148). Further, the application of snowball sampling has been used as it is an 'informal' method to get to the target population and since the objectives of a study are exploratory in nature snowball sampling brings practical advantages (Hendricks, Blanken and Adriaans, 1992, p.21).

The snowballing came to an end when there are no more candidates to be added along with the issue of time constraint. The quality of the sample depends on the starting point, and strength, of the network (Payne and Payne, year p.210).

### 3.5.3. SAMPLE SIZE:

The sample size relied on available subjects and since the sampling was conducted using snowball, the recommended participants reached a total of 10 individuals. The 10 TikTok users were females and they reside in various parts of the world, predominately in Ireland.

### 3.5.4. MODES OF COMMUNICATION:

The participants have been communicated using various mediums.

1.	Email	Information sheet and consent forms have been sent out via email.
2.	Whatsapp	Whatsapp application has been used to connect with several participants to check their availability.
3.	Google Calendar	Google Calendar to send out meeting invitations.
4.	Instagram	Some candidates have been contacted on Instagram.
5.	Zoom Software	The interviews have been conducted via Zoom Software.

*Table. 1 Communication Mediums*

### 3.6. THEMATIC DATA ANALYSIS:

Thematic coding is commonly used across various qualitative methods within the social sciences (Braun and Clark, 2013, p.432). The data collected from the interviews have been analysed by using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method used to identify, analyse and report patterns or themes within data. Since the study design has an interpretive approach, Thematic Analysis best fits the method in order to identify main themes and examine the research question. This process minimally organises and describes the data set in (rich) detail (Boyatzis, 1998 cited in Braun and Clark, 2006, p.79). This process is done to help ‘distinguish raw data from noise’,

and the main aim for coding is to provide more focused and exhaustive explorations of the data (Glaser and Laudel, 2013 cited in Bergin, 2018, p. 141). The 6 phase steps of thematic analysis have been performed so that the important elements are strained out from the conversations that include identifying topics, constructing and fine-tuning the coding structure (Clifford, French and Valentine, 2010, p.440).

1. **FAMILIARISING WITH THE DATA:** The data collected from the subjects have been transcribed from the video and audio recorded files. Each participant's recording has been analysed thoroughly. After that, all the transcripts have been re-read to get familiar.
2. **CODING:** Once familiarising with the data was done, the preliminary coding process began to help reduce the raw information into a manageable size (Boyatzis, 1998, p.69). Highlighting and searching for phrases, commonly used terms and unique meaning that stood out and certain codes were labelled which described feelings and ideas.
3. **PATTERNS AND THEMES:** The codes enabled to identify patterns which helped generate themes. This step helped to examine the codes and sorted out data for each code, with the intention to identify similarity and redundancy between codes (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.550).
4. **REVIEW THEMES:** This step provided clarity and precise reflection of the data. The themes have been refined and compared to check for inaccuracy and errors.
5. **DEFINE AND NAME THEMES:** All themes were refined and finalised. This stage is to give names to the themes and what it represents for better understanding.

6. **REPORT WRITING:** This part includes describing each theme and providing examples from the collected data. Analyse the research objectives and questions, finally producing a written report of the findings.

<b>PROCESS</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>CRITERIA</b>
Transcription	1	Interview data transcribed and further refined by removing errors and inaccuracy
Coding	2 3 4 5	Generated codes Searched for duplications Codes segregated into subcategories Identified patterns and generated themes
Analysing	6 7	Analysed transcripts and interpreted into meanings Checked themes fit into the research questions
Report Writing	8	Reported the findings in text

*Table 2. Themes development*

### 3.7. CHALLENGES OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS -

Thematic Analysis is considered to be relatively easy but it could be challenging as it has limitations while interpreting (Braun and Clarke, 2003, p.97). Cliffe (2017, p.52) described that thematic analysis involves assessment or analysing but to put data into themes. Meaning, the formulated questions could be already preconceived themes. Moreover, themes generated from the data could prove to be feeble analysis if it doesn't fit the theme or could provide insignificant

themes. Furthermore, transcribing and identifying main themes can be time-consuming as there could be overlaps of themes where the themes could be inconsistent (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.94).

### 3.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Ethics play an incremental role in research study and social research is a dynamic process that often involves an intrusion into people's lives. It is about developing a relationship with the participants which is mutually respectful, not forceful, achieves valid results, and the society concludes to be constructive (Miller and Brewer, 2003, p.95). Ethical considerations have been given an important part during the data collection and the three ethical principles will be addressed (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p.151). When conducting research with human subjects, The Belmont Report, 1979 should assist in solving the ethical problems (Mandal and Acharya and Parija, 2011) and the three principles, which are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice and these apply to informed consent, risk-benefit assessment and lastly, selection of subjects respectively (Beauchamp cited in Childress et al., 2004, p.17).

#### 3.8.1. RESPECT FOR PERSON

Information provided to the participants have covered all aspects of the research such as the research aims and objectives, methods and intended outcomes (Miller and Brewer, 2003, p.96) Prior to the participation, candidates are given adequate information about the nature of the study, the process involved, their rights and seek informed consent. The researcher has informed and secured permission from participants before recording them for both ethical and legal reasons (Given et al, 2008, p.191).

### 3.8.2. CONCERN FOR WELFARE/BENEFICENCE:

Research subjects will not be harmed in any way and risks assessment will be carefully examined. Similarly, any kind of information deemed sensitive to the subject will not be put forward and informants' identities are protected. Subjects have been assured that the recordings of their actions or words will remain confidential, and be seen and used by the researchers. (Payne and Payne, 2004, p.68).

### 3.8.3. JUSTICE

Miller and Brewer (2003, p.97) talk about the selection of participants may invoke adverse reactions and participants may be asked to express unpopular attitudes, or reveal personal characteristics and could cost participants to feel uncomfortable. During this study, all participants have been treated respectfully and given the freedom to speak.

### 3.9. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS:

Even though a qualitative approach can provide richer findings but it has its own limitations. Qualitative study designs as stated by Kumar (2019, p. 203) are not as precise, exact, and well defined as quantitative research. Even with the TikTok platform and its phenomenon being in the infancy stage, literature information is shown to be very limited. The sample size did not represent the whole TikTok population which might show different outcomes. Another concern was cross sectional study which is done in one series which also has its limitations as data analysed overtime could provide better results.

## 4. CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

This section illustrated the findings after conducting semi-structured interviews with TikTok users and how this application has impacted them, as consumers. The subjects have been using TikTok and come from the generation Z cohort. In the further section, certain narrations and quotations have been shown to demonstrate the findings.

### 4.2. NVIVO FINDINGS

After the transcription of the data collected through the semi-structured interviews were achieved. The software Nvivo 12 was utilised to start with the coding and identifying themes and patterns and further assist in carrying out the qualitative type of research by offering easy to use tools and analysis of such data (Castleberry, 2012). The usage of this software helped develop the 6 stages of the thematic analysis which led to the 3 emergent themes which are stated in the later stage.

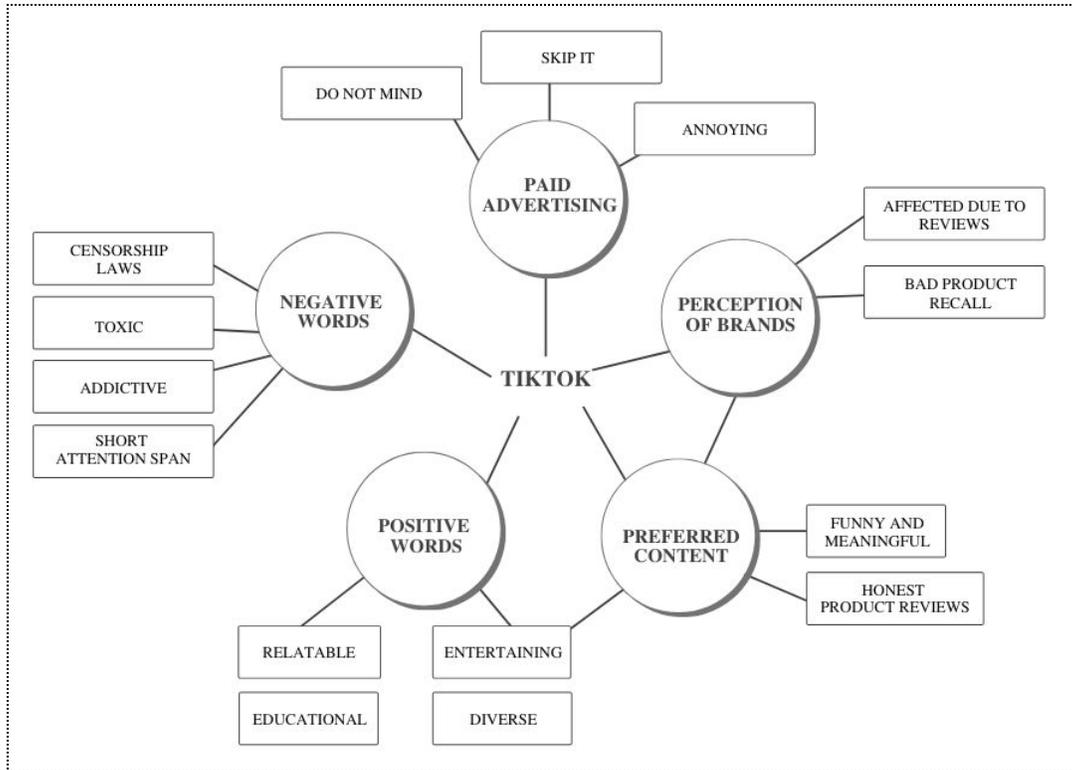
### 4.3. PRE-CODING:

The first stage involved trying to familiarise with the transcripts before the initial coding process. To familiarise with the data, word frequency query was run in Nvivo in order to see the most frequent words used by the participants. The word frequency query offered to search for recurring words and this process helped to interpret by finding words which could be proven to



### 4.3. CODING: INDUCTIVE OR BOTTOM-UP APPROACH

The coding the data and recognising certain patterns have been performed using inductive or bottom-up approach which can be explained when the themes were determined were heavily associated to the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.83). The inductive approach is applicable when the observation process is involved which will contribute to becoming a new theory (Wilson, 2017, p.7). This phase includes coding and searching for patterns within the codes and identifying themes. Braun and Clarke (2013, p.504) define coding as “a process of identifying aspects of the data that relate to your research question.” This section helped with generating emergent themes which are explained in table 3. Further, during the search of themes, a visual mind map (see fig. 2) was created to look for relationships between codes and themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 89). After the completion of all five phases, the last phase of producing the report is mentioned in the next section.



*Figure 2: Initial Theme: Visual Mind Map*

#### 4.4. REPORTING THE FINDINGS:

The last phase based on Braun and Clarke (2013, p.601) is documenting the findings from the data and what it represents by streamlining the analysis in a way that it informs the reader with a clear, unified and compelling story. Finalising the phase with emergent of 3 main themes and these are stated in detail below. The themes provide meaning and insights based on the subjects' viewpoints as consumers and how TikTok might have impacted their buying behaviour and ultimately affected their opinions or attitude with regards to brands. Before proceeding with the detailed storytelling of the data, participants' several characteristics have been highlighted below.

#### 4.4.1. INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants between the age of 18-23 years who were all TikTok users. The participants reside in various parts of the world including India (1), France (1), Germany (1), Ireland (6) and South Africa (1). Due to purposive and snowball sampling, the participants could not reach above 10. Considering the ethics of confidentiality and anonymity, subjects identities have been withheld and given code names from P1 to P10.

#### 4.4.2. MAIN THEMES

After coding, subsequent themes were identified. The main themes which emerged from the data collected from the semi-structured interviews and provided the meaning to research theories which are shown in Table 3 below. There were 3 major themes where theme 1 demonstrated the perception of brands or products that were formed due to TikTok and to reasons for any change in opinions. Theme 2 illustrated the buying behaviour of generation Z and the reasons for any change in consumption. And lastly, theme 3 offers the content they prefer and what they would like to see more.

<b>MAIN THEME 1</b>	<b>MAIN THEME 2</b>	<b>MAIN THEME 3</b>
Perception of Brands	Product Consumptions	Preferred Content
<b>SUB THEMES</b>	<b>SUBTHEMES</b>	<b>SUBTHEMES</b>

Paid advertisements	Creative contents	Entertaining and Funny
Product reviews content	Product testing and reviewing	Authenticity and Transparency
Honest Product Reviews	Transparency and Authenticity	Honest Product Reviews
Over Saturation Product Recall		Fun Hashtag Challenges
		Transitions Feature

Table 3: Emergent Themes

### THEME 1: PERCEPTION OF BRANDS:

Users on TikTok have experienced brands in different contexts and many participants were exposed to companies and products through a myriad of videos. Mostly, all of the participants showed neutral attitudes in regards to brand promotions but their change in attitude towards several brands did impact both negatively and positively. The major factor for this change was due to other normal TikTok users' videos but not through brands directly.

The perception of certain brands to some extent did affect negatively where P9 mentioned in regards to TikTok users exposing about brands based on their experiences:

*P9: Disliking brands, I think, yes, as well. Because a lot of people like post exposing videos about certain like brands or something and then like, it's not censored at all, and you can just like you just find the information and then in the comments, people will like, post like, Oh, I had this experience too.*

Another participant stated that she started to dislike a brand due to oversaturated content seen on TikTok:

*P7: um maybe dislike a brand or like the **SheIn** brand? Yeah, I see. It's just too much. People are always wearing the same thing. So I'm just bored of these brands. And I just don't want to um you know, buy from them.*

While this had a different impression on another participant. For instance, P4 spoke about appreciating the same brand as multiple users were reviewing and showcasing their clothes:

*P4: I kind of like is **SheIn** the clothing brand? a lot of people would show stuff like...*

One participant implied that using TikTok has made her closer to some brands because of the interactive contents these companies provided on this platform by showcasing how to apply the product in a short video. Also, she mentioned Makeup Influencers have helped her look at brands differently.

*P6: I like seeing brands through TikTok like the ordinary and Mac because I feel like it's a closer relationship.*

P9 had a similar appreciation of a brand because it showed how the product was made and it made her feel interested. Interestingly, this was supported by another participant (P5) that she would be interested to see content about how products actually got to her:

*P9: Dr Martens like it was like a video of how they make them and I thought that was pretty cool...But like you see the process and it sort of makes you like interested in Oh, this is how it's made and everything...*

*P5: Don't give me an infographic like the exact region that it came from. Yeah, and the climate conditions like and like an actual farmer who doesn't look like an actor. Like real people. Oh, how it was sourced and*

*yeah, okay. You know, it's like I want brands who are kind and work hard.*

Overall, the general perception of brands has been impacted due to product reviews given by other TikTok users who are not regarded as influencers. Individuals have more freedom to share their opinions on this platform than any other channels which ultimately influence others to share similar emotions.

## THEME 2: PRODUCT CONSUMPTIONS:

This theme emerged as participants were asked if TikTok influenced them to purchase anything.

Participant 2 responded as someone who is not for consumership even though she would be interested in the product seen on TikTok:

*P2: I didn't actually like go and buy anything afterwards because I'm not really want to buy something quickly after being like, interest to buy something. Um, but there were some things where I like more intrigued*

Participants P5 also showed interest in consuming certain fitness products but did not make any purchase.

*P5: I don't think it made me get a particular product although I was pretty tempted to like as I like to use a lot of um I watch a lot of videos and I health and fitness and food and stuff.*

While buying behaviour of participants P3 and P6 were strongly impacted and they described the purchase decisions they went through and how they were influenced.

*P3: Yes, yes, yes, yes. There's like, nice videos of girls and it's not like an ad but it's like girls just usually like in their car. And they're usually Americans or Canadians, and they'd be like, this is my Starbucks drink...but you know, I usually like trying out all their creations and*

*that's one thing. Another thing is like uh this one girl, she posted a video of her. It's like those paintings with numbers again.*

She further described another purchase she made:

*P3: And there was another girl she was using this Revlon Heat styler thing, and it was like a brush thing...And I actually got one...I haven't really used it I usually straighten my hair. Well yeah, that's that's what that's what I purchased*

Participant 6 purchased skincare products, a new pair of jeans from Zara and further emphasised that her product consumption was heavily influenced because they were tried and tested by normal TikTok individuals.

*P6: It's just again like I keep reiterating. Same thing when you see a bunch of like people that you could be friends with trying a product. This makes it seem more approachable and like, okay, it's not a waste of money because this person tried it and their views seem 1,000% more honest...*

*And I think with TikTok again, it's a bunch of people who bought the products themselves and are trying it instead of people just writing it online. Easier to watch a lot more palatable. And I think a little bit more trustworthy for the consumer.*

Other participants like P1, P4 have made purchases while the rest of the participants consumed products like mobile applications.

*P1: Maybe some of the clothes. I saw these girls with these really cool shoes and she had that if you use her promo code, you can get like 25% off these shoes and I was like, Oh, those are really nice and yeah, those that TikTok probably influenced me to want to buy that product anyways. Well, yeah, because shoes are pretty comfy.*

*P4: I actually did and I heard a lot about CeraVe. I didn't know this brand.*

The pattern of viewing product recommended and review videos were noticeable in every participant. This application is highly dominated by users sharing experiences and these participants believed to be more honest and real than any other platforms.

### THEME 3: PREFERRED CONTENT:

This theme reflected the type of content these participants primarily engage with and the entertaining element stayed constant in most cases but content consumption varied depending on the genre.

Product review videos were the main drivers in relation to makeup and skin care brands.

*P5: I think product reviews would be pretty high up there because like that's what I base a product on as in not only a review from one person but from a range of different people who come from like different backgrounds have different uses for that product.*

*P4: a lot of people would be talking about I got this and certain people like who are actually kind of experts and they would start discussing like oh this is good for your skin is not good for your skin. And you should get this, this is overpriced, this is not overpriced. There wouldn't really be um it wouldn't really be paid. um it would just be it will just be a genuine review you know.*

Fashion Influencers's content was preferred for styling tips:

*P6: brands uh have influencers style different looks. So if like you have a video with five influencers style, a pair of jeans, I love videos like that. what else draws my attention.*

Further when participants were asked hypothetical questions of promotion of a brand they owned, many of them mentioned product review videos.

*P4: And it just has to look like they're not gonna benefit from the ads like if they say anything about Oh, I got this for free or or you know anything that would tell me that they're getting paid or that they're benefiting from talking like giving a good review then I would really believe their reviews.*

*P3: I would do either a product review...like some kind of vibey kind of like a catchy song in the background.*

*P8: Obviously there's makeup reviews. I have to do it just for the makeup or for the girls.*

While participants P5 and P7 mentioned about doing a Hashtag challenge to gain engagement.

*P5: hashtag challenges would be a good way if you get enough crowd engagement*

*P7: Challenge is always a good thing. And it's fun for people to do. So. It's engaging*

Transitional and entertaining videos were interestingly mentioned by two more participants P1 and P3 in order to promote products while P9 found videos with transitions and funny elements to be engaging.

*P1: Transitions like I usually make transitions not to promote my makeup source where like, it's like you try to like um I don't have to explain this like transition into the makeup look like Oh, I should just show you a video to just like to see like, yeah, it's like, where you show the look step by step but like in a cool way.*

*P3: Yeah, transitions, transitions it just keep doing that. Um, yeah, that'd be pretty cool too. And I think that's, that's what I picked.*

## SUMMARY OF MAIN THEMES:

The above three themes indicate that TikTok provides users with versatile and entertaining videos in which many participants felt that they spent an unnecessary amount of time on the platform. They illuminate that TikTok provides entertaining but educational and informative content are prevalent too. They appreciate the freedom users have and the ability to share uncensored opinions. This is a great platform for individuals to share honest opinions about their experiences and people form opinions based on what others have shared and they make informed choices mostly based on authentic reviews but not by brands. They still like to be entertained hence were drawn to watching funny and entertaining videos on the platform.

## 5. CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS

### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to explore the impact of TikTok on generation Z and to identify their buying behaviour. This chapter will further emphasise on the three main themes discussed in the previous chapter in connection with research questions and literature. Lastly, the chapter will address this study's limitations and conclude with implications for future academic and practical researchers.

## 5.2. THEME 1: PERCEPTION OF BRANDS

The findings strongly circled back to user generated reviews and this was essence to any change in attitude towards brands. Testimonials from sources who already have experienced the consumption of the particular product including third-party reviews, expert reviews, and recommendation played important roles in affecting their decisions (Elwalda, 2016, p.127). Source of reviews came from ‘normal people’ on TikTok and some from Influencers. User-generated reviews of brands or products affected in both positively and negatively as Participant P2 highlighted that *‘very little to do with what the advertisements are showing more about like what people say about the companies and the products’*. As Keller and Kotler (2016, p.147) pointed out, positive word of mouth can be excellent customer service and have always been an important marketing tool since the dawn of time and it is still evidently visible till this day.

Factors that impacted these candidates positively towards certain brands was because of the type content shared directly by brands. Some stated interactive ‘how to apply’ video and ‘production story’ were interesting. Direct content from brands also showed to have an adverse effect on Participant P2 *‘I think the video that you showed me and the video that I've seen too of boohoo. It was a bit too cringy’*. Brands should consider these factors as Ramos (2013, p.57) stated that people don’t recall facts and figures, but they do recall a great story which eventually would be shared with their friends. However this platform is very different from other social media

channels, this younger cohort go to TikTok to watch entertaining videos and they prefer real content over branded promotions.

### 5.3. THEME 2: PRODUCT CONSUMPTIONS

Based on all the 10 participants' experiences on TikTok, buying behaviour can be seen to have been heavily influenced. The algorithm is skewed to videos that are trending along with the personalised content which indirectly has impacted these young individuals to watch content of people recommending or trying out products. This has influenced several participants to purchase brands as P6 recognised and said *'I think it aided me in actually trying the product because I was seeing so much of it on TikTok'*. A research study confirmed that viral marketing has shown to have a significant and positive relationship with the purchase decision and it helps customers to enhance their purchase decisions (Eltaj and Mohammed, 2017, p.70). The viral content came mostly from users. According to participants, their purchase decisions have not been shaped by advertisements or brand promotions. P9 recalled viewing a brand advertisement on TikTok but she considered it unnecessary as *'a lot of people are posting videos of like shein hauls or something so like that might convince someone else like to buy it before the ad would in the first place'*.

### 5.4. THEME 2: PREFERRED CONTENT

As stated by most of the participants, TikTok as a platform is described as entertaining, funny and versatile. *There's like literally different things for everybody um I like just everything about the app how it*

*can be funny (P1)*. Further P6 also said that *'you could see singers, you could see pranks, you could see couple videos, you could see cooking videos all in one page or one at the same time, which I think is like the diversity of the content'*. Entertaining and diverse content on this platform has made users watch videos after videos for hours. That is why statistics showed that on average people spend 45 minutes on the app and open it 8 times everyday (Mediakix, 2020). The findings confirm that they can consume any type videos which are engaging but branded content should be mostly product reviews, styling and hashtag challenges. Another interesting factor was expectation of seeing transparency and genuineness from brands and creators which has been stated in the literature section as one of main characteristics of generation Z.

## 5.5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

5.5.1. RO1: The purpose of this study is to understand if the usage of TikTok has had any positive or negative impact in the attitude in relation to a brand.

The findings suggest that generation Z were exposed to brands on TikTok through challenges, sponsored promotions and even paid advertisements. These types of branding might have impacted their viewpoints but user generated content from users was the motivating factor that changed their opinions on several brands. A participant experienced a negative change in attitude toward a brand as some users uploaded exposing videos and further backed by other users in the comment sections. Over saturated product recall was pointed out to have affected negatively. Concurrently users' videos on brands and products have impacted positively too. On the other

hand, brands' direct engagement with consumers affected positively by posting relatable content. Some of them were intrigued after seeing how the products were actually sourced and made. They preferred to see regular consumers rather than hired professionals for product promotion and participant P4 clarified that if ads or brand promotion is *delivered by a real person or a normal person rather than um I guess paid actors, you know, um that I believe that more*. This reflects the statement regarding customers' reaction evoked by emotions and changes based on their feelings and not at all cognitive and rational; "A brand or product may make a consumer feel proud, excited, or confident. An ad may create feelings of amusement, disgust, or wonder". (Keller and Kotler, 2016, 192)

5.5.2. RO2: Another aim for this study is to identify if and how this platform has influenced users to purchase or consume products.

The result of Gen Z's buying behaviour after consuming content on TikTok showed that more than half of participants were motivated to buy products and have made several purchases. This pattern emerged significantly in every participant's interview and which could be why the literature section stated that #TikTokMadeMeBuy had over 3 millions views (TikTok, no date). Two participants confirmed various purchases made which have been mentioned in the above findings section while others have made small purchase decisions based on people's recommendations. This outcome of this study confirms that TikTok has influenced users to consume products as they felt recommendations and reviews were done by genuine people and

P4 emphasised that people giving genuine review would definitely work. Harry Pforzheimer (Cited in Keller and Kotler, 2016, p.147) stated that it's difficult to measure consumer satisfaction but “roughly 8 out of 10 if roughly eight out of 10 customers bought your product because of word-of-mouth that’s a pretty powerful tool . . .”

5.5.3. RO3: To further get an insight into their preferred type of content while interacting with a brand.

This younger cohort has been labelled to have the attention span of 8 seconds (Arthur, 2016) while Neilson (2019) report argued the issue to be quality of the content not the attention span. This could be reflected when asked about paid advertisements, participants said they just scroll or skip it unless ads can engage them in the first 5 seconds. One participant stated the issue regarding TikTok in connection with her reduced attention span. She quoted that “*TikTok has really made me feel and made me like, it's really hard for me to actually have an attention span like why attention span is so little now*” (P3). This indicates that the attention span of Gen Z could be said to be shorter but also if content can grab their attention in the first 5 seconds then they will continue to watch any content.

In regards to popular content on TikTok to interact with brands, participants liked Hashtag Challenges as other users can participate and engage more with the brand as this could help to get exposure the brands need. They prefer transitions when it comes to makeup and styling videos with catchy songs in the background. TikTok is popular amongst this group because the application is entertaining and fun, which is an important factor in any type of content.

## 5.6. CONCLUSION

The study showcased that TikTok could be a potential platform to market to the younger consumers but they expect promotions or advertisements to be subtle and entertaining. Users consume diversified content as the 'For You' section is flooded with different videos and not from certain people they follow. Brands need to be careful about the type of content they produce as provided earlier branded content should be able to grasp their attention in the first 5 seconds in order to have traction. Generation Z wants content to be funny but also to be transparent and authentic. Creators on the platform can influence their buying behaviour but most of the users prefer to see honest product review videos which are done by mostly 'normal' users rather than influencers or celebrities. If brands are looking to promote through this application, then the recommended product promotion is through challenges where various individuals can participate and engage with the brand which can help with brand awareness.

## 5.7. LIMITATIONS

The study showed some limitations which have been identified below:

**QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN:** The study exclusively used qualitative data collection technique and this study designs as stated by Kumar (2019, p. 203) are not as precise, exact, and well defined as quantitative research.

**SUBJECTIVE IN NATURE:** Due to the subjective nature of the study involving finding results centered around the participants' personal portrayal, descriptions and this could reflect skewed narration.

**OBSTRUCTED TO ONLY FEMALES:** The study only consisted of female participants due to the snowball method. The recommended participants were all females and the findings may vary when introduced to the opposite gender which is male participant.

**SAMPLE SIZE:** Another concern was the sample size and the study has not been tested in a large sample which was comparably small due to availability of participants and the number of sample sizes being only 10 could not signify all TikTok users.

**TIME CONSTRAINT:** Further it the qualitative approach is ideal to analyse the trends over time (Scott, 2012, p.42) but the data collection was performed only once and in a short span due to time restrictions. Results could be proven richer if study is done in sequences as social shifts over time could provide different findings.

## 5.8. IMPLICATIONS:

The assessment of limitations section of this research paper have helped identify certain recommendations for the academic and practical researchers. These can be implemented in the forthcoming projects as the current findings concluded in this study showed that there could be potential subsequent researches. The result of this study is purely based on personal interpretations and later the study could be reconsidered by conducting quantitative research to provide more numerical findings. As the study was skewed to females, researchers should utilise male participants to see if it generates new meanings. Furthermore, the size of the sample could

be bigger in order to derive concise and reliable results and lastly, the time horizon of the study could be longitudinal or done in series to validate the theory even further.

## 6. CHAPTER TIME MANAGEMENT:

The table below has been provided to outline the project timeline. The research journey and its tasks involved during the study have been summarised.

	<b>TASKS</b>	<b>START</b>	<b>END</b>
1	Organised first meeting with the supervisor	5-Jun	5-Jun
2	First meeting	17-Jun	17-Jun
3	Re-worked on the topic	18-Jun	9-May
4	Submission of first draft of new topic: Aims and Objectives	23-Jun	24-Jun
5	First Meeting Presentation	26-Jun	26-Jun
6	Introduction Draft Submitted	3-Jul	6-Jul
7	Literature Review Draft	20-Jul	30-Jul
8	Methodology Briefing Meeting	10-Aug	10-Aug
9	Contacted Participants	8-Jul	7-Aug
10	Interview Questions Finalised	3-Aug	3-Aug
11	Finalising consent form	1-Aug	3-Aug
12	Confirming participants	20-Jul	10-Aug
13	Get consent forms signed and ready	6-Aug	10-Aug
14	Interviews	8-Aug	13-Aug
15	Interview Transcriptions	8-Aug	13-Aug
16	Coding and content analysing	13-Aug	20-Aug
17	Data analysing	13-Aug	21-Aug
18	Finalise the main themes	20-Aug	21-Aug

19	2nd draft and revisions	25-Aug	30-Aug
20	Refine the paper	19-Aug	24-Aug
21	Make poster - Visual structure of the thesis	22-Aug	24-Aug
22	Finalise the thesis paper	24-Aug	24-Aug
23	<b>Submission</b>	25-Aug	25-Aug

Table 4. Project Timeline

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: NVIVO CODE BOOK

#### Code Book - Nodes

NAME	DESCRIPTION	FILES	REFERENCES
1. Brand or Product Discovery	Exploring if TikTok helped generation Z to discover new brands or products	4	6
2. Describe TikTok	Understanding their perceived image of TikTok and its functionality	5	9
a. Negative Description	Negative words to describe TikTok	8	10
b. Positive Description	Positive words to describe TikTok	9	20
3. Influenced buying behaviour	Impact of using TikTok in regards to product consumptions. Understanding if the platform influenced them to purchase products?	1	1
a. Influenced Purchase Intent		7	10
b. Not Influenced Purchase Intent		2	3
4. Perception of brands	This cohort had a change in attitude toward a brand after viewing brands or products on TikTok	0	0
a. Changed opinion		3	4
b. Negative		2	2
c. Positive		2	2
d. No Change in Opinion		2	3
5. Preferred Type of Content	To understand what type of content generation Z would like to engage with. What content brands should produce to make them interested.	10	24
6. Views on Paid Advertisements	Perception of paid advertisements on TikTok	10	22

*Figure 3. Nvivo Code Book*

## APPENDIX 2: NVIVO: IDENTIFYING THEMES

The screenshot displays the NVivo interface with a text document on the left and a theme identification sidebar on the right. The text is divided into interviewer questions and participant responses. The sidebar lists several themes with corresponding colored bars indicating their density in the text.

**INTERVIEWER:**  
**Can you tell me the experience when you saw the product? Like, what was it like?**

Participant 6:  
 I think it felt like when I was younger, and I used to watch infomercials, like on TV, and I think now the infomercials are in my hands <sup>P6</sup> | it's actual real people doing it. So it makes the product review seem a lot more credible than when you weren't TV having these actors say oh my god, this blender is The best now with like 16 year old kids who don't really it's not sorry for they're not doing sponsored content they have no reason to lie. Yeah, so I think it aided me in actually trying the product because I was seeing so much of it on TikTok,

**INTERVIEWER:**  
**Do you think TikTok made you like or dislike a brand or a product?**

Participant 6:  
 Uh I think TikTok made me like brands a lot more to come with me like Mac a lot more than I did, just because of the type of content that we're making on there. uh TikTok made me really into like a lot of skincare brands, which I really wasn't but because I've seen so many ordinary people doing it. I was like, oh, okay, it's like now I want to try it as well. So I think because I see ordinary people doing it, their reviews makes more sense in a lot of brands seem more approachable on TikTok than they do on Instagram, or on like Twitter. So I think TikTok has aided me Liking brands a lot more.

**INTERVIEWER:**  
**Can you tell me if using TikTok made you or influence you to buy your product?**

Participant 6:  
 Oh yeah all the time. It's really bad. So [laugh] skincare stuff. I'm like I just purchased new jeans from Zara because Tiktok Yeah, my bank account like hates it. It's just again like I keep reiterating. Same thing when you see a bunch of like people that you could be friends with trying a product, it This makes it seem more approachable and like, okay, it's not a waste of money because this person tried it and their views seem 1,000% more honest, than going online and reading my Katie 125 said that these jeans are terrible. And I think the fact that you can see how people style it and how people try things on. It's like a walking infomercial for you. So that's, I try everything on TikTok

**Theme Identification Sidebar:**

- Negative
- Brand Promotions
- Brand or Product Discovery
- Changed opinion
- Positive
- Product Review
- Perception of brands

**Coding Density:**

Figure 4. Nvivo Identifying Themes

### APPENDIX 3: EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS:

Hello Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study.

As you know, I am conducting interviews for my Master Thesis on TikTok as a marketing platform. Before I start with the interview process I would like to request you to sign the consent form which provides all the necessary information.

Please find attached the consent form and if everything is in order, you can just sign and send it back to me.

Kind regards,  
Martina Ngangom

*Figure 5. Sample Email To Participants*

## APPENDIX 4: INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

### **Information Form and Consent Sheet**

#### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS**

*'How TikTok has impacted Generation Z's buying behaviour and their relationship with brands'*

You are being asked to take part in a qualitative research study for my Master's thesis to understand your insights into TikTok and its influence on brand(s) consumption. This study is supervised by Ieva Masevic and the project has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee and Dublin Business School. This form will provide information which will help you understand the purpose of the study and what it pertains. Please read the following instructions.

#### **PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY**

In this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview to explore your views and opinions on TikTok as a marketing platform. The aim of this study is to identify if usage of this social media application has had any impact on your buying behaviour i.e. if this platform has influenced you to purchase or consume products and to investigate any positive or negative change in your attitude in relation to a brand.

#### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU PARTICIPATE**

This interview will be conducted over a video call and you will be asked several questions in regards to TikTok. The video interview will be recorded and you have the right to withdraw or end the interview anytime. You will not be pressured to respond to any questions which you deem unfit.

#### **TIME COMMITMENT**

The length of the first interview is anticipated to range between 30 mins to 1 hour. You may be asked to further participate in the second interview, which you may accept or decline.

## PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation required from you. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn/destroyed. You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you. A full de-briefing will be given before and after the study.

## CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

The data collection does not contain any personal information about you. The interview will be recorded and the data will be used in my dissertation e.g., presentation at conferences, publication, etc. and the recordings made during the interview may eventually be donated to an archive at Dublin Business School. You are not required to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

I Martina Ngangom / and Ieva Masevic will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact my supervisor at [ieva.masevic@dbs.ie](mailto:ieva.masevic@dbs.ie) or call on (01) 417 7500.

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, (3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), and (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature/Initials

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Name

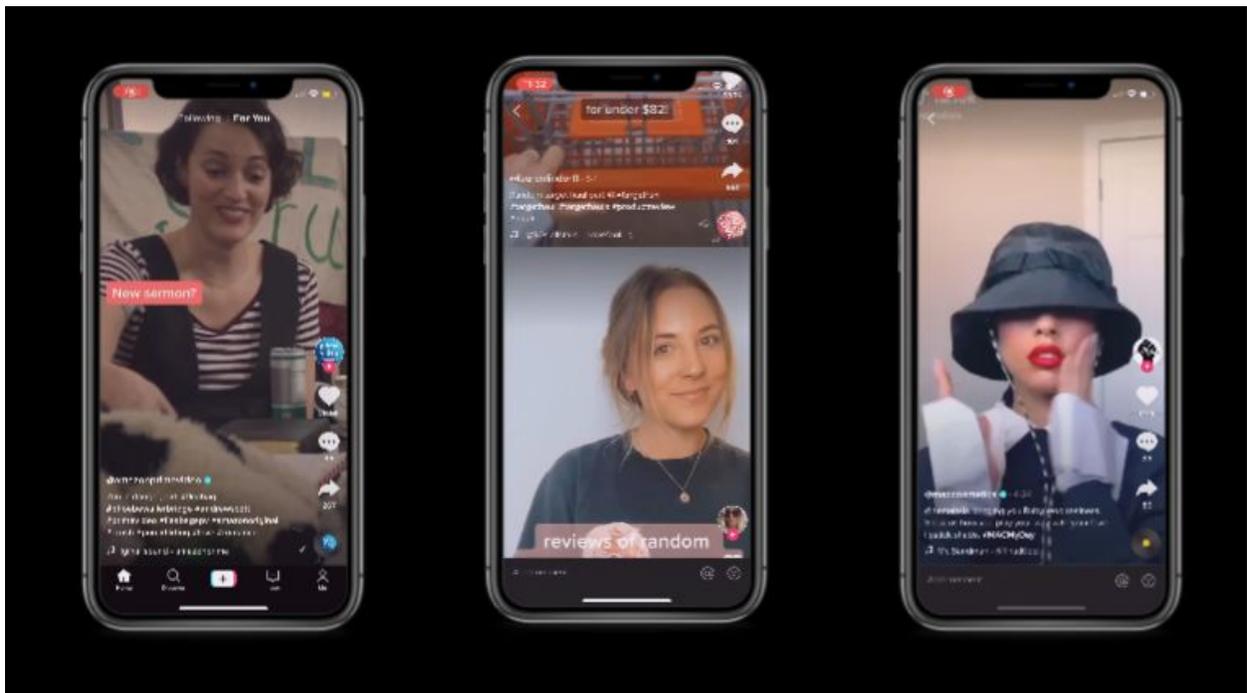
\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Name (Printed)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is TikTok to you?
2. When was the last time you used TikTok? And how was your experience?
3. Could you provide 3 words to describe TikTok? Please explain why you have chosen these words?
4. What brands or influencers do you follow on TikTok and why?
5. Can you think of a time when you discovered a new brand or product on TikTok?
6. Can you explain it? If not, what will help you in the discovery?
7. Do you think TikTok made you like or dislike a brand or a product? Please state your reasons.
8. Can you tell me if using TikTok made you or influenced you to buy a product? Please elaborate.
9. What are the product promotions you have encountered on TikTok? Please share your experience?
10. What kind of content draws your attention toward a brand?
11. Please explain what you like or dislike about TikTok? You can give a comparison with other social media platforms if you'd like?

## APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUE: TIKTOK VIDEOS



*Figure 5. TikTok Videos Shown to Participants*