

The Use of TikTok Social Media in Influencing Generation Z Online Purchasing Behaviour in Malaysia

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Abstract

TikTok is one of the world's fastest-growing social media platforms, with over 170 million downloads, making it the most downloaded app in the world in 2022. Almost half of TikTok's user base comprises young people aged 18 to 24. TikTok has been used by many sellers and companies to spread their advertising and marketing campaigns in order to sell their products due to its large number of users and exponential popularity. However, purchases made by the younger generation were made impulsively and simply by following social trends, resulting in unnecessary purchases. This behaviour is seen as widespread, particularly among the younger generation. The purpose of this research is to look into the factors that influence Gen Z's purchasing habits. The data is gathered using a qualitative method that includes a focus group discussion. A semi-structured interview with 5-6 people was divided into two groups. Despite the fact that the products are not required, the majority of respondents said they would buy them after viewing a product or service-related video post on TikTok. The findings offer recommendations for future TikTok research as well as an opportunity for relevant authorities to design appropriate frameworks to reduce impulsive purchases among Gen Z.

Keywords: TikTok, purchasing behaviour, generation Z, marketing, advertising

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social media applications has radically changed the way humans interact with each other. Starting off primarily as a platform to socialize and online networking, today social media platforms are viewed as one of the most powerful tools in the mass communication sphere. TikTok is viewed as one of the fastest-growing social media applications worldwide. However, it has been observed that the use of TikTok has caused users, especially young generations, to purchase a certain product or service impulsively. According to Ying and Chein (2021), impulse purchases are "unplanned purchases that are the result of stimulus and made on the spot." An article published in CNBC stated that 49% of users of TikTok have reported that they have made a purchase as a direct result of seeing a product advertised, promoted, or reviewed on the platform (Adamczyk, 2021). According to a survey conducted by Adweek and Morning Consult, 15% of all adults and 36% of members of Generation Z have made purchases as a direct result of using TikTok (Lundstrom, 2021). This study aims to investigate the factors that determine the purchasing behaviour of members of Generation Z while using TikTok.

A study conducted by Genoveva (2022) stated that social media has expanded from social networking sites, it also serves as an effective and efficient promotional medium for business actors, particularly SMEs looking to introduce their brands to the marketplace. The citizens of the digital age are utilizing social media applications not only to socialize, but also to be widely as a source for news, and entertainment, and today social media applications such as TikTok are largely utilized by marketers and advertisers to sell their products and services.

TikTok originated from China, wholly owned by a Chinese tech giant called Bytedance. Initially, TikTok was first launched to people in China in 2016 and called “Douyin” or in English “shaking sound” (Hassan, 2020). Two years later, in 2018, after a strategic merging with another China media social media service Musical.ly, the Chinese-owned app was introduced to the global stage known as TikTok. When it was first introduced, the video-sharing app was focusing primarily on lip-syncing and dancing videos. In essence, TikTok is a short video format that allows users to create interesting content with music, exciting sounds, and visual effects, which is most appealing to the younger generation, especially Gen Z.

LITERATURE REVIEW

TikTok: The emergence of another giant app in the social media platform sphere

According to the Digital 2022 April Global Statshot Report, there are 4.65 billion social media users on the planet (Walsh, 2022). That equates to 58.7 percent of the global population, with many using social media as their primary source of information. Labeled as the ‘new kid on the block’ by industry experts, TikTok is reported to have surpassed the top 5 giant social media apps (Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Snapchat) in terms of growth rate speed. As reported by Dellato (2021). TikTok announced that it hit 1 billion monthly active users, years ahead of Facebook and Instagram, making it one of the most widely used and fastest-growing social media platforms.

At first glimpse, TikTok's features and elements appeared to be similar to its giant competitors and other established social media platforms. The growing trend in social media has seen the rise of video creation and sharing in live-streaming and short looping videos available on giant social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. However, there is one significant element that distinguishes TikTok from other social media platforms; the prevalence of “the algorithm”. A study conducted by Bhandari and Bimo (2022) stated that TikTok, in contrast to other platforms, places an unprecedented emphasis on algorithmically driven feeds and experiences. The user experience is transparently, unambiguously, and explicitly driven by the “For You” algorithm. TikTok is the only platform to place its algorithm at the centre of the social experience it generates; the algorithm determines the type of video content the user is exposed to, and viewing this content constitutes the majority of the platform's experience. Consequently, the “For You” page is highly customized for each user, and no two users will see identical pages. It narrows its recommendations to niche interests, making them extremely specific. As a result, it encourages users to continue consuming content by virtue of its addictive nature, making TikTok an unstoppable cultural force in society faster than any other platform in history.

An article written by Geysler (2022) has also highlighted TikTok’s staggering growth. In 2021, TikTok surpassed YouTube in terms of average monthly time spent on the platform, with users spending 24.5 hours per month on average (Geysler, 2022). Against the backdrop of a highly competitive and crowded social media market, TikTok continues to create milestones in its global footprint and has become one of the strongest marketing tools for brands and businesses to connect with younger audiences, particularly Gen Z.

TikTok in Malaysia

According to an article published by Digital Business Lab (2021). 86 percent of the population of Malaysia utilizes social media as of January 2021. It was a 24 percent increase from 2016 when social media users made up only 62 percent of Malaysia's total population. Malaysia, as a developing country, is seen as experiencing the digital transformation bandwagon, with almost 70 percent of Malaysians (Digital Business Lab, 2021) using the internet on a daily basis to read news, watch videos, and network with friends via social media. The massive increase in numbers and percentage of usage in social media is a result of digital technology proliferation that has subsequently led to accessible internet access as well as affordable technological devices such as smartphones, computers, and tablets.

Data Reportal stated that early in 2022, Byte Dance's advertising resources revealed that TikTok had 14.59 million users aged 18 or older in Malaysia (Kemp, 2022). Following this report, it is also imperative to note that TikTok is the top mobile application in Malaysia based on the number of downloads (Digital Business Lab, 2021). This impressive data indicates that TikTok has become a popular platform among Malaysians especially the younger generation or Gen Z. The rapid growth and popularity among young Malaysians have made it the prime platform and choice for businesses to reach their targeted younger audience.

Another recent news report in the online news portal (Ibañez, 2022) stated that TikTok officially launched TikTok Shop in Malaysia in February 2022. TikTok Shop is the eCommerce arm of TikTok, which aims to assist small business owners to sell their products or services without a physical outlet which usually requires high investment capital. Digital advancement has yet again radically changed the way businesses operate, with a gradual transition from a purely brick-and-mortar model to an online platform. A study conducted by Ngangom (2020) highlighted that TikTok has become a cultural phenomenon, with 42 percent of its users between the ages of 18 and 24, making Gen Z a profitable market segment for brands and businesses. This new feature of TikTok is definitely positive news for SMEs in Malaysia. However, it is contributing to a worrying cultural phenomenon where more and more younger generations get hooked up on branded or user-generated content that influences their purchasing behaviour in an unhealthy manner.

Gen Z in Malaysia

According to the Department of Statistics of Malaysia (DOSM), the population of Malaysia is estimated at 32.7 million in 2021, up from 32.6 million in 2020 with an annual growth rate of 0.2 percent (Department of Statistics Malaysia Official Portal, 2021). Additionally, a study conducted by Tjiptono, Khan, Yeong, and Kunchambo (2020) shared that Gen Z is currently the largest age group in Malaysia, accounting for 29 percent of the total population and having a monthly disposable income of USD 330 million. Therefore, Gen Z has become the prime targeted segment for many businesses and brands in order for their business to grow and expand.

A study conducted by Ng, Ho, Lim, Chong, and Latiff (2021). stated that Gen Z is those who were born from 1997 onwards. However, it is also imperative to note that in Malaysia there is a limited study that determines the actual age group. Today, Gen Z is 25 years of age and is classified as a tech-savvy generation. Generation Z is Malaysia's first generation to have been exposed to digital technologies since their childhood, and they have proven to be tech-savvy and adaptable to rapid technological advancement (Ng et al., 2021). They are considered the new breed of digital citizens. This group, which has 98 percent Internet penetration and 99 percent smartphone penetration (Ng et al., 2021) are early adopters of rapidly changing technology, and their lives are strongly linked to social media, with extensive use of Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Reddit, and related products and services. Members of Gen Z are introduced to technology at a young age by their parents, who are highly educated compared to Baby Boomers.

Online Purchasing Behaviour of Gen Z in Malaysia

Purchasing or buying behaviour is defined as "a process that leads to the satisfaction of needs and wants through the use of inputs and their application through process and actions". Numerous factors are believed to have some level of influence on customer purchasing decisions as part of consumer buying behaviour. Today, consumers' needs and desires are dynamic and evolving based on many contributing factors, especially market and cultural trends. Understanding, knowing, and meeting consumer needs and desires in a delicate and insightful manner remains critical to an effective marketing strategy and subsequent business success.

A study conducted by Ting et al., Ting, Lim, de Run, Koh, and Sahdan (2018) highlighted that for many years marketers and business practitioners have used demographic and psychographic variables to segment and target customers. As a result, Gen Z, known as a digital-savvy population, has been targeted as the main revenue contributor in the E-commerce marketplace. Tjipano Khan, Yeong, and Kunchambo (2020) pointed out in their study that the majority of online shoppers in Malaysia are from the younger generation, with 52 percent of those aged 25 to 34, which represents the group Gen Z.

Ng et al., (2021) further noted that one of the most important market segments for retailers to target is Gen Z, who has been labelled as the generation of digital natives. In sum, as the country and other parts of the world continue to embrace the digitization of the global economy, Gen Z's online purchasing behaviour will be catalyzed by the latest offering of digital technologies. Hence, this study aims to investigate the usage of TikTok social media in influencing Gen Z's online purchasing behaviour by identifying how Tik Tok influences the purchasing behaviour of Gen Z in Malaysia and exploring the factors that contributed to the purchasing behaviour of Gen Z in Malaysia.

Research Framework



Figure 1: Research conceptual framework of the use of social media Tik Tok in influencing Gen Z purchasing behaviour

Generational Cohort Theory

In the attempt to understand how social media platforms such as TikTok influence Gen Z's online purchasing behaviour, it is important to approach the subject using the Generational Cohort theory. A study conducted by Gentina (2020) focusing on Gen Z in Asia, outlined the age ranges of each generational category; Baby Boomers were born approximately between 1950 and 1964, Generation X was born approximately between 1965 and 1979, and Generation Y was born approximately between 1984 and 1988 and Generation Z or digital natives born after 1995. However, it is important to note that the age group is diverse and may be categorized differently across different countries.

Generational Cohort theory, proposed by Inglehart in 1977, holds that populations can be divided into similar groups of people, or generations, based on their values, norms, characteristics, expectations, experience, history, lifestyle, and major events in their lives (Lim, & Parker, 2020). Gentina (2020) echoed this statement. In the socio-cognitive or sociological sense, generation refers to a group of people who were born during the same time period and experienced unique events as a result of their shared age situation in history. For example, Baby Boomers experienced the Vietnam War. Millennials experienced 9/11 as well as the financial crisis. The Coronavirus crisis has led to the imposition of a movement control order that witnessed the closing of schools, quarantines, and high unemployment rates could be a life-changing world event for Gen Z (Gentina, 2020).

Dabija and Lung (2018) stated that Gen Z's generation cannot imagine the world without online communication. Thus, the generational cohort is seen as pivotal in understanding the aspect of purchasing behaviour, essentially amongst Gen Z. In sum, the generational cohort has been largely used by marketers and advertisers to understand but importantly to fulfill the evolving demands of consumers, especially against the backdrop of social media proliferation.

User-Generated Content and Information

One of the most vital, and perhaps the 'game-changer' feature available on social media platforms, is user-generated content (UGC) and information. Users in social media platforms are able to engage and participate in any content uploaded, whether by leaving a comment, hitting the button 'like', or now the trending exercise of creating a personal product review by the mass customers. A study conducted by Colicev et al. (2019) described UGC as brand-related content or posts created by users. Another study conducted by Ngangom (2020) pointed out that UGC is created by ordinary people who voluntarily contribute data, information, or media that is then displayed to others in a useful or entertaining manner, typically on the web. For instance, McDonald's posted an advertisement for its latest Samurai burger on its TikTok official account, and TikTok users commented on the post. Another user followed by posting a video of the mouth-watering burger and provided a personal review on how the burger tasted. This post can be simply a sharing exercise, a normed practice seen amongst today's social media users.

Mayrhofer, Matthes, Einwiller, and Naderer (2020) in their study said that when comparing a typical advertisement and brand posts, UGC has resulted in higher purchase intention. This is due to the fact that this content is being shared by regular people without any commercial motives. Hence it is viewed that UGC is trustworthy, reliable, and authentic as compared to the traditional method of marketing or advertising content.

The Role of TikTok on Impulse Purchases

The strength of TikTok is largely attributed to the short video feature that focuses on entertainment, educative, informative, and raw content that is produced by its large number of users. According to a study conducted by Djafarova and Bowes (2021) when users have fun while using the app, they are more likely to make hasty purchases, because this encourages them to bypass the evaluation phase of the decision-making process. This has an effect on the purchasing process. Another study which was conducted by Fadillah and Kusumawati (2021) stated that after seeing electronic word-of-mouth or eWOM, consumers frequently engage in behaviour relating to unplanned purchases or purchases made on the spur of the moment. The use of TikTok serves as a stimulant, which leads to impulsive purchases.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth

Similar to the traditional concept of word-of-mouth, electronic word-of-mouth or eWOM is viewed as one of the most vital factors contributing to the purchase intention of mass audiences. A study conducted by Hasena and Sakapurnama (2021) defined eWOM as a notification, whether positive or negative, where this notification is made using the internet by consumers about a product or company. Another study by Ying, Jianqiu, Akram, and Rasool (2021) investigated the effects of eWOM on social media (i.e., friends' recommendations posted on social media) and shopping websites (i.e., anonymous reviews) and discovered that eWOM information on shopping has a greater impact on online shopping intentions. When consumers want to gather information about a product, they will frequently look for reviews or information about the product online before making a purchase. Against the backdrop of rapid digital advancement, the vast majority of people in today's world prefer to use social media as a platform for acquiring and exchanging information about a product that can be done online.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative analysis as a method to collect accurate data and findings in an attempt to achieve the research objectives. According to a study conducted by Kamal (2019), when conducting a qualitative study researchers are interested in identifying how people describe their own experiences, "how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences". Additionally, Mohajan (2018) further affirmed that qualitative research is a type of social action that focuses on how people interpret and make sense of their experiences in order to better understand individuals' social realities. Hence, performing a qualitative method for this research study is deemed effective in exploring and identifying the variables that may have a direct or indirect relationship with Gen Z's purchasing behaviour on TikTok.

Research Design

This research study uses a phenomenological research design to investigate Gen Z's purchasing behaviour on one of the most used social media platforms, TikTok. Phenomenological research design is being used to investigate a person's lived experience and discover meanings from it as noted by Rutberg and Bouikidis (2018). For instance, in understanding the phenomenology of Gen Z's consumption of TikTok and how it relates to their purchasing behaviour, the phenomenological research design is useful for investigating their attitude and practices. Tomaszewski, Zarestky, and Gonzalez (2020) stated that phenomenology is most commonly used in studies aimed at understanding the essence of a specific group of people's lived experiences. Thus, in the exploration of investigating the purchasing behaviour of a group of young people i.e. Generation Z, the selected research design is deemed as a practical tool.

In addition, this research study will employ focus group discussion to obtain data for this research study. Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, and Mukherjee (2018). pointed out that focus group discussions are a popular qualitative method for gaining a thorough understanding of social issues. The method seeks data from a selected group of individuals rather than a statistically representative sample of a larger population (Nyumba et al., 2018). Subsequently, this research study will apply a single focus group focusing on interactive discussion of a topic by a group of all participants and a team of facilitators in one specific location, either physical or online mode.

Method of Data Collection

The data derived from this research study is collected via a semi-structured interview method using the video call conferencing platform Zoom. Online meeting is preferable due to its flexibility of location and space. A study conducted by Evans and Lewis (2018) provides a brief description of the semi-structured interview; qualitative semi-structured interviews can be used to consider participants' experiences, meanings, and reality, as well as to investigate how these experiences, realities, and meanings may be informed by discourses, assumptions, or ideas that exist in the larger society. Urban residents are selected for this research study to examine purchasing behaviour on TikTok, due to the fact that they are perceived to possess higher purchasing power compared to those residing in the rural area. The selection criteria of the informants are listed below:

- Age ranges from 18-25 years old and/or belong to Generation Z age group
- Resides in Malaysia
- A regular or active user of TikTok (use TikTok on a daily basis and/or more than 2 hours in a day)
- Combination of both gender male and female
- Have encountered shopping experiences while using TikTok/Have purchased something via the TikTok platform (TikTok Shop, link to other online retail platforms Shopee, Lazda, Zalora, etc)

Interview Protocol**Table 1:** Interview protocol

How Does Tiktok Influence The Purchasing Behaviour Of Gen Z In Malaysia?		
Items	Questions	Source
Q1	How long have you been using TikTok and what made you download the app?	Wang (2022)
Q2	Can you tell me what you like most about TikTok and why?	Araujo et al., (2022)
Q3	What usually would excite or catch your attention when watching a video on TikTok? (Entertaining, fun, informative, educative). For instance, when you see a post that is related to a brand or product, what entices you to watch the video until the end	Araujo et al., (2022)
Q4	What made you purchase a product after you watched a video(s) posted on TikTok?	Ngangom (2020)
What Are The Factors Influencing Gen Z Purchasing Behaviour In Malaysia?		
Items	Questions	Source
Q1	What are the criteria of selection when you purchase an item from the video that you watched on TikTok? Example: product reviews by an influencer, entertaining branded content, random people, etc	Tram (2022)
Q2	Do you usually seek secondary sources (additional information) when purchasing something after watching the video on TikTok? What/who are these sources?	Ngangom (2020)
Q3	Does fashion or social trends influence you when you purchase a product when/after watching videos on TikTok? For instance, drinking expensive coffee after you watched many people posted videos enjoying coffee, etc	Hart (2022)
Q4	What/Who are your most trusted sources when you come across a new product video from TikTok?	Herrando et al., (2019)

Regular user, someone famous, friends, random people, Google (internet search)?

Q5	What is your opinion about impulse purchases in general? Do you feel regret about purchasing something that you initially didn't intend to buy?	Djafarova, & Bowes (2021) Fadillah & Kusumawati (2021)
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Thematic analysis is being used by the researcher to identify relevant patterns and specific themes from the data gathered. Evans and Lewis (2018) indicated that thematic analysis is practical because it allows the researcher to investigate, from a constructionist methodological standpoint, the meanings that individuals attach to civic participation, its significance in their lives, and, more broadly, their social constructions of it. Based on the findings, the researcher found multiple key elements that construct a pattern with the data collected. The analysis is detailed below:

1) **How does TikTok influence the purchasing behaviour of Gen Z in Malaysia?**

Most respondents downloaded the app in 2020 during Movement Control Order (MCO) when Covid 19 hit and stated that they downloaded TikTok because many of their friends started to use it. Apart from that the respondents also commented that the app is being widely used globally. The popularity of the app has become one of the reasons why many younger generations download and spend many hours on TikTok. Hence, TikTok is able to influence the purchasing behaviour of Gen Z due to its popularity and the large base number of users, locally and internationally. The group interview responses stated that:

“Everybody is on TikTok now. I started to notice TikTok because many videos were uploaded on Instagram which was taken from TikTok” (PR1-Q1, G1, 2022).

“During Covid 19, there were not many things to do. So I spent most of my time online and decided to download the app. Compared to other apps, I like TikTok the most because of many entertaining videos from different people around the world” (PR1-Q1, G3, 2022).

TikTok offers a variety of content that is entertaining, educative, and informative yet is genuine and raw as compared to other social media platforms. Raw in this context was defined as an unedited and non-pretentious type of video. All respondents stated that videos uploaded on TikTok have a combination of multiple interesting aspects. The group interview responses highlighted:

“What I truly love about TikTok is the videos uploaded are very entertaining and funny but there is also useful information shared. For instance, I got to know about good nutrients contained in a cooking video shared by this random user, I ended up going to the store and purchasing a similar product” (PR1-Q2, G2, 2022)

“TikTok is informative because I like to watch different videos teaching ‘how to’ - this can be some random video giving tips on how to fix broken stuff or how to plant properly. I went to look for the exact product used in the video in Shopee. I didn't realize that I was on TikTok for more than 3 hours sometimes” (PR1-Q2, G3, 2022)

Respondents shared the same views regarding TikTok's main feature. The short video format managed to attract their attention because it's entertaining, fun, and creative. They also felt that it was addictive because the content catered to their preferences and liking due to its algorithm and 'For You' feature.

“My attention span duration is maxed at 3 seconds. If you can’t attract me within those 3 seconds, I will quickly move on to the next video. On TikTok, I usually get hooked up because all the videos I watch are what I like to see. I think it's the algorithm” (PR1-Q3, G1, 2022)

“Everyone seems creative and funny on TikTok. That’s why TikTok is so entertaining. If I go into the ‘For You’ tab, I will find more funny videos. I love the fact on TikTok, you can upload anything at all, goofy and funny stuff usually gets more attention” (PR1-Q3, G2, 2022)

TikTok has gradually become an information hub for Generation Z because it incorporates elements of entertainment while simultaneously encouraging users to produce their own original content by providing them with tools to do so. All respondents mentioned that they are highly influenced to make the purchase after watching videos that are created by another user, as opposed to brand-related posts or paid content by celebrities, KOL (Key Opinion Leader), or influencers.

“I always come across videos posted by another user sharing experiences and personal comments about the product she just bought. This personal product review not just attracts my attention to watch the video, but I'm tempted to personally try too because the feedback about the product is genuine and not hard-selling” (PR1-Q4-G1, 2022)

“McDonald's did a promo on their newly launched beverage on TikTok recently, I think it was their new ice blended. Many people were commenting on the taste of the drink there, some were posting videos of the drinks on their TikTok accounts. I immediately plan to get it too” (PR1-Q4-G1, 2022)

2) What are the factors influencing Gen Z’s purchasing behaviour in Malaysia?

Most respondents agreed that their selection criteria when purchasing a product is genuine content or reviews made by random people. Some respondents stated that TikTok videos normally featured the soft-selling concept that provides useful information about the product or service which makes it trustworthy and credible.

“Before I decide to make a purchase after watching videos on TikTok, I will make sure I read the comment section and see the conversation other people had about the product. These comments are mostly genuine because they have tried the product” (PR2-Q1, G1, 2022)

All respondents stated that they would seek additional information about a product or service before deciding to ensure that the product or service meets their expectations. Almost all respondents stated that they opt for secondary sources for information and reviews through another user or buyer, Google search, and friends.

“I will always make sure that I search for any relevant information about the product after I watch some interesting product video posted on TikTok. The easiest way to do this is to go into Shopee or Lazada and read the review section. All these people will post reviews after they have used the product, so I trust them although I don't know them” (PR2-Q2, G3, 2022)

All respondents stated that they are heavily influenced by fashion or social trends when making a purchase decision. The reasons are largely due to curiosity and the feeling of inclusion and self-belonging among social friends and society.

“Although I feel that I'm not easily influenced, when it comes to something viral or trending that I saw on TikTok, I have this urge to try it out of curiosity. What made people so crazy about it? So I will immediately try it out” (PR2-Q3, G3, 2022)

“I was watching a few viral videos that contained #TikTokmademebuyit. All my friends started to talk about it, and I went and tried the new viral coffee although I'm not a coffee drinker. I wanted to share my comments and opinions about the new coffee with my friends” (PR2-Q3, G2, 2022).

All respondents agreed that their most trusted source is the review made by another user before making a purchase after being directed by a video watched on TikTok.

“The first thing that I will see before I click ‘ok’ to purchase, is reading reviews and comments made by another user. I think this is the most useful feature ever invented because you want to hear from another user, not from the seller (PR2-Q4, G1, 2022)

In the context of TikTok, many respondents agreed that TikTok has the power to lead users into impulsive purchases. This is largely contributed by the combination of multiple aspects of TikTok as an application. All respondents stated that they feel less regret purchasing something they don't need because it feeds their desires at the given time and fulfills the satisfaction of buying. Additionally, although many products were bought unplanned, those products were deemed useful for future use.

“Definitely TikTok has the power to influence me in a certain way. It’s not rocket science. It's pretty much the same as how YouTube, Instagram or Twitter can change your perception or behaviour about or towards something. This is just what social media does to people” (PR2-Q5, G3, 2022)

“I feel TikTok is ‘poisonous’ compared to other apps like Instagram because it leads you to exactly what you like to see. You buy what you think you want, not what you need. It’s definitely the algorithm of TikTok (PR2-Q5, G3, 2022)

“I feel impulse purchase is just a temporary state of feeling. Most of the time, although I bought items that I don't plan to buy, I felt satisfied with owning the items because I want to try the product and experience it myself” (PR2-Q5, G1, 2022)

Table 2: Thematic analysis table

How does TikTok influence the purchasing behaviour of Gen Z in Malaysia?	
General Theme	Sub-Theme
Social trends	Popularity
Content variation	Entertaining Educative Informative
Addictive	Entertaining Fun Creative

What are the factors influencing Gen Z’s purchasing behaviour in Malaysia?

General Theme	Sub-Theme
Genuinity	Trust Credibility
Purchasing decision	Secondary sources
Social trends	Curiosity Inclusion Self belonging
Impulse purchase	Social trends Buying satisfaction

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results and findings have strongly indicated that TikTok has emerged as one of the social and cultural phenomena in Malaysia, particularly among Gen Z. All respondents have stated that they use TikTok not only to pass the time but it is also being used as one of the primary sources of information especially when it comes to purchasing a product or services. The distinguishing feature of TikTok is the combination of entertainment elements while encouraging users to create their own creative content. This has set TikTok apart from other giant social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook as many respondents stated they spend more time on TikTok as compared to other social media platforms. As a result, many users, particularly Gen Z, are highly engaged and entertained while spending time on the application. This is largely contributed by a large number of users and its dynamic feature of algorithm that directs users to content based on their preferences and likings.

Another unique feature of TikTok that has a decisive impact on the purchasing behaviour of Gen Z is the ‘For You’ page. TikTok’s ‘For You’ feature is operating on hyper-relevant and personalized content that in turn, has an undeniable influence on the users' purchasing decisions and their relationships with various brands.

From the research, it is also interesting to note that Gen Z trusts other users consisting of a combination of random users, or friends when deciding to purchase a certain product or service. In previous research and general observation, influencers or key opinion leaders (KOL) were seen as major contributors to influencing purchasing behaviour of digital citizens. However, the findings from this research have provided a refreshing perspective. Most respondents stated that this is largely due to the honest or genuine reviews made by the users that are not related to any commercial gain or are profit-oriented.

Almost all respondents have stated that TikTok offers a unique and enjoyable experience due to its entertaining, educative, and informative nature in a short video format. TikTok is able to elevate its users by harnessing the power of positive emotions. Generation Z wants brands to use the platform to create experiences and campaigns that are invigorating, and they want those feelings of joy and euphoria to linger with them even after they have purchased the product. TikTok is the only platform where such a sustained wave of positivity can be found. Hence, the impact on purchasing behaviour while spending time on TikTok has a high positive correlation.

It is imperative to note that this study only focuses on the purchasing behaviour of Gen Z on TikTok. Future studies are recommended to analyze purchasing behaviour of the mass market across multiple social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram which are known to be the prominent platforms and ubiquitous in the shaping of consumption and purchasing behaviour of the general society.

Based on the findings from this research study, it is also notable to mention that impulsive purchasing behaviour among Gen Z is not viewed as a critical or worrying stage, as most purchases were not expensive or high-end items. However, government agencies such as MCMC or any relevant authorities must continue to perform close monitoring and observation to ensure the younger generations are not trapped in scamming or illegal commerce activities exploited on TikTok. This study is pivotal for advertisers and marketers to take advantage of TikTok's powerful and collective influence in designing their future social media marketing campaigns.

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