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How Brands Go Viral: An Analysis of Successful Brand Marketing
on Tik Tok with Gen Z

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to examine the unique relationship between Generation Z and the social media platform TikTok, especially in regard to its marketing function. A literature review, survey, and interviews were conducted to examine the social media habits of Generation Z and the attitudes they have towards these platforms. The data suggests that highly visual platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, are more widely used and trusted by members of the generation in question. These trends indicate that brands wishing to market toward this generation should become proficient in the use of these platforms. This research seeks to examine the necessity of TikTok as a main tactic of a brand's marketing mix when targeting Generation Z as a consumer audience.

Keywords: TikTok, Generation Z, marketing

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites, now more popularly known as social media, have played a part in how their users interact with the world since SixDegrees.com was started in 1996. Now, almost three decades later, the internet hosts many social media sites—some with user counts in the billions. A social media platform is defined as, “a form of electronic communication, including, but not limited to websites for social networking and microblogging, through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content(Law Insider, 2018).” These sites are accessible to their users 24/7 and provide an endless stream of content produced by friends, celebrities, organizations, and advertisers. Research shows that there are 4.55 million active social media users around the world, equating to about 57.6% of the global population. Facebook has 2.895 billion monthly active users, Youtube has around 2 billion, and TikTok has 1 billion monthly active users, with 50 million of these users logging on daily.

TikTok is the social media platform this thesis will focus on due to its potential to impact the attitudes of members belonging to Generation Z. The app has grown rapidly in popularity and is continuing a rapid growth rate due to its highly personalized algorithm and addicting content format. TikTok is quickly establishing itself as an essential component of the marketing mix, especially for those wishing to target the newest wave of consumers. Research supports the necessity of successful integration of TikTok content into a brand’s marketing strategy if seeking to target an audience consisting of members of Generation Z. Also, in relation to other social media platforms, TikTok usage is becoming more popular among this generation. Figure 1.1 shows the usage growth of this platform over 3 years against Instagram and Snapchat

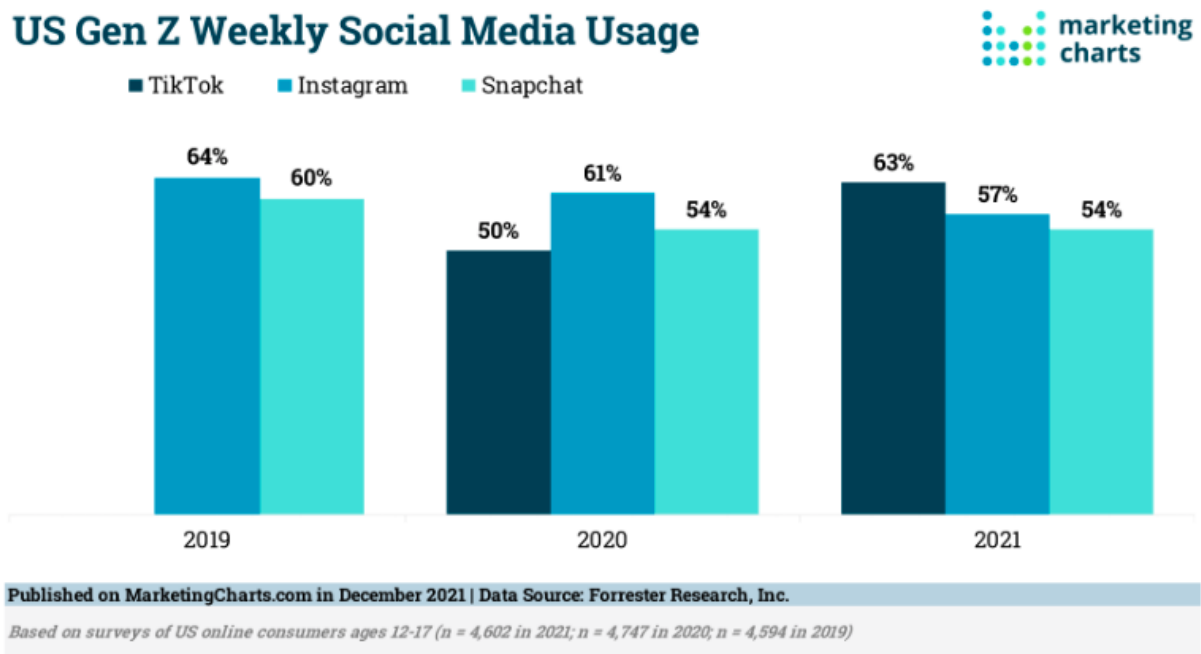


Figure 1.1 Generation Z Social Media Usage in the U.S. Over Time

Owned and operated by a Chinese company called ByteDance, TikTok was released internationally in September 2017. The design of the TikTok app is based on the design of Douyin, a Chinese social media site with the same functionality which was released in China by the same operating company in September 2016. Before TikTok existed under its current name it operated as Musical.ly, which ByteDance purchased before merging this software with Douyin to create TikTok. The TikTok app is now available in 155 countries and 75 different languages. TikTok's mission statement is, "to capture and present the world's creativity, knowledge, and precious life moments, directly from the mobile phone. TikTok enables everyone to be a creator, and encourages users to share their passion and creative expression through their videos." TikTok is a video-sharing social networking app used to produce and publish short-form videos ranging from 15 seconds to three minutes. The videos produced and shared on this platform cover many content types and subjects including dance, comedy, and education.

As of late 2021, TikTok had around 80 million active users located in the United States. Of these 80 million users, 60% are between the ages of 16 and 24 years old (Moshin, 2022). On average, US users spend 68 minutes on the app per day, with an average session duration of 10.85 minutes. Therefore, brands have a window of 68 minutes each day in which they know their target audience could experience their message on the TikTok app. More than half of U.S. Tik Tok users belong to Generation Z which means any message promoted through this platform is statistically likely to reach a member of this age group. Brands that consider this demographic as part of their target audience have a good chance of their message being successfully transmitted to its intended recipient through this medium.

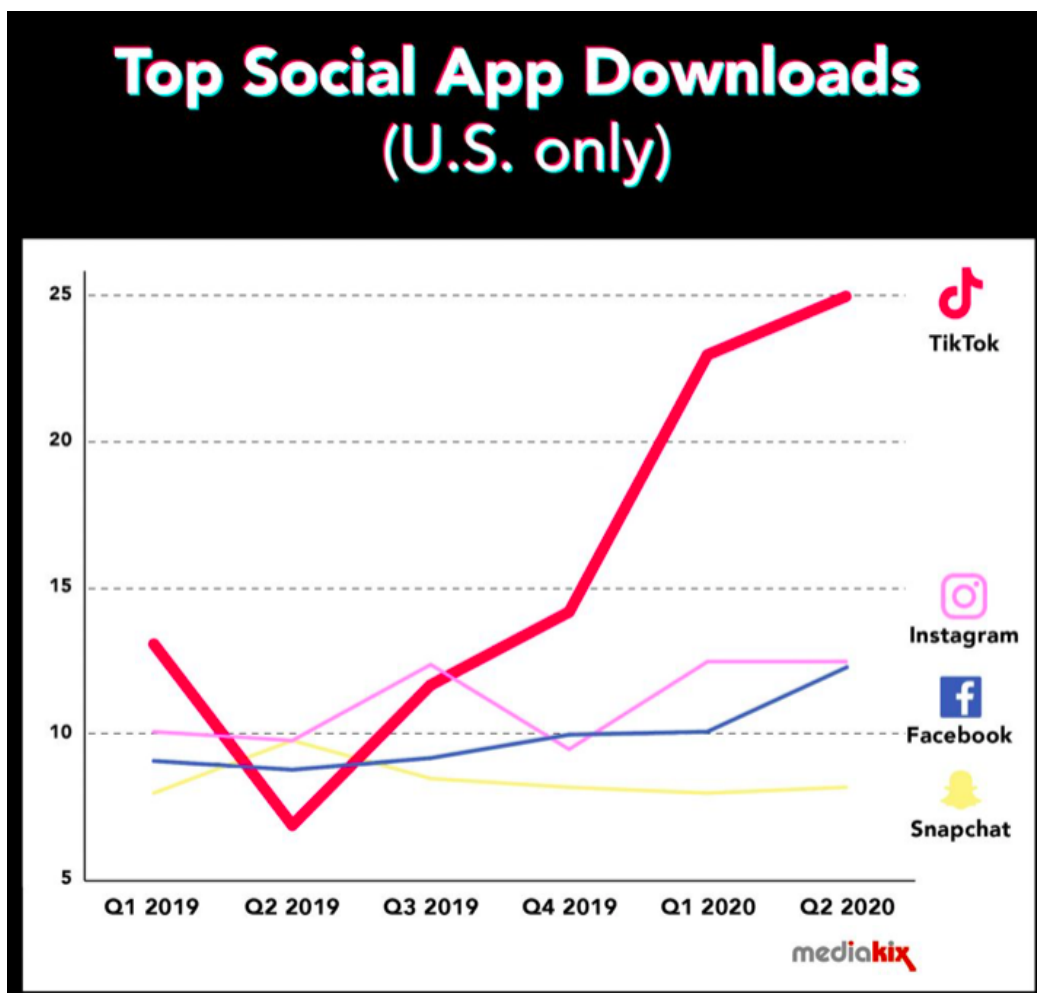


Figure 1.2 Social App Downloads 2019 to 2020

Figure 1.2 shows the growth in U.S. downloads of the TikTok app over approximately one year. This rapid growth rate coupled with the large user base the app has acquired makes TikTok a platform through which new and existing brands can advertise products with a large probability of successful conversion. Currently, direct-to-consumer brands selling products under \$200 are performing exceptionally well on the platform. Advertising campaigns on the app start at \$50 per day with no long-term commitments. About 70% of the app's user base is below the age of 30 years old. The average US worker in this age group earns between \$500-\$900 per week, therefore less expensive products appeal to them. This is an important consideration for advertising, as it allows brands to match their product with the correct consumer.

An important part of Tik Tok's economic power is the platform the app has created for influencer marketing. Google defines influencer marketing as, "a form of social media marketing involving endorsements and product placement from influencers, people and organizations who have a purported level of expert knowledge or social influence in their field." Small businesses and national brands alike have jumped onto the Tik Tok influencer train, using their incredible reach to push new products and revitalize interest in older ones. The most popular members of this influencer group appeal to the Gen Z consumer group because they belong to it themselves: Charli D'Amelio, age 17, holds the record for the most followed person on Tik Tok with a follower count of over 120 million. She has already partnered with national brands such as Dunkin' and Invisalign.

The media mix is the sum of all tactics used in an integrated marketing communications campaign. Tactics are tools used to communicate the campaign message to members of the campaign's target audience; examples include social media, radio ads, and magazine features.

The tactics chosen for a campaign function most effectively when chosen based on the attitudes and habits of the target audience. Generation Z spends more time online than any other generation and therefore online tactics should be dominant in the media mix to increase the likelihood the campaign message connects with its target audience.

Tik Tok holds a crucial advantage in the marketing mix for those brands who wish to target Generation Z consumers. As media habits and consumer interests evolve, brands must also evolve their marketing strategies. As Gen Z kids become Gen Z adults with substantial purchasing power, they must be increasingly marketed to in a way that suits their particular media consumption habits, which differ greatly from those of any previous generation. The social media landscape is constantly changing, making Facebook, Twitter, and other more traditional social media advertising platforms virtually irrelevant. The rise in popularity of influencer culture and short video content point marketers towards new platforms, new strategies, and new product placements.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Methodology

The literature review for this thesis examined a mix of academic and industry articles in order to compile a complete understanding of the role of TikTok in the current digital marketing industry, as well as the circumstances leading to this current role. These articles were found by using targeted google scholar and academic database searches. Articles were chosen based on relevance to the topic, the credibility of the source, and the quality of the information included. TikTok is a relatively new app and Generation Z has only recently become a large market force; therefore, most articles chosen were written in the last three years.

The Importance of Digital Marketing

This thesis examines the recent growth and success of digital video marketing through the Tik Tok platform. Successful utilization of this platform is key for brands that wish to target a Gen Z focused consumer segment. “Going viral” on Tik Tok has been an instrumental part of the marketing strategy for these brands and is the necessary component for success on other social media platforms. The research covered in this literature review speaks to the continuing importance of digital marketing and video content in marketing, as well as the importance of social media influencers to Generation Z consumers.

For the purpose of this thesis Generation Z will be defined as the generation born between 1997 and 2012. Generation Z is preceded by the Millennials and followed by Generation Alpha. This generation’s general profile presents many differences from their predecessors the Millennials. Generation Z is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in modern United States history (Parker & Igielnik, 2022). This may be a contributing factor to Generation Z’s

search for authenticity and openness to understanding different kinds of people and expression. Sometimes known as the “digital generation,” Generation Z has grown up with the internet and spends on average 11 hours interacting with it in some way across their devices. This makes them highly likely to be frequently exposed to and susceptible to marketing efforts online (Djafarova, 2021). A 2020 article published by Insider Magazine estimated the spending power of Generation Z to be more than \$140 billion but acknowledged this number will only grow.

US Gen Z Digital Buyers and Penetration, 2020-2025

millions and % of population

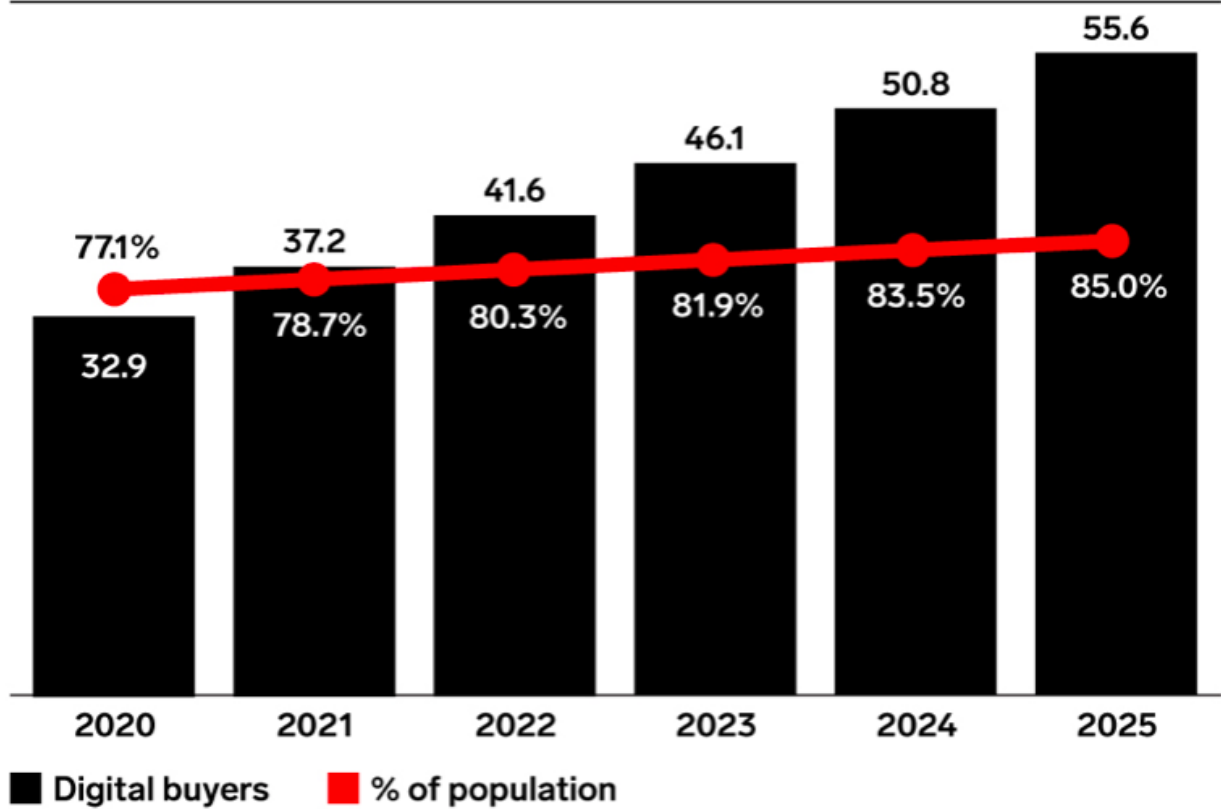


Figure 2.1 Generation Z Digital Buying Power

Brands are the driving force behind the marketing industry. In this context, a brand can best be defined as an intangible marketing or business concept that helps people identify a company, product, or individual. To be successful, brands will need to learn to market to Generation Z, which is quickly gaining power as a consumer group. When building a relationship with members of this generation, “Companies should be attuned to three implications for this generation: consumption as access rather than possession, consumption as an expression of individual identity, and consumption as a matter of ethical concern.” The paper containing the aforementioned quotation, ‘True Gen’: Generation Z and its implications for companies, asserts that an important commonality of this generation is its search for truth and authenticity (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Digital marketing has been used and studied much longer than Tik Tok has existed. The term digital marketing was coined in the mid-1990s as the internet moved beyond just email with the creation of search engines such as Yahoo! and Google. The Tik Tok app launched internationally more than 20 years later in 2017, and now it is one of the most used social media platforms in the world. Many users spend significant amounts of time on the app daily, with a U.S. average of 68 minutes per day split up into sessions about 10 minutes long. As one of the first mega-popular social media sites to be used by the generation in question, early Facebook ad engagement studies are a good indicator of how the digital marketing industry developed into what it is today.

A study conducted in 2011-13 at the University of Pennsylvania and published in 2018 by Lee et al. examined corporate ad messaging on Facebook and the effectiveness of different types of ad content. The corresponding publication is entitled “Advertising Content and Consumer Engagement on Social Media: Evidence from Facebook.” This research is relevant to

Tik Tok messaging because the study highlights the importance and potential effectiveness of the combination of a digital algorithm and engaging content format when delivered to a targeted audience. The researchers in this study analyze Facebook's EdgeRank algorithm software's ability to present content with which users will engage. The study measures the engagement rates of posts categorized by content format and message subject. This study was able to show the types of ad content to which users responded best. This was accomplished by classifying these online ad posts into categories: informative, persuasive, and a combination of these two types. Researchers coded 106,316 messages from 782 companies on Facebook using Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT) and natural language processing algorithms. Engagement data was collected on a timeline basis for two factors: likes and comments. For the purpose of this study informative posts were classified as those including, "details about product deals, availability, price, and product-related aspects that could be used in optimizing the purchase decision"(3). Persuasive messages were coded as those, "that broadly seek to influence by appealing to ethos, pathos and logos strategies"(3). Celebrity endorsements and philanthropic efforts were given as examples of persuasive message content. The study cited its main finding from this empirical analysis is that persuasive content drives social media engagement significantly in a positive direction, while purely informative messages (those without any persuasive elements) have a negative impact on user engagement.

The importance of a strong digital marketing strategy has grown exponentially since the previously discussed study ended in 2013. The American Marketing Association asserts that 58% of marketing budgets are spent on digital marketing. In February 2015, data shows that U.S. businesses dedicated an average of 9.9% of their marketing dollars to social media advertising. This number has continued to grow over the years with the average ad budget percentage

prediction for February 2022 at 17.8%. Entertainment apps such as TikTok are highly conducive to persuasive content, which promotes positive user engagement. From a brand perspective, it is essential to stay up to date with the most popular content formats and platforms. Facebook, the largest social media platform in existence right now, used to be considered very trustworthy. However, this status has seen a significant decline in the past several years. In 2016 the Digital Marketing Institute published an article saying that, “Across social media, 19% of consumers find it easy to tell the difference between marketing communications, advertising and branded content and non-commercial content on social media, while 30% have little or no trust in the content they see on Facebook.” Audiences have shifted their trust to other social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

One reason digital marketing has grown so aggressively is the industry shift from product-centric marketing to consumer-centric marketing. This shift to consumer-centric marketing has placed an increased emphasis on direct selling. Digital marketing is suitable for direct selling because it can cut out the middlemen and allow consumers to purchase online directly from the producer or brand. Digital platforms allow marketers to do everything a traditional platform can, but they also allow flexibility and interactivity not provided by traditional media. When targeting Generation Z, especially the younger members of this group, it is important to recognize that this generation consumes media differently than those before it. In an article published in the California Management Review by a team at the University of California Berkeley, the authors describe Generation Z’s media habits: “Instead of watching TV, Generation Z watches streaming services such as Netflix. Instead of listening to the radio, they listen to Spotify. And instead of reading magazines, they rely on Reddit.” The researchers claim this shift in habit led to the rise in popularity of two distinct marketing channels. The first

channel is categorized as outdoor advertising, which includes tactics such as billboards. The second channel is mobile advertising, including advertising on social media platforms such as Instagram and Tik Tok. In the U.S. 60% of Instagram users are younger than 34 years old, and 40% of those on Tik Tok are between the ages of 10 and 19 years old. The rise in mobile advertising as well as the emphasis on consumer centric marketing and direct selling, facilitated the emergence and growing popularity of influencer culture and influencer marketing. Figure 1.4 shows the usage of different social media sites among different age groups.



Figure 2.2 The % of adults per age group who say they use a certain social media platform.

TikTok is one social media platform that has utilized influencer culture as a sales function more often and arguably more successfully than any other. The Tik Tok app is well-suited to

consumer-centric marketing and direct selling— a brand or brand ambassador can post videos endorsing a product, live stream to answer questions, and link directly to a website selling the product in their post description. Influencers engaging in direct selling practices on the TikTok app have the technology to show the product, demonstrate how it is used, and direct viewers to the online selling platform all within one post.

Influencer Marketing Trends

Influencer marketing is the use of influencer partnerships or relationships to promote a brand, product, or service. Not every creator is an influencer, but the definition of an influencer is highly subjective. At its most basic level, a social media influencer is someone with a significant online following of people who put value in what the creator says or does. There are several levels of influencer and each level represents a different function for brands in regards to use in a marketing strategy.

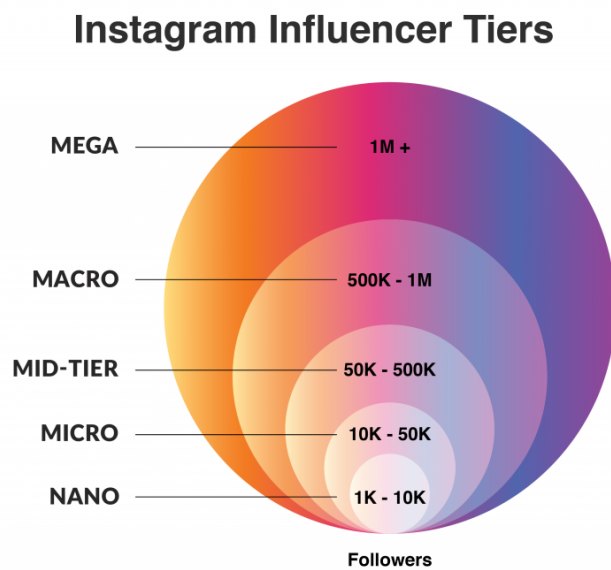


Figure 2.3 Instagram Influencer Tiers

Tik Tok’s content format makes this app an ideal platform for influencer marketing. Through Tik Tok’s short-form video format, creators and brands are able to showcase their personalities and creativity through a highly engaging and entertaining medium. Creators targeting Generation Z through TikTok benefit from authentic and relatable content. The aforementioned article from the California management review states, “being authentic is crucial for success” on TikTok. Because Generation Z, a group constantly searching for truth and authenticity, makes up the largest proportion of TikTok users, the assertion that authenticity is crucial to success makes sense. Many TikTok creators who have attained “influencer” status are those to whom audiences can relate. Outside of TikTok, its influencers have started building their images across multiple different platforms. However, the highest engagement rates for these influencers remains on TikTok

THE INFLUENCE OF THE INFLUENCERS



Tracking the impact of the top 10 influencers across Instagram, YouTube and Tiktok



Analysis of the top 10 most engaging profiles by engagement rate, active in the last 3 months, on Instagram, TikTok and YouTube as of Sept. 21, 2021. Selected profiles were required to meet a minimum of 1 million of followers to be included in the ranking.

Source: Nielsen InfluenceScope

Figure 2.4 Influencer Engagement Stats by Platform

Though smaller in user numbers than platforms like Facebook, engagement rates of TikTok are much higher than that of older social media platforms. While people use Facebook and

Twitter for news or networking purposes, Tik Tok is often used for pure entertainment. The short video format allows influencers to amass a large amount of followers that they have never met in person. Also, with higher engagement rates, companies need to consider the level of influencer they choose; accounts with more followers will reach a larger audience, but usually have lower engagement rates. Smaller accounts reach a smaller, more targeted audience but have higher engagement rates.

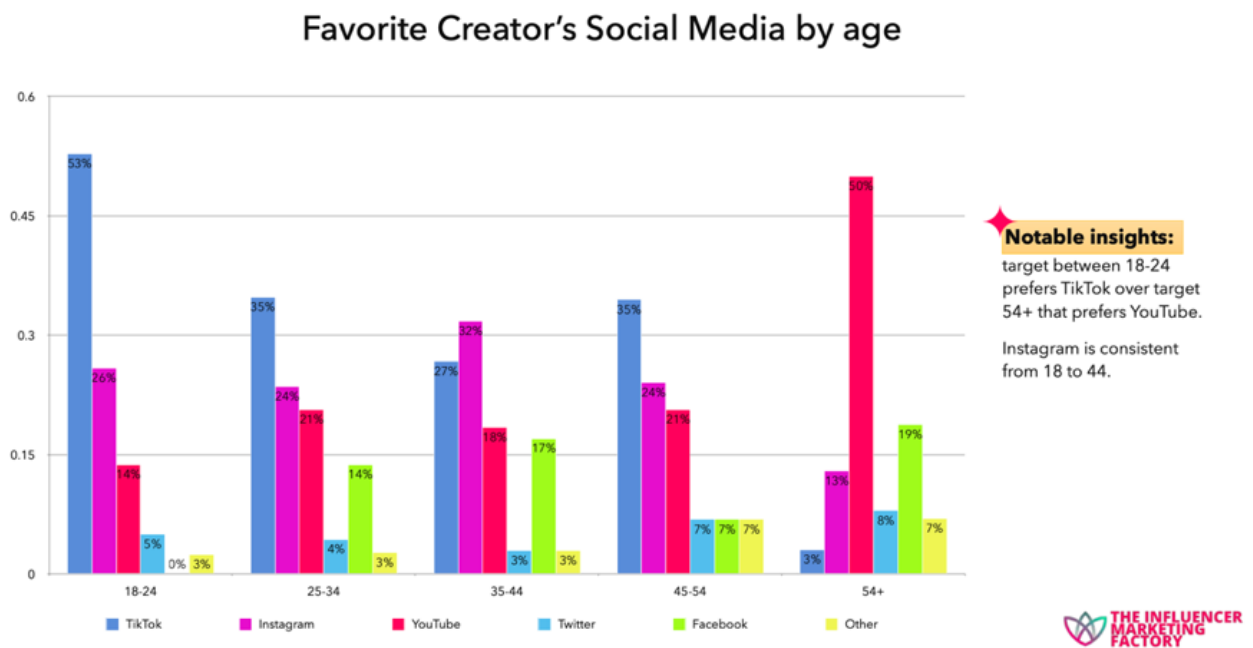


Figure 2.5 Creator's Favorite Social Media by Age

Younger creators name Tik Tok as their favorite social media platform, with 53% of creators ages 18-24 and 35% of creators ages 25-34 listing it as their preferred platform. Many attribute this to Tik Tok's implementation of their creator fund. The creator fund is a way for creators to get paid directly from the app based on a variety of factors such as number of views, authenticity of views, and overall level of engagement. According to Tik Tok, creators eligible to apply for the fund, "Are based in the US, UK, France, Germany, Spain or Italy. Are at least 18 years old. Have at least 10,000 followers. Have at least 100,000 video views in the last 30 days.

Have an account that fits with our TikTok Community Guidelines and terms of service.” While the company claims to have created this fund to show appreciation for their creators and give them a manner through which to support their creative lives, Tik Tok has good reason for wanting to keep creators on their platform. Tik Tok has essentially created its own breed of celebrities who are becoming increasingly famous on and outside of the app; these big-name influencers like Charli D’Amelio, Addison Rae, and Khabane Lame bring in much higher revenue than Tik Tok pays them through the Creator Fund.

As shown in Figure 1, as of February 2021 almost 50% of 18-29 year olds said they use TikTok. Generation Z is TikTok’s largest user base, potentially because most of the major influencers are among their peers (at least in age). Influencers are an especially potent marketing tool because, “Gen Zers are radically inclusive. They don’t distinguish between friends they meet online and friends in the physical world.”(Francis and Hoefel, 20XX). This “friendship” gives brands the opportunity to relate to this generation on a deeper level through the influencers they hire.

The minimum threshold requirements of the creator fund motivate influencers to create engaging content. Creators belonging to the fund are paid based on their engagement metrics; they have the potential for greater earnings with higher view engagement. Figure 2.5 above also shows that 53% of creators within Generation Z choose TikTok as their favorite social media platform. The accessibility of the creator fund could be a contributing factor to this number. Authenticity is not the only factor that contributes to success on TikTok; to reap the benefits of the creator fund, influencers must entertain. Entertainment is the main attraction for TikTok users and the unique entertainment style popular on the platform must be mastered creatively for accounts to be successful.

Trending sounds and hashtags add to the entertainment value of posts. In fact, brands can greatly benefit from jumping on these trends. Tik Tok released data from a survey saying that 61% of respondents like brands more when they participate in a Tik Tok trend. Generation Z is much less likely than their predecessors to buy or wear brands to fit a social norm. Therefore, developing a relatable and authentic brand image becomes very important for companies wishing to sell to this generation.

The TikTok Algorithm

An algorithm is a process or set of rules to be followed in calculations or other problem-solving operations, especially by a computer. The TikTok algorithm is responsible for deciding which content is shown to which viewers and how large of an audience that content will actually receive. Dr. Ike Brunner is an Integrated Marketing Communication professor at the University of Mississippi with a Ph.D. in Communication Studies from Bowling Green University. He specializes in social media, data analytics, and influencer marketing. According to Dr. Brunner, engagement rates on the platform are higher largely in part to its content first algorithm. Understanding the TikTok algorithm is essential to understanding its value as a marketing tool for Generation Z targets. However, it is also important to know how this generation thinks the algorithm works for them as consumers.

In the article “Trick and Please. A Mixed-Method Study On User Assumptions About the TikTok Algorithm,” researchers conducted interviews with 28 Tik Tok users between the ages of 18-25. This places these participants, who researchers called “producers” because they both produce and consume content on the app, squarely within Generation Z. The results of these interviews showed that these producers held three main assumptions about how the TikTok algorithm works for viewers. First, that high post engagement (likes, comments, and shares) is a

triggering factor for a post to be picked up by the algorithm and pushed to the “For you page.”

Second, producers assume that posting a video during a certain time of day increases the likelihood that a video will perform well with the algorithm. Third, the practice of using and piling trending hashtags in the description of a post was assumed to be the last contributing factor to how well a post performs within the app.

These assumptions are important because they shape how users view and interact with the content they encounter within the TikTok app. Because users assume videos are pushed to their for you page through other users’ engagement, they are more likely to have an initially positive first impression of the video and a positive attitude towards their individualized feed. In this way, TikTok appeals to users’ social-adjustive function of attitude. The algorithm acts as a third-person endorsement for the user, similarly to how influencers act as a third-party endorsement for many brands. The study confirmed that high post engagement, with a heavy emphasis on comments, is a good indication that a post will be successful with the algorithm.

The second and third assumptions hold less value to the viewer and more to the influencers and brands attempting to reach them. The assumption that posting time influences how the video performs was shown to be true by the researchers in this study. Researchers found that trending videos within the top 10% of play counts (the number of times a video has been played on the app) were posted between 6 am and 4 pm UTC time, with the highest number of these being posted at 11 am UTC time. Users assume the times that are best for posting are when there is a high demand for content. Brands and the influencers that collaborate with them can use this information to optimize their content’s performance with the algorithm and increase the chances that their message is pushed to their target audience. The third assumption, that piling trending hashtags in the caption to boost a video’s performance, was observed to have no

statistically significant positive effect on the performance of the post. However, the hashtags were not observed to have any negative impact on video performance either. Hashtags can be followed by users on the app, so brands and influencers are likely to reach a larger receptive audience by using hashtags that are relevant to their content. However, tagging posts in this way has not been shown to push their content to those outside of the group that follows the hashtag. Figure 2.6 shows that videos with many hashtags actually have relatively low play counts.

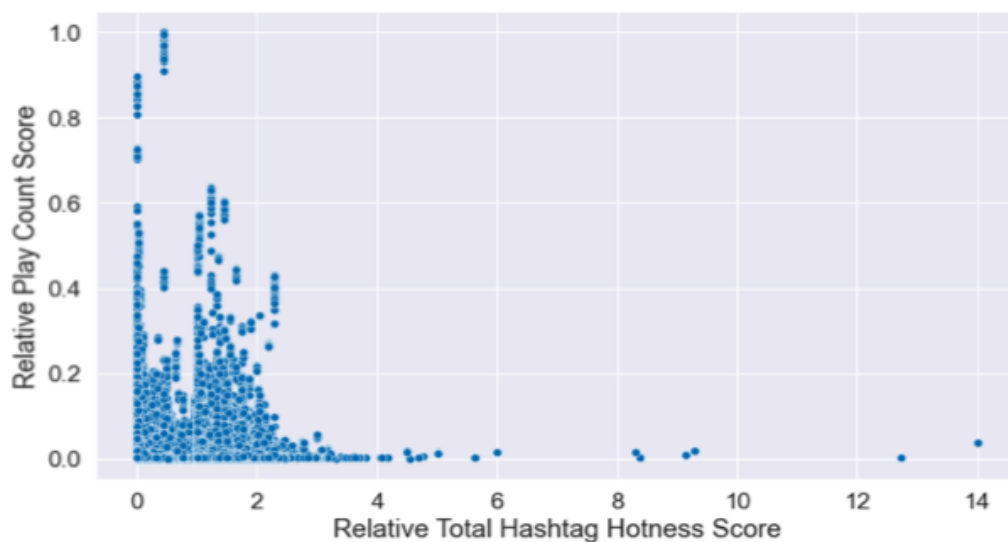


Figure 2.6 Hashtag Hotness to Relative Play Count Score

Assumptions and perceptions hold a powerful place in how brands interact with the audiences and understanding these assumptions and perceptions could increase the level of success brands have in their marketing efforts. The study above examines and potentially explains how these assumptions affect users' attitudes towards contention in their TikTok feeds.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this section is to describe the primary research undertaken to further examine the necessity of TikTok as an important marketing tool for brands targeting Generation Z. The primary research for this thesis was conducted through two different methods: journalistic interviews and a survey. The purpose of using these methods was to gain perspective on the research questions from academic experts, industry professionals, and users of the platform being studied. This section will describe how the data from each of these methods was collected and analyzed to be used towards answering the research question.

INTERVIEWS

The interviews were conducted to collect qualitative and quantitative data from those who have contact with TikTok in a professional or academic capacity. Two interviews were conducted by the researcher—one with a professor and one with an employee of TikTok. This pool of interviewees was chosen because of their relevant experience and accessibility to the researcher.

The specific purpose of interviewing a TikTok employee was to discover how brands interact with the app as a marketing tool, and what they need to do to be successful on the platform. This interview was conducted through phone call and focused on a set of eight questions concerning brand development on TikTok. The content of this interview is important to gaining a full understanding of how brands use TikTok as a marketing tool because the interviewee gives an inside perspective on how the business operates.

The American Marketing Association defines integrated marketing communication as, “a planning process designed to assure that all brand contacts received by a customer or prospect for a product, service, or organization are relevant to that person and consistent over time.”

TikTok is a medium through which these brands can contact relevant consumers with product or service messages. Therefore professors of integrated marketing communication who have experience with TikTok are uniquely qualified to evaluate how important this platform is for brands wishing to target a certain audience. In this case, this audience is Generation Z. Professor Brad Conoway was asked for his thoughts and expertise on TikTok branding and influencer content in order to collect qualitative data that can help explain the connection between marketing success with Generation Z and brands' utilization of TikTok as a communication strategy.

SURVEY

The main goal of this survey was to investigate the causal factors of brand success with Generation Z on TikTok versus other social platforms. A survey was chosen over other methods in order to standardize responses and add to ease of analysis after data was collected. This survey was created for this study by the primary researcher.

The target number of participants was set at 300, with the primary participant target being members of Generation Z. Qualtrics was chosen as the host platform for the survey due to ease of use by the researcher and the potential participants. This host platform provides accessible survey formatting for both mobile phone and computer usage of the participant. The survey was distributed electronically through social media posts and email invitation. These delivery methods were appropriate for reaching the target participants. Around 96% of U.S. adults between the ages of 18 and 29 report owning a smartphone; the target participant generation falls within this age range. Furthermore, research reports that 85% of all U.S. adults own a smartphone, so the survey was accessible to those outside of the primary target generation as well. (Pew Research, 2021). Because the purpose of this survey was to measure attitudes towards

how they interact with brands on a smartphone application (TikTok), only those with access to a smartphone and internet connection are relevant to the study.

% of U.S. adults who say they own a ...

	Cellphone	Smartphone	Cellphone, but not smartphone
Total	97%	85%	11%
Men	97%	85%	11%
Women	98%	85%	12%
Ages 18-29	100%	96%	4%
30-49	100%	95%	5%
50-64	97%	83%	12%
65+	92%	61%	29%

Figure 3.1 The % of adults who report owning a device

Recruitment was conducted primarily through social media promotion; Snapchat, Facebook, LinkedIn, and GroupMe were the social media platforms used by the researcher in the distribution process; email and text message invitations were also sent. The sampling population results from a convenience sample, but this method was successful in reaching the target demographic. The recruitment invitation contained a link to the online Qualtrics survey, as well as a message stating the survey was voluntary and anonymous. No monetary or academic incentives were offered to participants taking part in the survey; they were only told participating in the research would be of help to a friend or peer.

Participants were informed of any risks and consent was gained prior to the administration of the survey. The survey was approved for distribution by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Mississippi. All participants were free to complete or not complete the survey after beginning, and to skip any questions they preferred not to answer.

The survey contained a total of 31 questions. The first two questions were qualifying questions confirming the participant was over the age of 18 and has experience with TikTok. The remaining 29 questions focus on the participant's individual experiences with content on the TikTok app. The survey gathers demographic information from the respondents such as age, gender, and user status (creator or consumer). Because the focus of the research concerned brand interaction with only a specific generation, demographics such as race, ethnicity, political affiliation, and income were not collected. Members of Generation Z were the main targets of this survey due to the research topic specifically concerning this age group, but participants of all ages were encouraged to participate in this research to establish any differences in answers between generations.

The survey was left open for 10 days. During this time period, the survey gathered 305 responses, 274 of which were marked as complete by the survey platform. This falls slightly short of the goal participation count of 300, but the survey could not be left open any longer due to time constraints of the research deadline. It could not be opened any earlier due to compliance with IRB approval procedures, which took much longer than expected. Only completed responses were analyzed for the purpose of this research. Complete responses were recorded as those who had answered through to the end of their survey. This could be accomplished in three ways:

1. Answering "Disagree" to the first question verifying age and consent
2. Answering "No" to the second question asking if the participant has the TikTok app
3. Answering the first two questions affirmatively and scrolling through the entire survey to click next, reaching the "end of survey" screen. This does not necessarily mean that the participant has answered all questions, just clicked through to the end of the survey.

Incomplete surveys on average were marked as 6% complete at the point of abandonment, meaning respondents answered the first two questions affirmatively and then disregarded the rest of the survey.

Due to the methods of distribution available to the researcher, it is very likely a large percentage of respondents were college students. This is a limitation of the survey because the overall college enrollment rate for Americans aged 18 to 24 is only 41% (NCES, 2019). This means that a survey taken primarily by college students may not be entirely representative of the whole generation in question. College enrollment status was not part of the demographic information collected by the survey, and therefore it can not be filtered and controlled for when examining the survey's results.

4. PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Survey

Out of the 274 complete survey responses, 220 (79.1%) responses indicated the participant had the TikTok app at the time of participating. These participants advanced to the second section of the survey. This shows significantly higher usage than the general U.S. population, which was around 30% in 2021. Fifty-eight respondents (20.9%) answered they did not have the TikTok app at the time of participation, completing their survey.

The next questions of the survey collected demographic information, which consisted of gender and age. Female-identifying participants made up 84.6% of responses. Male-identifying participants made up 13.9% of responses. The response options also included non-binary/third gender (1.0% of respondents) and those who preferred not to disclose their gender (0.5%). This gender distribution is not even, nor does it align with the most recently released gender demographics in the United States. However, this discrepancy could be explained by two factors. First, the percentage of women who use social media is higher than that of men who use social media. A Statista poll from 2019 reports that 78% of adult women in the United States say they use social media, while 65% of adult men say they do (Statista, 2019). The most recently released statistics from TikTok reveal that 61% of users are female, indicating only 39% of users are male or identify with another gender category. Additionally, those who identify as female are generally more likely to participate in research surveys than are those who identify as male.

The research question focuses on those of a specific age group, commonly known as Generation Z. The question collecting age demographic data gave five response options for the participants' current age: 18-21, 22-25, 26-29, 30-49, and 50+. The first two answer choices for this question cover the adult population of Generation Z. Potential participants belonging to

either of these age groups were the primary target of this survey. The age distribution of participants in the survey is 69.7% people ages 18-21 years old, 23.9% people 22-25 years old, 2.0% people 26-29 years old, 2.0% people 30-49 years old, and 2.5% people 50+ years old. Because over 90% of participants belong to Generation Z, the data collected is relevant and applicable to the research question. The data from older generations will serve as comparison data to demonstrate how Generation Z is unique in its interactions with the TikTok app.

The next segment of the survey asks participants about their social media activity and their trust in the platforms they use. Respondents were asked to select which social media platforms they use out of the following choices: TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Pinterest. TikTok and Instagram were the most used social media platforms included in the survey; the difference in usage varied by less than one percent. On the opposite end, Twitter was the least popular platform included in the survey, with only 96 participants (%) saying they use this platform. From most to least used, the social media platforms included in this survey are TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Pinterest, then Twitter. Isolating the responses from those who chose either 18-21 or 22-25 does not change this ranking, therefore the results are representative of the target generation. Figure 4.1 illustrates these results with the number of participants saying they use each platform.

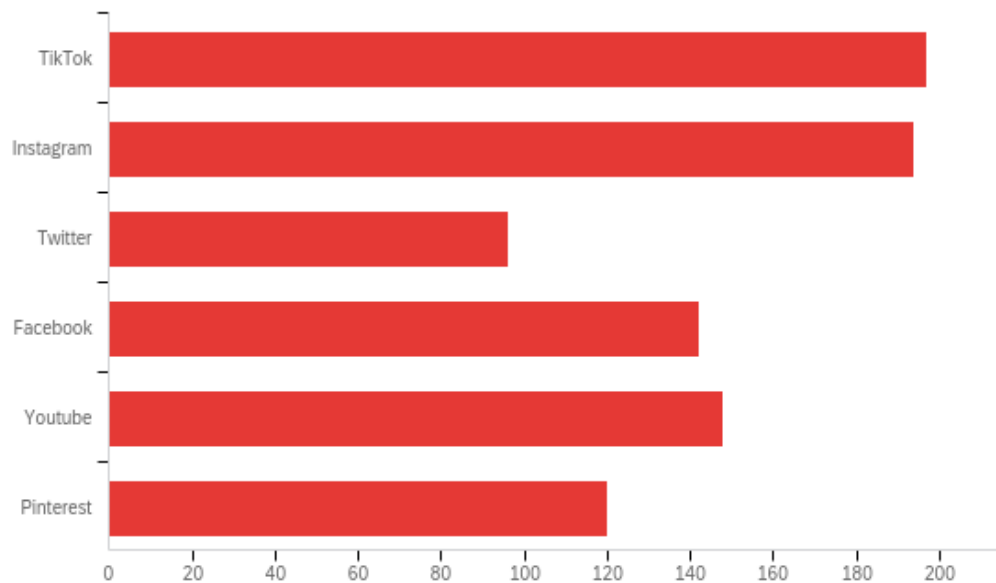


Figure 4.1 Number of participants that say they use X platform

Next, participants were asked to rank these six social media platforms based on how much they trust its sponsored content from most trusted to least (1-6). Overall, Instagram proved to be the most trusted platform, with a mean ranking score of 2.78. TikTok followed as a close second with a mean ranking score of 2.91. Youtube places third overall with a mean ranking score of 3.05. The trust rankings closely mirror usage rankings up to this point, however neither the fourth, fifth, or sixth place trust rankings lineup with their platform usage counterparts. Pinterest takes the spot of the fourth most trusted platform with a mean ranking score of 3.68, despite placing fifth in terms of usage. Twitter follows with a mean trust score of 4.19. Facebook is trusted the least by participants of this survey, earning a mean trust ranking score of 4.22.

Trust is an important aspect of brand loyalty. Therefore, it is important for brands to be active on social media platforms that their target audiences trust. While usage data may tell brands where their audiences are, trust data can help brands determine where their messages can be impactful.

In order to evaluate the importance of each social media to the target audience, results from the trust ranking were filtered to show only responses from those who indicated they were in the 18-21 or 22-25 year old age group. This filtering shows the same trust ranking order of the platforms, with minor changes in the mean ranking score. However, while these two groups comprised all participants eligible to take this survey, it is not representative of the entirety of Generation Z. A significant segment of this generation has not reached adult age yet. With this in mind, the results were filtered further to include only responses from those who indicated they were 18-21 years old at the time of participation. These results do differ from the results which include data from all survey respondents. Most notably, TikTok moves into first place with a mean ranking score of 2.80. Instagram follows in an extremely close second place with a mean ranking score of 2.81. Third through sixth-ranked remained the same: YouTube, Pinterest, Twitter, then Facebook. This group trusts Facebook significantly less than the whole sample, giving the platform a mean ranking score of 4.32. These results indicate that sponsored content on TikTok could have the most impact on the target generation and that brands should be utilizing this platform to spread their message.

The younger members of Generation Z differ from their older counterparts in terms of social media use and trust. For example, the younger Generation Z group ranked TikTok higher than Instagram for trust of sponsored content. One possible explanation for this is the length of time Instagram has been available to users. In contrast to TikTok, which was released internationally in 2017, Instagram has been available for use in the United States since 2010. It is extremely likely that most respondents in the 22-25 group have been on Instagram much longer than they have been on TikTok. It's even possible that Instagram was the first social media platform many respondents from this age group had experienced on their own. This

long-standing relationship with the platform could be an explanation for why these older members of Generation Z trust the platform more than their younger cohorts. Most of Generation Z wasn't on social media when Instagram was released—in fact the youngest members of this generation were probably still in diapers. It is not possible for this study to poll these younger members. However, it would make sense to assume their responses would likely be more similar to the 18-21 group's responses.

TikTok has been available internationally only since 2017, but most respondents have been interacting with the app for a much shorter time. Only 13.4% of respondents report having the app for longer than 3 years. The majority of participants (72.6%) report having the app for one to three years. The rest of the participants indicated that they have had the app for less than one year. Because a large portion of TikTok users (60%) come from users between the ages of 16 and 24, the platform shows a high potential for growth—even though the survey shows very few people downloading the app in the past six months. Only persons 18 years and older were eligible to participate in this study, but as more members of Generation Z grow into social media usage it is likely they will follow in the footsteps of their adult predecessors.

Based on the above data, brands can act knowing that Generation Z is both on TikTok and trusts the sponsored content on this site more than they trust sponsored content on other social media platforms. But trusting one social media platform more than others does not necessarily mean a high level of trust for that content. What it does mean is that this platform will likely be more beneficial than others if utilized as a tactic in a brand's marketing mix. Figure 3.2 below models the responses to, "What level of trust do you have for sponsored content on TikTok?"

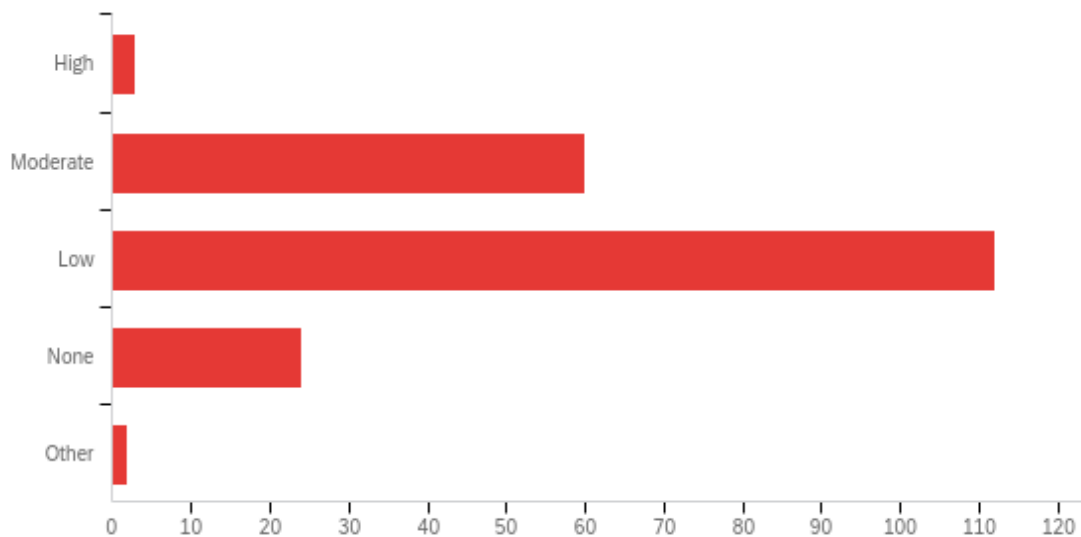


Figure 4.2 Level of trust for sponsored content on TikTok

The most popular response to the question illustrated in Figure 4.2 was that the respondent has a low level of trust for sponsored content on the app. However, it is important to note that the vast majority of responses, around 87%, indicate at least some level of trust. Also, more respondents answered moderate (29.85%) and high (1.49%), than those that indicated no level of trust (11.94%). Pairing this with the trust rankings discussed earlier in this section, brands can be confident that if paying for sponsored content is most likely to work anywhere, it would be on TikTok.

Brands can also use native advertising in addition to paid/sponsored content through brand-owned accounts. The survey shows that only 25% of respondents follow brand-owned accounts on the platform, which is not a large percentage of users. However, this does not mean brands owned content will only reach this segment of TikTok users. Brands, like all other creators, have the opportunity to have their video pushed beyond their follower audience to the “For You” page. On the For You page, anyone on the app has the potential to see a video. By participating in trends and using sounds that perform well with their target audience, brands can

increase their chances of “going viral” with their target audience. The entertainment factor on TikTok is more important to a brand’s success on the app than any other factor. In fact, the results from the survey show participants who follow a brand did so mostly because these brands post entertaining content on their owned account pages. This group of respondents (18.02%) is larger than the group of respondents who said they followed a brand because they enjoy their product (14.86%). This proportion of responses does not change significantly when filtered to include only those responses from Generation Z. This further emphasizes the importance of entertainment within the platform. The branded TikTok trifecta would be if brands were able to combine entertainment, good products, and strategic influencer partnerships within their native content.

Why do you follow a brand on TikTok

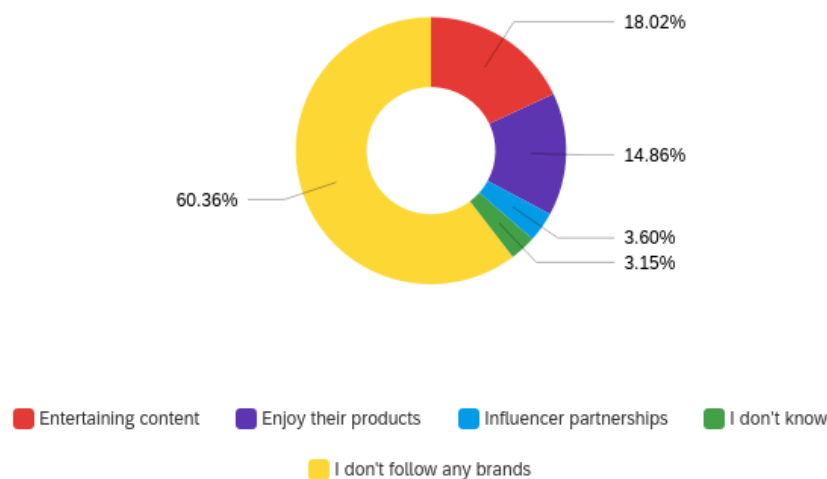


Figure 4.3 Why a participant follows a brand on TikTok

The most popular brands followed by survey respondents include fashion brands and sports teams/organizations. This follows logically from the data above because fashion and sports are better suited for entertainment than many other brand categories. As traditionally

televised categories, fashion and sports content has been proven to provide significant entertainment value through more traditionally media channels. The Fashionisto writes, “Not only do viewers want to replicate the outfits they see, but they want to buy them too. For the industry, this means they can make money while influencing the culture, making entertainment even more powerful.” This sentiment links entertainment and consumerism through fashion, which is also easily done on TikTok. Users watch fashion influencers because they want to know what they’re wearing and how to buy it. With sports on TikTok, the major players are also major players in the television industry. ESPN and individual team accounts were frequently cited as followed brands on the survey.

Two brands outside these entertainment categories that came up in the survey responses several times were ScrubDaddy and Duolingo. The content strategies utilized by these brands on TikTok are similar to each other and very successful, especially considering the target these brands usually serve is not the ideal target audience for TikTok. However, because these brands have been so successful on the platform, they can likely tap into a market to which their products didn’t originally appeal. To further explore this phenomenon, a content analysis of the ScrubDaddy and Duolingo owned account pages was performed.

ScrubDaddy is a company that produces and sells cleaning sponges characterized by bright colors and smiley face shapes. Their TikTok content utilizes current TikTok trends, sounds, and video styles. A life-size version of their mascot is frequently featured in posts and so is their CEO. The brand portrays an overall comedic brand personality that has earned them 1.1 million followers and 19.9 million likes since its first post in 2020.

Duolingo also makes use of a life-size mascot in many of their videos. The Duolingo creative team on TikTok has crafted a very distinct personality for the large green owl that

appears in most of their videos. Like ScrubDaddy, the brand utilizes current TikTok trends, sounds, and topics in their native content on the app. They also feature influencers native to the TikTok app. These efforts have earned the brand 3.2 million followers and 61.6 million likes since posting its first video in 2021. The rapid growth of this account appears to be much more explosive than that of the previously reviewed brand, perhaps due to the international nature of the brand. However, it is noteworthy that Duolingo's brand-owned TikTok page hits on every reason users might follow a brand-owned account: entertainment, product, and influencer partnerships.

The use of influencer partnerships introduces a key concept of marketing to Generation Z on the TikTok app: TikTok influencers. Brands are, especially large ones, inherently less successful on TikTok natively than many individual content creators. They're limited by corporate image, team dynamics, and the connotation that comes with being a brand. While only 25% of survey respondents indicated that they followed brands, 77.1% indicated they follow some type of influencer.

The use of influencer partnerships introduces a key concept of marketing to Generation Z on the TikTok app: TikTok influencers. Brands are, especially large ones, inherently less successful on TikTok natively than many individual content creators. They're limited by corporate image, team dynamics, and the connotation that comes with being a brand. While only 25% of survey respondents indicated that they followed brands, 77.1% indicated they follow some type of influencer. The most popular level of influencer among survey respondents was the mid-tier influencer, which has between 50,000 and 500,000 followers. Interestingly, the influencer level with the largest following, mega influencers with 1,000,000 or more followers, is followed by the lowest number of survey participants who follow influencers. All influencer

levels have an audience that could be very useful to brands. Nano and micro-influencers can be used to target very specific audiences, as many of the influencers create very niche content or belong to a very specific category. These influencers also tend to have higher engagement rates than macro or mega influencers. Influencers with larger followings can help brands push more generic products within more general categories such as fashion or food. As shown earlier in this section, members of Generation Z, especially the younger members, are likely to trust sponsored content from the influencers they follow.

Question: What levels of influencers do you follow?

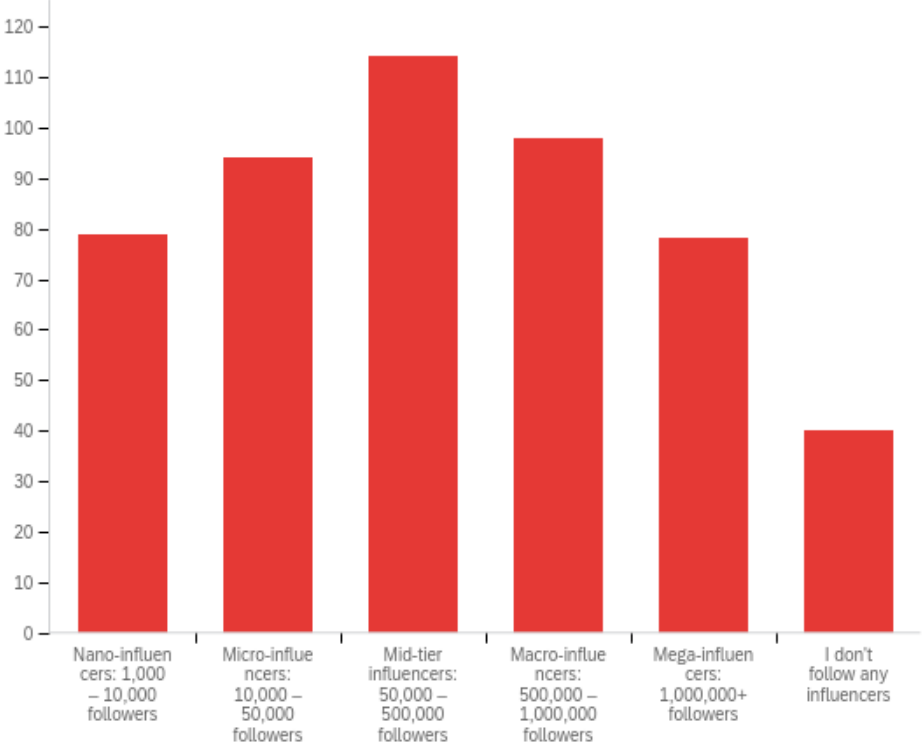


Figure 4.4 Level of Influencer Followed

This question of trust leads to another: “Does this translate to sales?” While the most popular response for why participants downloaded the TikTok app was entertainment, the second popular reason was recommendations. “Life hacks” are very popular forms of recommendation on the site, but so are products, and a good number of these product recommendations are not sponsored. The fact that many users downloaded the app with recommendations in mind makes it more likely that their mind is open to marketing messages about products or services. The nature of TikTok’s For You Page and how users think this page works also suggest that users are more open-minded when receiving messages on the platform. Because most users are happy with the creator content the algorithm shows them, they are predisposed to view branded content positively as well. As discussed in the review of relevant literature, TikTok users feel the algorithm curates their For You Page based on extremely individualized data. Therefore, users are predisposed to have a positive attitude towards posts they think the algorithm has chosen especially for them. This social-adjustive functionality can be especially useful to brands looking to sell products that correlate with social status, such as clothes, jewelry, or shoes.

According to the survey results, a majority of participants say they are either somewhat or extremely likely to save posts containing products they are interested in, with 42.29% answering somewhat likely and 33.83% answering extremely likely. When filtered to include just responses from the two Generation Z groups, these numbers increase slightly to 43.09% for somewhat likely and 34.57 for extremely likely. This shows the perceptiveness of this generation towards product messages on the TikTok app. If a brand can present its products in ways that interest Generation Z consumers on TikTok, an active impression can be made. TikTok users can go back through their likes and saves later to rediscover the post containing the brand’s product and potentially make a purchase decision. The key to marketing is repeated exposure and getting

a target to save a post to their personal account almost guarantees additional viewing of the marketing message.

How likely are you to save posts containing products?

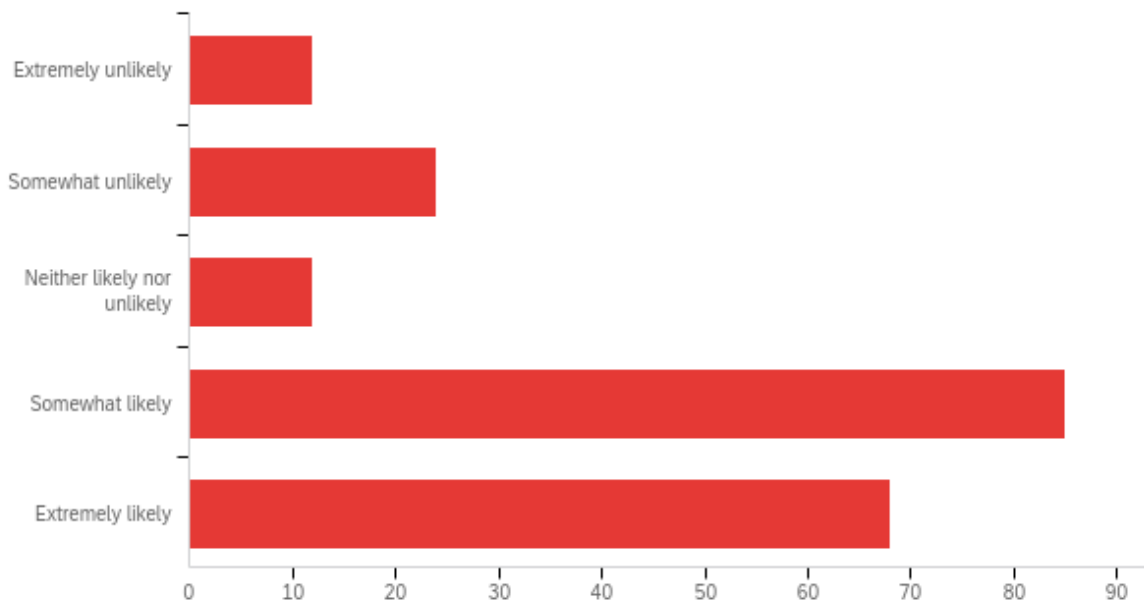


Figure 4.5 Likelihood of Saving posts Containing Desirable Products

Interest in products on TikTok among this generation is apparent, but this does not necessarily equate to intent to purchase and actual conversions for brands. However, influencers can help bridge the gap between an interesting product and the consumer that would purchase it. When asked how likely they are to purchase something recommended by a creator they follow, the most popular response from participants was somewhat likely (33.16%). Extremely likely was only chosen as a response by 3.74% of all survey participants. These results are shown below in Figure 4.6.

In an interview conducted for the purpose of this research, Liz Corbus was asked how brands can best connect with their target audience through TikTok. Ms. Corbus works for TikTok

with brands on the app as part of the global business team. She asserts that the best way for brands to connect with their target audience is through the app’s influencers: “At the end of the day creators are why TikTok is the way it is. They are the experts. They know the platform. They know what makes the users stay engaged and watch the content.” She also cites a statistic that creator content performs at two times the engagement level as brand-owned native or paid content.

How like are you to buy something recommended by a creator you follow?

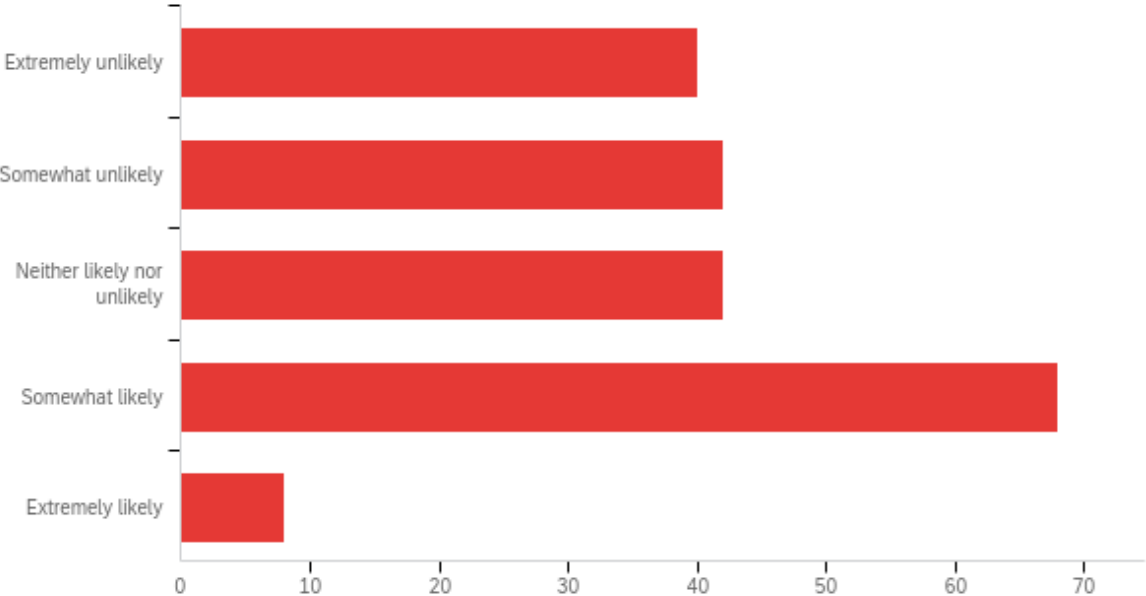


Figure 4.6 Likelihood of Buying Influencer Recommended Products

The older Generation Z group, those ages 22-25, had the highest number of positively inclined responses with 43.75% responding they are somewhat likely to purchase creator recommended products and 4.17% saying they are extremely likely to purchase these products. These results are shown below in Figure 3.7. One more notable difference between the results of the survey as a whole and the results when filtered for the 22-25 age group is the significant

decrease in the proportion of participants who answered “neither likely nor unlikely.” This could be a sign of this group’s comfort and confidence within the platform; they were more likely to choose an answer with a stronger valence. The combined factors of high trust in TikTok content/creators and the likelihood of higher-income could explain why this group seems most likely to purchase creator recommended products than their younger counterparts. This knowledge is important for brands wishing to market products to Generation Z because behavioral intention is the primary indication of behavioral outcome according to the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Azjen, 1980).

How like are you to buy something recommended by a creator you follow?(22-25)

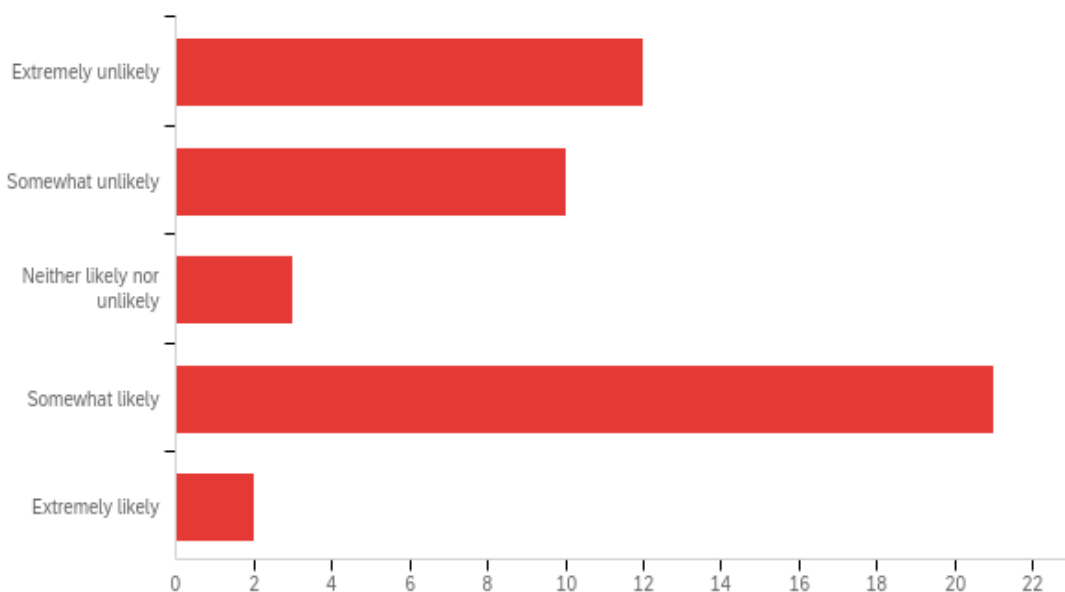


Figure 4.7 Likelihood of Buying Influencer Recommended Products (ages 22-25).

Keeping users watching could be the most valuable thing influencers bring to the table, but paid partnerships that seem inauthentic don’t perform as well as influencers’ normal content. Almost 40% of survey respondents indicated that they “almost never” continue watching a post

after they see it has been tagged as sponsored or an ad. This number increases by more than nine percent when the data is filtered to include only responses who indicated they are part of Generation Z. Although branded influencer content is watched much less than normal creator content, impressions formation can occur in as little as 30 milliseconds (Magee, 2014). Therefore, continued partnership with key influencers can provide the repetition necessary to build a brand image in the target's mind. Though they may not thoroughly engage with the branded content, their positive associations with the influencer account this content appears on should also create a positive association for the brand.

The survey also asked participants if they had ever bought anything from an ad on the platform. The response choices for this question were: yes, frequently; yes, occasionally; infrequently; and never. "Other" was also presented as an option but was not chosen. Most participants (67.66%) responded that they had never bought anything from an ad on the platform. "Yes, occasionally" was the next most popular response with 15.42% of respondents choosing it. Then infrequently with 14.93% of responses, and finally "yes, frequently" with just under 2% of responses. This potentially represents a 32% conversion rate, more than triple that of Facebook ads, which is currently reported to be around 9.21%. It is unlikely that TikTok ads alone could represent a conversion rate of 32%, but the data collected from this survey indicates the actual conversion rate is likely to be relatively high. TikTok has not yet released any official data about click-through rates or conversion rates in regards to paid content on the app.

Conversions are important for brands during any marketing efforts, however so is building brand awareness, reputation, and loyalty. TikTok is a platform that can allow brands to do so, especially with Generation Z, because the audience on this platform has a high level of trust in the content it sees there. Survey participants were asked why they thought people on

TikTok trust it more than other platforms. Figure 3.8 shows the answers they gave. Answers to this question are well-distributed, indicating that participants believe TikTok users have many reasons for trusting the sponsored content the app puts in front of them. The most popular response is that the product is demonstrated; this makes sense because people are inherently more likely to trust something they can see. It is much easier for users to believe what they can see visibly demonstrated than to believe what an advertiser or influencer is telling them. The next categories of answers speak to authenticity. The answer choices, “it seems more authentic” and “it is verified” received a significant amount of responses. This correlates heavily with the profile of characteristics attributed to Generation Z in the review of relevant literature. This air of authenticity on TikTok makes it suitable for a generation on a continuous search for truth and authentic expression. High post engagement such as likes and positive comments also adds credibility to posts on the platform. Although Generation Z is a highly individualistic generation, all individuals within a society are more trusting of information deemed trustworthy by their peers. This is why reviews on shopping sites such as Amazon are so important.

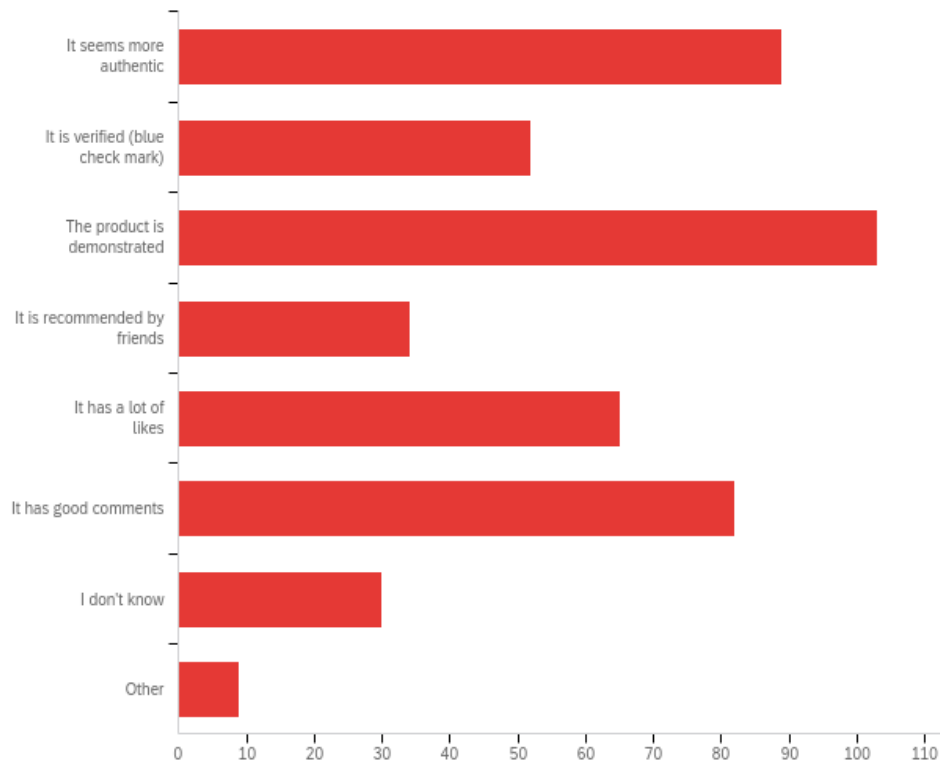


Figure 4.8 Why users trust TikTok content

Interviews

As referenced in the methodology section, qualitative interviews were conducted for the purpose of this research. The purpose of these interviews was to gain an understanding of the bigger picture behind TikTok.

As mentioned earlier in this section, Liz Corbus is part of the global business team at TikTok. She works with brands on the app to optimize their mix of paid and native content on the app. When asked why she thinks TikTok is so popular with Generation Z she said, “ I think it's a platform that many people turn to to get inspired and find creativity and joy.” Ms. Corbus also cites a sense of community that users experience on the app as attractive to younger users. TikTok is home to many different “subtoks,” which are niche communities on TikTok where users post content related to a very specific interest. A few examples of different subtoks would

be YA novel content, foster families, and LGBTQ+ creators. These communities are readily available to interested users thanks to the highly efficient TikTok algorithm. Corbus says that it's easy to get hooked with content flows so personalized to each user; people end up getting sucked down the rabbit hole of the For You page.

Her advice for brands on the platform is to create a brand voice and stick to it. Users on TikTok, especially those from Generation Z, value authenticity. She also said brands can't rely on their organic content to go viral. She suggests brands use a mix of influencer marketing and paid content to boost the content they create. As someone who works directly with brands every step of the way on their TikTok marketing journey, Corbus says she knows this platform is an important tactic to use with a Generation Z target audience.

Professor Brad Conaway teaches Integrated Marketing Communications students at the University of Mississippi in a variety of subjects related to the communications field, including social media. Conaway started paying attention to TikTok much earlier than the rest of the industry did and credits his niece for this. He compares TikTok to rock n' roll—if young people are into it, then it's going to be big. Additionally, Conaway asserts that social media is a great way to communicate with audiences and that brands should be taking every opportunity to utilize it in their marketing efforts, even brands that presume their target audience is on that particular platform. He brings up the case of a grill company that “went viral” on TikTok a year or so ago. The audience they attracted on the app was young, not the type to buy this type of product. However, Conaway says he had a student who came across this brand because of its success on the app, and she and her mother purchased the grill for her father—the brand's real target consumer.

In this case, as well as with many others, it starts with young people. Soon enough these consumers will have an immense amount of buying power and the brands that made an impression early will benefit.

5. Conclusion

Successful Tik Tok content and influencer relationships need to be a central part of the marketing mix to accelerate the popularity of brands and products which target Generation Z consumers. The factors leading to this conclusion include Tik Tok's above-average engagement rates and the target generation's shifting media preferences.

Generation Z represents a potential target audience with spending power that grows each year as new members of this generation enter the workforce. As of 2022, less than half of this generation has reached adulthood, however people form brand impressions and loyalties far before the age of majority. Brands looking to secure the loyalties of Generation Z can increase their chances of doing so by establishing presences in the spaces these consumers trust. The members of this generation are digital natives; they feel comfortable on social media. Through these platforms, they seek connection and authenticity. Because this generation spends so much time online, they are well aware of traditional digital marketing strategies and are able to discern authentic creative content from advertisements. Due to this discernment, the rise of influencer marketing presents a unique opportunity for brands to reach this consumer group without traditional advertising content. Online influencers, like those on TikTok and Instagram, are trusted opinion leaders in this digital generation. Research shows that Generation Z rarely differentiates between online and offline friendships, and influencers work hard to build this personal connection with their online followers.

TikTok represents a tactic through which brands can reach this audience effectively. Most brands that would target younger consumers on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are misusing their time and money—Generation Z is decreasingly using these platforms and has little to no trust for any brand-sponsored content they see on these platforms. Video is becoming

increasingly dominant throughout all forms of social media but seems to be working best on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Video also presents itself as a valuable tool for marketers because products can be visually demonstrated in the context of native, creative content. Entertaining product placement posts are often saved by TikTok users with interest in the product. This allows for repetition of the brand message when the user inevitably scrolls through the saved content on their profile.

Brands need to focus on keeping up with the trends...TikTok trends. Participating in challenges and content trends, and using popular sounds behind their videos is crucial to connecting with this audience. This strategy will also help brands perform better with the TikTok algorithm, which has importance beyond deciding how many views a video receives. Brands also need to take advantage of influencers, especially those native to the platform, because these are the new opinion leaders in their industries. Results from the survey show that users are likely to purchase influencer recommended products. Some brands get lucky and attract the attention of big names who promote their products just because they enjoy them. Those brands should waste no time in reaching out to that creator with a partnership offer. Other brands may need to research and seek out the influencers relevant to their business. TikTok makes this process incredibly easy through their creator marketplace, where influencers make themselves known as available for brand partnerships. Smaller businesses, or those that serve a specific niche, can find smaller influencers whose image aligns with that of the brand. These influencers tend to have higher engagement rates and reach more responsive audiences than big-name influencers.

The research conducted for this thesis indicates that members of Generation Z, especially the younger ones, trust this platform just as much as longer-established social media. Trust is essential to building lasting relationships with consumers. Brands must seek out spaces where

their audiences feel comfortable, and for Generation Z this space is TikTok. The presence they establish on this platform should be creative, authentic, and consistent with their brand identity as a whole. The successful utilization of this platform should occupy a place among the tactics of any brand that aims to target this audience with its marketing plan.

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Appendix

Survey Questions:

1. Do you currently have the TikTok app?
2. What gender do you identify with?
3. What is your current age?
4. What social media platforms do you use?
5. Rank the following platforms in order of how much you trust their sponsored content recommendations
6. How long have you had the Tik Tok app?
7. Why did you download Tik Tok?
8. How often do you use the Tik Tok app?
9. If you answer daily, how long do you spend on the app per day?
10. How likely are you to buy something recommended by a creator you follow?
11. Have you ever bought something from an ad on the platform?
12. How likely are you to save or “like” posts containing products you are interested in?
13. Do you follow any Tik Tok influencers?
14. What level of influencers do you follow?
15. How likely are you to follow the person/account that recommends the product you are interested in?
16. What level of trust do you have for Tik Tok sponsored content more than sponsored content on other social media platforms? #ad or sponsored
17. Why do you think people trust Tik Tok sponsored content more than sponsored content on other social media platforms? (check all that apply)
18. Which category of products do you see advertised most often on Tik Tok?

19. What types of content creators do you follow?
20. Have you ever seen a Halara ad or sponsored post in your Tik Tok feed?
21. Have you ever seen an Ocean Spray ad or sponsored post in your Tik Tok feed?
22. Do you follow any brand-owned accounts on Tik Tok?
23. If yes, why do you follow these brands? (good content, like their products, influencer partnerships)
24. How often/long do you continue to watch a video after you have seen it is tagged as an ad or sponsored content?
25. Are you more likely to engage with videos found on your account page or selected “for you” by TikTok?
26. Which of the following best describes the majority of your activity on Tik Tok? (check all that apply)
27. If a creator, have you ever been approached by a brand to participate in sponsored content?
28. Have you ever found a brand/product on Tik Tok and followed it on another social media platform?
29. Has a brand-owned Tik Tok account ever followed your account?

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