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# THE IMPACT OF TIKTOK INFLUENCER MARKETING ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

A Study of Influencer Marketing on TikTok affecting Consumer  
Behavior among Generation Z

Business Economics  
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## ABSTRACT

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The primary objective of the thesis is to explore the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviors. In addition, this study was conducted to deliver its readers with a practical case, TikTok, emphasizing the influence of influencer marketing initiated on generation Z customers' attitudes and responses.

In this research paper, the author established a theoretical framework (Customer-Centric Influencer Marketing, Consumer Behavior Model, McClelland's Learned Needs Theory, Theory of Priming Effect) through library research to investigate how influencer marketing could impact consumer behaviors. Furthermore, quantitative research was utilized to examine the effect of TikTok influencer marketing on Gen Z consumer behaviors and identify the crucial stages in the consumer decision-making process to optimize influencer marketing. With 110/156 valid responses, the SPSS program and Excel elicited the results with the selected theoretical framework and other supporting theories.

An in-depth analysis indicated that influencers could impact consumer behavior based on the psychological core and social influences. Moreover, this concept of influencer marketing on TikTok signal the positive effects on consumer behavior in general and two crucial stages of the Consumer Making Decision Process, namely Making judgments and decisions and Making Post-Decision Evaluations.

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Keywords Influencer Marketing, Affiliated Marketing, Social media Marketing, Social media Influencers, TikTok, Generation Z, Consumer Behavior, Consumer making decision process

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Appendix 1: Online questionnaire

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

The thesis is the research study of a bachelor's thesis for the International Business Administration degree program taught at Vaasa University of Applied Sciences.

The introduction aims to illustrate the background of the thesis topic as the source of interest in conducting the research project. In addition to the background, the research questions that arise from the topic and the thesis structure are introduced in the first chapter to establish a general view regarding the impact of influencer marketing on TikTok on consumer behavior. Specifically, generation Z is the focused customer segmentation analyzed in this thesis.

## **1.1 Background and objectives**

With the fast pace of technological innovation nowadays, social media has facilitated communication regardless of physical distance. This characteristic of social media made its users raise their voices boundlessly and be widely known with either viral content or the continuous sharing of helpful knowledge in a field. Therefore, the rise of social media also proceeds with the appearance of numerous influencers in different areas. (Morgan, 2020, p.2). According to Geyser (2022), the influencers have the power to affect the purchasing decision of their followers, with several factors that are also needed to address in the research. The effect could be positive, which generates sales for the companies if there are compliments from the influencers for instance; nevertheless, it possibly damages the brand reputation if an influencer posts an unpleasant experience with a product or service from that brand. Acknowledging the critical role of influencers, influencer marketing, as the branch of social media marketing (Chen, 2020), has been boosted by many companies and marketing agencies to promote the products and services or brand awareness on social media. As a frequent user of social media channels, the author has followed many influencers' contents and detected marketing-related content.



With her reaction to the differences, the question is whether influencer marketing impacts consumer behavior with the same effect as non-sponsored content when the influencers are paid. Therefore, in this study, the author will explore, analyze, and evaluate the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior. Even though several research has been conducted in influencer marketing to examine its performance on social media channels, information about its popularity on the TikTok platform and generation Z is limited. Because each social media channel has its format and algorithm, the differences might adjust how influencers approach their followers for a specific platform. Moreover, the generation gap with the separation of beliefs and behaviors (Hayes, 2021) could account for the discrepancy in the reaction of each generation's perception and adjustment to its buying behavior. Additionally, since generation Z is considered "the first digital native" (Kotler et al., 2021, p.25), it easily distinguishes between sponsored and non-sponsored content from the influencers, the question was raised as to whether there is an impact of influencers on generation Z's consumer behavior regardless of the level of the purity of the content. Hence, the relationship between generation Z, TikTok, influencer marketing, and consumer behavior will also be investigated.

## **1.2 Research questions**

Based on the objective of investigating *the impact of influencer marketing on TikTok on generation Z's consumer behavior*, a list of research questions is developed to address the research problem.

Q1. How does influencer marketing affect consumer behavior?

Q2. What are the effects of TikTok influencer marketing on generation Z's consumer behavior?

Q3. In which crucial stages of the consumer decision-making process could influencer marketing on TikTok affect generation Z's consumer behavior?

### 1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of six chapters in total. Its structure is illustrated in the figure below.

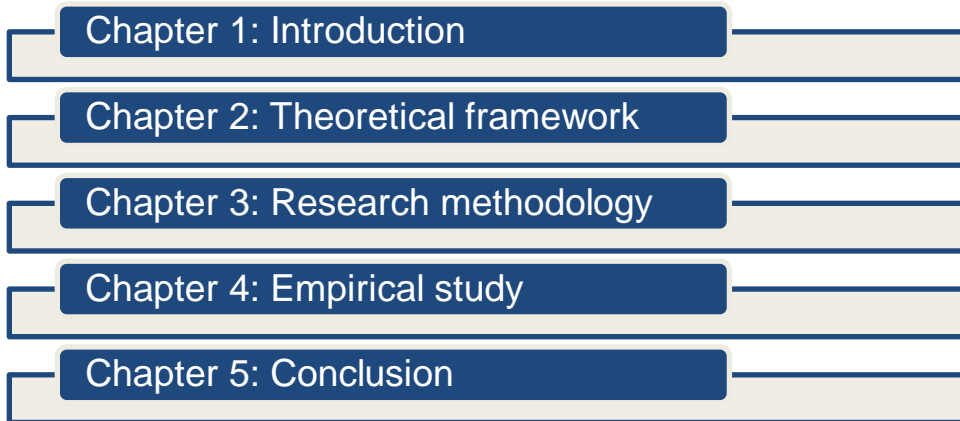


Figure 1: Thesis structure

The thesis begins with the introduction in chapter 1, in which the background and objectives of the research are highlighted, along with the research questions and the organization of the thesis.

Chapter 2 then explores the theoretical learning to give an in-depth clarification on influencer marketing, TikTok as the focus social media channel in this thesis, consumer behaviors, and the effect of influencer marketing on consumer behaviors. Based on the literature review, this chapter focuses on answering the first question (Q1) and establishing the fundament for the later empirical study.

Chapter 3 indicates the research methodology by clarifying WHAT methods are applied, WHY they are selected in this research, and HOW they are executed to address the research questions.

Chapter 4, as an empirical study, is responsible for answering two last questions through the analysis of primary data collection.

Finally, chapter 5 concludes the thesis by summarizing the research questions' key findings, self-evaluating the research project, and proposing suggestions for future development of influencer marketing.

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework aims to present and elaborate some theories and academic knowledge related to the scope of this thesis, including influencer marketing, consumer behavior, TikTok, and generation Z, to give a deep understanding of what they are and how they are they work, and their relationship.

The power of influencer marketing is based on the influencers. However, it is crucial to understand how influencers can affect the consumer's behavior and whether the effect of influencers is similar when they operate for influencer marketing. It is also essential to comprehend influencers' role in the consumer's decision to utilize influencer marketing effectively in appropriate phases.

After presenting theories and academic knowledge, the thesis will investigate the impact of influencer marketing and influencers on consumer behavior and decision-making.

The theoretical framework will focus on answering the first research question Q1. How does influencer marketing affect consumer behavior? And become the fundament to research the other two questions.

### **2.1 Influencer marketing**

As defined by Sammis et al. (2016, p.5), influencer marketing is the way to shed the brand message through sponsored content posted by engaging people who are leading on online platforms. It is considered the crucial approach to marketing because influential experts play a decisive factor in the purchasing process (Brown & Hayes, 2008, p.50). This finding was also confirmed in some experiments with lovable figures during the long history of influencer marketing since its active platforms were only traditional media. It had stated that "If people loved the person promoting a product, they loved the product too" (*The History of Influencer Marketing*, n.d.). During this time, the role of influencers did not highly emphasize since there were no direct means of communication as in the digital time. In fact, the version of

influencer marketing in the traditional media era is equivalent to celebrity endorsement.

Nevertheless, since the thesis focuses on the era of online social media, the celebrities' endorsement is not the focus of the influencer marketing but those social media influencers. Geyser (2022) defined that influencers have the power to impact the purchasing process thanks to their knowledge, authority, or relationship with followers in a particular area. When content production is overcrowded, influencer marketing has evolved to promote the voice of authority and attract attention from interested followers who no longer believe in ads (Newman, 2015). As a result, the adverse reaction would be predictable if the audience could detect a paid promotion among influential content. Therefore, this marketing strategy should be conducted cautiously and paid attention to keep the brand message genuine in front of the target segmentation.

### 2.1.1 Influencer marketing models

One of the popular models in influencer marketing is the Fisherman's Influencer Marketing Model presented by Brown & Fiorella (2013, p.77) (Figure 2).

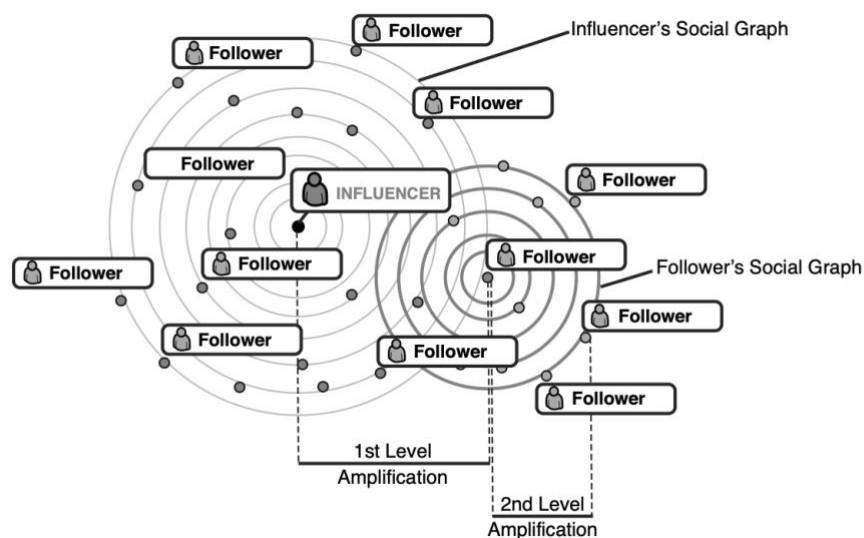


Figure 2 Fisherman's Influence Marketing Model (Brown & Fiorella, 2013, p.77)

According to Brown & Fiorella (2013, p.77), the current influencer marketing model places the influencer at the center since they acquire vast social media networks. As the figure 2 presented, the influencer cannot only reach its social graph as the 1<sup>st</sup> level but also expand the potential reach to the follower's social graph as the 2<sup>nd</sup> level of amplification; as a result, this influencer marketing approach highlights the role of influencer in helping businesses be able to reach a significant number of potential customers to increase brand awareness.

Another theory has also been proposed by Brown & Fiorella (2013, p.78) that the heart of influencer marketing is indeed the customer because, eventually, they are the one who makes the decision, not the influencer (Figure 3).

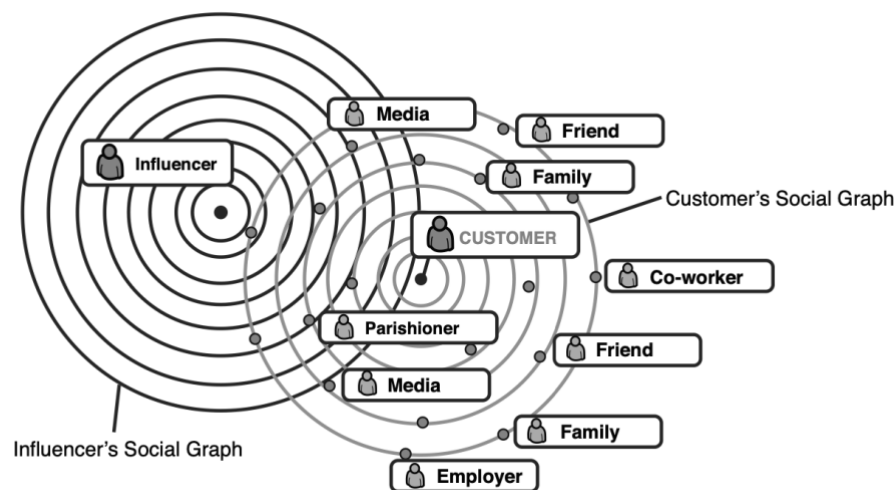


Figure 3: Customer-Centric Influence Marketing Model (Brown & Fiorella, 2013, p.78)

With this approach, the brand can directly communicate the messages with its potential customers and use their voices to spread the messages in their ways; as a result, the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies may enhance. An influencer is no longer the center of this new universe but lies in orbit with media and different customer social groups to influence customer behavior. Even though each model concentrates on other objects, both can be utilized corporately in a strategy to convey their messages and spread their awareness broadly to accurately targeted potential customers in the universe of either influencer or customer.

### 2.1.2 Social media marketing

Social media marketing is identified as applying social media technology, channels, and software to “create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for an organization’s stakeholders.” (Tuten & Solomon, 2018, p.53). There are several marketing practices on social media, such as seeking social funding on Kickstarter and increasing social indexing on Google; additionally, regardless of channels, one of the primary purposes of social media marketing is to influence promotional plans for brands. Social media marketing is utilized to produce and communicate with interested audiences and is diversified depending on the channels that the brand executes the campaign. For instance, while Youtube promotes video format, Instagram establishes networking for photo and video sharing. Nowadays, more platforms have emerged in this market, but they can be sorted based on their orientation. Dahl (2018, p.3) has formed a graph

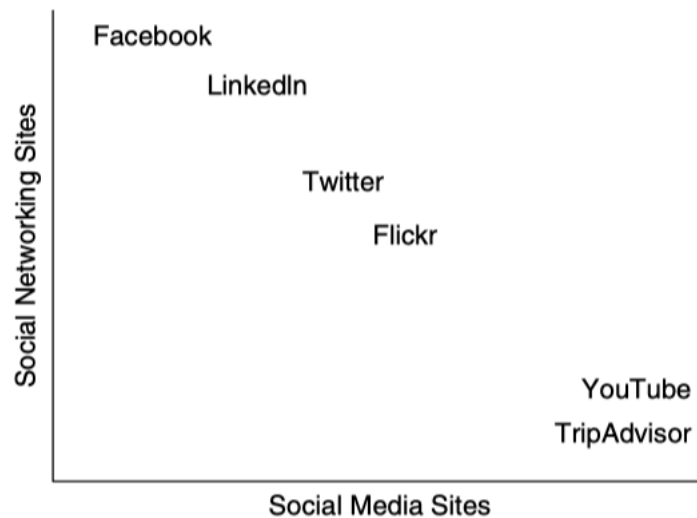


Figure 4: Taxonomy of social media channels (Dahl, 2018, p.3)

(Figure 4) to clarify that sites tend to the social media to emphasize the sharing of user-generated content but not necessarily encourage user interactions, while the social network sites concentrate on developing the continuous contact between users.

One of the similar definitions regarding this finding was stated by Hayes (2021) “The term social media marketing (SMM) refers to the use of social media and social networks to market a company’s products and services.”

The business could wisely select an appropriate site to promote social media marketing to suit its short or long-term goals based on the classification. In influencer marketing, either on social media or social network sites, influencers can still engage with interested audiences by producing high-quality content or strengthening the relationship with their followers. Indeed, influencers often appear on multiple platforms to leverage their authority and approach different audience segmentation.

### **2.1.3 Affiliated marketing**

Frankenfield (2018) defines affiliate marketing as a marketing technique in which the business compensates its registered partners to generate traffic or leads for the company's products or services. In other words, the registered partner for a brand or an e-commerce platform receives a commission whenever the lead is generated, thanks to him. There is no restriction for a person to become an affiliate marketer. However, to successfully attract the potential customer to purchasing decisions, this third-party "advertiser" must place several ads on their online channel and motivate their followers as a genuine marketer (Duffy, 2005). Additionally, they could build the trust of their community to influence their audience to purchase from their sites. This marketing scheme establishes a win-win relationship between the brand and its partners with durable potential to encourage a purchase decision.

Affiliate marketing and Influencer marketing are two different marketing strategies since they endeavor for individual goals. According to Le (2021), while affiliate marketing focuses on sales, orders, and subscriptions to increase conversion rate, influencer marketing enhances potential reach to increase user engagement. Nevertheless, affiliate marketing overlaps influencer marketing when both are considered the marketing strategy through influential figures by paying them to utilize their authority on social networks and media sites to influence followers to interact and act with the brand (Pham, 2021). As a result, while businesses can measure each method based on specific KPI indicators, there is no crucial distinction between both marketing schemes under the view of customers. This factor

signals a limitation when conducting the research with data collected from customers' perspectives.

## **2.2 TikTok**

In the booming digital era, social media and networking sites are the mass emergence that encourages users to express themselves and virtually connect with family, friends, or strangers within an interested community. Several giant sites have rapidly dominated the digital market, such as Facebook, with nearly 3 billion monthly active users, followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram. Surprisingly, according to Walsh (2021), TikTok has been the quickest growth and accounted for the 5<sup>th</sup> position in the rank even though it is the youngest site on the list. Besides that, its revenue is also remarkable, with \$35 billion, only behind Facebook. The figures have proved the considerable potential of this new platform.

### **2.2.1 Definition**

As introduced by Anderson (2020), a Chinese company named ByteDance released a lip-syncing clip creation called Douyin in 2016. One year later, to expand to the market outside of China, the company launched another version named TikTok. Since the launching date, this international version has increased from 65 million to 1 billion users in 2021 (Iqbal, 2022), with the primary user segment being generation Z (10-25 years old). For the time being, TikTok has been oriented as a short-form video-sharing app that users can produce and share 15-second to 10-minutes videos on any topic (Geyser, 2022).

### **2.2.2 Why TikTok?**

Its format of user-generated video content is not innovative; Instagram users can also create and post video clips on their account aside from images and share temporary short videos on the "Story" feature. One of the reasons to differentiate TikTok from other similar platforms was proposed by Bresnick (2019) as TikTok establishes a virtual creative playground for its users, providing audiovisual features and effects so young people can be creative



in generating content. Another crucial reason for the uniqueness of TikTok is its algorithm-driven; for instance, a video from a random user can quickly gain an audience as it appears in other users' feeds even though they did not establish any prior relationship (Anderson, 2020). However, TikTok's content is not merely randomly picked for the users. Indeed, the selection has been revealed as

The system recommends content by ranking videos based on factors — starting from interests you express as a new user and adjusting for things you indicate you're not interested in. (TikTok, 2020)

Accordingly, the users are attracted and continuously engage with their preferable content chosen by the app. TikTok also encourages its users to create content on this platform by establishing TikTok Creator Fund to grant eligible creators if they leverage the engagement with several views and authentic likes by sharing in line with its Community Guidelines and Terms of Service (TikTok, 2021).

### **2.2.3 The implementation of influencer marketing on TikTok**

The format and algorithm of TikTok facilitate the emergence and development of influencers in any field and support the influencer to reach potential engagement with the interested community by accurately suggesting to users their favorite content; as a result, connecting them with the influencers. With a remarkable number of users and the average daily usage time of a TikTok user reaching nearly 1 hour a day (Dean, 2022), it is considered the opportunity to capitalize on a massive potential audience through influencer marketing TikTok's influencers.

However, each social media or networking site has characteristics that might attract different generations and serve a particular purpose. The fast growth of TikTok has pushed other channels to adapt to the new preference of social media users. However, there are reasons for Facebook or Instagram still being dominant on the digital platform. Thus, implementing influencer marketing on TikTok required a thorough understanding of this platform. Regarding TikTok user's demographic, TikTok has become a

popular social platform for Gen Z (referring to people born between 1997 and 2009 (Kotler et al., 2021, p.25)). Besides that, it is often considered a generation that no longer believes in traditional advertising (Qudsi, 2020). They prefer authenticity and avoid brands that promote their image as too good to be true (Kotler et al., 2021, p.26). Therefore, businesses should be aware if they choose TikTok as the platform to target generation Z. Utilizing influencers for merely polishing the brand's product without genuine sharing is not the way to appeal to this target segmentation.

## **2.3 Generation Z**

Every generation is shaped by a particular sociocultural background of the period they emerged. In the era when the Internet has become mainstream, Generation Z considered digital connections on multiple screens indispensable in its daily life. Together with the fact that Gen Z has currently been dominant in the world regarding the size of the population, it is essential for marketers to understand this generation's view and be ready to welcome this most prominent generation in the consumption market.

### **2.3.1 Definition**

According to Kotler et al. (2021, p.25), generation Z or Gen Z refers to the people born between 1997 and 2009, following the millennial generation. Having surpassed its previous generation, Generation Z has already become the largest generation globally nowadays, which accounts for roughly 32% of the population in the world (Lu, 2018). As a result, it is predicted to become an essential market for products and services. Only in the US, generation Z has already accounted for more than 40% of consumers. (Finch, 2015)

### **2.3.2 Features**

Gen Z is identified as "the very first digital natives" (Kotler et al., 2021, p.25) since they were born and growing at the fast pace of Internet development; as a result, digital technologies have become an essential element of gen-Z's daily life. Hence, it is expectable when Viens (2019) reported that this

cohort spent nearly 3 hours on social media daily (which is one hour longer than its previous generation). According to Kotler et al. (2021, p.26), this generation prefers the conveniences of customization and personalization based on the personal information shared on social media. Generation Z demands constant engagement with the brands through interactive experiences at critical touchpoints throughout the purchase journey with that preference. Compared to the previous generations, product research and purchase drivers are two critical touchpoints that generation Z performs the most influential. In brand discovery and brand interaction, it is only lower than generation Y 2 to 5 percent (Viens, 2019). IBM (n.d.) presented that 70% of generation Z influences their household purchasing decisions on foods and household products.

## 2.4 Consumer behavior

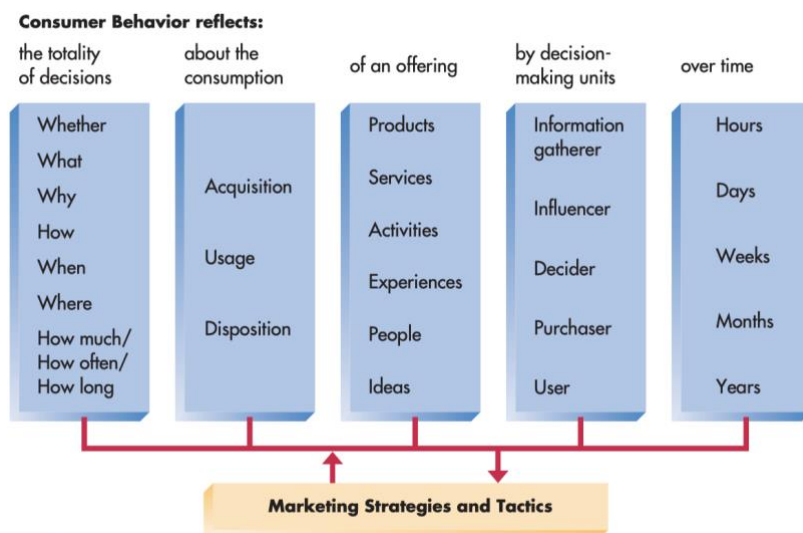


Figure 5: Elements in consumer behavior's definition (Hoyer and MacInnis, 2008, p.4)

Consumer behavior is crucial to either researchers or marketers since it is the key for businesses to obtain insights to provide what the market is missing and adjust the available offerings to satisfy the expectation of the customers. Throughout time, many researchers have defined consumer behavior with several concepts. According to Hoyer and MacInnis (2008, p.4), consumer behavior was defined as the totality of consumers' decisions on an offering by decision-making units over a period. (Figure 5). Through

the interpretation of the definition, it is revealed that consumer behavior reflects the decision related to the offering and how it is utilized and disposed of.

Solomon (2017, p.28) defined consumer behavior under the study perspective of “the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires.” The definition given by Solomon is slightly different from Hoyer and MacInnis’ regarding wording; however, it shares similarities in the primary meaning as a brief version compared to the interpretation illustrated in Figure 4. In the scope of this thesis, the definition from Hoyer and MacInnis is selected to elaborate further.

As observed in the figure, there are five crucial factors in customer behavior.

- “The totality of decision”: Not only buying decisions, but decision-making units also make a range of decisions regarding consumption based on several questions such as whether, why, where, when, how, how long, how often, and so on.
- “About the consumption”: The consumption does not merely refer to using of an offering; moreover, it concerns how an offering is obtained (acquisition) and how it is discarded (disposition).
- “Of an offering”: An offering is not limited to a tangible product. It could be services, experiences, activities, people, and ideas.
- “By decision-making units”: Since there are three main activities in the consumption, the consumer behavior could not be necessarily limited to a single individual involved in the process. It could be information gatherer, decider, purchaser, user, and influencer.
- “Over time”: Similar to what Solomon stated about the definition of consumer behavior, Hoyer and MacInnis (2008) declared that it is indeed a dynamic process. It concentrates on researching several questions and issues that arise from the sequence of acquisition, consumption, and disposition through the order of time. In other words, consumer behavior studies consumer behavior in three stages: what happens before, during, and after the purchase.

(Hoyer and MacInnis, 2008, p.4-p.9)

### 2.4.1 Consumer decision-making process

While consumer behavior studies the totality of decisions and related elements, the study of the process of making those decisions is also a concern by many researchers. In fact, the definition of the consumer decision-making process is often equated to the consumer buying decision process.

Consumer buying decision process: The five stages which a consumer often goes through, starting with problem recognition, the consumer passes through the stages of information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. (Kotler, 2002, p.98)



Figure 6: Five-stage Model of the Consumer Buying Process (Kotler, 2002, p.98)

Hoyer and MacInnis (2008, p.11) defined the consumer decision-making process as three stages: Problem recognition and information search, Judgment and decision making, and post-decision processes.

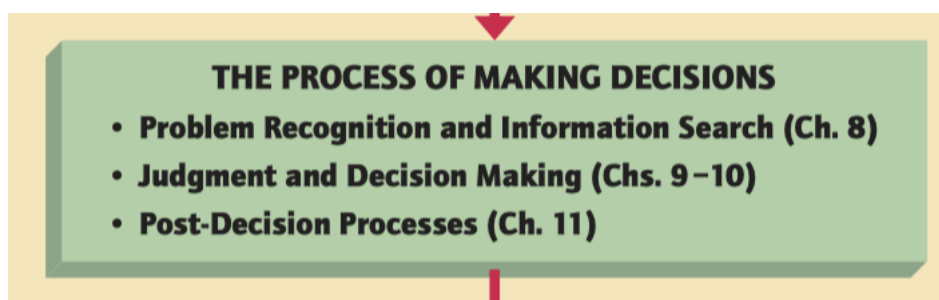


Figure 7: Three-stage Model of the Consumer Making Decision Process (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2008, p.11)

With the elaboration on the definition of consumer behavior established by Hoyer and MacInnis, it could be considered that the consumer buying process is a branch of a range of decision-making in consumption. Since this thesis focuses on the broad definition of consumer behavior from Hoyer

and MacInnis, the author decided to utilize the three-stage consumer decision-making model to analyze the impact of influencer marketing on the consumer decision-making decision process.

#### **2.4.2 Influences on consumer behavior**

Consumer behavior is a complex process that includes many crucial elements; therefore, many factors can influence the acquisition, usage, and disposition decisions. Hoyer and MacInnis (2008, p.12-p.15) proposed four areas that those factors could be categorized in as (1) the psychological core, (2) the process of decision making, and (3) the culture of consumers, and (4) consumer behavior outcomes. (Figure 8)

Psychological core: this area was suggested in the list since it is believed that consumers must proceed with internal process-based sources of information and knowledge before making a decision. The source includes “motivation, ability, and opportunity; exposure, attention, and perception; categorization and comprehension of information; and attitudes about an offering.” - Hoyer and MacInnis (2008). In the same way, Kotler (2002) concluded that psychological factors such as “motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitudes” play critical roles in influencing consumer buying behavior.

Decision-making process: Presented and interpreted in Chapter 3.3.1

Consumer’s culture: Culture consists of typical behaviors, norms, and ideas that distinguish an organization or a group of people. Since individual grows and develops surrounded by their society and culture, culture can be a powerful influence on consumer behavior.

The internal process of psychological factors (including the decision-making consumption process) and the external factors of consumer culture influence consumer behavior outcomes. As a loop, this factor, from being influenced, then influences other decision-making units' consumer behavior.

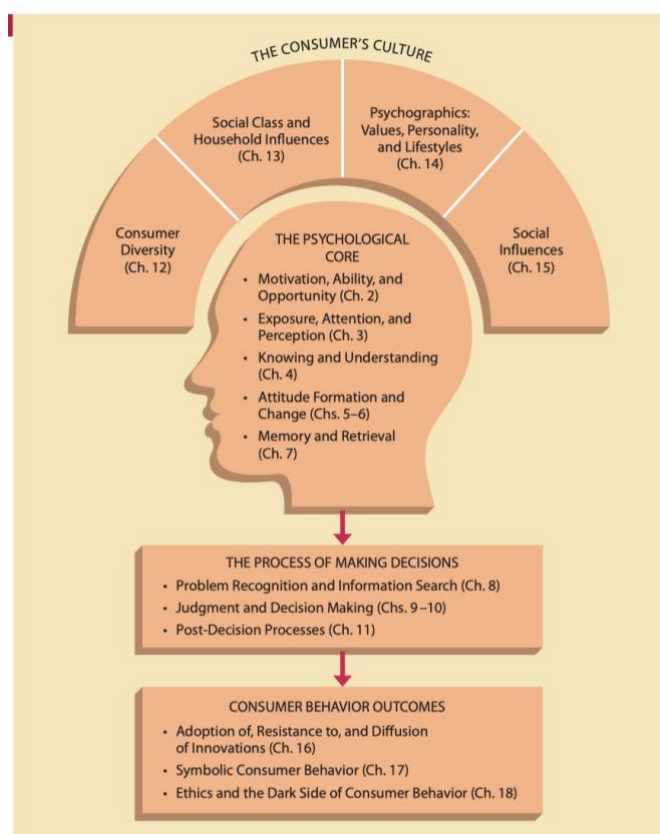


Figure 8: A model of consumer behavior (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2008)

## 2.5 Impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior

In this digital age, when people spend most of their time a day on screen and digest various types of commercials on social media, it is not complicated for them to conduct further research to detect whether those ads are authentic. Therefore, influencer marketing has evolved to ease that sales barrier between potential customers and brands. Influencers are defined as the individuals who have the power to influence purchasing process (Brown & Hayes, 2008, p.12) thanks to their voice of authority. Even though the influencers are paid to promote the products as celebrity endorsements, they still gain the trust of their followers. The evidence was given through research conducted by Crowdtap in 2015 (as cited by Cobain, 2020). In the study, they figured out that individuals become influencers by sharing what they are passionate about, not vice versa; therefore, to maintain their reputation, they must cautiously examine the brand as to whether the opportunities are most relevant for their audiences when being invited for the partnership.

### **2.5.1 How influencers can affect consumer behavior**

Based on the sub-chapter 3.4.2 about the factors influencing consumer behavior, four significant domains that affect this field have been elaborated. Some parts have signaled the emergence of influencers in this context.

Social influences in Consumer's culture: Influencers appear as an actor in social effects, as illustrated in the Customer-Centric Influence Marketing Model theory by Brown & Fiorella (2013, p.78). Indeed, this factor is elaborated as someone who is admired and influences how consumers evaluate information and make a decision.

Motivation in Psychological core: McClelland (2016) proposed the Learned Needs Theory in The Achieving Society book that any human has one of three main driving motivators: the needs for achievement, affiliation, or power. When placing this theory in the context of the effect of the influencer, it is observed that influential individuals can trigger a sense of affiliation and power. While the need for affiliation motivates people to belong to the influencer's tribe, the need for power urges them to attain status and recognition as the influencers.

Influences are considered part of both internal and external factors affecting consumer behavior. Therefore, influencers play a crucial role in influencing the decision-making process and even consumer behavior outcomes in the scope of consumer behavior.

### **2.5.2 Influencer marketing on consumer's perception**

The impact of influencer marketing on the consumer's perception might not be exactly explained since people with different backgrounds, preferences, or levels of education will reflect their perception distinctly of the same content. In this case, the psychological theory could clarify the relationship between influencer marketing and consumers' perception to some extent.

- Theory of Priming Effects: Oliver et al. (2020) have defined that "priming refers to the effects of the content in the media on people's later behavior,



thoughts, or judgments.” To explain how it works in the influencer marketing, Donawerth (n.d) had presented

Many influencers post and share in such a way that the follower is led through a series of decisions. This is priming. Getting a follower to take the first step makes the subsequent decisions easier. This increases the chances that a follower will act according to the influencer’s original guidance. (Donawerth, n.d)

Based on this technique, regardless of triggering consumers' feelings or needs, influencer marketing makes knowledge cognitively more easily accessible. As a result, a particular perception towards a product or service or buying impulsively will be established to act in reality. In other words, the consumer might not immediately perceive the influencer marketing scheme based on what content they have absorbed. Still, the goal is that the message is easily accessible when they decide on their consumption.

### **3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter illustrates the research methodology implemented to address the research problems in this thesis. Particularly, the general methodological procedure will be introduced, followed by clarifying the research method in greater detail.

#### **3.1 Research methodology**

The terms research methodology and research method are often indicated as synonyms; in fact, they mean two different perspectives. Kothari (2004, p.8) defined research methodology as a way to tackle the research problem systematically, while research methods indicate all of the techniques and methods that can be implemented when conducting the research operations. Therefore, in this section of research methodology, research methods are presented, and the reasons they are used are explained logically.

Two main research methods are implemented in the thesis as library research and quantitative research. In the first stage, the library research is conducted to explain and clarify the terminologies and critical elements indicated in the study and answer the first research question: "How does influencer marketing affect consumer behavior?". Furthermore, library research is applied as the fundament to design the quantitative research that enables the author to investigate further and examine the other two questions.

As defined by George (2008), library research is the method that "involves identifying and locating sources that provide factual information or personal/expert opinion on a research question." This method allows the author to establish a general acknowledgment in the field of study by analyzing prior research and theories in the chapter "Theoretical framework." Eventually, it is utilized to answer whether there are impacts on consumer behavior by influencer marketing in general. Hence, the author can determine crucial

factors in the survey for an in-depth investigation of the research within TikTok and generation Z.

According to Creswell (2013, p.53), the quantitative research method is “the processes of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and writing the results of a study.” Williams (2021) stated that quantitative research produces objective data in the form of statistics and numbers, allowing the researchers to communicate the results unbiased, fast, and focused. This method is implemented in the thesis under a survey to collect and interpret data from a specific sample population, generation Z, who uses TikTok. In this study, the author investigates the correlation of influencers with two factors influencing consumer behaviors: the social influences in consumer culture and motivation in the psychological core. Furthermore, the quantitative research attempts to test the frequency of the influencer marketing effect that emerged in the three-stage consumer decision-making process to determine which step the influencer marketing can concentrate on TikTok to optimize its impact on generation Z’s consumer behavior.

### **3.2 Secondary data – Library research**

According to Kothari (2004, p.111), secondary data refers to the already available data that has been collected and analyzed by other people, which are published data such as books, journal articles, and websites in the scope of this thesis. The secondary data gathered and collected in this study is the result of the library research method, which is conducted by utilizing theories and information related to the research topic to address the research questions. The sources of books and journal articles are retrieved from Google Scholar, which provides reliable sites for scholarly literature. Also, the related online websites, which have been used in other academic research, are utilized to clarify several terminologies and support the theoretical framework, such as TikTok, Influencer Marketing Hub, Investopedia, and so on.

### **3.3 Primary data – Quantitative research**

This study collects the primary data through quantitative research conducted with a questionnaire. One of the reasons motivating the author to select a questionnaire as the technique for quantitative research is that it assists the author in receiving a good spread of numerical results within a limited available time (Greetham, 2019, p.183). As a result, the author can obtain a broad picture of a situation from a sufficiently large and representative sample and then support and illustrate this with the knowledge in the theoretical framework of the thesis.

The questionnaire will be designed under a self-completion format, allowing participants to complete the form online. To effectively get data from this type of questionnaire, the author must ensure that the questions are straightforward, and the structure of the form is short and easy to follow (Greetham, 2019, p.185). Therefore, the questionnaire draft was distributed directly to certain respondents in 3 days for the pilot test, and the author later requested feedback to adjust the questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed on the Google Form, stored in Google Drive, and distributed via email, public Facebook and Instagram posts, and instant message applications such as Messenger. The information obtained from the survey is the statistical data that is later utilized to address the research questions in the empirical study.

### **3.4 Survey design**

The structure of the survey consists of 16 focal questions and is designed to present three main sections:

- The first part asks two categorical questions to filter the valid respondents (generation, TikTok usage).
- The second part focuses on examining factors that influencers in general and influencer marketing affect consumer behaviors. In this part, multiple response questions are utilized to explore the reasons behind their answers to previous questions. The categorical questions are designed to study whether the respondents

acknowledge the topics. Finally, the Likert scale questions with a five-point scale are applied to measure the attitudes and opinions of the respondents.

- The final part explores consumer behavior on TikTok toward influencer marketing in each step of the consumer decision-making process. The Likert scale questions are mainly asked in this section to measure respondents' attitudes on each step. A multiple-response question is also utilized so that the author can further understand the behaviors of respondents.

## 4 EMPIRICAL STUDY

The chapter on empirical study aims to present the results of the questionnaire in the prior quantitative research. Furthermore, the elaboration on the purpose of each question is also presented to establish the fundamental views for further data analysis.

In this chapter, the general information of participants is introduced as the conditions to filter the valid respondents for later research. In addition, the results from the series of questions on the effect of influencer and influencer marketing as well as the critical stages of the consumer decision-making process are illustrated to investigate Q2. "What are the effects of TikTok influencer marketing on generation Z's consumer behavior?" and Q3. "In which crucial stages of the consumer decision-making process could influencer marketing on TikTok affect generation Z's consumer behavior?"

### 4.1 Participants

#### Question 1 and 2: General information of respondents

There was a total of 156 respondents participating in the survey. To be eligible for later analysis, the respondents must belong to generation Z and use TikTok. In questions 1 and 2, the generation of respondents and whether they use TikTok are asked to filter the respondents. According to Table 1, 110 respondents belong to the cohort of Generation Z and use TikTok. Hence, these 110 qualified responses are used in the later analysis.

1. Which generation do you belong to? * 2. Do you use TikTok? Crosstabulation				
Count		2. Do you use TikTok?		Total
		Yes	No	
1. Which generation do you belong to?	Gen Z	110	27	137
	Gen Y	7	10	17
	Gen X	1	1	2
Total		118	38	156

Table 1: Basic information to separate respondents

## 4.2 The effects of influencer marketing on TikTok in influencing generation Z's consumer behaviors

### Question 3: The reasons for using TikTok

Following Question 2 on detecting whether respondents use TikTok, Question 3 examines which factors motivate respondents to use this social media platform. Regarding the reasons shown in Figure 9, 85 respondents reported that they used TikTok because of the content on this platform. Forty-six participants agreed that the following influencers were the main reason for using TikTok. A similar number of people, 44 respondents, use TikTok to socialize. Furthermore, there are 24 selections on both reasons for sharing content and following brands to explain why TikTok is used. Finally, only two people answered that they used TikTok for business.

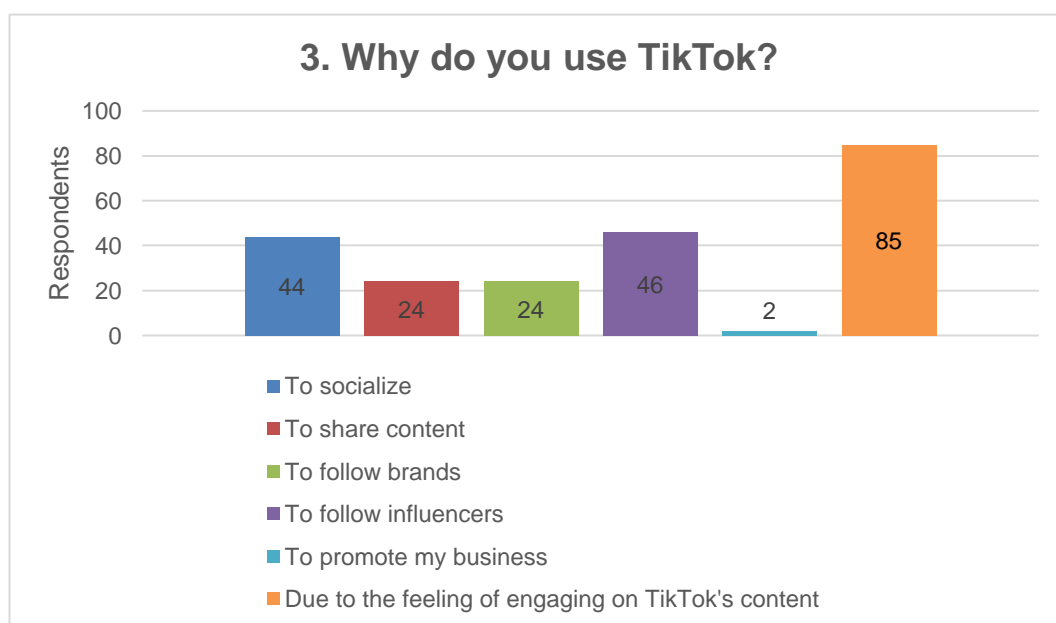


Figure 9: Reasons respondents using TikTok

### Questions 4a, 4b: Influencers on TikTok and the reasons why respondents follow them

In question 4a. "Do you follow any influencers on TikTok?", the definition of influencer was indicated to ensure that the respondents gave correct answers to this question. (Appendix 1). In the result of this question, there are 93 respondents following influencers on TikTok, which accounts for the

highest portion of 84,5%. 13 respondents reported that they did not follow any influencers. Four respondents did not remember whether they had followed any of them. Based on this question, two types of respondents: respondents following influencers and respondents not following any influencers, would be divided to test later hypothesis testing.

For those who answered “Yes” in question 4a, question 4b was asked to explore the reasons behind their following and its result presented in Figure 10. Based on the reasons indicated in the questionnaire, entertainment is the most popular reason for respondents to follow influencers, with which 73 out of 110 people selected. Besides the reason for entertainment, 51 respondents also reported that they follow the influencers since they could inspire them in their field of interest. As TikTok is famous for pushing viral videos, 42 respondents agreed that their reason behind following influencers is to be updated with the trends. In addition, to selecting from the listed reasons in the questionnaire, three other responses were mentioned in the “Others” section that the respondents want to learn new knowledge or language and be informed by following influencers. However, if the answer is viewed from a broader perspective, “learning something from the influencers” is aligned with “to be inspired” by the influencer’s knowledge in the particular field.

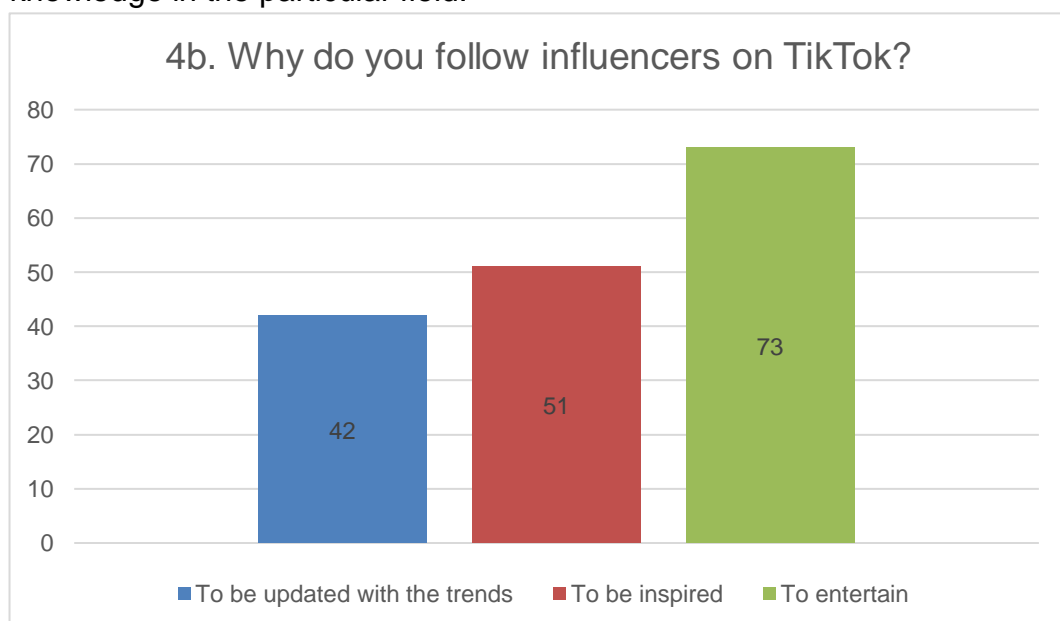


Figure 10: Reasons why respondents follow influencers



### Question 5a: The effects of influencers on consumer behaviors

Question 5a was designed to explore whether there is the effect of influencers on consumer behaviors among the respondents. When being asked whether respondents select a product or brand if influencers promote it, the following bar graph (Figure 11) presented that the influencers' advertised products exerted positive effects on consumer behaviors, especially 42 respondents reported that they would probably consider the promoted products. This answer also occurred the most in the total responses. While 10 participants would surely choose the product/brand promoted by the influencers, 35 of the total participants expressed a hesitant attitude towards this question.

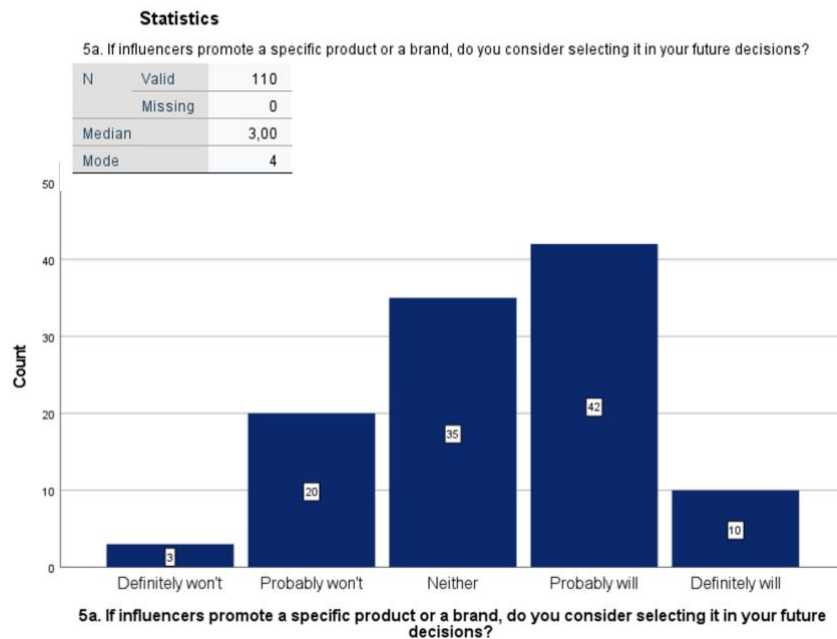


Figure 11: The effects of influencers on consumer behaviors

## Hypothesis testing

Since TikTok's algorithm allows its users to watch video clips mainly based on their interests, even if the users follow any influencers or not, there are chances that they will see influencers' content. Therefore, the effect of influencers should also be tested with either respondent following influencers or not with a 5% significance level.

H0: There is no difference between the respondents who follow and do not follow any influencers concerning the effect of influencers on their consuming behaviors.

H1: There is a difference between the respondents who follow and do not follow any influencers concerning the effect of influencers on their consuming behaviors.

### Mann-Whitney Test

		Ranks			
		4a. Do you follow any influencers on TikTok?	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
5a. If influencers promote a specific product or a brand, do you consider selecting it in your future decisions?	Yes		93	55,82	5191,00
	No		13	36,92	480,00
	Total		106		

### Test Statistics<sup>a</sup>

5a. If influencers promote a specific product or a brand, do you consider selecting it in your future decisions?	
Mann-Whitney U	389,000
Wilcoxon W	480,000
Z	-2,181
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,029

a. Grouping Variable: 4a. Do you follow any influencers on TikTok?

Table 2: Mann-Whitney test

With the result of Sig. equal to 0,029 (2,9%), which is lower than 5%, H0 is rejected, and H1 remains. In other words, there are differences between the participants who follow or do not follow influencers regarding the effects of influencers on consumer behaviors. Therefore, even watching the same content from an influencer, the impact on both groups could be different. As illustrated in Figure 12, the positive effects will mainly exert on the people who follow influencers. In contrast, the adverse effects are more prevalent in the responses from whom do not follow any influencers.

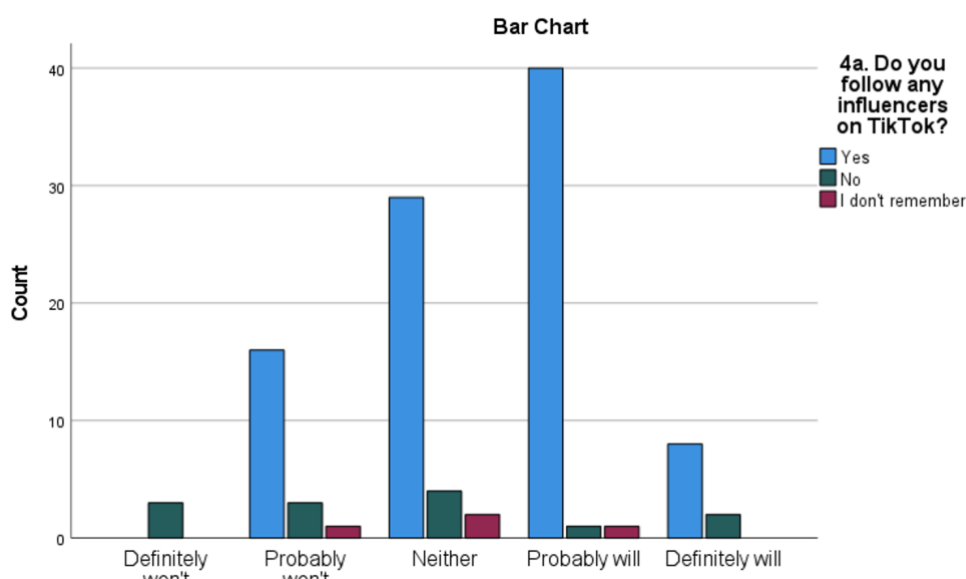


Figure 12: The effects of influencers on consumer behaviors with groups

### **Question 5b: The reasons behind positive responses to the effects of influencers on consumer behaviors**

A sub-question is designed with a 5-point Likert Scale to ask 52 respondents who left positive selections (“Probably will” and “Definitely will”) to examine what has been discussed in the theoretical framework. Based on the theory of the Consumer Behavior Model by Hoyer & MacInnis (2008) and the Learned Needs Theory by McClelland (2016), three factors related to influencers that influence consumer behaviors have been established in three statements reviewed in this question. As proposed by Learned Needs Theory by McClelland (2016), one of the reasons that influencers can affect consumers is due to the ambition of power, which urges them to attain status and recognition as the influencers; in the questionnaire, it is rewritten as: “It

**makes me [the target consumer] feel the urge to have a trending item promoted by an influencer.** The second statement is, **“It makes me [the target consumer] feel closer to my favorite influencers when owning their similar products.”** which demonstrates the need to be affiliated with the influencer tribute as indicated in Social Influences and Learned Needs Theory. Finally, as a part of social influence and the definition of influencers, the third factor influencing consumer behavior could be stated as **“I [the target consumer] believe in the quality of the product/brand that my influencers promote.”** Corresponding to the answers, Table 3 presented that the majority of responses for three statements are mainly distributed either in “Neutral” or “Agree.”

**Statistics**

		5b. In case you chose 4 or 5, which statements below are likely suitable to explain your answer? [I believe in the quality of the product/brand that my influencers promote.]	5b. In case you chose 4 or 5, which statements below are likely suitable to explain your answer? [It makes me feel urge to have a trending item promoted by an influencer.]	5b. In case you chose 4 or 5, which statements below are likely suitable to explain your answer? [It makes me feel closer to my favourite influencers when owning their similar products.]
N	Valid	52	52	52
	Missing	58	58	58
Median		4,00	3,00	3,00
Mode		4	3	4

Table 3: Influencing factors of consumer behaviors

In particular, Table 4 shows that most of the respondents (46,2%) agreed that the factor that motivated them to select the product and service promoted by influencers was their trust in influencers. On the other hand, most respondents disagreed with the aspect of affiliation with 23,1% for “Strongly Disagree,” followed by the factor of achievement with 28,8% for “Disagree.”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
It makes me feel urge to have a trending item promoted by an influencer.	6 (11,5%)	15 (28,8%)	16 (30,8%)	14 (26,9%)	1 (1,9%)
It makes me feel closer to my favorite influencers when owning their similar products.	12 (23,1%)	11 (21,2%)	11 (21,2%)	13 (25%)	5 (9,6%)
I believe in the quality of the product/brand that my influencers promote.	1 (1,9%)	5 (9,6%)	17 (32,7%)	24 (46,2%)	5 (9,6%)

Table 4: Results of influencing factors' opinions

### Question 6, 7: Influencer marketing on consumer behavior

When being inquired whether the respondents were aware of influencer marketing, most of the respondents had already acknowledged this type of marketing, with 77,27% of total respondents selecting "Yes." 5,45% of respondents did not know about influencer marketing, and the rest were unsure about this concept. (Figure 13)

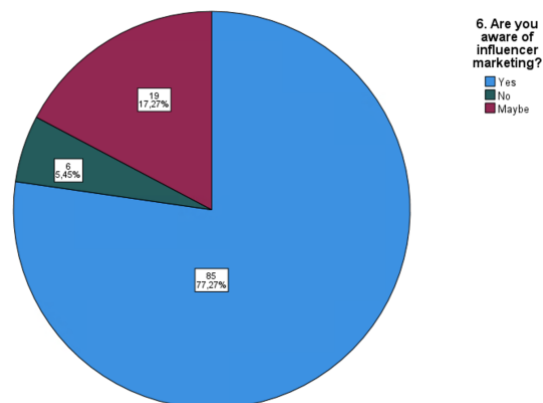


Figure 13: Awareness of influencer marketing

**4a. Do you follow any influencers on TikTok? \* 6. Are you aware of influencer marketing? Crosstabulation**

Count

		6. Are you aware of influencer marketing?			Total
		Yes	No	Maybe	
4a. Do you follow any influencers on TikTok?	Yes	71	5	17	93
	No	11	0	2	13
	I don't remember	3	1	0	4
Total		85	6	19	110

Table 5: The awareness of influencer marketing from different groups

Compared to the data from question 4a, it is perceived that most of the respondents (71/110 respondents) who follow influencers are aware of influencer marketing. Nevertheless, this group has 17 respondents who are unsure about the prior acknowledgement of this concept. 11 out of 13 respondents who do not follow any influencers are also aware of this concept, with no “No” selection and 2 “Maybe” selections. (Table 5)

Corresponding to question 7, Figure 14 illustrated that most of the respondents (44/110) hold neutral opinions, followed by 32 respondents who probably react positively to the paid promoted product by influencers. On the negative side, 27 respondents in total will not choose the influencers’ paid advertised products.

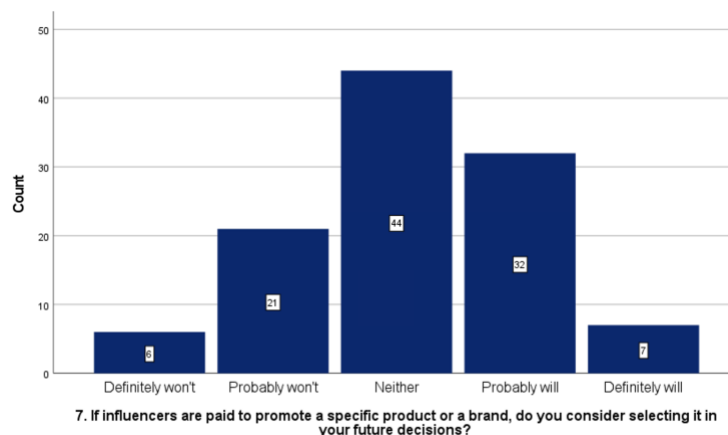


Figure 14: The effect of influencers on consumer behavior with respondents' awareness of influencer marketing

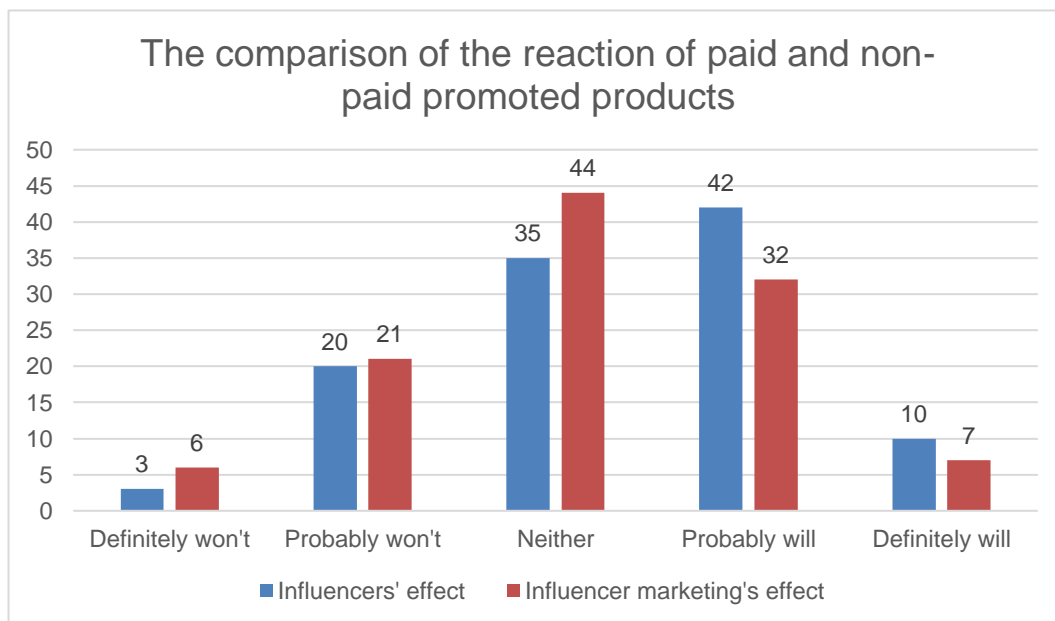


Figure 15: The comparison of the reaction of paid and non-paid promoted products

Even though there is no significant difference between the results of respondents on both paid and non-paid promoted products overall (Figure 15), the response on general influencers' promoted products signals a higher number in positive effect and a lower number in negative impact than the influencers' paid promoted products. Furthermore, most respondents (44 out of 110) tend to confuse the selection, while in question 5a, the positive effect accounts for the most popular answer (42 out of 110).

#### **4.3 The effects of influencers in the consumer decision-making process on generation Z**

Table 6 presents the answers from respondents on the frequency of activities they perform during three stages of the consumer decision-making process according to the model illustrated by Hoyer & MacInnis (2008). Specifically, Questions 8 and 9 are designed for the stage of Problem Recognition and the Search for Information, followed by questions 10 and 11 for the second stage, Making Judgments and Decisions. Finally, the last stage, Making Post-Decision Evaluations, is inquired by questions 12 and 13.

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
8. How often do you perceive your unfulfilled needs while watching TikTok's content?	3 (2,7%)	18 (16,4%)	65 (59,1%)	22 (20,0%)	2 (1,8%)
9a. How often do you actively search for reviews and information on TikTok before making decisions?	18 (16,4%)	22 (20,0%)	37 (33,6%)	24 (21,8%)	9 (8,2%)
10. How often do you make decisions based on online recommendations?	1 (0,9%)	19 (17,3%)	44 (40,0%)	41 (37,3%)	5 (4,5%)
11. How often do you make decisions by recommendation of your favorite influencers?	7 (6,4%)	24 (21,8%)	46 (41,8%)	27 (24,5%)	6 (5,5%)
12. After the decision is made, how often do you search for related reviews or information to evaluate your experience?	4 (3,6%)	19 (17,3%)	34 (30,9%)	36 (32,7%)	17 (15,5%)
13. In case your decision had been affected by influencers before, how often were you satisfied with their recommendation?	4 (3,6%)	10 (9,1%)	56 (50,9%)	33 (30%)	7 (6,4%)

Table 6: The frequency of respondents' experiences on different steps of the consumer decision-making process

Overall, the majority of participants experienced a moderate level of engagement in three-stage of the consumer making decision process on TikTok, with "Sometimes" occurring as the mode answer in all six questions. In addition, when comparing the responses in all three stages, respondents



tend to engage mainly on TikTok for the middle and final stages. In contrast, they express the average commitment on this platform in the first stage.

#### 4.3.1.1 The stage of Problem Recognition and the Search for Information

**Question 8: How often do you perceive your unfulfilled needs while watching TikTok's content?**

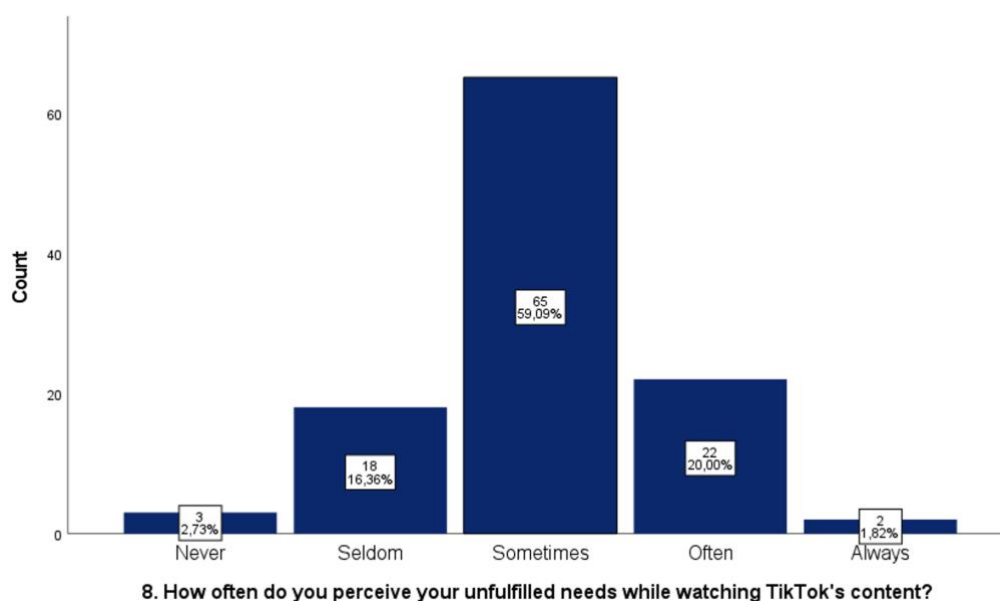


Figure 16: Frequency of respondents perceiving their needs on TikTok

It is demonstrated in Figure 16 that more than half of the participants (59,09%) reveal that they sometimes realize their problems during their time using TikTok. Besides that, 22 people (20%) often perceive their needs while watching TikTok, followed by two people (1,82%) who always have this experience. On the other hand, 18 participants (16,36%) rarely realize their needs through TikTok's content, and 2,73% of respondents never perceive their needs through this platform. Overall, even though the realization of needs does not often and always happen with the respondents, it still appears and affects the consumer behavior in the problem recognition at a moderate level.

**Question 9a: How often do you actively search for reviews and information on TikTok before making decisions?**

Another activity in the first stage is information search, illustrated in Figure 17. In this step, most people reported that they never or seldomly search for information on TikTok before making any decisions, with 16,36% and 20%, respectively. However, the percentage of respondents who often search for the information is still considerable at 21,82%, followed by 8,18% of total respondents who constantly research on TikTok before making decisions.

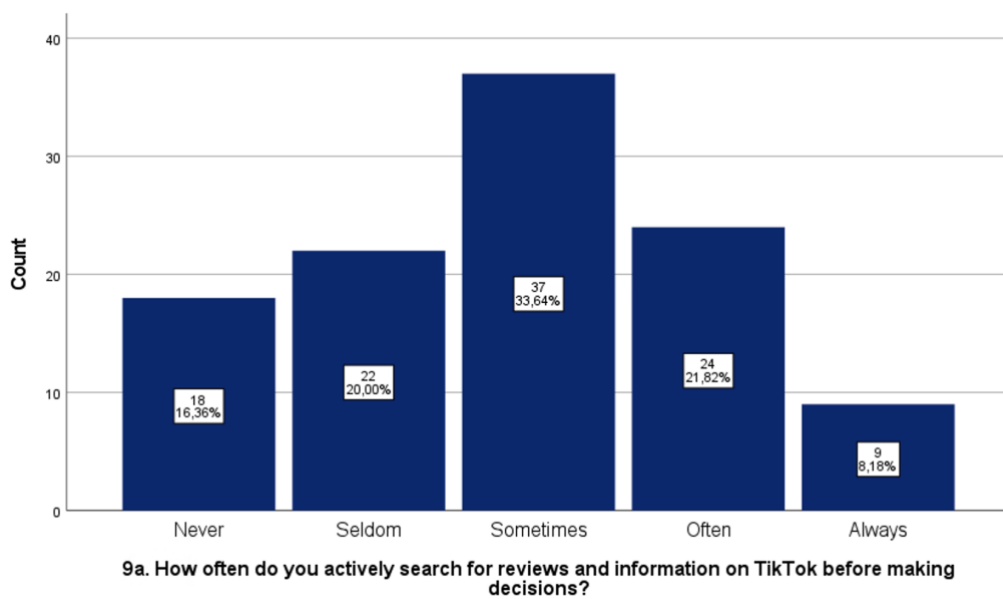


Figure 17: Frequency of respondents searching information on TikTok

**Question 9b: What types of content do you often search for on TikTok before making a decision?**

To explore what type of content TikTok users often search for, sub-question 9b was designed and illustrated in Figure 18 with the selections of 4 kinds of content. As observed in the graph, the respondents search for product or service reviews, constituting the most popular selection with 91 responses. Forty-nine people often search for tutorials, such as using and disposing of the product. Respondents were also concerned about product promotion and price when searching for information on TikTok, with 19 and 28 responses, respectively. Besides the available options, respondents

commented that they also search for the local places to find the preferred products and services.

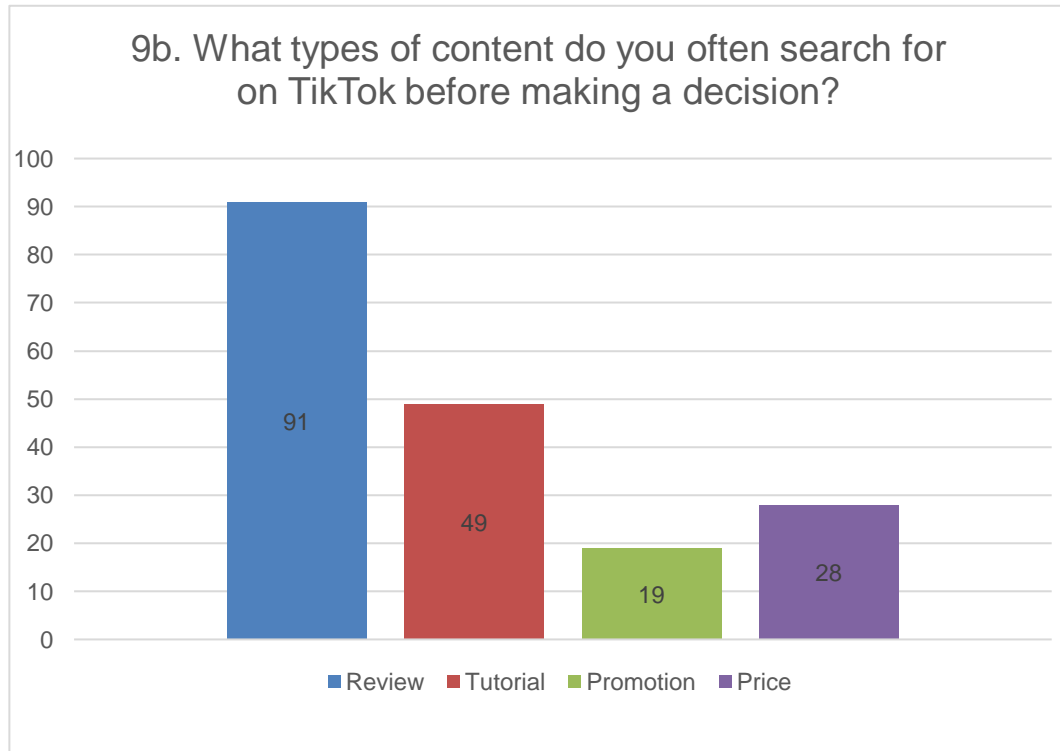


Figure 18: Types of content on TikTok that respondents often search for before making decisions

#### 4.3.1.2 The stage of Making judgments and decisions

##### **Question 10: How often do you make decisions based on online recommendations?**

When it comes to the respondent's behaviors in the second stage of the consumer decision-making process, most of the respondent has decided based on online recommendations. As illustrated in Figure 19, 40% of total respondents sometimes take action corresponding to the online recommendation. A similar number of people (37,27%) often utilize online guidance for decision making, while only one person never trusts online advice in general to make a decision.

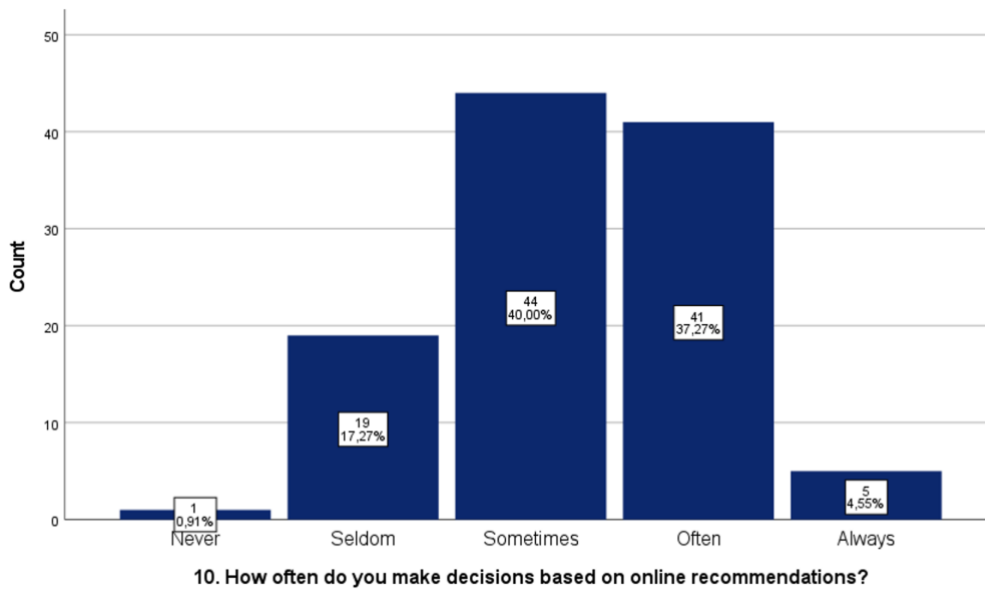


Figure 19: The frequency of respondents making decision based on online recommendations

**Question 11: How often do you make decisions by recommendations from your favorite influencers?**

While online recommendations receive many acceptances from respondents in decision making, the advice from their influencers does not highly engage in the giving decision process of respondents as the online recommendations in general. As demonstrated in Figure 20, nearly half of the total reported that they sometimes made decisions based on their favorite influencers' recommendations, followed by 24,55% of them often doing that. On the other hand, 21,82% of people said they seldom utilize recommendations from influencers for decision-making, and 6,36% never do that. The low frequency might be surprising since influencers are always well-known as someone who could substantially impact the purchasing process (Brown & Hayes, 2008, p.12). However, because most respondents in the scope of this thesis have reported they follow influential TikTok accounts for entertainment, the authority of influencers on this platform might not have a substantial impact as on other sites.

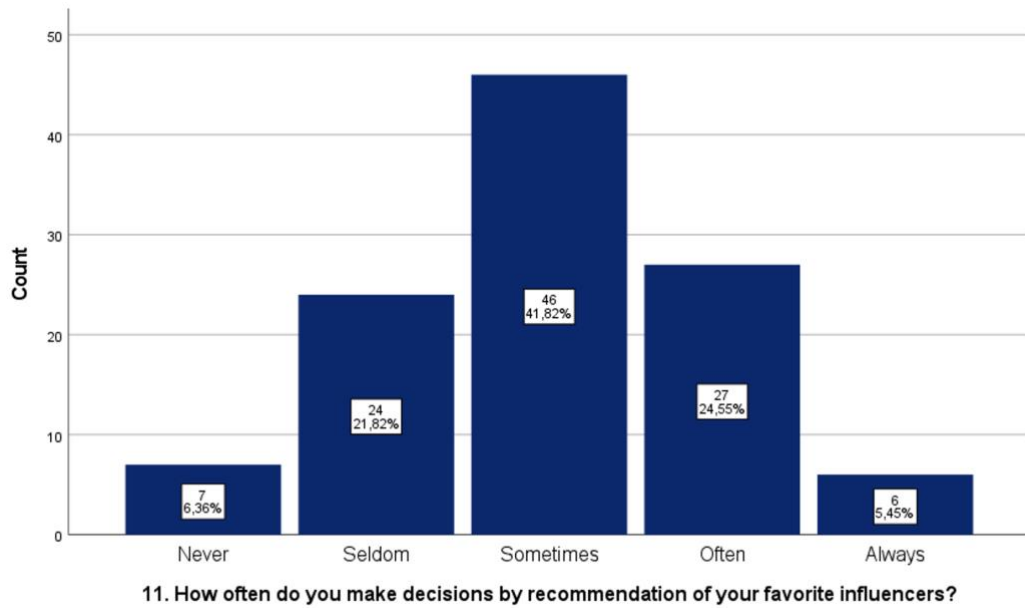


Figure 20: The frequency of respondents making decision based on their favorite influencers

#### 4.3.1.3 The stage of Making Post-Decision Evaluations

**Question 12: After the decision is made, how often do you search for related reviews or information to evaluate your experience?**

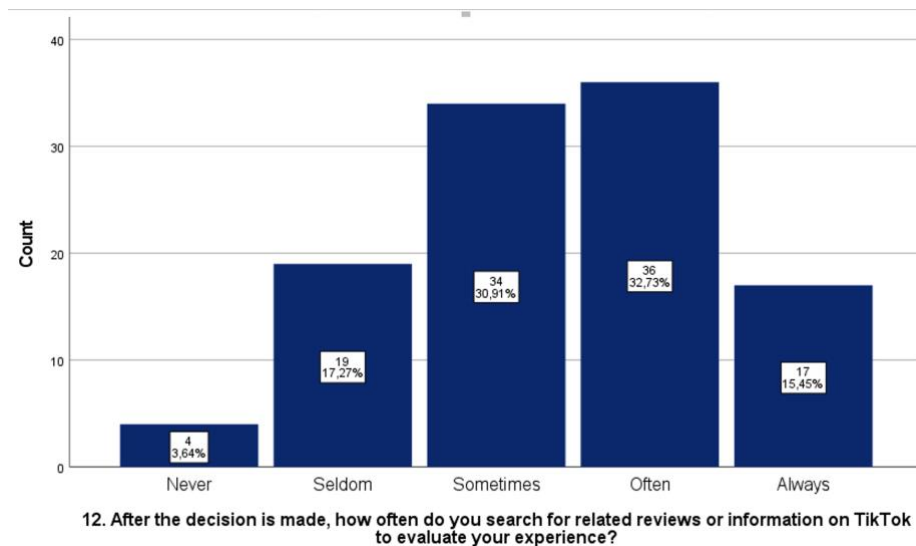


Figure 21: The frequency of respondents searching for related review on TikTok to evaluate their experiences after making decisions

Figure 21 illustrates that most of the participants search for information related to their decision to compare and evaluate their experience after making a decision. Figure 21 presents that 32,73% of total respondents often search for information on TikTok after making consumption decisions, followed by a similar figure of 30,91% who selected “Sometimes” and 15,45% always chose this way for evaluation. On the other hand, around 20% of respondents claimed that they barely or never evaluated based on information searches on TikTok. Overall, it could be seen that the vast proportion of participants shown in Figure 21 actively search for related information after the post-purchase stage to evaluate their experience. Thus, it might be a shred of evidence that customers tend to frequently employ the review on TikTok to search for the experience of others or product recommendations for comparison after selecting a product or service.

**Question 13: In case your decision had been affected by influencers before, how often were you satisfied with their recommendation?**

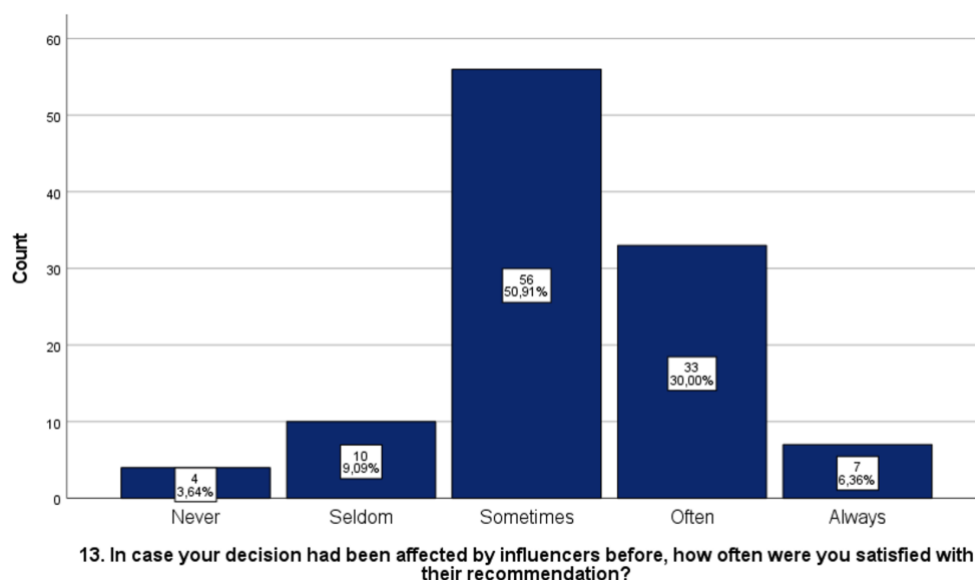


Figure 22: The frequency of respondents being satisfied with the influencers' recommendation

Question 13 is organized to examine whether the current content of influencers has reflected the actual value of the product and service they

promoted to deliver customers a satisfying experience. In the survey, the majority of respondents left positive feedback on their experience of the products promoted by influencers, in which at least half of respondents (50,91%) sometimes felt satisfied with the decision, 30% of the total often experienced a similar feeling and 6,36% always have valuable experience with the influenced decision. In addition, few respondents reported that they never or seldom feel the same, with 3,64% of respondents never feeling satisfied with influencers' recommendations and 9,09% of total barely having good experiences with decisions influenced by influencers. To sum up, even though each person's background is varied, it cannot be ignored that influencers have proved their trustworthiness when bringing good products and services closer to potential customers.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter aims to conclude the thesis by delivering the main findings to the research questions from collected data in connection with the theoretical framework. Furthermore, the reliability and validity of the thesis are discussed, followed by the limitations and recommendations for future research on the topic.

### **5.1 Key findings**

After retrieving several theoretical knowledge and conducting the quantitative research, this section will present the complete answers to three main research questions based on the collected primary and secondary data.

#### **5.1.1 Q1. How does influencer marketing affect consumer behavior?**

In the theoretical framework, several theories related to influencer marketing and consumer behavior have been discussed. When it comes to the analysis, the author has obtained some insights to propose three practical reasons to explain how influencer marketing could affect consumer behavior.

According to Hoyer & MacInnis (2008), there are internal and external factors influencing consumer behaviors: the consumer's culture and the psychological core. Since influencers play a crucial role in influencer marketing, how influencers affect consumer behavior is considered to explain influencer marketing. Within consumer culture, influencers are one of the critical factors in the social influence that could impact consumers' behavior. In another theory of the Customer-centric influencer marketing model from Brown & Fiorella (2013, p.78), they also claimed that influencers are one of the components of the orbit around consumers, which could influence them in making decisions. Corresponding to the internal factor, the human motivation need in the psychological core is supposed to affect consumer behavior. In the Learned Needs Theory proposed by McClelland (2016), the demands for achievement, affiliation, and power of consumers



could be triggered by influential individuals in making decisions. However, as perceived in the empirical study, even though it could not be denied the elements of needs in influencing consumers, half of the respondents reported that these needs were not the crucial factors for them to make a decision influenced by influencers. One of the possible reasons is that while the statement claimed by McClelland demonstrated the characteristics of the older generation, generation Z – the first digital natives – values the authenticity of the influencers. Thus, they mainly chose promoted products due to the trustworthiness of the influencers.

Another way that influencer marketing could impact consumer behavior is through the theory of media priming. Based on the engaging content, influencer marketing could bring followers step by step in a sequence of action, which helps them get closer to the promoted product or service. Besides that, the repetition of promotion of a product or service through influencers could assist consumers in getting cognitive knowledge easier later on the moment they need to make a decision. This is especially useful for fast-moving consumer goods when customers do not spend too much time making a decision.

#### **5.1.2 Q2. What are the effects of TikTok influencer marketing on generation Z's consumer behavior?**

In the scope of this thesis, the author could not extract data from a specific company utilizing influencer marketing to accurately measure the effect of this concept on consumer behaviors since the reaction of Gen Z consumers could be different towards paid and unpaid content from influencers. Besides that, with the algorithm from TikTok, whether its users follow influencers or not, they can still approach influencer marketing content if they are relevant to the users' interests. Therefore, a set of questions was designed to investigate the effect of influencers and the impact of influencer marketing on Gen Z's consumer behavior with two different groups in each case.

Through the data from the questionnaire, it can be perceived that the positive effect of influencers' content will likely occur towards the consumers if they have already followed their favorite influencers before. In other words, it means that consumers will probably acquire, use, or dispose of a product or service based on the recommendation of their influencers. Corresponding to the potential customers who do not follow or do not remember whether they follow any influencers, they mainly hold a neutral opinion with a slight trend of adverse reaction.

However, influencers' supporters are not always aware of influencer marketing; therefore, the impact could vary if they know their influencers were paid to promote specific content. Indeed, they started confused and reported more neutral opinions while the negative answers slightly increased compared to the effect of influencers in general.

In addition, the final question in the post-decision-making stage reveals that most consumers are satisfied with the decisions influenced by influencers. Thus, the trustworthiness of the influencers could increase with the positive effects on consumer behavior.

### **5.1.3 Q3. In which crucial stages of the consumer decision-making process could influencer marketing on TikTok affect generation Z's consumer behavior?**

The impact of influencer marketing is crucial to influencing consumer behavior. In addition to acknowledging the reasons behind to optimize this concept of marketing, determining which step of the consumer decision-making process is sensitive for influencer marketing to affect Gen Z consumer behavior. In the final section of the questionnaire, the results revealed that the consumers have an average to high commitment in the whole process towards the effect of influencers. Two crucial phases were reported as "Making judgments and decisions" and "Making Post-Decision Evaluations."

In the second stage, it can be perceived that even though people would generally love to make decisions based on online recommendations, not all

of them prefer those recommendations if they are delivered by their favorite influencers. It could be explained that since people mainly use TikTok for entertainment, the credibility of influencers on this platform is still controversial in the scope of this thesis. In this case, brands can diversify their choices on different scales of TikTok influencers or Key Opinion Leaders (KOL) and Key Opinion Customers (KOC) to expand the positive impact of online recommendations for the brand.

Regarding the most crucial stage in the process, the post-stage significantly obtains the highest engagement when consumers utilize TikTok content to evaluate their consumption choices. Thus, the brands could invest in influencer marketing in this stage as the bridge to communicate with the consumers to tackle the problems or issues they might cope with after acquiring the products or service. In that case, the consumers could obtain a positive experience in the stage of Making Post-Decision Evaluations.

Even though the first stage does not show a high commitment to the consumer decision-making process, the result demonstrates that most consumers at least perceive their unfulfilled needs sometimes in their decision-making process. The increased demand to watch “Reviews” and “Tutorials” on TikTok signals that the limited available content could explain the low engagement reported in the survey on TikTok. Suppose the brand and influencers invest in developing the desired type of content to elicit the needs of potential consumers. In that case, there will be a high potential of this platform for the brand to approach their potential customers at the beginning of the process.

## **5.2 Reliability and Validity**

According to Carmines and Zeller (1979, p.11), reliability is the extent to which an experiment, test, or any measuring procedure yields the same results on several repeated trials. Any measurement of a hypothesis or frequency and relation through quantitative research will always contain some chance errors. Therefore, while the goal of error-free measurement is targeted, it is never achieved because people do not duplicate each other

from all perspectives. The validity, on the hand, refers to the crucial relationship between concept and indicator, which determine how accurate a method measures what it is supposed to measure (Carmines and Zeller, 1979, p.12).

Corresponding to the reliability, the suggested sample size for the survey is 385 respondents, which yields a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error based on the estimated population is roughly 600,000,000 persons (generation Z using TikTok). Since 156 responses were collected and 110 responses were extracted for further analysis, the margin of error increases by 4.16 percent with the same confidence level. Nevertheless, the overall reliability of the research is still acceptable because the survey is supported mainly by the theoretical framework and focused on investigating the theory in a smaller scope. Also, the analysis throughout the research was conducted based on the theoretical framework to ensure the consistency of the whole study.

Regarding validity, to avoid ambiguity and misinterpretation by respondents in the quantitative research, the list of questions was designed based on a logical structure with three separate sections and utilized unadvanced written in English. With the crucial concept, the definition was provided so that respondents could fully understand the questions and give accurate answers. Furthermore, the questionnaire was processed with the pilot test. The author chose ten respondents to complete the form and requested feedback on how understandable the language was, how easy to fill out the form, and other matters related to the questionnaire. In addition, the identity of participants is not required in this thesis to ensure that they could confidently answer the questionnaire based on their own opinions.

In conclusion, while the chance error is inevitable since humans reflect different characteristics, so are the respondents. Nevertheless, the author must acknowledge and prevent or minimize all the threats that could expose the reliability and validity of the research.

### **5.3 Limitations and Recommendations for future research**

One of the research limitations is the low number of respondents for the questionnaire compared to the large population of 600,000,000 generation Z TikTok users, which could affect the reliability of the study due to the high margin of error. Also, even though the thesis does not specify the nationality or the country of residents for the topic, the questionnaire was distributed mainly in Vietnamese and Finnish areas. Therefore, the results might not be diversified and reflect the problem in a global context. Furthermore, language barrier and literacy bias are typical limitations in any online questionnaire since the questionnaire requires respondents to understand English to complete the form. As a result, if the respondents do not understand the language, they could not understand the questions to provide accurate answers.

Regarding recommendations for future research, there are many perspectives on the thesis topic that could be further explored. Suggestions for further study would be laid on the specification of a particular industry impacted by influencer marketing since consumers could reflect several consuming behaviors depending on the line of goods and service. In addition, since consumer behaviors are a broad topic, the effect of influencer marketing could be solely investigated deeply for separate steps of the consumer decision-making process. Besides that, since the impacts of influencer marketing are different for audiences who follow and do not follow any influencers, a further study could be conducted to explore and examine the reasons behind the variances.

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Vaasa, 2 May 2022

Tram Nguyen

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# APPENDICES

## The impact of TikTok influencer marketing on consumer behavior

Dear participants,

I am Tram Nguyen, a third-year student in the International Business program at Vaasa University of Applied Sciences. I am now doing research for my thesis about the impact of TikTok influencer marketing on consumer behavior, especially within Generation Z.

I am inviting you - generation Z's TikTok users - to participate in this research by completing the following anonymous survey. The following questionnaire will require approximately 7-10 minutes to complete and the collected data will remain confidential and be utilized solely for academic purposes. Thank you for taking your time in assisting me with the research!

Sincerely,  
Tram Nguyen

---

\*Required

### Basic information of the participants

1. 1. Which generation do you belong to? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Generation Z: born between 1997 and 2009
- Generation Y: born between 1981 and 1996
- Generation X: born between 1965 and 1980
- Baby Boomers: born between 1946-1964

2. 2. Do you use TikTok? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

Online questionnaire

### The effects of TikTok influencer marketing on consumer behavior

3. 3. Why do you use TikTok? \*

*Tick all that apply.*

- To socialize
- To share content
- To follow brands
- To follow influencers
- To promote my business
- Due to the feeling of engaging on TikTok's interested content

4. 4a. Do you follow any influencers on TikTok? \*

Influencers are the people who have built a reputation for their knowledge and expertise on a specific topic.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- I do not remember

5. 4b. If your answer were "Yes" or "Maybe", what could be the reasons you followed any of them?

*Tick all that apply.*

- To be updated with the trends
- To be inspired
- To entertain
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. 5a. If influencers promote a specific product or a brand, do you consider selecting it in your future decisions? \*

1: Definitely won't - 2: Probably won't - 3: Neither - 4: Probably will - 5: Definitely will

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5	
Definitely won't	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Definitely will

7. 5b. In case you chose 4 or 5, which statements below are likely suitable to explain your answer?

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
It makes me feel urge to have a trending item promoted by an influencer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It makes me feel closer to my favourite influencers when owning their similar products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe in the quality of the product/brand that my influencers promote.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. 6. Are you aware of influencer marketing? \*

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Maybe

9. 7. If influencers are paid to promote a specific product or a brand, do you consider selecting it in your future decisions? \*

1: Definitely won't - 2: Probably won't - 3: Neither - 4: Probably will - 5: Definitely will

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Definitely won't	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Definitely will

Consumer behavior on TikTok toward the influencer marketing in the consumer making the decision process

### Problem Recognition and the Search for Information

10. 8. How often do you perceive your unfulfilled needs while watching TikTok's content? \*

1: Never; 2: Seldom; 3: Sometimes; 4: Often; 5: Always

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

11. 9a. How often do you actively search for reviews and information on TikTok before making decisions? \*

1: Never; 2: Seldom; 3: Sometimes; 4: Often; 5: Always

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

12. 9b. What types of content do you often search for on TikTok before making a decision? \*

*Tick all that apply.*

- Review
- Tutorial
- Promotion
- Price
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Making Judgments and Decisions

13. 10. How often do you make decisions based on online recommendations? \*

1: Never; 2: Seldom; 3: Sometimes; 4: Often; 5: Always

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

14. 11. How often do you make decisions by recommendation of your favorite influencers? \*

1: Never; 2: Seldom; 3: Sometimes; 4: Often; 5: Always

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

### Making Post-Decision Evaluations

15. 12. After the decision is made, how often do you search for related reviews or information on TikTok to evaluate your experience? \*

1: Never; 2: Seldom; 3: Sometimes; 4: Often; 5: Always

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

16. 13. In case your decision had been affected by influencers before, how often were you satisfied with their recommendation? \*

1: Never; 2: Seldom; 3: Sometimes; 4: Often; 5: Always

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

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