The Sixth International Conference on Innovation in Social Science and Engineering Education (ICoISSEE-6)
Bandung, Indonesia, July 25, 2026

EXPLORING GENERATION Z ENGAGEMENT IN TIKTOK BASED MARKETING

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Abstract. *The shift from traditional digital advertising to integrated social commerce ecosystems has made TikTok a central driver of consumer purchasing patterns, particularly among Generation Z. TikTok facilitates experiential search, where visual demonstrations and parasocial interactions replace text-centric search engines as primary tools for product validation. This study employed a quantitative research design, utilizing a purposive sampling technique to survey 300 active TikTok users in Indonesia who have engaged with TikTok Shop. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression to examine the relationship between TikTok content marketing, shopping features, and purchase decisions. The findings demonstrate that both TikTok content marketing and TikTok shopping features have a statistically significant positive effect on the purchase decisions of Generation Z. These results indicate that high-quality, authentic content builds the necessary parasocial trust, while frictionless shopping features facilitate immediate financial conversion. The study concludes that successful social commerce strategies must integrate creative, creator-led content with seamless transactional tools to effectively engage digital-native consumers and drive sustainable sales performance*

Keywords: *Content Marketing; Generation Z; Purchase Decision; Social Commerce; TikTok Shop*

1. INTRODUCTION

A shift in the paradigm of digital commerce landscape has transitioned from traditional social media platforms that utilized social connectivity, to integrated social commerce ecosystems (Attar et al., 2022). Tiktok as a central example in this transformation has evolved from a short-form entertainment social media into a driver of modern consumer, especially Generation Z, purchasing pattern (Hardianawati, 2023). Tiktok has facilitated a move toward experiential search where the search process is mediated by parasocial interaction and visual demosntration that effectively challenge the primary of conventional, text-centric search engines. For Generation Z, this platform serves as the primary gateway for brand discovery and product validation, where the stimulus of content and the response of purchase are on one whole experience (Lu et al., 2026; Hardianawati, 2023). This integration of social influence and transactional capability represents a significant departure from traditional marketing models. This evolution marks a departure from legacy advertising models, where discovery and transaction occurred in separate spheres, toward a unified digital experience. As platforms increasingly prioritize seamless integration, the boundary between entertainment-based content and revenue-generating commerce has become intentionally blurred, fundamentally altering the consumer decision journey and establishing new benchmarks for brand-consumer interaction in the digital age (Oszust, 2023).

At the center of this massive shift is TikTok, which has quickly evolved from a platform for short-form entertainment into a major engine for digital commerce (Oszust, 2023). Unlike traditional platforms that prioritized polished, curated imagery, TikTok thrives on unfiltered and raw video content that resonates deeply with younger demographics (Putranto et al., 2026). Generation Z, in particular, has adopted TikTok as a primary tool for "experiential search," where they turn to video demonstrations instead of conventional text-based search engines. This behavior allows them to validate product quality and discover new brands through the eyes of trusted peers rather than through corporate-led advertising (Lu et al., 2026). By offering this visual and highly personalized discovery process, the platform creates a unique sense of reliability and community that is difficult to replicate elsewhere. Consequently, TikTok has become a critical space where social influence directly facilitates brand discovery and product consideration in a way that feels natural to the modern digital native (Rahmah & Tamamudin, 2026). This evolution is further accelerated by the introduction of native features like TikTok Shop, which have streamlined the shopping process into a seamless, experience. By allowing users to purchase products instantly without exiting the application, these tools have significantly shortened the time between seeing an item and completing a transaction (Dahniar et al., 2023). This instant gratification, combined with the emotional appeal of trendy, creator-led videos, often leads to a high degree of impulse purchasing behavior. The psychological drive to participate in these viral trends suggests that the personal satisfaction gained from the purchase is just as important as the product itself. Because this shopping model is so deeply tied to algorithmic curation and social trends, it has created a highly effective channel for driving immediate sales. As these features become standard across the platform, they are rapidly reshaping the expectations of younger consumers who now demand a faster and more interactive buying experience.

Despite the rapid rise of TikTok as a major shopping platform, there is a clear disconnect in current academic research regarding its actual long-term effectiveness. While there are many studies on general social media engagement, very little direct research compares how entertaining, non-curated content actually drives hard financial results for businesses. Most existing literature focuses heavily on passive metrics, such as how many people view, like, or share a video, rather than exploring how these actions translate into actual purchase intentions (Dahniar et al., 2023; (Rainy & Mou, 2025). There is a lack of analysis that distinguishes between the influence of purely entertaining content and the direct impact of integrated shopping tools like TikTok Shop. This research gap leaves a critical need for empirical evidence that bridges the divide between digital social engagement and measurable financial conversion among Generation Z. The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to quantify the specific influence of both content marketing and integrated shopping features within a single, unified consumer journey. By examining the dual effect of these elements, this research moves beyond superficial engagement metrics to identify the core drivers of actual purchase decisions. This study aims to investigate the extent to which TikTok’s content marketing strategies and integrated shopping features influence the purchase decisions of Generation Z. By analyzing the transition from passive digital engagement to active consumer behavior, this research seeks to identify the key factors driving financial conversions within the platform's social commerce ecosystem. Ultimately, the findings will provide a nuanced understanding of how digital-native audiences are converted into active customers, offering a framework for navigating the complexities of modern social media retail.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Tiktok Content marketing

The adoption of TikTok as a strategic marketing tool has necessitated a fundamental reevaluation of traditional digital communication paradigms. TikTok content marketing prioritizes the cultivation of engagement through algorithmic alignment, where the "For You" feed serves as a personalized discovery engine for consumers (Oszust, 2023). The core objective of this strategy is not merely brand visibility, but the creation of social currency where content is designed to be shareable, relatable, and culturally relevant within specific niche communities. Strategic frameworks for TikTok often revolve around the concept of "edutainment," an approach that blends informational value with entertainment to minimize the perception of overtly commercial intent (Ghani et al., 2023). This strategy aims to align brand messaging with the organic aesthetic of the platform, thereby reducing the psychological resistance typically associated with traditional top-down marketing communications. Consequently, the strategic objective of TikTok marketing has shifted toward fostering high-frequency, low-friction interactions that aim to integrate the brand into the daily consumption habits of the digital audience.

2.2 Brand Engagement

The conceptualization of brand engagement has undergone a significant transformation within the digital landscape, shifting from static consumer-brand interactions to dynamic, participation-based models. Brand engagement can be defined as a psychological state that manifests through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investments in a brand, which are particularly amplified in social commerce environments (Mubdir et al., 2025; Zarantonello & Andreini, 2025). Within the specific context of TikTok, this engagement is driven by the platform's unique algorithmic architecture, which facilitates a participatory culture where users are active co-creators of brand-related content. Strategic brand engagement on TikTok relies heavily on leveraging high-velocity trends and user-generated content, which serve to humanize the brand identity and foster a sense of community belonging among users (Rahmah & Tamamudin, 2026).

2.3 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention within digital marketing environments has evolved from a linear progression of awareness to a complex, non-linear process deeply influenced by social signals and immediate gratification. In the context of TikTok, purchase intention is frequently analyzed through the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework, which posits that the platform's immersive video content acts as a powerful environmental stimulus that triggers physiological and emotional responses in the user (Kamble et al., 2026). The unique affordances of TikTok, such as the algorithmic "For You" feed and real-time interaction capabilities, have been shown to shorten the cognitive distance between product discovery and the formation of a purchase intention (Lu et al., 2026).

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between TikTok-based marketing strategies and consumer purchase decisions. A quantitative approach was selected as it allows for the objective measurement of variables and the statistical generalization of findings across the target population, which is essential for testing the proposed hypotheses. The target population for this research consists of Generation Z individuals residing in Indonesia, defined by the birth year range of 1997–2012. Given the specific nature of the research objectives, a non-probability purposive sampling technique was utilized to ensure that all respondents possessed the relevant experience required to provide informed data. The inclusion criteria for participants required them to be active users of TikTok who have engaged with the platform and/or completed a purchase via TikTok Shop within the preceding eight months. This purposive approach is justified in social media research as it focuses the analysis on users who have demonstrated actual purchase behavior, thereby enhancing the relevance of the data collected regarding their decision-making processes.

Data were collected via an online questionnaire utilizing a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instrument was structured to measure three core variables: TikTok Content Marketing (X1): Measured through indicators of content quality, consistency, relevance, and attractiveness; TikTok Shopping (X2): Measured through indicators of direct interaction, product information, and purchase experience; Purchase Decision (Y): Measured as the dependent variable representing the consumer's choice to commit to a transaction. The collected data underwent a rigorous statistical analysis using SPSS software to validate the research model and test the stated hypotheses. Initially, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure the instrument consistently measured the intended constructs. Subsequently, a normality test was performed to confirm the distribution of the data before proceeding to inferential statistical analysis. The significance of these hypotheses was determined through the F-test (ANOVA), which assesses the model's overall fit, and the t-test (partial coefficient test), which examines the individual contribution of each independent variable to the purchase decision. Finally, the R-squared (coefficient of determination) test was used to identify the proportion of variance in the purchase decision that can be explained by the independent variables. To test the hypothesis a multiple linear regression analysis was employed to these hypotheses:

H1: TikTok content marketing has a significant effect on Generation Z's purchase decision
H2: TikTok Shopping has a significant effect on Generation Z's purchase decision

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This results and discussion will presents the empirical findings derived from the quantitative data collected through an online survey of 300 respondents, analysis begins with the presentation of validity and reliability tests to confirm the robustness of the instrument, followed by an assessment of the normality and regression testing used to examine the influence of TikTok Content Marketing (X1) and TikTok Shopping (X2) on Purchase Decision (Y)

Table 1. Validity Test Result

	Q1	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Q6**	**Q7**	**Q8**	**Q9**	**Q10**
X1 (Tiktok Content Marketing)	.683	.689	.743	.711	.728	.683	.716	.670	.693	.689
X2 (Tiktok Shopping)	.292	.405	.312	.343	.225	.240	.350	.300	.308	.368
Y (Purchase Decision)	.406	.375	.332	.343	.359	.329	.361	.333	.235	.333

The validity test results presented in Table 1 demonstrate that all ten measurement items for TikTok Content Marketing (X1), TikTok Shopping (X2), and Purchase Decision (Y) possess correlation coefficients above the minimum threshold. These results indicate that the measuring instruments are consistent and accurately capture the intended research variables within the study population. The consistency across all question items (Q1–Q10) confirms that the data collection instrument is suitable for further inferential statistical analysis.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Result (Reliability Test)

	Chronbach's Alpha	**N of Items**
X1 (Tiktok Content Marketing)	.885	10
X2 (Tiktok Shopping)	.880	10
Y (Purchase Decision)	.866	10

The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha to ensure internal consistency among the variable indicators. As shown in Table 2, the Cronbach's Alpha values for TikTok Content Marketing (0.885), TikTok Shopping (0.880), and Purchase Decision (0.866) all significantly exceed the standard requirement of 0.60 to 0.70. These values confirm that the questionnaire items possess high internal reliability, meaning participants provided consistent responses across the items for each construct. Consequently, the data collected from the 300 respondents is deemed sufficiently reliable to support the statistical modeling used to test the research hypotheses.

Table 3. Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	**df**	**Sig.**
X1 (Tiktok Content Marketing)	.977	300	<.001
X2 (Tiktok Shopping)	.988	300	.015
Y (Purchase Decision)	.985	300	.003

The normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk method was conducted to evaluate whether the data follows a normal distribution. The results in **Table 3.** indicate significance values less than 0.05 for all variables, which suggests that the data may not be perfectly normally distributed. However, given the large sample size of 300 participants, the Central Limit Theorem suggests that the sample distribution tends toward normality, making parametric tests robust against minor violations of this assumption. Therefore, the data distribution is considered acceptable for the subsequent multiple linear regression analysis.

Table 4. F-Test Result (ANOVA)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3337.626	2	1668.813	91.221	<.001
Residual	5433.371	297	18.294		
Total	8770.997	299			

The ANOVA results provided in Table 4 are essential for determining the overall fitness of the regression model. The calculated F-value of 91.221 is substantial, with a significance level (p-value) well below the 0.05 threshold. This statistical outcome confirms that the model, which includes TikTok Content Marketing (X1) and TikTok Shopping (X2) as independent variables, is significant in explaining the variance in the dependent variable, Purchase Decision (Y). This indicates that the independent variables collectively have a meaningful and statistically significant influence on the target purchase behavior.

Table 5. R Square Result

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.617	.381	.376	4.27717

The coefficient of determination, represented by the R Square value in Table 4, provides insight into the predictive power of the model. The reported R Square value of 0.381 demonstrates that TikTok Content Marketing and TikTok Shopping collectively explain 38.1% of the variation in the Purchase Decision for Generation Z users. The remaining 61.9% of the variance is likely attributed to external factors or variables not included within the scope of this current research. This result suggests that while these digital marketing factors are significant drivers, they operate alongside other complex psychological and social influences within the TikTok ecosystem.

Table 6. Coefficients Result

	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Tolerance	Statistics VIF.
(Constant)	6.597	2.450		2.693	.007		
X1	.435	.043	.462	10.107	<.001	.998	1.002
X2	.410	.044	.431	9.424	<.001	.998	1.002

Both TikTok Content Marketing (X1) and TikTok Shopping (X2) exhibit significance levels (Sig.) of <.001, which are below the 0.05 threshold, leading to the statistical acceptance of both hypotheses. The positive beta values of 0.462 for X1 and 0.431 for X2 indicate that improvements in content marketing strategy and shopping feature implementation both contribute positively to higher purchase decisions. Furthermore, the VIF statistics, both at 1.002, indicate an absence of multicollinearity issues within the model, ensuring the reliability of these individual variable impacts.

The results of this study provide empirical confirmation that the proposed research model is statistically valid and capable of predicting purchase decisions within the TikTok environment. The ANOVA analysis indicates that TikTok Content Marketing and TikTok Shopping are joint predictors of consumer behavior, confirming that the combination of engagement-focused content and transactional functionality is a powerful catalyst for Generation Z. Regarding the first hypothesis (H1), the analysis reveals that TikTok Content Marketing has a significant positive effect on the purchase decisions of Generation Z, with a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.462. This supports the premise that TikTok functions as an experiential search engine, where the quality, consistency, and attractiveness of content are critical to building the trust necessary for a transaction. By providing edutainment and fostering social currency, brands can effectively reduce the psychological resistance typically seen in traditional advertising (Attar et al., 2022). This confirms that content marketing acts as the primary vehicle for establishing the social validity that Generation Z requires before committing to a purchase.

The second hypothesis (H2) is similarly supported, as the TikTok Shopping variable demonstrates a significant positive influence on purchase decisions with a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.431. This finding validates the importance of the platform's frictionless shopping architecture, which includes direct interaction and easy access to product information (Hardianawati, 2023). By shortening the cognitive distance between product discovery and the final purchase, TikTok Shopping features successfully convert the impulse generated by content into an active financial response (Dahniar et al., 2023). The significance of this variable confirms that in the digital-native era, the accessibility of a seamless transaction process is just as vital as the marketing content itself. Ultimately, these findings highlight a synergetic relationship between content strategies and integrated e-commerce features. The data indicates that Content Marketing (X1) serves as the stronger predictor, suggesting that while the shopping features provide the necessary means for a transaction, the content provides the motivation via parasocial trust and perceived value. The results suggest that success for brands on TikTok depends on pairing authentic, creator-led content with simple shopping tools, as both factors significantly influence Generation Z's buying habits. Practically, this means marketers should shift their focus from only tracking engagement metrics toward creating content that builds real trust while removing barriers to the final purchase. Because this study was limited to a specific group and captured data at one point in time, future research should investigate whether these shopping patterns lead to long-term brand loyalty or are just temporary trends. Additionally, future studies could broaden the scope to include other age groups or use interviews to explore the deeper reasons behind impulsive buying.

CONCLUSION

TikTok has fundamentally transformed digital commerce, moving from a simple entertainment medium to a sophisticated ecosystem where Generation Z discovers and validates products through experiential search. As this platform integrates social connectivity with transactional capability, it creates a unique environment where content and commerce are inextricably linked. This study aimed to investigate how TikTok's content marketing strategies and integrated shopping features influence the purchase decisions of Generation Z in Indonesia. Empirical results indicate that TikTok content marketing exerts a significant positive effect on purchase decisions, driven by the authenticity and social currency of the content. Furthermore, the implementation of TikTok Shopping features significantly impacts purchase decisions by providing a frictionless environment that shortens the cognitive distance to transaction. Collectively, these findings validate the research model, showing that content-driven trust and transactional ease are dual pillars of modern social commerce success. Consequently, the research concludes that both strategic content engagement and integrated shopping tools are essential for converting digital-native audiences from casual viewers into active buyers.

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