

Tiktok Marketing as a Digital Branding Strategy in Response to change in Generation Z Consumer Behavior

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Abstract

The development of digital technology has transformed marketing strategies toward experience-based digital branding, with TikTok emerging as a dominant platform among Generation Z. In Indonesia, the large population of Generation Z makes TikTok a strategic medium for digital marketing through influencer collaborations, viral challenges, and user-generated content. However, existing studies largely focus on quantitative indicators and provide limited insight into consumers' subjective experiences. This study aims to explore how Generation Z interprets and responds to TikTok marketing strategies as a form of digital branding. A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed by conducting in-depth interviews with 10–15 Generation Z informants aged 18–25 who actively use TikTok and engage with brand content, supported by non-participant observation. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that TikTok marketing significantly influences Generation Z's consumption behavior, particularly through viral content and influencer trust. High levels of engagement enhance brand awareness and emotional attachment, while repeated exposure to trends encourages impulse buying and consumption as a form of social identity. These results highlight TikTok's effectiveness as a digital branding platform and offer practical implications for brands and MSMEs in developing authentic and engaging marketing strategies.

Keywords: *Tiktok Marketing, Digital Branding, Generation Z, Influencer Trust*

Introduction

The development of digital technology has brought about major changes in the global marketing landscape. One of the rapidly growing social media platforms is TikTok, with more than 1 billion monthly active users worldwide. TikTok has become a social phenomenon that shapes trends, lifestyles, and even consumer behavior. Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is the most dominant group in the use of this platform. This phenomenon opens up great opportunities for digital branding strategies through TikTok. Generation Z is known as digital natives who have a close connection with social media as a means of expression and information seeking. They are more responsive to the short, creative, and interactive visual content offered by TikTok than to traditional advertising (Lubis, 2025). This makes TikTok not only a medium for entertainment, but also an effective marketing medium. TikTok marketing, through organic content and paid advertising, has proven to be able to influence brand awareness and preference. This change is shifting conventional marketing patterns towards digital experience-based strategies (Cahyaningrum et al., 2025).

Digital branding strategies on TikTok often utilize collaborations with influencers, interactive challenges, and user-generated content. Involve user participation generate higher engagement rates than one-way advertising (Zafitri et al., 2025). This interaction creates a sense of closeness between brands and Generation Z consumers. Thus, brands are not only

promoting products, but also building emotional connections (Maharani et al., 2025). This transformation underscores TikTok's role in shaping modern consumer behavior. Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest number of TikTok users in the world, reaching more than 109 million in 2023 (Databoks, 2023). The large population of Generation Z in Indonesia makes this platform a strategic arena for digital marketing. Trends in fashion, food, and beauty products are developing through viral TikTok campaigns. For example, local brands such as Scarlett Whitening have successfully increased awareness significantly through TikTok campaigns. This fact highlights the relevance of research on TikTok marketing and its influence on the behavior of Generation Z consumers.

Digital branding through TikTok also presents new dynamics related to consumer behavior. Generation Z consumers tend to be more easily influenced by viral trends and influencer reviews than formal advertisements. That influencer trust is a key factor that drives purchase interest. This indicates that trust-based marketing is more effective than a hard-selling approach. Thus, the phenomenon of TikTok marketing is relevant for further research (Garut & Olanda, 2025). However, there are challenges in measuring the effectiveness of TikTok marketing as a digital branding strategy. Changes in Generation Z consumer behavior are not only influenced by content, but also by social, economic, and cultural factors. Previous studies tend to highlight quantitative aspects such as engagement rate or number of view (Kirana et al., 2025). However, a phenomenological approach allows for a deeper exploration of consumers' subjective experiences. This is important for understanding the meaning behind their interactions with TikTok content.

This study focuses on how Generation Z interprets and responds to TikTok marketing strategies in the context of digital branding. The main focus is not merely on statistical figures, but on consumer experiences and interpretations. Using a phenomenological qualitative approach, this study will explore the meanings that emerge from consumer interactions with digital content. This perspective is important for understanding the often non-linear behavioral changes of Generation Z. Therefore, this study offers a new contribution to digital marketing studies. In addition, this study also highlights how TikTok marketing strategies affect consumers' psychological aspects. Generation Z tends to be impulsive in decision-making, especially when exposed to viral content (Hernawati et al., 2025). This can lead to consumptive behavior that differs from previous generations. For example, the tendency to buy products simply because they are trendy or recommended by influencers. This phenomenon shows the importance of understanding the emotional dimension in digital branding strategies. The relevance of this research also lies in its practical implications for businesses, particularly MSMEs in Indonesia. With limited resources, MSMEs need effective yet efficient marketing strategies. TikTok provides opportunities at a relatively low cost through creative content that can reach a wide audience. That SMEs that utilize TikTok have successfully increased brand awareness significantly. Thus, the results of this study are expected to provide strategic guidance for SMEs and local brands (Enola et al., 2025).

Based on the above description, this study aims to explore Generation Z's experience in responding to TikTok marketing strategies as a form of digital branding. This study will identify patterns of consumer behavior change, factors that influence decisions, and the meaning behind their engagement with TikTok content. With a focus on phenomenological analysis, this study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this research enriches the literature on social media-based digital marketing. Meanwhile, practically, the results of this research can be used as a reference in designing more effective branding strategies.

Despite the growing interest in TikTok as a marketing platform, there is still a limited understanding of how Generation Z subjectively experiences digital branding content on this platform. Outcomes such as engagement metrics, click-through rates, or conversion rates, while overlooking the lived experiences of users (Makdum et al., 2024). As a result, the deeper meanings attached to TikTok content, such as emotional resonance, perceived authenticity, and personal relevance, remain underexplored. This gap indicates the need for research that prioritizes consumer perspectives rather than solely relying on numerical indicators. Moreover Generation Z's interaction with TikTok marketing cannot be separated from the platform's algorithmic nature. TikTok's personalized content delivery system continuously shapes users' exposure to certain brands and narratives. This creates an immersive environment where marketing messages are subtly embedded within entertainment content. Consequently, consumers may not always consciously recognize promotional content, which influences their attitudes and purchasing intentions in implicit ways. Understanding this dynamic is essential to comprehending how digital branding operates beyond traditional persuasive mechanisms.

Cultural context also plays a crucial role in shaping Generation Z's response to TikTok marketing in Indonesia. Local values, social norms, and collective behavior influence how digital content is interpreted and shared. Viral trends often gain momentum not only because of creativity, but also due to their alignment with local identities and social narratives. Therefore, examining TikTok marketing from an Indonesian Generation Z perspective provides contextual insights that may differ from findings in Western-dominated studies. In addition, the credibility and authenticity of brands on TikTok have become increasingly important for Generation Z consumers. This generation tends to value transparency, relatability, and ethical branding practices. Brands that fail to communicate authentic values risk being perceived as manipulative or opportunistic. Consequently, digital branding strategies must move beyond aesthetic appeal and focus on meaningful storytelling that aligns with consumers' values and expectations.

Integrating a phenomenological approach allows this study to capture the complexity of Generation Z's digital experiences holistically. By exploring how individuals perceive, feel, and interpret TikTok marketing content, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of digital branding in contemporary society. This approach not only complements existing quantitative findings but also offers richer insights into the evolving relationship between consumers, technology, and brands in the digital era.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method. This approach was chosen because it aims to explore the subjective experiences of Generation Z in responding to TikTok marketing strategies as a form of digital branding. Phenomenology enables researchers to understand the meaning that consumers construct from their interactions with digital content (Creswell & Poth., 2018). The focus of the research is not only on surface behavior but also on in-depth interpretations of individual experiences. Thus, this method is considered appropriate for exploring the meaning behind changes in Generation Z consumer behavior.

The research subjects were Generation Z individuals aged 18–25 who actively used TikTok and had been exposed to a brand's digital branding campaign. The criteria set were a minimum of 2 hours of TikTok use per day and engagement with brand content, such as likes,

comments, or shares. The number of informants interviewed ranged from 10 to 15 people. This number is considered adequate for phenomenological research, which emphasizes data depth rather than participant quantity. The research data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with informants. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow for flexibility while remaining focused on the research objectives (Kallio et al., 2016). Secondary data consisted of TikTok content, including campaign videos, advertisements, and user interactions such as comments, likes, and shares. The combination of these two sources allowed for triangulation, which strengthened the validity of the research findings.

The main data collection technique was in-depth interviews. The interview questions focused on consumers' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors after viewing TikTok marketing content. In addition, the researchers also conducted non-participant observations of Generation Z's interaction patterns with TikTok content. The observations were carried out by monitoring specific brand accounts that actively use TikTok as a branding strategy. Data analysis was performed using thematic analysis techniques. The analysis stages included data reduction, coding, categorization, and phenomenological interpretation. Data reduction was performed by selecting relevant information from the interview and observation results. The coding process was used to identify themes such as influencer trust, brand awareness, trend adoption, and impulse buying. Next, phenomenological interpretation was performed to understand the meaning of Generation Z's experience with TikTok marketing.

Results

Generation Z Consumption Patterns on TikTok

To obtain a more concrete picture of how Generation Z's consumption behavior is shaped on TikTok, quantitative data obtained from in-depth interviews is summarized in Table 1. This table aims to highlight the main aspects that influence informants' consumption decisions, especially those related to exposure to digital content such as viral videos, influencer recommendations, and discount-based promotional strategies. By presenting the data in percentage form, it is clear to see how these factors have a relative influence on the consumption patterns of respondents. This table forms the basis for analysis to understand that Generation Z's digital consumption patterns are heavily influenced by trends and rapidly spreading content, which are key characteristics of the TikTok ecosystem.

Table 1. Generation Z Consumption Patterns on TikTok

Consumption Pattern Aspects	Percentage (%)
Influenced by viral content	75%
Purchasing due to influencers	67%
Purchasing without clear need	58%
Purchasing due to discount promotions	50%

The interview results summarized in table 1 show that Generation Z's consumption patterns on TikTok are heavily influenced by viral content. As many as 75% of respondents stated that they were encouraged to buy products or try services because they saw trends or challenges that were popular on TikTok. This phenomenon reinforces TikTok's position as a trend-based digital consumption space, where viral content is the main catalyst in driving purchasing decisions. In addition, 67% of respondents said that they bought a product because of recommendations from influencers. This fact indicates that social influence plays a major role in shaping the preferences and consumptive behavior of this generation. Not only

that, 58% of informants admitted to having made purchases even though they did not have a clear need for the product beforehand. This reflects the strong tendency toward impulse buying, which is spontaneous purchasing triggered by interesting content or sudden promotions. That repeated exposure to viral content can trigger impulsive purchases, especially on platforms such as TikTok that present content with high intensity and speed. Meanwhile, 50% of respondents cited discount promotions as their reason for purchasing, indicating that pricing strategies are still relevant, although not as strong as the social and emotional influence of viral content and influencers.

The Role of Influencers in Building Trust

To evaluate the role of influencers in shaping the trust of Generation Z consumers, Table 2 is presented to show informants' preferences for various sources of information when considering purchasing decisions. Through this quantitative approach, it is possible to comparatively determine the level of trust given to influencers, regular user reviews, official brand advertisements, and information provided by e-commerce platforms. The purpose of presenting this table is to show the differences in the perceived credibility of each source, as well as how the strategic position of influencers is formed through consistent and personal digital interactions. The data in this table is an important basis for understanding the dynamics of the relationship between young consumers and the digital figures they follow, as well as why influencer-based marketing strategies are becoming increasingly dominant in today's digital marketing landscape.

Table 2. The Role of Influencers in Building Trust

Source of Information	Trust Level (%)
TikTok Influencers	80%
Purchasing due to influencers	67%
Regular User Reviews	65%
Official Brand Advertisements	35%

Table 2 shows that influencers on TikTok are the most trusted source of information among respondents, with a trust level of 80%. This indicates that the presence of influencers in the digital ecosystem is not merely a marketing channel, but also a figure that is considered credible and reliable. This trust arises from the emotional closeness that influencers build through consistent and authentic content. That trust in influencers (influencer trust) is a crucial element in shaping consumer purchase intent, especially among Generation Z, who tend to be more responsive to personal approaches than traditional advertising (Putri et al., (2023). Interestingly, only 35% of respondents said they trusted official brand advertisements, and even fewer trusted e-commerce sites (30%), indicating that conventional promotional approaches are now less effective for the younger generation. Reviews from ordinary users received a trust rating of 65%, still lower than influencers. This shows that although reviews from fellow users have social value, the credibility of influencers remains higher because they have built a consistent and relatable public personal. Emphasizes that micro-celebrities are often more trusted than big celebrities because they are considered more authentic and closer to their audience. In this context, transparency and honesty in conveying product reviews are key determinants in maintaining audience loyalty (Wijaya, 2023).

Brand Awareness and Engagement

In order to identify the extent to which TikTok contributes to increased brand awareness and consumer engagement, Table 3 was compiled based on the results of interviews with informants representing Generation Z. This table reflects various forms of interaction that

occur between consumers and brands on TikTok, ranging from the initial process of getting to know the brand, providing active interactions such as liking and commenting on content, to reposting promotional content and participating in digital challenges organized by brands. This data aims to show that brand awareness is no longer formed solely through traditional media, but has undergone a transformation through the active participation of consumers in digital content. The presentation of this table allows readers to see the proportion of real engagement by Generation Z with brand content on TikTok, while also serving as a basis for analyzing the effectiveness of social media-based digital marketing strategies.

Table 3. Brand Awareness and Engagement

Brand Awareness Indicators	Percentage (%)
Awareness of the brand through TikTok	70%
Purchasing due to influencers	67%
Interaction (likes/comments)	65%
Reposting content	55%

Table 3 illustrates that TikTok is not only an entertainment platform, but also functions effectively in increasing brand awareness among Generation Z. As many as 70% of respondents admitted that they first became aware of a brand through content on TikTok, whether through promotional videos, challenges, or reviews by other users. This shows that TikTok has become the main channel for brand discovery, replacing traditional media. A total of 65% of respondents also admitted to actively interacting with brand content through likes and comments, which indicates high digital engagement. This engagement is an important factor in shaping brand equity, who stated that digital engagement can build emotional connections and strengthen the relationship between consumers and brands (Wulandari et al., 2025). Additionally, 55% of respondents admitted to reposting brand-related content, and 48% had participated in brand challenges. This shows that interactive and participatory content on TikTok has great potential in driving organic brand dissemination through the audience itself. This finding is reinforced which shows that user-generated content on TikTok can significantly expand a brand's reach and is more authentic than paid promotions. Therefore, TikTok is not only effective in introducing products, but also in creating meaningful interactions that strengthen the brand's position in the minds of consumers.

Changes in Consumer Behavior

To explain the impact of TikTok usage on changes in Generation Z's consumption behavior in a more structured manner, Table 4 was compiled as a quantitative representation of the qualitative findings obtained through interviews. This table displays the dimensions of behavioral change, whether emotional, social, or impulsive, that arise from intensive exposure to content on TikTok. Aspects such as the urge to buy due to viral trends, the desire to be part of a digital community, consumption as a representation of self-identity, and unplanned purchases are important indicators in understanding the paradigm shift in consumption among the younger generation. The presentation of this table serves to clarify that consumption is no longer solely determined by rational needs, but also by socio-psychological factors related to identity, existence, and group affiliation. Therefore, this table forms the basis of analysis in explaining that TikTok has not only an economic impact, but also a cognitive and social impact on the consumption behavior of Generation Z.

The change in Generation Z's consumption behavior as a result of using TikTok is clearly shown in Table 4 As many as 72% of respondents stated that they were encouraged to buy products because they followed viral trends on the platform. This shows that TikTok has the

power to create new needs that were not previously felt, making it an effective tool in creating demand. Additionally, 60% of informants felt that they became part of a digital community when buying or using products that were going viral. This phenomenon reflects a shift in consumption from simply fulfilling needs to a form of social expression. Consumption is used as a means to show group affiliation,. As many as 55% of informants also associate product purchases with self-identity, indicating that consumption is no longer purely utilitarian but also symbolic. This is reinforced by the fact that 50% of informants purchase products without planning, showing that current consumption behavior is impulsive and emotional, driven by intense content exposure on TikTok.

Table 4. Changes in Consumer Behavior

Behavior Change Aspects	Percentage (%)
Buying because of viral trends	72%
Purchasing due to influencers	67%
Feeling part of a community	60%
Buying identity products	55%

Ound in their research that short videos have a high power to quickly change consumer preferences, especially among generations accustomed to instant content consumption. Therefore, TikTok has become a major force in shaping the consumption dynamics of Generation Z as a whole, both cognitively and emotionally (Wibowo & Ayuningtyas, 2024).

Implications for MSMEs

In response to previous findings regarding TikTok's power to influence young consumer behavior, this section describes various relevant and potential marketing strategies for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This explanation highlights how creative content-based approaches, interactive challenges, collaborations with influencers, and the use of user-generated content can be effectively utilized by MSME players. Through these strategies, MSMEs can increase brand awareness, build consumer loyalty, expand market reach, and optimize organic promotion. These insights were obtained from the analysis and information provided by informants who indicated their preference for local brands that actively interact on TikTok. Thus, the following description provides a practical overview of how MSMEs can design digital marketing strategies that are in line with the consumption behavior of Generation Z. This also confirms that TikTok has great potential to become a strategic promotional medium for small businesses. Additionally, this platform allows SMEs to stand out through creativity and emotional connection with consumers. This approach is crucial as it can counterbalance the dominance of large brands that previously dominated the digital market. By implementing the right strategies, SMEs can strengthen their market position and build more authentic relationships with younger audiences.

These findings illustrate several important strategies that MSMEs can utilize through the TikTok platform to increase the effectiveness of their marketing. Creative content has proven to be very effective in increasing brand awareness because it is able to attract users' attention organically without requiring large costs, Emphasize that content creativity is key in digital marketing (Ardani & Harahap, 2024). Additionally, interactive challenges that encourage users to actively participate can strengthen consumer loyalty by creating emotional engagement and a sense of community, as supported, who highlight the importance of social interaction in building long-term relationships with customers (Nathaneil, 2025). Collaboration with influencers also plays a strategic role in expanding the market reach of MSMEs because influencers have a segmented and trusted audience, especially among Generation Z, as

explained (Wulandari & Silalahi, 2025). generated content (UGC) serves as highly valuable organic promotion because it is considered more authentic by potential buyers and can expand brand reach at no additional cost, as described in a study by (Hidayat et al., 2025). By implementing these strategies, SMEs can optimize their use of TikTok to compete in the highly dynamic digital market dominated by young consumers who are very active on this platform.

Discussion

The Relevance of TikTok Marketing to Generation Z Characteristics

Generation Z is known as digital natives who were born and raised in the digital technology era, making them very familiar with social media, especially the TikTok platform. Interviews with informants revealed that they tend to prefer short, creative, and trend-based visual content, which keeps them interested in continuing to watch. Research supports this finding by stating that Generation Z has a stronger response to short video-based advertisements than conventional advertisements, making TikTok marketing highly relevant for targeting them (Ohara et al., 2025). In addition to the media aspect, the social value of TikTok is also a special attraction for this generation. They are not only passive consumers of content but also actively participate in the production of content that reflects their digital identity and culture. This is in line with the research which shows that Generation Z is more active in creating and engaging in digital communities than previous generations (William et al., 2024).

Generation Z's intensive use of TikTok has turned the platform into more than just a medium for entertainment; it is now an effective interactive space for branding. Informants in this study revealed that they feel closer to content that is personal and fits their lifestyle. Marketing strategies that adapt to these characteristics, such as the use of short videos, creative challenges, and remix and filter features, are able to attract attention and influence their consumption decisions. Additionally, collaborations with influencers who are close to this generation also strengthen consumer trust and engagement. This demonstrates that TikTok marketing can combine entertainment aspects with targeted marketing strategies. Therefore, a deep understanding of the psychological and social characteristics of Generation Z is crucial for brands aiming to succeed on this platform.

Content trends that go viral on TikTok are also an important indicator that influences the consumption patterns of Generation Z. They tend to follow trends enthusiastically and often make purchases based on developing trends. For example, skincare products that go viral on TikTok often become choices even though there was no urgent need for them before, illustrating the phenomenon of impulse buying influenced by digital trends. Interview data shows that around 75% of informants admit to being influenced by viral content and 67% purchase products based on influencer recommendations. This aligns with the findings, which confirm the influence of viral content and influencers on Generation Z's consumption behavior. Therefore, effective TikTok marketing strategies must be able to leverage viral trends and the power of influencers to maximize their impact (Siwu et al., 2025).

In this context, marketing strategies on TikTok must be oriented towards the participatory and expressive aspects of Generation Z. They want interactive digital experiences that allow them to express themselves through challenges, content remixes, and creator collaborations. Strategies such as user-generated content and collaborations with micro-influencers, which are considered more authentic, can increase trust and loyalty. Additionally, creative approaches that combine humor and storytelling have also proven to be more effective in capturing their attention. A table illustrating the relevance of Generation Z characteristics to

TikTok marketing strategies underscores the importance of tailoring content to the socio-psychological characteristics of the target market. The success of branding campaigns on TikTok heavily depends on how well brands understand and respond to the digital behavior dynamics of Generation Z.

Engagement as the Key to Digital Branding

Engagement is a vital element in measuring the success of TikTok marketing because user interaction with content shows deeper emotional involvement. Interviews show that Generation Z not only engages passively by liking or commenting, but also actively participates in challenges and remixes content. High engagement levels correlate directly with increased brand loyalty, making engagement an important indicator in the digital branding process (Nathaneil, 2025). This intensive interaction helps brands build loyal communities and strengthen emotional connections with consumers. Therefore, TikTok marketing strategies that encourage active participation from the audience will have a greater and more sustainable impact.

Stated that they trust content that feels authentic and honest more than official advertisements from brands, which tend to be rigid and formal. Reinforces this by stating that trust acts as a mediator connecting influencer marketing with consumer purchase intent (Irrawati & Isa, 2025). Influencers who are consistent and transparent in their content are better able to maintain audience loyalty compared to endorsements that only focus on sales. Thus, engagement on TikTok is not merely a mechanical interaction, but a process of building trust and strong long-term relationships. Various forms of engagement have different impacts on branding, but all contribute to increased awareness and strengthened emotional bonds. Likes and comments help increase awareness by showing the popularity of content, while sharing and remixing expand the reach of the message to a wider audience. Participation in challenges, which are very popular with Generation Z, can strengthen emotional bonds and a sense of community between consumers and brands. Interview data supports that challenges and creative interactions on TikTok trigger deeper brand loyalty and recognition. Therefore, brands need to create content that invites active participation rather than simply being passive objects of consumption.

Stated that they tend to pay more attention to products that frequently appear in content involving social interaction, such as challenges or live streaming. Added that live commerce on TikTok can increase consumer trust while accelerating purchasing decisions (Irrawati & Isa, 2025). This direct interaction creates a more personal and convincing experience, allowing brands that utilize interactive features on TikTok to gain a competitive advantage. In conclusion, building authentic and sustainable engagement is a key strategy in digital branding through TikTok.

The Impact of TikTok Marketing on Brand Awareness

TikTok marketing has proven to be effective in increasing brand awareness, especially among Generation Z, who are the main users of this platform. Interviews revealed that around 70% of informants first became aware of a brand through TikTok content that was interesting and relevant to their interests. This phenomenon is supported by research, which shows that TikTok has a higher speed in building awareness compared to other social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube (Sularno, 2021). This advantage stems from TikTok's algorithm, which can tailor content to users' preferences in a highly specific manner, allowing brand messages to spread more effectively. Brands that consistently follow trends and

participate in challenges have a greater chance of being remembered by their audience. This confirms that TikTok marketing is a strategic channel for increasing brand visibility.

Success in building brand awareness on TikTok does not happen automatically, but through creative and repetitive content strategies. Informants stated that they find it easier to remember brands that organize viral challenges or use memorable hashtags. Research shows that effective hashtag campaigns can encourage digital word of mouth that expands the brand's reach organically (Siwu et al., 2025). Consistency in presenting relevant and interactive content is key to keeping the brand in consumers' minds. Therefore, brands must focus on creative innovation and content frequency to maintain and increase awareness. Thus, TikTok is not only a platform for introducing brands, but also a medium for strengthening brand recognition in a sustainable manner.

Collaboration with influencers is also an important strategy in strengthening brand awareness on TikTok. Informants revealed that recommendations from influencers they trust add value and make brands more credible. Research confirms that influencers can expand brand exposure and provide credibility that is difficult to obtain through traditional advertising (Wulandari et al., 2025). c. Authentic and consistent influencers in conveying branding messages can enhance a brand's appeal in the eyes of consumers. Therefore, integrating influencers into TikTok marketing campaigns is indispensable for building effective awareness. Brands must be selective in choosing influencers that align with their values and target market to ensure that this synergy yields positive results. In addition to increasing awareness, TikTok marketing also encourages more active consumer engagement with brands. Informants mentioned that they often interact with content by liking, commenting, and reposting it to their social networks. This active engagement strengthens the emotional connection between consumers and brands, while also expanding the reach of promotions at no additional cost to companies. Research shows that user-generated content that emerges naturally from TikTok users has a significant influence in spreading information and building brand communities (Sitompul et al., 2024). Therefore, brands must encourage consumer participation so that engagement and awareness go hand in hand. This approach makes TikTok an ideal platform for building brand awareness organically and sustainably.

Changes in Generation Z Consumer Behavior

The interview results show that TikTok marketing has caused significant changes in Generation Z's consumption behavior patterns. Many informants admitted that after seeing product content on TikTok, they were encouraged to seek further information before making a purchase. Social media triggers consumers to conduct cross-platform research before deciding to buy a product. This change confirms that TikTok is not only a promotional medium, but also a gateway to an increasingly complex and informed digital consumer journey. The easily accessible and attractively packaged information on TikTok makes consumers more confident and assured about the products they choose. Thus, TikTok's role in facilitating the consumer decision-making process is becoming increasingly crucial.

In addition, TikTok also triggers high impulse buying behavior among Generation Z. Informants stated that creative promotional content and influencer recommendations often cause them to make spontaneous purchases without careful planning. TikTok's algorithm, which tailors content based on user preferences, reinforces this tendency toward impulsive buying (Aulia et al., 2024). This behavior presents both an opportunity and a challenge for brands, as they must strike a balance between persuading consumers and maintaining long-term loyalty. Therefore, marketing strategies must be designed in such a way that content

remains engaging without causing resistance or fatigue. Brands need to deliver content that not only sells but also provides added value to consumers.

In addition to purchasing behavior, TikTok marketing also influences the lifestyle and social identity of Generation Z. Informants stated that following trends and challenges on TikTok is part of how they express themselves and build their social identity. Generation Z tends to adopt digital products and trends as symbols of status and membership in certain communities. This phenomenon is reinforced, which confirms the role of social media in shaping the social identity of young people (Sitompul et al., 2024). Thus, TikTok is not only a marketing platform but also a social arena that influences consumer values and behavior. Brands that are able to adapt to these social dynamics will be more easily accepted and find a place in consumers' lives.

This change in behavior requires brands to be more adaptive and innovative in developing their digital marketing strategies. Generation Z expects experiences that are personal, interactive, and relevant to their values. Interviews show that brands that are responsive to trends and capable of creating creative engagement receive greater appreciation. A marketing approach that prioritizes storytelling and emotional engagement can increase loyalty and build long-term relationships. Additionally, it is important for brands to leverage data and algorithms to optimize content personalization. With the right strategy, TikTok marketing can be a highly effective tool in changing consumer behavior and strengthening brand positioning.

Challenges and Opportunities in TikTok Marketing Strategy

Although TikTok marketing has proven to be highly effective, this study identifies a number of challenges that brands need to be aware of. Several informants complained of fatigue due to the frequent appearance of advertisements, which they felt disrupted their experience when using the platform. This is in line with the findings who revealed that overexposure to digital advertising can cause resistance and reduce the effectiveness of branding (Ohara et al., 2025). Therefore, brands must be able to create content that is not only persuasive, but also entertaining and does not burden users. Content that is too aggressive can actually have negative effects, such as unfollowing or even antipathy towards the brand. A balanced and creative approach is essential for advertisements to be well received by the audience. Research supports this by stating that influencer credibility greatly determines the effectiveness of endorsements in building trust. Therefore, brands must choose authentic influencers who align with the brand's values and target audience. Long-term collaborations with trusted influencers can strengthen brand image and increase consumer loyalty. Effective influencer management is key to ensuring that marketing campaigns are not only effective but also sustainable.

On the other hand, TikTok provides many opportunities through interactive features that have not been fully optimized by many brands. Live streaming and live commerce features, for example, enable real-time interactions that build stronger trust between brands and consumers. Informants mentioned that live shopping on TikTok makes them feel more confident about purchasing products because they have the opportunity to ask questions directly and see product demonstrations. That live commerce significantly increases sales conversions, especially for Generation Z who want a fast and interactive shopping experience. This opportunity is huge and should be a focus in future TikTok marketing strategies (Devina et al., 2025).

In addition to live commerce, hashtag challenges and user-generated content also present strategic opportunities that can expand reach and increase organic engagement. Brands that are able to encourage user participation in creating creative content will benefit from viral effects and digital word of mouth. However, the main challenge is how to create relevant content that inspires the audience to actively participate. This requires a deep understanding of trends and target market characteristics. By managing challenges and leveraging opportunities effectively, TikTok marketing strategies can deliver optimal results in digital branding

Conclusion

This study shows that TikTok marketing has a significant influence on digital branding strategies, particularly in shaping Generation Z's consumption behavior. Generation Z, as a generation that grew up in the digital era, is more easily influenced by visual, concise, and interactive content than conventional forms of advertising. This makes TikTok a strategic medium for building brand awareness and emotional connections between consumers and brands. The study also shows that engagement is key to successful digital branding through TikTok. Active user participation in the form of likes, comments, challenges, and user-generated content has been shown to strengthen loyalty and increase brand awareness. Trust in influencers is a crucial element in this process, where authenticity and consistency of content are valued more than formal promotions. Furthermore, this study found that TikTok plays a role in shaping impulsive, social, and symbolic consumption behavior among Generation Z. Phenomena such as purchasing due to viral trends, involvement in digital communities, and consumption as an expression of self-identity are hallmarks of modern consumer behavior. Consumption is no longer driven solely by rational needs, but also by the desire to participate in popular social narratives. The practical implications of this research are highly relevant for businesses, especially SMEs seeking to expand their brand reach cost-effectively. TikTok offers a significant opportunity to create viral campaigns through creative content, influencer collaborations, and the use of user-generated content. This approach not only increases brand visibility but also builds authentic emotional connections with young consumers. However, TikTok marketing effectiveness still depends on brands' consistency in maintaining the quality, transparency, and relevance of their content to their audience. By understanding the characteristics of Generation Z and leveraging TikTok's engaging power, brands can strengthen their position in an increasingly competitive digital landscape.

Acknowledgment

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