

ASSESSMENT COVER SHEET

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effectiveness of TikTok marketing in shaping Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour in the United Kingdom. The research was prompted by the growing use of TikTok for marketing and the increasing role of short-form videos, influencers and consumer engagement in online decision-making. Despite this growth, existing evidence remains inconclusive about whether engagement with social media content leads to actual purchases. The study therefore examined the relationships between influencer credibility, content authenticity, consumer engagement, purchase intention and fashion purchase behaviour. A positivist philosophy, deductive approach and quantitative design were adopted, with data collected through an online Qualtrics questionnaire. Of 163 responses received, 33 were excluded, leaving 130 valid responses for analysis using SPSS. Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's Alpha, Pearson correlation and multiple regression were employed. The findings indicate that TikTok marketing has a stronger influence on consumer engagement and purchase intention than on completed fashion purchases. Purchase intention showed the strongest positive relationship with purchase behaviour and was the strongest positive predictor in the regression model. Although influencer credibility and content authenticity were positively related to purchase intention, neither demonstrated a significant direct relationship with actual purchase behaviour. The regression model explained 19.9% of the variance in purchase behaviour, suggesting that other factors also shape Generation Z's fashion purchasing decisions. The study concludes that TikTok's influence is meaningful but largely indirect and conditional. Fashion brands should therefore look beyond engagement metrics and focus on converting consumer interest and intention into completed purchases.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Digital marketing has transformed how organisations communicate with consumers by enabling interactive, data-driven and personalised communication across online platforms. Compared with traditional marketing, digital channels offer greater opportunities for real-time interaction and performance measurement. However, increased digitalisation has also intensified information overload, competition and consumer scepticism, meaning technological advancement does not automatically guarantee marketing effectiveness (Devi, 2025; Kusi et al., 2022; Gao, 2025).

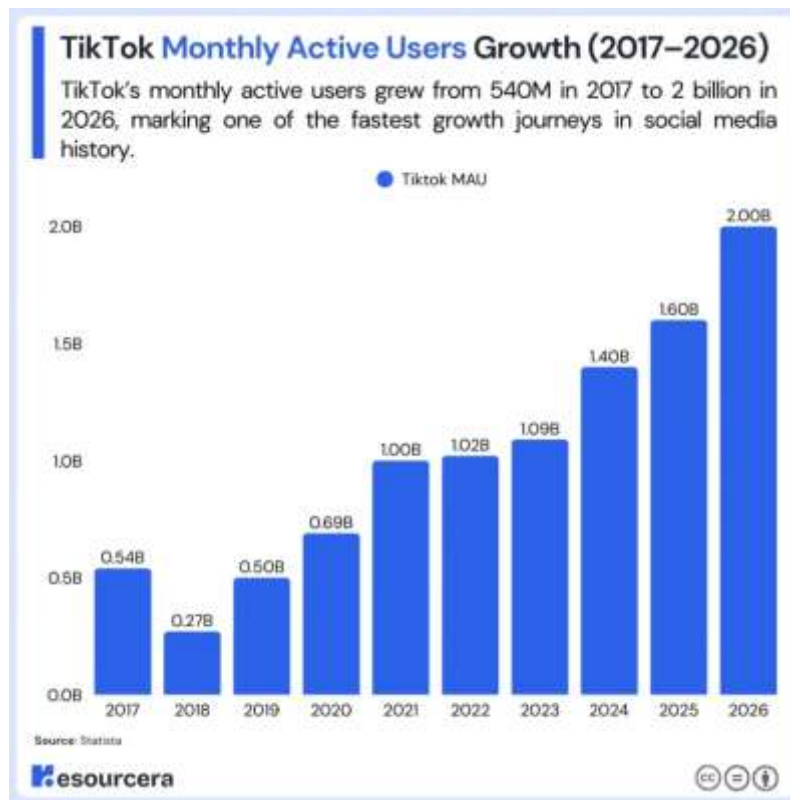


Figure 1: Growth of TikTok Global Users (2017–2026)

Social media marketing facilitates two-way communication and consumer participation in brand-related activities. While established platforms such as Facebook and Instagram continue to play a role in fashion marketing, TikTok offers fashion brands a distinctive environment for reaching

consumers through algorithmically recommended videos, short-form content and user-generated material (Melgarejo-Espinoza et al., 2025). Its recommendation system can provide organic reach beyond existing follower networks; however, high engagement may reflect entertainment rather than genuine purchasing behaviour (Ramadhan et al., 2025; Barta et al., 2023).

The UK fashion market provides an important context for examining Generation Z's response to social media marketing, given the group's high level of interaction with digital platforms. TikTok is particularly relevant to this consumer segment because fashion trends, product information and brand content can be encountered within the platform's video-based environment. However, the increasing visibility of fashion marketing on TikTok does not in itself demonstrate that exposure leads to purchasing. Evidence specifically examining whether TikTok marketing translates into actual fashion purchase behaviour among Generation Z consumers in the UK remains limited. This study therefore examines the extent to which TikTok marketing is associated with the fashion purchasing behaviour of Generation Z consumers in the United Kingdom.

1.2 Research Problem

The rapid adoption of TikTok has encouraged fashion brands to invest increasingly in influencer-led and interactive content to engage Generation Z consumers. Its algorithm-driven distribution and high engagement make it an attractive channel for fashion promotion, while influencers can shape consumer perceptions through reviews, styling content and trend-driven communication (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Jeswani, 2023; Gregor and Olejniczak, 2023).

Despite this growing commercial investment, existing evidence regarding TikTok's effectiveness in driving fashion purchase behaviour remains inconclusive. While some studies report that influencer credibility and engaging content positively influence purchase intention and consumer trust (Gregor and Olejniczak, 2023; Tian et al., 2025), others argue that high engagement often reflects entertainment consumption rather than genuine purchasing behaviour, thereby questioning the commercial value of viral content (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Existing research has provided valuable insights into social media marketing and Generation Z consumer behaviour, but a substantial proportion of this work considers social media more broadly or examines markets outside the United Kingdom. Consequently, there remains insufficient UK-specific evidence on whether TikTok marketing translates into actual fashion purchasing among Generation Z

consumers. This study addresses this contextual gap by evaluating the relationship between TikTok marketing and Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour in the United Kingdom.

1.3 Aim, Objectives and Research Questions

1.3.1 Research Aim

To investigate the effectiveness of TikTok marketing in influencing Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour in the United Kingdom.

1.3.2 Research Objectives

1. To examine the TikTok marketing strategies employed by fashion brands to engage Generation Z consumers in the United Kingdom.
2. To investigate the factors influencing Generation Z consumers' engagement with TikTok fashion marketing content.
3. To assess the influence of TikTok marketing on Generation Z consumers' fashion purchase intentions and purchase behaviour.
4. To develop recommendations for fashion brands seeking to improve the effectiveness of TikTok marketing strategies targeted at Generation Z consumers.

1.3.3 Research Questions

1. What TikTok marketing strategies are employed by fashion brands to engage Generation Z consumers in the United Kingdom?
2. What factors influence Generation Z consumers' engagement with TikTok fashion marketing content?
3. To what extent does TikTok marketing influence Generation Z consumers' fashion purchase intentions and purchase behaviour?
4. What recommendations can improve the effectiveness of TikTok marketing strategies adopted by fashion brands targeting Generation Z consumers?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Academically, the study adds to research on TikTok marketing, Generation Z consumption and digital fashion by providing evidence from the United Kingdom and examining how TikTok-related marketing factors relate to consumers' fashion purchasing behaviour. Existing consumer behaviour theories, including the Theory of Planned Behaviour, were developed largely within traditional or rational decision-making contexts and may not fully explain the algorithm-driven, socially influenced and emotionally impulsive purchasing behaviours observed on TikTok (Kumar, 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Practically, the findings will assist fashion brands, digital marketers, influencers and marketing agencies in developing evidence-based TikTok strategies that enhance consumer engagement, strengthen brand performance and improve fashion purchase outcomes among Generation Z consumers.

1.5 Dissertation Structure

The dissertation comprises six chapters. Chapter One introduces the research context, problem, aims and significance. Chapter Two critically examines literature on TikTok marketing, Generation Z fashion consumption and relevant theories. Chapter Three explains the research methodology and methods. Chapter Four presents and analyses the empirical findings. Chapter Five interprets the findings alongside existing literature and theoretical perspectives. Chapter Six summarises the study, draws conclusions, acknowledges limitations and provides recommendations for practice and future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Digital Marketing and Social Media Marketing

Digital marketing has shifted from traditional promotional methods towards an interactive and technology-enabled approach, allowing organisations to communicate with consumers through websites, search engines, email, mobile applications and social media (Devi, 2025). Unlike traditional media, which largely depends on one-way communication, digital marketing supports greater interaction, personalisation and real-time measurement of consumer responses. Within this environment, social media marketing has become particularly influential because it enables brands to engage consumers and develop ongoing relationships through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok (Jeswani, 2023).

Digital marketing has developed from predominantly one-way promotional communication into an interactive and measurable approach that enables organisations to communicate with consumers across multiple online channels. Its advantages include personalisation, targeting and performance measurement, although information overload, privacy concerns and declining consumer trust may reduce its effectiveness (Dwivedi et al., 2021).



Figure 2: Evolution of Marketing Timeline

2.2 TikTok as a Fashion Marketing Platform

TikTok has developed beyond its original entertainment focus to become an important marketing channel, particularly for fashion brands. Its approach differs from platforms that depend largely on established social connections, as content distribution is strongly influenced by recommendations generated from users' viewing patterns, interactions and previous activity. Through the For You Page, users are presented with personalised videos that can introduce them

to unfamiliar brands, products and emerging fashion trends. This recommendation-driven model gives fashion marketers opportunities to reach consumers beyond their existing follower base (Dwivedi et al., 2021). This algorithm enables fashion brands to achieve substantial organic visibility, allowing even newly created content to reach large audiences without requiring an extensive follower base. Consequently, TikTok has become an attractive platform for fashion retailers seeking to increase brand awareness and product discovery.

A distinguishing feature of TikTok marketing is its emphasis on short-form videos, user-generated content (UGC) and influencer collaborations. Fashion brands increasingly leverage styling tutorials, product demonstrations, "haul" videos and trend-based challenges to engage consumers in authentic and interactive ways (Haines et al., 2023; Koivunen et al., 2025). TikTok Shop has expanded the platform's role in online commerce by enabling consumers to complete purchases within the app. By connecting product discovery with the transaction process, the feature can reduce the steps between encountering a fashion product and purchasing it, potentially making the path to conversion more direct (Ngo et al., 2025). In addition, viral hashtags such as #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt have transformed consumer purchasing behaviour by creating social proof and encouraging impulse buying, particularly among Generation Z consumers.

TikTok's importance as a fashion marketing platform is largely linked to its algorithm-driven content discovery, which can expose users to brand and creator content beyond their existing follower networks. Combined with short-form video and user-generated content, this can support fashion discovery and engagement. However, dependence on algorithmic visibility also creates uncertainty, as brands have limited control over content distribution (Gregor and Olejniczak, 2023). While TikTok's entertainment-driven environment generates high levels of interaction, engagement metrics such as views, likes and shares do not necessarily indicate genuine purchase intentions or long-term customer loyalty (Tian et al., 2025).

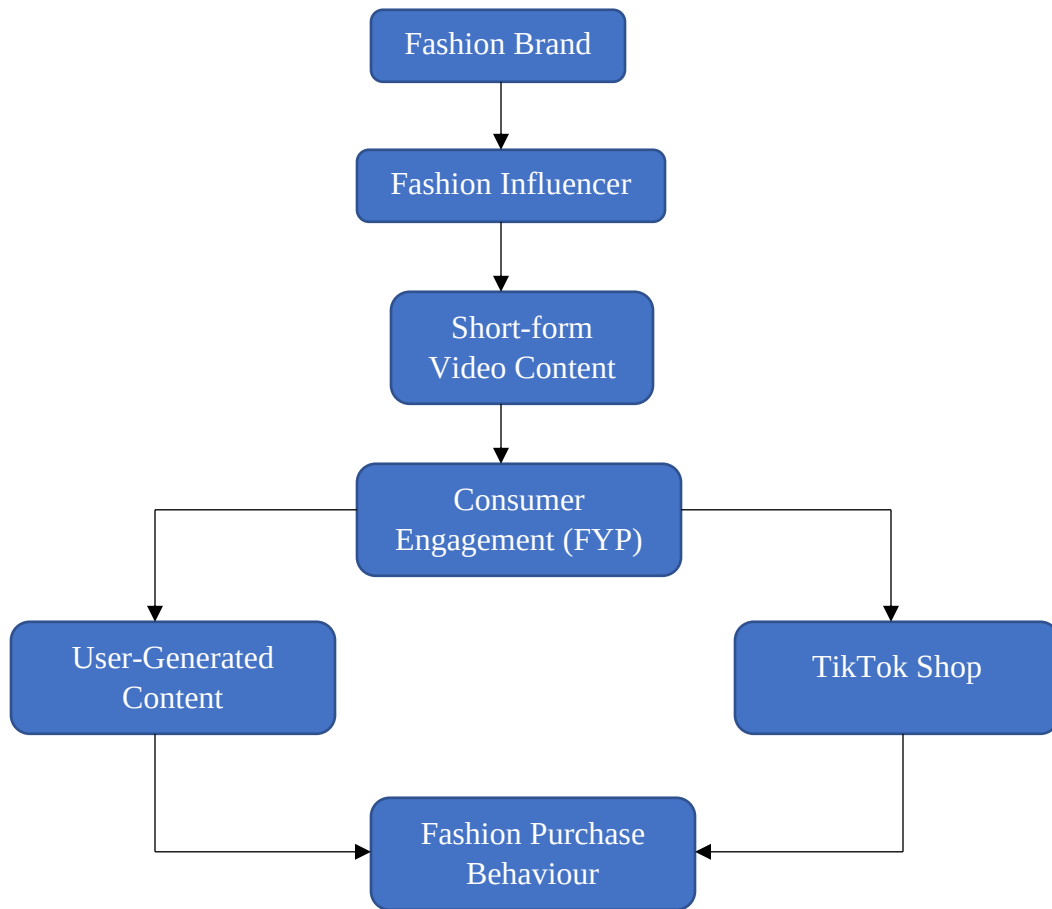


Figure 3: TikTok Fashion Marketing Ecosystem illustrating the pathway from brand communication to Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour.

2.3 Generation Z Fashion Consumer Behaviour

Generation Z, generally identified as those born between 1997 and 2012, has developed within a period characterised by widespread access to digital technologies. Regular interaction with smartphones, social networking platforms and online services has influenced how this generation communicates, searches for products and makes purchasing decisions (Chang and Chang, 2023). Unlike previous generations, Generation Z consumers actively use digital platforms not only to search for fashion products but also to discover trends, evaluate brands and engage with fashion communities. Consequently, social commerce has become an integral part of their purchasing

journey, with platforms such as TikTok facilitating seamless interactions between content consumption and online purchasing.

Generation Z's fashion consumption is increasingly shaped by content that is visually appealing, interactive and perceived as authentic. Short-form videos, live shopping and user-generated posts allow consumers to access product opinions and recommendations from influencers and other users, which can help them evaluate products and reduce uncertainty when shopping online (Luo, 2024). The integration of TikTok Shop and other social-commerce features has made the transition from discovering a product to completing a purchase more immediate. While this streamlined process may improve convenience, it can also encourage spontaneous purchasing, particularly when consumers respond to viral trends, emotional appeal or fear of missing out (FOMO) rather than carefully considering product quality and longer-term value.

Despite comparable levels of digital engagement, Millennials and Generation Z differ in how they approach online consumption. Having experienced the shift from traditional media to digital platforms, Millennials may place greater emphasis on online reviews and established brand reputation when evaluating products before making a purchase. In contrast, Generation Z places greater emphasis on influencer recommendations, peer-generated content and rapidly evolving social media trends (Chang and Chang, 2023; Theocharis et al., 2025). Nevertheless, whether Generation Z demonstrates genuine brand loyalty remains debatable. While some researchers argue that authentic brand values and personalised experiences foster long-term loyalty, others contend that Generation Z consumers are predominantly trend-driven, frequently switching between brands in response to viral content and influencer endorsements (Wan Nawang, 2024; Faridniya et al., 2025). This suggests that sustained loyalty within the fashion industry may depend less on traditional branding strategies and more on brands' ability to continuously produce authentic, engaging and culturally relevant content on platforms such as TikTok.

Table 1: Comparison of Millennials and Generation Z Fashion Consumer Behaviour

Characteristics	Millennials	Generation Z
Digital Native	Partial	Yes
TikTok Usage	Moderate	High
Influencer Trust	Medium	High

Short-form Video Preference	Moderate	Very High
Online Shopping	High	Very High

Millennials and Generation Z are both highly engaged with digital media, but their experiences of digitalisation differ. Millennials encountered the shift from traditional media to online platforms during their lifetime, whereas Generation Z has experienced digital technologies as a normal part of everyday life from an early age. This difference may contribute to Generation Z's stronger engagement with short-form video, peer-created content and influencer recommendations, meaning that approaches developed for Millennials may not produce the same response among Generation Z consumers.

2.4 Influencer Marketing and Fashion Purchase Behaviour

Influencer marketing has become an important component of fashion promotion, allowing brands to communicate with target consumers through individuals whose perceived expertise, authenticity and social influence can shape consumer responses. On TikTok, fashion influencers shape consumer attitudes by creating product reviews, styling tutorials, fashion hauls and trend-driven content that seamlessly integrates commercial messages into everyday social interactions. TikTok influencers can foster a stronger sense of connection with followers than traditional celebrity endorsements, largely through regular interaction and relatable content. These characteristics may enhance perceptions of trustworthiness and credibility, making influencer recommendations more persuasive to their audiences (Gregor and Olejniczak, 2023). These interactions frequently develop into parasocial relationships, whereby consumers perceive influencers as trusted acquaintances despite having no reciprocal relationship. Such emotional connections can strengthen consumers' willingness to accept product recommendations and influence fashion purchasing decisions.

Influencer marketing may affect fashion purchase behaviour through perceived expertise, trustworthiness and authenticity. Lou and Yuan (2019) emphasise the importance of influencer credibility and message value in shaping consumer responses, whereas Abduraimov (2024) and Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) demonstrate how perceived credibility can influence young consumers' purchase decisions. However, these studies do not establish that credibility consistently produces actual purchases, suggesting that its influence may be stronger at the attitudinal and intentional stages of decision-making.

These contrasting perspectives demonstrate that influencer marketing cannot be assumed to consistently produce favourable purchasing outcomes. Although influencer credibility can strengthen consumer engagement and purchase intentions, frequent exposure to sponsored promotions may also make audiences more cautious towards influencer recommendations. This concern may be particularly relevant among Generation Z consumers, who tend to place importance on transparency and authenticity when interacting with branded content. Consequently, influencer effectiveness appears contingent upon maintaining authenticity, selecting brand partnerships carefully and developing genuine relationships with followers.

2.5 Empirical Review

Research on social media marketing and its relationship with consumer purchasing has grown substantially. Nevertheless, evidence specifically addressing TikTok's role in the UK fashion sector remains relatively limited. This lack of context-specific research creates a gap in understanding how TikTok marketing influences Generation Z's fashion purchasing behaviour in the United Kingdom. Existing evidence provides valuable insights into influencer marketing, consumer engagement and purchase intention but presents mixed conclusions regarding the extent to which these factors translate into actual purchasing behaviour.

Using data from 305 social media users, Lou and Yuan (2019) examined whether influencer credibility and the value of social media messages affect consumer trust and purchase intentions. Their structural equation modelling analysis indicated that perceptions of influencer expertise, trustworthiness and informative content were associated with stronger consumer trust, which in turn contributed to higher purchase intention. A major strength of the study lies in its robust statistical analysis and validated measurement scales. However, the research focused primarily on Instagram and other social media platforms rather than TikTok, limiting its applicability to the algorithm-driven and entertainment-oriented nature of TikTok marketing.

Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) similarly explored the influence of Instagram influencers through in-depth interviews with 18 young female users in the UK. The study found that participants responded particularly strongly to influencers they could personally identify with, indicating that perceived authenticity and relatability could be more influential than celebrity status. However, the study's qualitative design and small, exclusively female sample limit the extent to which its

findings can be applied to wider Generation Z populations or transferred directly to the TikTok-based fashion context examined in this dissertation.

More recently, Dwivedi et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive systematic literature review synthesising research on digital and social media marketing across multiple platforms. The study concluded that interactive content, social engagement and influencer marketing are becoming increasingly important in shaping consumer behaviour. Nevertheless, the authors emphasised that empirical evidence concerning emerging platforms such as TikTok remains limited and called for further research exploring platform-specific consumer behaviour. This recommendation reinforces the need for UK-focused empirical studies examining TikTok's role in influencing Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that perceptions of influencer credibility, content authenticity and active consumer engagement can contribute to stronger intentions to purchase. However, they differ considerably in methodology, sample characteristics and platform focus. While quantitative studies establish statistical relationships, qualitative research provides deeper behavioural explanations.

Table 2: Summary of Key Empirical Studies

Author(s)	Methodology & Sample	Key Findings	Strengths	Limitations	Relevance to Current Study
Lou and Yuan (2019)	Quantitative survey (n = 305)	Influencer credibility positively influences consumer trust and purchase intention.	Robust statistical analysis; validated constructs.	Focused mainly on Instagram rather than TikTok.	Supports examination of influencer credibility and purchase behaviour.
Djafarova and Rushworth (2017)	Qualitative interviews (18 UK female participants)	Authentic and relatable influencers strongly affect purchase decisions.	Rich behavioural insights.	Small, gender-specific sample limits generalisability.	Supports investigation of authenticity and influencer trust in fashion marketing.

Dwivedi et al. (2021)	Systematic literature review	Social media engagement increasingly influences consumer behaviour; further TikTok research required.	Comprehensive synthesis of digital marketing literature.	Limited platform-specific empirical evidence on TikTok.	Identifies the research gap addressed by this dissertation.
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2.6 Theoretical Framework

The study draws on three complementary theoretical perspectives to explain the relationship between TikTok marketing and Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour in the UK: the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Source Credibility Theory (SCT) and Social Influence Theory (SIT). Together, these theories provide the basis for interpreting the individual, source-related and social factors that may shape consumers' responses to TikTok fashion marketing. Individually, each theory explains different aspects of consumer decision-making; however, none is sufficient on its own to capture the complex and interactive nature of purchasing behaviour within TikTok's algorithm-driven environment. Bringing these perspectives together enables the study to capture the different individual, influencer-related and social mechanisms through which Generation Z may respond to fashion marketing on TikTok.

Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour explains that an individual's intention to perform a behaviour is shaped by their attitude towards the behaviour, perceived social expectations (subjective norms) and perceived behavioural control, with intention subsequently influencing behavioural action. Within the context of TikTok marketing, positive attitudes towards fashion content, favourable peer opinions and consumers' confidence in purchasing online may collectively increase their intention to purchase fashion products. TPB has been widely used in consumer behaviour research because it offers a systematic framework for understanding how intentions develop. However, the theory has been challenged for placing considerable emphasis on rational and deliberate decision-making, which may not fully reflect the spontaneous or emotionally driven choices made by consumers. This assumption may not adequately explain TikTok-driven fashion purchasing, where impulse buying, emotional responses and viral trends

frequently shape purchasing decisions. Therefore, although TPB effectively explains planned behaviour, it offers only a partial explanation of Generation Z's fashion purchasing on TikTok.

Source Credibility Theory, as discussed by Umeogu (2012), suggests that the effectiveness of communication is shaped by how audiences perceive the credibility of its source, particularly in terms of expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness. In social media environments, these attributes are embodied by fashion influencers, whose recommendations often influence consumers' perceptions of brands and products. The theory explains why influencer credibility can increase trust and purchase intention (Gregor and Olejniczak, 2023). However, its explanatory power has limitations because credibility is not static. Excessive sponsored content, multiple brand endorsements and commercial partnerships may reduce consumers' trust in influencers, suggesting that credibility can fluctuate over time. Consequently, Source Credibility Theory alone cannot fully explain purchasing behaviour within rapidly evolving digital environments.

Oliveira et al. (2025) use Social Influence Theory to explain how social processes can shape individuals' attitudes and behaviours through mechanisms such as compliance, identification and internalisation. On TikTok, social influence is evident through viral trends, peer recommendations, user-generated content and hashtags such as #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt, which encourage consumers to imitate others' purchasing behaviours. Unlike TPB, which emphasises individual cognitive processes, Social Influence Theory recognises the powerful role of social conformity and peer pressure in shaping behaviour. However, the theory pays less attention to individual attitudes and perceptions of message credibility, which remain important determinants of consumer decision-making.

The three theories address different dimensions of consumer response to TikTok fashion marketing. TPB focuses on the development of behavioural intentions, while Source Credibility Theory explains how perceptions of influencers can affect the persuasiveness of marketing messages. Social Influence Theory, in contrast, highlights the effects of peer interaction, social conformity and viral trends. Their combined use therefore allows the study to examine Generation Z fashion purchasing from individual, influencer and social perspectives rather than relying on a single theoretical explanation.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study integrates the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Source Credibility Theory (SCT) and Social Influence Theory (SIT) to explain how TikTok marketing influences Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour in the United Kingdom. Drawing upon these theories and the reviewed empirical literature, the framework proposes that influencer credibility and content authenticity represent the primary marketing stimuli that shape consumers' perceptions of fashion-related content on TikTok (Gregor and Olejniczak, 2023). These factors are expected to enhance consumer engagement, reflected in behaviours such as viewing, liking, commenting, sharing and interacting with fashion content. Increased engagement is anticipated to strengthen fashion purchase intention, which subsequently influences actual fashion purchase behaviour.

The framework also recognises that Generation Z consumers operate within highly social and algorithm-driven digital environments where purchasing decisions are influenced by peer recommendations, viral trends and personalised content. Consequently, purchase behaviour is viewed as the outcome of both rational evaluation and social influence, supporting the integration of the three underpinning theories. Based on the proposed relationships, this study will empirically test whether TikTok marketing contributes significantly to Generation Z fashion purchasing behaviour within the UK fashion industry through quantitative statistical analysis.

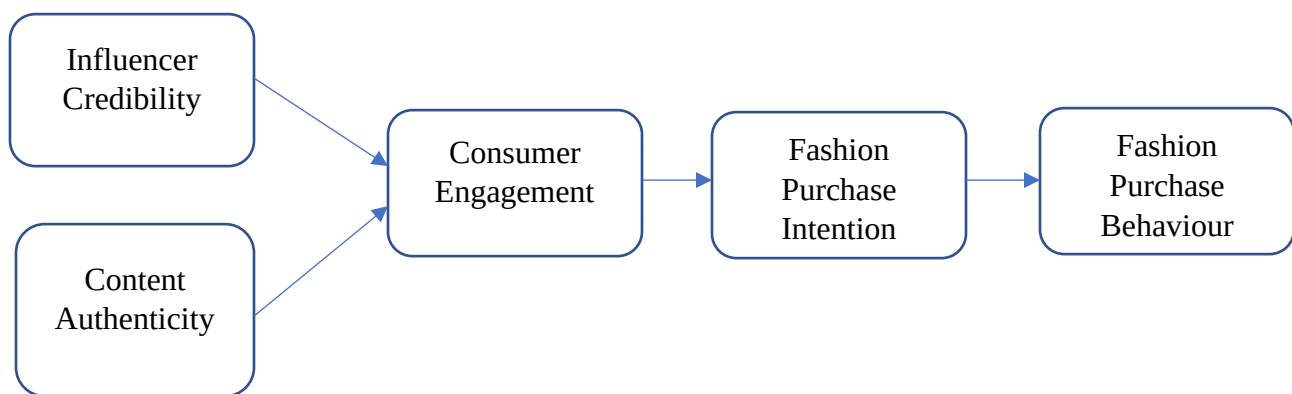


Figure 4: Conceptual framework

The proposed framework extends previous studies by integrating three complementary theoretical perspectives rather than relying on a single behavioural model. Unlike earlier research, which often

examined influencer credibility or purchase intention in isolation (Gregor and Olejniczak, 2023; Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017), this framework recognises that Generation Z fashion purchasing on TikTok is a multidimensional process influenced by marketing content, social interaction and behavioural intention. The framework subsequently informed the design of the questionnaire and the formulation of the hypotheses, while also providing a basis for examining the proposed relationships through correlation and regression analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains and justifies the methodology used to investigate the effectiveness of TikTok marketing in influencing Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour in the United Kingdom. It outlines the research philosophy, approach, design, sampling, data collection and analysis, while addressing reliability, validity and ethical considerations (Saunders et al., 2023).

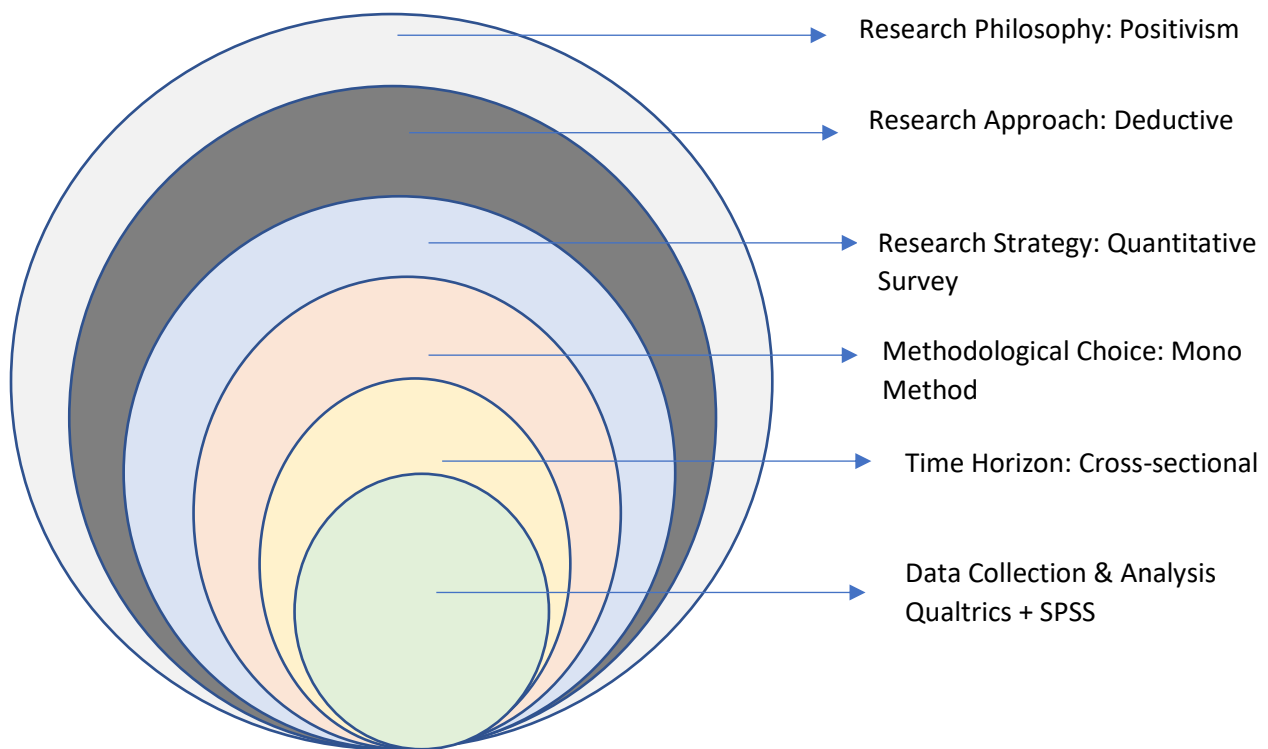


Figure 5: Research Onion (Adapted from Saunders et al., 2023)

3.2 Research Philosophy

A positivist philosophy was adopted because the study seeks to measure relationships between TikTok marketing variables and Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour using quantitative survey data. Rather than exploring participants' subjective interpretations, as an interpretivist approach would, the study focuses on objectively measurable variables and statistical testing of

the proposed relationships. This makes positivism appropriate for examining the hypothesised relationships within the study's sample (Saunders et al., 2023; Pervin and Mokhtar, 2022).

3.3 Research Approach

The research follows a deductive approach, drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Source Credibility Theory and Social Influence Theory to formulate the study's hypotheses and examine the proposed relationships statistically. Although induction is useful for developing theory from emerging observations, deduction is more appropriate because the study tests established theoretical propositions using quantitative data (Saunders et al., 2023; Mohammed, 2024).

3.4 Research Design

A quantitative design was selected to measure and statistically assess the relationships between TikTok marketing variables and Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour. Qualitative methods may offer richer accounts of individual consumer experiences, but they are less appropriate for determining the strength of hypothesised relationships. Although a mixed-methods design could provide additional perspectives, its broader data requirements would increase the demands of the study. The quantitative design was therefore aligned with the study's objectives and analytical requirements (Saunders et al., 2023; Mohammed, 2024).

3.5 Population and Sampling

The study focused on Generation Z consumers aged 18–27 living in the United Kingdom who used TikTok to engage with fashion-related content (Mc Keever et al., 2021). Participants were recruited online through social media using convenience sampling, a method chosen because it was accessible within the study's available time and resources (Saunders et al., 2023). This non-probability sampling method may, however, create selection bias and restrict the generalisability of the findings. To mitigate this limitation, recruitment sought to include respondents with varied demographic characteristics from across the UK.

3.6 Data Collection

Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire administered using Qualtrics, which was selected for its survey design capabilities, efficient data management, anonymous response collection and compatibility with SPSS (Saunders et al., 2023). The questionnaire consisted predominantly of closed-ended questions and employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This measurement format enabled respondents' attitudes, perceptions and behavioural intentions to be quantified and subsequently subjected to statistical analysis (Pervin and Mokhtar, 2022). The instrument was organised into sections covering respondents' demographic characteristics, TikTok usage, influencer credibility, content authenticity, consumer engagement, fashion purchase intention and actual fashion purchase behaviour. Before the main survey, a pilot test involving approximately 10–15 respondents was undertaken to evaluate the clarity of the questions, questionnaire reliability and completion time. Feedback obtained during the pilot phase was used to refine the instrument and improve its validity before the main data collection exercise (Khanal and Chhetri, 2024).

3.7 Data Analysis

Data collected through Qualtrics were exported to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 30, for coding, data cleaning and statistical analysis. SPSS was selected because it provides appropriate facilities for organising datasets, conducting inferential statistical procedures and testing research hypotheses in marketing and consumer behaviour studies (Rahman and Muktadir, 2021). Before the main analysis, the dataset was screened for missing responses, potential outliers and data-entry inconsistencies to improve the accuracy and consistency of the results.

Descriptive statistics were first used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics and the principal study variables through frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. This provided an initial profile of respondents' TikTok usage and fashion purchasing behaviour. The reliability of the questionnaire measures was subsequently assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70 or above treated as indicating acceptable internal consistency (Hussey et al., 2025). This assessment was necessary to determine whether the items consistently measured the intended constructs.

Pearson's correlation analysis was then used to assess the direction and strength of associations between influencer credibility, content authenticity, consumer engagement, purchase intention and fashion purchase behaviour. Since correlation does not demonstrate prediction or causality, multiple regression analysis was additionally employed to examine whether the identified independent variables significantly predicted fashion purchase behaviour and to test the proposed hypotheses. Regression also enabled comparison of the relative contribution of individual predictors, supporting the empirical assessment of the research objectives (Ilyas and Ullah, 2026).

3.8 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are important considerations in determining the credibility of the research instrument and the findings generated from it. Reliability concerns the consistency of a measurement instrument in producing similar results under comparable conditions (Mohammed, 2024). In this study, internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70 or above regarded as an acceptable indication of reliability (Hussey et al., 2025). This assessment examined whether the questionnaire items consistently measured the intended constructs, including influencer credibility, content authenticity, consumer engagement and fashion purchase behaviour.

Construct validity was supported through the use of measurement items informed by previously validated peer-reviewed research and their alignment with the theoretical framework adopted for the study. Content validity was further addressed through the review of relevant literature and feedback obtained from the research supervisor during the development of the questionnaire. In addition, the pilot study provided an opportunity to identify unclear or ambiguous questions before the main survey was administered. The feedback obtained was used to improve the clarity and accuracy of the instrument, thereby strengthening its overall validity and suitability for collecting data relevant to the research objectives.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were incorporated throughout the research process to ensure that the study was conducted responsibly and in accordance with the ethical requirements of the University for the Creative Arts (UCA). Participation was voluntary, and respondents provided informed consent

before accessing the Qualtrics questionnaire. Participants were given appropriate information about the purpose of the research, their rights as participants and how the information they provided would be used.

Participant anonymity was maintained by avoiding the collection of personally identifiable information. Confidentiality was also protected through secure data storage and controlled access to the research data. These measures were intended to minimise risks to participants and protect the information provided during the study. Data handling was undertaken in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Compliance with these requirements supported the protection of participants' privacy and rights throughout the research process.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and findings from the quantitative survey investigating the effectiveness of TikTok marketing in influencing Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour in the United Kingdom. Quantitative data analysis enables patterns and relationships between variables to be systematically examined using statistical techniques (Saunders et al., 2023). Of the 163 questionnaire responses received, 130 were retained as valid for analysis. The chapter presents data screening, respondent characteristics, descriptive statistics, reliability testing, correlation and regression analyses, providing the empirical foundation for the critical discussion in Chapter Five.

4.2 Data Screening and Response Rate

The Qualtrics survey generated 163 responses, which were screened against the study's inclusion and validity requirements before analysis. Screening was undertaken because incomplete, inaccurate or otherwise unsuitable responses could compromise the reliability of subsequent statistical results (Saunders et al., 2023). Following this process, 33 responses were excluded, leaving 130 valid cases for the final analysis. The statistical procedures presented in this chapter therefore use the 130 retained responses as the analytical sample. The final dataset was processed in SPSS to identify patterns and examine the relationships and predictive effects among the study variables.

4.3 Respondent Profile and TikTok Usage

The demographic and behavioural profile of the 130 valid respondents provides important context for interpreting the findings. Most respondents were younger members of Generation Z, with 44 (33.8%) aged 18–20 and 43 (33.1%) aged 21–23, meaning that 66.9% of the sample was aged between 18 and 23. The gender distribution was relatively balanced, comprising 62 females (47.7%) and 59 males (45.4%), alongside smaller proportions identifying as non-binary or preferring not to disclose their gender.

Regarding employment, 59 respondents (45.4%) were employed, while 53 (40.8%) were students. Online fashion purchasing was relatively frequent, with 64 respondents (49.2%) reporting monthly purchases. The findings also indicated substantial engagement with TikTok and fashion-related content. This is consistent with research characterising Generation Z as highly digitally connected consumers who increasingly encounter brands and consumption-related information through social media environments (Djafarova and Bowes, 2021; Sudaryanto et al., 2025). However, frequent platform use should not itself be interpreted as evidence of marketing effectiveness, as exposure and engagement may not necessarily result in purchasing.

Table 3: Demographic and Behavioural Profile of Respondents (n = 130)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Age	18–20	44	33.8
	21–23	43	33.1
	24–25	24	18.5
	26–27	19	14.6
Gender	Female	62	47.7
	Male	59	45.4
	Other/Prefer not to say	9	6.9
Employment	Employed	59	45.4
	Student	53	40.8
	Other	18	13.8
Fashion Purchase Frequency	Weekly	23	17.7
	Monthly	64	49.2
	Every 2–3 months	30	23.1
	Rarely	13	10.0

Source: Author's survey data (2026).

4.4 Descriptive Analysis of Key Study Variables

Table 4: Mean Scores for Key Study Variables

Study Variable	Mean Score
Influencer Credibility	3.32
Content Authenticity	3.41
Consumer Engagement	3.29
Purchase Intention	3.52
Actual Purchase Behaviour	3.16

Source: Author's survey data (2026).

Descriptive statistics were first applied to summarise respondents' views of the main variables investigated. Mean scores and measures of variation provided an indication of the typical response and the extent to which responses differed across the sample, establishing a basis for subsequent analysis of relationships between the variables (Saunders et al., 2023). Purchase intention produced the highest mean score ($M = 3.52$), followed by content authenticity ($M = 3.41$), influencer credibility ($M = 3.32$) and consumer engagement ($M = 3.29$). Fashion purchase behaviour had the lowest mean score among the measured variables ($M = 3.16$).

This difference is analytically important. Respondents appeared more likely to express an intention to purchase fashion products after exposure to TikTok marketing than to report corresponding actual purchasing behaviour. Consequently, high levels of exposure, engagement or favourable perceptions should not automatically be interpreted as evidence that TikTok marketing directly generates sales. The finding instead suggests a potential progression from marketing exposure to engagement and purchase intention, with additional factors influencing whether intention becomes actual behaviour. This pattern is broadly consistent with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, in which behavioural intention is recognised as an important predictor of subsequent behaviour, although it does not necessarily translate into action in every case (Ajzen, 1991).

4.5 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the multi-item constructs included in the study, providing an indication of how consistently the items measured their respective variables (Saunders et al., 2023). Influencer credibility ($\alpha = 0.803$) and purchase behaviour ($\alpha = 0.853$) demonstrated good reliability, while content authenticity ($\alpha = 0.709$) and purchase intention ($\alpha = 0.705$) showed acceptable consistency. Consumer engagement recorded a slightly lower value ($\alpha = 0.671$). Although this falls marginally below the conventional 0.70 threshold, it may reflect differences between behaviours such as liking, commenting, sharing and saving content rather than complete unreliability.

4.6 Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation test was used to assess the strength and direction of associations between the principal TikTok marketing and consumer behaviour variables. The strongest positive association with actual fashion purchase behaviour was observed for purchase intention ($r = 0.384$, $p < .001$), suggesting that respondents reporting stronger purchase intentions were also more likely to report purchasing fashion products. Consumer engagement showed weaker but statistically significant positive associations with both purchase intention ($r = 0.244$, $p = .005$) and actual purchase behaviour ($r = 0.188$, $p = .032$).

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Matrix of Key Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Influencer Credibility	1				
2. Content Authenticity		1			
3. Consumer Engagement			1		
4. Purchase Intention	.232**	.194*	.244**	1	
5. Purchase Behaviour	-.112	.061	.188*	.384**	1

Note: $p < .05$; $p < .01$. $n = 130$.

Source: Author's survey data (2026).

Influencer credibility ($r = 0.232$, $p = .008$) and content authenticity ($r = 0.194$, $p = .027$) were positively associated with purchase intention. However, neither influencer credibility ($r = -0.112$, $p = .207$) nor content authenticity ($r = 0.061$, $p = .491$) had a significant direct relationship with actual purchase behaviour. This distinction is important because it suggests that favourable perceptions of influencers and content may contribute to consumers' intentions without automatically producing completed purchases. Such findings reinforce the argument that purchase intention represents an important pathway towards behaviour, although intentions may not always translate fully into action (Ajzen, 1991).

4.7 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression was used to determine whether influencer credibility, content authenticity, consumer engagement and purchase intention significantly predicted Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour. This technique allows the simultaneous assessment of several independent variables in relation to a single dependent variable (Saunders et al., 2023). The regression model was statistically significant, $F(4,125) = 7.759$, $p < .001$, and accounted for 19.9% of the variance in fashion purchase behaviour ($R^2 = 0.199$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.173$).

Purchase intention emerged as the strongest positive predictor of fashion purchase behaviour ($B = 0.489$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of purchase intention were associated with greater reported purchasing. This finding is broadly consistent with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, although intention alone did not account for all differences in actual behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Influencer credibility also reached statistical significance, but its coefficient was negative ($B = -0.304$, $p = .012$) when the effects of the other predictors were held constant. This result should therefore be interpreted cautiously rather than as evidence that credible influencers reduce purchasing. Content authenticity ($B = -0.009$, $p = .946$) and consumer engagement ($B = 0.141$, $p = .250$) were not significant independent predictors. Importantly, 80.1% of behavioural variation remained unexplained, indicating that factors beyond TikTok marketing also influence fashion purchasing.

4.8 Findings by Research Objectives

Table 6: Summary of key Findings

Research Objective	Analysis	Summary of Key Finding
1. Examine TikTok marketing strategies used to engage Generation Z fashion consumers	Descriptive statistics	Respondents demonstrated substantial TikTok use and engagement with fashion-related content, indicating that the platform is an important channel for fashion discovery and inspiration.
2. Investigate factors influencing engagement with TikTok marketing content	Descriptive and correlation analysis	Influencer credibility, content authenticity and consumer engagement were positively associated with purchase intention, although the relationships were relatively weak.
3. Assess the impact of TikTok marketing on purchase intentions and purchasing behaviour	Correlation and regression analysis	Purchase intention had the strongest positive relationship with purchase behaviour ($r = .384$, $p < .001$) and was the strongest positive regression predictor ($B = .489$, $p < .001$).
4. Provide recommendations for improving TikTok marketing effectiveness	Overall findings synthesis	The results suggest that generating engagement alone may be insufficient; strategies should focus on converting favourable intentions into actual fashion purchases. Detailed recommendations are developed in Chapter Five.

Source: Author's survey data (2026).

Overall, the findings addressed the study objectives by identifying substantial TikTok and fashion-content engagement among respondents and examining factors associated with purchasing outcomes. The analysis found positive associations between influencer credibility, content authenticity, consumer engagement and purchase intention; however, these relationships were not consistently reflected in actual purchasing behaviour. Purchase intention showed the strongest positive predictive effect on fashion purchasing. Overall, the results indicate that TikTok marketing may have greater influence at the stages of consumer interest and purchase consideration than at the point of completed purchase.

4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter reported the findings from 130 valid respondents. The analysis indicated high levels of TikTok engagement alongside a clear difference between consumers' purchase intentions and

their reported purchasing behaviour. The measurement constructs generally demonstrated acceptable reliability, while the correlation and regression results identified purchase intention as the strongest positive predictor of fashion purchase behaviour. These findings establish the empirical foundation for the critical interpretation and comparison with existing literature presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Five interprets the results reported in Chapter Four by relating them to the existing literature and the theoretical perspectives underpinning the study. It evaluates what the findings reveal about TikTok marketing and Generation Z fashion purchasing in the UK, with particular consideration of consumer engagement, influencer credibility, content authenticity, purchase intention and actual purchasing behaviour. The discussion compares the results with previous empirical evidence, highlighting both consistencies and differences and considering possible reasons for these patterns. The findings are further examined through the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Source Credibility Theory and Social Influence Theory.

5.2 TikTok Engagement and Generation Z Fashion Consumer Behaviour

The results point to strong engagement with TikTok and fashion-related content among the respondents, supporting its relevance to Generation Z's fashion discovery and consumption. This finding is consistent with Djafarova and Bowes (2021), who linked social media exposure to Generation Z's engagement with fashion trends and influential content. It also reflects Tuten and Solomon's (2023) view that social media has shifted consumers towards more active roles in which they interact with, share and respond to brand communications rather than simply receiving marketing messages.

However, the present findings also challenge the assumption that high engagement necessarily demonstrates marketing effectiveness. Although respondents reported considerable engagement with TikTok fashion content, actual purchase behaviour recorded a lower mean score ($M = 3.16$) than purchase intention ($M = 3.52$). This suggests that engagement may be more effective at generating awareness, inspiration and purchase consideration than directly producing completed transactions. Such a distinction is important because platform metrics, including views, likes and shares, may overstate the commercial value of social media campaigns if they are interpreted as proxies for sales.

Compared with traditional marketing, TikTok's algorithm-driven and interactive environment potentially gives fashion brands greater opportunities to reach consumers beyond established follower networks. Nevertheless, this advantage also creates dependence on rapidly changing algorithms and viral trends. Dwivedi et al. (2021) similarly caution that the expanding digital and social media environment creates increasingly complex relationships between consumer interaction and marketing outcomes. Therefore, the findings suggest that TikTok engagement should be regarded as an important stage in the consumer decision-making process rather than definitive evidence of successful fashion purchase conversion.

5.3 Influencer Credibility and Content Authenticity

The analysis revealed that influencer credibility and content authenticity were positively related to purchase intention, yet neither variable showed a statistically significant direct relationship with actual fashion purchasing. This provides only partial support for Source Credibility Theory, as the theory emphasises the role of perceived expertise and trustworthiness in determining the persuasiveness of communication (Hovland and Weiss, 1951). The finding is also broadly consistent with Lou and Yuan (2019), whose research indicated that influencer credibility and the perceived value of influencer content can strengthen consumer trust and favourable responses to branded messages.

However, the present findings suggest that this relationship is less straightforward when actual purchasing behaviour is considered. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) similarly demonstrated that perceived credibility can influence young consumers' purchase decisions, but their findings were primarily concerned with how online celebrity credibility shapes decision-making rather than establishing that credibility alone consistently produces completed purchases. The difference may therefore reflect the distinction between influencing consumers' attitudes and intentions and overcoming the practical factors that determine final purchase decisions.

The regression results provide further complexity. Influencer credibility produced a significant negative coefficient after other variables were controlled for. This should not be interpreted as evidence that credible influencers discourage purchasing. Rather, regression analysis assesses each predictor's unique contribution while accounting for overlap with other variables, meaning that the result may reflect the interrelationships between credibility, engagement and purchase intention.

Overall, the findings suggest that authenticity and credibility remain important for persuasion, but they appear more effective in shaping consumer interest and intention than independently guaranteeing fashion purchases.

5.4 The Intention–Behaviour Gap in TikTok Fashion Purchasing

The clearest relationship identified in the analysis was between purchase intention and actual fashion purchase behaviour. Purchase intention recorded the strongest correlation with behaviour ($r = .384, p < .001$) and was also the strongest positive predictor in the regression analysis ($B = .489, p < .001$). This result is broadly consistent with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which positions behavioural intention as an important precursor to subsequent action (Ajzen, 1991). The findings consequently indicate that TikTok marketing may affect purchasing indirectly, particularly where exposure to marketing content contributes to stronger intentions to buy.

Nevertheless, the results also reveal an important intention–behaviour gap. Purchase intention recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.52$), whereas actual purchase behaviour was lower ($M = 3.16$). Thus, intending to purchase a fashion product after viewing TikTok content did not necessarily result in a completed transaction. This highlights a limitation in treating stated intentions as equivalent to actual consumer behaviour.

Nevertheless, purchase intention was higher than actual purchase behaviour, demonstrating an intention–behaviour gap. Consumers may reconsider intended purchases because of affordability, delivery costs, product availability or competing alternatives, while rapidly changing TikTok trends may also create short-lived intentions. The findings therefore partially support Ajzen's (1991) framework: intention is an important pathway towards behaviour but does not fully determine it.

5.5 The Limited Direct Effect of TikTok Marketing Factors on Purchase Behaviour

The regression results suggest that TikTok marketing effectiveness cannot be understood through individual marketing variables or engagement measures alone. Although the regression model achieved statistical significance, it accounted for only 19.9% of the variance in Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour ($R^2 = .199$). The remaining 80.1% was therefore not explained by

influencer credibility, content authenticity, consumer engagement and purchase intention. This suggests that consumers' fashion purchasing decisions are shaped by a wider combination of influences, with TikTok marketing representing only one element of the overall decision-making process.

Importantly, content authenticity and consumer engagement did not make significant independent contributions to purchase behaviour when the other variables were controlled. This does not necessarily mean that these factors are unimportant. Rather, their influence may operate indirectly through earlier stages of the consumer journey, particularly awareness, attitudes and purchase intention. This interpretation is consistent with the findings of Dwivedi et al. (2021), who emphasise the complexity of relationships between digital engagement and marketing outcomes.

These findings challenge the assumption that views, likes and shares necessarily indicate commercial success. TikTok may generate visibility and consumer interest, but actual fashion purchases are also influenced by factors beyond the present model. Its marketing effectiveness should therefore be regarded as indirect and conditional.

5.6 Theoretical Implications

The findings provide partial support for all three theories underpinning this study, while also demonstrating their individual limitations. First, the Theory of Planned Behaviour was supported because purchase intention was the strongest positive predictor of actual purchase behaviour, consistent with Ajzen's (1991) argument that intentions are important antecedents of behaviour. However, the regression model's relatively modest explanatory power indicates that intention alone cannot fully explain Generation Z fashion purchasing.

Second, Source Credibility Theory received partial support. Influencer credibility was positively associated with purchase intention, supporting the proposition that credible sources can influence consumer responses (Hovland and Weiss, 1951). However, its lack of a straightforward positive direct relationship with actual purchasing suggests that credibility may be more influential during persuasion than final conversion.

Finally, Social Influence Theory remains relevant for understanding TikTok's trend-driven environment, where peer behaviour, social proof and viral content may shape fashion preferences (Kelman, 1958). However, these complex social processes may not be fully captured through the variables examined quantitatively. Collectively, the findings therefore justify combining the three theories, as no single framework adequately explains TikTok-driven fashion purchase behaviour.

5.7 Practical Implications and Recommendations

The findings have important implications for fashion brands seeking to use TikTok to influence Generation Z consumers in the United Kingdom. First, brands should avoid evaluating campaign success solely through views, likes and other engagement metrics. As the findings showed, engagement and positive perceptions did not consistently translate into actual purchase behaviour. Marketing strategies should therefore focus on improving the conversion of purchase intention into completed transactions.

Second, fashion brands should prioritise credible and authentic influencer partnerships, but should not assume that influencer credibility alone will generate sales. Influencer content should be supported by clear product information, transparent sponsorship disclosure and convenient pathways from TikTok content to purchase. Reducing practical barriers, such as unclear pricing, complicated checkout processes and limited product information, may help convert consumer intentions into actual behaviour.

Finally, brands should adopt an integrated approach that combines entertaining TikTok content with measurable commercial objectives. Campaigns should track outcomes across the consumer journey, including awareness, engagement, purchase intention and conversion. This would provide a more meaningful assessment of marketing effectiveness and help businesses distinguish between temporary viral visibility and sustainable commercial outcomes.

5.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter critically discussed the findings in relation to previous literature and the study's theoretical framework. Overall, TikTok was shown to influence Generation Z fashion consumers primarily through engagement and the development of purchase intentions rather than directly

determining actual purchases. Purchase intention was the strongest predictor of behaviour, while credibility and authenticity appeared to exert more indirect influence. The findings partially supported the three theoretical perspectives and highlighted the complex, conditional nature of TikTok marketing effectiveness.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the investigation into the effectiveness of TikTok marketing in shaping Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour in the United Kingdom. It brings together the study's methodological approach and principal findings, evaluates these findings against the research objectives and provides an overall response to the research aim. The chapter also considers the limitations that affect interpretation of the results and proposes directions for future research, particularly in relation to factors that remained unexplained by the quantitative analysis.

6.2 Summary of the Study

The study examined how effectively TikTok marketing influences Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour in the United Kingdom. A positivist philosophy, deductive approach and quantitative design were employed, with data gathered through a Qualtrics questionnaire. From the 163 responses obtained, 33 were excluded following data screening, resulting in 130 valid cases for analysis in SPSS. The analysis incorporated descriptive statistics, reliability assessment, Pearson correlation and multiple regression. Overall, the results suggest that TikTok marketing has a stronger role in encouraging consumer engagement and purchase intention than in directly translating into completed fashion purchases.

6.3 Conclusions by Research Objectives

The findings addressed all four research objectives and indicate that TikTok provides an effective environment for engaging Generation Z with fashion-related content. Interactive material, influencer activity and perceptions of authenticity were important features of this engagement, reflecting the broader movement towards participatory social media marketing in which consumers interact with and contribute to brand communication (Sudaryanto et al., 2025; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the results also demonstrate that strong engagement should not be treated as direct evidence of commercial success, as interaction with TikTok content does not necessarily result in completed fashion purchases.

Second, influencer credibility, content authenticity and consumer engagement were positively associated with purchase intention, supporting arguments that credible and valuable social media content can shape consumer trust and behavioural responses (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Nevertheless, their influence on actual purchase behaviour was less consistent, demonstrating that positive perceptions do not necessarily result in completed purchases.

Third, purchase intention showed the strongest positive association with actual fashion purchase behaviour and was also the most influential positive predictor in the regression model. This finding is broadly consistent with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which positions intention as an important precursor to behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). However, the model accounted for only 19.9% of the variation in purchasing behaviour, suggesting that other influences not examined in this study also contribute to Generation Z's fashion decisions.

Finally, the findings indicate that fashion businesses should evaluate TikTok performance beyond engagement indicators and consider how marketing activity can facilitate movement from initial exposure to purchase conversion. This is particularly relevant in complex digital environments, where consumer interaction with branded content does not necessarily result in a commercial transaction (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

6.4 Overall Conclusion

Overall, the findings indicate that TikTok marketing has a meaningful influence on Generation Z fashion purchase behaviour in the United Kingdom, although this influence appears to operate mainly through indirect and conditional pathways rather than producing a direct purchasing outcome. TikTok appears particularly effective in supporting fashion discovery, consumer engagement and purchase intention, reflecting the increasingly interactive nature of social media marketing (Sudaryanto et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the comparatively lower level of reported purchasing and the regression model's limited explanatory power suggest that engagement with digital marketing content does not necessarily result in completed sales. Purchase intention emerged as the most important pathway towards behaviour, broadly supporting Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour, although intention alone could not fully explain purchasing. Consequently, views, likes and viral reach should not be treated as sufficient indicators of

marketing effectiveness; instead, businesses should assess whether digital engagement ultimately contributes to measurable purchase conversion.

6.5 Study Limitations

The study's findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. The use of convenience sampling may have introduced selection bias and reduced the extent to which the results can be generalised to the wider population of Generation Z fashion consumers in the UK (Saunders et al., 2023). In addition, the cross-sectional design captured participants' attitudes and behaviours at a single point in time, preventing conclusions about causal relationships. Reliance on self-reported data may also have introduced recall and social desirability biases (Bryman, 2007). Finally, the regression model accounted for only 19.9% of the variation in purchase behaviour, suggesting that other potentially important determinants of fashion purchasing were outside the scope of the model.

6.6 Recommendations for Future Research

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the study's results. Convenience sampling may have affected the representativeness of the sample through potential selection bias, thereby limiting the generalisability of the findings to Generation Z fashion consumers across the UK (Saunders et al., 2023). The cross-sectional nature of the survey also means that the data reflect participants' attitudes and behaviours at one particular time and cannot establish causal relationships. In addition, the use of self-reported responses creates the possibility of recall and social desirability bias (Bryman, 2007). The relatively low explanatory power of the regression model is another limitation, as the 19.9% variance explained indicates that several other factors influencing fashion purchase behaviour were not captured by the variables examined.

6.7 Final Concluding Statement

This study demonstrates that TikTok's influence extends beyond simple entertainment and audience engagement. However, digital attention should not be confused with commercial conversion. For Generation Z fashion consumers, TikTok marketing appears most influential when

it contributes to the wider process through which engagement develops into intention and, ultimately, purchasing behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Dwivedi et al., 2021)

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Appendix I: Research Ethics

The University for the Creative Arts is committed to supporting good practice in research and scholarly activity. Conducting research in accordance with ethical principles is considered to be of fundamental importance. The following Tier 1 Checklist must be completed for all research projects and approved at supervisor/school level.

Please use the UCA Research Ethics Code of Practice as guidance in completing this checklist.

Name of researcher	ABIODUN FANIYI
Title of proposed project:	An Investigation into the Effectiveness of TikTok Marketing in Influencing Generation Z Purchase Behaviour in the United Kingdom
Status (are you a member of staff, a Ph.D student or a student at another level)	
Email	
Line Manager/Supervisor/Tutor	

Brief outline of the project (250 words maximum):

This research will investigate the effectiveness of TikTok marketing in influencing Generation Z purchase behaviour in the United Kingdom. The rapid growth of TikTok has created new opportunities for businesses to engage younger consumers through short-form videos, influencer marketing, user-generated content and algorithm-driven recommendations. However, uncertainty remains regarding the extent to which consumer engagement with TikTok marketing translates into purchase intentions and actual purchasing behaviour.

The study will adopt a positivist philosophy and a deductive research approach. A quantitative survey design will be used to collect primary data from approximately 100–150 Generation Z consumers aged 18–27 residing in the United Kingdom. Participants will be recruited using convenience sampling and will complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire will contain closed-ended and Likert-scale questions examining TikTok marketing, influencer credibility, content authenticity, consumer engagement, purchase intention and purchase behaviour.

Data will be analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis will be employed to identify patterns and examine relationships between the study variables. Participation will be voluntary, and informed consent will be obtained before data collection. No directly identifiable personal

information will be collected. Participants will have the right to withdraw in accordance with the participant information provided, and research data will be securely managed in line with UCA ethical requirements and applicable data protection principles.

Does the study involve human participants?

If **Yes** please continue to Question 1. If **No** please continue to question 12

	Issues that may indicate that mitigation measures and/or ethical approval by Research Committee are necessary		
1	Does the study involve participants who are unable to give informed consent? (see 17.2a below)		No✓
2	Does the research involve sensitive topics? (see 17.2b)		No✓
3	Does the research involve groups where the permission of a gatekeeper is normally required for initial access? (see 17.2c)		No✓
4	Is the research to be conducted without the full and informed consent of the participant? (17.2d)		No✓
5	Does the research involve access to records of personal or confidential information concerning identifiable individuals? (17.2e)		No✓
6	Does the research induce, or have the potential to induce, psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation or to cause more than minimal pain? (17.2f)		No✓
7	Does the research involve, or have the potential to involve, intrusive interventions that participants would not normally encounter, or which may cause them to reveal information that could cause concern in the course of their everyday life? (17.2g, 17.2h)		No✓
8	Will the research take place outside the UK?		No✓

9	Will the research involve respondents to the internet or other visual/vocal methods where respondents may be identified?		No✓
10	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		No✓
11	Will the study involve NHS patients or staff? (18.4)		No✓

If you have answered **Yes** to any of these questions, you should submit further details of measures to mitigate ethical risks and a formal application for ethics approval using the UCA **Research Ethics Tier 2 Application for Approval** form. The form should be submitted to the Research Committee via the Research Office.

If you answered **No** to all the above questions, then you need not submit your project for formal ethics approval. You will need to complete the questions below and file a signed copy of this Tier 1 Ethics Checklist with your School (for staff) and your supervisors (PGT and PGR students), and submit it to the Research Office via the myUCA research ethics pages. The form must be signed by yourself, and your line manager or supervisor.

It is incumbent on you to observe the University's Research Ethics Code of Practice, and to ensure that your research complies with the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), by which you are legally bound.

	Further issues that require consideration in research good practice		
12	Have the topic and any ethical implications been addressed with your supervisor/line manager?	Yes✓	
13	Does the topic merit further research of the kind being proposed and is it appropriate to the level of study?	Yes✓	
14	Do you, as the researcher, have the skills to carry out this research?	Yes✓	
15	Are the participant information sheet or leaflet and consent forms appropriate?	Yes✓	NA

16	Are the procedures for recruitment of participants and obtaining informed consent appropriate?	Yes✓	NA	
17	Are the procedures for ensuring confidentiality/anonymity of respondent data appropriate?	Yes✓	NA	
18	Has a risk assessment been carried out and the form completed, where necessary?	Yes	NA✓	

I have read the UCA Research Ethics Code of Practice Signature Applicant:	This project complies with the UCA Research Ethics Code of Practice Signature Line Manager/Supervisor/Tutor:
Date:	Date:

Below are extracts from the key areas of the UCA Research Ethics Code of Practice:

3.1 As a matter of principle, all research is subject to ethical considerations and risk assessment taking into account professional codes of practice / standards where these exist, and subject specificity.

3.2 All research involving human participants, whether conducted in a direct or virtual or any other way, must consider the following issues from the inception of the research project. Researchers should be in a position to justify their research methods should it be required:

- i. the value of the research
- ii. informed consent
- iii. openness and honesty
- iv. right to withdraw without penalty
- v. confidentiality and anonymity
- vi. protection from harm
- vii. briefing and debriefing
- viii. reimbursements, payments and rewards
- ix. experience of researcher and suitability of methods employed
- x. ethics standards of external bodies and institutions
- xi. research for clients/consultants
- xii. research data management

3.3 These issues require careful consideration and the principles laid out below provide the basis for good practice in research management.

17. Consideration of Ethical Issues

17. Consideration of Ethical Issues

17.1 As outlined under 3.1, all research is subject to ethical consideration and requires an assessment of ethical risk, taking into account professional codes of practice where these exist, as well as subject specificity.

17.2 The following research would normally be considered as involving more than minimal risk and therefore **requires documented measures to mitigate potential risks, and consideration by the University Research Committee:**

- Research involving vulnerable groups or individuals, for example children and young people under 18, those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment, or individuals in a dependent or unequal relationship.
- Research involving sensitive topics such as:
 - Sexual behaviour
 - Illegal, political or religious behaviour
 - Experience of violence, abuse, exploitation and/or other racist or sexist behaviour
 - Mental health
 - Physical health and treatment.
- Research involving groups where the permission of a gatekeeper is normally required for initial access to members e.g. ethnic or cultural groups, native peoples or indigenous communities.
- Research involving deception or which is conducted without participants' full and informed consent at the time the study is carried out.
- Research involving access to records of personal or confidential information concerning identifiable individuals.
- Research that would induce psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation or cause more than minimal pain.
- Research involving intrusive interventions such as vigorous physical exercise, where participants would not normally encounter such interventions, which may cause them to reveal information that causes concern in the course of their everyday life.

17.3 Vulnerable groups include any person(s) who may be precluded from giving informed consent. Note that this does not necessarily include all groups whose consent is given by parents or by those *in loco parentis*. It should additionally be noted that even in those circumstances the 'real' consent of those individuals under study should also be sought wherever possible (sample consent forms are available from the Research Office).

17.4 Deceptive research is that which is undertaken when the investigator deliberately conceals or significantly misrepresents his or herself, the true nature of the research or any other significant aspect of the research: examples may include covert observation, the stating of a misleading research purpose or providing a misleading professional identity or institutional affiliation on part of the researcher(s).

17.5 No specific approval is needed for research not covered within the categories detailed in Section 17.2, although all projects must adhere to the principles laid out in this Code and the University requires all staff or students undertaking research to ensure that at each stage of the process, research is undertaken in a professional and ethical manner.

17.6 In particular all researchers will ensure that:

- Respect for Intellectual Property Rights and Copyright law is maintained in compliance with University guidelines.
- Researchers will be open and transparent regarding the purpose, methods and possible uses of research.
- Researchers will maintain the right to anonymity of any research respondents/subjects, and highlight any possible risks to staff or subjects arising from the research.
- Researchers will act within the law regarding the sourcing and use of research information and respect the obligation to acknowledge support and collaboration.
- Researchers will at all times act within the law of the UK and the law of any other country within the research being undertaken.

17.7 Research involving animals/animal tissue requires a license under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. Research involving human tissue including its display requires a license under the Human Tissue Act (2004). Experimentation / anatomical examination in human morbid anatomy requires a license under the 1984 Anatomy Act.

17.8 Research involving NHS patients or staff must be approved by NRES; see the NRES website for further information (www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk). Research involving patients or staff of other medical providers must be ethically approved by these institutions.

17.9 If there is any doubt as to whether a particular research project needs approval, advice should be sought, for staff, from the Research Manager or Head of School, and for PGR students, from the Research Degrees Leader or supervisors.