



An explanatory study on the effect TikTok has on the consumer buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic.

By

Tegan Sinclair

A research project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication

at the

Independent Institute of Education: Vega School

Supervisor: Clive Greenstone

Submission Date: 29 November 2021

Word Count: 12 839

DECLARATION

I, Tegan Sinclair, hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the IIE Bachelor of Art Honours in Strategic Brand Communication degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.



Signature

Tegan Sinclair

29/11/2021

Date

ABSTRACT

Over the last three years I have been interested in social media marketing and what businesses can grow with the right strategy. In 2020, I started my own social media marketing business, E-merge Media. I have enjoyed learning about social media platforms and their various marketing tools. This led to my decision to conduct an explanatory study on the effect TikTok has on the consumer buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is a lack of research regarding TikTok's effect on the buying behaviour of Generation Z in South Africa. This research report aims to provide insight into whether TikTok leads to buying behaviour. The research methodology took a qualitative approach, using focus groups and an open ended questionnaire. This approach was used to gain insight into the opinions and feelings of Generation Z in relation to TikTok and their buying behaviour.

The research concluded that TikTok has an effect on the consumer buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this influence is limited in South Africa due to the lack of access to international brands and affordable shipping. The data concluded that TikTok is an effective marketing tool for brands marketing strategies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my lecturer Carolanda Du Toit, as well as my supervisor, Clive Greenstone, for guiding me and encouraging me throughout the duration of this research report. I am very grateful for their assistance in ensuring that this research report was conducted and is presented in a professional, academic and ethical manner.

I would also like to acknowledge my family, boyfriend, friends and peers. I would not have been able to complete this research report without your constant support and upliftment. Thank you for all the love, prayers and positivity that you have provided me throughout the duration of 2021. The process of completing a honours degree and specifically a research report in a global pandemic and during social unrest has been tough. Thank you for sticking by my side and encouraging me to do my best in all my tasks and submissions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 CONTEXTUALISATION	1
1.3 RATIONALE AND RELEVANCE	2
1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT	2
1.5 PURPOSE STATEMENT.....	3
1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION	3
1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.....	3
1.8 CONCLUSION	4
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
2.1 INTRODUCTION	5
2.2 CONCEPTUALISATION	5
2.3 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION	6
2.4 REVIEW OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE	8
2.5 CONCLUSION	13
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	14
3.1 INTRODUCTION	14
3.2 PARADIGM	14
3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN.....	15
3.4 POPULATION	16
3.5 SAMPLING	17
3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS	17
3.6.1 Focus Groups	18
3.6.2 Qualitative Questionnaire	19
3.7 DATA ANALYSIS	21
3.8 CONCLUSION	23
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS.....	25
4.1 INTRODUCTION	25
4.2 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS.....	25
4.2.1 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS	25
4.2.2 LINK TO RESEARCH DESIGN	30
4.2.3 LINK TO PREVIOUS LITERATURE	32
4.3 TRUSTWORTHINESS	33
4.4 CONCLUSION	34
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	35
5.1 INTRODUCTION	35
5.2 RESEARCH QUESTION, SUB QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED.....	35

5.3	RESEARCH PROBLEM ADDRESSED	36
5.4	IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS FOR FUTURE PRACTICES	37
5.5	HEURISTIC VALUE	37
5.6	ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS.....	38
5.7	LIMITATIONS	39
5.8	CONCLUSION	40
REFERENCE LIST.....		41
LIST OF ANNEXURES		47

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Uses and Gratification Model (Thompson, 2019).....	7
Figure 2: Questionnaire Question Three Word Cloud	27
Figure 3: Focus Group and Questionnaire Responses Word Cloud.....	28
Figure 4: Questionnaire Responses Word Cloud	29

LIST OF ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Final Research Summary Document	47
Annexure B: Focus Group Schedule.....	48
Annexure C: Qualitative Questionnaire	50
Annexure D: Vega Ethics Checklist.....	52
Annexure E: Honours Ethical Clearance Letter.....	53
Annexure F: Consent Form.....	55
Annexure G: Consent Form for Audio or Video Recording.....	57

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

TikTok is the fastest growing platform in South Africa. It is now available in over 150 countries and has over 1 billion users (Doyle, 2021). This research report aims to explore the effect that TikTok has on the buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic. This is done with the effort to provide a better understanding of TikTok effectiveness as a marketing tool within South Africa.

This chapter will discuss the research background, rationale, problem statement, purpose statement, research questions and the research objectives. This chapter aims to introduce the research topic and help create an in-depth understanding of what the research report will entail.

1.2 CONTEXTUALISATION

Social media platforms are constantly evolving and offering new forms of communication and social networking tools. In December 2020, TikTok was the most downloaded app of the year, growing fivefold and is still increasing at this rate (Freer, 2020). TikTok has overtaken its competitors and is now ranked above Twitter, Telegram, Pinterest, and Snapchat (Dean, 2021). These statistics represent how TikTok has transformed into a media powerhouse with a large volume of users. Brands have slowly become aware that they are able to utilise TikTok in their marketing strategies (Olson, 2020). This research aimed to investigate the effect that TikTok has on the buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is current research that TikTok is a good marketing tool for businesses to utilise for their brands (Choudhary et al., 2020). However, there is limited research on TikTok's effectiveness in manipulating the buying behaviour of consumers. Brands are often sceptical to trust new and unique social media platforms. Therefore, this research aids as reassurance for these brands to give an indication on whether TikTok will be effective for them in manipulating their stakeholders to make a purchase. Many brands often need extra motivation and understanding about certain platforms before trusting them with their marketing strategies (Lundin, 2011). This research used qualitative methodology to gain

insight and a further understanding into the perceptions of Generation Z and consumer buying behaviours.

1.3 RATIONALE AND RELEVANCE

TikTok has reached one-third of all social media users in less than 4 years (Dean, 2021). The growth is exponential and there is still lots to be learnt about the fast-growing trendy platform. Society is still unaware of the true potential that this platform holds within many different areas of our lives, including the business world (Dean, 2021). Therefore, this research has relevance as TikTok has shown no signs of slowing down and daily TikTok usage rates are steadily rising. A large variety of different people can utilise this research from small brand owners to CEO's.

The recent addition of advertising features is predicted to lead to an increase of brands on TikTok (Deyan, 2021). Thus, this research is relevant to the brands interested in whether their TikTok videos will influence buying behaviour and therefore lead to purchases of their products and services. This research shows relevance in the next decade of agile brand building as brands need to ensure that they are up to date with the times. This includes brands needing to adapt to new and different platforms to stay relevant within the fast-changing digital environment (Templafy, 2020).

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Social media platforms, such as TikTok, are changing and developing daily and it can be difficult to keep up with the latest updates and trends. Businesses often struggle to identify the best marketing platforms for their business and how these platforms can benefit them (Wright, 2021). Although there is research proving that TikTok is a good marketing tool for businesses to utilise (Choudhary *et al.*, 2020). There is limited research on the effectiveness of TikTok in manipulating consumer buying behaviour. Therefore, the problem identified is that there is a lack of evidence in the market portraying direct correlations between TikTok and consumer buying behaviour, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic. This lack of evidence portrays a gap in the market whereby more research needs to be conducted. This study aimed to solve this problem through conducting research specifically on Generation Z's to find a correlation between their buying behaviour and the TikTok platform.

1.5 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this research was to gain an in-depth understanding as to whether TikTok has a role, as a digital marketing tool, in manipulating the consumer buying behaviour of Generation Z within the COVID-19 pandemic. Brands often need extra motivation and understanding before utilising new, unique platforms such as TikTok. This is even more evident due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the abundance of uncertainty within the economy (Hamill, 2020). This research used qualitative data methodology to gain insight and further understanding into the perceptions of Generation Z and their buying behaviour. The proposed research aimed to add further insights into utilising TikTok as a marketing tool. These insights were analysed with a purpose to reassure brands about TikTok marketing and encourage them to expand themselves within the digital market.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION

Primary Research Question:

1. Has TikTok had an influence on the buying behaviour of Generation Z within the COVID-19 pandemic?

Based on the primary research question, secondary research questions were obtained.

Secondary Research Questions:

1. Is TikTok an effective digital marketing tool for brands?
2. Does TikTok result in consumer buying behaviour?

1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore whether TikTok affects the buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. To investigate whether TikTok is an effective digital marketing tool for brands.
3. To explore whether TikTok results in consumer buying behaviour.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the overall research report provided context to the study that was conducted on Generation Z's buying behaviour. The chapter gave insight into the nature of the research report and the research questions and objectives which were addressed throughout the methodology. Chapter two will introduce the review of literature as well as the theoretical models and frameworks which supported this research report.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes conceptualisation of key terms, theoretical framework, and the review of literature. The theoretical framework includes three main theories: The Uses and Gratification Theory, The Social Marketing Theory and The Consumer Behaviour Theory. This chapter analysed relevant academic research which has been conducted by other researchers within the same field as this research report. The literature review structure followed four main themes: Generation Z, TikTok marketing, consumer buying behaviour and COVID-19. The four themes helped to gain a deeper understanding into existing research relating to the research conducted.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISATION

Buying Behaviour: refers to the way in which people make decisions and act when buying products or services. It is determined by how involved consumers are in their decision to buy a product or service as well as how risky it is to buy (Sydorenko, 2021). This key concept relates directly to the research as it will be investigating the effect that TikTok has on buying behaviour.

TikTok marketing: refers to marketing concepts and strategies which involved the use of TikTok. Marketers are able to use TikTok to run in-feed adverts, sponsored hashtag challenges, and banner ads within the homepage of the app (Battisby, 2020). This key concept is relevant to this research as it deals with the concepts and strategies that are found on TikTok.

Social Media Marketing: refers to the use of social media platforms for marketing for brand building, to increase sales and to help drive website traffic. Examples of social media platforms include Instagram, Facebook and TikTok (Hayes, 2018). This key concept relates to this research as social media marketing is part of the process leading to specific buying behaviours from consumers.

Generation Z: refers to individuals who were born between 1997 and 2015. This generation are considered digital natives as they do not know life without smart devices and advanced

technology. Generation Z are considered the most well-educated generation yet (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). This key concept is relevant to this research as Generation Z are the population that will be used throughout the data collection.

COVID-19 Pandemic: refers to an infectious disease that is occurring worldwide and is infecting a large volume of people. The pandemic was announced on the 11th of March 2020 (WHO, 2019). This key concept is relevant to this research as the research is specifically referring to the time within the pandemic.

2.3 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The Uses and Gratifications Theory was developed by Elihu Katz and Jay Blumler in the 1940s. The theory discusses the effect that media has on individuals. It explains how individuals use media to fulfil their needs. Individuals select media based on the expectation that it will satisfy their needs and desires (Spring, 2002). The uses and gratification theory includes two main principles which are that media users are active in their selection of the media they consume, and that they are aware of why they are selecting different media options over others (Vinney, 2019). There are four main needs that individuals use the media to fulfil. These include diversion, personal relationships, surveillance, and personal identity, as seen in **Figure 1** below (Thompson, 2019). This theory relates to the research being conducted as it will help to gain insight into individuals' use of TikTok to fulfil specific needs, specifically relating to buying behaviour. It will help to identify whether brands or consumers use TikTok to satisfy specific needs and desires within a branding context. It will also add value to the aspect of brands using TikTok to fulfil their own needs as organisations seeking new and unique marketing ventures.

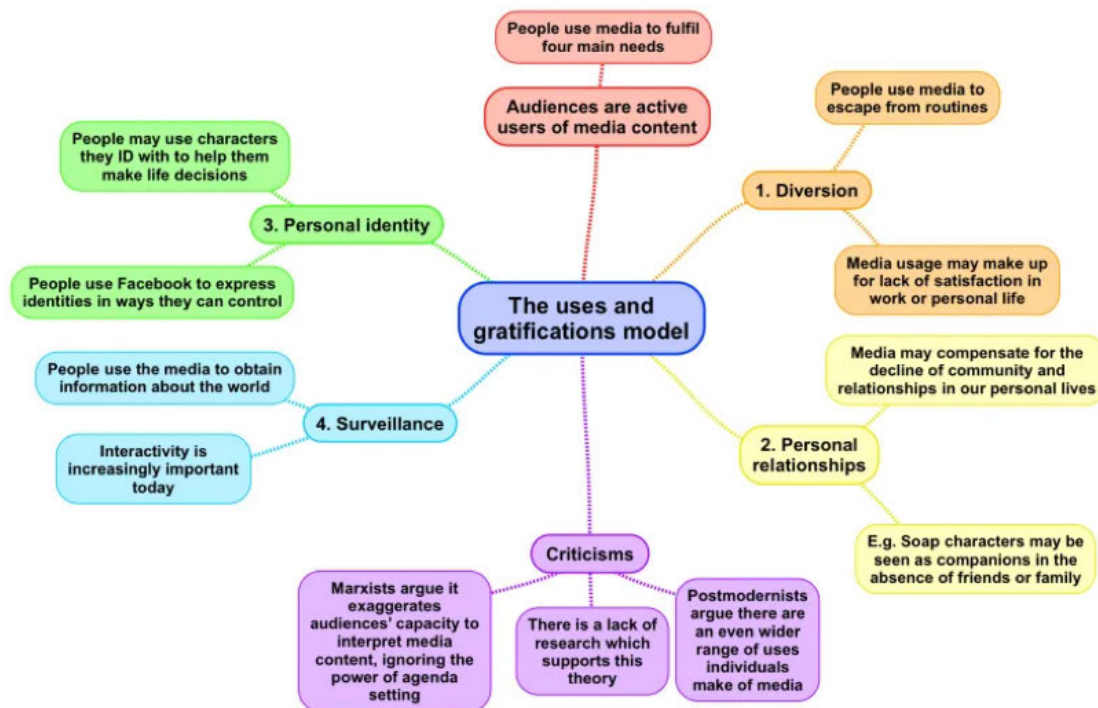


Figure 1: Uses and Gratification Model (Thompson, 2019)

The Social Marketing Theory refers to the creation of healthy social behaviours through specific concepts and strategies (Odiase, 2020). The social marketing theory includes six different features. These include creating audience awareness, targeting the right audience, reinforcing the message, cultivating images or impressions, stimulating interest, and inducing desired results. These six features incorporate the steps that are included within social marketing. These steps, if followed correctly, lead to brand recall of a product (Communication Theory, 2018). Therefore, this theory relates to this research as the research will be discussing how brand concepts and strategies influence individuals using social marketing on TikTok. This research will help to identify which brands incorporate the social marketing theory features into their marketing theories to stimulate interest and get the desired results that they are aiming towards.

The Consumer Behaviour Theory aims to understand the thought process of consumers when they make decisions about purchases. This theory includes monitoring and investigating the buying behaviour to identify trends and patterns that exist. This theory assures that marketing strategists use consumer buying behaviour patterns to the best of their ability. It allows for these strategists to understand consumers in a way in which they can manipulate their consumers' buying behaviour to benefit themselves (Gray, 2019). This theory is relevant to this research as it focuses on the aspect of buying behaviour and gives

insight into understanding specific buying behaviour, such as impulse buying or limited decision-making (Gray, 2019). TikTok leads to various buying behaviours such as impulse buying due to its fast-paced trend developments. When a new brand trend arises on TikTok, such as the LED strip lights trends, the brands or products involved benefit positively. The LED strip light trend led to an increase in sales of LED strip lights and therefore benefited the businesses who sell these lights (Lee, 2020). Therefore, this is an example of how TikTok can influence the buying behaviour of consumers and can therefore be used in the understanding and elaboration of the consumer behaviour theory.

2.4 REVIEW OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE

This literature review will be analysing academic research which has been conducted by other researchers. In doing so, this literature review will discuss three main themes including Generation Z, TikTok marketing and consumer buying behaviour. The themes will help to gain a deeper understanding into existing research which relates to this research being conducted. It will also position this research within a wider frame of reference within society.

GENERATION Z:

Generation Z, commonly known as Gen Z, consists of individuals in society who were born between 1997 and 2010. The individuals who are included in Generation Z have grown up with technology and can be classified as true digital natives. This generation is not aware of the world without access to digital devices and technology (Ngangom, 2020). The first iPhone was launched in 2007, at this time the oldest members of Generation Z were 10, therefore they were able to be digitally connected throughout their teen years (Dimock, 2019).

Simangunsong (2018) conducted a study on the buying behaviour of Generation Z and concluded that Generation Z are consumptive buyers who quickly spend their money on a product or service that they desire. The study also states that Generation Z prefer to shop conveniently online rather than in store. Simangunsong concludes that the internet is an important place to engage and get to know Generation Z to form trusting relationships with them and create brand awareness (Simangunsong, 2018).

In addition to Generation Z being present online, Ngangom (2020) stated that Generation Z are drawn to TikTok videos as they are entertaining. They are said to be drawn to videos which are characterised as being funny, authentic and transparent. Therefore, this gives an indication of how brands can utilise TikTok to reach the Generation Z population. The study also states that brands should use hashtag challenges and music to entertain and draw in Generation Z. TikTok challenges allow individuals to get involved in and create further brand awareness and publicity (Ngangom, 2020).

From these academic sources we can conclude that Generation Z is present within the online world. They are very active on social media and are technologically advanced due to the Era in which they grew up in. Generation Z are a generation who access TikTok and will therefore potentially be manipulated by the developing online platform. The studies show that they have formulated preferences relating to the application such as what types of videos they like best, entertainment and challenges (Ngangom, 2020).

MARKETING ON TIKTOK:

Lawrence (2020) states that there is a lack of academic research investigating TikTok, the new social media phenomenon and video sharing app. Lawrence elaborates that there is a lack of research relating to how and why individual's use TikTok and how they feel about brands which they are exposed to on TikTok.

However, statistics show that the average person spends 45 minutes on TikTok and open the application 8 times a day. Many brands have identified the recent development of the application and have used it to their advantage. Brands have identified that they are able to use TikTok for a more organic reach, to drive substantial traffic as well as express a unique and valuable brand personality (Ngangom, 2020).

Ngangom (2020) conducted research on TikTok, as a new phenomenon, and how it has impacted Generation Z as consumers. The research aims to create an understanding about whether TikTok has had any impact on the attitudes of Generation Z towards brands. The study elaborates on the new addition of TikTok for Business to the TikTok platform. This addition provides brands with marketing solutions and allows for integration of brands within the TikTok community (Ngangom, 2020). This addition of TikTok Business to the platforms gives an indication that brands are utilising the platform. TikTok has identified them and is now providing specifically for their needs.

Lawrence (2020) conducted a study specifically relating to TikTok and the Uses and Gratifications theory to explore the perceptions that individuals have about brands that they are exposed to on TikTok. The study concludes that individuals use TikTok to fulfil their needs for social connection and interaction, archiving, entertainment, and self-expression. The results from the study concluded that individuals believe that brands should spend constructive time to get to know and understand their TikTok audience before using TikTok for their marketing strategies. They gave ideas that brands could develop and launch branded hashtags challenges or dance challenges (Lawrence, 2020). This links to the study done by Ngangom (2020) regarding the importance of engaging with the stakeholders via two-way communication marketing campaigns that individuals can get involved in. The studies indicate that Generation Z are more likely to be drawn towards TikTok profiles of brands who provide entertainment and promote open relationships with their stakeholders.

Mou (2020) concluded similar findings to Lawrence (2020) and Ngangom (2020). Mou concluded that the most successful marketing campaigns are interactive ones as well as the fact that interactive campaigns are more likely to lead to high purchase rates of the product. Mou (2020) states that TikTok has developed a marketing ecosystem which supports brands for them to reach their target audience in a quick and precise manner. Therefore, this allows the platform to keep up to date with the fast pace dynamic society.

The TikTok community also influences the marketing which occurs on the platform. Ngangom (2020) identifies that TikTok is effective for marketing because of the community who are accessing the online platform. The community is identified as being interactive and supportive compared to Instagram which has higher expectations for perfection (Ngangom, 2020). This may indicate that individuals feel more comfortable and open on TikTok which could lead to the idea that they are more vulnerable. This vulnerability could benefit brands as the users may be more vulnerable and easier to manipulate into a specific way of thinking and buying behaviour.

Autio (2020) states that it is important for brands to ensure that they are being consistently active on social media to develop trusting relationships with their stakeholders. As stated above by Ngangom, on average individuals open TikTok 8 times a day. Therefore, brands need to ensure that they are using that to their advantage by ensuring that they are active and online (Ngangom, 2020).

These academic sources all give insight into TikTok as a social media platform and how it can be used successfully in marketing. Successful marketing efforts will lead to brand recall

which will evidently lead to effective buying behaviour. From these sources we can conclude that brands need to ensure that they are aware of the best way to engage with their stakeholders as well as the best marketing practices to use on TikTok. They need to plan strategically and take time to get to know their stakeholders to communicate with them intentionally.

The academic sources mentioned above are all less than a year old which strengthens their credibility and reliability. The information gathered from the sources is recent and is not outdated due to new developments.

CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR:

Autio (2020) conducted a study titled “The impact of social media on consumer purchasing behaviour”. The research aims to investigate how individuals are following, handling, and delegating the information that they are exposed to on social media before and during purchasing. Autio states that video content has grown significantly in 2020 and many brands have been successful when using videos for marketing. The *Cisco Annual Internet Report 2020* indicated that 82% of all social media and advertising content will be in video format by 2022. This strengthens the importance of TikTok as a new video based social media platform and the idea of brands using it for their marketing strategies. Brands need to ensure that they are up to date with the latest marketing developments and opportunities. The results show the importance of social media on providing information and influencing buying behaviour.

Generation Z are classified above as being digital natives and consumptive buyers who quickly spend their money on a product or service that they desire (Simangunsong, 2018). Due to these factors they trust online services and can easily access them to fulfil their needs as well as support their buying behaviour (Vieira, et al., 2020). The study conducted by Vieira, Frade, Ascenso, Prates and Martinho (2020) concluded that Generation Z trust companies more if they have a good online presence and good customer service. Therefore they are more likely to choose to buy from companies who they trust and feel as though they have built an open relationship with (Vieira *et al.*, 2020). This gives insight into the understanding that brands need to ensure that they stay relevant within the online world to stay relevant in customers minds and therefore have an influence on their buying behaviour.

A study conducted by Voramontri (2019) investigated the impact of social media on consumer behaviour. The study concluded that individuals who used social media found

decision making to be easier. It was discovered that individuals found that the information which they find online is higher quality and a larger quantity than if they had to look elsewhere for information (Voramontri, 2019). TikTok is a very diverse platform with lots of different types of information. This information which Voramontri concluded gives insight that TikTok may be a good place for brands to manipulate consumers' buying behaviour. Brands will be able to communicate large quantities of quality information via the platform. They will also be able to do this in a creative way to attract attention and have a chance to persuade the stakeholders. Voramontri's study also concludes that social media allows brands the chance to improve their product offerings and build stronger relationships (Voramontri, 2019). These are two factors which lead to manipulating the buying behaviour of customers.

These academic sources relating to the customer buying behaviour create a deeper understanding of buying behaviour and its relationship to social media. This aids in this research as it refers to the relationship between TikTok, a social media platform, and buying behaviour. The academic sources also give insight into whether social media is effective in manipulating buying behaviour. These sources conclude that social media does affect buying behaviour and that it affects it positively. This is specifically true for the younger generations as they have easy and quick access to social media. Therefore connecting these sources to the research being conducted relating to Generation Z.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This research is specifically relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic as TikTok has grown exponentially within the last year. TikTok has 689 million monthly active users worldwide and more than 1 billion videos have been watched daily over the past year (Mohsin, 2021). Therefore TikTok's influence on its uses is more relevant than ever. These statistics represent how TikTok has transformed into a media powerhouse with a large volume of users. Brands have slowly become aware of the TikTok growth and that they are able to utilise TikTok in their marketing strategies. It is unclear as to whether TikTok would have developed as much if the pandemic had not occurred. However, brands need to use the development to their advantage while they can (Olson, 2020).

The academic sources used in this literature review are less than five years old and are therefore credible and reliable to be utilised for this research. The statistics and facts stated from the academic sources all provided a deeper understanding into this research. The

results which were found helped to guide this research and to position it within a larger context in society. The social media world and the context of different generations is constantly changing and evolving, however both are relevant within today's society, as seen from the academic sources which were consulted. Therefore, the literature studied and the findings were relevant and valuable to this research.

2.5 CONCLUSION

With social media evolving daily and the shift to online buying behaviours, businesses need to ensure that they are updated with the latest marketing platforms and trends. This chapter helped to position this research report within a wider frame of reference within society. The above literature highlighted the impact that social media, such as TikTok, has on individuals as well as how popular TikTok has become over the last year. The literature identified that individuals' use platforms, such as TikTok, to get easy and quick access to products that they need and want to purchase and to therefore fulfil their purchasing needs. The next chapter, chapter three, discusses the research design and methodology for this research report. Introducing the paradigm, population, data collection methods and data analysis methods.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes the research methodology which was followed throughout the qualitative data collection and data analysis processes. An in-depth description will be provided as to how the data will be collected and analysed. This chapter introduces the paradigm, population and sample that was used for this research.

3.2 PARADIGM

The research paradigm is interpretivism as the research is subjective in nature. Interpretivism includes the investigation of behaviours to gain an understanding of the meaning that other individuals attach to their own unique realities. Interpretivist research led to understanding a phenomenon (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, this paradigm was well suited for this research as it helped to gain insight into the phenomenon of TikTok and how it affects the buying behaviour of Generation Z. This research provides insight into a description of meaningful social action that is occurring within society within a specific generation. The interpretivist approach helped to understand reality from the participants' individual experiences using the TikTok platform, as they all would have experienced it from a different frame of reference.

Due to this research being interpretivist, the research was influenced by hermeneutics and phenomenology. Hermeneutics refers to interpreting human action and phenomenology looks at the way that individuals make sense of the unique world that they are experiencing (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). This research aimed to explore the consumer buying behaviour of Generation Z and therefore aimed to interpret their human behaviour and understand their unique perspectives.

The ontological approach to this research refers to the idea that there are multiple realities (Moon & Blackman, 2017). The research investigated various participants' perspectives, these participants all had different ideas about TikTok and its effect on the buying behaviour of themselves and society. The epistemological approach to this research is subjective (Moon & Blackman, 2017). The research aimed to give meaning to the perspectives that Generation Z has on the effect that TikTok has on buying behaviour. The methodological

approach to this research used an inductive research approach (Dudovskiy, 2018). This research researched a specific population however the results can be applied to a more general population. The data that was collected from this research was used to explore patterns and trends as well as identify specific themes.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

The research design refers to the overall strategy which is used to integrate all the components of the study (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006). This research was conducted using qualitative data methodology. Qualitative research is subjective and creates an understanding of individuals perceptions and how they understand the social world (Creswell *et al.*, 2019). A qualitative approach was selected for this research report to gain an understanding of the Generation Z individual's perceptions. In doing so, qualitative research supported the explorative nature of this research topic, exploring the relationship between TikTok and Generation Z's buying behaviour within the COVID-19 pandemic.

An explanatory design was used as the research explored the effect that TikTok has on consumer buying behaviour. This type of research design explores a specific situation or research problem which has not been explored before (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The research question needed to be explored from a new perspective which made an exploratory design ideal for this research. A cross-sectional time dimension was used because it helped to create an overall picture of the phenomenon occurring (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). It assisted in recording information and data within the specific time frame of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The direction of theorising of this research was inductive theorising because interpretivists are more likely to use inductive approaches rather than theory formulation. In other words, instead of first formulating a theory, then testing hypotheses and then testing the theory against reality, interpretivists prefer to collect information, analyse it and then formulate a theory based on the information and analysis (Thomas, 2003). Inductive research allowed for the exploration of new phenomena as well as the establishment of new perspectives on existing data. This research approach allowed the researcher to begin the research methodology with an open mind about the data collection and findings that would be derived (Gabriel, 2013).

This research used open ended questionnaires and focus groups to obtain data. These methods gathered detailed data which was then be analysed using content and thematic analysis methods. Small sample groups were used in order for the researcher to conduct the research carefully and accurately (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

3.4 POPULATION

Generation Z are known as the generation who have grown up with technology around them. They are also known as digital natives and most of them have had social media for more than half of their lives (Kasasa, 2021). A study conducted in September 2021 showed that 60% of TikTok users fall within Generation Z (Doyle, 2021). This made Generation Z the perfect generation for a social media, specifically TikTok, related research topic.

The unit of analysis for this population is people, specifically people within Generation Z. The population characteristics of this research study were individuals who fall within Generation Z and who are frequent TikTok users. Generation Z includes all individuals who were born between 1997 and 2015 and are therefore currently between the ages of 6 and 24 years old (Young, 2021). This study helped to gain an understanding of the population's perception towards brands on TikTok as well as brands using the platform as a marketing tool. The research helps gain a deeper understanding of the influence TikTok has on the buying behavior of Generation Z.

The target population for this research was all Generation Z individuals who use TikTok frequently. The accessible population for this research was South African individuals who are part of Generation Z and use TikTok frequently. The accessible population was not limited to Durban areas as the data collection methods used online platforms which allowed individuals from other areas of South Africa such as Pretoria and Cape Town to participate. The research population did not include participants below the age of 18 ensuring the research remain aligned with the IIE's ethical research guidelines. The characteristics of race and gender were not a determining factor of the population as TikTok is not only used by one specific race or gender.

3.5 SAMPLING

The sample group for this research was selected from within the population group mentioned above. The researcher made use of non-probability sampling, specifically utilising purposive sampling. Non-probability sampling was used as it is a very cost and time efficient method of sampling (Forster, 2001). The use of purposive sampling ensured that the participants met the specific population characteristics required for this research. Therefore ensuring that each sample group participant effectively contributed towards the research data collection (Du Plooy Cilliers al, 2014). The responses that were collected from the sample group can be generalised to a larger population, Generation Z. The sample group was chosen from the accessible population as those individuals met the specific characteristics required for the data collection (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

A sample size of 20 participants was selected for the qualitative questionnaires. The sample size is relatively small however this was done to ensure that in-depth data was collected from the sample group to formulate credible results. Originally one focus group with a sample size of 10 participants was going to be conducted for data collection. However slight changes were made to ensure that the data collected was more in-depth and reliable. Therefore, two focus groups each consisting of a six participant sample group were conducted. This allowed the focus groups to have more in-depth open discussions as well as allow for data to be collected, recorded and analysed with ease.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

This research, being qualitative in nature, aimed to explore, understand and describe gathered information (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The data collection methods used in this research were focus groups and an open ended questionnaire. These two data collection methods were used efficiently and effectively to gather responses to the research objectives.

Both data collection methods were pre-tested prior to the official data collection taking place. The researcher hosted a mock focus group and sent out a sample questionnaire to a set sample group of four individual's. Pre-testing the data collection methods ensured that the questions were grammatically correct and that they were clear to other individuals. This

aimed to minimise mistakes and issues coming up at a later stage when the official data collection was being conducted.

3.6.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups help to gather in-depth information by allowing individuals to voice their own perspectives and opinions on certain topics. This form of data collection is very useful in viewing reality from another individual's perspective (Webster, 1992). Focus groups help researchers to gain insight into issues which may not have initially been considered for discussion (Vaughan, 2017). Focus groups were selected for this research to gain insight into consumers' perspectives about TikTok as well as how it influences the population's buying behaviour. The use of focus groups will also help to explore the population's perspective on TikTok as a digital marketing tool for brands. Focus groups allow for an open discussion to take place which will lead to an honest and reliable data collection. The selection of focus groups was done with the aim to directly obtain data to reach a credible conclusion to the overall research questions and objectives. The selection of focus groups allowed for easy data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The researcher identified individuals who were within the population parameters of this research report and contacted them to find out whether they would be willing to participate in the focus group. The potential participants were contacted via WhatsApp and the researcher provided them with a clear explanation of the research aim as well as what the focus group would entail. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the focus groups were hosted via Zoom to take extra precaution and to ensure that the participants were within their comfort zone.

The researcher conducted two focus groups each consisting of 6 participants, the sample groups were small to get in-depth responses. Once the researcher confirmed the 12 focus group participants, an email including an explanatory sheet, two consent forms as well as the Zoom meeting details was distributed to the participants. The participants were asked to fill in and sign the two forms which were attached to the email. The first consent form was to obtain the participants consent to participate in the research focus group (Annexure F) and the second consent form was to give the researcher consent to voice record the Zoom call using the Apple Voice Memos application (Annexure G). The email also informed the participants that they had the right to withdraw from the research data collection at any point

in the process and that all data collected would be confidential and anonymous. A few of the respondents took a while to send the signed consent forms back to the researcher. Therefore, the researcher had to follow up with the participants to get their consent forms prior to the focus group. Once the researcher had consent from all the participants, the focus groups could take place. The Zoom meetings were scheduled for two separate dates that suited the participants and researcher best. On the day of the focus groups, the researcher sent out reminders to ensure that all the participants would be present at the focus group.

The focus groups were each allocated 45 minutes in duration to complete a series of 8 open-ended questions scheduled (Annexure B). There was 5 minutes allocated to questions at the end of the focus group to ensure that all concerns were covered. The researcher began the voice recording using the Apple Voice Memos application at the beginning of the focus group. Recording the responses was vital as it allowed the researcher to remain focused on the discussion for the duration of the focus group, avoiding the distraction of making in-depth notes. To start the focus group the researcher shared the relevant slideshow created for the focus group and introduced themselves to the participants. The researcher briefly reiterated the research aim as well as the purpose of the focus group. The researcher conducted the focus group asking the six participant's the eight open-ended questions to encourage the participants to share their perceptions and experiences. The researcher asked a few sub-questions which derived from the standard questions which were asked. These sub-questions allowed the participants to explain their responses further and added more depth to the focus group discussion. After the focus group, the voice recording was saved and backed up to ensure that the recording was available for the data analysis process. The focus groups were holistic and allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of Generation Z in relation to TikTok as a marketing tool. This understanding aids in formulating an answer to the research objectives of this research report.

3.6.2 Qualitative Questionnaire

Qualitative questionnaires aim to explore in-depth attitudes and beliefs and help generate insightful data around a particular topic (Eckerdal & Hagström, 2016). Therefore qualitative questionnaires were an ideal choice for this research to help gain insight into the attitudes and beliefs of consumers directly relating to TikTok and their buying behaviours. Questionnaires are a reliable data collection method to use for research being conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic as no human contact is required to collect the responses.

The questionnaires will be distributed and conducted electronically which will ensure that people are not required to give up a large portion of their time or be put out of their comfort zone. Questionnaires are also very cost and time efficient which are essential factors in research which has financial and time limits (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The qualitative questionnaire was selected with the aim to collect in-depth responses which would be viable in contributing towards the research questions and objectives. The qualitative questionnaire used for this research consisted of 10 qualitative questions and was sent out to 20 participants (Annexure C). The use of open-ended questions will allow the respondents to respond in their own words, accurately explaining their unique perspectives and beliefs.

The researcher identified individuals who fell within the population parameters of this research report, members of Generation Z who use TikTok frequently, and contacted them to find out whether they would be willing to take part in a qualitative questionnaire. The potential participants were contacted via WhatsApp, the researcher provided them with a clear explanation of the research aim as well as the purpose of the questionnaire. The researcher ensured that the 20 participants knew that they could withdraw from the data collection at any point during the duration of completing the questionnaire. The researcher also ensured that the participants were aware that their identities would remain confidential and that by completing the questionnaire that they are consenting to their responses being used in research data collection.

As said above, the questionnaire was pre-tested before being sent out to the sample group. The questionnaire testing was done by allowing four respondents to carefully check and conduct the questionnaire. The test ensured that all technical issues were taken care of prior to the final data collection. After the test was done, slight changes were made to the questionnaire before a final version was completed.

The questionnaire was created on Google Forms which allowed for it to be shared very easily via WhatsApp. The final questionnaire was sent to the finalized participant group. Google Forms questionnaires are anonymous; therefore, the participants' identities were not recorded. The questionnaire data collection took 48 hours as some respondents were not able to complete the questionnaire immediately. The questionnaire link was then closed to avoid any further responses after the data collection. The questionnaire allowed respondents to express their personal experiences and opinions about TikTok without any pressure from the researcher. The responses were saved on Google Forms and were

accessible at any point during the data analysis to aid in an accurate and reliable data analysis process.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

This researcher made use of content thematic data analysis to analyse the data collected from the questionnaire and focus groups. Content analysis and thematic analysis methods combined helped to clearly identify patterns and trends that occurred within the data collected (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The two methods together ensured that the researcher analysed the data, layer by layer, and that the insights were accurate and reliable. Content data analysis allowed the researcher to identify common patterns that were present within the data collected from the focus groups and questionnaire. Thematic data analysis allowed the researcher to group the data structurally within specific themes according to similarities (Warren, 2020).

Content analysis is one of the most common forms of data analysis. It aims to evaluate content to identify specific patterns. This form of analysis allows researchers to identify the frequency with which specific opinions, words or phrases are stated within the data (Warren, 2020). Therefore, the patterns and trends which occurred within the data collected from the Generation Z participants' answers were identified through structured coding. This allowed for deeper underlying interpretations to be understood (Warren, 2020). This data analysis method was beneficial as it allowed for flexibility throughout the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The use of content analysis allowed the researcher to determine the presence of specific words, themes and patterns within the Generation Z participants' responses. Content analysis allowed the researcher to gain more in-depth insights into Generation Z participants' opinions and perspectives. The researcher started the data content analysis by transcribing the data into a hardcopy format. The researcher analysed the qualitative questionnaire responses from the Google Forms platform as well as the voice recordings from the focus groups. The researcher transcribed the primary questionnaire responses as well as valuable dialogue and quotations from the focus group responses. During this data analysis step the researcher ensured that the questionnaire and focus group responses were read and listened to numerous times. This ensured that the researcher fully understood

the responses and was providing a clear unified analysis. During the content analysis the researcher referred to the focus group participants as participant A-L to ensure a level of confidentiality and anonymity was present.

The researcher then used thematic data analysis methods to further understand and analyse the themes and patterns identified during the content analysis. Thematic data analysis involves familiarisation with data that has been collected by reading and re-reading the data to ensure that the researcher is fully engaged with the content. It involves looking for patterns which have meaning, allowing the researcher to create codes for common themes and therefore analyse further (Warren, 2020). The thematic analysis used the initial themes that were formulated during the content analysis as a basis for further analysis. This allowed final conclusions to be drawn from the data answering the research questions and objectives.

The researcher followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps in the thematic data analysis process for the qualitative questionnaires and the focus groups. The first step of the six step process was familiarisation with the data collected which was already completed during the content analysis step (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This ensured that the researcher had a clear understanding of all the data that had been collected and included searching for patterns and themes.

Step two was generating initial codes, the researcher started the thematic analysis process on this step. Once the researcher was familiar with the data they started to formulate initial codes relating to the data. The coding included identifying key aspects which stood out within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher found the coding process easier using brightly coloured highlighters and pens to outline trends and patterns identified. Therefore, the researcher used these tools to highlight, circle and underline all the patterns that they could identify within the data.

Once the researcher had completed the coding process, the third step was initiated. This step embodied searching for themes and sub-themes within the initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The important data was categorised according to patterns or broader themes. Step four included reviewing the themes that had been identified in step three. This step included an in-depth analysis of the themes formulated from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes and subthemes were all listed together to ensure that there were no

repetitions or errors. This ensured that the themes were refined and a finalised set of themes was derived to accurately represent the data that was collected.

The fifth step was defining and naming the themes. This step involved labelling the themes to differentiate them from one another (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher created a table including all the themes and subthemes to substantiate their meaning and create an clear overall understanding. The table allowed the researcher to identify further links between the themes and connect them directly to the overall research objectives. The researcher finalised the themes and labelled them to differentiate them. The finalised themes were placed into a word cloud diagrams (See **Figure 1, 2 & 3**) to create a detailed visual representation of the data. The visual diagrams helped to depict the data in a new format and allowed for a different way of thinking and understanding.

The last step of the thematic data analysis involved interpretating the themes and applying them within the context of this research report. This included linking the themes to the research question and objectives as well as comparing the insights to previous literature and theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher generalised the research from being specific to this study to being more generalised within the broader society.

The researcher ensured to follow the data analysis steps in a structured and precise manner which warranted that the data analysis was conducted in a credible and accurate manner. This ensured that credible and accurate data was provided from the analysis contributing to an overall trustworthy and insightful research report.

3.8 CONCLUSION

The research methodologies presented in this chapter followed an interpretivist paradigm investigating behaviours to gain an understanding of the meaning that other individuals attach to their own unique realities. The research population and sample group were discussed in this chapter, providing an understanding of the individuals involved in the data collection process. Lastly, the data collection and data analysis methods were outlined. The questionnaire and focus groups provided clear and insightful results that were then analysed in an ethical and structured manner. The findings and insights derived from the data will be

discussed in the next chapter, chapter four. Chapter four interprets the data that was collected and analysed providing the answers that the researcher was pursuing and addresses the overall research problem.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher utilised content thematic data analysis methods allowing the researcher to clearly identify patterns and trends occurring within the data. The research conducted was small-scale, there was a total of 26 participants who were involved in the data collection processes. This chapter includes an in-depth interpretation of the data findings to answer the research questions and objectives as well as identify links to literature identified and theoretical frameworks.

4.2 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1.1 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

A total of 20 respondents completed the questionnaire and 6 participants were involved in each of the two focus groups. The data collected was analysed using content thematic analysis and grouped into five main themes. These themes indicate the key findings which were derived from the data.

TikTok as an entertainment platform:

All 32 participants involved in the focus groups and questionnaire were part of Generation Z and frequently use TikTok. During the focus group, the participants were asked whether they used TikTok for entertainment purposes or for the brand element of the platform. All 12 participants said that they use it as an entertainment platform. Participant G said that they do not understand how they can waste so much time on TikTok, they just scroll from one video to the next and it can lead to three hours of scrolling. Participant J said that TikTok has become massive and there is no one that you speak to that hasn't seen a TikTok video before. However, 15 out of the 20 questionnaire respondents said that they enjoy the brand element of TikTok and would not prefer for it to only be for entertainment. A particular questionnaire respondent said they like the fact that there is a brand element as it allows users to be exposed to businesses they might not have known about previously. Another respondent said they do enjoy the brand element as they see many things they haven't seen before and it allows them to see honest reviews of products.

In the analysis of this finding, it was determined that TikTok is a very well-known and a favoured platform for entertainment. The participants stated that a large percentage of people use TikTok and that they use it very frequently, if not every day. It can be concluded that there is a large percentage of the population using TikTok daily and being exposed to the content that is made available for them online. The questionnaire results concluded that although the application is primarily for entertainment most individuals do enjoy the branding element of TikTok and being exposed to new brands. Therefore, this proves that the platform has multiple purposes and can meet the needs of a variety of different individuals. It can meet the needs for individuals who are seeking entertainment as well as individuals who are seeking online business growth and exposure.

Generation Z's perspective of brands on TikTok:

During the focus groups, the participants were asked how they feel when they are exposed to brands on TikTok. Participant D said that it is quite cool since it's such a large platform with millions of people of like all ages and backgrounds. Participant E said it's a nice thing for businesses to do and it does make the brand seem a little more exciting and relatable. Participant B said they get excited when they see brands on their For You Page because usually on your For You Page brands come up because they are catered to what videos you like. Participant F said I personally feel like it makes me feel like I'm not wasting my time on



Figure 3: Focus Group and Questionnaire Responses Word Cloud

The word cloud above, **Figure 3**, illustrates the codes established from the key phrases and trends identified in the participants responses. The word cloud depicts an overall result that the participants feel that they are persuaded by TikTok to some degree. The respondents stated that they are persuaded in many different ways, such as style, shopping, cooking, skin-care and make-up.

The above question led to the researcher asking a sub-question during the focus group asking the participants if they are still persuaded to look for similar products or services locally after being exposed to overseas products and services on TikTok, as a lot of brands are American. Participant A said yes and that it expands her purchasing behaviour because now they are going to shops that they would not necessarily go into before. Participant G said that they looked for a top that they saw on TikTok at Zara over the weekend. Participant K said that they often look, and participant J spoke about make up videos that suggest stores where you can find similar, less expensive alternative make-up products to the well-known expensive brands.

TikTok as a marketing tool:

The researcher asked the focus group and questionnaire participants if they would use TikTok as a marketing tool for their own business. The participants' overall responses were that they would use TikTok for their business however only if their businesses target market was the age group that uses TikTok, the younger generations. A few of the respondents said that they would hire someone to make and manage their TikTok videos they believe that it is a difficult platform to manage. The above question led to the researcher asking a sub-question, asking the respondents what strong qualities they think TikTok offers as a social media marketing tool. The responses that the respondents submitted are depicted in the word cloud below, **Figure 4**.

agreed that COVID-19 has allowed TikTok to become the popular well-known platform that it is today. Everyone had a lot of free time to utilize the platform for entertainment and creation. The questionnaire responses showed that most of the participants online first downloaded TikTok at the beginning of lockdown, strengthening the point stated above about COVID-19 contributing to the platform's success. Respondents stated that they downloaded it because it was a good distraction, they were bored, it could use up a lot of their time and they wanted to keep up with the trend. One respondent stated that they were advised by a marketing company to download it and get familiar with its functions.

From these findings, we can conclude that Generation Z believe that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the success of TikTok as a platform. The findings show that the participants think that TikTok would have been successful if the pandemic had not happened however not to the extent that it is successful and trendy today.

4.2.2 LINK TO RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Problem:

The research problem identified in this research is that there is a lack of evidence in the market portraying direct correlations between TikTok and consumer buying behaviour, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic. This lack of evidence portrays a gap in the market whereby more research needs to be conducted. This study aimed to solve this problem through conducting research, specifically on Generation Z, aiming to find a correlation between their buying behaviour and TikTok.

This study provided in-depth insights into the correlation between TikTok and consumer buying behaviour, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research allowed for opinions and perspectives to be analysed providing new ideas and findings. The research has allowed the researcher to assist in solving the research problem. The research allows the researcher to conclude a correlation between Generation Z's buying behaviour and TikTok, that the two do influence one another to some degree. This allows individuals to use this conclusion within their marketing strategies, assisting them in making decisions regarding utilising TikTok as a marketing tool.

Primary Research Question:

1. Has TikTok had an influence on the buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic?

Secondary Research Question:

1. Is TikTok an effective digital marketing tool for brands?
2. Does TikTok result in consumer buying behaviour?

The primary and secondary questions are answered from the data collected and analysed in this research. It can be concluded that TikTok does have an influence on the buying behaviour of generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic. In the findings, the participants clearly stated that they feel influenced by what they are exposed to on TikTok. This is evident in the interpretations and findings concluded in the theme: TikTok's influence on Generation Z's buying behaviour. The findings also answer the secondary questions mentioned above. The findings in the theme: TikTok as a marketing tool provides insight that Generation Z believe TikTok is an effective digital marketing tool for brands to utilise. The Ngangom's (2020) and Autio (2020) studies also strengthen this insight and reiterate TikTok's ability as an effective marketing tool. Lastly, the findings from the theme: TikTok's influence on Generation Z's buying behaviour determined that TikTok does result in consumer buying behaviour for Generation Z. Whether participants bought things directly from the platform, visited a specific location to make a purchase or looked for similar products or services more convenient to them, the findings concluded that they are persuaded to some degree.

Research Objectives:

1. To explore whether TikTok effects the buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. To investigate whether TikTok is an effective digital marketing tool for brands.
3. To explore whether TikTok results in consumer buying behaviour.

The research objectives were guidelines for this research methodology ensuring that the researcher aimed to conclude the objectives during the data collection and analysis. The

interpretation and findings explore and investigate all three of the research objectives and determine adequate responses to each. It is concluded that TikTok does affect the buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic, TikTok is an effective digital marketing tool for brands and TikTok does result in consumer buying behaviour.

4.2.3 LINK TO PREVIOUS LITERATURE

This study contributes and links to existing literature and theory investigating TikTok, Generation Z, consumer buying behaviour and COVID-19. However, this study combines the factors together into one concise study, drawing from data collected as well as the literature and theory mentioned below.

The Uses and Gratification Theory discusses the effect that media has on individuals. It explains how individuals use media to fulfil their needs and select media based on the expectation that it will satisfy their needs and desires (Spring, 2002). This can be seen in the theme: TikTok as a marketing tool. This theme links to the theory as the theory would be used to understand the effect that TikTok has on Generation Z as well as how they use it to fulfil their needs. The Uses and Gratification theory strengthens the idea that Generation Z have a specific expectation from brands on TikTok, they expect them to meet their needs. The study conducted by Lawrence (2020) concluded that individuals believe that brands should spend constructive time to get to know and understand their TikTok audience before using TikTok for their marketing strategies.

This can also be seen in the theme: TikTok's influence on Generation Z's buying behaviour discussed above. This theme identified that brands need to understand their target audience before utilising TikTok for their marketing strategies. The Consumer Behaviour Theory would be suitable for assisting marketers with understanding the thought process of consumers when they make decisions about purchases. The theory will allow marketers to identify trends and patterns that exist and therefore influence their target audiences buying behaviour in their favour (Gray, 2019).

According to Ngangom (2020), the new addition of TikTok Business to the platform gives an indication that brands are utilising the platform. This is evident within the findings as the participants have seen an increase of brand presence on TikTok. As mentioned in the

theme: TikTok as a marketing tool, the participants stated that TikTok helps brands to be more creative and it makes them more trustworthy, credible, and entertaining. This links to Ngangom's (2020) finding that Generation Z are more likely to be drawn towards branded TikTok profiles who provide entertainment and form open relationships with their stakeholders. Autio (2020) also identified the need to formulate trusting relationships through TikTok, linking again with the findings from the theme: TikTok as a marketing tool. Autio (2020) states that brands need to ensure that they are being constantly active on TikTok to develop trusting relationships with their stakeholders.

Voramontri & Klieb (2019) conducted a study on the impact of social media on consumer behaviour. The study concluded that individuals who used social media found decision making to be easier. This links to the findings derived in the theme: TikTok's influence on Generation Z's buying behaviour. The study strengthens the finding that TikTok has an effect on the buying behaviour of Generation Z by giving insight that TikTok may be a good place for brands to manipulate consumers' buying behaviour.

There is limited research conducted connecting the COVID-19 pandemic and TikTok. However, Mohsin (2021) states that more than 1 billion videos have been watched daily over the past year. This confirms how TikTok has transformed into a media powerhouse with a large volume of users (Mohsin, 2020). Participants stated that they believe COVID-19 assisted with the success of TikTok however they were unsure as to whether it would be as successful if the pandemic had not occurred. This is strengthened in the study done by Olsen (2020). Olsen (2020) states that it is unclear as to whether TikTok would have developed as much if the pandemic had not occurred, but identifies that brands should use it to their advantage.

4.3 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Being qualitative in nature, it is important to consider the trustworthiness of the research data. Trustworthiness is tested using four categories; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Maree, *et al.*, 2019).

Credibility refers to how accurate the findings are based on the data that was collected from the participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The credibility of this research was increased by the conduction of two different data collection methods, this ensured that in-depth data was analysed. The participants were selected through purposive sampling which ensured that

the participants met the population parameters and contributed effectively to the study. Credibility was also ensured through the use of scientific guidelines throughout the questionnaires and focus group data collection.

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to similar situations and deliver similar results. It refers to whether the results can be applied outside of the proposed research (Du Plooy Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). This research used inductive theorising which in turn allowed for generalisation of the research findings outside of the context of this research report.

Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of the data overtime to ensure a structured flow (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). This was maintained throughout this research by ensuring that the research theory, data collection and data analysis were well integrated with one another. The researcher gave in-depth descriptions of all processes and steps to ensure flow from one section to another and maintain consistency throughout.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the research could be conducted by another researcher and render the same results (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). This was ensured throughout this research by following a structured scientific methodology which can be recreated by any researcher. The research is conducted in the form of a research proposal which ensures it is presented in a formal manner.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter included the interpretation and findings that were derived from the data collected during in-depth focus groups and a qualitative questionnaire. The researcher was able to determine that TikTok does have an effect on Generation Z's consumer buying behaviour, within the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, determining that it is an effective marketing tool for brands to utilise within their marketing strategies. This chapter effectively linked the research findings to previous theories and literature to strengthen the insights that were derived from the data. The findings from this research should inspire and inform marketers about utilising TikTok to reach their target audience and grow their engagement.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the final concluding chapter for this research report. The chapter includes an analysis concluding whether the findings have answered the research question and sub questions as well as whether the overall research objectives have been addressed. Furthermore, this section includes ethical considerations that were incorporated in this research report, limitations that were experienced and the heuristic value of the research.

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTION, SUB QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED

Primary Research Question: Has TikTok had an influence on the buying behaviour of Generation Z within the COVID-19 pandemic?

From the data that was collected and analysed during the methodology of this research report, it is evident that TikTok does have an influence on the buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is evident that individuals are limited in their influence due to being in South Africa and having limited access to overseas brands and products.

Secondary Question 1: Is TikTok an effective digital marketing tool for brands?

It is evident that TikTok is an effective digital marketing tool for brands to utilise within their marketing strategies. This means that brands should consider include TikTok within their marketing strategies and plans. Brands should update their current social media strategies according to the latest trends and marketing developments. Almost all the respondents said that they would use TikTok as a digital marketing tool within their own business.

Secondary Question 2: Does TikTok result in consumer buying behaviour?

The results concluded that TikTok does result in consumer buying behaviour. However, because many of the brands are from America, South Africans are sceptical to trust the

brands and do not want to pay expensive shipping fees. Therefore, the effect on consumer buying behaviour is evident but it is limited and is still growing within South Africa.

Research Objectives:

1. To explore whether TikTok effects the buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. To investigate whether TikTok is an effective digital marketing tool for brands.
3. To explore whether TikTok results in consumer buying behaviour.

The three research objectives above were directly linked to the primary and secondary research questions. The objectives were all addressed within this research report. The questionnaire and focus groups asked various questions directly correlating to these objectives. The research methodology explored objective one, whether TikTok effects the buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed that TikTok does influence Generation Z's buying behaviour. Objective two aimed to investigate whether TikTok is an effective digital marketing tool for brands. The data analysis methods derived insights from the data that was collected to conclude that TikTok is an effective digital marketing tool for brands. Lastly, objective three aimed to explore whether TikTok results in consumer buying behaviour. The results from the focus groups concluded that TikTok does result in consumer buying behaviour. However, the influence that TikTok has on buying behaviour is still growing within the South African community.

5.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM ADDRESSED

The research objectives for this research report were solved using a structured research methodology, guided by primary and secondary research questions. The research objectives being solved lead to the overall research problem being addressed.

This research report solved the overall problem of a lack of research conducted on the effect that TikTok has on the buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic. The research provides a direct correlation between their buying behaviour and TikTok. The research concludes that TikTok has an effect on the buying behaviour of Generation Z which has grown due to the COVID-19 pandemic and individuals being at

home more. This research provides insight into the effect TikTok has on manipulating consumer buying behaviour fulfilling a gap in research around this specific topic.

Therefore, the overall research goal to answer the research questions, reach the research objectives and address the overall research problem was achieved within this research report.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS FOR FUTURE PRACTICES

The proposed research refers to various different fields of study such as Generation Z, consumer buying behaviour, TikTok and the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore the research findings are able implicate information within these various fields for future practices.

The findings that have been derived from this research are valuable to businesses who are looking to upgrade and grow their social media marketing strategies. Businesses can use the insights to simplify their decision making processes and stream line their marketing processes. This research acts as reassurance and justification for businesses who are questioning TikTok as a marketing tool.

This research report incorporates the COVID-19 pandemic and the affect that it has had on societies behaviour. This aspect of this research report can provide insight for future practices. Researchers should ensure that they take into consideration the COVID-19 pandemic as it has had a great impact in human behaviour and the way that specific human processes occur. Therefore, this research reiterates the importance to monitor the changes that COVID-19 has caused when conducting research methodologies, especially human-related studies.

5.5 HEURISTIC VALUE

This study contributed to a greater understanding of TikTok's effectiveness as a digital marketing tool and how it affects Generation Z's buying behaviour. No similar research reports have been done in Durban, South Africa and therefore this research report is contributing to the use of TikTok to alter buying behaviour within the South African market.

The goal of this study was to assist South African businesses with their digital marketing tool selection processes. It aims to help make the process easier for them by providing insight into whether TikTok will lead to product or service sales.

It is recommended that further research is done including other age demographics, as this research was limited to Generation Z. Although Generation Z is the biggest Generation utilising TikTok, further research may assist businesses whose target markets differ and are not included in Generation Z. This research could also be studied further by focusing on specific business groups such as clothing, make-up, housing, food, toys, etc. This would provide more in-depth results for specific markets and whether they will be successful in their use of TikTok marketing for their business. Lastly, a larger study could be conducted to gain more accurate broader results.

5.6 ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Ethical considerations concerning the participants are very important in research studies. These considerations included informed consent, collecting data from participants, dealing with sensitive information, providing incentives, avoiding harm, dealing with confidentiality versus anonymity and avoiding deception (du Plooy Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

This research reflected these ethical considerations throughout all research processes. The focus group participants were emailed explanatory sheets and consent forms to inform the participants about the research and for them to give their consent to participate in the research focus group (Annexure F). The participants were also asked to give consent for the researcher to record the Zoom call via the record setting on Zoom (Annexure G). All research participants were made aware that they would remain anonymous and that the data would only be used for the purpose of the research. They were also informed that they had the option to opt out of the data collection process at any stage. The research questionnaires were electronic and were distributed to the potential participants via email. Due to COVID-19, this method was ethical as it ensured that the participants were not put in any harm and could fill in the questionnaire from the comfort of their homes. The researcher did not need to deal with sensitive information however the researcher ensured that boundaries were established when collecting data from participants. This researcher relied on willingness of participation to gather participants rather than using the unethical method of incentives (du Plooy Cilliers *et al.*, 2014)

Ethical considerations concerning the researcher were also very important when conducting research. These considerations included falsifying information, distorting intentions or results, allowing bias to influence interpretation of results, misusing information and using inappropriate research methods (Du Plooy Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

The researcher reflected these ethical considerations when conducting the research. The researcher ensured that ethical clearance was granted by the IIE prior to the data collection process (Annexure E). The researcher collected and analysed the research results in a way which did not falsify information or distort the intentions of the results. Through the use of purposive sampling, the researcher did depict some bias. However the researcher ensured that the participants within the sample group all met the same requirements. The researcher will not reuse the data that was collected in this research for other research purposes without getting consent from the participants. Therefore, the researcher ensures that they are not misusing the data collected. The researcher ensured that they followed scientific methodology throughout the research collection and analysis to not deviate from the research purpose communicated (du Plooy Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

5.7 LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this study included the COVID-19 pandemic, financial restraints, research scope requirement restrictions and time restraints.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a shift in conditions for all the entire population and was therefore a limitation. COVID-19 made it difficult to conduct face-to-face data collection without respondents feeling unsafe and out of their comfort zones. This limitation was resolved using online platforms to collect data. The online platforms which were used were Survey Monkey and Zoom. These online platforms allow for accurate and safe data collection.

This research report included financial restraints. Due to the researcher being a student, there is a limited budget for this research report. Therefore, the research is limited to containing its methodology within the financial boundaries. This limitation was resolved by using suitable cost-effective methods throughout the data collection and analysis.

The requirements for this research limited the research report that could be produced. The requirements were to follow either qualitative or quantitative approach. This is a limitation as mixed-methods would provide a more diverse in-depth research report. This limitation is overcome by conducting more than one type of qualitative data collection to ensure that a variety of data is collected. The requirements for the sample sizes were also limited to smaller groups of participants. This limited the amount of data and depth of data that could be collected for this research report. These limitations were resolved by structuring the data collection to get as in-depth and extensive findings and insights as possible.

Lastly, the time frame of the research report is a limitation. The research report needed to be finalised within an 8 month period. This was a limitation due to the fact that a more detailed and extensive research report could be conducted if a longer time frame was possible. This limitation was resolved by having regular deadlines to ensure that the research methodology steps were being conducted over time and the final research report was being completed as a process.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This study provided insight into TikTok as a brand, Generation Z and their unique behaviour within society, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and marketing strategies and tools.

The literature review and theoretical frameworks considered in chapter two helped place the research report in context. The data collection methods in chapter three created an understanding of the population that was involved as well as the structure that was followed to collect data. Chapter three included the data analysis methods which allowed for in-depth insightful findings to be derived from the data. Evidently, the findings in chapter four answered the research questions and addressed the research objectives and problem directly. Chapter five concluded that TikTok does have an effect on the consumer buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic. This study provides evidence that businesses should consider TikTok within their marketing strategies. Should businesses choose to implement TikTok within these strategies, it will lead to an increase in brand awareness and profitability.

REFERENCE LIST

2018. Communication Theory. [Online]. Available at:

<https://www.communicationtheory.org/social-marketing-theory/> [Accessed 12 May 2021].

Autio, S. 2020. The impact of social media on consumer purchasing behaviour. [Online].

Available at:

<https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/352736/Thesis%20Impact%20of%20social%20media%20on%20consumer%20purchasing%20behavior%20Susanne%20Autio.pdf?sequence=2> [Accessed 18 May 2021].

Bajracharya, S. 2018. Social Marketing Theory. [Online]. Available at:

<https://www.businessstopia.net/mass-communication/social-marketing-theory> [Accessed 17 June 2021].

Battisby, A. 2020. An In-Depth Look at Marketing on TikTok. [Online]. Available at: An In-Depth Look at Marketing on TikTok. [Accessed 17 May 2021].

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. [Online]. Available at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235356393_Using_thematic_analysis_in_psychology [Accessed 14 June 2021].

Choudhary, N., Gautam, C. & Arya, V. 2020. DIGITAL MARKETING CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY WITH REFERENCE TO TIKTOK-A NEW RISING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM. [Online]. Available

at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345064726 DIGITAL MARKETING CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY WITH REFERENCE TO TIKTOK-A NEW RISING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345064726_DIGITAL_MARKETING_CHALLENGE_AND_OPPORTUNITY_WITH_REFERENCE_TO_TIKTOK-A_NEW_RISING_SOCIAL_MEDIA_PLATFORM) [Accessed 6 April 2021].

Dean, B. 2021. TikTok User Statistics (2021). [Online]. Available at:

<https://backlinko.com/tiktok-users> [Accessed 29 November 2021].

Deyan, G. 2021. How Much Time Do People Spend on Social Media in 2021? [Online].

Available at: <https://techjury.net/blog/time-spent-on-social-media/#gref> [Accessed 6 April 2021].

Dimock, M. 2019. Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins. [Online]. Available at: <http://tony-silva.com/eslefl/miscstudent/downloadpagearticles/defgenerations-pew.pdf> [Accessed 18 May 2021].

Doyle, B. 2021. TikTok Statistics – Updated Sep 2021. [Online]. Available at: <https://wallaroomedia.com/blog/social-media/tiktok-statistics/> [Accessed 29 November 2021].

Du Plooy-Cilliers, F., Davis, C. and Bezuidenhout, R. (2014). Research Matters. Paarl Media Paarl, South Africa.

Dudovskiy, J. 2018. Research Approach. [Online]. Available at: <https://research-methodology.net/research-methodology/research-approach/> [Accessed 17 May 2021].

Freer, A. 2020. TikTok was the most downloaded app of 2020. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.businessofapps.com/news/tiktok-was-the-most-downloaded-app-of-2020/> [Accessed 6 April 2021].

Gabriel, D. 2013. Inductive and deductive approaches to research. [Online]. Available at: <https://deborahgabriel.com/2013/03/17/inductive-and-deductive-approaches-to-research/> [Accessed 14 June 2021].

Gray, R. 2019. Consumer Behaviour Theory: How Has It Changed. [Online]. Available at: <https://fastpayltd.co.uk/blog/consumer-behaviour-theory-how-has-it-changed/> [Accessed 16 May 2021].

Ha, C. 1998. The theory of reasoned action applied to brand loyalty. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/10610429810209737/full/html> [Accessed 17 June 2021].

Hamill, A. 2020. Five more COVID-19 marketing trends for ‘the new normal’ of constant change. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.warc.com/newsandopinion/opinion/five-more-covid-19-marketing-trends-for-the-new-normal-of-constant-change/3833> [Accessed 17 June 2021].

- Hayes, A. 2018. Social Media Marketing (SMM). [Online]. Available at: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-media-marketing-smm.asp> [Accessed 17 May 2021].
- Hughes, L. 2005. A perspective on perspectives. [Online]. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/7704389_A_perspective_on_perspectives [Accessed 17 May 2021].
- Kasasa. 2021. Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z, and Gen A Explained. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.kasasa.com/articles/generations/gen-x-gen-y-gen-z> [Accessed 13 August 2021].
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 2006. What Is Research Design? [Online]. Available at: <https://library.sacredheart.edu/c.php?g=29803&p=185902> [Accessed 17 June 2021].
- Lawrence, A. 2020. A Uses and Gratifications Exploratory Study of TikTok: What Does This Mean for Brands? [Online]. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346523887_A_Uses_and_Gratifications_Exploratory_Study_of_TikTok_What_Does_This_Mean_for_Brands [Accessed 18 May 2020].
- Lee, M. 2020. 21 things people love on TikTok that are actually worth the money. [Online]. Available at: <http://churchill.imgix.net> [Accessed 17 May 2021].
- Lundin, K. 2014. The Psychology of Design: 5 Tips to Reassure Customers. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.brandunited.com/article/the-psychology-of-design-5-tips-to-reassure-customers/> [Accessed 29 November 2021].
- Maree, K. 2016. First Steps in Research. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Mohsin, M. 2021. 10 TIKTOK STATISTICS THAT YOU NEED TO KNOW IN 2021 [INFOGRAPHIC]. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.oberlo.com/media/1607428967-tiktok-slides.png?fit=max&fm=webp&w=1824> [Accessed 7 April 2021].
- Moon, K. & Blackman, D. 2017. A guide to ontology, epistemology, and philosophical perspectives for interdisciplinary researchers. [Online]. Available at: <https://i2insights.org/2017/05/02/philosophy-for-interdisciplinarity/> [Accessed 17 May 2021].

Moser, A. & Korstjens, I. 2018. Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092> [Accessed 14 June 2021].

Mou, J. 2020. Study on Social Media Marketing Campaign Strategy – TikTok and Instagram. [Online]. Available at: <https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/127010> [Accessed 18 May 2021].

Ngangom, M. 2020. How TikTok Has Impacted Generation Z's Buying Behaviour and Their Relationship With Brands? [Online]. Available at: <https://esource.dbs.ie/handle/10788/4116> [Accessed 18 May 2021].

Odiase, V. 2020. What is Social Marketing Theory? Principles of Social Marketing Theory. [Online]. Available at: <https://izeyodiase.com/what-is-social-marketing-theory-principles-of-social-marketing-theory/> [Accessed 7 April 2021].

Olsen, B. An In-Depth Look at Marketing on TikTok. [Online]. Available at: <https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/an-in-depth-look-at-marketing-on-tiktok> [Accessed 19 September 2021].

Olson, N. 2020. DEVELOPING YOUR BRAND'S TIKTOK MARKETING STRATEGY. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.yrcharisma.com/2020/02/10/developing-tik-tok-marketing-strategy/> [Accessed 7 April 2021].

Parker, K. & Igielnik, R. 2020. On the Cusp of Adulthood and Facing an Uncertain Future: What We Know About Gen Z So Far. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/14/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far-2/> [Accessed 17 May 2021].

Simangunsong, E. 2018. Generation-z Buying Behaviour In Indonesia: Opportunities For Retail Businesses. [Online]. Available at: <https://mix.mercubuana.ac.id/id/publications/256911/generation-z-buying-behaviour-in-indonesia-opportunities-for-retail-businesses> [Accessed 18 May 2021].

Spring, E (2002). Uses & Gratifications/ Dependency Theory. [Online]. Available at: <http://zimmer.csufresno.edu/~johnca/spch100/7-4-uses.htm> [Accessed 17 June 2021].

Sydorenko, N. 2021. What is Buyer Behaviour: definition, types, patterns, and analysis. [Online]. Available at: <https://snov.io/glossary/buyer-behavior/> [Accessed 17 May 2021].

Templafy. 2020. Moving with the times: the importance of agile branding. [Online]. Available at: <https://info.templafy.com/blog/moving-with-the-times-the-importance-of-agile-branding> [Accessed 14 June 2021].

Thomas, D. 2003. A general inductive approach for qualitative data analysis. [Online]. Available at: <https://frankumstein.com/PDF/Psychology/Inductive%20Content%20Analysis.pdf> [Accessed 14 June 2021].

Thompson, K. 2019. The selective filter model of audience effects. [Online]. Available at: <https://revisesociology.com/2019/11/04/selective-filter-model/> (Accessed 17 May 2021).

Vaughan, T. 2017. Advantages and disadvantages of focus groups. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.poppulo.com/blog/focus-group-advantages-and-disadvantages> [Accessed 14 June 2021].

Vieira, J., Frade, R., Ascenso, R., Prates, I. and Martinho, F. 2020. Generation Z and Key-Factors on E-Commerce: A Study on the Portuguese Tourism Sector. [Online]. Available at: https://www.google.co.za/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwidh_rG4NPwAhUXVRUIHW9zCMsQFjABegQIBBAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.mdpi.com%2F2076-3387%2F10%2F4%2F103%2Fpdf&usg=AOvVaw18Fu0IC-LID7rrRNkNDFyA [Accessed 18 May 2021].

Vinney, C. 2019. What Is Uses and Gratifications Theory? Definition and Examples. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.thoughtco.com/uses-and-gratifications-theory-4628333> [Accessed 12 May 2021].

Voramontri, D. & Klieb, L. 2019. Impact of social media on consumer behaviour . [Online]. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335614346_Impact_of_social_media_on_consumer_behaviour/link/5d705e70299bf1cb80884b87/download [Accessed 19 September 2021].

Warren, K. 2020. Qualitative Data Analysis Methods 101: The “Big 6” Methods + Examples. [Online]. Available at: <https://gradcoach.com/qualitative-data-analysis-methods/> [Accessed 14 June 2021].

Webster, S. 1992. Focus Groups: An Effective Marketing Research Tool for Social Service Agencies. [Online]. Available at: <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/pubstext/focus.htm> [Accessed 16 June 2021].

WHO. 2019. Coronavirus. [Online]. Available at: https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1 [Accessed 19 May 2021].

Wright, G. 2021. Social media trends 2021: What’s working and what isn’t this year? [Online]. Available at: <https://www.smartinsights.com/digital-marketing-strategy/social-media-trends-2021/> [Accessed 29 November 2021].

Young, H. 2021. Millennials vs. Gen Z: How Are They Different? [Online]. Available at: <https://www.salesforce.com/blog/how-millennials-and-gen-z-are-different/> [Accessed 20 August 2021].

LIST OF ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Final Research Summary Document

TITLE: AN EXPLANATORY STUDY ON THE EFFECT TIKTOK HAS ON THE CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF GENERATION Z, WITHIN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

Research Purpose	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Lit Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations	
To gain an in-depth understanding as to whether TikTok has a role in manipulating Gen Z's buying behaviour.	Has TikTok had an influence on the buying behaviour of Generation Z within the COVID-19 pandemic?	TikTok has shown no signs of slowing down. Brands need to stay up to date with the latest marketing trends and developments .	(Ngangom, 2020) (Simangunsong, 2018) (Lawrence, 2020)	Theme 1: Generation n Z Theme 2: Marketing on TikTok Theme 3: Consumer Buying Behaviour Theme 4: COVID-19 Pandemic	Paradigm Interpretivism Epistemology Approach to this research is subjective. The research aimed to give meaning to the perspectives that Generation Z have on the effect that TikTok has on buying behaviour. Ontology The research investigated various participants' perspectives	Qualitative	Two focus groups conducted via Zoom.	COVID-19 - conducted online data collection.	TikTok influences the buying behaviour of Gen Z.	Brands should utilise TikTok within their marketing strategies. Brands must consider the COVID-19 pandemic when analysing their stakeholders.	
						Population	An open-ended questionnaire conducted via Google Forms.	Consent - Sent out well informed consent forms.			
						Population Parameters		Ethics – Ethical clearance was granted from the IIE.			
						Individuals who fall within Gen Z and frequently use TikTok.					
Research Problem	Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories			Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Key Contribution		
Lack of research linking TikTok, Gen Z and COVID-19. Brands don't trust TikTok.	To investigate whether TikTok is an effective digital marketing tool for brands. To explore whether TikTok results in consumer buying behaviour.	Buying Behaviour, TikTok Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Generation Z and COVID-19 Pandemic.	The Uses and Gratification Theory The Social Marketing Theory The Consumer Behaviour Theory			Non-probability Sampling method Purposive Sampling Size: Questionnaire: 20 participants Focus Group: Six per focus group = 12	Unit of Analysis People, Generation Z Data Analysis Methods Content Thematic Analysis	Time Constraints COVID-19 pandemic Financial Restraints Scope Requirement Restraints	This research report contributes to reassuring brands about TikTok as marketing tool although it is new and still developing.		

Annexure B: Focus Group Schedule

Three TikTok videos representing three different brands will be shown three times each to the participants. The following 8 questions will be asked at random to facilitate a discussion between the participants.

1. Have you seen any of the brands shown in the videos on TikTok? What do you think of these brands?

2. Why do you think people are persuaded by these branded TikTok videos?

3. Have you ever purchased anything from these brands because of TikTok? If yes, why? If not, would you ever?

4. How do you feel when you are exposed to brands on TikTok?

5. To what degree do you feel persuaded by branded TikTok videos?

6. What brands have persuaded you to buy things via their TikTok marketing? Why?

7. Why do you think that brands are starting to use TikTok more within their marketing strategies?

8. Do you think that COVID-19 has had a major role in TikTok's success as a platform? Why?

The participants will be given time to ask any questions.

Annexure C: Qualitative Questionnaire

I am conducting an explanatory study on the effect TikTok has on the consumer buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic. Please could you fill out the following 10 open-ended questions to contribute to the research collection. You can opt out at any point while conducting the questionnaire.

1. When did you download the TikTok application?

2. How do you think that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected TikTok as a platform?

3. Do you use TikTok? If so, how many hours do you use it per day?

4. How do you feel about brands using TikTok in their marketing strategies?

5. What type of brands do you see featuring on your TikTok "For You" page?

6. How have you been influenced by TikTok?

7. Have you ever bought anything because of TikTok? If so, what? If not, why not?

8. If you answered yes to question 6 - what persuaded you to buy the product?

9. What specific brands have persuaded you to make purchases via TikTok?

10. Do you feel pressured by brands that continuously show up of your TikTok “For You” page?

11. Do you feel that there are too many brands on the TikTok platform? Why?

12. What do you think the future of TikTok as a marketing and advertising platform looks like?

Thank you for your participation.

Annexure D: Vega Ethics Checklist



Vega Ethics checklist: RESE8419/p/w

Student Details												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☒	Mrs	☐	Mr	☐	Mx	☐
First name(s)	Tegan											
Last name(s)	Sinclair											
Title of study	An explanatory study on the effect TikTok has on the consumer buying behaviour of Generation Z, within the COVID-19 pandemic											
Qualification	BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication											

Supervisor Details												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☒	Ms	☐	Mrs	☒	Mr	☐	Mx	☐
First and last names	Clive Greenstone											
Co-supervisor Details (if applicable)												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☐	Mrs	☒	Mr	☐	Mx	☐
First and last names	Carolanda du Toit											

Explaining your research process						
Philosophical paradigm	Positivism	☐	Interpretivism	☒	Constructivism	☐
	Realism	☐	Objectivism	☐	Pragmatism	☐
	Functionalist	☐	Subjectivism	☐	Humanist	☐
	Other:					
Research design:	Interview	☐	Questionnaire (self administered)	☒	Focus group	☒
	Ethnography/ Observation	☐	Artefact analysis/website/ social media analysis	☐	Action Research	☐
	Case Study	☐	Design Research (Practice based)	☐		☐
	Other (if so, state)	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.			
Brief explanation of the population and number of participants/items	Individuals within Generation Z who use TikTok. The number of participants for the focus group will be 10 and the number of participants for the survey will be 20.					
Target group sampling methods/artefact (No under 18's or vulnerable groups allowed)	Purposive	☒	Random	☐	Snowball	☐
	Convenient	☐	Stratified	☐	Census	...
	Explain selection process	The selection process will be done by sending out the questionnaire and focus group links by email to individuals within Generation Z.				

Ethics		
Documentation submitted with proposal	Gatekeeper s letter (institutional consent)	☐
	Completed Annexure E if you conduct research on IIE sites/students/staff	☐
	Instrument(s) (interview schedule or questionnaire)	☒
	Participant or respondent consent form	☒
	Audio-visual consent form (if applicable)	☒

Campus ethics committee recommendation	
Proposal has been reviewed by the supervisor and necessary ethics considerations have been included. ☐ Accepted as is and provide letter ☐ Accepted with provisions: Nature of provision: e.g. Instrument is not sufficient / included and need to be signed off by the supervisor ☐ Major issues: Student should not continue with fieldwork. Actions to be taken: Click or tap here to enter text.	
Supervisor signature	
	2021/07/06
Co-supervisor/Campus ethics panel member signature	
	2021/07/07

Annexure E: Honours Ethical Clearance Letter



Date: 05/07/2021

Student name: Tegan Sinclair

Student number: [REDACTED]

Campus: Vega School Durban

Re: Approval of RESE8419 Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.

3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.
4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

Supervisor name: **Clive Greenstone**

Signature:



Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC) name: **Carolanda du Toit**



Signature:

7 July 2021

Annexure F: Consent Form

Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants
To whom it may concern, My name is Tegan Sinclair and I am a student at IIE Vega School Durban. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Clive Greenstone about the effect of TikTok on the buying behaviour of Generation Z, withing the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of brands use of online applications to manipulate consumer buying behaviour. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.
What will I be doing if I participate in your study?
I would like to invite you to participate in this research because (insert reason). If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to (explain exactly what participation will involve). You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.
Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?
Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your (insert what you are examining). If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.
Do I have to participate in the study?
• Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary; • If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so; • Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.
Will my identity be protected?
I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at IIE Vega School Durban will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.
What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication degree. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Tegan Sinclair

[REDACTED]

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Clive Greenstone

[REDACTED]

Participant or respondent consent

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by [INSERT YOUR FULL NAMES AND SURNAME] about [INSERT AIM OF RESEARCH/BRIEF SUMMARY OF EXACTLY WHAT YOU ARE RESEARCHING].

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- I agree to be interviewed for this research.
- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
- My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
- I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
- I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Signature

Date

Annexure G: Consent Form for Audio or Video Recording

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to allow [INSERT YOUR FULL FIRST NAMES AND SURNAME] to audio record my interviews as part of the research about [INSERT AIM OF RESEARCH/BRIEF SUMMARY OF EXACTLY WHAT YOU ARE RESEARCHING]. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: • My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private; • The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer; and • Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.	
Signature	Date