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Content Marketing on Tiktok and Generation Z'S Purchase Decisions: A Quantitative Approach

Sudung Simatupang[1], Fadli Eka Aldiansah[2], Lena Febriani Nadeak[3], Rosita Manawari Girsang[4], Herliana Maharani Manurung[5]
[1,2,3,4,5]Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Sultan Agung, Indonesia
E-mail: selitaefraim@gmail.com[1], fadlieka182@gmail.com[2], lenanadeak33@gmail.com[3], rosita.girsang@gmail.com[4], herlianamanurung318@gmail.com[5]

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Abstract: *This study examines the effect of TikTok content marketing on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z. TikTok has become an influential digital marketing platform because its short-form video content enables interactive and personalized communication with consumers. A quantitative survey was conducted involving 136 Generation Z respondents who are active TikTok users in Pematangsiantar City and Simalungun Regency. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using SPSS through validity and reliability tests, simple linear regression, the coefficient of determination, and the t-test. The findings show that all research instruments are valid and reliable. The regression equation, Y = 15.476 + 0.362X, indicates that TikTok content marketing positively affects purchasing decisions. The coefficient of determination (R^2 = 44.7%) shows that TikTok content marketing explains 44.7% of the variation in purchasing decisions, while the remainder is influenced by other factors. The t-test results (t = 10.414 > 1.977, p = 0.000 < 0.05) confirm that the proposed hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, TikTok content marketing has a positive and significant effect on Generation Z's purchasing decisions, highlighting the importance of creating creative, relevant, and engaging digital content.*

INTRODUCTION

Advances in digital technology have brought about significant changes in the world of marketing, particularly through the use of social media as a marketing communication tool (Dwivedi et al., 2020). Social media allows companies to reach consumers more widely, quickly, and interactively than conventional media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In addition, this change has also influenced consumer behavior, as consumers are increasingly proactive in seeking information before making a purchase decision (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). As a generation that grew up in the digital age, Gen Z is deeply immersed in technology and social media in their daily lives (Priporas et al., 2017). They tend to rely on digital platforms as their primary source of

information when evaluating products (Djafarova & Bowes, 2020), This is supported by data showing that more than 97% of Gen Z use social media as their primary source of shopping inspiration (Price, 2026). The rapid growth of social media has also been marked by the rising popularity of TikTok, a short-form video platform widely used by Generation Z (Montag et al., 2021). TikTok is known for its algorithm, which is capable of delivering personalized and engaging content, thereby increasing user engagement. According to (Kemp, 2024) TikTok now has over 1 billion monthly active users worldwide. In Indonesia, TikTok is also among the platforms with the largest user base, which is dominated by younger age groups. This high level of usage indicates that TikTok has significant potential as a digital marketing platform. However, not all content posted on the platform is able to consistently capture attention or influence consumer behavior. This suggests that the effectiveness of using TikTok as a marketing platform varies (Yadav & Rahman, 2017).

Content marketing is a digital marketing strategy that focuses on providing content that is relevant, engaging, and valuable to consumers (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). In the context of social media, content marketing serves not only as a promotional tool but also as a means of building relationships with consumers (Pulizzi, 2012), And to ensure that content marketing is effective, the key factors are buyer personas, educational content, online visibility, real-time content, multi-channel distribution, engagement, authenticity and transparency, and measurement (Scott, 2009). On the TikTok platform, content marketing takes the form of creative videos, storytelling, and viral trends that boost audience engagement. Content shared on social media—particularly by influencers—has been shown to increase engagement and drive consumer purchase intent (Jiménez-castillo & Sánchez-fernández, 2019).

However, current trends show that not all content marketing generates the same response from consumers. Differences in content quality, creativity, and alignment with audience preferences result in varying levels of effectiveness. This underscores the fact that content marketing plays a crucial role in capturing consumers' attention in the digital age (Yadav & Rahman, 2017).The purchase decision is the final stage in the consumer behavior process and is influenced by various factors, according to (Kotler & Keller, 2016) that these factors are: Needs Recognition, Information Search, Evaluation of Alternatives, Purchase Decision, and Post-Purchase Behavior.

In the digital context, purchasing decisions are closely tied to information obtained through social media, which can shape consumer perceptions. Generation Z tends to use information from digital content as the basis for making purchasing decisions; 69% of consumers have purchased a product after seeing an ad on social media (Moraes, 2024), 48% of social media users have made an impulse purchase after seeing a product (Gillespie, 2023). However, not all consumers make a purchase immediately; instead, they consider various factors such as trust and needs, which indicates that there is variation in the purchasing decision-making process in the digital age (Stephen, 2016). Based on the above discussion, it is evident that there are dynamics in the use of TikTok as a marketing medium, particularly in relation to content marketing and Generation Z's purchasing decisions. Although TikTok has great potential as a marketing platform, the effectiveness of content marketing efforts still yields mixed results. Therefore, this study aims to quantitatively analyze the relationship between content marketing on TikTok and Generation Z's purchasing decisions. This study is expected to contribute to the development of digital marketing knowledge and serve as a reference for companies in designing more effective marketing strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Content Marketing

Content marketing is a strategic approach to digital marketing that emphasizes the creation and distribution of content that is relevant and valuable to consumers. From an academic perspective, content marketing is understood as a form of marketing communication that focuses on conveying information capable of capturing the audience's attention and fostering engagement (Lou & Yuan, 2019). With the rise of social media, the implementation of content marketing has undergone a significant transformation, particularly through visual and video-based platforms. Content that is informative, entertaining, and tailored to audience preferences has proven to be more effective in boosting consumer engagement (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). In addition, content quality is also a key factor in shaping consumers' perceptions of a brand (Vries et al., 2012). Research shows that effective content marketing can increase consumer engagement and strengthen the relationship between consumers and brands (Baltes, 2015). Thus, content marketing serves not only as a promotional tool but also as a strategy for creating value and experiences for consumers in the digital environment.

Purchase Decision

A purchase decision is the process by which consumers select and purchase a product or service based on various considerations. This process involves evaluating information obtained from various sources before consumers make their final choice (Solomon, 2009). In the digital age, purchasing decisions are increasingly influenced by information available on online media, including social media. Consumers tend to seek guidance from reviews, recommendations, and the experiences of other users before making a purchase (Filieri et al., 2015). This indicates that digital information sources play a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes and preferences. In addition, trust in the information received is also a key factor in the purchasing decision-making process (Cheung et al., 2020). Therefore, purchasing decisions are influenced not only by product characteristics but also by the quality of the information conveyed through digital media.

The Relationship Between Content Marketing and Purchase Decisions

Content marketing plays a significant role in influencing consumer behavior, particularly in the digital context. Engaging and relevant content can increase consumer attention and engagement with a product or brand (Lou & Yuan, 2019). In addition, content marketing can also build consumer trust by providing clear and valuable information. This trust is a key factor that can encourage consumers to make purchasing decisions (Cheung et al., 2020). Previous research has shown that there is a significant correlation between the quality of content marketing and purchasing decisions: the better the content, the more likely consumers are to make a purchase (Baltes, 2015). In the context of social media, content that provides an engaging and relevant experience is more effective at influencing consumers' purchasing decisions; thus, content marketing can be considered one of the key factors influencing purchasing decisions, particularly among digital consumers such as Generation Z

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach using a survey method to analyze the relationship between content marketing on TikTok and purchasing decisions among Generation Z. This approach was chosen because it allows for the statistical testing of relationships between variables using numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The study is scheduled to take place from April to May 2026, with data collected online via a questionnaire distributed to respondents.

The population for this study consists of Generation Z TikTok users aged 17–26 residing in the city of Pematangsiantar and Simalungun Regency. The sampling technique employs non-probability sampling using a purposive sampling method, based on specific criteria such as having a TikTok account, having viewed marketing content, and having made a purchase after viewing such content (Etikan et al., 2016). The minimum sample size used was 100 respondents, with an appropriate sample size for the study ranging from 30 to 500 (Roscoe, 1975). The data used consists of primary data collected via a questionnaire using a Likert scale (Joshi et al., 2015).

The Likert scale is used to measure respondents' attitudes, opinions, and perceptions regarding a particular phenomenon (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Data analysis was conducted using statistical software such as SPSS. The instruments were tested for validity and reliability (Field, 2018), to test the validity of questionnaire items with a correlation coefficient of ≥ 0.30 (Taherdoost et al., 2014), and for the reliability test, with a minimum Cronbach's alpha threshold of 0.70 (Eisingerich & Rubera, 2010) Next, simple linear regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between the variables using the formula $Y = \beta0 + \beta1X + e$ (Bevans., 2020), as well as a t-test to test the hypothesis. In addition, the coefficient of determination is used to determine the extent to which the independent variable contributes to the dependent variable (Montgomery et al., 2021)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Description of Research Respondents

Table 1: Respondent Descriptions

Respondent Data	Respondent Descriptions	Total	Percentage
Gender	Male	51	37,5%
	Female	85	62,5%
Age of Respondents	17–20 years old	77	56,6%
	21–23 years old	41	30,1%
	24–26 years old	18	13,2%
Highest Level of Education	High School/Vocational High School	119	87,5%
	Diploma	2	1,5%
	Bachelor's degree	14	10,3%
	Magister	1	0,7%
Active TikTok users	Yes	124	91,1%
	No	12	10,2%
Frequent Use of TikTok	Rarely (1–2 times a week)	13	9,6%
	Quite often (3–5 kali/minggu)	24	17,6%
	Very often (every day)	101	74,3%
Have you ever seen promotional content or ads on TikTok	Yes	130	95,6%
	No	6	5,1%
Have You Ever Bought a Product After Seeing Content on TikTok?	Yes	113	83,1%
	No	23	17,6%

Source: Data processing, 2026

Based on the results of a questionnaire distributed to 136 respondents, the characteristics

of the respondents in this study were analyzed by gender, age, highest level of education, current TikTok usage status, frequency of TikTok use, exposure to promotional content, and experience purchasing products after viewing promotional content on the TikTok platform. By gender, the majority of respondents were female, totaling 85 people or 62.5%, while male respondents numbered 51 people or 37.5%. These data indicate that female respondents' participation was more dominant than that of male respondents in this study. Based on the respondents' age, the majority of respondents were in the 17–20 age range, totaling 77 people or 56.6%. Respondents aged 21–23 numbered 41 people or 30.1%, while those aged 24–26 totaled 18 people or 13.2%. This indicates that the majority of respondents fall within the late teenage to early adult age group, which tends to be active on social media. In terms of highest level of education, the majority of respondents had a high school (SMA/SMK) background, totaling 119 people or 87.5%. There were 2 respondents with a diploma (1.5%), 14 with a bachelor's degree (S-1) (10.3%), and 1 with a master's degree (0.7%). This indicates that the majority of respondents are students

Based on TikTok active user status, 124 respondents (91.1%) reported actively using TikTok, while 12 respondents (10.2%) reported not using it. These findings indicate that the majority of respondents have a high level of engagement with the TikTok platform.In terms of TikTok usage frequency, the majority of respondents use TikTok very frequently or daily, totaling 101 people or 74.3%. A total of 24 respondents, or 17.6%, use TikTok fairly often (3–5 times per week), while 13 respondents, or 9.6%, use it rarely (1–2 times per week). This indicates that TikTok has become part of the daily digital activities of the majority of respondents. Regarding exposure to promotional content or ads on TikTok, 130 respondents (95.6%) stated they had seen promotional content or ads on the platform, while 6 respondents (5.1%) stated they had never seen any. This data indicates that promotional content on TikTok has a very wide reach among users.

Furthermore, based on their experience purchasing products after viewing content on TikTok, 113 respondents (83.1%) stated that they had made a purchase after seeing promotional content on TikTok, while 23 respondents (17.6%) stated that they had never done so. These findings indicate that promotional content on TikTok has a significant influence on consumers' purchasing decisions. Overall, the characteristics of the respondents in this study were dominated by females aged 17–20 with a high school/vocational school educational background, who actively use TikTok every day, are frequently exposed to promotional content, and have experience making purchases after viewing promotional content on the platform. These characteristics indicate that the respondents are highly relevant to the research focus on the influence of TikTok promotions on consumer purchasing decisions.

Validity Test

Table 2: Validity Test

Variabel	Number of Items	Range of Item Correlation Values	Validity Period	Description
Content Marketing TikTok (X)	31	0,517 – 0,785	≥ 0,30	Valid
Purchase Decision (Y)	15	0,572 – 0,770	≥ 0,30	Valid

Source: Data analyzed using SPSS, 2026

Based on the results of the validity test in Table 2, the TikTok Content Marketing variable

(X), which consists of 31 statement items, yielded item correlation values ranging from 0.517 to 0.785. All of these item correlation values are above the minimum threshold of 0.30; therefore, all items in the TikTok Content Marketing variable are deemed valid. Furthermore, the results of the validity test for the Purchase Decision variable (Y), which consists of 15 items, show item correlation values ranging from 0.572 to 0.770. All items also have correlation values above the minimum threshold of 0.30, so all items in the Purchase Decision variable are deemed valid. Thus, it can be concluded that all research instruments have met the validity criteria and are suitable for use in further research analysis.

Reliability Test

Table 3: Reliability Test

Variabel	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Minimum Limit	Description
Content Marketing TikTok (X)	31	0,959	≥ 0,70	Very Reliable
Purchase Decision (Y)	15	0,941	≥ 0,70	Very Reliable

Source: Data analyzed using SPSS, 2026

The reliability test in Table 3 was conducted to determine the level of consistency of the research instrument in measuring the variables under study. The reliability test in this study used Cronbach's Alpha, with the criterion that an instrument is considered reliable if it has a Cronbach's Alpha value of at least 0.70. Based on the reliability test results, the TikTok Content Marketing (X) variable, consisting of 31 statement items, obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.959. This value is above the minimum threshold of 0.70; therefore, the instrument for the TikTok Content Marketing variable is deemed highly reliable. Furthermore, the Purchase Decision variable (Y), consisting of 15 statement items, obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.941. This value is also greater than the minimum threshold of 0.70, so the instrument for the Purchase Decision variable is deemed highly reliable. Thus, all items in both research variables exhibit excellent internal consistency and are suitable for use as measurement tools in this study.

Simple Regression

Table 4: Simple Regression Analysis

Variabel	Regression Coefficient (B)	t-statistic	Sig.	Decision
Konstanta	15,476	3,955	0,000	Significant
Content Marketing TikTok (X)	0,362	10,414	0,000	Significantly Influential

Source: Data processed using SPSS, 2026

Based on the results of the simple linear regression analysis, the following regression equation was obtained: Y = 15.476 + 0.362X. This equation indicates that the constant term is 15.476. This means that if the TikTok Content Marketing variable is held constant, the Purchase Decision value is 15.476. Meanwhile, the regression coefficient for the TikTok Content Marketing variable of 0.362 indicates that a one-unit increase in TikTok Content Marketing will increase the Purchase Decision by 0.362. Based on the results of the simple linear regression analysis, it can be concluded that TikTok Content Marketing has a positive effect on the Purchase

Decision. This indicates that the better the content marketing strategy implemented through the TikTok platform, the higher the tendency for consumers to make a purchase decision. The positive regression coefficient of 0.362 indicates that every improvement in the quality of TikTok Content Marketing will be followed by an increase in Purchase Decision. Thus, TikTok Content Marketing has been proven to be one of the factors capable of driving consumers in determining their product purchase decisions

Coefficient of Determination

Table 5: Coefficient of Determination

Model	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Simple Linear Regression	0,447	0,443

Source: Data processed using SPSS, 2026

The coefficient of determination (R-squared) value of 0.447 indicates that the TikTok Content Marketing variable explains 44.7% of the variation in Purchase Decision, while the remaining 55.3% is influenced by other factors outside the research model. Based on the coefficient of determination (R-squared) value of 0.447, it can be concluded that the TikTok Content Marketing variable has a fairly strong influence on Purchase Decisions, specifically 44.7%. This indicates that TikTok Content Marketing is one of the key factors influencing consumers' decisions to make a purchase. Meanwhile, 55.3% of the Purchase Decision is influenced by other factors outside the scope of this study, such as price, product quality, consumer trust, customer reviews, promotions on other media, as well as consumers' personal needs and preferences. Thus, TikTok Content Marketing has been proven to have a significant influence on the Purchase Decision, although it is not the sole factor determining consumers' decisions to make a purchase.

Partial Hypothesis Testing

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing (t-Test)

Variabel	t-statistic	t-table	Sig.	Decision
Content Marketing TikTok (X)	10,414	1,977	0,000	H_0 is rejected, H_1 is accepted

Source: Data processed using SPSS, 2026

The results of the t-test in Table 6 show that the TikTok Content Marketing variable obtained a calculated t-value of 10.414 with a significance level of 0.000. This value is greater than the critical t-value of 1.977, and the significance level is less than 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that TikTok Content Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decisions. These results indicate that the more effective the content marketing presented through TikTok is, the greater the tendency for consumers to make a purchase decision.

DISCUSSION

This study shows that content marketing on the TikTok platform has a positive and significant influence on Generation Z's purchasing decisions. These findings indicate that the quality of marketing content presented via TikTok can serve as a stimulus that influences consumers in the purchasing decision-making process. This is evident from the positive regression coefficient, which shows that the better the quality of the marketing content received

by the audience, the higher the tendency for consumers to make a purchase. This phenomenon reflects changes in consumer behavior in the digital era, particularly among Generation Z, who have grown up in a tech-driven environment and rely heavily on social media as their primary source of information. In this context, TikTok no longer functions merely as an entertainment platform but has evolved into a digital space capable of shaping perceptions, preferences, and consumption decisions. The transformation of social media has turned it into a marketing ecosystem with significant potential to directly influence consumer behavior through personal, rapid, and sustained interactions (Appel et al., 2019)

The significant impact of content marketing revealed in this study indicates that Generation Z consumers tend to respond positively to content that is presented in a creative, concise, and visual manner and aligns with emerging digital trends. These characteristics are consistent with the findings (Alalwan, 2018) which states that the elements of interactivity, visualization, and ease of access to information on social media play a crucial role in shaping consumer purchase intent. TikTok offers all these characteristics through short-form video content, which allows marketing messages to be conveyed more effectively than conventional promotional approaches. The primary strength of TikTok's content marketing lies in its ability to build engagement rapidly. Consumers do not merely passively receive information; rather, they actively engage through features such as comments, likes, shares, and direct interactions with the displayed content. This dynamic reinforces the argument (Koay et al., 2021) which explains that social media marketing activities capable of generating meaningful interactions will enhance consumers' positive perceptions of a brand and drive purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, purchasing decisions influenced by TikTok content marketing can also be explained through the psychological aspects of digital consumers. Repeated exposure to content tailored to user preferences via personalization algorithms makes consumers more familiar with a product. This familiarity gradually builds trust and confidence in the product being offered (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020) emphasizes that the credibility of digital visual content has a significant influence on purchase intention because it creates a perception of authenticity and emotional connection with consumers. On the other hand, the substantial contribution of content marketing to purchase decisions reaching 44.7% indicates that this variable plays a significant role in explaining consumer behavior. This figure suggests that nearly half of respondents' purchase decisions are influenced by the quality of content marketing they receive via TikTok; the quality of interactions with digital content significantly impacts purchase intention through perceptions of usefulness and consumer trust (Geng & Chen, 2021) However, the results of this study also indicate that purchasing decisions are not entirely determined by content marketing; there are other factors that influence consumer decisions, such as price, product quality, brand reputation, electronic word of mouth, and individual needs. This indicates that TikTok content marketing serves as an initial driver that builds consumer attention and interest; however, the final decision is still influenced by consumers' rational evaluation of the products offered. In the context of social commerce, purchasing decisions are influenced by digital interactions that foster consumer trust in the information received through social media (Hajli, 2015).

Furthermore, user engagement on digital platforms is also a key factor in enhancing the effectiveness of content marketing, (Hilvert-Bruce et al., 2018) explains that the higher the level of user interaction with digital content, the greater the likelihood of behavioral responses, including purchasing decisions. The findings of this study have practical implications: businesses need to understand the characteristics of Generation Z when designing content marketing strategies. Content that is authentic, informative, relevant, and creatively packaged will have a

greater chance of capturing consumers' attention. In TikTok's fast-paced ecosystem, a brand's ability to adapt to digital trends is a critical factor in maintaining relevance in the eyes of the audience. Overall, the results of this study confirm that TikTok has become a strategic marketing medium in influencing Generation Z's purchasing decisions. The effectiveness of content marketing on this platform lies in its ability to integrate entertainment, information, interactivity, and personalization into a single digital experience capable of significantly shaping consumption behavior (Alalwan, 2018; Appel et al., 2019)

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that TikTok content marketing has a positive and significant effect on Generation Z's purchasing decisions. The results of the simple linear regression analysis indicate that an improvement in the quality of TikTok content marketing is followed by an increase in consumer purchasing decisions. This finding is supported by the results of the hypothesis test, which show that the TikTok Content Marketing variable has a statistically significant effect on purchasing decisions. A coefficient of determination of 44.7% indicates that TikTok content marketing has a fairly strong influence on purchasing decisions, while the remainder is influenced by other factors outside the scope of this study, such as price, product quality, consumer trust, and individual preferences. This study confirms that TikTok has become an effective digital marketing medium for businesses to reach Generation Z. Creative, relevant, authentic, and interactive content has proven capable of capturing consumer attention, increasing engagement, and driving purchasing decisions. Therefore, businesses need to optimize their TikTok-based content marketing strategies to better align with the characteristics and digital behaviors of Generation Z.

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