



**The Impact of Grocery Stores' TikTok Marketing on Customer's  
Purchasing Behaviour**

***A Study of TikTok Trends in the Helsinki Metropolitan Grocery  
Retail Sector***

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## Abstract

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<p>This thesis explores the influence of TikTok marketing on consumer purchasing behaviour, with a specific focus on the grocery retail sector. As social media platforms continue to shape digital communications and commerce, TikTok has emerged as a particularly impactful channel for brands aiming to engage modern consumers. The primary research problem addressed in this study is how grocery stores utilise TikTok marketing – especially global trend driven content – to influence purchasing decisions and build stronger customer relationships.</p> <p>Through the analysis of marketing content, consumer responses, and digital behaviour patterns, this research highlights the strategic potential of TikTok in grocery retail marketing. The findings demonstrate that trend-driven marketing on TikTok offers a powerful way to connect with younger, digitally native consumers, who are increasingly shaping retail demand. Finnish grocery stores that successfully adapt and localise these global trends are enhancing their visibility as well as fostering cultural relevance and long-term customer loyalty.</p> <p>Ultimately, this study underscores the evolving role of social media in retail marketing and points to the growing importance of platforms such as TikTok in driving product discovery, shaping consumer perceptions, and influencing behaviour in the digital age.</p>
<b>Key words</b> TikTok Marketing, Customer Behaviour, Purchasing Behaviour, Grocery Retail, Global Trends

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# 1 Introduction

Social media has an increasingly significant role in in the domain of marketing, and it became a crucial ever since the digitalization. Digitalization in marketing has brought tremendous changes in the traditional methods of marketing, providing a wide access of potential customers (Bapat, 2018). Internet and social media as marketing tools are getting a lot of attention among entrepreneurs, managers, investors and other business actors. In marketing context, social media are considered platforms on which people build networks and share information and other content (Li, Larimo & Leonidou, 2020).

Internet and social media marketing is growing rapidly. New trends emerge on a daily basis, necessitating the continuous evolution of corporate strategies. Failure to adapt may expose firms to significant risks. Hence, future oriented companied must already acknowledge the impact of globalisation on all aspects of business operations and decision-making. Therefore, digital marketing has become more prominent and widely practiced, and the methods of traditional marketing are utterly replaced by digital marketing (Faruk, Rahman & Hasan, 2021). In addition, by this development of digital marketing, social media has moved on from being a personal consumer-oriented paradigm to something that has a huge impact on companies, and therefore, companies of all sizes are now using social media to improve their business (Singla & Durga, 2015).

## 1.1 Context of the Study

In Finland, social media marketing has expanded across numerous sectors, including retail. The retail industry has effectively leveraged various social media platforms, regardless of the company size. While major players in the sector, such as Kesko and K-Group, have successfully established a strong presence on these platforms, smaller companies within the chain, including individual grocery stores, have moreover made themselves well-represented there. One of the most widely used platforms for local grocery stores to engage with customers, enhance visibility and promote their own business, is TikTok.

With a great popularity and explosive growth of TikTok, numerous companies have started to apply the marketing opportunities offered by TikTok to reach new customers and create visibility for the company and its products or services (Venermo, 2023). This has also been done by numerous K-Group retailers, as each of them has the opportunity to decide the marketing strategies of their own store and where it is carried out. Given that TikTok is a strategically great platform to market to,

especially nowadays, considering its recognition and popularity among all demographics, many companies have wanted to take their own marketing there as well.

In recent years, particularly following TikTok's rapid emergence as a powerful marketing platform, consumer interest in trending products has notably increased, prompting more individuals to seek such items in grocery stores. And with the popularity of the platform and its trends, many grocery stores have taken to TikTok to market those trends that are in high demand among consumers. In addition to this, a considerable number of the stores share their normal daily lives in the store, make content regarding trending products and new in-coming products, and a variety of other types of content. However, this marketing style, which is often encountered, is ongoing, as everyone tries to gain a competitive advantage with this tactic and encourage foot traffic and in-store purchasing activity.

### **1.1.1 Defining Key TikTok Trends**

TikTok trends represent recurring, rapidly evolving themes or behaviours that gain popularity through the platform's algorithm-driven exposure. In the context of consumer products – especially within grocery retail – these trends can take the form of viral food items, trending product recommendations, or widely replicated content formats such as specific music, sounds, editing styles, humour or challenges. Although the themes of TikTok trends may shift frequently, certain categories – such as beauty product reviews, cooking recipes, and comedic clips – remain consistently popular.

A "trending product" in this case, typically refers to an item that experiences a sudden surge in visibility and consumer demand due to widespread attention on TikTok. In the grocery retail context, this can be seen in the case of flavoured or "candy" dates (Picture 1.), which gained massive popularity after going viral on TikTok. Their sales increased significantly across major retail groups, including Kesko Oyj, where they have attained sales levels compared to those of popular candy products. According to Kesko's Communications Manager Helena Viinanen, the demand of the product exceeded all expectations, driven by both novelty of the product and successful marketing efforts (Salovaara, 2024).



Picture 1. Green Dates' Candy Dates (Koenkytö, 2025)

Similarly, non-food items such as the skincare brand CeraVe experienced rapid growth after TikTok users shared personal success stories of its effectiveness (Halonen, 2021). These examples illustrate how TikTok's algorithm is central in pushing viral content to the "For You" page, making products visible to millions of users in a very short time. As Nicola (2022) explains, the success of such trends often lies in the simplicity and reproducibility of the content – whether it is testing a product, recreating a recipe, or taking a part in a challenge – making them easy to tailor and share.

As TikTok continues to shape modern communication and consumption habits, its trends serve not only as entertainment but as powerful tools in influencing real-world purchasing behaviour. Products that have gained traction through TikTok – such as Prime Hydration drinks, Buldak Instant Noodles by Samyang, and the aforementioned candy dates – serve as notable examples of how online hype can continue into in-store demand. For example, the case of Buldak's carbonara-flavoured instant noodles illustrates this dynamic vividly.

Although the product has been available since 2017, a TikTok video showcasing its vibrant packaging and unique flavour received over 57 million views and prompted a surge in global interest, with Google searches increasing fivefold compared to previous year (Park, 2024). Similarly, Prime Hydration, a beverage brand endorsed by internet personalities KSI and Logan Paul, caused heated scenes in stores due to its online virality and limited availability (Pandey, 2023).

As outlined, this thesis does not concentrate on any single product or trend. Instead, the focus lies on the broader utilisation of TikTok trends by the participating grocery stores – whether these trends relate to specific items, content formats, editing techniques, or user driven challenges – offering a comprehensive view of how trend-based marketing manifests in the grocery retail context.

### 1.1.2 Key Concepts and Definitions

**TikTok:** The leading social media application for short-form mobile videos. The application aims to “inspire creativity and bring joy to life” (TikTok, n.d.).

**TikTok Marketing:** Marketing that is carried out on TikTok.

**Consumer Purchasing Behaviour:** Consumer purchasing behaviour refers to the actions and decision-making process individuals undertake before making a purchase (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

**User Generated Content (UGC):** Material created by individuals (often resembling the target audience) rather than the brand itself. This can include social media posts, and it often represents authentic content produced by consumers reflecting their interactions with a brand (American Marketing Association, 2024).

**Engagement Metrics:** Essential indicators employed to assess the success of a marketing strategy. These metrics provide insight into the ways users interact with a brand, product or service, whether through likes, shares, comments, click-through rates, or the duration of their engagement on a website (WiserNotify.com, n.d.).

**Consumer vs. Customer:** In this thesis, the terms *consumer* and *customer* are used interchangeably. Both refer to individuals who may engage with grocery store content on

TikTok, may make purchasing decisions based on this engagement and may have answered the survey. While *consumer* is often used in academic literature and *customer* is more common in general contexts, in this study, they represent the same group of people.

The following concepts and their definitions were generated by ChatGPT 4.0:

**Social Media Trends:** Recurring and viral topic, behaviours, or content styles that gain popularity within a social media platform.

**Content Virality:** The phenomenon where content, such as videos, images, or posts, rapidly gains widespread attention and engagement on a platform such as TikTok due to its shareable nature, algorithm-driven visibility, and high user interaction.

**Trend-Driven Marketing:** A marketing strategy where businesses align their promotional efforts with the trends emerging on platforms such as TikTok.

**Brand Presence:** The visibility and recognition of a brand across various platforms, particularly social media.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Study

The primary research problem addressed in this study, is to understand the impact of TikTok marketing on consumer purchasing behaviour, particularly within the context of grocery stores. As social media platforms, especially TikTok, continue to evolve, they have increasingly become powerful tools for influencing consumer choices. This study examines how grocery stores are leveraging global TikTok trends to engage consumers, enhance brand presence, and drive sales.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

Research Question 1	How do TikTok trends influence consumer purchasing decisions in grocery stores?
Research Question 2	What role do social media trends play in shaping grocery store marketing strategies on TikTok?
Research Question 3	How do consumers engage with grocery store content on TikTok, and what factors drive their engagement?

Table 1. Overlay matrix

<b>Research Questions (RQs)</b>	<b>Survey Questions (SQs)</b>	<b>Theoretical Framework Concepts</b>	<b>Results</b>
RQ1: How do TikTok trends influence consumer purchasing decisions in grocery stores?	6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16	Examines the direct impact of global TikTok trends on consumers' in-store behaviour and curiosity, highlighting how trend-driven content encourages product discovery and purchase decisions.	4.2, 5.2
RQ2: What role do social media trends play in shaping grocery store marketing strategies on TikTok?	14, 15, 16, 17, 18	Focuses on how grocery stores adopt and implement global TikTok trends to shape marketing strategies, aiming to increase visibility, engagement, and sales through trend participation.	4.3, 5.2
RQ3: How do consumers engage with grocery store content on TikTok, and what factors drive their engagement?	3, 4, 5, 13, 19, 20	Explores consumer interaction with trend-based content, identifying which types of global trends capture attention and drive engagement with grocery store profiles.	4.2, 5.2

These research questions aim to explore the dynamics between TikTok marketing and consumer behaviour, with a focus on the grocery retail sector's use of the platform to influence purchasing decisions and engage with customers.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

This study contributes to academic knowledge by addressing a gap in the literature on TikTok marketing, particularly in the context of grocery retail. While much research focuses on broader social media platforms, TikTok's impact on consumer purchasing behaviour within grocery stores remains unexplored. This thesis aims to provide new insights into how TikTok trends influence purchasing decisions and how grocery stores can leverage these trends.

Practically, the study offers strategic marketing insights for grocery retailers on using TikTok to engage customers and drive sales. It highlights how TikTok trends shape consumer behaviour and offers recommendations on how to optimise TikTok content for better engagement and drive sales.

As TikTok continues to grow as a major marketing platform, this research has implications for future retail marketing strategies, helping retailers adapt to shifting digital trends and consumer habits.

This study is particularly relevant to marketers, social media managers, and retailers, providing them with a comprehensive understanding of how TikTok marketing works in practice and how global trends can be utilised to influence consumer purchasing behaviour.

### **1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This thesis focuses on examining how TikTok marketing influences consumer purchasing behaviour within the context of grocery retail sector in Finland, with an emphasis on the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, including selected grocery stores from Helsinki, Vantaa and Espoo. The research is confined to grocery stores operated in the Kesko Oyj chain, one of Finland's leading retail chains, and does not extend to other forms of retail or international markets.

The study targets consumers aged 18 and older, as university regulations limit participation to younger age demographics. Obtaining proper consent from individuals under 18 would require additional approvals, such as guardian consent, which possess logistical challenges. Therefore, the research focuses on how TikTok trends influence the engagement and purchasing decisions of adult consumers within the context of grocery shopping, rather than exploring broader consumer behaviour or other marketing platforms.

In terms of limitations, the research is constrained by the geographical focus on the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and the selection of a single retail chain, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other regions or grocery retailers. Additionally, the study's reliance on consumer surveys and content analysis may not capture the full spectrum of consumer behaviour or broader impact of TikTok marketing on the grocery retail sector in Finland.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, the theoretical framework for understanding how TikTok marketing influences consumer purchasing behaviour in the context of local grocery stores is presented. As TikTok continues to grow as a global platform known for trend-driven and algorithm-based content, it has become an influential force in shaping how consumers discover and engage with brands.

The chapter introduces key concepts relevant to this study, including social media marketing, TikTok-specific marketing strategies, social media trends and virality, and the role of trends in consumer decision-making. Together, these themes provide insight into how grocery retailers can leverage TikTok to engage audiences, enhance brand visibility, and ultimately drive sales.

### 2.1 Introduction to Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing has emerged as a transformative force in the business world, enabling companies to connect with consumers in ways that were not possible in the past. Through platforms such as social networking sites, microblogs, and content-sharing communities, businesses can now build meaningful relationships with customers based on shared interests and values (Li et al., 2020). These platforms empower firms to reach broad audiences as well as to do so in a targeted, personalized, and real-time manner, enhancing trust, relevance, and community-building (Bapat, 2018).

In recent years, research across various industries has placed particular emphasis on the influence of social media marketing on consumer behaviour. As Prasath and Yoganathen (2018) highlight, social media has brought consumers back to the centre of marketing efforts, offering businesses innovative tools to engage audiences and shape buying decisions. It plays a critical role in shaping brand perceptions, driving brand loyalty, and fostering deeper customer relationships. Although social media marketing offers numerous strategic advantages, it remains a complex domain owing to the ever-changing nature of digital trends. Consequently, businesses must consistently revise their strategies to sustain consumer relevance (Li et al., 2020).

A key strength of social media lies in its ability to provide direct and interactive communication channel between businesses and consumers. Platforms such as TikTok allow brands to respond to comments, mentions, and messages in real time, which can foster a sense of community and strengthen consumer relationships (Joshi, 2024). Such reciprocal interaction fosters enhanced

customer satisfaction, strengthens loyalty, and may lead to proactive brand advocacy. For grocery stores, this means that engaging content – such as responding to user-generated videos or participation in trending challenges – can not only enhance visibility but also drive more meaningful consumer connections. Furthermore, by sharing compelling and trend-relevant content, businesses can increase traffic to their online platforms or in-store promotions, ultimately influencing consumer purchasing behaviour. As Joshi (2024) emphasises, leveraging social media effectively is essential in today's competitive digital landscape, especially for businesses seeking to build brand awareness and generate measurable results.

## 2.2 TikTok Marketing

TikTok has rapidly emerged as significant social media marketing platform, especially given its expansive global reach and unique format of short, engaging videos. As Choudhary, Gautam, and Arya (2020) note, the application enables users to create and share videos, with millions of active users across 154 countries. TikTok's short-form video format supports the "micro-narrative" model, capturing user attention in brief, highly consumable segments. This model appeals to users' curiosity and encourages engagement, aligning with the diffusion of innovation theory, where content spreads rapidly within social networks (Choudhary et al., 2020). For brands and companies, TikTok presents an unprecedented opportunity to connect with diverse audiences and establish a solid presence, making it a powerful tool for today's businesses.

In recent years, marketing objectives have evolved from merely reaching vast audiences to building relationships and fostering two-way communication, as highlighted by Azpeitia (2021). TikTok exemplifies this shift, as not merely engages audiences but additionally encourages them to interact with branded content, transforming them from passive viewers to into active participants. Unlike traditional one-way advertising methods, TikTok's algorithm holds a pivotal role in enhancing engagement by compiling personalized content based on users' preferences and interactions. This algorithm, combined with the application's trend-focused and challenge-driven culture, enables content to go viral swiftly, amplifying brand reach through *network-enhanced word-of-mouth* (Azpeitia, 2021). This application's distinct content forms, such as challenges, short storytelling, and live streams, provide diverse avenues for brands to creatively connect with their target markets.

For locally operating businesses, TikTok offers specific advantages that can be crucial for their growth and visibility. The application and its platform, allows local brands to reach nearby consumers, fostering brand familiarity and loyalty. Moreover, the application's focus on trends and user-

generated content allows businesses potentially leverage influencers and encourage authentic customer engagement. In addition, TikTok supports influencer marketing, which, according to Choudhary et al. (2020), is increasingly popular for reaching vast audiences through trusted voices. By collaborating with local influencers, small businesses can tap into community networks, enhancing their reliability and expanding their customer base without exorbitant costs.

Another key advantage of TikTok is its interactive and dynamic engagement mode, rooted in social media's evolution as a two-way communication channel. TikTok allows consumers to become creators and collaborators, sharing and interacting with brand content in a way that benefits both parties. Li et al. (2020) explains the customer engagement on social media reflects on a continuum, where interactions between brands and consumers increase engagement levels and drive value for both parties. In this case of TikTok, engagement is fostered through "social exchange" dynamics, where businesses can benefit from consumer interactions, driving both local and international reach.

### **2.3 Social Media Trends and Virality**

Social media platforms, particularly TikTok, have transformed how brands engage with consumer by offering an environment where trends emerge and spread rapidly. These trends – ranging from viral challenges and sounds to hashtag campaigns – play a vital role in influencing consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions (Ahmad et al., 2024; Achek, 2024). The fundamental nature of virality lies in the spread ability and emotional resonance of content. As Atayeva (2024) notes, content that evokes strong emotions such as joy, excitement, or curiosity is more likely to be shared, driving high levels of engagement and visibility across platforms.

Virality is especially powerful on TikTok, where short-form videos are widely consumed and where algorithm prioritizes content based on user interaction, not follower count. This allows even small businesses, including local grocery stores, to reach large audiences. Finnish grocery stores, for instance, have successfully embraced this opportunity by adapting global viral trends to reflect domestic culture. Rather than copying trends, they reframe popular challenges and trends to align with Finnish values, humour, and preferences. Adapting content to reflect local cultural contexts reinforces brand authenticity and promotes active consumer participation (The Content Mix, 2022; Chidimma & Nnaemeka, 2019).

Acknowledging the power and influence of these trends, entire organisations and publications have emerged with the sole purpose of identifying, analysing, and forecasting them. These actors create trend guides that help companies and individuals anticipate what is coming next, allowing them to craft content that aligns with future cultural shifts and remain relevant in the fast-paced social media landscape (Yliluoma, 2022).

Marketing through viral trends is not without challenges. The unpredictable and fast-paced nature of social media trends demands continuous monitoring and quick adaptation. As Zadníčková (2024) highlights, trends can emerge and disappear in days, making it difficult to build long-term marketing strategies around them. This is especially relevant for grocery retailers who must be able to balance trend responsiveness with their brand identity and logistical constraints.

In the retail sector, staying on top of emerging trends is essential to maintaining relevance (Anjorin, Raji & Olodo, 2024). Social media is no longer merely a communication tool; it is a cultural barometer that influences how consumers perceive brands and make purchase decisions. As such, TikTok and other platforms provide grocery retailers with a unique space to not only sell products but also build communities and tell culturally resonant stories through trend-driven content. The intersection of virality, cultural adaptation, and consumer engagement makes social media trends a compelling driver in modern marketing.

## **2.4 The Role of Trends in Consumer Decision-Making**

Consumer purchasing behaviour refers to the actions and decision-making process individuals undertake before making a purchase (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). These actions include online searches, social media engagement, reading reviews, and evaluating peer recommendations – activities that have become increasingly digitalized, particularly with the growth of platforms such as TikTok. In today's environment, understanding how trends influence this behaviour is critical, especially for grocery retailers seeking to adapt global content to local markets.

The emerge of smartphones and the widespread accessibility of the internet have transformed the way consumers gather information and form purchasing decisions. Already in the early 2000s, the rise of digital technologies shifted consumer's first point of contact from salespeople to online platforms, leading to a demand for accessible and engaging online content from brands (Bapat, 2018). This transformation established the foundation for the complex interplay that now exists between social media dynamics, trending content, and consumer purchasing behaviour.

In particular, social media platforms such as TikTok have become central in shaping how consumers – especially younger generations – engage with and ultimately decide on products. The application's algorithmic structure and short-form video format enable content to go viral quickly, often presenting trending products or services in a way that feels organic, entertaining, and emotionally compelling. According to Miñarro (2024), global trend-based content achieves greater impact when adapted locally, as it delivered cultural resonance that deepens consumer-brand connections and promotes repeat buying behaviour.

Social influence plays a powerful role in shaping consumer decisions on platforms such as TikTok. Content shared by peers, influencers, or everyday users is often perceived as more trustworthy and relatable than traditional advertising (Anjorin et al., 2024; Araujo et al., 2022). This aligns with consumer socialisation theory, which suggests that communication among consumers can shape cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses to marketing (Prasath & Yoganathen, 2018). Consequently, TikTok trends – often introduced through challenges, product hauls, or recipe videos – have the ability to directly impact how and what consumers choose to buy, including everyday necessities and groceries.

While engagement metrics such as views and likes offer surface level insights, they often fail to capture the deeper decision-making processes behind everyday life. TikTok, however, acts as a powerful engine for consumer trends, turning spontaneous engagement into real purchasing behaviour (Song, 2024). Viral hashtags such as *#TikTokMadeMeBuyIt* demonstrates how trends – amplified by influencers and user-generated content – can amplify the popularity and sales of even niche products.

The platform's algorithm-driven visibility, global reach, and interactive format make it uniquely effective in shaping perceptions and encouraging impulse purchases. Psychological drivers, such as the *Fear of Missing Out* (FOMO), also plays a key role, given that users are frequently driven by perceived urgency to engage with prevailing trends in order to maintain social visibility and relevance (Ahmad et al., 2024). This trend-driven culture fuels fast-paced consumer decision-making and reinforces TikTok's role as both a discovery tool and a motivator for action. For grocery stores, tapping into these viral dynamics through locally resonant, trend-based content offers a powerful way to influence purchasing behaviour in a highly responsive and engaging environment.

## 2.5 Summary

This chapter explored the dynamic role of TikTok marketing in shaping consumer purchasing behaviour, particularly through the influence of social media trends. As consumers increasingly rely on online platforms to discover and evaluate products, TikTok has emerged as a powerful driver of brand awareness and purchasing intent. Its short-form, algorithm-curated content allows for accelerated trend dissemination, creating a unique environment where products can gain massive visibility in a short time. Viral challenges and peer-driven content, such as unpaid reviews, are especially effective in engaging users – particularly among Generation Z, who tend to favour authentic and relatable content over traditional advertising (Muñoz, 2022).

Despite the platform's strength in generating brand awareness (Gesmundo et al., 2022), there are limitations in brand recall, which may impact actual purchase conversions. Still, awareness remains critical first step in the purchasing journey, especially for Millennials and Gen Z consumers who make quick, informed decisions online (Muñoz, 2022; Gesmundo et al., 2022).

Social media's broad reach also enables businesses – from startups to big grocery chains – to better understand and connect with their customers in real-time (Bapat, 2018). However, success on TikTok require more than just visibility. Trend-driven marketing ought to be culturally relevant and emotionally engaging to effectively influence purchasing behaviour. Grocery retailers can benefit by adapting global product trends into local content that resonates with their community (Swapna, Priyadharshini & Leon 2024).

Ultimately, TikTok provides modern, interactive bridge between brands and consumers, and its trend-driven nature continues to reshape how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products in both digital and physical spaces. While its marketing power has been widely explored in numerous sectors, its role in the grocery retail industry remains under-examined. This thesis aims to address that gap by examining how TikTok marketing influences consumer purchasing behaviour through the lens of social media trends. The study focuses on how grocery stores utilise TikTok to engage local audiences, build brand presence, and drive sales by capitalizing on viral content, short-form video storytelling, and user engagement mechanisms

### **3 Research Methodology**

This chapter will outline the research methodology used to examine how TikTok marketing influences consumer purchasing behaviour through social media trends, with a specific focus on how grocery stores utilise the platform to engage customers, drive sales, and shape their brand presence.

A mixed-methods approach is employed, combining quantitative and qualitative data to capture both the consumer perspective and marketing practices. The chapter presents the data collection methods, including survey design and distribution as well as content analysis of TikTok videos to explore trend-driven marketing mechanisms such as content virality, algorithm-driven visibility, and user engagement. It furthermore describes the data analysis techniques used to interpret the findings in a structured and meaningful way. Ethical considerations related to data privacy and participant confidentiality are also addressed to ensure research validity and reliability.

#### **3.1 Research Approach: Mixed-Methods**

This thesis utilises a mixed-methods research approach, strategically integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to leverage the strengths of each. According to Harvard Catalyst, mixed methods “strategically integrate or combine rigorous quantitative and qualitative research methods to draw on the strengths of each... offsetting limitations of exclusively quantitative and qualitative research through a complementary approach that maximizes strengths of each data type and facilitates a more comprehensive understanding” (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services National Institutes of Health, 2018).

In the context of the research conducted in this thesis, the quantitative aspect is carried out through a survey seeks to collect numerical data on consumer behaviour, engagement, and purchasing decision influenced by TikTok marketing. The survey, which is available in Finnish, is distributed in three grocery stores in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Then, the qualitative section involves content analysis of TikTok posts made by the participating grocery stores, focusing on their participation in trends. Engagement metrics such as views, likes, and comments will be analysed in connection with these trends to gain a comprehensive understanding of the audience’s interaction. Additionally, the quality of the comments will be examined to uncover further insights into customer responses and engagement.

In this research, methodological balance of the method used refers to the intentional and balanced combination of both methods to ensure they complement and enhance each other. Instead of treating these methods as separate or competing approaches, methodological balance emphasises their interdependence. It ensures that strengths are maximally utilised, therefore, the quantitative data offers scope and generalisability, while qualitative data provides depth and concrete context. Additionally, the methodological balance ensures that limitations are offset, and therefore, the weaknesses of one method (e.g., possible lack of context in quantitative data) are mitigated by the strengths of the other (e.g., insights from qualitative data) method. It furthermore allows alignment with research objectives, therefore, both methods work together to answer the research questions holistically, providing a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

The mixed-methods approach incorporated both descriptive analysis and content analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of how TikTok marketing influences consumer purchasing behaviour. Descriptive analysis is essential for summarising and identifying trends in the collected data, helping to outline patterns in consumer engagement and purchasing behaviour. By examining the current and historical data, this type of analysis allows for the identification of key relationships and trends, setting the stage for further in-depth analysis (Cote, 2021). It also provides a clear overview of how different variables, such as content engagement and consumer responses, relate to each other, enabling a more structured interpretation of the data (Rawat, 2021).

The mixed-methods approach is particularly well-suited for this study as it aligns with the research questions by combining inductive and deductive reasoning. The quantitative data provides a broad understanding of consumer behaviour, while the qualitative content analysis offers deeper insights into how TikTok marketing influences engagement and purchasing decisions. By analysing trends, engagement metrics, and consumer interactions, this study explores how grocery stores leverage TikTok's viral content, algorithm-driven visibility, and trend participation to shape brand presence and drive sales.

### **3.2 Data Collection Methods**

The data of this research was gathered by using a mixed-methods approach, utilising quantitative and qualitative techniques to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. Two primary methods were used: a survey and an observational content analysis process.

The survey aimed to collect numerical data from participants on their TikTok usage, engagement with local grocery stores' TikTok content, and how such content influences their purchasing behaviour and decisions. The content analysis process involved analysing participating grocery stores' TikTok accounts to identify trends, content styles, and engagement metrics.

This chapter will provide an overview of the methods used, starting with the survey design and distribution of it in section 3.2.1, followed by an overview of the content analysis process in section 3.2.2.

### **3.2.1 Content Analysis Process**

The purpose of this content analysis is to examine the TikTok content produced by the participating grocery stores, focusing on how global trends are utilised to engage local audiences, drive sales, and shape brand presence. By analysing the types of content created, the extent to which viral trends are incorporated into the content, and the methods of engaging consumers through TikTok's short-form video format, this analysis aims to establish a link between trend-driven marketing strategies, consumer engagement, and the impact on purchasing behaviour, which will be later compared with survey results.

Content analysis serves as a crucial qualitative approach, providing insights into the types of trends leveraged, how TikTok's viral nature is harnessed, and how the content's engagement metrics reflect on consumer interest and interaction. According to Columbia University Irving Medical Center (n.d.), content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within qualitative data. Researchers can quantify and analyse the presence, meanings, and relationships of these elements, making it a useful method for understanding how content engages consumers and drive marketing outcomes. TikTok was selected as the platform for analysis, as the study focuses on understanding how TikTok trends influence consumer purchasing behaviour and brand marketing strategies within this specific social media environment.

The analysis considered a broad range of content types, including viral challenges, user-generated content, and product-focused content. Content was examined to determine whether it integrated global trends through theme-based elements or trend participation. Engagement metrics, including views, likes and shares, were analysed to assess audience interaction with content, providing an indication of how well the trends resonated with

the target demographic. However, no systematic quantitative recordings of these metrics were made.

Content analysis offers several advantages, as highlighted by Columbia University Irving Medical Center (n.d.). It allows for both qualitative analysis of content themes and quantitative analysis of engagement metrics, providing valuable insights into how trends evolve and how audience responses are shaped by these trends. These strengths make it particularly useful for documenting how content virality and algorithm-driven visibility contribute to consumer engagement and behavioural responses to marketing messages.

Data collection was conducted primarily through notes and screenshots, with screenshots capturing the content that prominently reflected viral trends or featured trends in a way that was likely to impact consumer purchasing decisions. Notes documenting key observations were systematically compiled in an Excel file. The analysis covered a comprehensive time frame, spanning from the earliest available posts to the most recent, allowing for a thorough examination of content evolution and trend utilisation over time.

### **3.2.2 Survey Design and Distribution**

The survey of this research was conducted in Finnish and structured to include 18 core questions, categorized to align with the thesis objectives and research questions. The survey begins with demographic and TikTok usage patterns, followed by questions focused on consumer engagement with the participating grocery stores' TikTok content, purchasing behaviours influenced by the platform, and attitudes toward global trends and their local adaptations. The survey uses a combination of close-ended questions (multiple choice, Likert scale) for quantitative data and open-ended questions for additional qualitative insights. This survey structure ensures a comprehensive data collection process, while maintaining respondent engagement.

The full survey questionnaire used for data collection is included in Appendix 1.

### 3.3 Data Analysis Methods

To analyse the collected data, a mixed-method approach was used. The content focused on identifying recurring themes and patterns in the TikTok content of the participating grocery stores. For the quantitative data gathered through the survey, descriptive analysis was used to examine the frequency and distribution of responses, highlighting the most common views and behaviours among participants. By combining the insights from both methods, the analysis aimed to uncover overarching themes and provide deeper understanding of how TikTok trends influence consumer behaviour in the grocery retail context.

### 3.4 Ethical Guidelines: Protecting Data and Participants

While conducting this research, ethical considerations play a critical role in ensuring the protection of participants' rights, the confidentiality of their data, and compliance with relevant regulations.

The data collected for this research includes anonymous survey responses, which majority of is non-personal, the inclusion of age classifies the dataset as containing personal data under GDPR guidelines.

To ensure that all participants provide informed consent, the survey begins with a consent statement. This statement outlines the purpose of the research, how the data will be used, confidentiality assurance, and the voluntary participation. Respondents must check a mandatory consent box to confirm their understanding and agreement before continuing with the survey. This ensures that participation is both informed and documented. Below is the full consent statement (translated in English) which was provided to survey respondents:

*“This survey is part of a thesis and its research on TikTok marketing and consumer behaviour.*

*For more information: [bha970@myy.haaga-helia.fi](mailto:bha970@myy.haaga-helia.fi)*

*It will take 3-5 minutes to complete the survey. Your participation is voluntary, and your answers will remain anonymous. The information will be used for academic purposes only, and you can exit the survey at any time. By checking the box below, you confirm that you have read the information above and agree to participate in the survey.”*

All the data gathered from the survey is securely stored on Webropol, a platform recommended by the university for its compliance with data protection standards. To protect the anonymity of the respondents, no identifying information beyond age will be collected, and responses will be stored separately from any metadata. The survey data will be deleted promptly upon the conclusion of the research and thesis process aligning with GDPR and university policies.

## 4 Results

This chapter presents the empirical research conducted for this thesis, including both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The study consists of a survey and a content analysis of TikTok marketing strategies used by participating grocery stores. First, the participating grocery stores are introduced, followed on by survey results and analysis of their TikTok content. The gathered insights are examined using the chosen research methods. Additionally, the chapter presents and analyses the survey results, providing a comprehensive understanding of consumer perspectives on TikTok marketing in grocery retail. Finally, the data is interpreted in relation to the mechanisms of trend-driven marketing, consumer engagement, and the impact of TikTok's viral content on purchasing behaviour.

### 4.1 Overview of the Participating Grocery Stores

All three grocery stores that participate in this thesis – K-Supermarket Tripla, K-Supermarket Lipulaiva and K-Citymarket Jumbo – are locally operating grocery stores located in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Each operates within the K-Group, under the Kesko Oyj name.

Kesko Oyj, is the largest retail company in Finland and one of the largest in Northern Europe. It operates across the grocery trade, building and technical trade, and car trade sectors. Kesko has a strong expertise and market position in these operating fields, offering them a good and profitable long-term growth potential. Additionally, digitalisation and customer experience are complementary central themes in Kesko's strategy and their key elements in utilising digitalisation are to enable the best possible customer experience and to increase the efficiency of their operations and consequently their cost-efficiency (Kesko Oyj, 2025). The company's operations focus on utilizing data in many ways, and the company's visibility on social media is furthermore noticeable, with increased amount of shared digitalised advertising and grocery stores present in the social media landscape. Furthermore, in its annual report of 2023, Kesko Oyj shares that social media is one of the most important interaction channels with customers.

The three participating grocery stores maintain an active social media presence, including TikTok. Each store produces content on the platform within a distinct style, showcasing unique features of their individual operations. However, despite their individual styles and unique offerings, all three stores share a common approach to TikTok; staying relevant by engaging with platform trends while tailoring their content to highlight their distinct identities and own areas. This shared strategy

reflects the adaptability and creativity of these stores in connecting with diverse audiences, from local customers to younger, trend-savvy TikTok users, while maintaining the relevancy in the local area.

#### **4.1.1 K-Supermarket Tripla, Helsinki**

K-Supermarket Tripla, is a locally operating grocery store in Pasila, Helsinki, within Mall of Tripla, one of the largest shopping centres among the Nordic countries. Since the opening in 2019, K-Supermarket Tripla has been active on social media platforms, including TikTok, where the store began creating content in 2021. With a TikTok following of approximately 12,000 and over 364,00 likes (based on 14<sup>th</sup> of April, 2025) and views ranging from over 1,000 to an impressive 404,900, the store's content focuses on *edutok* – a blend of educational and entertaining videos – highlighting expertise and consumer guidance (Mäntyranta, 2024).

In addition to providing “behind-the-scenes” glimpses into daily store operations, the store showcases its high-quality offerings. K-Supermarket Tripla is recognised for delivering the best produce, featuring a wide range of options from fresh baked goods and vegetables to fish to premium vegetarian products. The store is particularly known for its extensive selection of cold cuts, including Italian hams and salamis, and a unique cheese selection. The newest and quite unique feature of the store is the “pick and mix frozen goods” section, supplied by Huurre Herkku – a new company with products available in only six stores across Finland, gaining popularity especially through TikTok within consumers.

Strategically located in the transportation centre of Pasila, the store benefits from excellent accessibility via buses, trains, and private vehicles. This ideal positioning makes it a convenient destination for a diverse range of customers, further enhancing its appeal and reach.

#### **4.1.2 K-Supermarket Lippulaiva, Espoo**

K-Supermarket Lippulaiva, is located in Espoonlahti, Espoo, within the Lippulaiva shopping centre, which opened in 2022. The store is situated conveniently within the Espoonlahti

metro station, enjoying excellent accessibility, making it a popular destination for a wide range of customers.

On TikTok, K-Supermarket Lippulaiva has built a strong following of approximately 8,200 users and has received nearly 270,00 likes (based on 14<sup>th</sup> of April, 2025). Its videos, which have received views ranging from over 1,000 to an impressive 162,900, focus on showcasing the unique offerings and daily activities of the store. A defining feature of their TikTok presence is the frequent appearance of the store owner, Juuso, who has become a recognisable face in their content. Other staff members additionally make appearances, contributing to the relatable and personable image of the store.

Additionally, the store's TikTok content emphasises participating in current trends on the platform, including popular music, video editing templates, and challenges. One particularly popular video features an older staff member using Gen Z vocabulary to present the store, a humorous and creative way to connect with younger audiences. Beyond trends, the store provides behind-the-scenes glimpses into its operations, such as showing day in the life of the store owner.

A standout feature of K-Supermarket Lippulaiva is its food market street, offering fresh beef, fish and a remarkable cheese selection. The store is committed to maintaining a top-tier selection across all product categories, from candy and drinks – favourites among younger customers – to fresh vegetables and meats that cater to older shoppers.

#### **4.1.3 K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo, Vantaa**

K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo is located in the Jumbo shopping centre in Vantaa, near Helsinki-Vantaa Airport and the surrounding airport hotels. This strategic location allows the store to cater to both international travellers and local residents, making it a unique hub for a diverse customer base.

In November 2024, K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo was recognized as “Store of the Month” by the British Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD), a globally renowned research and expert organization in the retail sector. The IGD praised the store for its captivating customer experience and the innovative touches integrated throughout its aisles, enhancing the shopping journey (Kesko Oyj, 2024).

On TikTok, K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo has established a significant presence, boasting 22,800 followers and 336,900 likes (based on 14<sup>th</sup> of April, 2025). The store's videos regularly achieve high engagement, with views ranging from over 2,000 to an impressive 306,300. A majority of posts consistently surpass 10,000 views, showcasing the store's ability to connect with a broad audience.

The store's content strategy on TikTok seems to reflect its "American-like" identity, emphasizing diverse range of products and services. A notable highlight is its unique "Candy Heaven" section, renowned for its one-of-a-kind selection of sweets. This candy section has become a recurring theme in the store's TikTok videos, making it particularly popular among younger audiences. In addition to candy, the store frequently promotes products appealing to various demographics, including drinks, snacks, and other trending delicacies that resonate with TikTok's audience. The store additionally uses TikTok as a platform for interactive engagement, such as contests where followers can participate, and win prizes. This approach not only drives engagement but additionally attracts new followers eager to participate in these opportunities.

K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo further showcases its offerings through engaging videos that highlight unique features, such as its deli specialty deli section with custom-filled subs, a peanut butter machine, and an extensive pick-and-mix candy selection. This diverse content ensures the store appeals to a wide range of customers – from local families to travelers – while maintaining a strong connection with its youthful and trend-savvy TikTok audience.

## 4.2 Findings from the Survey

The survey, conducted between December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025, aimed to gather data into consumer behaviour and perceptions related to TikTok marketing. It was advertised in three participating grocery stores located across the Helsinki Metropolitan area, covering Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa, and the survey was available to respondents by scanning a QR code. In total, 85 individuals answered the survey.

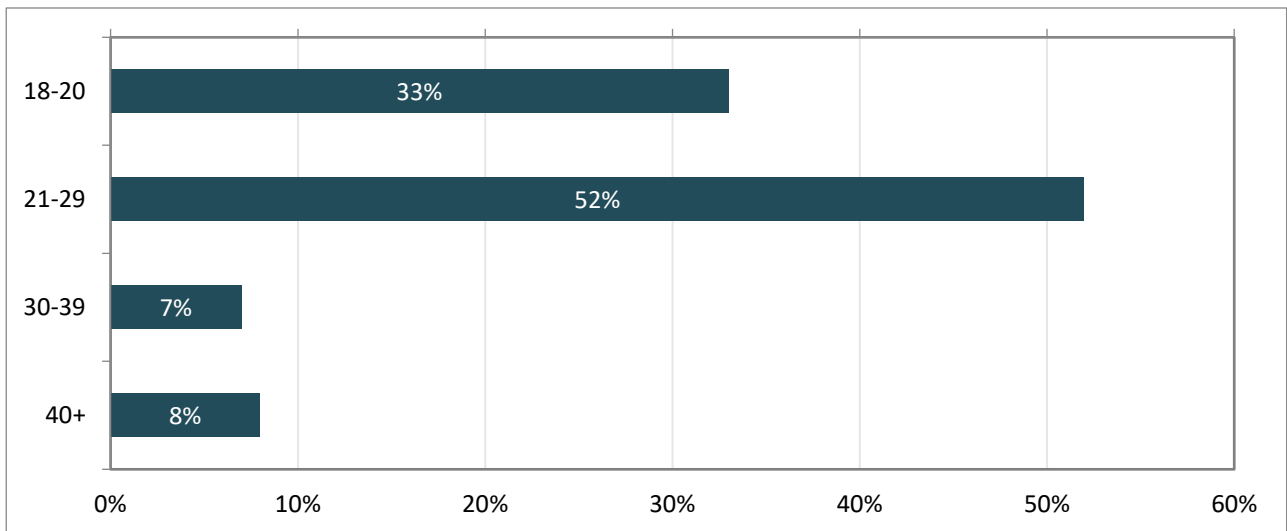


Figure 1. Question 2: Age?

The survey captured responses predominantly from 21-29-year-olds (52%) and 18-20-year-olds (33%), providing valuable insight into the behaviours of young adults. However, the absence of responses from the youngest TikTok demographic (13-17-year-olds) creates a notable gap, especially considering their significant presence and influence on the platform. This limitation, driven by university regulations, likely impacted the survey's ability to fully understand the most engaged and active users of TikTok marketing.

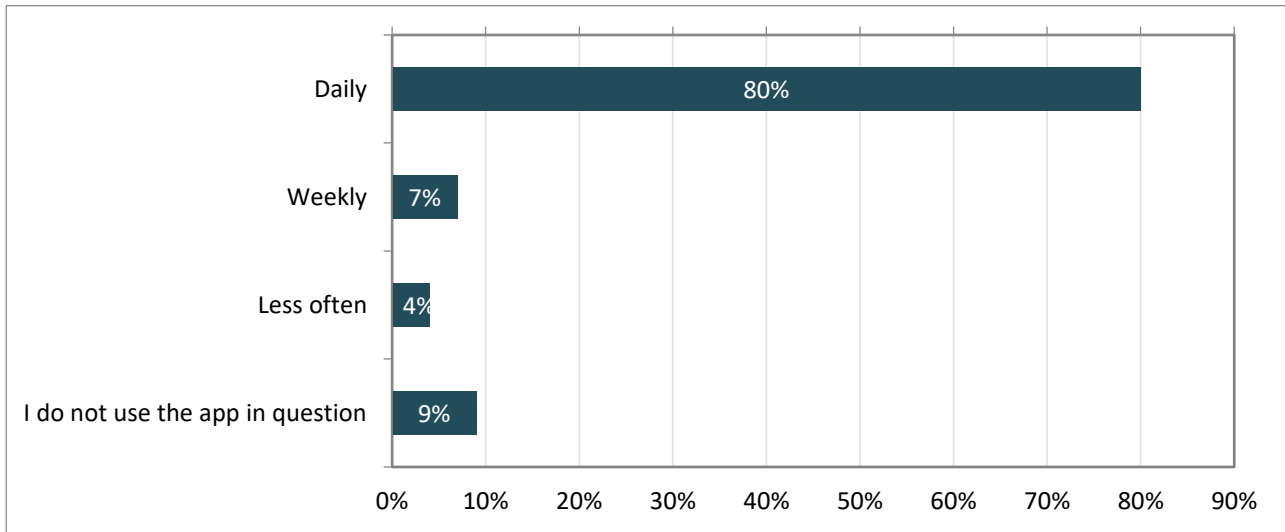


Figure 2. Question 3: How often do you use TikTok?

Out of the survey respondents, 80% of all answered using TikTok daily, highlighting the platform's widespread presence in users' daily life. This demonstrates TikTok's significant role in shaping consumer behaviour, as frequent exposure to platform content increases the likelihood of marketing messages influencing purchasing decisions. The data reinforces TikTok's effectiveness as a marketing tool for grocery stores, particularly when targeting younger consumers who are highly engaged with the platform.

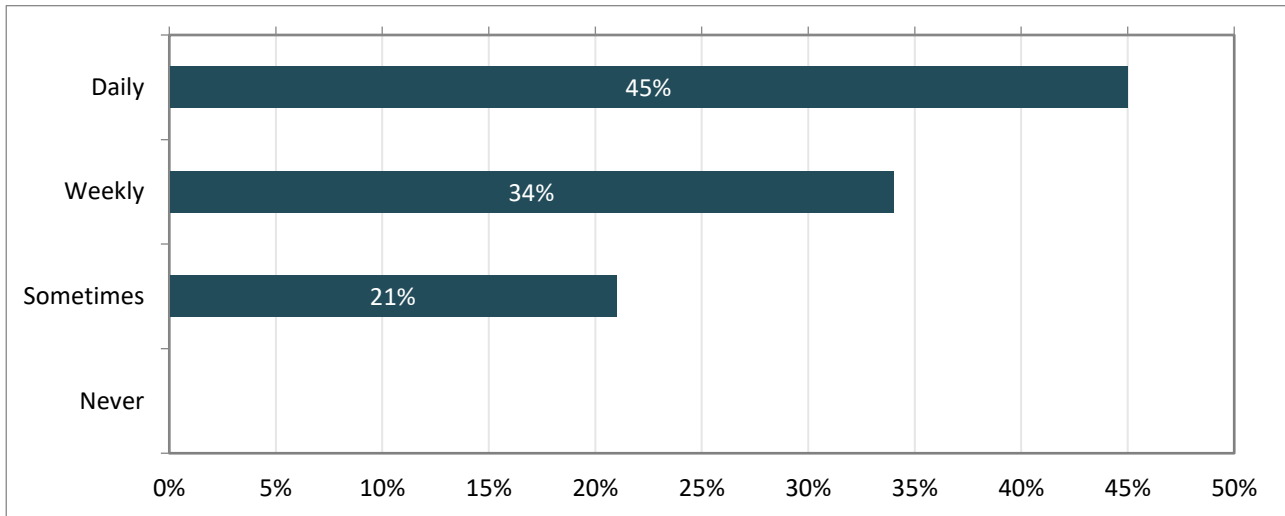


Figure 3. Question 4: How often do you see TikTok content from grocery stores?

The survey results reveal that 45% of respondents see TikTok content from grocery stores daily, while 34% view such content weekly, and 21% encounter it occasionally. Notably, none of the respondents indicated that they never see grocery store content on TikTok.

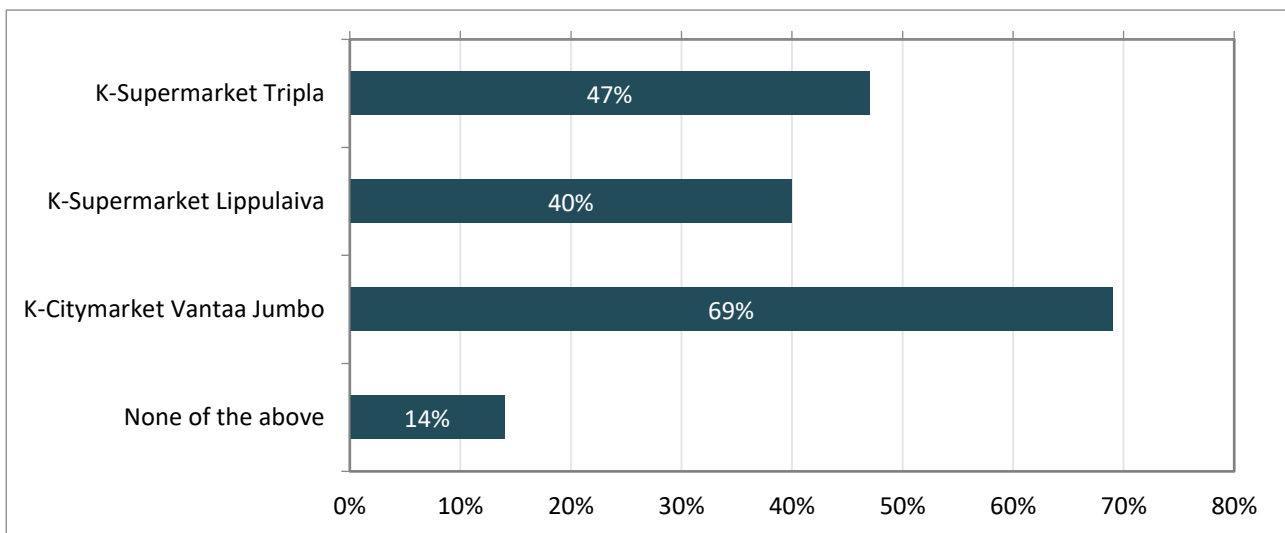


Figure 4. Question 5: Which of the following grocery stores have you seen on TikTok? (Select one or more)

Out of the 77 respondents who use TikTok, 47% identified K-Supermarket Tripla, 40% identified K-Supermarket Lippulaiva, 69% identified K-Citymarket Jumbo and 14% indicated “none of the above”.

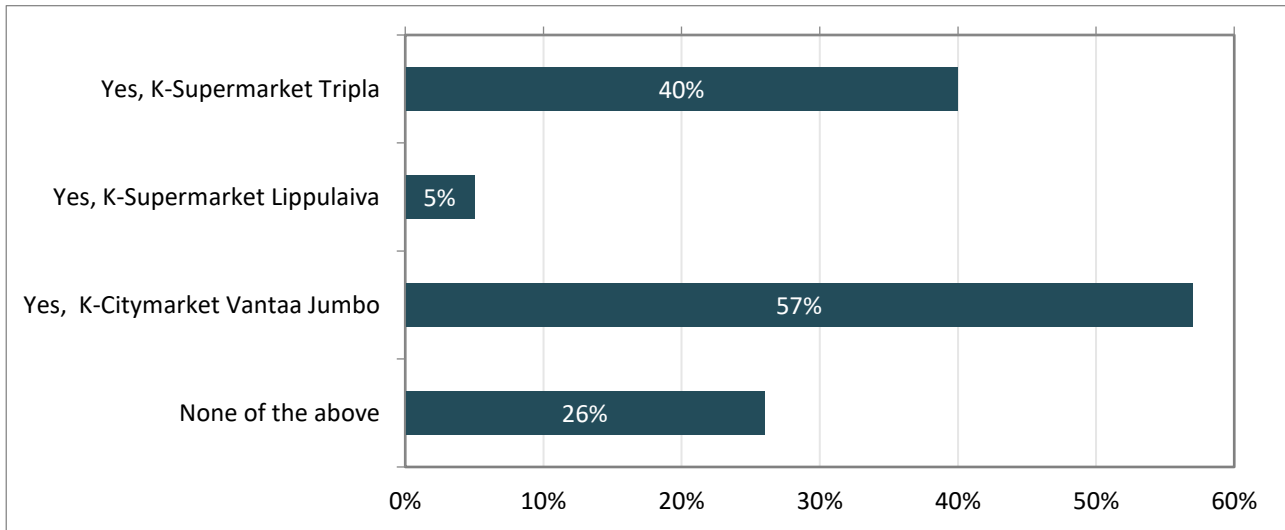


Figure 5. Question 6: Have you shopped at any of these grocery stores after seeing their content on TikTok? (Select one or more)

57% of the respondents have shopped at K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo after seeing its content on TikTok, making it the most influential store in this regard. K-Supermarket Tripla follows with 40%, while K-Supermarket Lippulaiva has a lower impact at 5%. Meanwhile, 26% of respondents reported that they had not shopped at any of these stores despite seeing their content on TikTok.

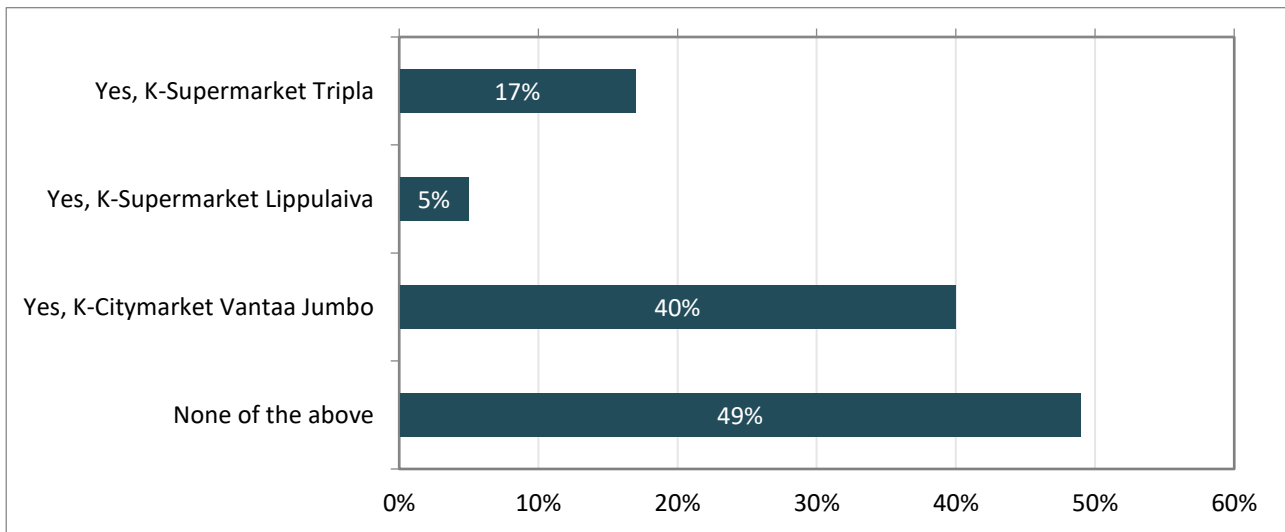


Figure 6. Question 7: Has any of the following stores gotten you to buy and test a specific product through their TikTok content? (Select one or more)

The results indicate that K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo has the strongest influence on product-specific purchases, with 40% of respondents reporting they had bought and tested a product after seeing its TikTok content. K-Supermarket Tripla influenced 17% of respondents, while K-Supermarket Lippulaiva had a lower impact at 7%. However, nearly half of the respondents (49%) stated that none of these stores had influenced them to purchase a specific product through TikTok.

But since the survey sample consists of 77 respondents, the findings may not fully represent broader consumer behaviour. Furthermore, the absence of much more younger demographics, aged 13-17, could skew the results, as younger TikTok users may be more impressionable and responsive to product-focused content.

### Question 8: What product was it?

If respondent answered “Yes” to question 7, they were directed to a follow-up question, question 8, which was aimed to identify the specific product or products that influenced their purchasing decisions after seeing TikTok content.

Pick-and-mix candy was the most frequently mentioned product, indicating that promotional offers or visually appealing content featuring these products resonated strongly with respondents. Similarly, energy drinks such as Celsius, Nocco, and Red Bull were repeatedly highlighted, as well as mentions of new flavours suggests that innovation plays a role in driving consumer interest, reinforcing the effectiveness of TikTok marketing in promoting trending products. Additionally, unique or specialized items such as the avocado ripening machine, guanciale, and beer and cheese were cited, suggesting that unique or niche products additionally capture attention, as well as campaign offerings.

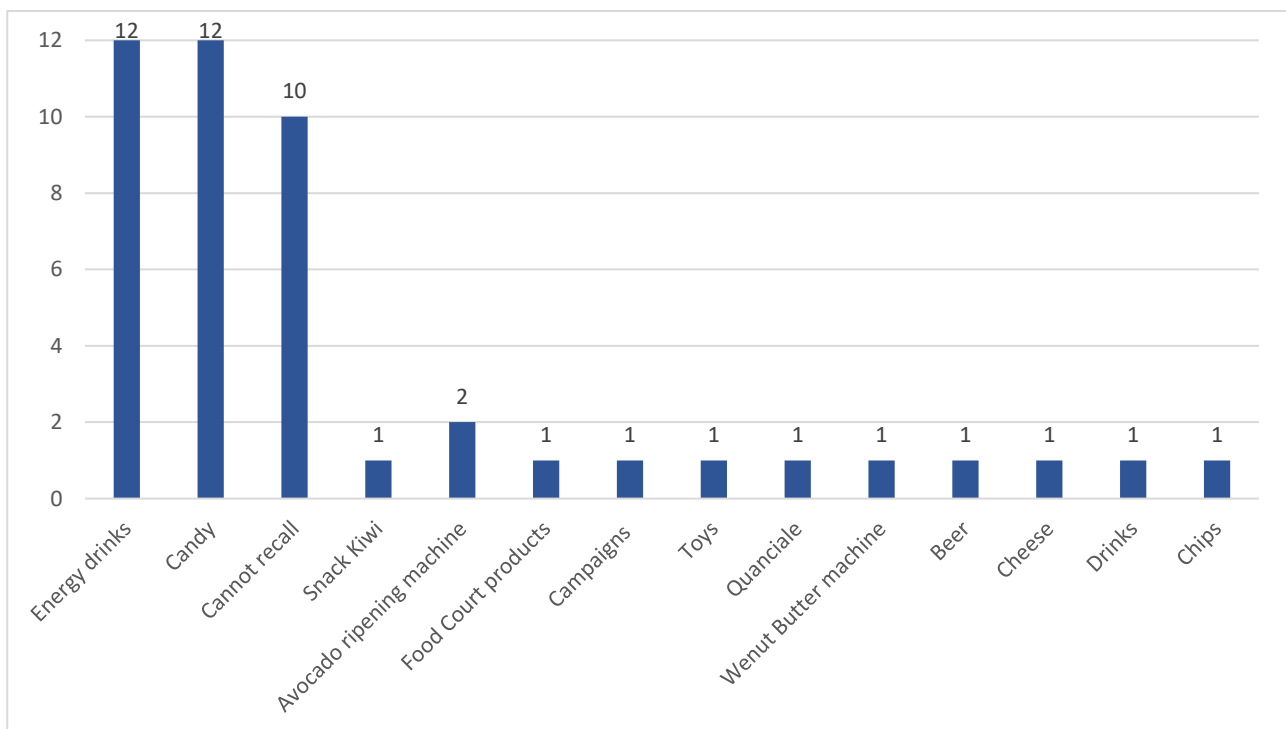


Figure 7. Answers to the question 8 and times they were mentioned

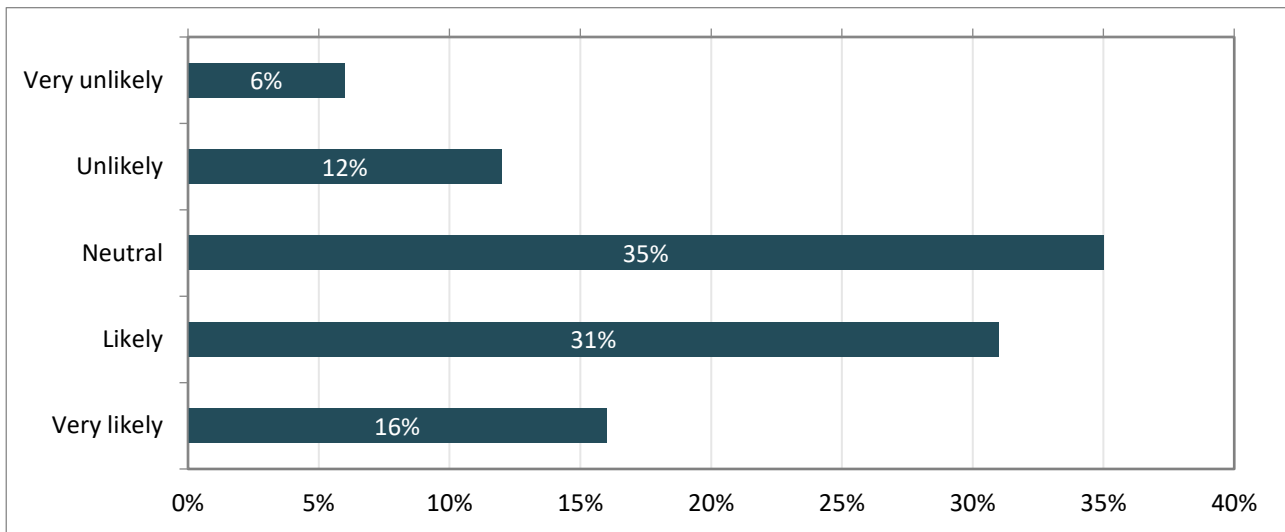


Figure 8. Question 9: How likely is content seen on TikTok to influence your decision to visit and shop at a particular grocery store?

The results of question 9 show a varied influence of TikTok content on grocery store visits. While 47% of respondents indicated that they are likely (31%) or very likely (16%) to be influenced by TikTok content when deciding where to shop, 35% remained neutral. In contrast altogether 18% found it either unlikely (12%) or very unlikely (6%) that TikTok content would impact their shopping decisions.

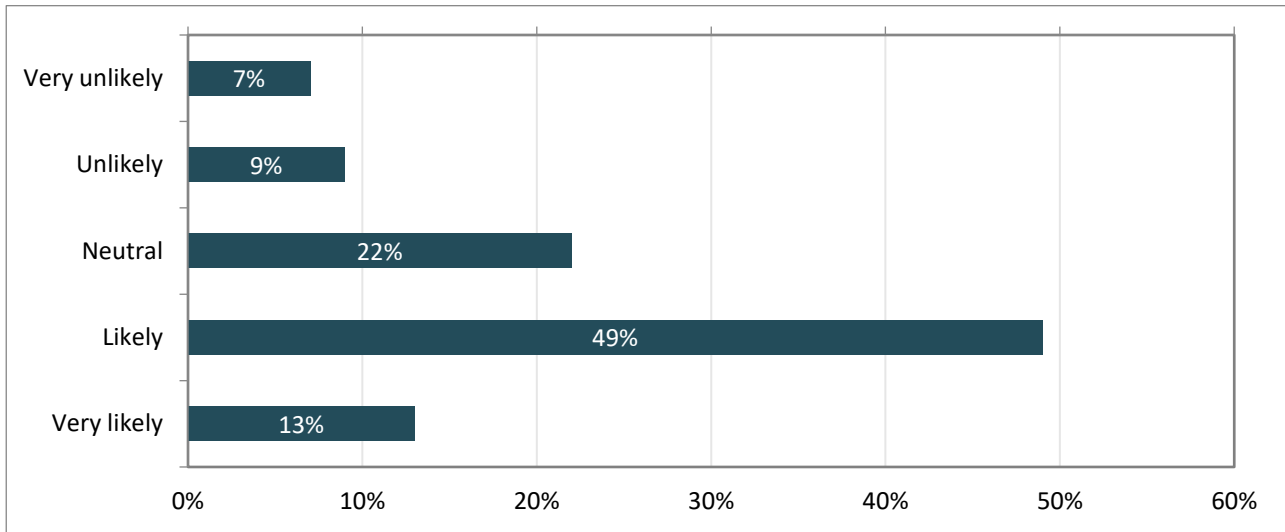


Figure 9. Question 10: How likely is it that grocery store TikTok marketing will get you to buy and test a product you would not normally buy?

The results of question 10 indicate that nearly two-thirds (62%) of respondents find grocery store TikTok marketing likely or very likely to influence them to buy and test a product they wouldn't normally purchase. Meanwhile, 16% see it as unlikely or very unlikely to have an impact, and 22% remained neutral. This suggests that TikTok marketing has a strong potential to encourage product trials among consumers.

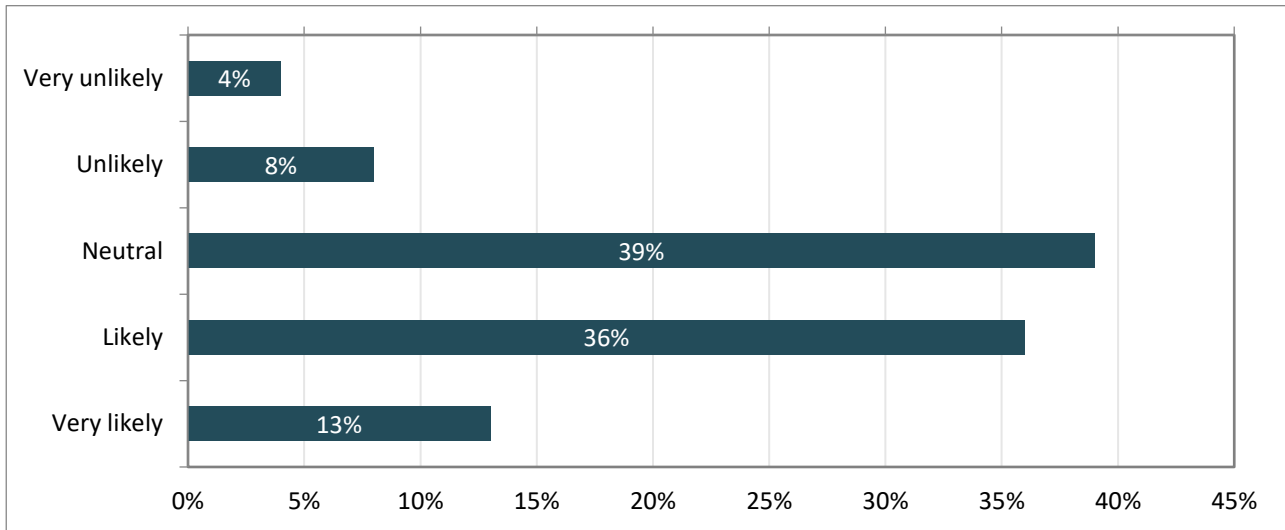


Figure 10. Question 11: How likely are you to visit a grocery store based on a promotion or product featured in their TikTok content?

The results of question 11 indicates that nearly half (49%) of respondents are likely or very likely to visit a grocery store based on a promotion or product featured in its TikTok content. A significant portion (39%) remained neutral, while only 12% find it unlikely or very unlikely. This suggests that TikTok promotions can influence store visits for many consumers.

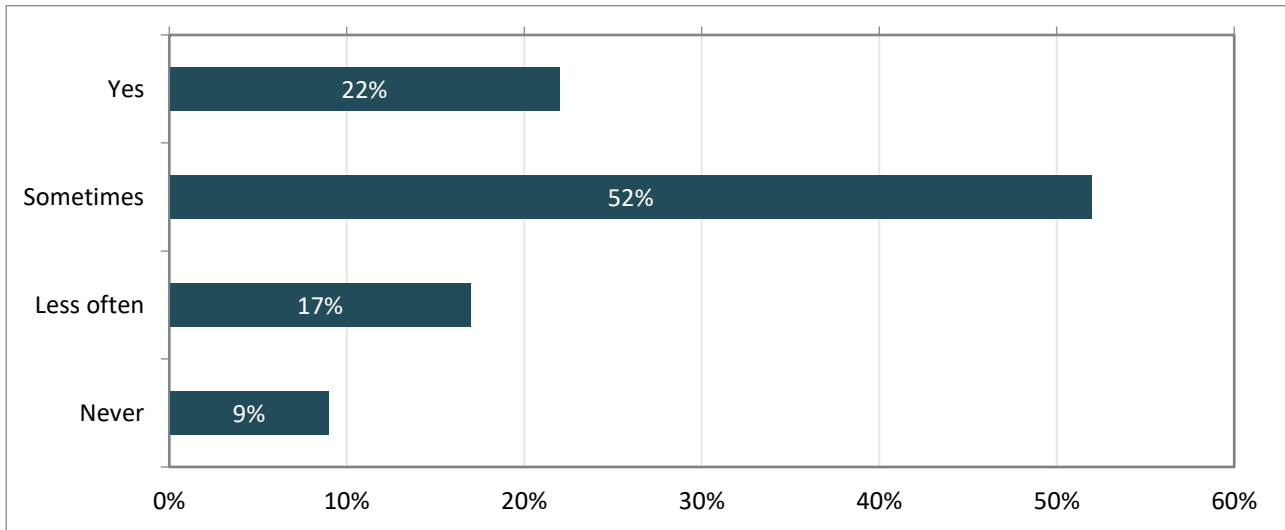


Figure 11. Question 12: Do you often search for trending products on TikTok at grocery stores?

The results of question 12 indicate that most respondents (74%) at least occasionally search for trending products from TikTok at grocery stores, with 22% doing so often and 52% sometimes. Meanwhile, 17% do so less often, and 9% never search for trending products in stores.

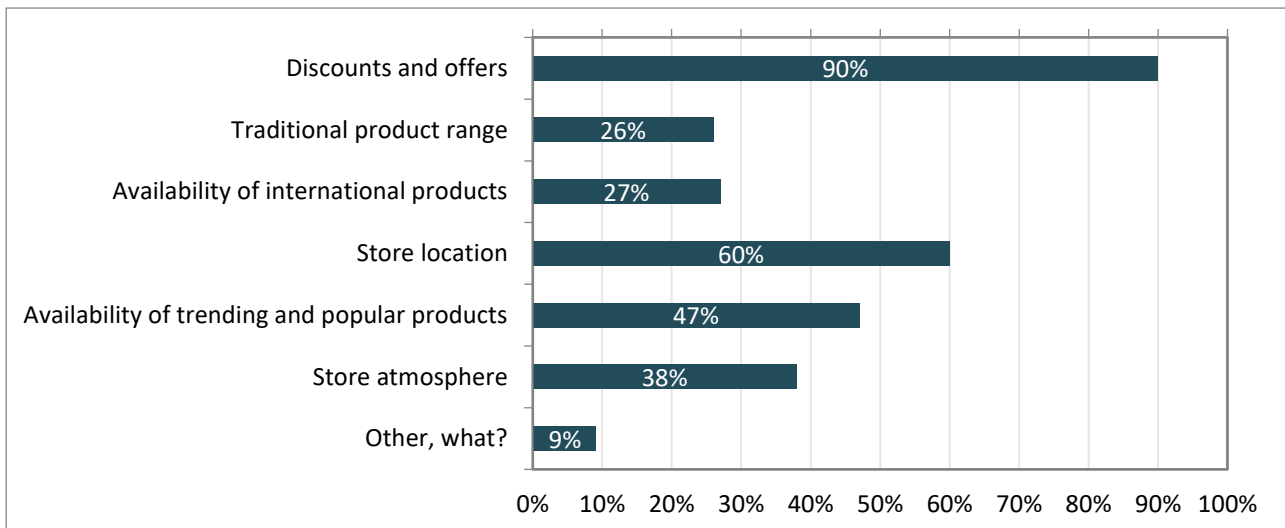


Figure 12. Question 13: Which of these factors most influences your decision to visit and shop at a particular grocery store after seeing it on TikTok? Choose the top three.

The results of question 13 show that the most influential factors for visiting and shopping at a grocery store after seeing it on TikTok are discounts and offers (90%), store location (60%) and the availability of trending and popular products (47%). Other notable factors include store atmosphere

(38%), the availability of international products (27%), and a traditional product range (26%). A small portion (9%) selected “Other” reasons.

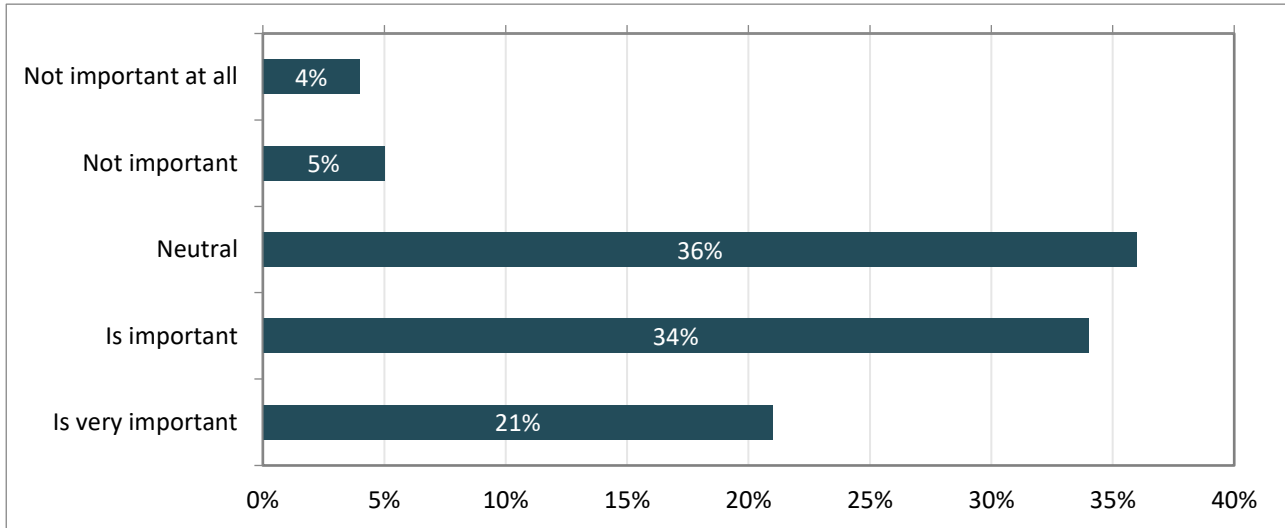


Figure 13. Question 14: Do you think it is important for grocery stores to follow internationally trending products, challenges, etc. on social media when creating their own TikTok content?

The results of question 14 indicate that a majority (55%) of respondents believe it is important or very important for grocery stores to follow international trends on social media when creating their own TikTok content. Meanwhile, 36% remained neutral, and only 9% think it is not important.

For respondents who answered, “Is important” or it “Is very important”, a follow-up question, question 15, was available for them.

Question 15: What international trends do you think would be important for locally operating grocery stores to follow?

The results of this open-ended question indicate that respondents place significant value on grocery stores keeping up with global trends, particularly in terms of new and trending products. These were the most frequently mentioned responses, highlighting consumer interest in staying updated with what is popular worldwide. Other commonly cited themes included trending recipes, pricing strategies, and even local products – suggesting that while international inspiration is important, it should be balanced with local relevance. Responses classified under “other” included specific product mentions, reflecting a demand for timely and trend-aware assortments.

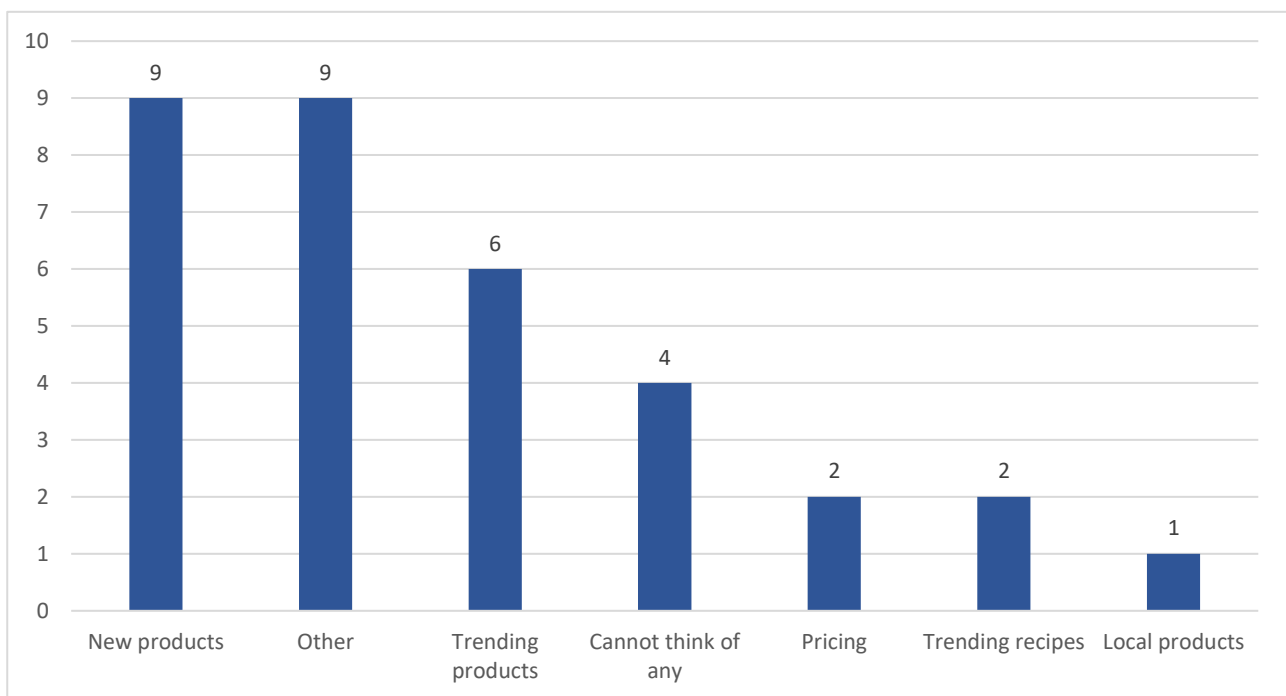


Figure 14. The most popular answers to question 15

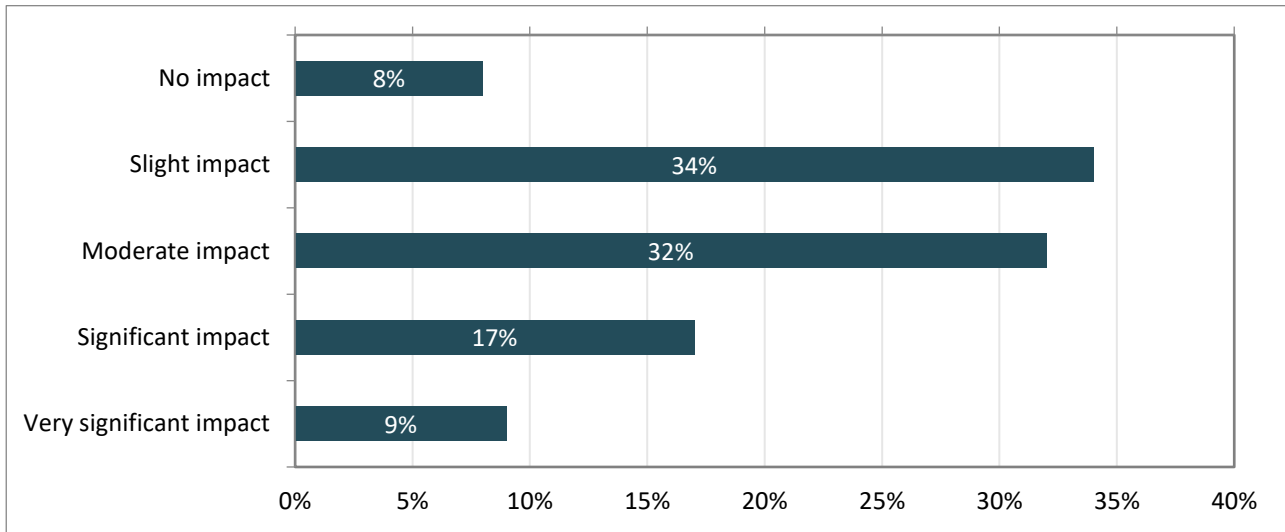


Figure 15. Question 16: How much of an impact do international trends have on what you might look for or buy at the grocery store?

The results of question 16 show that most respondents (58%) feel that international trends have at least a moderate impact on what they look for or buy at the grocery store. Meanwhile, 34% report only a slight impact, and 8% say international trends have no impact at all.

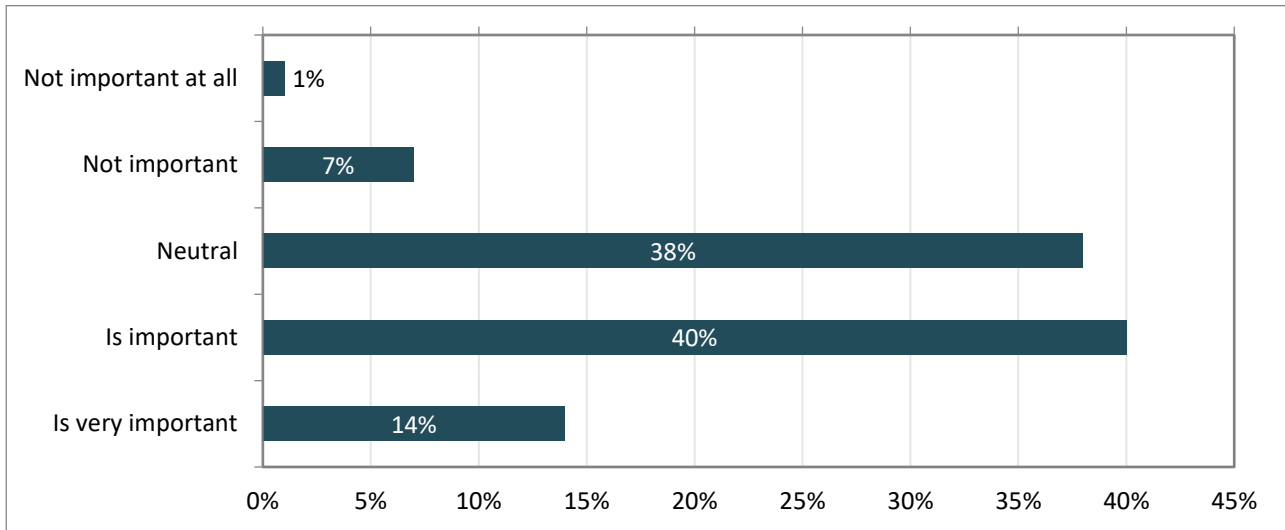


Figure 16. Question 17: Do you think it is important for grocery stores to adapt their content and global trends to better suit their local customer base?

The results of question 17 show that a majority (54%) of respondents believe it is important or very important for grocery stores to adapt their content and global trends to better suit their local customer base. Meanwhile, 38% remained neutral, and only 8% think it is not important.

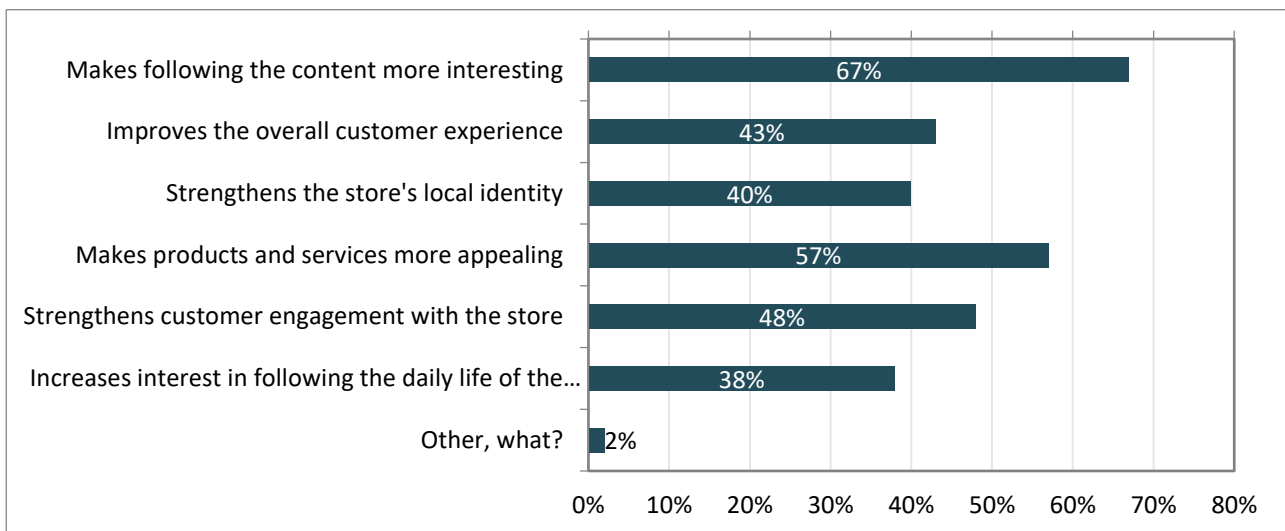


Figure 17. Question 18: Why would it be important? Choose the top three.

The results of question 18 show that the top reasons for adapting content and global trends to the local customer base are making the content more interesting to follow (67%), making products and services more appealing (57%), and strengthening customer engagement with the store (48%).

Other important factors include improving the overall customer experience (43%), strengthening the store's local identity (40%), and increasing interest in following the store's daily life (38%). A small portion (2%) selected "Other" reasons.

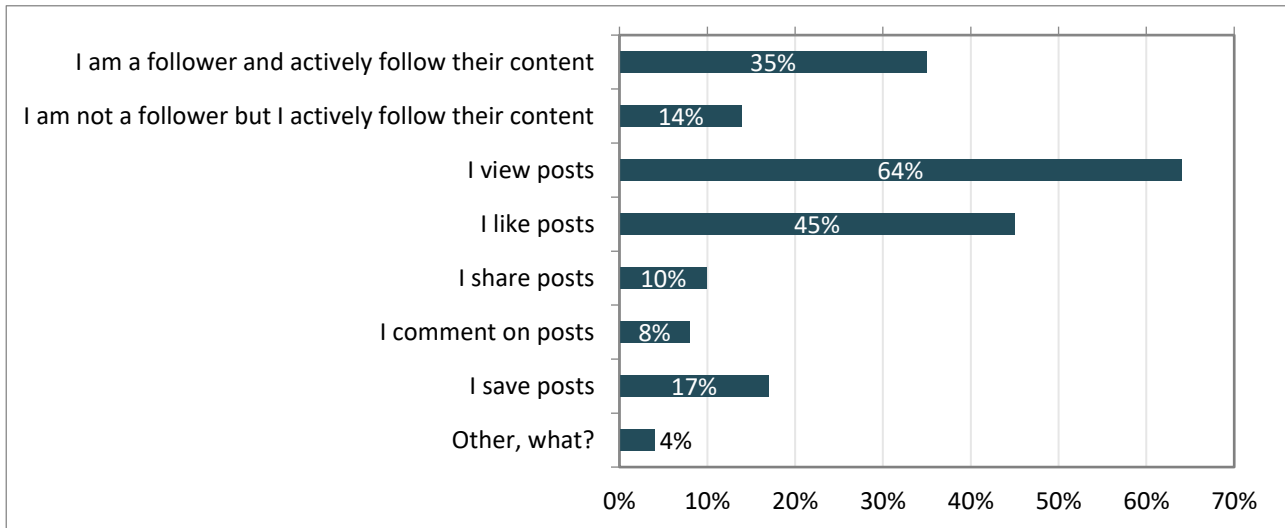


Figure 18. Question 19: What kind of interaction do you have with grocery store content on TikTok? (Select one or more)

The results of question 19 show that most common interaction with grocery store content on TikTok is viewing posts (64%), followed by liking posts (45%). Additionally, 35% of respondents actively follow grocery store accounts, while 14% follow the content without being official followers. Other interactions include saving posts (17%), sharing posts (10%), and commenting (8%). A small portion (4%) selected "Other" reasons.

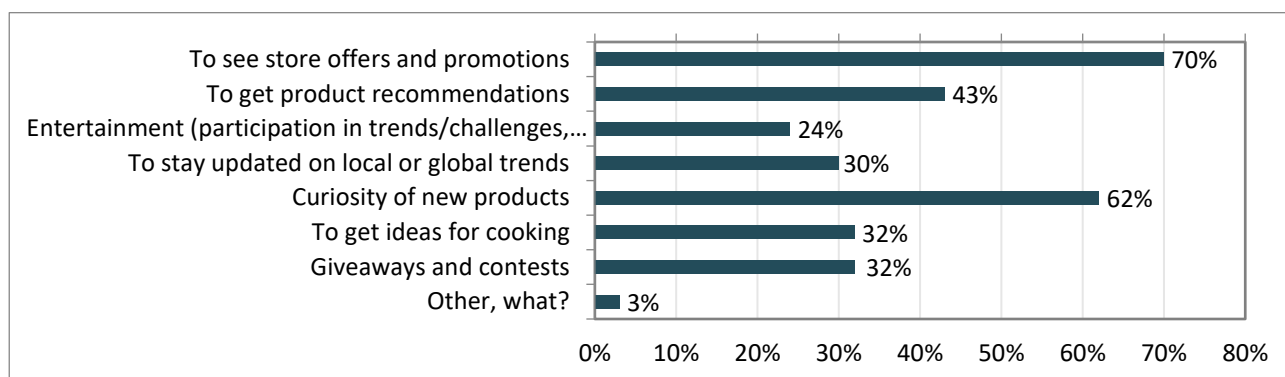


Figure 19. Question 20: What are your top three reasons for following grocery stores on TikTok? Choose your top three.

The results of question 20 show that the top reasons for following grocery stores on TikTok are to see store offers and promotions (70%) and to discover new products (62%). Other popular reasons include getting product recommendations (43%), staying updated on trends (30%), finding cooking ideas (32%), and participating in giveaways and contests (32%). Entertainment, such as trends, challenges, and humour, also plays a role (24%), while small portion (3%) selected “Other” reasons.

### 4.3 Content Analysis of the TikTok profiles of the grocery stores

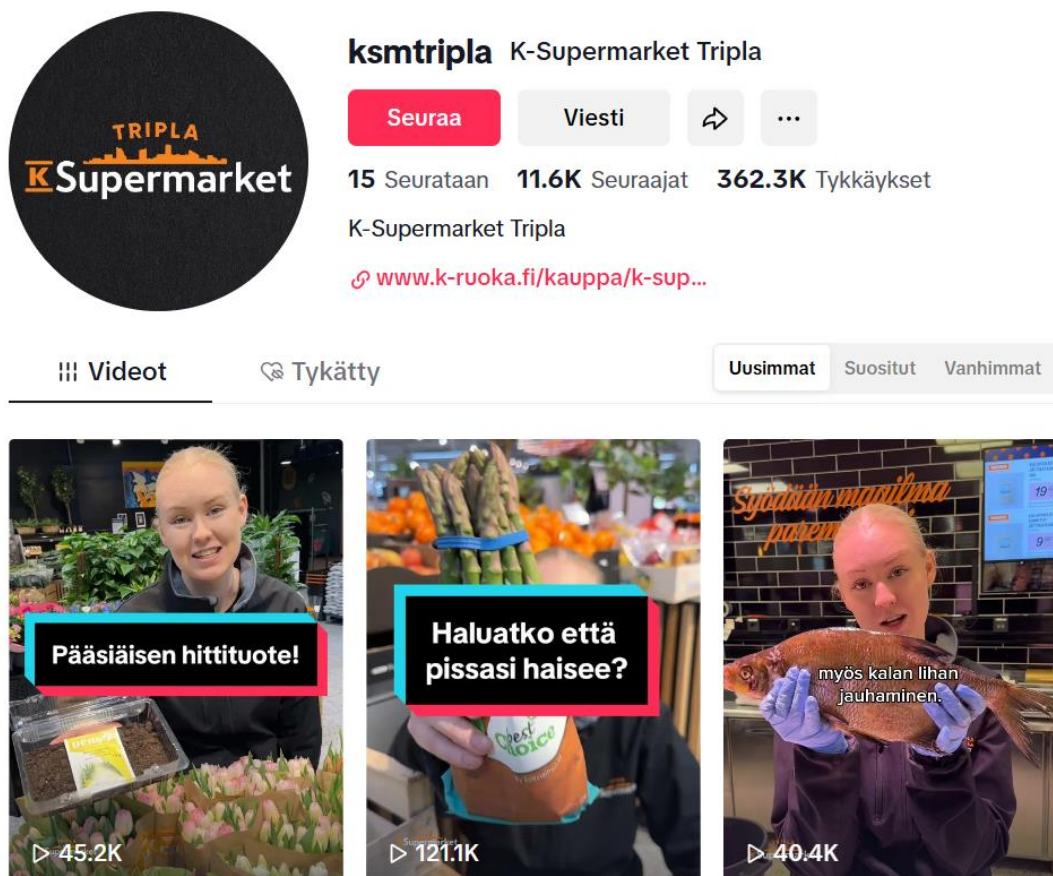
This section presents the results of the content observation conducted on the TikTok accounts of the participating grocery stores. The observation involved a one-time analysis of the type of content shared and how each store utilises global trends to attract customer. Each store’s TikTok activity is analysed individually to provide insights into their content strategies, the themes highlighted in their posts, and their potential approach to engaging customer and influencing purchasing behaviour.

#### 4.3.1 K-Supermarket Tripla, Helsinki

K-Supermarket Tripla demonstrates a well-rounded and innovative approach to TikTok marketing by blending educational, entertaining and trend-sensitive content to engage its audience and shape its brand presence. The store consistently showcases its unique offerings, such as dog-friendly shopping trolleys, a bread-cutting machine, an extensive cheese

selection, and an innovative frozen goods pick-and-mix section. These distinctive features help differentiate the store from competitors while appealing to consumers looking novelty and convenience.

While K-Supermarket Tripla maintains a professional and informative presence through its edutok-style content, it also strategically incorporates humour and cultural relevance. This blend has proven highly effective, with views ranging from 3,000 to 1.2 million. For example, quite recent humorous example includes a seasonal promotion of asparagus, accompanied by the bold – and in some contexts rather abnormal – catchphrase: “Do you want your pee to smell?”. The video has over 120,000 views and received praise in the comments for its creativity and memorability, including reactions such as “Ad of the year 2025” and “Now that’s marketing”.



Picture 2. K-Supermarket Tripla's TikTok account



The store has actively followed current food trends and adapts its offerings accordingly. A prime example is its unique ramen bar, where customers can build their own noodle cup – a concept that aligns with consumer interest in personalised, fast, and culturally inspired meals. Similarly, during the summer of 2023, the store leveraged on the viral ice cup trend originating from Asian convenience stores (Johnston, 2023), presenting the product in a visually engaging way on TikTok.



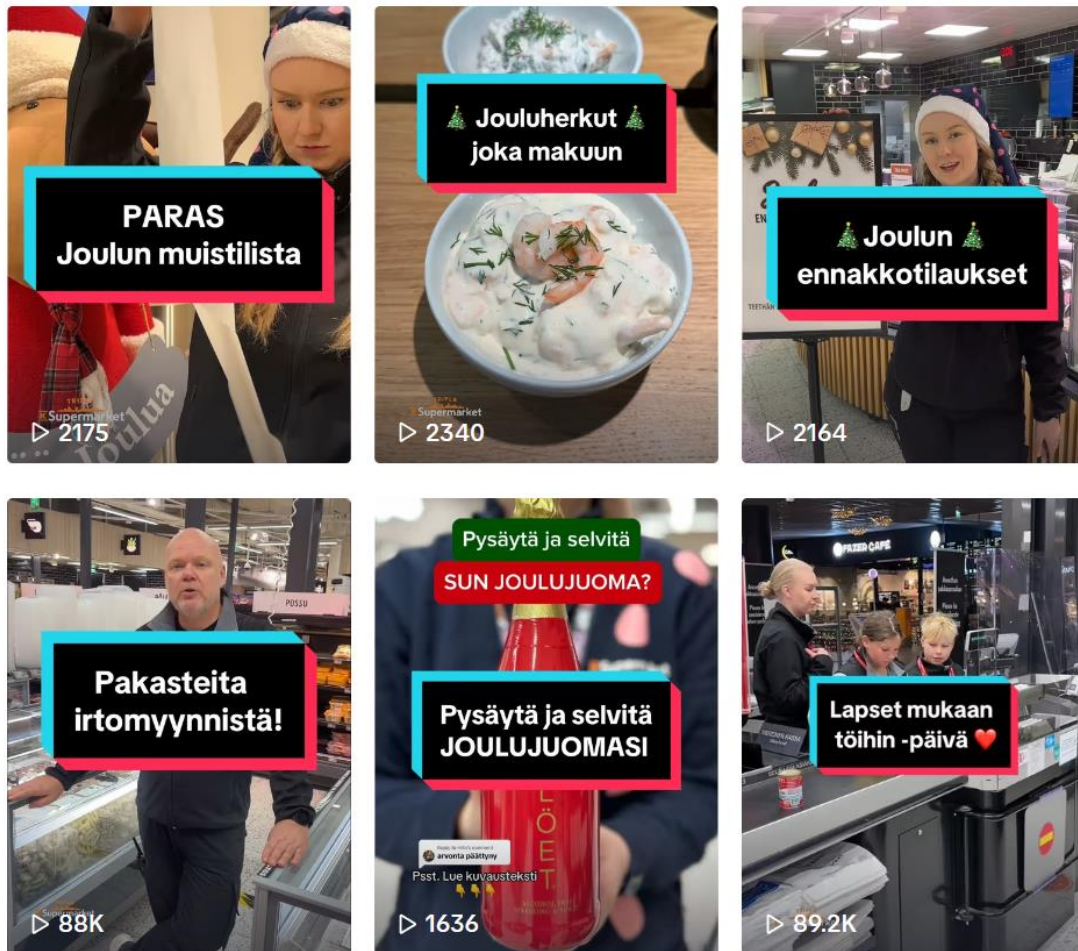
The store's content strategy is also timely and responsive, often linking broader societal conversations to grocery retail. Notable examples include videos addressing Finland's changing alcohol laws (such as wine entering grocery store selections), the orange juice shortage, and the temporary pasta shortage caused by a product recall due to metal contamination (Tuominen, 2023). By reacting quickly to these issues, the store positions itself as both informative and relevant in the eyes of consumers.

Picture 3. The Noodle Bar



In addition to trend participation and timely content, K-Supermarket Tripla consistently highlights its extensive product offerings through detailed and visually engaging TikTok content. The store frequently showcases its meat and fish service counter, seasonal specialties, and curated cheese selection, helping to build awareness around its premium and diverse assortment. Notably, the store has promoted exclusive items such as vegan Christmas products made by the store's kitchen and range of Italian meats, including pancetta and guanciale, introducing these products to customers while educating them on their use. Promotional campaigns have also included giveaways, such as the much-anticipated Nocco energy drink advent calendar during Christmas 2024, which gained considerable attention on social media. These content strategies not only increase visibility of the store's unique offerings but also position K-Supermarket Tripla as an accessible yet trend-conscious destination for high-quality food products.

Picture 4. The ice cup



Picture 5. More of K-Supermarket Tripla's content

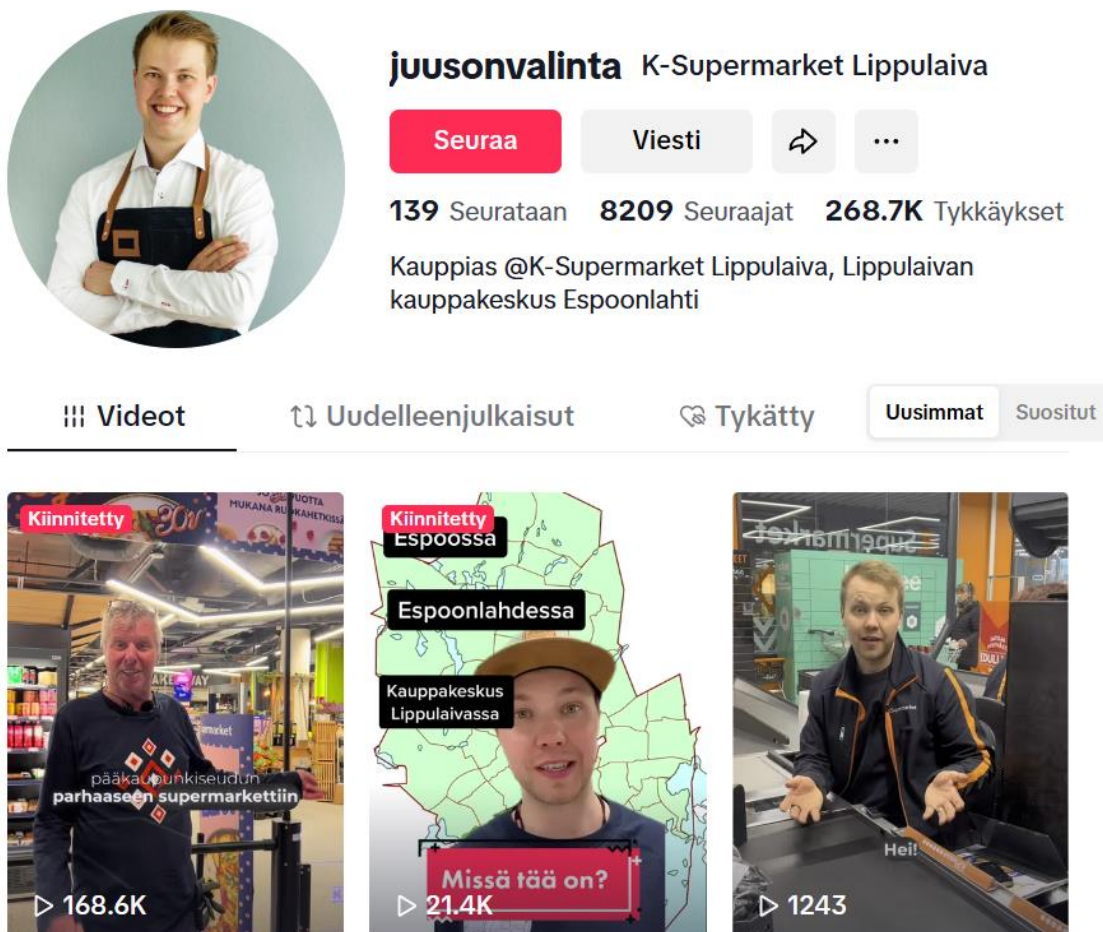
In addition to engaging with broader societal trends, K-Supermarket Tripla's TikTok content consistently stays up to date with the store's own activities, ensuring that followers are informed about the latest offerings, changes, and in-store happenings. Whether it's highlighting newly launched products, limited-time seasonal items, or showcasing behind-the-scenes daily tasks, the content provides a real-time look into the store's evolving selection. This ongoing alignment between social media content and in-store updates keeps the audience engaged as well as reinforces the store's image as a dynamic and customer-oriented retailer that values transparency and immediacy in its communication.

Through consistent participation in trend-driven TikTok content, the strategic use of viral formats and sounds, and the creative balancing of professionalism and humour, K-Supermarket Tripla has cultivated strong viewer engagement. Its ability to leverage short-form video

to inform, entertain, and build community demonstrates how TikTok marketing can effectively influence consumer perception and drive purchasing behaviour in the grocery store.

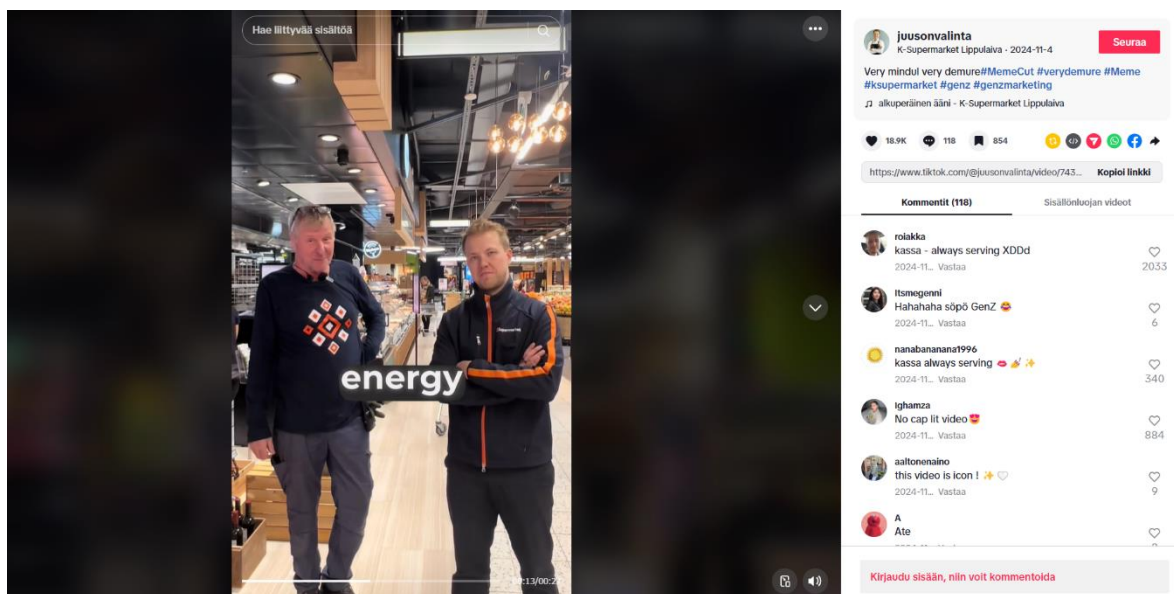
#### 4.3.2 K-Supermarket Lippulaiva, Espoo

K-Supermarket Lippulaiva's TikTok strategy effectively blends humour, education, and product promotion to engage customers, drive sales, and strengthen their brand presence. The store's TikTok account is primarily led by the store's merchant, who serves as the face of the store and helps establish its brand identity. The content typically combines humour with educational value, aligning with the preferences of younger audiences, especially Generation Z.



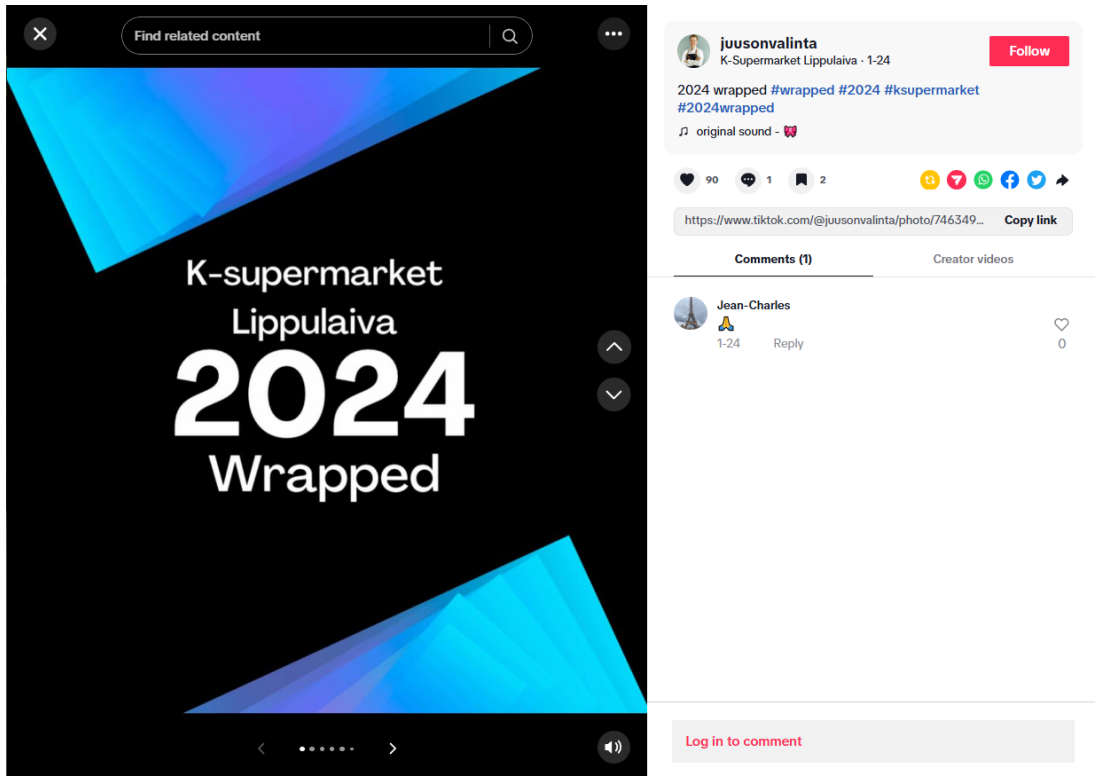
Picture 6. K-Supermarket Lippulaiva's TikTok account

One key approach K-Supermarket Lippulaiva adopts is leveraging viral Generation Z trends, such as the “Gen Z editing style” trend, known for its intentionally chaotic and humorous edits. For instance, one video included “ruined takes” and playful, self-aware tones, reflecting Gen Z’s preference for authenticity over perfectly polished content. This aligns with the observation by Portée (2024) that content embracing flaws resonates with younger audiences seeking relatability and realness. The store moreover embraced another trend, speaking in “Gen Z style”, incorporating slang and presenting the store through an older employee, creating humorous contrast that further engages younger viewers.

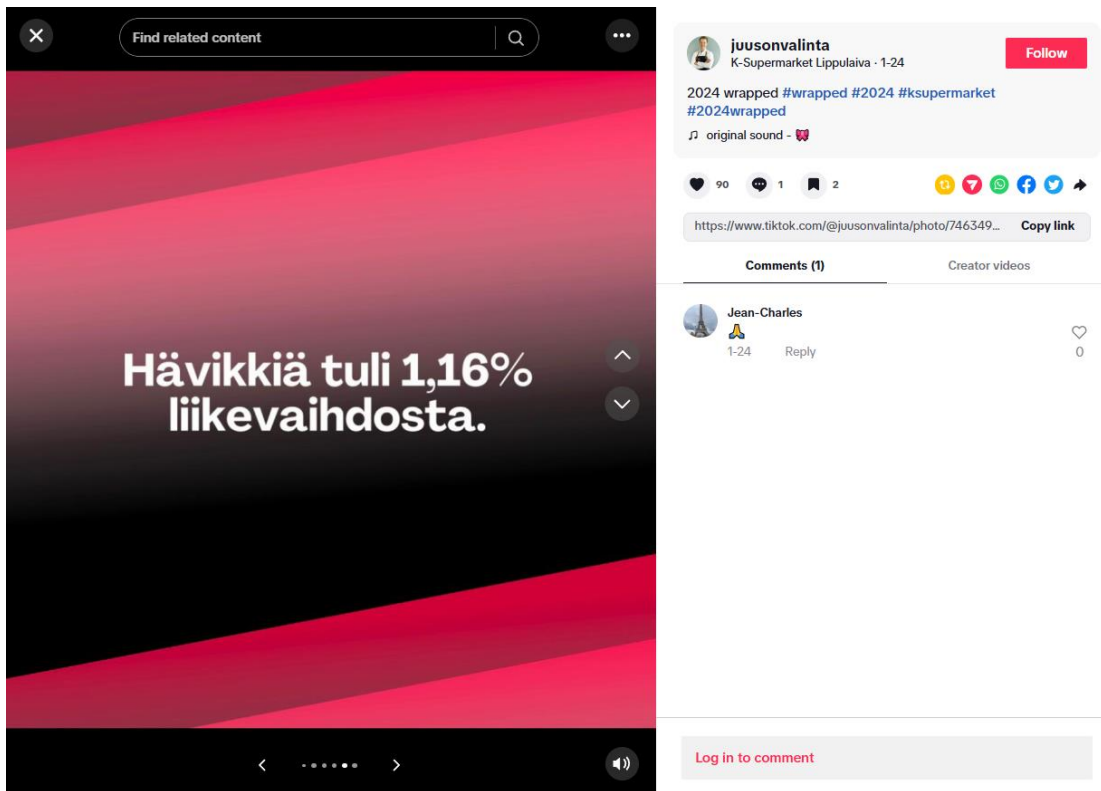


Picture 7. The video using Gen Z slang

Furthermore, the store took part in the popular “Spotify Wrapped” trend with their own “K-Supermarket Lippulaiva 2024 Wrapped”, providing a year-in-review format showcasing top-selling products, sales statistics, and waste data. This blend of trending and informative content demonstrates the store’s unique ability to leverage trending formats while keeping the content casual in tone and engaging.



Picture 8. The “Spotify Wrapped” trend



Picture 9. The “Spotify Wrapped” trend, showcasing some of the year’s statistics



Picture 10. The viral cream bun



Picture 11. The answer video

In addition to trend-driven content, K-Supermarket Lippulaiva uses TikTok to highlight popular store offerings, such as candy, energy drinks and in-store-made products. A prime example is the promotion of their seasonal cream-filled cinnamon bun, a limited-edition treat released for the February holiday season, which became a viral sensation already in 2024.

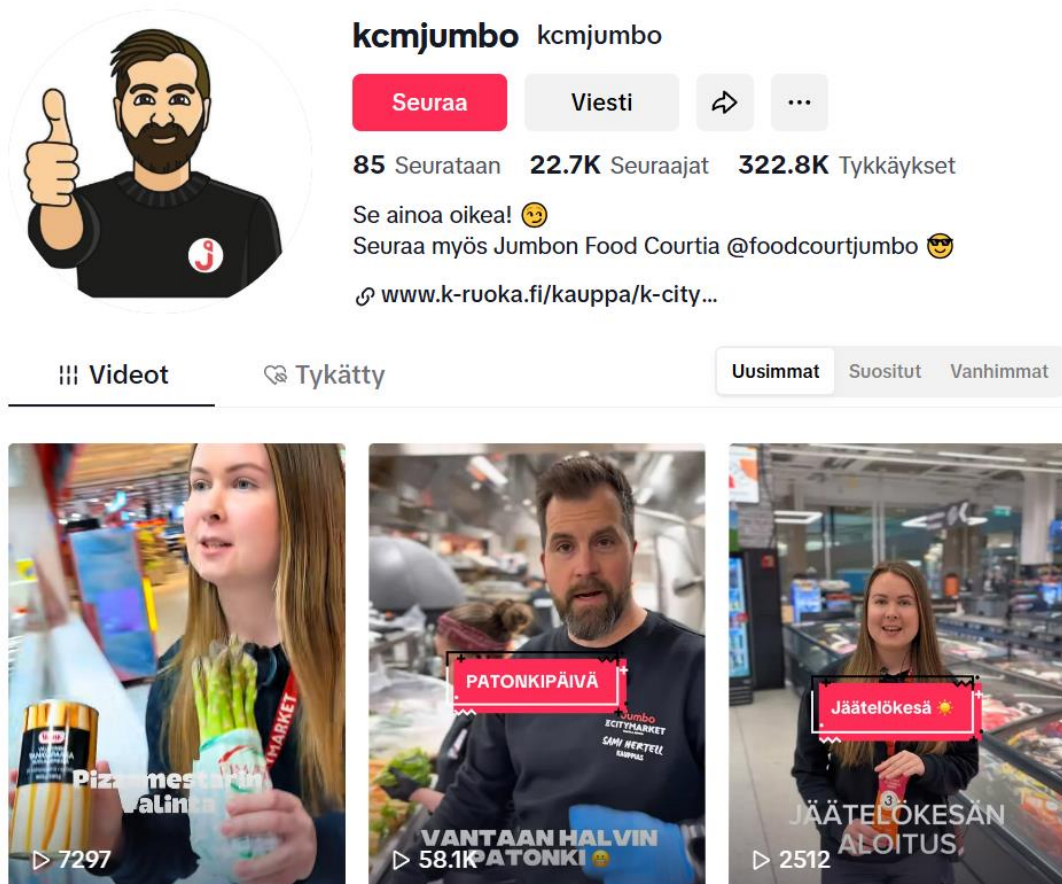
The store also focuses on providing informative content, such as answering customers questions, such as the availability of new energy drinks. These “answer videos” create a sense of direct interaction with customers, building a relationship and fostering community engagement.

K-Supermarket Lippulaiva’s TikTok strategy also emphasises the store’s various departments and product ranges, making it clear to viewers that the store offers a wide selection of products. The store has also used TikTok to promote current campaigns and its availability on Wolt, further increasing accessibility and engagement with potential customers.

Through this humorous, informative, and trend-driven approach, K-Supermarket Lippulaiva successfully engages its target audience, encouraging both online interaction and in-store visits. This strategy showcases the power of TikTok marketing to influence consumer behaviour by blending entertainment with product promotion and educational content.

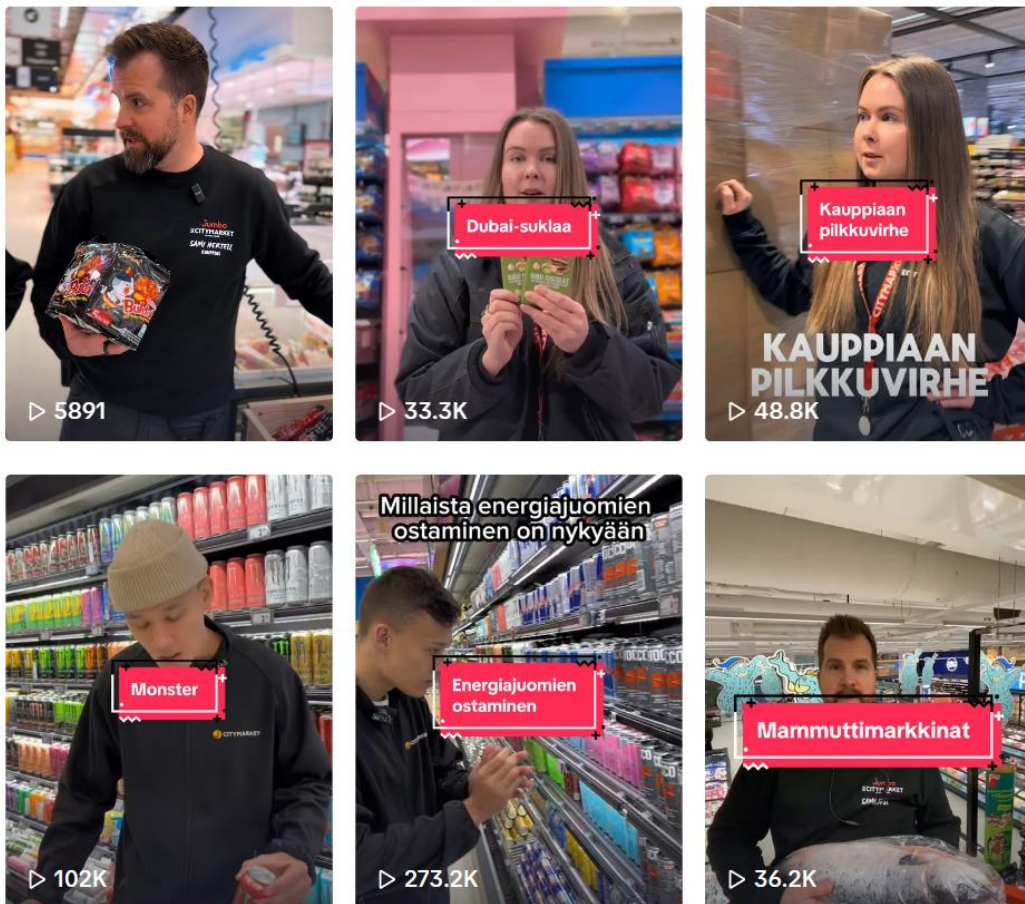
### 4.3.3 K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo, Vantaa

K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo has established a strong and active presence on TikTok, embracing a variety of content formats to engage viewers and promote the store's unique offerings. The store is particularly known for its focus on its extensive candy section, the Candy Heaven, and has effectively leveraged on TikTok trends such as the "scoopability" challenge and the "chill guy" trend. By pairing these popular trends with relatable humour and eye-catching visuals of their store, they successfully capture the attention of a broad audience.



Picture 12. K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo's TikTok account

In the recent months, the store's merchant has become a more visible figure on the TikTok account, further solidifying the store's brand presence and making it more recognisable to followers. K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo's content spans across a wide range of themes, from limited-time promotions and special campaigns to showcasing store-made specialities like filled baguettes. They additionally actively promote new and trending products, including globally popular items such as Dubai chocolate and the widely recognised Samyang Buldak noodles, ensuring they stay relevant with current consumer trends.



Picture 13. More of K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo's TikTok content



Picture 14. The TikTok video showcasing DOP3 & PTV Labs products

K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo has clearly focused most of its TikTok marketing on appealing to a younger consumer demographic by consistently promoting and showcasing products that align with youth interests – such as energy drinks, protein products, and candy. A notable example of this strategic focus is their content featuring PTV Lab’s protein bars and DOP3 energy drinks, which are associated with the popular gym entrepreneur Joel Vatanen. These items have gained significant popularity among younger audiences and active gym-goers on social media platforms. By intentionally highlighting these highly sought-after products – specifically at a time when they had not yet been widely available in Kesko-owned grocery stores until spring 2025 – the store leveraged on early demand and hype. The original TikTok post promoting these items was published at the beginning of September 2024, signalling a deliberate effort to attract attention and drive foot traffic from trend-conscious consumers eager to access products not easily found elsewhere.

Through their involvement in trending topics, K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo maintains an active and engaging TikTok presence. Their giveaways, which encourage viewers to follow the account and tag friends to enter, further enhance engagement and visibility, offering viewers the chance to win prizes while increasing the likelihood of them visiting the store. By utilising a mix of promotional content, trending products, and interactive campaigns, K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo effectively uses TikTok to drive consumer engagement, direct sales, and strengthen its brand presence among its target audience.

#### 4.3.4 Summary of the Content Analysis

The content analysis of the TikTok accounts of the three participating grocery stores – K-Supermarket Tripla, K-Supermarket Lippulaiva, and K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo – revealed diverse strategies for engaging their audiences and utilising TikTok trends. Each store demonstrated a unique approach to integrating popular social media trends into their content, driving consumer engagement and influencing purchasing behaviour.

All three stores actively incorporated viral TikTok trends, such as trending editing styles, sounds, challenges and music, to enhance the appeal of their content. By adopting playful, humorous, and self-aware tones, their videos resonated particularly well with the younger audience, tapping into the preferences of TikTok's primary demographic. This content strategy helped maintain high engagement levels and increased the likelihood of content virality, making the stores more visible on the platform's algorithm.

Additionally, the stores balanced the promotion of globally trending products and locally relevant items. Examples included advertising vegan Christmas products, Italian cold cuts, Finnish protein bars and energy drinks, and international brands such as Prime and Samyang Buldak. This combination of global and local product offerings effectively showcased the stores' diverse inventories and catered to various consumer preferences.

By leveraging these TikTok trends, the stores enhanced their visibility, captured the interest of wide range of consumers, and drove traffic to their physical locations. Their strategies reflected an understanding of TikTok's viral nature and its power to influence consumer purchasing decisions, using popular trends and engaging content to shape their brand presence on the platform.

## 5 Discussion

This chapter critically examines the findings of this study in relation to the research objectives, existing literature, and theoretical frameworks. This discussion begins with a summary of key findings, highlighting significant patterns identified in the survey and content analysis.

Additionally, the results are compared to previous research to assess how this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on TikTok marketing in the grocery retail sector. Furthermore, the chapter explores practical implications, providing insights for grocery stores on how to effectively leverage TikTok trends while adapting them to local consumer preferences. Finally, the study's limitations are acknowledged, and suggestions for future research are proposed to further expand knowledge on this evolving topic.

### 5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The primary objective of this research was to explore how local grocery stores in Finland can effectively utilize TikTok as a marketing tool to influence consumer purchasing behaviour by leveraging platform-specific trends. The study focused on how TikTok trends are used to engage customers, drive sales, and shape brand presence in the grocery retail sector. By examining the mechanisms behind trend-driven marketing – such as content virality, algorithm-driven visibility, and consumer engagement with short-form video content – the study sheds light on how grocery stores can strategically position themselves on TikTok to reach their target audience, especially younger consumers.

The survey results highlight the growing influence of TikTok in shaping consumer engagement and purchasing behaviour. A notable portion of respondents (45%) are exposed to grocery store content on TikTok daily, with 35% actively following grocery stores on the platform. This level of engagement translates into real-life actions, as for example, 57% of respondents reported visiting K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo after seeing its TikTok content. Furthermore, over half (51%) indicated that they had purchased a specific product after encountering it in a TikTok video posted by one of the participating grocery stores. This influence is particularly strong among younger demographics (aged 18-20 and 21-29), who demonstrated a higher likelihood of acting on TikTok content than older consumers.

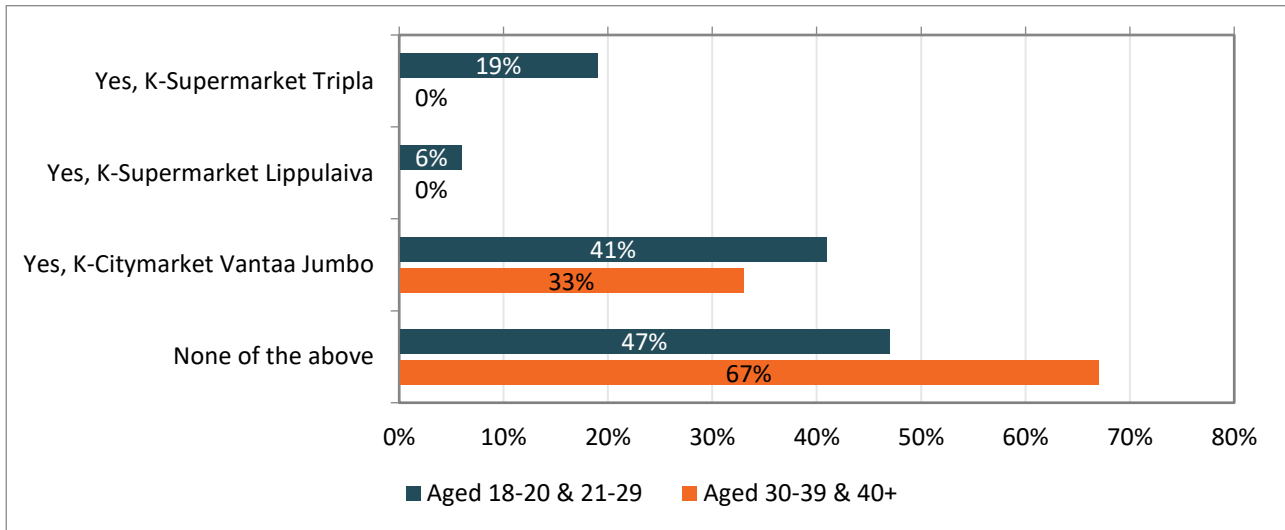


Figure 20. Question 7 answers, demonstrating the difference between younger and older demographics.

The product most frequently purchased due to TikTok marketing – such as energy drinks, candy, and chips – highlight the platform’s effectiveness in promoting trend-sensitive and impulse-driven product categories. Additionally, 47% of respondents stated that TikTok content affects their decision to visit a grocery store, and 62% expressed a willingness to purchase items they would not normally consider, simply based on seeing them promoted on TikTok. The most influential factors driving store visits after TikTok exposure were discounts and offers (90%), store location (60%), and the availability of trending products (47%), suggesting that combining promotions with timely, trend-driven content is essential for effective TikTok marketing.

The content analysis of three local grocery stores – K-Supermarket Tripla, K-Supermarket Lippulaiva, and K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo – supports these findings by showcasing various trend-leveraging strategies used to boost consumer interest. Each store demonstrated a strong ability to adopt viral TikTok elements such as trending sounds, visual styles, challenges, and humour, while also showcasing their unique store features and product selections. Whether through playful, self-aware tones or the promotion of trending products such as energy drinks, candy, and viral food items, the content was tailored to resonate particularly with younger consumers and TikTok-savvy audiences. The strategic use of these tactics illustrate how effectively trend-driven TikTok marketing can shape brand presence and impact purchasing behaviour in a highly competitive digital environment.

## 5.2 Interpretation of Findings

The findings related to RQ1 – *How do TikTok trends influence consumer purchasing decisions in grocery stores?* – demonstrate that TikTok marketing has a tangible impact on both store visits and purchasing behaviour. Survey results reveal that a majority of respondents have acted on grocery store content they have seen on TikTok, with only 26% indicating they have not visited any of the participating stores after seeing their content on TikTok. These figures suggest that stores with strong visibility and engaging content – especially when aligned with current trends – has the potential to translate digital engagement into tangible consumer behaviour. Popular products influenced by TikTok marketing include pick-and-mix candy and energy drinks, such as Celsius, Nocco, and Red Bull, highlighting the success of visually striking or impulse-driven items. The mention of new flavours and unique products, such as an avocado ripening machine or guanciale, points to a consumer preference for novelty and trend relevance. Additionally, nearly two-thirds (62%) of respondents indicated that TikTok content makes them likely to try products they would not usually buy, and 74% at least occasionally search for trending items in store. These insights affirm the role of TikTok as a platform that does not merely promote awareness but actively drives product discovery and experimentation. Furthermore, content analysis supports these findings; the most effective videos combined viral sounds and editing styles, humour, and trend alignment – elements that enhance algorithmic visibility and user engagement. For example, the stores effectively leveraged on international TikTok trends such as the “Dubai chocolate” phenomenon or Korean Buldak noodles, while presenting them through locally relatable formats. This strategic use of social media trends showcases the power of short-form video content to generate impulse purchases, create curiosity, and shape brand perception. Although the sample size of 77 limits generalizability, and the absence of younger demographics (teenagers aged 13-17) may understate the true influence among TikTok’s core userbase, the results underscore that trend-driven content significantly contributes to consumer purchasing behaviour in the grocery sector.

The findings related to RQ2 – *What role do social media trends play in shaping grocery store marketing strategies?* – highlight the increasing strategic value of global trends in shaping local TikTok content. A majority of respondents (55%) believe it is important or very important for grocery stores to follow international social media trends when crafting their TikTok strategies, and 54% feel similarly about the need to adapt these trends to suit the local customer base. This suggests that consumers not only recognise but also expect stores to remain current and responsive to global trends while ensuring local relevance. Respondents identified new and trending products, food challenges, and seasonal adaptations as the most important types of international content for grocery

stores to adopt, indicating a strong desire for fresh, timely, and globally inspired experiences that still feel relevant to local culture. This dual demand for trend adoption and localization was further supported by answers to question 18, where respondents emphasised that adapting global trends makes content more interesting (67%), enhances product appeal (57%), and deepens customer engagement (48%). These insights demonstrate how trend-driven content is not just about visibility but about fostering a stronger connection with the audience. Content analysis reinforces these points; the most engaging TikToks were those that creatively localized international trends – such as viral snacks, challenges, or pop culture references – while showcasing in-store staff, humour, or regional dialects. Stores that succeeded in blending international virality with local familiarity – such as incorporating popular English Gen Z slang within a Finnish context – were more likely to appear relatable and build brand affinity. Thus, social media trends shape marketing strategies by acting as both a source of inspiration and a tool for brand localisation, helping stores align with consumer expectations and maintain cultural relevance in globalized digital environment.

In relation to RQ3 – *How do consumers engage with grocery store content on TikTok, and what factors drive their engagement?* – the findings highlight that consumer engagement with grocery store content on TikTok is both frequent and multifaceted. A significant 80% of respondents use TikTok daily, and nearly half encounter grocery store content on the platform daily as well, with none reporting that they never see such content. This high visibility strengthens TikTok's role as a primary marketing touchpoint, especially among digitally native consumers. Engagement tends to be passive but impactful – viewing (64%) and liking (45%) are the most common forms for interaction, yet over a third (35%) also actively follow grocery store accounts, suggesting a deeper level of interest and brand loyalty. Key motivators for following include store offers and promotions (70%), new product discovery (62%), and product recommendations (43%). Entertainment-based factors such as trends, humour, and challenges also contribute to engagement (24%), illustrating the importance of content that is not only informative but also enjoyable. Content analysis supports this by showing that humorous videos, store tour formats, and interactive challenges – especially those reflecting trending sounds, edits, or challenges – tend to gain traction. Factors like discounts, trending products, and store atmosphere further enhance engagement, indicating that consumers are drawn to content that combines practical value with trend-driven aesthetics. This underscores the importance of creating relatable, trend-aware content that delivers both information and entertainment to sustain consumer interest and drive continued interaction.

### 5.2.1 Engagement Patterns and Consumer Behaviour

The interpretation of findings related to RQ3 reveal clear engagement patterns and motivational differences between demographic groups, which help explain how and why consumers interact with grocery store content on TikTok. Younger consumers (aged 18-29) demonstrate higher levels of engagement, with 87% using TikTok daily and 66% citing curiosity about new products as one of the key motivators to follow grocery stores on TikTok. This suggests that frequent exposure to the platform and an openness to discovery drive their interaction with trend-based grocery store content. These behaviours reflect the principles of customer engagement theory, which highlights the importance of emotional and experiential incentives in fostering deeper consumer interaction (Li et al., 2020).

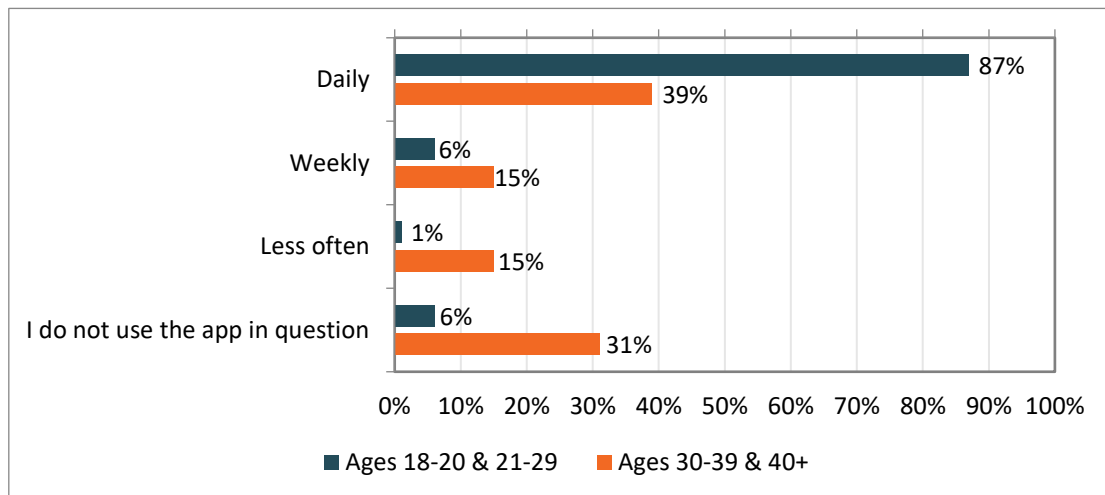


Figure 21. Question 4: How often do you use TikTok?

In contrast, older consumers (30+) are more likely to follow grocery stores for practical purposes, with 80% indicating promotions as their primary reason for engagement. This indicates that while younger users are drawn to TikTok's entertainment and novelty, older users are motivated by value and utility. These findings emphasise that TikTok trends become effective marketing tools when they align with user motivations; entertaining, visually engaging content captures younger audiences, while clear value propositions such as discounts and offers appeal more to older viewers.

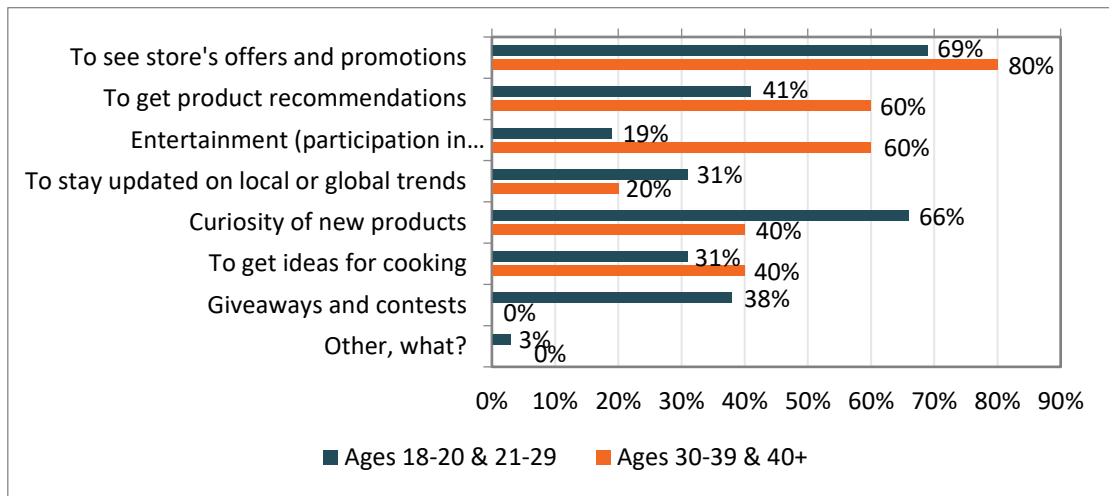


Figure 22. Question 19: What are your top three reasons for following grocery stores on TikTok? Choose your top three.

The variation between age demographics stems from differing motivations and digital behaviours. However, despite these differences, overall engagement remains high across age demographics, highlighting TikTok's broad marketing potential.

### 5.2.2 Comparing Findings to Initial Expectations

Personal initial assumption at the outset of this study was that TikTok marketing plays a significant and undeniable role in shaping contemporary consumer behaviour, particularly within the grocery retail sector. This belief was informed by existing literature, which positions TikTok as more than just an entertainment platform – it now functions as a powerful channel for information, discovery, and consumer influence. As highlighted by the Berlin School of Business & Innovation and Palmer (2024), TikTok has become a key medium for spreading knowledge and shaping global conversations, especially among younger demographics who increasingly rely on the platform as a source of news, trends, and product recommendations.

While I entered the study with confidence in TikTok's marketing impact, critically assessing its role presented challenges – particularly considering its complex societal and economic context. One of the main difficulties lay in evaluating TikTok's long-term stability as a

marketing platform due to ongoing regulatory critical examination. In early 2024, concerns surrounding TikTok's data privacy practices and its parent company's ties to China sparked renewed discussion in the United States over a potential ban. Given that approximately one-third of young adults in the U.S. regularly use TikTok for news, such a ban would carry significant implications. Both former and current U.S. presidents have raised concerns, fueling political discourse on whether the application should be restricted or removed from app stores (Liptak, Tausche & Saenz, 2025).

From an economic perspective, these developments had the potential to significantly disrupt small businesses and brands reliant on TikTok for affordable marketing and organic reach. Experts highlighted that a forced migration to more costly platforms like Instagram or YouTube could reduce visibility and engagement, especially among younger consumers. According to Miller (2025), a sudden shift away from TikTok could lead to downsizing for businesses heavily dependent on the platform, while also affecting international trade dynamics and foreign investment patterns, particularly in Europe where TikTok remains highly popular.

Despite these uncertainties, my confidence in the topic – and its relevance – remained strong throughout the research process. In fact, the empirical findings aligned closely with my initial expectations. The survey results and content analysis supported the notion that TikTok is a highly influential tool in driving consumer engagement and purchasing behaviour. For example, findings related to RQ3 demonstrated how consumers actively engage with grocery store content on TikTok, particularly through interactions driven by entertainment value, curiosity, and informational content. The consistency between the research findings and own personal assumptions not only reinforced the credibility of TikTok as a powerful marketing channel but also validated the broader idea that trend-driven short-form video content can shape the way consumers interact with everyday retail environments, such as grocery stores.

### **5.3 Comparison to Previous Research & Theories**

The results of this study align with several existing findings in the fields of social media marketing, TikTok advertising, and consumer behaviour – but they also highlight the unique dynamics specific to grocery retail context, which has not previously been examined through this lens. While TikTok marketing has been widely studied in relation to brand awareness and influencer engagement

(e.g., Gesmundo et al., 2022; Gumalang, Saerang & Arie, 2022; Araujo et al., 2022), its application in the grocery retail sector remains largely unexplored territory. This thesis addresses that gap by investigating how grocery stores can utilise TikTok trends to influence purchasing decisions, boost engagement, and remain culturally relevant in a rapidly changing digital environment.

Previous research has confirmed that TikTok users often feel well-informed by brand content on the platform, which supports smoother transitions through the AIDA model – from Awareness to Action – when marketing efforts align with users' personal interests (Gesmundo et al., 2022). This theory is reflected in the current findings, where consumers acknowledged that TikTok content from grocery stores positively shaped their perception of the store and even influenced their intent to visit or make purchases. The selective exposure theory, mentioned by Gesmundo et al. (2022), also resonates with the findings of this study, as many participants reported being compelled to familiar content types – such as trending recipes or popular product reviews – that fit their preferences and expectations on the platform.

Furthermore, the study by Araujo et al. (2022) revealed that emotionally engaging short-form videos – particularly those that generate interactions through likes, comments, and shares – positively influence Gen Z's purchase intentions. This is consistent with the current findings, where consumer engagement with TikTok videos correlated with stronger brand connections and higher likelihood of in-store visits. The study also supports Yliluoma's (2022) conclusion that content aligned with current TikTok trends has higher visibility and engagement potential, which is essential for maintaining reach in the algorithm driven "For You" feed.

However, this study goes beyond prior research by introducing the complex dynamic of *locality* in TikTok content marketing. While earlier works (Gumalang et al., 2022; Prasath & Yoganathan, 2018) explored how influencers, psychological factors, or peer recommendations affect online purchases, this research highlights how local grocery stores must strike a balance between global trends and local relevance. As Mäntyranta (2025a) has emphasised in his article, local stores face the unique challenge of tailoring content for hyperlocal audiences within a global platform. Findings from this thesis confirm this tension; while respondents were clearly interested in global trends – especially in the form of new and as well as trending products and trending recipes – they moreover valued content that acknowledged local culture, availability, and relevance.

Additionally, while Gumalang et al. (2022) found that content marketing alone was not always sufficient to influence brand awareness, this study suggests that in the grocery context, the combination of content marketing, visual appeal, humour, and trend alignment significantly contributes to

consumer attention and behavioural outcomes. It also supports Mäntyranta's (2025b) mention on that trend-driven short videos and authenticity are the most effective content forms for grocery stores navigating TikTok.

In conclusion, this thesis confirms many elements from prior research – such as the effectiveness of emotionally engaging, trend-based content and the importance of user interaction – but it contributes new knowledge by applying these theories to Finnish grocery retail, a sector previously underrepresented in TikTok marketing literature. It moreover identifies practical gaps in earlier studies, particularly concerning the challenges of localization within a global social media framework and offers actionable insights for stores seeking to maximize TikTok's potential in reaching modern, trend-aware consumers.

## **5.4 Managerial & Practical Implications**

The findings of this research provide valuable insights for grocery store managers and marketers looking to enhance their social media marketing strategies, particularly on TikTok. The study confirms that TikTok marketing can influence consumer purchasing behaviour by directing customers specific stores, promoting certain products, and increasing overall engagement. However, successful implementation requires an understanding of the platform and a strategic approach that balances global trends with local adaptation while aligning with the store's brand identity and customer preferences.

### **5.4.1 Strategic Considerations for TikTok Marketing**

To effectively leverage TikTok marketing, grocery stores should first recognize that not all trends resonate equally with all audiences. As demonstrated in this research, younger customers tend to be more engaged with social media-driven trends, while older demographics may still be influenced but require different messaging. Therefore, a thoughtful approach that mixes global trending products with locally relevant content can enhance engagement while maintaining authenticity. For instance, instead of simply promoting viral international snacks, stores could create content showcasing how these products fit into Finnish food culture or pair them with locally popular items.

Furthermore, the case of K-Citymarket Malmi (Tikkala, 2025) highlights both the power and the limitations of TikTok marketing. While viral campaigns successfully drove traffic for specific products – such as energy drinks and limited-edition treats – the broader challenge was sustaining customer engagement beyond short-term hype. This emphasises the need for balanced content strategy that extends beyond trending products and includes storytelling, customer interaction, and behind-the-scenes insights. Responding to comments, discussing store operations, and involving employees in content creation can help build a more relatable and trustworthy brand presence.

#### **5.4.2 Content Creation, Customer Engagement & Branding**

For grocery stores aiming to strengthen their presence on TikTok, several strategic recommendations can be made based on this study and previous findings. Firstly, stores should diversify their content strategies rather than relying solely on product-based or trend-following videos. Including behind-the-scenes content, showcasing employees, and responding to customer comments can help foster a more personal connection with viewers and encourage deeper engagement. This approach aligns with insights from Mäntyranta's (2025b) article, where grocery stores' social media managers emphasised the importance of authenticity, short-form content, and experimentation as keys to success in the fast-paced world of social media.

Secondly, it is crucial to actively utilise customer feedback and insights gathered through social media interactions. A notable example comes from K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo, where direct engagement with customers online influenced real in-store improvements and adjustments to the product assortment (Mäntyranta, 2025a). Listening to the customer base not only builds loyalty but also helps ensure that content remains relevant and relatable.

Thirdly, stores should aim to use TikTok trends in a way that aligns with their target audience and store identity. While taking part in popular challenges or using trending audio can help boost reach, it is important that the content still feels relevant to the store's customer base and overall image. Jumping on every trend without considering its fit can lead to confusion and loss of credibility. As Mäntyranta (2025b) points out, many K-Citymarket social media managers have noticed that content created purely for the sake of following trends often lacks impact if it does not resonate with the intended audience. Since grocery store

audiences are often locally concentrated, the real challenge lies in creating engaging trend-based content that still feels personal and meaningful to viewers.

Lastly, maintaining consistency in brand identity across TikTok content is essential. Rather than chasing visibility through every trending sound or challenge, stores should ensure that their content reflects their core values and personality. A cohesive tone, engaging storytelling, and genuine interaction can help build a long-term following and increase consumer trust. As noted by the before mentioned social media managers interviewed (Mäntyranta, 2025b), success in this space often requires patience, thoughtful planning, and a willingness to learn and adapt through ongoing experimentation.

#### **5.4.3 Tracking and Measuring TikTok Marketing Success**

To assess the effectiveness of TikTok marketing efforts, grocery stores should implement measurable tracking methods to evaluate engagement, sales impact, and customer perceptions. Engagement metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and views provide valuable insights into how well content resonates with the audience. Additionally, analysing customer flow and sales data can help determine whether TikTok-driven campaigns lead to increased foot traffic and product sales, as demonstrated in the case of K-Citymarket Malmi's (Tikkala, 2025) viral product promotions.

Beyond quantitative data, customer feedback gathered through social media comments and direct messages offer qualitative insights into customer preferences and perceptions. Finally, conducting A/B testing – comparing different types of content, such as product-focused videos versus storytelling-driven posts – allows stores to refine their strategies and identify which formats generate the highest engagement and conversion rates. By consistently tracking these metrics, grocery stores can optimize their TikTok marketing efforts to maximize impact and customer engagement.

#### **5.4.4 Final Considerations**

While the research highlights the positive benefits of TikTok marketing, it is not a solution that fits all. The findings were based on selected stores in the Helsinki metropolitan area, and further research would be needed to assess whether similar strategies would be effective in different regions of Finland. Additionally, the store's own willingness and resources to

invest in social media marketing play a crucial role in its success. TikTok can be a powerful tool for grocery retailers, but only if used strategically and in a way that aligns with both the store's capabilities and customer expectations.

## 5.5 Limitations of the Study

This study faced several limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the results. One of the primary challenges was the limited availability of academic literature specifically focused on TikTok marketing within the context of grocery stores. As this is a relatively new and emerging area of study, especially in the retail sector, the research had to rely partly on personal observations, practical examples, and insights from industry publications. This required a critical evaluation of sources, given that many were highly contingent upon specific contexts

Another limitation lies in the scope and nature of the data collection. The study was limited to adult respondents, which significantly narrows the potential reach of the survey. Given that TikTok is especially popular among younger audiences, such as teenagers, the exclusion of this demographic may have resulted in an incomplete picture of consumer behaviour and engagement on the platform. As, Guo (2022) notes, TikTok has a great influence on youth, particularly teenagers aged 12-20, who actively participate in trend creation and content sharing – therefore, excluding this age group may have excluded a highly active and trend-setting segment of TikTok's user base.

In addition, the survey was conducted during the holiday season – particularly hectic period for grocery stores – which likely affected the willingness to participate. As a result, only 85 responses were collected, which may limit the generalisability of the findings.

The study also depended on self-reported data, which introduces the possibility of response bias. Participants might have provided answers they deemed socially desirable or struggled to recall specific instances of purchasing behaviour influenced by TikTok. While measures were taken to ensure clarity and neutrality in the survey questions, these factors remain a potential limitation.

Furthermore, external challenges related to TikTok itself must be acknowledged. The platform's global standing, particularly in the United States, has been marked by political and regulatory uncertainty. As Stackpole (2025) highlight, TikTok is at the heart of broader geopolitical tensions, making its future as a reliable marketing platform unclear. Additionally, Miller (2025) emphasises that a potential TikTok ban in the U.S. could have significant economic consequences globally,

influencing everything from marketing budgets to digital strategy and international trade relations. This uncertainty made it more difficult to continue the thesis, as the platform's future was under debate during the research period. The possibility of the United States exiting TikTok raised concerns about how it might impact the platform's role and accessibility in other countries, including European Union. With these global shifts unfolding, it was challenging to predict long-term trends or draw broader conclusions about the sustainability of TikTok marketing strategies. The limited access to deeper platform analytics and the unpredictability of the future regulations further complicated efforts to analyse the platforms' full potential from a research perspective.

Overall, these limitations – ranging from sample size constraints and demographic exclusion to broader platform-specific issues – should be taken into account when interpreting the study's results. While the findings offer valuable insights into how TikTok marketing may influence consumer purchasing behaviour in grocery stores, they also reflect the realities of conducting research in rapidly evolving digital environment.

## **5.6 Suggestions for Future Research**

Given the growing role of social media in grocery retail, particularly on platforms like TikTok, the further research on this topic is highly encouraged. A longitudinal study could offer valuable insights into how TikTok's role evolves over time within the grocery sector, especially in response to changing algorithms, consumer behaviour, and platform regulations. Future studies could improve upon the current research by expanding the sample size, including respondents from various age groups or conducting cross-country comparisons to understand how marketing strategies differ across regions.

It would be also beneficial to explore platform-specific content strategies, such as comparing TikTok with Instagram, or focusing on a particular grocery chain or content format (e.g., behind-the-scenes videos vs. product promotions). Since Generation Z forms a significant portion of TikTok users, future studies could also examine how authenticity and influencer engagement affect their loyalty and purchasing behaviour (Rezek, 2022).

Additionally, exploring how global trends are locally adapted – through the lens of glocalization theory – could provide a deeper understanding of how viral content is transformed into culturally relevant marketing. Lastly, considering the potential ban of TikTok in the United States, future research

could assess how such geopolitical shifts influence global trend dissemination and the strategic decisions of brands relying on TikTok for visibility.

## 5.7 Final Conclusions

In this research, TikTok trends have been found to shape consumer curiosity and influence in-store purchasing behaviour. One of the clearest findings of this research is that TikTok trends significantly influence consumer interest and behaviour in grocery stores. A substantial 74% of respondents reported that they at least occasionally search for trending products in-store after seeing them on TikTok. This demonstrates that viral products or popular content can directly translate into purchase intent, supporting the idea that the content seen on the platform is a strong motivator in the discovery phase of the customer journey.

The presence of new and trending products on TikTok appears to play a substantial role in driving consumer engagement and stimulating sales. The research revealed that users are most drawn to content showcasing store offers (70%) and new incoming products (62%). Products such as pick-and-mix candy and energy drinks (e.g., Nocco, Red Bull, Celsius) were frequently mentioned, suggesting these categories benefit greatly from TikTok visibility. Additionally, special or novel items – such as avocado ripening machines or Italian specialty meats – also caught consumers' attention, proving that innovation, uniqueness, and visual appeal are key drivers of engagement and influence actual purchases.

Global TikTok trends, when appropriately localised, have the potential to effectively engage Finnish consumers by aligning with cultural preferences and shopping habits. Grocery stores' social media managers are increasingly utilising global TikTok trends as a way to connect with local audiences (Mäntyranta, 2025b). This insight highlights that while trends may originate internationally, their success in Finland depends on how well they are adapted to the local context. When done successfully, this local tailoring makes the content more relatable and authentic, strengthening brand perception and driving consumer interest.

Marketing strategies that incorporate social media trends can yield measurable outcomes, particularly in terms of product discovery and purchase decisions. The results show that TikTok marketing does more than just raise awareness – it can also drive purchasing decisions. For instance, 40% of survey respondents said they had bought or tested a product after seeing it in K-Citymarket Vantaa Jumbo's TikTok videos. Although almost half of respondents said no store had influenced their

purchasing behaviour, however, the data still suggests that targeted, trend driven content can convert views into action, especially when executed consistently and creatively.

The findings of this study suggest increasing potential for trend-driven marketing strategies within the grocery retail sector, especially in the context of evolving digital consumer behaviour. This research confirms that TikTok is an effective tool for reaching younger, digitally native consumers who are highly responsive to social media trends. As Rezek (2022) notes, Generation Z especially values authenticity, creativity, and trend participation from brands. Finnish grocery stores tapping into TikTok trends are not only staying culturally relevant but also positioning themselves to capture long-term loyalty from this audience. The evolving nature of the platform, combined with its impact on product discovery, indicates significant potential for the future of retail marketing driven by social media.

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## Appendices

## Appendix 1. The Survey



# Haaga-Helia

## Päivittäistavarakauppojen TikTok -markkinoinnin vaikutus asiakkaan ostokäyttäytymiseen

Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (\*)

Tämä kysely on osa TikTok -markkinointia ja kuluttajakäyttäytymistä koskevaa opinnäytetyötä ja sen tutkimusta.

Lisätietoja: [bha970@myy.haaga-helia.fi](mailto:bha970@myy.haaga-helia.fi)

Kyselyyn vastaamiseen menee 3-5min. Osallistumisesi on vapaaehtoista ja vastauksesi pysyvät anonyymeinä. Tietoja käytetään vain akateemisiin tarkoituksiin, ja voit milloin tahansa poistua kyselystä. Valitsemalla alla olevan valintaruudun, vahvistat että olet lukenut yllä olevat tiedot ja suostut osallistumaan kyselyyn.

### 1. Olen lukenut ja hyväksynyt yllä olevat tiedot. \*

Kyllä

### 2. Ikäsi? \*

18-20

21-29

30-39

40+

### 3. Kuinka usein käytät TikTokia? \*

- Päivittäin
- Viikoittain
- Harvemmin
- En käytä kyseistä sovellusta

**4. Kuinka usein näet TikTok sisältöä päivittäistavarakaupoilta? \***

- Päivittäin
- Viikottain
- Joskus
- En koskaan

**5. Minkä seuraavista päivittäistavarakaupoista olet nähnyt TikTokissa? (Valitse yksi tai useampi) \***

- K-Supermarket Tripla
- K-Supermarket Lippulaiva
- K-Citymarket Jumbo
- Ei mikään mainituista

**6. Oletko tehnyt ostoksia joissakin näistä kaupoista nähtyäsi heidän sisältönsä TikTokissa? (Valitse yksi tai useampi) \***

- Kyllä, K-Supermarket Tripla
- Kyllä, K-Supermarket Lippulaiva
- Kyllä, K-Citymarket Jumbo
- Ei mikään mainituista

**7. Onko joku seuraavista kaupoista saanut TikTok sisällöllään sinut ostamaan ja testaamaan jotakin tiettyä tuotetta? (Valitse yksi tai useampi) \***

- Kyllä, K-Supermarket Tripla
- Kyllä, K-Supermarket Lippulaiva

- Kyllä, K-Citymarket Jumbo
- Ei mikään mainituista

**8. Mikä tuote on ollut kyseessä? \***

Mikäli et muista tai osaa sanoa, vastaa "en muista"/"en osaa sanoa".

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**9. Kuinka todennäköisesti TikTokissa nähty sisältö vaikuttaa päätökseesi vierailta ja tehdä ostoksia tietyssä päivittäistavarakaupassa? \***

- Todella epätodennäköistä
- Epätodennäköistä
- Neutraali
- Todennäköistä
- Todella todennäköistä

**10. Kuinka todennäköistä on, että päivittäistavarakauppojen TikTok-markkinointi saa sinut ostamaan ja testaamaan tuotetta, jota et normaalisti ostaisi? \***

- Todella epätodennäköistä
- Epätodennäköistä
- Neutraali
- Todennäköistä
- Todella todennäköistä

**11. Kuinka todennäköistä on, että vieraillet päivittäistavarakaupassa heidän TikTok-videossaan esitellyn kampanjan tai tuotteen perusteella? \***

- Todella epätodennäköistä

- Epätodennäköistä
- Neutraali
- Todennäköistä
- Todella todennäköistä

**12. Etsitkö usein päivittäistavarakaupoista TikTokissa trendaavia tuotteita? \***

- Kyllä
- Joskus
- Harvemmin
- En koskaan

**13. Mikä näistä tekijöistä vaikuttaa eniten päätökseesi vierailla ja tehdä ostoksia tietyssä päivittäistavarakaupassa nähtyäsi sen TikTokissa? Valitse kolme tärkeintä. \***

- Alennukset ja tarjoukset
- Perinteinen tuotevalikoima
- Kansainvälisten tuotteiden saatavuus
- Myymälän sijainti
- Trendaavien ja suosittujen tuotteiden saatavuus
- Kaupan tunnelma
- Muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Onko mielestäsi tärkeää, että päivittäistavarakaupat seuraavat sosiaalisessa mediassa kansainvälisesti trendaavia tuotteita, haasteita, tmv. omaa TikTok sisältöään tehdessä? \***

- Ei ole yhtään tärkeää
- Ei ole tärkeää
- Neutraali
- On tärkeää
- On erittäin tärkeää

**15. Mitä kansainvälisiä trendejä mielestäsi paikallisesti toimivan päivittäistavarakaupan olisi tärkeä seurata? \***

Esim. uudet tuotteet

Anna esimerkki \*

<  >

**16. Kuinka suuri vaikutus kansainvälisillä trendeillä on siihen, mitä saatat etsiä tai ostaa päivittäistavarakaupasta? \***

Esim. TikTokissa trendanneet kurkkusalaatit, karkkitaatelit, Prime, Buldak nuudelit, kosmetiikka, eri sesonkien tuotteet...

- Ei ole vaikutusta
- Vaikuttaa hieman
- Vaikuttaa kohtalaisesti
- Vaikuttaa merkittävästi
- Vaikuttaa erittäin merkittävästi

**17. Onko mielestäsi tärkeää, että päivittäistavarakaupat muokkaavat sisältönsä ja globaaleja trendejä sen mukaan, että ne sopivat paikalliselle asiakaskunnalle paremmin? \***

- Ei ole yhtään tärkeää
- Ei ole tärkeää
- Neutraali
- On tärkeää
- On erittäin tärkeää

**18. Miksi se olisi tärkeää? Valitse kolme tärkeintä. \***

- Tekee sisällön seuraamisesta mielenkiintoisempaa
- Parantaa asiakaskokemusta kokonaisuudessaan
- Vahvistaa kaupan paikallista identiteettiä
- Tekee tuotteista ja palveluista houkuttelevampia
- Vahvistaa asiakas-sitoutumista kauppaan

- Lisää kiinnostusta seurata paikallisen kaupan arkea
- Muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

**19. Minkälaista vuorovaikutusta sinulla on päivittäistavarakaupan sisällön kanssa TikTokissa? (Valitse yksi tai useampi) \***

- Olen seuraaja ja seuran aktiivisesti heidän sisältöään
- En ole seuraaja, mutta seuran aktiivisesti heidän sisältöään
- Katson julkaisuja
- Tykkään julkaisuista
- Jaan julkaisuja
- Kommentoin julkaisuja
- Tallennan julkaisuja
- Muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

**20. Mitkä ovat tärkeimmät syyt seurata päivittäistavarakauppoja TikTokissa? Valitse kolme tärkeintä. \***

- Nähdä kaupan tarjoukset ja kampanjat
- Saada tuotesuosituksia
- Viihde (trendeihin/haasteisiin osallistuminen, humoristinen sisältö)
- Pysyä päivitettyinä paikallisista tai globaaleista trendeistä
- Uteliaisuus uusista tuotteista
- Saada ideoita ruoanlaittoon
- Arvonnat ja kilpailut
- Muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_