



The Marketing Power of TikTok Beauty Influencers: Understanding Their Impact on Gen Z Consumer Behavior

Veronika Maliavina

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor of Business Administration

Bachelor's Thesis

2025

Abstract

Author(s) Veronika Maliavina
Degree Bachelor of Business Administration
Thesis Title The Marketing Power of TikTok Beauty Influencers: Understanding Their Impact on Gen Z Consumer Behavior
Number of pages and appendix pages 39 + 7
<p>This bachelor's degree thesis investigates the marketing power of TikTok beauty influencers and their impact on Generation Z's purchasing behavior among users who actively engage with beauty content on the platform. The research aims to provide valuable insights for marketers, beauty brands, and content creators looking to enhance their influencer marketing strategies on social media.</p> <p>This study consists of a theoretical framework and an empirical part. The theoretical framework explores how TikTok beauty influencers impact Generation Z's purchasing behavior. It begins with an overview of social media marketing and the role of engagement metrics in capturing consumer attention on TikTok. The study then explores influencer marketing, examining different types of influencers, brand endorsements, and the formation and influence of parasocial relationships. The framework also covers credibility and trust, focusing on authenticity, transparency, and the strategies influencers use to build credible and lasting relationships with their audience. Lastly, the research analyzes Generation Z consumer behavior, investigating their digital habits, content preferences, emotional responses, and motivational factors that influence purchasing decisions.</p> <p>The empirical research was conducted through a quantitative online survey specifically aimed at Generation Z participants to examine how TikTok beauty influencers affect their purchasing behavior. A total of 52 responses were collected and analyzed, providing insights into how this generation engages with influencer content. The findings demonstrated that TikTok influencers significantly affect Generation Z's buying decisions, especially when they are perceived to be credible and authentic. Authenticity, honest product reviews, and relatable personalities emerged as the most influential factors that drive trust and the decision to follow influencers. Conversely, overly polished, exaggerated, or sponsored content often causes scepticism and reduces viewer engagement. The majority of respondents reported purchasing beauty products based on influencer recommendations, highlighting product demonstration videos and educational content to be most effective and persuasive forms of content.</p> <p>For future studies, it would be beneficial to possibly study other age groups, to compare TikTok to other social media platforms, and to incorporate qualitative research methods.</p>
Key words Beauty Influencers, Generation Z, TikTok, Consumer Behavior, Influencer Marketing, Social Media

Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Background.....	1
1.2	Research Question.....	2
1.3	Demarcation.....	3
1.4	Scope and Limitations.....	3
1.5	Benefits.....	3
1.6	Key Concepts.....	4
2	TikTok Beauty Influencers' Impact on Gen Z Purchasing Behavior	5
2.1	Social Media Marketing.....	5
2.1.1	TikTok and Engagement Metrics	6
2.2	Influencer Marketing	7
2.2.1	Influencer types (mega, micro, nano).....	7
2.2.2	Brand endorsement	9
2.2.3	Parasocial relationship.....	9
2.3	Credibility and Trust.....	10
2.3.1	Trust-Building	11
2.3.2	Transparency	11
2.4	Gen Z Consumer Behavior.....	12
2.4.1	Influencers Impact	12
2.4.2	Social Media Usage.....	13
3	Research Approach and Methods	15
3.1	Research methodology	15
3.2	Data collection process	16
3.3	Reliability and validity of research.....	17
4	Results	19
4.1	Introduction to survey responses.....	19
4.2	Characteristics that Make TikTok Beauty Influencers Appealing to Generation Z (IQ1) ...	21
4.3	The role of Credibility and Trust in shaping Purchasing Behavior (IQ2)	22
4.4	Most effective content strategies used by TikTok beauty influencers (IQ3)	26
4.5	Additional Information from open-ended questions.....	27
5	Conclusion.....	30
5.1	Key Findings	30
5.1.1	IQ 1: What characteristics make TikTok beauty influencers appealing to Gen Z consumers?.....	30

5.1.2 IQ 2: How do credibility and trust influence Gen Z's purchasing behavior on TikTok?	31
5.1.3 IQ 3: What marketing strategies used by TikTok beauty influencers are most effective in driving purchases?	32
5.2 Validity and Reliability	33
5.3 Recommendations for Future Research.....	34
5.4 Learning Reflection.....	34
Sources.....	36
Appendices	40
Appendix 1. The Survey.....	40

1 Introduction

This is a research-based bachelor's thesis for the degree programme in Business Administration, with a major specialization in Marketing and Sales, conducted at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. The thesis, titled "The Marketing Power of TikTok Beauty Influencers: Understanding Their Impact on Gen Z Consumer Behavior," aims to investigate the growing influence of TikTok beauty influencers on Generation Z's purchasing behavior.

This chapter will introduce the thesis topic and its background, along with the research question and investigative questions designed to address the study's central issue. It also covers the scope and limitations of the research, potential benefits, and key concepts.

1.1 Background

Social media today play an important role in shaping consumer behavior, particularly among Generation Z. This demographic lives digitally, and therefore so heavily relies on online platforms when researching products and making purchasing decisions (Thangavel et al., 2019). TikTok, with its unique short-video format and personalized recommendations, has become a primary channel for Generation Z to look for product recommendations. Particularly, they look for these recommendations from beauty influencers on the platform, who set trends, endorse products, and build trust with their audiences (Weismueller et al., 2020).

TikTok beauty influencers rapidly grow their presence on social media through engaging and authentic content. This credibility significantly impacts consumer trust, brand perception, and engagement levels. This thesis explores the influence of TikTok beauty influencers and their role in shaping the purchasing decisions of Generation Z. Investigating what attracts Generation Z to these influencers and motivates them to follow their beauty recommendations will offer valuable insights for brands, marketers, and academics studying digital marketing.

Instead of traditional advertising, influencer marketing uses authentic content created by popular individuals who engage effectively with their audience (Hudders et al., 2021). TikTok stands out as a new type of digital marketing where beauty influencers play an essential role in recommending products, creating trends, and shaping brand perceptions among Generation Z. Identifying the factors that enhance influencer credibility and effectiveness, in addition to understanding the psychological triggers behind Generation Z's purchasing decisions, is crucial for influencer marketing.

The beauty industry, in particular, has quickly adopted TikTok marketing, leveraging influencer partnerships to connect with target consumers. Research suggests that influencer credibility, engagement style, and relatability significantly influence Generation Z's purchasing decisions (Barta

& Andalibi, 2021). Consequently, gaining insights into how TikTok beauty influencers affect this demographic is essential for businesses looking to improve their social media marketing strategies.

1.2 Research Question

This research investigates how TikTok beauty influencers affect Generation Z's purchasing decisions by analyzing the role of social media marketing, influencer marketing, credibility and trust, and Generation Z consumer behavior. Specifically, the thesis focuses on how influencers use TikTok to connect with their audiences through authentic, relatable content. It also explores the importance of transparency, personal storytelling, and parasocial relationships in building trust and influencing buying decisions. By identifying what makes content created by influencers effective, the study provides valuable insights for brands aiming to engage with Generation Z consumers more successfully.

The primary research question (RQ) guiding this study is: How do TikTok beauty influencers impact Gen Z's purchasing decisions? To answer this research question comprehensively, three investigative questions (IQs) have been formulated:

IQ 1: What characteristics make TikTok beauty influencers appealing to Gen Z consumers?

IQ 2: How do credibility and trust influence Gen Z's purchasing behavior on TikTok?

IQ 3: What marketing strategies used by TikTok beauty influencers are most effective in driving purchases?

Table 1 below presents the investigative questions, theoretical framework components, research methods, and results chapters for each investigative question.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Investigative Question	Theoretical Framework	Research Method	Results
IQ 1: What characteristics make TikTok beauty influencers appealing to Gen Z consumers?	Influencer Marketing, Gen Z Consumer Behavior	Survey	5.1.1

IQ 2: How do credibility and trust influence Gen Z's purchasing behavior on TikTok?	Credibility and Trust, Influencer Marketing, Gen Z Consumer Behavior	Survey	5.1.2
IQ 3: What marketing strategies used by TikTok beauty influencers are most effective in driving purchases?	Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing, Gen Z Consumer Behavior	Survey	5.1.3

1.3 Demarcation

The scope of this research is specifically limited to examining the impact of TikTok beauty influencers on Generation Z's purchasing decisions by focusing on four key areas: Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing, Credibility and Trust, and Gen Z Consumer Behavior. The study focuses exclusively on TikTok beauty influencers and does not include influencers from other categories, for example, such as fashion, fitness, or gaming.

1.4 Scope and Limitations

This study employs a quantitative questionnaire to analyze Generation Z consumers' perceptions of TikTok beauty influencers, specifically examining influencer characteristics, trust factors, and marketing strategies. The research findings primarily reflect self-reported consumer attitudes and intended behaviors. Furthermore, results may be influenced by geographical or cultural variations, as Generation Z consumers across different regions may demonstrate diverse engagement patterns and preferences regarding influencer marketing on TikTok.

1.5 Benefits

This research offers valuable insights for marketers, influencers, academics, and businesses by examining how TikTok beauty influencers impact Generation Z's purchasing decisions. The findings will help marketers and brands refine their influencer marketing strategies by identifying the characteristics and techniques that resonate the most with Gen Z. Influencers can better understand how credibility, authenticity, and engagement affect their interaction with their audience. For academics and researchers, this study contributes to existing literature by quantitatively examining the relationships between influencer characteristics, their credibility, marketing strategies, and Generation Z's decision-making process.

1.6 Key Concepts

Social Media Marketing (SMM): The use of social media platforms and interactive tools by brands to connect with consumers, build brand awareness, and influence purchasing intentions through content creation, participation, and interaction with consumers (Tuten & Solomon, 2013).

Influencer Marketing: A form of online marketing that employs influential individuals who create authentic content and leverage their online presence to promote products and influence consumer behavior (Hudders et al., 2021).

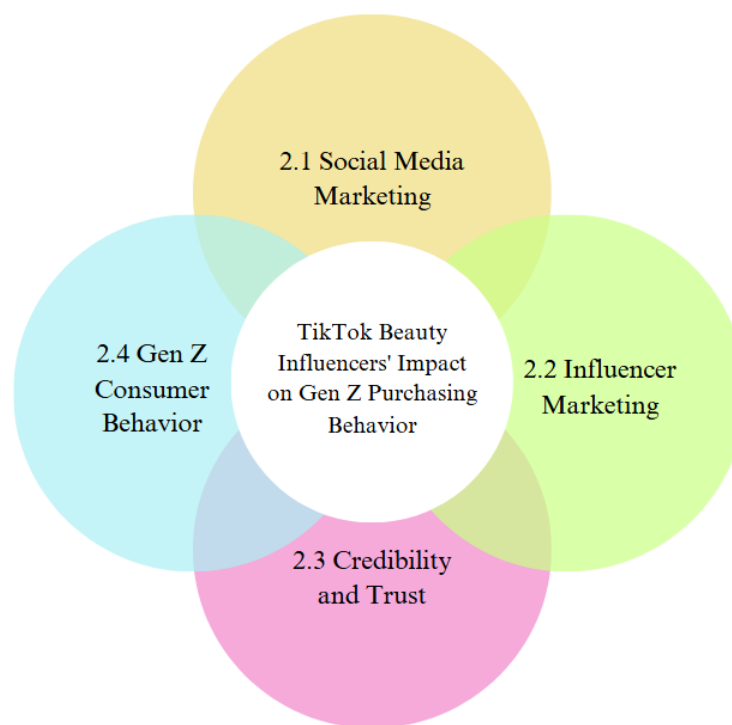
TikTok Beauty Influencers: A beauty influencer is someone on social media who shares content about makeup, skincare, and other beauty topics (Influencity, 2024)

Generation Z: Individuals born between 1996 and 2010 who are digitally native, highly active on social media, and significantly influenced by online platforms and digital communities in their decision-making processes (Thangavel et al., 2019).

2 TikTok Beauty Influencers' Impact on Gen Z Purchasing Behavior

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework needed to examine the influence of TikTok influencers on the purchasing behavior of Generation Z. It consists of four main sections: Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing, Credibility and Trust, and Generation Z Consumer Behavior. Each section addresses specific concepts directly related to the research and investigation questions, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors driving Generation Z's interactions with influencers and subsequent purchase decisions.

Figure 1. This framework illustrates how key components interconnect to explain TikTok beauty influencers' impact on Gen Z's purchasing behavior.



2.1 Social Media Marketing

Nowadays, the number of people on social media has grown significantly, and social media is now a fundamental aspect of people's lives. It is estimated that in 2025, there will be 5.42 billion social media users worldwide (Sprout Social, 2025).

One of the founding pillars of social media is social media marketing (SMM). Social media marketing (SMM) is the use of social media platforms, tools, and channels to promote products or services to achieve mutual benefits for companies and their target audience (Tuten & Solomon, 2013).

SMM has changed how brands and consumers interact in many ways, creating a more dynamic and participatory environment. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok allow brands to establish a deeper connection with their audience through content creation, user engagement, and direct communication. Companies are implementing SMM strategies to increase brand engagement, build awareness, and ultimately drive purchase intent. The 2025 Sprout Social Index revealed that 90% of consumers use social media to keep up with trends and cultural events, making it the most dominant source of information. By utilizing social media, brands encourage users to consume, engage, and create content, strengthening the consumer-brand relationship and increasing brand loyalty. Among these digital spaces, TikTok stands out as an exemplary platform that fits these descriptions.

2.1.1 TikTok and Engagement Metrics

TikTok was launched relatively recently, in 2017, but despite this, the platform is experiencing rapid global growth, especially among Generation Z (Gen Z). As of early 2025, 82% of Gen Z social media users have an account on TikTok, which makes this platform the leading product search platform among this generation. The platform receives about 2.65 billion monthly visits and offers an advertising reach of 1.59 billion users (Sprout Social, 2025).

Social media marketing is actively used on TikTok, but when discussing it, it's important to understand how success is measured. On TikTok, the key engagement metrics are likes, comments, and shares. Likes are the most direct indicator of audience approval and play a crucial role in how the platform's algorithm promotes content (WNY News Now, 2025). Comments also increase visibility and reflect active audience engagement, providing direct interaction between creators and viewers. Shares emphasize the perceived value of content as users choose to share it in their networks (Cheng & Li, 2023).

On TikTok, likes serve as social proof, showing that a video is popular and worth watching. When people see a video with many likes, they are more likely to watch, comment, and share it. This cycle boosts engagement and keeps the video trending (WNY News Now, 2025). Several beauty brands have already leveraged these metrics to improve their social media marketing strategies. For example, brands including The Ordinary, Rhode, and Maybelline have been efficiently utilizing engagement metrics on TikTok to go viral and generate significant sales growth. By understanding the role and importance of likes, comments, and shares, businesses can create more engaging content and increase the effectiveness of their marketing. While engagement is a key factor in social media marketing, it becomes even more important in influencer marketing, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.2 Influencer Marketing

TikTok has become one of the most influential platforms shaping consumer trends and purchase decisions, mainly because of the engaging content created by influencers. Online consumers increasingly turn to TikTok influencers for product recommendations and guidance rather than depending only on referrals from friends and family. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2024), an influencer is defined as “a person or group of people with the ability to influence the behavior or opinions of others.” Freberg et al. (2011) further emphasize that social media influencers act as independent authorities who shape their audience's opinions through various content formats.

Social media influencers, particularly on TikTok, are often perceived as accessible, trustworthy, and relatable. These qualities make them stand out on the platform, as they effectively shape audience purchasing decisions through real-time interactions, prompt responses, and active engagement with trending topics (Bu et al., 2022). By consistently sharing valuable and engaging content, influencers build a unique identity that fosters trust and authority within their audience (Liu & Zheng, 2024).

Influencers now play a crucial role in TikTok marketing as brands actively collaborate with them to promote their products through influencer marketing. According to Rahmad (2024), TikTok influencer marketing leverages influencers' established audience relationships to enhance brand awareness, reputation, and consumer perceptions. This idea is further supported by Torres, Augusto, and Matos (2019), as they highlight that the interactions between influencers and followers can create illusions of face-to-face relationships, making followers more receptive to influencer-generated content. Unlike traditional celebrity endorsements that typically lack personal interaction, influencer marketing builds stronger connections through continuous engagement and authentic communication (Bu et al., 2022).

Highly effective TikTok influencer marketing strategies often involve authentic storytelling, humor, product tutorials, honest demonstrations, and interactive formats such as “get ready with me” videos (Nemirovsky, 2025). These content styles deeply resonate with Generation Z, increasing influencer credibility and encouraging consumer purchases. By carefully choosing the right TikTok influencers, brands can successfully connect with their target audiences and build stronger consumer relationships (Influencity, 2023; Torres, Augusto, and Matos, 2019).

2.2.1 Influencer types (mega, micro, nano)

While companies are actively recognizing the benefits of integrating influencers into their marketing communication strategies, they still face the challenge of identifying and collaborating with the right social media influencers to achieve effective marketing outcomes (Liu & Zheng, 2024). Influencers

are generally categorized based on follower counts into mega, macro, micro, and nano. Mega influencers typically have more than one million followers, and this category often includes traditional celebrities. Following them are macro influencers who have between 500,000 to 1 million followers. Lastly, there are micro-influencers (10,000-50,000 followers) and nano-influencers (1,000-10,000 followers), who often tend to maintain greater authenticity and higher engagement due to more direct and personal interactions with their followers (Sanders, 2024).

Recent industry trends show that beauty brands are significantly shifting their marketing preferences toward smaller-scale influencers, particularly nano-influencers (44%) and micro-influencers (25.7%) (WHY News Now, 2025). This shift is driven by the higher trust and stronger engagement that smaller influencers tend to generate with their audience. As social media users these days increasingly get tired of traditional influencer content, these smaller creators are seen as more relatable and authentic in their recommendations. This explains why nano and micro-influencers typically achieve engagement rates two to three times higher than larger influencers. For instance, according to Influencer Marketing Hub (2025), nano-influencers achieve an average engagement rate of approximately 15.04%, significantly outperforming mega-influencers, whose average engagement rate on TikTok is around 10.53%. The figure below reflects this growing trend by showing how brand partnerships with nano-influencers increased from 39% in 2023 to 44% in 2024 (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2025). Moreover, collaboration with nano-influencers can be particularly advantageous for brands aiming to target a specific niche or launch new products. These combined benefits make them an increasingly appealing choice in modern influencer marketing.

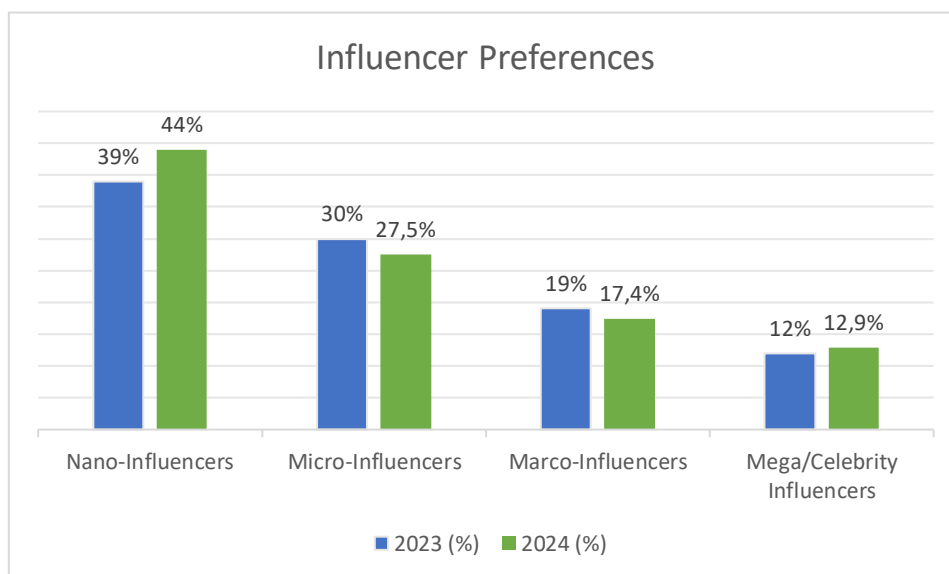


Figure 2. Influencer Preferences adapted from Influencer Marketing Hub 2025.

2.2.2 Brand endorsement

The success of influencer marketing on TikTok highlights a broader trend in social media marketing, where brands increasingly utilize influencers to distribute brand messages through endorsements (Torres, Augusto, and Matos, 2019). These endorsements typically involve partnerships in which influencers promote products or services in exchange for monetary compensation or free items (Influency, 2023; Welsh, 2024). The most common and influential endorsement formats are sponsored posts and product reviews. In sponsored posts, influencers showcase a brand's product as part of a paid collaboration and directly promote it to their audience. In contrast, product reviews are mostly based on personal experience and provide followers with reliable, honest information that significantly affects their purchasing decisions.

Unlike traditional advertisements, influencer endorsements are often perceived as credible recommendations rather than purely commercial promotions. However, the effectiveness of these endorsements largely depends on the validity and trust established between influencers and their followers. In reality, not all sponsorships are clearly disclosed. A lot of influencers either fail to do it properly or hesitate out of fear that transparency might lead to losing their audience (Kim, Jiang and Wang, 2021). This ongoing issue with undisclosed sponsorships is making it way harder for followers to figure out what content is authentic and what is just a well-planned ad.

Therefore, selecting the right influencer is critical to a successful endorsement campaign (Torres, Augusto, and Matos, 2019). Key selection criteria include follower count, engagement rate, and audience demographics. Most importantly, brands should collaborate with influencers whose values, interests, and visual identity align with their own (Influency, 2023). Influencers must also produce high-quality content that effectively communicates brand messages and resonates with their target audience. Carefully reviewing an influencer's past content, audience engagement, and performance metrics helps reduce the risk of ineffective or misleading endorsements that could harm campaign outcomes, damage brand credibility, or lead to potential legal issues. As a result, the influencer's appeal and how well they align with the brand are key factors in making endorsements effective (Torres, Augusto & Matos, 2019).

2.2.3 Parasocial relationship

The psychological side of influencer marketing also plays an important role. Parasocial relationships, or the emotional one-sided bonds followers develop with influencers, significantly increase the impact of influencer marketing (Liu & Zheng, 2024). According to Närvänen, Kirvesmies, and Kahri (2020), these relationships are just illusions of closeness that followers have with influencers,

despite limited or no direct interaction. Such emotional connections deepen trust and make influencer endorsements more persuasive and effective (Liu & Zheng, 2024).

Additionally, Shan, Chen, and Lin (2020) introduced the concept of parasocial identification, where followers associate their ideal self-image with the influencer's image. This sense of alignment strengthens brand engagement, enhances brand perception, and increases purchase intentions.

Many followers are aware that influencers receive compensation for endorsements and recognize such content as a form of advertising; therefore, they process these persuasive messages accordingly (Liu & Zheng, 2024). However, how successfully this content is received largely depends on the perceived authenticity of the influencer's motives. Followers are more likely to respond positively when they believe the influencer genuinely supports the product and cares about their audience. In contrast, endorsements that seem as solely profit-driven tend to erode trust and reduce effectiveness (Shan, Chen and Lin, 2020). As a result, transparency and authenticity are crucial for maintaining influencer credibility and fostering successful brand partnerships.

2.3 Credibility and Trust

Credibility plays a major role in shaping how consumers respond to influencer marketing, especially on platforms like TikTok. It's about whether people would trust them and follow their recommendations based on how competent, trustworthy, and relatable an influencer appears (Barta & Andalibi, 2021). When followers see influencers as reliable sources, they're more likely to take their advice seriously and let it shape their opinions and buying decisions (AlFarraj et al., 2021).

Credibility is especially important for Generation Z, the primary audience on TikTok, who highly value authenticity, transparent communication, and genuine interactions. This generation prefers spontaneous, unscripted content from social media influencers, as it feels more relatable and natural compared to traditional, scripted advertising (Martínez-López et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). For instance, influencers like Alix Earle gained popularity through her unfiltered, behind-the-scenes content that resonated deeply with young audiences, resulting in successful partnerships with various fashion and beauty brands. On the other hand, campaigns that give influencers strict scripts, such as a skincare promo where everyone said the same thing, will probably receive criticism from Generation Z viewers for being perceived as fake. Excessive control over influencer content can lead to perceptions of inauthenticity and negatively impact how audiences perceive the credibility of both the influencer and the brand (Martínez-López et al., 2020). Therefore, brands need to give influencers some creative freedom while still providing content oversight, allowing influencers to deliver branded content in a way that aligns with their personal style and voice.

2.3.1 Trust-Building

The credibility of influencer messages largely relies on the trust developed between influencers and their followers. This trust develops over time through consistent and genuine interactions and can positively shape consumer attitudes toward the recommended products and significantly increase purchase intentions (Kim & Kim, 2021). Followers who trust an influencer are more likely to perceive their recommendations positively, which not only enhances long-term loyalty and engagement but also increases their willingness to accept product or service endorsements even when their connection to the influencer is limited.

Notable examples of influencers who have successfully built trust with their audiences include Meredith Duxbury and Mikayla Nogueira. Both are known for openly sharing the strengths and weaknesses of the products they review while maintaining genuine, two-way communication with their followers. When influencers stay true to these principles, even sponsored content is perceived as a sincere recommendation rather than purely promotional (Yesiloglu & Costello, 2021). As a result, brands increasingly partner with trusted influencers to enhance the credibility and impact of their campaigns, as follower trust directly strengthens confidence in the brand's message (Martínez-López et al., 2020).

2.3.2 Transparency

According to Figure 3, approximately 48% of Generation Z social media users trust brand recommendations from influencers. These findings highlight that Generation Z is the most likely to trust influencers, however, this trust can be conditional and influenced by perceived authenticity. If an influencer looks too commercialized, engagement rates can drop. Unlike previous generations who were more tolerant of traditional celebrity recommendations, Generation Z sees overly commercial content as inauthentic, which often causes them to disengage (Pradhan et al., 2022).

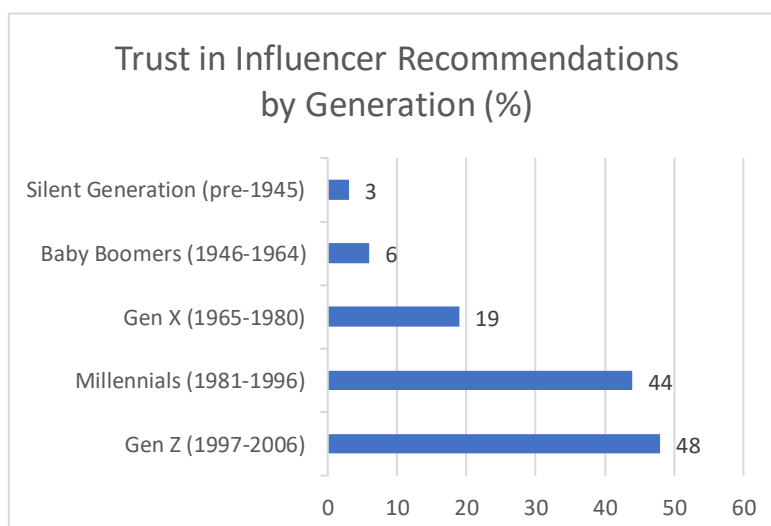


Figure 3. Trust in Influencer Recommendations by Generation, adapted from Emarketer 2024.

Transparency about paid partnerships is essential in influencer marketing. When sponsorships or promotional intent are hidden, consumers may mistakenly believe the endorsement is entirely genuine, which can harm both the influencer's and the brand's credibility if later revealed. At the same time, overtly commercial messages are often less effective, as they are perceived as less aligned with the audience's interests, leading to lower engagement and acceptance. Instead, content that provides informative, brand-related insights with authentic, personal opinions is generally perceived as more trustworthy and persuasive. To maintain follower trust and credibility, influencers should openly disclose sponsored content and emphasize that their opinions remain honest and independent (Martínez-López et al., 2020).

2.4 Gen Z Consumer Behavior

Generation Z is highly active on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, using them not only for entertainment but also for learning, practical tips, and discovering new products. 47% of Generation Z use social media as inspiration for shopping, emphasizing the platform's role in guiding their purchasing decisions (Survey Monkey, 2022). Additionally, according to Sprout Social (2025), nearly half of all consumers make purchases each month because of influencer content. Furthermore, 55% of Generation Z considers influencer recommendations as one of the most important factors influencing their buying decisions (HubSpot, 2022). These statistics demonstrate the powerful impact social media influencers have on Gen Z's consumer behavior.

2.4.1 Influencers Impact

Influencers act as important bridges between brands and Gen Z consumers, allowing brands to connect more authentically with their target audiences. Through influencer content, Generation Z learns about a brand's reputation, values, and product offerings. Influencers who specialize in specific niches, such as beauty, fashion, or technology, generally inspire higher trust and engagement due to their perceived expertise and consistent, targeted content (Eisend & Langner, 2010). By regularly sharing knowledge and insights within their niche, influencers establish authority, which significantly enhances the impact of their recommendations on Generation Z's purchasing decisions. However, an influencer's effectiveness extends beyond niche expertise. Personal qualities and authentic interaction with their audience also play a crucial role in building credibility. According to Kim and Kim (2021), developing trust and perceived expertise takes time and repeated interactions, making consistency a key factor in forming strong, long-term relationships between influencers and their followers.

Beauty brands can strategically leverage this trend by prioritizing authentic interactions and focusing on long-term relationships over short-term sales. One effective approach that helps to build trust and deepen engagement with Generation Z consumers is by encouraging user-generated content (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2025). As a result, influencers are taking on more active roles in brand collaborations, contributing not just to promotions but also to campaign development and even product design. This collaborative style aligns well with Gen Z's expectations for transparency, creativity, and storytelling that reflects real experiences.

Taking this approach further, many brands are choosing to work directly with Gen Z creators. Involving young marketers, designers, and influencers in the creative process helps ensure that campaigns are both relevant and relatable. These collaborators bring valuable insights into Gen Z's values, communication styles, and current trends. Influencers, in particular, act as trusted messengers who share brand messages in a way that feels natural to their audiences (Londe, 2023). This peer-to-peer strategy helps build stronger emotional connections and makes marketing efforts more effective.

2.4.2 Social Media Usage

For companies, it is extremely important to stay active and engaging online, as based on the statistics from Survey Monkey (2022), nearly a third of Generation Z consumers (29%) are more likely to buy from brands that have a strong presence on social media. TikTok, in particular, has become a powerful tool for influencing Gen Z's buying habits due to its short, visually appealing videos that easily go viral (WNY News Now, 2025). Content on TikTok is always evolving and mostly filled with different kinds of trends. Within the beauty niche, popular trends such as the "clean girl aesthetic" and "glassy skin" routines have significantly contributed to the rise in popularity of specific beauty products (Brand Vision Insights, 2023). For instance, items like Maybelline's Sky-High mascara and Dior's lip oil quickly sold out after going viral on the platform.

Moreover, TikTok's interactive features, including real-time user-generated comments and product reviews, further enhance audience engagement by offering authentic consumer feedback. Unlike traditional product descriptions, TikTok showcases genuine, real-world product applications and reactions that build influencer credibility (Torres, Augusto & Matos, 2019). This highly interactive approach also nicely aligns with Generation Z's digital preference for convenience, emotional gratification, and impulse buying. Engaging visual content, intuitive platform navigation, and personalized user experiences with aesthetic enjoyment are all crucial in driving both planned and unplanned purchases, especially in digital and e-commerce environments, where interactive features and tailored recommendations significantly impact purchasing decisions (Pradhan et al., 2022).

In conclusion, Generation Z's purchasing behavior is deeply integrated with their extensive social media usage, emotional connections with influencers, and strong preference for authentic, transparent, creative, and engaging content. For brands seeking to effectively engage with such an influential demographic, these insights should be used strategically to build meaningful connections and drive consumer loyalty.

3 Research Approach and Methods

This chapter describes the research methodology selected to explore how TikTok beauty influencers affect Gen Z's purchasing decisions. It also outlines the study design, sampling method, data collection process, and chosen analysis method. Additionally, it provides the rationale behind selecting this specific research methodology and briefly addresses reliability and validity considerations.

3.1 Research methodology

Selecting an appropriate research method significantly influences the quality and outcomes of the study. Since the research aims to obtain broad insights from a larger audience, a quantitative research approach was selected.

Quantitative research involves the systematic collection and statistical analysis of numerical data. It is used to measure variables, identify patterns, and test relationships through statistical analysis (Watson, 2015). This method enables the researcher to study a large group of participants and produce generalizable results based on structured data collection. Key principles of quantitative research include reliability, which refers to the consistency of results, and validity, meaning the accuracy of what is being measured (Watson, 2015).

While qualitative research methods may be useful for in-depth exploration of individual perspectives, they are typically better suited for smaller sample sizes and narrower research scopes (Pathak et al., 2013). Common qualitative data collection methods include observations, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. In contrast, a quantitative method aligns better with this thesis's aim to gather comprehensive data from Generation Z social media users. Consequently, an online survey was identified as the most appropriate method for data collection. It allows for gathering structured responses from a larger audience within a short time, making it suitable for analyzing patterns in consumer behavior.

The overall research design, including the research focus, target group, method, data collection, and its connection to the investigative questions, is illustrated in Figure 4 below.

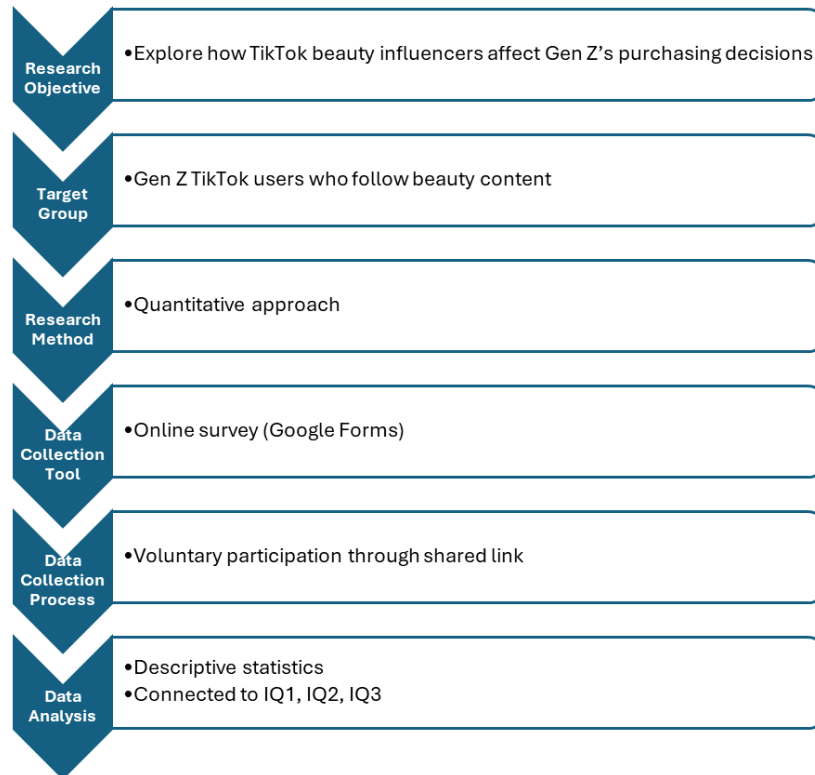


Figure 4. Research Design

3.2 Data collection process

Sampling is the process of selecting a suitable segment of the population that best represents the group being studied. Researchers mainly rely on samples to draw meaningful conclusions, since it is often not feasible to collect data from every individual in the target population. Sampling methods are generally classified into probability sampling, where every individual in the population has an equal chance of being selected, and non-probability sampling, where the selection probability varies (Taherdoost, 2016). Probability sampling is more suitable when the goal is to generalize results to the entire population, whereas non-probability sampling is often used when time, access, or resources are limited. For this thesis, a non-probability sampling method was chosen. Specifically, the survey targeted Generation Z TikTok users interested in beauty-related content. The survey was distributed via social media and completed by Gen Z TikTok users who follow beauty content. This method was chosen for its efficiency and accessibility in reaching the intended audience.

The main target group for respondents was Generation Z. Although Generation Z typically refers to individuals born approximately between 1996 and 2010, the survey data also included responses from slightly older participants (up to 35 years old). All collected responses were considered relevant and therefore included in the analysis.

To collect primary data, an online questionnaire was developed using Google Forms. The survey was carefully designed to be clear, user-friendly, and concise, maximizing the likelihood of respondent engagement and quality data collection. The final survey included 16 structured questions, including a mix of multiple-choice, multiple-selection, Likert-scale, rating-scale, and two optional open-ended questions. The questions were structured in a logical flow, beginning with general background information and moving toward more specific topics. All questions were designed to directly support the thesis's investigative questions.

To answer IQ1 (What characteristics make TikTok beauty influencers appealing to Gen Z?), the survey included questions on why respondents follow influencers (e.g., personality, expertise, aesthetics), how relatable they find them, and which specific influencers they regularly engage with.

For IQ2 (How do credibility and trust influence Gen Z's purchasing behavior on TikTok?), several questions focused on what builds or reduces trust (e.g., authenticity, over-promotion, transparency about sponsorships), preferences regarding micro- vs. mega-influencers, and the influence of specific influencer behaviors.

Finally, for IQ3 (What marketing strategies are most effective in driving purchases?), the survey examined the types of content that most influence purchases (e.g., reviews, tutorials, transformations), the frequency of buying behavior based on recommendations, and additional sources respondents consult before making a purchase.

The survey was distributed through popular social media and communication platforms among Generation Z, including Instagram, LinkedIn, Telegram, and WhatsApp. This multi-platform distribution method aimed to maximize visibility and engagement, encourage diverse responses, and ensure a sufficient sample size. The survey was voluntary and anonymous, with participants informed about the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their responses.

3.3 Reliability and validity of research

Reliability and validity are essential for evaluating the quality of quantitative research, as they ensure that findings are trustworthy and accurate (Mellinger & Hanson, 2020). In this thesis, reliability refers to how consistently the results would appear if the study were repeated under similar conditions. To support this, the survey questions were designed to be as clear and straightforward as possible, reducing the chance of confusion or misinterpretation. The survey was distributed digitally, ensuring the conditions of data collection remained consistent for each respondent. Additionally, responses were collected anonymously. However, it is important to acknowledge that using non-probability sampling may slightly limit reliability, since the sample was self-selected and might not represent the entire Generation Z population (Taherdoost, 2016).

Validity, on the other hand, refers to whether the survey accurately measures what it intends to measure, specifically in this case the Generation Z's consumer behavior and opinion towards TikTok beauty influencers. To make sure the survey captured this accurately, the questions were created based on relevant research and closely aligned with the investigative questions of the thesis. Key themes such as influencer credibility, trust, and purchasing behavior were addressed in a clear and structured way to support content validity.

Overall, the measures taken throughout the research design, such as careful formulation of the survey, systematic data collection methods, and a strong link between the survey and research objectives, helps to support the reliability and validity of this study.

4 Results

This chapter presents the results of the quantitative research conducted through a survey. It addresses the investigative questions outlined in Chapter 1.2 by connecting them with the data collected during the two-week survey period. In total, 52 responses were collected, all from participants belonging to the target demographic: Generation Z.

Visual graphs were created with the help of Excel to support the analysis. As a result, this chapter will present a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how TikTok beauty influencers shape the purchasing decisions of Generation Z.

4.1 Introduction to survey responses

This first section describes the demographic and behavioral background of the survey respondents.

1. What is your age?

52 responses

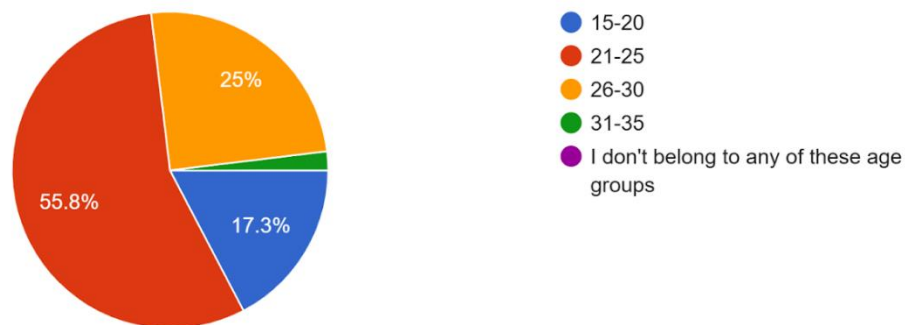


Figure 5. Age Distribution

As shown in Figure 5, the majority of respondents fall within or near the Generation Z demographic, generally defined as people born between 1996 and 2010 (approximately aged 15–29 by 2025). The largest share, 55.8% (29 respondents), belongs to the 21–25 age group, followed by 25% (13 respondents) in the 26–30 age group. Additionally, the dataset includes one respondent slightly older (up to 35 years old) than the traditional Generation Z definition. This broader age range provides additional insights while still confirming that the survey successfully reached the target audience.

2. How often do you use TikTok?

52 responses

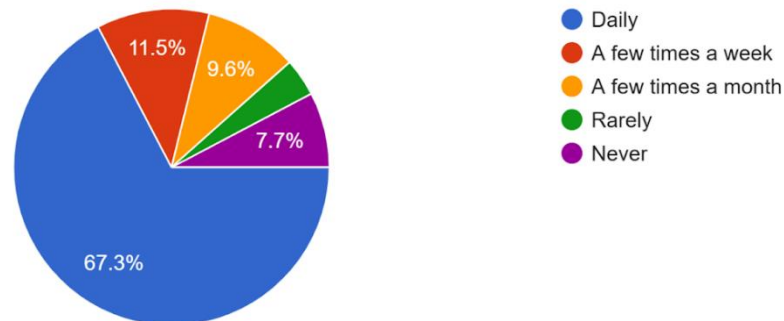


Figure 6. TikTok usage

A significant majority, 67.3% (35 respondents), reported using TikTok daily. Additionally, 11.5% (6 respondents) use the platform a few times a week, while 9.6% (5 respondents) access it a few times a month. (See Figure 6)

3. How often do you engage with beauty content on TikTok (watching, liking, commenting)?

52 responses

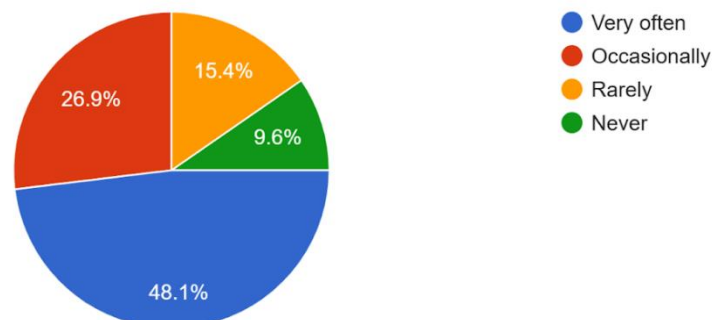


Figure 7. Engagement frequency with beauty content on TikTok

Regarding beauty content engagement, nearly half of the respondents, 48.1% (25 respondents), reported engaging with it very often, while 26.9% (14 respondents) stated they engage occasionally. The remaining respondents reported engaging with beauty content either rarely, 15.4% (8 respondents), or never, 9.6% (5 respondents). (See Figure 7)

4.2 Characteristics that Make TikTok Beauty Influencers Appealing to Generation Z (IQ1)

This part of the survey focuses on the attributes that make beauty influencers appealing to Generation Z consumers.

4. Do you follow any beauty influencers on TikTok?

52 responses

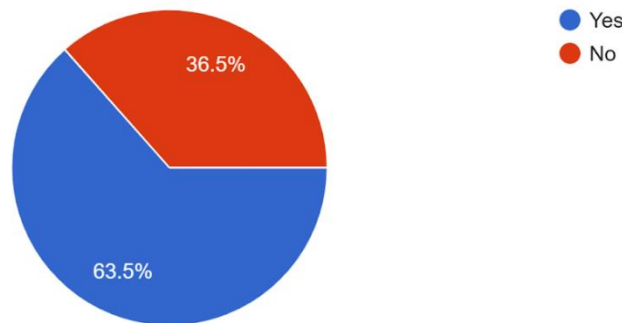


Figure 8. Beauty Influencers following

According to the survey data, 63.5% of respondents follow beauty influencers on TikTok, while 36.5% do not. This indicates that the majority of respondents belong to the targeted group for this study. (See Figure 8)

Reason for Following Influencers	Number of Respondents
Honest product reviews	31 (59.6%)
Quality of content	21 (40.4%)
Beauty expertise	20 (38.5%)
Humor or entertainment	19 (36.5%)
Addressing specific beauty needs (e.g., acne, budget-friendly)	18 (34.6%)
Engaging storytelling	17 (32.7%)

Table 2. Reasons for following TikTok beauty influencers

According to the results in Table 2, 59.6% of respondents selected honest product reviews as the main reason for following beauty influencers. This was followed by the quality of content, which

was 40.4%, and beauty expertise, which was 38.5%. These results show that authenticity, high-quality content, and beauty expertise are the key factors influencing Gen Z's decision to follow TikTok beauty influencers.

6. How important is the influencer's relatability (e.g., similar lifestyle, beauty concerns) when deciding to follow them?

52 responses

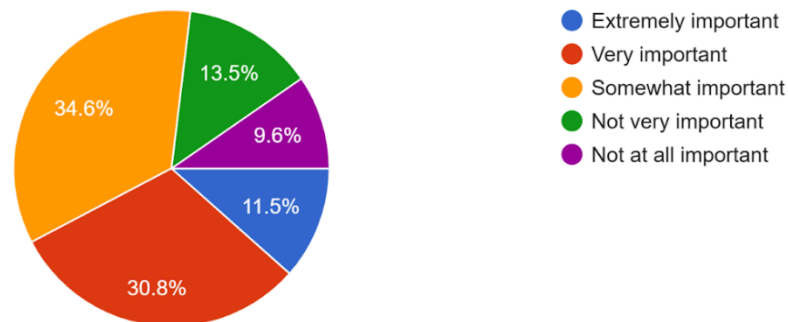


Figure 9. Relatability Importance

The results presented in Figure 9 indicate that influencer relatability plays a significant role in Generation Z's decision to follow beauty influencers. In total, 78.9% of respondents rated relatability as important to some degree, with 34.6% (18 respondents) considering it very important, 30.8% (16 respondents) somewhat important, and 13.5% (7 respondents) extremely important. Only 21.1% of respondents viewed relatability as less important, with 11.5% (6 respondents) rating it as not very important and 9.6% (5 respondents) as not important at all.

4.3 The role of Credibility and Trust in shaping Purchasing Behavior (IQ2)

This section of the thesis presents the findings from the survey regarding the influence of credibility, transparency, and authenticity on purchasing behavior.

7. Which factors make a TikTok beauty influencer trustworthy? (Select all applicable)

52 responses

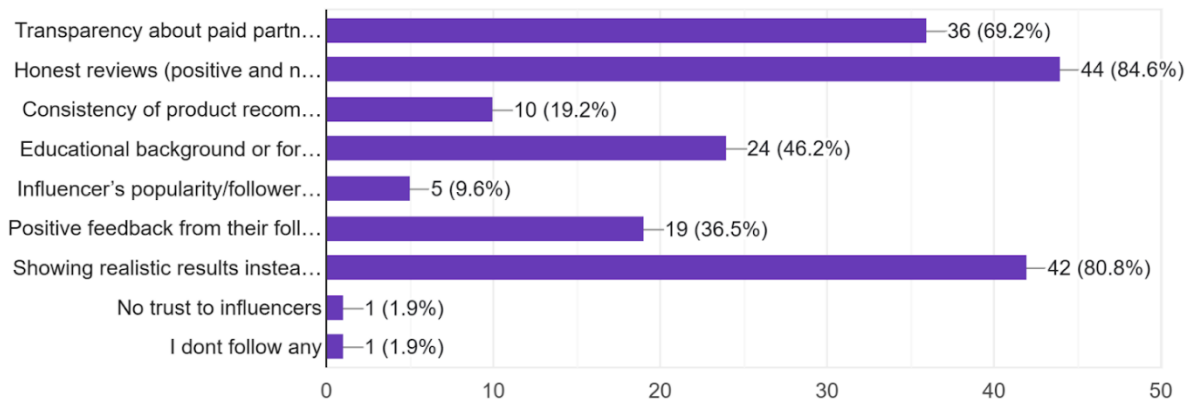


Figure 10. Key factors enhancing influencer trustworthiness

According to the results, 84.6% of respondents identified honest reviews as the most important factor in making a TikTok beauty influencer trustworthy. Showing realistic results was also highly valued, chosen by 80.8% of respondents. Additionally, 69.2% considered transparency about paid partnerships important. Educational background and consistency in product recommendations were seen as slightly less critical, selected by 46.2% and 19.2% respectively. (See Figure 10)

8. What makes you lose trust in a TikTok beauty influencer? (Select all applicable)

52 responses

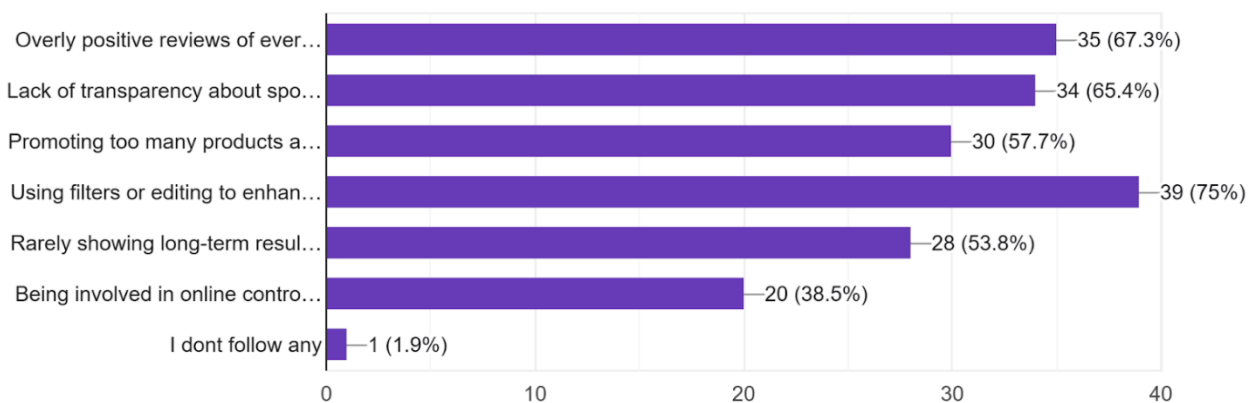


Figure 11. Factors leading to the loss of trust in influencers

As we can in the Figure 11, the top reasons for losing trust in influencers were using filters or editing to enhance product results, selected by 75% of respondents, then overly positive reviews of every product, which was chosen by 67.3%, and a lack of transparency about sponsorships, with 65.4%. Other common reasons included promoting too many products at once (57.7%) and rarely showing long-term results (53.8%). These findings suggest that Gen Z quickly loses trust in influencers who seem inauthentic, overly commercial, or not fully honest.

Influencer Behavior	Very Likely	Likely	Neutral	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
Disclose paid partnerships	12	15	21	3	1
Mention both pros and cons of products	31	18	2	1	0
Regularly engage with their audience in comments	14	23	11	2	2
Clearly label content as sponsored or partnered	22	20	7	2	1
Share personal stories about the product experience	29	16	5	1	1

Table 3. Trust based on influencer behavior

Table 3 shows how likely respondents are to trust a TikTok beauty influencer based on certain behaviors. The highest level of trust was associated with influencers who mention both the pros and cons of products, with 31 respondents stating they are "very likely" to trust them. This was followed by sharing personal product stories (29 respondents) and clearly labeling content as sponsored (22 respondents). On the other hand, disclosing paid partnerships was generally seen positively but had more mixed responses, with many respondents selecting "neutral."

10. Do you find influencers with smaller number of followers (e.g. under 50,000 followers) more trustworthy than big influencers (over 1 million followers)?

52 responses

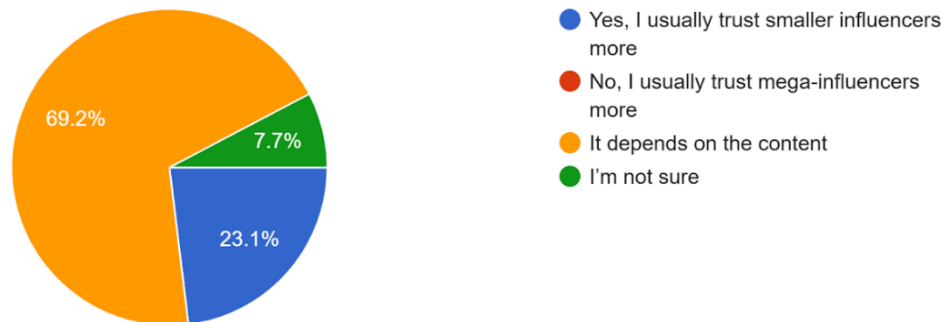


Figure 12. Gen Z perceptions of trustworthiness based on influencer follower count

In the survey, the majority of respondents, 69.2% (36 respondents), reported that their trust depends more on the content than the number of followers. These results show us that for Gen Z, credibility is not based on the influencer's popularity. Both micro- and macro-influencers can earn Gen Z's trust if they like their content. (See Figure 12)

Additional Source	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)
Online reviews on other platforms	40	76.9
Comments section on TikTok	28	53.8
Brand's official website	20	38.5
Recommendations from friends or family	15	28.8
I usually don't check anything else	3	5.8

Table 4. Additional sources checked before purchase

Before buying a product recommended by a TikTok influencer, most respondents reported seeking confirmation from additional sources. Forty respondents stated that they check online reviews on other platforms, while 28 respondents reported reading the TikTok comment section. Many also visit the brand's official website or ask friends and family for advice. (See Table 4)

4.4 Most effective content strategies used by TikTok beauty influencers (IQ3)

This final part of the results section explores which content strategies most effectively influence Generation Z's purchasing behavior.

11. Have you ever bought a beauty product based on a TikTok beauty influencer's recommendation?

52 responses

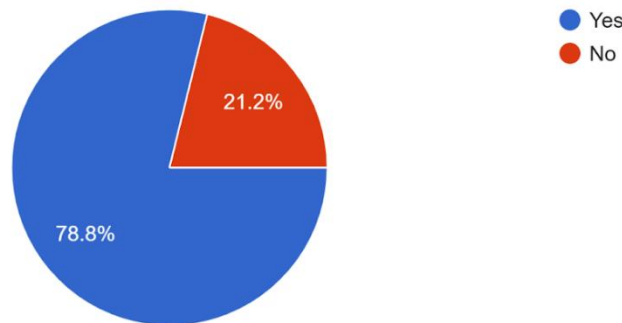


Figure 13. Buying products based on TikTok beauty influencers' recommendations

According to the results shown in Figure 13, 41 respondents (78.8%) said they had bought a beauty product based on a TikTok beauty influencer's recommendation.

Content Element	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)
Product demonstrations (e.g., before and after)	33	63.5
Authenticity and honest opinions	32	61.5
Clear explanations and information	27	51.9
Product affordability or convenience	23	44.2
Relatable influencer identity or experience	13	25
Personal stories or beauty routines	12	23.1
Aesthetic visuals or high production quality	9	17.3

Table 5. What is mostly influencing purchasing decisions

Respondents were also asked to select up to three content elements that mostly influence their purchasing decisions. The top choices were product demonstrations, selected by 33 respondents, followed by authenticity and honest opinions, chosen by 32 respondents and lastly clear explanations and information was selected by 27 respondents. (See Table 5)

14. On a scale from 1-5, how strongly do you agree with the following statement: "TikTok beauty influencers significantly impact my beauty purchasin...isions." (1 - Strongly Disagree, 5 - Strongly Agree)

52 responses

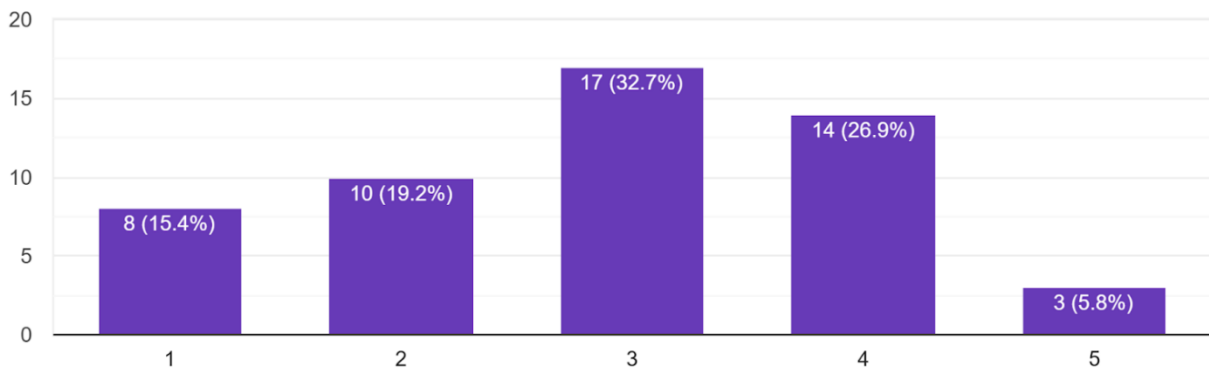


Figure 14. Impact of beauty influencers to purchasing decisions

Moderate responses were received to the statement regarding TikTok beauty influencers' impact on purchasing decisions. About one-third of respondents (17 individuals) selected a neutral response (option 3). Additionally, 14 respondents agreed to some extent (option 4). In total, 18 participants expressed some level of disagreement (option 2 or option 1). And only a small number, 3 respondents, strongly agreed with the statement (option 5).

4.5 Additional Information from open-ended questions

An additional chapter with the responses to the two open-ended questions included in the survey.

15. Provide an example of a beauty product you purchased because of a TikTok influencer recommendation (optional):

24 responses

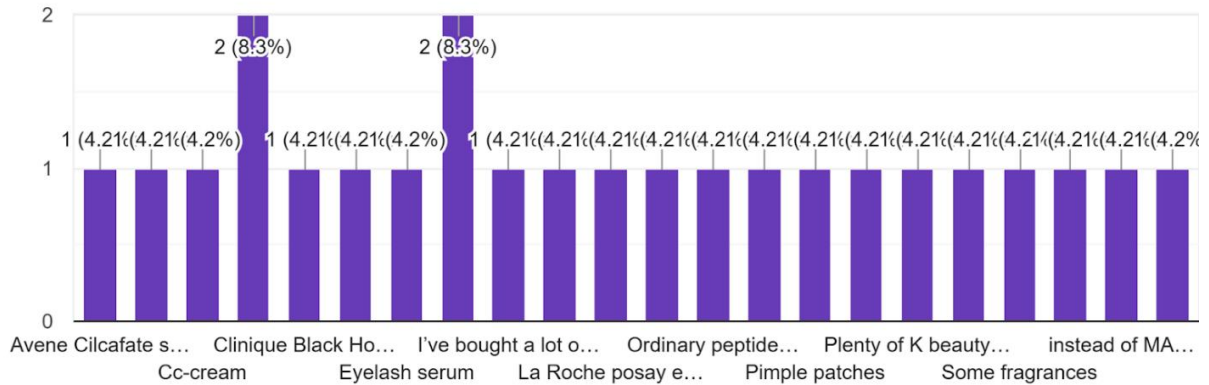


Figure 15. Beauty products purchased based on influencers' recommendations

In the first open-ended question, respondents were asked to name a beauty product they had bought based on a TikTok influencer's recommendation. A total of 24 responses were collected. Popular examples included Clinique's Black Honey lipstick, eyelash serums, and skincare products from brands like The Ordinary and La Roche-Posay. Additionally, products related to K-beauty cosmetics, pimple patches, and various types of fragrances were mentioned.

16. Is there anything else you'd like to share about TikTok beauty influencers and their impact on your purchasing decisions? (optional)

6 responses

Nowadays it is difficult to trust whether the product really is what the influencers say and promise. Regardless of that I do buy products that are recommended on TikTok. If I see that a majority of people recommend or have positive feedback about the product then I tend to believe them which leads to purchasing.

Sometimes it's like peer pressure so if you not careful u fall into it

они гипнотизируют своими видео на покупку того, без чего я могу жить...

i don't trust people, who's reviews are always paid, or they get the PR-boxes. and their "always-happy-face" makes the videos so fake

TikTok beauty influencers have a huge impact on purchasing decisions because they make products seem more accessible and trustworthy. Plus, the way they demo products in short, engaging videos makes it easier to decide if something is worth trying.

No

Figure 16. Additional feedback

In the final open-ended question, participants were asked to share any additional thoughts about how TikTok beauty influencers affect their purchasing decisions. Six people provided answers for this question.

Several comments stated that it can be hard to fully trust influencer content due to the possibility of paid promotions or overly positive reviews. One participant mentioned that trust can be an issue, but seeing a large amount of positive feedback still makes them more likely to buy a product. Another participant compared TikTok's influence to peer pressure, mentioning how easy it is to be persuaded by engaging videos. A response written in Russian also described the almost hypnotic pull of TikTok content.

On the other hand, one comment shared positive feedback, writing that TikTok influencers can make products feel more accessible and trustworthy, especially through relatable and engaging demonstrations. It also mentioned in this comment how short, interactive videos help people quickly decide whether a product is worth trying. (See Figure 16)

5 Conclusion

This chapter provides a summary of the research on how TikTok beauty influencers impact Generation Z's purchasing behavior. It presents the main findings to answer the Research Question and Investigative Questions. In addition, the reliability and validity of the study will be covered later on in the chapter, as well as recommendations for further research and the authors' reflection on the thesis process and learning outcomes.

5.1 Key Findings

The aim of this research was to explore the marketing power of TikTok beauty influencers and their impact on Generation Z consumers' behavior. The main research question of the study was: "How do TikTok beauty influencers impact Gen Z's purchasing decisions?"

To address the research problem, the following investigative questions (IQs) were formulated:

IQ 1: What characteristics make TikTok beauty influencers appealing to Gen Z consumers?

IQ 2: How do credibility and trust influence Gen Z's purchasing behavior on TikTok?

IQ 3: What marketing strategies used by TikTok beauty influencers are most effective in driving purchases?

This chapter provides a detailed answer to each of the investigative questions and gives a full understanding of the topic.

5.1.1 IQ 1: What characteristics make TikTok beauty influencers appealing to Gen Z consumers?

The first IQ aims to understand which characteristics make TikTok beauty influencers appealing to Generation Z consumers. It was important to find out whether aspects like relatability, authenticity, expertise, or content quality had an effect on Gen Z's decisions to follow influencers.

The survey results revealed that Generation Z values the following qualities in TikTok beauty influencers: authenticity, high-quality content, beauty expertise, and relatability. Out of the survey participants, honest product review was chosen by 31 respondents (59.6%) as the main reason for following beauty influencers (See Table 2). These survey results also support what was discussed in the theoretical framework, where authenticity and trust emerged as important influencer characteristics (Bu et al., 2022).

The following 2 important characteristics were high-quality content, selected by 21 survey respondents (40.4%), and beauty expertise, which 20 respondents (38.5%) considered important (See Table 2). These results show that Generation Z wants influencers to have genuine knowledge to offer helpful, high-quality information.

Additionally, relatability plays a significant role in influencers' appeal among Generation Z, with 78.9% of total respondents rating it as at least somewhat important, very important, or extremely important (See Figure 9). This corresponds to earlier information from the theoretical framework, where influencers who shared similar lifestyles and experiences with their audience were considered more trustworthy (AlFarraj et al., 2021).

To summarize these findings, it is important to highlight that for Generation Z, the key factor that makes beauty influencers on TikTok appealing is their ability to appear real and relatable. While beauty expertise and product quality are also valued, they are not as important as honesty and authenticity.

5.1.2 IQ 2: How do credibility and trust influence Gen Z's purchasing behavior on TikTok?

In the second IQ, the goal was to investigate how credibility and trust shape Generation Z's purchasing behavior on TikTok. The research was mainly focused on identifying the actions that create or destroy trust, and which factors affect purchasing behavior after engaging with influencer content.

Credibility and trust turned out to be key influencing factors for Generation Z when it comes to buying beauty products recommended by TikTok influencers. According to the survey, 44 respondents (84.6%) identified honest reviews as the most important factor that makes an influencer more trustworthy. This was followed by realistic product results, picked by 42 respondents (80.8%), and transparency about paid partnership, with 36 respondents (69.2%) choosing it, as other important criteria (See Figure 10). These insights align closely with the theoretical framework findings from Chapter 2.3.1, where Kim & Kim (2021) mentioned that transparency and authenticity are essential for building trust between influencer and their audience.

Nevertheless, the results regarding factors that lead to a loss of trust in the influencer turned out to be the following. Respondents reported a significant loss of trust in the influencers who actively use filters to enhance results (75%) or provide overly positive reviews (67.3%) (See Figure 11). These results confirm that Gen Z consumers are highly critical of content that feels exaggerated or fake. As previously discussed in Chapter 2.3.2, the works Kim, Jiang and Wang (2021) emphasize that hidden sponsorships and a lack of honesty can quickly damage an influencer's credibility among their followers.

The influencer's number of followers was also one of the topics explored in both the theoretical framework and the survey conducted for this thesis. According to the survey results, this criterion is not considered particularly important to followers. The majority of respondents, 36 participants, stated that trust depends more on the influencer's behavior and communication than on their popularity (See Figure 12). This means that both micro- and macro-influencers have equal chances to build trust if they are authentic and genuine with their audience.

Lastly, even though influencers play a strong role in shaping their audience's purchase decisions, many Generation Z consumers still prefer to double-check information before making a purchase. This way, the most frequent activity was reviewing additional sources, such as online reviews, selected by 40 respondents (76.9%). Another popular behavior was checking the comment sections before making a final decision, chosen by 28 respondents (53.8%) (See Table 4). This cautiousness indicates that Generation Z values trust in influencers, but still prefers to verify information independently. Overall, these results show that Generation Z takes trust very seriously, and if they perceive an influencer as untrustworthy or detect inauthentic content, they are unlikely to tolerate it. This is exactly why being transparent and honest is essential for influencers to build trust with their audience.

5.1.3 IQ 3: What marketing strategies used by TikTok beauty influencers are most effective in driving purchases?

The third Investigative Question focused on analyzing what marketing strategies used by TikTok beauty influencers are most effective in encouraging Generation Z to make purchases. Specifically, it focused on identifying the types of content, communication styles, and techniques that have the biggest impact on Generation Z buying behavior.

The survey results showed that a large majority of Generation Z social media users, 41 respondents, have bought a beauty product after seeing it recommended by a TikTok influencer (See Figure 13). This indicates that influencers play a strong role in promoting beauty products among young consumers on TikTok.

Looking more closely at the content types that mostly influence purchases among Generation Z, product demonstrations came first, selected by 33 respondents (63.5%). Nearly matching this, 32 respondents (61.5%) identified authenticity and honest opinions as a second key factor driving the purchase. Lastly, clear explanations about the product were chosen by 27 respondents (51.9%), making it the third most influential element (See Table 5). These findings align well with the earlier theory by Nemirovsky (2025) in Chapter 2.2, which highlights that highly effective TikTok

influencer marketing strategies often involve authentic storytelling and honest product demonstrations.

The less significant marketing strategies, based on the survey responses, included aesthetic visuals and storytelling, selected by just 9 and 12 respondents, respectively (See Table 5). These results show that Gen Z consumers are more interested in honest communication and real product results than in entertainment or visuals.

Although the majority of respondents admitted that some influencers affect their purchasing decisions to some extent, the overall emotional response remained neutral. In particular, 17 respondents (32.7%) rated the statement as a “3” on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree.” Only 3 respondents (5.8%) strongly agreed that influencers have a major impact on their buying decisions (See Figure 14).

Feedback collected from two open-ended questions in the survey also highlighted a mix of cautious attitudes and acknowledgment of influencer impact. Some of the participants were skeptical towards sponsored content, while others appreciated short and relatable product demonstrations (See Figure 16). These insights suggest that there are plenty of video strategy formats that appeal to Generation Z, but the format itself is not the most important thing. What Generation Z truly values is simplicity, clear explanations, and transparency and honesty. If an influencer shows genuine interest and willingness to share a product, Generation Z is more likely to trust and engage with any type of content.

5.2 Validity and Reliability

The next important part of the results section is to evaluate the validity and reliability of this research to ascertain the accuracy and utility of the research.

This study aimed to understand how TikTok beauty influencers impact Generation Z's purchasing behavior. To achieve this, the theoretical framework was carefully developed by collecting information from reliable sources, such as books, articles, and blogs, most of which were published approximately within the last ten years. All the sources have been correctly referenced according to the university guidelines to maintain the validity and academic integrity of the thesis.

As for the survey creation, it was carefully designed based on the theoretical framework and the investigative questions. The collected responses provided relevant insights into Generation Z's behavior towards the TikTok beauty influencers and nicely addressed the research questions outlined in this thesis. The survey collected a total of 52 responses, which gave a good foundation for

analyzing Generation Z behavior in the TikTok beauty sector. The survey and theoretical framework supported each other well, and the findings aligned with the research objectives set for this thesis.

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations regarding the validity and reliability of this thesis. To begin with, the sample size of 52 respondents is relatively small, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Since the respondents were self-selected through social media platforms, there may also be a risk of selection bias that can potentially affect the representativeness of the data. Additionally, self-reporting-based responses can also have inherent biases based on subjective interpretations. Therefore, while the collected data provides valuable exploratory insights, caution should be exercised when generalizing these findings widely.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

As social media and influencer marketing continue to evolve rapidly, there are still many areas that could be studied further in the future. Since this research is focused only on Generation Z and TikTok beauty influencers, it would also be informative to study other age groups, such as Millennials or even younger generations like Generation Alpha, to see if their behavior is somehow different. It could also be useful to compare TikTok influencers with influencers on other platforms, like Instagram or YouTube.

Another suggestion for further research would be to combine quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, to conduct both a survey and an interview. Interviews could provide deeper insights into this topic.

Lastly, it would also be helpful to have a bigger and more diverse group of participants, including people from different countries and backgrounds. Although 52 respondents participated in my survey, and there were individuals from different backgrounds, I believe that a larger data collection would be extremely useful.

5.4 Learning Reflection

Overall, I dedicated about five months to working on this thesis, and during this process, I learned a lot. To begin with, working on this thesis helped me to improve my knowledge of influencer marketing, a topic that I was very interested in. This was my initial goal, and I am glad that I was able to achieve it. Along the way, I learned even more about how influencers, especially on TikTok, impact consumer behavior and how to effectively apply influencer marketing strategies to influence Generation Z.

One of the most significant things that I learned was conducting a full research project from start to finish. I learned how to design a survey, collect the data, analyze it, and then connect the results with the theoretical framework. Analyzing the data and drawing conclusions helped me to better understand how important it is to have both theory and practical findings supporting each other.

The thesis process also improved my time management skills, as balancing the research with other responsibilities was sometimes challenging. However, it taught me how to plan my work more effectively. Overall, the entire thesis process turned out to be a very valuable learning experience. It not only strengthened my research and writing skills but also gave me new insights that I believe will be useful in my future career in marketing.

Sources

AlFarraj, O., Alalwan, A.A., Obeidat, Z.M., Baabduallah, A., Aldmour, R. and Al-Haddad, S., 2021. Examining the impact of influencers' credibility dimensions: attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise on the purchase intention in the aesthetic dermatology industry. URL: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108> Accessed: 3 April 2025.

Barta, K., and Andalibi, N., 2021. Constructing authenticity on TikTok: Social norms and social support on the "Fun" Platform. URL: <https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1145/3479574> Accessed: 14 February 2025.

Brand Vision Insights, 2023. TikTok's marketing strategy: A revolution in creativity and connection. URL: https://www.brandvm.com/post/tiktoks-marketing-strategy?utm_source=chatgpt.com Accessed: 8 April 2025.

Bu, Y., Parkinson, J., and Thaichon, P., 2022. Influencer marketing: homophily, customer value co-creation behaviour and purchase intention. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102904> Accessed: 6 March 2025.

Cambridge University Press, n.d. Influencer. Cambridge Dictionary. URL: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/influencer> Accessed: 5 March 2025.

Cheng, Z. and Li, Y., 2024. Like, comment, and share on TikTok: Exploring the effect of sentiment and second-person view on the user engagement with TikTok news videos. URL: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10> Accessed: 10 March 2025.

Digital Marketing Institute, 2023. An in-depth look at marketing on TikTok. URL: <https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/an-in-depth-look-at-marketing-on-tiktok> Accessed: 7 March 2025.

Eisend, M., and Langner, T., 2010. Immediate and delayed advertising effects of celebrity endorsers' attractiveness and expertise. URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2501/s0265048710201336> Accessed: 10 March 2025.

Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K. and Freberg, L.A., 2011. Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii> Accessed: 5 March 2025.

HubSpot, 2022. 2022 Consumer Trends Report. URL: https://www.hubspot.com/hubfs/Consumer%20Trends%20Report_111522.pdf Accessed: 8 April 2025.

Hudders, L., De Jans, S. and De Veirman, M., 2021. The commercialization of social media stars: a literature review and conceptual framework on the strategic use of social media influencers. URL: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003181286-3> Accessed: 14 February 2025.

Influencer Marketing Hub, 2025. Beauty Influencer Marketing: Trends and Insights for 2025. URL: <https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-beauty-industry/> Accessed: 10 March 2025.

Influencity, 2023. The Dos and Don'ts of Social Media Influencer Endorsements. URL: <https://influencity.com/blog/en/the-dos-and-donts-of> Accessed: 30 March 2025.

Influencity, 2024. Top beauty influencer: What is it? URL: <https://influencity.com/blog/en/top-beauty-influencer-what-is-it> Accessed: 17 February 2025.

Kim, D.Y. and Kim, H.Y., 2021. Trust me, trust me not: A nuanced view of influencer marketing on social media. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0148296321003532> Accessed: 31 March 2025.

Kim, S., Jiang, J.-Y. and Wang, W., 2021. Discovering undisclosed paid partnership on social media via aspect-attentive sponsored post learning. URL: <https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/3437963.3441803> Accessed: 13 May 2025.

Liu, X., Zheng, X. The persuasive power of social media influencers in brand credibility and purchase intention. URL: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-023-02512-1> Accessed: 31 March 2025.

Londe, L., 2023. The Ultimate Guide to Selling to Gen Z. URL: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/ultimate-guide-selling-gen-z-lais-londe/> Accessed: 9 April 2025.

Martínez-López, F.J., Anaya-Sánchez, R., Esteban-Millat, I., Torrez-Meruvia, H., D'Alessandro, S. and Miles, M., 2020. Influencer marketing: brand control, commercial orientation and post credibility. URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0267257X> Accessed: 6 April 2025.

Mellinger, C.D. and Hanson, T.A., 2020. Methodological considerations for survey research: Validity, reliability, and quantitative analysis. URL: <https://lans-tts.uantwerpen.be/index.php/LANS-TTS/article/view> Accessed: 25 March 2025.

Nemirovsky, D., 2025. Celebrity endorsements vs influencer marketing: What's the difference? URL: <https://www.brandvm.com/post/celebrity-endorsements-vs-influencer> Accessed: 11 March 2025.

Närvänen, E., Kirvesmies, T. and Kahri, E., 2020. Parasocial relationships of Generation Z consumers with social media influencers. URL: https://cris.tuni.fi/ws/portalfiles/portal/43157273/Parasocial_relationships_postprint.pdf Accessed: 30 March 2025.

Pathak, V., Jena, B. and Kalra, S., 2013. Qualitative research. URL: https://journals.lww.com/picp/fulltext/2013/04030/qualitative_research Accessed: 24 March 2025.

Pradhan, D., Kuanr, A., Pahi, S. A., and Akram, M. S., 2022. Influencer marketing: When and why Gen Z consumers avoid influencers and endorsed brands. URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/mar.21749> Accessed: 7 March 2025.

Rachmad, Y.E., 2024. The Future of Influencer Marketing: Evolution of Consumer Behavior in the Digital World. URL: <https://books.google.fi/books?hl=en&lr=&id=g3IN-EQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR2&dq=> Accessed: 6 March 2025.

Sanders, R., 2024. The 5 types of influencers you need to know. URL: <https://www.simplylearn.com/types-of-influencers-article> Accessed: 9 March 2025.

socialShan, Y., Chen, K.J. and Lin, J.S., 2020. When social media influencers endorse brands: the effects of self-influencer congruence, parasocial identification, and perceived endorser motive. URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02650487.2019.1678322> Accessed: 30 March 2025.

Sokolova, K., and Kefi, H., 2020. Instagram and Youtube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011> Accessed: 10 March 2025.

Sprout Social, 2025. The 2025 Sprout Social Index: Social media statistics and trends. URL: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-statistics/> Accessed: 5 April 2025.

SurveyMonkey, 2022. Gen Z social media and shopping habits. URL: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/gen-z-social-media-and-shopping-habits/> Accessed: 8 April 2025.

Taherdoost, H., 2016. Sampling methods in research methodology; how to choose a sampling technique for research. URL: <https://hal.science/hal-02546796/> Accessed: 24 March 2025.

Thangavel, P., Pathak, P. and Chandra, B., 2022. Consumer decision-making style of Gen Z: A generational cohort analysis. URL: <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.haaga-helia.fi/doi/epub> Accessed: 13 February 2025.

Torres, P., Augusto, M. and Matos, M., 2019. Antecedents and outcomes of digital influencer endorsement: An exploratory study. URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/mar.21274> Accessed: 30 March 2025.

Tuten, T.L., 2023. Social media marketing. Accessed: 16 February 2025.

Watson, R., 2015. Quantitative research. URL: <https://hull-repository.worktribe.com/output/374637/quantitative-research> Accessed: 24 March 2025.

Weismueller, J., Harrigan, P., Wang, S. and Soutar, G.N., 2020. Influencer endorsements: How advertising disclosure and source credibility affect consumer purchase intention on social media. URL: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1016/j.ausmj> Accessed: 13 February 2025.

Welsh, J., 2024. What is an Influencer Endorsement? URL: <https://www.justinwelsh.me/glossary/what-is-an-influencer-endorsement> Accessed: 30 March 2025.

WNY News Now, 2025. Why are TikTok likes so important for success? URL: <https://wnyn-ewsnow.com/2025/03/28/why-are-tiktok-likes-so-important> Accessed: 7 April 2025.

Yesiloglu, S. and Costello, J., 2020. Influencer Marketing: Building Brand Communities and Engagement. Accessed: 8 March 2025.

Appendices

Appendix 1. The Survey

Survey on TikTok Beauty Influencers and Gen Z Purchasing Behavior

B I U G X

Welcome!

This survey, conducted by Veronika Maliavina, an International Business student at Haaga-Helia University, is part of a Bachelor thesis titled *"The Marketing Power of TikTok Beauty Influencers: Understanding Their Impact on Gen Z Consumer Behavior"*.

The aim of this questionnaire is to understand how TikTok beauty influencers influence Gen Z consumers' decisions when purchasing beauty products.

Your participation is **completely anonymous**, and your responses will be kept confidential. The survey will take approximately **2-5 minutes** to complete.

Thank you for helping me complete my research!

Image title



1. What is your age? *

- 15-20
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- I don't belong to any of these age groups

2. How often do you use TikTok? *

- Daily
- A few times a week
- A few times a month
- Rarely
- Never

3. How often do you engage with beauty content on TikTok (watching, liking, commenting)? *

- Very often
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

4. Do you follow any beauty influencers on TikTok? *

- Yes
- No

5. What makes you follow a TikTok beauty influencer? (Select up to 3) *

- Influencer popularity/trendiness
- Engaging storytelling
- Quality of content
- Beauty expertise
- Humor or entertainment
- Honest product reviews
- Creative makeup looks
- Addressing specific needs (acne, sensitive skin, budget-friendly)
- Specific beauty niches (K-beauty, skincare)
- Other...

6. How important is the influencer's relatability (e.g., similar lifestyle, beauty concerns) when deciding to follow them? *

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not at all important

7. Which factors make a TikTok beauty influencer trustworthy? (Select all applicable) *

- Transparency about paid partnerships
- Honest reviews (positive and negative aspects)
- Consistency of product recommendations
- Educational background or formal certifications in beauty or skincare (dermatology, cosmetology)
- Influencer's popularity/follower count
- Positive feedback from their followers
- Showing realistic results instead of overly-edited or filtered images/videos
- Other...

8. What makes you lose trust in a TikTok beauty influencer? (Select all applicable) *

- Overly positive reviews of every product
- Lack of transparency about sponsorships
- Promoting too many products at once
- Using filters or editing to enhance product results
- Rarely showing long-term results or follow-ups
- Being involved in online controversies
- Other...

9. How likely are you to trust a TikTok beauty influencer if they do the following? *

	Very Likely	Likely	Neutral	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
Disclose paid p...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mention both p...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regularly enga...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clearly label co...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Share personal...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Do you find influencers with smaller number of followers (e.g. under 50,000 followers) more trustworthy than big influencers (over 1 million followers)? *

- Yes, I usually trust smaller influencers more
- No, I usually trust mega-influencers more
- It depends on the content
- I'm not sure
- Other...

11. Have you ever bought a beauty product based on a TikTok beauty influencer's recommendation? *

- Yes
- No

12. Which elements of TikTok beauty influencer content most influence your buying decisions? (Select up to 3) *

- Product demonstration (e.g., before & after results)
- Authenticity and honest opinion
- Engaging content format (e.g., short, fun, or emotional)
- Clear explanation and informative content
- Personal stories or beauty routines
- Special discounts or affiliate codes
- Aesthetic visuals or high production quality
- Product affordability or convenience
- Relatable influencer identity or experience
- Other...

13. Before purchasing a beauty product recommended by a TikTok influencer, what additional sources do you check? (Select all applicable) *

- Online reviews on other platforms
- Comments section on TikTok
- Brand's official website
- Recommendations from friends or family
- I usually don't check anything else
- Other...

14. On a scale from 1-5, how strongly do you agree with the following statement: *
"TikTok beauty influencers significantly impact my beauty purchasing decisions."
(1 - Strongly Disagree, 5 - Strongly Agree)

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Provide an example of a beauty product you purchased because of a TikTok influencer recommendation (optional):

Short answer text

16. Is there anything else you'd like to share about TikTok beauty influencers and their impact on your purchasing decisions? (optional)

Long answer text
