IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON BRAND MARKETING ON TIKTOK AND ITS ACCEPTABILITY AMONG CUSTOMERS

BY

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**BEING A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project has been read and approved as meeting part of the requirements for the award of Higher National Diploma (**HND**) in Mass Communication, in the Department of the Mass Communication, Institute of Information and Communication Technology, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin

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DEDICATION

I specially dedicate my project to Almighty Allah, the most merciful and benevolent.

And also, I am dedicating this project to my loving parents, (**Mr. & Mrs. LAWAL**)

& my supportive elder sibling, (**Neemah**).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This project is a culmination of hard work, dedication, and perseverance. I dedicate it to you, my family, for your unwavering support, guidance, and love.

Your encouragement, wisdom, and sacrifices have shaped me into the person I am today. I'm grateful for the values you've instilled in me and for being my constant source of inspiration.

I also extend my deepest gratitude to my project supervisor (**Miss Sulyman Aminat**). For her invaluable guidance, expertise and support through this project. Your mentorship has been instrumental in my academic growth.

Thank you for believing in me and pushing me to reach my full potential. This achievement is not just mine, but ours, and I hope it makes you proud.

Last but not the least I want to thank me for believing in me. I want to thank myself for believing in this hard work. I want to thank myself for having no days off, I want to thank me for never quitting. I want to thank me for always being a giver and trying to give more than I receive.

I want to thank me for trying to do more right than wrong, I want to thank me for just being me all the times.

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ABSTRACT

One of the most significant developments within the TikTok ecosystem is the rise of social media influencers. These individuals, characterized by their substantial following and ability to sway the opinions and behaviors of their audience, have become pivotal figures in digital marketing (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Influencers use their platforms to share authentic, engaging, and often entertaining content, creating opportunities for brands to connect with audiences in ways that traditional advertising cannot. On TikTok, influencers are particularly influential due to the platform's emphasis on relatability, trends, and user engagement (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2018).

Brands have increasingly recognized the potential of influencer marketing on TikTok, leveraging it to boost visibility, foster customer engagement, and drive sales (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencer marketing on TikTok is distinct in its reliance on short, creative video content that seamlessly integrates brand messages into the entertainment-focused environment of the platform. Unlike conventional marketing techniques, influencer marketing emphasizes authenticity and personal connection, making it more appealing to younger, tech-savvy audiences (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019).

However, while the potential benefits of TikTok influencer marketing are evident, its impact and acceptability among customers warrant closer examination. The authenticity of influencer endorsements has come under scrutiny, with critics arguing that paid partnerships may dilute the genuine appeal of influencers' recommendations (Jin, Muqaddam & Ryu, 2019). Customers, especially those who value transparency, may perceive such endorsements as commercial rather than authentic. Consequently, the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns depends on various factors, including the credibility of the influencer, the relevance of the content, and the alignment of the brand with the influencer's image (Freberg et al., 2011).

The demographics of TikTok users add another layer of complexity to influencer marketing. With its predominantly youthful user base, TikTok offers unique opportunities for brands targeting Generation Z and Millennials (Sheldon, Rauschnabel & Antony, 2021). However, this demographic specificity can pose challenges for brands seeking to appeal to broader or more diverse audiences. Understanding how different customer segments perceive and respond to influencer-driven marketing is crucial for optimizing campaigns and achieving desired outcomes.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Background to the Study

In the 21st century, social media has become an integral part of everyday life, reshaping communication, entertainment, and commerce. Among the myriad of platforms available, TikTok has emerged as one of the most prominent and fastest-growing social networking applications worldwide. Launched in 2016, TikTok allows users to create, share, and discover short-form videos, making it a dynamic space for creativity and interaction (Kumar & Nanda, 2021). With its algorithm-driven content delivery and diverse user base, TikTok has proven to be a fertile ground for innovative marketing strategies (Montag, Yang & Elhai, 2021).

One of the most significant developments within the TikTok ecosystem is the rise of social media influencers. These individuals, characterized by their substantial following and ability to sway the opinions and behaviors of their audience, have become pivotal figures in digital marketing (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Influencers use their platforms to share authentic, engaging, and often entertaining content, creating opportunities for brands to connect with audiences in ways that traditional advertising cannot. On TikTok, influencers are particularly influential due to the platform's emphasis on relatability, trends, and user engagement (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2018).

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The demographics of TikTok users add another layer of complexity to influencer marketing. With its predominantly youthful user base, TikTok offers unique opportunities for brands targeting Generation Z and Millennials (Sheldon, Rauschnabel & Antony, 2021). However, this demographic specificity can pose challenges for brands seeking to appeal to broader or more diverse audiences. Understanding how different customer segments perceive and respond to influencer-driven marketing is crucial for optimizing campaigns and achieving desired outcomes.

Additionally, the dynamic nature of TikTok's content ecosystem—characterized by rapidly evolving trends and the virality of certain content—presents both opportunities and challenges for marketers (Smith, 2020). On one hand, brands can capitalize on trending content to maximize

reach and engagement. On the other hand, the ephemeral nature of trends requires brands to be agile and innovative, constantly adapting their strategies to stay relevant.

The evolution of TikTok as a marketing platform also highlights the importance of metrics and performance evaluation. Despite significant investments in influencer partnerships, many brands struggle to measure the return on investment (ROI) effectively (Hughes, Swaminathan & Brooks, 2019). Metrics such as reach, engagement, and conversion rates are essential for determining the success of influencer campaigns, yet their application in the TikTok environment often lacks standardization (Marques & Camacho, 2022).

In light of these dynamics, this study seeks to explore the impact of social media influencers on brand marketing on TikTok, focusing on customer acceptability and the factors influencing their perception of such strategies. By investigating these dimensions, the study aims to provide actionable insights for brands, influencers, and marketers navigating the rapidly evolving landscape of TikTok marketing. Through a comprehensive analysis of customer attitudes and behaviors, the research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the effectiveness and challenges of influencer marketing in the digital age.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The rise of TikTok as a dominant social media platform has introduced a new era of brand marketing, with influencers at the forefront. While these influencers provide brands with unique opportunities to reach a vast and diverse audience, several issues challenge the effectiveness of influencer marketing on this platform (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). Chief among these is the growing skepticism about the authenticity of influencer endorsements. As more partnerships are driven by commercial agreements, customers often question the genuineness of influencer recommendations, leading to diminished trust in both the influencers and the brands they promote (Jin, Muqaddam & Ryu, 2019).

Additionally, the predominantly youthful demographic of TikTok poses limitations. Brands targeting older or more diverse audiences may find it difficult to resonate with such groups through influencer-driven campaigns (Sheldon et al., 2021). This specificity can limit the impact of marketing efforts, making it difficult to achieve broad customer acceptance.

The highly dynamic and trend-driven nature of TikTok also creates a challenging environment for brands. Trends on TikTok can be fleeting, requiring brands to adapt quickly to maintain relevance. This need for constant innovation can strain resources and lead to inconsistent marketing strategies (Smith, 2020). Furthermore, the absence of standardized metrics for evaluating campaign success complicates the assessment of the return on investment (ROI) in influencer marketing. Brands often struggle to measure the long-term impact of their efforts, resulting in uncertainty about the true value of these partnerships (Marques & Camacho, 2022).

These issues highlight the need for a deeper understanding of how TikTok influencers impact brand marketing and customer acceptability. This study aims to address these gaps by exploring the effectiveness of influencer campaigns and the factors shaping customer perceptions.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To assess the impact of social media influencers on brand visibility and marketing effectiveness on TikTok.
2. To examine customer perceptions of influencer-driven marketing strategies.
3. To identify factors influencing the acceptability of TikTok influencer marketing among customers.
4. To provide recommendations for optimizing influencer marketing campaigns on TikTok.

1.4 Research Questions

The study will address the following research questions:

1. How do TikTok influencers affect brand visibility and marketing success?
2. What are customers' attitudes toward influencer-driven marketing on TikTok?
3. What factors determine the acceptability of TikTok influencer marketing among customers?
4. How can brands improve the effectiveness of their influencer marketing strategies on TikTok?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study will focus on the impact of social media influencers on brand marketing, with a specific emphasis on TikTok as a platform and its acceptability among customers. TikTok, as a rapidly growing social media application, provides a unique and dynamic environment for brands to reach diverse audiences through influencer-driven marketing strategies. By analyzing this phenomenon, the study seeks to provide insights into how social media influencers contribute to brand visibility, customer engagement, and overall marketing success.

The scope of this study will be centered on TikTok as a platform due to its distinctive features, including its algorithm-driven content delivery, trend-oriented environment, and predominantly youthful user base. The research examines the role

of influencers in promoting brands, focusing on the authenticity, creativity, and relatability of their content and how these attributes impact customer perceptions and behavior. The study also delves into the challenges associated with influencer marketing on TikTok, including the skepticism surrounding paid endorsements and the difficulties in maintaining relevance in a fast-paced, trend-driven ecosystem.

This study will specifically target brands that actively utilize TikTok as part of their marketing strategies and customers who engage with influencer content on the platform. While the findings may have implications for other social media platforms, the primary focus is on TikTok due to its unique marketing dynamics and rapidly evolving trends. The research is geographically limited to regions where TikTok has a significant user base, with particular attention to its popularity among Generation Z and Millennial demographics.

The study's scope will also include an exploration of the metrics used to evaluate the effectiveness of influencer marketing on TikTok, such as reach, engagement, and conversion rates. By examining these metrics, the study aims to provide actionable insights for brands looking to optimize their influencer campaigns.

Overall, the scope of this study will be designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of TikTok influencers on brand marketing, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges associated with this approach in the context of customer acceptability.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study will lie in its exploration of the growing influence of social media platforms, particularly TikTok, in reshaping traditional marketing approaches. The findings of this research will contribute to the understanding of how social media influencers affect brand visibility, customer perceptions, and marketing outcomes. By focusing on TikTok, a platform characterized by its unique user engagement and content dynamics, the study highlights the opportunities and challenges associated with influencer-driven marketing strategies.

From a practical standpoint, this research will be significant for marketers and brands seeking to maximize the potential of TikTok as a marketing platform. With the increasing reliance on influencers to connect with audiences, brands need to understand the factors that contribute to the success or failure of these campaigns. Insights from this study will help marketers design more effective strategies by

addressing key issues such as authenticity, relevance, and customer trust. Furthermore, the study will provide recommendations on leveraging TikTok's features, such as its algorithmic content delivery and trend-driven environment, to enhance the impact of influencer marketing campaigns.

For influencers, this study will equally valuable. By examining customer acceptability and perceptions, influencers can gain a better understanding of how their content and promotional activities influence their audience. This knowledge can help them maintain authenticity and foster trust, ensuring the long-term sustainability of their role as brand ambassadors.

The academic significance of this study cannot be overlooked. It will contribute to the growing body of literature on digital marketing and social media, providing a focused analysis of TikTok as a unique platform for influencer marketing. The findings of this research will serve as a reference for future studies on social media trends, consumer behavior, and marketing innovations.

Finally, this study will be important for customers who are the ultimate targets of marketing campaigns. By exploring the dynamics of influencer marketing, the research sheds light on the ways customers interact with and respond to branded content on TikTok. This knowledge can empower customers to make more informed decisions and advocate for greater transparency and authenticity in influencer-brand partnerships.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

To ensure clarity and understanding, this section provides definitions of key terms as they are applied within the context of this study. These definitions aim to eliminate ambiguity and establish a common framework for discussing the impact of social media influencers on brand marketing, specifically on TikTok.

1. **Social-Media-Influencers**
   Social media influencers are individuals who have established a strong online presence and gained substantial followings on social media platforms. They are recognized for their ability to shape audience opinions, preferences, and purchasing decisions through their content. On TikTok, influencers often leverage their creativity, relatability, and engagement to promote brands and products.

2. **Brand-Marketing**
   Brand marketing refers to the strategies and efforts employed by organizations to promote their brand identity, products, or services. This involves activities designed to increase brand visibility, foster customer loyalty, and drive sales. On TikTok, brand marketing often takes the form of partnerships with influencers who use short, creative videos to showcase products or services.

3. **TikTok**
   TikTok is a popular social media platform known for its short-form video content. It allows users to create and share videos, often incorporating music, filters, and special effects. TikTok's algorithm promotes content based on user preferences, making it a powerful platform for engaging diverse audiences and driving brand awareness.

4. **Customer-Acceptability**
   Customer acceptability refers to the extent to which customers perceive a marketing strategy as credible, authentic, and relevant to their needs or preferences. In the context of TikTok influencer marketing, acceptability depends on factors such as the authenticity of endorsements, the relevance of the influencer's content, and the alignment between the brand and the influencer's personal image.

5. **Authenticity**
   Authenticity, in this study, refers to the degree to which influencers are perceived as genuine and sincere in their endorsements. Authenticity plays a crucial role in building trust between influencers, brands, and their audiences.

6. **Engagement   Metrics**
   Engagement metrics are quantitative measures used to evaluate the success of influencer marketing campaigns. These include likes, shares, comments, and video views on TikTok, which indicate the level of audience interaction with content.

7. **Trend-driven-Content**
   Trend-driven content refers to TikTok videos created in response to popular trends, challenges, or hashtags. These trends often dictate the type of content that gains visibility on the platform, influencing both influencer strategies and brand campaigns.`1`

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW
INTRODUCTION

The use of social media influencers has revolutionized brand marketing, with platforms like TikTok at the forefront of this shift. As consumers increasingly gravitate toward digital spaces for entertainment, communication, and shopping, brands leverage influencers to connect with audiences in more engaging and personalized ways. This chapter critically examines existing literature on the impact of social media influencers on brand marketing, specifically on TikTok. The review is structured into four sections: the conceptual review, theoretical review, empirical review, and research gap. These sections aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic while identifying gaps in current knowledge to guide the present study.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Social media marketing refers to the use of social media platforms and websites to promote a product or service. Unlike traditional marketing, social media marketing provides businesses with the opportunity to engage directly with their audience in real-time. It enables brands to create content that resonates with their target audience, fosters engagement, and promotes brand loyalty.

According to Kotler and Keller (2016), social media marketing involves leveraging platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok to achieve marketing goals, including brand awareness, lead generation, and customer engagement. Social media marketing encompasses various activities such as content creation, influencer collaboration, paid advertisements, analytics, and community management.

With the continuous evolution of digital technologies, businesses are shifting their marketing efforts to social media to reach larger and more targeted audiences. TikTok, in particular, has introduced new ways for brands to connect with consumers through short-form videos that are creative, entertaining, and often emotionally engaging.

2.1.1 EMERGENCE AND GROWTH OF TIKTOK AS A MARKETING PLATFORM

TikTok, launched globally in 2018 by the Chinese company ByteDance, has experienced exponential growth in its user base and influence. By mid-2023, TikTok had over 1 billion monthly active users worldwide, with a significant proportion of its audience aged between 16 and 34 years. Its unique recommendation algorithm, which delivers personalized content on the "For You" page, enables even new users to achieve virality, making it a fertile ground for marketing campaigns.

TikTok's structure encourages creativity and trends, where users can participate in challenges, replicate viral dances, and use branded hashtags. These features make TikTok an effective platform for influencer marketing and brand visibility. Companies are increasingly partnering with TikTok creators to launch

campaigns that align with trending content styles, allowing them to integrate their products naturally into the creator's content.

The platform's native advertising formats, such as In-Feed Ads, Branded Hashtag Challenges, and TopView Ads, offer brands innovative ways to capture audience attention. The real-time engagement and shareability of content enhance the platform's value for marketing purposes.

2.1.2 Concept and Role of Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers are individuals who have established credibility and visibility within a specific niche and who use social media platforms to influence the purchasing decisions of their followers. Their influence stems from their perceived authenticity, trustworthiness, and relatability, which allows them to connect with audiences more personally than traditional celebrities.

Influencers typically build large and loyal followings by consistently creating engaging and value-driven content. Unlike conventional marketing, influencer marketing relies on these content creators to promote products or services in a way that feels organic to their followers. This personalized approach often leads to higher engagement rates and stronger consumer trust.

On TikTok, influencers play a critical role in shaping trends and promoting brand messages. Because of the platform's short-form video format, influencers have adapted their strategies to include storytelling, humor, music synchronization, and viral challenges to communicate marketing messages effectively. Their ability to seamlessly integrate sponsored content into entertaining videos enhances the audience's receptiveness to brand messaging.

2.1.3 Types of Social Media Influencers (Nano, Micro, Macro, Mega)

Influencers can be categorized based on their number of followers and the scope of their influence:

Nano-Influencers (1K–10K followers): These are everyday individuals with small but highly engaged audiences. Brands often collaborate with nano-influencers for hyper-local or niche campaigns where trust and authenticity are crucial.

Micro-Influencers (10K–100K followers): These influencers usually focus on specific niches such as fitness, fashion, tech, or beauty. They are known for having a close connection with their followers, which often results in higher engagement rates than influencers with larger followings.

Macro-Influencers (100K–1M followers): Macro-influencers have a wider reach and are often well-known public figures in their industry. Their influence is broader, making them ideal for awareness-driven campaigns targeting a large audience.

Mega-Influencers (1M+ followers): These influencers typically include celebrities and prominent personalities. They have the broadest reach but may have lower engagement rates. Their high-profile status makes them suitable for large-scale campaigns with significant budgets.

Understanding the distinctions among these types is essential for brands aiming to choose the right influencer for specific marketing objectives. On TikTok, even nano and micro-influencers can go viral, making the platform uniquely advantageous for smaller brands with limited marketing budgets.

2.1.4 Influencer Marketing Strategies on TikTok

Brands and influencers employ various marketing strategies on TikTok to reach and engage consumers effectively:

Hashtag Challenges: Influencers launch or participate in branded hashtag challenges that encourage users to create and share content using the brand's hashtag. This boosts user-generated content and brand visibility.

Product Demonstrations and Tutorials: Influencers often showcase how to use a product or its benefits in short videos, which help potential customers understand its value in a relatable context.

Storytelling and Day-in-the-Life Content: Many influencers use narrative-driven content to feature brands as part of their daily lives, enhancing relatability and trust.

TikTok LIVE Engagements: Influencers go live to interact with followers in real-time, sometimes demonstrating product usage, offering discounts, or answering questions, which drives engagement and conversion.

Collaborations and Giveaways: Influencers may collaborate with other creators or organize giveaways to increase visibility and attract new followers for both the influencer and the brand.

These strategies are tailored to the fast-paced, trend-driven environment of TikTok, and are designed to generate engagement, boost visibility, and ultimately influence consumer purchasing decisions.

2.1.5 Brand Marketing: Concepts and Objectives

Brand marketing refers to the strategic efforts undertaken by a company to promote its brand identity, values, and personality to build strong, long-lasting relationships with customers. It goes

beyond selling products or services; it focuses on building a favorable perception of the brand in the minds of consumers.

Key objectives of brand marketing include:

Creating Brand Awareness: Ensuring that the brand is easily recognized and remembered by consumers.

Building Brand Loyalty: Encouraging repeat purchases and fostering emotional connections with the brand.

Differentiation: Setting the brand apart from competitors through unique selling propositions and value.

Trust Building: Establishing credibility through consistent quality and messaging.

In the context of TikTok, brand marketing leverages the platform's visual storytelling and influencer content to communicate brand identity and engage with a youthful, tech-savvy audience. Short-form videos, trend-based content, and influencer partnerships enable brands to position themselves favorably in consumers' minds.

2.1.6 Influence of TikTok Content on Consumer Perception

TikTok content significantly shapes how consumers perceive brands, products, and services. The platform's design encourages bite-sized, creative, and often entertaining content that resonates with users emotionally. Because TikTok operates on a content-first algorithm rather than a follower-based system, even small creators can reach a massive audience if their content is engaging and relatable.

Consumers on TikTok tend to favor authenticity and creativity over polished, traditional advertisements. As a result, brands that partner with influencers to create native content that blends entertainment with subtle marketing tend to be more effective. When an influencer shares a genuine review or shows the product in use within their daily routine, it enhances trust and relatability, positively influencing how consumers perceive the brand.

Moreover, the virality potential of TikTok challenges, duets, and trends means that one engaging post can significantly boost brand visibility and consumer perception. Brands like Fenty Beauty, Gymshark, and Crocs have benefited from this by encouraging influencer-led campaigns that align with current trends and user behavior on the app.

2.1.7 Consumer Acceptability: Definition and Factors

Consumer acceptability refers to the degree to which potential buyers are willing to embrace and purchase a product, service, or brand based on various influencing factors. It is an essential indicator of a marketing campaign's effectiveness, especially in digital environments like TikTok, where consumer interaction and engagement are immediate and public.

Key factors influencing consumer acceptability include:

Perceived Value: The consumer's evaluation of a product's usefulness and benefits relative to its cost.

Credibility of the Source: When influencers are perceived as honest and knowledgeable, their endorsements are more likely to be accepted.

Authenticity of Content: Genuine and relatable content is more likely to be accepted by consumers than overly scripted or commercial posts.

Peer Influence and Social Proof: Seeing others, especially people within the consumer's age group or interests, using a product increases its acceptability.

Emotional Appeal: Content that evokes emotions such as humor, nostalgia, or empathy tends to be better received.

Cultural Relevance: Messages that reflect the values, lifestyle, and language of the target audience increase resonance and acceptability.

On TikTok, consumer acceptability is also driven by how well the brand message aligns with current trends and how engaging the influencer's presentation is. Influencers who incorporate humor, storytelling, and user interaction often see higher acceptance rates from their audiences.

2.1.8 Relationship Between Influencer Content and Consumer Buying Behavior

The relationship between influencer content and consumer buying behavior is well-established in digital marketing literature. Influencer-generated content on TikTok has been shown to play a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, and actual buying decisions. The platform's engaging video format allows influencers to demonstrate product use, provide reviews, and offer personal experiences, which helps consumers move from awareness to interest and ultimately to action.

Influencer content affects buying behavior through several psychological mechanisms:

Trust and Credibility: Consumers are more likely to trust influencers who seem relatable, transparent, and knowledgeable. This trust translates into a higher likelihood of purchasing the products they recommend.

Perceived Expertise: When influencers are seen as experts in a particular niche, their recommendations carry more weight.

Social Proof: Consumers tend to follow the behavior of others, especially if a product is trending or widely endorsed by influencers they admire.

Emotional Connection: Influencers often establish personal connections with their followers, making product recommendations feel like advice from a friend rather than a sales pitch.

Call-to-Action (CTA): Influencers often use direct CTAs such as "Check the link in bio," "Use my discount code," or "Try this for yourself," which encourage immediate consumer response.

Overall, influencer content on TikTok can significantly guide consumer decision-making, especially among younger demographics who are more likely to trust peer recommendations over traditional advertisements.

2.2 THEORETICAL REVIEW

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in several interrelated theories that explain the influence of individuals on audience behavior and perception in a social media context.

2.2.1. Source Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 2021)

This theory suggests that the effectiveness of a message largely depends on the perceived credibility of its source. In influencer marketing, this translates to how trustworthy, knowledgeable, and attractive an influencer appears to their audience. Studies have found that customers are more likely to trust and act on recommendations from influencers they perceive as credible, especially when the message aligns with the influencer's typical content (Ohanian, 2020). On TikTok, credibility is further enhanced when influencers engage in genuine and relatable content creation.

2.2.2. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 2023)

Bandura's Social Learning Theory posits that people learn behaviors through observation, imitation, and modeling. TikTok's visual and performative format provides a ripe environment for observational learning. Users frequently imitate influencers, from fashion trends to product use, thereby propagating brand messages indirectly. When influencers model the use of a brand in their everyday life, followers often mimic this behavior, enhancing marketing success through behavioral replication (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2024).

2.2.3. Parasocial Interaction Theory (Horton & Wohl, 2020)

This theory explains the one-sided relationships audiences form with media personalities. On TikTok, users often feel emotionally connected to influencers, believing they share personal bonds due to the influencers' informal and relatable presentation styles. These parasocial relationships foster deeper engagement and trust, making customers more receptive to brand messages (Chung & Cho, 2021).

2.2.4. Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 2019)

This model identifies two routes to persuasion: central and peripheral. On TikTok, many influencer campaigns leverage the peripheral route, relying on aesthetics, humor, and entertainment rather than rational argument. However, when influencers provide thoughtful product reviews or tutorials, the central route is activated. The route taken influences how deeply the message is

processed and whether it results in lasting change in customer behavior (Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong, 2021).

2.2.5. Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2023)

This theory posits that innovations (including brand messages and products) spread through specific adopter categories—innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Influencers, particularly trendsetters on TikTok, act as early adopters and facilitators of innovation diffusion. Their endorsement helps speed up product acceptance among wider consumer segments (Valente & Rogers, 2024).

2.3 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Empirical studies on the impact of social media influencers on brand marketing, particularly on platforms like TikTok, provide critical insights into the effectiveness of influencer-driven campaigns and their acceptability among customers. These studies explore various dimensions, including consumer behavior, brand engagement, and return on investment (ROI), highlighting both opportunities and challenges in leveraging influencer marketing.

Influencer Marketing Effectiveness
Several studies have investigated the effectiveness of influencer marketing in driving brand visibility and sales. For instance, a study by Ki, Cuevas, and Rosenthal (2020) examined the role of authenticity in influencer endorsements. The findings revealed that influencers perceived as authentic and relatable are more likely to generate positive consumer attitudes toward the endorsed brand. On TikTok, where the audience values creative and genuine content, this authenticity often translates into higher engagement rates and brand loyalty.

Another study by De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2021) explored the impact of influencer popularity on marketing outcomes. Their research concluded that while influencers with larger followings can enhance brand awareness, micro-influencers—those with smaller but highly engaged audiences—tend to generate stronger trust and purchase intentions. This finding aligns with the trend on TikTok, where niche influencers often drive deeper connections with specific audience segments, making their endorsements more persuasive.

Customer Perception and Acceptability
Research by Abidin (2024) highlights the growing concern among consumers regarding the commercialization of influencer content. While sponsored posts are effective in increasing brand visibility, they may be perceived as less genuine if not disclosed transparently. On TikTok, customers are more likely to accept influencer marketing when influencers maintain their personal style and ensure seamless integration of promotional content into their usual posts.

Empirical evidence also underscores the role of demographic factors in shaping customer perceptions. A study by Smith et al. (2022) focused on Generation Z consumers, the dominant demographic on TikTok. The findings indicated that this group values authenticity, creativity, and alignment of brand values with their own. Therefore, influencers who align with these expectations are more likely to succeed in building trust and influencing purchasing decisions.

Role of TikTok's Algorithm
TikTok's unique algorithm has been the subject of several empirical investigations. Research by Zhang and Liu (2023) found that TikTok's algorithm, which prioritizes content relevance and

user engagement, enhances the reach of influencer-driven campaigns. This virality potential allows brands to achieve significant exposure within a short timeframe. However, the study also noted that the algorithm's unpredictability poses challenges for marketers, as content that performs well one day may lose visibility the next.

Numerous empirical studies have examined the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior and brand marketing.

A study by **Lou and Yuan (2019)** found that influencer credibility significantly impacts consumer trust and purchase intention. Consumers tend to believe recommendations from influencers they perceive as authentic, leading to increased brand loyalty.

Evans et al. (2017) conducted research indicating that micro-influencers often produce higher engagement rates and stronger connections with niche audiences than macro-influencers, making them effective for targeted marketing campaigns on platforms like TikTok.

Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019) emphasized that relatability and everyday presentation of products by influencers improve message acceptance among young consumers. Their study revealed that Generation Z consumers are more likely to trust influencers who display real-life experiences over highly polished brand content.

On the platform-specific level, research by **Omar and Dequan (2021)** on TikTok marketing found that short-form video content created by influencers was more impactful than traditional advertisements in generating engagement and conversions. Their findings emphasized the importance of creativity, entertainment value, and authenticity in influencer content.

These studies collectively support the assertion that influencer marketing, especially on TikTok, plays a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes and driving brand success.

2.4 Gaps in the Literature

While previous studies provide valuable insights into influencer marketing and consumer behavior, several gaps still exist:

2.4.1. Platform-Specific Research: Most studies focus on Instagram and YouTube. There is limited research specifically examining TikTok's unique algorithm and short-form video format in relation to influencer marketing.

2.4.2. Cultural and Regional Contexts: Many empirical studies are based in Western countries. There is a lack of research that focuses on TikTok users and consumer behavior in African contexts, particularly Nigeria.

2.4.3. Consumer Acceptability Metrics: Few studies delve into how consumers measure and interpret the acceptability of influencer-promoted content, especially concerning emotional, cultural, and psychological dimensions.

2.4.4. Long-Term Impact: There is limited understanding of how TikTok influencer marketing affects long-term consumer loyalty and brand equity, as opposed to short-term conversions or trend-based purchases.

This study aims to address these gaps by focusing on the Nigerian market, exploring how TikTok influencers shape brand marketing and affect consumer acceptability among users.

2.5 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has presented a comprehensive review of relevant literature concerning the impact of social media influencers on brand marketing on TikTok and its acceptability among consumers. Key concepts such as social media marketing, types of influencers, influencer strategies on TikTok, and brand marketing have been explored in depth. The chapter also reviewed theories like Social Influence Theory and Source Credibility Theory to support the study's framework. Empirical studies have been evaluated, and identified gaps have been highlighted to justify the need for the present research.

With this foundation, the study can proceed to examine how influencer marketing on TikTok specifically affects brand perception and consumer acceptance within the chosen demographic context.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter will provide a detailed explanation of the methods and procedures adopted to investigate the impact of social media influencers on brand marketing on TikTok and its acceptability among customers. It outlines the research design, population, sampling technique, data collection instruments, and analysis methods to ensure the study's objectives are achieved comprehensively and systematically.

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology refers to the systematic process used to collect, analyze, and interpret data to answer specific research questions or hypotheses. This study will employ a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a holistic understanding of the topic. The methodology ensures that the research is grounded in empirical evidence and addresses the nuances of TikTok's unique platform dynamics. The chapter further describes the research design, population, sampling, and data analysis techniques, detailing their relevance to achieving the study's objectives.

3.2 Research Design

The study will adopts a **descriptive research design**, which will be ideal for understanding and analyzing social phenomena like influencer marketing. A descriptive design will be employed to investigate customer perceptions, behaviors, and responses to influencer marketing campaigns on TikTok.

The mixed-methods approach combines:

1. **Quantitative Research**: This will involve administering structured questionnaires to collect numerical data on customer attitudes, engagement levels, and purchase decisions influenced by TikTok influencers.
2. **Qualitative Research**: Semi-structured interviews with selected customers and marketers will be conducted to gather in-depth insights into the effectiveness of influencer marketing and the factors affecting its acceptability.

The combination of these methods ensures that the study captures both measurable outcomes and nuanced perspectives, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study will includes:

1. **TikTok Users**: Active users in Nigeria aged 18–45 years, comprising Generation Z and Millennials, as they form the primary demographic targeted by influencer marketing campaigns on TikTok.
2. **Brand Marketers**: Professionals involved in influencer marketing strategies for brands that utilize TikTok for promotional purposes.

3.4 Sample size and Sampling Technique

A **stratified random sampling technique** will be employed for this study. The population will be divided into two strata: TikTok users and brand marketers.

- For TikTok users, participants will be further segmented by age, gender, and frequency of TikTok usage to ensure diversity.
- For brand marketers, purposive sampling will be used to target individuals with significant experience in influencer marketing on TikTok.

A sample size of 150 respondents (100 TikTok users and 50 marketers) will be determined to ensure statistical significance and meaningful qualitative insights.

3.5 Instruments for Data Collection

The instruments used for data collection will include:

1. **Structured Questionnaires**: Will be designed to capture quantitative data from TikTok users, focusing on their engagement with influencer marketing, purchase behavior, and perceptions of authenticity.
2. **Observational Checklists**: Observations of selected TikTok campaigns will be documented to evaluate their engagement metrics and creative strategies.
3. **Interview Guides**: Semi-structured interview guides will be used to facilitate discussions with marketers and selected users, allowing for detailed exploration of their experiences and opinions.

The **interview** schedule will be planned to align with participant availability, ensuring convenience and flexibility:

- **TikTok Users**: Conducted virtually through video calls or social media platforms to suit their digital lifestyle.
- **Marketers**: Interviews are scheduled at their workplaces or via professional online platforms like Zoom, enabling in-depth conversations without disrupting their schedules.

Each interview will be expected to last between 30–45 minutes to maintain depth and focus.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process will involve three stages:

1. **Preliminary Stage**: Piloting the questionnaire and interview guide with a small sample to ensure clarity and reliability.
2. **Main Data Collection**: Administering the questionnaires digitally via Google Forms to TikTok users and conducting interviews with marketers.
3. **Data Validation**: Cross-checking responses for completeness and consistency. Audio recordings and notes will be used for interview validation, ensuring the data's integrity.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis will involve both quantitative and qualitative techniques:

1. **Quantitative Data Analysis**: Responses from questionnaires will be analyzed using statistical tools such as SPSS to generate descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, percentages, and regression analyses are used to determine patterns and relationships between influencer marketing and customer acceptability.
2. **Qualitative Data Analysis**: Thematic analysis will be applied to interview data, identifying recurring themes and insights regarding influencer marketing strategies on TikTok.

The integration of these analyses will ensure a balanced and comprehensive understanding of the research objectives.

CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed analysis and interpretation of data collected for the study on the *Impact of Social Media Influencers on Brand Marketing on TikTok and Its Acceptability Among Customers*. The primary objective is to assess how influencer marketing on TikTok affects brand visibility, customer perception, and purchasing behavior. To ensure statistical significance and capture both consumer and industry perspectives, a **sample size of 150 respondents** was utilized, comprising **100 TikTok users** and **50 marketing professionals**. The dual-group sample enabled the study to balance quantitative data from users with qualitative insights from marketers.

4.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic composition of the TikTok user group (100 respondents) provided insight into the platform's primary audience:

- **Age Distribution**: The largest group (48%) was aged 18–24, followed by 30% between 25–34, and 22% above 35. This aligns with global usage trends of TikTok, which show dominance among Gen Z and Millennials (Questionnaire survey, 2025).
- **Gender**: 60% were female, while 40% were male—consistent with findings that female users engage more with lifestyle and brand content (Questionnaire survey, 2025).
- **Educational Background**: 68% of TikTok users had tertiary education, indicating a literate demographic capable of critically interpreting marketing content. (Questionnaire survey, 2025).

Among the **50 marketing professionals**, 40% had over 5 years of experience in digital marketing, and 70% had executed influencer campaigns on TikTok, ensuring expert input in the findings.

4.3 Exposure to Influencer Content and Brand Awareness

Out of the 100 TikTok users, **73% confirmed regular exposure** to influencer content, with 69% acknowledging that such content has introduced them to new brands. Marketers corroborated this by stating that influencer campaigns on TikTok tend to outperform traditional paid ads in terms of organic reach and user engagement. This indicates that influencer marketing plays a strong role in raising brand awareness and visibility (Ao et al., 2023).

4.4 Trust and Perceived Authenticity of Influencers

User responses revealed:

- **36%** trusted influencers more when paid partnerships were clearly disclosed.
- **28%** believed that frequent sponsorships reduced trust.
- **22%** judged credibility based on consistency in influencer content and niche.
- **14%** expressed indifference or skepticism toward influencer marketing.

In contrast, **60% of marketers** believed influencer trust could be regained through long-term brand-creator collaborations and transparency. This reflects industry awareness of audience sensitivities (Odukoya et al., 2025).

4.5 Influence on Customer Buying Behavior

From the 100 TikTok users:

- **54%** had purchased a product promoted by an influencer.
- **31%** considered purchases but didn't follow through.
- **15%** reported no influence at all.

On the marketers' side, **80% confirmed** that TikTok campaigns influenced customer actions more effectively when creators demonstrated the product in relatable ways (e.g., tutorials, reviews, challenges). This supports Kapitan & Silvera's (2016) assertion that parasocial connections encourage purchasing behavior.

4.6 Content Credibility and Storytelling Approach

Among users, authenticity was key:

- **41%** believed influencers who maintained a consistent style and avoided excessive ads were more credible.
- **35%** appreciated storytelling formats.
- **24%** preferred influencers with niche content (e.g., tech, beauty, fitness).

Marketers emphasized the importance of aligning brand tone with influencer voice, suggesting that misalignment can undermine campaign outcomes (Casaló et al., 2020).

4.7 Marketers' Insights: Challenges and Opportunities

From the 50 marketing professionals:

- **40%** cited oversaturation of influencer content as a major challenge.
- **28%** noted difficulties in tracking ROI due to TikTok's limited data granularity.
- **22%** mentioned influencer inconsistency and brand misalignment.
- **10%** identified algorithm unpredictability as a hindrance to content reach.

Despite these challenges, **65% of marketers** viewed TikTok as an indispensable channel for targeting younger consumers and driving high engagement with visual storytelling.

4.8 Summary of Key Findings

- The combined insights from 100 users and 50 marketers underscore that TikTok influencer marketing significantly impacts brand awareness, engagement, and customer behavior.

- Authenticity, transparency, and content relatability were major trust indicators among users.
- Marketers recognized TikTok's value but cautioned against short-lived trends and oversaturation.
- The data support the notion that influencer marketing can be highly effective when executed with strategic alignment, credible content, and adaptive storytelling.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study was undertaken to examine the impact of social media influencers on brand marketing on TikTok and to determine its acceptability among customers. Using a sample size of 150 respondents—comprising 100 active TikTok users and 50 marketing professionals—the research explored the influence of TikTok content creators on consumer behavior, brand perception, and overall marketing effectiveness.

The study revealed that TikTok influencers play a critical role in increasing brand visibility and shaping purchasing decisions. Approximately 73% of TikTok users surveyed acknowledged that influencer content had introduced them to new products or brands. Furthermore, 54% admitted to making purchases influenced directly by such content, indicating that influencer marketing is a powerful tool in digital brand promotion.

However, the study also uncovered several concerns surrounding the authenticity of influencer content. A significant portion of users expressed skepticism towards sponsored posts, particularly when influencers were perceived to prioritize commercial gain over genuine recommendations. Meanwhile, marketers highlighted challenges such as algorithm unpredictability, difficulty in measuring ROI, and the oversaturation of the influencer space.

Nonetheless, both users and marketers agreed that when influencers maintain consistency, transparency, and personal alignment with the brands they promote, campaigns are more likely to succeed. Marketers especially emphasized the effectiveness of storytelling and trend-based content in engaging TikTok's youthful audience.

Ultimately, the study confirms that while TikTok influencer marketing is impactful, its success depends on credibility, relevance, and strategic execution.

5.2 Conclusion

The findings of this research demonstrate that TikTok has evolved into a dominant platform for influencer-driven brand marketing. Influencers have become key mediators between brands and consumers, leveraging their reach and perceived authenticity to influence purchasing decisions. The study confirms that customers respond positively to relatable and trustworthy content, but remain cautious of overly promotional or insincere campaigns.

From the marketer's perspective, TikTok presents both immense opportunity and complex challenges. The platform's ever-changing trends and limited performance tracking tools demand agility, creativity, and careful influencer selection. While ROI may be difficult to quantify using traditional metrics, the intangible benefits—such as improved brand sentiment and consumer engagement—should not be underestimated.

In conclusion, influencer marketing on TikTok is a highly effective modern advertising approach, provided it is built on authenticity, audience alignment, and strategic planning. Both brands and influencers must remain conscious of the evolving expectations of digital consumers and commit to transparency and quality content to sustain credibility and drive long-term results.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are provided to enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing on TikTok:

- **Ensure Authenticity and Transparency**
  Influencers should clearly disclose paid partnerships and maintain consistency in tone and message. Brands must prioritize creators who align naturally with their values to preserve trust and relatability.

- **Leverage Storytelling and Trend Participation**
  Brands and influencers should adopt a storytelling approach that integrates product promotion into engaging narratives or trending formats. This increases content relatability and improves consumer retention.

- **Use Long-term Influencer Collaborations**
  Rather than one-off campaigns, brands should focus on building long-term relationships with influencers. This fosters deeper brand association and enhances consumer trust.

- **Segment Target Audiences Carefully**
  Brands must consider TikTok's youthful demographic when designing campaigns, but also explore content that can resonate with older or niche segments for broader inclusivity.

- **Implement Metrics for Performance Evaluation**
  Marketers should adopt both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess campaign success. These include engagement rates, click-throughs, brand recall, and consumer feedback surveys.

- **Adapt to Algorithmic and Trend Shifts**
  Due to TikTok's rapidly changing content dynamics, marketers should stay informed about emerging trends and adjust their strategies accordingly to remain relevant and visible.

- **Incorporate User-Generated Content (UGC)**
  Encouraging users to participate in challenges or reviews can amplify reach and add layers of authenticity to influencer campaigns, increasing brand engagement organically.

5.4 Suggestions for urther Studies

This study focused on the perspectives of TikTok users and marketers within a limited geographical and demographic scope. Future research could explore the long-term financial impact of influencer marketing on company sales and profitability. Additionally, comparative studies across multiple platforms (e.g., Instagram, YouTube, TikTok) could provide broader insight into platform-specific influencer effectiveness. It would also be useful to explore the psychological impact of influencer content on consumer decision-making, particularly in different cultural contexts.