

The Impact of TikTok on Product Promotion and Marketing Strategies: A Review with Special Reference to Malaysia

Saiful Hairul Tan¹, Mustaffa Halabi Azahari²

^{1,2}Faculty of Creative Industries, City University Malaysia, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT: TikTok has become a dominant force in digital marketing, transforming how consumers discover, engage with, and purchase products. Unlike follower-driven platforms, TikTok's algorithm curates highly personalised content, offering unique opportunities for rapid brand visibility. In Malaysia, where Gen Z and Millennials form a strong user base, the platform supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) while reshaping consumer behaviour through social commerce features such as TikTok Shop and TikTok Live.

This literature review synthesises research on TikTok's role in product promotion and marketing strategies, with particular emphasis on Malaysia. It draws upon key theoretical frameworks including Uses and Gratifications Theory, the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Parasocial Interaction Theory. Findings reveal that entertainment value, influencer credibility, trust, and cultural localisation are central to consumer engagement and purchase intention. However, challenges persist, including content saturation, authenticity risks, misinformation, and regulatory compliance. Research gaps include a reliance on cross-sectional surveys, limited focus on older demographics, and a lack of studies on SMEs and ethical issues.

The review concludes that TikTok offers unprecedented opportunities for Malaysian marketers but requires strategies that are creative, culturally sensitive, and compliant with regulations to ensure sustainable success.

KEYWORDS: TikTok, social commerce, influencer marketing, product promotion, consumer behaviour, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Platforms for short-form videos have taken centre stage in the field of digital marketing, radically changing the ways in which customers interact with businesses. With more than a billion active users, TikTok has become a worldwide sensation. TikTok's algorithm creates tailored feeds that enable quick discovery of content and brands outside of one's immediate social circles, in contrast to more conventional platforms like Facebook or Instagram, which mostly rely on follower networks (Montag et al., 2021). TikTok's growth in Malaysia has been particularly noteworthy. With over 18 million users as of 2024 (DataReportal, 2024), the site has ingrained itself into Gen Z and Millennials' daily digital routines. TikTok is a desirable marketing tool because these groups place a high value on entertainment, interaction, and cultural significance. Thanks to commerce integrations like TikTok Shop and TikTok Live, businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, use TikTok's features to shorten the consumer journey from awareness to purchase.

In Malaysia, scholarly research on TikTok is still scarce and dispersed, despite its popularity. Previous research indicates the importance of entertainment in promoting customer engagement (Ismail & Tan, 2022), the mediating impact of trust in TikTok Shop transactions (Nguyen & Lim, 2023), and the predictive role of influencer credibility in buy intention (Rashid et al., 2022). Few evaluations, meanwhile, integrate these observations into more comprehensive theoretical and regulatory frameworks. In order to fill that gap, this study critically reviews the research on TikTok's influence on marketing strategies and product promotion, paying particular attention to Malaysia's distinct sociocultural and legal context.

METHODOLOGY OF LITERATURE SEARCH

This review identifies pertinent scholarship using a systematic approach. Between 2019 and 2025, literature searches were performed on Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and

The Impact of TikTok on Product Promotion and Marketing Strategies: A Review with Special Reference to Malaysia

ResearchGate. In order to give current and useful context, industry studies (such as DataReportal, Statista, and TikTok for Business) and regulatory documents (such as Content Code 2022; PDPA 2010) were also included.

Among the search terms were 'short-form video advertising,' 'TikTok marketing Malaysia,' 'TikTok influencer promotion,' 'TikTok Shop,' and 'social commerce Malaysia.' Studies have to specifically address TikTok in connection with marketing, commerce, or consumer behaviour in order to meet the inclusion criteria. Excluded from consideration were noncommercial studies of TikTok, such as those that just examined political content or adolescent leisure.

It is significant to point out that the total of 12 empirical studies with a Malaysian emphasis were among the 48 core sources that were found during this approach. In addition to traditional theoretical works on communication and consumer behaviour, these were complemented by international literature on TikTok marketing, influencer involvement, and social commerce.

They serve as the cornerstone of this synthesis when combined.

Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations

There are several established theories offer useful perspectives for comprehending the marketing influence of TikTok.

First, the theory of uses and gratifications (U&G). According to this hypothesis, audiences look for media to meet their demands for social contact, entertainment, and information. TikTok concurrently satisfies these needs, especially for Gen Z users in Malaysia who need interesting and useful material (Katz et al., 1973).

Second, the S-O-R model stands for stimulus-organization-response. Visual effects, sound effects, and influencer cues are some of the stimuli on TikTok that cause emotional states (organisms) that impact behavioural reactions like liking, sharing, and buying. These responses are mediated in Malaysia by humour, cultural relevance, and authenticity (Hassan et al., 2021). Third, Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). This paradigm makes a distinction between peripheral stimuli (such as influencer attractiveness and editing aesthetics) and central processing (such as thorough product reviews and information). Peer validation and social proof are important, as Malaysian consumers frequently react strongly to peripheral stimuli (Liu & Zheng, 2024).

Fourth, Model for Acceptance of Technology (TAM). TAM places a strong focus on perceived utility and usability as factors that influence the adoption of new technologies. While social influence encourages adoption in Malaysia's collectivist society, TikTok Shop improves perceived usefulness by streamlining transactions (Syafika & Antonio, 2024). Finally, Theories of Parasocial Interaction. One-sided interactions between audiences and influencers can be explained by this approach. Purchase intention and enduring loyalty are directly predicted by influencer credibility in Malaysia, which includes attributes like trustworthiness, relatability, and knowledge (Rashid et al., 2022).

Collectively, these frameworks demonstrate how TikTok can combine social influence, entertainment, trust, and commerce to create a potent marketing ecosystem.

TikTok as a Marketing Platform

The For You Page (FYP), which uses algorithmic recommendation algorithms to make it possible for content from unidentified advertisers and artists to reach large audiences, is

TikTok's distinguishing feature. Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) can obtain quick exposure on TikTok without having an existing following because to this visibility mechanism, which sets it apart from follower-based platforms (Montag et al., 2021). Nonetheless, virality is still unpredictable, which makes campaign performance erratic and difficult to manage (Johnson & Woodcock, 2023).

TikTok's advertising formats are meticulously matched to user habits and content consumption trends. For example, In-Feed Ads mix in perfectly with natural films, whereas Spark Ads enhance creator-generated material to maintain authenticity (Liu et al., 2022). Despite guaranteeing optimal visibility, premium ad formats like TopView and Brand Takeover run the danger of being viewed as invasive disruptions to the user experience (Wang & Li, 2023). Additionally, even though TikTok's self-serve advertising solutions are easily accessible, many SMEs still struggle to accurately measure return on investment (ROI) and attribute conversions (Kemp, 2024).

The platform's marketing potential has been further enhanced by its transformation into social commerce. While TikTok Live combines entertainment and commerce through interactive product presentations and real-time engagement, TikTok Shop integration enables straight inapp transactions (Phua et al., 2022). Although this combination of business and content has been quite successful, over-commercialization may turn off consumers who prefer amusing and genuine material (Lim et al., 2023).

Cultural localisation is another important component of TikTok marketing in Malaysia. In addition to cultural themes from significant holidays like Deepavali, Chinese New Year, and Hari Raya Aidilfitri, local ads usually combine several languages—Bahasa Melayu, Mandarin, and Tamil (Ahmad & Omar, 2022). While cultural blunders or inappropriate depictions can cause serious backlash, effective localisation increases emotional resonance and relatability among a variety of audiences (Hassan & Yusof, 2021).

The Impact of TikTok on Product Promotion and Marketing Strategies: A Review with Special Reference to Malaysia

All things considered, TikTok is a dynamic marketing ecosystem that encourages awareness, interaction, and buy intent all at once. Although marketers must overcome the inherent difficulties of volatility, algorithmic unpredictability, and cultural sensitivity, its potential is found in accessibility, virality, and community-driven involvement (Rashid et al., 2022; Montag et al., 2021).

Marketing Strategies in Malaysia

Malaysian brands are using localised digital marketing strategies that work with TikTok's unique features and cater to local buyer tastes. According to Ahmad and Omar (2022),

Malaysian marketers focus on campaigns that are rooted in culture and include visual storytelling, a variety of languages, and social contact to get people more involved. The first key strategy is to tell stories and make content. In the fast-paced setting of the platform, marketers often use humour, relatable everyday stories, and product demos to get people's attention (Lim et al., 2023). Beauty brands often use transformation videos to show how well their products work, while food and drink companies use short-form recipe clips and taste-test tasks to get people interested and getting them to participate (Liu et al., 2022). While material based on trends can go viral quickly, relying too much on short-lived trends may make it harder to stay engaged over time. According to Johnson and Woodcock (2023), using slang and popular sound effects makes people more relatable and helps younger people feel like they belong in a group.

Influencer partnerships, which are still an important part of TikTok marketing, are the second key strategy. Macro-influencers have a lot of followers, but micro-influencers are more specific and seem more real (Phua et al., 2022). Rashid et al. (2022) say that confidence, which can come from being attractive, knowledgeable, or trustworthy, has a big impact on people's plans to buy. Nevertheless, overemphasising celebrity impact at the expense of authenticity can reduce brand trust and weaken customer loyalty (Lim et al., 2023).

Social commerce is a third method that can be used. Tang and Li (2023) say that TikTok Shop and TikTok Live let small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) connect directly with customers through live Q&As and demos. This combines the fun of shopping with the chance to ask questions. Phua et al. (2022) pointed out that this mix of interaction and quick gratification makes people want to buy things right away, but it needs to be done carefully— too much aggressive marketing could take away from the entertainment value and make people tired of watching.

Localising culture is also very important. Big Malaysian holidays like Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Chinese New Year, and Deepavali are often used in successful campaigns. To reach more people, stories told in two or more languages are often used (Ahmad & Omar, 2022). Music and images that are sensitive to different cultures help people connect emotionally. But, as Hassan and Yusof (2021) warn, mistakes in how they reflect or talk about other cultures can lead to criticism or loss of interest.

Finally, adding e-commerce is an important part of TikTok marketing. Many brands connect their TikTok ads to outside e-commerce sites like Shopee and Lazada, which makes it easier for people to find and buy products (Kemp, 2024.4). This mix of methods expands the market, but brands must be constant across all channels to keep customers' trust (Montag et al., 2021). When looked at as a whole, these tactics show how important cultural resonance, authenticity, and engagement are for Malaysian TikTok marketing. However, sustaining their long-term success requires a careful balance between creativity, credibility, and consistency (Rashid et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2023).

Consumer Behaviour and Impact

Significantly, TikTok has a big impact on Malaysian consumers' purchasing decisions in several ways. First, although engagement activities like likes, shares, and comments offer social proof that strengthens trust, algorithmic discovery raises brand recognition (Hassan et al., 2021). Second, buy intention is driven by entertainment value; creative and humorous content increases conversions and maintains attention (Ismail & Tan, 2022). Third, social proof and trust are crucial, and TikTok Shop's credibility is strengthened via user-generated content, product reviews, and live Q&A sessions (Nguyen & Lim, 2023). Fourth, through relatability and authenticity, influencer credibility builds brand loyalty by fostering parasocial interactions that go beyond transactions (Rashid et al., 2022). Last but not least, cultural identity improves relatability because campaigns with festival and bilingual content strengthen emotional bonds, whereas generic campaigns run the danger of alienating people. As a result, a combination of cultural alignment, entertainment, trust, and social validation affects Malaysian customers. Campaigns that use these components have a higher chance of converting engagement into loyalty.

Challenges, Risks, and Regulations

Despite the potential, there are a number of obstacles to TikTok marketing in Malaysia. Increased competition, higher prices, and the possibility of declining returns are all consequences of content saturation. Over-commercialization by brands undermines relatability and raises questions about authenticity. Because of the platform's transparency, consumers are exposed to false information, especially in the cosmetics and health sectors, which raises worries about consumer protection.

The Impact of TikTok on Product Promotion and Marketing Strategies: A Review with Special Reference to Malaysia

Regulatory frameworks make things much more complicated. Influencers are required to declare sponsored content under the Communications and Multimedia Content Code (2022) (#Iklan, #Berbayar), however compliance varies. The Personal Data Protection Act (2010) governs data privacy and mandates that marketers protect consumer data; infractions could result in legal repercussions as well as damage to their reputation. Furthermore, due to Malaysia's political and cultural sensitivities, care must be taken because anything that is interpreted as disparaging religion, race, or royalty the "3Rs" may cause retaliation.

It is urged that for businesses to succeed over the long term therefore, they must strike a balance between innovation, authenticity, compliance, and ethical responsibility.

Synthesis and Research Gaps

The usefulness of TikTok as a marketing medium is supported by literature, which emphasises cultural localisation, trust, influencer credibility, and entertainment value. These fit the parasocial, TAM, ELM, S-O-R, and U&G frameworks. However, there are still noticeable gaps.

Most Malaysian studies rely on cross-sectional surveys, which restrict the ability to draw causal conclusions. Future research should instead employ experimental and longitudinal designs. Experimental and longitudinal approaches should be used in future studies. Despite their increasing involvement in e-commerce, older segments are understudied in scholarship, which disproportionately concentrates on younger populations. Malaysia's economy depends heavily on SMEs and microenterprises, although little is known about them, particularly in regard to resource limitations and return on investment. Lastly, there hasn't been enough empirical focus on ethical and regulatory issues, like disclosure procedures, privacy compliance, and cultural sensitivity. For Malaysia to establish ethical, context-specific marketing strategies, these deficiencies must be filled.

Managerial Implications

Related to the above matter, several lessons emerge for practitioners. A 'creative-first strategy' is crucial because relatable, real content performs better than well-produced ads. Credibility and audience fit should be the top priorities in 'influencer collaborations', with microinfluencers providing significant local resonance. Campaigns must incorporate 'social commerce platforms' like TikTok Shop and Live, where qualified hosts increase engagement and conversions in real time.

Additionally, marketers have to follow 'regulatory frameworks' that serve as both legal protections and procedures for fostering trust, such as disclosure regulations and PDPA compliance. Lastly, managers ought to implement 'data-driven strategies, striking a balance between qualitative information like customer sentiment and culture feedback and quantitative measurements like conversions and engagement. In the end, combining innovation, compliance, cultural sensitivity, and adaptation is essential for long-term success.

CONCLUSION

TikTok has revolutionised marketing and product promotion tactics in Malaysia by providing companies with a potent platform that combines engagement, discovery, and purchase. Its influence is fuelled by cultural resonance, trust, entertainment, and influencer credibility, especially with Gen Z and Millennials. Yet there are still difficulties. Careful and moral methods are required because to content saturation, issues with authenticity, false information, and regulatory complexity. With gaps in ageing demographics, SME views, causal analysis, and regulatory studies, current research is still dispersed. For academics and professionals alike, TikTok offers both possibilities and difficulties. Long-term effects will rely on creative, culturally sensitive, and morally sound approaches, but it has enormous potential.

REFERENCES

- 1) Ahmad, N. A., Esa, N. E. Y., Rahman, A. A., Haron, H., Nazmi, F. M., & Rasak, N. T. S. (2024). TikTok's impact on consumer behavior: A conceptual review. *Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SMEs*, 6(20), 221–227. <https://doi.org/10.35631/AIJBS.620019>
- 2) Ahmad, R., & Omar, N. (2022). Cultural adaptation in Malaysian digital advertising: A case of social media marketing. *Journal of Media Studies*, 35(2), 88–104.
- 3) Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R., & Stephen, A. T. (2020). The future of social media in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48(1), 79–95. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00695-1>
- 4) Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia. (2022). *Communications and Multimedia Content Code*. Kuala Lumpur: CMCF. Retrieved from <https://contentforum.my>
- 5) DataReportal. (2024). *Digital 2024: Malaysia*. Retrieved from <https://datareportal.com>
- 6) Hassan, S., & Yusof, A. (2021). Digital culture and identity in Malaysia: Cross-cultural challenges in online branding. *Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 37(3), 212–230.

- 7) Hassan, S., Rahim, N. A., & Noor, M. (2021). The influence of entertainment and e-WOM on
- 8) Gen Z purchase intention via TikTok in Malaysia. *Asian Journal of Business Research*, 11(2), 54–68. <https://doi.org/10.14707/ajbr.210095>
- 9) Ismail, M. A., & Tan, Y. S. (2022). Post-COVID digital advertising: Entertainment value and purchase intention in TikTok marketing. *Journal of Asian Marketing Studies*, 30(3), 112–128.
- 10) Jabatan Perlindungan Data Peribadi Malaysia. (2010). Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) 2010 (Act 709). Putrajaya: Government of Malaysia.
- 11) Johnson, L., & Woodcock, J. (2023). Algorithmic marketing and the unpredictability of virality on social media. *New Media & Society*, 25(4), 1223–1241.
- 12) Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509–523. <https://doi.org/10.1086/268109>
- 13) Kemp, S. (2024). Digital 2024: Malaysia – Datareportal global digital overview. Datareportal. <https://datareportal.com>
- 14) Lim, H. J., Tan, C. Y., & Rahman, F. (2023). Balancing authenticity and commerce in social media marketing. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 35(1), 134–151.
- 15) Liu, Q., Zhang, Y., & Li, F. (2022). Native advertising and user engagement on short-video platforms. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 58, 78–92.
- 16) Liu, X., & Zheng, X. (2024). The persuasive power of social media influencers in brand credibility and purchase intention. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11, 15. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02512-1>
- 17) Montag, C., Yang, H., & Elhai, J. D. (2021). On the psychology of TikTok use: A first glimpse from empirical findings. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 9, 641673. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.641673>
- 18) Montag, C., Yang, H., & Elhai, J. D. (2021). Social media and digital well-being: TikTok as a new platform for attention economy research. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(10), 5390.
- 19) Nguyen, T. L., & Lim, C. S. (2023). Building trust in TikTok Shop: The mediating role of consumer confidence in social commerce adoption. *Malaysian Journal of Consumer Studies*, 21(1), 45–60.
- 20) Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 19(3), 39–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673191>
- 21) Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). *Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change*. Springer.
- 22) Phua, J., Jin, S. V., & Kim, J. J. (2022). Influencer marketing and social commerce in the era of TikTok Live. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 28(6), 654–671.
- 23) Rashid, M. R., Khalid, N., & Adnan, M. (2022). The influence of credibility and authenticity on purchase intention in TikTok advertising. *Journal of Digital Marketing Research*, 8(3), 45–59.
- 24) Rashid, R., Aziz, N. A., & Omar, S. (2022). Influencer credibility and consumer loyalty: Evidence from TikTok marketing in Malaysia. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 28(6), 589–606. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2022.2042153>
- 25) Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53, 101742. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011>
- 26) Statista. (2024). TikTok user demographics in Malaysia 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com>
- 27) Sun, L., Shao, X., Li, X., Guo, Y., & Nie, K. (2023). How short video platforms reshape ecommerce: Evidence from TikTok and Douyin. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 62, 22–37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2023.01.004>
- 28) Syafika, Y. Z., & Antonio, G. R. (2024). Impacts of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) on the use of the TikTok e-commerce application among Indonesian students. *Journal of Online Education*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.56943/joe.v3i2.591>
- 29) TikTok for Business. (2025). About Spark Ads. Retrieved from <https://ads.tiktok.com/help/article/spark-ads>
- 30) TikTok. (2020, June 18). How TikTok recommends videos #ForYou. TikTok Newsroom. <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/how-tiktok-recommends-videos-for-you>
- 31) TikTok. (2022, December 20). Learn why a video is recommended for you. TikTok Newsroom. <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/learn-why-a-video-is-recommended-for-you>
- 32) Venkatesh, V., Morris, M. G., Davis, G. B., & Davis, F. D. (2003). User acceptance of information technology: Toward a unified view. *MIS Quarterly*, 27(3), 425–478. <https://doi.org/10.2307/30036540>

- 33) Wang, Z., & Li, S. (2023). Ad intrusiveness and consumer response in short-form video platforms. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 146, 107733.
- 34) Weismueller, J., Harrigan, P., Wang, S., & Soutar, G. N. (2020). Influencer endorsements: How advertising disclosure and source credibility affect consumer purchase intention on social media. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 28(4), 160–170.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2020.03.002>
- 35) Wongkitrungrueng, A., & Assarut, N. (2020). The role of live streaming in building consumer trust and engagement with social commerce sellers. *Journal of Business Research*, 11



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.