



The Study of Uses and Gratification Theory of TikTok as A Shopping Platform Seen from Buyers' View

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ABSTRACT: Shopping is one of the economic activities enjoyed by most people. Interest in new items is always a long-anticipated part of shopping. The growth of global industry and the disappearance of national borders have made a lot of information about shopping centers available, particularly through an online shopping application called TikTok Shop. As a new application, TikTok Shop has attracted the attention of its users, resulting in many requests being made through TikTok Shop. Using a qualitative approach, researchers describe people's habits by interviewing them about their use of TikTok Shop and what aspects satisfy them when shopping on TikTok Shop. By employing qualitative methodology and interviews, the researchers aim to understand why people use TikTok Shop nowadays. The results show that TikTok Shop is considered to meet users' wants and needs, providing satisfaction through discounts, live shows, and other minor features described in this article. The conclusion is that shoppers are likely to increasingly turn to TikTok Shop over the next few years, making it a favorite shopping tool.

KEYWORDS: TikTok shop, marketing, shopping platform, uses and gratification

1. Introduction

TikTok is not only an application that is used just for looking for entertainment or eye gratification, but it is also used as an interaction and communication app. The appearance of TikTok is never off on internet connection and availability, since it is also related to the massive use of social media. TikTok has created a new dimension in people's lives where people are known to "gather" and interact in a world called TikTok's [1]. The history of the TikTok creation has been the talk of the town, and one of the interesting things about TikTok is its massive growth as a communication and entertainment medium. Stephen Sawyerr wrote on his profile that the growth of TikTok was supported by many factors. With one billion downloads in the last five years and one million active users a day after its debut, it cannot be doubted that TikTok is remembered in people's minds for its uniqueness [2]. Much information about TikTok as an entertainment medium has been spread through the internet. They had at least 800 thousand active users ready to scroll up and down the screen watching videos. One TikTok user could open that application eight times a day with an average usage time of 52 minutes. Through that period, TikTok proved that many activities could be done [3].

As a TikTok user, watching videos was not the only thing that could be done; making videos and acting as a content creator was also an interesting thing that could be done on TikTok. TikTok gave a special feeling to its users, and its motto tended to show that the user could create anything on TikTok, including trends and interactions, gain attention through virality, and share content on other social media platforms. That kind of application marketing model allowed TikTok to be seen and used everywhere, including Facebook, WhatsApp status, Twitter media, and even Instagram, which has a feature known as “reels” that is systematically related to TikTok. TikTok showed its existence by positioning itself as complementary to other social media that people used, not only as an alternative medium. Moreover, TikTok recently showed a feature where users could go shopping online. That feature was known as TikTok Shop. TikTok Shop was a feature that could be used in an online transaction as a seller or buyer. Once it was released, TikTok Shop became a trendsetter among its users. TikTok won users’ hearts with its unique selling system, which was different from other online transaction media. TikTok's sales reached \$67.32 billion US dollars in 2024. That sign that the sales rose above 19.9% from 2023, reaching \$56.17 billion dollars. The online marketing platform called eMarketer predicted that along with the rise of TikTok’s popularity, in 2025 TikTok’s [4].

What's more, recently TikTok launched a feature where its users could shop. The feature is known as TikTok Shop. TikTok Shop is a feature that can be used as a medium for online transactions in the form of sales and purchases. Shortly after its launch, TikTok Shop managed to become a trendsetter among its users [4]. TikTok Shop won the hearts of users with its unique sales system, different from other online transaction media. Sales from TikTok Shop alone exceeded \$67.32 billion US dollars in 2024, even though it had only been running for two months. This was also a sales increase of 19.9% from 2023, which was \$56.17 billion dollars. Online marketing platform eMarketer predicts that along with the rise in the popularity of TikTok, sales in 2025 are predicted to touch \$79.64 billion dollars [5]. These features contained in TikTok continue to make the application grow massively. In 2021, TikTok had 1 billion users, and by the end of 2023, there were 1.67 billion TikTok users worldwide. The existence of this then made the TikTok application developer aware that there were possible benefits of the TikTok application that could be used as part of commercial activities. This article will focus on discussing how potential a buying and selling medium called TikTok Shop is seen from the perspective of buyers. Several indicators of this study brought researchers to this point. TikTok gives an idea of how successful they are in targeting and creating new buyers through marketing videos uploaded by market players. In previous research, it was mentioned that TikTok is a successful form of marketing due to the many market players who run their businesses on the platform. Although there are a lot of online marketing applications, as a newcomer, TikTok managed to provide great profits to its users [6]. With the development of increasingly advanced technology, the shift of society in shopping has also changed. It is undeniable that the presence of the shift has made the community more wasteful, but the shift has changed how the community shops. Various benefits of shopping online are unavoidable. Both parties benefit equally; for example, when shopping offline, buyers must be willing to drive their vehicles and walk inside the mall, which takes hours. Unlike shopping online, where buyers just sit in front of their devices and choose which items they want to buy. The choices also vary, ranging from color, shape, and availability. Buyers also do not need long to shop; just for a while and then the goods are already in hand [7].

Not only do buyers benefit, but sellers also enjoy similar advantages. They incur fewer taxes compared to selling in offline stores, as they require fewer sales teams, enabling them to maximize profits. E-commerce shopping proves to be a profitable endeavor for both parties, appreciated for its time efficiency, effectiveness, and transactional ease. Various online shopping applications are widely embraced by the public. Before delving into the prevalent platforms utilized for online shopping, it is imperative to trace the historical evolution of online commerce itself. The current form of online shopping has evolved significantly from its early origins. In 1979, Michael Aldrich pioneered an early form of e-commerce, facilitating transactions between businesses and their customers or between businesses themselves. This conceptual breakthrough established a system that streamlined interactions between buyers and sellers [8]. The advent of web browsers in the 1990s further cemented the legitimacy of online shopping, as web browsers became essential tools for conducting e-commerce activities. The landscape saw a significant development in 1995 with the emergence of key platforms. Jeff Bezos launched Amazon.com, marking a pivotal moment in online shopping. Amazon.com's debut spurred further expansion in the realm of online shopping, accompanied by the rise of eBay.com to prevent economic monopolies. The momentum of online shopping gained further traction with the inception of PayPal in 1998, marking a milestone success in the economic landscape of that year. The proliferation of online shopping platforms continued with the introduction of Alibaba.com from the Asian continent, followed by a noteworthy enhancement of PayPal's capabilities, enabling cross-border transactions with the same payment instrument [6].

In contributing to these advancements, the Indonesian state played a significant role with the establishment of Tokopedia on August 17, 2009, aimed at fostering digital economic equality. Founded by William Tanuwijaya and Leontinus Alpha Edison, Tokopedia propelled Indonesia towards digital economic parity, motivating Indonesians to engage in online selling through a platform that facilitated accessibility and inclusivity. Similarly, Singapore introduced a parallel online shopping platform in 2015, known as Shopee. As a multinational company deeply entrenched in technology, Shopee was launched to compete with other trading giants such as Lazada, Tokopedia, and AliExpress from Alibaba. To distinguish itself and underscore its commitment to online security, Shopee introduced the Shopee Guarantee, a system that withholds payments made by buyers until they acknowledge receipt of their orders. This strategic measure enhances consumer confidence in online shopping. In 2019, Shopee made significant strides in the market, amassing 200 million downloads and achieving a gross income of 92.7%, amounting to 246.3 million dollars. This marked a substantial increase compared to the previous year, reflecting the platform's robust growth trajectory. Shopee also garnered a sizable monthly active user base. In Indonesia, Shopee emerged as the predominant shopping platform in the final economic quarter of 2017, despite facing stiff competition from rivals such as Tokopedia, Lazada, and Instagram [7].

Continuing its expansion, Shopee ventured into new territories as a startup. In 2019, it entered Brazil, followed by Mexico (2021), Chile (2021), and Colombia (2021). This global outreach underscores Shopee's ambition to transcend geographical boundaries. Notably, Shopee became the first business entity to establish its domain in the Americas and beyond Asia. In addition to its Latin American foray, Shopee expanded its presence in Europe, launching its platform in Poland (2021), Spain (2021), and France (2021). The introduction of TikTok Shop, a feature integrated within the TikTok platform, presents users with an

opportunity to browse, search, and purchase products showcased directly on the shopping platform. This innovative concept amalgamates entertainment content with online marketing. Users often unwittingly succumb to the influence of product review videos, persuading them to purchase items endorsed by influencers [9]. TikTok adeptly leverages its vast user engagement to introduce novel shopping experiences. Users can seamlessly transition from viewing short-form videos showcasing enticing products to making purchases without leaving the app. This seamless integration eliminates transactional frictions, capitalizing on social trading trends. Renowned for its captivating and entertaining content, TikTok engages brands and influencers to promote products through immersive video demonstrations, enhancing the shopping experience for consumers [10].

The article endeavors to elucidate customers' shopping preferences on this platform, examining several factors throughout the discourse. Additionally, the author will compare TikTok with another prominent online shopping platform, Shopee. TikTok Shop is lauded for its ability to meet users' needs by offering a wide array of desired items. Through this platform, users find satisfaction in acquiring desired products, as evidenced by various factors across different media channels. This assertion is underpinned by the uses and gratification theory employed in this study. Building upon prior theoretical frameworks, the uses and gratification theory explores media consumption from the perspective of media selection, utilization, and discernible impacts [1].

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Qualitative methods.

The qualitative approach entails collecting data in a natural setting, aligning with natural reasoning processes. Its aim is to interpret occurring phenomena, offering valuable insights through research. This qualitative methodology employs open-ended interviews to delve into the attitudes, perspectives, emotions, and behaviors of distinct groups. Such an approach was adopted in this study, recognizing qualitative research's aptness for investigating societal phenomena. Qualitative research is scientifically validated to comprehend phenomena, as evidenced by the focus of this article on elucidating why many consumers favor shopping on TikTok over other online platforms [11]. Social phenomena, as explored through qualitative methodology, emerge from social interactions, emphasizing communication processes integral to the phenomenon under scrutiny. To glean comprehensive insights, this study relies on qualitative methods, distinct from quantitative methodologies which prioritize data-centric approaches [12].

In qualitative research, human observers serve as instruments for data collection, assimilating field observations that inform document reviews. This methodology is favored for its capacity to conduct inductive data analysis, revealing diverse realities inherent in interview data. Specifically, this type of research emphasizes establishing explicit, recognizable, and accountable relationships between researchers and respondents, enabling comprehensive contextual descriptions [13]. Employing an interview structure enhances the efficiency of data processing, ensuring researchers' perspectives are integrated into interview data analysis. Interviews serve as purposeful conversations aimed at reconstructing past events, gathering insights into organizational dynamics, emotions, motivations, and associated concerns.

Structured questions guide interview sessions, enabling researchers to elicit targeted responses aligned with research objectives.

2.2. Phenomenology case.

As a phenomenological study, this research endeavors to comprehend shoppers' direct feelings and offer insights into their experiences shopping on TikTok Shop. Phenomenological studies delve into the interpretation and profound understanding of how individuals perceive and experience events [14]. Utilizing the TikTok Shop feature for shopping fosters subjective viewpoints tailored to each individual's unique experience. Each shopper's encounter shapes their perspective, which forms the focal point of this study. The phenomenological approach adopted here seeks to capture diverse perspectives on the shopping experience on TikTok Shop [15].

This study employs a phenomenological approach that centers on guiding participants' attention back to the theoretical framework, assumptions, and prior knowledge, thereby facilitating an exploration of subjective experiences. This method, introduced by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl, aims to elicit multiple viewpoints representing subjectivity comprehensively. Phenomenological studies, emphasizing individual subjective experiences, eschew reliance on objective, numerically-driven data in favor of detailed descriptions of consumer satisfaction and advantages gleaned from usage. In addition to collecting data through structured interviews, researchers analyze textual descriptions of TikTok Shop's advantages from various perspectives. The study aims to offer a captivating exploration of shopping experiences on TikTok Shop, as articulated by the sources [16].

Previous research titled "Uses and Gratification Theory in TikTok as Social Media Marketing Platform: Seen from Market Player View" employed a qualitative approach focused on collecting interview data. This study serves as a follow-up, offering distinct perspectives gleaned from buyers' viewpoints. It aims to assist market players in devising effective marketing strategies to engage buyers and enhance sales through TikTok. The research methodology ensures consistency and coherence across various research sections, facilitating data collection through interviews and interpretation following established protocols. The convergence of media used by each participant reveals discernible patterns elucidating phenomena in the social sciences. These patterns inform interpretations of the case under discussion, fostering a comprehensive understanding from which meaningful conclusions can be drawn [14].

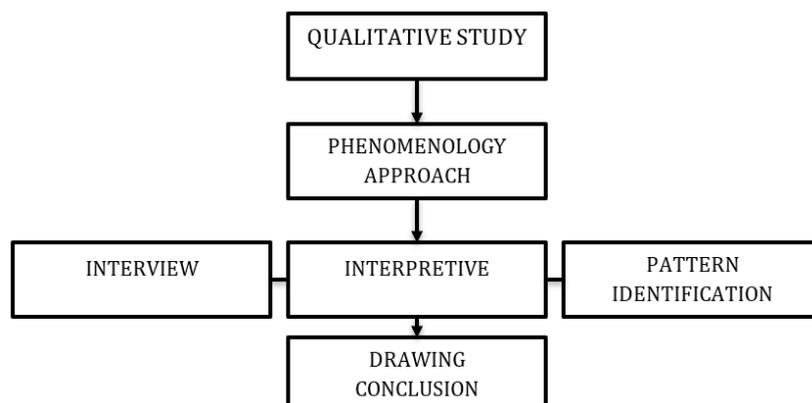


Figure 1. The study's framework.

2.3. *Uses and gratification theory.*

The theory of uses and gratification is a communication theory centered on the satisfaction of media users and the empowerment it confers, enabling users to access desired media. Given the ever-growing hunger for information and the indispensability of communication access in today's world, mobile phones and internet connections have become essential tools for individuals to easily access suitable media for information sourcing. The research study employing the theory of Uses and Gratification is predicated on utilizing TikTok Shop as a medium to fulfill perceived information needs comprehensively. Within the realm of mass communication, this theory underscores individuals' capacity to seek, utilize, and respond to media content, positioning media users as active agents in information seeking aligned with their needs [17].

Individuals' pursuit of information needs can vary based on their unique attitudes, with this theory characterizing audiences as consumers of mass media. As arbiters in the realm of e-commerce, consumers bear responsibility for selecting media that aligns with their needs, cognizant of the ensuing consequences or risks. While individual levels of activity may vary, the theory underscores the pivotal role of individuals' active participation, driven by needs and goals, in accessing media. Consequently, this study accentuates the satisfaction derived from TikTok Shop, positioning it as a medium capable of meeting users' visual and daily needs [18].

In supporting the selection factor, researchers also gathered information on when and under what conditions users opted for TikTok Shop, framing it as a psychological decision-making process. The questions posed to participants were structured around the five fundamental tenets of the theory of uses and gratification, aimed at eliciting comprehensive insights into their experiences and decision-making rationale. These five assumptions encompass active and goal-oriented audiences, the initiative of individuals in correlating satisfaction with media choices, media competition in meeting needs, the interests and motives driving media usage, and personal judgments regarding media [19].



Figure 2. The five assumptions of uses and gratification theory.

From Figure 2, five assumptions underpin the theory of Uses and Gratification. These assumptions delineate differences in psycho-social conditions and contextual scopes prevailing in various contexts. It is conceivable that individuals may harbor divergent opinions and perspectives on a given scenario within a particular context. The first assumption posits that individuals harbor specific goals for engaging with a medium. When individuals utilize media, they invariably do so with distinct objectives in mind. In the realm of online shopping media, individuals typically prioritize options offering economic value and are often swayed by assurances such as money-back guarantees in instances where ordered goods fail to match advertised claims. The second assumption centers on the proactive engagement of media users. Media consumers are inclined to actively seek out desired information or other relevant content. Hence, user proactivity assumes paramount importance. The study further elucidated the frequency of media usage to gauge users' level of engagement and control over their media consumption habits. The third assumption of this theory underscores the active role of media platforms in vying for user attention by offering compelling features. Consequently, users perceive these features as indispensable for future engagement with social media platforms. The fourth assumption probes into the underlying motivations driving media usage. Audiences are discerning in discerning why a particular medium is deemed suitable for accessing requisite information. The fifth and final assumption underscores the exclusive prerogative of audiences in adjudicating the efficacy of a medium. Thus, media platforms cannot unilaterally assert their performance efficacy without validation from their user base. In essence, these five fundamental assumptions underpin the Uses and Gratification theory, serving as the conceptual foundation of this study. In structuring research inquiries, questions are tailored in accordance with these basic tenets of the theory. Notably, the study titled "Uses and Gratification Theory in TikTok as Social Media Marketing Platform: Seen from Market Player View" similarly adopts this theory, aligning its inquiry with the five core assumptions of this theoretical framework [19].

3. Results and Discussion

TikTok Shop has swiftly emerged as a prominent player in the realm of e-commerce, garnering a substantial user base. Many individuals who are active TikTok users also engage with TikTok Shop due to its efficiency in time management and streamlined payment processes. The rationale behind opting for TikTok Shop is evident, as gleaned from interviews conducted with three active users of the platform. These participants were selected randomly, and subsequent data processing revealed a unanimous preference for TikTok Shop among them. Online shopping has been a staple for a considerable period, experiencing fluctuations in popularity over time. Previously, giants like Amazon and Alibaba dominated the online shopping landscape. However, the evolving landscape has seen the emergence of numerous other applications offering a wide array of products accessible with just a click. TikTok Shop has carved out its niche in this dynamic environment, with users drawn to its various offerings, including enticing discounts and sophisticated promotional strategies. Insights garnered from interviews with three participants indicate that substantial discounts are a key factor driving their loyalty to the platform, with prices often being more competitive than those offered by rival e-commerce platforms. Additionally, the innovative video sales system employed by TikTok Shop has garnered significant interest from users. Marketing endeavors on the TikTok platform, coupled with the interactive yellow basket feature, create a compelling user

experience, enticing individuals to engage with the platform. The analysis presented herein aligns with the fundamental tenets of the Uses and Gratification theory, elucidating the underlying motivations driving media usage. Media users consciously leverage their knowledge of a platform to derive gratification from their media consumption experiences (Figure 3). The three sources interviewed affirmed their familiarity with the TikTok Shop application, acquired through various channels, including direct exposure within the TikTok app and recommendations from peers who are also users of the platform [8].

The Users know that the media exist

Because they know, they use it.

Figure 3. Media Knowledge.

From the insights gathered through the interviews, it became evident that the interviewees obtained information about TikTok Shop from a variety of sources. These sources played a crucial role in equipping users with the knowledge necessary to become aware of the platform's existence and establish its presence in their minds. TikTok's efficacy in attracting users has been highlighted in a prior study titled "Uses and Gratification Theory in TikTok as Social Media Marketing Platform: Seen from Market Player View." The platform achieves this by leveraging short videos lasting between 15 to 30 seconds, which leave a lasting impression on users' memories. Capitalizing on this, influencers harness the potential of TikTok and direct users to the TikTok Shop feature through embedded links (Table 1). As media users who possess knowledge about and understanding of this platform, individuals leverage TikTok Shop as a vehicle for online shopping. Armed with this understanding and interest in the platform, users make informed decisions when utilizing media. There exist diverse profiles of active TikTok Shop users, each engaging with the platform in various ways. The interviews elucidated how the availability of numerous discounts and promotions incentivized users to become more active in utilizing the platform according to their preferences [21].

Table 1. The known of the media.

=	KFA	R	LT
The Known of The Media	At first, we all know that people are promoting stuff in TikTok but linked it to Shopee right? So, we know them as an affiliate. Not long after that, I realized that I found something different on TikTok which popped up with a yellow basket, and when we clicked the basket, the stuff was there.	I was told by my friend, honestly, I already knew about TikTok Shop, but I never thought of using it because there were already Shopee, Tokopedia, and else that were more interesting than TikTok Shop, at first. Then the flip came when most of my friends could not stop talking about how cheap TikTok Shop is, and because of that I tried to shop there, and what my friends said was right, all the stuff is there.	From the TikTok itself, I know it once it boomed not at it first appeared. I am not a FOMO one who just tries it like that, I know there is a TikTok Shop, and I was okay with that.

In Table 2, it becomes evident that users consciously utilize TikTok Shop as a medium that they perceive capable of delivering satisfaction in its usage. Spending prolonged durations

within the app, users exhibit distinct preferences, receiving either fewer or no messages compared to actively searching for messages. They demonstrate heightened activity levels when seeking messages to fulfill their desired needs and satisfy existing gratifications. The Uses and Gratification theory itself acknowledges the interactive nature of media consumption. This theory delves into how users interact with media content across various dimensions, encompassing media selection, interpretation, and response. TikTok Shop, functioning as a media platform, actively competes with other media outlets to captivate and retain active users. It innovates by furnishing a platform capable of showcasing short-form videos in an engaging manner. Leveraging this, TikTok subtly guides users' attention towards the yellow basket located at the bottom left corner, serving as a promotional conduit for products and seamlessly directing users to relevant items. Subsequently, users exhibit heightened engagement in seeking out products, having already recognized TikTok Shop as a shopping medium offering significant discounts and a myriad of attractive promotions. Most sellers attribute this to subsidies provided by TikTok, a strategy challenging for other online shopping platforms to replicate. The audiovisual content renders items on TikTok easily discoverable and perpetually captivating in the eyes of its users. Consequently, users, enticed by TikTok's offerings, gravitate towards TikTok Shop, enticed by the installed promos [22].

Table 2. Audiences are responsibly active.

=	KFA	R	LT
Audiences Are Responsibly Active	I actively contribute as a TikTok user for 3 hours a day, it could be longer than 5 or six hours if I deep into it and cool myself. I use it for watching videos and looking for stuff. I love to scroll through the feature called TikTok Shop. They were just so smart when they packed the exploration part of the goods. It is different from another platform that has a limit, in TikTok Shop they do not have a limit.	I often look for items and scroll for a long time. I used this TikTok shop feature for quite a long time in one week. I've been using it for a while, the feature, I made it average using about checking out goods 4 times a week and the duration of using this Tiktok shop is 4 to 5 hours that is my average time because every time I need something, I got to TikTok Shop.	Buying more needs than what I want is a characteristic of me as an individual. But for the use of this Tiktok shop, I am even more active than my sister who is a shopper. Now I use it often to look for items compared to the items I am looking for, I like it and like it because it is cheap and yes the application is connected to TikTok.

As users, they possess a fundamental understanding of the factors driving their utilization of TikTok Shop, which consequently influences the frequency of their usage of the platform. The surge in the application's usage enables users to make more purchases. The utilization of TikTok Shop furnishes insights into the underlying motivations prompting its users to engage with the platform. In an interview with one of the sources, a 21-year-old individual, KFA, articulated a common rationale for utilizing TikTok Shop. KFA emphasized TikTok's adeptness at attracting users effortlessly, facilitating its rapid expansion and heightened user engagement through enticing discounts, promotions, and visually captivating advertising models. Additionally, KFA likened TikTok to a vast emporium, akin to a Million Item Store, offering a diverse array of products from various vendors. TikTok Shop enables users to compare prices with other online stores, facilitating informed purchasing decisions by showcasing similar items alongside price differentials [4].

“TikTok Shop has allowed enjoying cheaper prices than the other platforms. My reasons are many discounts, promotions, and fascinating types of advertisement. By that, my interest to use TikTok Shop basically about how they promote their stuff.” – KFA (21)

The utilization of TikTok Shop is intricately linked with the active participation of users in providing feedback to the platform. User ratings play a pivotal role in ensuring that TikTok Shop delivers quality products to its customers. Insights gleaned from user feedback highlight certain areas for improvement, such as discrepancies between the advertised items and the products received by buyers. To address this issue, TikTok Shop must adopt a more stringent approach in vetting the items sold on its platform, potentially requiring sellers to submit samples for thorough evaluation. By subjecting these samples to regular testing, TikTok Shop can ensure that its sales standards remain consistent and aligned with the expectations of its user base.

4. Conclusions

TikTok Shop, as a novel platform, has effectively met the needs and gratified the desires of its users. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements and the increasing pace of human life, online shopping platforms have garnered widespread popularity and are frequently utilized by the general public. The trajectory of online shopping platform evolution, from the inception of Amazon.com to the rise of Alibaba and subsequent emergence of other platforms, culminates in the advent of TikTok Shop. The conspicuous appeal of TikTok Shop prompts inquiries into the factors driving its popularity and the strategies employed to captivate the public's interest. This study, employing the theoretical framework of Uses and Gratification, endeavors to unveil the underlying motivations of shoppers who opt for TikTok as their preferred online shopping destination. Central to this exploration are the enticing discounts and promotions offered on TikTok, alongside the innovative packaging of advertisements, which catalyze user engagement and foster a sense of active participation in the pursuit of desired goods. Through these mechanisms, TikTok Shop serves as a conduit for fulfilling user needs and achieving satisfaction, thus solidifying its position as a prominent player in the realm of e-commerce.

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Competing Interest

The researcher has declared there is no competing interest in this research.

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