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Research Article

TikTokers Turned Influencers: iGeneration's Perceptions toward their 'Preferred' TikTok Influencers to Follow

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study explored the potential factors the iGeneration considers before intending to follow TikTok influencers, assessed their behavioral response as an outcome of the intention, and examined the impact TikTok influencers had on their potential followers.

Design/methodology/approach – The researchers used a convergent mixed-parallel design to interpret data gathered from interviews and surveys with the quantitative data analyzed through the Jamovi software. This study used the philosophies of pragmatism and interpretivism.

Findings – TikTok users considered perceived added value to personal lifestyle and perceived hedonic experience the most compared to other antecedents tested. The researchers classified them according to the findings and arrived at three (3) distinct categories, transitioning from intention to behavior; (A) Nonchalant, (B) Serious, and (C) Adaptive.

Research Limitations/Implications – The scope and delimitations of this study only involved students currently enrolled in De La Salle University, between 17 to 24 years old. The researchers used purposive and convenience sampling to acquire respondents for the Google Forms survey and Zoom interviews.

Practical and Social Implications – This study has implications for business and e-commerce, especially in the current commercial climate where influencer marketing is gaining popularity.

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Furthermore, it can help enterprises look for suitable influencers who can positively impact their branding to the public.

Originality/Value – This study addressed the gap in the literature on TikTok users and their behavior toward the consumption of influencer content, with the increasing popularity of TikTok as a social platform and the growth of influencers as online opinion leaders.

Keywords: *Growth, SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production, iGeneration, lifestyle, SDG 10 Decent Work and Economic, SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals, TikTok influencers*

Introduction

The rise of the social media platform TikTok has cultivated an era for users of the platform to gain a following where their audience relies on them for information and updates, usually catered to a specific niche or industry that appeals to different groups of people (Balaban et al., 2020). These users who have amassed large followings are called influencers tied to personal branding that associates themselves with a specific niche or industry *(i.e., beauty, lifestyle, or fitness),* which determines the content they produce. Influencers are key opinion leaders in the online sphere, where their knowledge, skills, and character holds influence among their followers (Bognar et al., 2019). On the receiving end of an influencer's content are their followers, who are impressionable to the content they create and their influence which usually leads to a behavior where they mimic or adopt the influencer's lifestyle, practices, or advice (Ki & Kim, 2019). Furthermore, a study by Fraser et al. (2022) recognized that the youth vary in which mediums they use to consume media and, by extension, which type of media or content they choose to consume and how they respond to it. In line with this, this study determined what the iGeneration, more popularly known as *Gen-Z*, looks for when choosing which influencers to follow on TikTok and what factors convert them into followers of the influencer.

The researchers examined six variables affecting the intention of TikTok users: Perceived Frequency of Posts, Added Value to the Personal Lifestyle, Relevance, Job and Endorsement Opportunities, Relatability, and Hedonic Experience. The study utilized these variables to determine whether they are significant determinants in choosing which influencer a TikTok user will follow. Hence, the study's objectives are as follows:

1. Explore the variables that iGeneration TikTok users consider before following TikTok influencers.
2. Determine how TikTok influencers directly impact the viewers' lifestyles.
3. Assess the behavioral response of TikTok users as an outcome of their intention to follow TikTok influencers.

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative research. The researchers collected the data through online surveys and virtual interviews. It focused on social media influencers seen on TikTok; thus, it did not include prominent influencers on other social media platforms. The researchers only considered TikTok influencers categorized as mid-tier influencers, with total followers ranging between 50,000 to 500,000, regardless of the number of their engagements, endorsements, and other factors. Researchers did not include celebrity endorsers or former celebrities who are now influencers, even if the number of their followers is mid-tier. This study also omitted to categorize the interviewees into their respective specialties — whether the influencer's content is on lifestyle, beauty, gaming, and more. Only De La Salle University-Manila undergraduate students participated in both online surveys; otherwise, responses were deemed invalid. This research only covered the perspective of TikTok influencers and iGeneration respondents; thus, it omitted the viewpoint of brands and marketing agencies. In terms of academic relevance, this study can be an added reference for future studies regarding the rise of social media influencers, specifically the popularity of TikTok influencers. Since the topic is relatively

new, this paper can help future researchers understand how iGeneration audiences view and interact with relatable influencers.

Furthermore, the rise of social media, influencers, and their integration into business makes this a study worth researching. Hence, this study also considered the RVRCOB Code of Ethics and the Covenant for Shared Prosperity, integrating into it the values of (1) promoting socially valuable products that serve human development, (2) promoting the standard of living of future generations, and (3) providing quality products and services that are of value. With this, the study collected data on how TikTok influencers positively impact their followers. Similarly, organizations have been leaning towards using influencers to market themselves. While many studies go into depth about how influencers affect consumers, there need to be more resources on how consumers choose which influencers they want to be affected. This study potentially bridged that gap to help business enterprises choose the right influencer.

Exploring the intention of the iGeneration audience to follow the lifestyle of TikTok influencers can help address three sustainable development goals. First, SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production, aims to prioritize the need for both companies and citizens to lead toward a more sustainable production and lifestyle. Thus, the impact of TikTok influencers on the new generation can be studied to curate and promote a more sustainable lifestyle that the environment can cope with. Second, SDG 10 Decent Work and Economic Growth, was created to address unemployment and worker productivity. Thus, studying the careers of online or social media influencers can open discussions on how social media can provide job opportunities for the iGeneration. Lastly, SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals; the last SDG goal intends to collaborate with different organizations, companies, and individuals to move towards a common goal by 2030. Through this study, it can curate how TikTok influencers can effectively influence people to join the agenda of sustainable development. To measure whether TikTok users are directly persuaded and influenced by TikTok influencers, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

Main Research Question: What factors do viewers consider when they follow TikTok influencers based on their 'desired preference'?

1. Do TikTok users consider their perceived frequency of posts and added value to personal lifestyle of the TikTok influencers as significant factors in their behavior to follow?
2. Do TikTok users consider their perceived relevance and job and endorsement opportunities of the TikTok influencers as significant factors in their behavior to follow?
3. Do TikTok users consider their perceived relatability and hedonic experience of the TikTok influencers as significant factors in their behavior to follow?

Literature Review

The researchers found an empirical gap in the general lack of studies regarding TikTok users' behavior toward their content consumption in the application, particularly towards influencers. This may be because both TikTok and Social Media Influencers are relatively recent phenomena, thus lacking knowledge in those fields. Additionally, the available studies regarding these particular phenomena were targeted more toward influencers' effects on their audience and society rather than how users choose content and which influencer to consume. With the rise of TikTok as a social media platform and influencers as online opinion leaders, this study desired to fill that gap in knowledge towards this issue.

Social media influencers (SMIs) and users (SMUs)

The emergence of social media platforms further developed career opportunities online for its users to explore in modern times (Abert et al., 2019). The growing number of social media users (SMUs) using the digital platform for entrepreneurial activities as a way to develop their individual online careers consequently gave rise to new types of entrepreneurs in the form of social media influencers (SMIs) who develop and share content for public consumption (Guiñez-Cabrera & Aqueveque, 2021). SMIs are perceived to be accessible, believable, and intimate by their followers (Torres et al.,

2019). Moreover, SMIs play a crucial role online in spreading information, marketing, and expanding brand awareness for several SMUs (Singh et al., 2020). With social media, SMIs can build a solid online persona by sharing their interests and opinions that impact their audience's decision-making process (Hudders et al., 2021). The researchers were interested in knowing more about this role of the SMIs by examining the perceptions of their audience, the SMUs. *Table 1* shows the theories and themes applied in constructing the conceptual framework in the study.

Table 1 . Theories in Social Media Influencers (SMIs) and Users (SMUs) Research

Theory	Research themes of literature published on Social Media Influencers (SMIs) and Social Media Users (SMUs)
Dibble, Hartmann, and Rosaen's Parasocial Relationship (PSR)	The social media influencer builds its online personality that can establish a 'unique' relationship with users drawn to influential online personae for their consumption-related and domain-specific needs (Yuan & Lou, 2020).
Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Framework	The social media influencer utilizes different narrative strategies. It determines how these strategies add value to user perceptions and behavioral responses in overcoming influencer marketing issues (Zhou et al., 2021).
Thomson's Human Brand Theory	The social media influencer serves as a 'brand' with distinct characteristics capable of establishing strong relationships with followers. It can create value and fulfill their intrinsic needs, generating successful marketing effects (Malik et al., 2022).

TikTok, TikTok influencers, and TikTok users

TikTok is a popular social media application among the younger generations, particularly 'Generation Z' or the 'iGeneration.' It is a critical contemporary space that allows users to view, create, and share a broad spectrum of short looping videos, soundtracked with various available music (Stahl & Literat, 2022). TikTok's algorithm can construct a user-based feed as a *For You Page* (FYP), a unique feature that displays videos based on the user's interests (Agater, 2022). TikTok is now becoming more commercialized, with company networks realizing their marketing potential by embedding advertisements and monetizing content with the help of TikTok influencers and their following (Abidin, 2020). The researchers looked into this opportunity to explore a phenomenon of a rapidly growing pool of TikTok influencers using the platform for content creation dedicated to TikTok users.

TikTok personae

The use of social media has become an increasingly prevalent factor in forming individual identities and presenting online personas. Such instances occur when platforms like TikTok enable users to save and display their content, thus, creating a kind of archive of their online presence (Jaramillo-Dent et al., 2022). Likewise, these platforms facilitate connections between users with similar interests, forming online communities that can shape one's identity. Bolter (2000) further emphasized that online activities performed on social media platforms alter how people understand and construct their persona (as cited in Moore et al., 2017). It is essential to examine the role of social media in shaping one's sense of self, particularly in this digital era. In the context of this study, TikTok personae refer to the varying identities that describe how users interact with their preferred influencers and even the platform itself.

iGeneration

According to Dimock (2019), there is no fixed point where generations end or begin. Instead, the cutoff points of generations should

be considered more as a tool rather than an arbitrary boundary. In many studies, the age range of Generation Z varies (Dolot, 2018), with some categorizing them as being born as early as 1990 and other studies designating them as those born after 1997. During this study, the researchers categorized the iGeneration as those aged 17 to 24. The media consumption patterns of the iGeneration are attached to the utilization of the internet and its applications: *Netflix* instead of TV, *Spotify* instead of radio, and *Reddit* instead of magazines, which is fundamentally different from previous generations (Haenlein et al., 2020). Moreover, the younger generations actively use applications like *TikTok* and *Instagram* as a source of content (Haenlein et al., 2020). The iGeneration are distinctive members of society with several defining characteristics regarding their world views, including perceptions of the workforce, corporation, and finances (Rodriguez et al., 2019). The researchers aimed to understand a generation presenting distinct attributes in maximizing technology use in everyday life.

Research Philosophy

The study used the philosophy of pragmatism, as shown in *Table 2*, which considers the ideology to be true if the idea fulfills its intended purpose once applied. Additionally, this philosophy believes the intention of an ideology occurs in the practical consequences of accepting it while rejecting impractical ideas. In simple terms, pragmatism is grounded on the idea that practical thinking and action are the standards considered when applied (Žukauskasakauskas et al., 2018). However, it is essential to note that individuals' outlook varies widely, so what is practical to one may be impractical to another. The table also shows the philosophy of interpretivism, which integrates the social sciences into a study, especially those that analyze people and social life. The idea of this philosophy is that people assign subjective meanings to things in the social world, and interpretivism acknowledges these meanings to use them as building blocks for theorizing. According to Junjie & Yingxin (2022), this philosophy considers different interpretations of particular concepts from its knowledge seeker and their experiences.

Table 2. Research philosophy (derived from Žukauskas et al., 2018)

Paradigm	Ontology	Epistemology	Research Methods
Pragmatism	The reality is uncertain, but it is based on practical thinking and application.	Knowledge is obtained through experiences. The researchers re-establishes subjectively assigned meanings and their "objective" definitions.	*Qualitative and Quantitative Methods* a. Survey b. Interview
Interpretivism	The study is based on researchers' subjective and concurring interests.	Knowledge is hinged on the abstract. Human experiences cultivate their meanings.	*Qualitative Methods* a. Interview b. Phenomenology

Theoretical, Conceptual, and Operational Frameworks

The research derived its framework from three theories: Parasocial Relationships Theory, S-O-R Framework, and Human Brand Theory. All these theories were espoused from previous studies and modified to fit the context of this study. *Figure 1*, obtained from Yuan and Lou (2020), visualizes the role of expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness, similarity, and the different kinds of fairness (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational) in maintaining parasocial relationships used in the context of social media to create and foster product interest. The critical factors influencing the development of parasocial relationships between social media influencers and followers in the study are (1) the followers' perceived frequency of posts and (2) the followers' per-

ceived added value to their lifestyle. The researchers considered these factors in developing the framework of the study, grouped under Parasocial Relationships, to establish their effect on viewers' intention to follow (H1 and H2).

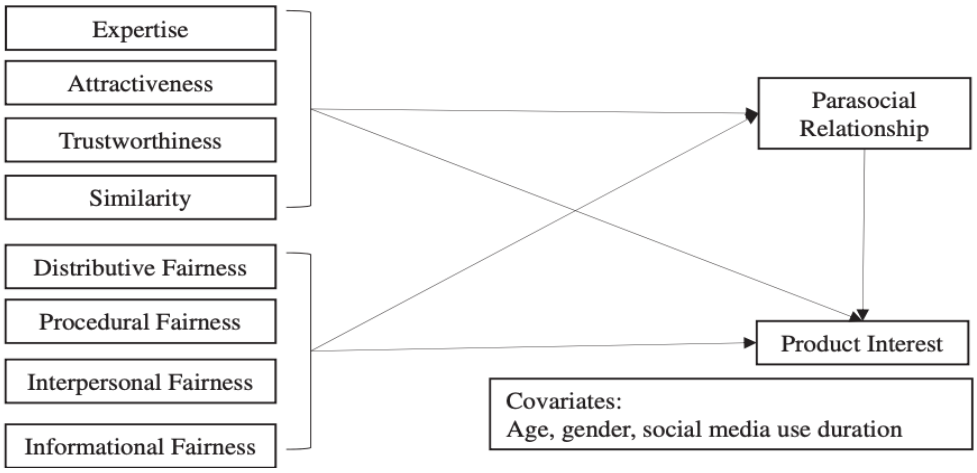

Figure 1. Parasocial Relationships Theory

Figure 2, obtained from Koay et al. (2021), demonstrates how perceptions of specific social media marketing strategies (stimulus) affect a social media influencer's perceived attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness (organism). Consequently, this significantly impacts the online impulse-buying tendencies of influencers' followers (response). This framework establishes the need for a social media influencer to have a significant perceived relevance on social media and a significantly high level of perceived access to job opportunities and endorsements to impact their followers' impulse-buying tendencies. The researchers considered these factors in developing the framework of the study, grouped under Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R), to establish their effect on viewers' intention to follow (H3 and H4).

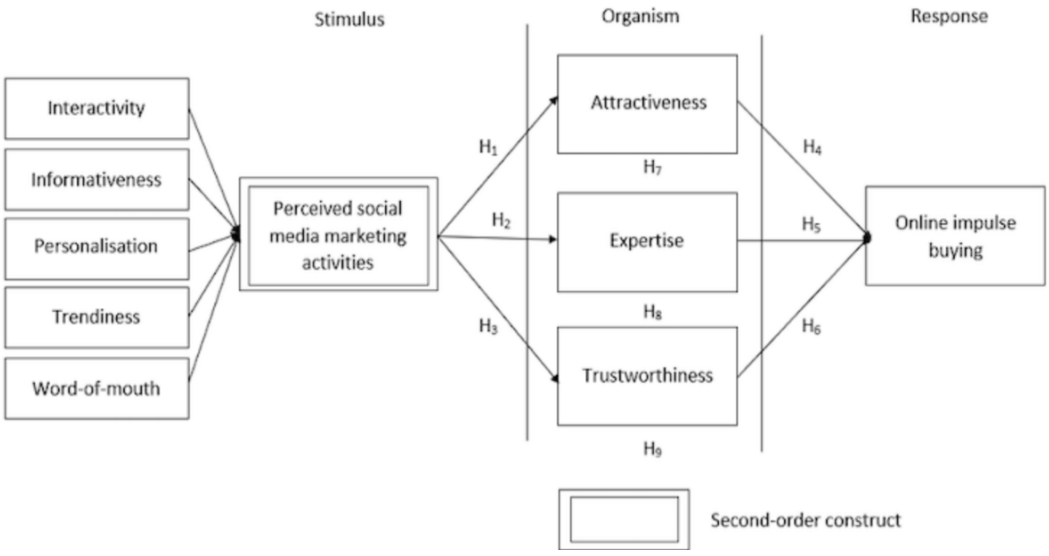

Figure 2. S-O-R Framework

Figure 3, obtained from Ki et al. (2020), presents the factors contributing to the developing attachment between social media influencers and their followers. It proposes that the stronger the social media influencer's emotional bond with their followers, the more likely they will accept the influencer's product or brand endorsements. In order to foster this emotional bond, social media influencers need to be (1) relatable and (2) provide their followers with a hedonic experience through their content. The researchers considered these factors in developing the framework of the study, grouped under Human Brand, to establish their effect on viewers' intention to follow (H5 and H6).

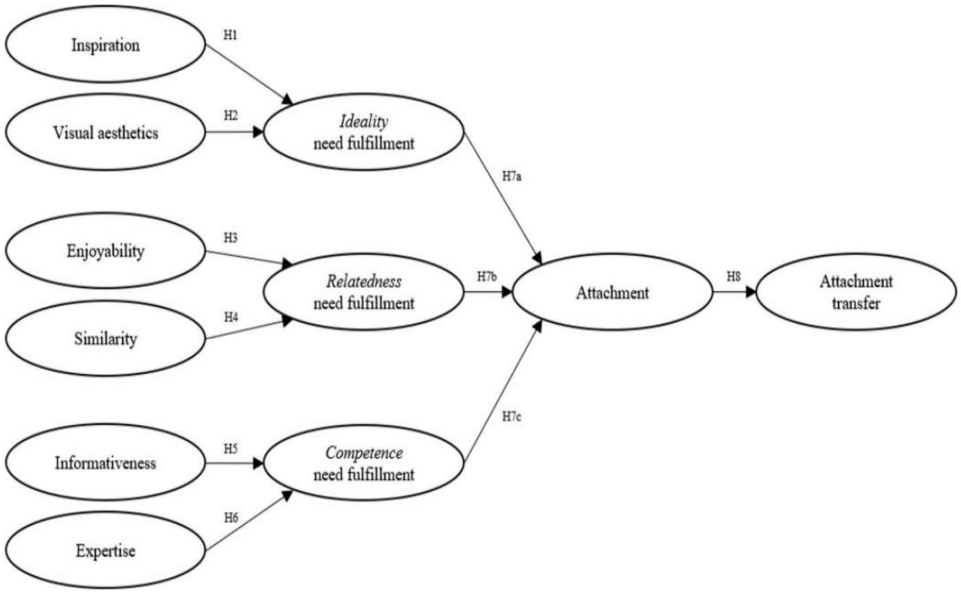

Figure 3. Human Brand Theory

In developing the conceptual framework, the researchers formulated six (6) independent variables (H1-H6) to determine the perceptions of TikTok users toward their preferred TikTok influencers to follow. Each of these was used as a hypothesis to test whether they significantly and positively influence one's intention 'to follow' TikTok influencers. After this, researchers assessed the behavioral response of TikTok users (H7) as an outcome of their intention 'to follow' as shown in *Figure 4*

Listed below are the hypotheses examined as derived from Barta et al. (2022):

H1. The perceived frequency of posts by TikTok influencers positively affects viewers' behavior to follow.

H2.The perceived added value to the personal lifestyle of the viewer has a positive effect on the intentions to follow TikTok influencers.

H3. The perceived relevance of a Titkok influencer's posts positively affects viewers' behavior to follow.

H4. The perceived job and endorsement opportunities of TikTok influencers' posts positively affect viewers' behavior to follow.

H5. The perceived relatability of TikTok influencers' posts positively affects viewers' behavior to follow.

H6. The perceived viewers' hedonic experience positively affects viewers' behavior to follow TikTok influencers.

H7. The intention 'to follow' of TikTok users positively affects viewers' behavior to follow.

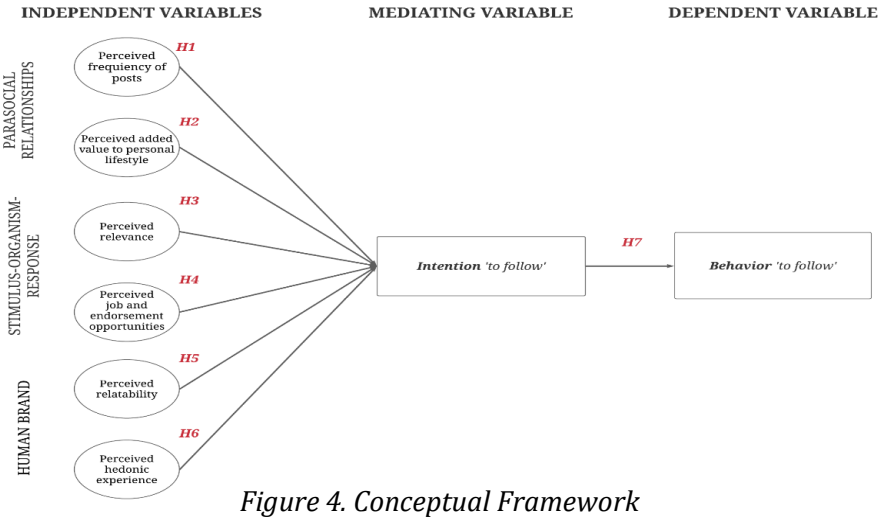

Figure 4. Conceptual Framework

To support the formulated hypotheses further, the researchers looked into other supporting studies that can explain their relation to the independent variables found in the conceptual framework, as shown in *Table 3*.

Table 3. Related Studies about the formulated hypotheses

Independent Variables	Research themes of literature published to support formulated hypotheses in the study
Perceived Frequency of Posts and Perceived Added Value to Personal Lifestyle	Ki et al. (2020) revealed that an influencer's competency and consistency in posting are critical for followers to view the influencer as a relevant social media influencer. It indicates that followers are satisfied with social media influencers whom they deem inspiring. The thought of the influencer as the follower's ideal self helps the followers to attach to their desired influencer. The more an influencer persuades its followers to experience new things, learn something different, and expand their perspective, the more they are bound to continue following.
Perceived Relevance and Perceived Job and endorsement opportunities	An & Haryanto (2021) argued that intrinsic and extrinsic drivers motivate influencers to pursue their careers. Aside from job and endorsement opportunities, another finding from the said study is that the influencer's motivation stems from the desire to share relevant information and build social connections with their audience. Both of these are indicative of an influencer's motive for how they interact with their followers. Furthermore, in studies conducted by Koay et al. (2021) and Weismueller et al. (2020), it is mentioned that credible influencers are likely to receive more engagement from their followers.
Perceived Relatability and Perceived hedonic experience	Barta et al. (2022) discussed how perceived originality is essential in driving success for TikTok influencers, citing the importance of creating content that satisfies the needs of their audiences through short video sequences that highlight authenticity. In the same study, Barta mentions that humor is also an effective alternative route for TikTok influencers. While other social media sites' informative content makes them highly regarded, the TikTok platform was valued for its entertainment capacity, citing that the relatable humor displayed by TikTok influencers contributes to a greater influencing capacity. Similarly, influencers have a greater influence on followers who have established a stronger emotional bond with them (Ki et al., 2020).

Moreover, this study's definition of *'to follow'* is derived from several theories: the Parasocial Relationships, S-O-R Framework, and Human Brand Theory. *Table 4* shows the theory-based definitions the researchers constructed.

Table 4. Theory-based definition of 'to follow'

Theory	Definition of 'to follow'
Parasocial Relationships	To develop intimacy with the TikTok influencer established through media (*derived from Su et al., 2021)*
S-O-R Framework	To have a reputable source of information *(derived from Barta et al., 2023; Belanche et al., 2021)*
Human Brand Theory	To keep track of the TikTok influencers' accounts *(derived from Kim, D. & Kim, H., 2022)*

Methods

Fundamental societal changes, particularly concerning new media consumption practices and transformative cultures, are best reflected in the youth (Dunas & Vartanov, 2020). With this in mind, the study used a purposive sampling method wherein chosen respondents were part of the iGeneration. The study took place in Manila, Philippines, and the respondents were undergraduate students of De La Salle University-Manila. The researchers looked into active users of the TikTok application within the 17 to 24-year-old age range, with a total target of 300 respondents for the initial and follow-up surveys. In addition, the researchers interviewed three (3) TikTok users separate from the survey respondents following the same criteria as them and two (2) mid-tier Filipino iGeneration TikTok influencers. The researchers utilized a convergent mixed-parallel method in interpreting the data gathered. Furthermore, this study derived its research design *(see Figure 5*) from Demir and Pismek's (2018) study, which evaluated the quantitative and qualitative data gathered.

Figure 5. Research design using convergent mixed-parallel method (derived from Demir & Pismek, 2018)

As shown in the figure above, the study employed quantitative and qualitative data to examine the relationship between iGeneration TikTok users' preference and behavior 'to follow' TikTok influencers. In interpreting the results, the researchers utilized the Jamovi software for quantitative analysis and table clusters to organize common and emerging themes for qualitative analysis. The researchers obtained quantitative data from the Google Forms (GForms) surveys distributed; one (1) initial survey that determined their 'intention to follow,' and one (1) follow-up identified their behavioral response as an outcome of their 'intention to follow.' The surveys had an interval of one (1) week between each other. The surveys

were composed of questions that aimed to determine common perceptions of respondents among TikTok influencers, and the measurements were through a 7-point Likert Scale. On the other hand, the researchers gathered qualitative data from transcripted interviews and collected responses from the survey's open-ended questions. The three (3) TikTok users and two (2) TikTok influencers had their interviews conducted through the Zoom application. The researchers arrived at a three (3) circle Venn diagram that synthesized their qualitative and quantitative findings, aided by the Jamovi software results and themes that emerged from the table clusters. Furthermore, the researchers critiqued the theories involved according to their discussion of findings.

Data Results and Analysis

Quantitative Results

The study gathered a total of 200 respondents upon their completion of both the initial and follow-up survey. The researchers were not able to reach the targeted 300 sample size due to the non-compliance of other participants in answering the follow-up survey, hence, making their initial responses invalid. Most respondents were female TikTok users aged 21 to 22 who spend roughly thirty (30) minutes to two (2) hours daily using the said social media platform. The descriptive analysis shows that the central tendency of the mean, median, and mode values are close to one another, ranging from 5.00 to 6.00. For skewness, all the values are within +1.0 to -1.0. All the variables are also negatively skewed, which entails that most of the respondents answered on the *"slightly agree" to "strongly agree"* side of the Likert scale. Consequently, all independent variables showed kurtosis values within the range of +3 to -3, which suggests that there are fewer outliers found in the data.

The researchers used Pearson's correlation to test the relationship between various variables and the behavior of following an influencer. Additionally, the analysis utilizes Cronbach's alpha to assess the reliability of each variable. With a value of .30 to .49 as a medium correlation and .50 to 1.0 as a strong correlation — *Table 5* indicates that two independent variables are partially correlated, while the remaining four independent variables are statistically strongly significant. Perceived Added Value, with r = 0.581, has the highest correlation or statistical significance to behavior to follow a TikTok influencer. For Cronbach's Alpha, the values of each variable are all above the 0.7 threshold. This concludes that the questions or statements used in each variable are reliable.

Table 5. Correlation Matrix and Reliability Analysis

	Pearson's r	p-value	Cronbach's Alpha
Perceived Frequency of Post	0.504	0.666	0.884
Perceived Added Value to Personal Lifestyle	0.581	0.017	0.871
Perceived Relevance	0.533	0.045	0.883
Perceived Job and Endorsement Opportunities	0.400	0.643	0.890
Perceived Relatability	0.423	0.494	0.889
Perceived Hedonic Experience	0.500	0.043	0.886
Follow Intention	0.613	0.001	0.872

Linear Regression Analysis

As shown in *Table 6*, three out of six independent variables obtained a statistically significant score based on the p-value of $p < 0.05$ and a 95% confidence interval. The aforementioned variables are Perceived Added Value ($p = 0.017$), Perceived Hedonic Experience ($p = 0.043$), and Perceived Relevance ($p = 0.045$). This implies that creating content that is deemed valuable or of a certain value to audiences' lifestyles can help persuade viewers to follow the TikTok influencer. Similarly, consistently creating content that brings enjoyment and satisfaction to audiences will entice viewers to check out similar content styles. Keeping up with the trends and discussing relevant issues also increases the intention of viewers to seek similar content. It can also be discerned

that the mediating variable, Follow Intention (p = 0.001), is directly significant or positively affects TikTok viewers' behavior to follow.

As for the standardized estimate, results indicate that the variable with the highest effect on Behavior to Follow is Perceived Added Value with a standard estimate of 0.2230, followed by Perceived Relevance (β = 0.1528), and Perceived Hedonic Experience (β = 0.1509). This shows that most respondents consider the three independent variables when contemplating whether or not they should follow a particular TikTok influencer. On the other hand, Perceived Relatability and Perceived Job and Endorsements are considered insignificant or the least motivators when following a TikTok influencer. Assumption checks showed that the data has a normal distribution and the variance of error is constant while the Variance Inflation Factor for each variable is <5, hence, satisfying the assumption of multicollinearity. Overall, the model obtained a significant p-value of <.001 and a total R-squared of 0.450 which signifies that the model accounts for 45% of the data.

Table 6. Regression Analysis

Variables	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	t	p	Stand. Estimate	Lower	Upper
Intercept	0.9196	0.4024	0.12582	1.7133	2.285	0.023			
Perceived Frequency of Post	0.0336	0.0776	-0.11941	0.1866	0.433	0.666	0.0351	-0.12467	0.1948
Perceived Added Value to Personal Lifestyle	**0.2005**	**0.0830**	**0.03680**	**0.3642**	**2.416**	**0.017**	**0.2230**	**0.04093**	**0.4050**
Perceived Relevance	**0.1482**	**0.0735**	**0.00326**	**0.2930**	**2.017**	**0.045**	**0.1528**	**0.00336**	**0.3023**
Perceived Job and Endorsement Opportunities	-0.0359	0.0774	-0.18850	0.1167	-0.464	0.643	-0.0327	-0.17193	0.1065
Perceived Relatability	-0.0450	0.0657	-0.17462	0.0845	-0.686	0.494	-0.0512	-0.19868	0.0962
Perceived Hedonic Experience	**0.1780**	**0.0873**	**0.00574**	**0.3503**	**2.038**	**0.043**	**0.1509**	**0.00487**	**0.2970**
Follow Intention	**0.3207**	**0.0977**	**0.12795**	**0.5135**	**3.281**	**0.001**	**0.2943**	**0.11739**	**0.4711**
Model Fit Measures									
R-squared	0.671								
Adjusted R-squared	0.450								
Model P-value	<.001								

Mediation Analysis

Table 7 presents the mediation analysis model based on a 95% confidence interval. Only three out of six independent variables are significant determinants of Follow Intention, which may translate to the actual behavior of following TikTok influencers. The variable with the highest mediated effect is the Perceived Frequency of Posts (β = 0.10988; p = <0.003), which likely suggests that TikTok users consider the number of recurring posts of an influencer as a significant factor of their intention to follow. The same is deduced with perceived Hedonic Experience (β = 0.10136; p = 0.002) and Perceived Added Value to Personal Lifestyle (β = 0.09520; p = 0.013). Consistent with the findings in the regression analysis, this can imply that TikTok users follow influencers with whom they find enjoyment and perceive to add merit to their lifestyle. Contrarily, other variables such as Perceived Relevance, Perceived Job and Endorsement Opportunities, and Perceived Relatability produce marginal statistical significance. Their confidence intervals are near zero, which connotes the possibility of having a weak or no indirect effect on a user's behavior to follow.

In terms of the direct effect, only Perceived Hedonic Experience resulted in a significant effect (β = 0.1536; p = <0.036) in connection with the user's behavior to follow TikTok influencers as it obtained a plausible value in the

parameter. The result from the interval implies that for every unit increase in Perceived Hedonic Experience, follow behavior increases by 0.18598, ranging from 0.01184 to 0.3601. However, in general, both Perceived Added Value to Personal Lifestyle (β = 0.20076; p = 0.032) and Perceived Hedonic Experience (β = 0.25501; p<.001) still obtained significant total effects in relation to Follow Behavior. This means that whether it is direct or indirect, both variables have observed underlying effects on why users would follow specific TikTok influencers.

Table 7. Mediation Analysis Model

Type	Effect	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	β	z	p
Indirect	**PFP ⇒FI ⇒FB**	**0.10792**	**0.0360**	**0.03745**	**0.1784**	**0.10988**	**3.0014**	**0.003**
	PAV ⇒FI ⇒FB	**0.09089**	**0.0366**	**0.01906**	**0.1627**	**0.09520**	**2.4802**	**0.013**
	PRLV ⇒ FI ⇒ FB	0.03875	0.0299	-0.01985	0.0974	0.03693	1.2960	0.195
	PJE ⇒ FI ⇒ FB	0.06785	0.0334	0.00239	0.1333	0.05954	2.0314	0.042
	PRLB ⇒ FI ⇒ FB	0.06134	0.0287	0.00509	0.1176	0.06438	2.1371	0.033
	PHE ⇒FI ⇒FB	**0.12269**	**0.0405**	**0.04336**	**0.2020**	**0.10136**	**3.0313**	**0.002**
Component	**PFP ⇒Fl**	**0.20377**	**0.0578**	**0.09057**	**0.3170**	**0.23193**	**3.5281**	**< .001**
	FI ⇒FB	**0.52963**	**0.0928**	**0.34784**	**0.7114**	**0.47377**	**5.7103**	**< .001**
	PAV ⇒FI	**0.17161**	**0.0623**	**0.04946**	**0.2938**	**0.20095**	**2.7535**	**0.006**
	PRLV ⇒ FI	0.07316	0.0550	-0.03460	0.1809	0.07795	1.3307	0.183
	PJE ⇒ FI	0.12811	0.0589	0.01259	0.2436	0.12567	2.1736	0.030
	PRLTB ⇒ FI	0.11582	0.0503	0.01732	0.2143	0.13590	2.3046	0.021
	PHE ⇒FI	**0.23165**	**0.0648**	**0.10472**	**0.3586**	**0.21395**	**3.5769**	**< .001**
Direct	PFP ⇒ FB	0.04126	0.0792	-0.11392	0.1964	0.04201	0.5212	0.602
	PAV⇒ FB	0.10078	0.0845	-0.06480	0.2664	0.10556	1.1929	0.233
	PRLV ⇒ FB	0.05043	0.0735	-0.09364	0.1945	0.04806	0.6861	0.493
	PJE ⇒ FB	-0.06070	0.0794	-0.21623	0.0948	-0.05326	-0.7649	0.444
	PRLTB ⇒ FB	-0.00500	0.0678	-0.13780	0.1278	-0.00525	-0.0738	0.941
	PHE ⇒FB	**0.18598**	**0.0889**	**0.01184**	**0.3601**	**0.15365**	**2.0932**	**0.036**
Total	PFP ⇒ FB	0.14919	0.0830	-0.01339	0.3118	0.15190	1.7985	0.072
	PAV ⇒FB	**0.19167**	**0.0895**	**0.01623**	**0.3671**	**0.20076**	**2.1413**	**0.032**
	PRLV ⇒ FB	0.08918	0.0790	-0.06558	0.2440	0.08499	1.1294	0.259
	PJE ⇒ FB	0.00715	0.0846	-0.15876	0.1731	0.00628	0.0845	0.933
	PRLTB ⇒ FB	0.05634	0.0722	-0.08512	0.1978	0.05914	0.7806	0.435
	PHE ⇒FB	**0.30867**	**0.0930**	**0.12637**	**0.4910**	**0.25501**	**3.3186**	**< .001**

Legend: PFP = Perceived Frequency of Posts; PAV = Perceived Added Value to Personal Lifestyle; PRLV = Perceived Relevance; PJE = Perceived Job and Endorsement Opportunities; PRLB = Perceived Relatability; PHE = Perceived Hedonic Experience; FI = Follow Intention; FB = Follow Behavior

Qualitative Results

TikTok Users

The researchers included a qualitative question per variable studied in the survey questionnaire and clustered each response according to common keywords and themes observed. In addition, the researchers interviewed three (3) TikTok users that did not participate in the survey. Table 8 summarizes the answers from the survey respondents and the separately conducted interviews for better visualization. TikTok users from the survey were referred to as TUS, while TikTok users A, B, and C were called TUA, TUB, and TUC. When asked to rank the variables, all TikTok users coincidentally agreed that hedonic experience was their highest factor, with different lowest

factors considered. Through this, the researchers had an initial idea of TikTok users' preferences.

TikTok Influencers

To further support the findings from the TikTok users, the researchers interviewed two (2) mid-tier influencers in TikTok who belong to the iGeneration. As of writing this study, Influencer A, referred to as IA, currently has 65.7K followers and 4.1M likes, while Influencer B, referred to as IB, currently has 100.2K followers and 5.3M likes. IA became a TikTok influencer in 2020 during the pandemic while trying to satisfy boredom by posting videos about coffee and student-related content. IB has been a TikTok influencer for almost two years. It started as a form of enjoyment, but later IB became more intentional when its popularity grew by producing comedic and entertaining content.

Table 8. Summary of Qualitative Results of TikTok Users

Variables	TikTok User Survey (TUS)	TikTok User A (TUA)	TikTok User B (TUB)	TikTok User C (TUC)
Personal Ranking	**Highest:** Hedonic Experience L**owest:** Job and Endorsement Opportunities	**Highest:** Hedonic Experience **Lowest**: Job and Endorsement Opportunities	**Highest:** Hedonic Experience **Lowest:** Frequency of Posts	**Highest:** Hedonic Experience **Lowest:** Frequency of Posts
Perceived Frequency of Posts	There is a **positive relationship** between the frequency of posts and user engagement.	There is a **positive relationship** between the frequency of posts and user excitement.	There is a **positive relationship** between the frequency of posts and user awareness.	There is a **positive relationship** between the frequency of posts and user comments.
Perceived Added Value to Personal Lifestyle	**Common themes**: purchase behavior, relatability to self, alignment of lifestyle and interest, entertainment, and inspiration	A source of similar 'vibes.'	An aspirational model and a source of relatable content.	An aspirational model for self-improvement.
Perceived Relevance	**Purpose:** For entertainment, source of information, personal development and inspiration, product recommendations, and a sense of community.	**Purpose:** For entertainment and killing time.	**Purpose**: For recommendations and making decisions.	**Purpose:** For entertainment and working on something.
Perceived Job and Endorsement Opportunities	The content is **commercialized** for the **majority** because of brands and sponsorships; **personalized** for the **minority** because of relatable niche content.	The content is **initially personalized** but **eventually commercialized** because of growth in following.	The content is **commercialized** because of brands and sponsorships.	The content is **commercialized** because of brands and sponsorships.
Perceived Relatability	**Common themes:** having similar interests, connectedness to personality and lifestyle, and source of inspiration and positivity	80% match of personality	50% match of personality	To be determined match of personality

Variables	TikTok User Survey (TUS)	TikTok User A (TUA)	TikTok User B (TUB)	TikTok User C (TUC)
Perceived Hedonic Experience	I **'heart'** TikTok content if it resonates with me, has charming content creators, is of good quality and original, consistent and frequent, and has an authentic influencer	I **'heart'** TikTok content if It is funny, has charming content creators, and It has good storytelling	I **'heart'** TikTok content if it is funny, beneficial, has recommendations, and is relatable	I **'heart'** TikTok content if it is entertaining, has honest recommendations, and positively impacts one's self

Perceived Frequency of Posts (H1) and Perceived Added Value to Personal Lifestyle (H2)

There was a positive relationship between the frequency of posts and user engagement, which involved (1) user excitement, (2) user awareness, and (3) user comments. TUS highlighted the role of the algorithm that merits consistency in postings, consequently driving user engagement. Furthermore, frequent postings can reinforce a sense of loyalty. IA believed that consistency in producing quality content matters, and natural engagement would follow, "*I do my best to post every day because when you're consistent, [people] will be familiar with you and your content as they see your face frequently.*" (Personal communication, February 8, 2023). Even though the algorithm rewards consistent posting, the perception of its users still holds value. TUA is more enticed to stay updated with influencers posting every day, however, only to a certain extent, "*I look forward to the updates on the influencer's daily life, but at the same time, there are instances wherein I get tired of seeing the same thing repeatedly.*" (Personal communication, February 15, 2023). TUA referred to this as the state of being fatigued by consuming 'too much' repetitive content from them. In addition, TUA explained that content is 'too much' if it comes out of the algorithm daily without it offering something of value. IB stated that each post should have intentionality, hence a target audience in mind. IB termed '*content vomit*' in which an influencer just randomly posts content for the sake of posting without intentionality in mind, which TUA pointed out. Aside from this, the influencer's added value to the users' lifestyle drives their engagement.

Five (5) common themes emerged in TUS regarding TikTok and how using the application affects their lifestyle; (1) Purchase behavior – influencers encourage them to try new things, (2) Relatability – content resonates with users personally, (3) Alignment of lifestyle and interests – influencers provide information matching the personal lifestyle and interests of the user (4) Entertainment – consumption of media to destress, laugh, and have fun and (5) Inspiration – influencers act as mentors or role models. With this, TikTok influencers must ensure their content adds value to their viewers' lifestyles. IB pointed out that to do so, an influencer must be self-aware, "*The bare minimum is that [we] must be aware of our personality to make the content more relatable and, at the same time, be sensitive as to how you relate with people*." (Personal communication, February 28, 2023). IB emphasized making content 'not highly' intelligent for public consumption, not to undermine the audience's intellectual capacity but to make it easier for them to enjoy and relate to the influencer. TUB brought up an interesting perspective about mimicking an influencer's lifestyle, "*I take into consideration their recommendations… in a way, I intend to mimic [their lifestyle], but with the given means I have, it is something that I cannot prioritize.*" (Personal communication, February 16, 2023). TUB was brutally frank; certain things are achievable and too far-fetched from an influencer's portrayed lifestyle compared to their audience's reality. Personal lifestyle and relevance are intertwined, given that TikTok users find influencers relevant if the content consumed is value-adding to their respective lives outside of the application.

Perceived Relevance (H3) and Perceived Job and Endorsement Opportunities (H4)

There were numerous ways to utilize TikTok through TUS, which coincided with its effect on TUS' respective lifestyles. TUS stated

that the application is for (1) entertainment purposes, (2) information or a source for advice and to know what is currently trending, (3) for personal development, (4) following recommendations (places and products to try), and (5) finding a community with like-minded people. Based on the findings, the application was mainly for users' entertainment. TUA and TUC affirmed this but have different needs to address; boredom and busyness, respectively. When asked what makes IA and IB's content relevant, the most straightforward answer was that it is entertaining and not hard to understand. IA stated that "*although [the vlog] is really simple, they learned a thing or two.*" referring to IA's student-related content (Personal communication, February 8, 2023). IA interestingly coined the term '*controlled controversies*' in which people get intrigued by the content, generating more questions, hence more engagement. IA expounded, "*It's a tick, people are going to question or even hate you, but it's to just that they can comment more… it would be controversial but controlled, not necessarily negative.*" (Personal communication, February 8, 2023). TikTok influencers have diverse and unique narrative strategies that make them appealing to their audience. As they gain relevance and popularity through engagements, brands consider them potential endorsers of their products and services. From the job and endorsement side of TikTok, TUS believed that there had been an increasing number of commercialized posts, which made them hesitant to follow specific influencers. Even so, TUS can still find personalized and relatable content, putting influencers still in control of what to show. TUA figured that content was initially personalized and eventually commercialized, "*There's a trend…Once [the influencers] start content creation, it's like personalized [at first], but as they gain popularity to the point that they are getting sponsors because of their increased following, the content is [becoming] more commercialized."* (Personal communication, February 15, 2023). IA and IB are critical in choosing brands they would partner with and make content. Important considerations behind their decisions include the alignment of values and principles. TUA trusts an influencer more than an actual celebrity for brand endorsements, "*In my opinion, influencers are more relatable compared to big stars like celebrities or Youtube stars, making them more effective brand endorsers to the public.*" (Personal communication, February 15, 2023). It can inadvertently imply that influencers can be on equal footing with their viewers' reality, meaning their audience can relate to them better than bigger celebrities. Endorsing brands on TikTok will not be effective if the chosen influencer is not relatable to its target market.

Perceived Relatability (H5) and Perceived Hedonic Experience (H6)

TUS pointed out three (3) primary considerations concerning their perceived personality match to their preferred influencers; (1) having similar interests, (2) connectedness to their personality and lifestyle, and (3) a source of inspiration and positivity. Aside from connectedness and relatability, engaging content was deemed important. TUC explained that a post is 'engaging' when "*I'm able to watch from start to finish and get to watch it again and again… it means I was very entertained.*" highlighting replayability and watching the entirety of the post (Personal communication, February 23, 2023). Moreover, knowing what is trendy to the audience can significantly boost engagement. IB shared that the content drawing the most engagement was about love life because of its popularity among female viewers, "*I think the ratio of my viewers on TikTok is like 70 female and [30 male]. I think what's popular with them are the crush content or anything about love life, like k-drama level romance.*" (Personal communication, February 28, 2023). With this, IB mentioned that even with minimal presentation and effort, the audience would share or heart the content because it resonated with them. In addition to being relatable and engaging, the entertainment value was an essential factor that TikTok users considered when using the application for content consumption. TUS resonates with influencers with good quality content, meaning that it is original, visually appealing, and effective in making them 'do something.'Interestingly, TUS also looked into the physical attractiveness and looks of the influencer. TUA brought this point up, "*okay, let's be honest, I also look into their face value,*

like if the content creator is beautiful or handsome before the video ends, I 'heart' it right away." (Personal Communication, February 15, 2023). Although beauty is subjective and prone to bias, 'eye candy' influencers have an appeal to TikTok user

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Synthesis

From the quantitative and qualitative discussions, the researchers identified three (3) main categories of TikTok Users' Personae; Category A - Nonchalant, Category B - Serious, and Category C - Adaptive *(see Figure 6)*. Each category has its distinct personality and traits in the data evaluation. In addition, the overlaps in the Venn Diagram indicate the variables studied, organized in a manner that would fit a particular category. The common variables were the added value to lifestyle and hedonic experience. For a summary of its significance, refer to *Table 9*.

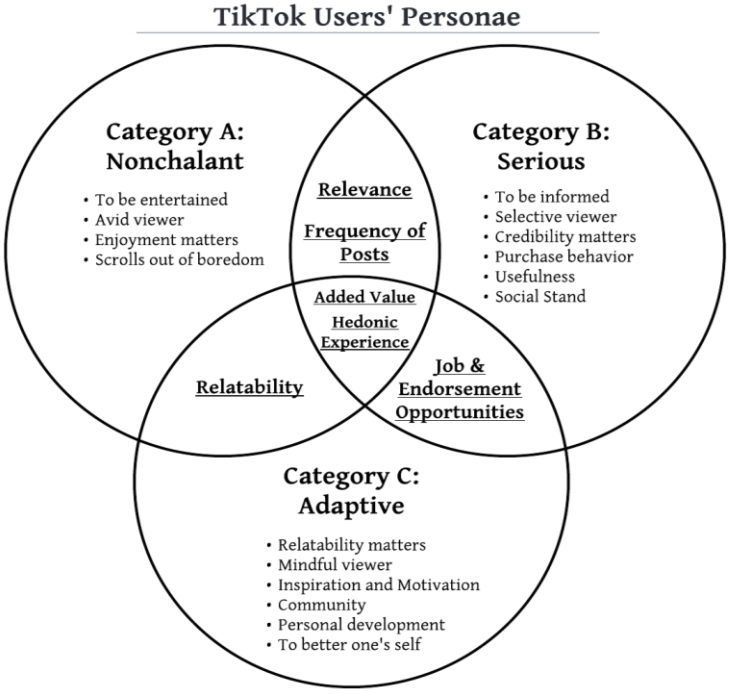

Figure 6. TikTok Users' Personae

The researchers thematically grouped keywords from emerging themes in the survey responses. For example, in Perceived Hedonic Experience, answers with words such as "informative," "knowledge," or "recommendation" were categorized under the theme of information. However, answers with keywords such as "fun" and "leisure" were categorized under the entertainment theme. It is important to note that some answers contained keywords that would fall into multiple thematic categories, thus having specific answers in more than one theme. Consequently, the researchers connected the interviews with the table clusters formed, identifying characteristics that encapsulated each categorized persona from emerging themes clustered. Category A personality traits include being enthusiastic, looking for fun and entertainment, can be avid viewers, and scrolling out of boredom. To put it simply, Category A users utilize TikTok to enjoy and have fun, and TUA exhibited all these traits. Category B personality traits include being serious, prioritizing information, can be selective viewers, looking deeply into recommendations (*is this useful to me?*), and being mindful consumers. In essence, Category B users utilize TikTok to acquire practical benefits, and TUB was a perfect example of this user. Category C personality traits include being motivated and

inspired, valuing relatability and a sense of community, being determined to better themselves, can be mindful viewers, and adapting to their needs. To sum it up, Category C users utilize TikTok to reflect and select essential things for the betterment of themselves and the community; TUC encapsulates these traits.

Follow Intention to Follow Behavior (H7)

There were three (3) important considerations for 'follow intention' — recommendable to other people, aspirational to you, and a reputable source of information. Transitioning to their follow behavior, Category A follows content frequently if the influencer is consistent with its branding. In addition, Category A considers them aspirational if there is an opportunity for them to step outside their comfort zone and try new experiences. Consequently, influencers can affect critical decisions in some areas of their life, especially regarding recommendations given. Category B, on the other hand, focused on frequent recommendations before consistently following an influencer. Category B TikTok influencers are aspirational if they can enlighten the mood over the simplest things (e.g., daily reminders). Category B values the opinion of people face-to-face rather than those online. Category C values trust and credibility before deciding to follow consistently, primarily if things worked out well for them because of the influencer recommendation. An influencer is aspirational if they can offer content related to growth and self-love and has a positive emotional impact on their viewers. In addition, this does not necessarily mean that it is the only basis for crucial decisions in their lives. They are still very particular and meticulous about the information they are getting. In addition to these categories, the researchers critiqued the theories based on their findings. Furthermore, it concretized emerging concepts related to the principles of humanistic management, viewed through the lens of TikTok users and influencers in contemporary society.

Parasocial Relationships (Frequency of Posts and Added Value to Personal Lifestyle)

TikTok users perceived that the more frequently TikTok influencers post, the higher engagement; however, there was more to it, as discussed in the qualitative findings. TikTok influencers are recognized to be aspirational models in the platform that notably add value to TikTok users' lifestyles across three (3) categories introduced (Nonchalant, Serious, Adaptive). Based on the study of Yuan & Lou (2020), influencers develop relationships with their audience due to their consumption-related and domain-specific needs. While this holds true, the findings of this study showed that these 'influencer-user relationships' were not necessarily one-sided; instead, it is a 'unique relationship' that mutually benefits both parties. TikTok allows its users to interact with the influencers in such a manner that there is significant weight behind their opinions, perceptions, and needs in utilizing the application. In turn, influencers consider these interactions when producing their content while not veering much away from their authentic self when establishing an online persona. Because of this two-way interaction, the relationship no longer falls under parasocial relationships and questions the application of the concept of PSR in social media influencers.

While the findings of this study have determined that there was a need to expound PSR's definition to fit contemporary times, it can still align the values of humanistic management within an ethical scope. The concept of PSR can leverage influencers' online persona to satisfy their audience's consumption needs positively. An example of this is through product endorsements, where the end goal result is to generate promotion for the product and profit from product sales. Using PSR within an ethical scope entails influencers being transparent about their endorsement practices and disclosing any financial or other incentives they receive for promoting products. This can help build trust and maintain authenticity in the 'influencer-user relationship.' Influencers should prioritize their audience's genuine needs and interests rather than solely focusing on profit generation. When integrating humanistic management practices into the concept of PSR, the influencer puts value on their relationship with their audience.

SOR Framework (Relevance and Job and Endorsement Opportunities)

TikTok is an appealing platform for influencer marketing through the utilization of its influencers to endorse brands and increase awareness about it. As mentioned in the earlier discussion of qualitative findings, TikTok influencers are critical when choosing brands they would partner with. SOR integrates how different narrative strategies of influencers affect user behavior and responses (Zhou et al., 2021). TikTok users have different intentions for using the platform; Category A for amusement, Category B for recommendations, and Category C for self-improvement. However, based on the findings, TikTok is primarily used for entertainment. The essence of viewers learning something from the TikTok influencer's content while being entertained is integral to TikTok influencers' narrative strategies. Intrinsic and extrinsic drivers motivate an influencer to pursue content creation (An & Haryanto, 2021). IA's internal motivation was to create something out of passion, translating into relevance for others. For IB, it was establishing a personal identity outside his social media influencer brother. For external, IA focused more on looking into other content creators as inspiration. On the other hand, IB anxiously contemplated if this was the right career path to pursue.

The concept of SOR was present in the findings of this study: different TikTok influencers use different strategies to stand out in the platform, all while catering to a different niche in consideration of their own intrinsic and extrinsic drivers. These targeted niches receive fine-tuned value when consuming an influencer's content. Humanistic management places a high value on human growth and the well-being of the producer and the consumer, in which case the TikTok influencers and users for this study. The behavioral response of users highly depends on the content consumed, giving significant weight to the thought processes and factors involved in the narrative strategies produced by the influencer. Conversely, influencers appreciate user engagement (heart, comments, interactions) in the platform, which drives them to make better content that can positively impact their audience.

Human Brand (Relatability and Hedonic Experience)

TikTok users, regardless of which category, put high regard on the entertainment value an influencer can bring to their content on the platform. Aside from this, the perceived level of match between TikTok users and their preferred TikTok influencers' personalities varied; this involves users' connection with the influencers through shared interests, values, or beliefs. The Human Brand Theory ties the idea that influencers can serve as a 'brand' capable of creating solid and meaningful value for their followers (Malik et al., 2022). IA and IB both answered that their real-life personas are not that different from their online personas. IA is a jokester, genuinely obsessed with coffee, and loves trying out new food, while IB is timid and introverted but can be outgoing at times. When TikTok influencers have qualities that users deem to align with their personality or lifestyle, it is easier to establish a relationship with their followers. These characteristics initially were how they presented themselves on social media, which consequently became their branding over time.

The Human Brand Theory capitalizes on the personal characteristics of the influencers and how they utilize such in finding their niche market. The interviews revealed how different IA was from IB regarding personality and approach to doing things in TikTok. Moreover, with diverse 'human brands' on the platform comes a wide range of options that Category A, B, and C users can follow. In the context of Humanistic management, these 'human brands,' in essence, are tasked to utilize the platform for positive means. For example, IB persistently mentioned in the interview that influencers are to promote less 'red flag' but more 'green flag' behaviors to their audience. Moreover, TikTok users can decide which content adds value to them, putting weight on their opinions and engagements toward TikTok influencers. It is important to note that what may be value-adding to one is not generally true for all.

Conclusion

The objectives of this research are centered on identifying which factors are considered when viewers follow TikTok influencers based

on their *'desired preference.'* Using the mixed-method study, the researchers utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate the significance of the mediating and independent variables *(see Table 9)*. Out of the six variables hypothesized by the researchers, the regression and mediation analyses indicate that TikTok users' most considered factors are *(1) perceived added value to personal lifestyle* and *(2) perceived hedonic experience (see Table 10)*. Supplemented by the qualitative results, TikTok users chose perceived hedonic experience as the most critical variable they consider before following their desired TikTok influencers. These results imply that whether a TikTok user is a nonchalant, serious, or adaptive viewer, they all delve into content that brings entertainment and added value to their lifestyles.

With the concurrent added value that TikTok influencers impart to their followers, these influencers partake in the growth and development of their followers. TikTok influencers often use their platforms to share their experiences, opinions, and expertise on various topics. In doing so, they inspire and educate users to grow and develop in different aspects of their lives. TikTok influencers can contribute to their viewers' Integral Human Development (IHD) through the value they provide and the role model they represent. Their impact can extend through the information, resources, and support they provide, thus, potentially shaping the personal growth, well-being, and development of their viewers.

Parasocial relationships are molded in a manner that interactions are mutually beneficial for everyone involved. The frequency of posts or consistent uploading of quality content attracts engagement, thus, creating user enjoyment and achievable goals for the influencers. Recognized as an inspirational model, advice and recommendations aired by TikTok influencers are deemed added values from the perspective of their viewers. SOR Framework interprets how influencers' varying strategies can affect user behavior and responses. Staying relevant and receiving endorsement opportunities are substantial for TikTok influencers; however, different approaches to these goals can eminently change their viewers' experience. Sticking to their branding and utilizing trends can help TikTok influencers maintain engagement while fulfilling their objectives. Human Brand Theory perceives TikTok influencers as *'brands'* capable of creating meaningful connections with their followers. Presenting an authentic persona that viewers can resonate with creates the 'brand' that viewers perceive as inspiration. TikTok influencers can leverage shared interests, values, and beliefs to create entertaining content for TikTok users. Hedonic experience or association of positive experience to specific contents is the most significant variable that all types of TikTok users consider before following.

The intention to follow of TikTok users influences their behavior toward following a TikTok influencer. After the intention of users to follow the profile of a TikTok influencer, viewers then anticipate and 'follow' the subsequent uploads or content of the influencer. However, the progression from intention to behavior depends on the variables that different types of viewers contemplate *(see Table 10)*. For nonchalant users, the succeeding content should be — recommendable to other people, aspirational to them, and a reputable source of information. Serious users focus on inspirational and informative content, while Adaptive users are selective before following someone; thus, they follow influencers who can positively impact their lifestyles.

Table 9. Summary of findings per measure

Hypotheses	Measures	Results
H1. The perceived frequency of posts by TikTok influencers positively affects viewers' behavior to follow.	PFP ⇒FB	Significant predictor; indirect positive correlation on viewers' behavior to follow

Hypotheses	Measures	Results
H2.The perceived added value to the personal lifestyle of the viewer has a positive effect on the intentions to follow TikTok influencers.	PAV ⇒FB	Significant predictor; indirect positive correlation on viewers' behavior to follow
H3. The perceived relevance of a TikTok Influencer's posts positively affects viewers' behavior to follow.	PRLV ⇒FB	Insignificant predictor *(marginal p-value)*; weak or no correlation on viewers' behavior to follow
H4. The perceived job and endorsement opportunities of TikTok influencers' posts positively affect viewers' behavior to follow.	PJE ⇒FB	Insignificant predictor; weak or no correlation on viewers' behavior to follow
H5. The perceived relatability of TikTok influencers' posts positively affects viewers' behavior to follow.	PRLB ⇒FB	Insignificant predictor; weak or no correlation on viewers' behavior to follow
H6. The perceived viewers' hedonic experience positively affects viewers' behavior to follow TikTok influencers.	PHE ⇒FB	Significant predictor; indirect and direct positive correlation on viewers' behavior to follow
H7. The intention 'to follow' of TikTok Users positively affects viewers' behavior to follow.	FI ⇒FB	Significant predictor; direct positive correlation on viewers' behavior to follow

Legend: PFP = Perceived Frequency of Posts; PAV = Perceived Added Value to Personal Lifestyle; PRLV = Perceived Relevance; PJE = Perceived Job and Endorsement Opportunities; PRLB = Perceived Relatability; PHE = Perceived Hedonic Experience; FI = Follow Intention; FB = Follow Behavior

Table 10. Summary of Research Questions, Objectives, and Results

Research Objectives & Questions	Summary of Results
Obj1 & Main RQ: What factors do viewers consider when they follow TikTok influencers based on their 'desired preference'?	The top factors that TikTok users consider before following a TikTok influencer are — (1) if the influencer can add value to their lifestyle and (2) if the content generated brings pleasure and enjoyment, or a hedonic experience, whenever viewers watch.
Obj2: Determine how TikTok influencers directly impact the viewers' lifestyle.	TikTok influencers impact the decisions and lifestyle of their viewers through notable (1) *purchase behavior*, (2) *relatability*, (3) *alignment of lifestyle and interests* with viewers, (4) *entertainment*, and (5) as an *inspiration*.
Obj3: Assess the behavioral response of TikTok users as an outcome of their intention to follow TikTok influencers.	The intention 'to follow' of TikTok users positively affects viewers' behavior to follow — considered factors are dependent on the type of TikTok user.

Recommendations

Given that the rise of TikTok influencers is a relatively new concept, the researchers have the following recommendations on how they can be further integrated into the business field, particularly in this digital era. The researchers also provided added insights for influencers and future studies that aim to understand user intention and behavior better.

For companies. It is crucial to find the right influencers compatible with their brand. Companies can do this by first identifying their followers and the type of content they produce to ensure that the influencers they will hire align

with the users they aim to target. Giving the influencers creative freedom enables them to showcase their online personality while ensuring that their content is still aligned with the marketing intent of the brand.

For social media influencers. Inasmuch as TikTok is a platform that values authenticity, influencers have a responsibility not just to be intentional but also mindful of their online persona, as TikTok has a younger user base. Finding their niche and focusing on what kind of content will resonate with them is still crucial. Doing so allows influencers to build a market and establish themselves as experts in their own areas of interest — not just be seen as individuals who post different commercialized content.

For future studies. Despite achieving the objectives and research questions of the study, there are still areas in which other researchers can explore to gain further insights into how

TikTok influencers directly affect their viewers. Future studies may widen the scope of the study or critique other applicable theories to lead to more comprehensive findings. This opens an opportunity to identify new research questions and variables which were not previously considered. Additionally, researchers suggest trying a different time duration when sending out the initial and follow-up surveys to improve overall response rates and data quality. Future studies may also tap into other subject themes, such as the concept of Integral Human Development and its integration into the relationship between influencers and their viewers. This means using social media platforms not just to educate or empower but as a means to grow together with their viewers in a way that both parties are empowered to reach their full potential. Another subject theme worth exploring is how the TikTok application can further finetune user experience and create an inclusive online community for all influencers. In this way, they become driven to generate content with consideration to their viewers' values and the broader economic impact of their actions. Likewise, the platform increases user retention and contributes to long-term sustainable changes by promoting responsible content creation.

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