

TikTok Exposure and Buying Behavior Among Gen Z Students in CELA Department

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Abstract: One of the growing concerns in today's buying behavior is how Generation Z makes their purchasing decisions. This study examined the relationship between TikTok exposure and buying behavior among Generation Z students in the CELA Department at Davao Central College. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, data were collected from 210 purposively selected students through a researcher-made questionnaire. The study measured TikTok exposure in terms of frequency of use, exposure to influencers, and exposure to viral content, while buying behavior was assessed in terms of impulsive buying, trend-based buying, and purchase intention. Results revealed that both TikTok exposure and buying behavior were at high levels, with purchase intention obtaining the highest mean among the buying behavior indicators. A significant strong positive correlation was found between TikTok exposure and buying behavior, indicating that higher exposure is associated with increased impulsive and trend-driven purchasing. These findings suggest that TikTok significantly influences the buying behavior of Gen Z students and highlight the importance of promoting critical thinking and responsible social media use.

Keywords: TikTok Exposure, Buying Behavior, Gen Z, Davao Central College.

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the growing concerns in today's buying behavior is how Generation Z makes their purchasing decisions. Many young people today show a pattern of frequent and sometimes unnecessary spending, where money is used more on wants than on needs. Their buying behavior is often influenced by what they regularly see and encounter, making them more likely to change their choices quickly. Rather than judging items by quality or usefulness, many focus on what is new, popular, or approved by peers. This group is also highly responsive to peer approval, meaning that what friends or online communities find attractive often shapes purchase choices. Platforms like TikTok are significant in this process, as its short and engaging content regularly exposes students to new products, fashion, and lifestyle options. This continuous flow of content adds to the shifting patterns of spending among Generation Z, especially as their decisions are often made in response to what they see online.

Globally, a study showed that TikTok strongly shapes young people's plans to buy fashion and beauty products

(Muñoz, 2022). Similarly, in Asia, another study found that college students who often see influencers and viral videos tend to make unplanned purchases to keep up with online trends (Valeza & Soriano, 2024). These studies point to a big concern for young people everywhere because TikTok does not only encourage creativity and connection, but it also encourages spending habits that may not be practical for students.

In the Philippines, the same problem is happening. In the research conducted by Barcelona et al. (2022) they found out that Filipino youth are often influenced by products that become viral or are promoted by popular TikTok influencers, which leads to impulsive buying and a strong liking for trendy items. Fashion and how they present themselves are very important reasons for this, as many young Filipinos see TikTok as a guide for what is stylish and socially accepted. And these habits are really a serious issue where students' buying behavior is more affected by exposure than their real needs.

Locally, the CELA department felt the need to follow what is popular, often considering trends they see online. This situation became urgent to study because the continuous flow of TikTok trends encouraged impulsive spending, trend-driven purchases, and purchase intentions that affect how students manage their finances. While previous studies had explored social media's effect on youth spending, there was still limited research focusing specifically on how TikTok exposure influences the buying behavior of Gen Z students in CELA department, a group whose appearance is closely tied to both identity and program expectations. If this gap had remained unaddressed, the next five years may bring stronger reliance on trend-based fashion, higher financial strain due to frequent purchases, and a deeper influence of TikTok on students' self-image and spending habits. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the influence of TikTok exposure on the buying behavior of Gen Z students in the CELA department at Davao Central College, addressing a growing concern that might have worsened in the coming years.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Tiktok Exposure

TikTok has become a leading platform for brief video content, reshaping how consumers discover, evaluate, and engage with brands. Its algorithmically curated "For You" feed, influencer-driven storytelling, and viral mechanics foster high emotional engagement and personalized user experiences. According to Ahmad et al. (2024), TikTok's interactive features and short-form videos greatly affect how consumers make choices by enhancing relatability and emotional resonance. Similarly, Valeza and Soriano (2024) found that entertainment value and interactivity are among the strongest predictors of consumer engagement and purchase intention, particularly among Gen Z users.

Moreover, frequent exposure to TikTok has notable cognitive and behavioral effects. Venciūte et al. (2023) emphasized that Gen Z's habitual use of the platform correlates with increased responsiveness to branded content and trend-based messaging. This finding aligns with the study of Wahyudi et al. (2025), which revealed that short video marketing, relatability of influencers, and signs of trust strongly affect Generation Z's purchase intention. These results highlight how engaging and persuasive content on platforms like TikTok can shape consumer decision-making. Consequently, TikTok's engaging interface and algorithmic precision not only sustain user attention but also shape their perceptions and buying preferences.

In addition, Gesmundo et al. (2022) highlighted that emotional connection and brand recall are amplified through immersive and visually appealing content formats. These findings underscore TikTok's potential as a powerful medium for both academic learning and commercial promotion. Complementing this, Astaño (2025) showed that TikTok improves communication and emotional engagement, especially in educational contexts, which indirectly contributes to better content retention and overall platform satisfaction.

Finally, Tartaraj et al. (2024) examined TikTok exposure through specific indicators such as frequency of use, engagement with influencers, and interaction with viral content. Their study revealed that these exposure patterns significantly influence consumer behavior by shaping attitudes, preferences, and purchase intentions. Hence, TikTok exposure serves as a multidimensional factor that intertwines entertainment, social interaction, and decisions consumers make in today's online world.

B. Frequency of Use

How often people use TikTok greatly influences their buying habits, feelings, and reliance on the platform. According to Venciūte et al. (2023) emphasized that Generation Z's habitual use of TikTok correlates with increased responsiveness to branded content and influencer messaging. In their study, daily engagement with the platform heightened emotional resonance and reduced skepticism toward product endorsements.

Moreover, Haliti-Sylaj and Sadiku (2024), repeated exposure to short-form videos influences how users cognitively process messages, making them more responsive to emotionally charged content. Consequently, this frequent interaction reinforces brand familiarity and increases susceptibility to trend-based buying. Similarly, Abualrob (2025) highlighted that frequent use enhances user satisfaction and platform loyalty, indirectly increasing purchase intention through repeated exposure and entertainment value.

C. Exposure to Influencers

This is a big part of how consumers trust and to guide product trials on TikTok. According to Gesmundo et al. (2022) found that emotional connection and brand recall are amplified when influencers evoke personal relevance, making endorsements feel authentic and memorable. Similarly, Dinh et al. (2023) highlighted that social conformity drives consumer responsiveness to influencer trends, particularly when products are framed as part of a shared digital movement.

In addition, Zhou (2024), influencer-driven commerce in Southeast Asia thrives because of the platform's blend of product discovery and entertainment, making influencers key agents of persuasion. Furthermore, Alcántara-Pilar et al.(2024) emphasized that credibility of influencers and consistent engagement foster consumer trust and brand loyalty.

Moreover, Haskins et al.(2025) found that Generation Z are more responsive to influencer content when it aligns with their identity and social norms, reinforcing the role of peer-like creators in shaping attitudes. Likewise, Bulazo et al. (2025) revealed that entertainment and interactivity in influencer content increase perceived enjoyment and purchase intention, especially when influencers use storytelling and humor.

Additionally, Lazuardi and Usman (2025) emphasized that short-form video consumption among Filipino youth is closely tied to impulsive buying and influencer trust,

suggesting that cultural context plays a role in influencer impact.

Thus, influencer content on TikTok operates at the intersection of trust, entertainment, and emotional resonance, positioning creators as powerful drivers of consumer behavior.

D. Exposure to Viral Content

Viral TikTok content rapidly increases product visibility and emotional engagement. According to Bizel et al. (2022) found that trend-based buying often reflects identity expression and social relevance, especially when users adopt products featured in viral content. Melgarejo-Espinoza et al. (2025), they found TikTok's algorithm amplifies emotionally resonant content, making viral content a key mechanism for brand exposure. In fact, Britopian (2025) reported that 71% of users discover products through viral content, underscoring the platform's role in organic product discovery.

Furthermore, Lawal (2025) emphasized that viral challenges foster a sense of belonging and collective creativity, which encourages users to participate and engage with branded trends. Additionally, Melgarejo-Espinoza et al. (2025), they found TikTok's algorithm amplifies emotionally resonant content, making viral content a key mechanism for brand exposure.

Moreover, Mishnick and Wise (2024) demonstrated that effective engagement with viral campaigns boosts purchase intention, particularly when content includes emotional storytelling and brand resonance. Similarly, Gega et al. (2024) added that parasocial relationships formed through viral influencer content increase consumer trust and curiosity, reinforcing the emotional pull of viral media.

Finally, Isman and Yahya (2024) applied the Diffusion of Innovation Theory to TikTok's viral mechanics, showing that observability and emotional contagion drive user adoption. The combination of algorithmic amplification, emotional arousal, and social validation makes viral content a powerful catalyst for consumer action on TikTok.

E. Buying Behavior

Buying behavior involves a combination of psychological, emotional, and social factors that affect consumers' decision to buy. On TikTok, this behavior is influenced by influencer credibility, viral content, and interactive features that promote emotional engagement. According to Bulazo et al. (2025), reported that entertainment and interaction embedded in TikTok videos significantly enhance perceived enjoyment, which consequently increases intention to buy. Similarly, Gesmundo et al. (2022) emphasized that emotional connection and brand recall are vital predictors of consumer responsiveness, especially when the content evokes personal relevance.

Furthermore, Zhou (2024) observed that TikTok commerce thrives on its seamless blend of entertainment and product discovery, positioning the platform as a powerful driver of buying behavior. In support of this, Alcántara-Pilar et al.(2024) added that influencer reliability and consistent

engagement foster brand loyalty, particularly among younger audiences. Moreover, Dinh et al. (2023) demonstrated that social conformity drives trend-based purchasing, especially when users perceive products as part of a shared digital movement. Likewise, Gega et al. (2024) found that parasocial relationships with influencers heighten purchase intention by strengthening emotional bonds and perceived authenticity.

Additionally, Mishnick and Wise (2024) highlighted that effective engagement through brand storytelling boosts consumer interest and purchase likelihood. Meanwhile, Haliti-Sylaj and Sadiku (2024) explained that responsiveness to visual cues in short-form videos enhances product recall and emotional engagement, reinforcing spontaneous buying tendencies. Altogether, these studies show that TikTok's unique mix of entertainment, emotional resonance, and social validation makes it highly effective in shaping consumer behavior. In line with this, Abd. Aziz et al. (2024) revealed that TikTok's emotionally engaging, and trend-driven content significantly influences Generation Z's impulsive buying behavior and purchase intentions, particularly through viral product exposure and creator credibility.

F. Impulsive Buying

This refers to spontaneous, emotionally driven purchases that occur without prior planning or rational evaluation. On TikTok, this behavior is amplified by fast-paced content, algorithmic targeting, and emotionally engaging visuals. According to Andreanto et al. (2025), real-time interaction and emotional engagement during live streams intensify impulsive buying, especially when paired with product demonstrations.

Furthermore, Demir (2024) stated that flash sales and limited-time offers amplify impulsive behavior, particularly when embedded in short-form content. Likewise, Qu et al. (2023) emphasized that customer ratings and social proof during live streams contribute to impulsive decisions, while as noted by Siow and Phang (2025), anchor credibility and emotional engagement strongly influence impulsive buying, with gender acting as a moderating factor.

In addition, Benitez-Correa et al. (2025) demonstrated that emotional retention and personalized content increase impulsive tendencies, especially when users feel emotionally connected to the creator. Moreover, Abualrob (2025) highlighted that TikTok's entertainment value and ease of use reduce cognitive resistance, creating a frictionless path to impulsive purchases.

Altogether, these studies confirm that TikTok's dynamic, emotionally charged environment fosters impulsive buying through urgency, interactivity, and social influence.

G. Trend-based Buying

This is shaped by consumers' desire to align with popular movements and socially validated choices. On TikTok, this behavior is amplified by algorithmic promotion of trending sounds, challenges, and hashtags. Tartaraj et al.(2024), stated that influencer advertising increases brand awareness and purchase intention, especially when products are framed as part of viral contents. Furthermore, Benitez-

Correa et al. (2025) emphasized that emotionally resonant content enhances retention and relatability, making trend-based items more memorable and desirable.

In a broader perspective, He et al. (2021) provided a global analysis of TikTok’s rapid expansion, noting that its algorithmic design and cultural adaptability fuel trend adoption across diverse markets. Their analysis shows that TikTok’s structure encourages users to replicate popular content, reinforcing collective behavior and trend-based consumption. Similarly, Isman and Yahya (2024) applied the Diffusion of Innovation Theory to TikTok adoption, showing that observability and social influence drive users to follow trends.

Moreover, Firth et al. (2025) noted that cultural sensitivity affects how users engage with trending content, with emotional triggers varying across regions. In addition, Ismail and Mohamed (2024) added that social influence fosters conformity, encouraging users to adopt products that are perceived as socially endorsed.

Altogether, TikTok’s viral mechanics, emotional design, and peer influence create a fertile ground for trend-based buying behavior, especially among younger consumers who seek identity expression and social belonging through digital trends.

H. Purchase Intentions

This reflects a consumer’s readiness to buy based on emotional engagement, perceived value, and social influence. According to Sibulan and Limos-Galay (2024), product presentation and influencer credibility significantly shape consumer attitudes, increasing purchase likelihood. Likewise, Abualrob (2025) highlighted that TikTok’s entertainment value and ease of use enhance user satisfaction, indirectly boosting purchase intention through repeated exposure.

Furthermore, Canoza et al.(2025) emphasized that brand awareness and brand recall especially when delivered through TikTok marketing campaigns are strong predictors of purchase intention among Gen Z consumers, as peer-driven content and emotional resonance make endorsements feel authentic, increasing the likelihood of conversion. Additionally, Haliti-Sylaj and Sadiku (2024) demonstrated that visual cues in short-form videos influence message processing and product recall, reinforcing consumer interest.

In the same way, Astaño (2025) added that TikTok’s emotionally engaging design improves communication and retention, which supports deeper consumer connection with branded content. Moreover, Benitez-Correa et al. (2025) further showed that emotional connection and content retention are key drivers of behavioral response, especially when users feel personally connected to the content.

Together, these studies confirm that TikTok’s emotionally immersive environment and socially validated content strongly influence consumers’ intention to purchase.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research study was grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) by Katz et al. (1973) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1991). The result of these studies indicated how TikTok exposure influenced the purchasing behavior of Generation Z students, who had a significant role in short-form visual content and social media trends.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) stated that people actively choose and utilize media to meet various needs including enjoyment, knowledge, social connection, and personal identities (Katz et al., 1973). In the context of TikTok, Gen Z students were motivated by the platform’s entertaining and relatable content, interactive features, and sense of online community. They consumed and engaged with videos that gratified their emotional, social, and cognitive needs while being exposed to influencer marketing, product reviews, and viral contents. According to Ahmad et al. (2024), TikTok’s attractiveness and user-driven environment encouraged users to find content that matched with their personal preferences, which often led to exposure to brand promotions and consumer products. Thus, TikTok worked both as a platform for personal expression and as a channel for persuasive marketing that subtly shaped user interests and consumer awareness.

Meanwhile, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) claimed that three primary factors influence behavior: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). In relation to this study, Gen Z students who developed positive attitudes toward products seen on TikTok, perceived strong social approval from peers and influencers, and feel capable of purchasing online are more likely to form strong buying intentions. As supported by Canoza et al. (2025), social influence and brand recall on TikTok significantly contributed to purchase intention among young consumers. Therefore, repeated exposure to persuasive and trendy TikTok content fostered favorable attitudes and social norms that drive purchasing behavior.

Integrating these theories, this study assumed that TikTok exposure, driven by the gratifications sought by Gen Z students, influenced their attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control, which in turn affect their buying behavior. The UGT provided the motivational foundation behind why Gen Z engaged with TikTok, while the TPB demonstrated how these engagements translated into behavioral intentions and actual purchasing actions.

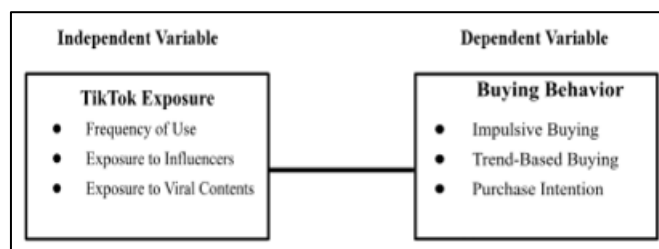


Fig 1. Conceptual Framework Showing the Variables of the Study

The conceptual framework for this study emphasized the relationship between TikTok Exposure (independent variable) and Buying Behavior among Generation Z students in CELA Department (dependent variable). TikTok exposure represented the extent to which Gen Z students interacted with and consumed content on the platform. It included three major components: frequency of use, which measured how often users accessed and engaged with TikTok; exposure to influencers, which focused on the influence of trusted content creators and endorsers; and exposure to viral contents, which referred to participation in trending challenges, sounds, and product-related content. These elements captured how TikTok served as both a source of entertainment and a marketing channel that shaped users' awareness, attitudes, and purchasing tendencies.

Buying behavior, as the dependent variable, refers to the observable actions and choices of Generation Z students about purchasing products featured on TikTok. It consisted of three key dimensions: impulsive buying, trend-based buying, and purchase intention. Impulsive buying refers to unplanned purchases driven by emotional appeal or time-limited offers. Trend-based buying reflected the tendency of consumers to purchase products that aligned with popular or socially validated trends, while purchase intention pertained to the likelihood of buying a product after exposure to persuasive or relatable content. Collectively, these dimensions illustrated how emotional engagement, social influence, and media interaction contributed to shaping the consumer behavior of Gen Z students.

Together, the relationship between TikTok exposure and buying behavior highlighted the influence of digital media engagement on modern consumption patterns. Increased interaction with influencers, trends, and short-form video content led to stronger emotional connections, heightened product awareness, and greater likelihood of purchase among Generation Z students.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

➤ *Level of TikTok Exposure Among Gen Z Students in the CELA Department*

The study indicates that the level of TikTok exposure among Gen Z students in the CELA Department is *high*. This suggests that TikTok is a frequently accessed platform and forms part of students' regular digital activities. Further, this high amount of exposure among Gen Z students in the CELA Department attributed to the platform's short-form, visually engaging, and algorithm-driven content, which encourages repeated viewing and prolonged engagement. As a result, students are consistently exposed to various forms of TikTok content, making the platform a significant source of entertainment and information.

In terms of frequency of use, the results show that the level of TikTok exposure among Gen Z students in the CELA Department is *very high*. This indicates that students access the application multiple times a day, reflecting habitual usage patterns. Further, this frequent use increases familiarity with platform content and reinforces continuous engagement.

Haskins et al. (2025) explained that repeated interaction with TikTok strengthens habitual media consumption, allowing content to be repeatedly encountered and more easily recalled.

Meanwhile, in regards to exposure to influencers, the findings revealed that the level of TikTok exposure among Gen Z students in the department is *high*, suggesting that students are regularly exposed to influencer-generated content on the platform. Zhou (2024) noted that influencer content is perceived as more credible and engaging, making it more effective in capturing students' attention. Hence, influencers often present content in a relatable and authentic manner, which increases viewer interest and sustained engagement.

Similarly, the *high* result of TikTok exposure among Gen Z students in the CELA Department in terms of exposure to viral content indicates that students are frequently exposed to trending videos and popular hashtags. This means that the application's algorithm repeatedly promotes viral materials, increasing their visibility and making them appear socially relevant. Melgarejo et al. (2024) explained that continuous exposure to viral content enhances awareness and reinforces perceived popularity, which sustains user attention on the platform.

Thus, these findings indicate that the level of TikTok exposure among Gen Z students in the CELA Department is shaped by frequent use, consistent exposure to influencers, and repeated encounters with viral content. This supports the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al. 1973), which explains that students actively engage with TikTok to satisfy needs for entertainment, social interaction, and personal relevance. Through this active engagement, TikTok exposure is continuously reinforced, confirming the platform's strong presence in students' daily digital lives.

➤ *Level of Tiktok Exposure of Gen Z Students in CELA Department in terms of Frequency of Use*

The findings indicate that Gen Z students in the CELA Department are very highly exposed to TikTok, particularly in how often they open the application each day. This indicates that students engage with TikTok multiple times a day, reflecting a habit of frequent platform use. This reflects a habitual pattern of engagement, likely influenced by the frequent exposure to short-form, algorithm-driven content. Frequent opening of the application reflects automatic engagement, where TikTok becomes a go-to platform during free time or idle moments. This implication is supported by Haliti-Sylaj and Sadiku (2024), who explained that repeated exposure to digital content strengthens message processing and reinforces habitual media use. Similarly, Haskins et al. (2025) noted that habitual social media use increases user responsiveness and engagement, making frequent platform access a common behavior among Generation Z users.

Conversely, integrating TikTok as a part of daily routine occurs somewhat less often than other exposure forms. This indicates that while students frequently use the platform, it is slightly less ingrained as a fixed part of their everyday activities. This suggests that while students frequently use TikTok, they may not always consciously perceive it as a

structured or planned part of their daily routine. Instead, TikTok usage appears to be spontaneous rather than intentionally scheduled. This interpretation aligns with Astaño (2025), who emphasized that consistent social media use does not always require deliberate planning, as emotional connection and content retention can develop through casual and repeated interactions. This finding also supports Haskins et al., (2025) who explained that spontaneous platform use is common among Gen Z users due to easy access and continuous content availability, even without a specific purpose.

➤ *Level of TikTok Exposure of Gen Z Students in CELA Department in Terms of Exposure to Influencers*

The findings show that Gen Z students in the CELA Department are exposed to watching videos created by Tiktok influencers. This implies that watching videos created by influencers are a common part of students' lives. Hence, influencers have become one of their main sources of information, entertainment, and trends on the platform, making them highly visible and influential in shaping what they see either as popular or relevant. This result is supported by the study of Zhou (2024), who found that TikTok influencers frequently appear on users' *For You Pages* (Tiktok's newsfeed), making influencer-generated videos a regular part of daily platform exposure. In addition, Lazuardi and Usman (2025) emphasized that repeated exposure to influencer content increases its visibility and influence, allowing influencers to become dominant sources of information, entertainment, and trend awareness among Generation Z users.

On the other hand, the findings also indicate that students do not tend to follow a large number of influencers on TikTok, even though they are frequently exposed to influencer content. This shows that following influencers is done selectively rather than excessively. Students appear to be more careful and intentional in choosing which influencers to follow, suggesting that they value credibility, trust, and relevance over simply following many creators. This interpretation is consistent with Alcantara-Pilar et al. (2024), who emphasized that influencer credibility is an important factor in building consumer trust, leading users to follow only those influencers they find reliable and authentic. Similarly, Haskins et al. (2025) noted that Gen Z users are more likely to engage with and follow influencers whose content aligns with their personal interests and values, reinforcing selective following behavior rather than mass subscription.

➤ *Level of Tiktok Exposure of Gen Z Students in CELA Department in terms of Exposure to Viral Content*

The researchers found out that most Gen Z students in the CELA department discover new products through viral content in the application. This result can be related to the study of Gesmundo et al. (2022) who explained that emotional resonance and visual storytelling enhance brand recall and consumer responsiveness. Similarly, Bulazo et al. (2025) noted that enjoyment and interactivity in TikTok content positively influence purchase intention. Hence, these findings explain why students who are frequently exposed to TikTok content are more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward

products. This can be highlighted from the study of Dinh et al. (2023) who explained that social conformity drives trend-based purchasing when products are presented as part of a shared digital experience.

Further, the study illustrated that most Gen Z students in the CELA Department participate in viral challenges or trends on TikTok. This indicates that viral participation is not limited to passive viewing but also involves active engagement with trending content. According to Lawal (2025), participation in viral challenges strengthens user involvement and encourages collective engagement, making trends more influential among young audiences. In addition, Isman and Yahya (2024) emphasized that repeated exposure to viral content on algorithm-driven platforms like TikTok reinforces familiarity and adoption, which explains why students frequently encounter the same viral content on their *For You Page*.

➤ *Level of Buying Behavior among Gen Z Students in CELA Department*

The researchers found out that most of the Gen Z CELA learners have a high level of buying behavior. This means that these students are active and responsive when it comes to purchasing products, especially on what they see on TikTok.

The study found out that most of the Gen Z students have high purchase intentions. These findings align with Canoza et al. (2025), who emphasized that TikTok marketing significantly enhances purchase intention through brand recall and social validation. Likewise, Gesmundo et al. (2022) found that emotional resonance and repeated exposure to short-form video content increase consumers' readiness to purchase, especially among Gen Z users.

Meanwhile, *Trend-based buying* receives a high marking, meaning the Gen Z students are highly influenced by what they saw on TikTok, like the popular trends, viral challenges and the socially approved products. Many of these students tend to buy the product not because they need them, but because they are trending and widely known online. This result supports Tartaraj et al. (2024), who found that influencer-driven and trend-based marketing increases brand awareness and encourages consumers to follow viral product trends. In addition, Isman and Yahya (2024) explained through the Diffusion of Innovation Theory that social influence and observability motivate individuals to adopt popular trends, which explains why Gen Z students are more likely to engage in trend-based buying behavior.

In addition, results showed that most students are impulsive buyers. Meaning, this high level indicates that most Gen Z students get unplanned purchases due to their emotions rather than think of it carefully. This suggests that TikTok's fast-paced and visually appealing content can trigger spontaneous buying decisions. This finding is supported by Abd. Aziz et al. (2024), who reported that TikTok's emotionally immersive environment encourages impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z. In the same way, Bulazo et al. (2025) explained that enjoyable and interactive content reduces consumers' resistance, making them more likely to buy without much planning.

➤ *Level of Buying Behavior of Gen Z students in CELA Department in terms of Impulsive Buying*

Results showed that most of the Gen Z students often make spur purchasing decisions after being exposed to TikTok videos, especially those that are visually attractive or promoted by influencers. This *high level* of impulsive buying observed among the respondents supports previous studies emphasizing the role of emotionally stimulating and fast-paced social media content. These types of students tend to make spontaneous purchasing decisions after being exposed to TikTok videos, particularly those that are visually appealing or endorsed by influencers. Hence, this finding aligns with Andreanto et al. (2025), who reported that TikTok's short-form video format and algorithm-driven content encourage unplanned purchases by triggering emotional responses and urgency. In addition, Abualrob (2025) pointed out that TikTok's entertainment value and ease of use lower users' resistance to buying, creating a smooth and effortless path toward impulsive purchases.

As a result of these spur-of-the-moment purchasing decisions, the study also found that many Gen Z students buy items on TikTok even when they do not really need them. This indicates that impulsive buying behavior can lead users to purchase products without carefully considering their necessity. This finding is supported by Benitez-Correa et al. (2025), who explained that emotionally engaging and personalized social media content can increase impulsive buying tendencies among young consumers, especially when users feel connected to the content or creator. Similarly, Haliti-Sylaj and Sadiku (2024) emphasized that visually stimulating short-form videos can trigger emotional responses that influence quick purchasing decisions without extensive evaluation.

➤ *Level of Buying Behavior of Gen Z students in CELA Department in terms of Trend-Based Buying*

The researchers found out that most Gen Z students bought products on Tiktok because they were trending. This means that students are strongly influenced by the TikTok videos that are popular online, especially that the products are endorsed by the trusted influencer. Influencer credibility and consistent engagement foster consumer trust and brand loyalty (Alcantara et al., 2024). In addition, Bulazo et al. (2025) that entertainment and interactivity in influencer content increase perceived enjoyment and purchase intention, especially when influencers use storytelling and humor.

Meanwhile, most Gen Z feel left out when they do not buy products that are trending on TikTok. This implies that social pressure plays an important role in their buying decisions. Dinh et al. (2023) explained that social conformity and fear of missing out (FOMO) strongly motivate Gen Z consumers to follow trends promoted on social media platforms. Likewise, Abualrob (2025) highlighted that TikTok's entertainment value and ease of use enhance user satisfaction, indirectly as boosting purchase intention through repeated exposure.

➤ *Level of Buying Behavior of Gen Z students in CELA Department in terms of Purchase Intention*

In terms of Gen Z's purchase intentions, the researchers figured out that most of them considered buying products endorsed by the creators they trust. This implies that most Gen Z students are influenced by content creators that they trust to purchase. According to Bulazo et al. (2025), entertaining and interactive TikTok advertisements increase consumer interest and intention to buy, especially when the content is enjoyable and engaging. Similarly, Gesmundo et al. (2022) supported this finding by stating that emotional storytelling and influencer credibility on TikTok improve brand recall and strengthen consumers' intention to purchase.

However, most Gen Z tend to purchase the products they like when a TikTok video emotionally resonates with them. This means that their emotional connection strongly affects their purchasing decisions. Astaño (2025) added that TikTok's emotionally engaging design improves communication and retention, which supports deeper consumer connection with branded content. Moreover, Benitez-Correa et al. (2025) further showed that emotional connection and content retention are key drivers of behavioral response, especially when users feel personally connected to the content.

Overall, the high levels of *impulsive buying, trend-based buying, and purchase intention* demonstrate that TikTok plays a significant role in shaping the buying behavior of Gen Z students. The findings affirm that students are influenced by emotional appeal, social validation, and persuasive content when making purchasing decisions. This supports the anchored theories of the study, particularly the *Uses and Gratifications Theory* by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973), which explains how users actively engage with TikTok to satisfy entertainment and social needs, thereby increasing exposure to marketing content. In addition, the *Theory of Planned Behavior* by Ajzen (1991) is reinforced, as TikTok exposure influences students' attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions, ultimately leading to actual purchasing behavior.

➤ *Significance of Relationship Between TikTok Exposure and Buying Behavior Among Gen Z Students in CELA Department*

The findings of the study indicate that TikTok exposure has a strong and significant influence on the buying behavior of Gen Z students. The high positive correlation confirms that frequent interaction with TikTok content such as influencer videos, viral trends, and branded posts increases students' tendency to engage in impulsive, trend-based, and intentional purchasing. This result is consistent with Ahmad et al. (2024), who found that TikTok's emotionally engaging and interactive content significantly affects consumer decision-making. Similarly, Valeza and Soriano (2024) emphasized that entertainment value and interactivity strongly predict purchase intention among Gen Z users.

Moreover, the results revealed that TikTok strengthens emotional connection and product recall, which leads to higher purchase intention. Gesmundo et al. (2022) supported this finding by explaining that emotional resonance and visual storytelling improve brand recall and consumer responsiveness. Likewise, Bulazo et al. (2025) confirmed that enjoyment and interactivity in TikTok content positively influence purchase intention. These findings suggest that Gen Z students rely heavily on emotional engagement when forming buying decisions.

In addition, the influence of influencers and viral content reinforces social conformity and trust. Haskins et al. (2025) found that habitual TikTok exposure increases responsiveness to influencer messaging and branded content. Dinh et al. (2023) also stated that social conformity drives trend-based purchasing when products are framed as part of a shared digital movement. Furthermore, Gega et al. (2024) highlighted that parasocial relationships with influencers strengthen emotional bonds and increase purchase intention. These studies explain why TikTok exposure strongly affects buying behavior through social and emotional mechanisms.

In conclusion, the findings support the theoretical framework of the study. The Uses and Gratifications Theory is supported because Gen Z students actively use TikTok to satisfy entertainment, social interaction, and emotional needs, which exposes them to persuasive product content (Katz et al., 1973; Ahmad et al., 2024). Likewise, the Theory of Planned Behavior is supported since TikTok exposure shapes students' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, leading to stronger buying intentions and actual purchasing behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Canoza et al., 2025). Therefore, the results confirm that both theories effectively explain how TikTok exposure influences the buying behavior of Gen Z students.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that Gen Z students in the CELA Department exhibit a high level of TikTok exposure, as reflected in their frequency of use, exposure to influencers, and exposure to viral content. Among these indicators, frequency of use obtained the highest level, while exposure to influencers obtained the lowest level. In relation to buying behavior, the findings also reveal a high level of impulsive buying, trend-based buying, and purchase intention among the respondents. Among these indicators, purchase intention obtained the highest level, whereas trend-based buying obtained the lowest level.

Furthermore, the study found a significant high positive relationship between TikTok exposure and buying behavior, indicating that increased engagement with TikTok content corresponds with stronger tendencies toward impulsive and trend-driven purchases.

These findings support the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explains that Gen Z students actively use TikTok to satisfy entertainment, social, and emotional needs, thereby increasing their receptiveness to marketing content. Likewise, the findings affirm the Theory of Planned Behavior, as TikTok exposure influences attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, leading to stronger buying intentions. Hence, the study confirms that TikTok exposure not only serves as a source of entertainment but also significantly influences consumer decision-making among Gen Z students.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. For CELA students, it is recommended that they practice more mindful and intentional TikTok use to avoid impulsive reactions such as unplanned purchases. Students are also encouraged to critically evaluate the credibility of influencers before relying on product recommendations and to set personal limits on app usage in order to balance digital entertainment with academic and personal responsibilities. Through these practices, students may develop greater digital awareness and become more responsible consumers.

For teachers, the findings suggest the importance of integrating social media literacy and critical consumption activities into classroom instruction. Using real-life examples from TikTok may help students analyze how influencer credibility, trend-based marketing, and emotional appeals affect consumer behavior. Classroom discussions, reflection activities, and the creation of educational TikTok content may also encourage students to use social media platforms more purposefully and meaningfully.

For school administrators, the study recommends the development of institutional programs and workshops that promote digital literacy and financial responsibility among Gen Z students. Seminars focusing on responsible social media use, budget management, and critical evaluation of online content may help address the impulsive and trend-driven buying tendencies identified in the study. In addition, partnerships with financial literacy experts and digital media professionals may strengthen awareness campaigns that encourage responsible digital and consumer behavior within the school community.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to explore other variables related to TikTok exposure and buying behavior, particularly psychological and emotional factors influencing selective engagement and participation in viral content. Comparative studies involving different social media platforms may also be conducted to determine which platform features most strongly influence Gen Z purchasing behavior. Moreover, future studies may investigate the effectiveness of intervention programs such as financial education, time management strategies, and digital awareness campaigns in reducing impulsive and trend-driven purchasing behaviors. These studies may provide deeper insights into the influence of social media and contribute valuable information for educators, policymakers, and future scholars.

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