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A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON THE USAGE OF TIK TOK AS A SHOPPING PLATFORM: A SURVEY IN KOLEJ POLY-TECH MARA IPOH

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ABSTRACT

The rapid digital transformation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the way businesses engage with consumers. While TikTok has been widely studied as a social media platform, limited empirical attention has been given to its role as an integrated shopping platform and how marketing mix elements influence brand-related outcomes among digital natives. This study explores the usage of TikTok Shop as a shopping platform among Diploma in Digital Marketing students at Kolej Poly-Tech MARA (KPTM) Ipoh. Using the Marketing Mix (4Ps: Product, Price, Place, Promotion) as a conceptual framework, the research aims to determine how these elements influence brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, corporate image and brand equity. A total of 143 students were surveyed through structured questionnaires. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis and multiple regression. The findings reveal that marketing mix elements, particularly promotion and place, play significant roles in shaping students' perceptions and purchase intentions. These results provide empirical support for the application of marketing mix and brand equity theories in a social commerce context.

Keywords: TikTok, TikTok Shop, Marketing Mix, Brand Loyalty, E-commerce, Social Media Marketing, Digital Natives

1   INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how people live, work and shop. Due to the spread of the virus and increasing number of deaths, governments across the world, including Malaysia, implemented movement control orders (MCO). These restrictions forced many traditional businesses to stop operations, and people were required to stay at home. As a result,

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global and local economies faced financial challenges, especially businesses that relied on physical stores. In Malaysia, many traditional businesses experienced losses due to reduced customer spending power.

However, the situation gave rise to digital platforms, e-commerce. Malaysians started to turn to online shopping for their daily needs. One platform that gained massive popularity during the pandemic is TikTok. Originally known for short entertainment videos, TikTok has now grown into a powerful marketing and shopping platform. During the pandemic, many users turned to TikTok not just for entertainment but also to promote products, share reviews and start small online businesses. According to ByteDance's advertising data, by early 2022, there were 14.59 million TikTok users aged 18 and above in Malaysia (Simon Kemp, 2022).

Recognising this shift, TikTok introduced TikTok Shop, a feature that allows users to buy and sell products directly through the app. This feature brings together sellers, buyers and marketers in one platform. With creative tools, video content and in-app shopping features, TikTok is no longer just a social media platform it is becoming one of the most influential e-commerce platforms in Malaysia today**.**

Previous studies on TikTok have primarily focused on influencer marketing and user engagement, with limited attention to TikTok Shop as an integrated shopping platform. In particular, the combined influence of marketing mix elements (product, price, place, and promotion) on brand-related outcomes such as brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, corporate image, and brand equity among digital natives remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap by empirically examining these relationships among Diploma in Digital Marketing students at Kolej Poly-Tech MARA (KPTM) Ipoh, thereby extending marketing mix and brand equity theories to a social commerce context and providing empirical insights relevant to both academia and digital marketing practice.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Marketing Mix

Marketing mix, traditionally known as the 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) was introduced by McCarthy as a framework to understand how businesses can influence consumer decisions. These four elements play a vital role in shaping customer perceptions, experiences and satisfaction. Today, especially in digital platforms like TikTok Shop, the marketing mix must be seen from the perspective of how it affects consumer behaviour and preferences**.**

For example, in the TikTok Shop environment, "product" is showcased through short, engaging videos that highlight product features and benefits. "Price" is often made attractive with in-app discounts and promotions. "Place" is no longer a physical location; instead, it refers to the accessibility of products through the app interface, making shopping more convenient. "Promotion" happens through viral content, influencer marketing and real-time interaction through live selling features.

Consumers on TikTok are also exposed to creative product promotions**,** peer reviews and interactive content that influences their purchase decisions. This shows how the 4Ps are being adapted to digital platforms where the goal is not only to sell but to engage and build trust with consumers. According to Baker (2003), the marketing mix helps organisations communicate their offers further on TikTok; this communication is done in a more visual, entertaining and emotional way that connects deeply with modern consumers.

2.2   Product

A product can be defined as anything that can satisfy customer needs or wants whether it is a physical item, service or even an idea. According to Kotler, Wong, Saunders and Armstrong (2008), "Anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or need," is considered a product. Products can be tangible like clothes, gadgets or intangible like services, digital goods. In the context of TikTok Shop, the way products are presented plays a major role in attracting consumer attention. Since TikTok is a visual platform, consumers often rely on short videos to understand the product's look, function and benefits. Businesses or influencers usually highlight the uniqueness, packaging and usage of a product in creative ways which can influence buying decisions quickly.

Packaging and visual presentation become even more important in this setting. A product with eye-catching packaging or trendy design is more likely to go viral or attract likes, shares and purchases. According to Kotler and Armstrong (1999), distinctive packaging helps consumers recognize the product and brand instantly. This is particularly relevant on TikTok Shop where users scroll quickly and first impressions count. Physical characteristics shown in videos such as colour, texture and size allow consumers to evaluate the quality of a product. As Spott and Shimp (2004) stated, consumers tend to rely on these physical attributes especially when making purchases. Therefore, marketers on TikTok must focus on improving product presentation, packaging and design in their videos to influence perception and encourage sales.

2.3   Place

In marketing, "Place" refers to how a product is delivered or made available to consumers. Traditionally, businesses used physical stores or intermediaries to distribute products. However, with the growth of digital platforms the concept of "place" has shifted towards online accessibility and convenience. According to Kidulani (2014), delivering the product to the customer at the right time and place increases customer satisfaction and reduces purchasing barriers.

On TikTok Shop, the idea of "place" is redefined through direct-to-consumer access. Consumers no longer need to go to physical stores instead, they can view a product in a video and purchase it immediately within the app. This instant accessibility allows consumers to make faster buying decisions while enhancing their overall shopping experience. Thru TikTok's algorithm, products are also distributed in a personalized and targeted way. The content shown on a user's "For You" page is based on their interests and past interactions which means that products are placed directly in front of the right audience. This smart digital placement removes the need for traditional distribution channels and improves convenience and reach.

A smooth and fast delivery process after purchase also contributes to customer satisfaction. When consumers receive products on time and in good condition, it builds trust and loyalty. As Bharadwaj, Varadarajan and Fahy (1993) noted, an effective distribution system can strengthen brand equity and in the case of TikTok Shop, this includes how quickly online orders are fulfilled, creating a more positive perception of the brand lead to repeat purchases.

2.4   Price

Price is not just about money but, it's about value. On platforms like TikTok Shop, consumers often judge the value of a product by looking at the price shown in videos, live sessions and product pages. According to Nagle and Holden (2002), price is the monetary value that a buyer must pay to complete a purchase but for customers, reflects quality and trust. Many consumers believe that higher prices mean better quality, while lower prices are associated with affordability or deals. On TikTok Shop, customers are more likely to be attracted to products that offer value for money especially when

they come with free gifts, bundle offers or flash discounts during live sales. These strategies make shopping more exciting and can encourage impulse buying.

Another factor that influences customers is the transparency of pricing. When the price is clearly displayed and compared to the "before" price or market price, consumers feel more confident in making decisions. In some cases, even if the price is slightly higher, the way it is presented, together with positive reviews, real-life usage videos or influencer endorsements, makes the product appear worth the price. Price on TikTok Shop is not just a number, it plays a big role in shaping how consumers feel about the product, the brand and the shopping experience itself.

2.5   Promotion

Promotion is one of the key elements in the marketing mix, and it plays an important role in communicating product information to consumers. Through effective promotion, businesses can raise awareness, attract interest and encourage purchases. On platforms like TikTok Shop, promotion has become more creative and direct because of the app's unique features. TikTok allows online sellers to express their creativity through short videos. These videos are often fun, entertaining and engaging, which helps to catch the attention of potential buyers. Sellers are free to explore different video concepts such as storytelling, tutorials, challenges and reviews to promote their products. This flexibility in content creation makes TikTok an attractive platform for both sellers and buyers.

In addition to videos, TikTok Live is also a powerful promotional tool. Sellers can go live to promote products in real time, give demonstrations, answer customer questions and offer limited-time deals or discounts. This creates a sense of urgency and builds trust, especially when consumers see the product being used live. Sometimes, consumers decide to buy not just because they need the product but because they enjoy the marketing video or feel emotionally connected to the content.

2.6   TikTok Shop as a Shopping Platform

TikTok is one of the fastest-growing social media platforms in the post-pandemic era. According to Forbes (Koetsier, 2021), it was the most downloaded application in 2021. Initially, TikTok was mainly used by users to share lifestyle videos, dance tutorials, food reviews and educational content. However, as user interest and app features evolved during the COVID-19 pandemic, TikTok became more than just a platform for entertainment. It started to be widely used for product promotions and online selling, resulting in the birth of TikTok Shop.

The global pandemic significantly changed how people live and shop. Due to social distancing rules, lockdowns and store closures, many consumers shifted to online shopping, cashless payments and home deliveries. This change in shopping behaviour gave TikTok a new role from just an entertainment application to a shopping platform that connects consumers directly with sellers. Small businesses benefitted from TikTok's marketing potential, using it to rebuild customer trust and attract new buyers after facing financial losses during the pandemic (IARAS, 2021).

2.7   Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers to how easily consumers can recognise or recall a brand (Romaniuk, 2017). It is the first step in building customer trust and loyalty. On platforms like TikTok Shop, brand awareness is often created through engaging content, influencer collaborations and viral trends. When a product appears frequently on users' feeds, consumers become more familiar with the brand and are more likely to remember it during their purchase decision process. High brand awareness increases the chances that a customer will choose a known brand over unfamiliar alternatives.

2.8   Perceived Quality

Perceived quality refers to how consumers view the overall excellence or value of a product, even before trying it. It is often shaped by customer perception rather than actual product performance. According to Wang et al. (2020), product and service quality are strongly linked to company profitability and customer satisfaction. On platforms like TikTok Shop, perceived quality is influenced by short videos, influencer reviews and live demonstrations. When customers see products being shown in a positive way, they are more likely to believe the items are of high quality. This belief not only boosts their confidence to buy but also reflects the strength and benefits of the service and product quality offered.

2.9   Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is when customers continue to support the same brand because they feel satisfied and trust it. It also reflects their intention to keep buying from that brand (Atulkar, 2020). On TikTok Shop, brands can build strong loyalty by offering good service, fast delivery and consistent product quality. When buyers enjoy engaging videos, attractive promotions and personal interaction with sellers, customer are more likely to follow the brand and make repeat purchases. Loyal customers often recommend the brand to others, helping the brand grow even more.

2.10   Corporate Image

A company's image is how the public views its overall practices and behaviour Kotler et al (2006). This includes whether the business is seen as trustworthy and professional. On TikTok Shop, corporate image is shaped by the content a business shares, how it responds to customer comments, and how it treats buyers during TikTok Live sessions. When a brand appears friendly, honest and responsive, it builds a positive impression. This helps customers feel more secure and connected, making them more likely to buy and support the brand.

2.11   Brand Equity

Brand equity is the unseen value a brand has in the minds of consumers built through factors like brand awareness, perceived quality, customer loyalty and trust. Wantini et al. (2021) explain that brand equity is the positive effect that happens when people recognize a brand name, which then influences how they respond to its products or services. On TikTok Shop, strong brand equity helps businesses stand out in a crowded market. When customers feel familiar and emotionally connected to a brand, they are more likely to make repeat purchases and recommend it to others. This boosts customer confidence and supports the brand's long-term growth and success.

Based on the marketing mix and brand equity literature, this study adopts a sequential perspective in which marketing mix elements (product, price, place, and promotion) influence brand-related outcomes through consumer perception and evaluation processes. In the context of TikTok Shop, marketing mix strategies are expected to enhance brand awareness, which subsequently shapes consumers' perceived quality of products. Positive perceptions of quality are likely to strengthen brand loyalty and corporate image, which ultimately contribute to the development of brand equity. This conceptual linkage integrates the marketing mix framework (McCarthy, 1960; Kotler & Keller, 2006) with brand equity theory (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993) in a social commerce environment.

3   METHODOLOGIES

3.1   Sampling

The sample of this study consisted of Semester 1 and Semester 3 students of the Diploma in Digital Marketing at Kolej Poly-Tech MARA Ipoh (KPTM Ipoh). These students were selected because they represent digital natives, for whom TikTok Shop is freely accessible and frequently used. This study employed purposive sampling, specifically homogeneous sampling, as the selected students share similar characteristics: they are enrolled in the same digital marketing programme, take similar marketing-related subjects, possess TikTok accounts, and have direct access to the TikTok Shop platform. The sample and respondents are as follows:

Table 1
Sample of respondents

Semester	Class	Number of students
Semester 1	DDM 0101	27
	DDM 0102	25
	DDM 0103	25
Semester 3	DDM 0301	23
	DDM 0302	22
	DDM 0303	21
Total		**143**

3.2   Data Collection

Data is collected through questionnaires as it is the cheapest form of data collection, with minimal cost. The questionnaire is used because it serves as the primary data in this research. A questionnaire serves as a feature to obtain the information, and it has four dimensions, which are knowledge of what people know, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, behaviour and attributes (Powell E., 1998). Eiselen et al. (2005) said that a questionnaire is one of the research tools that is cost-effective, less intrusive to sensitive issues compared to a face-to-face interview, and most people are familiar with the concept of a questionnaire. Furthermore, with a given time and space, the respondents can complete the questionnaire based on their convenience.

3.3   Research Instrument

This study adopted the instruments from Kim & Hyun (2011) on the marketing mix effort and corporate image in the TikTok Shop setting. There are modifications that need to be adjusted to measure the marketing mix and corporate image of TikTok Shop as a shopping platform among students.

3.4   Data Analysis Procedure

The data in this research is both descriptive and inferential analysis. The descriptive analysis will be used for demographic variables such as gender, class section, and how much the respondents spend on the TikTok Shop platform per month.

The data will be tested for normality to detect its distribution. The Shapiro-Wilk test is applicable for this study due to its applicability to all sampling sizes. Cronbach's reliability test is used to ensure the consistency of the measurement items. According to Gliem and Gliem (2013), as the value of the Cronbach Alpha gets closer to the value one (1), the greater the consistency among the items. This study will also employ a structural equation model (SEM) by validating the measurement via confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and the equation model.

4   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the data analysis carried out in this study. The analysis includes descriptive statistics, normality testing, reliability testing and inferential testing using multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship between marketing mix components and brand-related outcomes in the context of TikTok Shop among students at KPTM Ipoh.

4.1   Descriptive Analysis

The respondents of this study were Semester 1 and Semester 3 students from the Diploma in Digital Marketing program at Kolej Poly-Tech MARA (KPTM) Ipoh. The sample was selected using convenience sampling. A total of 143 students participated. The majority of the students reported that they actively browse and shop through the TikTok Shop platform.

Table 2.
Frequency of scrolling or browsing the TikTok shop

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Every hour	23	19.5	19.5	19.5
	Every day	54	45.8	45.8	65.3
	Every week	11	9.3	9.3	74.6
	Every month	5	4.2	4.2	78.8
	Rarely	25	21.2	21.2	100.0
	Total	118	100.0	100.0	

4.2   Reliability Analysis

To assess the internal consistency of the measurement items, Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.869 which is above the recommended value of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). This result confirms that the questionnaire used in this study is reliable and suitable for further analysis.

4.3   Normality Test

Normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests. The results indicate that most variables deviate from a normal distribution ($p < 0.05$). However, given the sample size (n = 143), multiple regression analysis remains appropriate, as it is robust to violations of normality.

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
CH	.157	117	.000	.846	117	.000
PC	.089	117	.024	.954	117	.000
PM	.103	117	.004	.898	117	.000
AS	.067	117	.200[*]	.973	117	.018
BA	.131	117	.000	.935	117	.000
PQ	.186	117	.000	.598	117	.000
BL	.135	117	.000	.942	117	.000
OBE	.241	117	.000	.495	117	.000

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

4.4   Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine how the marketing mix elements Content Highlight (CH), Price Competitiveness (PC), Promotional Method (PM) and Advertising Strategy (AS) influence five key brand-related outcomes: Brand Awareness (BA), Perceived Quality (PQ), Brand Loyalty (BL), Corporate Image (CI) and Brand Equity (BE). The results show that the marketing mix has a significant impact on all five outcomes with varying levels of influence. For Brand Awareness, the R^2 value is 0.449, meaning 44.9% of students' awareness is influenced by marketing strategies on TikTok Shop. Perceived Quality recorded an R^2 of 0.237, indicating a moderate influence of 23.7%. This shows that TikTok's marketing mix has some effect on how students view product quality.

Brand Loyalty and Corporate Image were strongly influenced by the marketing mix, with R^2 values of 0.544 (54.4%) and 0.615 (61.5%), respectively. This suggests that creative marketing approaches on TikTok help build student loyalty and enhance the brand's public image. Meanwhile, Brand Equity had the lowest R^2 at 0.209 (20.9%), but still shows that marketing efforts contribute to brand value. Overall, the results confirm that the marketing mix plays an important role in shaping students' perceptions and attitudes toward brands on TikTok Shop.

Table 3.

Multiple regression analysis

OUTCOME VARIABLE	R VALUE	R² VALUE	PERCENTAGE OF INFLUENCE (%)	INTERPRETATION
Brand Awareness (BA)	0.670	0.449	44.9%	Moderate influence from marketing mixes on brand awareness
Perceived Quality (PQ)	0.487	0.237	23.7%	Moderate influence on perceived product quality
Brand Loyalty (BL)	0.737	0.544	54.4%	Strong influence on brand loyalty
Corporate Image (CI)	0.784	0.615	61.5%	Very strong influence on corporate image
Brand Equity (BE)	0.457	0.209	20.9%	Lower but still meaningful influence on brand equity

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study highlight the strong influence of the marketing mix product, price, place and promotion on brand-related outcomes such as brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, corporate image and brand equity among tiktok Shop users in KPTM Ipoh. The results from the multiple regression analysis reveal that promotional methods and creative content play a crucial role in shaping students' purchase intentions and perceptions. Tiktok's unique video-based format enables sellers to deliver product messages more interactively. The use of videos and live sessions enhances product visibility and appeals to emotions. Tiktok content acts as both a means of shaping attitudes and consumer behaviour. Additionally, the influence of price competitiveness as a driver of perceived value aligns with Zeithaml's (1988) definition of perceived value, where customers evaluate a product based on the trade-off between what they give and what they receive. Tiktok Shop's promotional pricing, discounts and bundle offers enhance this perceived value, especially among price-sensitive students.

The findings also support Keller's (1993) brand equity model, which emphasises brand awareness and perceived quality as core components. The R² values from this study, 0.449 for brand awareness and 0.237 for perceived quality, demonstrate moderate effects, indicating that TikTok's marketing strategies effectively boost visibility but still need improvement in maintaining consistent quality. Furthermore, corporate image and brand loyalty show strong correlations (R² = 0.615 and 0.544, respectively), suggesting that users who are emotionally connected to TikTok Shop campaigns are more likely to

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trust the platform and become repeat buyers. This supports Aaker's (1991) concept of brand equity, which includes loyalty and associations as key elements of a strong brand. However, the relatively lower R^2 value for brand equity (0.209) indicates that while marketing efforts increase short-term engagement and image, they may not yet be sufficient to establish long-term brand value. Concerns such as product authenticity, customer service, and after-sales support may limit the growth of sustainable consumer trust on TikTok Shop.

5   CONCLUSIONS

This preliminary study provides a comprehensive look at how TikTok Shop, as a social commerce platform, impacts student consumer behaviour through the lens of the marketing mix. The results confirm that marketing elements, especially creative content and promotions, have an influence on brand loyalty and corporate image among KPTM Ipoh students.
TikTok's transformation from a social media app to an e-commerce platform is a reflection of digital marketing innovation accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The integration of entertainment, influencer marketing and e-commerce allows brands to connect with younger audiences more effectively than traditional platforms. The study also underscores the importance of addressing non-marketing concerns such as product quality control and customer service. While engaging marketing content attracts first-time buyers, brand equity and loyalty will only improve with consistent value delivery and trustworthy seller practices.
In sum, TikTok Shop holds immense potential as a retail platform, especially for SMEs targeting digital natives. To fully capitalise on this potential, businesses must align their marketing mix with consumer expectations and digital behaviour trends. Future research should explore long-term purchase behaviour and the role of trust and satisfaction in shaping loyalty on this platform.

6   ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

7   CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in the paper.

8   AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Author 1 contributed to the conceptualization, research design, and writing of the original draft.
Author 2 was responsible for data collection, analysis, and validation of the results.
Author 3 provided supervision, critical review, and editing of the final manuscript.
All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

9   ETHICS STATEMENT

This research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah and adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from the [**Institutional Ethics Committee/Review Board**] under reference number [**Approval Number, if applicable**]. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent prior to participation. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and the data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

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