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FROM TRENDS TO TRANSACTIONS: HOW TIKTOK ADVERTISING DRIVES YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WITH HAIR SALONS

ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of TikTok advertising on the consumer behaviour of young people in hair salons located in Buffalo City, South Africa. The primary objectives were to assess the influence of TikTok on purchasing decisions, identify the advertisement features that attract young consumers, and evaluate their awareness and engagement with salon-related content. A quantitative exploratory research design was employed, focusing on individuals aged 16–35 years who actively use TikTok and visit hair salons. A sample of 100 respondents was selected from the Buffalo City population using a non-probability judgment sampling technique. Data collection involved a structured questionnaire with closed-ended and Likert-scale items, which were then analysed using descriptive statistics and visual charts. The findings indicate that 90% of respondents have TikTok accounts, with half using the platform multiple times daily, confirming its popularity among the youth demographic. Additionally, 70% of participants strongly agree that TikTok effectively attracts young customers, while 90% believe it enhances salon visibility, demonstrating its efficiency as a marketing tool. Content preferences revealed that trends (29.4%), discounts (23.5%), and music (23.5%) are the most engaging, followed by influencer collaborations and customer testimonials. These insights underscore TikTok's substantial impact on shaping purchasing intentions and brand engagement. The study recommends that salons adopt comprehensive TikTok marketing strategies, focusing on authentic, trend-driven content, leveraging influencer partnerships, and integrating TikTok's interactive features along with operational tools such as online booking systems. By implementing these strategies, salons can translate digital engagement into physical visits, foster customer loyalty, and achieve sustainable growth. The findings also provide valuable insights for small businesses seeking to adopt cost-effective digital marketing strategies to stay competitive in an increasingly dynamic marketplace.

Keywords: influencer collaboration, purchase intention, social media marketing, TikTok advertising, youth consumer behavior

JEL Classification: M31

INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of digital platforms has transformed how businesses communicate with consumers, with TikTok emerging as one of the most influential tools in shaping youth behaviour globally. Known for its short-form, visually engaging videos and algorithm-driven content distribution, TikTok has become a dominant space for trend creation and brand visibility. Its interactive features, such as viral challenges, influencer collaborations, and music-driven content, have redefined marketing strategies, particularly for industries that rely heavily on aesthetics and creativity, such as hair salons. In Buffalo City, hair salons are increasingly adopting TikTok advertising to showcase hairstyles, share tutorials, and promote services to attract young consumers. This demographic, aged between 16 and 35, represents a critical market segment for salons due to their trend-conscious nature and high engagement with social media platforms. Unlike traditional advertising, TikTok offers salons the opportunity to connect with young audiences in authentic and relatable ways, fostering trust and loyalty through real-time

engagement and user-generated content. However, despite the platform's global success in influencing consumer decisions, there is limited empirical evidence on its impact within local contexts, particularly among small businesses in South Africa. Existing studies largely focus on multinational brands or urban markets in developed countries, leaving a gap in understanding how TikTok advertising affects youth consumer behaviour in smaller, community-based settings. This gap is significant because local salons often operate with limited resources and depend on cost-effective strategies to remain competitive. Understanding the dynamics of TikTok advertising in Buffalo City is therefore essential for empowering these businesses to leverage digital tools effectively, enhance customer acquisition, and contribute to sustainable economic growth in line with Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8), which advocates for inclusive economic development and decent work opportunities.

The problem statement underpinning this research is the lack of localized insights into how TikTok advertising influences youth purchasing decisions and engagement with hair salons in Buffalo City. While global evidence suggests that short-form video content and influencer marketing can shape consumer attitudes and drive brand loyalty, these findings cannot be directly generalized to small businesses operating in South African townships and urban centers. Many local salon owners remain uncertain about the return on investment for TikTok advertising and lack strategic guidance on creating content that resonates with youth audiences. Consequently, they risk missing opportunities to attract and retain customers in an increasingly digital marketplace. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the impact of TikTok advertising on youth consumer behaviour in Buffalo City hair salons.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three interconnected concepts: Digital Marketing Theory, Consumer Behavior Theory, and the Technology Acceptance Model. Together, these frameworks elucidate how TikTok advertising influences youth consumer behaviour regarding hair salons in Buffalo City. Digital Marketing Theory emphasizes the strategic use of online platforms to enhance value creation and build customer relationships. For hair salons, digital marketing extends beyond simple promotions; it incorporates interactive tools that foster engagement and build trust. Research by Kokong and Naidoo (2022) highlights that salons in South Africa are increasingly combining traditional marketing with digital strategies, such as loyalty programs and influencer partnerships, to remain competitive. TikTok particularly enables salons to creatively showcase their services through short videos featuring hairstyles, client testimonials, and behind-the-scenes glimpses, aligning with Smith's (2021) perspective on how social media boosts brand visibility and customer retention through two-way communication and personalized experiences.

Consumer Behavior Theory sheds light on the purchasing decisions of young consumers, who are heavily influenced by peer recommendations, trends, and visual content. According to Sekhosana and Naidoo (2024), these factors shape how youth in Buffalo City perceive quality and style. TikTok's algorithm amplifies these influences by presenting users with viral trends and endorsements from influencers, thereby fostering a sense of social proof. Pricopoaia and Susanu (2022) note that features such as comments and live sessions enhance trust and emotional connections, which are crucial for informed consumer choices. Despite this, many salons miss the chance to leverage these behavioural insights by not implementing structured social media strategies, which limits their ability to turn online engagement into actual customer visits.

The Technology Acceptance Model further enriches this study by exploring how perceived usefulness and ease of use drive the adoption of digital platforms among businesses and consumers. Fatimah (2024) notes that TikTok's user-friendly interface and potential for virality make it particularly appealing to small businesses with limited resources. Enhancements such as branded challenges and in-feed advertisements, highlighted by Tram (2024), increase the perceived usefulness of TikTok as a cost-effective marketing tool. For consumers, TikTok streamlines the discovery of hair salons through personalized algorithmic recommendations and integrated booking options, thereby enhancing convenience. Nevertheless, research indicates that many South African salons are underutilizing these benefits, creating a strategic gap. By employing the Technology Acceptance Model in this research, the study aims to illuminate how salons that effectively embrace TikTok can secure a competitive edge, while those resistant to digital integration risk losing relevance among today's tech-savvy youth. This theoretical framework ultimately integrates marketing, behavioural, and technological perspectives, positioning TikTok advertising as a pivotal factor for the sustainable growth of local hair salons in Buffalo City, an area that has been largely overlooked in existing research. As depicted in Figure 1, the essential elements outlined in the preceding paragraph are visually represented, enhancing the reader's understanding of the concepts discussed.

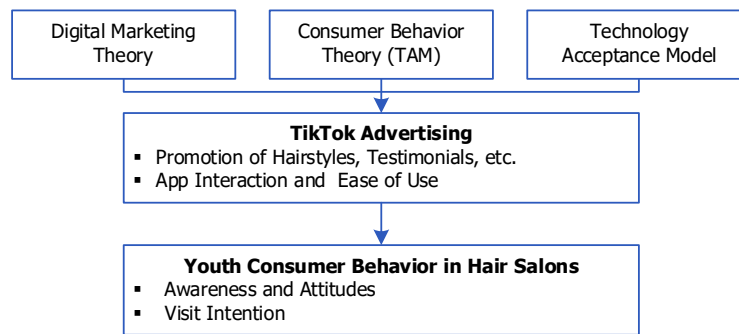


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

Background to Hair Salons in South Africa

Hair salons in South Africa play a crucial role in local economies and social life, particularly in townships and rural areas, where they offer income opportunities for women and youth who are often excluded from formal employment (Kokong & Naidoo, 2022). These businesses contribute to poverty alleviation and household sustainability, but often operate informally, which limits access to funding, infrastructure, and training, thereby constraining growth and competitiveness. Despite these challenges, demand for hair care remains stable, positioning salons as resilient enterprises deeply embedded in community life (Kabuya, 2023). Recent trends indicate that salons are increasingly adopting digital tools, such as online booking, mobile payments, and social media marketing, to overcome structural barriers and attract younger clients (Kabuya, 2023). Platforms like TikTok and Instagram enable salons to showcase hairstyles, build brand loyalty, and engage customers through interactive content. This digital shift represents a missed opportunity for salons that remain reliant on traditional marketing, as young consumers increasingly discover and select salons through social media rather than word of mouth. Strategically, salons must leverage these platforms to enhance visibility and trust, as failure to do so risks marginalization in a competitive market.

The sector's strengths lie in skilled stylists, personalized service, and strategic location, which foster customer loyalty and justify premium pricing (Kabuya et al., 2023; Nokuthula & Tavonga, 2020). Opportunities include retailing hair products, forming partnerships with local businesses, and exploiting digital marketing trends to expand reach (Nokuthula & Tavonga, 2020). However, operational drawbacks persist, including high competition that drives price wars, reducing profitability, limited financial literacy and informal practices hinder access to credit, and inconsistent service quality, due to a lack of training, which undermines the reputation (Rambe et al., 2022; Robertson, 2021). Weak compliance with health and safety standards and poor record-keeping further restrict scalability. Critically, many salons underutilize social media and influencer collaborations, missing a cost-effective avenue for customer acquisition and retention (Sekhosana & Naidoo, 2024). Strategic implications are that salons must professionalize their operations, adopt digital tools, and integrate TikTok-driven campaigns to attract trend-conscious young people. Immediate actions include implementing online booking systems, creating engaging content aligned with viral trends, and partnering with micro-influencers to build trust and visibility. These steps not only address current gaps but also position salons for sustainable growth in a digital-first economy.

Digital Transformation and Marketing Dynamics in South African Hair Salons

Hair salons in South Africa operate within a competitive and dynamic market, where their sustainability hinges on effectively melding traditional business practices with digital innovations. Kokong and Naidoo (2022) highlight that many salons are increasingly adopting a hybrid approach, integrating conventional strategies, such as loyalty programs, referral discounts, and seasonal promotions, with contemporary digital tools to attract and retain clients. Social media platforms, most notably TikTok, have emerged as pivotal elements in this transformation. They allow salons to effectively showcase hairstyles, client testimonials, and behind-the-scenes content while simultaneously developing stylist brands through targeted hashtags and geotags. These strategies resonate particularly well with younger consumers, who prioritize affordability and relevance to current trends; thus, promotional tactics such as "bring-a-friend" deals and collaborations with influencers are particularly impactful. Nonetheless, despite the advantages presented by online booking systems and customer management tools that can streamline salon operations, many establishments have been slow to adopt these technological advancements, thereby missing significant opportunities to enhance customer convenience and personalization. This technological lag signifies a strategic imperative: salons that neglect to incorporate digital platforms risk jeopardizing their relevance in an increasingly social media-driven landscape, where engagement and real-time interactions are paramount.

The scope of social media's role in business promotion extends beyond mere visibility; it serves as an essential driver of trust, loyalty, and cultural relevance. According to Pricopoaia and Susanu (2022), platforms such as TikTok offer affordable yet powerful tools for small businesses to create visually engaging content, including hairstyle transformations and instructional tutorials that resonate with young audiences. In contrast to traditional static advertising methods, TikTok's interactive features, such as live streaming, comment sections, and Q&A sessions, encourage authentic engagement and foster community building among users. Sekhosana and Naidoo (2024) further emphasize TikTok's advanced advertising capabilities, which allow salons to effectively target specific demographic groups based on factors including age, geographical location, and personal interests, a crucial consideration in South Africa's culturally diverse market. The impact of user-generated content and influencer collaborations in amplifying reach and enhancing credibility mirrors the functions of modern word-of-mouth marketing. Unfortunately, many salons underutilize TikTok Business features designed for bookings and client communication, thereby constraining their ability to provide seamless client experiences (Singh, Telukdarie, & Mongwe, 2024). The conspicuous oversight stems from an inability to fully leverage TikTok's algorithm-driven virality and its cost-effective advertising mechanisms, which have the potential to democratize marketing efforts for salons that may lack substantial resources. Consequently, immediate and strategic emphasis should be placed on developing structured social media strategies that marry creative content with data-driven targeting to optimize engagement and conversion rates.

TikTok's remarkable ascent as a marketing platform signifies its transformative potential for redefining customer acquisition strategies for small enterprises. Fatimah (2024) observes that TikTok's sophisticated algorithm enables even accounts with minimal followings to achieve significant viral reach, positioning it as a great equalizer in the realm of digital marketing. Salons can strategically capitalize on this potential by creating authentic, trend-oriented content, such as makeover showcases, styling advice, and influencer partnerships, that align with the preferences of younger consumers who value relatability and entertainment. Tram (2024) corroborates this perspective by noting that TikTok's evolving advertising functionalities, encompassing branded challenges and in-feed advertisements, offer innovative channels for engagement and direct potential clients to booking platforms. The platform's emphasis on storytelling and community resonates particularly well with the consumption habits of Generation Z and Millennials, further establishing TikTok as a vital tool for salons aiming to distinguish themselves in an oversaturated market.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the study is to provide actionable insights that enable salon owners to design effective TikTok marketing strategies tailored to the preferences and expectations of young consumers. Specifically, the research seeks to achieve three objectives: (1) examine the influence of TikTok advertising on the purchasing decisions of youth visiting hair salons; (2) identify key features of TikTok advertisements such as trends, music, discounts, and influencer collaborations that attract youth consumers; and (3) assess the level of awareness and engagement of Buffalo City's youth with TikTok content related to hair salon services. These objectives are guided by the key research question:

- **RQ1:** How does TikTok advertising influence the purchasing decisions of youth visiting hair salons in Buffalo City?
- **RQ2:** What key features of TikTok advertisements (such as trends, music, discounts, and influencer collaborations) attract youth consumers to hair salons?
- **RQ3:** To what extent are Buffalo City's youth aware of and engaged with TikTok advertisements related to hair salon services?

Addressing this question is essential for connecting global digital marketing trends with local business practices. This study not only contributes to the academic discussion on social media marketing but also offers practical recommendations for small businesses seeking to succeed in a competitive, technology-driven landscape. Ultimately, the findings will empower salons to harness the potential of TikTok, enhancing brand visibility, strengthening customer loyalty, and driving local economic growth, thereby underscoring the platform's role as a catalyst for sustainable business development.

METHODS

This study utilised a quantitative research approach to investigate the impact of TikTok advertising on the consumer behaviour of youth in hair salons within Buffalo City. Quantitative methods were selected for their capacity to produce measurable data that support statistical analysis and objective interpretation (Bhandari, 2020). The research design was exploratory, well-suited for examining a relatively under-researched phenomenon: the influence of social media on local salon marketing. This approach not only provides insights into current trends but also lays the groundwork for future

research (George, 2021). The focus of this study was on youth consumers aged 16 to 35 who actively engage with TikTok and frequent hair salons in Buffalo City. This demographic was chosen due to their high engagement on social media platforms and their significant influence on beauty and fashion trends (Park & Park, 2022). The population was defined as individuals residing in Buffalo City who met these criteria, ensuring alignment with the research objectives. To select participants, a non-probability judgment sampling technique was employed, focusing on individuals based on their familiarity and engagement with TikTok advertising (Akman, 2023). This method was deemed suitable, given the exploratory nature of the study and the limited resources available. A sample size of 100 respondents was established to enhance the reliability and generalizability of the findings in comparison to smaller samples (Andrade, 2020). Participants were recruited from various locations within Buffalo City to capture a diverse range of perspectives.

The data collection for this study employed a structured questionnaire featuring a combination of closed-ended questions, Likert-scale items, and ranking questions. This instrument was specifically designed to assess various variables, including the frequency of TikTok usage, engagement with salon-related content, and perceptions regarding TikTok's influence on salon selection. The questions were developed in alignment with the study's objectives and were informed by existing literature on social media marketing and consumer behaviour. The standardized format of the questionnaire ensured consistency across responses and facilitated subsequent quantitative analysis. To maximize accessibility and encourage timely responses, questionnaires were distributed both in physical and electronic formats. Upon completion, the surveys were coded and analysed using Microsoft Excel, allowing for the generation of descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and visual representations, such as bar charts and pie charts. These analytical outputs were instrumental in interpreting consumer behaviour patterns and evaluating the perceived effectiveness of TikTok advertising. To enhance the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire underwent pre-testing with a small focus group to confirm the clarity and relevance of the items. Content validity was further strengthened by aligning the questions with established constructs from the digital marketing and consumer behaviour literature (Leavy, 2022). Reliability was addressed through standardized administration procedures and uniform scoring across all participants. The inclusion of closed-ended questions minimized ambiguity, thereby improving measurement accuracy. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation, and respondents were granted the right to withdraw at any point without penalty. Data were securely stored and utilized solely for academic purposes, in compliance with institutional ethical guidelines (Braun et al., 2021).

RESULTS

Figure 2 indicates that a significant majority of the respondents, 70%, identified as females, while 30% identified as males. This demographic data suggests that the predominance of female consumers, particularly among single youths engaging with hair salons in Buffalo City, presents valuable marketing implications. Businesses targeting this market segment may benefit from tailoring their services and promotional strategies to appeal specifically to young female consumers, potentially enhancing customer loyalty and increasing market share within this demographic.

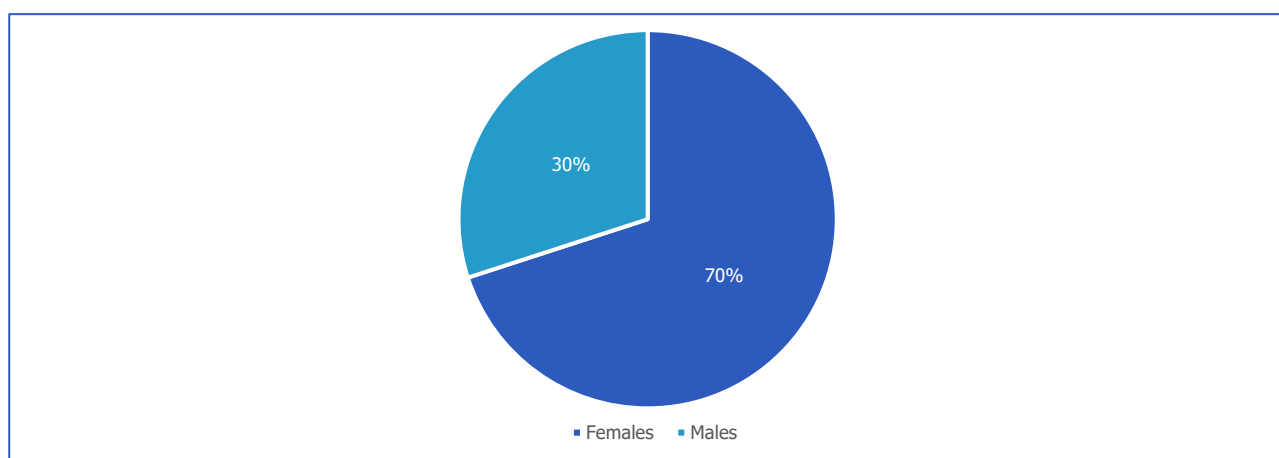


Figure 2. Gender of respondents.

Figure 3 illustrates the age distribution of respondents, revealing that the majority, comprising 60%, fall within the 21–30-year age bracket, while 30% are aged 16–20 and only 10% are between 31 and 35 years old. This data indicates that hair

salons in Buffalo City primarily attract a younger demographic, particularly middle-aged youth, suggesting that marketing strategies should focus on appealing to individuals aged 21–30. Given that the older age group shows significantly lower representation, salons might consider tailored services and promotions that resonate with younger clients to enhance engagement and drive business growth.

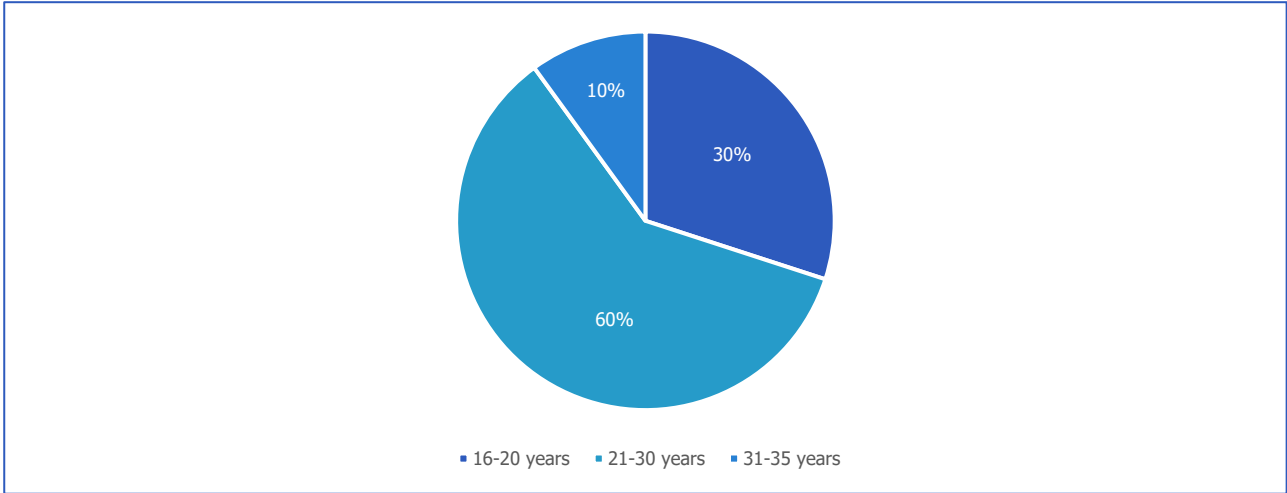


Figure 3. Ages of respondents.

Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of TikTok account ownership among respondents. The results indicate that a significant majority of respondents, specifically 90%, own a TikTok account, while only 10% do not. This statistic indicates that the vast majority of youth consumers engaging with hair salons in Buffalo City are active on TikTok, suggesting a robust platform for marketing outreach. Given TikTok's popularity among this demographic, hair salons should consider leveraging targeted advertising and creative content strategies on the platform to effectively engage with this audience and enhance brand visibility.

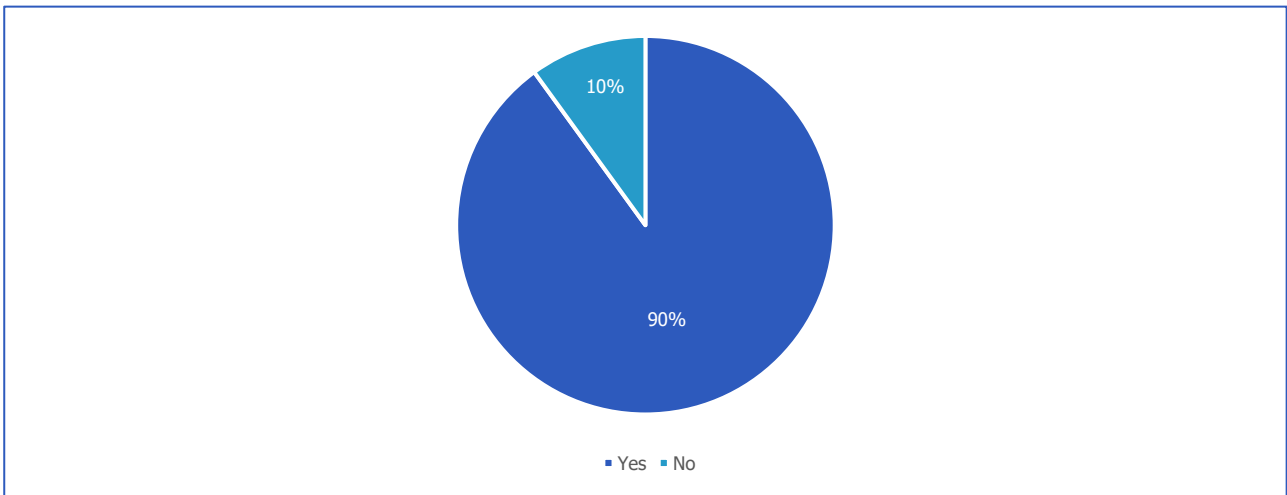


Figure 4. TikTok account ownership among respondents.

Figure 5 shows the frequency of TikTok usage among respondents in Buffalo city, revealing that 50% engage with the platform multiple times a day, while 20% use it once daily, and another 20% access it a few times a week; only 10% of participants do not use TikTok at all. This data indicates a strong reliance on TikTok as a primary social media platform, particularly among half of the respondents who engage with it multiple times daily. From a marketing perspective, this high frequency of usage suggests significant opportunities for brands to leverage TikTok's advertising potential, as they can effectively reach a highly engaged audience that frequently interacts with content on the platform.

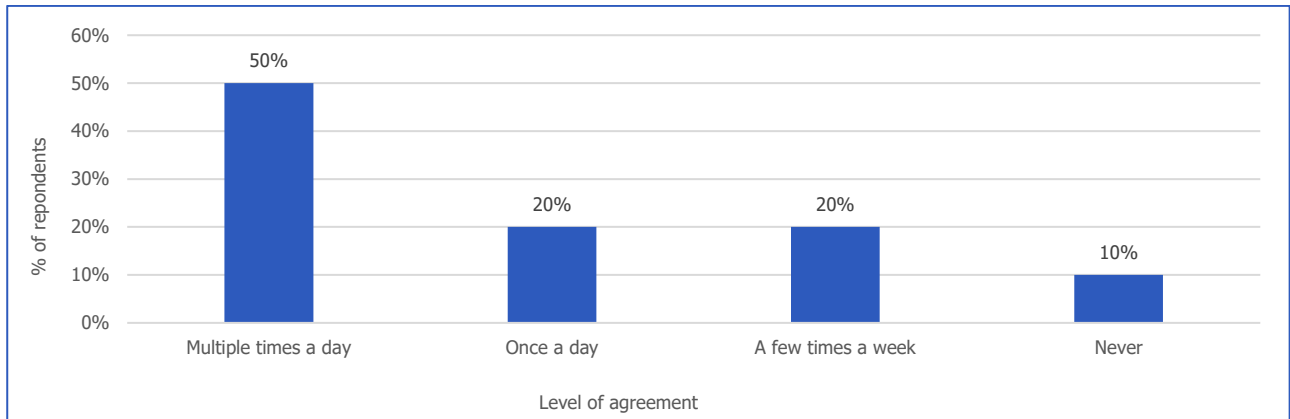


Figure 5. Frequency of TikTok usage among respondents.

Figure 6 shows that 60% of respondents from Buffalo City actively follow hair stylists or salons on TikTok, while 40% do not engage with these accounts. This significant majority indicates a robust interest among consumers in the hair styling content available on the platform. For marketers in the beauty sector, this presents a valuable opportunity to leverage TikTok as a marketing channel to reach potential customers, enhance brand visibility, and engage directly with a demographic that is already inclined to seek hair care inspiration and services through social media.

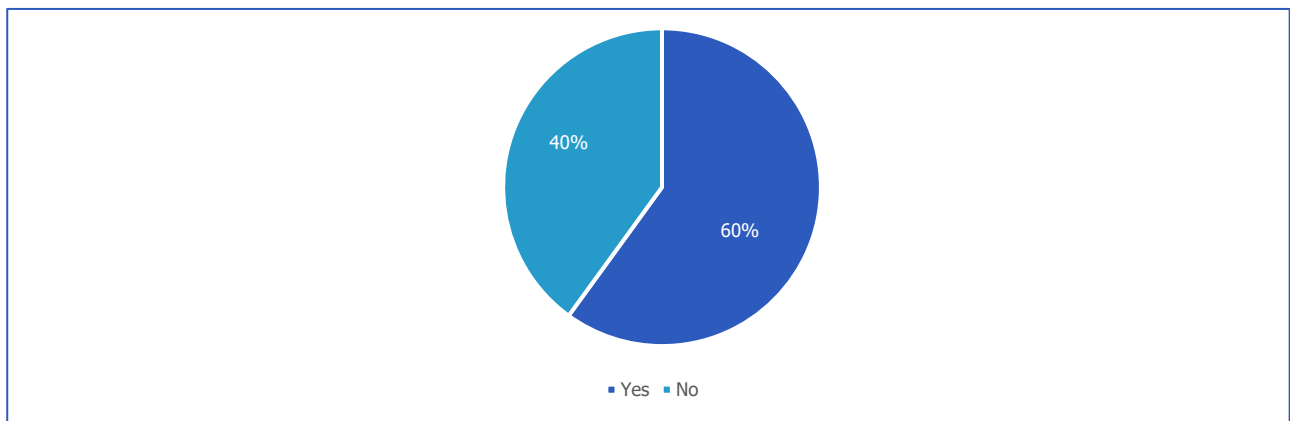


Figure 6. Engagement with Hair stylists/salons on TikTok among respondents.

The data indicates that a significant majority, 80%, of respondents from Buffalo City have encountered advertisements for hair salons on TikTok, while the remaining 20% reported not seeing such ads (Figure 7). These findings underscore the effectiveness of TikTok as a marketing platform for promoting hair salons, suggesting that businesses targeting this demographic should prioritize their advertising strategies on TikTok to maximize visibility and engagement with potential customers.

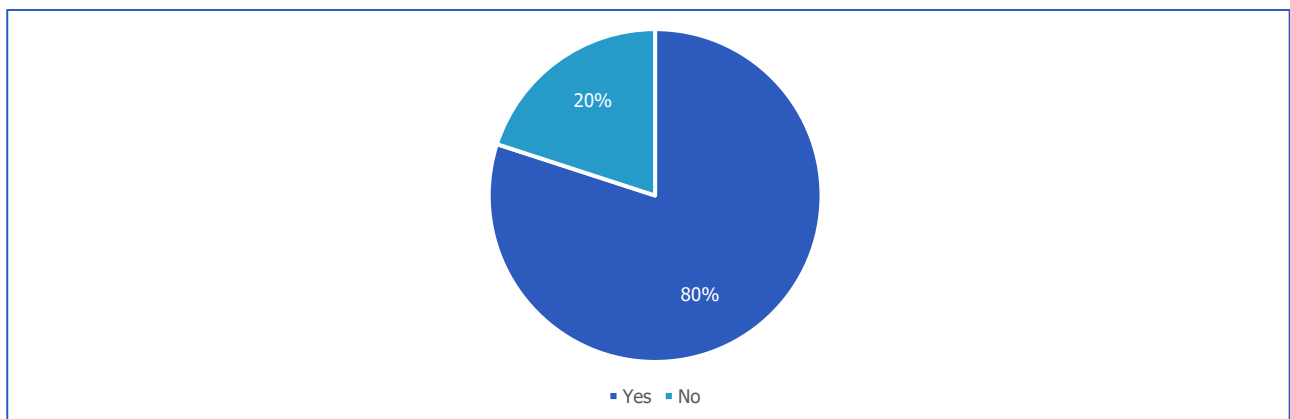


Figure 7. Visibility of hair salon advertising on TikTok among respondents.

The data presented in Figure 8 indicates that trends are the most significant influence on respondents' interest in hair salons, with 29.40% of participants highlighting this feature. Following trends, 23.50% of respondents were influenced by discounts and the musical ambiance of the salon, while 11.80% cited influencer collaborations as a key factor in their decision. Additionally, 5.90% of respondents were swayed by client testimonials. These findings suggest that hair salons in Buffalo should prioritize showcasing current trends and enhancing customer experience through promotional discounts and engaging in music to effectively attract young consumers.

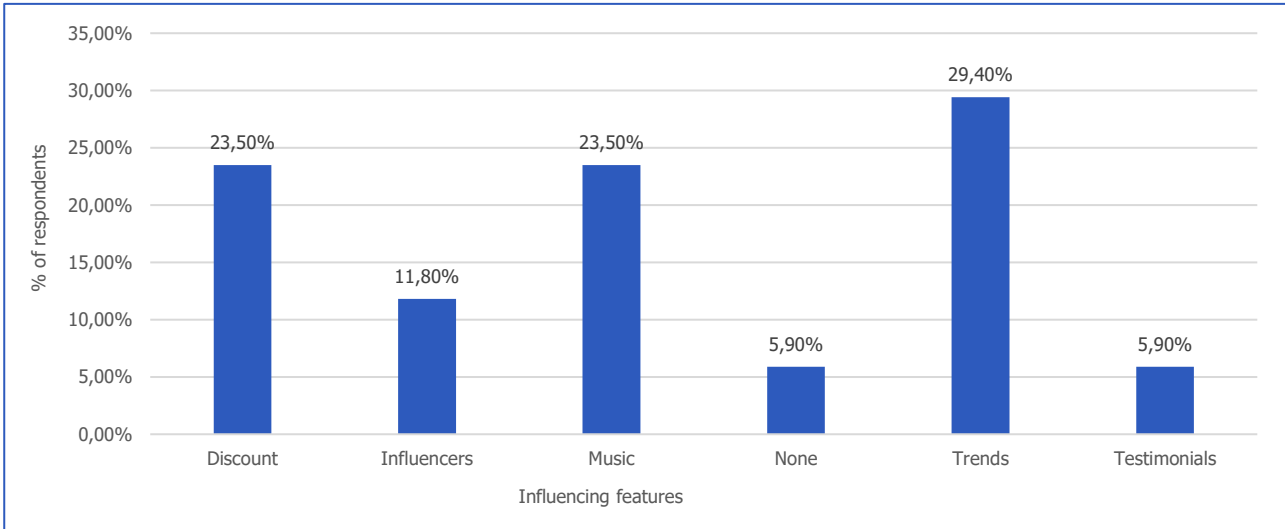


Figure 8. Features That Influence the Interest of Respondents.

The data presented in Figure 9 indicates that a significant majority of youth consumers in Buffalo City believe that TikTok advertising effectively attracts them to hair salons, with 70% strongly agreeing and 20% agreeing with this statement, while only 10% remain neutral. This suggests that TikTok is a potent marketing tool for salons seeking to engage younger clients. The results highlight the importance of incorporating social media platforms, particularly TikTok, into marketing strategies to enhance customer outreach and attract a demographic that is increasingly engaged with digital content.

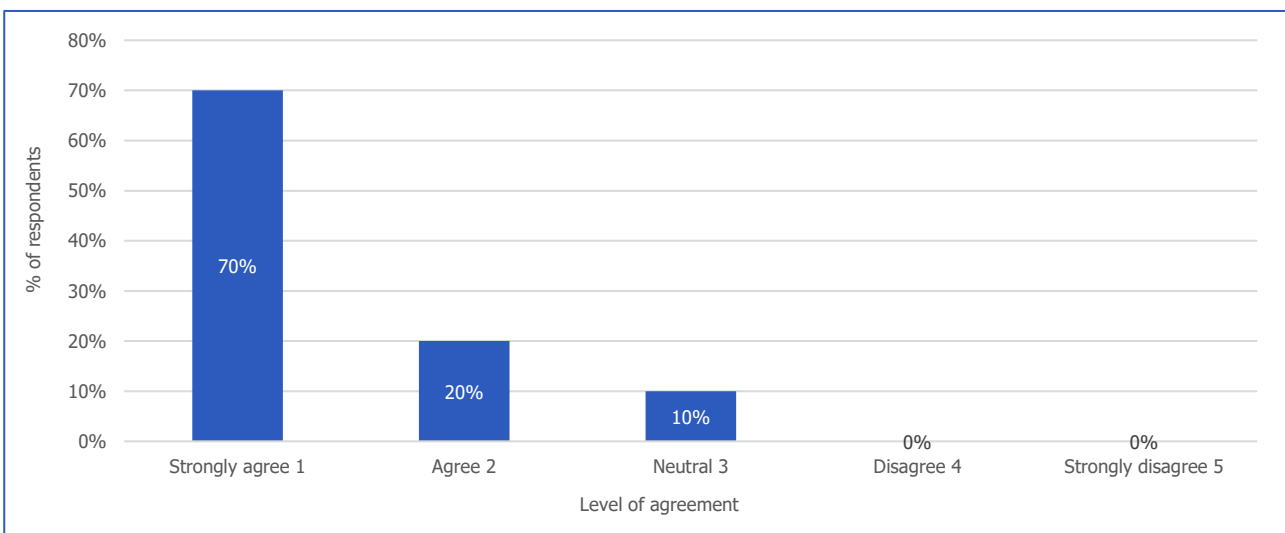


Figure 9. Influence of TikTok Advertising on Youth Attraction to Hair Salons.

Figure 10 illustrates the impact of TikTok advertising on the salon visitation intentions of young consumers in Buffalo City, revealing that 70% of respondents either strongly agree (40%) or agree (30%) that TikTok content influences their decisions to visit salons. In contrast, 20% maintain a neutral stance, while 10% express disagreement regarding the platform's influence. This data indicates that a significant majority of youth consumers recognize TikTok as a powerful marketing tool for salons, suggesting that hair salons in the area should consider leveraging TikTok as a central component of their marketing strategies to enhance customer engagement and drive foot traffic.

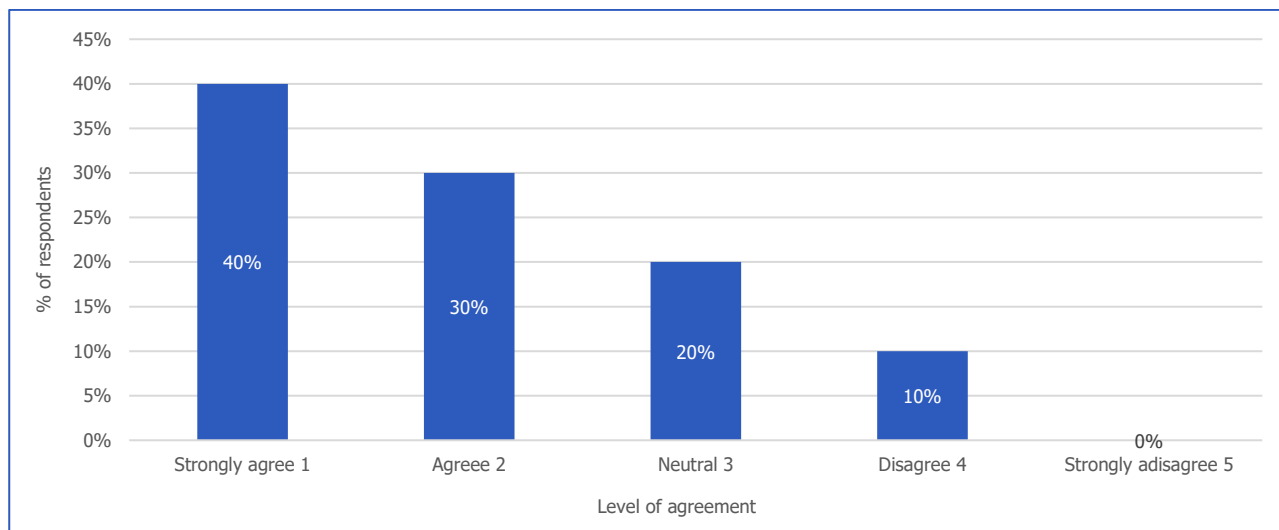


Figure 10. Influence of TikTok Advertising on Salon Visitation Plans.

The data presented in Figure 11 demonstrates that 90% of respondents (70% strongly agree and 20% agree) recognize that TikTok significantly enhances the exposure and visibility of hair salons, while only 10% remain neutral on this matter. This overwhelming consensus among participants suggests that TikTok serves as an effective marketing platform for hair salons, highlighting the importance of incorporating social media strategies into branding efforts. Consequently, salons that leverage TikTok for marketing can expect to increase their visibility and attract a broader clientele.

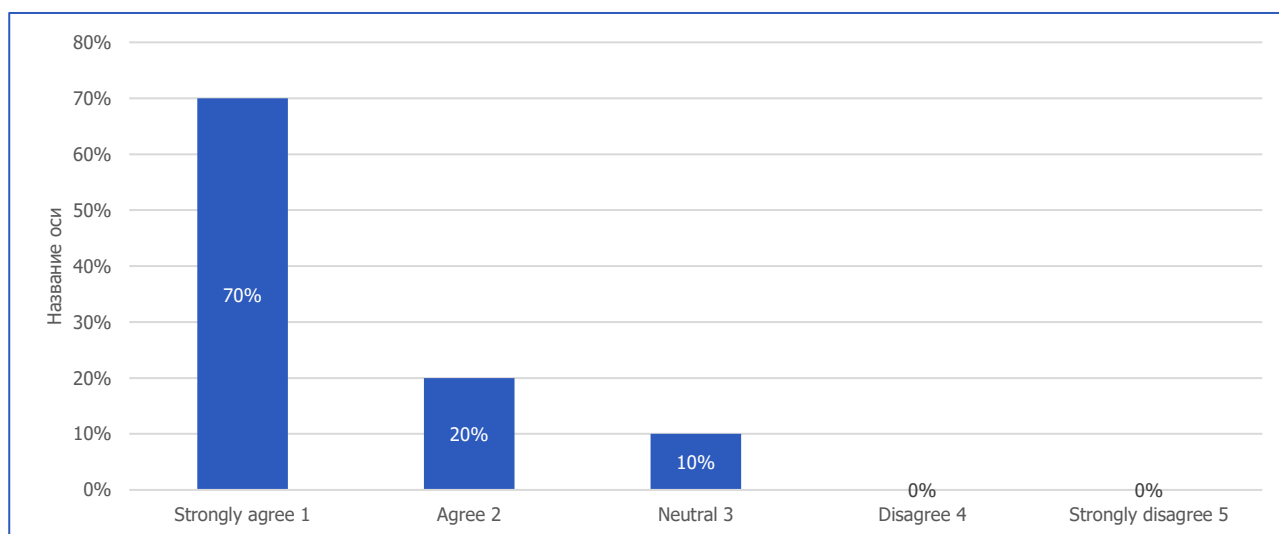


Figure 11. Impact of TikTok on Salon Brand Visibility.

The findings indicate that TikTok is a highly influential platform among youth in Buffalo City, with 90% of respondents owning TikTok accounts and half using the app multiple times daily. This significant level of engagement underscores TikTok's potential as a highly effective marketing channel for hair salons. Notably, 60% of respondents follow hair stylists or salons on TikTok, and 80% have encountered salon advertisements on the platform, revealing strong visibility and consumer interest. Demographically, the majority of respondents were female (70%) and aged 21–30 years (60%), indicating that marketing strategies should be targeted at this specific segment. Additionally, 70% of respondents strongly agree, and another 20% agree, that TikTok is effective in helping salons attract younger customers, while 70% say that TikTok content influences their decisions to visit salons. Moreover, 90% believe that TikTok enhances the visibility of salon brands, emphasizing its role as a powerful tool for both exposure and engagement.

In terms of content preferences, respondents identified trends (29.4%), discounts (23.5%), and music (23.5%) as the most impactful elements in TikTok advertisements, followed by influencer collaborations (11.8%) and testimonials (5.9%).

These insights suggest that salons should prioritize showcasing trending hairstyles, offer promotional discounts, and incorporate music-driven content to grab the attention of younger audiences. The significant link between TikTok engagement and consumer decision-making indicates missed opportunities for salons that do not fully leverage this platform. Strategic implications include implementing structured TikTok marketing campaigns, forming partnerships with influencers, and incorporating interactive features such as challenges and tutorials to enhance user engagement. Overall, the results confirm that TikTok advertising effectively raises awareness, influences purchase intentions, and fosters loyalty among youth consumers in Buffalo City. Salons that adopt these strategies can expect improved visibility, increased customer acquisition, and sustainable growth in a competitive digital market.

DISCUSSION

Supporting evidence from Jia and Kim (2024) further reinforces these findings, demonstrating that TikTok's short-form beauty videos have a notable influence on beauty management behaviours and cosmetic purchase intentions. Their regression analysis revealed that factors such as interest and interaction significantly impact hair management behaviours, while interest, convenience, and interaction collectively influence makeup management behaviours. Notably, interest emerged as the most significant factor, accounting for a substantial portion of the variance in purchase intention. This aligns with the Buffalo City study's emphasis on trends and entertaining content. Similarly, Selezneva (2024) found that user-generated content (UGC), particularly organic influencer posts, was perceived as more authentic and trustworthy than firm-generated content (FGC), resulting in higher purchase intentions. Respondents expressed a preference for relatable, genuine content over polished brand advertisements, indicating that authenticity and trustworthiness are crucial for persuasion.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study highlight TikTok's significant influence on the consumer behaviour of youth and the marketing strategies employed by salons in Buffalo City. The first recommendation emphasizes the necessity for hair salons to integrate TikTok as a fundamental marketing channel. This integration should involve the development of structured, trend-driven campaigns that harness TikTok's algorithmic capacity for virality and its interactive features, such as hashtags, challenges, and live sessions. Salons are encouraged to prioritize creating authentic and relatable content, including tutorials, videos, and behind-the-scenes glimpses, to foster trust and engagement among young audiences. The study demonstrated that 70% of respondents strongly agree that TikTok attracts youth customers, while 90% believe it enhances brand visibility, thereby confirming that TikTok serves not merely as a promotional tool but as a strategic driver of customer acquisition. To optimize impact, salons should also incorporate TikTok with operational tools, such as online booking systems and automated reminders, to ensure a seamless customer journey from content discovery to service delivery. This recommendation aligns with the Technology Acceptance Model, which emphasizes the importance of perceived usefulness and ease of use as key factors in the adoption process.

The second recommendation addresses the optimization of content in accordance with consumer preferences, directly responding to Research Question 2. The study identified trends (29.4%), discounts (23.5%), and music (23.5%) as the most influential elements in TikTok advertisements, followed by influencer collaborations (11.8%) and testimonials (5.9%). Salons are advised to design campaigns that feature trending hairstyles, incorporate popular audio clips, and offer limited-time discounts to encourage engagement and enhance conversion rates. Collaboration with micro-influencers and local content creators can significantly extend reach and authenticity, as user-generated content is often perceived as more trustworthy than corporate-generated content. Supporting evidence from Selezneva (2024) indicates that authenticity and relatability significantly bolster purchase intentions. Furthermore, salons should utilize TikTok's advanced targeting capabilities to tailor content specifically for demographic segments, particularly females aged 21–30, who comprised 60% of the study sample and exhibited the highest levels of engagement. By aligning content strategies with consumer expectations, salons can strengthen emotional connections, foster loyalty, and convert digital interactions into actual visits. This recommendation underscores the dual importance of aesthetic appeal and functional utility in achieving measurable business outcomes.

The final recommendation focuses on strategic engagement and performance monitoring, which are directly linked to Research Question Three. With 90% of respondents owning TikTok accounts and 50% utilizing the platform multiple times daily, salons must leverage this high level of engagement by maintaining an active and responsive presence. This includes monitoring comment sections, promptly addressing inquiries, and encouraging user-generated reviews to establish social proof. The study found that 80% of respondents have encountered salon advertisements on TikTok, and 60% actively

follow stylists or salons, indicating robust awareness and interaction. To sustain this momentum, salons should implement analytics-driven strategies, utilizing TikTok's business dashboard to track key metrics such as views, likes, shares, and conversion rates. These insights will inform content adjustments and budget allocations, ensuring campaigns remain both cost-effective and impactful. Moreover, salons should invest in staff training that focuses on digital marketing strategies and influencer collaborations to enhance the quality of their execution. Ethical considerations, such as transparency in sponsored content and adherence to data privacy regulations, must also be prioritized to maintain trust and compliance. By institutionalizing engagement practices and leveraging data-driven insights, salons can transform TikTok from a mere promotional platform into a comprehensive customer relationship management tool that helps salons attract and retain trend-conscious youth, enhance customer loyalty, and achieve sustainable growth, thus achieving long-term growth and resilience in an increasingly competitive market.

Directions for Future Research

This study offers valuable insights into the impact of TikTok advertising on youth consumer behaviour in Buffalo City; however, several areas warrant further investigation. Future research should employ a comparative approach across diverse regions and industries to assess the generalizability of the observed patterns in varying cultural and economic contexts. Expanding the focus beyond hair salons to encompass other small businesses could yield broader implications for digital marketing strategies. Additionally, a mixed-methods design that integrates quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews would enhance the understanding of consumer motivations and perceptions, particularly in relation to authenticity and trust in influencer-driven content. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to evaluate the long-term effects of TikTok campaigns on customer loyalty and repeat patronage, as this study primarily emphasizes short-term engagement. Moreover, future inquiries should investigate the dynamics of algorithms and the effectiveness of paid advertising, including cost-benefit analyses for small enterprises operating with limited budgets. Ultimately, addressing ethical considerations and consumer privacy concerns in social media marketing is crucial for promoting sustainable digital practices. These research directions will not only validate the current findings but also contribute to the development of robust frameworks for leveraging social media platforms in emerging markets.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors have contributed equally.

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The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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ВІД ТРЕНДІВ ДО ТРАНЗАКЦІЙ: ЯК РЕКЛАМА ТІКТОК СТИМУЮЄ ЗАЛУЧЕНІСТЬ МОЛОДІ ДО ПЕРУКАРЕНЬ

У цьому дослідженні розглянуто вплив реклами ТікТок на поведінку молоді в перукарнях, розташованих у Баффало-Сіті, Південна Африка. Основними цілями було оцінити вплив ТікТок на рішення щодо покупок, визначити рекламні функції, які приваблюють молодих споживачів, а також оцінити їхню обізнаність і залученість до контенту, пов'язаного з салонами. Було застосовано кількісний дослідницький дизайн, зосереджений на особах віком від 16 до 35 років, які активно користуються ТікТок і відвідують перукарні. Вибірка зі 100 респондентів була відібрана з популяції Баффало-Сіті за методом наймовірнішого відбору. Збирання даних передбачало структуровану анкету із закритими відповідями й елементами за шкалою Лайкерта, які потім аналізували за допомогою описової статистики та візуальних діаграм. Результати свідчать, що 90% респондентів мають акаунти в ТікТок, а половина користується платформою кілька разів на день, що підтверджує її популярність серед молодіжної аудиторії. Крім того, 70% учасників повністю погоджуються, що ТікТок ефективно приваблює молодих клієнтів, водночас 90% уважають, що він підвищує видимість салонів, демонструючи його ефективність як маркетингового інструмента. Уподобання контенту показали, що тренди (29,4%), знижки (23,5%) та музика (23,5%) є найбільш захопливими, за ними йдуть колаборації з інфлюенсерами та відгуки клієнтів. Ці інсайти підкреслюють значний вплив ТікТок на формування намірів щодо покупок і залучення бренду. Дослідження рекомендує салонам упроваджувати комплексні маркетингові стратегії ТікТок, зосереджуючись на автентичному, орієнтованому на тренди контенті, залучаючи партнерства з інфлюенсерами та інтегруючи інтерактивні функції ТікТок разом із операційними інструментами, такими як онлайн-системи бронювання. Упроваджуючи ці стратегії, салони можуть перетворити цифрову взаємодію на фізичні візити, сприяти лояльності клієнтів і досягти сталого зростання. Результати також дають цінні інсайти для малого бізнесу, який

прагне впроваджувати економічно ефективні стратегії цифрового маркетингу, щоб залишатися конкурентоспроможним на все більш динамічному ринку.

Ключові слова: співпраця з інфлюенсерами, намір купівлі, маркетинг у соціальних мережах, реклама в TikTok, поведінка молоді

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