

# GEN Z'S VIEWS ON INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CONTENTS ON TIKTOK

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## Abstract

This study investigates how perceived informativeness and perceived entertainment in TikTok content from international school's influence Generation Z's online engagement and behavioral intentions. Anchored in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, the research explores how content perceptions (stimuli) affect online engagement (organism), which subsequently shape behavioral intentions (response), such as inquiring about, enrolling in, or sharing school content. Data were collected through an online survey of Generation Z respondents in Surabaya, Indonesia. A total of 336 responses were gathered, and after applying a screening process to ensure relevance and data quality, 255 valid responses were analyzed. The findings reveal that both perceived informativeness and perceived entertainment significantly enhance online engagement, which in turn positively influences behavioral intentions. These results underscore the importance for international schools to create informative and entertaining content to effectively engage Gen Z on TikTok. The study offers practical implications for educational institutions aiming to strengthen their digital marketing strategies.

**Keywords:** Perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment, online engagement, behavioral intentions, gen z, Surabaya, international schools

## 1. Introduction

As the digital age has revolutionized the way we access and consume information, it has become increasingly crucial. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are becoming more popular and being more important in people's life, it now goes beyond communication, and now includes education and commerce (Pelletier, et.al, 2020).

As social media keeps on becoming popular, one social media platform– TikTok– was launched in 2017, the international version of Douyin, and acquired Musical.ly, a social media platform that allows users create and share short videos lip synching to songs, it is based in Shanghai that had already gained significant popularity among teenagers in the U.S. and UK (Kaye, Chen, & Zeng, 2020). By merging Musical.ly with TikTok in 2018, ByteDance is a technology company that capitalized on its access to the youth market abroad. While earlier short-video platforms that allowed users to create, share, and lip sync videos– like Vine and Dubsplash had some niche success in the West, TikTok stood out by becoming a mainstream platform, now competing with giants like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Much of TikTok's success is credited to its early focus on Gen Z, specifically targeting teenagers and preteens, unlike ByteDance's domestic products, which appeal to a wider demographic (Zeng, Abidin & Schafer, 2021).

According to Munoz (2022), within the 3.5 billion downloads the TikTok has, approximately 60% of those are included in the generation Z or known as Gen Z. Generation Z, the youngest generation examined, includes individuals born between 1997 and 2012. Given the quantity of active users, TikTok may be a viable social media platform that advertisers might target and draw in customers. TikTok has useful features like videos that anybody can watch, like, and comment on to promote or sell a good or service by a marketer. (Akbari, et.al, 2022).

Promotional content from brands on TikTok often focuses on enhancing personal or brand visibility rather than education. Brand-driven promotional videos generally aim to boost brand identity and consumer engagement through entertaining or aesthetic content, appealing to viewers' lifestyle aspirations. For example, businesses and influencers use TikTok to connect emotionally with audiences by tapping into trends, utilizing humor, or emphasizing aspirational lifestyles. Such promotional content often mirrors traditional advertising techniques, aiming to subtly influence consumer attitudes and buying intentions without necessarily imparting educational value (Bhosale, 2020; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2021)

While brands typically use TikTok to generate engagement and subtly shape consumer behavior, schools leverage the platform differently—employing it as a creative medium with students and showcase their programs in a way that combines entertainment and information in education effectively. Research about incorporating TikTok into education indicates that it can enhance the recognition of brands, among individuals. By sharing visually appealing content TikTok can effectively engage students. Keep them updated on school activities and atmosphere (Tan et al., 2022).

The distinctive interactive elements on TikTok such as comments. Likes boost user engagement and cultivate a feeling of community among its users. Studies indicate that this interactive aspect fosters a sense of connection not with the content itself but also with fellow viewers, by promoting shared reactions and a sense of belonging within the social space (Meng & Leungs, 2021).

Additionally, TikTok has quickly developed into a potent tool for educational establishments to interact with students and advertise their programs by fusing entertainment and information. TikTok's brief, captivating video format is used by schools to visually appeal and have an impact highlighting their programs, facilities, and student lives. This strategy is in line with the entertainment-education paradigm, which aims to improve viewer engagement and knowledge retention by creating content that is both entertaining and educational (Alghameeti, 2022). By producing quick-paced, visually appealing content that keeps viewers interested and informed about school events and culture, TikTok can have a good effect on brand recognition among younger audiences, according to studies on its educational usage (Tan et al., 2022).

High levels of engagement and a sense of community are fostered by TikTok's distinctive interactive features, which include likes, comments, and personalized content recommendations. According to research, this interactive TikTok experience promotes a sense of social belonging and shared reactions by making users feel connected to both the material and other viewers (Meng & Leung, 2021). Younger audiences, who frequently appreciate peer contact and the sense of connection created by online groups, are especially impacted by this kind of engagement. By presenting a pleasant and appealing image of the school community, these encounters can have a favorable behavioral impact during school promotions (Hamzah et al., 2021).

For educational institutions, particularly international schools in competitive regions like Surabaya, TikTok presents a powerful platform to attract and engage Gen Z audiences effectively. Research by Chabata and Gouveia (2023) emphasizes the value of TikTok engagement metrics—such as likes, shares, and

comments—which foster visibility and engagement with Gen Z users. These insights imply that schools can leverage these metrics to amplify the reach of both informative and entertaining content. Furthermore, Tubalawony (2023) underscores the impact of entertainment, customization, and electronic word-of-mouth in influencing Gen Z's decision-making processes on TikTok, suggesting that educational content should strike a balance between informative and entertaining elements to engage this demographic successfully. Additionally, Cheng and Li (2023) found that TikTok videos using specific emotional appeals significantly increase engagement, which suggests that educational institutions could strategically enhance their content's emotional resonance to appeal to Gen Z preferences effectively.

Surabaya's international schools make good use of TikTok's marketing potential by highlighting events, student accomplishments, and daily school life. An example of this is an international school, which creates in-house content that has garnered impressive engagement, with some videos reaching 147,000 likes, 1,596 comments, 11,000 saves, and 27,000 shares. Another school also achieved significant interaction, such as a video with 26,000 likes, 218 comments, 2,026 saves, and 818 shares. By doing this, these schools provide a lively and energetic image that appeals to parents and potential students alike. By using TikTok strategically, viewers' opinions of the school can be improved, which frequently results in behavioral effects like a rise in questions or interest in enrolling. According to studies, this type of promotional material can influence viewer perceptions and have a significant impact on engagement, making schools seem more accessible and approachable (Ningsih et al., 2023).

Furthermore, comparing the traditional platforms to TikTok, Gen Z, who cherish individualized experiences, finds TikTok particularly appealing because of its algorithm, which is thought to be among the most advanced in identifying content that closely matches users' tastes. When presenting material based on user interests, TikTok's recommendation engine routinely beats Instagram's algorithm, according to Bishqemi & Crowley (2022). This resulted in higher engagement metrics (views and interactions) than comparable postings on Instagram. For Gen Z, who like information that represents their own preferences and cultural quirks, this tailored approach works especially well.

In addition to that, unlike Facebook and Twitter, which started as text-heavy platforms, TikTok's core format is short-form video, which aligns well with Gen Z's preference for quick, visually engaging content. Flecha-Ortiz et al. (2023) emphasized that TikTok meets both hedonic (entertainment-focused) which means the pursuit of pleasure that refers to activities that make the user feel good, for example a user in TikTok is entertained, and relaxed by just simply using the platform, it shows hedonic pleasure, and utilitarian (information-focused) wherein this explains how a user in a social networking service (SNS) fulfills specific

needs for self-expression and social interaction, for example the needs of Gen Z, who view videos as an accessible way to gather information and interact online (Flecha-Ortiz et al., 2023). The focus of using videos in this format encourages a level of interaction since individuals tend to view and interact with videos more readily than they do, with text based or still image content available elsewhere.

Moreover, TikTok's ability to blend entertainment with information allows schools to engage viewers in a meaningful way. The platform's algorithm, which tailors content based on user interests, ensures that school-related videos reach a targeted audience. Schools can take advantage of this feature by crafting content that resonates with youth culture, helping them maintain visibility and reinforcing their brand image. This ongoing engagement with prospective students can influence their attitudes and behaviors, making them more likely to feel connected to the school (Liu, 2023).

However, a notable gap exists in the exploration of these dynamics within educational content aimed at Asian audiences, particularly in promoting educational institutions on platforms like TikTok. Studies in China have primarily examined factors influencing TikTok engagement, such as entertainment and personality traits, yet they lack a focus on educational content or its application in promoting schools (Meng & Leung, 2021). Furthermore, a study of Heyang and Martin (2022) focuses on leveraging TikTok's use in teaching and learning in higher education.

Furthermore, while TikTok's educational potential has been noted, especially for procedural learning and student engagement during COVID-19, studies conducted by various scholars (such as Susanti & Hamka, 2024; Hasanah, Pujiastuti, & Tirtayasa, 2022; Putri, 2021; Afida, Sari, & Hanifah, 2021;) do not focus on its use for school promotion or its effectiveness in fostering engagement and shaping behavioral intentions. This research gap is especially relevant for institutions in Surabaya, Indonesia, seeking to connect with Gen Z through informative and entertaining content on TikTok, as current studies provide limited guidance on best practices for engaging this demographic in an educational setting.

In addition, a study by Garcia et al. (2022) highlights the scarcity of research on TikTok's role as a structured educational tool, indicating a significant gap in understanding how the platform can be effectively utilized for educational content. Most research (such as Srivastava, 2021; Paatelainen, Kannasto, & Isotalus, 2022; Khanom, 2023) focuses on traditional social media platforms, leaving behind holes in research concerning the unique dynamics of TikTok. In addition, since this generation is more likely to search for information on TikTok and similar platforms, what leads to obstacles or improvements in their engagement would be useful to help inform educators and marketers (Rushing, 2024).

Addressing this gap involves investigating how content informativeness and entertainment value impact Gen Z's engagement and behavioral intentions within educational promotions on TikTok, providing actionable insights specific to the Indonesian and broader Asian educational landscape. To this end, this study explores how international schools can strategically create TikTok content that blends entertainment and informativeness to effectively engage Gen Z audiences. Grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, this research positions informativeness and entertainment as stimuli, online engagement as the organismic response, and behavioral intentions as the resulting outcomes.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on international school promotions targeting school-aged Gen Z users—a demographic and context rarely examined in current literature. This research offers both theoretical contributions and practical implications for educational institutions seeking to enhance their digital marketing strategies.

To guide this exploration, the study is driven by the following research questions:

1. Does the informative value of international schools' promotional content on TikTok impact online engagement among Gen Z?
2. Does the entertainment value of international schools' promotional content on TikTok influence online engagement among Gen Z?
3. Does online engagement influence Gen Z's behavioral intentions toward international schools?
4. Does online engagement mediate the effect of informative and entertainment value on Gen Z's behavioral intentions?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory**

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model was coined by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) wherein the SOR model is about the various elements of the environment act as (S) that influence individuals' emotional states (O), which in turn lead to their behavioral intentions (R). This has been widely applied in the retail domain to analyze how external stimuli affect consumers' internal states, which subsequently influence their behavioral responses (Eroglu et al., 2001).

In this study, the S-O-R model is applied to investigate how perceived informativeness and perceived entertainment of a brand's promotional contents on a specific communication channel (i.e., TikTok in the

context of this study) function as the stimuli (S) that influence consumer engagement (O), which subsequently drives behavioral intentions (R). Perceived informativeness and entertainment, as external triggers, evoke cognitive and emotional engagement, which mediates the relationship between these stimuli and behavioral outcomes. As such, similarly with Chan et al. (2017), applying this model can help understand the critical role of consumer engagement in linking perceptions of value to behavioral intentions, giving an insight or a pathway for understanding and optimizing consumer interactions or in this case behavioral intentions.

The discussion regarding brands' promotional contents on digital platforms inform us the necessity of applying content marketing in influencing brand outcomes such as awareness and equity (e.g., Ahmad, Musa, & Harun 2016; du Plessis 2015; Holliman & Rowley, 2014) or more specific outcomes such as consumer engagement with the content and the brand (e.g., Ashley & Tuten 2015; Chauhan & Pillai 2013; du Plessis 2017; Hutchins & Rodriguez 2018; Kim and Ko, 2012). Another studies (e.g., Coursaris et al., 2016) also discuss and provide empirical evidence on the impact of content marketing, largely in the form of its perceived values (e.g., informativeness or entertainment), on brand equity, consumer engagement, and purchase intentions. Therefore, in the following section, the author will briefly discuss content marketing and how it underpins the formation of consumer perceived value of content marketing, which comprises many dimensions.

## **2.2. Content Marketing**

Content marketing is a digital strategy focused on creating valuable, relevant content to attract and retain customers without direct selling, ultimately driving profitable actions (du Plessis, 2022). Unlike traditional advertising, it builds trust and relationships through informative, entertaining, or educational content in formats like blogs, videos, and case studies.

Poradová (2020) and Lopes & Casais (2022) emphasize that strong content enhances brand image, customer relationships, and engagement. Key strategies include consistent, high-quality multimedia content, interactive elements, and aligning content with business goals.

Jafarova & Tolon (2022) note that content marketing on social media boosts brand loyalty and purchase intent, especially as consumers increasingly ignore traditional ads. Storytelling and interactivity play a crucial role in emotional connection and engagement.

Baltes (2015) identifies five success factors: relevance, value, targeting, engagement, and brand positioning. Together, these guide businesses in crafting effective, audience-centered content strategies.

Overall, content marketing stands out for building loyalty and driving engagement through meaningful, customer-focused content. Ducoffe's (1995) work further highlights content value as key to understanding ads effectiveness.

### **2.3. Ducoffe's Advertising Content Value**

Ducoffe (1995) defines advertising value as the consumer's subjective evaluation of an ad's usefulness, shaped by five key factors: informativeness, credibility, entertainment, irritation, and incentives (Martins et al., 2017). All are important in shaping consumer responses.

This study focuses on informativeness and entertainment—two elements highly relevant to school promotional content on TikTok. Informativeness meets the practical needs of prospective students by providing relevant and useful details (Shareef et al., 2019), while entertainment helps capture attention and foster emotional engagement (Jiang et al., 2015).

Although credibility is a significant factor, it is not included in this study because the content examined is organic that means created and posted by the schools themselves through official TikTok accounts wherein this already inherently establishes credibility. This approach allows the study to explore how informative and entertaining content influence viewer perception and engagement.

### **2.4. Perceived Informativeness**

Perceived Informativeness (PI) refers to the extent to which users perceive content as relevant, useful, and complete in helping them make decisions. In the context of social media and digital marketing, PI is considered a key factor influencing user engagement and behavior.

Kenang and Kasetty (2024) define PI on social commerce platforms like TikTok as the degree to which information is relevant, complete, and timely, directly impacting consumer decision-making. Similarly, Lee and Hong (2021, as cited in Ji et al., 2021) identify five dimensions of PI in social media advertising: novelty, accuracy, relevance, usefulness, and knowledge acquisition. These elements highlight how informative content can shape user perceptions and behavior.

Ismail et al. (2022) emphasize that informativeness positively affects purchase intention when combined with entertaining content. This synergy enhances engagement and behavior. Although Dwinanda et al.

(2022) found entertainment more influential on TikTok, they noted that informativeness still contributes to consumer interest, especially among Gen Z audiences.

Overall, existing literature shows that informative content increases user satisfaction, encourages engagement, and supports decision-making in digital environments.

H1: There is a significant relationship between perceived informativeness and online engagement.

H2: There is a significant relationship between perceived informativeness and behavioral intention.

## **2.5. Perceived Entertainment**

Perceived Entertainment (PE) refers to the enjoyment, interest, and emotional satisfaction users experience when engaging with digital content. Jiang, Peng, and Liu (2015) define PE as the intrinsic happiness and interest users feel, emphasizing emotional response, excitement, and user engagement as core elements contributing to content adoption. Similarly, Khabibah, Pradekso, and Manalu (2022) highlight enjoyment, interest, connection, and emotional resonance as key factors that drive engagement with social media ads.

Ganter (2024) adds that emotional response and agency are crucial for young adults when options are limited, suggesting that entertainment value can evolve based on context and access. Meanwhile, Gansaraiva and Lues (2024) emphasize appeal, engagement, and enjoyment in determining the effectiveness of advertising, especially for younger audiences.

Widyastuti (2024) and Walt et al. (2024) both found that PE enhances user satisfaction, positively affects brand perception, and mediates the impact of informativeness on behavioral outcomes. Their findings show that enjoyment plays a central role in sustaining attention and influencing consumer attitudes. Matute-Vallejo and Melero-Polo (2019) similarly observed that perceived enjoyment impacts perceived usefulness and ease of use, increasing user engagement and behavioral intention.

These findings are supported by Martins et al. (2017), who define PE as how interesting, enjoyable, entertaining, and pleasing the content is. For international schools on TikTok, creating emotionally engaging, fun, and relatable content can significantly increase Gen Z's interaction with and behavioral response to the content.

Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: There is a significant relationship between perceived entertainment and online engagement.

H4: There is a significant relationship between perceived entertainment and behavioral intention.

### **Online Engagement**

refers to the psychological and emotional connection that motivates users to actively interact with brands and other users on social media. Paruthi and Kaur (2017) define it through five indicators: (1) Conscious Attention, (2) Affection, (3) Enthused Participation, (4) Social Connection, and (5) Interaction with brand-related content. This definition is adopted in the current study.

Scholars consistently link online engagement to behavioral intentions. Kayapinar et al. (2023) found a positive correlation between engagement and future consumer behavior, noting that functional, emotional, and communal engagement enhance social benefits and behavioral intent. Similarly, Yan et al. (2023) highlighted that perceived enjoyment and usefulness, as components of engagement, mediate the relationship between users' preferences and their intention to act—underscoring the value of engaging and useful content.

Yoong and Lian (2019) affirmed that motives like information sharing, social interaction, and attraction fuel engagement, which then boosts purchase intentions. Wismiarsi et al. (2024) found that while interactive content influences behavior, online engagement plays a more dominant role in shaping purchase decisions.

Supporting this, Holdack et al. (2022) showed that enjoyment enhances the perceived value of informativeness, leading to stronger usage intentions. Alqutub (2023), using the Theory of Planned Behavior, concluded that engagement significantly mediates the relationship between attitudes and behavioral intentions in social media marketing.

These studies suggest that online engagement is not only a direct predictor of behavioral intention but also a mediator between content value (informativeness and entertainment) and user behavior.

H5: There is a significant relationship between online engagement and behavioral intention.

H6a: Online engagement significantly mediates the relationship between perceived informativeness and behavioral intention.

H6b: Online engagement significantly mediates the relationship between perceived entertainment and behavioral intention.

## **2.7. Behavioral Intentions**

Behavioral intention refers to an individual's motivation or willingness to perform a specific action. Tran and Le (2020) define it as the likelihood of returning to, recommending, or speaking positively about a service or brand, influenced by satisfaction and perceived value. Setiawan et al. (2022) similarly describe it as the desire to carry out a behavior, such as adopting technology, shaped by attitudes and perceptions. Islam, Islam, and Zannat (2023) associate behavioral intention with purchase intention, highlighting a consumer's readiness to engage in online transactions. Mahmoud, Abd El-Basit, and Fekry (2019), based on the Theory of Reasoned Action, explain it as a subjective probability of performing a behavior, driven by attitudes and social norms. Wang and Bai (2022), drawing from the Technology Acceptance Model, define it as the intention to engage with a product or service due to perceived usefulness and the impact of advertising.

In this study, behavioral intention is defined as the willingness or extent of one's motivation to interact with or purchase a product or service as influenced by advertisements. It includes checking product or service details, clicking links to learn more, participating in discussions about the advertisement, expressing willingness to purchase, actually purchasing or availing the product or service, and recommending it to others.

## **2.8. Research Model**

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed research model, which examines the influence of perceived informativeness and entertainment of promotional content on TikTok on users' online engagement and behavioral intentions.

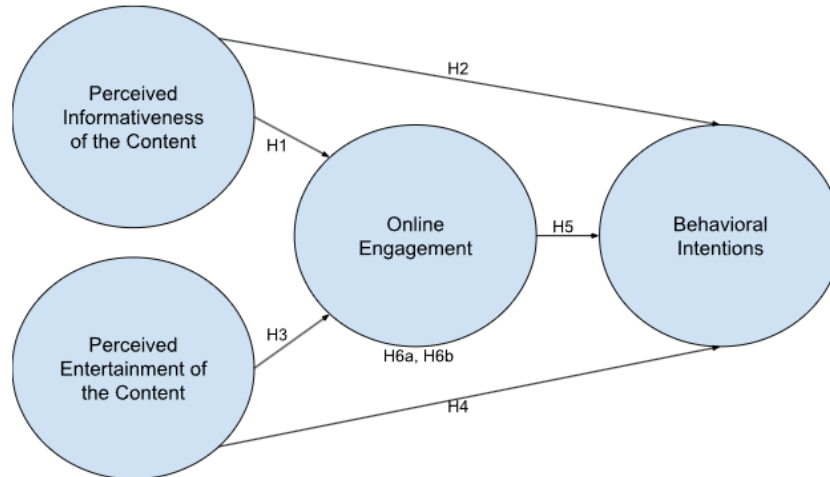


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Population and Sample

In this study, a non-probability sampling method was employed, meaning not all members of the population—specifically students—had an equal chance of being selected. Purposive sampling was used, in which students were deliberately chosen based on characteristics relevant to the research objectives. The selected students were required to have been exposed to a school’s promotional content on TikTok within the past three months.

The study was conducted in Surabaya, and data collection was limited to this geographic scope. During April-May 2025, the researcher distributed an online questionnaire and collected responses from 336 students in Surabaya. Out of this total, 33 students were excluded as they had not been exposed to a school’s promotional content in TikTok. After this screening, the researcher removed the responses that had a variance of 0, it was found out that 48 of the responses had a variance of 0. Thus, the responses that are eligible for further analysis and deemed valid amounted to 255 responses.

#### 3.2. Measurement and Data Analysis

Perceived Informativeness was measured using items adapted from Ji et al. (2021) and Lee and Hong (2021), while Perceived Entertainment was assessed with items developed by Martin et al. (2017). Online Engagement was measured using items from Paruthi and Kaur (2017). Lastly, Behavioral Intentions were evaluated through items adapted from Wang and Bai (2022) as well as Mahmoud, Abd El-Basit, and Fekry (2019). All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

To examine the proposed hypotheses, this study utilizes Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis to support and streamline the data processing. The analysis is carried out using the SmartPLS 4.0 software. Within the PLS approach, two key models are assessed: the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model).

#### 4. Results

##### 4.1. Respondent Profile

Based on Table 1, the study analyzed 255 valid responses, showing a fairly balanced distribution across gender, age, and year level, with a slight skew toward younger Gen Z individuals. Among the respondents, 53.33% identified as female and 46.67% as male, indicating a nearly equal gender representation with a marginal female majority. In terms of age, 41.57% were 16 years old, 43.14% were 17, and only 15.29% were 18, suggesting that most participants were in the lower range of the Gen Z cohort and likely still in high school. The year-level distribution was relatively even, with 30.98% in Grade 10, 34.90% in Grade 11, and 34.12% in Grade 12, offering perspectives from students at different stages of their academic journey. Regarding engagement with international school content on TikTok, 64.71% of respondents reported following such accounts, while 35.29% did not, indicating a strong interest among a majority of students. Daily usage of TikTok was reported by 85.5% of the participants, while smaller percentages used the app weekly (5.1%), monthly (1.2%), or rarely (8.2%), highlighting the platform's central role in their daily digital routines. However, only 8.2% used TikTok daily to search for international school information, with others doing so weekly (25.9%), monthly (31.4%), or rarely (34.5%), reflecting a more casual engagement with educational content. Of the original 336 respondents, 33 (9.82%) were excluded for not meeting the minimum exposure requirement of having viewed international school content at least three times in the past three months, and another 48 (14.29%) were removed due to having zero variance across all relevant variables, leaving 255 valid responses (75.89%) for inclusion in the study.

Table 1. Respondent Demographic Profile

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	119	46.67%
Female	136	53.33%
Age		

16 years old	106	41.57%
17 years old	110	43.14%
18 years old	39	15.29%
Grade Level		
Grade 10	79	30.98%
Grade 11	89	34.90%
Grade 12	87	34.12%
Following International Schools		
TikTok		
Yes	165	64.71%
No	90	35.29%
Frequency of TikTok Use Among Students		
Daily	218	85.5%
Weekly	13	5.1%
Monthly	3	1.2%
Rarely	21	8.2%
Frequency of Student Use of TikTok to Find Information About International Schools		
Daily	21	8.2%
Weekly	66	25.9%
Monthly	80	31.4%
Rarely	88	34.50%
Exposure to International School Promotional Content on TikTok		
Yes	303	90.18%
No	33	9.82%

#### 4.2. Measurement Model

The evaluation of the outer model begins with tests for validity and reliability. Validity assessment includes examining both convergent and discriminant validity, while reliability is measured through composite reliability. Convergent validity is first evaluated using outer loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). Although the recommended threshold for outer loadings is 0.708, values between 0.40 and 0.70 may be retained in social science research, particularly for newly developed instruments, provided their removal does not enhance composite reliability or AVE (Hair et al., 2017). Additionally, the AVE must meet a minimum value of 0.50 to confirm adequate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017). As shown in Table 2, all outer loading values for the measured variables satisfy these established criteria, confirming the model's validity and reliability.

Table 2. Construct Mean, Standard Deviation, Convergent Validity and Reliability

Construct Model	Label	Items	Mean	StDev	Factor Loading
Perceived Informativeness  AVE = 0.676 CR (rho A) = 0.884 CA = 0.879	PI1	I can get new information from international school's promotional contents on TikTok (e.g., new students' experiences, new facilities)	0.826	1.014	0.827
	PI2	I can get valuable information from international school's promotional contents on TikTok (e.g., curriculum, learning methods, facilities)	0.882	0.969	0.882
	PI3	I can get accurate information from international school's promotional contents on TikTok (e.g. Enrolment and tuition fee, teacher qualifications, curriculum)	0.772	0.951	0.774
	PI4	I can get reliable information from international school's promotional contents	0.843	0.997	0.843

	PI5	I can get the information that I want from international school's promotional contents on TikTok	0.777	0.916	0.779
Perceived Entertainment  AVE = 0.764 CR (rho A) = 0.903 CA = 0.896	PE1	International school's promotional contents on TikTok are interesting.	0.798	0.860	0.800
	PE2	International school's promotional contents on TikTok are fun to watch or read	0.893	0.874	0.893
	PE3	International school's promotional contents on TikTok are entertaining.	0.910	0.932	0.910
	PE4	International school's promotional contents on TikTok do not just sell, they also entertain me	0.889	0.934	0.889
Online Engagement  AVE = 0.701 CR (rho A) = 0.941 CA = 0.938	OE1	International school's promotional contents on TikTok are amusing	0.696	0.853	0.699
	OE2	International schools' promotional contents on TikTok grabs my attention.	0.845	1.04	0.846
	OE4	I find the experience of watching international schools' promotional contents on TikTok to be pleasurable.	0.803	0.902	0.804
	OE5	Engaging with International schools' promotional contents on TikTok makes me feel happy.	0.873	1.074	0.873

	OE6	I spend a lot of my free time watching international schools' promotional contents on TikTok	0.842	1.179	0.842
	OE7	I enjoy spending time watching international schools' promotional contents on TikTok	0.892	1.100	0.892
	OE8	I love watching international schools' promotional contents on TikTok with my friends.	0.865	1.264	0.865
	OE9	I have fun watching international schools' promotional contents on TikTok with my friends	0.860	1.206	0.860
Behavioral Intentions  AVE = 0.835 CR (rho A) = 0.952 CA = 0.951	BI1	I will check the product/service information in detail from international schools with promotional contents on TikTok	0.909	1.399	0.909
	BI2	I will recommend to others the international schools that have positive promotional contents on TikTok	0.931	1.311	0.931
	BI3	I will say positive things about the international schools that have promotional contents on TikTok	0.893	1.13	0.894
	BI4	I think International schools with promotional contents on TikTok are worth sharing with others	0.909	1.15	0.910
	BI5	I will recommend friends/relatives to watch international school's promotional contents on TikTok	0.926	1.317	0.927

The next step after assessing convergent validity in the outer model is evaluating discriminant validity. In this study, discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). For exploratory research, the HTMT value should be below 0.90 to indicate adequate discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). Table 3 presents the HTMT results for each variable.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratio)

Construct	Behavioral Intentions	Online Engagement	Perceived Informativeness	Perceived Entertainment
Behavioral Intentions				
Online Engagement	0.867			
Perceived Informativeness	0.745	0.759		
Perceived Entertainment	0.600	0.831	0.553	

#### 4.3. Structural Model

On the results presented in Table 4, the  $R^2$  values for the dependent variables, OE and BI, both exceed 0.50. Specifically, the  $R^2$  values of these variables indicate a moderate to substantial level of predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2017). For the OE variable, the  $R^2$  value stands at 0.707, suggesting that about 70.7% of the variance is explained by informativeness and entertainment. The remaining 29.3% is attributed to other variables not examined in this study. In addition, the  $R^2$  value for BI is 0.713, indicating that approximately 71.3% of the variability is explained by OE, while the remaining 28.7% is influenced by other variables not included in the current model.

Moreover, both OE and BI have  $Q^2$  values greater than 0, confirming that the model has predictive relevance for both constructs. The  $Q^2$  value for OE is 0.700, and for BI, it is 0.528—both demonstrating strong predictive capability. This implies that changes in informativeness and entertainment can predict

shifts in OE, which in turn can forecast changes in BI. Since both the  $R^2$  and  $Q^2$  meet the required criteria, the analysis proceeds to hypothesis testing for statistical significance.

Table 4. Predictive Accuracy and Relevance

Dependent Variables	$R^2$	$Q^2$
Behavioral Intentions (BI)	0.713	0.528
Online Engagement (OE)	0.707	0.7

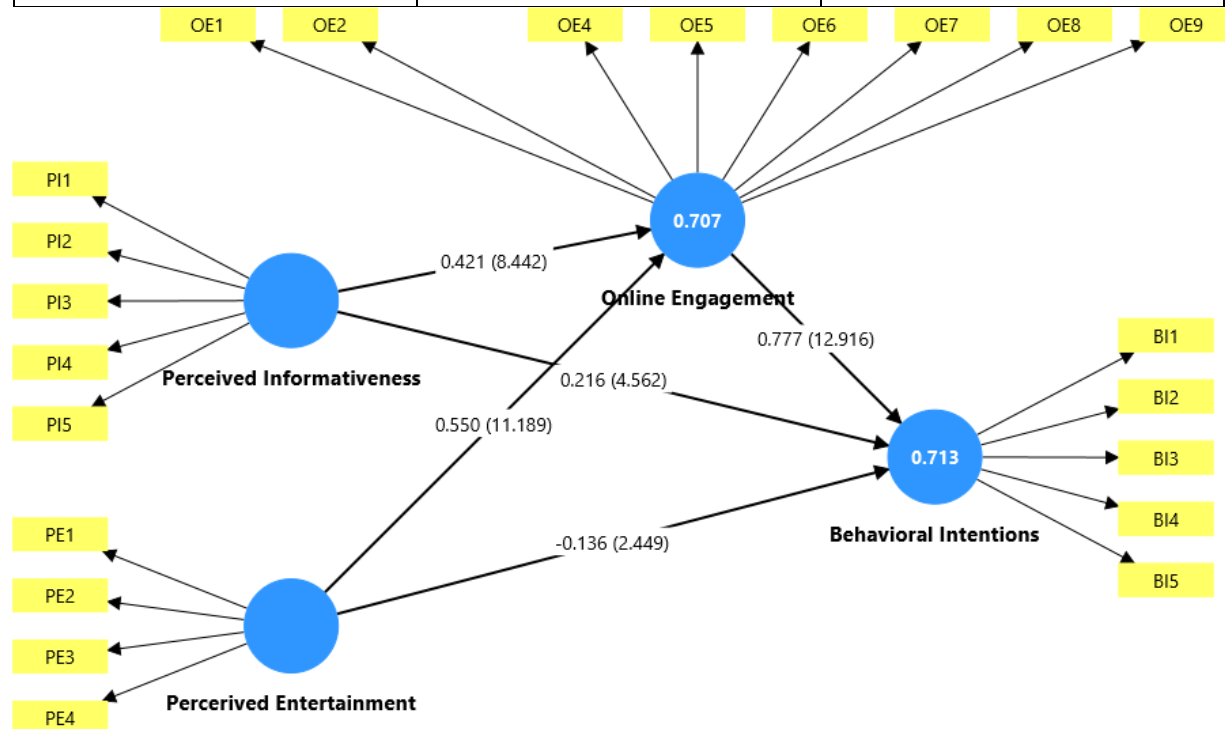


Figure 2. PLS-SEM Structural Model

In this hypothesis test shown in Table 5, the researcher will perform a t-test to analyze the relationship between the independent variables, informativeness and entertainment, and the dependent variable, behavioral intentions (BI), with online engagement (OE) serving as a mediating variable. Additionally, the test aims to evaluate the extent to which OE mediates the relationship between the independent variables and BI. The t-test is conducted using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS 4.0. The analysis involves comparing the t-statistic value against the critical t-value from the t-distribution table at a 5% significance level. If the t-statistic exceeds the critical value ( $>1.96$ ), the hypothesis is supported, indicating that the effect is statistically significant at the selected level of confidence.

Table 5. Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	T statistics	P values	Remarks
H1	Perceived Entertainment -> Online Engagement	0.550	11.189	0.000	Supported
H2	Perceived Entertainment -> Behavioral Intentions	-0.136	2.449	0.014	Not Supported
H3	Perceived Informativeness -> Online Engagement	0.421	8.442	0.000	Supported
H4	Perceived Informativeness -> Behavioral Intentions	0.216	4.562	0.000	Supported
H5	Online Engagement -> Behavioral Intentions	0.777	12.916	0.000	Supported
H6a	Perceived Informativeness -> Online Engagement -> Behavioral Intentions	0.328	7.023	0.000	Supported
H6b	Perceived Entertainment -> Online Engagement -> Behavioral Intentions	0.427	8.526	0.000	Supported

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. The influence of perceived entertainment on online engagement and behavioral intentions

In this study, the indicator with the highest outer loading for perceived entertainment is PE3: “International school’s promotional contents on TikTok are entertaining.” This suggests that Gen Z respondents respond positively to content showcasing enjoyable aspects of school life — such as student-teacher interactions, extracurricular activities, and vibrant school facilities — which align with their preference for engaging and visually dynamic content.

Hypothesis testing for H1 revealed that perceived entertainment has a significant influence on online engagement (path coefficient = 0.550, t-statistic = 11.189, p-value = 0.000). This supports prior findings by Jiang, Peng, and Liu (2015), who stated that emotional satisfaction and enjoyment are key drivers of engagement with digital content. Similarly, Widyastuti (2024) and Walt et al. (2024) emphasized that perceived entertainment enhances user satisfaction and shapes emotional connection, which is essential for driving social media interaction. When international schools present joyful and authentic experiences through TikTok, it fosters emotional connection and motivates interaction.

However, in H2, perceived entertainment was found to have a significant but negative influence on behavioral intentions (path coefficient = -0.136, t-statistic = 2.449, p-value = 0.014). This suggests that while entertaining content can capture attention and promote engagement, it may also unintentionally diminish perceptions of academic seriousness or credibility. This aligns with Ganter (2024), who noted that when options are limited, emotional resonance must be managed to avoid undermining informational trust. Similarly, Flecha-Ortiz et al. (2023) identified that hedonic content alone may not support utilitarian goals such as decision-making, particularly in educational contexts.

This result highlights the importance of the mediating role of online engagement. While entertainment alone may not directly encourage behavioral intentions, it serves as an effective gateway to foster engagement. Holdack et al. (2022) noted that enjoyment enhances the perceived value of informativeness and thus indirectly supports behavior. Only after such engagement is established can the content potentially lead to more serious outcomes such as enrollment interest. In other words, entertaining content must first generate emotional and cognitive involvement before it can effectively drive behavioral action—especially in educational contexts where trust and credibility are critical.

These findings emphasize the need for balance: while entertainment is valuable for capturing attention and driving engagement, it should be complemented with credible, informative content to effectively support deeper behavioral outcomes.

## **5.2. The influence of perceived informativeness on online engagement and behavioral intentions**

In this study, the indicator with the highest outer loading for perceived informativeness is PI2: “I can get valuable information from international school’s promotional contents on TikTok (e.g., curriculum, learning methods, facilities).” This highlights that Gen Z viewers perceive promotional content as informative when it provides practical and relevant insights into what international schools offer. Participating schools in this study often feature globally recognized curricula such as Cambridge,

Singaporean, and the International Baccalaureate (IB), as well as showcase various facilities including swimming pools, podcast rooms, and sports courts.

TikTok's visual and fast-paced nature aligns well with Gen Z's media consumption habits, enabling schools to present detailed and transparent information in an engaging format. As noted by Kenang and Kasetty (2024), relevance, completeness, and timeliness of information directly influence digital decision-making. For Gen Z, informativeness contributes to a sense of trust, credibility, and relevance. Ismail et al. (2022) further support that informative content enhances engagement and behavioral outcomes, especially when paired with entertainment.

In hypothesis testing, perceived informativeness was found to have a significant influence on both online engagement and behavioral intentions. Specifically, H3 recorded a path coefficient of 0.421, t-statistic of 8.442, and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that informative content encourages Gen Z viewers to engage more actively. Additionally, H4 demonstrated a path coefficient of 0.216, t-statistic of 4.562, and a p-value of 0.000, suggesting that when viewers find the content genuinely informative, they are more likely to take follow-up actions, such as exploring enrollment options or seeking additional information about the school.

These findings underscore the vital role of transparency and meaningful messaging in digital content. Shareef et al. (2019) and Ji et al. (2021) both emphasize that informative advertising builds credibility and influences consumer behavior. By focusing on the delivery of valuable and credible information through a platform Gen Z favor, international schools can effectively boost both engagement and prospective student interest.

### **5.3. The influence of online engagement on behavioral intentions**

In this study, the indicator with the highest outer loading for online engagement is OE7: "I enjoy spending time watching international schools' promotional contents on TikTok." This suggests that Gen Z viewers find pleasure and interest in engaging with such content, particularly when it showcases relatable and appealing aspects of school life. The sample videos presented to respondents typically featured internationally recognized curricula such as Cambridge, Singaporean, and IB, alongside vibrant visuals of school facilities like swimming pools, podcast rooms, sports courts, as well as clubs, sports activities, and close, enjoyable interactions between students and teachers. These elements contribute to making the content enjoyable and immersive for viewers.

Hypothesis testing, H5 reveals a significant influence of online engagement on behavioral intentions. Specifically, the path coefficient is 0.777, with a t-statistic of 12.916 and a p-value of 0.000. This supports previous studies such as Paruthi and Kaur (2017), who established that conscious attention and interaction with content predict user behavior. Kayapinar et al. (2023) and Alqutub (2023) also found that emotional, social, and communal aspects of engagement drive behavioral intentions in digital environments.

These findings highlight the power of creating engaging content that not only captures attention but also motivates meaningful actions, reinforcing the importance of connecting with Gen Z audiences through authentic and enjoyable digital experiences.

#### **5.4. Online engagement as a mediator**

In this study, online engagement is examined as a mediator in the relationship between perceived informativeness and perceived entertainment on behavioral intentions. The highest outer loadings for the key constructs are: PI2 (“I can get valuable information from international school’s promotional contents on TikTok, e.g., curriculum, learning methods, facilities”), PE3 (“International school’s promotional contents on TikTok are entertaining”), OE7 (“I enjoy spending time watching international schools’ promotional contents on TikTok”), and BI2 (“I will recommend to others the international schools that have positive promotional contents on TikTok”).

Hypothesis testing confirms the mediating role of online engagement in these relationships. Specifically, perceived informativeness influences behavioral intentions through online engagement, with a path coefficient of 0.328, a t-statistic of 7.023, and a p-value of 0.000 (H6a). Likewise, perceived entertainment influences behavioral intentions via online engagement, with a path coefficient of 0.427, a t-statistic of 8.526, and a p-value of 0.000 (H6b).

These results are supported by Holdack et al. (2022), who found that emotional engagement enhances perceived informativeness and increases usage intention. Similarly, Wismiarsi et al. (2024) emphasized that while entertainment influences behavior, it is engagement that has a more dominant role in shaping decisions. The findings in this study indicate that the more informative and entertaining the TikTok promotional content from international schools is perceived to be, the more likely Gen Z viewers are to engage with it. This increased engagement, in turn, leads to stronger behavioral intentions, such as recommending the schools to others.

Thus, online engagement plays a crucial bridging role, amplifying the impact of content attributes on viewers’ actions. It confirms the mediating function described in the S-O-R model, where stimuli

(informativeness and entertainment) influence internal states (engagement), which then lead to responses (behavioral intention) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Chan et al., 2017).

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **6.1. Conclusion**

Based on the results of the research and the discussion above, the following conclusions and recommendations can be drawn:

Perceived entertainment significantly enhances online engagement but may reduce behavioral intentions if not balanced with informative content. The indicator with the highest outer loading in this construct — PE3: “International school’s promotional contents on TikTok are entertaining” (0.910) — reflects Gen Z’s strong emotional response to engaging content that highlights vibrant aspects of school life such as clubs, sports, and student-teacher interactions. However, the significant but negative influence of perceived entertainment on behavioral intentions (H2) suggests that overly entertaining content may lead viewers to question the academic seriousness of the school. Therefore, international schools’ promotional content on TikTok should strategically pair entertaining content with clear academic messaging. For example, behind-the-scenes videos of fun events can be followed by informative clips about the IB, Cambridge, or Singaporean curricula, or teacher expertise to maintain seriousness and motivate follow-up actions.

Perceived informativeness strongly influences both engagement and behavioral intentions and should be prioritized in TikTok promotional strategies. The top loading item — PI2: “I can get valuable information from international school’s promotional contents on TikTok” (0.882) — suggests that Gen Z appreciates content that presents clear, relevant, and practical insights such as curriculum details, teaching methods, and school facilities. Unlike entertainment, informativeness positively impacts both online engagement (H3) and behavioral intentions (H4), reinforcing trust and interest. With that, international schools’ promotional content on TikTok should consistently feature informative content showcasing curriculum strengths (e.g., Cambridge, IB), state-of-the-art facilities (e.g., podcast rooms, courts, pools), and student achievements. Content should aim to be both reliable (PI4 – 0.843) and new (PI1 – 0.827) to resonate with Gen Z’s expectations.

Online engagement plays a critical mediating role between content perception and behavioral intentions. The strongest influence observed in this study was from online engagement to behavioral intention (H5: path coefficient = 0.777). Moreover, online engagement significantly mediated the impact of both perceived informativeness and entertainment (H6a, H6b). The outer loading for OE7: “I enjoy spending

time watching international schools' promotional contents on TikTok" reflects the power of immersive, relatable, and visually dynamic content. Thus, international schools' promotional content on TikTok encourage interaction by adding calls-to-action within videos (e.g., "Comment your dream classroom!" or "Would you study here?"), using trending audio, and responding to comments to build community. These actions deepen engagement, increasing the chance of conversion.

### **Lower-performing items suggest content gaps that need to be addressed.**

The lowest loading indicator for informativeness — PI3: "I can get accurate information" (0.774) — signals that viewers may not find enough precise details about enrollment, fees, or teacher qualifications. Similarly, PE1: "Content is interesting" (0.800) underperformed relative to other entertainment items, suggesting a need to refine how schools frame their content to captivate Gen Z beyond surface-level appeal. Having that, international schools' promotional content on TikTok should include clear, visually digestible information about important aspects like admission procedures, faculty profiles, and tuition structures. Combine engaging storytelling with factual clarity to reinforce both interest and trust.

## **6.2. Implication**

Here are some managerial implications derived from this research:

International schools' marketing teams should recognize that Gen Z's engagement is significantly influenced by how well TikTok content conveys real value—such as detailed curriculum overviews, firsthand student experiences, and a transparent look into school life. The effectiveness of PI2 and PI4 suggests that presenting such content can shape trust and influence perceptions of academic credibility. This approach strongly enhances online engagement due to increased perceived informativeness, and as engagement mediates behavior, it ultimately boosts behavioral intention as well.

The high entertainment value of content like PE3 ("entertaining") and PE2 ("fun to watch or read") reinforces that schools must cater to Gen Z's preference for dynamic, relatable, and fun digital experiences. Since perceived entertainment has a strong impact on online engagement, improving this aspect will directly increase engagement and indirectly lead to higher behavioral intention. However, because excessive entertainment could weaken perceptions of academic rigor, a balance between fun and substance is essential to maintain institutional credibility.

The role of online engagement as a mediator emphasizes that simply being informative or entertaining is not enough—schools must foster ongoing interactions through content strategies that invite students to

comment, share, or ask questions. These engagement-driven efforts are crucial to turning passive viewers into active participants. Increasing interaction will directly strengthen online engagement, which then positively influences behavioral intentions like inquiries, recommendations, or application interest.

Given that the lowest-rated items involved accuracy of core details (e.g., fees, teacher credentials—PI3), schools should reassess the clarity and transparency of this information. Even if not inherently “entertaining,” these data points are vital for building perceived informativeness and academic trust. Providing clear, factual content in visually engaging formats (e.g., Q&A videos, explainer graphics) will support long-term decision-making and strengthen behavioral intentions, particularly among prospective students and their families.

### **6.3. Limitation**

This study focuses on perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment, online engagement, and behavioral intentions among Gen Z students (ages 16–18, Grades 10–12) in international schools in Surabaya who viewed TikTok promotional content within the last three months. Its findings are limited by the geographic focus and exclusive use of TikTok. Due to restrictions on accessing student lists, random or stratified sampling was not possible; data collection depended on school principals distributing the survey and direct outreach, which may affect sample representativeness.

Future studies should consider broader locations, multiple platforms, and randomized sampling methods to improve generalizability, as well as explore alternative frameworks for deeper insights into online engagement.

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