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Title:

Media Streaming and Social Interaction: A Study of Gen Z Participation in TikTok Livestream in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The advent of streaming media has transformed content consumption, with social live streaming platforms emerging as hubs for real-time interaction. The research aims to explore intrinsic and extrinsic motivations behind Gen Z's active participation, the impact of live stream engagement on user experience, and content creator strategies to foster and sustain audience engagement on TikTok livestreams.

Design/Methodology: Qualitative research, encompassing in-depth interviews and direct observations was adopted.

Findings: While extrinsic motivations like exclusive deals remain influential, intrinsic factors like entertainment, parasocial connection, and autonomy play a crucial role in sustaining participation. The interactive nature of live stream chats fosters a sense of community and co-creation, enhancing user satisfaction and platform enjoyment. Content creators employ diverse strategies, including conversational approaches, support team dynamics, and product-focused tactics, to foster engagement.

Research limitations: The limitations of this research are primarily related to its sample size, data collection method, potential participant bias, and the specific focus on the fashion, beauty, and cosmetics sectors within the Vietnamese context.

Originality/Value: This research contributes to the growing literature on streaming media and social commerce by focusing on the relatively unexplored area of TikTok live streaming among Generation Z users in Vietnam context. The findings can help brands, content creators, and platform developers to customize their strategies to effectively engage with this influential demographic. Additionally, by providing a model for audience participation in TikTok e-commerce live streams, this research helps content creators, marketers, and platform developers have a better insight into engagement strategies to foster meaningful connection with audiences in the context of TikTok e-commerce.

Keywords: *Streaming media, Livestream, TikTok, audience participation, Live streamers, Content creators, livestream chat, parasocial relationship, Uses and Gratification theory.*

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Background and Statement of the problems

Streaming media has revolutionized the way individuals consume information and provided them with on-demand access to a massive collection of multimedia without the need for downloads and storage (Burroughs, 2019). While traditional media requires physical means and involves some forms of ownership, streaming media allows instant access to a library of content through a subscription or view ad-supported content (Li et al., 2021). This difference has reshaped users' consumption habits, providing convenience and instant availability. With just a few clicks, users can access a vast library of movies, TV programs, music, and more. Particularly, the value of streaming media goes beyond its accessibility. It has not only impacted on various industries including entertainment, gaming, media, education, communication and commerce, but also created opportunities for content creation, distribution, and monetization on streaming platforms (Gao et al., 2021; Houssard et al., 2023; Özgün & Treske, 2021). With streaming age, creators can reach a wider range of audiences and have in-time interaction with them anywhere while consumers also have a greater autonomy over their content consumption, entertainment experience and viewing habits.

Within the broader context of streaming media, social live streaming platforms have emerged as a new form of content delivery fostering a more participatory and interactive media landscape (Lu & Chen, 2021). These platforms include Twitch, YouTube Live, Facebook Live, Instagram Live etc. They have enabled real-time interaction, creating a dynamic space for content creators and viewers to connect (Ki et al., 2024). Since its launch in 2011, Twitch has become the leading platform for live gaming globally. By 2016, Facebook and YouTube also successfully offer live-stream features and attracted a significant number of viewers and creators (Chen & Lin, 2018). Overtime, live-stream becomes more and more popular in a variety of fields from gaming and entertainment to education and e-commerce, emphasizing its potential to reshape communication and social interaction in the digital age (Y. Wang et al., 2022). It includes live video game play, sporting events, live performance, informative stream, personal vlogs, talent shows, etc (Chen & Lin, 2018). Prior studies have mainly focused on Twitch livestream (De Wit

et al., 2020; Hilvert-Bruce et al., 2018; Recktenwald, 2017) with insufficient attention to other emerging platforms.

Particularly, TikTok livestream remains under-researched although it has rapidly evolved into a powerful tool for audience engagement and revenue optimization. TikTok, which was originally known for short-form video content, has attracted more than one billion active users globally in 2024 (Backlinko, 2024). It has added support for livestream to enhance the interactive experiences through features like multi-source streaming, live chats, Q&A sessions, customizable layouts, virtual gifts (Krings, 2024). This dynamic format has expanded this platform's reach beyond pre-recorded videos, enabling creators to build stronger connections with their followers, showcase their personalities, and even monetize their content through virtual gifts and brand partnerships (Chan & Asni, 2023; Sunuantari et al., 2023). Every day, millions of TikTok accounts, ranging from large corporations to small businesses, utilize TikTok live streaming (Meeker, 2023). They sells various types of products on the app such as cosmetics, clothes, healthcare products, food, motorbikes. A research revealed that a considerable 50% of TikTok users have bought something after watching TikTok LIVE (TikTok, 2022). This is further evidenced by the viral hashtag #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt, boasting over 75.3 billion views (Cooke, 2023). This highlighted the platform's significant impact on e-commerce over the last year and its integral role in shaping compelling shopping experiences. Particularly, with Gen Z's $360 billion in purchasing power, TikTok offers a unique platform to connect with and convert this young demographic (MegaDigital, 2022).

Despite the rising popularity of live streams in the online shopping world, there is still a lack of clarity on what exactly motivates viewers to participate in livestream and how successful streamers keep their audiences engaged. Many studies have examined factors influencing purchase decisions and sales during livestreams such as interactivity, entertainment, product individualization, platform loyalty, viewer count, consumer engagement, and the incorporation of lucky draws (Cai & Wohn, 2019; Hu et al., 2017b; P. Zhang et al., 2023), but the underlying motivations driving audience participation received insufficient attention. Understanding *why* viewers engage with livestreams, beyond the immediate goal of purchasing, is essential to crafting more effective engagement strategies for content creators and brands. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations driving audience participants so that businesses and content creators can optimize their live streaming efforts and achieve the desired

outcomes in the increasingly competitive e-commerce landscape. Additionally, existing research has primarily utilized surveys to examine consumer perspectives on livestreaming such as customer satisfaction and continuous purchase intention (Chen, 2019), consumer's intention to follow livestream brand community (W. Wang et al., 2022), consumers' buying impulse (Yan et al., 2023), consumer characteristics (Deng et al., 2023) while the streamer/seller perspective remains under-explored. Understanding both viewpoints is vital, as the former sheds light on reception and impact, while the latter provides crucial insights into content creation, community building, and the overall success of livestreaming. Therefore, it is important to shift the focus to the streamer/seller perspective and investigate their strategies for fostering and engaging audience engagement.

Furthermore, several other key research gaps persist in the study of TikTok live streaming within e-commerce context that requires further investigation. Although some research has touched on user motivations and experiences in livestreaming, these studies often focus on entertainment, gaming, or knowledge-sharing domains. This study addresses the lack of research on livestream shopping motivations. As livestream shopping is expected to continue dominating the future of e-commerce in 2024, it is important to investigate this phenomenon in depth to fully comprehend the customer experience in this new shopping environment. In addition, despite its widespread popularity, TikTok platform, especially within the e-commerce domain, has received limited academic attention. The preponderance of existing e-commerce literature centers on established platforms such as Facebook, Twitch livestream. The unique features and dynamics of TikTok necessitate a dedicated investigation to uncover how they shape user engagement. Particularly, the specific motivations and behaviors of the Gen Z demographic in the context of livestream shopping remain largely unexplored. This generation, known for its digital fluency and unique preferences, requires targeted research to understand their engagement patterns (Li, 2023). They have grown up immersed in technology, and their media consumption habits, social interactions, and motivations differ significantly from previous generations (Serbanescu, 2022). Having a deeper insight into Gen Z's participation in new media platforms like TikTok is crucial for comprehending the broader shifts in digital communication and social dynamics. This knowledge is also essential for content creators, marketers, and platform developers alike to effectively connect with, engage, and cater to this influential generation.

Research purpose and research questions

Therefore, this research aims to fill the gaps and delve into the multifaceted world of TikTok live streaming among Generation Z users in Vietnam. It seeks to understand the motivations behind their active participation, the impact of live stream engagement on their overall platform experience, and the strategies content creators employ to foster and sustain audience interaction. By examining these aspects, this study intends to shed light on the complex dynamics of social interaction within the context of media streaming and contribute to the growing body of knowledge surrounding Gen Z's digital behaviors and preferences. Accordingly, this research will seek to address following questions:

1. What are intrinsic and extrinsic motivations driving Generation Z TikTok users to engage actively in live streaming activities on the platform?
2. How does active participation in live stream chats influence user satisfaction and overall platform enjoyment among TikTok users in Vietnam?
3. What strategies do TikTok content creators employ to foster and sustain audience engagement during live streams?

Scope of study

This research specifically examines the dynamics of live streaming engagement on TikTok within the fashion, beauty, and cosmetics e-commerce sectors in Vietnam. It focuses on Gen Z users and content creators actively involved in these sectors. The study focuses on livestream sessions hosted by well-known and active brands within these sectors, specifically those that resonate with the Gen Z demographic and maintain a consistent livestreaming frequency of at least once or twice a week. This focused scope allows for an in-depth exploration of the specific context and dynamics of live streaming engagement within this particular niche. By targeting well-established brands with a strong Gen Z following and selecting sessions across major cities, the study aims to capture the essence of the livestreaming experience on TikTok in Vietnam's fashion and beauty/cosmetics e-commerce landscape.

Significance of this study

This research has important implications for both academics and practitioners in the context of streaming media and e-commerce. From an academic perspective, this study contributes

to the expanding body of knowledge surrounding Gen Z's digital motivations for active participation in live streaming. By exploring the specific motivations behind Gen Z's active participation in TikTok live streams, this study expands the application of U&G theory within the context of social live streaming e-commerce. It delves deeper into the specific needs and gratifications sought by this demographic on this particular platform, contributing to a better understanding of how U&G operates in this rapidly evolving digital landscape

Additionally, this research provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay of factors that influence audience participation in TikTok e-commerce livestreams. This model integrates platform affordances, audience motivations, and content creator strategies, providing a holistic perspective on this phenomenon the development. It positions "Audience Participation" as the central focus, highlighting its dependence on a complex interplay of factors. In other words, it offers valuable insights into the mechanisms driving purchasing behavior within this rapidly growing digital marketplace. It also widens our understanding of how TikTok interactive features such as live chat affects user satisfaction and overall platform enjoyment. This understanding is valuable for the platform to enhance its live stream features, build trust and optimize the user experience, potentially leading to increased user retention and growth.

Furthermore, it is crucial to have an in-depth investigation into TikTok sellers/live streamers' strategies to encourage audience participation and engagement during livestream sessions. Understanding these strategies helps to identify key trends and factors contributing to their success. It also sheds light on seller/live streamers' psychology of persuasion and influence, revealing how they maximize engagement, shape consumer decisions, and cultivate long-term relationships. As a result, businesses and marketers can refine their own strategies to better align with consumer behavior, encourage impulse buying, foster community engagement and drive sales. Moreover, while parasocial relationships have been studied in various media contexts such as TV shows, movie, influencer marketing, music, social media, this research specifically examines their formation and influence within the context of TikTok live streams. Unlike traditional media, where parasocial relationships are constructed passively through watching television, listening to music and reading news, TikTok livestreams allow for real-time interaction, which further blurs the line between parasocial and social relationships. Therefore, this research

adds depth to our knowledge of this phenomenon in the social commerce landscape, allowing better insights into persona-building strategies and its tangible impact on consumer decision-making.

From a practical perspective, this research offers actionable insights for businesses, brands and sellers seeking to connect with Gen Z on TikTok. By understanding the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that drive audience engagement, they can customize their content and strategies to better align with this young demographic. In addition, the exploration of effective engagement strategies can provide practical guidance for individuals and organizations aiming to foster and sustain a loyal following on the platform. By customizing their approach with the motivations and preferences of Gen Z users, brands and creators can strengthen relationships, increase conversion rate, and ultimately achieve their goals on TikTok.

Structure of this study

This research is organized into seven main chapters. Following an introductory chapter which establishes the background and objectives of the study, the subsequent chapter will conduct a comprehensive literature review on streaming media, Livestreaming and audience participation in livestream shopping. This review will highlight existing knowledge gaps and limitations in the current research landscape. Afterwards, chapter 3 will meticulously detail the research design, providing a rationale for the chosen methodological approach. In chapter 4, the main findings will be presented and discussed in detail before going to chapter 5 which will offer a concise conclusion, acknowledging the limitations of the research and outlining recommendations for future investigations. This chapter will also include important theoretical and practical implications of the study's findings.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Streaming media and social interaction

The modern digital age has revolutionized the way people communicate, work, entertain and interact with media content. Streaming media, which is a cornerstone of this transformation, has emerged as a dynamic and pervasive force in contemporary communication and gain increasing attention from scholars (Spilker & Colbjørnsen, 2020). Unlike traditional media,

streaming media allows individuals to access and consume content wherever and whenever they want. In other words, users have transformed from passive content consumers to active content participants by interacting with content in real-time without the need for permanent storage on their devices (Strangelove, 2015).

The concept of streaming media starts with early audio and video streaming technologies in 1990s which allowed users to listen to live radio broadcasts and audio files without needing to download them (Brewer, 2023; Özgün & Treske, 2021). However, it was the widespread adoption of internet and the proliferation of mobile devices that truly brought streaming into the mainstream (Demetriades, 2003; Guo et al., 2007). Today, streaming platforms including Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Disney+ have millions of subscribers globally, providing a huge library of on-demand content for diverse tastes and preferences (Eklund, 2023). The rise of streaming has not only resulted in a significant decline in traditional cable TV subscriptions as consumers are more likely to adopt on-demand streaming services but also provided more opportunities for content creators (Cai & Wohn, 2019). Streaming platforms prioritize original content creation to attract and retain subscribers, leading to a surge in diverse programming (Peck, 2022). This shift has democratized content creation, providing opportunities for a broader range of creators and contributing to the diversification of content available (Cai & Wohn, 2019; Li et al., 2021).

2. Livestream

The emergence of social live streaming platforms has been a notable area of study, with scholars exploring the dynamics of user communities and the factors influencing audience participation (Shi et al., 2023; Xue & Liu, 2023). Livestreaming is a vital component of streaming media, distinguished by its real-time content delivery and interactive experience (L. M. Meng et al., 2021). Platforms such as Twitch, YouTube Live, and Facebook Live have popularized this format, offering interactive experiences across gaming, events, and daily activities (Hilvert-Bruce et al., 2018; Spilker & Colbjørnsen, 2020; Zhao et al., 2019). In fact, prior researchers have highlighted the immediacy and authenticity inherent in livestreaming, which foster a better user engagement and a sense of connection between creators and viewers (Liu et al., 2021; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019; Wongkitrungrueng et al., 2020). Research by Hilvert-Bruce et al. (2018) has investigated the impact of real-time audience interaction features on user engagement and para-social relationship between sellers and viewes. This interactive dimension not only enhances the

user experience but also creates a sense of community as viewers can share their thoughts, ask questions, and connect with content creators or fellow audience members (Giertz et al., 2021). According to findings from Vantage Market Research, the global livestream market exhibited a value of 988 million dollars in 2021, with a projected increase to 4290 million dollars by 2028 (Research, 2022). The anticipated growth from 2022 to 2028 is forecasted to maintain a compound annual growth rate of 23.50%, underscores the transformative impact and increasing significance of livestream shopping in the global market (Research, 2022). Therefore, understanding the intricacies of livestream commerce is essential for businesses looking to leverage this innovative model effectively and stay ahead in an increasingly digital marketplace.

Existing literature has revealed the uniqueness of livestream in the context of e-commerce. Firstly, it is classified as a form of **user-generated content** which involves broadcasters uploading real-time video content, ranging from talent performances to daily life (W. A. Hamilton et al., 2014; Lu & Chen, 2021). This UGC aspect distinguishes livestream shopping from traditional advertising methods, as it engages consumers in a participatory role (J. Zhang et al., 2023). The dialogue and interaction between broadcasters and the audience contribute to the creation of content, making the shopping experience more dynamic, personalized, and reflective of consumer preferences (Scherr & Wang, 2021). Particularly, scholars highlight crucial role of live streamers in demonstrating products, sharing personal experiences, and answering audience queries, thus contributes to the authenticity of the shopping experience (Chen et al., 2023). As revealed by Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut (2020), consumers are no longer solely reliant on traditional decision-making information such as online product rating; instead, livestream shopping introduces a new paradigm where trust is influenced by the characteristics of livestreamers (Chen & Dubinsky, 2003; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). In other words, viewers often rely on the live streamer's insights and interactions to make informed purchasing decisions (Leong et al., 2023). This characteristic highlights the shift from traditional advertising to more participatory and influencer-driven marketing strategies facilitated by live streaming platforms.

Moreover, livestream shopping, distinguished by its **real-time and interactive nature**, presents affordances not found in traditional marketing channels (L. M. Meng et al., 2021; Wang & Oh, 2023). These affordances include the provision of hyperlinks, private messages to clarify queries, and real-time audience interaction. Research indicates that such interactivity reduces the

audience's lack of perceived control, enhances consumption experiences, and improves acceptance of branded products/services (W. A. Hamilton et al., 2014; Hu et al., 2017b; Lu & Chen, 2021). As technology progresses, social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Youtube transform into selling platforms, contributing to the evolution of social commerce (s-commerce) (Cai & Wohn, 2019; Ellison et al., 2007). Live streaming, integrated into s-commerce and e-commerce sites, offers an effective way to display products, demonstrate functionalities, and address customer inquiries instantly (W. A. Hamilton et al., 2014; Leong et al., 2023).

This interactive dimension not only enhances the user experience but also creates a **sense of community** as viewers can share their thoughts, ask questions, and connect with content creators or fellow audience members (Sun et al., 2019). Unlike traditional retail settings where the buyer-seller transaction dominates, the livestream shopping community thrives on collective engagement because participants not only watch the real-time shows but actively contribute to discussions, sharing insights and opinions about the featured products (Xu et al., 2019). This communal approach transforms the shopping experience into a shared endeavor, enhancing the overall enjoyment and understanding of the products being showcased (Lim et al., 2012). Researchers reveal that viewers are drawn to livestream channels where they feel noticed, important, and influential, satisfying their inherent needs for membership and sociability (Hilvert-Bruce et al., 2018; Lim et al., 2020; Lim et al., 2012). The shared experiences and ongoing participation in livestreams contribute to the development of connectedness among participants, fostering a strong sense of community within the channel.

The literature surrounding livestreaming in e-commerce has primarily concentrated on the factors that impact customers' intentions to make a purchase and the subsequent actual sales in livestream shopping events such as streamers' features, interactivity, humour, steamer-product fitness (Deng et al., 2023; Gao et al., 2021; Park & Lin, 2020; Song et al., 2021). Particularly, through an examination of 378 consumer responses, Gao et al. (2023) revealed that the appeal, liveliness, and responsiveness of streamers contribute to the development of social presence and telepresence, consequently enhancing the intention to make a purchase. Meanwhile, Song et al. (2021) found that livestream shopping sales are significantly influenced by product characteristics, streamer characteristics, and consumer engagement. Furthermore, Zhang et al. (2022) emphasized the positive impact on sales when integrating lucky draws into livestream shopping. While

livestream studies on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube abound, research on TikTok Live remains in its infancy.

The rise of livestreaming has also given birth to a burgeoning creator economy, where individuals can monetize their content and build sustainable careers (Baym, 2021). Livestreaming platforms offer a range of monetization strategies, including subscriptions, donations, sponsorships, and brand partnerships (Houssard et al., 2023). However, the creator economy is not without its challenges. Platform policies, algorithmic recommendations, and the competitive nature of the landscape can impact creator success and sustainability. Nonetheless, livestreaming has democratized content creation and distribution, empowering individuals to reach global audiences and build loyal fan bases.

As technology continues to advance, the future of livestreaming holds immense potential. Its unique characteristics, including real-time interaction, community building, and the creator economy, have reshaped the media landscape and redefined how we communicate and connect online (Cai & Wohn, 2019). As livestreaming continues to evolve, it is essential to critically examine its impact on individuals, communities, and society as a whole. By fostering a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges presented by livestreaming, we can navigate its complexities and harness its potential for positive social change

3. Social media

3.1. The popularity of social media

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, transforming the way we communicate, interact, and access information (Scherr & Wang, 2021). This digital landscape, characterized by platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, has garnered extensive scholarly attention, generating a wealth of research on its diverse impacts and implications. The literature on social media consistently defines it as digital platforms and technologies that facilitate the creation, sharing, and exchange of information, ideas, and content among users within virtual communities and networks (Jenkins, 2022; Ji, 2023). This definition highlights the user-centric nature of social media, emphasizing the active role individuals play in generating and disseminating content. Furthermore, it highlights the interactive and communicative aspects of

these platforms, enabling users to engage in dialogue, build relationships, and form online communities (Ji, 2023).

In 2024, a staggering 5.17 billion people worldwide are active social media users, representing 63.7% of the global population (Statista, 2024). This remarkable growth, with 282 million new users joining in the past year alone, highlights the platform's increasing reach and importance. Facebook remains the undisputed leader with over 3 billion monthly active users (DataReportal, 2024), followed by YouTube with 2.5 billion potential ad reach (Hootsuite, 2024). Beyond sheer numbers, the depth of engagement is striking. People spend an average of 2 hours and 24 minutes on social media daily (DataReportal, 2024), translating to a collective 11.5 billion hours spent on these platforms globally every day. TikTok stands out as the platform where users spend the most time, clocking in an average of over 34 hours per month for Android users (DataReportal, 2024). Moreover, the average person has 6.7 social media accounts (Dean, 2024), showcasing the multifaceted nature of our digital interactions. The impact of social media extends to the business world as well. 77% of businesses leverage social media to reach customers, and 90% of users follow at least one brand (ForbesAdvisor, 2024). Importantly, social media directly influences purchasing behavior, with 76% of users having made a purchase based on something they saw on social media (ForbesAdvisor, 2024), further emphasizing the economic significance of these platforms. As technology evolves and platforms innovate, the reach and impact of social media are likely to continue to grow, prompting us to further explore its potential and implications.

3.2. The emergence of TikTok

TikTok, a social media platform launched in 2016 by ByteDance, has rapidly evolved into a global sensation, captivating users with its short-form videos set to music (Ryu, 2022). It has become one of the most popular social media platform with 1.5 billion monthly active users in 2023, with projections indicating an anticipated increase to two billion by the conclusion of 2024 (Iqbal, 2023). With a user-friendly interface and a sophisticated algorithm that tailors content recommendations, TikTok has become synonymous with creativity, entertainment, and cultural influence. This unprecedented growth has sparked significant interest from researchers and scholars, who are examining the platform's impact on various aspects of society and culture.

Studies have delved into TikTok's distinctive features and algorithmic recommendations, highlighting how they contribute to its widespread appeal and addictive nature (Faltesek et al., 2023; Kaye et al., 2022). The emphasis on short-form video content, coupled with intuitive editing tools and a vast music library, empowers users to create and share engaging videos with remarkable ease. The platform's algorithm, driven by user preferences and engagement metrics, plays a pivotal role in content discovery and virality, tailoring content feeds to individual tastes and fostering an immersive and personalized user experience (Siles et al., 2022). This, coupled with the "For You" page's endless scroll, has been cited as a contributing factor to TikTok's addictive nature and its ability to launch trends and challenges that rapidly spread across the globe (Miltsov, 2022).

Research on user behavior and engagement on TikTok has revealed a diverse range of motivations and gratifications. Studies have shown that users are drawn to the platform for entertainment, social connection, self-expression, and information seeking (Chen et al., 2024; DeMasters et al., 2024; Handranata et al., 2024). TikTok's interactive features, such as comments, duets, and stitches, encourage active participation and foster a sense of community (Lan et al., 2024). Moreover, the algorithm's personalized recommendations and the platform's emphasis on trends and challenges create a sense of belonging and shared experience among users (Ionescu & Licu, 2023; Zhou, 2024).

3.3. Tiktok as a streaming platform

This platform has not only redefined social media but has also become a powerful player in the e-commerce landscape through features like livestream shopping (Wu et al., 2022). Although livestream shopping is one of the latest additions to TikTok's repertoire, it has captured users' interest and holds significant potential as a lucrative business opportunity for entrepreneurs.

TikTok Live Shopping, introduced in late 2021, revolutionizes online advertising by allowing brands to showcase products through real-time live stream events (Chan & Asni, 2023; Li & Kang, 2020; Sunuantari et al., 2023). Similar to Instagram and Amazon Live, it streamlines the shopping experience, enabling viewers to add products directly to their TikTok cart with a simple tap on a pin during a livestream. This dynamic feature aligns with TikTok's impact on e-commerce, providing a platform for diverse sellers and offering an engaging, immersive shopping experience. TikTok Shop live streaming boasts conversion rates up to 10 times higher than

traditional e-commerce, reflecting the success seen in China's $305 billion live streaming industry (TiktokShop, 2023). With TikTok Shop expanding to the US and the UK, retailers can tap into this lucrative opportunity, leveraging the platform's viral potential and enjoying incentives such as cash bonuses for creators (MegaDigital, 2023). TikTok incentivizes creators with cash bonuses and rewards for using the shopping feature. This encourages more content creators to embrace live-stream shopping, contributing to the platform's vibrant and dynamic ecosystem. As TikTok provides a significant market for livestream shopping, offering businesses and creators a wide reach and potential customer base (Zhao & Wagner, 2023), it becomes a compelling platform for investigating audience participation and content creator's strategies in livestream shopping.

3.4. Popularity of TikTok among Generation Z

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, stands out as a unique cohort with distinct characteristics that distinguish them from preceding generations (Dimock, 2019; Dolot, 2018).They are known for their remarkable diversity, being the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in history (Katz et al., 2022). The most defining characteristic of Gen Z is their deep-rooted connection to the digital world. Growing up in an era where technology is ubiquitous, they are true digital natives, seamlessly integrating technology into every facet of their lives (Elkatmış, 2024). From smartphones and social media to online learning and entertainment, Gen Z spends a significant portion of their day immersed in the digital realm, blurring the lines between the physical and virtual worlds.

This digital fluency has shaped Gen Z's worldview and behaviors in profound ways. They are adept at navigating online platforms, consuming and creating content, and connecting with others across the globe (Dirir, 2022). Their short attention spans, honed by years of exposure to bite-sized digital content, demand quick, engaging, and visually appealing experiences. This has significant implications for how they interact with brands, consume media, and engage with the world around them.

Gen Z's values and priorities also reflect their digital upbringing. They prioritize authenticity, transparency, and social responsibility, expecting brands and institutions to align with their values. They are also highly entrepreneurial and independent, leveraging digital tools to create and share their own content, build communities, and even launch businesses. TikTok's

popularity is largely driven by Generation Z, who make up over 60% of its users (WallarooMedia, 2024). This generation's short attention span (around 8 seconds) makes them particularly receptive to TikTok's user-friendly design, short videos, and creative features (Boger, 2024). The platform's growth exploded during the COVID-19 pandemic, cementing its status as a major cultural influence (Oktarini et al., 2022; Suwana et al., 2020).

Justification for the focus on Gen Z

Focusing on Generation Z in the context of media streaming and social interaction, particularly within the TikTok livestream space in Vietnam, is justified for several compelling reasons. Firstly, Gen Z constitutes a substantial portion of TikTok's user base, both globally and in Vietnam. By focusing on Gen Z, the study taps into the largest and most active user group on the platform, providing insights into the primary drivers of its popularity and cultural impact. Secondly, Gen Z is the first generation to have grown up entirely in the digital age (Serbanescu, 2022). They are highly adept at navigating online platforms, creating and consuming digital content, and forming online communities (Suwana et al., 2020). Their intrinsic understanding of the digital landscape makes them ideal subjects for studying how media streaming and social interaction are evolving in the 21st century. Thirdly, Gen Z is known for its trendsetting behavior and early adoption of new technologies and platforms (Nawaz, 2020). Their preferences and habits on TikTok can provide valuable insights into emerging trends in media consumption and social interaction, which may eventually influence broader societal patterns. While research on live streaming is growing, there's still a relative dearth of studies specifically focusing on Gen Z's participation in TikTok livestreams, particularly in the Vietnamese context. This research aims to fill this gap, providing valuable insights into this under-explored area.

4. Motivation for audience participation

Investigating the motivations behind users' active participation in live streaming is essential for creating meaningful connections on this new shopping experience, creating targeted contents and driving e-commerce success. Motivation has been defined as the underlying needs and desire that drive individual behaviours. In the context of livestreaming, it involves factors that encourage viewers not only to watch but also actively participate and spend time on the platform for a longer period. Past literature has classified motivation into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. While extrinsic motivation is related to external rewards or incentives such as prizes,

tangible gain (Kim & Drumwright, 2016), intrinsic motivation is related to internal factors like sense of satisfaction, personal enjoyment, self-expression, sense of accomplishment derived from the activity itself (Poch & Martin, 2015).

4.1. Extrinsic motivation

Prior literature has revealed that extrinsic rewards**,** such as likes, comments, shares, virtual gifts, and badges, can serve as powerful motivator for participation, particularly in the initial stages of engagement (Kim & Drumwright, 2016). These tangible and social reinforcements tap into individuals' desires for recognition, validation, and status, thereby stimulating contributions and interactions within online communities. A study by Zhang & Lu (2019) illustrated how extrinsic motivators, like monetary rewards in crowdsourcing contests, can significantly increase participation efforts. However, recent studies also caution against an overreliance on extrinsic motivation. The literature suggests that an excessive focus on external validation may undermine long-term engagement and foster superficial interactions, as highlighted by the crowding-out effect observed in studies where financial incentives decreased the impact of intrinsic motivation on content sharing (Mochon et al., 2017).

4.2. Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation**,** which stems from internal factors and personal fulfillment, is increasingly considered to be crucial for fostering meaningful and long-lasting participation (Oh & Syn, 2015). As prior researchers revealed, individuals are more likely to engage in activities they find enjoyable, meaningful and give them a sense of fulfillment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the context of social media, users are often motivated to participate in discussions, express their views, like, share, comment when they find the interaction meaningful and personally relevant, demonstrating the powerful influence of intrinsic drivers in driving online engagement (Król & Zdonek, 2021). Similarly, in live streaming contexts, the opportunity to interact with content creators in real-time, build community, and experience a sense of belonging can serve as powerful intrinsic motivators (Chou et al., 2022; Giertz et al., 2022).

In the context of livestream shopping, audience participation is an important contributor to the success of the retail model (Shi et al., 2023; Xue & Liu, 2023). As a rich source of information, livestream shopping provides viewers with in-depth review and personal experiences on the

products, thus adding credibility and customer's trust. Sun et al. (2020) also highlighted the uniqueness of livestream shopping that it allows viewers to ask specific questions about products and services, clarify ambiguity, and receive immediate responses. Consequently, this benefits viewers from detailed information and firsthand experience, allowing them to make more educated choice about products and services. Additionally, entertainment value is also another motivator. As Lo et al. (2022) said, livestream shopping, recognized as a high-entertainment shopping platform, inherently caters to viewers' hedonic shopping motivation (Liu et al., 2023; Lo et al., 2022). One significant facet of this hedonic motivation is the concept of idea shopping, a term conceptualized in relation to openness to inspiration (Böttger et al., 2017; Khoi & Le, 2023). The integration of real-time interactivity within the livestreaming commerce framework becomes a crucial mechanism for delivering the responsive and personalized information sought by viewers driven by idea shopping motivations (Khoi & Le, 2023). The desire for novel, engaging, and sometimes escapist content propels individuals to participate actively in livestream chats. The interactive and real-time nature of these sessions adds an element of unpredictability and excitement, contributing to a more immersive entertainment experience.

Moreover, social motivations play a crucial role in livestream, fostering a sense of community among viewers (W. A. Hamilton et al., 2014). Livestream environments act as virtual "third places," facilitating interactions, social support, and a sense of belonging (W. A. Hamilton et al., 2014; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Several studies also reveal that meeting new people and engaging socially are intrinsic motivators for livestream viewers (Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009; Hilvert-Bruce et al., 2018; Zhu & Chang, 2014) Particularly, streamers who are influencers or celebrities play a crucial role in motivating audience participation in livestreams (Park & Lin, 2020; Sun et al., 2019). Their fans are likely to join the livestream to interact with their favorite figure. This creates a unique opportunity for the audience to engage directly with the celebrity, asking questions, making comments, and feeling a sense of connection (Cai & Wohn, 2019; Sun et al., 2019). Despite the illusionary nature of this intimacy, viewers, perceiving the influencers as reliable friends, become more willing to engage in interactions not only with the streamers but also with fellow viewers, contributing to increased audience participation and active involvement in the livestream shopping experience (Deng et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021; Wanqi & Xigen, 2017).

Justification for the focus on TikTok on this research

While existing research predominantly delves into factors influencing purchase intention, the dynamics of the streamer-viewer relationship, or audience interactions within gaming streams, there remains a significant gap in the exploration of motivations driving participation in livestream shopping, particularly on Tiktok platform. Specifically, while there have been some scholarly studies examining livestream viewer motivation from a socio-motivational perspective (Hilvert-Bruce et al., 2018), it predominantly focuses on the gaming-oriented domain of livestream entertainment rather than the context of livestream shopping in the e-commerce landscape. In other words, there is a notable lack of comprehensive understanding of what specifically motivate audience participation in livestream shopping.

5. Content Creator Strategies for Audience Participation

In the fast-paced and competitive landscape of social media, content creators are required to continuously seek creative and effective ways to increase audience engagement and build thriving online communities. The literature on this subject has revealed several key approaches that creators leverage to encourage engagement, interaction, and loyalty from their followers on social media (Jun & Yi, 2020; Shawky et al., 2019).

Interactive strategies are paramount in fostering immediate engagement with the audience. Live streams, Q&A sessions, polls, contests, and other real-time or near-real-time features create a sense of shared experience and direct communication, blurring the lines between creator and viewer. A study by Tian & Frank (2020) found that interactive features in live streaming significantly increased viewer engagement and satisfaction. Such tools allow creators to respond to comments, answer questions, and even co-create content with their audience, thereby fostering a sense of participation and investment (Tian & Frank, 2024).

Cultivating a sense of community among followers has emerged as a vital strategy for long-term audience participation (W. Hamilton et al., 2014). Creators who actively build and nurture their online communities through consistent communication, responsiveness, and inclusivity tend to see higher levels of engagement and loyalty (Jones & Vogl, 2020). Studies emphasized the importance of community building in social media branding, noting that it fosters brand loyalty and advocacy (Siregar et al., 2023; Wong, 2023). This can involve creating dedicated groups or

spaces for fans to interact, recognizing and rewarding loyal followers, and facilitating user-generated content that strengthens the collective identity of the community.

In the context of livestream, the role of a content creator (can be called as sellers or streamers in this context) in encouraging audience participation in livestreams is pivotal, requiring a multifaceted strategy to foster engagement and build a dedicated community. Previous studies show that involving celebrities or influencers in livestreams has become a powerful strategy for engaging audiences and enhancing the overall livestreaming experience (Chen et al., 2023). The association with a well-known figure brings a sense of credibility and trust to the livestream (L. Meng et al., 2021; Park & Lin, 2020; Sun et al., 2019). The halo effect created by the influencers/celebrities can make their followers to view the content more favorably and may be more likely to be persuaded during the livestream. Sun et al. (2021) propose that the interactivity of Internet celebrities plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer purchase intentions. Additionally, Zhu et al. (2021), drawing insights from cognitive-affective system theory, delve into the impact of streamers' characteristics on consumer purchase intentions within the context of livestream shopping.

In fact, content creators serve as the architects of the livestream experience, employing various techniques to make their content more interactive and enjoyable for viewers (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). This could include innovative challenges, entertaining games, or thought-provoking discussions that encourage viewer participation. Actively participating in the live chat, responding to comments, and addressing viewer questions create a sense of immediacy and connection (Sjöblom & Hamari, 2017). Despite its importance, limited attention has been given to understanding the specific strategies employed by streamers, and sellers to drive consumer interaction, influence purchasing decisions, and cultivate a participatory environment within live-streamed content. While the consumer/viewer perspective is vital for assessing reception and impact, the streamer/seller perspective is equally crucial for unraveling the intricacies of content creation, community building, and the overall success of livestreaming as a digital medium.

6. Framework for Understanding Media Consumption

6.1. Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G)

The Uses and Gratifications theory has been a widely-employed framework in the fields of media studies as it provides a valuable lens for understanding the complex relationship between individuals and their media consumption. From U&G perspective, individuals consciously choosing and using various forms of media to satisfy specific needs and gratifications (Katz et al., 1973). According to Katz et al. (1973), these needs include seeking information, shaping identity, connecting with communities, escaping the reality. Subsequent research has identified diverse gratifications associated with media usage. For example, Lee and Ma (2012) investigated the impact of information seeking, socializing, entertainment, and status seeking on news sharing, while Yu et al. (2016) examined gratifications related to group-buying websites. Furthermore, Dhir and Tsai (2017) proposed that the extent to which people engage with Facebook is driven by several key motivations: the desire for entertainment, exposure, escape, information, and social influence. Various social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter have been investigated through the lens of U&G to shed light on this topic (Chakraborty & Das, 2019; Hossain et al., 2019; Hossain, 2019; Phua et al., 2017). In fact, it has expanded the scope of U&G beyond its original focus on traditional media (Albarran et al., 2007; Vaterlaus et al., 2019), incorporating new dimensions such as the role of parasocial relationships, online communities, and identity construction in media consumption (Yang & Ha, 2021). Furthermore, this theory has been used to understand various aspect of well-being such as mental health, social connection, political participation. By continuously evolving and adapting to new media landscapes and societal concerns, it remains a powerful tool for understanding media consumption in the digital age. Despite its widespread application in media research, there remains a scarcity of studies utilizing the UGT framework specifically within the context of livestreaming services. This theory will be helpful to shed light on the unique gratifications and its implications for online engagement.

6.2. Parasocial relationship

Parasocial relationships, the one-sided, seemingly intimate bonds that individuals form with media figures, offer a valuable framework for understanding media consumption in the digital age (Lacap et al., 2024). The literature on parasocial relationships reveals their significant impact on audience behavior, attitudes, and motivations, shedding light on how media consumption fulfills social and emotional needs (Lacap et al., 2024; Zhong et al., 2021). Studies have demonstrated that parasocial relationships can influence consumer choices, political preferences,

and even self-perception (Liu et al., 2019; Tsfati et al., 2022; Tsiotsou, 2015). For example, prior studies revealed that individuals who develop strong parasocial bonds with influencers or celebrities are more likely to purchase products they endorse or adopt similar attitudes and behaviors (Chung & Cho, 2017). This highlights the potential for parasocial relationships to shape consumer behavior and influence marketing strategies.

Moreover, several scholars have highlighted the psychological and social aspects of parasocial relationships. These relationships can offer a sense of belonging, social connection, and emotional support, particularly for individuals who may experience loneliness or social isolation (Aw & Chuah, 2021; El-Gohary et al., 2022). Parasocial interactions can also contribute to identity formation and self-esteem, as individuals identify with and model themselves after their favored media figures (Chung & Cho, 2017; Lacap et al., 2024; Lee & Lee, 2017).

While the concept of parasocial relationships initially emerged from traditional media like television and radio, its application has expanded to encompass online interactions. This includes engagements with avatars (Jin & Park, 2009), celebrities (Baek et al., 2013), and even brands through social media platforms (Labrecque, 2014). The rise of social media and online platforms has transformed the nature of parasocial relationships, enabling more direct and frequent interactions between audiences and media figures (Dibble et al., 2016). This heightened sense of intimacy and access has amplified the potential influence of parasocial relationships on audience behavior and attitudes, making them an increasingly important factor in understanding media consumption patterns (Meng et al., 2024). By understanding the dynamics of parasocial bonds and their impact on audience behavior and attitudes, we can better understand the motivations and gratifications driving media consumption, particularly in the context of social media and online platforms. This knowledge can inform strategies for media creators, marketers, and researchers to foster positive and meaningful engagement with audiences

Justification for theoretical frameworks

This research adopts the Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G) and the concept of Parasocial Relationships to delve into the motivations and experiences of Generation Z TikTok users engaging in live streaming. U&G is particularly relevant as it posits that individuals actively seek out and use media to fulfill specific needs and gratifications. By examining the intrinsic and

extrinsic motivations driving Generation Z's active participation in live streams, this research aligns seamlessly with the core tenets of U&G. Understanding the specific needs met through live stream engagement, whether it be entertainment, social interaction, information seeking, or self-expression, will provide valuable insights into why this demographic actively participates in such activities.

Furthermore, the concept of parasocial effect is vital for understanding the relationship between content creators and their audience on TikTok LIVE. These one-sided, seemingly intimate bonds formed with media figures can significantly impact user engagement and satisfaction. By investigating how active participation in live stream chats contributes to user satisfaction and platform enjoyment, this study explores the role of parasocial interactions in fostering positive experiences on TikTok. Understanding the nature and strength of these relationships can illuminate the mechanisms through which creators cultivate and sustain audience engagement during live streams.

In combination, these theoretical frameworks offer a comprehensive lens for examining the multifaceted nature of Generation Z's engagement with TikTok LIVE. U&G provides a framework for understanding the underlying motivations driving their active participation, while the concept of Parasocial Relationships elucidates the role of social and emotional connections in shaping their experiences on the platform. Grounded in established media theories, this research sheds light on the dynamic interaction between sellers/livestreamers and Gen Z viewers in the context of TikTok livestream.

Literature gap and contribution of this study

Livestream shopping seeks to fill significant gaps in the existing media literature. Firstly, existing studies in the realm of livestream shopping have primarily concentrated on factors influencing consumer purchase intentions and sales during livestream events including interactivity, entertainment, product individualization, platform loyalty, viewer count, consumer engagement, and the incorporation of lucky draws (Cai & Wohn, 2019; Hu et al., 2017b). However, a critical gap exists in understanding the motivations driving audience participation in livestream sessions from consumer perspective. This study aims to bridge this gap by delving into the motivational aspects that encourage viewers to actively engage during livestreams.

Particularly, it makes a distinctive contribution to literature by shifting the focus from prevalent livestreaming platforms such as Facebook, and Twitch to TikTok livestreaming. Despite TikTok's widespread use, it remains an underexplored area in academic research, especially with regard to the phenomenon of livestream shopping.

Moreover, limited attention has been dedicated to Gen Z demographic in this context. As Gen Z constitutes a significant and influential user base on TikTok, understanding their participation in livestreams is crucial given their dominance on the platform and vital for brands seeking to connect with this demographic.

Additionally, existing literature has largely relied on surveys to investigate the consumer's perspective, exploring aspects such as purchase intention, attitudes, and consumption behaviors meanwhile, little attention is given to the streamer/seller perspective. While the consumer/viewer perspective is vital for assessing reception and impact, the streamer/seller perspective is equally crucial for unraveling the intricacies of content creation, community building, and the overall success of livestreaming as a digital medium. Therefore, this study, which uses qualitative approach, takes a significant step forward by delving into the process of how live-streamers actively encourage audience participation, moving beyond mere descriptions to an in-depth exploration and analysis of the strategies employed by content creators.

While some studies have explored the motivation and experiences of livestreaming users, it is related to livestream entertainment gaming-oriented domain or knowledge-sharing purposes instead of livestream shopping in e-commerce. This study aims to contribute by providing insights into the motivations that drive Gen Z to participate in livestream shopping events on platforms like TikTok.

Finally, existing studies predominantly focus on livestreaming in China. However, understanding consumer cognition and behavior necessitates a nuanced exploration across cultural contexts. This study contributes to enrich current literature by shifting the focus to the Vietnam market, recognizing its distinct cultural dynamics, and leveraging the massive user base on TikTok.

CHAPTER III. RESEARCH DESIGN

Description of Participants of the Study

Thirty interviewees were purposively selected for this research. Among these, fifteen participants are livestreamers/sellers who actively host live stream shopping sessions on TikTok (as shown in Table 1). These live streams originate from their business locations in major Vietnamese cities, including Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Danang. Their livestreams mainly centered around fashion, beauty products, and cosmetics and targeted at young people who are tech-savvy and frequently make online purchases. Their frequencies of live streaming range from 1-2 times a week to 5-6 times a week.

In addition, the remaining fifteen interviewees are active viewers of TikTok live stream shopping (as shown in Table 2). This group of interviewees includes both male and female viewers, with ages ranging from 17 to 26 (Generation Z). They are located in different regions in Vietnam, such as Quy Nhon, Quang Nam, Danang, Ho Chi Minh City, Thanh Hoa, and Vung Tau. While all participants frequently watch live streams, their engagement levels vary. Some actively participate in chat interactions, while others primarily observe the content.

Table 1. Livestreamers' profile

	Status	Age	Livestream products	Gender	Place	Livestream frequency
C1	Livestreamer	25	Fashion	Female	Ha Noi	2-3 times a week
C2	Livestreamer	27	Fashion	Female	Ho Chi Minh	5-6 times a week
C3	Livestreamer	27	Beauty products	Female	Danang	1-2 times a week
C4	Livestreamer	37	Cosmetics	Female	Ha Noi	1-2 times a week
C5	Livestreamer	36	Cosmetics	Female	Ho Chi Minh	5-6 times a week
C6	Livestreamer	24	Fashion	Female	Danang	2-3 times a week
C7	Livestreamer	26	Cosmetics	Female	Ha Noi	2-3 times a week
C8	Livestreamer	27	Beauty products	Female	Ho Chi Minh	2-3 times a week
C9	Livestreamer	28	Fashion	Female	Ho Chi Minh	2-3 times a week
C10	Livestreamer	27	Fashion	Female	Ho Chi Minh	1-2 times a week
C11	Livestreamer	35	Cosmetics	Female	Danang	1-2 times a week
C12	Livestreamer	26	Cosmetics	Female	Ha Noi	1-2 times a week
C13	Livestreamer	26	Beauty products	Female	Ho Chi Minh	1-2 times a week
C14	Livestreamer	27	Fashion	Female	Ho Chi Minh	2-3 times a week
C15	Livestreamer	30	Beauty products	Female	Danang	2-3 times a week

Table 2. Livestream participants' profile

	Status	Age	Gender	Location	Live Streaming Engagement Level
P1	Livestream participant	18	Female	Quy Nhon	Frequent Viewer, Active Chat Participant
P2	Livestream participant	18	Female	Quang Nam	Frequent Viewer, Active Chat Participant
P3	Livestream participant	19	Female	Danang	Frequent Viewer, Rarely Chat
P4	Livestream participant	19	Female	Ho Chi Minh	Frequent Viewer, Rarely Chat
P5	Livestream participant	26	Female	Thanh Hoa	Frequent Viewer, Rarely Chat
P6	Livestream participant	19	Male	Quang Nam	Frequent Viewer, Rarely Chat
P7	Livestream participant	17	Male	Vung Tau	Frequent Viewer, Rarely Chat
P8	Livestream participant	20	Female	Nha Trang	Frequent Viewer, Active Chat Participant
P9	Livestream participant	22	Female	Ha Noi	Frequent Viewer, Active Chat Participant
P10	Livestream participant	21	Male	Nha Trang	Frequent Viewer, Active Chat Participant
P11	Livestream participant	22	Female	Phu Yen	Frequent Viewer, Active Chat Participant
P12	Livestream participant	23	Female	Nha Trang	Frequent Viewer, Active Chat Participant
P13	Livestream participant	24	Female	Ha Noi	Frequent Viewer, Active Chat Participant
P14	Livestream participant	23	Female	Ho Chi Minh	Frequent Viewer, Active Chat Participant
P15	Livestream participant	24	Female	Ho Chi Minh	Frequent Viewer, Active Chat Participant

Research Approach

A qualitative approach was adopted in this research to allow for a rich exploration of the motivations, experiences, and strategies related to TikTok livestream shopping. This approach is suitable to capture the depth and the context-specific understanding of user engagement on this platform. While the quantitative approach focuses on measuring and quantifying phenomenon, it does not allow for exploring subjective experience, motivation, discovering new themes and patterns. Therefore, qualitative approach is more relevant as it prioritizes contextual understanding, rich insights from insider's perspective, and in-depth exploration of the multifaceted aspects of TikTok livestream engagement. Due to the exploratory nature of this study,

it is a useful tool to explore the psychological and social factors influencing engagement, explore *how* chat participation shapes user experience, and uncover live streamers' tacit knowledge.

Research Design

Qualitative descriptive design, which combines both in-depth interview and observation, was chosen for this research. Research process was as shown in Figure 1.

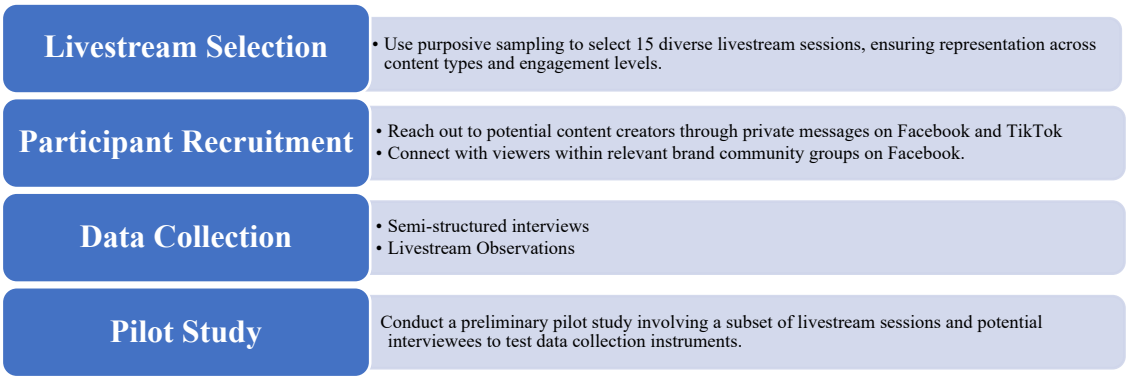


Figure 1. Research procedure

A mixed-method approach utilizing both in-depth interviews and livestream observations were adopted to provide a complete picture of livestreaming experience from both live streamer and viwer's perspective. This methodological choice is grounded in the belief that combining qualitative data from both self-reported experiences and direct observations yielded richer and more comprehensive insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Denny & Weckesser, 2022).

In-depth interviews serve as a primary tool for delving into the subjective experiences and motivations of participants (Cassell et al., 2018). By engaging in in-depth, one-on-one conversations via online video calls, researchers can explore the personal feelings, thoughts, and attitudes of both content creators and viewers towards TikTok livestream participation. This method allows for probing questions and follow-ups, enabling a deeper exploration of the complex and often nuanced motivations that drive engagement (Allison, 2023). The qualitative data gleaned from these interviews is invaluable in understanding the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that contribute to active participation in live streams.

While interviews provide valuable subjective insights, direct observation of livestream sessions offers a unique opportunity to capture real-time interactions and behaviors within the actual context of the platform. Through note-taking and video recording, researchers

documented non-verbal cues, audience reactions, content creator engagement techniques, and the overall atmosphere during livestreams. This observational data complemented the interview findings by providing a context-specific understanding of how users actively participate in livestreams and how content creators shape these interactions.

The rationale for combining these methods lies in their complementary strengths. Interviews offer in-depth, subjective perspectives, while observations capture actual behaviors and interactions within the natural setting of the platform (Jamshed, 2014). By using multiple data sources, it not only helps to enhances the validity and reliability of the findings, but also enables a more comprehensive and holistic insight into the research phenomenon. In other words, this combination helps to minimize the limitations or biases inherited in a single method, facilitates the exploration of patterns, trends, and revealing underlying motivations that might not be fully captured by relying on a single method alone.

Data Collection Procedure

This research employed a targeted approach to data collection, focusing specifically on the context of fashion and beauty/cosmetics e-commerce livestreams on Livestream sessions hosted by well-known and active fashion or beauty e-commerce brands that resonate with the Gen Z demographic. The selection process prioritized brands with a significant presence and engagement within this target audience on TikTok.

To ensure a consistent stream of content for observation and analysis, the study focused on brands that conduct livestream sessions at least once or twice a week. To identify relevant livestreaming sessions and live streamers, researchers searched TikTok using relevant keywords in Vietnamese (such as “Clothes on TikTok”, “Sales on TikTok”, “Bag Livestreams”, “Shoes Livestream”…) and explore popular livestreams. Before contacting potential sellers, researchers reviewed their overall TikTok profile and watched their TikTok livestream sessions to ensure their suitability with this research goals. Diverse age groups, genders, and experience level were considered to ensure the diversity and richness of the data. From 67 sellers, reseachers chose 24 sellers that met following requirements for initial contact. The selection criteria were:

(1) Live streamers had demonstrated active involvement in conducting livestreaming sessions specifically related to fashion and beauty/cosmetics e-commerce.

(2) They frequently conducted TikTok live stream shopping sessions (at least once a week), demonstrating a consistent engagement with this platform's live features.
(3) The livestreamers were willing and available to participate in in-depth interviews and allow observation of their live streams for research purposes.
(4) Their livestream sessions primarily targeted Vietnamese young demographic.
(5) Main locations are Ho Chi Minh city, Hanoi, Danang city (three biggest cities in Vienam). Afterwards, researchers sent a polite and concise message through Facebook messager and Tiktok to introduce the research project, express interest in their live streams before inviting them to participate in this research. Finally, a total of 15 livestream sessions was purposively selected to encompass a diverse range of content types and audience engagement levels. These sessions were drawn from three major cities in Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, and Danang City, which are known as trendsetting hubs for fashion, beauty, and e-commerce, particularly among Gen Z. This deliberate sampling strategy was designed to capture the dynamic nature of livestreaming on TikTok within the specific context of fashion and beauty/cosmetics e-commerce. By selecting sessions from well-established brands with a strong Gen Z following, the research aims to access content that is both relevant and engaging to the target demographic. The emphasis on frequent livestreamers ensures a sufficient pool of content for analysis, while the geographic diversity of the selected sessions allows for the exploration of potential regional variations in content, engagement patterns, and cultural influences.

Two primary groups were involved in the data collection process: live streamers and livestream viewers.

Livestreamers

Fifteen actively engaged sellers or livestreamers on TikTok livestream shopping were chosen. As they worked within the fashion and beauty/cosmetics e-commerce space, their products showcase focused on livestream mainly were clothes, handbags, shoes, skincare products, shampoos, perfumes, glasses, hats, lipsticks, etc. These creators were sourced from the three major cities in Vietnam: Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Danang. The aim was to connect with content creators who were actively utilizing livestreaming as a sales and engagement tool within the chosen sectors. The interviews were scheduled to ensure a comfortable and conductive environment for effective conversation. They are conducted

through Google Meet or Facebook video call to ensure the convenience and comfort. Each interview lasted from 45-60 minutes.

Livestream Viewers

The research also engaged with 15 livestream viewers who actively participated in TikTok livestream sessions related to fashion and beauty/cosmetics e-commerce. These viewers were identified and approached within brand community groups on Facebook and TikTok where relevant brands frequently shared deals, promotions, and livestream event announcements. The selection criteria included:

(1) Viewers belong to Gen Z (born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s)

(2) Viewers had experience of watching and participating in e-commerce livestreams related to fashion/beauty products/cosmetics.

(3) Viewers a history of frequently purchasing products showcased in TikTok livestreams.

(4) Viewers were willing and available to participate in in-depth interviews about their experiences on TikTok live stream shopping.

This criterion ensured that the selected interviewees were livestream's active participants and have a genuine interest to the content. The research leveraged the existing interest and engagement of community members within these brand groups to identify and recruit potential participants.

Data analysis

In the data analysis phase, a comprehensive approach was undertaken through the examination of qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews and livestream observations. **Thematic analysis,** a method commonly employed for qualitative research, was the principal analytical framework. Thematic analysis is well-suited for this research due to its flexibility and its ability to uncover rich and meaningful insights from qualitative data (Swain & Chen, 2024). Its inductive nature allows themes and patterns to emerge directly from the data, ensuring that the analysis is grounded in the participants' experiences and perspectives (Swain & Chen, 2024). Furthermore, thematic analysis facilitates the identification of both explicit and implicit meanings within the data, allowing for a deeper understanding of the complex motivations and behaviors associated with live stream participation on TikTok.

By combining thematic analysis with a mixed-methods approach, this research aims to generate a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The integration

of data from both interviews and observations provided a more holistic picture of the factors influencing audience participation, user satisfaction, and content creator strategies in the context of TikTok live streaming.

For interviews

The analysis of interview transcripts commenced with an open-coding approach. This initial phase involved meticulously reading and reviewing the transcripts to identify and label recurring concepts, ideas, and patterns without imposing any predetermined categories. This inductive approach allows for the emergence of themes and concepts directly from the data itself, ensuring that the analysis remains grounded in the participants' perspectives (Allison, 2023).

Subsequently, axial coding was employed to establish connections and relationships between the identified codes. This step involves organizing and grouping codes into broader categories and exploring the interrelationships among them, thus creating a more structured and conceptual understanding of the data. Through selective coding, the analysis was further refined, focusing on the identification of key themes and patterns directly relevant to the research questions. Particular attention was given to factors such as user motivations, satisfaction, and content creator strategies, enabling a focused and in-depth exploration of these core aspects.

Livestream Observations

Concurrently, thematic analysis was applied to the observational data gathered from TikTok livestream sessions. This systematic process involved carefully reviewing notes and video recordings to identify, analyze, and report recurring patterns or themes within the data. The observational data, capturing real-time interactions and behaviors during livestreams, provided crucial insights into audience engagement dynamics and content creation strategies. By meticulously examining these observations, the research aims to uncover nuanced patterns of interaction, identify effective engagement techniques, and understand the factors that contribute to a positive and fulfilling livestream experience.

Throughout the analysis, a rigorous and systematic approach was maintained to uphold the validity and reliability of the findings. **Peer review sessions** was conducted to ensure consistency and inter-coder reliability. Additionally, reflexivity was observed to acknowledge and address any potential biases that may influence the interpretation of the data.

CHAPTER IV. DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and livestream observations, thematic analysis was chosen due to its flexibility and ability in uncovering and interpreting the underlying meanings, searching for connections and patterns.

Regarding data collected from in-depth interviews, researchers coded it systematically highlighted key ideas and phrases before identifing and labelling concepts without predetermined categories. After initial coding, the data underwent **axial coding** for the identification of connections and relationships between different codes and concepts. Through the process of connecting codes, themes and patterns relevant to the research questions was revealed. Main themes were “Motivation”, “Live stream chat’s participation”, “Strategy-People” and “Strategy – Product & Background”, addressing the research questions.

At the same time, thematic analysis was also applied to interpret the **observational data** gathered from livestream sessions. The observational data provided a real-time view to complement and enrich the insights from the in-depth interview. Similar analysis process for interview data, the process for observational data also involved grouping codes, identifying potential themes and patterns within the data. The themes were compared and contrasted with those identified in the interview data. This process ensured the validity and accuracy of the findings.

Throughout the analysis, a consistent and systematic approach was applied to uphold the validity and reliability of the findings. Researchers also conducted peer review sessions ensure consistency and inter-coder reliability. Additionally, reflexivity was observed to acknowledge and address any potential biases that may influence the interpretation of the data.

Table of theme, sub-theme, categories, and illustrative quotes

Theme	Sub-theme	Categories	Illustrative quotes	RQ
Motivation	Extrinsic	Exclusive Deals & Promotions	“I always tune in to live streams because I totally don’t want to miss out on the amazing deals they offer. You can save money by shopping on TikTok!”	**RQ1**
		Product Demonstrations and Reviews	“Seeing products in action during live streams helps me decide if they are worth buying. They often demonstrate and review it clearly”	
	Intrinsic	Entertainment & Enjoyment	“Live streams are my way to unwind after a long day. It’s totally better than watching television because it has more interaction”.	
		Parasocial Relationships	“I love watching Pham Thoai livestreams. He’s so funny and relatable”	

		Sense of Control & Autonomy	"I like that I can choose which live streams to watch and interact with. You are fully in control of your shopping experience. If you just want to watch it for 1 minutes, it's totally ok. If you want to watch for 2 hours, it's totally ok as well."	
Live stream chat's participation	Enhancing Engagement & Entertainment	Breaking Free from Passive Consumption	"Commenting and reacting live makes me feel more connected to what is happening. I can experience it"	**RQ2**
		Instant Gratification	"Chatting makes live streams way more fun. I love getting instant responses to my comments. It makes the whole experience so much more dynamic and exciting."	
		Deeper Connection with Content Creators	"When I can chat directly with the creator, it feels like I'm getting to know them on a personal level."	
	Co-creation of content	Feeling heard and valued	"When my comments get noticed by the host, it makes me feel like I have a voice and can influence the stream."	
		Personalized and Relevant Content	"I love that I can request the host to change songs or products during a live stream. It makes the content feel more tailored to my interests."	
Strategy – People	Livestreamer	Conversational Approach	"I always start my live streams by asking viewers how their day is going. It's a simple way to connect with them on a personal level."	**RQ3**
		Personal Touch	"I often ask my viewers for their opinions on products or what they'd like to see me try next,"	
		The Power of the Crowd	"I believe that when viewers see that lots of people are buying something, it makes them think it must be good,"	
	Support team	Lively and energetic atmosphere	"Having a support team really helps to get the energy going, especially at the beginning of a stream or when things start to slow down. Their enthusiasm is contagious, and it encourages other viewers to join in and participate."	
		Social proof	"Even if the actual organic viewership is relatively small, the presence of an active support team can create the illusion of a larger, more engaged audience. This can make viewers feel like they're part of a bustling community, which can be especially appealing in a social media context."	
Strategy – Product & Background	Products	Product unique selling points	"I always meticulously research the products I'm going to sell. I want to understand their unique selling points and how they can solve my customer's problems."	
		Testing products	"Skincare is a very personal choice, and people want to see how a product actually works before they invest in it. By testing it on my own skin, I can give them a realistic preview and answer their questions in real-time."	
	Background Setting		"I try to change my background regularly to keep things fresh and interesting. Sometimes it's a summer background, sometimes, it's a farm background. It also helps showcase different products and create a variety of shopping experiences."	

Ethical considerations

In this study, several ethical issues were considered carefully. Firstly, before participating in the research, all participants were provided with clear and sufficient information regarding research topic, research purposes, research objectives, procedures, advantages, and possible risks.

They were explicitly informed their right and the data collection process. Participants were fully acknowledged that they had the right to withdraw from the research without any consequences. They could withdraw before, during, or up to two weeks after the interview. This provision was to ensure that they have sufficient time to reconsider their participation and fully feel comfortable with the implications of the interview process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. For those under 18 years of age, assent was sought in addition to parental/guardian consent, acknowledging their developing capacity for autonomous decision-making.

Secondly, all data collected from interviews was treated with confidentiality. To ensure their confidentiality and anonymity, participants' identities (name, workplace…) were anonymized and replaced by codes in all transcripts and reports. The data was stored in password-protected laptop and only accessed by researcher. Only several demographic details were collected including age, gender, location, frequency of TikTok use to protect participants' identities.

Thirdly, participants were given opportunities to skip any questions if they want or feel uncomfortable. The research design combined both observational and non-interventional approach, with the purpose to minimize any potential harm or discomfort to participants. However, researchers remained vigilant to any signs of distress and provided appropriate support or referral if needed.

CHAPTER V. FINDINGS

Research question 1

What are intrinsic and extrinsic motivations driving Generation Z TikTok users to engage actively in live streaming activities on the platform?

1. Extrinsic motivations

Firstly, Vietnamese Gen Z TikTok users are undeniably drawn to live streams by the allure of **exclusive deals and promotions**. As one user passionately stated, *"I always tune in to live streams because I don't want to miss out on the amazing deals they offer. It's a great way to save money!"* The opportunity to access limited-time offers and discounts creates a sense of urgency and excitement, compelling users to actively participate. Another user shared similar view, stating, *"The live stream often offered a lot of flash sale, special offers and discount that you cannot easily find somewhere else. I need to compete with many other viewers to get the best deal. It's a game So, I never miss any livestreams from the clothes brand that I love"* This further highlights the

gamified aspect and competition for best deal of live stream shopping. Participants expressed very often that everyone wants to get their favourite products at a cheaper price, so they were willing to spend on these sessions and make frequent purchases. The research revealed a **clear preference for TikTok live streams** when it comes to accessing exclusive benefits compared to other platforms. In fact, participants strongly agreed that TikTok offer better vouchers, discounts, free shipping, and many other special offers than other platforms like Facebook, Shopee, Youtube. As one participant shared their experience:

"When I love a clothes shop, I often follow it on multiple platforms, but I always prefer to watch their TikTok live streams. I can buy 3 skirts with freeship and 100,000 VND voucher easily while I never can get this deal on Facebook Live."

Another pariticpant also shared similar view,

"Some shops choose to be live on both TikTok and Shopee at the same time. But I also choose TikTok to watch because I have more chances to get freebies. Sometimes I see that there are more viewers on one TikTok livestream session than viewers on Shopee livestream"

This suggests that TikTok's live stream ecosystem has cultivated a reputation for generosity and exclusivity, making it a prime destination for savvy shoppers seeking the best deals.

Another extrinsic motivation is their **real-time product demonstrations and reviews**. Live streams on TikTok serve as a dynamic platform for showcasing products in action and offering real-time feedback, significantly influencing users' purchasing decisions. The ability of live streamers to physically try on clothes, provide real-time sizing advice, and even touch and showcase the material quality creates a "virtual fitting room" experience that resonates deeply with Vietnamese Gen Z users. As one participant enthusiastically stated, *"Watching a live streamer try on clothes and discuss the fit is so helpful! It's like having a personal stylist right there with me."* This "try-before-you-buy" experience, facilitated by live demonstrations and reviews, proves to be a compelling external motivator for active participation. As one user expressed, *"Seeing products in action during live streams helps me decide if they're worth buying."* This sentiment encapsulates the value of witnessing how products are used, their functionality, and their overall aesthetic appeal in real-time - an experience often unavailable in brick-and-mortar stores. Another user shared, *"I'm more likely to buy something after seeing a live demo. It's much more convincing than just looking at photos or reading descriptions."* The authenticity and transparency of live reviews further bolster the trust users place in these streams. One participant remarked, *"I feel like*

I can trust the recommendations of live streamers because they're using the products in real-time. It's not just scripted advertising." Another added, *"It's like getting advice from a friend, not just a salesperson. I value their honest opinions and firsthand experiences"*- a level of interaction and personalized feedback rarely encountered in traditional shopping environments.

2. Intrinsic motivations

Beyond extrinsic rewards, intrinsic motivations play an essential role in fostering engagement. From participant's perspective, watching livestream was considered to be a source of **entertainment and relaxation** because it provided a more interactive and engaging shopping experience compared to traditional media. One participant expressed:

"Live streams are my favorite way to unwind after a long day. It's like watching a TV show but way more fun!".

"I don't watch television anymore, I find it more fun to use social media and go shopping on TikTok. You can talk to sellers, other buyers, make jokes, and discuss about the price even when being at home".

Participants frequently highlighted their preference for interactive and engaging content on this platform. They expressed that the dynamic nature of live streams, with their unscripted moments and spontaneous interactions makes their shopping experience more enjoyable and unique.

Another interviewee revealed,

"I can see the spontaneous interactions between the livestream host and viewers. Sometimes the live streamers use various filter to match the requirements of audience. It's like watching a reality show unfold in front of my eyes".

"The energy and excitement of live streams are contagious. Some live streamers are really funny! Their personalities make the experience even more enjoyable. I think they are very comfortable to express themselves on this platform"

Many participants admitted that the unpredictable and spontaneous nature of live streams contribute to their enjoyment during livestream sessions. As one participant explained, *"you might thought that they just sell shoes, but they don't. They sell experience. To sell shoes, they can tell a lot of funny stories and even some non-fictional series related to their products. I don't believe these stories, but I have to admit that they really make me excited and relaxed. You will never know what's going to happen next during the livestream."*

Many participants highlighted the novelty and surprise as important element that motivate them spend a lot of time on livestream. These elements add a layer of excitement and anticipation to the viewing experience. They all agreed that the livestream would be really boring if live streamers just stay there, tell audience about the product's benefits and price.

Additionally, **parasocial relationships** formed with live streamers can act as a significant motivator, fostering loyalty and consistent viewership. For some TikTok users, live streamers become role models or even idols. One participant expressed, *"I love watching Pham Thoai's streams. He's so funny and relatable."* Another shared, *"I look up to Hang Du Muc for her confidence and creativity. I like her storytelling and the way she persuades us to buy her products."* Many interviewees admitted that they watched livestream because they felt connected with the live streamers. They can buy the cosmetics, shoes or lipsticks in other online stores but the connection between them and the live streamers motivate them to tune in regularly. In other words, the authentic and meaningful interactions, even in a digital space is one of their motivation for engaging on this platform.

"I never miss a live stream from V. H. Linh! She's always so honest and upfront about the products she recommends. I know I can trust her to only showcase items that are genuinely good and won't harm consumers."

"I've learned so much about beauty and skincare from H. Linh over the years. She's not only knowledgeable but also passionate about educating her viewers. I've been following her since her early YouTube days. She's always looking out for our best interests, and I appreciate that she prioritizes customer benefits over making a quick sale."

"I like joining Livestream on this platform because I really like Annes. She's my idol. And I really want to support her work".

Furthermore, **the sense of control and autonomy** intrinsic to live streams resonates strongly with users. When asked about their preferences for live streams over other forms of media, Vietnamese Gen Z TikTok users consistently highlighted the ability to choose which streams to watch and interact with, as reflected in the statement, *"I like that I can choose which live streams to watch and interact with. It's a way to take control of my online experience."* This sentiment is further explained in the statement, *"With live streams, I can decide what I want to watch, when I want to watch it, and how much I want to participate. It's so much more powerful than traditional TV."* They frequently highlighted the flexibility that live streams offer and compared it to the

passive consumption of traditional media. They appreciate the freedom to engage with content on their own terms, tailoring their experience to their individual preferences and schedules. Additionally, participants also compared live streams to the often overwhelming and pressured environment of offline shopping. One participant shared, *"In a store, I feel pressured by salespeople and limited by what's on the shelves. With live streams, I can browse at my own pace, ask questions directly, and make choices without feeling rushed."* This highlights the sense of comfort and control that users experience when engaging with live streams, allowing them to explore products and make decisions at their own leisure.

Research question 2

How does active participation in live stream chats influence user satisfaction and overall platform enjoyment among TikTok users in Vietnam?

Interviews with Vietnamese Gen Z TikTok users reveals that active participation in live stream chats significantly contributes to their satisfaction through **enhancing engagement and entertainment**. This has transformed the viewing experience from passive consumption to active participation.

1. Breaking Free from Passive Consumption

Interviewees contrasted live streaming with traditional media, highlighting the difference between "just watching" and "actively participating." As several participants passionately stated: *"Traditional media is a one-way street. Live streaming is a two-way conversation, and that makes all the difference in feeling connected."*Another participant shared, *"I love being able to interact with the host and other viewers in real-time, this's completely different from TV or Youtube video; not just watching it from a distance."* The ability to directly interact with the content creator and other viewers was frequently cited as a key factor in breaking free from passive consumption. Additionally, the ability to comment, react, and influence the content in real-time of livestream was seen as empowering and transformative. As one participant expressed, *"Commenting and reacting on livestream makes me feel more connected to what's happening. It's not just something I'm watching, it's something I'm experiencing."* Another participant also revealed *"The chat makes all the difference. I have an active role in choosing what and when to consume those content. It's way more fun than just watching something alone."*

2. Instant Gratification and Dynamic Engagement

The immediacy of live stream chats, with instant responses and real-time interactions, adds a layer of dynamism and excitement to the viewing experience. Several interviewees expressed that they enjoy engaging in conversations, asking questions about products on livestreams, and receiving immediate feedback. It made their shopping experience more enjoyable and fulfilling. One user remarked, *"Chatting makes live streams way more fun. I love getting instant responses to my comments. It makes the whole experience so much more dynamic and exciting."* Another user highlighted the sense of shared excitement, saying, *"When everyone in the chat is reacting to something funny or surprising, it amplifies the experience and makes it even more enjoyable."* One user emphasized the value of immediate feedback during live streams, stating, *"If I want to know about the size, or ask the host to show me a different color of that handbag, I get an instant response."* This highlights the unique advantage of live streams in providing real-time interaction and personalized assistance, a feature that significantly enhances user satisfaction and engagement. Many participants expressed their preference for the interactive nature of live stream chats that allows for real-time engagement between creators and viewers. By actively responding to comments, creators create a dynamic and interactive dialogue. This responsiveness not only keeps the conversation flowing but also makes viewers feel heard and valued. A viewer shared their perspective, *"I love when the host picks up on my comment and responds. It makes me want to keep chatting and participating in the stream."*

3. Deeper Connection with Content Creators

The interviews revealed that active participation in live stream chats not only fosters a significant sense of connection with content creators but also enhances user satisfaction and engagement. Many participants expressed their preference for TikTok livestream chat that transcends the traditional boundaries between live streamers and audience, fostering a sense of familiarity, intimacy, and even virtual friendship. One participant expressed this sentiment,

"I feel like I have a personal connection with some of the live streamers I follow. Although we have never met each other face-to-face before, I still really enjoy their sessions and see a lot of things in common between us."

They further explained this sense of connection results from the ability to interact directly with the host, ask questions, receive real-time responses on this platform, and even influence the content of the live stream. Another user highlighted the impact of this connection on their viewing habits: *"I'm more likely to tune in to a live stream if I feel like I know the creator. I can even make*

a joke with her, ask her random questions during live stream." This demonstrates how parasocial relationships formed through live stream interactions can drive consistent viewership and engagement. Moreover, this connection extends beyond mere entertainment. The live chat feature enables viewers to gain deeper insights into the creators' personalities and values, fostering a stronger sense of connection. *"I love seeing the host's reactions and hearing their thoughts in real-time. It makes them feel more relatable",* one participant noted.

4. Co-creation of Content and Empowerment

Active participation in chats allows users to feel heard and valued, contributing to a sense of empowerment and agency: *"I love when T.Linh (livestreamer) asks us what products we want to see next or what outfits they should try on. It makes me feel like I'm part of the show."* When their comments are acknowledged or their suggestions are incorporated into the stream, users feel like they have a voice and can influence the content they consume. As one user stated, *"When my comments get noticed by the host, it makes me feel like I have a voice and can influence the stream."* Another echoed this sentiment, sharing, *"The ability to comment, ask questions, and even influence the direction of the stream makes me feel heard and valued. It's a two-way conversation, not just a one-way broadcast."* This participatory role increases their satisfaction as they see their input shaping the content, making the experience more interactive and personalized. Furthermore, the opportunity to request songs or products during a live stream empowers participants to personalize their experience and tailor the content to their interests. *"I love it when streamers take requests from the chat. It makes me feel like they're listening to us and want to create content that we enjoy."* another user shared.

Research question 3

What strategies do TikTok content creators employ to foster and sustain audience engagement during live streams?

In-depth interviews with actively engaged sellers/livestreamers on TikTok within the fashion and beauty/cosmetics e-commerce space, coupled with direct livestream observations, have shed light on the multifaceted strategies these creators employ to foster and sustain audience

engagement. These strategies encompass three core themes: People, Products, and the overall background.

1. The Livestreamer's Presence: A Driving Force

Conversational Approach: Building Bridges Through Dialogue

As live streamers, participants frequently employed a conversational approach, initiating casual and friendly dialogues with their viewers about their daily lives, feelings, and experiences.

"I always start my live streams by asking my audience about their day "How's your day?", "Have you finished work?", "Have you eaten dinner?" and so on. I will not talk about my products immediately. It's a powerful way to connect with them on a personal level."

"Sometimes, we just chit chat about random things, what we had for lunch or our favorite movies. I think this is a unique but simple way to make them feel relaxed. Sellers in the offline stores can never have this advantage".

According to the participants, a friendly, conversational tone should be utilized instead of a formal or overly promotional language. In other words, encouraging audience to ask questions, responding to their comments, creating a friendly dialogue with them are more important than talking about their products at the beginning. As one host expressed,

"If you can make your live streams feel like a casual chat with friends, it is easier for you to get the insights from your customers, know what they like, what they want. It's about creating a welcoming space where people feel comfortable interacting and sharing their thoughts."

Another host shared, *"I avoid using jargon or overly technical terms. I really want my audience to feel like they are having a conversation with a friend, not listening to a lecture or a salesperson. They are more likely to trust a friend than a salesperson."*

From their viewpoints, this conversational style is helpful to break down barriers and have value-driven interaction. They believed that customers want to feel in control of their purchasing decision and do not like aggressive sales tactics.

Personal Touch: Authenticity and Relatability

"Sharing personal stories" are frequently shared by participants as a useful tool to construct meaningful rapport with their audience during livestreams. As one participant revealed,

"When I share a bit of myself, my experience in the field, things that I dislike in products, my audience are more likely to trust my recommendations and my sharing. If you can make them see you as a person, a real customer too, they will feel more related, thus want to support you and buy your products".

By sharing personal stories, experiences with products, the difficulties, the challenges they experienced, participants believed that they can help build rapport with the audience. As revealed by a live streamer, this authenticity makes the livestreamers more relatable and fosters a sense of connection:

"I often share stories or experiences from my own life that relate to the products I'm showcasing," one host mentioned.

"People often don't want to feel like they are just being sold to. When I shared my experience about how I actually try different cosmetic products, and how I really feel about the product I'm selling, how it has changed my skin smoothness, the viewers wanted to buy it more. I never tell a lie about my products; I always shared it for the benefits of customers. Therefore, it becomes less about the sale and more about sharing something I genuinely believe in."

"You don't always have to talk about your products, you can talk about your travels, your hobbies, your career plans. By doing so, customers are more likely to know you as a person, not just a seller. And I think that builds a stronger bond."

"I always try to shout out viewers by name and thank them for their support,"

Additionally, recognizing and acknowledging individual viewers, their comments, and purchases creates a sense of community and encourages further participation. *"It makes them feel appreciated and part of something bigger."*; *"It helps people see me as a real person, not just a salesperson."* Simple gestures like calling out names or highlighting comments can go a long way in making individuals feel seen and appreciated. *"I always make it a point to thank viewers for their comments and questions,"* one creator explained. *"By doing so, they will realize that that I really value their participation and that we're all in this together."* They even emphasized the power of inclusive language by addressing their audience as "friends" or "family," because it can create a sense of belonging and shared experience.

Furthermore, some participants actively involve their audience in decision-making or content creation. "*I often ask my viewers for their opinions on products or what they'd like to see*

me try next," one host explained. *"It makes them feel like they have a say in the live stream and keeps them engaged."*

"I use polls to let my viewers vote on which product I should review first, or what color outfit I should wear. It's a fun way to get them involved", one host shared.

"I often ask viewers about their skin type or hair concerns, and then I will recommend products based on their specific needs. It makes them feel seen and heard."

These examples illustrate how livestream hosts go beyond simply presenting content. They actively involve their audience in the creative process, making them feel valued and empowered

The Power of the Crowd

According to many participants who are livestreamers, by strategically leveraging the power of the crowd, TikTok content creators significantly enhance audience engagement during live streams. One of the key strategies observed was the use of real-time sales and inventory updates. Publicly announcing the number of products sold or highlighting limited stock availability triggers a sense of urgency and FOMO (fear of missing out). As one streamer shared, *"When I announce that there are only a few items left, the chat goes crazy! People start commenting faster and making purchases, they don't want to miss out."* Interviewees expressed that highlighting limited stock availability ("There are only 50 items remaining in stock.") created a sense of scarcity and urgency. It motivates viewers to act quickly to avoid missing out on a desirable product. Similarly, showcasing the number of vouchers or discounts remaining acts as a powerful motivator.

Beyond general calls for participation, interviewees shared that livestreamers should go a step further by directly acknowledging and thanking individual buyers. As one creator highlighted, *"When someone makes a purchase, I always make sure to thank them by name and express my appreciation. It makes them feel special, thus they will encourage others to join in."* In fact, many interviewees revealed that sense of FOMO (fear of missing out) among viewers could be created if viewers witness others making purchases in real-time. According to one interviewee, the power of crowd helps to validate the product's desirability:

"From my experience, many viewers might think the product on livestream is good if it is wanted by many people. In other words, when they see a lot of people are buying a type of handbag in real-time, they are more motivated to make purchases because they think it's a good product too"

"As humans, we don't want to miss good opportunities, good shirts, good pairs of shoes, good deals. If your livestreams are full with customers who are eager to buy your products, tt definitely influences other viewers' decision to purchase."

2. Support teams

Beyond organic audience participation, interviewees often enlist the help of "support teams" to further enhance the live stream experience. According to many participants, these teams, positioned off-camera, actively contribute to the atmosphere by verbally expressing enthusiasm and excitement during the broadcast. They might chant slogans, express admiration for products, or create a sense of urgency through synchronized calls to action, all in coordination with the host. As several livestreamers explained,

"Having a support team really helps to elevate the energy, especially during key moments like product reveals or limited-time offers. Their vocal enthusiasm creates a sense of excitement that's contagious and encourages viewers to get involved."

"When we launch a new product, my team starts chanting 'Get it now!' in the background. It builds so much excitement that people are afraid they'll miss out if they don't buy immediately."

"My support team's gasps and 'oohs' and 'ahhs' when I reveal a product make it seem so much more special. Viewers can feel the energy through the screen and want to be part of it."

Therefore, interviewees expressed that support teams engage in call-and-response interactions with the host, creating a playful and interactive atmosphere that encourages viewer participation.

Additionally, according to majority of interviewees, support teams often use positive affirmations and compliments to boost the host's confidence and energy levels. This positive reinforcement can translate into a more engaging and enjoyable experience for viewers. *"I often coordinate with my support team to create specific call-to-actions or reminders during the live stream. Their contribution add another layer of engagement and help to keep viewers focused."* Furthermore, the support team can help to create a sense of FOMO as their energy and enthusiasm can be contagious. In other words, many viewers who are initially hesitated to join the livestream and make purchase are more likely to be actively involved in livestream chat, and stay in the platform for a longer time. One participant expressed:

"The support team's enthusiasm and excitement can create ripple effect. They see others having fun and want to join in. No one wants to miss a fun party. I believe that tt creates a sense of FOMO for my viewers who might be hesitant to participate".

Moreover, the interviewees also showed that even if the actual number of people watching a livestream is low, a dedicated support team can create the illusion of a much larger and more enthusiastic audience. *"Even if the actual organic viewership is relatively small, the presence of an active support team can create the illusion of a larger, more engaged audience. This can make viewers feel like they're part of a bustling community, which can be especially appealing in a social media context."* As participants explained, people are naturally drawn to things that others seem to enjoy. A seemingly bustling chat gives the impression that the stream is popular and worth watching, attracting more viewers. The lively and energetic atmosphere in the livestream, partly due to the cheerleading team, can capture the attention of potential viewers who are scrolling through TikTok. They might be drawn in by the positive vibe and decide to join the livestream.

3. Product Showcasing and Product Testing

Effective product showcasing emerges as a central strategy employed by many interviewees to foster audience engagement and drive conversions. These participants value an interactive and informative approach that resonates with their viewers more than mere product descriptions and visuals, adopting.

"It's not enough to just tell people about a product; you have to show them how it works and why it's a good deal."

They shared that focusing on three most outstanding selling points is helpful to guide the livestream sessions and frame them as questions to trigger audience's interest. As one participant shared, *"By focusing on the three most compelling selling points, I can keep my presentations concise and impactful. Viewers appreciate that I'm not wasting their time and that I'm providing them with the most relevant information."*

According to interviewees, this approach involves a deep understanding of the product and its potential benefits for the viewer. As one livestreamer shared, *"I always meticulously research the products I'm going to feature. I want to understand their unique selling points and how they can solve my viewers' problems."* They then craft a concise and focused script that emphasizes

these key points, avoiding unnecessary tangents and ensuring each product presentation remains engaging and impactful.

"I try to keep my product sharing to around 5-6 minutes, no more than 6 minutes" another livestreamer explained.

"Even though I can have 3-4 hour live stream session, I rarely spend more than 10 minutes for any products. I focus on the features that really relevant to my customers and demonstrate how they can add value to my customers' lives."

"It will be useful to think about what your audience can ask. I always predict the questions my viewers might have and address them proactively during the live stream. This shows that I'm knowledgeable about the product and that I care about their concerns."

They believe that proactively addressing viewer questions during live streams can foster trust, demonstrate product knowledge, and create a more personalized and engaging shopping experience. Therefore, learning about the products and showcasing products carefully are considered to be important.

Beyond showcasing products, many participants shared that they actively **test and demonstrate their products** during the livestream sessions. They believed that this is the best way to build trust through allowing viewers to witness the product's function, quality, texture, and overall performance in real-time. Therefore, it helps to bridge the gap between online and offline shopping experiences. As several livestreamers explained,

"I always make sure to test the products I'm featuring live on camera. It's the best way to show viewers how they work and what they can expect."

"Seeing is believing. When I demonstrate a product live, viewers can see its texture, how it works, and its immediate effects. It's much more convincing than just showing a picture."

Particularly, most participants expressed that product testing would help to build trust on products quality in fashion and beauty industry. As one beauty influencer shared, *"When I'm selling skincare products, I always apply them to my skin during the live stream. Viewers can see how the product feels, how it absorbs, and any immediate visible results. This transparency builds trust and helps them understand the product's value."* This hands-on demonstration allows viewers to assess aspects like consistency, fragrance, and potential skin reactions, which are crucial factors in skincare purchases. It also provides an opportunity to showcase the product's unique benefits, such as brightening effects, hydration levels, or improved skin texture. Another beauty

livestreamer emphasized the importance of this approach, stating, *"Skincare is a very personal choice, and people want to see how a product actually works before they invest in it. By testing it on my own skin, I can give them a realistic preview and answer their questions in real-time."* When it comes to products like sunscreen, live streamers leverage the platform's real-time nature to conduct compelling demonstrations. They might use UV lights or UV-sensitive cards to visually showcase the product's effectiveness in blocking harmful rays or conduct outdoor demonstrations to highlight its real-world application. As one livestreamer explained, *"When I'm selling sunscreen, I like to use a UV light to show the difference between protected and unprotected skin. It's a powerful visual that really resonates with viewers."* They believe that these live demonstrations not only provide tangible evidence of the product's efficacy but also create an engaging and informative experience for viewers. A cornerstone of this approach is the active demonstration of products during live streams. Similarly, the interview result shows that fashion sellers often try on clothes during live streams, demonstrating fit, movement, and versatility. This allows viewers to visualize how the clothes might look on themselves and make more informed choices about size and style.

Many interviewees also shared that people are more likely to buy a product after they've had a chance to experience it firsthand.

"Think of product trials as a bridge between hesitation and purchase. It lets customers cross over from 'maybe' to 'definitely' - and I see that transformation in my sales figures every time."

"It's more convincing to see how it actually works! I often see a noticeable increase in purchases after testing products."

According to participants, this hands-on approach provides viewers with valuable insights they would not get from traditional online shopping or even static product displays in physical stores.

5. Background Setting: Replicating the In-Store Experience

Many TikTok live streamers revealed that they strategically utilized their background setting to enhance the overall viewer experience. As shared by many participants, they want to create a "real shopping experience" for audience by setting up their live streams in physical stores or carefully designed home studios to give the best experience for customers. They explained that this approach aimed to bridge the gap between online and offline shopping, offering viewers a

sense of familiarity and immersion. This may involve decorating their studio similar to a shopping malls, utilizing an actual retail store as the backdrop, or changing the backdrop that match with the color or the theme of their products. One participant explained:

"I want my viewers to feel"REAL", like they're actually visiting my store, not just watching a video from distance. So I put a lot of effort into creating a visually appealing and realistic background."

"I try to change my background regularly to keep things fresh and interesting. It also helps showcase different products and create a variety of shopping experiences."

Careful attention was paid to product displays, lighting, decoration, images to create an comfortable and professional atmosphere. These responses emphasize the significance of background setting in shaping viewers' perceptions and overall enjoyment of TikTok live streams. From their perspective, a well-curated and visually appealing background can create a more immersive, reliable, and engaging experience. It will ultimately contribute to the success of the livestream. Observations of live streams confirm this trend. Many creators utilize props, lighting, and decor to create a visually engaging and immersive atmosphere. Some even incorporate elements of traditional Vietnamese markets or shopping streets to add a touch of cultural authenticity.

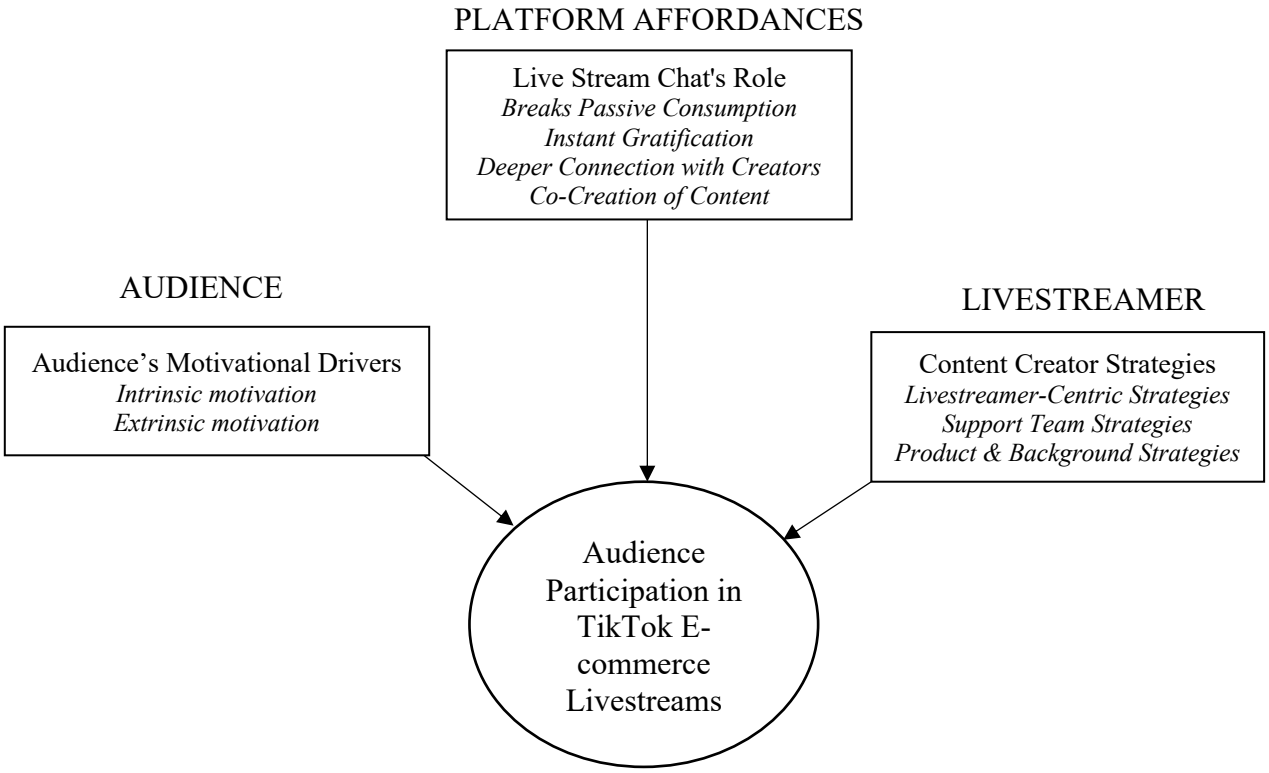


Figure 1. Model for Audience Participation in TikTok E-commerce Livestreams

CHAPTER VI. DISCUSSION

Audience's Motivational Drivers

The research confirms the strong influence of extrinsic motivations, particularly the allure of exclusive deals, promotions, and the fear of missing out (FOMO), in driving engagement with live streams. This aligns with established marketing principles that highlight the effectiveness of scarcity and urgency in influencing consumer behavior, particularly among younger demographics (Cialdini, 2009; Hodkinson, 2016). The study further reveals a preference for TikTok's live stream ecosystem due to its perceived abundance of exclusive benefits, underlining the platform's strategic use of extrinsic rewards to attract and retain viewers.

Beyond FOMO, the desire for informed decision-making, which is previously underemphasized motivator, emerges as a significant motivator. Live streams offer a unique "try-before-you-buy" experience through real-time product demonstrations and reviews, fostering trust and confidence in potential purchases. This observation echoes prior research on the importance of transparency and authenticity in building trust and influencing purchase decisions in online environments (Irshad et al., 2020; Kim & Kim, 2019). However, this study highlights the distinctive advantage of live streaming in providing real-time, interactive product experiences that bridge the gap between online and offline shopping. Unlike physical stores where products are often statically displayed or limited to brief interactions, live streams bridge the gap by allowing viewers to witness products being used, tested, and reviewed in real-time. This interactive element adds a layer of authenticity and transparency that is often absent in offline shopping, enabling users to make more informed decisions.

The findings also reveal a range of intrinsic motivations that contribute to sustained engagement, aligning with the Uses and Gratifications theory (Katz et al., 1974). Live streams serve as a source of entertainment and relaxation, catering to Gen Z's preference for participatory media experiences. The unscripted nature, spontaneous real-time interactions, and special personalities of live streamers create a captivating atmosphere that foster and sustain audience engagement. Within this context, parasocial relationships with livestreamers help to widen the understanding of intrinsic motivations. The findings highlighting viewers' admiration and connection with specific creators, such as Pham Thoai and Hang Du Muc, emphasize the role of

personality and relatability in fostering engagement. This aligns with previous research on parasocial interaction, which suggests that these one-sided relationships can fulfill social and emotional needs (Kowert & Daniel, 2021; Sherrick et al., 2021). Finally, the research reveals a novel insight into Gen Z's media consumption habits: the strong appeal of control and autonomy offered by live streams. The ability to choose content, interact in real time, and even influence the stream's direction empowers viewers, contrasting sharply with the passive consumption associated with traditional media. This finding suggests a shift in viewer expectations towards more interactive and personalized media experiences. Live streaming empowers live streamers/sellers to become content creators themselves by providing them with a platform to express their ideas and connect with an audience. In other words, this process helps to democratize the content creation, further reinforcing the sense of control and autonomy that Gen Z TikTok viewers value.

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on e-commerce by revealing deep insights into the motivations driving Gen Z engagement on platforms like TikTok. It highlights the interplay of extrinsic and intrinsic factors, particularly the unique role of parasocial relationships and the desire for autonomy, in shaping viewer behavior and preferences. These findings have important implications for content creators, marketers, and platform designers seeking to optimize live stream experiences for this influential demographic.

Active Participation and its Impact on User Satisfaction and Enjoyment

The findings, which is related to the shift from passive to active consumption, are aligned with the concept of "participatory culture" (Jenkins, 2006). This research extends this concept by showcasing how live stream chats can empower users to actively shape their viewing experiences in digital media, transcending the traditional role of passive observers. Users become co-creators, contributing to the unfolding narrative of the live stream through real-time interactions, as observed in Sundar & Limperos' (2013) exploration of user agency in digital media. This active engagement not only foster a sense of ownership and influence among TikTok users, but also significantly contributes to improve user satisfaction and enjoyment. This resonates with the intrinsic motivations highlighted in Uses and Gratification theory.

The desire for instant gratification and real-time engagement aligns well with the Uses and Gratifications theory. It suggests that people actively choose media to satisfy specific needs and gratifications (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). In the live streaming context, the distinctive nature of

live stream that allows the immediacy of feedback and real-time interactions fulfill the viewers' need for instant gratification and enjoyable shopping experience. It cultivates a sense of excitement and fulfillment that distinguishes it from other forms of media consumption. This dynamic engagement further contributes to the formation of a sense of community and belonging, as highlighted in the literature on online communities (Baym, 2010).

Furthermore, the study reveals the unique role of live stream chats in cultivating parasocial relationships—one-sided bonds that viewers form with media personalities (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956). While previous research has explored parasocial interactions in traditional media and popular social media, this study emphasizes how the real-time, two-way communication in live streaming fosters a sense of intimacy and virtual friendship, echoing findings by Dibble, Hartmann, & Rosaen (2016) on parasocial relationships in digital media. This suggests that live stream chats offer a more direct and immediate channel for fostering these connections, potentially leading to increased loyalty and engagement.

The research also highlights the empowering nature of co-creation in live streaming context. Users' ability to contribute to the content through comments, feedback, suggestions, open conversation, aligns with the concept of "cognitive surplus" (Shirky, 2010). According to Shirky (2010), people bring value to online space by utilizing their collective intelligence and creativity. This demonstrates how acknowledging and integrating user contributions fosters a sense of agency and validation. Finally, the ability for users to personalize their live stream experience through real-time requests distinguishes this platform from traditional media consumption. This feature allows users to actively curate their content, contribute to the livestream's atmosphere, aligning with the literature on the importance of personalization in enhancing user experiences (Park, 2014). In other words, by tailoring to individual preferences and offering a sense of control, live streaming platforms can empower users and foster greater engagement.

This research not only confirms existing theories and literature on user engagement, parasocial relationships, and co-creation but also highlights the novel ways in which live streaming platforms foster active participation, instant gratification, and personalization. It emphasizes the transformative potential of live stream chats in shaping user satisfaction and enjoyment, offering valuable insights for content creators, platform developers, and researchers interested in understanding the dynamics of this evolving digital landscape.

Livestreamer's strategies

Expanding on current research in live streaming and e-commerce, the findings provide new perspectives and highlight the methods that TikTok content creators in Vietnam use to enhance audience engagement during their live streams.

Firstly, unlike previous studies that have mainly concentrated on the promotional side of e-commerce, this research highlights the social and relational aspects of engagement. Instead of just focusing on advertising to boost sales, it emphasizes the importance of building relationships, fostering community, and creating meaningful interactions with customers. By sharing personal stories and experiences, livestreamers present themselves as multi-dimensional individuals rather than just sellers. This openness helps humanize the livestreamer, building trust and making their recommendations seem more genuine and less like a hard sell. It shifts the interaction from a purely transactional one to a more relational one, where viewers feel they are engaging with a friend rather than just a salesperson. Acknowledging and valuing viewers' contributions strengthens their sense of community and belonging, as noted by Hilvert-Bruce et al. (2018a). This interactive approach aligns with findings from online community research, which stress the importance of participation and two-way communication in fostering engagement (Ray et al., 2014). When viewers feel recognized and valued, they are more likely to keep participating and become loyal followers (Hu et al., 2017a).

The focus on the livestreamer's conversational style aligns with the idea of parasocial interaction, where viewers develop one-sided relationships with media personalities. Liu et al. (2019) note that in today's digital world, audiences are more inclined to engage with and support livestreamers who make them feel a genuine connection. This underscores the importance of building real relationships with viewers, going beyond the traditional creator-consumer dynamic. The research highlights that successful livestreamers do not just promote products; they use a conversational, personal approach to create a sense of community and belonging. This has significant implications for content creators and marketers, suggesting that an authentic and interactive approach can enhance audience engagement and loyalty.

This research also brings forth novel insights into the realm of live stream engagement. The strategic use of "cheerleading teams" or "Support teams" to amplify excitement and create a

sense of community represents a unique and innovative approach that warrants further exploration. The support team's enthusiastic comments about the host and the products can serve as testimonials, boosting social proof. When viewers see others expressing positive opinions and excitement, they're more likely to view both the host and the products as credible and appealing. The support team's active involvement also sets an example for other viewers, encouraging them to join the chat and interact with the host. This approach shows how coordinated engagement can improve the viewer experience and contribute to the success of live streams.

Additionally, these creators recognize that effective product presentation extends beyond mere descriptions and visuals, necessitating an interactive and informative approach that resonates with their audience. By actively testing and demonstrating products, and by anticipating and addressing viewer questions, they create a more personalized and engaging shopping experience. This approach aligns with the **Uses and Gratifications Theory**. Viewers actively seek out live streams not just for entertainment, but also to gain information and make informed purchase decisions (Bawack et al., 2023). By showcasing products in a dynamic and informative manner, creators fulfill this need, enhancing viewer satisfaction and increasing the likelihood of conversion. Furthermore, the interactive nature of these presentations, where creators proactively address viewer inquiries, aligns with the gratifications of social interaction and participation, further deepening audience engagement (Phua et al., 2017). While the role of product showcasing in e-commerce is well-known, this study highlights three key selling points and the value of concise presentations to align with TikTok's fast-paced nature. This approach is designed to keep viewers engaged and ensure they retain information despite short attention spans. Moreover, addressing potential questions upfront shows that creators understand their audience's needs and are committed to providing a seamless shopping experience. This strategy fosters trust and positions the creator as a knowledgeable and helpful resource. By adopting an interactive, informative, and personalized approach, creators can effectively leverage these strategies to cater to viewers' needs and build strong parasocial relationships, ultimately leading to increased sales and brand loyalty. Further research could explore the impact of different product showcasing techniques and the role of social proof in influencing purchase decisions within the context of TikTok live streams.

In contrary to expectations, the perceived efficacy of guest appearances as a livestreaming strategy was found to be low. Participants expressed concerns about the sustainability and financial

implications of regularly hosting guests, indicating a preference for alternative growth tactics. From a livestreamer's point of view, the costs and logistical challenges of guest appearances often outweigh the potential benefits, making it a less appealing strategy for long-term growth.

Another interesting finding is the strategic use of background setting. By replicating physical stores or designing visually appealing home studios, streamers aim to bridge the gap between online and offline shopping experiences. This deliberate curation of the background environment aligns with the broader literature on atmospherics in retail, which posits that the physical attributes of a shopping environment significantly influence consumer perceptions and behaviors. This research adds to our understanding of livestream e-commerce by showing how important the background setting can be for boosting viewer engagement. The study finds that a well-designed background can make the shopping experience on TikTok live streams more immersive, trustworthy, and engaging. This highlights the need to pay attention not just to how products are presented, but also to the overall visual context in which they are displayed. Future research could further explore the impact of different background settings on specific consumer behaviors, such as purchase intent, brand perception, and social sharing.

CHAPTER VII. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Conclusion

This research offers valuable insights into what drives Gen Z to engage actively with TikTok e-commerce livestreams, particularly in the fashion and beauty/cosmetics sectors in Vietnam. It explores the intricate mix of motivations, platform features, and content creator strategies that help create a dynamic and interactive livestream experience.

Firstly, the study confirmed the enduring power of **extrinsic motivations** such as exclusive deals and FOMO in attracting viewers. However, it also unveiled the crucial role of intrinsic motivations like entertainment, parasocial connections, and autonomy in sustaining engagement. This insightful understanding challenges traditional assumptions about the primacy of external rewards and highlights the importance of catering to viewers' deeper psychological needs. Secondly, the research highlighted how live stream chat can dramatically boost participation and enjoyment. By enabling real-time interaction and allowing viewers to co-create content, the chat

feature transforms passive viewing into an engaging, community-driven experience where viewers have a say in shaping the livestream. Thirdly, the investigation into content creator strategies revealed a range of tactics employed to foster engagement. **Conversational approaches, support team dynamics,** and **product-focused strategies** all contribute to creating an interactive, informative, and entertaining environment that resonates with Gen Z viewers.

In conclusion, this research underscores the complex and multifaceted nature of audience participation in TikTok e-commerce live streams. It highlights the need for content creators and brands to go beyond mere transactional incentives and leverage intrinsic motivations, parasocial relationships, and interactive features to cultivate meaningful and lasting engagement with Gen Z audiences. By understanding and strategically addressing these factors, creators and brands can create captivating live stream experiences that foster loyalty, drive sales, and build thriving communities on the platform.

Implications of results and findings

The findings of this research not only offer broader implications for our understanding of **media consumption theories**, challenging existing assumptions and suggesting new avenues for exploration. The study's emphasis on intrinsic motivations like entertainment, parasocial connections, and autonomy expands the traditional scope of Uses and Gratifications Theory. It suggests that the gratifications sought from media consumption are not limited to information, social interaction, or personal identity, but also encompass the desire for control, agency, and emotional fulfillment. Moreover, the prominence of parasocial relationships in driving engagement highlights the need for further research into the gratifications individuals derive from these mediated connections. The study deepens our understanding of parasocial relationships in the context of live streaming, demonstrating their significant impact on viewer engagement and loyalty. This highlights the need for further research into the dynamics and implications of parasocial interactions in the evolving digital landscape.

Additionally, this research has important practical implications for content creators, brands, social media platforms. **For content creators and brands**, the research shows that relying just on things like discounts and promotions isn't enough to keep viewers engaged in the long run. Instead, they should focus on creating content that is entertaining, informative, and interactive, meeting viewers' needs for connection, self-expression, and autonomy. Personalized content,

interactive features, and opportunities for co-creation can make a big difference. The study also suggests that in influencer marketing, it's crucial to prioritize real connections over just chasing follower counts. Brands should team up with creators who genuinely connect with their audience. Creators should be approachable and personable, actively engaging with viewers in live chat to build a strong sense of community. This approach can lead to greater loyalty, more repeat viewership, and a better brand image. Live chat is key for boosting participation and enjoyment. By actively encouraging and responding to comments and questions, creators can make viewers feel valued and part of the experience, which can increase brand awareness, generate positive word-of-mouth, and drive potential sales. Also, creating a conversational and friendly atmosphere during live streams helps enhance engagement. Creators should aim to make their streams feel like casual chats with friends, sharing personal stories and experiences to build trust and relatability, especially with Gen Z consumers who appreciate authenticity. Finally, offering detailed product demos and real-time reviews during live streams helps viewers make informed decisions. This allows viewers to visualize the products in action, builds trust, and encourages purchase decisions. Brands should collaborate with creators to showcase their products effectively and leverage the power of live demonstrations to drive sales.

For social media and e-commerce platforms, this research suggests that Gen Z viewers significantly value live chat and are increasingly seeking interactive and participatory media experiences. Social media platforms should keep investing in features and tools that support real-time engagement, content co-creation, and personalized experiences. Additionally, the important role of parasocial relationships in boosting engagement highlights the need for authenticity and transparency. Platforms should encourage and reward genuine interactions between creators and audiences while actively working to prevent misinformation and inauthentic behavior. This can create a more trustworthy and engaging environment for users.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the motivations, the role of live stream chat, and strategies related to TikTok live streaming among Vietnamese Gen Z users, it is important to acknowledge the limitation of its sample size. While selecting 30 participants with a focus on diversity ensures a range of perspectives, it might limit how well the findings apply to all TikTok users. Given the qualitative nature of this research, which aims to explore the nuances of user motivations and engagement, the goal is to provide deep, detailed insights rather than broad

generalizations. This method allows for a thorough understanding of the participants' specific experiences, contributing meaningful information to the field.

Secondly, time constraints and geographical distances prevented the collection of data through in-person interviews. As a result, interviews were conducted via Google Meet, and Facebook video call, which precluded the use of observational methods to capture participant interactions and offer a complementary perspective (Cassell et al., 2018; Holstein & Gubrium, 2002). Future research should consider using a mixed-method approach, blending interviews with direct observation of the interviewee's behavior during the interview. This combination would offer a more complete understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Thirdly, although this research aimed to explore viewers' motivations and livestreamer strategies, some participants may have been hesitant to fully share their true thoughts or sensitive details about the tactics streamers use. This reluctance could be due to wanting to appear socially acceptable or to protect the platform's reputation. Livestreamers, in particular, might have framed their engagement strategies more positively during interviews to maintain their self-image and professional standing. While this bias could affect how openly they discussed certain tactics, interviews and self-reported data were still the best approach for gathering insights in this study.

Fourth, since this research focuses on the fashion, beauty, and cosmetics industries in Vietnam, the findings might not apply to other sectors or cultural settings. Engagement patterns, motivations, and strategies could differ greatly in other industries or regions. Future studies examining a wider range of industries and cultural contexts would help determine how broadly these insights can be applied.

While observing the livestream offered useful insights into the strategies used by streamers, it is necessary to recognize that watching just one stream might not reflect their full, long-term approach. Some of the tactics seen could have been spontaneous or situational, rather than part of a consistent, planned strategy. Future research could involve longitudinal observation of multiple livestreams or interviews with content creators to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their long-term engagement strategies.

Finally, while this research provides insights into the immediate impact of live streamer's strategies, support team, and background settings on viewer engagement during TikTok live streams, it does not examine the long-term effects on viewer behavior. More research is needed to

see if their strategies have an impact beyond the livestream, influencing things like repeat purchases, brand loyalty, and the overall relationship between consumers and brands.

Recommendations for Further Studies

Future research should aim to include a larger and more diverse group of participants, covering different demographics, industries, and cultural backgrounds. Doing so would make the findings more applicable to a broader audience and provide a deeper insight into how live streamers and their viewers interact across various contexts.

To assess the long-term impact of various factors, including live-streamers' conversational approach, support team, background setting, on viewer behavior, longitudinal studies are recommended. These studies could track viewer engagement, purchase patterns, and brand loyalty over an extended period, providing valuable insights into the sustained effects of livestreaming strategies.

To further enhance understanding of viewer motivations and engagement patterns, future research should adopt a mixed-methods approach. By involving qualitative techniques, such as interviews or focus groups, with quantitative tools like surveys or behavioral data analysis, researchers can gather more comprehensive insights into the complex dynamics of the livestreaming landscape. This combination not only highlights key trends but also sheds light on the deeper factors driving viewer behavior, fostering a more nuanced understanding of audience engagement. Additionally, conducting cross-cultural studies would reveal both commonalities and differences in viewer preferences and engagement patterns across various cultural contexts, helping streamers develop strategies that cater to diverse audiences.

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IX. APPENDIX

A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LIVESTREAM PARTICIPANTS

General questions

- In which city or province do you currently reside?
- How often do you use TikTok on a daily basis?
- What kind of creators do you typically follow on TikTok?
- How often do you watch livestreams on TikTok?
- How often do you actively participate (comment, like, send gifts) in livestreams?
- What types of livestreams shopping do you enjoy watching the most?

Motivation

- What attracts you to watch and participate in livestreams on TikTok?
- What do you find enjoyable or fulfilling about engaging in livestreams compared to other forms of content on TikTok?
- Does the opportunity to interact directly with the streamer or other viewers in real-time motivate you to participate?
- Are you more likely to participate in livestreams if there are potential rewards or benefits involved, such as giveaways, discounts, or exclusive access to content?
- Do you feel influenced by the number of viewers or the level of activity in the chat when deciding to participate in a livestream?

Impact of chat participation

- How does actively participating in the chat during a livestream affect your overall experience?
- Do you feel more connected to the streamer or other viewers when you engage in the chat?
- What elements of a livestream chat contribute to a positive and enjoyable experience for you? Have you ever had any negative experiences in livestream chats that impacted your enjoyment?

Strategies

- Are there any particular livestreamers who you feel are particularly good at keeping you engaged throughout their broadcasts? What do they do differently?

B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LIVESTREAMERS

General questions

- Which city or province do you currently live in?
- How often do you go live on TikTok each week?
- On average, how long do your livestream sessions typically last?
- On average, how many viewers do you have during your livestreams?
- What types of products do you primarily feature or sell during your livestreams?
- What are your primary goals or objectives for livestreaming on TikTok?

Sales strategies

- How do you demonstrate or showcase the products during your livestreams? (e.g., using samples, live demonstrations, showcasing customer testimonials)
- How do you interact with your viewers during livestreams? Do you respond to comments, ask questions, or create polls?
- Do you incorporate different formats or activities during your livestreams to keep viewers interested?
- Do you have any specific techniques for encouraging viewers to participate in the chat and interact with each other?
- Do you have a team or any collaborators who help you with your livestreams? If yes, what are their roles?
- How do you build rapport and establish a connection with your audience during livestreams?
- What challenges do you encounter in managing the sales aspect of your livestreams?