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THE INFLUENCE OF TIKTOK IN
PORTUGUESE MILLENNIALS' FOOTWEAR
CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Dissertation thesis work to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain a
Master's Degree in Communication Studies specialising in
Communication, Marketing and Advertising

Work written by

Luís Maria Albuquerque Gaivão Mouzinho de Albuquerque

Faculty of Human Sciences

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Written under the supervision of

Professor Doutor Alexandre Duarte

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this dissertation is to analyse the influence of TikTok on Portuguese millennials' footwear consumer behaviour. The latest data has shown there are over 3.5

million of users in Portugal (almost half of the country's total social media users), that's an accomplishment that took Instagram and Facebook more time to achieve. Little research has been done so far to understand how the app impacts users and their consumer behaviour, even though is one of the most popular social media platforms, and to the researcher's knowledge there is no study related to TikTok's influence on consumer behaviour and more specifically regarding the footwear industry.

This investigation emphasizes how different strategies in Marketing (content marketing, influencer marketing, word-of-mouth, virality) are perceived by the consumers and to what degree is a factor in their purchase intentions. A mixed methods approach was employed in the research methodology. This included a quantitatively analysis of an online survey to 440 millennials, that after some inclusion criteria reduced to 142 millennials that claim to have purchased footwear because of TikTok. To complement this information, a qualitative analysis of two focus groups was also conducted.

Because the sample is not representative (for that to happen, the study would have 384 participants randomly chosen), the conclusions of the participants' sample (N = 142) conclude that TikTok is very influential with Portuguese millennials' footwear consumption. More studies need to be conducted to thoroughly interpret the impact.

Keywords: content marketing; consumer behaviour; electronic word-of-mouth; influencer marketing; millennials; social media marketing; TikTok.

RESUMO

O objeto de estudo desta dissertação é a influência do TikTok no comportamento de consumo de calçado dos *millennials* portugueses. Os últimos dados mostram que

existem mais de 3,5 milhões de utilizadores em Portugal (quase metade do total de utilizadores de redes sociais do país), um feito que o Instagram e o Facebook demoraram mais tempo a alcançar. Esta investigação pretende enfatizar a forma como diferentes estratégias de Marketing (marketing de conteúdo, marketing de influência, *word-of-mouth*, viralidade) são percebidas pelos consumidores e até que ponto são um fator nas suas intenções de compra. Até ao momento, poucos estudos estudaram o TikTok, apesar de ser uma das plataformas de redes sociais mais populares, e, tanto quanto é do conhecimento do investigador, não existe nenhum estudo relacionado com a influência do TikTok no comportamento do consumidor e, mais especificamente, na indústria do calçado.

No que diz respeito à metodologia, foi implementada uma abordagem de métodos mistos, que incluiu uma análise quantitativa de um inquérito online 440 *millennials*, que após alguns critérios de inclusão reduziu para 142 *millennials* que afirmam ter comprado calçado devido ao TikTok, e depois uma análise qualitativa de dois grupos focais, para complementar a informação.

Uma vez que a amostra não é representativa (para tal, o estudo teria de ter 384 participantes escolhidos aleatoriamente), as conclusões da amostra de participantes (N = 142) concluem que o TikTok é muito influente no consumo de calçado dos *millennials* portugueses. São necessários mais estudos para interpretar em profundidade o impacto.

Palavras-chave: marketing de conteúdos; comportamento do consumidor; word-of-mouth eletrónico; marketing de influência; *millennials*; marketing nas redes sociais; TikTok.

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I am not one to do this. Nevertheless, I will be fully vulnerable here. Working a full-time job while writing a dissertation was a challenging task. Many were the nights where quitting was an (unfortunate) option for me.

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INTRODUCTION:

The following study, "The Influence of TikTok in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour," emerges from the necessity of understanding how TikTok, one of the largest social media networks of today's digital landscape, directly influences consumer behaviour. The investigation explores how TikTok is helping Portuguese consumers purchase footwear.

There are several themes in the study that are worth to study. The first one is social media, which is constantly evolving due to technological advancements, creating new platforms with new features and providing users the experience of engaging with new social media platforms (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016; Dwivedi et al., 2021). The second theme is the footwear industry, in this case relating to consumer behaviour, which is also in continuous evolution (recent trends, new external stimuli from consumers, innovation) (Ma et al., 2023). TikTok as a media outlet still has much to be studied in the research field, which is considerable since almost two billion people are signed into the platform (Statista, 2023). There is a lack of publicly available research on Portuguese consumption habits and the Portuguese market. This makes it difficult for interested individuals to understand how Portuguese consumption habits compare to more significant markets like the US or the UK. The study assumes that access to information needs to be developed in order to address this issue. There needs to be more academic research done, especially about TikTok (overall), Portuguese consumer behaviour, and the footwear industry in Portugal. With this study, the intention is to increase scientific knowledge about the topic discussed.

The author believes that understanding what drives millennial consumer behaviour is crucial for brands to make an impact. In Portugal, the millennial generation is expected to become the driving force behind consumer spending (as millennials are growing older and their economic power will only tend to increase), but very little is known, with only the occasional news article about them (Expresso, 2018). If marketers want to reach consumers through TikTok, they must apply effective strategies to engage them, as this is the platform's main purpose.

The study is relevant to the field of Communication Science as it examines how social media and other external stimuli influence human interaction.

Taking this into consideration, this dissertation tries to address two research questions: 1) "To what extent does TikTok influence Millennials' purchase intentions in the Portuguese footwear industry?" which is the main research question that conducted

this study, and then the other one is 2) "What are the features on TikTok that have the most influence on Portuguese millennials when it comes to buying footwear?".

This research is conducted through interpretivism (subjective regulation). It seeks to explain the stability of behaviour from the individual's point of view (Williams, 2000). As TikTok is a relatively new topic, there have been few studies on it, particularly with regards to the Portuguese context.

To conduct the methodology study, a mixed methods research approach was employed, utilizing two instruments. For quantitative data, which allows a deeper understanding of the phenomena, an online survey was carried out on 563 participants. Out of them, only 447 were a part of the millennial generation. When considering the rest of the inclusion criteria, only 142 answers were deemed valid. To collect qualitative data, we conducted two focus groups, with four participants in each group.

Regarding the literature review, in the first part of this research, information was gathered regarding three main topics: (1) consumer behaviour, (2) TikTok, and (3) millennials.

- Chapter one explores consumer behaviour, with the first subchapter focusing on the history of consumer behaviour to understand how research is relatively recent, interdisciplinary, and has been evolving throughout the last century. Then, an explanation is given to address consumer behaviour within the scope of marketing, and finally, a correlation is conducted between social media and consumer behaviour, while analysing the key features of social media marketing.
- Chapter two relates to TikTok, overviewing the app's brief history, the main characteristics, the main findings available, and how TikTok influences consumer behaviour.
- Chapter three relates to understanding millennials, their history, their main characteristics, and how they behave as consumers with shared similarities, and finally, an understanding of the Portugal millennials is done.

The second part of the study focuses on the methodology, which includes (1) a deeper understanding of the research objectives and research questions, a review of the paradigm, the methods used, and strategies, (2) comprehending the survey and instrumentation, (3) understand the focus group and the instrumentation, and finally (4) the data collection analysis.

The final part of the study involves analysing data using methodological tools, validating the research hypothesis, and discussing the results. The work concludes with a

summary and recommendations for future investigations. All further information about the focus group and survey can be seen in the attachments.

CHAPTER 1 - CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR:

1.1. History of Consumer Behaviour Research

Consumer behaviour and the interactions of individuals in the market interest various disciplines (such as economics, marketing, psychology, and sociology), so we consider its analysis to be part of an interdisciplinary study since each has its distinctive approaches, objectives, and backgrounds (Stavkova et al., 2008; Nalawade & Nale, 2013), examining the effect of emotions, attitudes, and preferences on consumer buying behaviour (Medium, 2020). The study will focus on understanding the dimensions and perspectives of consumer behaviour studies through the discipline of Marketing and its objectives.

Marketing plays a crucial role in consumer behaviour study, as both concepts were originally closed-tied (Erasmus et al., 2001). According to Pickett-Baker and Ozaki (2008), Marketing as a subject is concerned with studying how to influence consumers' attitudes toward brands and products. To understand the complexity of behavioural science study, one must travel back in time to understand how consumers behave and what drives them to behave the way they do. To be more precise, one must travel back to the 1930s, and up to this day a clear and concise approach or definition is still not established due to the various perspectives and approaches from several hundreds of authors (Paz & Rodriguez, 2023).

Researchers focused on the economic part of consumer behaviour during its early research stages. The consumer is a rational person whose only motivations are driven by his economic interests (Arndt, 1986; Ekström, 2003; Zaichkowsky, 1991). Few researchers considered any other external factor (like, for example, psychological) as a driver for consumer behaviour (Waguespack & Hyman, 1993)

By the 1950s, the approach shifted to include more psychological and external factors that put the consumer under a scope as an irrational (erratic) being who makes impulsive decisions and who is open and considers other external influences. It was an era where psychology entered the consumer behaviour study, and scholars were putting focus through new research methods (like focus groups) on consumer's perspectives and motivation to consume and the meanings they gave to products beyond their physical features (Zaichkowsky, 1991; Ekström, 2003). From this era, it is essential to highlight how Maslow's motivation theory still prevails in academia.

In the 1960s, bulked by rigorous legislation in the US over company's transparency towards the products consumers were consuming, theories started to shift again, eliminating the perspective from the erratic consumer from the previous decade to an understanding of the consumer as an analytical individual and a problem solver that through his wants and needs, deliberately buys products and services that cater his satisfaction (Zaichkowsky, 1991). Throughout this decade, consumers started to be clustered into the groups they would belong, segmented through several factors, including "... perceived risk, cognitive dissonance, personality, social character, and social class" (Ekström, p.6, 2003). Criticism during this time persisted in issues of the research's dependency on Western civilization, the focus on the pre-purchase processes (Arndt, 1986), and several limitations on the theoretical conceptualization.

During the 70s, with increased mediums and ever-growing competition, advertisers realised that to perform their jobs better, they would have to understand how the consumer was processing information, making them join academic researchers in developing consumer behaviour studies, making it the grand highlight of the decade, and increasing Marketing interest in understanding the consumer perspective. Studies found that despite the increasing choices, consumers' ability to process information still needed to be improved (Zaichkowsky, 1991). By the end of the decade, rationality was starting to be questioned, as research showed that certain purchases occurred without a prior decision-making process by the consumer (Arndt, 1986). Several factors still influencing consumer behaviour research started in the decade, with family, reference groups, personality, and attitude models being highlighted (Ekström, 2003).

In the 1980s, marketers faced new challenges as the world changed due to globalisation, which accelerated since the end of several dictatorships and communist regimes, leading to several multicultural and consumerism shifts that made advertisers tap into new markets and Third World countries (Belk, 1995). Such changes would make anthropologists and sociologists join forces with marketing researchers, bringing in new research tools and methods and impacting consumer behaviour's evolution (Ekström, 2003). The market would also accelerate with new products, brands, and companies that flood an already busy population (Zaichowsky (1991), leaving them with little to no time to rationalise (a cognitive effort that results in low-involvement consumers, or as Zaichowsky labels them, "cognitive misers"). This acceleration was a massive shift from prior research, as consumers were now being viewed as socially connected individuals engaged in multiple cultures, causing a division between positivists (the old perspective)

and non-positivists (the new perspective) (Belk, 1995). Throughout the decade, new cultural elements of consumer behaviour were included, such as experimental consumption, impulse buying, gift-giving, and rituals (Ekstöröm, 2003).

During the transition into the 90s and early 2000s, consumer behaviour slowly shifted from individualistic to collective consumption styles Zaichkowsky (1991), driven by several factors, and studies started focusing on the importance of overall branding and power of the brand and even the negative aspects of consumption (Ekström, 2003), with topics emerging focusing on the development of data analysis, the fundamentals of behaviour sciences, and the decision-making process (Ma et al., 2023). Peighambair et al.'s (2016) study undergoes a content analysis sample of 1,263 obtained from 5 of the prominent journals of consumer behaviour studies, and how they are mainly categorised by four major areas: internal, purchase process, external, and miscellaneous. During the identification phase of the research, a sample of 1,263 consumer behaviour articles was obtained between 1998 and 2009. These articles were then classified into 37 topics, grouped into four major areas: internal (as in human internal conflicts), external (the external factors and influences), the entire purchase process (before, during, and after), and miscellaneous (Peighambair et al., 2016).

Over the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in academic research focused on consumer behaviour (Barari et al., 2020; Peighambari et al., 2016; as cited in Ma et al., 2023). Ma et al. (2023) analysed "14,807 journal publications, proceeding papers, editorial materials, and review notes that contain at least one [...]" (Ma et al., p.3, 2023) of keywords related to consumer behaviour that showed that significant themes include the continuous evolution of consumer behaviour, the impact of technology in consumption and the development of virtual communities, the impact of innovation and experiential aspects of behaviour, service quality, consumer satisfaction and the growing demand for sustainability (Ma et al., 2023). The development of technology is related to the continuous evolution of consumer behaviour studies, with researchers and companies having access to more analytical knowledge of consumer preferences and patterns, which allows them to stay easily updated and adapt to any changes (Medium, 2020).

1.2. Definition of Consumer Behaviour:

In marketing, understanding consumer behaviour is crucial to identifying customers' unsatisfied needs and desires (Kotler, 1998). This knowledge is essential for

marketing activities such as branding, research and development, management, sales, and advertising. By studying consumer behaviour, marketers can predict why, when, and how people purchase products or services. This understanding helps them strategize and make better decisions that align with the needs of their target audience (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2005).

Kotler (2000) defines consumer behaviour as the study that analyses the individuals' traits at the origin of their behaviour, and how individuals, groups, and organisations end up choosing, purchasing, using, and disposing of goods and services, ideas or experiences to satisfy their needs and desires. Kotler's definition will guide the rest of the study, as it is backed up by several authors who share common points with his perspective (Kotler & Keller, 2006; Churchill & Peter, 1998; Engel et al., 1995).

In other words, behavioural science is the study of consumers' habits, patterns, beliefs, and "peak moments" that can drive behavioural change, according to McKinsey (2020). When purchasing products or services, people undergo a decision process (either extensive or narrow, considering resources like time, money, and effort), which researchers usually try to understand. Consumer behaviour usually studies how consumers find, buy, use, and evaluate products and services and in what way that fulfils their needs and desires (Kardes et al., 2014).

This field covers the fundamental aspects of consumption, including the who, what, when, where, and how of consumer activity, and includes all activities and responses related to the before, during, and after acquiring products and services (Kardes et al., 2014).

1.3. Factors influencing consumer behaviour

There are endless numbers of internal and external forces of personal and situational characteristics that influence consumer behaviour (Kotler & Keller, 2006) and constantly evolve based on innovation and trends (Medium, 2020). According to Zamazalová (2010) (as cited in Švajdová, 2020), at its essence, both internal and external factors influence consumer behaviour (Švajdová, 2020). Internal factors are those directed to individual (or self) characteristics, such as personality traits, attitudes, values, beliefs, and lifestyle choices. These factors help evaluate an individual's perception of need, products and brands, decision-making processes, and how they choose said action to perform. (For example, a consumer who prefers eco-friendly products may be more likely to choose environmentally responsible brands).

While external factors, on the other hand, are influenced by the context in which the consumer exists and lives and can be categorised into various groups and can include cultural, economic, environmental, and social factors (Zamazalová 2010, as cited in Švajdová, 2020; Keller & Kotler, 2016). For this study, we will consider the perspective of Kotler & Armstrong (2010), who define a model of four main groups that influence consumer behaviour, split further into different categories within the group, including (1) cultural, (2) social, (3) personal, and (4) psychological factors.

1.3.1. Cultural factors

Culture plays a pivotal part in the social group. Culture plays a vital role through behaviour patterns passed within society (Arnoulds & Thompson, 2005 as cited in Nayeem, 2012). Cultural elements influencing consumer behaviour and decision-making include language, education on pattern behaviour, imitation, and shared values (Lee et al., 2000, Luna & Gupta, 2001, Barney, 1986 and Hofsted, 2001 as cited in Nayeem, 2012). These cultural backgrounds have been widely accepted as an influence on consumer behaviour by marketing research (de Mooij, 2010 as cited in Nayeem, 2012) because they shape their needs and desires while also influencing the marketing strategies in targeting behaviours, attitudes, and preferences (Venkatesh, 1995 as cited in Nayeem, 2012). Moreover, even the discussion of how individualist societies (e.g., societies where decisions are made individually, through self-discovery) versus collectivist societies (e.g., the societies that seek validation through peers, through status differentiation) weigh in on culture has been proven (Gregory & Munch, 1996, Wong & Ahuvia, as 1998 cited in Nayeem, 2012).

Cultural elements are one of the main influencing factors of an individual's desires and behaviours through socialisation with different stakeholders (Pinki, 2014). These factors include social class, which refers to the consumer's income, occupation, education level, and residence area (Solomon, 2017). Lindon et al., 2000 briefly describe culture as the reflection of society's proceeded values, norms, and behaviours. It is through common elements such as language, education, and socialisation that the learning of cultural particularities begins from an early age.

Social classes are moderately long-lasting and homogeneous social divisions, organised hierarchically, where members share and mingle through their values, interests, and behaviours. Social classes have various characteristics, and it is based on these that society is organised (Lindon et al., 2000; Kotler & Keller, 2009). Social class is defined

by various factors, such as profession, education, and income, but also aspects, such as how individuals dress, speak, and the social choices they make in their lives.

1.3.2. Social factors

The social context and influence in a consumer's life and behaviour play a substantial role, as people are often impacted by the actions, opinions, and suggestions of the social groups they are a part of (including family, friends, colleagues, and online communities). Social factors include reference groups, family, social role, and status (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010; Wanke, 2008 as cited in Jackson et al., 2011).

Reference groups stand out among the groups, which correspond to groups that directly or indirectly affect attitudes (Solomon, 2017). Reference groups serve as points of comparison and help shape a person's attitudes, opinions, and behaviour.

. These can be distinguished by primary affinity groups - the family - or secondary affinity groups - professional groups (Solomon, 2017). In addition, groups to which individuals do not belong can influence individuals' behaviour, such as aspiration groups - to which the person hopes to belong - and dissociation groups - in which the individual rejects the values (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Various small groups influence people's behaviours (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). A group comprises people with common goals and needs, which they can fulfil if they cooperate. The group comprises the interdependence and awareness of the people who form it, and to cooperate, its members must have identical beliefs, values, and norms (Lindon et al., 2000).

1.3.3. Personal factors

Personal factors involve gender, age, and lifestyle (Pinki, 2014). This group also involves characteristics such as gender, occupation, purchasing power, personality, and self-image (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Consumers, throughout their lives, make various purchases of goods and services related to age and the family life cycle (Kotler & Keller, 2016). For example, consuming a particular activity is often related to age (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Lifestyle defines a person's way of living, expressed through activities (e.g., sports and work), opinions (e.g., about himself and society), and interests (friends and movies). It, therefore, portrays the "whole person" when he engages with his surroundings (Lindon et al., 2000; Kotler & Armstrong, 2010; Kotler & Keller, 2009).

The consumer's personality is one of the elements influencing their purchasing behaviour. The concept defines what differentiates individuals in how they act and react in the same situation, so knowing someone's personality can be a critical factor in predicting their behaviour (Lindon et al., 2000). For Kotler and Keller (2009), personality is described as several distinct psychological traits that lead to consistent and lasting responses to environmental stimuli. Brands can also have distinctive personalities, as Kotler and Keller (2012) explain, individuals relate to specific brands and are likely to match brands to their own personalities. Aaker (1997) defines brand personality as the human traits found in specific brands (Aaker, 1997).

This is why, most of the time, the products the consumer purchases represent the image that most closely matches the consumer's image of themselves (Lindon et al., 2000). Consumers also choose brands that feel like they fit their image, either an ideal version of it (the brand represents who the consumers want to be or achieve in life) or through how they want to be perceived by others (how others see us) (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

Age will be better explained in the third chapter, when we characterize millennials, which is the interest of the study.

1.3.4. Psychological factors

Lastly, psychological factors such as the consumer's motivation, perception, beliefs, and attitudes also significantly impact their decision (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010).

According to Kotler & Keller (2009), motivation derives from a need, i.e., it becomes a motivation when it reaches such an intensity that it leads us to act. Thus, a motive is an urgent enough need that leads a person to pursue fulfilment. Motivation has a direction - as individuals have purposes that have several goals - and it has intensity - determining the severity with which we try to achieve the goal. On the other hand, motivations lead us to fulfil needs and purchase products and services on the market (Kotler & Keller, 2009; Lindon et al., 2000).

In Binotto et al. (2014), the authors find that perceptions are analysed by how people see the world. In other words, reality becomes relative, considering that they are only perceptions, not what is happening, but rather what consumers think. Perception is how we select, organise, and interpret knowledge to create a meaningful worldview. Perception is not only conditioned by physical stimuli but also by the relationship we develop with our surroundings and the way we receive those stimuli, as well as by

intrinsic conditions (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Kotler and Keller (2012) argue that perceptions affect most consumers' behaviour because they are much more important than reality since everyone has their interpretation of reality and can have a specific perception of the same object. Perception is the process where the consumer chooses, organises, and interprets the information they receive from the environment, depending on the stimulus, context, and the consumer's prior knowledge and expectations (Durmaz, 2014).

Concerning learning, this corresponds to the interaction process of impulses, stimuli, signals, responses, and reinforcements (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Learning is the process that describes changes in an individual's behaviour that derive from their experiences.

According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2005), attitudes are formed by direct personal experience, including the individuals' experiences with acquaintances or exposure to mass communication. Attitudes can shape marketing's role in consumer behaviour, and marketers can base consumers' attitudes on judging and evaluating strategies, responsiveness, and segmentation (Durmaz, 2014). An attitude is a predisposition, the result of learning, which enables a person to react to an object in a certain way, either favourably or unfavourably. Attitudes are based on beliefs, personal experience, or knowledge acquired over time (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008). For Katz and Stotland (1959) in Lindon et al. (2000), an attitude consists of a human tendency or predisposition to evaluate an object in a certain way and to react to it. An attitude is, therefore, an intermediary between motivation and behaviour and helps us adapt quickly to the most diverse situations, simplifying our view of the world through knowledge, beliefs, stereotypes, or feelings (Lindon et al., 2000).

Consumer behaviour is highly influenced by one's beliefs, perpetuating existing habits and routines (McKinsey, 2020). As we have seen last, with the COVID-19 pandemic, people can completely change their routines and habits and question what they have taken for granted (McKinsey, 2020).

Maslow (1943) states that people sometimes organize and satisfy their needs directly from their most urgent to the least urgent ones. Human needs are mostly states of self-aware deprivation and include physical needs (like food and water), social needs (affection, sense of belonging, etc.), and individual needs (knowledge, self-expression, etc.). Thus, there are five categories of needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943). According to Maslow (1943), people will always try to satisfy their most urgent needs first. Once they have successfully satisfied these needs,

they will then move up the hierarchy and try to satisfy the second most important need, and so on. For Maslow (1943), in Lindon et al. (2000), an unmet need is the explanatory factor for individuals' behaviour. In other words, this need will guide man towards anything that can satisfy it, thus justifying the reason for individuals' actions - the greater their need, the more likely they are to purchase.

1.4. Social Media and Consumer Behaviour

It's undeniable the impact the internet has had in people's everyday lives, and in facilitating communication through developed social networking sites (Alsubagh, 2015, as cited in Xhema, 2019) and impacting consumer behaviour (Casalo et al., 2011, as cited in Bronner & Hoog, 2014). The ease associated with how consumers nowadays discover, explore, evaluate and purchase products nowadays is directly linked to the technological evolution of social media, e-commerce, digital platforms, and social commerce tools (Bronner & Hoog, 2014). Marketers are obligated to consider certain variables in their strategy nowadays, like influencer marketing, consumer-reviewed word-of-mouth, content marketing, and asserting digital advertising, to name a few (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), which will be further developed in the following chapter, and reviewed for the hypothesis, and methodology of the current study.

Literature has many definitions for social media (Appel et al., 2020). However, it will be considered one of the most accepted theories in Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) that refer to social media as online-based platforms that build upon the ideas and technology of Web 2.0 that allow users to create and exchange content with each other (the commonly known definition for it is User Generated Content). Appel et al. (2020) in their research mention three reasons why social media has had universal acceptance:

1. The possibility of establishing digital communication and socialising with individuals' social circles
2. The same possibility of interaction, but with strangers who share common interests.
3. The ability to access and generate content such as news, gossip, and reviews of a company's products or services.

One can classify in various ways social media, depending on the variables researchers decide to focus on (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Zhu & Chen, 2015). Both authors have a widely accepted definition (Peters et al., 2013) that splits the different

social media sites by their social presence (including media presence) and self-presentation (including self-disclosure), assigning them into six different groups: “... (1) collective projects, (2) blogs and microblogs, (3) content communities, (4) social networks, (5) online role-playing games, and (6) social virtual worlds” (Kaplan & Haenlein, p. 60, 2010). For the sake of the study, TikTok will be considered a social networking site as it shares the same communicative features with other leading platforms, including liking, commenting, and sharing content, interacting with other users through following and direct messaging, the use of hashtags to explore content, search tools and several others (Klinger, 2023).

		Low	Medium	High
Self-presentation / Self-disclosure	Low	Blogs	Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)	Virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life)
	High	Collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia)	Content communities (e.g., YouTube)	Virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft)

Table 1. Kaplan & Haenlein social media classification

Social media is among the most popular activities worldwide (Statista, 2022). In 2022, there were over 4.5 billion social media users worldwide (Statista, 2022). That is about 59% of the planet's population, according to Statista (2023). Furthermore, it is only continuously getting more prominent as technology development and accessibility to cheap mobile phones reach underdeveloped countries (Statista, 2022).

With social media, the traditional model of one-way communication of other media outlets, like printed media or television, stops existing, and consumers have access to brand information anywhere they are, any time they want, empowering them to be a part of the narrative (Batra & Keller, 2016; Constantinides, 2014). Social media has replaced the influential role these media outlets have in younger generations' social behaviour (Uitz, 2012, Nhlapo, 2015, as cited in Duffett, 2017), and in their buying patterns (Harvard Business Review, 2022), redefining entirely marketing strategies and approaches (Heaton, 2006; Thomas, 2007, as cited in Constantinides, 2014).

The ever-growing daily usage of social media as a part of both consumers and companies' activities has led to the possibility of direct consumption from social channels through social commerce (Godey et al., 2016). Social media platforms are great tools for

companies because they are highly engaged, interactive, massified, reactive, user-friendly, and cost-efficient (Power, 2014) and allow for online branding at a relatively low cost (Godey et al., 2016), meaning that they are great communication tools, if not one of the most important ones (Barcelos et., 2018).

In the decades before social media and the internet were starting to be a thing, brands and companies could have control over online narratives over their enterprises (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Since communication was mainly one-sided (company to consumer), they could plan statements and lead the online sphere with their websites, their sources of information, and public relations strategies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Since technology is continuously being developed and more intuitive and information is easily accessed, social media has completely changed how consumers relate, interact, and engage with brands and each other, transforming the marketing and communication environment (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Nowadays, companies are part of a reality where consumers talk, engage, complain, and post, making them easy targets of online chatter (whether the chatter is positive or negative, companies stay on constant alert) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This made social media such a trailblazer in shifting the power dynamic between brands and consumers, as consumers oversee the content, timing, and frequency of what people want to say about them (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019).

Social media is an essential and relevant tool for a brand's strategy (Stephen, 2016, as cited in Dwivedi et al., 2021), proving to be a great asset to communicate directly and efficiently with consumers. Other types of traditional communication do not share these features or capacities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Consumers expect companies to be present on social media, as it has long passed the idea of it being an exclusive medium for brands to reach out to consumers (Godey et al., 2016). It is now a channel that marketers should use to help develop their company's branding and communication (Alalwan et al., 2017). The number of social media users are continuously rising, as new channels are always appearing to compete with the individual's attention, making social media an appealing way to build an audience, increase brand awareness, source leads effectively and quickly, test consumer perception on new launches, services, and products, and to curate their message to their core target (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016; Alalwan et al., 2017).

Social media marketing efforts have positive influence in creating brand awareness, improve brand image, generate demand, provide information, increase traffic, develop relationships between brands and consumers in enabling two-way

communication and a support for improved customer service and follow-up, generate leads, increase sales and establish brand loyalty (Thomas, 2011, Stokes 2013, as cited in Duffett, 2017; Statista, 2023; Dwivedi et. al, 2021) and can be an effective strategy for brands in the long-term (Tuten & Solomon, 2017 as cited in Fondevila et. al, 2020) with studies showing that social media can significantly improve brand equity (Kim and Ko, 2012, as cited in Godey, 2016) and brand equity being directly related to consumers' future purchase behaviour, brand preference and loyalty, and the disposition of paying higher prices for the brand's products (Bruhn, Schoemueller, & Schafer, 2012, as cited in Godey 2016; Hasan & Sohail, 2021). Several studies prove millennials' acceptance and influence of social media on their behaviour (Duffett, 2017).

Social media has facilitated the creation of user-generated content which deeply influences a brand's equity and consumer attitude, affecting a consumers' purchase intention (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016, as cited in Copeland & Zhao, 2020). In a nutshell, any time that an individual uses social media or the internet to promote a product or a service (without any other commercial interests, like paid promotion) he is engaging in user generated-content (Krumm et al., 2008) and can come in various forms. Individuals produce content for the internet for several reasons that include self-expression, interest, altruism, and entertainment (Krumm et al., 2008). Forbes (2023) states that a good portion of individuals that engage in user-generated content are brand enthusiasts, who serve as free brand ambassadors to their communities and help promote the brands or products throughout the internet.

People have now a space where they can leverage their opinions and experiences with others, shifting how consumers now make decisions and behave, as we've seen above, people are directly or indirectly influenced by social factors, including groups, and the same happens in the digital world, and research has shown that in fact, people are bound to depend on others' feedback (Brooner & Hoog, 2013). When a person uses a forum, or a social media platform, or any form that amplifies his digital voice, he's indulging himself in a phenomenon called Electronic Word-of-mouth (EWom), which relates to all informal communications that consumers make via the Internet (Schmäh et al., 2017). It is defined as a way of transmitting information (either made in a positive or negative light) in the form of a review, about a brand, product, or service to current, former, or potential consumers, which are available to access by many people online (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). It's been proven that EWom is a powerful tool when it comes to affecting consumer purchasing decisions (more so than other forms of

advertising tools) (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008) because internet users perceive EWom communications and content as less biased and independent of commercial interests (Bronner & Hoog, 2010), becoming an essential ally (if positive) to brands when acquiring and retaining consumers (Litvin et al., 2018, as cited in Zhang et al., 2010).

King et al. (2014) examined the literature on the main differences between traditional word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth and concluded that:

1. EWom has a greater volume and reach.
2. EWom spreads easily across different platforms.
3. The impact of opinion persists in electronic word-of-mouth.
4. Users are anonymous on the internet.
5. Valence is more emphasised.
6. The community is more involved on the internet.

The popularity of certain products are influenced in online reviews, which is positively associated with sales increases (Zhang et al., 2010), as peer reviews help validate a product's value (Cohen & Golde, 1972 as cited in Zhang et al., 2010) and pressure consumers into a sense of group belonging (Miniard & Cohen, 1983, as cited in Zhang et al., 2010). Social proof is symbolic of this constant exchange of information (whether through chats, comment sections, blogs, forums, or rating apps) that has made customers add extra value as products/brand advocates and allowed brands to shift their marketing efforts towards relationship-building and interaction with their communities (Moustakas, as cited in Xhema, 2019; Forbes, 2023).

Influencer marketing is one of the many social media marketing strategies companies can adopt and is currently one of the most popular worldwide (Statista, 2023). Influencers are today's opinion leaders, as research showed that before social media, the most influential people were politicians and celebrities (Knoll & Matthes, 2017, as cited by Vrontis et al., 2021). Nowadays, with the way social media has spread internationally and is easily accessible, anyone can be an opinion leader (Vrontis et al., 2021). Opinion leaders are seen as individuals with exquisite status, knowledgeable about various things, charismatic, and prestigious (Godey et al., 2016; Moldovan et al., 2017, Lin et al., 2018, as cited by Vrontis et al., 2021). Companies apply this strategy by endorsing online creators to use, review, and interact with their products and services (Statista, 2023). Influencers are people with a sizable amount of following on social networks and are perceived by social media users as individuals with a high level of opinion-giving behaviour, having a significant influence on their behaviours and attitudes (Chu & Kim,

2011, as cited in Godey et al., 2016; Watts and Dodds, 2007 as cited in Vinerean & Opreana, 2019; McKinsey, 2023; Forbes, 2022), and can be a more effective tool (in terms of visibility and cost) compared with other strategies (like advertising) (Forbes, 2015), mainly due to the trust and perceived relationship the influencers' followers have with the influencer (Del Piño & Castello, 2016; Geirinhas, 2014, as cited in Fondevila et al., 2020). Ever growing in popularity, the influencer marketing market is valued at over 21 billion dollars in 2023 (Statista, 2023), and brands are estimated to be spending over 4.5 billion dollars to funnel their efforts (Statista, 2023). Studies have shown the importance of influencers within the fashion industry (Wiedman et al., 2010, as cited in Vinerean & Opreana, 2019). A report conducted by Business of Fashion and McKinsey (2019) shows the general adoption of influencer marketing in companies' strategy (with 86% of companies using it) (Vinerean & Opreana, 2019).

Content is essential for a brand's marketing communications to succeed (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Content marketing is the intent to create and distribute authentic and relevant brand stories that can attract and retain the respective audience it has intended to (Pulizzi, 2012). It's important to not confuse it with product advertising, since content marketing's purpose is to not sound promotional (it's about storytelling, sharing beyond product, and more about the company's story and messaging) (Baltes, 2015). The more genuine the message, the stronger the connection with the customer (Denning, 2011 as cited by Baltes, 2015). Content and the rationale behind content posted on social media should regard five dimensions: entertainment, interaction, trendiness, word-of-mouth, and customisation (Godey et al., 2016).

- Regarding entertainment, it is one of the strongest motives because people use social media as users find content to pass the time, to relax and to enjoy themselves (Godey et al., 2016).
- Interaction is a core means that social media is disruptive (Gallaughier & Ransbotham, 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, as cited in Godey et al., 2016). Depending on the platform, people interact with each other on social media via comments, shares, messaging, and likes, proving to be a huge factor in creating user-generated content (Daughier et al., as cited in Godey et al., 2016). It is essential to mention that as a company, TikTok defines itself as a social media platform and one of the reasons why this happens, is because the level of personal interaction between users (including messaging) is much smaller compared with other key players,

with only 15% of users using the app's messaging feature to communicate directly with others (Fast Company, 2022).

- Trendiness is a vital social media characteristic and is considered to be an important feature of social media, as people are easily connected wherever they are, whenever they can. So, as people discuss and share the latest news and engage in searching for more information on topics, they feel more satisfied with the results of the content shown on social media, more so than other media sources (Godey et al., 2016).
- Word-of-mouth relates to people sharing their likes and dislikes with their networks (including acquaintances, family, and friends) or being vocal on social media platforms with their opinions and testimonials (Godey et al., 2016). Word-of-mouth plays important in content because it is one of the biggest drivers of consumer behaviour, as people find word-of-mouth/reviews from a diverse group of people more credible, empathic, and relevant than communication efforts from companies on the internet (Gruen et al., 2006 as cited in Godey et al. 2016; Ratchford et al., 2001 as cited by Cheung, 2014). Word-of-mouth is one of the biggest promoters of user-generated content (Meyerson, 2010; Gensler et al., as cited in Duffett, 2017). Negative word-of-mouth can seriously affect businesses (Dwivedi et al., 2021).
- Customization refers to the intent of creating content for the sole purpose of reaching each user's individual preferences and interests (Chu et al., 2022). Content customization is a feature that is positively linked to individuals' favouritism for short-form video platforms (Zhang et al., 2019).

Brands and companies can also advertise through social media. Social media provides a cost-effective and engaging tool compared to traditional channels that allow brands and companies to target their audiences through digital advertising (Tuten & Solomon, as cited in Fondevila-Gascón et al., 2020). Customers usually allow social media platforms to have access to several first-data information, which have robust analytical and information recollection systems, that then are leveraged in media platforms to sell their space to businesses (Dwivedi et al., 2015) and reach a diverse audience (Alhabash et al., 2019). Companies also have access to platforms that allow them to monitor and optimise the performance of their campaigns, correlating to increased

awareness, leads, traffic, targeting and sales (Voorveld et al., 2018; McKinsey, 2022). There is limited research about social media advertising's impact besides the traditional performance tools (i.e., Google Analytics) (Voorveld et al., 2018).

Several authors also highlight that with the development of technology and the continuous growth of social media, customers are now part of the conceptualising phase of a product (in the design and distribution phase) instead of just the purchasing phase (as it was decades ago) (Arakji, 2007 as cited in Xhema, 2019), due to enabling a two-way flow communication (Nolcheska, 2017, as cited in Xhema, 2019), which increases considerably companies' value.

In Portugal, there are over 7 million social media users, and every year the number of social media users continues to increase (Statista, 2023). By 2028, there will be almost 8 million social network users (Statista, 2023).

It is essential to understand and acknowledge that the constant evolution of social media can put constraints on research, and there is still a lack of adequate constructs and validated scales (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

CHAPTER 2 - TIKTOK

2.1. Overview of TikTok

TikTok is a short-form video social media platform that has gained immense popularity worldwide since its launch in 2018 (Harvard Business Review, 2019). Founded by Chinese tech company ByteDance, TikTok has been proliferating since it merged with musical.ly, and it has since become a global phenomenon like no other platform has (Dias & Duarte, 2022), with over one billion monthly active users (Forbes, 2022) and over 1.9 billion users worldwide (Statista, 2023), and ranking as the 10th most valuable brand in the world in 2023, behind powerhouses like Tesla, Apple, Microsoft, Google, and Amazon (Statista, 2023). As of April 2023, ByteDance was worth over \$200 billion, making it the world's highest-valued unicorn company (Statista, 2023). It is one of the fastest-growing media outlets worldwide, ranking first in 2022 as the most considerable growth in brand value, with a 215% gain rate (Statista, 2022). In 2023, this translated into a brand value of 65 billion dollars, just behind Google and surpassing Facebook (Statista, 2023)

In Portugal, there are over 3.5 million TikTok users (Pplware, 2023), that almost half of the country's total social media users, as mentioned above (Statista, 2023), and

one million of them came during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the year when the app exploded in popularity worldwide (Expresso, 2022). 53% of Portuguese people on TikTok are less than 44 years old, very young skewing compared to Facebook, whose 64% of users are older than 45 (Expresso, 2022). Out of all social media platforms available in Portugal, TikTok ranks 5th as the most used app by users between the age of 16 to 64 years old (Statista, 2023).

TikTok was the 7th most downloaded app of the last decade around the world, outranking YouTube, and Twitter, despite launching two years before the decade ended (Forbes, 2019). In 2022, TikTok was the world's most visited website, surpassing search engine giant Google in terms of traffic (Wired, 2023), and has since surpassed it as the main search engine tool for Gen Z (Euronews, 2022). In 2022, depending on the country, TikTok was between the third and fourth most popular social media platforms for purchasing products worldwide (and growing in popularity) (Statista, 2022). By January 2023, the global gender distribution of TikTok users was reported to be 54% women and 46% men (Statista, 2023).

TikTok has redefined the way people create, consume, and interact with media, as the company does not see itself as a social media platform but rather as an entertainment outlet (Fast Company, 2022) that requires the user's full-attention span compared to other competing platforms like Instagram and Twitter that have a more passive component to them and the user may access them while multitasking with other activities (Fast Company, 2022; Variety, 2023). As previously mentioned, TikTok will be considered a social media platform for the purpose of the study and conducting the research, as it shares the same characteristics as competitors Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (Klinger, 2013).

It allows users to effortlessly create, engage with, share, and discover content in short video format, typically ranging from 15 seconds to 10 minutes in length (Harvard Business Review, 2019), and is known for being incredibly successful in managing to amuse entire communities in an everlasting stream of impactful and meaningful content (TikTok, 2022). TikTok has been growing at the same rate as the popularity of short-form, engaging video content among younger demographic groups (Gen Z's and millennials) on all social platforms (Digiday, 2022), as these generations are continuously engaging more with and generally retain better video content (by 95% of the message when watched), than with static photography and text-based content (10% when message is read) (Medium, 2017; Harvard Business Review, 2022).

The platform is particularly interested in user-generated content that is original, relevant, and creative, which makes it resonate with users (Harvard Business Review, 2022). Content can span a wide range of genres and topics, including lip-syncing, dancing, comedy skits, challenges, multimedia edits, educational content, news, and more (McKinsey, 2022). The variety of content gives a broad appeal to the app while ensuring something for everyone. Additionally, TikTok's focus on hashtags, trends, and challenges fosters a sense of community. It encourages collaboration and reaction among users by drawing in participants and camaraderie among users who share the same interests (El País, 2023). The platform has become a digital culmination of ideas and diversity as users from around the world share their experiences, cultures, and perspectives over several subjects and dynamics (The Verge, 2021) through popular features such as 'Duet' and 'Stitch,' which allows users to interact with each other's videos, making content live much longer, and making it possible to create a continuous loop-hole of social commentary or build new narratives that other users can engage with (The Washington Post, 2022).

TikTok is unique for creating a curated online space of fluid content that can reach the entire world (excluding China) (AdWeek, 2022), allowing for cross-cultural sharing and interaction and engaging in viral behaviour. The more relevant the content, the more it is prioritised over the reach of the content, posing a challenge for brands and creators looking to leverage the platform since content needs to be highly selective (Forbes, 2022; Adweek, 2022), but allowing a user (whoever and wherever he is) not to need to have built an established audience to attract attention to himself (as the algorithm handles that) (The Washington Post, 2022). This reach makes consumers engage in what Alhabash et al. (2019) discuss: viral behaviour intentions, which measure how consumers engage with user-generated content on social media for social re-transmission. Viral behaviours are directly linked to increased intent purchase behaviour (Alhabash et al., 2019).

According to The Washington Post (2022), due to this immense popularity and appeal to content creators and audiences alike, TikTok now covers virtually every topic imaginable, creating particular hubs and communities that engage deeply with the content. It is essential to mention that the development of online communities, as Wang et al. (2016) state, positively influences how consumers seek and share information. Quoting directly from The Washington Post (2022), the interests go "[from]... fishing (#fishtok, 14 billion views), farming (#farmtok, 7 billion) and role-playing (#medievaltiktok, 4 billion). There are TikTok cops, lumberjacks, nurses, and nuns. There is domestic bliss (#cleantok) and chaos (#cluttercore). There is #happiness (16 billion

views) and #pain (76 billion)", and brands are using TikTok to forge authentic relationships with consumers and create content that is lighter, engaging, and amusing, ditching dated, overly promotional strategies (McKinsey, 2022).

TikTok is considered an accessible tool because it allows users, regardless of where they came from or who they are, to create their content (which they can record via the app or upload videos from their personal phone libraries) and turn viral through easy-to-use and intuitive functionalities such as editing (users can quickly speed, trim, make transitions between videos), sound (through a wide range of music, audio clips, trending sounds that make users connect even more to what they are seeing), co-creation, and filters that enhance the quality and overall appeal of their videos (TikTok, 2022). Virality is an attractive consequence of TikTok usage, unlike anything seen online (The Washington Post, 2023), turning regular people into over-night celebrities. For all this, the user only needs to own a smartphone to create this content (The Washington Post, 2022).

TikTok's sensation comes from its machine learning algorithms, which match users to custom "For You" pages (the app's homepage) based on factors like the user's location, what each user views and interacts with (including likes, comments, shares, how long content is viewed, what the user says he is not interested in) (Harvard Business Review, 2019). This innovative algorithm is constantly absorbing live information about the users' preferences (since it's in constant interaction with the platform), closely monitoring what makes them pause, scroll, and what makes them watch a video in its entirety (The Washington Post, 2022), and unlike other social media giants, it provides content tailored to their interests and what users are most likely to engage with, making users rarely leave their "For You" page in search for other content (The Guardian, 2023). The difference between TikTok and other major platforms (like Twitter and Facebook) in recent years is that these platforms used to rely on users to create their homepages by explicitly entering their interests- whether following a celebrity, liking a cooking page, or sharing a post. At the same time, TikTok approaches content differently (by observing the user and learning from its app usage, tapping into trends and desires that users may not have identified, but at the end of the day, they like it) (The Washington Post, 2022).

The app's success has been so defying that its main competitors are reshaping themselves in the image of the app, according to a report by The Washington Post (2022). Meta has come up with Reels and YouTube with Shorts, and both (with the inclusion of Twitter) have transitioned from feeds that included friends, family, subscriptions, and

liked personalities to ones with strangers and viral content, just like TikTok's 'for you' page (The Washington Post, 2022).

All this makes TikTok a "highly addictive" platform (Harvard Business Review, 2019), with a higher engagement level comparatively to other social media platforms, with an average user engaging ten times per minute with the app (engagement can include liking, viewing, sharing with content, in any way possible) (The Washington Post, 2022), and recent data from 2022 shows that users worldwide spent approximately more time using TikTok in 2022 (a 20% increase) versus 2021 (Statista, 2023).

Regarding TikTok as an ad platform, just like Meta Business Center or others, the platform has been developing its offerings and possibilities to advertisers by providing behavioural tracking and algorithmic suggestions, allowing advertisers to comprehend which ads resonate the most with viewers. Moreover, it has been relatively successful, with TikTok's ad revenue estimated to have tripled in 2022 to \$12 billion and projected to surpass YouTube at nearly \$25 billion by 2025 (The Washington Post, 2022). In the United States alone, top advertisers are willing to pay a significant amount, up to \$3 million per day, for TikTok's coveted "TopView" spot (TikTok's premium ad space).

As a primary influencer marketing hotspot for brands, TikTok has also been revolutionary, with the creation of the 'Creator Marketplace,' where brands can connect and align with creators (or 'TikTokers') based on shared interests and follower count. A study conducted by Statista (2023) showed that 9% of respondents buy products through TikTok influencers (against lower rates for Instagram consumers of 22% and Facebook of 9%). This is one reason they earn more advertising than on Facebook, with The Washington Post (2022) estimating influencers get paid more than \$750 million through paid promotions on TikTok. Influencers on TikTok usually have higher engagement rates in comparison to other social media platforms (take into consideration an average of 17,96% engagement for 'TikTokers' to 3,86% of 'Instagrammers') (Statista, 2023).

Besides advertising and commissions, TikTok also monetizes through "Video Gifts," a digital crypto currency ("coins" in the app) that fans offer to the creator as a tip. Revenue from this feature alone has reached remarkable levels, with users spending over \$900 million within the app in the last quarter of 2022, setting a record for quarterly spending in any app's history (The Washington Post, 2022).

User-friendliness is in mind within the platform, as when a user searches about a particular subject, the platform prioritises up-to-date and experimental results (Wired, 2023). TikTok as a search engine can present some perks versus other traditional search

websites, including the delivery of up-to-date information and content in concise and compelling video format (that lasts on average about one minute), and as mentioned above, a dynamic algorithm that understands what the user usually prefers (Euronews, 2022), allowing for the whole process to resemble a social discovery experience. Consumers perceive TikTok as more credible because of the app's unpredictability and authenticity, and recommended content comes in the form of like-minded interests for the user (Forbes, 2022).

The growth and expansion of TikTok is something that has never been seen before. Some studies in the US show that young adults, including millennials and Gen Z, use TikTok as their number one platform to access the news (Mashable, 2022). TikTok has been the subject of studies over its influence in various industries, including the music industry, where the phenomena of decade-old songs trending and reaching the top of charts are making record labels fight for a chance of putting their artists on the top again or having record labels and artists curating songs that end up dominating platforms like Spotify and Apple Music for its 'easy audibility' (Business Insider, 2021). Additionally, TikTok has significantly impacted the entertainment industry (Variety, 2022).

Beyond its cultural impact, TikTok has also become a powerful marketing tool for businesses and influencers. Brands have recognized the platform's potential to reach large and engaged audiences, and many have used TikTok to promote their products and services (McKinsey, 2022). This expansion and domination have made TikTok an attractive and relatively cost-efficient tool for brands to reach consumers (Financial Times, 2023). Furthermore, the platform itself is currently providing tools and guides, whether organic (with brands having the possibility of joining the app through official accounts) or paid (through the possibility of targeting ads, joining TikTok Shop, having access to analytic platform, TikTok for Business) for brands to have successful performances (The Washington Post, 2022). Marketers are increasingly aware of TikTok's impact on their company's strategies. According to a study by Statista (2023), 30% of surveyed marketers used TikTok to promote the companies they worked for, and another study by Statista (2023) lands TikTok as the 5th most-used social media among marketers worldwide. Another study conducted on marketers worldwide by Statista (2022) ranks TikTok as the fourth most significant return on investment social media platform, falling only 6% behind Facebook (ranked first place).

In Portugal, recent data as much as January 2023 has shown that there are almost 3.3 million Portuguese users on TikTok (Statista, 2023), an increase of almost one million

users in two years (Statista, 2023), with an average of 50 minutes of daily usage on the platform, while 65% of users are women, and 68% being between 14 and 24 years old (recent data from 2020) (Renascença, 2022). TikTok's domination is nowhere near ending any time, as it is expected that in 2027, there will be over 2.2 billion users (Statista, 2023).

2.2. TikTok's Influence on Consumer Behaviour

As a social platform that has allowed users to seek their motivations for fame, self-expression, and feel recognized (Chu et al., 2022), TikTok has impacted culture in an explosive way through virality and trends (TikTok, 2022). From old popular music being back to the top of worldwide charts to the book industry breaking sales records over a popular TikTok hashtag, to the normalisation of luxury brands to day-to-day style, TikTok has impact to its users, as 71% of users believe that TikTok is a driver for what is trending worldwide (TikTok, 2022). This study aims to understand if that impact is felt regarding Portuguese millennials' consumer behaviour.

By the source of its content, TikTok has become a driver of individual behaviour and not just mutually exclusive to consumption, whether by its DIY videos (or do-it-yourself videos, traditionally teaching people how to do certain things without a third party involved), fashion hacks, or beauty tips, TikTok is valued by its users as a medium that makes them go out and explore new products, ideas, and trends to better their lives (Euronews, 2022), as the information being perceived by users comes across as more customised and authentic than of other platforms (Euronews, 2022).

About 34% of American travellers were influenced to visit a destination and find more about it via TikTok (MMGY Global, as cited in Skift, 2023), substituting Google as their primary source. Regarding the beauty industry, which moves around \$460 billion in revenue (McKinsey, 2023), TikTok is the sweet spot that drives the most decisive impact in growth (Fashion Network, 2022). As of May 2023, the hashtag #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt has over 54 billion views (TikTok, 2023).

Throughout the mid-to late-2010s, the best place to find out about fashion trends was on Instagram. In the late 2000s, it was style blogs and, before that, glossy print magazines. Now, TikTok is being credited as the place where users go to find out what is in style (Glossy, 2022)

Fashion brands are following consumers and fashion media, as TikTok has become a haven for fashion trends, and there are reports of established companies seeing a resurgence in audiences, sales, and awareness due to TikTok's influence (Glossy, 2022).

Research from GWI (2023) has shown that consumers' impulsive buying behaviour increases to 70% on TikTok, higher than other platforms.

As Business Insider (2023) reported, TikTok users usually feel inspired by the app to purchase items when they were not planning to do so, and Digiday (2022) also reports that about two-thirds of users indulge in searching about products after viewing content about them on the platform.

In a world that is becoming increasingly impacted by social commerce (expected to be evaluated at three trillion dollars by 2025 – McKinsey, 2022), TikTok is an attractive outlet for leading brands, as these companies are coming up with strategies to connect to consumers and develop content that feels less like an ad, and more of a positive and fun tone that people engage with (McKinsey, 2022). TikTok is investing greatly in live streaming, where users can go live and broadcast their content, live chat with viewers, and connect with their audience in real-time (McKinsey, 2022). TikTok's impact is vastly known in China (where the brand has another name, Douyin), where it is the reigning champion as the ultimate social commerce, outdoing other e-commerce giants in the countries (McKinsey, 2022). Now, it is trying to replicate the success in other key world markets like the United Kingdom, North America, Spain, and others (Financial Times, 2022), with the TikTok Shop feature being launched in 2021 in collaboration with Shopify (McKinsey, 2022).

CHAPTER 3 - MILLENNIALS:

3.1. Defining Millennials

Millennials are a complex generation to define. It is so complex that researchers call them all sorts of other things: to name a few, Generation Y, Nexters, Echo Boomers, Generation XX, and Generation 2000, among various others (Valentine & Powers, as cited in Moreno et al., 2017).

Part of the complexity described is also due to the need for scientific common ground to define their age gap (Pew Research Centre, 2019). Even though the range does not fluctuate disproportionately, researchers claim different age gaps for this generation. As cited in Moreno et al. (2017), some claim millennials were born between 1977-1996 (Valentine & Powers, 2013), others between 1980-1999 (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016), 1982-1998 (Howe & Strauss, 2009), some agree 1980-2000 (Rainer & Rainer, 2011 and Lee & Kotler, 2016), and others are vague within the decades of the 80's and 90's (Muda et al.,

2016 and Omar, 2016). For the sake of the study, we will consider Pew Research Centre's 2019 article defining a millennial as an individual born between 1981 and 1996 (they would be aged 27 to 42 in 2023). They get their 'generational name' from the proximity of the new millennium and the digital age (Pew Research Centre, 2019).

In 2021, according to the World Economic Forum, millennials surpassed Generation X (or baby boomers) as the generation with the most influence globally. There were over 1.7 billion millennials, meaning that 1 in 4 people are a part of this millennial cohort. This generation already dominates the marketplace, with an estimated 75% of millennials representing the entire global workforce by 2025 (Forbes, 2022).

But Millennials come "with some baggage". This generation was in their development years when several shattering events happened around the world. Most Millennials witnessed the 9/11 terrorist attacks that shook the world in 2001 (Pew Research Center, 2019). While young millennials vaguely remember the event, older millennials understood the worldwide implications of that historic moment, and both parties lived the consequences of such a terrorist attack (Pew Research Center, 2019). Millennials lived the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through the screens of their televisions and the endless acts of violence that have since terrified the world. The Pew Research Center (2019) has studied and acknowledged how these events have sharpened millennials' political views and points out the polarising atmospheres and views that shape the current political climate in the world.

This generation also faces the consequences of overwhelming economic uncertainty periods that devastated younger and older Millennials' financial prospects (NBC News, 2022). Millennials are shaped by economic downfalls and institutional crises that left them a more vulnerable and conscious generation compared to older ones (GWI, 2023). When, in 2008, the housing market collapsed in the United States, making significant banks and financial firms file for insolvency due to their exposure to risky assets, the world went through the Great Recession, a period of economic regression (the worst since The Great Depression of 1929), that set back almost every market (The New York Times, 2022).

Most Millennials were teens or young adults starting to tap their foot in the job market (CNBC, 2021). These young adults had to find lower-paying jobs (with fewer jobs available) early in their careers, damaging their savings and lowering their purchasing power and lifetime earnings potential (The Washington Post, 2020).

For millennials who graduated during that period, the start of their careers and independence proved to be harder than previous generations. Business Insider (2022) has showed research that demonstrate how recently graduated individuals could see stagnation in financial growth lasting 15 years.

The consequences of The Great Recession were still being felt by millennials when, in 2020 (The New York Times, 2022), the world faced a global health pandemic, the COVID-19 virus pandemic. By this time, younger millennials were entering the market, while older millennials were entering their prime working years (CNBC, 2021).

To prevent the virus from spreading, thus reducing infection rate, and preventing healthcare systems from becoming overwhelmed, governments all over the world implemented strict lockdowns, prohibited travel restrictions, and had to demand social distancing between people. These measures had several social and economic repercussions. For millennials, in particular, it would mean another rocky period of instability with the worst inflation rates of their lifetimes, eye-watering housing prices, and the precarious fallout of the pandemic (NY Times, 2022).

However, these actions had significant social and economic repercussions. In the context of millennials, in their primal consumption years, the consequences they are squeezed between a setback in the labour market (CNBC, 2021), the worst inflation rates of their lifetimes, eye-watering housing prices, and the precarious fallout of the pandemic (NY Times, 2022).

As underdeveloped adults, these events profoundly altered and defined millennials as a generation with shared beliefs, values, expectations, and behaviours (Jackson et al., 2011), which will be further elaborated.

3.2. Characteristics of Millennials

Just as the authors differ in what to name, or their age definition, they also differ in the way they see millennials as a whole. Some have a more positive view of this generation (Alsop, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Zemke et al., 2013), while others have a more pessimistic perspective (Kotler & Keller, 2012; Baker & Hastings, 2018).

Millennials are considered to be the most educated generation ever (World Economic Forum, 2019) and a generation that is empowered by globalisation (Maiers, 2017; Howe & Strauss, 2003) and technology and the era of easy access to knowledge and information, making it the first generation with an innate ability that precedes their past generations in acquired knowledge and opportunities (Ordun, 2015 as cited in

Moreno et al., 2017) (i.e., being born with access to technology, made it more equipped than their parents and grandparents). Millennials are multitaskers who believe the world should be at the tip of their fingers (Goldman Sachs, 2016; Sweeney, 2006, as cited in Radojka & Filipovic, 2017). They are the first generation of digital natives, being highly connected through smartphones and social media (TikTok, 2022; Moore, 2012), processing information rather quickly and becoming easily bored if they are not connected online (Weyland, as cited in Maiers, 2017).

Concerning their attitude towards the professional market, Kowske et al., (2010) suggest that the millennial generation is more concerned with career development than previous generations but values a balance between work and social activities more than their previous counterparts (Deloitte, 2023).

This is just one of many disruptive differences that make the millennials a rather unique one (Parment, 2013; Deloitte, 2023). As previously mentioned, they were born facing economic, political, and social adversities throughout their developing years (Jackson et al., 2011). These sets of unfortunate events have made millennials delay marriage and living on their own, showing a different approach to ownership that's driving the rise of the "sharing economy" (Goldman Sachs, 2016).

Millennials are an unapologetic generation in the sense that they are much more progressive than previous generations (Baralt et al., 2020), being incredibly sociable individuals (Farris et al., 2002, as cited in Bilgihan, 2016) that value their relationships (especially their friendships) (McCrindle, 2004 as cited in Jackson et al., 2011), while also being very vocal on social issues (including racism and abortion) and equality (Howe & Strauss, 2000). According to Tapscott (2009), millennials' appropriation of social media is based on this active participation, meaning they don't want to be mere observers or feel left out. However, they want to participate in a group and be able to criticise, inform, express opinions, seek information, and demonstrate their views and thoughts.

Regarding their personality traits, millennials are vibrant people who want to experience the world surrounding them, benefiting from the easy accessibility of travelling (Alsop, 2008; Bilgihan, 2016). They care about their well-being, go to great lengths to care for themselves, and make time for exercising and healthy eating (Goldenman Sachs, 2016). They are impatient but optimistic, and they are confident and entitled, they love independence but have excellent team spirit (Sweeney, 2006, as cited in Radojka & Filipovic, 2017), they like to be vanguardists in their experiences and loathe

being told what to do and how to proceed (Goldgehn, 2004 as cited in Jackson et al., 2011).

As a reflection of their upbringing, they are aware of the consequences of climate change and global warming and take into significant consideration the environment in their day-to-day lives (Muralidharan et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2016, as cited in Wang et al., 2018).

3.3. Millennials as consumers

Millennials are a powerful group of consumers, and as Gronbach (2000) states (as cited in Bilgihan et al., 2014), marketers need to understand how millennials are spending their time and their money since they will be able to benefit from the leading generation's economic preference (McKinsey, 2017). Known for their early adoption of the Internet and technology, they are digital natives who are deeply immersed in the online world, using the Internet to ponder their purchasing decisions (Alch, 2000 as cited in Bilgihan et al., 2014). This shapes their shopping habits, as they are accustomed to quick access to price comparisons, product details, and peer reviews (Goldman Sachs, 2016).

As previously mentioned, millennials share the most common beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours (Jackson et al., 2011), and one of the most prominent common behaviours is their fondness towards shopping (Ordun, 2015). A 2017 report on Millennial consumer behaviour conducted by McKinsey shows that millennials are active spenders, with reports of over \$1 trillion in 2018 and a projection indicating it would rise to \$8.3 trillion by 2025, surpassing their older counterparts. Nevertheless, that does not mean millennials are not struggling to make ends meet, as a recent study conducted by Deloitte (2023) revealed that 52% of millennials live paycheck to paycheck. The market's volatility (constrained by inflation and the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020) demands turning to side jobs, allowing them to have some savings available (Deloitte, 2023) (although, it's important to mention that some have other jobs in order to pursue other dreams and passions). They are also prone to impulsive buying behaviours (Jackson et al., 2011). As they tend to spend their income quickly, Millennials usually shop online and are accustomed to shopping through social networks, if necessary (Moreno et al., 2017).

This generation is driven by a type of consumption that adds value by fulfilling their expectations (Goldgehn, 2004, as cited in Jackson et al., 2011), the allure of trying new things (Forbes, 2018), and the gratification of an experience in their consumption, and overall are willing to spend money on quality and durability of purchased goods

(McKinsey, 2017), being more sophisticated and selective than previous generations (Holtzhausen & Strydom, 2006, as cited in Jackson et al., 2011). When continuing the comparison to their older counterparts, they do not feel it is essential to buy several high priced 'must-haves' (like owning their property, a car, or shopping for luxury goods), and they usually put off spending large amounts of money in one sitting (Goldman Sachs, 2016).

The 2017 McKinsey report also showed that millennials are savvy researchers, with over half of them searching for information before actively shopping (an increase versus other generations) and influenced/pursuing recommendations from word-of-mouth, including friends, influencers, online reviews, and social media, while also sharing a concern to sharing the feedback right back. In this report, McKinsey (2017) conducted a survey to over 7000 millennials and was able to categorise millennials into seven distinct segments through the focus of three behavioural clusters: value, quality, and image. These are:

- The value-driven group which comprised about 40% of consumers. These consumers fell into two segments.
 - The economizers, who are always looking for the best deal, are more budget-conscious consumers and do not have a particular preference for any brand.
 - The risk-avoiders are typically younger millennials without immense spending power who heavily depend on trusted sources for recommendations. They're not that price-sensitive, like the economizers, even though it's a factor, but more than anything, they prioritise certainty and confidence in their purchases.

- Another group is the cluster driven by quality, representing 22% of millennials, again splitting between two clusters:
 - Diligent loyalists, or consumers, prefer stability and feeling in control of several aspects of their lives. They embrace familiar brands that align with their routines.
 - Premium enthusiasts are well-educated individuals who willingly spend more for quality. Products and brands must represent what they stand for to the point where they are extensions of themselves.

- The final group is the one that is driven by image, which makes up 38% of millennials—categorised into three groups:
 - "You Only Live Once" (or YOLO-ers) millennials are the ones who are all about the thrill of the purchase experience. The product and/or brand needs bring them fulfilment, even if it means exceeding their means.
 - The showcasers, often with financial resources, usually share their latest findings/purchases on social media, so they constantly search for the latest big thing.
 - Finally, the explorers are front-of-the-line people who need uniqueness and are willing to pay extra for innovative products to stand out from the crowd.

Lewis and Bridges (2004) add that millennials are well-informed and self-reliant consumers, completely changing how they buy. This generation wants to get involved with brands, developing relationships of mutual respect, and feeling capable of changing the quality of consumer relationships and influencing companies' behaviour. This generation allocates more spending on clothing and footwear than others. (McKinsey, 2017).

Enjoyment, uniqueness, and self-expression are requirements for millennials purchasing (Moreno et al., 2017; Forbes, 2018) that add bigger value to the consumption experience (Forbes, 2018), as millennials want to feel good about their purchases (Forbes, 2018), they want to experience first-hand new brands and products (Goldgehn, 2004 as cited in Jackson et al., 2011), and their purchases need to be expenses of their personalities and traits (Forbes, 2018).

Millennials are very receptive to other individuals' opinions and experiences (GWI, 2023), whether influencers' or peers' feedback. A recent study by GWI (2023) has shown that 4 out of 5 millennials trust influencers' opinions on social media (to any extent), and they are 15% more likely to trust complete influencers than other generations while being 13% more likely to shop products recommended by influencers. One out of three millennials say influencers are more trustworthy than traditional advertising (GWI, 2023), the same with peer-reviewed word-of-mouth, as they find it more credible than traditional advertisements (Allsop et al., 2007 as cited in Moreno et al., 2017).

However, social media can be a millennial's worst nightmare, with 43% of millennials saying they want to buy things they cannot afford from social media (Deloitte, 2023).

Also, sustainability and sustainable shopping is a big concern for millennials, as they are concerned with several aspects like family planning, the food they are consuming, the clothes they are wearing, and what their offices' recycling policy are (Deloitte, 2023). Nevertheless, their purchasing power ultimately undertones how sustainable they can be.

3.4. Millennials on TikTok

Many millennial users are on TikTok (Digiday, 2022; TikTok, 2022). TikTok is commonly said to be the Gen Z hotspot (and in fact, the app's popularity within this generation cohort is vast, with two-thirds of them on TikTok). However, the app is diverse, with over 77% of TikTok users over 26 (GWI, 2022). TikTok is millennials' fourth favourite social media platform (behind WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, respectively), but it has the biggest year-on-year growth (2023 vs 2022) (GWI, 2023).

On TikTok, Millennials tend to enjoy the platform's entertaining content, ranging from music (63%) to food and cooking (60%), to comedy (50%), to film and television (55%), to sports (53%), to health (50%) in top short video categories most watched by millennials (67% of TikTok users) (TikTok, 2022).

Millennials value content from brands that feel real and authentic and are willing to interact and participate (through comment, stitching, using audio) with brands (TikTok, 2022). Their favourite content includes humorous, creative, relaxing, exciting, and informative. Regarding product discovery, 47% of TikTok's millennial consumers discover products from other users. Almost 60% more than users from other platforms (TikTok, 2022). There needs to be more information and academia research on Portuguese millennials' usage of TikTok. Previous studies have solely focused on Gen-Z's reasons to use the platform, (Duarte & Dias, 2021), or the app as a vehicle for misinformation (Sidorenko et al., 2021), or in student-level research.

3.5. Portuguese millennials as consumers

In Portugal, Millennials are the second largest generation, the first being Generation X (Pordata, 2018). A calculation was used in place because of the need for more specific information on the demographics of millennials in Portugal, as neither of

the two biggest statistical centres in Portugal are able to provide this information in a clear way. This estimate considered the segmentation suggested by the Pew Research Centre (2019), which states that Millennials were born between 1981 and 1996. In 2016, around 2.3 million Millennials living in Portugal fell into this generation, and around 2.9 million residents considered Generation X (Pordata, 2023).

According to Sol (2017), 92% of Portuguese millennials have access to the Internet, 94% use computers, and 33% engage in online shopping. On search engines, 56% of millennials use Google to access the media to read about relevant news, and 42% find information that makes everyday tasks more straightforward (e.g., tutorials, recipes, weather, whatever the person desires) (Google, 2021).

A study by Deloitte in 2023 shows that around 51% of Portuguese millennials live "paycheck to paycheck" and fear that they will not be able to make ends meet - a considerably high figure compared to the world average (versus 27% of millennials). The report also has shown that Portuguese millennials feel financially insecure (especially in a time of economic uncertainty and decreased purchasing power caused by inflation), stressed in their work (related to stagnant career progression and uncertainty about employment status), apprehensive about retirement, but at the same time are very committed to fighting for the climate and sustainability issues. The study also revealed that 31% of millennials have a second job, mainly for economic reasons (Meios e Publicidade, 2023).

In 2018, one in five Portuguese people were millennials and represented the generation with the least weight in overall consumption (11.2%), caused by precarious life conditions and low salaries. That same year, in Portugal, the age segment of seniors over 65 were "bigger agents of consumption" than the millennial generation, as they had more disposable income and spent more in general. In the next three decades, millennials are expected to make up a third of Portuguese consumers (Expresso, 2018).

Approximately 77% of Portuguese Millennials (aged between 18 and 35) follow at least one brand on social media, while the European average is 55%.

A report by Cetelem (cited in Sol, 2018) showed that Portuguese millennials were interested in interacting with brands through social media, with 77% of participants following at least one brand on social media, higher than the European average (55%). Compared with two of Europe's leading economies (France and Germany), the proportion was even more considerable, with 39% of French millennials and 38% German millennials following at least one brand on social media (Sol, 2018). It is essential to

mention that even though Portuguese millennials like to interact with brands on social media, three out of four consumers disregard brands (Tek, 2017), and 49% of them consider brands to be less critical in the decision-making process (EY, 2022). Regarding the reasons why millennials followed brands, businesses, or stores on social media, buying a product or service came last, with 31% of millennials saying they purchased something through social media (factors such as the desire to follow the activity of brands and like the content that businesses publish came first), less than the European average (38%). Regarding their offline behaviour, Portuguese consumers preferred to shop in physical stores (58%) over online commerce because they enjoyed shopping and preferred the overall experience (Sol, 2018), which included immediate access to the product and trying it directly. Nevertheless, in Klarna's report on shopping behaviours (2022), the tendency gravitated to the opposite, with 59% saying they see themselves shopping online first.

Klarna (2022) also found that the frequency with which Portuguese shoppers buy something is higher offline (in a store) every week than online, with only 18% of millennials doing so. When purchasing online, Portuguese millennials tend to shop more for clothing and shoes (55%), electronics (47%), entertainment (41%), beauty products (34%) and leisure, sports and hobbies (30%). When purchasing from physical stores, Portuguese millennials' purchasing habits include groceries (90%), pharmaceutical products (79%), clothing and shoes (59%), beauty (47%), and home and garden (38%).

Regarding the perceived perks of shopping online, Portuguese millennials, compared to other generations, find that comparing prices (33%), having a wider selection of products (21%), and saving time online (40%) are the significant benefits gained from this behaviour (Klarna, 2022), with the other related benefits being lower prices (31%) and the possibility of being at the comfort of their homes (44%).

Portuguese millennials are consumers by convenience, as they prefer substantially (87%) that the packages be delivered to their homes (Klarna, 2022) and are increasingly using their mobile devices to purchase goods and services (up 72% versus the Covid-19 pandemic levels), but still prefer using a computer (56%) when shopping online (versus 42% that prefer mobile, the most out of all generations).

Peer-recommended websites influence Portuguese millennials' visits, and video content is enjoyed by 67% of Portuguese Millennials, 18% higher than the average for their European counterparts (Sol, 2018).

Portuguese millennials are changing their diets for physical and mental wellbeing and a desire to reduce their climate footprint more than older generations (Visão, 2022).

PART II - EMPIRICAL STUDY

CHAPTER 5 - Methodology

Having concluded the theoretical framework, a description of the methodology process will be detailed in this chapter according to the proposed objectives and research questions.

This chapter details how the research will be conducted, including the variables concerning the research questions, the scientific positioning, the population sample, the techniques used, and how data will be interpreted. The present study aims to understand if and in what depth TikTok influences millennials' consumer behaviour regarding footwear.

According to Moura (2010), methodology development involves a series of steps, procedures, and strategies for data collection. In this sense, it is essential to reflect on and plan which methodological options, methods, and techniques will guide the development of the scientific research process, in other words, which form the research framework.

5.1. Research Questions and Objectives

As a millennial marketing manager in the fashion industry, with a particular interest in the footwear industry (at the time of writing this dissertation, I work as a head of marketing for a footwear brand) and because I am an active user of TikTok, this research aims to build a study that enriches me through all the reading I have done and the research work that measures TikTok's influence on its users.

As mentioned above, social networks have revolutionised company communication and are essential to the overall marketing strategy of a company that wants to present itself to its customers. TikTok is considered one of the most powerful social networks of the moment. As the literature on TikTok is quite limited (in comparison to other social media platforms), given the short period it has been around and its popularity and unquestionable impact on society, it is of particular interest to understand how and if the social network's influence fluctuates across different industries and generations, and how it impacts consumers' lives.

As the internet constantly evolves and new channels are always entering the market and/or adapting, science must always stay on top of the subject. To date, few studies have investigated the effects of TikTok on consumer behaviour, and it is still being determined whether there have been any studies into the influence of TikTok on the consumption habits of Portuguese millennials, especially in the footwear industry. Brands need to be constantly top of mind, and it is believed that the results of this study will provide essential insights for the footwear industry.

After thoroughly analysing the literature regarding consumer behaviour, social media, TikTok, and millennials, the following research question was designed: "To what extent does TikTok influence Millennials' purchase intentions in the Portuguese footwear industry?". This is the central question that has guided this research as TikTok (the object of the study) has been celebrated during its small lifespan as a trailblazing platform, reaching one billion active users per month (Forbes, 2022). The distinction between two variables (TikTok and consumer behaviour) is considered.

Considering the previously mentioned hypothesis, other research question was developed to explore the research further. It goes as "What are the features on TikTok that have the most influence on Portuguese millennials when it comes to buying footwear?".

Our main objectives are:

1. Determine the influence of TikTok on Portuguese Millennials' footwear purchasing behaviour.
2. Examine the correlation between TikTok's features (including variables previously mentioned in the hypothesis such as advertising, content, influencer marketing, and user-generated content) and the actual purchase intention of Portuguese Millennials' consumption of footwear.
3. Determine which of the previously mentioned variables have the most impact on the Portuguese millennial consumer.
4. Assess the impact of post-TikTok usage on Portuguese Millennials' awareness of footwear brands and/or products.

Accordingly, to the literature review, we're aware of the premise that:

- Leading content on TikTok needs to be highly selective, as much as it needs to be creative, transparent, and perceived differently to consumers (Forbes, 2022; Adweek, 2022)

- Brands, creators, and users don't need to have a previous established on TikTok to be viral, or to attract and engage an audience (the algorithm handles that, in delivering relevant content to the relevant people) (The Washington Post, 2022).
- Viral behaviours are directly linked to increased intent purchase behaviour (Alhabash et al., 2019).
- Younger generations are using TikTok as a search engine, presenting some perks (Euronews, 2022) that include remembering better the message (Medium, 2017)
- 71% of users believe that TikTok is a driver for what is trending worldwide (TikTok, 2022).
- Millennials are tech-savvy individuals, who want to have their own sense of personality, always on the prowl for the newest trend that will define their unique spirit that allocates more spending on clothing and footwear than other generations (McKinsey, 2017).
- 31% of Portuguese millennials saying they purchased something through social media.
- Millennials like to primarily follow the activity of brands, and generally like brand's content (Sol, 2018)
- When purchasing online, Portuguese millennials tend to shop more online for clothing and shoes (55%) (Klarna, 2022)
- Peer-recommended websites influence Portuguese millennials' visits (Sol, 2018)
- Video content is enjoyed by 67% of Portuguese Millennials (Sol, 2018)

5.2. Paradigm, Methods, and Strategies

The research will be conducted through the scope of interpretivism. Interpretivism is a research philosophy that is always exploratory and investigative, considering how the subject-object of science develops its relations with the lifeworld. Within interpretivism, the production of scientific knowledge is an act of intersubjective interpretation of meanings between different levels of reality in a dynamic, complex, and interactive methodological approach (Williams, 2000; Furlong, 2002, as cited in Paranhos et al., 2016). The interpretivism paradigm (subjective regulation) seeks to explain the stability of behaviour from the individual's point of view (Williams, 2000).

The study aims to identify any patterns or trends that appear in the research on how the recent phenomena of TikTok influence consumer behaviour (in this case,

millennials' footwear consumption) and how it can contribute to a very understudied academic topic. It's important to note that the study in question is not representative of the entire population. And it is a cross-sectional study because, as it is an observational study, we are only observing people's opinions now, i.e., at this time, this is what they think.

Considered one of three "research paradigms" (Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research), mixed methods research is a close attempt to consider both the qualitative and the quantitative research strengths to provide a solution to the various problems existing in research by collecting, analysing, and combining these two research techniques in the same research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Tashakori & Teddlie, 2011). Denzin (1970) argued that to overcome the natural bias that can affect different studies with singular approaches, research should combine different theories while articulating the methods and analyse data sources (single-method, single-observer, single-theory studies). According to Johnson et al., in the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* (2007, p.113), "mixed methods research is, generally speaking, an approach to knowledge (theory and practice) that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions, and standpoints (always including the standpoints of qualitative and quantitative research)." Meirinhos (2007) states combining quantitative and qualitative data contributes to more solid and rigorous research. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) state that the core assumption that justifies the mixed methods approach is that the interplay between them delivers the best analytical prospects.

To broaden conclusions, combined methods will be beneficial to collect and analyse data rather than just using a qualitative or quantitative approach. Hence, a mixed-methods approach with a sequential design is the most appropriate tool for developing an answer to the research question (Creswell, 2009).

To collect and refine the initial information (quantitative data), an online survey will be conducted. The survey was pilot tested with 10 participants to ensure the validity of the constructs and to align any possible discrepancies in the questions. The survey will first ask respondents some critical questions (such as their age and TikTok usage) to verify their eligibility for participation in the study. If they are millennials and TikTok users, they will qualify for the next part of the survey.

For Creswell (2012), quantitative research, such as the study of numbers and indicators, can be analysed with the help of statistics and reveal practical, swift, and trustworthy information about many observations. Qualitative research methods, such as

focus groups, can provide information on the interviewees' speech, offering diverse perspectives on the topic and outlining the subjective characteristics of the phenomenon.

Regarding the strategy, the research will follow a sequential explanatory one where quantitative precedes qualitative. The qualitative analysis will be based on the preliminary results produced by the quantitative analysis (Ivankova et al., 2006). Morse (1991) states this approach is appropriate when the researcher observes unexpected results or outliers. The researcher can pick apart from the pack the outliers and further investigate them using qualitative techniques.

Thus, by conducting the research using mixed methods, an attempt will be made to validate the hypotheses sought to be established in this research:

- H1. TikTok influences Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour.
 - H1.1. Positively
 - H1.2. Negatively
- H2. Influencers' TikTok presence influences Portuguese Millennials' Footwear consumer behaviour.
 - H2.1. Positively
 - H2.2. Negatively
- H3. Content on TikTok influences in Portuguese Millennials' Footwear consumer behaviour.
 - H3.1. Positively
 - H3.2. Negatively
- H4. Out of all social media platforms, TikTok is the one that is influencing positively the most consumption of footwear for Portuguese Millennials
 - H4.1. Positively
 - H4.2. Negatively
- H5. Users' content and perceived word-of-mouth on TikTok influence in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour
 - H5.1. Positively
 - H5.2. Negatively
- H6. TikTok is influencing Portuguese millennials' footwear purchasing behaviour.
 - H6.1. Positively
 - H6.2. Negatively

- H7. TikTok is useful in consumer purchasing decisions.

5.2.1. Survey

Choosing an online survey is not only a practical and intuitive tool that allows the researcher to formulate the various types of questions you want to ask and measure individuals' opinions, attitudes, values, behaviours, and other information within the reality of the population being studied, while also being a tool that's easy to use to reach the community, to share through various groups of people and one that does not involve any high associated costs to the researcher. (Roegiers & Ketele, 2001; Fink, 2013; Creswell & Crewsell, 2017). Without this research method, reaching as many people and groups as the online survey allows would be practically impossible. (Wright, 2005). In this case, the online survey will be the starting point for conducting the research that will allow us to understand, from the point of view of millennial consumers and users of TikTok, how the app influences their footwear consumption and validate the study that has been carried out since the literature review.

Using online surveys or questionnaires as a data collection tool has several benefits, as it also makes it possible to monitor responses in real-time and have a brief overview of all the answers obtained, thus making it easier to process the data later and making it the ideal method to conduct and validate a series of hypotheses and correlations carried out (Quivy et al., 1992). Since online surveys are answered more quickly than face-to-face surveys, it is easier to analyse the data since it is recorded digitally and does not have to be transcribed (Wright, 2005).

The platform of choice for the online survey was Google Forms, as it is easy to use and free to use and allows the results and answers to be automatically saved on the platform. The survey was live from Friday, September 15th to Monday, September 26th. Digital media was used to spread this survey, being publicised on online platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, WhatsApp groups, and through personal messages.

For this study, the sample selected was the non-probabilistic snowball sampling by convenience; in this type of sample, available participants are selected to whom the researcher has access (Gunter, 1999). The sampling is not representative since the sample does not represent the totality of millennial TikTok users and millennial footwear consumers in Portugal. When a sample is convenient, the researcher must minimise individual differences within the variables to be studied, to achieve as much diversity in the people surveyed and in their responses as possible, according to Hultsch et al. (2002).

The focus of this study is to collect relevant data on how Portuguese millennials are subject to TikTok's influence in the footwear industry, as the researcher works as a Marketing Manager for a shoe brand.

Throughout the course of the study, the age cohort considered to define millennials, was the one reported in 2019 by Pew Research Center's millennial demographic age analysis (those born between 1981 and 1996), there are over 2.3 million people in Portugal that fit the age description (a rounded number of the total available at Por Data). According to SurveyMonkey, this study would need a simple random sampling of 385 respondents, to have a minimum representation of the population size, with a margin of error of 5%, and to be able to generalise the interpretations from the data (Creswell, 2009).

5.2.2. Focus Group

With its origins in sociology (Freitas et al., 1998), the focus group is considered a rich qualitative research tool (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2019) that comes from an informal and carefully planned debate between previously screened individuals (Beck et al., 1986; Krueger, 1994). This technique involves the participants interacting with each other and with the moderator, thus distinguishing it from individual interviews (Morgan, 1996). Kruger (1994) defines this interaction as a way to get clearer perceptions about a defined area of interest, proving to be a considerable source of a wide variety of ideas (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2019)

Its application can provide information on different points of view and the dynamics of intergroup interaction, such as consensus, disagreement, or power differences between participants (Litosseliti, 2003). It is considered a flexible research method and one that is easy to apply but rather demanding (Freitas et al., 1998), as the moderator needs to possess specific skills that will positively leverage the conversation, including knowing how to moderate and accommodate participants, keep the conversations on tracking with the topic, know how to listen, record conversations, and stay alert to the tone of the voice, and keep a bias identity, to name a few (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2019; Wilkinson, 1998).

The first set of questions was related to the motivations behind using TikTok and if there's a time correlation we can develop (i.e., motivations to use TikTok from a user that is on the app since 2020, may be completely different in 2023). To achieve this, the survey questions and the study carried out by Dias and Duarte in 2022 provided guidance

in selecting the appropriate options. The second set of questions aims to understand the participants' perception and overall level of influence from TikTok in their day-to-day activities, on how it impacts their consumption behaviours. In this stage, there is an attempt to funnel the conversation and participants towards their footwear consumption habits. Finally, to understand more thoroughly the implication of certain variables under study, participants are asked to explain what influences them the most on TikTok. The conversations are made to be flexible and to encourage further knowledge, while maintaining clear the goals of the study.

As per the survey, the sample selected will be again the non-probabilistic snowball sampling by convenience. Participants were found by directly asking in the researcher's personal networks (Instagram and LinkedIn) if they were (1) millennials, (2) had TikTok, and (3) were willing to join an online focus group. In total, 11 people responded to the invitation, but three of them backed down, on the previous days of conducting the focus group. Two groups of four millennials (in each group) were interviewed throughout September 2023 in Lisbon. Ages ranged from 27 (the youngest participants) and 29 (the oldest participants). Each session lasted around 25 minutes and were recorded via Google Meet.

Focus Groups	Hypothesis
How long have you been to TikTok? And what makes you use TikTok?	H7. TikTok is useful in consumer purchasing decisions
How would you rate TikTok's influences in your day-to-day lives? Do you think TikTok is influential overall? Would you say it's the most influential social media platform right now?	H1. TikTok influences Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour H1.1. Positively H1.2. Negatively
	H7. TikTok is useful in consumer purchasing decisions
	H6. TikTok is influencing Portuguese millennials' footwear purchasing behaviour H6.1. Positively H6.2. Negatively
	H4. Out of all social media platforms, TikTok is the one that is influencing positively

	<p>the most consumption of footwear for Portuguese Millennials</p> <p>H4.1. Positively H4.2. Negatively</p>
<p>So, if someone were to say TikTok is influential for footwear consumption, how would you reply?</p>	<p>H6. TikTok is influencing Portuguese millennials' footwear purchasing behaviour</p> <p>H6.1. Positively H6.2. Negatively</p>
	<p>H4. Out of all social media platforms, TikTok is the one that is influencing positively the most consumption of footwear for Portuguese Millennials</p> <p>H4.1. Positively H4.2. Negatively</p>
<p>And has reality met the expectation you had from the shoes? Do you plan on purchasing again?</p>	<p>H7. TikTok is useful in consumer purchasing decisions</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 1) Branded Content</p>	<p>H3. Content on TikTok influences in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour</p> <p>H3.1. Positively H3.2. Negatively</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 2) Influencers</p>	<p>H2. Influencers' TikTok presence influences in Portuguese Millennials' Footwear consumer behaviour</p> <p>H2.1. Positively H2.2. Negatively</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 3) Virality/Trends</p>	<p>H3. Content on TikTok influences in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour</p> <p>H3.1. Positively H3.2. Negatively</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 4) Word-of-mouth/User's content</p>	<p>H5. Users' content and perceived word-of-mouth on TikTok influence in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour</p> <p>H5.1. Positively H5.2. Negatively</p>

I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 5) Advertising	H3. Content on TikTok influences in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour H3.1. Positively H3.2. Negatively
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Table 2. Crossing the focus groups questions and the hypothesis

Name	Age	Job description
Sebastião	28	Commercial aeroplane pilot
Constança	27	Financial crime analyst
Francisco	27	Entrepreneur
Duarte	29	Operations manager

Table 3. Participants from the first focus group, according to age and profession.

Name	Age	Job description
João	28	Business Developer Lead
Inês	28	Software Setup
Matilde	28	English Teacher
Manel	29	Entrepreneur

Table 4. Participants from the second focus group, according to age and profession

5.3. Data Analysis and Interpretation

To come up with the questions for the survey that will be analysed according to the participants' answers, scales were adapted from other research studies with discrete ordinal measures to quantify the degree of influence of the variables mentioned above on the hypotheses. These measures consist of a set of answers with an order relationship between categories, using a seven-point Likert scale, which is one of the broadest rating scales used in research in order to measure a population's attitude towards the object of the study and, in this case, it was used to differentiate and measure the degree to which the respondents agreed with certain possibilities, allowing it to be balanced - 1) Strongly

Disagree, 2) Disagree, 3) Somewhat Disagree, 4) Neutral, 5) Somewhat Agree, 6) Agree, 7) Strongly Agree (Brace, 2018; Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011).

Before getting into the adapted measuring scales, mentioning that the questionnaire is closed-ended is necessary. This helps provide a simplified data analysis (Brace, 2018). To have an organised questionnaire and to be able to narrow it down topic by topic depending on the respondent's answers, the questionnaire was divided into four parts: demographic data, the degree of use of TikTok, the influence of TikTok on consumer behaviour, and the measurement of TikTok's influence on the consumer and purchase intention.

To measure the influence of TikTok (H1) and content (H3) on consumer behaviour, employing the eleven-item Wang et al., 2012 social media usage and perception scale to measure consumers' TikTok and their perception of the app was necessary. The scale was adapted to a nine-item instrument to fit the purpose of the study, just like Copeland and Zhao (2020). Also, the variables incorporated TikTok and footwear as Copeland and Zhao (2020), also proceeding in the same manner as the previously mentioned authors did when they adapted their study to consider shopping and apparel (Items include, 'I use TikTok to gain knowledge,' 'TikTok is useful for learning about news,' 'TikTok is useful for learning about footwear shopping,' 'I would be interested in TikTok for information about footwear,' 'I would like footwear advertised to me by TikTok,' Brands should use TikTok to enhance shopping,' 'TikTok is a professional way to assess brands', and 'TikTok is an appropriate resource for footwear shopping').

The level of penetrative influence of TikTok influencers in Portuguese millennials' consumer behaviour (H2) was measured by Ryu et al.'s., (2021) own nine-item measurement scale. Items were adapted to meet this study's criteria. The authors drew the research instrument from other studies (Ohanian, 1990; Reysen, 2005; Cheugn et al., 2012; Voss et al., 2003; Xiao, 2018; Kumar, 2019; Abreu, 2019, as cited in Ryu et al., 2021) (Items include, 'Influencers on TikTok do not hesitate to accept and experience something new,' 'Influencers on TikTok communicate information about a product or brand,' 'Influencers on TikTok know and understand a product or brand well,' 'Influencers make good use of social networking services (SNS),' 'Influencers have a ripple effect on public opinion,' 'Influencers themselves have a marketing effect,' 'Influencers have excellent content management skills,' 'Influencers lead the trends,' 'Influencers have expertise in their field').

Loyalty was measured to assess how TikTok is the most influential social media platform for millennials' footwear behaviour (H5) by using Kim & Hyun's (2011) four-time brand image subscale (as cited by Kim & Ko, 2012) and Aaker (1997) and Yoo's et al., (2000) adapted six-item scale (as cited by Kim & Ko, 2012). Items include 'TikTok is a leading social media platform,' 'TikTok has extensive experience,' 'TikTok is a representative of the footwear industry,' 'TikTok is a customer-oriented company,' 'I will suggest TikTok to other consumers', 'I would love to recommend TikTok to my friends,' 'I regularly visit TikTok,' 'I intend to revisit TikTok,' 'I am satisfied with TikTok with every visit,' and 'TikTok would be my first choice of social media').

In order to measure how other TikTok users' content and word-of-mouth influence Portuguese millennials' consumer behaviour (H6), this study used the work from Shen et al. (2003), adapting both the authors' social influence peers on social network sites four-item scale and the two-item motivation to comply scales (Items include, 'People who influence my behaviour think I should use TikTok,' 'People who are important to me think I should use TikTok,' 'In general, my peers support the use of TikTok,' 'In general, brands support the use of TikTok,' 'My involvement on social media influences my purchase decisions,' 'My friends' opinions on social media influence my footwear purchase decisions,' 'My friends' opinions on TikTok influence my footwear purchase decisions').

In order to be able to answer the questionnaire in its entirety, respondents must be part of the millennial generation (born between 1981 and 1986), be of Portuguese nationality, have a TikTok account, have already been interested in buying footwear, and that this interest has triggered the influence to buy footwear, all of which are elimination questions.

In order to draw conclusions, for the statistical analysis, a score was attributed to each item (1 to 7) and calculated from the sum of all the items that made up the analysis measure that validated the hypothesis study (for example: some scores took 3 items, others took 10 items). After calculating this sum, a formula was used based on this value, subtracting the minimum (which also varies depending on the number of items) and dividing by the range of possible values (also depending on the number of items). In the end, the result of this division is multiplied by 100.

- For example: the overall score is equal to the sum of the 36 items that made up the scale used above. As these 36 items range from 1 to 7 (according to the Likert scale), this score will be in a range of values from 36 to 252 (it ranges from a minimum of 36 to a maximum of 252). But

since interpreting something that ranges from 36 to 252 is difficult, we have to define a midpoint to be able to consider what is positive or negative. So, we converted this score into a percentage from 0 to 100 per cent.

- We calculated this percentage score as follows = ((overall score - minimum) / range (Max-Min)) x 100. If one

In the overall characterisation of the sample, the numerical variables are summarised using the median and interquartile analysis (IQA) and are presented in the text using the median ± IQA. For qualitative variables, absolute and relative frequencies are used. The statistical analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS software version 29.

Research Question	Hypothesis	Item	Reference
To what extent does TikTok influence Millennials' purchase intentions in the Portuguese footwear industry?	H1. TikTok influences Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour H1.1. Positively H1.2. Negatively	I use TikTok to gain knowledge TikTok is useful for learning about news TikTok is useful for learning about footwear shopping I would be interested in TikTok for information about footwear	Wang et al. (2012), Copeland & Zhao (2020), Schellewald (2021)
	H4. Out of all social media platforms, TikTok is the one that is influencing positively the most consumption of footwear for Portuguese Millennials H4.1. Positively H4.2. Negatively	Brands should use TikTok to enhance shopping TikTok is a professional way to assess brands TikTok is an appropriate resource for footwear shopping TikTok is a	Kim & Hyun's (2011), Aaker (1997), Yoo's et al., (2000), Kim & Ko (2012)

		<p>leading social media platform.</p> <p>TikTok has extensive experience</p> <p>TikTok is a representative of the footwear industry.</p> <p>TikTok is a customer-oriented company. will suggest TikTok to other consumers.</p> <p>I would love to recommend TikTok to my friends.</p> <p>I regularly visit TikTok.</p> <p>I intend to visit TikTok again.</p> <p>I am satisfied with TikTok with every visit.</p> <p>TikTok would be my first choice of social media.</p>	
	<p>H6. TikTok is influencing Portuguese millennials' footwear purchasing behaviour</p> <p>H6.1. Positively</p> <p>H6.2. Negatively</p>	<p>My involvement on social media influences my purchase decisions</p> <p>My involvement on Instagram influences my purchase decisions</p> <p>Brands I follow on social media</p>	<p>Copeland & Zhao (2020), Appel et al. (2020), Dias & Duarte (2022)</p>

		influence my purchase decisions	
	H7. TikTok is useful in consumer purchasing decisions	36-item scale	Shen et al. (2003), Copeland & Zhao (2020), Schellewald (2021)
What kind of features from TikTok influence Portuguese millennials the most, for footwear consumption?	H3. Content on TikTok influences in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour H3.1. Positively H3.2. Negatively	I use TikTok to gain knowledge	Shen et al. (2003), Copeland & Zhao (2020)
		TikTok is useful for learning about news	
		TikTok is useful for learning about footwear shopping	
		I would be interested in TikTok for information about footwear	
		I would like footwear advertised to me by TikTok	
		Brands should use TikTok to enhance shopping	
		TikTok is a professional way to assess brands	
		TikTok is an appropriate resource for footwear shopping	
	H2. Influencers' TikTok presence	Influencers on TikTok do not	Ryu et al.'s., (2021), Gräve (2017), Saima

	<p>influences in Portuguese Millennials' Footwear consumer behaviour</p> <p>H2.1. Positively</p> <p>H2.2. Negatively</p>	<p>hesitate to accept and experience something new.</p> <p>Influencers on TikTok clearly communicate information about a product or brand.</p> <p>Influencers on TikTok know and understand a product or brand well.</p> <p>Influencers make good use of social networking services (SNS).</p> <p>Influencers have a ripple effect on public opinion.</p> <p>Influencers themselves have a marketing effect.</p> <p>Influencers have excellent content management skills</p> <p>Influencers lead the trends.</p> <p>Influencers have expertise in their field.</p>	<p>& Khan (2020), Veiman et al. (2017), Wertz (2022)</p>
	<p>H5. Users' content and perceived word-of-mouth on TikTok</p>	<p>My friends' opinions on social media influence</p>	<p>Shen et al. (2003), Wertz (2022), Wang et al. (2018), Zhang et</p>

	<p>influence in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour</p> <p>H5.1. Positively</p> <p>H5.2. Negatively</p>	<p>my footwear purchase decisions</p> <p>My friends' opinions on TikTok influence my footwear purchase decisions</p> <p>People who influence my behaviour think I should use TikTok</p> <p>People who are important to me think I should use TikTok</p> <p>In general, my peers support the use of TikTok</p> <p>In general, brands support the use of TikTok</p> <p>My involvement on social media influences my purchase decisions</p>	<p>al. (2010), Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), De Bruyn & Lilien (2008), Cheung (2014)</p>
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Table 5. Crossing the research questions, the items based on other studies, the hypothesis and the research framework.

CHAPTER 6 - RESULTS

6.1. Results from Survey

Out of the total of 563 collected participants in the online survey, only 142 answers were validated, considering the six criteria that each answer had to meet and be considered a confirmed reply:

- Be a millennial, according to Pew Research Centre's official definition.
- Be Portuguese
- Have a TikTok account (at least have an account and the app installed on their mobile phones)

- Have had interest in purchasing anything from TikTok’s influence.
- Have had interest in purchasing footwear from TikTok’s influence.
- Have had purchased footwear from TikTok’s influence.

	N	%
Silent Generation (born between 1928-45)	0	0
Baby Boomers (born between 1946-64)	4	0,70%
Generation X (born between 1965-80)	21	3,70%
Millennials (born between 1981-96)	440	79,40%
Generation Z (born between 1997-2012)	90	16%

Table 6. Demographic data at the beginning of the survey (N = 563)

	N	%
Female	209	47,50%
Male	222	50,50%
Other	1	0,20%
Prefer not to say	8	1,80%

Table 7. Demographic data after inclusion criteria (generation) (N = 440)

Now, to underline some of the data of participants’ responses before stepping further to the results that validate that try and validate the research goals. Following up on the generation that participants were a part of it was designed to describe their gender. As you can see in the table below, 50,5% (N = 222) of participants said that they identified as male, and 47,5% (N = 209) identified as female. A total of 8 participants (1,8%) preferred not to say, and just 1 person respondent (0,2%) said other.

	N	%
Yes	290	65,90%
No	150	34,10%

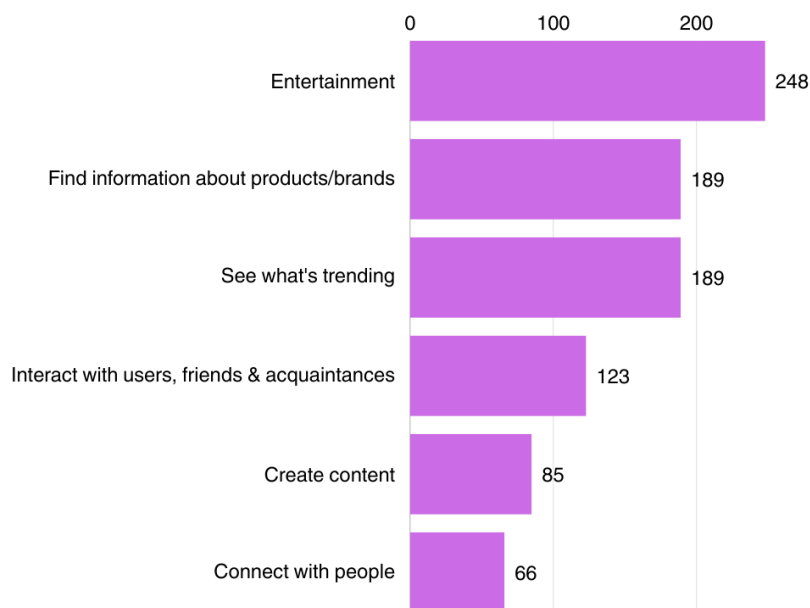
Table 8. Number of participants with a TikTok account (have an account and the app installed on their mobile phone) (N = 440)

Following with TikTok usage, 65,9% out of the 440 participants that matched the millennial and Portuguese criteria have a TikTok account (N = 290).

	N	%
I use it at least once every day	168	57,90%
I use at least two/three times a week	77	26,60%
I use it once a week	17	5,90%
I rarely use it (as in, every couple of weeks)	19	6,60%
I never use it (but have an account and the app installed)	9	3,10%

Table 9. Participants' perception of TikTok usage (N = 290)

Regarding their perceived usage, 57,9% (N = 160) use TikTok every day, 26,6% (N = 77) use it every day, 6,6% (19) say they rarely use the app (only opening it every couple of weeks), 5,9% (N = 17) use it once every week, and the remaining 9 (3,1%) rarely use it (and consider that they only have the app installed).



Graphic 1. Participants' reasons to use TikTok (N = 290)

The motivations to use TikTok also vary as out of the 290 participants, at least 248 use it for entertainment purposes (85,5% of the sample), 199 (68,6% use it to see what's trending), 189 (65,2%) use it to find information about products/brands, 123 (42,4%) use it to interact with users, friends, acquaintances, and 66 (22,8%) use it to connect with people.

	N	%
Yes	265	91,40%
No	25	8,60%

Table 10. Number of participants interested in something they've seen on TikTok (N = 290)

	N	%
Yes	212	80,00%
No	53	20,00%

Table 11. Number of participants interested in purchasing footwear from something they've seen on TikTok (N = 265)

	N	%
Yes	142	67,00%
No	70	33,00%

Table 12. Number of participants interested in purchasing footwear from something they've seen on TikTok (N = 212)

It's important to consider the analysis of the three previous Tables (10, 11, 12) as they show a sign of positive attitude from consumers towards TikTok's ability to

influence their purchasing intentions, with 91,4% (N = 265) out of the 290 participants that fit the millennial, nationality, and use of TikTok criteria stating that they had an interest in something they saw on TikTok. It's important to consider 290 participants, 265 of them (91,4% of the sample) say they have had interest in purchasing something from something they've seen on TikTok, and out of the 265, 80% of them (N = 212) said they had interest in purchasing footwear from TikTok's realm of influence (which we'll dive deeper into the discussion). Finally, out of the 212 respondents, 142 (67%) went through purchasing something they've seen from TikTok.

When considering if they had an interest in footwear products, 80% (N = 212) out of the 265 participants that had interest in something they saw on TikTok, agreed that TikTok was influential in their consumer behaviour. Finally, 67% (N = 142) out of the remaining participants (N = 212) stated that they purchased a footwear product because of TikTok. We can also conclude, that when compared to the total sample of millennials surveyed (N = 447), TikTok was responsible for having an influence in at least one of the three millennials surveyed in this study's footwear consumer behaviour (142 out of the 440 millennial participants said they purchased a footwear product from TikTok's influences).

6.1.1. Univariate Analysis of the results

With all the inclusion criteria outlined in the survey, the study was reduced to 142 participants. The next step to proceed and analyse the data is to carry out a univariate analysis. In the overall characterisation of the sample, the numerical variables are summarised by calculating the scores using the medians and the interquartile range because all these variables were strongly asymmetrical (they are skewed to the right). To understand if the variable has a positive or negative, we found a midpoint.

In this study's case, they are to the right. They are closer to 100% than to the middle point (50%). They are presented in the text using the median \pm IQR. Absolute and relative frequencies are used for qualitative variables.

	N	%
Gender	63	44,40%
	77	54,20%

Prefer not to say 1 0,70%

Other 1 0,70%

Table 13. Gender of number of participants that met all inclusion criteria (N = 142)

Taking into consideration the sample that was left out, from the 142 validated answers, 44,4% of them were female, 54,2% were male, and the following 1,4% didn't want to disclaim their gender (0,7%) or identified with another gender (0,7%).

		N	%
Usage of TikTok	I rarely use it (as in, every couple of weeks)	2	1,4
	I use it once a week	6	4,2
	I use at least two/three times a week	43	30,3
	I use it at least once everyday	91	64,1

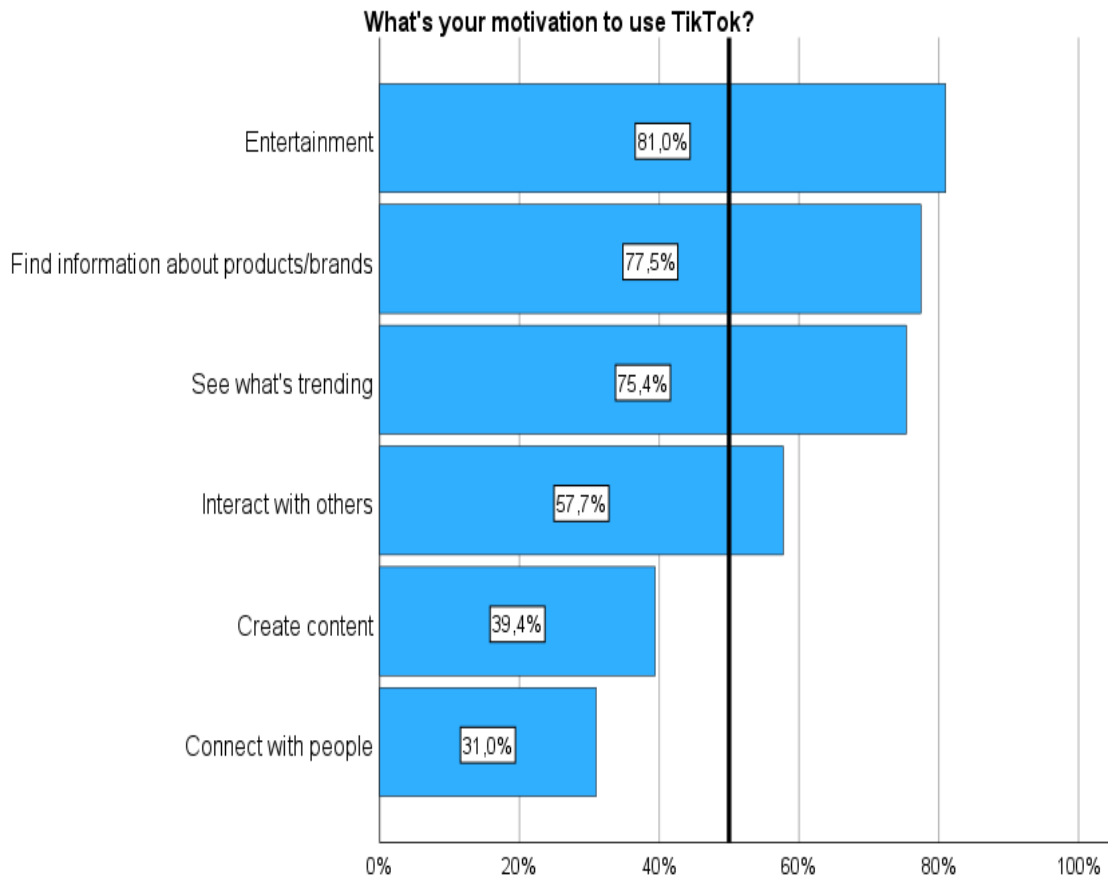
Table 14. Usage of TikTok of number of participants that met all inclusion criteria (N = 142)

Taking the level of usage of the participants that matched the inclusion criteria for this study (N = 142), 64,1% of them (N = 91) state that they use TikTok at least once a day, and 30,3% (N = 43) use it at least two/three times a week. With these results, we can conclude that the more the user interacts in the platform, the higher the chance they end purchasing a footwear product.

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Motivation to use TikTok	Create content	142	0	1	0,39	0,49
	Connect with people	142	0	1	0,31	0,464
	Entertainment	142	0	1	0,81	0,394
	Interact with others	142	0	1	0,58	0,496
	Find information about products/brands	142	0	1	0,77	0,419

	See what's trending	142	0	1	0,75	0,432
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Table 15. Motivation of TikTok usage of participants that met all inclusion criteria (N = 142)



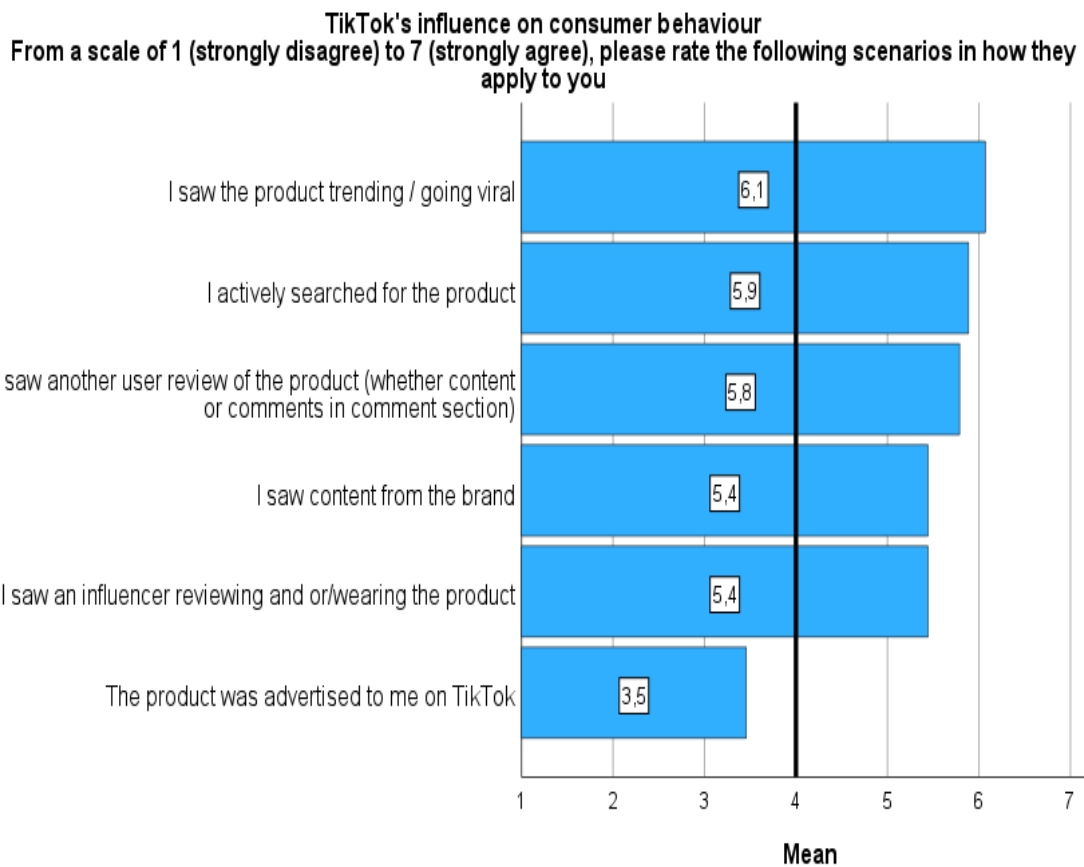
Graphic 2. Usage of TikTok of number of participants that met all inclusion criteria (N = 142)

Regarding motivation, in the following question, participants could choose the options that applied to their motivation to use TikTok. To come up with the options, we took into consideration Duarte and Dias' study (2021) on the motivation for Gen-Z to use TikTok, applied to the theory of use and gratification. From the results of the sample (N = 142), 81% use TikTok for entertainment reasons, while 77% use it for information about products and brands, and finally, 75,4% said they were on TikTok to see what's trending, aligned with previous findings (Adweek, 2021). The bottom two reasons that fell below the average include create content (39,4%) and connecting with people (31%), which is aligned with research that showed that the level of personal interaction between users

(including messaging) on TikTok is much smaller compared with other social media platforms (Fast Company, 2022)

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
I saw an influencer reviewing and or/wearing the product	142	1	7	5,44	1,49
I actively searched for the product	142	1	7	5,89	1,215
I saw content from the brand	142	1	7	5,44	1,324
The product was advertised to me on TikTok	142	1	7	3,46	2,162
I saw another user review of the product (whether content or comments in comment section)	142	1	7	5,79	1,172
I saw the product trending / going viral	142	1	7	6,07	1,23

Table 16. Reason why number of participants that met all inclusion criteria, have purchased the product (N = 142)



Graphic 3. Motivation to use TikTok from participants that met all inclusion criteria (in percentage)

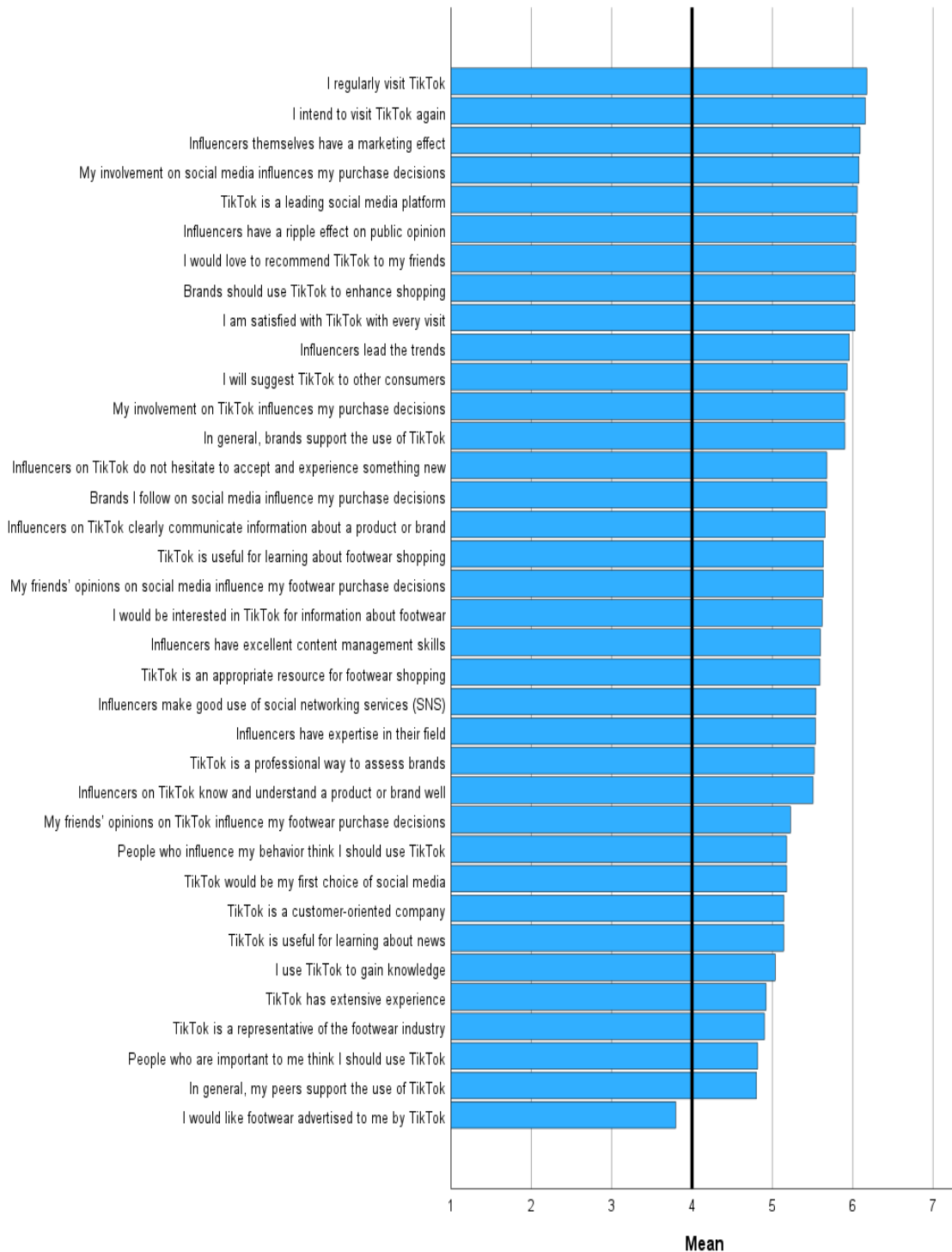
A first attempt to funnel the reasons why users purchased footwear products on TikTok was made in this question. The goal was to sum up the following items by taking into consideration both TikTok's and social media's literature review that guided the study. What came from that were the variables ('I saw an influencer reviewing and or/wearing the product,' 'I actively searched for the product,' 'I saw content from the brand,' 'The product was advertised to me on TikTok', 'I saw another user review of the product (whether content or comments in the comment section),' and 'I saw the product trending/going viral'). Most of them are positive (or above the neutral level, i.e., 4), except for advertisement, which doesn't seem like a factor for millennials.

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
I use TikTok to gain knowledge	142	1	7	5,04	1,365
TikTok is useful for learning about news	142	1	7	5,14	1,23
TikTok is useful for learning about footwear shopping	142	2	7	5,63	1,062
I would be interested in TikTok for information about footwear	142	2	7	5,62	1,002
I would like footwear advertised to me by TikTok	142	1	7	3,8	1,926
Brands should use TikTok to enhance shopping	142	2	7	6,03	0,945
TikTok is a professional way to assess brands	142	2	7	5,52	1,002
TikTok is an appropriate resource for footwear shopping	142	2	7	5,59	0,983
People who influence my behaviour think I should use TikTok	142	1	7	5,18	1,157
People who are important to me think I should use TikTok	142	1	7	4,82	1,324
In general, my peers support the use of TikTok	142	2	7	4,8	1,21
In general, brands support the use of TikTok	142	1	7	5,9	1,119
My involvement on social media influences my purchase decisions	142	2	7	6,08	1,046
My involvement on TikTok influences my purchase decisions	142	2	7	5,9	0,977
Brands I follow on social media influence my purchase decisions	142	2	7	5,68	0,964
My friends' opinions on social media influence my footwear purchase decisions	142	1	7	5,63	1,101

My friends' opinions on TikTok influence my footwear purchase decisions	142	1	7	5,23	1,193
Influencers on TikTok do not hesitate to accept and experience something new	142	2	7	5,68	0,993
Influencers on TikTok clearly communicate information about a product or brand	142	2	7	5,65	1,004
Influencers on TikTok know and understand a product or brand well	142	1	7	5,51	1,096
Influencers make good use of social networking services (SNS)	142	2	7	5,54	1,089
Influencers have a ripple effect on public opinion	142	2	7	6,04	1,024
Influencers themselves have a marketing effect	142	2	7	6,09	0,996
Influencers have excellent content management skills	142	1	7	5,6	1,045
Influencers lead the trends	142	2	7	5,96	1,044
Influencers have expertise in their field	142	2	7	5,54	1,165
TikTok is a leading social media platform	142	2	7	6,06	0,98
TikTok has extensive experience	142	1	7	4,92	1,394
TikTok is a representative of the footwear industry	142	2	7	4,9	1,339
TikTok is a customer-oriented company	142	2	7	5,14	1,247
I will suggest TikTok to other consumers	142	1	7	5,93	1,015
I would love to recommend TikTok to my friends	142	2	7	6,04	1,006
I regularly visit TikTok	142	2	7	6,18	0,925
I intend to visit TikTok again	142	2	7	6,15	0,925
I am satisfied with TikTok with every visit	142	2	7	6,03	1,085
TikTok would be my first choice of social media	142	1	7	5,18	1,63

Table 17. Overall perception of the study's adapted measurement scales and how they apply to the participants of this study realities.

Measuring the influence of TikTok on purchasing behaviour
 From a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), please rate the following scenarios in how they apply to you



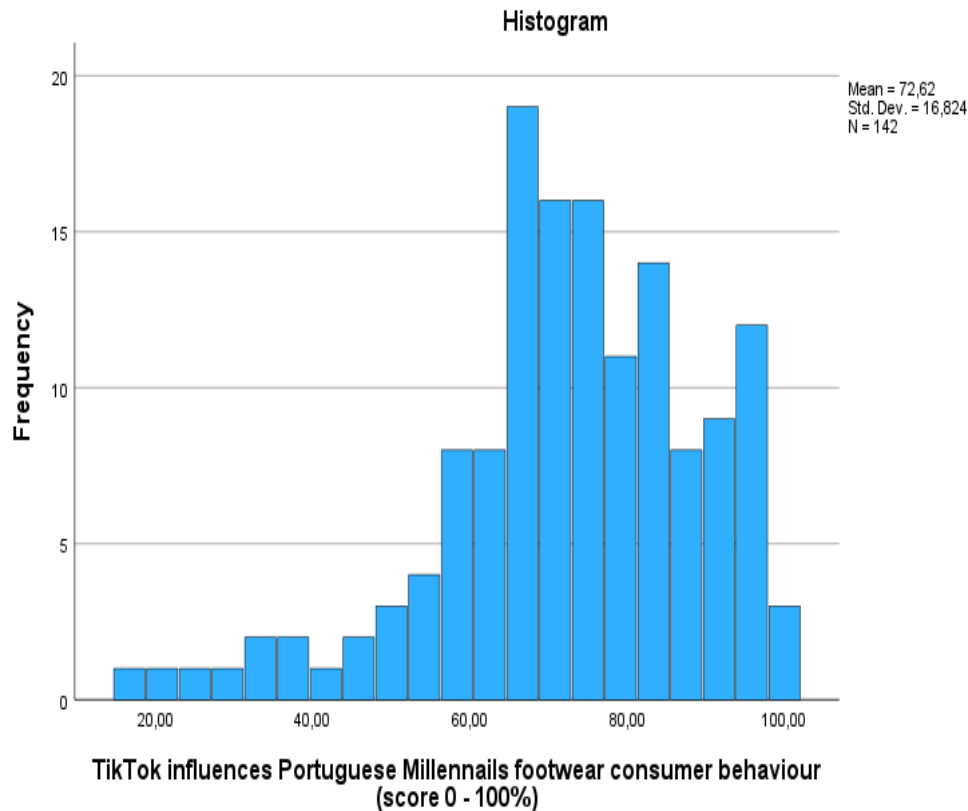
Graphic 4. Measure the 36-item scale (in totality) to measure the influence of TikTok in consumer behaviour (in percentage)

Analysing the 36-item scale by the most influential, the scaling options vary between 1 (strongly agree) and 7 (strongly disagree). As such and considering that 4 is the neutral scale that divides between positive (above 4) and negative (below 4), all the items where the average of the 142 responses exceeds this value of '4' can be considered "positive" (respondents agree more than they disagree with that item on the scale) of the scale). In other words, the level of influence of the items on the participants' consumption behaviour is translated by the average of all the answers they gave to the items on the scale, and ranges from a minimum of '1' to a maximum of '7' points. As such, as we can see in both the graphic 4 and the table 17 above, there is only one item out of the 36 that millennials exclude as influential, which is 'I would like footwear advertised to me by TikTok'. All the other have positive influence, with the highest ones being 'I regularly visit TikTok' (6,18), 'I intend to visit TikTok' (6,15), Influencers themselves have a marketing effect' (6,09), 'My involvement on social media influences my purchase decisions' (6,08) and 'TikTok is a leading social media platform' (6,06), validating H7: TikTok is useful in consumer purchasing decisions.

Validating H1: TikTok's influence in Portuguese Millennials' Footwear Consumer Behaviour

		Statistic	Std. Error
TikTok's influence in Portuguese Millennials footwear consumer behaviour (score 0 - 100%)	Mean	72,6232	1,41184
	Median	75	
	Minimum	16,67	
	Maximum	100	
	Interquartile Range	16,67	

Table 18. Score analysis of TikTok's influence in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour



Graphic 5. Histogram of score analysis of TikTok’s influence in Portuguese Millennials’ footwear consumer behaviour

With over one billion monthly active users (Forbes, 2022) and over 1.9 billion users worldwide (Statista, 2023), TikTok's influence on consumer behaviour is still a very undisclosed area, but it's important to understand how the app is seen in Portuguese Millennials' consumer behaviour, specifically for footwear, the subject of this study.

Taking into consideration the four items used to measure this scale ('I use TikTok to gain knowledge', 'TikTok is useful for learning about news', 'TikTok is useful for learning about footwear shopping', and 'I would be interested in TikTok for information about footwear'), the score of the app's influence was 75%, so it's considered a very positive source of influence for the participants of the study.

The histogram above (Graphic 5) shows that most of the survey's participants (the ones that matched all inclusion criteria) have a tendency for a positive evaluation of influencers (represented by the large perception in the right part of the graphic), with very remote negative evaluations, as seen on the left side of the histogram.

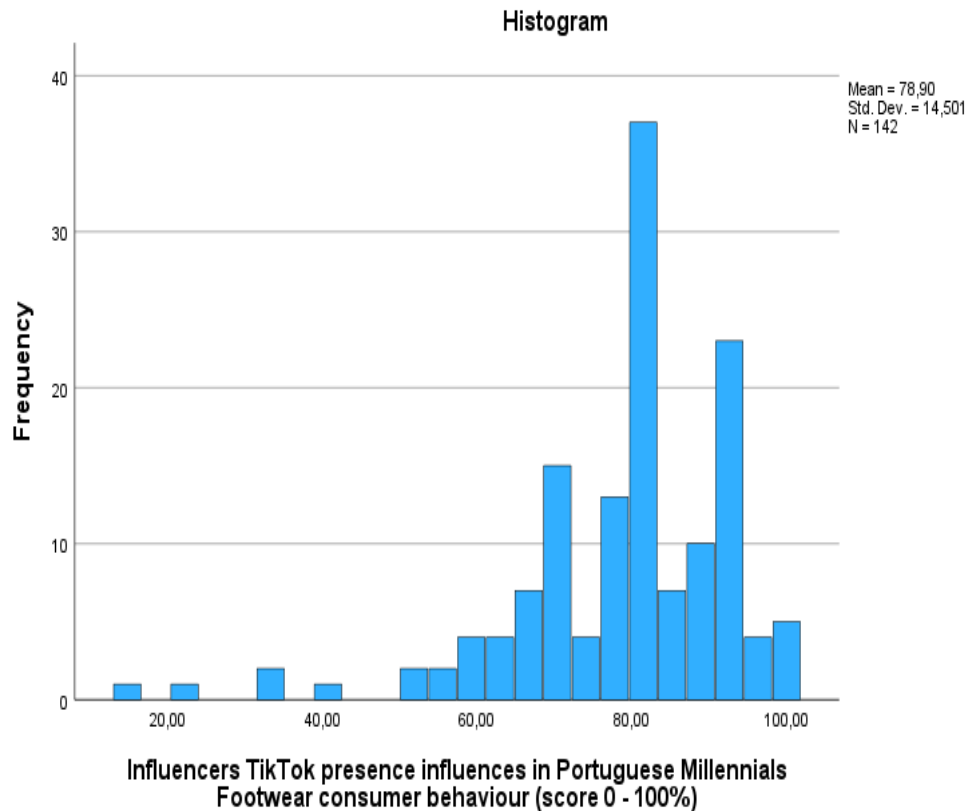
Regarding the focus group answers, to consider the hypothesis (H1), participants' answers to the following questions ('How would you rate TikTok's influences in your

day-to-day lives?', 'Do you think TikTok is influential overall?' and 'Would you say it's the most influential social media platform right now?'). The overall response was positive, with members of the group all agreeing that TikTok poses a great influence on day-to-day (all through the scope of finding more information, inspiration, entertainment, and consumption), with possibilities to explore further interests and proving to be a valuable work-tool, although Instagram is still a close competitor, with several of each group's members still preferring Instagram, even though they might spend more time on TikTok on average.

Validating H2: Influencers' TikTok presence drives influence in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour.

		Statistic	Std. Error
Influencers' TikTok presence drives influence in Portuguese Millennial's footwear consumer behaviour	Mean	78,8993	1,21691
	Median	83,3333	
	Minimum	14,81	
	Maximum	100	
	Interquartile Range	15,28	

Table 19. Score analysis of TikTok influencer's influence in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour



Graphic 6. Histogram of score analysis of TikTok influencer's influence in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour

In research, consumers perceive influencers as sources with whom they share familiarity. This is due to being seen as credible, honest, and real about their lifestyle and experiences they wish to pass on to their communities (Bohan, 2008; McQuarrie et al., 2013, as cited in Ryu & Han, 2021). Influencer marketing is currently considered to be one of the most used strategies by marketers, as they can positively affect the consumer decision-making process and potential customers (Booth & Matic, 2011; Ge & Gretzel, 2018, as cited by Ryu & Han, 2021), by forming opinions, influencing attitudes and being behaviour enablers (Van den Bulte & Joshi, 2007, as cited in Ryu & Han, 2021) and pose as a more effective strategy than many others (Phua et al., 2016, as cited in Ryu & Han, 2001).

Taking into consideration the nine items used to measure this scale ('Influencers on TikTok do not hesitate to accept and experience something new,' 'Influencers on TikTok communicate information about a product or brand,' 'Influencers on TikTok know and understand a product or brand well,' 'Influencers make good use of social networking services (SNS),' 'Influencers have a ripple effect on public opinion,' 'Influencers

themselves have a marketing effect,' Influencers have excellent content management skills,' 'Influencers lead the trends,' 'Influencers have expertise in their field'), the score of how influencers are a valuable factor into Portuguese millennials' footwear consumer behaviour was 83,33%, so it's considered a very positive source of influence for the participants of the study.

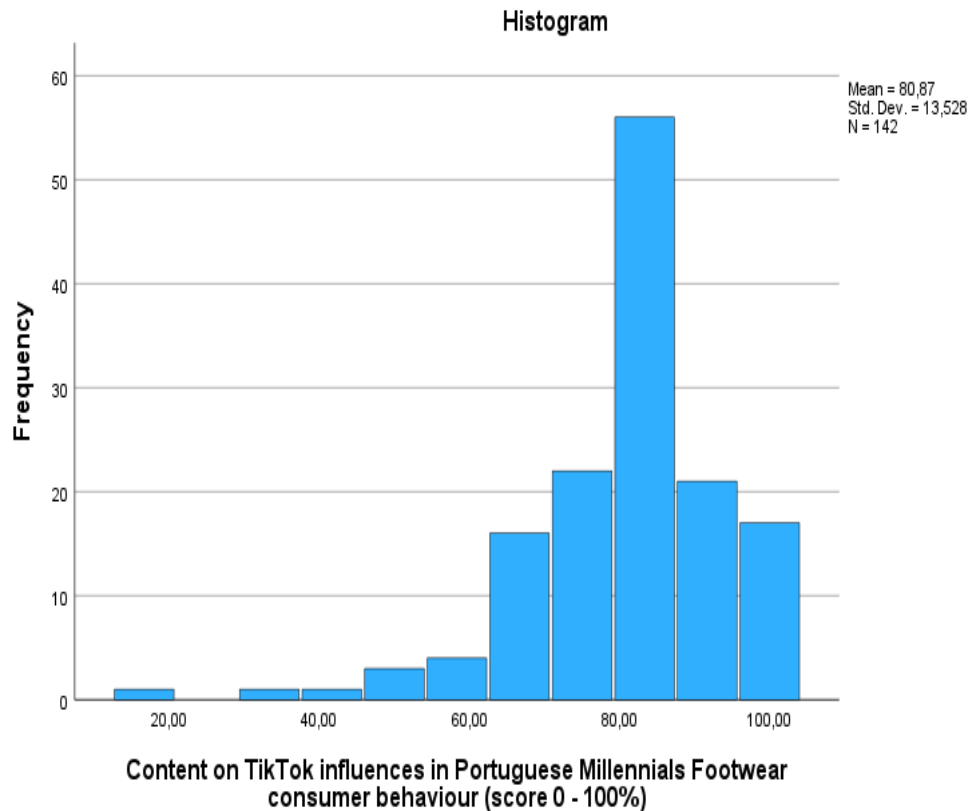
The histogram above (Graphic 6) shows that most of the survey's participants (the ones that matched all inclusion criteria) have a tendency for a positive evaluation of influencers (represented by the large perception in the right part of the graphic), with very remote negative evaluations, as seen on the left side of the histogram.

Regarding the focus group answers, neither the participants deny the power that influencers have in today's media landscape of influencing consumer behaviour, with most of them stating that they are partly or fully influenced by TikTok influencers for footwear consumption.

Validating H3: Content on TikTok influences Portuguese millennial's footwear consumer behaviour.

		Statistic	Std. Error
Content on TikTok influences in Portuguese Millennials Footwear consumer behaviour (score 0 - 100%)	Mean	80,8685	1,13525
	Median	83,3333	
	Minimum	16,67	
	Maximum	100	
	Interquartile Range	16,67	

Table 20. Score analysis of content on TikTok's influence in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour



Graphic 7. Histogram of score analysis of content on TikTok’s influence in Portuguese Millennials’ footwear consumer behaviour

TikTok is being applauded for disrupting the creation of video content that can reach the entire world and impact society as a whole (Adweek, 2022) and is credited for having content for any kind of interest and each user's personal taste (The Washington Post, 2022). Video content was greatly enjoyed by 67% of Portuguese Millennials back in 2018 when TikTok wasn't even as popular as it was in 2023 (Sol, 2018).

Content can be seen from four different scopes: (1) advertisement (McKinsey, 2020), (2) brand content (TikTok, 2022), (3) influencer-created content (Ryu et al., 2021), and (4) user-generated content (Forbes, 2022) and about two-thirds of users indulge in searching about products after viewing content about them on the platform (Digiday, 2022)

Taking into consideration the nine items used to measure this scale ('I use TikTok to gain knowledge', 'TikTok is useful for learning about news', 'TikTok is useful for learning about footwear shopping', 'I would be interested in TikTok for information about footwear', 'I would like footwear advertised to me by TikTok', 'Brands should use TikTok to enhance shopping', 'TikTok is a professional way to assess brands', and 'TikTok is an

appropriate resource for footwear shopping'), the score of it was 83,33%, so it could be considered a positive representation on the variable's influence on Portuguese millennials' footwear consumer behaviour.

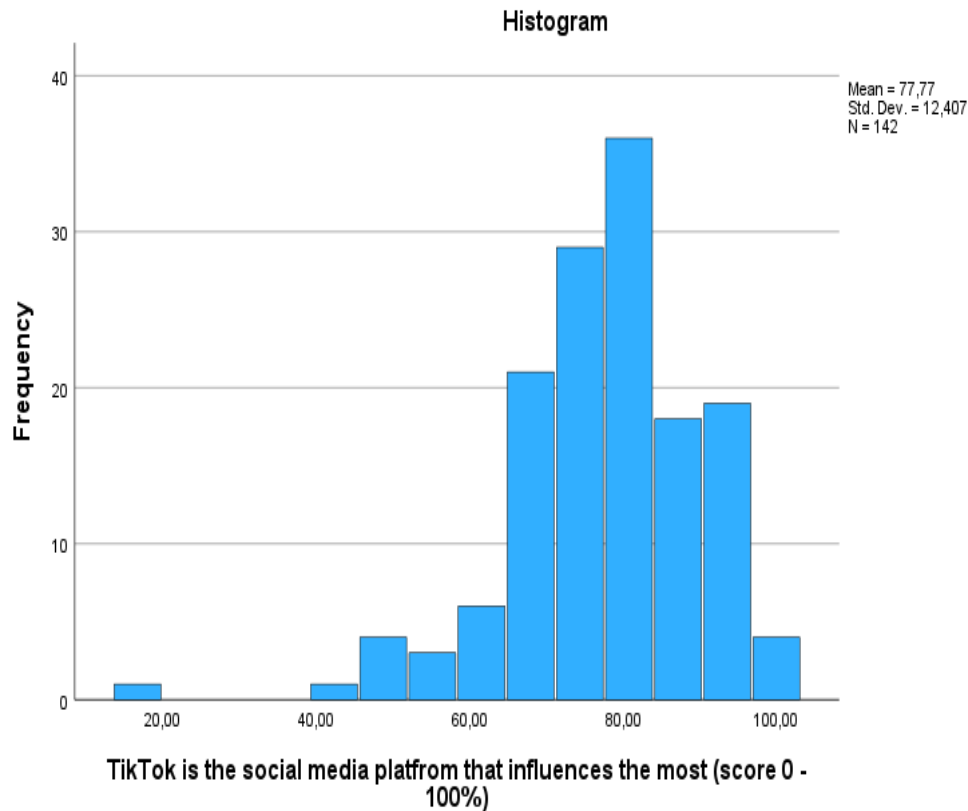
The histogram above (Table 20) shows that most of the survey's participants (the ones that matched all inclusion criteria) have a tendency for a positive evaluation of influencers (represented by the large perception in the right part of the graphic), with very remote negative evaluations, as seen on the left side of the histogram.

Regarding the focus group answers, there are several questions refraining from this hypothesis (three questions about other users'/word-of-mouth content, branded content, influencer content, and advertisement). The two most influential respondents are definitely content created by their peers and influencers. Users feel very neutral about brands, in that they don't consider the most important variable in influencing their footwear consumer behaviour and have very negative opinions about being targeted on TikTok with footwear advertisements (even though it never happened to any of them).

Validating H4: Out of all social media platforms, TikTok is the one that is influencing the most Portuguese millennials' footwear consumer behaviour.

	Statistic	Std. Error	
Out of all social media platforms, TikTok is the one that is influencing the most Portuguese millennials' footwear consumer behaviour (score 0 - 100%)	Mean	77,7718	1,0412
	Median	79,4872	
	Minimum	16,67	
	Maximum	100	
	Interquartile Range	19,05	

Table 21. Score analysis of TikTok's perceived preference over other social media platforms to Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour



Graphic 8. Histogram of score analysis of TikTok's perceived preference over other social media platforms to Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour

As the literature review and the study have continuously shown, TikTok has become a global phenomenon like no other platform has, and in the app's short lifespan, it has a considerable number of users that other giants like Facebook and Instagram took longer to achieve (Forbes, 2022). It was the fastest-growing media outlet worldwide in 2022 (Statista, 2022). In 2023, this translated into a brand value of 65 billion dollars, just behind Google and surpassing Meta (Statista, 2023).

TikTok was also the 7th most downloaded app of the last decade, outranking YouTube and Twitter, despite launching two years before the decade ended (Forbes, 2019). In 2022, TikTok was the world's most visited website, surpassing search engine giant Google in terms of traffic (Wired, 2023). And finally, millennials are continuously engaging more with video content than with static photography and text-based content (Harvard Business Review, 2022), and TikTok reports that the app is a driver for what is trending worldwide to 71% of its users (TikTok, 2022).

Considering this, it was interesting to understand if millennials considered TikTok as the most influential platform for footwear consumption or to influence their consumer

behaviour. With this, a scale with thirteen items was used ('Brands should use TikTok to enhance shopping', 'TikTok is a professional way to assess brands', 'TikTok is an appropriate resource for footwear shopping', 'TikTok is a leading social media platform', 'TikTok has extensive experience', 'TikTok is a representative of the footwear industry', 'TikTok is a customer-oriented company', 'I will suggest TikTok to other consumers', 'I would love to recommend TikTok to my friends', 'I regularly visit TikTok', 'I intend to visit TikTok again', 'I am satisfied with TikTok with every visit', 'TikTok would be my first choice of social media'), the score of it was 79,48%, so it could be considered a positive representation on the variable's influence on Portuguese millennials' footwear consumer behaviour.

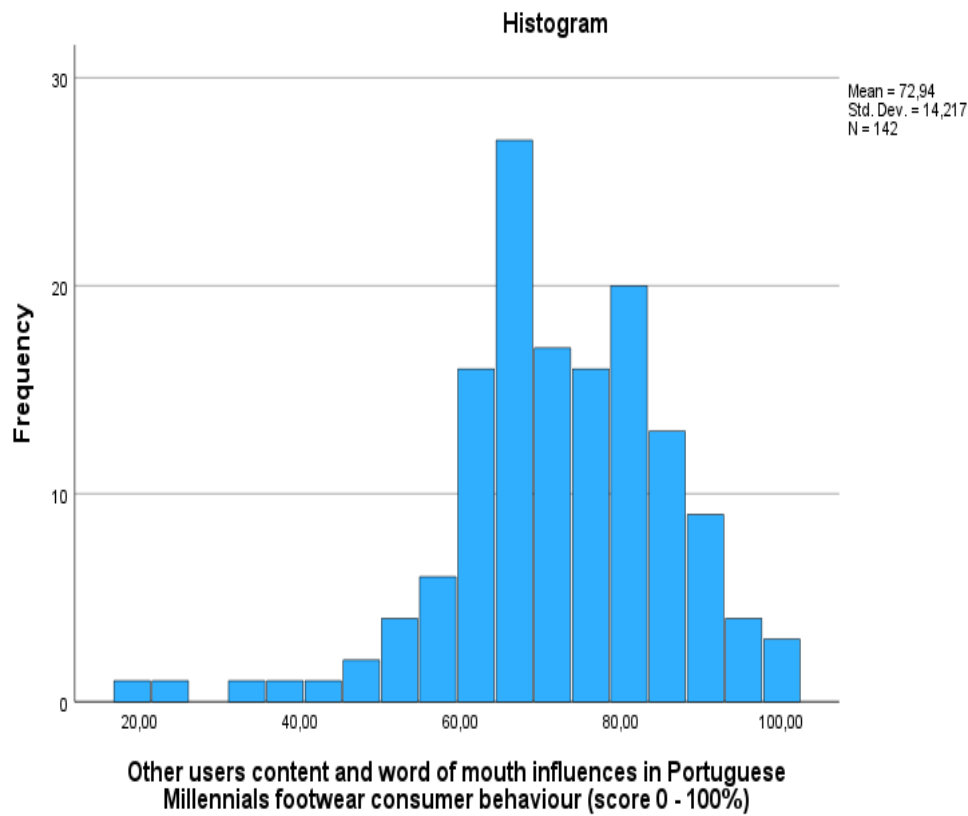
The histogram above (Graphic 8) shows that most of the survey's participants (the ones that matched all inclusion criteria) have a tendency for a positive evaluation of influencers (represented by the large perception in the right part of the graphic), with very remote negative evaluations, as seen on the left side of the histogram.

Regarding with the focus group answers, most participants have bought or know someone close who has bought out of a direct influence from TikTok and find TikTok very influential and helps to inspire to find new products, new recipes, new people, new points of view, creativity. Either the participants considered TikTok as the most influential platform currently, or it was considered second-best, falling behind Instagram.

H5: Other users' content and word-of-mouth influences in Portuguese millennials' footwear consumer behaviour

		Statistic	Std. Error
Other users' content' and word-of-mouth's influence on Portuguese Millennials footwear consumer behaviour (score 0 - 100%)	Mean	72,9376	1,19303
	Median	73,8095	
	Minimum	19,05	
	Maximum	100	
	Interquartile Range	19,05	

Table 22. Score analysis of TikTok’s perceived preference over other social media platforms to Portuguese Millennials’ footwear consumer behaviour



Graphic 9. Histogram of score analysis of TikTok’s perceived preference over other social media platforms to Portuguese Millennials’ footwear consumer behaviour

Consumers are highly influenced by their peers (Liu et al., 2013, as cited in Copeland & Zao, 2020) as they exchange feedback and reviews on the internet, not only because they wish to express themselves, validate their experiences and entertain (Kaplan & Haenlein, as cited in Copeland & Zao, 2020), but because they want to offer advice, the same way they would the advice to be given to them (Hogg & Reed, 2006 as cited in Copeland & Zao, 2020). Hogg and Reid (2006, as cited in Copeland & Zhao, 2020) state that is part of social identity, as it influences consumers' perception within their reference groups.

Peer-generated reviews and comments are deemed the most trustworthy source online for consumers (Pooklulangara & Koesler, 2011, as cited in Copeland & Zhao,

2020), thus increasing purchase intentions (Haji et al., 2007 as cited in Copeland & Zhao, 2020).

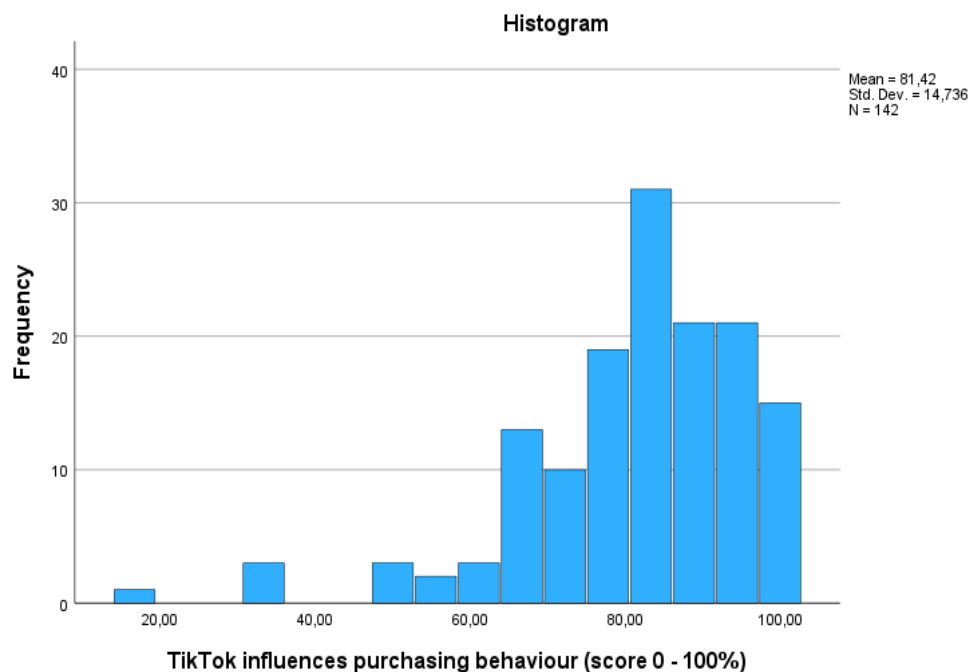
Taking into consideration the nine items used to measure this scale ('My friends' opinions on social media influence my footwear purchase decisions', 'My friends' opinions on TikTok influence my footwear purchase decisions', 'People who influence my behaviour think I should use TikTok', 'People who are important to me think I should use TikTok', 'In general, my peers support the use of TikTok', 'In general, brands support the use of TikTok', and 'My involvement on social media influences my purchase decisions'), the score of it was 73,81% so it could be considered a positive representation of TikTok being the most influential social media in Portuguese millennials' footwear consumer behaviour.

The histogram above shows that most of the participants are in the right part of the graphic, with even fewer exceptions than the histogram for the previous hypothesis. Regarding the focus group answers, it's generally accepted by the participants that user-generated content, reviews, and comments are greatly appreciated when influencing their consumer behaviour. They believe that TikTok's ability to produce video content (not static, image, or text), has enabled users to genuinely want to offer reliable and authentic feedback.

Validating H6: TikTok influences millennials' footwear purchasing behaviour.

		Statistic	Std. Error
TikTok influences millennials' footwear purchasing behaviour (score 0 - 100%)	Mean	81,4163	1,23666
	Median	83,3333	
	Minimum	16,67	
	Maximum	100	
	Interquartile Range	18,06	

Table 23. Score analysis of TikTok's influence Portuguese Millennials' footwear purchasing behaviour



Graphic 10. Histogram of score analysis of TikTok’s influence Portuguese Millennials’ footwear purchasing behaviour

Millennials' acceptance and influence of social media in their behaviour (Duffett, 2017) was the starting point to consider the hypothesis, as social media has an influence, generates leads, and increases sales (Duffett, 2017). As there is a generalised lack of research about TikTok's direct influence on purchasing behaviour, the intent was to directly measure it through the participants of the study.

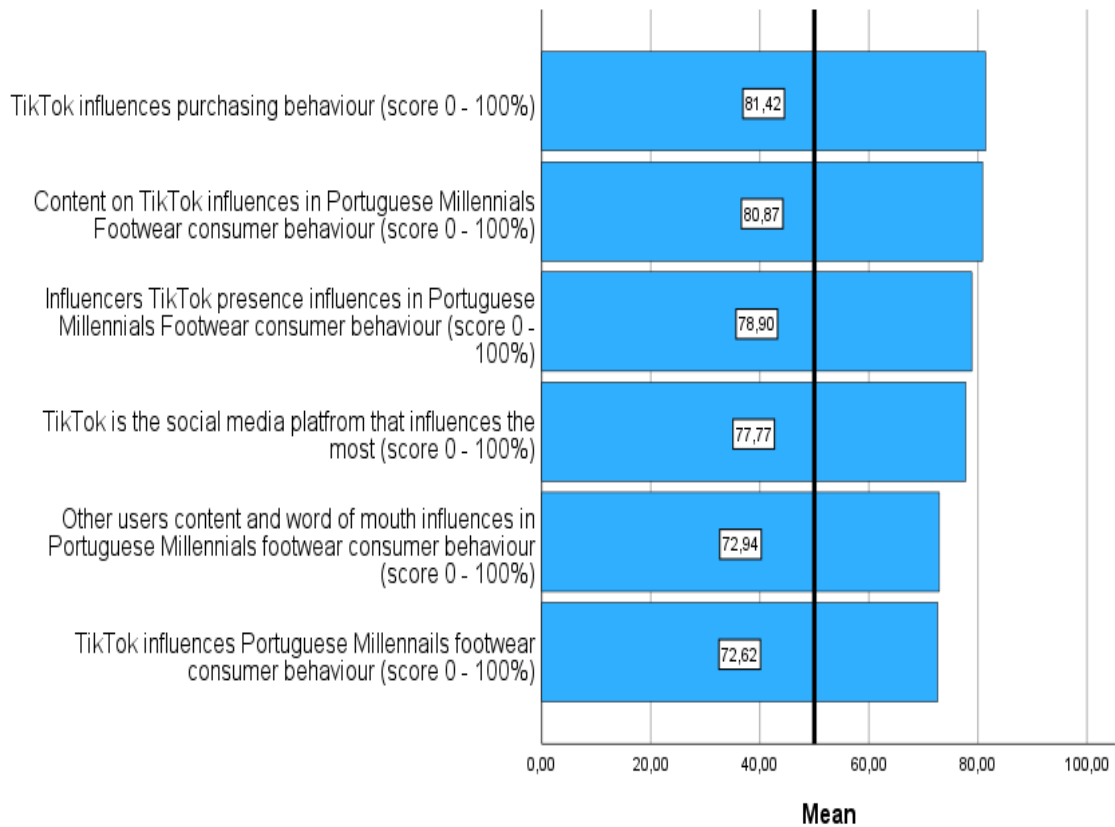
Three items were considered to measure this scale ('My involvement on social media influences my purchase decisions', 'My involvement on Instagram influences my purchase decisions', and 'Brands I follow on social media influence my purchase decisions'), and the score of it was 83,33% so it could be considered a positive representation of TikTok having a direct influence in footwear purchasing behaviour for Portuguese millennials.

The histogram above shows that most of the participants are in the right part of the graphic, with even fewer exceptions than the histogram for the previous hypothesis. Regarding the focus group answers, it was considered the analysis of two questions ('How would you rate TikTok's influences in your day-to-day lives? Do you think TikTok is influential overall? Would you say it's the most influential social media platform right now?' and 'So if someone were to say TikTok is influential for footwear consumption, how would you reply?'). Regarding the first set of questions, respondents said there's an

overall good perception of the app's influence in day-to-day usage (for entertainment, search for information, inspiration, and consumption), but TikTok still competes with Instagram. Regarding the question about TikTok's influence on footwear consumption, millennial participants said that they agree with its influence, and the participants who never bought anything used examples of people in their close social groups who have bought and use TikTok as a great source to provide other users' points of view for information.

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
TikTok influences Portuguese Millennials footwear consumer behaviour (score 0 - 100%)	142	16,67	100	72,6232	16,82401
TikTok is the social media platform that influences the most (score 0 - 100%)	142	16,67	100	77,7718	12,40731
TikTok influences purchasing behaviour (score 0 - 100%)	142	16,67	100	81,4163	14,73648
Content on TikTok influences in Portuguese Millennials Footwear consumer behaviour (score 0 - 100%)	142	16,67	100	80,8685	13,52801
Influencers TikTok presence influences in Portuguese Millennials Footwear consumer behaviour (score 0 - 100%)	142	14,81	100	78,8993	14,50114
Other users' content and word-of-mouth influences in Portuguese Millennials footwear consumer behaviour (score 0 - 100%)	142	19,05	100	72,9376	14,21654

Table 24 - Table summary of variable and hypothesis in study



Graphic 11 – Histogram summary of variable and hypothesis in study

After a more detailed analysis of the various dimensions and hypotheses under consideration, a summary of each studied variable is presented above, on which the hypotheses were based. All the variables are influential, and they are influential because the values are above 50%, i.e., many more people agree with the positive relationship of the hypotheses than those who disagree. Even so, some variables stand out, such as 81.42% agreeing that TikTok influences buying and the least agreeing, 72.62% (which is a rather positive figure), saying that TikTok influences Portuguese millennials' consumer behaviour.

6.1.2. Bivariate analysis of results

When we want to relate numerical variables, there is an analysis called correlation coefficients, and there is Piercen's R and Spearman's Rho (Yue et al., 2002). In this case, since all the scores we are crossing are skewed (they are asymmetrical). Both range from -1 to 1. If the value of the coefficient is close to 0, there is no relationship between the variables, they have nothing to do with each other. If the coefficient is close to 1, the two variables are strongly positively related (directly proportional). When one increases, so

does the other. If the coefficient is close to -1, the variables are inversely proportional (when one increases, the other decreases) (Yue et al., 2002).

	Correlation Coefficient (ρ)	Sig. (2-tailed)
TikTok is the social media platform that influences the most Portuguese millennials' footwear consumer behaviour	0,880**	< 0,001
Influencers TikTok presence influences in Portuguese Millennials Footwear consumer behaviour	0,842**	< 0,001
Other users' content and word-of-mouth influences in Portuguese Millennials footwear consumer behaviour	0,810**	< 0,001
TikTok influences Portuguese Millennials footwear consumer behaviour	0,777**	< 0,001
TikTok influences purchasing behaviour	0,580**	< 0,001
Content on TikTok influences in Portuguese Millennials Footwear consumer behaviour	0,505**	< 0,001

Table 25 – Correlation Coefficient (ρ) between variables in study

Let's proceed to correlate the numerical variables using Spearman's Rho. The scores are all skewed to the right (as seen in the histograms) and this type of statistical analysis studies which of the hypotheses is contributing most to the overall score and makes the correlation.

All the hypotheses put forward contribute positively (in other words, they are directly proportional) to the overall score that defines TikTok as useful for influencing Portuguese millennials to buy footwear (H7), with particular emphasis on the strongly correlated (> 0.7 and < 0.9) hypothesis (H4) 'TikTok is the social media platform that influences the most Portuguese millennials' footwear consumer behaviour' (0,880), (H2) 'Influencers TikTok presence influences in Portuguese Millennials Footwear consumer behaviour' (0,842), and (H5) 'Other users' content and word-of-mouth influences in Portuguese Millennials footwear consumer behaviour' (0,810) and (H1) 'TikTok influences Portuguese Millennials footwear consumer behaviour'. The other two hypothesis ‘

In other words, those who agree that TikTok is useful for influencing Portuguese millennials' consumer behaviour also agree with the intensity of the variable mentioned above, for example, TikTok is very dominated by the perception that is the most influential social media platform (H4).

And the correlation is significant at the 1% level (sig), which means that the p-value is smaller than 1%, which is very unlikely to mislead the variable (the probability of this difference being attributable to chance is so small as to be less than a thousandth). This test also proves the consistency of people's answers while taking the survey. And we can conclude that the various variables under study contribute to the decision of Portuguese millennials to buy footwear.

6.1.3. Focus groups conclusions

Focus Groups	Hypothesis	General Conclusions from both groups
How long have you been to TikTok? And what makes you use TikTok?	H7. TikTok is useful in consumer purchasing decisions	Most participants were driven by the pandemic, but some joined as much as recently Users used it for a multitude of reasons including search for information, work-related activities, entertainment, day-to-day leisure
What about now? Did your TikTok usage motives change?		Same as the answer above. Reasons to use TikTok grew, as participants see the benefits of the app
How would you rate TikTok's influences in your day-to-day lives? Do you think TikTok is influential overall? Would you say it's the most influential social media platform right now?	H1. TikTok influences Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour H1.1. Positively H1.2. Negatively	TikTok is very influential and helps to inspire to find new products, new recipes, new people, new points of view, creativity
	H7. TikTok is useful in consumer purchasing decisions	
	H6. TikTok is influencing Portuguese millennials' footwear purchasing behaviour H6.1. Positively H6.2. Negatively	TikTok competes with Instagram for favourite app among millennials

	<p>H4. Out of all social media platforms, TikTok is the one that is influencing positively the most consumption of footwear for Portuguese Millennials</p> <p>H4.1. Positively</p> <p>H4.2. Negatively</p>	
<p>I took Matilde's comment because I find it so interesting. What would you do change on the app if you could?</p>	N/A	<p>No comments besides concerns of privacy, dependency (as highlighted by João in another topic above) and lack of support to strategize the platform</p>
<p>So, if someone were to say TikTok is influential for footwear consumption, how would you reply?</p>	<p>H6. TikTok is influencing Portuguese millennials' footwear purchasing behaviour</p> <p>H6.1. Positively</p> <p>H6.2. Negatively</p>	<p>Most participants have bought or know someone close who has bought out of a direct influence from TikTok.</p>
	<p>H4. Out of all social media platforms, TikTok is the one that is influencing positively the most consumption of footwear for Portuguese Millennials</p> <p>H4.1. Positively</p> <p>H4.2. Negatively</p>	
<p>And has reality met the expectation you had from the shoes? Do you plan on purchasing again?</p>	<p>H7. TikTok is useful in consumer purchasing decisions</p>	<p>Nothing important to add.</p> <p>Find customer experience the same as with other channels</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever</p>	<p>H3. Content on TikTok influences in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour</p> <p>H3.1. Positively</p> <p>H3.2. Negatively</p>	<p>Most participants like to follow brands but it's not influential</p> <p>Participants feel like brands aren't taking full advantage of TikTok</p>

<p>contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 1) Branded Content</p>		<p>Most of them don't leave their 'For You' page so following the brands isn't going to change their viewing habits</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 2) Influencers</p>	<p>H2. Influencers' TikTok presence influences in Portuguese Millennials' Footwear consumer behaviour H2.1. Positively H2.2. Negatively</p>	<p>Overall influential But TikTok can over-saturate influencer's point of view</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 3) Virality/Trends</p>	<p>H3. Content on TikTok influences in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour H3.1. Positively H3.2. Negatively</p>	<p>Virality is incredibly important for participants Viral is what makes them explore, and find new products, and trends Like influencers, virality may become too overwhelming (thus losing its effect)</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 4) Word-of-mouth/User's content</p>	<p>H5. Users' content and perceived word-of-mouth on TikTok influence in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour H5.1. Positively H5.2. Negatively</p>	<p>Users' feedback and other people's reviews on TikTok are influential It helps with decision-making, or to manage expectations for future purchases</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 5) Advertising</p>	<p>H3. Content on TikTok influences in Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour H3.1. Positively H3.2. Negatively</p>	<p>Overall underwhelming opinion and influence</p>

Table 26 – Analysis summary and major findings or themes from the participants' answers in the two focus groups held (N = 8)

CHAPTER 7 – DISCUSSIONS AND FINAL CONCLUSION

7.1. Addressing the Research Questions

7.1.1. To what extent does TikTok influence Millennials' purchase intentions in the Portuguese footwear industry?

It's important to acknowledge that the study didn't meet the criteria necessary (N = 384) in order to be a closer representation of the population, the analysis that comes from this chapter, is regarding the sample of the study (N = 142).

The first research question was, "To what extent does TikTok influence Millennials' purchase intentions in the Portuguese footwear industry?". To answer that, the following hypothesis were considered (H1. TikTok influences Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour; H4. Of all social media platforms, TikTok is the one that positively influences the most footwear consumption for Portuguese Millennials; H6. TikTok is influencing Portuguese millennials' footwear purchasing behaviour; and H7. TikTok is helpful in consumer purchasing decisions).

All of them have a positive influence, which can lead to the conclusion that to this sample of participants TikTok greatly influences the act of purchase and shows TikTok as the social network that currently influences them the most (in correlation the variables with Spearman's ρ). Accordingly to the literature review, footwear brands can still use TikTok as a powerful ally in their strategy to increase brand awareness, drive brand loyalty, build relationships with users, and hopefully increase sales. Furthermore, the great thing about TikTok is that brands do not need an established audience to attract attention, as the platform prefers to offer its audience the best content (The Washington Post, 2022). Millennials are prone to impulsive buying behaviours (Jackson et al., 2011). As they tend to spend their income quickly, Millennials usually shop online and are accustomed to shopping through social networks, if necessary (Moreno et al., 2017).

Portuguese millennials are on TikTok, as seen by 65,9% (N = 290) of the 440 survey millennials (this result is also not representative of the population, due to the sampling not being random, i.e., not all people had the opportunity to participate in the study). Regarding participants, 57,90% (N = 168) visit daily the platform and TikTok now ranks up almost 3.5 million users in Portugal (it's undisclosed how many of them are on TikTok) (Pplware, 2023; Statista, 2023). This presents TikTok as a great opportunity for brands, at a very cost-effective way to enter at least half of Portugal's

social media users (without even considering the app's multi-regional approach, where users can be impacted with content from every part of the world).

These participants visit TikTok to find information about products and brands (65,2%) and see trends (68,6%), aligned with the report in Sol (2018) that stated that Portuguese millennials liked to follow brands online and like to engage with their content. The participants are also very engaged, with 64,1% saying they visit every day TikTok, but that is no surprise considering that in 2018, 67% of Portuguese millennials claimed to prefer video content so that TikTok can fit right like a glove with those desires (Sol, 2018).

Almost 80% of participants who passed the criteria of having TikTok (N = 290) have said that they have had an interest in something they saw on the platform, and out of those 265 people, 87% (N = 212) have said to have had an interest in footwear from something they saw on the app. Moreover, finally, out of these 212 individuals, 67% (142) have purchased footwear from something they saw on TikTok. Now, if we consider the sample (N = 142) of participants who have purchased TikTok (which is 1 in 3 millennials surveyed in total, N = 440), which can be related to this generation's affinity with apparel and footwear (McKinsey, 2017), as is strongly correlated with Klarna's (2022) report that Portuguese millennials are very inclined to shop online for clothing and shoes (55%) and Sol's report (2018) stating that 31% of millennials said they purchased something through social media.

From the focus group, participants deemed TikTok is very influential and helps to inspire to find new products, new recipes, new people, new points of view, creativity as Sebastião states "I've tried or gone after things that I've seen from TikTok, from bars to museums to apparel and accessories like sunglasses, shoes, or clothes. Like I've done it all..." or Constança that concludes with "... I would say it's so influential that even Instagram or YouTube (which is a whole video platform) adapted their huge platforms to have their own TikTok version...", but millennials still have a soft spot for Instagram, to which Constança says "Instagram just hits different, I love posting there, and even though I post occasionally on TikTok, I prefer a thousand times more to post on my Instagram feed, because I want to post in my own reality, if it makes sense". Most of participants state that they have bought or know someone close to them who has bought footwear and apparel out of a direct influence from TikTok. Sebastião has "... purchased loafers from Duke + Dexter, to Kanye's Yeezys, to dupes" and Constança has bought shoes too, stating

that "... I have a note on my note app with certain items (that include footwear) that I would eventually like to purchase...".

Taking into consideration the sample that was left out, from the 142 validated answers, 44,4% of them were female, 54,2% were male, and the following 1,4% did not want to disclaim their gender (0,7%) or identified with another gender (0,7%). Slightly contradicting the hegemony of women as the running gender on the app (54%). Known for their early adoption of the Internet and technology, millennials are digital natives who are deeply immersed in the online world, using the Internet to ponder their purchasing decisions (Alch, 2000, as cited in Bilgihan et al., 2014) so TikTok can posit a great influence as a medium to drive purchasing intentions.

7.1.2. What kind of features from TikTok influence Portuguese millennials the most, for footwear consumption?

The second and final research question was, "What kind of features from TikTok influence Portuguese millennials the most for footwear consumption?". To answer that, the following hypothesis were considered (H2. Influencers' TikTok presence influences Portuguese Millennials' Footwear consumer behaviour, H3. Content on TikTok influences in Portuguese Millennials' Footwear consumer behaviour, H5. Users' content and perceived word of mouth on TikTok influence Portuguese Millennials' footwear consumer behaviour). We proceeded to analyse some variables that are strongly present in TikTok, including content, word-of-mouth, and influencer marketing, all with high levels of influence, highlighting at first the content in TikTok (in the univariate analysis), which seemed incredibly influential (80,87%) but then when interpreted the data using the correlation of Spearman, between all variables, we came to find that influencer marketing is also enormously influential in consumer behaviour (0,842 in a scale -1 to 1).

Content poses a critical factor for TikTok, as the platform is known for being incredibly successful in entertaining entire communities with an everlasting stream of impactful, meaningful, original, and user-generated content (TikTok, 2022; Harvard Business Review, 2022). TikTok is unique for creating a curated online space of fluid content that can reach the entire world (Adweek, 2022), proving to be an incredible opportunity for brands who want to create genuine relationships with their customers. Even though millennials who participated in this survey are not necessarily in the app to create content (39.4% out of N = 142), they like to see content from the brand (65.2%) and see trends (68.6%). When analysing the univariate variables, one of the more

substantial factors (out of the 36 items) is 'Brands should use TikTok to enhance shopping, and the only negative one is 'I would like footwear advertised to me by TikTok', meaning that the participants want to more organic involvement from brands.

When considering data from the question on the survey (that appeared in Section V: TikTok's influence on consumer behaviour - From a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), please rate the following scenarios in how they apply to you), the goal was a first attempt to funnel the reasons why users purchased footwear products on TikTok. What came from that were the variables ('I saw an influencer reviewing and/or wearing the product,' 'I actively searched for the product,' 'I saw content from the brand,' 'The product was advertised to me on TikTok,' 'I saw another user review of the product (whether content or comments in the comment section),' and 'I saw the product trending/going viral'). Most of them are positive (or above the neutral level, i.e., 4), except for advertisement, which is not a factor for the study participants.

TikTok, as a search engine, can present some perks, as highlighted in the study, with 75% of the sample (N = 142) stating that they use TikTok to see what's trending and 70% find information about products and brands. Regarding the focus group, all agree that the word-of-mouth component of TikTok is one of the most influential factors of TikTok with Francisco stating: "People are more authentic on TikTok [...] It's a platform that truly allows people to be themselves, and that's because video is video. It has movement, it has a tone of voice, it has a story and an experience, and it's more palpable than the photo, which, you know, doesn't have a background," and João said "Especially if I am looking for information about a subject online, I am very dependent on my peers' feedback and online reviews. I check all possible sources".

Other users' feedback is fundamental to millennials and consumers alike as they search for information before actively shopping (an increase versus other generations) and influence/pursuing recommendations from word of mouth, including friends, influencers, online reviews, and social media, while also sharing a concern to sharing the feedback right back. Peer-recommended websites influence Portuguese millennials' visits online (Sol, 2018)

Millennials are very receptive to other individuals' opinions and experiences (GWI, 2023), whether influencers' or peers' feedback. A recent study by GWI (2023) has shown that 4 out of 5 millennials trust influencers' opinions on social media (to any extent), and they are 15% more likely to trust complete influencers than other generations while being 13% more likely to shop products recommended by influencers. One out of

three millennials says influencers are more trustworthy than traditional advertising (GWI, 2023), the same with peer-reviewed word-of-mouth, as they find it more credible than traditional advertisements (Allsop et al., 2007, as cited in Moreno et al., 2017).

Influencer marketing is an influential factor in TikTok. In every analysis, influencer marketing ranked as the most influential factor (in the correlation analysis) or one of the two influential factors (in the scores analysis). That correlates with findings in literature review (GWI, 2023).

A decisive variable in question that this study was unable to analyse was virality, which TikTok has gained a reputation for (the ability to constantly trend everything from music to fashion, to slang, to recipes is constantly appearing in media), as 71% of users believe that TikTok is a driver for what is trending worldwide (TikTok, 2022). Viral behaviours are directly linked to increased intent purchase behaviour (Alhabash et al., 2019). Users agree that is an influence, as we see in our sample answers, with a 6.1 mean out of 7, the strongest out of all six variables. In the focus group, participants deemed virality incredibly important because it makes them explore and find new products and trends. However, it can be too overwhelming (thus losing its impact).

7.2. The academic contribution of this study

In academic terms, as mentioned above, this study doesn't qualify for academic contribution, due to the inability to have a clear sample of respondents (N = 384). It was applied several considerations about social media as an influential medium to consumer behaviour.

In addition, it tests whether factors such as influencer marketing, the type of content, and electronic word-of-mouth that other studies have shown to be decisive in the consumer decision-making process, can be applied to TikTok. This study also provides some information on a specific generation, in this case the millennials, by delving deeper into their purchasing behaviour, and more especially to enter the footwear industry.

Regarding corporate contributions, given that we are in an era in which consumers interact in a digital environment, it is important for brands to have access to information that allows them to develop strategies and close relationships with their customers. It is increasingly important to have a presence in consumers' minds and to understand what influences them. Understanding consumers and the factors that lead to purchasing decisions via social networks is crucial for all businesses.

7.3. Main limitations on the study

The validation and development of the study was dependent on respondents' participation, which proved to be harder than expected. Without resources to impact the population, it would be hard to achieve the 384 minimum sample pool necessary to draw broader conclusions.

Focus group interviews have also a constraint of people's time and availability to answer questions, and makes people's sincerity in answering the questions, dubious. For future studies, it would be necessary to increase the number of participants, the number of focus groups, maybe incorporate a final interview with respondents, to understand if answers were coherent, and consider paying to participants and find a random sample.

Considerations of respondents' cultural backgrounds are not being considered, because the only segmentation criteria are their age. It will not be considered people's nationality or income, which can be interesting to consider in future research. It would be interesting to do a generation comparison for future studies, it would've helped achieve the number minimum of respondents that met the inclusion criteria.

Given the immense popularity of video platforms (including TikTok, YouTube Shorts and Instagram Reels) and the content of video itself (search for a reference), it would perhaps have been more extensive to have studied the impact of video content on millennials on these networks, or to make a comparison by network, and try to draw more broad conclusions and see which results would have been complementary and which results could have analysed the differences. Virality was also a variable that was deeply underdeveloped and should be interesting to study.

It would be relevant to do time-based research, to measure the impact of TikTok's virality online, and actually apply it in the variable's studies (i.e., study the impact of an influencer throughout time, use a case study from a brand who's found 'success' on TikTok, analyse viral content and the trend regarding a product and measure if there's actual impact within a timeframe).

Finally, it would be interesting to see TikTok being applied to a consumer behaviour model (i.e., AIDA, or the Engel, Kollat & Blackwell model) to develop both the research on how social media, and see if those models apply to the findings, since both fields (social media and consumer behaviour) are known for its volatility, as evidenced by the literature review.

7.4 Conclusions

The current dissertation aimed to study the influence of TikTok and other social media marketing strategies (including content, influencer, virality, and word-of-mouth) on millennials' footwear consumer behaviour. This is intended to contribute to the underdeveloped study of TikTok from a brand's perspective (or at least from the perspective of a marketing manager of a shoe company), as one of the leading social media platforms in the world, and to study consumers' perspectives on the perception of the use of the platform, aiming to have a more micro-analysis of the phenomenon.

Marketing is one of the disciplines concerned with the study of consumer behaviour (Erasmus et al., 2001). As the literature on consumer behaviour's history showed, a lot can influence individuals, and studies do not show much coherence between them because the world is constantly changing. Even now, in the era of innovation and technological advancements, researchers are sure that the studies will change. From internal to external stimuli, people are constantly targeted with needs and desires they wish to satisfy.

Social media has been a powerful tool in influencing individuals' consumer behaviour. It has completely changed the way consumers engage by putting the focus on them and has eliminated forever the one-way communication that brands were accustomed to interacting with consumers. Social media is intuitive, cost-efficient, and connects the whole world. The number of social media users is increasing every year. New social media platforms are constantly appearing, making it also hard for academia to stay on top of the influence of social media platforms in society, as has allowed the appearance of several strategies that include content marketing, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer marketing, and user-generated content. Social media is positively linked to a bunch of benefits for brands.

TikTok is one of the most recent social media platforms that has completely disrupted the social media scene. In just seven years, TikTok has become the fastest-growing brand (in terms of users), and it has achieved many milestones that took many competitors longer to achieve. TikTok has disrupted how the world connects via video, enabling everyone to become content creators in their own right through its accessible social media software. The app is interested in creative, original, and relatable video content, and this broad appeal has created millions of communities with specific interests where there is always something for someone. TikTok works differently than other platforms because it is backed up by an ever-learning algorithm that captures each user's

actions when using the platform and curates streamlined personalized content that no other platform was doing until TikTok appeared.

TikTok has disrupted various industries, and its impact is well-documented worldwide, becoming a potent marketing tool for businesses and influencers.

TikTok has been widely accepted in Portugal, with half of the country's social media users having an account.

Millennials are the first digital natives, so they know what it is like to grow digital and have technological skills embedded in them. Life was not always easy for millennials, as several shattering events (economic, political, and social) have defined their societal behaviour. Millennials' literature research is only sometimes exact, with research concluding different things about them as a generation, but as consumers, they reflect the society they grew up in. They are the buyers of today, as they are the biggest consumers in the world, and they share a bunch of characteristics as consumers that include being price sensitive but indulgent in impulsive buying; they shop online, yet they want to find the next big thing that can define them; they prefer experiences and traveling, but most live paycheck to paycheck; they want their purchases to mean something, to add value to the price they are willing to pay; and they use the internet like no other generation, especially for their purchases. They're also very dependent on other people's feedback, including peers, social groups, and influencers.

Portuguese millennials, on the contrary, are not still the biggest drivers of consumption in Portugal (they fall behind Generation X) and live paycheck to paycheck. They like to interact with brands on social media, and one in three millennials has bought something directly influenced by social media. They are particularly interested in apparel and footwear (Klarna, 2022).

Regarding the methodology, as stated above, we decided to proceed with a mixed-methods approach, supported by the results of an online survey to support the quantitative data and a focus group for qualitative data.

The survey was conducted to 544 people, but only 142 met the inclusion criteria (e.g., were Portuguese millennials that purchased footwear due to the influence of TikTok), invalidating the validity of the study but providing rich data that was analysed taking into the scope of these participants (N = 142).

Results from a score analysis and correlation analysis have shown that these millennials surveyed are present on TikTok, that they are influenced by the platform (with a large sum of them considering TikTok as the most influential platform in today's

landscape) and influenced explicitly by influencers and other users' word-of-mouth/content.

The focus group validated most of the findings and quantified examples of how and what millennials are purchasing footwear.

Limitations to the study include the need for a validated sample, a need to understand TikTok's virality and measure its impact through time, and an analysis of TikTok is the realm of consumer behaviour models to predict and understand better its influence.

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APPENDIX

A. Structure of Online Surveys

To what generation do you belong?

- Silent Generation (born between 1928-45)
- Baby Boomers (born between 1946-64)
- Generation X (born between 1965-80)
- Millennials (born between 1981-96)
- Generation Z (born between 1997-2012)

Are you a Portuguese citizen?

- Yes
- No

What's your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Are you on TikTok? (Disclaimer, you have an account and have used it/use it)

- Yes
- No

How often do you use TikTok?

- I use it at least once everyday
- I use at least two/three times a week
- I use it once a week
- I rarely use it (as in, every couple of weeks)
- I never use it (but have an account and the app installed)

What's your motivation to use TikTok?

- Create content

- Connect with people
- Entertainment
- Interact with users, friends,
- acquaintances
- Find information about products/brands
- See what's trending

Have you have had interest in purchasing something you've seen on TikTok?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever had interest in purchasing footwear you've seen on TikTok?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever purchased footwear from something you've seen on TikTok?

- Yes
- No

From a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), please rate the following scenarios in how they apply to you

- I saw an influencer reviewing and or/ wearing the product
- I actively searched for the product
- I saw content from the brand
- The product was advertised to me on TikTok
- I saw another user review of the product (whether content or comments in comment section)
- I saw the product trending / going viral

From a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), please rate the following scenarios in how they apply to you

- I use TikTok to gain knowledge
- TikTok is useful for learning about news

- TikTok is useful for learning about footwear shopping
- I would be interested in TikTok for information about footwear
- I would like footwear advertised to me by TikTok
- Brands should use TikTok to enhance shopping
- TikTok is a professional way to assess brands
- TikTok is an appropriate resource for footwear shopping
- People who influence my behavior think I should use TikTok
- People who are important to me think I should use TikTok
- In general, my peers support the use of TikTok
- In general, brands support the use of TikTok
- My involvement on social media influences my purchase decisions
- My involvement on TikTok influences my purchase decisions
- Brands I follow on social media influence my purchase decisions
- My friends' opinions on social media influence my footwear purchase decisions
- My friends' opinions on TikTok influence my footwear purchase decisions
- Influencers on TikTok do not hesitate to accept and experience something new.
- Influencers on TikTok clearly communicate information about a product or brand.
- Influencers on TikTok know and understand a product or brand well.
- Influencers make good use of social networking services (SNS).
- Influencers have a ripple effect on public opinion.
- Influencers themselves have a marketing effect.
- Influencers have excellent content management skills
- Influencers lead the trends.
- Influencers have expertise in their field.
- TikTok is a leading social media platform.
- TikTok has extensive experience.
- TikTok is a representative of the footwear industry.
- TikTok is a customer-oriented company.
- I will suggest TikTok to other consumers.
- I would love to recommend TikTok to my friends.
- I regularly visit TikTok.
- I intend to visit TikTok again.

- I am satisfied with TikTok with every visit.
- TikTok would be my first choice of social media.

B. Structure of Focus Groups:

Estructure:

Introduction

- Explain focus group, topic in question, research goals, etiquette to promote conversation, procedures being applied
- Explanation of guidelines, boundaries, different points of view and respect, first name basis
- Ask if everyone's comfortable, if they have any final questions
- Remind consent forms, start Google Meet recording

Opening question

- Q1: How long have you been on TikTok? And what made you use TikTok?
- Q1.2: What about now? Did your TikTok usage motives change?

Follow-up questions

- Q2: How would you rate TikTok's influences in your day-to-day lives? Do you think TikTok is influential overall? Would you say it's the most influential social media platform right now?
- Q3: How would you rate TikTok's influences in your day-to-day lives? Do you think TikTok is influential overall? Would you say it's the most influential social media platform right now?
- Q3: So, if someone were to say TikTok is influential for footwear consumption, how would you reply?
- Q4: And has reality met the expectations you had from the shoes? Do you plan on purchasing again?
- Q5: I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour?
 - Q5.1. Branded content
 - Q5.2. Influencers
 - Q5.3. Virality/Trends
 - Q5.4. Word-of-mouth

- Q5.5. Advertisements

Thank you for participating

The End

C. Analysis of Focus Group 1

Focus Groups #1	Constança	Duarte	Francisco	Sebastião	Main conclusions
How long have you been to TikTok? And what made you use TikTok?	Pandemic, Entertainment, knowledge, occasional content	Before the pandemic hit, Entertainment, knowledge	Pandemic, Entertainment, passing the time, peer pressure	Pandemic, Entertainment, pass the time	The pandemic has driven their main motivation to join the app Entertainment, knowledge and passing the time were what they found appealing on the app
What about now? Did your TikTok usage motives change?	Entertainment, Browse, knowledge, day-to-day, inspiration	Entertainment, knowledge, day-to-day	Inspiration, work-purposes, content creation	Entertainment, Browse, knowledge, day-to-day, inspiration	Entertainment, inspiration and knowledge for their day-to-day activities were the most listed reasons for participants
How would you rate TikTok's	Influential on her's day-to-day,	TikTok is his favourite platform.	Most influential all around,	Most influential all around, not	TikTok poses a great influence on

<p>influences in your day-to-day lives? Do you think TikTok is influential overall? Would you say it's the most influential social media platform right now?</p>	<p>source of getting a representation of something she's curious about</p> <p>Considers TikTok "hugely" influential, but Instagram is where her priority sets</p> <p>TikTok helps her to explore</p>	<p>Not from just a consumerism perspective. He shares things he sees from TikTok to group chats outside the platform.</p>	<p>not his favourite (prefers Instagram)</p> <p>TikTok is great to have different points of view in a quick sum of time</p> <p>Sees the potential of TikTok especially for his work-related activities and hopes to use it even more</p>	<p>his favourite (prefers Instagram)</p> <p>Influence on his day-to-day life, source of getting a representation of something he's curious about</p>	<p>day-to-day (all through the scope of finding more information, inspiration, entertainment and consumption)</p> <p>Instagram is pointed as a personal favourite, but recognize the influence of the platform (even citing as the most influential out of what the market)</p>
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<p>So, if someone were to say TikTok is influential for footwear consumption, how would you reply?</p>	<p>TikTok even though very influential, it's just a faster medium to influence consumer behaviour, because clothes are a human need</p> <p>Influential enough to keep tracking of her findings on her phone and think about them</p> <p>Has bought styles that were trending</p>	<p>TikTok's users are great sources of influence and de-fluence (the act of telling what a person should or should not buy).</p> <p>TikTok is a fast and reliable source of information. Highlights the possibility of consuming video very fast, when an individual wants quick tips</p>	<p>Believes it's very influential for brands who want to push their products</p> <p>Not an active shopper but doesn't deny the platform's power. Great for searching and finding more information but does not recall ever buying something from something he saw exclusively on TikTok.</p>	<p>Agrees with the premise</p> <p>Influential in his shopping decisions (uses examples of shoes styles bought because of TikTok's influence)</p> <p>Virality from the platform drives his consumption</p> <p>TikTok has a snowball effect (videos being sent to you) that makes you want even more the product</p>	<p>Agree, and offer examples of trending and searched styles that have purchased</p> <p>Agree that TikTok is great for finding information, get others' feedback</p>
<p>And has reality met the expectation you had from the shoes? Do you plan on purchasing again?</p>	<p>Not much to add, both positive answers</p>	<p>Has been impacted by viral products, but doesn't associate to the app's direct influence</p>	<p>Yes, because the feedback he received has always met his expectations</p>	<p>Both of positive replies.</p> <p>Has had a disappointment but doesn't blame the platform</p> <p>Like Constança has a list of things he wants to buy</p>	<p>Nothing important to add.</p> <p>Find customer experience the same as with other channels</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation</p>	<p>Doesn't feel like brands are original on TikTok,</p>	<p>Remembers Crocs' content</p>	<p>Like Sebastião, follows brands but</p>	<p>Follows brands, rarely leaves the 'For You'</p>	<p>Even though all follow brands, they don't find it</p>

<p>some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 1) Branded Content</p>	<p>so is not impacted</p>	<p>But feels like the three that brands aren't adding anything to them</p>	<p>out of love for the brands, not because their content adds anything to his life.</p> <p>Feels like brands don't know how to communicate on TikTok</p>	<p>page</p> <p>Doesn't feel like branding on TikTok has even driven him to actively stay in contact with a brand</p>	<p>influential</p> <p>Brands are not looking at their full potential on TikTok</p> <p>The 'For You' page is all they see when exploring content</p>
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<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 2) Influencers</p>	<p>Influencers are great to present her brands and products</p> <p>But she rationalizes how media impacts her, especially from these mediums</p> <p>Follows influencers for fun, but rarely appears on her TikTok feed</p>	<p>Loves following influencers, but not what influences him the most, as they rarely appear on his feed.</p> <p>Agrees to some level that influencers have influenced him</p>	<p>TikTok is causing an exhaustion of influencers, he does not care that much but at the same time says he has been impacted by content or an influencer suggestion</p>	<p>Yes, very influenced by some of his personal favourites</p> <p>Uses influences as inspiration and validation that after affects his purchasing behaviours</p>	<p>All opinions differ but overall influencers do have a degree of influence</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say</p>	<p>Her long list comes from things that are viral</p> <p>She waits before purchasing</p> <p>Virality on TikTok is incredibly influential in more ways than consumption</p>	<p>The media picks up on what's viral so that helps to expand the trend's influence</p> <p>Agrees on the influence of the viral aspect of the app</p>	<p>Trends and virality makes the world talk about the same thing for Francisco</p> <p>Impactful in people influenced but virality is rarely a continuous consequence as the app is always</p>	<p>TikTok is viral content.</p> <p>Has been influenced by viral content</p>	<p>The virality of a product drives the interest of the participants</p> <p>Viral makes it talked about, searched about, drives conversation even though participants agree that its</p>

<p>what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 3) Virality/Trends</p>	<p>Sometimes can be overwhelming because something's always happening</p>		<p>trying to push the next big thing</p> <p>Perfects for brands</p>		<p>very fleeting the virality</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 4) Word-of-mouth/User's content</p>	<p>Very influential too.</p> <p>Prefers TikTok's comment sections versus other platforms</p> <p>Feels users is more authentic, and intentions are more of a helpful kind so takes in consideration any content she finds</p>	<p>Finds videos the most engaging type of content there</p> <p>TikTok feels like a community that backs-up decisions</p> <p>Feels like more people are on the app, than they say</p>	<p>Agrees with Constança</p> <p>People can be themselves, that allows their intentions to be more transparent, and better perceived</p> <p>Loves the power of video</p>	<p>TikTok's the first source of influence, then family and friends.</p> <p>Loves scrolling through comment sections and see other users' feedback on topics</p> <p>Very influential</p>	<p>Users' opinions are very influential because TikTok is a pool that drives authentic, caring feedback</p> <p>Video is influential and allows to be more reliable</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would</p>	<p>Not influential to purchasing decisions. Rarely appears brands she's willing to buy</p>	<p>Not influential and rarely appears anything he's interested</p>	<p>Not influential and rarely appears anything he's interested</p>	<p>Not influential and rarely appears anything he's interested</p>	<p>Not influential at all</p>

be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour? 5) Advertising					
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Table 27 – Analysis of Focus Group 1

D. Analysis of Focus Group 2

Focus Groups #2	Inês	João	Manel	Matilde	Main conclusions
How long have you been to TikTok? And what made you use TikTok?	Pandemic, Entertainment, Content Creation, Pass the time	Pandemic, Entertainment, Content Creation	2022, Work-related things	2021, Socialize and explore her interests	The group is more diverse than the previous one, and there's no specific timeline or reason for which they're on the app It's interesting to analyse the interest of Manel with work-related

					things and Matilde with the possibility of socialisation
What about now? Did your TikTok usage motives change?	Inspiration, searching for information, entertainment, relaxation	It's continuing to be entertainment reasons, day-to-day activities and searching for information	Inspiration, work-related things (including as general tool for the team), brainstorm	Inspiration, work-related things, socialisation stopped being main reason, even though it's still present	The group agrees that TikTok is a valuable source for inspiration, entertainment, being a part of their day-to-day, even so for work
How would you rate TikTok's	Compared to other social media networks, TikTok	Agrees that it's on its way to become the	Creativity is a great	Great place for people with niche	Overall good perception

<p>influences in your day-to-day lives? Do you think TikTok is influential overall? Would you say it's the most influential social media platform right now?</p>	<p>is her favourite</p> <p>Lack of alternatives for her, so super influential</p>	<p>most influential app out there</p> <p>Endless scrolling/addiction feature that doesn't happen with other apps</p> <p>Recognizes the brand's attractiveness to other users</p>	<p>outlet for everyone</p> <p>Surpassed Instagram in that sense</p> <p>Broader appeal to niche communities</p> <p>Great source of influence</p>	<p>interests to explore and find more information</p> <p>Work inspiration</p>	<p>of influence from the app as a day-to-day must-have</p> <p>Creativity and source for work knowledge is highlighted</p> <p>Endless scrolling possibility, the app is very catchy</p>
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<p>I took Matilde's comment because I find it so interesting. What would you do change on the app if you could?</p>	<p>Not reasons pointed</p>	<p>Certain features of the app, like the sharing</p> <p>Feels the app is too close in it itself</p>	<p>TikTok, as a platform, be a guide for brands on how understand and optimize the usage of the platform</p>	<p>More privacy, safer environment for younger generations</p> <p>People too obsessed with being viral</p> <p>Too much time of consumption younger generations</p>	<p>No comments besides concerns of privacy, dependency (as highlighted by João in another topic above) and lack of support to strategize the platform</p>
<p>So, if someone were to say TikTok is influential for footwear consumption, how would you reply?</p>	<p>Total agreement</p> <p>Has been impacted by certain products, styles, and certain content creators/influencers with products (though the content was not sponsored)</p>	<p>Total agreement, even though nothing in particular caught his attention</p> <p>But in social circle, knows of people that have bought influenced by TikTok</p>	<p>Agrees that TikTok is influential but hasn't felt the influence in any specific thing</p>	<p>Has engaged in purchasing</p> <p>Finds it influential, especially to find great deals and know new brands</p>	<p>Agree that is influential</p> <p>Lack of information compared to group #1</p> <p>Have or know who's been influenced by the platform</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the</p>	<p>It depends on the content about the brand</p>	<p>No comments. Finds it that isn't the most influential or</p>	<p>Yes, it does.</p> <p>Uses</p>	<p>If interested, goes check but only adds to her</p>	<p>Very neutral feedback when</p>

<p>conversation in some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour?</p> <p>1) Branded Content</p>	<p>Use another example of a brand that is able to capture the public's attention (not footwear brand)</p>	<p>appealing factor for him</p>	<p>examples of brands whose content is very influential on consumer behaviour overall (not footwear brand)</p>	<p>decision-making to a certain point (and it's not always influential)</p>	<p>analysing the four responses: either is influencer (as per Manel), or the total opposite (João) with Matilde and Inês being middle women, with a positive undertone</p>
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<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour?</p> <p>2) Influencers</p>	<p>Very influenced</p> <p>Needs to be real/transparent/relatable</p>	<p>No attention paid to influencers, but acknowledges the power of influencers (due to follower count meaning that something interesting/appealing about person)</p>	<p>Feels work from influencers is underrated</p> <p>Believes it's very influential (has professional opinion) on it</p>	<p>Prefers real/relatable people</p> <p>Finds it relatable</p>	<p>Overall influential (with a strong opinion of Manel, who works with the industry)</p> <p>Important to highlight the medium for extra influence</p>
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll</p>	<p>Finds it strong influence</p>	<p>Yes, but looks at the overwhelming part of there's always something trending or going viral</p>	<p>Strong influence</p>	<p>A positive response to virality/trendiness aspect to influence consumer behaviour</p>	<p>Strong influence overall</p> <p>No further comments about it</p>

<p>explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour?</p> <p>3) Virality/Trends</p>					
<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour?</p> <p>4) Word-of-mouth/Use r's content</p>	<p>Very vocal person herself</p> <p>Will always give an opinion, expects one back</p> <p>Finds it though incredibly influential in her behaviour</p>	<p>Very influential is his overall behaviour</p> <p>Expects and searches for users, acquaintances, friends and family</p>	<p>TikTok thrives on word-of-mouth, important to understand overall the feedback from customers</p>	<p>Agrees with João</p> <p>One of her favourite features on TikTok is the ability to continue a chain of communication from one topic</p>	<p>Overall influential variable</p> <p>People are expected to browse each other's opinions, and continue the dialogue</p> <p>Important to brand to listen to these types of feedback</p>

<p>I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour?</p> <p>5) Advertising</p>	<p>Overall opinion is negative</p> <p>Rarely impacted with ads on TikTok</p>	<p>TikTok ads are poor quality</p> <p>Not influential</p>	<p>No comments</p> <p>Doesn't like it, but finds it that if brands are creative, it can be effective</p>	<p>It's the platform with the less ads in her perception</p> <p>But no, advertisement isn't appealing for her behaviour</p>	<p>Overall underwhelming opinion and influence</p>
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Table 28 – Analysis of Focus Group 2

E. Transcription of Focus Group organised by the order of participation

Q1: How long have you been on TikTok? And what made you use TikTok?

S: I've had TikTok since the pandemic (Covid-19) hit. During the lockdown, I didn't have much to do, as I was stranded in Alentejo to finish my pilot course, and so I downloaded it and... we're here (laughs).

C: Me too, since 2020. I actually downloaded it during the pandemic because so many were doing it, and I wanted to have a productive lockdown. So, I was in my productive girl era (laughs). I love make-up, so I wanted to really try and improve my skills, so I went full-on with seeing content, checking out some influential people (or people who knew what they were doing), and then went on to create some silly skits, and I use it regularly.

F: I've had it since 2020 too, like I assume most people did, so nothing new. But it was what people were doing at the time. Either working or chatting in Clubhouse* or like on Instagram and TikTok. I was doing all of the four.

D: I see that I'm the black sheep of the group. I've actually had it before 2020, but it's not that far from the timing of the pandemic. I installed the app in late 2019 just because I saw some football content on TikTok, and it was redirecting to TikTok, so I thought, 'Why not?' and just went with it.

Q1.2: What about now? Did your TikTok usage motives change?

S: Definitely, yes, when I began using TikTok, it was mostly for entertainment purposes, to pass the time. I would scroll, see some videos, laugh at the same stupid thing, and then stop and go about my day. I think TikTok has much more of an inspirational element to it than most people give it credit for, and I use it as a kind of a continuation of other platforms.* It's easy to browse, to use, to get feedback in an hour. And I use it for everything: humour, workouts, tips for my dad's boat, to see fashion, and influencers that inspire me. It has everything.

*I asked Sebastião to clarify his continuation of other platform's comments, and he stated that it has the inspirational element of Pinterest, the search engine feature of Google, the visual representation of TripAdvisor

C: Me too. I would like to add to Sebastião's claim about TikTok being a lot more versatile than most people give credit to, and I kind of hate the reputation of the wrong perception that people who aren't on TikTok have of it of being a silly

dance app. Not everything is Gen-Z themed or has a moronic connection to it.**. I'm even more passionate about make-up than three years ago, and I actually get to do it as a weekend or after-work side gig now because of TikTok and the endless hours of learning techniques and tips from other users or influencers that I saw. I see really incredibly inspirational stories of people that warm my heart like I can even get news from it, useful to my job***.

**I asked Constança to clarify his moronic connection comment, and she says that people (outside of TikTok) usually think TikTok only has dumb content or, as she puts it, content that 'stupefies you'.

*** Constança works in banking

F: Completely. Three years ago, I was working in an advertising agency and was using it subconsciously as a work tool (to get inspiration and see other realities while also having an entertainment/personal element to it) and now I use TikTok for business purposes**** (like it's a strategy that I'm dependent on- that and Instagram). But I still use TikTok for personal reasons, and I love to create fun and light-hearted content on it. I did it a lot as an easy-to-use video editing platform, and so it's a day-to-day app for me. Even if I spend only five minutes there.

**** @kicaodogcare on TikTok

D: For me, and since I was using it for news, sports, and entertainment, I mostly still give the same use to it (laughs). But at the same time, the world changed a lot due to COVID-19, due to whatever reason there is, where people's vibes feel more intense*****, where TikTok usage exploded around the world. I think TikTok naturally progressed as social media. So, I use it for a lot more things.

*****I asked Duarte to clarify his comments, and he meant by intensity, the recent world events (radicalised democracies, war, climate change, social media addiction, the inflation, the housing crisis in Portugal)

Q2: How would you rate TikTok's influences in your day-to-day lives? Do you think TikTok is influential overall? Would you say it's the most influential social media platform right now?

S: (pauses) I would say TikTok is the most influential social media platform right now, yeah. But for me, I'm an Instagram fan by heart, and I don't see that changing right now. I can't quite explain why because I usually spend more

time on TikTok, but I prefer Instagram overall. I prefer to see the people I like and the whole clean aesthetic vibe of Instagram, even though it's going down to hell (Instagram). I also agree that TikTok is influential in my day-to-day life, as I said before, I literally search for anything there (if I'm in need or if I'm just curious to have a visual representation of a problem). I've tried or gone after things that I've seen from TikTok, from bars to museums to apparel and accessories like sunglasses, shoes, or clothes. Like I've done it all.

C: Yeah, I think overall is influential. Like to find trending styles, and iconic catchphrases, for quick tips, easy hacks, and great homemade recipes (I'm still addicted to the feta pasta). Every topic is really jammed in there, and it's super easy to browse on the platform. I would say it's so influential that even Instagram or YouTube (which is a whole video platform) adapted their huge platforms to have their own TikTok version. And even there, most videos that I see are reposting from original TikTok content, so I would say it's a hugely influential platform, definitely and the vibes are there. But I'm also an Instagram girl by heart. Instagram just hits different, I love posting there, and even though I post occasionally on TikTok, I prefer a thousand times more to post on my Instagram feed, because I want to post in my own reality, if it makes sense*****. I do feel like both platforms still have key differences, and for me TikTok is more of an exploratory type of media, while I know Instagram and I know what I can on it. ***** I asked Constança to clarify what she meant with her reality. She means that even though she loves posting on TikTok and wouldn't mind going viral, she prefers the comfort of posting on her own Instagram feed, knowing that only people in her social circle follow her.

F: I would agree too that it is influential and more influential than other platforms. It's where every trend right now comes from. But especially for me, coming from this advertising realm and being a business owner, it's huge when a simple video of your business goes viral. Followers, leads, and contacts go up for the minimum cost possible. I haven't had a TikTok video go viral per se, but when you get used to editing videos, it's a really low-effort thing to do, so I personally don't mind at all. But at the same time, I know of endless businesses like mine that really exploded all around the world, by posting on TikTok. But yeah, it's influential, but for me, as a source, that provides an extra layer of influence*****

***** I've asked Francisco to clarify in what sense TikTok influenced even more and what it influenced, to which he replied that TikTok is a great source to validate what you're looking for, from other users' points of view and opinion-sharing.

D: (pause) I would say that I use TikTok more than any other platform, so I consider it pretty influential, not just from a consumerism perspective. I find things to laugh on TikTok and I find things to decorate my home with, so the spectrum is pretty large. Of course, everything depends on your algorithm, but I'm constantly sending to my friends' group chats things I see from TikTok and vice-versa, more so than on Instagram, so I would say its influence is huge.

Q3: So, if someone were to say TikTok is influential for footwear consumption, how would you reply?

S: I would agree (laughs), in my case I'm borderline addicted to shopping. I've purchased loafers from Duke + Dexter, to Kanye's Yeezys, to dupes***** of a Tyler, the Creators' sneakers Converse line, which I found on Vinted*****. I think the viral part of TikTok moves everyone, because it's mostly seen by millions of people, so it will always influence someone seeing it on their screen to do something (to browse through comments sections to see what people are saying, to seeing where it's available). And at the same time, if you engage with content, it'll be on your 'For You' for a period of time, so you'll have that snowball effect with something you like, it's like TikTok saying to you 'buy this, shop that'.

***** Dupe is TikTok slang for knock-off or really close substitute.

***** With his answer, the rest of the group started saying the, cutting off the purpose of the next question, which would be 'What was the latest footwear item you purchased from TikTok?'

C: I would agree too. You know, TikTok is a powerful medium. So, of course it's influential because shopping for clothes or apparel is a necessity, so it'll eventually hit you, that need. I would say that it's influential, for me for example, I do admit that I have a note on my note app with certain items (that include footwear) that I would eventually like to purchase (I'm rarely impulsive, so I like to reflect for a while). But I honestly think that TikTok is just a reflection of the internet and this whole 'shopping craze that everyone around me seems to have, of like I have to buy something, because it's viral, because it's great, and because I would damn be

good in it', definitely exists. But you know, shoes are a necessity, and of course TikTok influenced me (because apparently TikTok doesn't know that I need to have to save money), and I bought online the coolest sneaker from Adidas (the Adidas Spezial that I couldn't find in any store in Lisbon), which is like all over my 'For You' page and I bought once a pair of white Vans slip-on just because I saw a video once of an user customising them, that I felt inspired, and they are one of my favourite items. *****

***** Sebastião intervened, saying that he also saw that on his 'For You' page.

F: I would agree. I think TikTok is putting brands and products out there. I'm not an active online shopper. I use more TikTok to find information about products that I want to purchase, but I don't think I've seen a shoe or a pair of sneakers from TikTok and actively purchased it. But it has proven to be a valuable resource to gather more information. And that's what I love about TikTok.

D: I agree with all statements said, I think it's so interesting the way TikTok builds a community that reassures to you about why is a product is not worth your time and money. For me, that I also browse about products that I like, I think it's so good to have "TikTok" (opens quotes with his fingers) kind of showing in videos that usually last 20 to 25 seconds, the feedback from consumers, and browse and see for yourself, so you get to hear a lot of points of view in a short period of time, and hopefully decide for yourself

Q4: And has reality met the expectations you had from the shoes? Do you plan on purchasing again?

S: I mean, if the right shoe comes (laughs). So far it's been more of a hit than a miss, at least I have more success stories than failures (the Dupe from the Converse collection is rather sad, but I've had worse things happening even from major brands). I think, but like Constança I also have some things in my notes app (laughs)

C: I don't think I have much to add. I'm pretty satisfied with my latest purchases, and as I said before, I do have some things that I would eventually like to buy.

F: I would say it has. Again, I can't recall if I was influenced by seeing something for the very first time on TikTok and then progressively deciding to purchase it, but if I looked up to TikTok when searching for information, then yes. I would

say that the expectation that I had from other users' feedback was well-managed, as they were incredibly authentic, passing on their message every time, so that helps.

D: Same as Francisco, I think it's important to separate what's the actual source of information, because TikTok doesn't have an identity. It's not TikTok pushing you a product, it's a whole bunch of stuff. But I do have been impacted by certain viral products, but I have never actually purchased a product from opening up the app and it appearing to me or started appearing to me out of the blue. I have actively searched more for things that I liked, then been introduced to something that I've ended up purchasing, if that makes sense.

Q5: I would like to throw into the conversation some variables that I'm aiming to validate in my study, and understand what would be your opinion on them? I'll explain the variable, and then you say what you feel about it and if it has ever contributed to your footwear purchasing behaviour?

Q5.1. Branded content

S: I do follow some brands on TikTok, but I rarely leave the 'For You' page, so it's very rare for me to see the content of the brands that I follow, like Nike's content (which I follow). And using Nike as an example, like I love Nike, it's a top-of-mind brand, I wear certain Nike products, and I'm very inspired by Nike overall, and their content but I don't think it's the thing that would move me to purchase Nike. I think it's nice, but at the same time, not what I'm the most interested in.

C: I mean, if the brand has great communication then yes. But I feel most content from brands are exact replicas of their communication on other socials like Instagram, and it doesn't match at all with TikTok, and it doesn't feel the same way as users' content or influencers' content. So, no, I don't think it was ever a factor in my decision.

F: Same as Sebastião, I follow some brands but it's just because I like them and have known them before, and I don't even follow that many accounts on TikTok. I don't think I've seen much branded content, except when I was actively searching for inspiration for my business. But at the same time, I don't think brands are quite aware or knowing what and how to post on TikTok.

D: Not for me, no! But now that I'm thinking about it, shout-out to Crocs for being one of the best brands communicating on TikTok. I've definitely been thinking about grabbing a pair or two, and it's mainly because their communication is really cool. But overall, most brands aren't adding anything, like the three of them said (and I can't even name the last brand I've seen on TikTok). I rarely leave the 'For You' page.

Q5.2. Influencers

S: Of course, influencers influence. At least for me. For example, I love @monsierugustavo*****, a TikTok who has the chilliest vibe, and I've actually bought certain products he wore on TikTok videos (more apparel though). Sometimes I'll see one or two on my 'For You' page and like their aesthetic, like what they're wearing, check out how much is their outfits. Other than that, when I'm really interested in something, I'll try and check who's wearing it, how they're wearing it, if they have any tips, and sometimes the occasional influencer appears when I search for them. The most influential opinion on TikTok and how that person's overall vibe fits in with mine. It's something I consider in my opinion (the influencer's knowledge).

***** Since Sebastião mentioned an influencer, I've asked at the end of each reply to say an influencer they follow and or like.

C: Yeah, that's not me. Influencers are perfect for introductions, but I'm more ultimately influenced by the common mortal's feedback who pays for their stuff (laughs). But in all seriousness, I do follow some influencers, but it's mostly for fun. I don't actively pursue them to be inspired by them. Otherwise, it's just exhausting that constant search for information (pauses) I feel everyone's been impacted by influencers (otherwise they wouldn't be an influencer), but they have so much stuff going on*****, that is for me is easier to dissociate and get my feedback on from other people.

I do love an influencer called @ritamontezuma

***** I've asked Constança to clarify her statement, and she said that most people can't afford the entire outfit that an influencer wears (and most times the products they promote were given to them), so she prefers to rationalise her perceived influence when seeing that type of content.

F: I understand where Constança is coming from, and I think it's a concern for influencer marketing. Everyone's an influencer today if you think about it, and I feel like people will get sick of it eventually. What I do think about TikTok is that it's a lot to do with trends, and rarely with the influencer per say. It's really rare for me to actively follow an influencer, even though I would agree that I've been influenced by them (I can think of @miguelmaninho as a cool laidback guy I like to follow and go check him from time to time). But it's much more about me searching Miguel than the platform purposefully showing him, contrary to Instagram, if that makes sense***** In that sense, I think Instagram does a better job at showing the people who we voluntarily follow.

***** Everyone agrees

D: Like Sebastião, I love to follow people on social media (laughs), I like the inspiration. I never really thought much of it, but I kind of agree with you, Francisco, now that I'm thinking about it, the people I follow rarely appear on the 'For You'. I could say that influencers have influenced me, but it's mostly when like the hottest item is trending and then you see someone with 200k followers trying it, reviewing, or being like the force that has reckoned the virality of a product. I split my account with my wife, so we usually follow a lot of female influencers (laugh). My wife loves foreign influencers (think from @mariapombo, to @emilymariko, to influencers from Paris that I don't know how she reaches to them, and I would say she's much more influenced than me. But I do agree that I've been influenced to purchase items from TikTok and it's a mixture of influencer's influence.

Q5.3. Virality/Trends

S: That's TikTok in a nutshell. The pushing of content to a point where everyone's mimicking videos and stepping into a camera to recreate a trend. If you're asking me if I've found any products because of a trend? Of course. I think it's the main source of influence on TikTok because it's pushing something to you. Constantly. To see if you engage with it. Everyone is talking about it, and it has 800k likes, and then from TikTok, it starts trending on Instagram, and then media, and then stores, and soon you're in that rush to have and find the perfect product.

C: My God, trendy things are my demons (laughs). That's what I was telling you before. I have a long (long) list of things I want to buy from things I see on

TikTok. Since I started working in banking, I'm very rational with my money and how I spend it, so even though I see a lot of things on TikTok, I'll think about it for a couple of days, and then usually go on about my day. But yeah, it's tough for TikTok not influencing you (laughs). I'm fine about my day, and then start talking like Cardi B (laughs). But regarding shopping, it's so tough because you like something, and then spend the next five business days being targeted with dozens of videos of people or content talking about the products, because I saved the link and now my algorithm is pushing that onto me. My latest Adidas came about because of a trend. It was love at first time, to be honest. And I'm super happy about them. So, I would say it's about

F: I agree with both Constança and Sebastião. The thing about TikTok is that it sticks with you for a short period of time and it's impactful (but I do think it's very limited). Next week, you'll have something that's trending. And it's always pushing you to do something, and then you start seeing millions of people commenting, or reacting, or stitching videos, and so there's a whole chain reaction. I get that's the great thing for brands to hop on that. I would agree that it's what influencing the most out of the three mentioned.

D: I don't have much to add. I will tell you that it's influential in my opinion, because when it's viral on TikTok, I can guarantee you that NIT and MAAG will be talking about it in the next days. For me, it's influential, yes, because you're redirecting your attention to whatever's viral, so that's that. Even when you don't engage with it, there will be people who will.

Q6.4. Word-of-mouth and other users' feedback

S: If I need something from TikTok, I'll first see what other users are saying and then go about friends and family. It's a very TikTok thing to do. Instagram is much more personal in that sense. People interact more there. I love scrolling through comment sections and see what people are saying, so I say it's very influential in my opinion.

C: For me, it's that combination of various things when I'm on TikTok scrolling and finding something that catches my eye. I would say I prefer TikTok's comment section than any other social media platforms. People are funnier, they help more, they more kind, less critical. That's my opinion. Because the likeliness

of being a total stranger that has the best intentions is real, I don't know if I'm explaining it well. That's what influences.

F: I do agree with Constança. People are more authentic on TikTok. I think it's a very Gen-Z app in that sense. They genuinely want to give their feedback and share their unpopular opinion or whatever. It's a platform that truly allows people to be themselves, and that's because video is video. It has movement, it has a tone of voice, it has a story and an experience, and it's more palpable than the photo, which, you know, doesn't have a background. A video is a video. And comments are comments. And I love it, and I'm influenced by it.

D: Yeah, video engages much more (pauses). Yeah, I don't know. It's part of TikTok. I know that not everyone's on TikTok, but it does feel like that. And it does feel like people want to give their opinions, and it makes it valuable if you're interested in specific things. For example, I love boats, and it's super hard to search boat content on Instagram, because the app is not that intuitive to search for things and on Facebook, the likeliness of finding spam/bot/some random guy on the internet talking about it. TikTok opens that world, and I find it interesting.

Q6.5. Advertisement

S: Does anyone automatically skip commercials? (laughs). I don't really pay that much attention to that...

C: Me neither, I don't much to comment. Except if you want me to explain how annoying Fox's avatar advertisements are (laughs). Full-on spam for like two months.

F: Mine are Inês Alves Pereira's' summer campaign with Worten! I really don't care about opening the app and see that, as much as I love her though

D: I really don't nothing to add! Not a fan of ads.

F. Transcription of Focus Group

Opening question:

Q1: How long have you been on TikTok? And what made you use TikTok?

João: I've begun using TikTok a couple of months into the pandemic. It came out of genuine boredom. I started using it to do some fun videos, but I didn't care much about it until last year, when I got back on the app (I never deleted it from my phone)

Matilde: Okay, so full disclosure: I'm a huge Taylor Swift fan, and I absolutely love her/worship her (in a healthy way) (laughs), so I joined TikTok when she joined in 2021. For the very first months, I wasn't going that much into the app, just occasionally, and my 'For You' was literally Taylor Swift or content made by her fans.

Manel: I actually only joined TikTok recently. I was very sceptical about it, and now I realize I would only go to Instagram to check out Reels. But I have my communication agency here in Lisbon, and I'm focused on growing now and learning more, and it seems like everyone's joining TikTok. And so, I had to go with the flow and be where everyone's at.

Inês: I joined during the pandemic because my younger sister, who was in college in the US, told me that everyone in her generation was addicted to a fun app where you could join and make cool/funny videos, and so I downloaded it and started making videos with my family. We were all quarantined at my grandparent's house in Arrábida, and it was just a stupid thing to pass the time. Didn't think much about it, to be honest.

Q1.2: What about now? Did your TikTok usage motives change?

J: I still occasionally use the app; I don't think the reason why I'm on TikTok changes. It's cool to see funny clips and some conspiracy theories (I don't know why, but my ('For You') homepage is 1/4 Futebol Clube do Porto, 1/4 Conspiracy Theories, 1/4 funny videos, and 1/4 recipes, but you know I go whenever I'm bored, or I'm interested in something I want to find the answer quick.

M: For me, totally. Even though my algorithm still has a very strong Swift influence*, I decided to use TikTok to inspire me more. I have been using it as a source of inspiration for classes and activities to do with my students. I teach middle school**, so they're the generation currently facing a short attention span, so pushing for another side of them intellectually (as an English teacher, I know) has been a great experience.

Manel: Yeah, I, too, use it for work reasons, and since I've been on the app very recently, I find it an incredible tool for creative people or, at least, not to sound cocky, people who want to be more creative. My agency is pretty 360°, so we do video, photography, graphics, strategy, concepts, and there's something for every single person that works here. I actually encourage people to take inspiration breaks because it's great for brainstorming sessions. I'm a photographer, for example, and I get very much inspired by things I see on TikTok.

Inês: I can't live without TikTok, honestly (laughs). TikTok has everything. Travel guides, what to wear, what not to wear, how to style, things to do, things to say, recipes, as João was saying. And it's entertaining sometimes and a great way to zone out for a while and laugh or see what's the best New York bagel place.

Follow-up questions:

Q2: How would you rate TikTok's influences in your day-to-day lives? Do you think TikTok is influential overall? Would you say it's the most influential social media platform right now?

João: Yes, I do think it's on its way to becoming the most influential app. I don't think for the older generation, that's happening right now, but I do think it'll get to that point. And kids are definitely there. I think TikTok is very addictive. Inês was just saying that she zones out, and it's true. Sometimes, I'm at home on a Sunday afternoon, and an hour of me fully emerged on TikTok has passed, and I've seen about 200 videos, and it's scary the amount of them I can actually recall after a certain amount of time has passed. So yeah. But I do think it's influential. You can't go to downtown Lisbon without half of the people making videos for TikTok (either kids or tourists), so people are on the app, spending their time.

M: Yeah, I do. TikTok is so easy for a person to have diverse and explore their interests easily. Just take what we've said before. You're inspired for day-to-day things like Inês and João said, or you can take TikTok to inspire your work as I already do and apparently Manel too. I think it's very powerful. It does need some twitches, though***.

M: Yeah, if you work in creative outlets, then yes. Everyone's showing themselves on TikTok. I think it's a long-surpassed Instagram in that field. Instagram is all about influencers and deals these days. TikTok has a broader

appeal, and at the same time, you have niches where you can explore and develop your interests. TikTok has a professional impact, and it's hard to ignore its influence. Is it the most influential? Well, it's a formidable player.

I: I will say yes, and I don't see it changing anytime soon, to be honest. Instagram is boring these days, Facebook, I don't know anyone over 40 that actively goes there (I only use it to remind myself of people's birthdays), and LinkedIn is not fun. What's left? You know? In the social media spectrum, there's nothing else.

Q2.1: I took Matilde's comment because I find it so interesting. What would you do change on the app if you could?

J: (retrospective) It's tough the simple act of sharing things on TikTok. It's too many steps, and it makes me lose interest in sharing with people outside the app (laughs). I don't know if it's done on purpose, but yeah, I find it a little bit dreadful to share things.

M: I would just make it a little bit safer and restrictive for kids. Kids are addicted to it, or to the whole I can get viral thing. I get that TikTok can be a really cool way for them to express themselves, but I see students spending 3/4 hours per day there. It's too much. Kids need to stay more off the phone.

Manel: I don't think I have any further comments, honestly. I think I would make my agency go viral and explore my client list (laughs). But yeah, I think I would be a little bit more intuitive for companies to guide there. But maybe that's part of the mystery behind TikTok.

I: I don't know. I really don't. I can't think of a reason, not that I think TikTok is perfect. If I remember anything before ending this call, I'll tell you.

Q3: Let's imagine I would say that TikTok is influential for footwear consumption. How would you reply?

J: I would agree, obviously, even though I never bought any shoes on TikTok. But I would lie if I said I never looked for style tips on TikTok and saw some suggestions. I do know friends who are a bit more fashionable than me who have bought things on Amazon from brands they've found on TikTok (not a lot, but I know people).

M: I actually got a pair of sandals from a Portuguese brand called Lemon Jelly from a Spanish influencer I saw on TikTok, I can't recall her name. But it introduced me to the brand (I had never heard of it), and I browsed a little bit around the internet, saw it on sale at Clube Fashion, and immediately bought it with no regrets.

Manel: I don't know, man. Not me, but I think TikTok has an overall influence because you're constantly being flooded with inspiration (from the videos you see), so I do believe it has, but I never bought any styles so far.

I: Yes, I have. The winter Birkenstock clog that everyone's wearing? All the way from TikTok. Literally sent that I was seeing to various groups of friends, and I can assure you that within the next month, half of them ordered a pair of them. That's what happened! There's this influencer/I don't know if he's already considered a celebrity type of famous guy that I follow on TikTok @chrisolsen, and for a while, he wore these white Balenciaga Crocs collaboration (he wasn't directly promoting the shoe, but he was making hilarious videos with them) and the shoes were incredible but cost like 400/500€, but I'm sure in the millions of likes that the shoes had, people bought because of him. I'm also very much into the whole vintage/retro/90's vibe that's going viral on TikTok, and my algorithm has showed me some cool places in Lisbon, that I'm dying to go soon.

Q4.1. Branded content:

J: I don't think so, no, at least not for me. Never paid any attention to it, to be honest.

M: If I'm looking actively for a product, I will see the brand's socials. But it only adds so much. I think it's great to get involved with the brand, but I don't think it adds anything no.

Manel: As a consumer, I wouldn't think so. But I work with brands, so I have to. So, the professional part will inevitably influence the personal part. So yes, I think it does. It has to. Many great brands have great social media presence. Look at Ryanair, for example. For fashion, though, I can't think of anyone.

I: It depends on the brand. There are some really cool brands communicating on social media, adding something. Manel said Ryanair, I love Rare Beauty, for example. It's so comfortable and laidback it doesn't feel like promotion.

Q4.2. Influencers:

J: I really don't pay attention at all to influencers, so I can't comment that much. But you know, anyone with followers (that's not a celebrity) got there because people want to hear from them, so I think that's influential. I understand why.

M: I follow a lot of pseudo-influencers. I say pseudo-influencers just because they're regular folks with large amounts of following. I don't think they do it for the commercial part of it. They're like sweet people with incredible life stories, and so I'm very drawn to that. But yeah, I think those people influence a lot.

Manel: I work a lot with influencers, and most of them are worth a lot more than what they're actually getting paid to do. On a side note, I think the incredible thing about TikTok is that it is putting Portuguese girls on the map with just a video. So, from a professional perspective, yes, it's very influential. From the girls I work with, from the return on investment that I see them bring, it's insane. Forget celebrities, honestly. If I were the brand, I would go through here. I would dare to say this is the most influential thing out of your study.

I: Yes, I'm very much influenced, especially if the influencer is relatable. That's my criteria. I have to feel like you're a friend who's got my back, and you're advising from all the things these brands are offering, and you suggest to me the best of the best. By the way, I hate sponsored influencer ads. I'm out in a second from the video. If you have that, I'm going to follow you.

Q4.3. Virality/Trends:

João: It's so exhausting, to be honest (impatient). You're constantly hearing about the latest viral trend, challenge, life-changing thing, or product wherever you go. I think it's undeniable TikTok's influence.

Matilde: I would say that the more eyes you have, the more people will have something to say about it. I think TikTok is incredibly influential on what's trendy and what's not.

Manel: I think that's what everyone works for, the ultimate goal is to be viral, is to have eyes on you, and those fifteen minutes of fame. I would definitely associate TikTok with having a strong influence on viral content.

I: When I bought the Birkenstock's last year, they were pretty viral. I think a new thing is always appearing, so I would say that TikTok has a strong influence on what people are buying.

Q5.4. Word-of-mouth:

J: I take very seriously these types of recommendations. Especially if I'm really looking for information about a subject online, I'm very dependent on my peers' feedback and online reviews. I check all possible sources. The more information I have, the more confident I feel about it.

M: I agree with João. I feel TikTok really is a platform that can assist you because there will always exist an opinion, and if that opinion has had some views and some likes, the comments will always be there. I love it when people stitch other people's videos and create this chain of information. Those types of videos are very informative.

Manel: Without feedback, you can't go anywhere. TikTok has the internet at the palm of its hands, and who better to benchmark than the community you want to target?

I: I'm very vocal wherever I go, whatever I do. You can count on me to comment on the latest post of Expresso on Instagram if I see some prejudice, or I'll use the Complaint Book if someone is rude to me at a store, so I'll do the same on TikTok, to be honest. I'll tag, I'll comment, I'll share because I have the best intentions, and I believe people do the same. So, it's very influential these reviews and people's feedback, in my opinion.

Q5.5. Advertisements:

J: No one actually likes advertising, so it's a big no. TikTok's ads are literally the worst, even worse than Instagram in quality (because Instagram wins in quantity). I usually ignore it.

M: You know, it is what it is. As I do find TikTok to have the least ads (or at least they're more interactive) than Instagram or Facebook (which appear in the middle of a user's Instagram page (which is surreal to me), I also don't like it, nor has it ever influenced me to do anything. I don't think TikTok has the vibe for advertising.

Manel: When I started on the app, Isto**** had a really cool ad online. The best I've seen is promoting the brand in a really unique way. But that's the only thing I remember about it. Really loved it. But that's the one thing. Other than that, it's just Samsung or Worten ads. It's annoying.

I: It rarely appears to me, so am I just a fortunate person? I agree with Matilde, especially in the part where Instagram is becoming really annoying with the constant ads. Hope that doesn't happen with TikTok or, worse, that they decide to go all YouTube with the skip less ads... So annoying.

Thank you for participating