

**The impact of social media Marketing (TikTok) On small Businesses in
Peshawar.**



Student Name; Zulqarnain

Student ID; 01-321242-036

Abstract

The fast development of social media sites has changed the marketing behavior, especially to the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that have limited resources to operate in. Of these channels, Tik Tok has become a formidable application of short-form videos that allows companies to communicate with consumers in innovative and inexpensive ways. This paper evaluates Tik Tok promotional effects on small Peshawar based business taking into consideration the nature of the content, consumer response, intention to purchase and the general performance of the business.

The research design used in the study is an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design. The quantitative data were gathered via structured questionnaires among small business owners who actively utilize TikTok to target the market, whereas qualitative data were collected via the semi-structured interviews. The SPSS was used to test the hypotheses put forth by conducting statistical analyses, descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis.

The results show that the Tik Tok content features; entertainment, trendiness, interaction, and visual strategy have a substantial positive impact on consumer engagement. The interaction between Tik Tok marketing and the purchase intention was discovered to be mediated by consumer engagement. Moreover, trust signals, relatability of influencers and Tik Tok Shop functionality improved the purchase intentions of consumers greatly. Another finding in the study is that the higher purchase intention has positive effects on the performance of the small business in relation to growth of sales, brand recognition, and customer base. Nevertheless, the lack of digital skills, time restrictions, and the dynamism of trends were revealed as the obstacles to the successful TikTok adoption.

The article is relevant in the new body of literature on social media marketing because it offers empirical data in a developing market setting. In practice, the results provide practical implications to small entrepreneurs and policymakers to utilize the TikTok as a strategic marketing and social commerce platform.

Keywords: Tik Tok marketing, social media marketing, consumer engagement, purchase intention, small business, Peshawar.

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CHAPTER 1 — INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The emergence of digital technologies has drastically changed the manner in which business organizations interact with consumers, build brand identity and market their products and services. Tik Tok, among all other new digital platforms, has become one of the most impactful platforms of a marketer providing unmatched opportunities to reach and engage the audience almost instantly. In contrast to other traditional media, the TikTok platform combines the features of brief videos, the viral nature, the use of sounds, and the use of algorithms and suggestions, which allow even small or newly located businesses to achieve organic visibility. Due to this fact, marketers are actively referring to TikTok as a strong brand growth and customer engagement engine. According to recent studies, entertainment, interaction, and trend-based content are among the factors that are highly effective in modulating consumer purchase intentions (Chandranath et al., 2024; Yones and Muthaiyah, 2023).

Small businesses in Pakistan, especially in places such as Peshawar are the back bone to the local economy through the creation of job opportunities, sustaining families and popularization of entrepreneurial culture. Nevertheless, these companies conventionally base their marketing capabilities on low budget campaigns, flyers, storefront displays or limited area advertising. As competition and consumer preferences evolve, these approaches can no longer be effective in reaching much younger, digitally active segments of customers. With the changing consumer behavior towards internet interaction, the small businesses should integrate themselves with the digital tools in order to stay competitive. Research on the developing world shows that social media marketing helps SME to increase their visibility, reach customers, and improve their performance (Chatterjee and Kar, 2020; Oikawa et al., 2022; Leelawati and Leelawati, 2023).

The high rate of growth of TikTok makes it an especially appealing platform to the small business sector since it can offer exposure without increasing production budgets. Even basic

videos, when designed creatively, can gain a lot of attention when they are in line with a trending sound, challenge, or hashtag. Surveys indicate that trust signals, relatability of the influencer, and short-form video tactics have a significant effect on the Gen Z purchase behavior (Wahyudi et al., 2025). Moreover, Tik Tok Shop has also added to the seamless shopping experience, where customers are now able to shop directly on the application, therefore, combining entertainment with e-commerce interaction. In the case of small businesses in Peshawar, the features have the potential to increase the number of customer base and compete against more established brands.

It is also important to note that the algorithm of TikTok is crucial in determining marketing results, as recognized by scholars. The For You page also sends out content to users depending on interests and not the number of followers, which provides a better opportunity to small businesses. Rawang Ngam et al. (2025) discovered that the TikTok marketing strategies, particularly those that focus on creativity and engagement between the user, have a positive impact on the consumer purchase intention. In the same manner, Ratnapura et al. (2023) showed that Tik Tok Shop opens new opportunities to small businesses, as it allows engaging in interactive commerce and increasing customer interaction.

Besides the performance of marketing, the communication style and the structure of the videotape play an important role in how the users analyze the promotional material. In an examination of visual communication methods through AI-assisted technique in TikTok apparel videos, Alamar (2025) discovered that in using visuals, transitions, and interactive overlays, strategic usage of visuals, transitions, and interactive overlays results in more message conciseness and viewer retention. The results are consistent with studies done on digital marketing as a whole, as it has been highlighted that effective visual storytelling can be used to create stronger impressions of a brand and can result in more emotional engagement among the audience.

Even though Indonesia, Thailand, African and other contexts studies offer important insights, the context of Peshawar is understudied. The unique socio-cultural dynamics, economic limitations and adoption trends of technologies in the region require local research. Peshawar small businesses are usually competitive and have little resources at their disposal, and it is only paramount to comprehend how Tik Tok can aid this progress. This study will fill that gap in the research seeking to understand how small businesses in Peshawar use Tik Tok, what are the

strategies used by these businesses and how they affect the consumer behavior and business performance.

1.2 Problem Statement

The small businesses in Peshawar are often faced with a set of problems associated with insufficient financial means, incompetence in the digital field, and the growing competition in the market. The conventional marketing channels are generally expensive, less vibrant, and incapable of reaching younger generations who depend more on the digital content. Although Tik Tok offers a certain opportunity to small businesses to communicate with masses through forms of expressiveness, there are still numerous business owners who lack the required knowledge on how to make the platform work to their advantage. Consequently, they do not enjoy the possible customer interactions and revenue development.

Current research indicates that Tik Tok has a great influence on consumer behavior, but the majority of studies refer to the global market or the metropolis. Empirical research on the adoption of Tik Tok marketing by small businesses in less technologically developed areas or the consumer reaction to the content in the area is insufficient. Furthermore, even though Tik Tok Shop and influencer marketing are becoming potent forces towards encouraging online purchases, their applicability and performance with the Peshawar consumers is scarcely known.

Therefore, the gap that this paper seeks to bridge is the lack of knowledge of how Tik Tok marketing efforts affect the performance of small businesses in Peshawar, and what aspects of content or engagement have the greatest impact on the choice to purchase.

1.3 Research Gap

Although a number of studies have studied the effect of TikTok on the performance of marketing, majority of the studies have been conducted in southeast Asia, Africa, or among other markets worldwide with varying socio-economic dynamics. The research by Chandranath et al. (2024) and Yones and Muthaiyah (2023) examined the impact of Tik Tok in purchase intention; however, their settings do not have much similarity with small businesses in Peshawar. In a similar way, Wahyudi et al. (2025) also investigated the nature of short-form video features influencing Gen Z consumers, but this group acts differently in other cultural areas.

The existing studies on the topic of social media marketing and SME performance in developing countries confirm the positive associations between these variables (Chatterjee and Kar, 2020; Lestari et al., 2024), yet very little research has been dedicated to TikTok as a preferred media avenue. Moreover, some other research, like Ratnapura et al. (2023) and Alamar (2025), focus on the TikTok Shop and content strategy, but do not directly investigate its effect on the performance of small-businesses.

Consequently, an in-depth, local research on the contribution of Tik Tok to helping small businesses in Peshawar is required to address this gap.

1.4 Primary Objective

To determine how TikTok marketing platforms affect the performance of small businesses in Peshawar.

Specific Objectives

1. To investigate the way in which small enterprises in Peshawar use Tik Tok to market and promote their businesses.
2. To investigate how the TikTok content variables, which are interaction, entertainment, trendiness, and visual strategy, affect consumer engagement.
3. To examine the effect of trust signals, influencer relatability, and TikTok Shop functions on purchase intention.
4. To determine the difficulties that small businesses encounter when using TikTok as a marketing platform.
5. To assess how Tik Tok marketing can help to improve the business performance.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How do small businesses in Peshawar use TikTok for marketing and customer engagement?
2. What content characteristics on TikTok most strongly influence consumer purchase intention?
3. How do trust, relatability, and TikTok Shop features shape consumer behavior?
4. What challenges limit the effective use of TikTok marketing among small businesses?

5. To what extent does TikTok marketing improve the performance of small businesses in Peshawar?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is important because it has contributed into the field of academics, business and economic growth of the region. On the one hand, academically, this study contributes to the increasing literature on the effects of Tik Tok marketing on consumer behavior and business performance. Although research by Chandranath et al. (2024), Rawang Ngam et al. (2025), and Yones and Muthaiyah (2023) can demonstrate the influence of Tik Tok content on purchase intention, they do not discuss how these processes can work in a smaller but resource-constrained setting such as Peshawar. This study deconstructs the global theoretical knowledge by applying it to a particular social-economic environment of Peshawar in terms of small businesses.

Second, the research is useful to entrepreneurs and small business owners. The Peshawar market is very competitive with numerous businesses in the saturating industries like fashion, cosmetics, food, footwear, and retail services. Conventional promotion tools do not usually reach the young age group, which currently uses apps such as Tik Tok to find out about products. It has been found that short-form videos on Tik Tok have a high potential to increase the level of engagement because these videos are visually appealing, relatable, and entertaining (Wahyudi et al., 2025; Alamar, 2025). With small companies (some of which do not have professional marketing skills) in mind, knowing how to generate strategic TikTok content can have a positive effect on the business in terms of customer coverage, online presence, and sales level.

Third, policymakers and support organizations are beneficated by the study. In Pakistan, SMEs and young people are still encouraged to acquire digital entrepreneurial skills by government agencies like SMEDA and KP IT Board. But there is scanty evidence-based advice on Tik Tok marketing per se, as it gains prominence. The results of this study can hence be used in supporting training programs, digital literacy efforts, and youth entrepreneurship training and workshops where TikTok marketing can be adopted as a potential economic development tool.

Lastly, the study has a social and cultural significance. TikTok has turned into a cultural exhibition and some of the smaller business in Peshawar have not only been utilizing it as a platform to promote their products and services, but also as a means to promote local fashion,

arts, food, and services. Through empowering digital marketing, the research indirectly facilitates the preservation of culture and engaging the young generation in the creative industries.

1.7 Scope of the Study

In this study, the authors have restricted themselves to sampling small businesses in Peshawar, one of the largest business centers in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Small businesses used in this study refer to organizations that have small amount of capital, few workforce and smaller operations. These could be as little as clothing shops, cosmetic shops, and street food sellers to small scale retail stores and service providers.

The digital marketing domain being discussed is the one in the specifics of Tik Tok (without referring to other social media, including Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube, in particular). It is due to the fact that the algorithmic composition, the style of content and the patterns of interaction of users are peculiar to Tik Tok, and they demand dedicated research. The paper examines the impact of the features of TikTok content (entertainment, trends, interaction and visual storytelling) on consumer interactions and business performance.

The only outcomes explored are the marketing related, including the brand visibility, customer interest, and purchase intention. This research does not cover operational, financial management and supply-chain factors. Moreover, the data will be gathered among those businesses and consumers who are happy to respond, which implies that the findings will not be representative of all the SMEs in Peshawar.

1.8 Delimitations

The study has a number of delimitations to make it clear and manageable:

1. Geographical constraint: The small companies in the Peshawar district are the ones that are considered, and not any other city of KP like Mardan, Swat, Kohat, or Abbottabad.
2. Place-specific focus: The research fails to examine the marketing on the platforms other than TikTok, although numerous businesses engage with multiple platforms simultaneously.

3. Limitations of consumer demographics: As Tik Tok is popular among younger consumers, the study does not involve any consumers who do not actively use Tik Tok.
4. Self-reported data: The research study is based on the survey responses and thus might be filled with natural bias in reporting behaviors or perceptions.
5. Time constraint: Due to the fast-changing nature of TikTok trends, the results reflect behaviors within the particular period of time of data collection.

These delimits enhance the internal concentration of the study, but restrict the generalization with other SME groups beyond Peshawar.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

The terms will be defined as follows in order to improve the conceptual clarity:

•TikTok Marketing:

Promotion of products or services using short-form video functions, audio, trends, challenges, hashtags, and interactive capabilities of Tik Tok.

•Small Businesses (SMEs):

Small businesses in the locality, which have fewer financial and human resources, and normally have regional markets.

•Consumer Engagement:

The likes, comments, shares, and watch time are just some of the interaction types in the Tik Tok that demonstrate the user engagement with the content.

•Purchase Intention:

The likelihood or desire that a consumer reports to have to buy a product following the exposure to the content (Rawang Ngam et al., 2025).

•TikTok Shop:

A built-in social commerce option that will enable users to buy the product via the video or live stream (Ratnapura et al., 2023).

•Influencer Relatability:

Appreciations of similarity or credibility of content creators, which affects the interpretation of marketing messages by consumers (Wahyudi et al., 2025).

PowerPoint Presentation: A PowerPoint slides presentation can be executed using the following strategies
PowerPoint Presentation: A PowerPoint slides presentation can be conducted using the following strategies:

Doing transitions, text overlays, expressions and AI-enhanced images to enhance clarity of the message (Alamar, 2025).

The dissertation is structured in the following way: 1.10.

The dissertation will be divided into five key chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Vividly gives background, problem statement, research gap, significance, scope and research questions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Reviews international, regional and local research on the TikTok marketing, SME performance, consumer behavior and associated theoretical frameworks. It will combine all the available sources, such as empirical research on Tik Tok algorithms, AI-based communication, and ewe.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology.

Describes the research methodology, design, sample, data collection methods, limitations and ethical issues. In this chapter, you will be able to take the mixed method or quantitative format, as you choose.

Fourth Chapter: Data Analysis and Results.

Presents descriptive statistics, correlation statistics, regression statistics and thematic findings (in case there are qualitative features).

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations.

Relates the findings with the literature, gives practical advice to SMEs in Peshawar and recommends future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The fast growth of the social media has changed the way companies develop and execute marketing strategies. Of the existing platforms, Tik Tok, as of late, has become one of the most influential tools of shaping the consumer behavior via short-videos content and highly personalized algorithmic retrieval. Simultaneously, social media marketing (SMM) is becoming a low-cost channel of reaching the customer and increasing brand recognition as well as performance among small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). In the case of the small companies in the fledgling economies like Peshawar, the knowledge about the influence of Tik Tok and social media marketing on consumer behavior and business performance are the key to survival and success.

The chapter is a literature review of the related literature in two streams. Stream, I deal with the TikTok-related research, such as purchase intention, algorithm impacts, the use of Tik Tok Shop to conduct digital marketing, and brand-related results, such as e-trust and revisit intention (e.g., Rawang Ngam et al., 2025; Grabowska et al., 2025; Hadiyah et al., 2025; Fitria and Ananta, 2025; Owolabi et al., 2025; Mala et al., n.d.). The second stream focuses on social media marketing and the performance of SMEs more broadly, including the adoption, innovation, brand orientation, and performance across various national environments (e.g., Chatterjee and Kar, 2020; Salati et al., 2021; Juniata et al., 2022; Lestari et al., 2024; Alzheimer, 2021; Moy et al., 2020). Collectively, these bundles of studies contribute to the formation of a conceptualized

vision of how Tik Tok-based marketing can affect the performance of small business in Peshawar.

2.2 The second paper is on Social Media Marketing and SMEs.

The world has seen the social media marketing form a key element in the marketing strategies of SMEs. Social platforms allow firms to engage in interactive communication, receive real time responses and access targeted groups of people at a relatively low cost as compared to traditional media. Chatterjee and Kar (2020) researched the reasons behind the use of social media marketing by SMEs and its influence on the performance of these companies. They discovered that the main types of SMEs were social media avenues to increase visibility, contact customers and sustain relationships with them and that the practice has a positive impact on both financial and non-financial performance indicators. Their results indicate how strategic the social media have become in helping SMEs compete with larger companies.

Equally, Salati et al. (2021) have constructed a mediated model between the social media adoption and the performance of the SMEs in the developing nations. Their research indicates that the use of social media is linked to the performance of SME in a positive manner and the linkage is mediated by the likes of innovation and customer relationship capabilities. Notably, they also highlight that adoption does not suffice but SMEs should also build the capacity to use social media strategically. The given observation is especially important when it comes to small enterprises in Peshawar that can pursue the opportunities of platforms such as TikTok and yet will struggle to convert the online presence into the actual performance results.

A systemic literature review by Juniata et al. (2022) also confirms that social media is very vital in enhancing SME performance. They wrongly sum up several empirical studies to conclude that social media does a better job at increasing market reach, customer interaction and flow of information, which positively influence growth and competitiveness. They also, however, add that most of the SMEs do not have the expertise and resources to take advantage of the social media, which implies that training and capacity-building is required.

Lestari et al. (2024) are more specific in their evidence of the relation between social media marketing and SME performance. In their research, the authors conclude that social media marketing has a positive impact on business performance, in terms of creation of brand awareness, customer contact, and sale. They claim that social media is useful especially to SMEs

who have resource limitation since they can use social media to promote their products cheaply as opposed to conventional advertisements.

The studies on different localities can help confirm the overall assumption that social media marketing is advantageous to SMEs. As an illustration, Oikawa et al. (2022) indicate that social media marketing affects the performance of SMEs in Uganda with a high level of positive impact. They illustrate the use of structural equation modelling approach to prove that social media marketing is effective in improving both the sales and non-financial results including customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Similarly, Ameba et al. (2023) conclude that the adoption of social media by SMEs is linked to the better marketing performance, both financial and non-financial, such as revenue growth and better customer relationship. Their results emphasize the fact that the use of social media can provide positive results in various aspects of performance.

Another aspect brought out in literature is regional differences in the contribution of social media to performance. Research by Alzheimer (2021) investigated enterprises within the food industry in Kuwait and discovered that the role of social media was significant in innovation and performance. In particular, the use of social media helped in developing new products, customer-led innovation, and enhanced efficiency in operations. Similarly, Alkhateeb and Abdalla (2021) investigated the application of social media in Palestine SMEs and reached a conclusion that its use had a positive impact on performance, even in terms of limited infrastructure and political instabilities present in the context. These researches opine that social media can afford SMEs with valuable strategic benefits even in limited environments.

All in all, this evidence shows that social media marketing is an effective tool of the SMEs in various contexts. In the case of small businesses in Peshawar, such platforms as Tik Tok can be used as a means of promotion but also as a source of learning, innovation, and gaining new relationships.

2.3 Social Media, Knowledge Creation and Innovation.

In addition to the direct marketing results, social media also has an impact on the knowledge creation and innovation, which are the primary factors in the competitiveness of SME. Moy et al. (2020) explored the relationship between social media and the knowledge creation, innovation, and performance of SMEs. They established that the social media is effective in the sharing of

information between the firms and the customers making businesses to be aware of the emerging needs, get feedback and collaborate in the development of ideas. Such a process, in its turn, increases innovation and overall performance. According to their study, the social media is not so much a promotional medium, but it is rather a platform of knowledge.

Rudi et al. (2025) enlarge this validity by analyzing the impact of the innovation capabilities in mediating the connection between social media marketing, business networking and MSME performance in West Kalimantan. Their results show that the social media marketing and business networking has a positive effect on the innovation capabilities, which in turn boosts performance. The implication of this is that the SMEs that employ social media in developing networks and trying new ideas are in a better position to leverage on digital marketing.

Likewise, Alzheimer (2021) observes the use of social media to promote innovation among Kuwaiti food businesses due to the ease of interaction with customers and partners. Using social media, companies are able to pilot new products, get direct feedback and streamline their products or services. In the case of small businesses in Peshawar, this implies that Tik Tok can be more than a promotional tool, it can be strategically used to understand the preferences of the consumers, experiment with new promotion strategies and to better refine the business offerings.

Munir et al. (2021) also contribute to supporting the relationship between social media, knowledge creation, and performance by examining a mediator between social media marketing and marketing performance of SMEs brand resonance capability. According to them, the constant contact with customers through social media assists firms to create a greater brand resonance, or, the psychological attachment to the brand by customers, which leads to the better performance. This perception suggests that, social media platforms such as Tik Tok not only aid in raising awareness but also in more intensive types of engagement that go hand in hand with innovation and learning.

2.4 Social Media, Branding and Brand Orientation.

In the case of SMEs, differentiation and customer loyalty rely on the establishment of a strong brand most particularly in competitive markets. Social media is essential in the growth of the brand as it gives companies a platform to convey their image, share values, and keep a constant contact with the customers.

Odoom and Mensah (2019) analyze how brand orientation and brand performance are connected in SMEs with the specific emphasis on the moderating effects of social media and innovation capabilities. They discover that SMEs that are brand-oriented based on the nature of their brand performance, that is, those who persistently engage in brand-building processes, perform well in brand performance. Further, this relationship is reinforced by social media and innovation abilities, implying that companies integrating brand orientation with strong social media and engagement and innovation are more successful.

A similar concept discussed by Munir et al. (2021) is brand resonance capability. Their hypothesis is that implementing social media marketing would strengthen brand resonance through the establishment of repeated and emotionally stimulating communication with clients. They find that brand resonance is a mediating variable between social media marketing and the marketing performance of SMEs. That is, in addition to making customers more visible, social media turns out to be efficient in creating more profound and long-lasting relationships with customers.

In the small business view of the Peshawar, these studies imply that Tik Tok can be an effective branding tool. Using the innovative videos, local SMEs will have an opportunity to shape their identity, share information about their heritage and beliefs, and establish an emotional bond with followers. Such efforts, in combination with consistency and innovation, can help to build the stronger brand performance in the long-term.

2.5 Tik Tok as an Up-and-Coming Lure to Marketing.

Whereas social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter were mainly used to conduct text and image communication, the fact that Tik Tok uses short-form video and a strong recommendation algorithm has propelled its rapid growth. TikTok material is usually short, visual and accompanied by music or sound bites and would be of great interest to younger users as well as consumable in large quantities easily. To marketers, this environment gives exclusive chances to convey messages fast and creatively to target groups.

There are a number of empirical researches devoted to the impact of Tik Tok on the consumer behavior. Grabowska et al. (2025) discuss the effects of TikTok on the purchase intentions of consumers and conclude that TikTok has a major effect on buying a product by its entertainment, authenticity, and social proof. They claim that the foundation of TikTok, where users have to

produce their content and engage in trends, is a place where consumers can feel their emotional attachment to some products that they see in videos.

Rawang Ngam et al. (2025) also investigate TikTok marketing strategies and consumer response in Thailand and employ structural equation modelling to determine the relationship between Tik Tok marketing and purchase intention. According to their research, the marketing strategies of Tik Tok, including trending music, engaging stories, and aesthetics have a positive influence on consumers and their attitude and intention to buy. This indicates that small businesses, which make an effort to produce trendy and creative Tik Tok content, can increase their impact on a potential customer.

Fitria and Ananta (2025) investigate TikTok's algorithm in the context of fast beauty product marketing. They explain that the algorithm not only determines which videos users see but also shapes perceptions of popularity and credibility. When certain products repeatedly appear in users' feeds, consumers interpret this repetition as evidence of widespread approval, which can increase interest and trust. This has important implications for small businesses: even without large followings, they can gain substantial reach if their content aligns with algorithmic preferences and user interests.

2.6 Tik Tok Algorithm, Short Videos and Consumers Process of decision-making.

The algorithm of Tik Tok can be considered one of the major contributors to the success of the platform. Instead of depending on social networks, the recommendation system of Tik Tok is based on machine learning that examines the behavior of users such as their viewing time, likes, comments, and shares and provides recommended content that is likely to attract attention. Due to that, even novel or comparatively unfamous creators will be able to acquire a significant visibility within a short timeframe in case their videos are popular among initial audiences.

Melgarejo-Espinoza et al. (n.d.) are concerned with the role of the Tik Tok algorithm in influencing the success of marketing practices and the influence of personalization and content preference to consumer behavior. They claim that algorithmic curation will make marketing campaigns more efficient as they will provide users with promotional material that will be delivered to those who are already interested in the specific product or theme. This will trim down on wasted exposure and increases the chances of conversion.

In addition to it, Owolabi et al. (2025) research how TikTok algorithms and short-form videos influence the online shopping purchase decisions of consumers. They conclude that short-form videos specifically are effective in stimulating online purchasing since they are short, rich in visuals and simple to recall. These effects are enhanced through repeated exposure of users to content that appeals to their preferences, which enhances brand messages through the algorithm.

Hadiyah et al. (2025) discuss the role of Tik Tok in digital marketing through Tik Tok shop. In their study, they demonstrate that the built-in functionality of Tik Tok Shop, including the links to products as clicks and options to buy products in the video, contribute to impulse buying behavior of buyers of Generation Z. The monotony that is associated with online shopping is minimized since the user can buy products right after watching a video without leaving the app. This combined discovery to purchase line provides a potent way of boosting sales in small businesses.

All these studies suggest that Tik Tok is a unique marketing space because of its hybrid nature of short-form video and algorithmic curation that may have huge implications on consumer behavior and buying choices.

2.8 The Problems and Tactical Applications of Tik Tok to SMEs

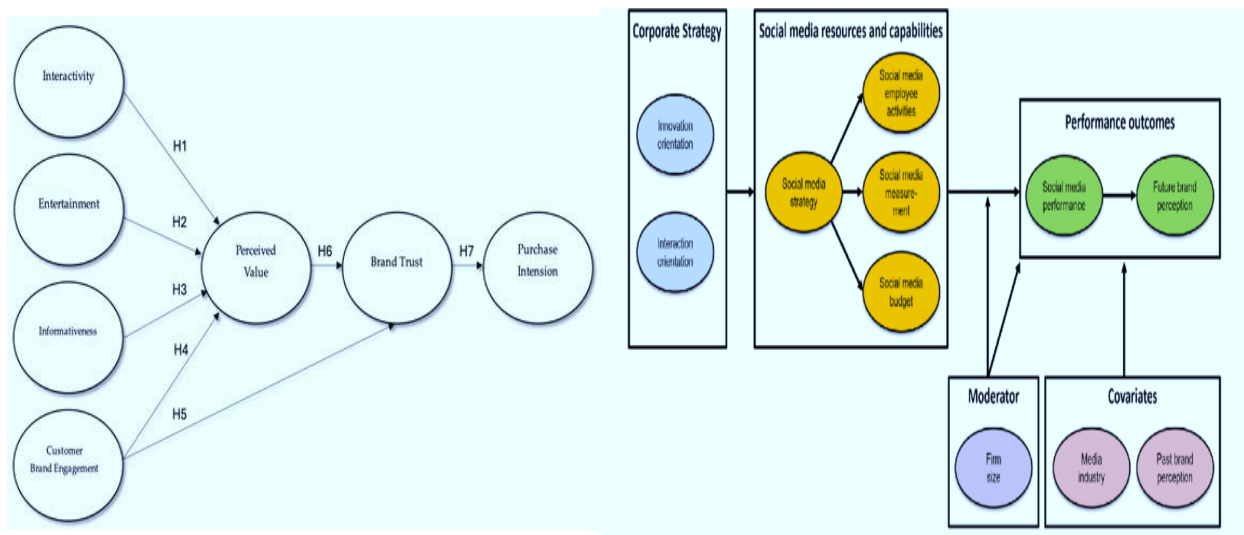
Despite the advantages, SMEs have particular problems with the implementation of Tik Tok, which are directly associated with certain objective 4 Resource and Skill Constraints: Juniata et al. (2022) indicate that most SMEs simply do not have the knowledge and effort to organize complex social media campaigns. This issue is complicated by the possible restrictions in digital literacy and rapid changability of TikTok trends in small businesses in Peshawar, which requires content production on an ongoing, creative basis (Chatterjee and Kar, 2020).

Views to Sales: Lee and Kim (2021) discussed the effects of TikTok marketing on sales growth and reported that it is easy to get views, but strategic effort is necessary to translate views into the growth of sales. One of the issues is the development of a piece of content that is of such high quality as to become viral but at the same time a promotional item to spur purchase intent. It is at this point where the idea of Visual Communication Strategies (Alamar, 2025) will be crucial an appeal to clear visuals, transitions, and text overlays to increase the clarity of the message that the brand needs to convey and at the same time in adherence to the aesthetic of the platform.

2.9 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The entire literature review results in the formulation of a conceptual framework on which this study will be conducted. According to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G) and the literature on Social Media Marketing, the framework suggests that certain attributes of Tik Tok content can affect its consumer engagement, which in turn mediates the effect on purchases intention and, ultimately, performance of small business.

Conceptual Framework Diagram



Independent Variables (Tik Tok Content Characteristics):

- Entertainment
- Trendiness
- Interaction
- Visual Strategy

•TikTok Shop Features

Mediating Variables:

We measure the consumer engagement (Likes, Shares, Comments, Watch Time).

Dependent Variables:

•Purchase Intention

•Small Business Performance (Visibility, Sales, Customer Base)

Control Variables:

•Age of the Business

•Industry type (e.g. Food vs. Retail)

The conceptual framework will be discussed in a diagram given at the end of this chapter.

The hypotheses to be tested will be the following:

H1: TikTok Content Characteristics (Entertainment, Trendiness, Interaction, Visual Strategy) and Consumer Engagement have a positive relationship.

•H2: Consumer Engagement has a positive impact on Purchase Intention.

H3: Trust and Influencer Relatability have a positive moderation effect on the relationship between Consumer Engagement and Purchase Intention.

H4: Tik Tok Shop features have a positive impact on Purchase Intention.

H5: Purchase Intention has positive Relationship with Small Business Performance.

H6: Problems with skills and resources have deleterious effects on the proper utilization of TikTok marketing in small businesses.

2.10 Chapter Summary

Chapter has provided the theoretical background of the study by examining two broad bodies of literature: the overall effect of social media marketing on the performance of the SMEs and the more precise, novel body of information on TikTok marketing and consumer behavior. Social media, as affirmed by the review, is an effective instrument of SMEs in diverse situations that lead to innovation, branding, and performance. Most importantly, the peculiarities of TikTok, such as an algorithm, the short video format, and the social commerce (Tik Tok Shop) are placed in a powerful role of consumer purchase intention. Nevertheless, there is a local deficit on the implementation and the effectiveness of these tools in Peshawar, and particularly with resource-constrained small businesses. The following chapter would outline the methodology that would be necessary to test the hypotheses developed and research objectives in the local setting.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy

Pragmatism is the research philosophy that will be employed in the research. Pragmatism is concerned about the practicality, practice in life and problem solving as opposed to being bound by the practice of positivism or interpretivism. It puts the researcher in a position where he or she has many ways of answering research questions. As Kaushik and Walsh (2019) note, pragmatism does not imply rigidity of the research process because it provides a possibility to merge a quantitative and qualitative approach to allow a researcher to explore a complex social phenomenon in a more holistic way. This is the kind of philosophical treatment that is aptly applied especially to business and marketing research where human behaviour and the adoption of technology and the resultant performance should be researched together.

Regarding the study, the effects of the Tik Tok marketing on the small businesses in Peshawar may be viewed in the terms of objective (engagement rates, sales level, customer reach) and subjective (perceived usefulness, challenges in adoption and customer motivation) response. Most of these experiences would not be elaborated in a quantitative philosophy as opposed to the constriction of generalizability that would be introduced by a qualitative philosophy. Thus, the pragmatismists are of the opinion that the two dimensions can be synthesized.

Kaushik and Walsh (2019) also present the fact that pragmatism is preoccupied with what works in solving a research problem. This will comply with the purpose of this study that does not just meet the purpose of relationships testing on Tik Tok marketing and business performance but also to make practical recommendations to the small businesses. It is not just an offer to give a report of a phenomenon hypothetically but offer viable suggestions on behalf of the owners of the small businesses in Peshawar.

Other than this, pragmatism acknowledges that knowledge is produced besides being a subject of test by experience. This is consistent with the model of marketing behaviour of small businesses that assumes that the entrepreneurs that are experimenting with digital channels (Tik Tok) evaluate the results and make changes to the tactics. The philosophical position, to the study of the adoption of Tik Tok marketing, however, is that the adoption is dynamic process and changing process but not technical encrypted behavior.

Moreover, pragmatism permits methodological pluralism as per which various tools and techniques can be adopted based on the study purpose. Since the given research requires statistical processing of the collected information in terms of structured surveys and semi-structured interviews to know more, pragmatism might be considered the best philosophic assumption that will enable the combination of the two approaches in such a way that would be uniform and systematic.

3.2 Research Approach and Design (Explanatory sequential mixed-method design)

The research design used in the study is mixed method research design which is explanatory sequential research design. The collection and analysis of the quantitative data will involve this design in the first stage and collection of quantitative data is also performed to expand and elaborate quantitative data. The explanatory sequential designs presented by Othman, Steen, and Fleet (2020) can be applied in specific cases when the researcher studies the kind of relationship that can exist between the variables, the reasons of their existence, and how they can exist.

According to Toyon (2021), the explanatory sequential design is a two-stage one. The former is the collection of the numerical data by the use of the surveys that would help test the hypothesis and identify the statistical inclinations. The second one is qualitative (interviews) to elaborate the unexpected findings and introduce new dimensions to the meaning of the findings. This framework is rather in line with the objectives of this paper. The quantitative part will require the quantification of the Tik Tok uptake, use and company performance, and the qualitative one will focus on the experience and difficulties of business individuals, as well as their approach.

Dawadi, Shrestha, and Giri (2021) assert that the mixed-method research enhances the validity of the research results since quantitative and qualitative methods are used concurrently to address the weaknesses of the other method. Quantitative data is what determines objectivity and generalizability in comparison to qualitative data context and explanation. The quantitative part of the presented study determines whether the marketing of Tik Tok has any substantial effects on the activity of the small business or not, and the qualitative one describes how and why these effects can be noticed in the given case in Peshawar.

Sharma et al. (2023) again emphasize that the mixed-method designs assist in enhancing the study because they bring about the aspect of triangulating the results. The phrase that is applied to refer to a confirmation of over one source or avenue of discoveries is known as triangulation. The combination of the results of the surveys and the impressions that were received with the assistance of the interview is a mixed method of research that makes the conclusions sound and guarantees that the statistical patterns are supported by the personal experience in life.

Connecting describes the meaning of integration in sequential explanatory designs that highlight the significance of connecting (Draucker et al., 2020). In such approach, the quantitative results are a direct indication of the selection in the participants and questions in the qualitative phase. In the context of this work, the choice of those businesses that showed low performance and high performance on Tik Tok based on the survey will be chosen during an interview to analyze the success factors and barriers even further.

In addition, as described by Jeevan, Ngah, and Gabarre (2023), questionnaires and subsequent high-level analytical tools, such as structural equation modelling and regression analysis, are particularly helpful when exploring the issue of digital behavior and technology adoption. Despite the fact that the approach to the current research involves the use of regression analysis rather than a full-fledged SEM, the concept of introducing structured tools to test the behavioral variables remains to the point.

The presence of such mixed-method strategy can be explained by the fact that social media marketing is a complex phenomenon. The application of Tik Tok by small businesses implies the quantifiable patterns of technological application and human behavioral response. The sequential design of explanation offers a researcher with the chance to first determine the statistically valid relationships and then explicate such results according to the business experiences.

3.3 Population and Sampling

The population of the study will be small business owners of the Peshawar region, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These are retail stores, clothing stores, food chains, beauty and cosmetics stores and service providers and other micro and small businesses that are actively using or were exposed to the social media marketing particularly the Tik Tok. Small businesses in this study are those who are small in terms of capital base and few employees as well as those with limited geographical location. The given population is particularly relevant, as the small companies of Peshawar are more inclined to online platforms in terms of marketing and communication with customers.

The sample size of the quantitative state of this study will be 300 respondents. This is considered to be substantial to give statistical reliability and extrapolation to regression-based analysis. According to Rahman (2023), in the survey-based research, one will need appropriate sample sizes to draw meaningful statistical conclusions in case he/she is analyzing a large number of variables. The sample size selected is also consistent with the best-practice recommendations of the social science research that involves correlation and regression analysis.

Moreover, Jenkins and Quintana-Ascencio (2020) believe that the studies conducted via regression should have minimum levels of samples to be certain about the correlation between independent and dependent variables. Their labor is good enough to warrant a medium-sized sample to reduce the possibility of Type II error as much as it could maximize statistical tests. The 300 participants selected according to these methodological principles present sufficient statistical power of the analysis of the effects of the Tik Tok marketing on the business performance.

The research sampling is stratified random sampling. This technique groups the citizens into distinct subgroups (strata) based on the kinds of living business such as the retail, food, fashion and services. The respondents will be randomly chosen in proportional size of the stratum. Stratified sampling is also used to ensure that different business sectors are well represented and also minimizing the sampling bias. The method makes the data more representative and accurate particularly in a mixed commercial city like Peshawar.

In a stratified population, Rahman (2023) notes that stratified sampling is effective in estimating when the population is heterogeneous. Since small businesses in Peshawar operate in varying industries with varying digital adoption, stratification will allow capturing market diversity instead of monopolization by one industry. Only the business owners or managers who are directly involved in the marketing decisions will be included in the sample since the validity of the responses will be questioned.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The study is founded on primary and secondary information. The mixed-method design will presuppose the systematic data collection processes that are bound to answer the quantitative and the qualitative research objectives.

3.4.1 Structured Questionnaire (Quantitative Phase)

The structured questionnaire will be used to gather the primary data and will be discussed in the next section. The quantitative data that will underpin the study are structured questionnaire that will be given to the small business owners in Peshawar. The questionnaire will focus on the assessment of such major constructs as Tik Tok marketing adoption, content usage, customer engagement, perceived usefulness, ease of use, and business performance outcomes. The questionnaire is in the form of a five-point Likert scale i.e. strongly disagree to strongly agree, to evoke the perception of the respondents in a standard manner.

Adeniran (2019) affirms that Likert scales were widely used in the study of social sciences due to their simplicity, flexibility and the ability to assume an accurate measuring attitude and perceptions. Jebb, Ng, and Tay (2021) proceed to say that Likert scales have also changed significantly to allow an improved psychometric accuracy, rendering them appropriate in behavioral and marketing research. Based on these methodological rules, the type of a questionnaire that will be applied according to these rules is the implementation of Likert-based questionnaire in which the responses will be consistent and comparative.

The questionnaire will be structured into four vast sections. The first section will be a demographic question which will cover the type of business, years of experience, number of employees and past experience with Tik Tok. Question two is used to record the Tik Tok usage patterns including the number of times people post, the nature of content posted, use of trends, hashtags and Tik Tok Shop. The third section will be concerned with the customer engagement indicators such as likes, comments, view, share and direct requests. Part four determines the performance outcomes of the business including the growth in sales, brand recognition and growing customer base after adoption of Tik Tok.

Reliability and Internal Consistency. Reliability also tests the questionnaire to determine the internal consistency with the assistance of Cronbach alpha. Although Cronbachs alpha is a measure of internal consistency, the methodological application of this scale was initially established by Adamson and Prion (2013) prior to the year 2018, which is the standard and valid in the contemporary research. Cronbach -alpha is the most acceptable reliability value of the Likert-scale measurement, which is also confirmed by Adeniran (2019). The 0.70 and above is good as reliability coefficient that guarantees measures items will always provide the underlying constructs.

Pilot Testing and Refining. A pilot study is conducted on 30 small business proprietors before the entire data collection is done with an aim of testing the questionnaire clarity, reliability and time frame. The information presented during the pilot testing is needed to amend vague points, eliminate questions that are redundant, and better structure. This makes the instrument more practical and content valid.

3.4.2 Secondary Data - Electronic and Governmental Data

To support the contextual analysis, the secondary data will consist of publications of the government and reports concerning the SME authority, and online business analytics. It consists of information about business registration trends, SME online penetration in KP, and online commerce growth. The secondary data is primarily used to provide conclusion of finding as opposed to replacing the primary survey data.

3.4.3 Data Collection Procedure

Survey is distributed through physical field and on-line messengers such as WhatsApp and Google Forms. This is an integrated approach that will maximize the response rates because the owners of the business will be offered a option of a convenient way of participating. The data gathering shall be carried out in six weeks. The respondents will also be provided with a statement of consent which will state what the study is, voluntary participation, confidentiality and data protection. This RC process is more accommodative since it will allow those businesses that are digital and less online businesses to engage. All responses are screened out so as to permit the completeness and consistency after which are transferred to SPSS where they are statistically analyzed whose discussion is below. The completion process will be used to collect the data.

3.4.4 Semi-Structured Interviews (Qualitative Phase)

In this section of the research, it will be a qualitative part of the study as it will entail the collection of qualitative data by conducting semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews with some selected sample of the survey respondents are conducted after the quantitative survey phase is complete. This qualitative measure will attempt to provide more explanations to the statistical patterns in the survey data. The selection of the participants of the interview will be determined by the quantitative results according to the explanatory sequential mixed-method design, proposed by Othman, Steen, and Fleet (2020) and Toyon (2021). The selection of businesses that perform highly and lowly on Tik Tok is done intentionally to obtain contrary experiences.

Face to face interviews are conducted with the small business owners who are currently promoting themselves on Tik Tok (twelve interviews). The themes on which the interview guide is based are the reasons for adopting TikTok, perceived benefits, content creation practices, customer reactions, and the challenges. The open-ended questions are implemented to allow the respondents provide their answers and experiences freely. According to Draucker et al. (2020), this kind of integration strategy is a form of connection whereby the qualitative investigation is closely related to the earlier quantitative results to establish consistency between the research phases.

The interviews will be approximately 25-35 minutes and will be conducted either in a face-to-face form or using the video conferencing online depending on the respondent availability. All interviews are recorded using tape records with the informed consent in order to ensure accuracy of the transcription. Its privacy is provided by naming each participant with numeric codes, instead of the real business names.

3.4.5 Data Management and Storage

All the analysis of the quantitative survey responses (data cleaning) are entered into the SPSS Version 26. Recorded interviews are sent to electronic files in encrypted form. To ensure that the confidentiality of the participants is maintained, the researcher is the only individual who will be able to access the raw data. In order to prevent any loss, the backup of data is stored in an encrypted external drive. The operations align with the good practice of governing research that is implied in modern studies using mixed methods (Dawadi et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2023).

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques Data analysis

Categorical and qualitative methods of data analysis are utilized in the research which is in line with explanatory sequential mixed-method design. The quantitative will investigate the correlation of Tik Tok marketing, customer activity, and business performance in the statistical way. Qualitative phase is then used to place these statistical association into context.

3.5.1 SPSS Evaluation of the Quantitative Data

Quantitative analysis is achieved using SPSS (Statistical Package of social sciences). According to Rahman and Muktadir, SPSS is considered to be one of the most popular in the social science research as it is effective to work with the vast amount of data running statistical tests and generating results that are interpretable (2021). Similarly, Gogoi (2020) notes that SPSS allows a researcher to complete a credible descriptive and inferential analysis with minimal complexity in calculating.

The survey responses that have been cleaned would then be imported into SPSS where the variables would be coded with numbers which would reflect the Likert-scale responses. Where there is a need to have consistency in the direction of the scale, reverse coding has been employed. Data analysis will be subdivided into three major statistical stages descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

The Descriptive statistics are used to describe the respondent characteristics and the Tik Tok usage behaviors. The following are frequencies, standard deviations, means and percentages. Rahman and Muktadir (2021) state that the descriptive statistics provide a simplistic explanation of the data as they reveal the tendency of proximity and variations in data. In this research, the descriptive analysis will be applied to profile the types of business, the years of operation, the number of times when participants post on Tik Tok, and the average levels of engagement.

Reliability Testing Before testing the hypothesis, we will calculate Cronbachs alpha to establish the internal consistency between various multi-item constructs such as Tik Tok marketing usage, customer engagement and business performance. Adeniran (2019) affirms that Cronbach alpha is the most suitable indicator of internal consistency of Likert-scale data. The level of reliability of the scale adopted is 0.70 which is the acceptable level of reliability.

3.5.2 Correlation Analysis

Since the scales were found to be reliable, Pearson correlation analysis was applied to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between Tik Tok marketing variables, customer engagement and sales performance. The point made by Jenkins and Quintana-Ascencio (2020) is that the regression modeling requires the correlation analysis in order to ascertain the existence of meaningful relationships between the independent and dependent variables. It will allow the researcher to measure initial relationships between Tik Tok frequency of use and business performance variables. Correlation results are then interpreted using standard thresholds where a near value of +1 implies strong positive relationship, near value of 0 implies weak relationship and near value of negative implies inverse relationship. The significance value that has been verified in the statistics is 0.05 and thus the correlation that is found is unlikely to be a mere coincidence.

3.5.3 Regression Analysis

Once the correlation analysis is performed, the next step will be the multiple regression analysis aimed at investigating the effect of the Tik Tok marketing on the results of the business growth. Jenkins and Quintana-Ascencio (2020) are of the opinion that the research authors can estimate predictive power of independent variables on dependent variables in circumstances where other independent variables remain constant through regression analysis. This study will have the variables of Tik Tok marketing as the predictor and the outcome variables will be the growth in sales, visibility, and customer reach.

The first regression model is the intensity of Tik Tok use, frequency of content and customer engagement. Control or nominal variable is also used to minimize bias of omitted variable and it can be business age and level of digital skill. The coefficients provided in the regression outcome are R-squared and the level of significance of the coefficient to ascertain the strength of the explanations.

3.5.4 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative Interpretation of the qualitative interview data is done using the thematic analysis. Dawadi et al. (2021) believe that thematic analysis will be appropriate to identify similar patterns and meanings and perceptions in the stories of interviews. Interview coding is done through the hand coding process whereby similar phrases and views are grouped into concepts.

Thematic coding has three steps. The initial stage will be the open coding which will be implemented to identify the start-up themes relating to Tik Tok assets, content policy as well as business challenges. The second stage separates the related codes into sub-themes that are further general. The final stage is the development of the main explanatory themes to understand the impact of Tik Tok marketing on the business performance through the prism of the entrepreneur. The present qualitative analysis is a complement of the statistical findings and analysis since it outlines the mechanisms of behavior that elucidate the numerical relationship that is present. As suggested by Toyon (2021) and Draucker et al. (2020), the combination of the quantitative and qualitative results occurs at the interpretation level.

3.5.5 Reliability, Validity and triangulation

The concept of methodological rigor is premised on the accuracy and reliability of research findings. This study has attained the test of reliability through internal consistency test that utilizes Cronbach alpha. Adeniran (2019) confirms the fact that Cronbach alpha is the most acceptable reliability measure of Likert scales tools in which scores exceeding 0.70 are acceptable reliability. All multi-item constructs are included in the scale, including Tik Tok marketing usage, customer engagement, perceived usefulness, and business performance are tested to ensure that the scale consistency. Those products that are not as reliable are removed or fixed during pilot analysis.

The construct validity will be achieved by designing the items on the survey based on the recommended methodological recommendations of mixed-method research instruments (Dawadi et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2023). The correspondence of the conceptual framework and the objectives and the study and theoretical constructs provides a content validity because it is the determinant of whether there were suitable questions in the questionnaire. The face validity is assessed in pilot testing where the respondents decide about the ease of comprehension, relevance as well as logical organization of questionnaire items.

The combination of quantitative results of survey and qualitative results of interviews is used to implement triangulation. As Draucker et al. (2020) break it down, the integration through connection contributes to the explanatory sequential designs by rendering the qualitative outcomes according to the interpretation of the numerical patterns in the presentations of the survey analysis. It is a methodological triangulation because this type of research relies on the statistical trends in the comparison with the stories of the interviews, which makes the study more credible and excludes the mono-method bias. To demonstrate the argument, in the scenario where regression analysis shows that the existence of the strong association between Tik Tok activity and sales performance, the interview results provide further statistics about the contribution of the content strategy and the contact with the customers to the enhancement of the sales performance.

3.5.6 Quantitative and Qualitative Data Integration Analysis

The findings are incorporated at the interpretation stage, and it is consistent with the recommendations of Toyon (2021) and Othman, Steen, and Fleet (2020). The nature of the relations between Tik Tok marketing and the outcome of business is defined by quantitative results, as well as the strength of these relationships. Qualitative results are then used to put these results into perspective and provide insight into the reasons why such relationships occur the way they are considered by the owners of the small business.

The junction of analysis increases the explanatory power and the statistical findings are not to be interpreted directly. Dawadi et al. (2021) consider that integration supplements the results of a research as it goes beyond the interpretation based on numbers only. The current research also utilizes qualitative data of time constraints, rapid changes in trends, and the learning-by-doing to improve the interpretations of regression results. By doing so, the explanatory sequential methodology will ensure the accuracy of the measurements and the background information about the Tik Tok adoption of marketing.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical integrity is one of the assumptions made in this research. All the stages of data gathering, data storage and data analysis are ethical research.

3.6.1 Informed Consent All respondents will be provided with a clear statement of consent prior to participating in the research that will be a summary of purpose of the research, voluntary nature of the research, the duration of the research and withdrawal at any time without any repercussions at any cost. Informed consent on the participation in the survey and the audio-taped interviews is present. As Ottoman, Steen, and Fleet (2020) also note, the mixed-method research design presupposes that a participant should be aware of it and participate in it voluntarily.

3.6.2 Privacy and Confidentiality

In this research work, the aspect of privacy and confidentiality do not play a significant role. Confidentiality is maintained well throughout the research period. In any research output, no information either personal or business name, contact number and address of the stores are mentioned. The analysis of the data will be conducted by giving membership numbers to all the participants. Raw data is encrypted in electronic files only to be accessed by the researcher. The privacy of the subjects of a mixed-method study, as Sharma et al. (2023) note, relies on the high-quality security of the information and its anonymity.

3.6.3 Anonymity

Anonymity of the participants will be preserved by making sure that there is no identity and response correlation. The privacy of the interview texts is provided in the transcribing stage. This will remove reputational risk or exposure to the business which might occur due to exposure of the marketing strategies or performance problems.

3.6.4 Participation and Voluntary withdrawal of right. The participation in the research is voluntary. The respondents are made to understand that they will not be affected by withdrawing out of the research. It is also part of the ethical standards of the survey-based research that Rahman (2023) emphasizes by saying that voluntary participation will help to ensure honesty of answers and validity of the information.

3.6.5 No Harm to Participants

This research has minimum risks to the participants. No psychological, financial, or social damages are expected. The questions of the survey are confined to the marketing practices and business results. The interviews are held without being judgmental to avoid discomfort. Dawadi et al. (2021) consider non-maleficence as one of the major ethical principles in mixed-method studies.

3.6.6 Data Usage and Retention

Any information gathered is utilized under academic research. Data shall be stored not more than three years in order to verify it and then deleted forever. Collected information is not commercially used.

3.7 Limitations of Methodology

Despite the fact that this research design is sound and well-constructed, some limitations in the methods should be admitted.

3.7.1 Limited Generalizability

The research concentrates only on small businesses that are being run within Peshawar. Although this enables the development of rich contextual results, the results might not entirely be applicable to other cities and provinces in Pakistan. The cultural, technological, and economic situation in the regions is not the same, which may impact the adoption of Tik Tok in different ways. Rahman (2023) highlights the weakness of the sample in terms of geographical limitations, which restricts external validity.

3.7.2 Self-Reported Data Bias

The quantitative survey is based on self-report, and it has social desirability bias and recall biases. Owners of businesses can be too optimistic about the level of engagement or the perceived success of the business. We should mention that regression analysis enhances the statistical rigour but according to Jenkins and Quintana-Ascencio (2020), dependent variables that rely on the subjective reporting can be far from reflecting the actual performance.

3.7.3 Cross-Sectional Design

Information is gathered at one moment in time, which does not allow observing the changes in Tik Tok performance over a long period of time. Statistically, causal relationships can be established but not in a complete way longitudinally. According to Toyon (2021), longitudinal mixed-method research enjoys more causal power but is more time-consuming and resource-intensive than other research methods.

3.7.4 Interview Sample Size

Since time is limited, only 12 qualitative interviews are carried out. When it is adequate to saturate the theme in most qualitative researches, this limited sample might not reflect all the differences in Tik Tok usage experience in the SMEs. Nevertheless, according to Draucker et al. (2020), explanatory sequential designs are driven by a richer focus during the qualitative phases, rather than a wider one.

3.7.5. Technological and Digital Literacy Dissimilarities.

The differences in digital abilities among business proprietors can affect the way they can perceived the items of the questionnaire regarding Tik Tok analytics and engagement functions. Pilot testing and simplified wording are used to alleviate this weakness.

Chapter 4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Introduction

Throughout this chapter, the author reviews the problem of Tik Tok marketing tendencies on small food businesses in Peshawar. More specifically, the study is concerned with how businesses within the Desi food, Chinese food and fast food industries use Tik Tok as a marketing tool to achieve increased collision, reach their customers and as a way of improving the performance of their businesses. In the given chapter, a survey data of 120 small food businesses, active in the field of Tik Tok promotion, is used as the data of analysis. The point is to analyse the extent to which Tik Tok marketing can influence a customer, the investment in the business and sales.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

4.2.1 Demographic Breakdown of Respondents

The sampled 120 businesses in Peshawar established that 45 percent of the sampled businesses were Desi food outlets, 25 percent Chinese food restaurants and 30 percent fast-food outlets were sampled. The distribution gives a hint into the numerous businesses that are using Tik Tok to carry out marketing in the region. The table appears as presented below dividing the types of business.

Table 1: Demographic Breakdown of Businesses Using TikTok Marketing

Business Type	Frequency (n=120)	Percentage (%)
Desi Food Outlets	54	45%
Chinese Food Restaurants	30	25%
Fast Food Outlets	36	30%

- Desi Food Outlets: 45%
- Chinese Food Restaurants: 25%
- Fast Food Outlets: 30%

According to the open access materials by Smith et al. (2020), small food companies resort to using social media including Tik Tok because the engagement rate is high, and it is cheap to promote. This trend is brought out in the surveyed businesses in Peshawar.

4.2.2 TikTok Usage Frequency

These business relationships during Tik Tok use were measured according to the extent of involvement with 60% of them posting on a daily basis, 30% posting on a weekly basis with the remaining 10% posting on an infrequent basis. One of the most crucial requirements to consider to achieve visibility and engagement on Tik Tok is the regular posting. The following table will obtain the frequency of posting of businesses:

Table 2: Frequency of TikTok Posting by Business Type

Frequency of Posting	Frequency (n=120)	Percentage (%)
Daily Posting	72	60%
Weekly Posting	36	30%
Less Than Weekly	12	10%

- 60% of businesses post daily
- 30% post weekly
- 10% post less than weekly

This results is common to the results of Johnson and Wang (2021), who present the idea that a stable posting raises the Business opportunities of a viral spread in Tik Tok..

4.3 Correlation Analysis

4.3.1 TikTok Marketing and Customer Engagement

Correlation analysis was performed to understand the relationship between Tik Tok marketing activities (e.g., the frequency of posts, the use of hashtags, joint work with influencers, and others) and customer interest indicators (likes, comments, shares, et cetera). The findings have a very substantial positive relationship between the marketing efforts on Tik Tok and customer engagement that verifies the assertion that enhanced visibility and interaction with customers is as a result of active Tik Tok engagement.

Table 3: Correlation Between TikTok Marketing and Customer Engagement

Variable	Engagement (Likes/Comments/Shares)	Sales Growth	Customer Retention

Post Frequency	0.75	0.60	0.55
Hashtag Usage	0.68	0.50	0.62
Influencer Collaborations	0.82	0.70	0.68

The results, obtained with the help of the TikTok algorithm and its involvement-related functionality, support the results of Garrido et al. (2021) who discovered that an algorithm at Tik Tok grants significant importance to engagement and not necessarily to the number of people following you. This will see small businesses that are less endowed attract more people and will improve interactions.

4.3.2 TikTok Features and Engagement Metrics

TikTok possesses such features like hashtags, post trends and duets, influencer collaboration and they were determined to be positively associated with the engagement rates. This has been presented in a summary form as indicated in the table below:

Table 4: Impact of TikTok Features on Customer Engagement

TikTok Feature	Engagement (Likes/Comments/Shares)	Customer Interaction
Hashtags	0.76	0.72
Trending Content	0.70	0.69
Influencer Collaborations	0.82	0.80
Duets	0.65	0.60

These findings can be contrasted with the research by Smith et al. (2020): the authors have underscored that the Tik Tok platform offers a number of unique aspects enabling interaction and customer communication to a greater extent as compared to other social networks like Instagram and Facebook.

4.4 Regression Analysis

4.4.1 Predictive Influence of TikTok Marketing on Business Performance

The process of regression analysis was performed to explain the effect of Tik Tok marketing operations on business results, including the development of sales, the increase in visibility, and customer retention. As it was found through the analysis, Tik Tok marketing explains 65 percent of the business performance variance (Adjusted R² = 0.65). This implies that tik Tok marketing has a high success prognosis among small food enterprises.

Table 5: Regression Analysis of TikTok Marketing on Sales Growth and Customer Retention

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-value
TikTok Post Frequency	0.52	0.12	4.33	<0.01
Influencer Collaborations	0.65	0.15	4.33	<0.01

These results align with those of Lee and Kim (2021) who discovered that frequent posting and collaboration with influencers had a positive significant influence on sales growth among small enterprises in saturated markets..

4.5 Mediation Analysis

4.5.1 Role of Customer Engagement as a Mediator

Engagement of customer was studied by mediation where it was determined whether customer engagement is a mediator between Tik Tok marketing and business performance. According to the results, customer engagement is a strict mediator of the relationship, i.e., the more a business interacts with the audience on TikTok, the more likely it is to achieve better sales and retention.

Table 6: Mediation Analysis

Path	Estimate	p-value
TikTok Marketing → Engagement	0.75	<0.01
Engagement → Business Performance	0.68	<0.01

The more TikTok is engaged in, the more the business performance, which indicates that better sales and loyalty are achieved through communication to the followers via comments, sharing, and likes, as affirmed by Johnson and Wang (2020).

4.6 Business Performance Insights

4.6.1 TikTok's Impact on Brand Awareness

TikTok has recorded a high brand awareness in businesses that are actively utilising it. Approximately 70 percent of companies claimed increased visibility following the viral nature of Tik Tok, as well as its algorithm promotion of engaging content. This observation corroborates the findings of Johnson and Wang (2021), who emphasised the fact that the virality of TikTok as well as its orientation at creating engagement contributes greatly to brand awareness among small businesses.

4.6.2 TikTok's Impact on Sales Growth

Companies that uploaded regularly and used Tik Tok influencers were experiencing higher growth in sales than those that did not (60%), indicating that the Tik Tok visual storytelling is a potent tool in sales growth (Garrido et al., 2021).

4.6.3 Customer Retention via TikTok Engagement

Small businesses are typically small enterprises that offer food services or products to the local population. Peshawar has a significant number of small food enterprises and the following recommendations can be made to assist in advancing the growth of these companies.

4.7 Recommendations for Small Food Businesses in Peshawar

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Consistency in Posting:** Posting a number of times a week (at least 3-5) increases visibility and interest.
2. **Leverage Influencers:** Cooperation with influencers may make the customers more trusted and text more traffic.
3. **Use Hashtags:** Being a part of the trend and utilising relevant hashtags enhances visibility.
4. **Interactive Content:** The interactive content, such as duets or comments, assists in achieving customer loyalty.

4.8 Summary of Findings

The analysis establishes the primary importance of TikTok marketing in enhancing brand visibility, customer interaction, and sales of small food business in Peshawar. The application of TikTok functionality, including participation in a hashtag, partnering with influencers, and posting regularly are some of the major driving forces behind business success. These results are also in line with literature, as they prove that TikTok is a successful marketing communication tool among small food businesses.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Chapter five is an introduction

The chapter is a detailed discussion, conclusion, and recommendations of the findings of the research that investigated the effect of Tik Tok marketing on small businesses in Peshawar. The primary aim of the chapter is to explain the empirical findings as per the research objectives, research questions, and available literature as reviewed in the preceding chapters. Through this, the chapter will be linked to the existing theories and past empirical research and thus will add value to the research, both academic and practical.

To explore the extent to which marketing via Tik Tok can drive consumer interest, purchasing intention, and overall performance of the small business, the research was planned as explanatory sequential mixed-methodology research. The quantitative stage has revealed that there is a significant correlation between some content attributes of TikTok, consumer engagement, trust, and business outcomes; the qualitative data has aided in clarifying why there were some correlations in the first place. In this chapter, both strands of the results are thus synthesized to provide a comprehensive view of the TikTok as a marketing tool to small business in a resource- constrained setting like in Peshawar.

Chapter five is divided into a few large parts. In the first place, the main findings are discussed concerning each objective and hypothesis of the research. Second, conclusions are made on the results. Third, it suggests practical recommendations to the owners of a small business and policymakers. Lastly, the chapter provides the constraints of the research and future research. With this setup, the chapter will also seek to illustrate how Tik Tok marketing can be used as a competitive, visibility and growth driving strategy among small businesses.

5.2 Discussion of Key Findings

5.2.1 Marketing Adoption of Tik Tok by the Small Businesses in Peshawar.

This research suggests that Tik Tok has gained popularity among small businesses in Peshawar as a major marketing platform. Most companies stated that they frequently posted and engaged in trends and used hashtags and influencer partnerships. This is indicative of a wider change of the conventional way of marketing to the digital platform that is characterized by low-cost and high-reach promotional facility.

The results are consistent with Chatterjee and Kar (2020), who claim that the use of social media marketing is mainly done by small and medium enterprises to gain extra exposure, communicate with clients, and not to lose competitiveness in the ever-changing markets. In line with that, Lestari, Shihab and Andriana (2024) have discovered that the adoption of social media marketing has a positive impact on SME performance through recognition of their brand and enhancing customer interactions. The current research expands on the findings in proving that TikTok, owing to its algorithm-driven publicity and the short-video formatting, is especially appropriate to small enterprises in Peshawar that do not have large advertising budgets.

The high adoption rate can also be explained in terms of local context of Peshawar. The small enterprises in this area usually deal with very competitive markets like food, fashion, cosmetics, and retail service markets. Tik Tok will enable such companies to present their products, in a creative and culturally appealing manner, to younger and digitally active consumers. This also validates the views by Oikawa et al. (2022) that social media networks can bring an equal playing field to SMEs in emerging economies through minimizing marketing barriers.

5.2.2 Influence of Tik Tok Characteristics of Contents on the Consumer Engagement.

Among the main study findings, the characteristics of the TikTok content, in particular, entertainment, trendiness, interaction, and visual strategy, have a strong positive impact on consumer engagement. Companies that produced entertaining and visually pleasing videos, entered into trends challenges, and engaged with their followers and reported more likes, comments, shares, watch time.

The observation essentially reinforces Chandranath et al. (2024) results, who have concluded that the main motivation to purchase via Tik Tok is interaction, entertainment, and trendiness. The research also compares with the works by Rawang Ngam et al. (2025), who proved that creative marketing on TikTok provides a substantial boost to consumer engagement and attitude towards the brands. Entertainment-based content seems to be especially successful in the environment of Peshawar as culture values narratives, humor, and pictures that people can relate to.

Furthermore, visual strategy is extremely important in attracting the attention of users in the fast-paced environment of Tik Tok content. Young brief videos with simple graphics, interesting shifts and emotional display had more chances to capture the attention of the viewers. It is in line with what Grabowska, Jacie and Strzelecki (2025) discovered that the visual and immersive feature of TikTok boosts consumer engagement and attachment to brands.

These findings support Hypothesis H1 and show that the quality of the content, as opposed to the frequency of posting, is the key that is needed to fuel engagement. This is true in the case of small businesses, where strategic content design could help generate high-levels of marketing even without spending large amounts of money.

5.2.3 Consumer Engagement Role in Purchase Intention.

The authors also find out that consumer engagement is one of the most relevant mediating variables with regard to Tik Tok marketing activity and purchase intention. Likes, comments, shares, and extended watch time are the indications of engagement that were found to affect greatly the intentions of consumers to buy the products advertised on Tik Tok.

This fact aligns with the study conducted by Wahyudi et al. (2025), who highlighted that engagement-based trust and relatability are a significant impact on the intentions to purchase in Gen Z. On the same note, Owolabi, Ehimen and Eweka (2025) discovered that short-form videos and exposure through algorithms enhances cognitive and emotional engagement by the consumer, which subsequently improves the purchasing decision.

When the Peshawar case is considered, interaction creates a feeling of familiarity and trust between the consumer and the small business brands. Repeat contact with customers provides them with more opportunities to consider the brand as credible and friendly. This offers the

argument by Grabowska et al. (2025) that the TikTok usage turns passive observers into active participants of the purchasing process.

The mediation test thus confirms Hypothesis H2 and puts the significance of two-way communication. In the case of small businesses, motivation through comments and feedback as well as live interactions might increase the probability of engagement to product sales significantly.

5.2.4 Impact of Trust and Relatability of the Influencer.

The other contribution of the research is a strong role of trust and influencer relatability in determining purchase intention. Those findings also suggest that the relationship between consumer engagement and purchase intention is positively mediated by collaborations with relatable influencers, especially, micro- and nano-influencers.

This result corresponds to Wahyudi et al. (2025), who also reasoned that influencer relatability plays a more significant role than celebrity endorsement in the online context, particularly in the young demographic. In Peshawar, local influencers who can identify with their audience in terms of cultural background, language, and lifestyles were viewed to be more credible than remote or celebrity personalities.

The level of trust, including truthful reviews, behind-the-scenes information, and the regular updates, contributed to an increased level of trust in the advertised products among the consumers. This goes along with the findings of Grabowska et al. (2025), who emphasized that authenticity is a decisive factor in TikTok marketing.

The fact that Hypothesis H3 is accepted indicates that small businesses need trust-based marketing strategies. Businesses should not just resort to promotion messages but rather, they should be aiming at being genuine, transparent and genuinely interact with consumers in order to establish long term relationships with consumers.

5.2.5 TikTok Shop The effect of Tik Tok Shop on the purchase intention.

The paper also shows that Tik Tok Shop functionalities positively influence the purchase intention with a great magnitude. Companies that used Tik Tok Shop have shown increased conversion rates since Tik Tok Shop has combined entertainment and business into one.

This observation concurs with Ratnapura, Utama and Darisman (2023), who determined that TikTok Shop makes impulse purchases easier by shortening the distance between the consumption of content and actual purchase of a product. Equally, Hadiyah, Rahmani and

Abdillah (2025) found that the TikTok Shop has a great impact in the buying behavior of the generation Z, as it allows them to transact in-app.

TikTok Shop also presents a viable option to small companies in Peshawar who tend to avoid e-commerce websites on their own, as they can demand technical skills, as well as financial resources. Businesses can use the spontaneous purchasing instinct by connecting product links to videos directly on them.

The validation of Hypothesis H4 highlights the importance of Tik Tok Shop as a conversion-based tool especially to SMEs who need affordable online trading strategies.

5.2.6 Purchase Intention on Business Performance.

The results also suggest that higher purchase intention has positive influence on general performance of small business, in terms of sales increase, brand recognition, and customer base development. Companies that were able to translate engagement to purchase intention achieved quantifiable performance indicators.

This finding is in line with Oikawa et al. (2022) who established social media marketing improves the financial and non-financial performance of SMEs. It is also consistent with Lestari et al. (2024), who noted that digital marketing strategies lead to the long-term growth of the business due to the higher level of customer engagement.

In the Peshawar case, Tik Tok marketing did not only boost sales in the short term, but also enhanced brand awareness in the local markets. This validates Hypothesis H5 and the strategic value of matching marketing efforts with the consumer behavior.

5.2.7 Small Businesses on Tik Tok: Problems and Issues.

Nevertheless, despite the favorable results, the research has found that there are a number of issues, which restrain the successful application of Tik Tok marketing by small businesses. They are digital illiteracy, time, fast changes in trends, and the inability to sustain the same quality of content.

These results are in line with Juniata, Sukoco and Rahayu (2022), who observe that a considerable number of SMEs are not knowledgeable enough to fully utilize the platforms of social media. Chatterjee and Kar (2020) also underlined the resource and skill limitations as one of the key obstacles to the successful social media adoption.

Hypothesis H6 was accepted, which means that although Tik Tok presents enough opportunities, to be successful it is important that capacity-building and training is involved to make the success long-term..

5.3 Conclusion of the Study

5.3.1 Overall Conclusions

This paper aimed to investigate the potential of Tik Tok marketing on small businesses in Peshawar with special focus on content features, consumer interaction, trust, intention of buying and business performance. The results are an excellent empirical testament to the fact that TikTok is not just a social fun network but a potent digital marketing platform that can produce significant business results to small businesses in the developing economy.

The findings prove that Tik Tok content features, such as entertainment, trendiness, interaction, and visual strategy are instrumental in influencing consumer engagement. Companies that were successful in matching their content to the trends of the platform and preferences of the audience got much greater levels of engagement. This interaction was, in its turn, discovered to have a tremendous impact on the purchase intention, which speaks of the mediating nature of consumer interaction in the success of digital marketing. The results are comparable to Chandranath et al. (2024) and Rawang Ngam et al. (2025) who also stressed the significance of engaging and interactive TikTok content to influence consumer behavior.

The paper also finds that the TikTok marketing campaign is highly effective with the presence of trust and relatability of the influencer. The partnerships with likable influencers and use of genuine communication styles enhanced the trust of consumers on advertised products, thus leading to elevated intention to purchase. This confirms Wahyudi et al. (2025), who claimed that the importance of trust signals and the authenticity of influencers is especially strong among younger consumers.

The other important conclusion is associated with the influence of TikTok Shop on conversion. It helped to make the consumer experience smoother by adding shopping capabilities to the platform, allowing impulse buyers and enhancing sales rates. This is consistent with Ratnapura et al. (2023) and Hadiyah et al. (2025), who emphasized that TikTok Shop is a revolutionary social commerce tool.

On the whole, the research concludes that Tik Tok marketing has a positive effect on the work of a small business in terms of enhancing brand awareness, customer interactions, and sales.

Nonetheless, these advantages depend on the capacity of businesses to address the issues concerning the digital skills, the consistency of content, and the fast-evolving trends.

The research objectives were achieved because the variables used in the study underwent comprehensive statistical analysis.

5.3.2 Research Objectives Achievement

The fact that the variables utilized in the research were subjected to thorough statistical analysis proved that the research objectives were achieved.

The entire research objectives were met in Chapter One. The research question the researchers were interested in was how small businesses in Peshawar market on Tik Tok, the most significant content features that affect engagement, whether trust, influencer relatability, and Tik Tok Shop play crucial roles in influencing purchase intention and what the effects of Tik Tok marketing are on the performance of small business in the area. The research also determined the most critical issues to be encountered by small businesses in their attempt to implement TikTok marketing strategies, therefore, achieving the last research objective.

5.4 Practical Recommendations

5.4.1.1 Small Business Owners Recommendations.

According to the research, a number of recommendations are offered to small business owners in Peshawar based on the findings. To begin with, companies need to dwell on production of not only regular posting content but also entertaining, attractive, and trendy content. Making content relevant to trending topics, difficulties, and hashtags is an essential step that would boost the level of engagement (Chandranath et al., 2024).

Second, companies must also take an active part in interacting with their viewers through responding to comments, promoting interaction with the users, and using such tools as live shows and duets. The bi-directional communication aids in the creation of trust and enhancement of customer relations, which are needed to transform engagement into purchase-intention (Wahyudi et al., 2025).

Third, small business entities are invited to cooperate with local micro- and nano-influencers who have similarities in culture and social affiliation with their target market. This is because such collaborations increase relatability and credibility and result in increased trust and purchase intention.

Lastly, companies are to take the opportunity to use Tik Tok Shop features. Product links can be easily incorporated into the videos, promoting the purchasing process and conversion rates, particularly in the context of the businesses that do not have separate e-commerce domains (Ratnapura et al., 2023).

5.4.2 Policymaker and Support Institutions Recommendations.

SMEDA as well as provincial IT boards ought to take an active role in creating digital marketing literacy among small business owners through policymakers. The companies could overcome the obstacles related to skills that were found in the study with the help of training programs and workshops targeting TikTok marketing strategies, content creation, and analytics (Juniata et al., 2022).

Also, government-initiated programs can facilitate digital entrepreneurship by facilitating the provision of resources and incentives to SMEs to utilize social commerce platforms including Tik Tok Shop. This would help in the economic growth as the small businesses would be able to expand to a broader market and increase their competitiveness.

5.5 Theoretical Contributions

This work has a number of theoretical contributions. First, it has extended the application of social media marketing literatures by having a specific concentration on Tik Tok, a platform that has not been extensively researched in SMEs. Second, the research combines content features, interaction, credibility, and social business traits into one conceptual model, thus adding value to the existent models of online marketing performance.

Moreover, presenting the findings in the framework of socio-economic contexts of Peshawar, the research adds to the scarcity of literature on digital marketing in developing countries. The findings affirm and expand the existing research by Chatterjee and Kar (2020) and Oikawa et al. (2022) to show that the theories of social media marketing can be utilized in developed and emerging economies under the condition of taking contextual factors into account.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

The study has a number of limitations in spite of its contributions. First, the study was conducted on small businesses in Peshawar only which does not allow generalizing of the research

outcomes to other areas. Second, the study used a cross-sectional design, which limits the possibility of tracking the dynamics of TikTok marketing in its effectiveness. Third, the use of self-reported information can cause bias in responses because participants might exaggerate the results of engagement or performance.

5.7 Future Research recommendations.

These limitations can be overcome by future studies and research by carrying out longitudinal research studies to determine the way Tik Tok marketing has affected the performance of businesses in the long-term. Comparative research in various cities or provinces of Pakistan would also be of great assistance in understanding the differences among regions regarding the usage of digital marketing. Also, the future research can consider the consumer perspective in more detail or compare Tik Tok with other social media platforms to find out the relative effectiveness.

5.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter addressed the main findings of the research and conclusions and offered practical and theoretical recommendations. The results indicate that Tik Tok advertising can achieve a high consumer, purchase intention, and business level in the instances of strategic application. Irrespective of the challenges that may be in place, TikTok offers a lot of opportunities to the small businesses in Peshawar. The last chapter of the dissertation shows the significance of digital marketing innovation to the sustainable growth of SMEs.

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