



EXAMINING THE EFFECT OF TIKTOK ON THE MOROCCAN CONSUMER BUYING DECISION PROCESS AFTER THE PANDEMIC

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Abstract:

After the pandemic of covid 19, the growth in social media has provided and created opportunities for both consumers by simplifying the buying process to simple clicks and product searching for companies to merge and strengthen their online presence. Given the importance for marketers to recognize the consumer way of making the buying decisions, acknowledging the consumer decision-making process starts with the awareness of identifying needs passing by collecting information in the form to satisfy these needs, evaluating the options available and alternatives to making the final decision of buying and finally explaining the satisfaction or dissatisfaction by considering this purchase decision. This study aims to understand how social media marketing channels can impact the five stages of the buying decision process after the pandemic. This paper will analyze the effect of social media marketing on the buying decision process. It has been designed to work and focus on TikTok as a social media marketing channel since it occupied an important role during the pandemic and has extensive growth and a global community. Furthermore, an online questionnaire is administered to investigate how this platform can impact Moroccan customers' purchasing decisions to meet their demands after the pandemic of covid-19.

Keywords:

Social media marketing, covid 19, TikTok, consumer buying decision process

1. Introduction

Since the virus spread from Wuhan, China, the world has experienced several changes; every human being was concerned. Every organization and business with a profit or non-profit was affected from the health to economics sector. With the lockdown and quarantine, enterprises have started thinking about multiplying efforts on new channels to maintain their activities, serve their clients and promote their works, which has been seen and manifested through different and appropriate social media marketing channels.

Companies can employ social media to construct and sustain connections with customers and clients, plus enhance community functioning (Thota,2018). The pandemic has significantly impacted businesses and has driven more executives to use, orient, and adapt their marketing strategy to digitalization. This digitalization has also had a remarkable influence on human social life since the beginning of social network platforms.

According to (Datareportal 2021) information, the total number of social media platforms users have reached 4.62 billion in January 2022, which represents 58.4 percent of the earth's population; In addition, the Global Web index data (Global Web Index,2020) attested that social media platform are used for an average of 2 hours and 27minutes daily usage.

This number explains that social media has become indispensable in our daily lives. Since the apparition of the pandemic, social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and other platforms have helped the world during pandemic times. Sharing photos, videos, and news with friends and the community can not be done without social networks.

Understanding consumer behavior is a challenge for every company. Knowing the Purchasing Decision-Making Model, the so-called consumer buying process, helps marketers identify how consumers complete the journey from learning about a product to purchasing.

In this study, the author will relate the social media marketing channels. For this paper, the researcher limited the survey to TikTok as an example of a social media marketing channel since it has a grown community around the world and how it affects the buying process of Moroccan consumers in making their buying decisions to satisfy their needs.

2. Background and Theoretical Foundation

This part aims to interpret, explain and explore the concept of TikTok and its growing notoriety in the context of the COVID19 pandemic, and describe the buying process and its steps related to TikTok.

2.1. TikTok and COVID-19

TikTok has become a social media application that permits users to create, promote, and react to short-form music video content. (Geysler, 2019). TikTok users have been utilizing the app for creating videos of themselves dancing, acting, training, cooking, and exercising.

TikTok is centering on short video involvement. Users and firms are responsible for content creation in the app by using templates, filters, visual effects, and built-in music to create short-lived videos. (Johnson, 2020)

The application has demonstrated immense popularity before the pandemic. Earlier in 2020, TikTok grew its fame over diverse ages and regions and became more considered by brands and advertisers (Newton, 2020). According to the official company statement, in 2021, TikTok has reached 1 billion users and has been downloaded from the Google Play and App store more than 1 billion times. (TikTok, 2021) References are prepared in Harvard style.

TikTok had recognized phenomenal progress amid the COVID-19 pandemic when people were confined at home and searching for entertainment. The application has known a rise in download on google play and the app store worldwide. According to Music Business Worldwide, during the week of March 16, 2020, the TikTok application was downloaded 2 million times, with an 18% increase compared to the previous week. Another 27% increase was shown in the first 23 days of March compared to February, with 6.2 million downloads (Crowley, 2020)

With a strong identity, all features in the app's user interface were designed to facilitate the learning and use of the app in making short videos and entertainment. Furthermore, the engaged community using the app before the pandemic has helped the newcomers to familiarize themselves with the application. TikTok has become more popular and gained the attention of the z generation. (Johnson, 2020)

The entertaining, humorous, and spontaneous environment and nature of TikTok videos represent a resource of relaxation, entertainment, and a time killer at the same period as self-quarantining and social distancing through the pandemic (Su et al.,2020).

2.2. Buying process

Understanding consumer behavior, especially how they behave to making the buying decision, is necessary for every intelligent company. Marketers must ask the basic customer comportment queries such as who, what, when, where, how, and why.

With the introduction of the buying process model in 1910 by John Dewey Bruner, G.C. and Pomazal, R.J. (1988), Several studies have developed the model and its five-stage that the consumer typically passes through.

The Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell model emphasize the decision-making process during a purchase to discover how and why consumers act. The EKB model explains the process leading from the problem or needs recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior.

The Five stage model of the consumer buying decision process presented in Figure1 (Spivakovsky,2016) illustrates the usual order of this process that starts by discovering and recognizing a problem or need to attain the post-purchase behavior. Although, it is necessary to mention that these five steps of the consumer buying process are not always respected in the same order; the consumer may jump or switch some steps depending on the nature of the product or needs wanted. However, the model presents a reasonable frame of reference. (Kotler and Keller,2012).



Figure 1 Five-Stages models of the consumer buying decision process. (Spivakovsky,2016)

2.2.1. Problem Recognition

The buying process begins when a consumer discovers a need to satisfy or a problem to resolve. Problem recognition is founded on the interaction between the requested state and the actual state.

Identifying needs can appear due to habits, necessity, or alternative development changes. Maslow hypothesized that humans have five types of needs and are stimulated hierarchically. Kaur, A. (2013).

According to (Gratton,1980), Maslow's needs hierarchies can be categorized into five classes demonstrated on a pyramid that describes psychological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs. (Jashari and Rrustemi,2017) have alleged that social media photos, videos, and comments can motivate the identification of new special needs.

2.2.2. Information Search

Once the needs are distinguished, the consumers start gathering information about the wanted need or product. This process may differ from one consumer to another based on product and desires. Consumers can focus on internal information described as prior knowledge acquired from previous experience. Alternatively, they can use external information sources based on the importance and value of the product, and the needs wanted to be satisfied (Oliver et al., 2011). It is said that there are two levels of action the exploration of information. Consumers become more open to getting information concerning a product first. Later, consumers begin an active information search: looking for learning material, calling families, friends, and colleagues, searching the internet, and visiting physical stores to hear about the product. (Armstrong et.al , 2020).

2.2.3. Evaluation Of Alternatives

After completing the needed research and collecting pieces of information from different sources, the customers start the phase of evaluating the alternative. It is essential to mention that no specific procedure is managed by all consumers or one consumer in all buying situations. Therefore, there are various methods, and most existing models find that the consumer creates decisions generally on a determined and reasonable basis. (Kotler and Opresnik,2020). Typically, consumers assess the options based on some aspects and characteristics of the product. Purchasers will read and verify numerous reviews, assessing benefits, comparing prices, and the best or simplest place to obtain the product. Through this stage, the consumers need to choose from whom they would buy and when to buy, which can be influenced by price, store ambiance, terms of sale, or previous experience.

2.2.4. Purchase Decision

In this phase and after considering the information gathered and evaluating alternatives for the product desired. Consumers were able to decide and choose on purchasing the product that would satisfy their needs and solve the problem. (Inman et al.,2002) declared that consumers might often drop the decision for different reasons. The reasons may differ and can be related to price, value, and changes in the consumer's needs. Such unexpected transactions result from tempting deals or are merely attributable to the buyer's features.

Two conditions can disrupt the final purchase decision: Discouraging criticism from friends or other customers who purchased the same product. Second, sudden changes in business plans, financial crises, and unanticipated increases in prices might lead the consumer to drop buying the desired product. (Kotler and Keller, 2012)

(Hoyer and Macinnis,2008) have noticed that even if the purchaser may have been thorough across all the steps, the buying decision often depends on the stock and store management availability.

2.2.5. Post-Purchase Decision

The final stage in the consumer decision buying process is the post-purchase behavior, when the customer formulates an evaluation of the experience by measuring his satisfaction, whether he is satisfied or dissatisfied.

The satisfaction or dissatisfaction will always be significant in the future and will influence the decision of other customers concerning that product or that brand wht sharing their attitudes about the purchase and the experience survived.

Satisfying the consumer is a fundamental point for every business, which will help create a loyal customer and reflect this loyalty in their future purchasing and recommendations (Spreng et al., 1996).

The satisfied customer will play an essential role and decisive factor for future purchases or references. Ofir and Simonson (Ofir and Simonson, 2005) underlined the consequence of this stage for the consumer's succeeding operation and how companies do not consider it. Furthermore, the impact of the reference groups might play a considerable role during this phase of the post-purchase evaluation, not only involving the consumer.

2.3. TikTok And The Buying Process

According to (Jashari and Rrustemi,2017), videos, comments, and photos available on social media platforms can be a stimulator to increase the recognition of new needs. (Thota,2018) affirms that companies can use social media to initiate consumer product needs by emphasizing product positives and brand awareness. Businesses can use, for example, TikTok as a social media platform to post short videos and reviews to generate and increase the need for their product or services. (Wertz,2019) suggests that businesses can appeal to influencers to increase recognition for a specific product or demand by posting a favorable product review.

In the subsequent phase of the buying process, consumers search for information to find the option to satisfy the need recognized in the first stage. Consumers take into consideration numerous variables, attributes, and opportunities. (Tam and Jeong-Nam, 2019)stated that the improvement of technology and culture had led to a rise in using social media to gather and acquire information. The pandemic also played a role in increasing the use of social media platforms to get the information needed, given that lockdown and curfew led to a reduction in physical contact with stores and people. (Mason et al., 2020)

In the third stage of the buying process, and before making the final purchase decision, consumers start evaluating product options centered on some traits and attributes of the product. Marketers can use social media platforms, TikTok, to interact with customers to push and influence consumer decisions. Communication can be realized by posting short videos that present and demonstrate positive information to help consumers satisfy their needs and concerns.

With the spread of COVID-19, the ability to interact directly with their corresponding has decreased. Therefore, technological advances have allowed companies to increase the capability of communicating and demonstrating product information. Consumers can count on social media to be more informed and judge the advantages and risks of a given product. Hence, it appears possible that consumers might expand their use of social media to reduce the alleged threat of a particular purchase decision.

In the fourth step of the buying decision process, the consumer can buy the product or satisfy the needs. Social media has an influential role in building and creating awareness for a product or service. (Ranaweera, 2015) stated that consumers evaluated their alternatives based on previous experiences of family members, friends, and expert and opinion advisers. Besides this, the pandemic has played a significant role in social media by allowing consumers to communicate with a larger community and discover their experiences with the given products or services without making physical contact. Notably, social media has played a significant role in purchase decision behaviors.

The final stage in the consumer decision buying process is post-purchase behavior. In this step, the consumer creates an experience evaluation by making a statement about his satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

TikTok, or other social media platforms, have allowed consumers to describe and post their purchases. (Dholakia,2017) has indicated that behavior can increase consumers' happiness and share private consumption to become public consumption. Social media allows consumers to communicate their consumption behaviors with other platform users, and it does not differ from traditional word of mouth. (Barasch and Berger, 2014) affirmed that consumers have more power and control of purchasing experiences and post purchasing behavior on social media since it offers allochronic communications.

3. Research Methodology

This part will focus on the purpose and importance of this paper, the hypothesis, and the research model, and finally, the author will highlight the data analysis and findings.

3.1. Purpose of Study

This paper aims to analyze the effects and impact of social media marketing channels; we have concentrated our studies on TikTok and its influence on the Moroccan consumer buying decision process post covid.

3.2. Importance of Study

The importance of this article is distinct in giving businesses a transparent picture of the role of social media marketing channels, specifically TikTok, defined by this study on the Moroccan consumer purchase decisions process after the pandemic.

3.3. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were developed and derived from the literature and theoretical review:

H0: TikTok has no positive impact on the Consumer buying Decision process post covid

H01: TikTok has a positive effect on need recognition post covid

H02: TikTok has a positive impact on the information search post covid

H03: TikTok has a positive impact on the evaluation of alternatives post covid

H04: TikTok has a positive impact on the purchase decision post covid

H05: TikTok has a positive impact on the post-purchase behavior post covid

3.4. Research Model

The research model created by the author of the paper describes the relationship between the different variables of this research. The independent variable is presented by TikTok as a social media marketing channel, although the dependent variable is presented by the buying process, which has five steps related to this paper's hypothesis.

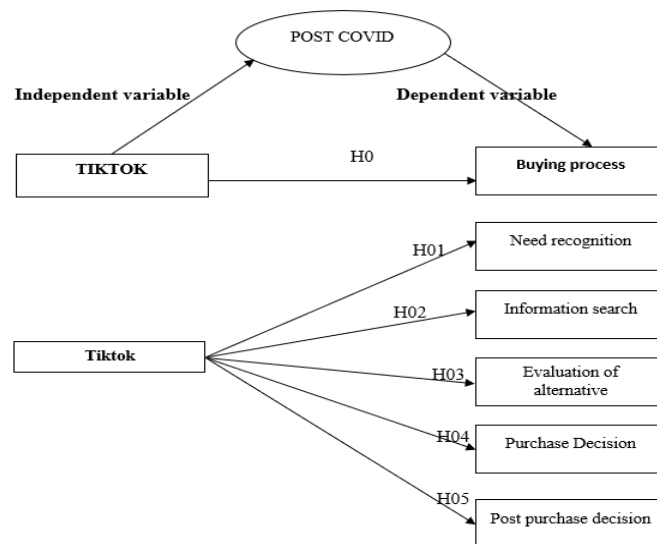


Figure 2 Research model presented by the author.

3.5. Sample and Data Collection

An explanatory research strategy was employed to achieve this paper's objectives, which is focused on analyzing the effect of TikTok on consumer behavior and their buying process decision in Morocco after the pandemic. A

structured questionnaire was administrated online using Google Forms; given that the questionnaire is dedicated to Moroccan consumers, it was conducted in French and English.

Respondents were asked to express their level of agreement using the Likert scale, which determines respondents' degree of accordance with the statement asked. In this form 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (agree or disagree), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree).

This research study adopts the qualitative comparison of respondents and quantitative analysis methods. The data was collected, cleaned, and analyzed electronically using SPSS version 23. The questionnaire was distributed to 250, and 209 responses were reached from different Gender, ages, and social classes. It is necessary to mention that the time deadline has limited the author of this paper to collect more responses from a large population.

3.6. Data Analysis and Findings

This section presents the analysis results conducted in the research study to empirically investigate the effect and impact of TikTok marketing on the Moroccan consumer buying decision process post covid using a structured questionnaire instrument. This research study adopts the qualitative comparison of respondents and quantitative analysis methods. The returned question was collected, cleaned, and analyzed electronically using SPSS version 23, and findings were presented using descriptive and inferential statistics.

3.7. Descriptive and Univariate Variables

When examining Tables 1, 2,3, and 4, it is understood that most respondents in this questionnaire are between 20-29, represented by 59.8%. For Gender of respondents, 55% of participants are male, and 45 % are female. A large population of the participants, represented by 42.6%, are undergraduates, 36.8% are master's Graduates, and 7.2%% are at Ph.D. Graduate education level. The active users of TikTok represent 63.6 %.

Table 1 Respondents Age

Age Range of Respondents	Freq.	Percent (%)	Cum.
20-29	125	59.8	59.8
30-39	70	33.5	93.3
40-49	13	6.2	99.5
50-59	-	-	99.5
60+	1	.5	100.0
Total	209	100.00	

Table 2 Respondents Gender Distribution

Gender of Respondents	Freq.	Percent (%)	Cum.
Female	82	45.0	45.0
Male	110	55.0	100.0
Total	209	100.00	

Table 3 Respondents' Educational level

Education level of Respondents	Freq.	Percent (%)	Cum.
Undergraduate	89	42.6	42.6
Master's Graduate	77	36.8	79.4
Ph.D. Graduate	15	7.2	86.6
Other	28	13.4	100.0
Total	209	100.00	

Table 4 Respondents Using TikTok

	Freq.	Percent (%)	Cum.
No TikTok group	76	36.4	36.6
TikTok group	133	63.6	100.0
Total	209	100.00	

In Table 5, the results show that the respondents use TikTok to complete their buying process; 27.3% of participants agree that TikTok impacts their attitude toward the buying decision, and 32.5% of respondents attest that they have discovered needed products via TikTok. 27.8% prefer using TikTok in information search to satisfy their needs discovered, 34.4% of participants use TikTok to evaluate alternatives, 29.9% use the platform to make a buying decision, and finally, 33% are sharing their post-purchase decision satisfaction or dissatisfaction with TikTok.

Table 5 Distribution of Respondents' Response Percentage

QUESTIONS	SD	D	N	A	SA
BUYING PROCESS					
TikTok has an essential role in changing my attitude toward the buying decision	19.6%	14.8%	24.9%	27.3%	13.4%
NEED RECOGNITION					
I use TikTok to identify needed products	20.1%	11.0%	23.4%	32.5%	12.9%

INFORMATION SEARCH					
I use TikTok to gather information to compare products	19.1%	14.4%	25.8%	27.8%	12.9%
EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES					
I prefer using TikTok to evaluate product purchase risk	20.1%	12.0%	21.5%	34.4%	12.0%
PURCHASE DECISION					
I favor using TikTok to make a purchase decision	20.6%	12.4%	23.4%	29.2%	14.4%
POST-PURCHASE DECISION					
I Favor using TikTok to share my post-purchase satisfaction or dissatisfaction	19.6%	9.6%	25.4%	33.0%	12.4%

3.8. Test of Research Hypotheses

Analyzing the impact of TikTok on buying decision process, the five stages had to be investigated using a regression analysis approach with other interacting predictors.

Hypothesis 1

TikTok has a positive impact on need recognition post covid purchase.

Table 6 Regression for Need Recognition

	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		7.692	.000
Tiktok group	.591	10.365	.000

A regression analysis was conducted to measure the effect of TikTok and its impacts on the need recognition step, where the need recognition was considered a dependent variable, TikTok user, demographic variables, and the social media daily usage were considered as predictors. By examining the ANOVA table, a fit model of $F(4,204) = 27.59$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .351$, indicating 35.1% variation in predictive variable, TikTok ($\beta = .591$; $t = 10.37$, $p < .001$).

The coefficient of the predictive variable shown in table 6 after removing insignificant predictors confirms the stated hypothesis. Therefore, TikTok has a positive impact on need recognition post-pandemic.

Hypothesis 2

Tiktok has a positive impact on the information search post covid

Table 7 Regression for Information Search

	Standardized		
	Coefficients		
	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		6.214	.000
Tiktok group	.558	9.506	.000

A regression analysis was directed to determine the impact of TikTok on the second stage of the buying decision process, which is information search, where the information search was taken as the dependent variable, TikTok user, demographics variables, and the social media daily use considered as predictors. By examining the ANOVA table, a fit model of $F(4,204) = 23.07$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .31$, indicating 31% variation in predictive variable, Tiktok ($\beta = .558$; $t = 9.51$, $p < .001$)

The coefficient of the projecting variable exposed in table 7 after eradicating insignificant predictors confirms the stated hypothesis. Therefore, TikTok has a positive impact on the information search post-pandemic.

Hypothesis 3

Tiktok has a positive impact on the evaluation of alternatives post covid

Table 8 Regression for Evaluation of Alternatives

	Standardized		
	Coefficients		
	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		6.863	.000
Tiktok group	.547	9.284	.000

A regression analysis was elaborate to control the influence of TikTok on the third stage of the buying decision process, which is the evaluation of alternatives, where the evaluation of alternatives was denoted as a dependent variable, TikTok user, demographics variables, and the social media daily use considered as predictors. The ANOVA table shows a fit model $F(4,204) = 22.60$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .307$, indicating 30.7% variation in predictive variable, Tiktok ($\beta = .547$; $t = 9.28$, $p < .001$).

The coefficient of the model-based variable presented in table 8 after deleting insignificant predictors confirms the stated hypothesis. Therefore, TikTok has a positive impact on evaluating alternatives post-pandemic.

Hypothesis 4

Tiktok has a positive impact on the purchase decision post covid

Table 9 Regression for the Purchase Decision

	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		6.814	.000
Tiktok group	.583	10.225	.000

To control the influence of TikTok on the fourth phase of the buying decision process, that is, the purchase decision, a regression analysis was elaborate, where the purchase decision was involved as a dependent variable, TikTok user, demographics variables, and the social media daily use considered as predictors. The ANOVA table indicated a fit model of $F(4,204) = 27.61$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .351$, indicating 35.1% variation in predictive variable, TikTok ($\beta = .583$; $t = 10.22$, $p < .001$).

The coefficient of the predictive variable displayed in table 9 after eliminating insignificant predictors confirms the stated hypothesis. Therefore, TikTok, we can conclude that Tiktok positively impacts the purchase decision post covid.

Hypothesis 5

Tiktok has a positive impact on the post-purchase behavior post covid

Table 10 Regression For Post-Purchase Decision

	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		6.747	.000
Tiktok group	.533	9.029	.000

To control the influence of TikTok on the final step of the buying decision process, that is, post-purchase decision, a regression analysis was elaborate, where the post-purchase decision was entailed as a dependent variable, TikTok user, demographics variables, and the social media daily use considered as predictors. The ANOVA table indicated a fit model of $F(4,204) = 22.16$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .303$, indicating 30.3% variation in predictive variable, TikTok ($\beta = .533$; $t = 9.03$, $p < .001$).

The coefficient of the predictive variable displayed in table 10 after rejecting insignificant predictors confirms the stated hypothesis. Therefore, TikTok, we can determine that TikTok positively impacts the post-purchase decision post covid.

Table 11 Pearson R Correlation Summary

		TikTok group	TikTok has an essential role in changing my attitude toward buying decisions.	I use TikTok to identify needed products.	I use TikTok to gather information to compare products	I prefer using TikTok to evaluate product purchase risk	I favor using TikTok to make a purchase decision
TikTok group	Pearson Correlation	1	.494**	.575**	.554**	.540**	.578**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	209	209	209	209	209	209
TikTok has an essential role in changing my attitude toward the buying decisions	Pearson Correlation	.494**	1	.811**	.771**	.807**	.787**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	209	209	209	209	209	209
I use TikTok to identify needed products	Pearson Correlation	.575**	.811**	1	.786**	.827**	.794**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	209	209	209	209	209	209
I use TikTok to gather information to compare products	Pearson Correlation	.554**	.771**	.786**	1	.780**	.822**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	209	209	209	209	209	209

I prefer using TikTok to evaluate product purchase risk	Pearson Correlation	.540**	.807**	.827**	.780**	1	.833**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	209	209	209	209	209	209
I favor using TikTok to make a purchase decision	Pearson Correlation	.578**	.787**	.794**	.822**	.833**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	209	209	209	209	209	209
I Favor using TikTok to share my post-purchase satisfaction or dissatisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.533**	.830**	.817**	.776**	.825**	.786**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	209	209	209	209	209	209

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 11 presents the relationship between TikTok and consumers' buying behavior. Investigating the association between the buying behavior processes and TikTok indicated a significant positive relationship ($P < .001$). This confirms the stated hypothesis, hence was confirmed in this study.

4. Conclusion

The expanding influence of social media marketing channels on consumer behaviors has become evident. TikTok, especially after the pandemic, has become an essential component of social media marketing channels and has known immense popularity, which leads to grabbing the attention of marketers and companies to use it to influence the consumer behaviors towards the buying decision process.

Based on the results of the data analysis and summary, we can deduce that social media marketing channels represented by TikTok have a significant impact and effect on all steps of the buying decision process, starting from the need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, buying decision, to post-purchase decision.

Given the limitations acquired in this paper, starting from analyzing the effect of social media marketing channels through TikTok in a specified geographic part (Morocco) with a specific culture and social influence. The suggestion for further researchers to analyze the effect of social media marketing channels in other countries, regions, or globally to compare the results because they may differ from Morocco's. The second suggestion is to measure the impact of TikTok on the buying process for a specific sector or for a particular brand (local or international) which can be valuable for brand strategies.

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