

Submission

What do viral dance trends, “Get Ready With Me” videos and skincare routines have in common? Beyond entertaining millions, they are reshaping markets in real-time. Welcome to the [attention economy](#), where what you notice, watch, and share holds serious economic value. And at the heart of this new economy are women, whose influence on TikTok is rewriting the rules of how products are sold, brands are built, and markets move.

In a world where attention is a scarce commodity, social media platforms like TikTok thrive by capturing and holding your interest. The platform translates viral trends into transactions, making it a commercial playground where products fly off shelves in hours. Women are at the forefront of this shift, creating waves of consumer demand and bypassing traditional advertisements.

Capturing Attention: The New Currency of the Digital Age

In the attention economy, businesses no longer compete only for your money; they compete for your time and focus. This shift reflects economist Herbert Simon’s theory that when information is plentiful, attention becomes the scarcest and most valuable resource. Platforms like TikTok capitalise on this, curating personalised algorithms to engage users and hold their attention.

These strategies work through the [behavioural economic](#) concept of [social proof](#): people rely on social cues, following trends endorsed by others. TikTok’s female creators leverage this tendency by building trust through relatable content. Their product recommendations feel like personal advice rather than marketing, which is far more persuasive than traditional ads. This trust-driven model is a powerful departure from traditional advertising, reframing how products are marketed and consumed.

The Power of Everyone Wanting What Everyone Else Has

The success of TikTok is a prime example of [network effects](#), where a platform becomes more valuable as more people use it. On TikTok, trends grow exponentially as users imitate viral content, amplifying its reach. The platform’s collaborative features,

like duets and stitching, further enhance this effect, making it easier for influencers to engage with their audiences.

One demonstration of this is the [#CleanGirlAesthetic](#) trend, featuring natural makeup, slicked-back hair, and minimal fashion. Creators like @aliciabreuer0 popularised the look, skyrocketing sales of Dior Lip Glow Oil and Rare Beauty blushes. Small businesses riding the wave saw dramatic growth, demonstrating that even niche trends driven by women can generate significant economic impacts. It underscores the importance of market power in the attention economy, as individual creators now wield influence that can shape market trends.

Selling Through People, Not Brands

The economic impact of female creators extends beyond beauty and fashion. Communities like [#Booktok](#), where users share book recommendations, have caused several titles to sell out, with publishers crediting TikTok for a surge in sales. Similarly, movements like [#ThriftTok](#) have driven increased sales in secondhand stores, encouraging sustainable consumption.

TikTok's rise reflects a shift from selling products through corporate branding to marketing through trusted voices. Female creators not only generate sales but also shape consumer values, promoting everything from eco-conscious choices to lifestyle aesthetics. In this model, brands adapt by partnering directly with influencers, who act as trusted intermediaries between products and consumers.

What the Attention Economy Means for Female Entrepreneurs

The attention economy isn't just a trend; it represents a shift in economic power distribution. Platforms like TikTok allow women to monetise their influence and build brands independently, bypassing traditional gatekeepers. This empowerment enables female entrepreneurs to shape consumer behaviour and lead cultural conversations on their terms.

However, the rapid commercialisation of attention also brings challenges. The pressure to maintain relevance and engagement can be taxing, and economic inequality may deepen as those with larger followings capture greater rewards. For female-led businesses and entrepreneurs, success in the attention economy demands resilience and innovation, balancing opportunity with the volatility of online platforms.

As markets shift to favour attention and influence over direct transactions, women's leadership in this space signals a move toward a more inclusive and democratised economy. Supporting female creators and fostering fair compensation models in digital spaces will be essential for building a sustainable and equitable marketplace. The future of commerce will not be dictated solely by brands but by the voices of these women who have captured the world's attention.

A New Economic Paradigm

The attention economy is reshaping how products are marketed and sold, with women on TikTok driving the movement. Their power to capture attention, foster trust, and drive trends signals a departure from traditional advertising models and ushers in a new era of commerce. This shift provides women unprecedented opportunities for influence and entrepreneurship while highlighting the need for inclusive, fair practices that support sustainable digital careers.

In a world built on engagement, the future belongs to those who know how to wield attention wisely. So, have I got yours?