

Original Research

# Why Small Brands Choose TikTok Marketing in The Digital Age? An In-Depth Analysis

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## Abstract

Digital transformation has directly affected how humans live. New technologies and social networks have changed the way people connect, and their habits and customs have also been affected. Consumption patterns are one aspect of this transformation process, and to be successful, brands and advertisers must understand how consumers behave in social media applications like TikTok. To know how to design their marketing strategy, they need to analyze what leads consumers to make one decision or another and what makes them choose a product. This research will examine the unique relationship between a brand's marketing success and its relationship with the social media platform TikTok.

**Keywords:** Digital age, consumers, behavior, TikTok, marketing.



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## 1. Introduction

New virtual communication platforms based on new digital technologies and the internet have caused essential changes in decision-making patterns and consumer behavior (Lee et al. 2008). Moreover, they have become the most influential social reality in communication in recent years (Kaplan and Heinlein 2010) for both consumers and companies, allowing the sharing of knowledge and information and assisting consumers or users when purchasing digital content. Companies invest in business strategies that allow them to constantly adapt to changes in consumer behavior and purchase decision processes. Consumers can actively and directly participate through these new digital environments, generating information and knowledge about their tastes and product needs. It is beneficial for companies to guide marketing strategies, make business decisions, and define business templates.

### 1.1. Research questions

This article analyzes the consumer-brand-TikTok relationship to understand how brands can design effective marketing strategies by analyzing consumer behavior on TikTok.

Another key analysis point is investigating TikTok's role in digital marketing to explore its unique role in the industry.

## 2. Research background and significance

This article will examine a mix of academic and industry articles to compile a complete understanding of TikTok's role in the current digital marketing industry and the circumstances leading to this role. These articles were found using academic database searches. They were selected based on their relevance to the topic, the source's credibility, and the information quality.

### 2.1. What is TikTok?

TikTok is a popular social media video-sharing application that allows their users to create and share short-form videos about any topic. It is mainly mobile-based, although you can watch TikTok videos using the web app on your computer or other devices. The platform allows their users to get creative with their content. They can use filters, stickers, voiceovers, sound effects, and background music.

In the Chinese market, TikTok is a separate application called Douyin, one of the country's most popular social media applications. More than 700 million people use it daily, and TikTok maintains a separate user count from the Chinese version of the application.

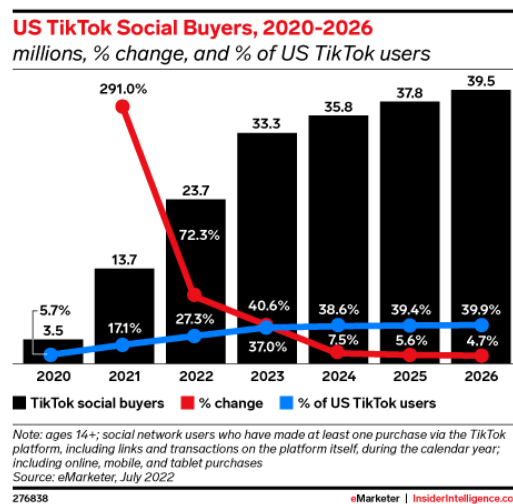


Fig. 1: Tiktok buyers 2020-2026

### 2.2. The Importance of Digital Marketing and its relation with TikTok

Digital marketing allows brands to engage with their target audience and to advertise and promote their products or services. Although that is the objective of any conventional marketing campaign, digital marketing allows firms to target a more specific audience. Digital marketing is highly cost-effective. Small and medium businesses recognize the value of digital marketing due to its rapid results on a considerably limited budget. Furthermore, digital marketing can communicate with a broader audience, irrespective of location. TikTok provides extensive built-in features like animation and special effects to facilitate content creation. However, the most crucial feature is sound, including voices, movie dialogue, or songs. The sound feature has a function similar to hashtags. When users tap the "Discover" button on TikTok, viral sounds are visible on the platform. All content with pertinent sound is displayed when users click on any sound link. TikTok is transforming the marketing landscape by providing small business owners new ways to connect with their audiences and boost their businesses. TikTok also wants to help small and medium-sized businesses. TikTok is making available a series of self-service advertising tools and solutions, allowing account owners to manage everything quickly and easily within the business center of their TikTok account. From campaign creation, payments, measurement, and data analytics, these tools cover everything any business needs to create and optimize their campaigns successfully. Through TikTok Ads Manager, small and medium-sized companies can select from three options to manage their budgets: "unlimited," where there are no budget restrictions; "daily budget"; and "total budget," where businesses can launch their campaigns for as little as €20 per day and increase their budget if desired, setting a daily or total maximum that cannot be exceeded. Small businesses must adapt to the platform and stay updated with trends and new formats to achieve greater impact. What is a trend? Trends are determined by social media users who adopt a topic, hashtag, or meme and make it viral through their comments, posts about that particular topic, hashtags, etc.

### 2.3. Neuro-insight study of TikTok

According to a recent Neuro-Insight study, TikTok brands see higher engagement and receptivity to brand messaging and calls to action. Neuro-Insight is a neuro-marketing and neuro-analytics company that uses unique in-lab, privacy-safe brain-imaging technology to measure how the brain responds to communications. It provides scientific consumer insights on how advertising affects consumers on both an emotional and subconscious level.

*"The TikTok study consisted of a neuro research conducted in the US with 57 in-lab respondents aged 18- 35. It included 24 minutes of TikTok browsing experience per respondent, including the overall platform experience and exposure to 26 ads.*

*The study's results revealed several powerful insights into the impact of ads on TikTok, including three major takeaways.*

*TikTok's powerful combination of relevance and engagement creates a more pleasurable experience. It enables users to be more receptive to brand messaging and calls to action from businesses of all sizes. In Neuro-Insight's study, TikTok stood out from other platforms regarding the two key dimensions of consumers' neuro response: approach and engagement.*

*The approach shows the content's emotional valence. It correlates with the likeability of what was seen and the in-the-moment action (e.g., paving the way for unplanned purchases). Along this dimension, on average, TikTok was 44% stronger than Social Media.*

*Engagement shows the personal relevance of the content and has the highest correlation to memory. It determines whether someone will act on the information in the future (e.g., buy a product in-store). In this study, TikTok's engagement rate was 15% stronger than other leading platforms.*

*"TikTok's unique engagement signature gives it an edge to be able to deliver ads and branded content in a way and at a moment when consumers are most open to receiving that messaging – and while all such signatures change over time, it is a golden opportunity for brands to use TikTok to their advantage right now." - Pranav Yadav, US&Europe CEO, Neuro-Insight. TikTok outperformed the competition on multiple levels compared to other video-based media, such as TV, digital video, and radio."*

Neuro-Insight's study showcases how powerful TikTok ads can be for businesses looking to impact today's digital culture. The combination of TikTok's innovative content delivery and short-form video format appeals to consumers at a deeper emotional level. The advantages are accessible to all businesses and brands advertising on TikTok.

### **3. Materials and Methods**

This section describes the primary research undertaken to further examine the necessity of TikTok as an essential marketing tool for small brands. The primary research for this article was conducted through a survey. This section will describe how the data from was collected and analyzed to answer the article questions.

The survey's main goal was to investigate the causal factors of brand success on TikTok versus other social platforms. After collecting the data, a survey was chosen using different methods to standardize responses and add to ease of analysis. The target number of participants is set at 85, with the primary participant target being 30 small business owners and 55 TikTok users, but counting them all also as customers. Instagram (another popular social media account) was the platform used for the survey, where questions were repeatedly posted for two days in a row in stories, and the time limit for the post was 24 hours. Instagram was used application because of the broader demographic range of users following the account of the author of this research.

#### **3.1. Survey analysis**

The survey contained a total of 15 questions. The first two questions confirmed the participant's age and whether the participant knows or has used TikTok. The remaining 13 questions focus on the participant's experiences with content on the TikTok app. The survey gathers information from the respondents, such as age and user status (business owner or regular user). Business owners were the primary targets of this survey due to the research topic specifically concerning the relation between their brand marketing success and TikTok. Due to the distribution methods available, a larger percentage of respondents were still college students; this is a limitation of the survey because the overall number of college students owning a business between the followers is less than 40%; this means that a survey taken primarily by college students may not be entirely representative of the whole group of business owners and big corporations. There were no questions asked about the respondent's gender because it is considered irrelevant to the research questions.

Respondents were asked to select which social media platforms they spend more hours on daily from the following choices: TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. The most used social media applications in the survey were TikTok and Instagram; the difference in usage varied by around two percent. On the other hand, Twitter was the least popular platform in the study, with only three participants saying they used this platform.

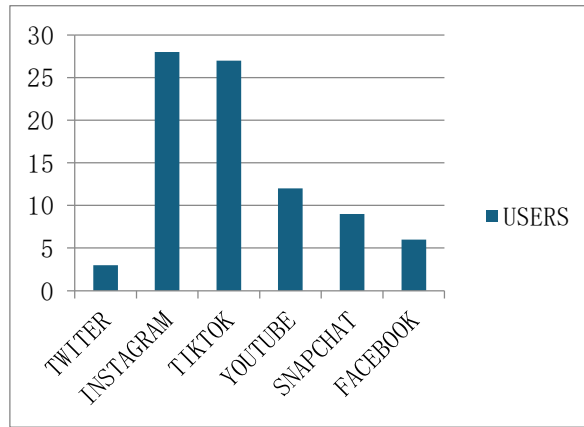


Fig. 2: most used social media platforms

A specific question only for business owners (35 out of 85 were small business owners) was: Between all the social media platforms mentioned before, where do they post their business more often? There was a blank space for them to answer the question, "Why?"

The only one on Twitter replied that they posted there to direct users to their Instagram page to check the products. Moreover, for most of the posts on TikTok, their most common reply was "immediate call to action, the consumers buy faster, and TikTok settings are easier for business owners." Instagram has more people, but 3 out of 14 that chose Instagram wanted to post more on TikTok but could not use the application because they were located in China, and the application was tough to use because of the need for a VPN.

Another question asked was how often they save a TikTok post containing products. The answers were divided into three parts: always, not so often, and never. "Never" had 0 participants, "not so often" had 48 participants, and "always" had 37 participants.

The last question for small business owners was, "Which platform do you make more money posting your business on?" and 70% of the responses were "TIKTOK," thanks to the traffic it attracts in a short period of time and the simple use of product links that you can put in the description of the video.

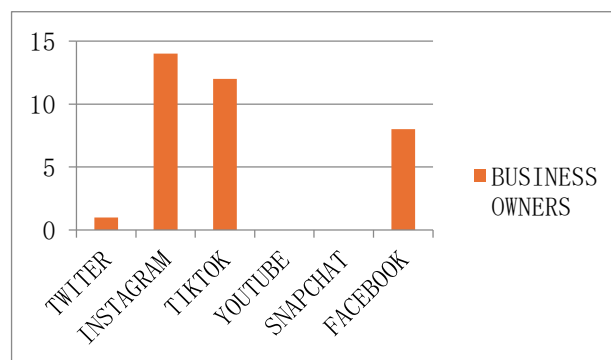


Fig. 3: Business Owners

User interest in products on TikTok is palpable, but that doesn't necessarily equate to purchase intent and actual conversions for brands. However, influencers can help bridge the gap between an interesting product and consumers purchasing it.

In Marketing, an influencer is a person capable of influencing potential buyers of a product or service by promoting or recommending the item on social media.

When asked how often they purchase something recommended by a content creator or influencer, the most popular response from participants was "always" (62 participants). When asked, "Do you follow an influencer?" the answers were divided into yes/no, with yes having 100% clicks.

Many researchers assert that the best way for brands to engage with their target audience is through the platform's influencers: "At the end of the day, creators are why TikTok is the way it is. They are the experts. They know the platform. They know what makes the users stay engaged and watch the content."

#### 4. Findings and Conclusion

Successful TikTok content and influencer relationships need to be central to the marketing mix to accelerate brand popularity. The factors leading to this conclusion include TikTok's engagement rates and users' media preferences. Because users spend so much time online, they know traditional digital marketing strategies and can discern authentic creative content from advertisements. Due to this discernment, the rise of influencer marketing presents a unique

opportunity for brands to reach this consumer group without traditional advertising content. However, TikTok users still react better to brand content and ads when the brand follows trends and uses trending music. Online influencers, like those on TikTok and Instagram, are trusted opinion leaders in this digital generation. Brands need to focus on keeping up with the TikTok trends. Participating in challenges and content trends and using popular sounds behind their videos is crucial to connecting with this audience. Brands must also take advantage of influencers, especially those native to the platform, because they are the new industry opinion leaders. Results from the survey show that users are likely to purchase influencer-recommended products. Brands should waste no time in reaching out to creators with a partnership offer because TikTok makes this process incredibly easy through their creator marketplace, where influencers make themselves known as available for brand partnerships. The successful utilization of this platform should be among the tactics of any brand that aims to target this audience with its marketing plan.

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