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TikTok and Virality:

Exploring emotional triggers through trending content as a branding marketing tool

Bachelor Thesis for Obtaining the Degree

Bachelor of Business Administration in

Tourism and Hospitality Management

Submitted to Eva Aileen Jungwirth-Edelmann, MA

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Affidavit

I hereby affirm that this Bachelor's Thesis represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed. In particular, I did not use any text generators or other paraphrasing tools. My thesis was not proofread.

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Abstract

Topic: TikTok and Virality: Exploring emotional triggers through trending content as a branding marketing tool

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Content:

The main aim of this research is to examine the use of TikTok as a potential marketing tool. First, a comprehensive exploration of social media in general is provided, including its role in society, challenges, and trends. The study further investigates social media marketing and branding, focusing on strategies, benefits, and challenges. The study then examines TikTok specifically as a platform, its key features, the target demographic of users, the effectiveness of marketing, the impact of user-generated content (UGC) on a brand's TikTok appearance and explores the triggers for creating viral content and driving consumer engagement. These objectives are achieved through a comprehensive literature review and a quantitative approach incorporating a survey gathering data about individuals' views on these aspects of the social media platform, TikTok.

The findings of the survey indicate that despite TikTok users showing a higher preference for emotional videos from regular users, branded content with user-generated elements has shown more effectiveness in driving engagement and sentiment. Furthermore, it is evident that brands leveraging user-generated content achieve a higher degree of user interaction and positive reactions. This study also uncovers the perceived influence of TikTok's algorithm on content virality and the unique emotional resonance of branded content on TikTok compared to other platforms. These findings underline the unique nature of user-brand interaction on TikTok and its potential for incorporation into a business marketing strategy.
Further research in this area, particularly regarding TikTok's algorithm and its influence on content virality across different generations, could provide even more specific insights for brands.

Supervisor: Eva Aileen Jungwirth-Edelmann, MA

Table of Contents

List of Graphs

List of Tables

1   Introduction

The following chapters will discuss the scientific and social relevance of the research undertaken, the outline of the thesis, including its main and secondary aims, the derived research questions as well as the hypothesis. Lastly, limitations of this thesis will be communicated, and the reader will be presented with an overview of the thesis.

1.1   Motivation and cognitive interest

In today's competitive landscape, it is important for businesses to adapt to emerging social media platforms and trends to attract customers and stay up to date. The platform TikTok and its immense popularity makes it an essential marketing tool for companies that are looking to reach new audiences, the younger generations and to build brand awareness. Creating high-quality content that resonates with viewers is essential for success on the platform (Barta et al., 2022). It is an opportunity for businesses to go viral and draw attention to their product or service. As pointed out by Geyser (2019) social media has become an indispensable tool for branding and marketing for all types of businesses and is the most downloaded social media platform among millennials and Gen Z, topping 3.5 billion installations and approximately 1 billion monthly active users (Geyser, 2019). Considering that users spend approximately 1.5 hours or 95 minutes on the platform every day, brands and marketers have recognized the potential of TikTok as a powerful marketing tool (Geyser, 2019). Hereby focusing specifically on targeting younger audiences, generating brand awareness, and therefore also increasing brand engagement. However, even though marketers know about the power TikTok marketing can have on a business, the scarcity of effective tools and explicit instructions is hindering businesses to fully leverage its potentials. Therefore, it is necessary to educate and inform older generations about the benefits of this social platform as a marketing tool. In return, understanding the benefits of this social media platform can then lead to more user engagement and more followers on other platforms like Instagram (Santora, 2021).

As mentioned by Bentahar (2019), TikTok`s rapid growth and popularity around the world despite being a relatively new social media platform make it an exceptional opportunity for businesses, mainly because it takes time for big companies to adapt their social media strategies and to use new platforms. Furthermore, advertising to younger generations such as Gen Z could provide an important tool for marketers to build long term brand awareness as less popular platforms for young people such like Facebook lose market share. Investigating emotional triggers and their effectiveness could additionally provide valuable insights for businesses targeting this age group (Grome, 2022). However, for targeting this age group it is imperative to understand how TikTok's algorithm works. Its main goal: to promote popular and engaging content that keeps people on the platform. Understanding that TikTok is following its own business goals is key to running viral marketing campaigns. Viral content usually comes in the form of short videos or pictures that are spread rapidly throughout the internet, hereby reaching a large audience of viewers, who engage with the content by liking sharing, saving or commenting on the post (Twaino, 2022). Therefore, investigating the characteristics that contribute to viral content can support marketers and businesses to reach virality and get the benefits of what this brings. Finally, the study on TikTok marketing and emotional triggers could help us understand how emotions influence human behavior and decision-making (Twaino, 2022). This can help businesses market their product or service effectively. Despite the advantages of this popular platform there have been debates about whether or not TikTok should be banned. This is argued for by Maheshwari & Holpuch, (2023) who claim that sensitive data might be used by the Chinese company ByteDance Ltd. that owns TikTok. Overall, understanding how TikTok's algorithm works and how to activate emotional triggers to go viral could provide significant insights for marketers and organizations trying to successfully enter target millennials and later.

1.2 Outline of the thesis: main aim, secondary aims, research questions and hypothesis

The main aim of this thesis is to investigate the use of TikTok as a marketing tool, with a focus on identifying the triggers for creating viral content and driving consumer

engagement. Providing a structured guideline for businesses to leverage their social media presence.

To achieve the main aim of investigating TikTok`s potential as a marketing tool, the following several secondary aims have been identified and will be addressed:

a. Overview of social media, covering its definition, types, challenges, the role of social media today, and factors contributing to virality, with a specific focus on generational management and usage patterns.

b. Explore social media marketing and branding, including definitions and key strategies, different types of marketing and challenges, benefits and psychological aspects of marketing strategies, including its unique characteristics and best practices.

c. Examine TikTok as a social media platform, including its key features, target demographic of users, effectiveness of marketing and emotional triggers, potential risks and benefits of using emotional triggers, factors contributing to viral marketing success, and its implications for our scientific understanding of human behavior and decision-making.

From the above secondary aims, the following research questions have been stipulated:

- How do the key features of social media platforms, affect user psychology and the factors contributing to virality across different generations?

- In what ways do social media marketing and branding strategies differ across platforms, and how do these differences impact the effectiveness of marketing campaigns?

- What makes TikTok users enjoy or dislike emotional videos from brands compared to emotional videos from regular users, and how do these factors affect the success of advertising on the platform?

- How can a company incorporate TikTok into its marketing strategy to generate more customers and target different audiences?

The four research questions will be used to answer the following hypothesis, which is:

Although TikTok users are more likely to enjoy videos from regular users than from brands, videos from brands that feature user-generated content will be more successful in generating engagement and positive sentiment among users.

1.3   Limitations

While conducting this research there might be limitations that occur that need to be taken into consideration. The first and most pressing limitation of this research is the finite amount of time given to the researcher, as it is part of a bachelor's degree and only conductible until the end of the course. Moreover, there might be limitations that arise during the literature review as the researcher might not be able to gather enough primary data on the topic. Another limitation is the fact that it is unfeasible to create a company selling real products to test assumptions. This would be out of scope as part of this thesis.

Lastly, there might be issues with gathering the right sample size for the questionnaire, while also taking into account that not every social media user is also a TikTok user.

2 Literature Review

This section will provide the reader with a thorough insight into social media. The reader will get an overview of different types of social media platforms, its role in today's world, its challenges, as well as the terminology of virality will be discussed. Furthermore, the reader will learn about usage patterns to get a better understanding about different generations.

2.1 Overview of social media platforms

Social media has become an important part of modern communication globally and it has shaped the way people interact and connect with each other (Purwanto et al., 2023). Dixon (2022) argues that social networks are not only a part of our everyday lives, but social networks continue to change the way people interact with one another. According to Kim & Ko (2012) social media is a set of online applications, platforms and media which aim to foster collaborations, interactions and the sharing of content. However, this has not always been the case. As mentioned by Paquette (2013) social media has gone beyond just providing people with a platform for keeping up and staying in touch with loved ones to a place where individuals can find out more about brands, companies and their products. With consumers dedicating almost one third of their time to online social media (Laroche et al., 2013), and the rising number of social media users it is evident that social media applications are of high importance for businesses and especially marketers today (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Number of social media users worldwide from 2017 to 2027
(in billions)
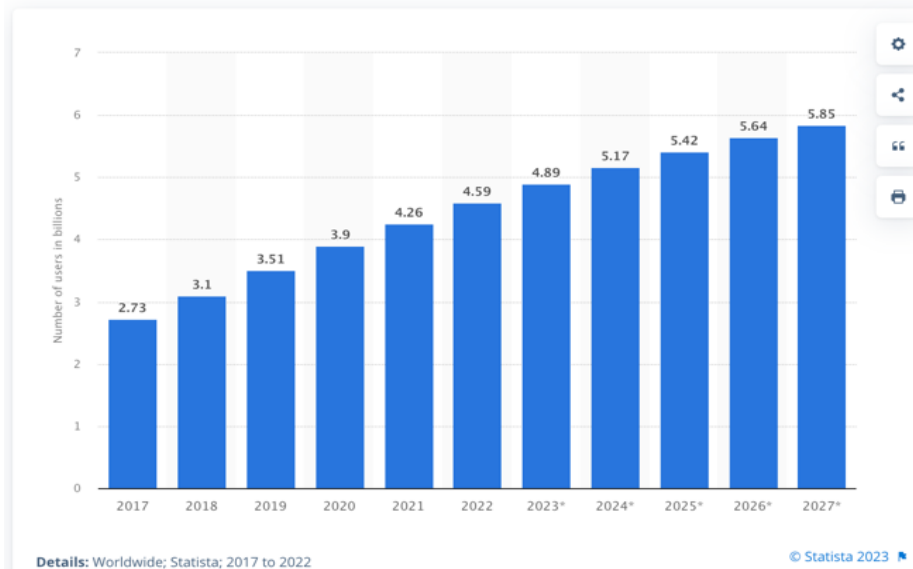
Graph 1: **Number of social media users worldwide from 2017 to 2027**
Source: Statista, 2023b

Speaking in a marketing context, Li et al. (2021) note, that social media are considered online platforms where individuals share information and/or views, opinions and beliefs as well as build online networks.

Social media has become an indispensable tool for companies, enabling them to market their products and services, connect with customers, build brand awareness, and reach diverse geographic target markets and audiences (Li et al., 2021). Some of the most known and most popular social media platforms amongst others are: TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram.

2.1.1 Covering its definition

To fully understand and leverage social media, it is necessary to first define key terms in social media. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) state that even though the list of social media applications may provide some insight into the concept of social media, a formal definition of social media must be linked to two related concepts: Web 2.0 and User Generated Content.

Kochhar & Sharma (2018) define Web 2.0 as a platform where content is continuously modified by all users in a collaborative and synergistic manner. This perspective aligns with Kaplan & Haenlein's (2010) definition, positioning Web 2.0 as a paradigm shift in how end-users and software developers utilize the internet. Web2.0 has transformed the way people communicate, collaborate and access information online today. Users are able to interact with each other and also with the content of the webpage making the internet more dynamic. The term "User generated content", or short UGC, gained large popularity in 2005 when the internet and social media became more accessible for a wider audience of people. UGC is any type of content created by individuals who are using social media. UGC can be seen and often is the main selling point on a variety of social media platforms including Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and many more. Kaplan & Haenlein, (2010) argue that UGC refers to any type of content that social media users create and share on these different social media platforms.

Mou, (2020) combines these two terms and defines social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that builds on ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and it allows the creation and exchange of user generated content".

Therefore, as remarked by Paquette (2013) for a website or webpage to qualify as a social network it must meet specific requirements. These qualifications include being able to create user profiles and content while being able to post comments and join groups with shared interests.

2.1.2   Types of social media

With the ever-increasing number of social media platforms available one must differentiate between the different types of social media. There are several types of social media platforms with a very distinctive use for each of them.

Graph 2: Types of social media

Source: Cite, 2012

As seen in the Graph 2 there are 10 different types of social media. Some of them are more useful for businesses than others. The most important types of social media for businesses is social networking sites, microblogging platforms, online ratings as well as video sharing platforms, which will be discussed in detail in the following section.

According to Voorveld et al., (2018) there are four categories of social media which these 10 types of social media can be categorized into. These four are relationship social media platforms, self-media platforms, creative outlet platforms and collaboration platforms.

The first type of social media is social networks, which allow individuals to create a personal profile, connect with other users as well as share information and media. Social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and others have become omnipresent in the digital age, with millions of users worldwide (Cite, 2012). These platforms are widely used for connecting with friends and family, build professional networks, and share interests and hobbies. Which makes this type of social media a relationship social media platform (Voorveld et al., 2018)

Microblogging platforms fall under the category self-media platforms. These include platforms such as Twitter and Tumblr which offer real-time communication, have the potential to go viral and the ability to build a following. Even though the posts are limited by their character count, for business purposes microblogging can be very effective for real-time communication and growing a community (Voorveld et al., 2018).

Online ratings are a type of social media that allows for opinions and experiences with products or services through online reviews and ratings. Known online rating platforms include TripAdvisor, Yelp or Google reviews. This type of social media can be categorized into the collaboration platforms as online reviews can influence the purchasing decision and influence consumer behavior (Voorveld et al., 2018). Therefore, they are of utmost importance for businesses.

Video sharing platforms or also called "Multimedia platforms" for example include YouTube and TikTok, and fall under creative outlet platforms (Voorveld et al., 2018). These types of media allow for users to create and share content mostly in the form of videos (Cite, 2012). This can be very helpful for businesses to explain a product or showcase a service.

2.1.3   Challenges of social media

Despite the vast opportunities that social media brings, there are also challenges that need to be addressed in order to ensure effective and responsible use of social media platforms.

Coming from an individual prospective there are numerous challenges that come along with social media and the internet. Especially for younger generations ethical consideration and responsible behavior can be a challenge on social media. Tapscott (2009) pointed out that mainly younger generations need guidance on ethical actions, responsibility, and the importance of setting boundaries when engaging with social media. One of the primary challenges of social media for businesses is the lack of clear definitions and a comprehensive framework for integrating social media into a business strategy plan. According to Li et al. (2021), there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics and significance of social media

marketing strategies. This is necessary for businesses to achieve their marketing objectives and effectively utilize social media.

Moreover, the appearance of social media has resulted in companies having limited control of information about them online. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) state that many firms struggle or face difficulties in managing an environment where customers can effortlessly share their opinions, viewpoints or encounters with other customers.

2.1.4   Virality on social media

To understand virality it is important to first define the meaning of this term. Tsugawa & Ohsaki (2017) define virality as "the volume and speed of message diffusion".

The most important factors that contribute to virality are emotional aspects of content, polarity, and emotional charge, which will be discussed in this section.

For businesses and individuals virality can be an essential tool if the aim is to reach different audiences and have content or information shared widely across the internet. According to Saquete et al. (2022), there are several factors that can contribute to virality. These include emotional aspects of content, polarity and emotional charge. Shareability is mainly affected by emotional aspects of content. Emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, fear and surprise have the potential to trigger the audience, making the content more shareable with the individuals' network, which in return can lead to virality. This can be seen by a study conducted by Saquete et al. (2022) during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is indicated that messages that had a very high emotional charge during the pandemic were more likely to be spread across the internet and go viral. Furthermore, the same study by Saquete et al. (2022) suggests that the polarity of content is another factor that contributes to virality. Hereby, the study found out that messages and content with a high-negative polarity are more likely to go viral than messages with a positive polarity. The reason for this may be that negative emotions are more likely to arouse a response from the audience, which in return can increase engagement and sharing of content.

2.1.5   Social media trends

To get the most out of social media platforms it is also essential to understand the trends that are constantly evolving over time. According to Atske (2021), social media

usage is strongly influenced by age. Younger social media users indicate that they are most likely to use TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram.

The first trend in social media is the ever-evolving development of social media platforms that address and cater to specific needs and interest of its users. As Vandenbosch et al. (2022) point out, social media users have diverse needs and preferences, and this has led to the emergence of new social media platforms like TikTok, which focuses on short-form video content. While Instagram on the other hand emphasizes visual storytelling through pictures.

The second trend is the rise of features unique to social media platforms. Social media platforms are continuously innovating to offer users new features and ways to engage with each other and the content (Vandenbosch et al., 2022). This is because every platform wants to gain more active users and cater to their specific needs and wishes. This phenomenon can be seen when investigating for example Instagram and TikTok. Instagram has introduced Reels, a short-form video feature that competes directly with TikTok, a short-video sharing platform.

The third trend in social media is the unpacking of the not well-defined effects of 'positive' content. While social media has traditionally been associated with negative effects like cyberbullying and social comparison, there is growing evidence that positive content can also have unintended consequences. As Vandenbosch et al. (2022) note, positive content can sometimes have unintended effects, such as promoting unrealistic expectations or leading to a sense of social exclusion.

As mentioned before, social media trends are constantly evolving, therefore it is of high importance for businesses to stay up to date with these changes to create engaging and relevant content. The rise of different platforms, the emergence of unique features, and the unpacking of the unclear effects of positive content are just a few examples of the trends that are shaping social media today. By understanding these trends, companies and marketers can stay ahead of the curve and get the most out of these powerful marketing and branding tools.

2.1.6 Social media and generational management: Understanding usage patterns

Different generations have varied experiences with and attitudes towards social media, which can have implications for businesses and organizations. The next table shows a detailed list for different generations including the birth years, the % of US population, the % of social media importance, key characteristics of the varying generations as well as recommendations for organizations for implementing social media into their marketing strategy.

Generation	Birth Years	% of US Population	% of Social Media Importance	Key Characteristics	Recommendations for Organizations
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	23% (Leung, 2013)	40%	Grew up with television, varied comfort levels with social media	Understand and address the comfort levels and preferences of this demographic when using social media
Generation X	1965-1980	15%	74%	High number of users across social networks	Use a multi-channel approach, focus on video tutorials to showcase products and services (Sprout Social, 2023)
Millennials Net Generation	1981-1996	27% (Leung, 2013)	Fundamental part of their lives	Grew up with social media, more likely to be online consumers	Utilize social media for customer service, engagement, and interaction
Generation Z	1997-2012	-	66%	Grew up understanding the digital economy, use social media more for killing time	Cultivate two-way communication, foster collaboration between brands and users, focus on brand awareness (Sprout Social, 2023)

Table 1: Generational differences on social media

Even though Baby Boomers and Generation X may be less active on social media than the Net Generation and Gen Z, it is important not to generalize these generations too broadly, as it cannot represent each individual. However, understanding the nuances of each generation's social media habits is crucial for organizations that want to engage with their target audience effectively. Furthermore, the next table will provide

an overview of the different social media platforms with the respective age group, content, strategies and cons. The information in this table is available from FHWien written in German.

Platform	Age group	Content	Strategies	Cons
Facebook	25 – 34 Boomers	Photos & Links News Live videos	Local marketing Advertising Relationships	Weak organic reach
YouTube	18 – 25 26 - 35	How to-s Webinars	Organic SEO Advertising	High resource needs for videos (time/money)
Instagram	18 – 24 25 – 34 Millenials	Inspiration Adventure Questions/Polls	Organic E-commerce Influencer	High advertising costs
Twitter	25 -34 35 -49 High level of education	News Demographics Discussions	Advertising for male segment Customer care	Small advertising audience
LinkedIn	46 – 55 Employed	Long format Core values	B2B Organic International	Reporting tool required
TikTok	10 – 19 Predominantely female 60%	Entertainment Humor Challenges	Influencer Marketing Series marketing	Relationship building Time-intensive
Snapchat	13 – 17 25 – 34 Teenager	Fresh Feel-good factor Trends	Location-based marketing Video advertising App marketing	Relationship building Time-intensive

Table 2: Social media usage across different platforms

Source: FH Wien

2.2 Social media marketing and branding

In this section the reader will learn about social media marketing and branding strategies. The reader will be provided with a definition of social media marketing, key strategies, different types of social media marketing as well as benefits and challenges. Lastly, the reader will gain an understanding about best practices connected to the psychology of marketing.

2.2.1 Marketing and branding on social media

The right marketing and branding strategies have become crucial for businesses in today's competitive landscape. This section discusses important aspects about social media marketing or abbreviated SMM and the role of promoting brand loyalty.

To discuss this chapter, it is necessary to first define the terms branding and marketing. These two disciplines are two interconnected concepts that play a crucial role in the success of any business. Marketing is the process of planning and executing strategies to communicate value to customers and promote products or services effectively. It involves understanding target audiences and their preferences, using various tactics like advertising, public relations, and social media management to attract and retain customers as well as drive sales (deBara, 2019). On the other hand, branding is the process of creating a unique identity and image for a product, service, or organization in the minds of consumers and shaping the brand (deBara, 2019). Branding involves defining core values, mission, and personality, designing visual elements that represent these attributes e.g. logo, slogan, website, and fostering an emotional connection with customers to ensure long-term business success.

Social media platforms have become an essential tool for marketers to reach their customers and generate new potential customers (Shankar et al., 2011). Purchasing decisions are more and more based on social media and the promotion of products and services through these platforms. As cited in Li et al. (2021), a marketing strategy involves making choices regarding marketing activities. This involves finding and selecting the companies target markets to create, communicate and deliver value to consumers.

However, not only does social media help exchanging information and promotion products, it is also used to deliver valuable and distinctive brand experiences (Khan,

2022). Social media can play a vital role in establishing an individual relationship with customers. SMM is a two-way communication with empathy placed on younger users (Kim & Ko, 2012). Through SMM, brands strengthen the relationship with customers and also gain brand awareness.

According to Erdoğmuş & Çiçek (2012), marketers have established a variety of techniques to maintain the loyalty of customers towards their brand. These techniques include traditional marketing mix variables, brand features as well as newer methods like sponsorship, events, personalized marketing, social media marketing and internet marketing. By using social media strategically, brands can access their target audience and establish individual relationships with them, creating unique brand experiences that drive business success.

2.2.2 Defining social media marketing (SMM) and branding

Marketing and branding are essential components of a successful business. According to Nisar & Whitehead (2016) branding is a process of creating a unique image for a product that is differentiated from its competitors brand. To distinguish the product from other brands in the market, this process involves developing a unique brand name as well as symbols and designs that are different from competitors. The goal of branding is to create a memorable impression in the consumer minds, that will ultimately lead to brand awareness, loyalty and therefore also increase sales.

On the contrary, SMM has only gained significant attention in the last several years, making it a relatively new concept for brands and marketers to look into. Even though SMM has become a vital part of an organization's strategy there is still no clear definition of social media marketing strategies, according to Li et al. (2021). This can be attributed to the recognition that social media marketing is a unique and distinctive procedure, involving a range of important factors that require careful consideration These elements include content creation, engagement and advertisement. As pointed out by Kochhar & Sharma (2018), research has been conducted on exploratory and theoretical studies on social media. However, there is still the need for empirical research to gain a better understanding of the benefits businesses can acquire from using SMM as their strategic tactic.

Therefore, we can derive that branding is about creating a unique image for a product or service that stands out from competitors. While on the other hand social media marketing is the promotion and advertisement of products through social media platforms.

2.2.3 Key strategies of social media marketing

For leveraging SMM it is crucial to have a strategy in place. It is necessary for marketers to analyze their target audience and determine which social media platforms are the most effective to communicate with the target audience.

As Erdoğmuş & Çiçek (2012) suggest that with the ever rising number of social media platforms it is impossible for businesses and marketers to operate on all of them. Therefore, it is essential for marketers to focus on the platforms that most of their target audience are using.

For successful social media marketing, companies need to capture the mindsets, motivations, and driving factors of their intended customers. As consumers are now able to create content about brands and are increasingly doing so, it is vital to know what resonates with them as Kochhar & Sharma, (2018) note.

Another key component of SMM is the use of brand communities as pointed out by Zollo et al., (2020). These communities play a crucial role in managing the relationships with customers, but also do they help in promoting the brand among customers.

Additionally, it is common for businesses to employ social media experts, consultants and content creators, which assist a company in deciding on the right content and characteristics for their activities on social media (Erdoğmuş & Çiçek, 2012). Hereby, the goal is to capture the hearts and minds of customers and ultimately build brand loyalty. By implementing these key strategies into a business, marketers can effectively use social media as a tool to reach and engage with their target audience.

2.2.4 Types of social media marketing

There are different types of social media marketing, each with its own benefits and weaknesses, which can be categorized into two categories. These categories are owned media and earned media, as described by Zhou et al. (2023). Hereby, owned

media refers to social media activities that are posted on the brands own social media channels like their Facebook page or their YouTube channel. On the contrary, earned media refers to social media activities posted by other individuals and not by the brand itself. This could include mentions of the brands or shares of the brands content.

While owned media allows for greater control over content and messages spread with the content, earned media can lead to greater exposure through e-word-of-mouth recommendations. However, this can also lead to false messages being spread or negative e-word-of-mouth.

The study by Paquette (2013) emphasizes on the fact that earned media can be of great importance to brands. Hereby, the study focuses on the importance of understanding the factors that drive consumer attitudes and motives. This is reasoned, because consumers are increasingly creating content about brands through UGC. This statement is in conformity with the study conducted by Laroche et al. (2013). In the study it is noted that social media content is now primarily produced, shared and consumed by users through UGC.

By integrating both earned and owned media into the brand, marketers can create an effective strategy that drives brad engagement and loyalty.

2.2.5   Benefits of social media marketing

Social media marketing (SMM) offers a variety of benefits to businesses that wish to incorporate it into their marketing strategies. One of the most significant benefits of SMM is its ability to enhance a brands reputation. In compliance with Kim & Ko (2012), social media can have a drastic impact on how a brand is perceived by consumers and social media users. Furthermore, SMM also has benefits in terms of effort and cost than compared to traditional marketing methods. This is possible and reasoned by Kim & Ko (2012), who suggest that by partnering commercial messages and interactions with digital services, entertainment, events and retailers marketing activities can be performed at a way lower cost. This is also in agreement with Nisar & Whitehead (2016) who suggest that social media marketing can be used to save marketing costs and can as well more efficient, while generating a higher rate of return.

Moreover, social media has outdated traditional marketing methods by providing a platform for companies and consumers to communicate and connect easily. As pointed out by Erdoğmuş & Çiçek, (2012), SMM provides businesses with a more effective use of their time and resources to communicate with customers and provide instant support, while also being able to create an online community of brand enthusiast, which is however not always necessary. The study also highlights that a variety of platforms detailed in section 2.1.2 - including social networking sites, blogs, microblogging sites, forums and beyond - offer businesses a diverse set of tools to advertise their products and services to various demographic groups.

2.2.6   Challenges of social media marketing

Social media marketing has many benefits, but also limitations and challenges that must be considered when implementing into a business marketing mix.

One challenge is building customer loyalty through social networks. It is crucial to understand that retaining user relationships can no longer be attained by creating a better product or service (Nisar & Whitehead, 2016).

Another challenge which at the same time also presents a benefit to companies is the shift from traditional sources of communication to social media in order to share opinions, views and information. This ultimately means that companies that want to stay relevant must develop customer relations via the internet (Nisar & Whitehead, 2016). Businesses and marketers must also be aware of ever-changing trends and keep up with them on various different social media channels. Furthermore, businesses need to work harder in order to stand out and capture the attention of their audiences as content is constantly created and available. Despite these challenges, with careful planning and a willingness to adapt to changing circumstances, businesses can overcome the challenges of SMM and experience the advantages of social media marketing.

2.2.7   Best practices and psychology of social media marketing

Effective social media marketing requires understanding the unique characteristics of the medium and best practices to engage with customers.

One of the unique characteristics of social media branding is the importance of brand personality. The theory behind this, is that brands, have identifiable personalities with characteristics similar to those found in human individuals (Pitt et al., 2011). This concept has been adapted from the field of individual and social psychology. Understanding and effectively portraying the brands personality on social media platforms can create a strong emotional connection with customers. Best practices for social media marketing and branding include analyzing the target audience and participating in the social media platforms that the target audience is using.

It was found by Erdoğmuş & Çiçek (2012) that advantageous campaigns on social media are the most significant drivers of brand loyalty. As well as by content relevancy, popularity of content among friends as well as using and appearing on different social media platforms.

2.3 The social media platform TikTok as a marketing tool

In this section, the reader will find a comprehensive overview of TikTok as a marketing tool, including its key features, target demographic, opportunities and benefits, concerns and challenges, factors for viral marketing success, and the utilization of emotional triggers for marketing and branding. With a thorough understanding of these factors, businesses can effectively leverage TikTok to connect with their target audience and achieve their marketing goals.

2.3.1 TikTok: a new social media platform

TikTok is one of the newer social media platforms that was originally launched in 2016 and quickly became one of the most popular and widely used apps in the world. According to Dixon (2022), the platform has established itself in mainstream social media and is now one of the major players online. In 2021 TikTok was the most downloaded app worldwide surpassing the big players of social media: Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and Snapchat (Dixon, 2022). In June 2020 TikTok was banned in India, which meant losing a considerable number of users. However, despite this regulatory setback, TikTok has been downloaded more than three billion times by July 2021 reaching a milestone that only Facebook and Instagram previously reached (Ceci, 2023).

Number of TikTok users worldwide from 2020 to 2025
(in millions)
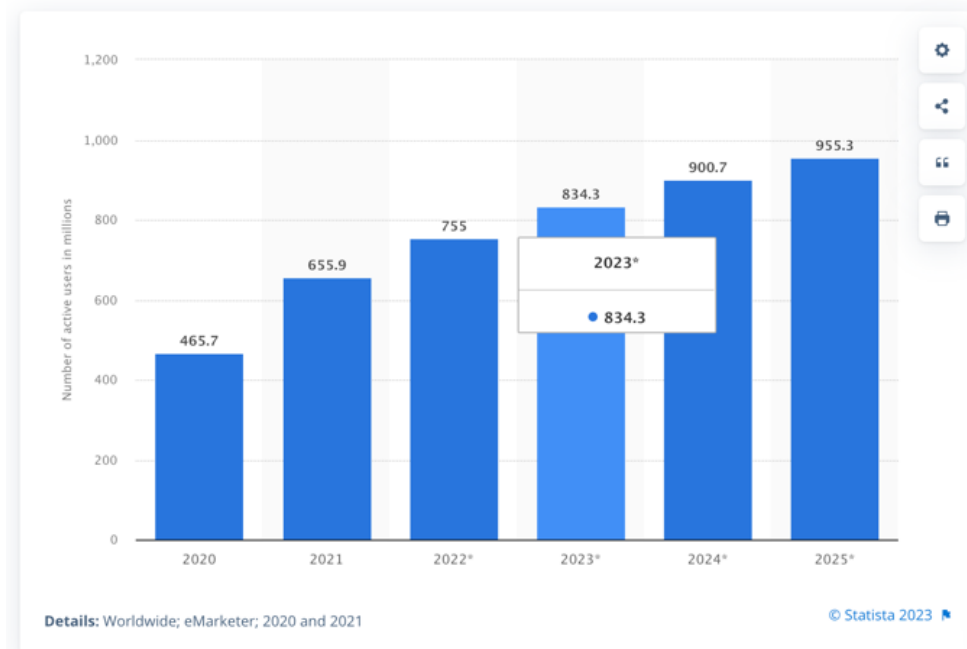
Graph 3: Number of TikTok users worldwide from 2020-2025

Source: (Statista, 2023a)

According to Choudhary et al. (2020) TikTok users add more than thirteen million videos to the platform every day. The popularity of the app can be credited to its unique approach to short-form video content. Users can create videos with music, filters and special effects which can be 15 seconds, 60 seconds, 3 minutes as well as 10 minutes in length. TikTok is unique in creating engaging challenges to motivate users to create and engage with content (Choudhary et al., 2020)

Overall, TikTok's growing popularity is a testament to its appeal to younger generations and its unique features.

2.3.2   TikTok's key features

In recent years, TikTok has grown to be the most popular social media platform worldwide, with an incredible number of 1 billion monthly active users (Choudhary et al., 2020). Businesses have started to recognize the immense potential this platform has as a marketing tool. However, in order to effectively exploit TikTok as a marketing tool, one must understand its unique key features. Due to the interactive and

engaging nature of this platform, TikTok has the ability to capture the attention of billions of users (Choudhary et al., 2020). The app allows users to create videos of different lengths, with lip-syncing options while being able to add background music and trending sounds. In addition to that, users can add hashtags, filters and try different speeds of the video, making each video unique. Furthermore, TikTok creates a sense of community by providing the viewer with the possibility to interact and engage with the content through "reactions" or "duets" (Choudhary et al., 2020). According to Choudhary et al. 2020, TikTok users mainly value the authentic content other people post, which is very much in line with TikTok's user experience which is much more geared towards individuals rather than big corporations.

Another very important aspect that marketers need to look out is TikToks' unique algorithm. This algorithm chooses which content will be displayed on the users "For You" page, based on the individual users preferences (Geyser, 2022b)
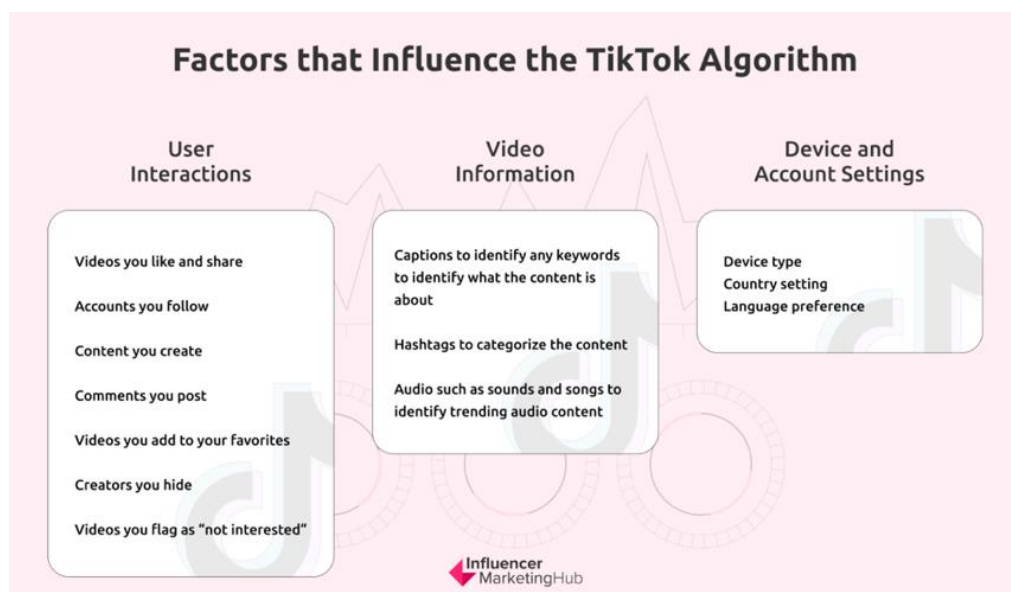
Graph 4: Factors that influence the TikTok Algorithm

Source: Geyser, 2022b

Lovett et al. (2021) discloses however, that the unique algorithm of TikTok is exclusive and for the most part confidential. Therefore, it is difficult to fully leverage the algorithm. However, it is obvious that the algorithm prioritizes content that is relevant to the users and which they would engage with. This feature makes the platform

highly personalized. Tailored to the interests and watch history of the users account, TikTok's algorithm plays videos on the "For You" page upon opening the application (Hayes et al., 2020). This is different to other social media platforms like Instagram, where users only see content of pages and people they follow (Seekis & Kennedy, 2023). Highly individual personalization is what makes TikTok so popular among young people. It is also important to note that through behavioral changes of the users, the algorithm also changes over time. The most appropriate content will be displayed for the user and will change constantly with the users preferences (Geyser, 2022b). Therefore, as seen by Geyser (2022b), TikTok will not show you content you have already watched, duplicate content, spam content, potentially harmful or upsetting content as well as content that the user has marked with "not interested".

Another unique aspect is that TikTok can be searched through and videos can be shared and watched by people without creating an account first (Lovett et al., 2021). This means that not registered users can engage with the content before becoming a potential user. As pointed out by Hayes et al. (2020), the platform allows users to follow as many accounts as they like, upload an infinite amount of videos to their page as well as add as many videos to their favorites as they wish.

One of the most significant advantages of TikTok as a marketing tool is its potential to reach large and different audiences with distinct demographics. With over 50% of active users being under the age of 30, the platform can be seen to have a strong presence for a younger audience (Choudhary et al., 2020). Through traditional marketing this audience is more difficult to reach for businesses, making TikTok a valuable tool for businesses looking to reach younger audiences or expand their reach. Overall, TikTok's unique features make it a powerful tool for businesses looking to reach younger and divers audiences. Its interactive and engaging nature, personalized content delivery, and broad reach make it an attractive platform for marketing. Understanding the platform's algorithm and creating engaging content that appeals to individual user preferences is crucial for success on the platform.

2.3.3 Target demographic of TikTok users

TikTok Users - Demographics

| 24.27% | 17.04% | 15.74% | 11.77% |

18–24-year-old females | 13–17-year-old females | 25–34-year-old males | 25–34-year-old females

Influencer MarketingHub

Graph 5: TikTok users demographics

Source: Geyser, 2022a

With over 50% of regular TikTok users being aged 18 to 29, this platform has become increasingly popular amongst younger individuals (Pew Research Center, 2022).

As with any social media platform it is important to identify the business target audience and which social media platform they are using, before investing time and resources into marketing. It is important to note that not all demographics are equally presented on TikTok (Geyser, 2022a). Additionally, although overall the percentage of older users is still relatively small, there are more older male TikTok users than female users according to Geyser (2022a).

About a quarter of U.S. adults under 30 now regularly get news on TikTok

*% of U.S. adults in each age group who **regularly** get news from TikTok*
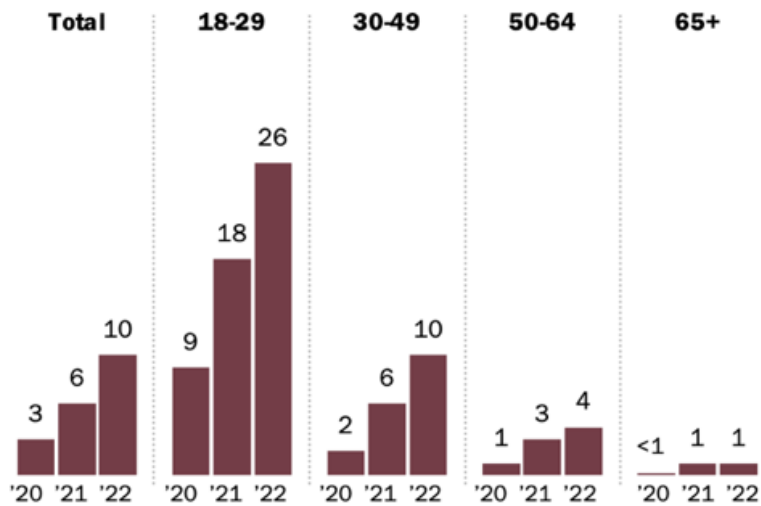
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 18-Aug. 21, 2022.

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Graph 6: News on TikTok

Source: (Matsa, 2022)

Despite these demographic differences, many brands are leveraging TikTok to raise brand awareness and connect with younger audiences. As pointed out by Geyser (2022b), due to the high levels of engagement the platform sees, TikTok has become a popular platform for brands looking to connect with younger audiences. TikTok's young fanatics, often referred to as "TikTokers," are a highly engaged and passionate community, making it an ideal platform for brands looking to build brand loyalty among younger audiences (Choudhary et al., 2020).

However, it is important to consider if the brands target audience is using this platform and create content that is catered to the needs and interests of these younger individuals or TikTokers.
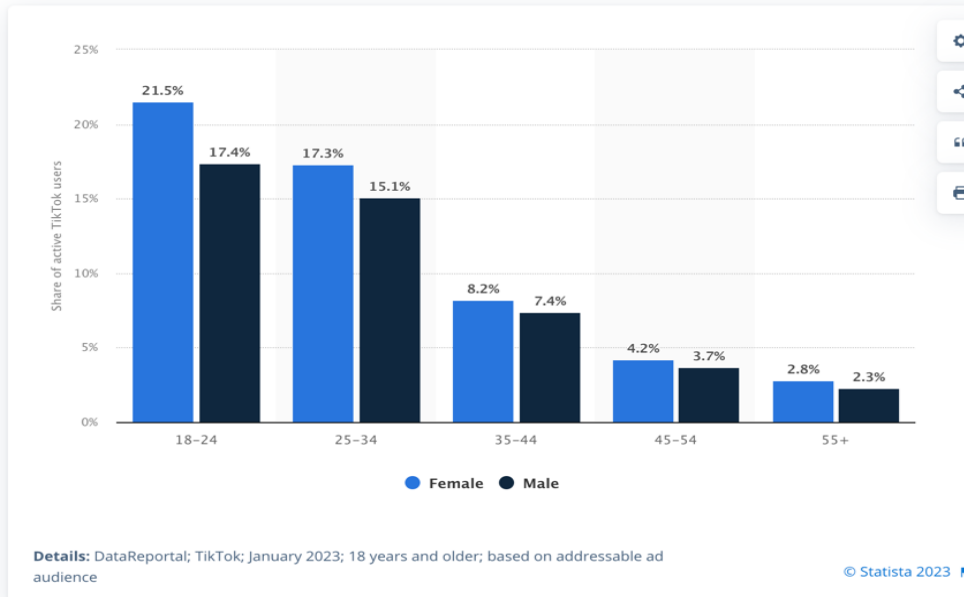
Graph 7: Distribution of TikTok users worldwide as of January 2023

Source: Statista, 2023c

2.3.4 Effectiveness of marketing and emotional triggers

TikTok's unique features and high engagement levels make it a valuable platform for marketers looking to reach and engage with large audiences. One effective marketing strategy on TikTok is influencer marketing, which leverages the social reach of users with large followings to promote products or services (Choudhary et al., 2020).

One emotional trigger that can be effective in TikTok marketing is appearance anxiety, which refers to the fear of not meeting societal beauty standards (Seekis & Kennedy, 2023). Influencers with relatable and authentic content can use this emotional trigger to promote products or services that address appearance anxiety.

Trust is another emotional trigger that can be effective in TikTok marketing. According to the loyalty and trust literatures, trust is one of the main antecedents of loyalty (Laroche et al., 2013). By partnering with influencers who are trusted by their audience, businesses can increase their credibility and build brand loyalty among TikTok users. Furthermore, there is a strong preference for working with small influencers, such as nano and micro-influencers, who have more engaged and dedicated followings than larger influencers or celebrities (Geyser, 2022a).

Graph 8: Influencer marketing market size

Source: Geyser, 2022a

The influencer marketing industry is set to grow to approximately $21.1 billion in 2023 (Geyser, 2022a). This highlights the importance and potential of influencer marketing in reaching audiences through TikTok. When selecting influencers for TikTok marketing campaigns, it is important to consider engagement rates, as small accounts with 1K-5K followers have been found to have the highest engagement rates on the platform (Geyser, 2022a).

To conclude, appearance anxiety and trust are two emotional triggers that can be leveraged in TikTok marketing campaigns. Influencer marketing has become a popular and valuable strategy for reaching audiences on TikTok, with a preference for working with small influencers with highly engaged followings.

2.3.5   Opportunities and benefits of using TikTok for marketing and branding

TikTok presents a unique opportunity for businesses to connect with younger audiences and promote their brands through engaging and authentic content. Many brands, including Chipotle, NBA, and The Washington Post, are proactively using

TikTok as part of their digital marketing strategy (Choudhary et al., 2020). This highlights the potential for businesses to reach new audiences through the platform. One major advantage of TikTok is that content can be easily shared on other social media platforms, allowing videos to reach a wider audience (Hayes et al., 2020). This sharing feature also allows businesses to reach those who do not have a TikTok account. Additionally, unlike other social media platforms, TikTok videos can be viewed on any web browser or electronic device with an internet connection (Hayes et al., 2020). Another advantage of TikTok is that it allows creators to restrict user comments by blocking certain accounts from commenting on their videos and setting comment restrictions, which filters and blocks comments containing certain words from being posted on the video (Hayes et al., 2020). This can help businesses maintain a positive and respectful online presence.

Finally, TikTok is now the natural home of user-generated content (UGC), with many brands engaging influencers to set up dance challenges and other activities on their behalf (Geyser, 2022a). This presents a valuable opportunity for businesses to create engaging and authentic content that resonates with TikTok users and builds brand loyalty through user-generated content.

2.3.6 Utilizing emotional triggers for marketing and branding

Utilizing emotional triggers for marketing and branding on TikTok can be an effective way to create engaging and memorable content that resonates with the viewers. One way to do this is by leveraging the platform's ability to stimulate mutual attention and interaction among users, which can lead to a shared emotional experience (Choudhary et al., 2020).

By creating content that evokes positive emotions, such as humor, joy, or awe, businesses can create a deeper emotional connection with their audiences and build brand loyalty. For example, a brand could create a video that showcases a heartwarming story or highlights a relatable experience that resonates with TikTok users. Another way to utilize emotional triggers on TikTok is through the use of music, which is a key feature of the platform (Choudhary et al., 2020). By choosing music that aligns with a brand's values and resonates with their target audience, businesses can create an emotional connection that extends beyond the video itself. It is important

to note, however, that emotional triggers should be used ethically and responsibly. Brands should avoid exploiting negative emotions, such as fear or anxiety, as a marketing tactic. Instead, focus on creating content that evokes positive emotions and adds value to the TikTok user's experience. By creating content that evokes positive emotions and resonates with TikTok users, businesses can build brand loyalty and create a deeper emotional connection with their audience.
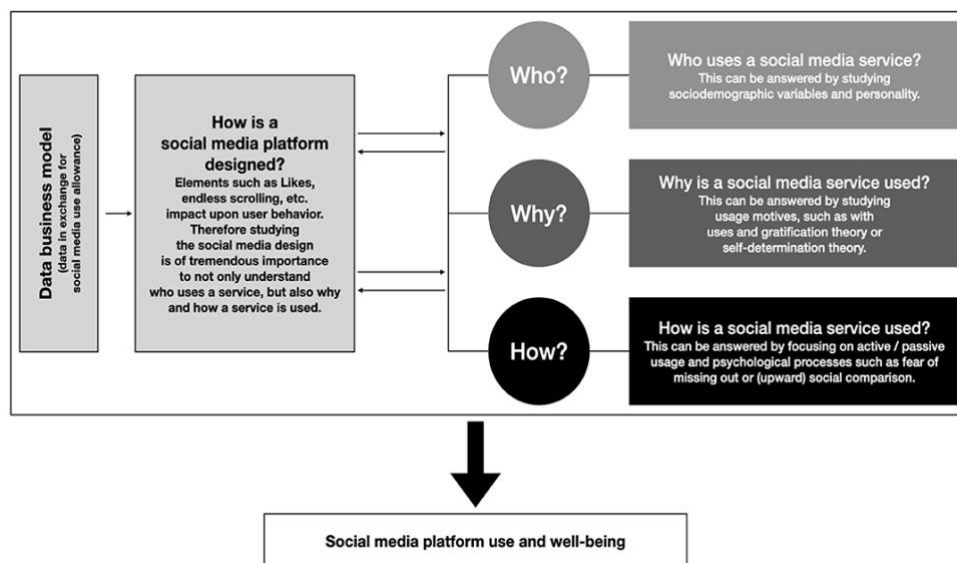
Graph 9: Overview of social media platform designs

Source: Montag et al., 2021

2.3.7 Factors for viral marketing success

The success of viral marketing on TikTok can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, TikTok content is available to view indefinitely, which makes it easier for users to discover and share content that resonates with them. Additionally, viral marketing on TikTok relies on word-of-mouth marketing, which can create the potential for exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence (F. Wilson, 2018).

To create an effective viral marketing strategy on TikTok, brands should focus on creating content that aligns with the platform's core values of entertainment and creativity. As Geyser (2020) notes, people come to TikTok to be entertained and share their creative efforts, therefore brands should focus on creating content that adds value to the user's experience. To create content that resonates with TikTok users, brands can partner with influencers to create engaging and shareable content.

Graph 10: Most common measures of influencer marketing success

Source: Geyser, 2022a

According to Geyser (2022a), content production is the most important factor when partnering with influencers for survey respondents, followed by views/reach/impressions and content type/category. Brands can also create their own sound and try to get it to trend to gain further visibility (Geyser, 2022b).

Timing is also an important factor when it comes to viral marketing success on TikTok. According to Geyser (2022b), the best time to post on TikTok varies for each account but in general, 9 AM (EST) on Tuesdays, 12 AM (EST) on Thursdays, and 5 AM (EST) on Fridays offer particularly high levels of engagement. Creating an effective viral marketing strategy on TikTok requires a deep understanding of the platform's unique features and values. Brands that focus on creating entertaining and shareable content, partnering with influencers, and posting at optimal times can increase their chances of viral marketing success on TikTok.

2.3.8 Concerns and challenges about TikTok

Despite its popularity as a marketing tool, TikTok also presents a number of concerns and challenges for businesses and individuals using the platform. One of the most significant concerns is the security of data on TikTok, with governmental officials and

corporations raising concerns about the potential for data breaches (Lovett et al., 2021). This highlights the importance of taking appropriate measures to protect personal and sensitive data on the platform.

Another challenge is breaking through to reach a global audience, especially making videos that appear on the "For You" page (Hayes et al., 2020). This requires creating engaging and high-quality content that resonates with individual user preferences, which can be a challenge for businesses that are new to the platform.

It is also important for academic accounts and creators to ensure that their use of TikTok aligns with institutional social media policies and that permission is sought from others before including their work, videos, personal image, or data in a TikTok video (Hayes et al., 2020). This is important to ensure, that content is ethical and respectful, and that personal data is not misused or shared without consent.

Furthermore, while TikTok presents a valuable opportunity for businesses to reach younger audiences, advertising to TikTok users and reaching non-followers of the account can be challenging (Hayes et al., 2020). This again highlights the importance of creating content that resonates with individual user preferences and working with influencers to expand reach.

In addition to these concerns, there are also issues of influencer fraud, with brands and marketers remaining cautious of influencers who may engage in fraudulent practices (Geyser, 2022a). Finally, TikTok has also been associated with higher rates of discrimination compared to other platforms, with over 58% of those who experienced discrimination reporting that it occurred on TikTok (Geyser, 2022a).

As with every social media platform there is, it is important to be aware of the challenges TikTok can bring. However, to mitigate these concerns, it is important for individuals and businesses to take appropriate measures to protect data, create engaging and ethical content, and work with influencers to expand reach.

3   Methodology

In the methodology chapter, the reader will find a short description of the primary aim as well as a comprehensive explanation of the research design and approach adopted for this study, including a quantitative research method involving an online questionnaire. Additionally, the chapter will discuss the selection criteria for participants, the design of the questionnaire, and it will reflect on the effectiveness of the questionnaire. The choice of research design aims to effectively gather and analyze large amounts of data from a sufficient number of participants, allowing for a valid exploration of TikTok's potential as a marketing tool.

3.1   Aim

The primary aim of this research is to explore the utilization of the social media platform TikTok. Hereby, TikTok will be investigated as a marketing and promotion tool concentrating on the catalyst that drive viral content and foster customer relations. This study offers a guideline for businesses to leverage the use of TikTok as a branding marketing tool.

3.2   Research Design

Research design is the plan or framework for conducting research. It involves deciding on the research question, the research methods to be used, and the overall approach to the research. According to Creswell (2014) there are several different types of research design, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Quantitative research design focuses on collecting and analyzing numerical data. It is often used to test hypotheses and to evaluate relationships between variables. Quantitative research typically involves collecting data from a large sample of participants using structured instruments, such as surveys or experiments. The data is then analyzed using statistical techniques to identify patterns and relationships or test hypothesis (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research design, on the other hand, focuses on collecting and analyzing non-numerical data. Creswell (2014) explains that this method is often used to explore complex phenomena and to understand people's experiences, perspectives, and motivations. Mixed methods research design combines quantitative

and qualitative research approaches. It is often used to triangulate data and to provide a more complete understanding of a research question or problem (Creswell, 2014). Overall, the choice of research design depends on the research question and the goals of the research. Different research designs have their own advantages and limitations, and it is essential to carefully consider which approach is most appropriate for the specific research project.

This paper will gain primary data through quantitative research conducting an online questionnaire. The reason to use this research design is because there is already data available on this topic and questionnaires can be established based on previous results. This will allow for a better validation and reliability of the survey and for collecting large amounts of data from a large number of participants as well as the numerical data will be straightforward to analyze and interpret. Other reasons for choosing quantitative research will include the suitability of it for testing the established hypotheses and examining relationships between variables, the use of standardized data collection methods and data analysis techniques (Creswell, 2014). One of the most important factors for this research will be the efficiency and cost-effectiveness as well as the potential for generalizability of conducting an online survey using a quantitative research method (Creswell, 2014). However, there are downsides to using an online survey. As mentioned by Sincero (2012) the limitations include not being administered in form of an interviewer, as this survey is conducted individually and online. In addition to that, another limitation is fraud, as some participants might answer surveys to get benefits such as money or vouchers.

3.3   Unit of Analysis

In this thesis, the unit of analysis is of significant importance and remains the central focus of the study (DeCarlo, 2018). The unit of analysis is centered around understanding the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of TikTok as a marketing tool and the triggers for creating viral content that drives consumer engagement.

The unit of observation, which refers to the approach employed for measuring, observing, and analyzing information to enhance understanding of the unit of

analysis, will involve multiple interconnected aspects through a combination of content analysis and user behavior analysis (DeCarlo, 2018).

This will include social media usage patterns across generations, social media marketing and branding strategies, and the unique features of TikTok as a social media platform.

By addressing the primary aim of the thesis and answering the research questions, this study will provide a deeper understanding of TikTok's potential as a marketing tool and the elements that contribute to the creation of viral content, ultimately helping businesses to leverage their social media presence effectively. Furthermore, this comprehensive approach will offer insights into the topic's relevance and generate quantifiable data to further comprehend the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of TikTok as a marketing tool and the triggers for creating viral content.

3.4 Participants

The participants for the survey will be recruited through social media, especially through LinkedIn, Instagram as well as WhatsApp and email. Everyone is invited to take part in the survey. The survey was launched on the 5th of May 2023 and was available for 10 days. The survey was created on Google forms and takes approximately 10 minutes to fill out.

3.4.1 Selection Criteria

The selection criteria are automatically fulfilled as everyone who sees the survey on e.g Instagram or LinkedIn is automatically a user of social media platforms and therefore eligible to take part in the survey. Some users, however, might not be able to answer every specific question about TikTok, as they might not be registered TikTok users. This is alleviated by the fact that TikTok videos can be freely shared. The location of the participants is not important and will therefore not be asked. The limitations include fraud, as some people only answer the questionnaire to get a voucher or money. As there is a chance to win 2x10€ Amazon vouchers, this limitation is very reasonable, therefore, an effort has been made to manually verify the data. Another limitation that might occur is that participants have to go through the survey unsupervised which might lead to confusion about certain questions.

3.4.2   Questionnaire Design

When designing this questionnaire, the researcher opted for a blend of demographic and Likert scale questions to gather a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and perceptions of social media platforms. In total the questionnaire consists of 26 closed-ended questions (Ross, 2005). The first section of the questionnaire is comprised of 7 demographic questions to get a better understanding of the background of the respondents. These questions are mandatory to fill out, as this information is critical as it provides context for their responses and allows for an exploration of potential variations in responses across different demographic groups (Ross, 2005). For example, gathering data on age, gender, and occupation of the respondents can help investigate if there are generational, gender-based, or professional differences in the use and perception of TikTok and other social media platforms. These questions can be answered as single choice questions with different options to choose from, that best describes the participant.

The second part of the questionnaire asks about more general questions about social media usage across various social media platforms. This part consists of 3 questions that can be answered using the Likert scale ranging from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. This is important to get a better understanding about the participants perception of different social media platforms.

The third part and main part of the questionnaire consists of 16 questions specifically related to the social media platform TikTok. The questions are composed of Likert scale questions, which are designed to measure the respondents' attitudes and perceptions towards various aspects related to the research topic TikTok as a branding marketing tool. The Likert scale provides a consistent measurement across questions, making it easier for respondents to provide their input and for the researcher to analyze the results. The questions are divided into specific constructs that align with the research questions and hypothesis, ensuring that each aspect of the research topic is thoroughly explored (Ross, 2005).

Moreover, the order of the questions was carefully considered. The survey begins with personal demographic questions to build rapport and make the respondents comfortable. The Likert scale questions follow, arranged by theme starting from general perceptions of emotional content and virality across social media platforms,

moving towards more specific questions related to TikTok. This order is intended to guide respondents from a broader understanding of the topic to a more specific focus on TikTok, facilitating a natural progression in their thought process (Ross, 2005).

By carefully considering the types and order of questions, the survey aims to facilitate a smooth experience for the respondents, encouraging thoughtful and accurate responses that will generate valuable data for this research.

3.4.3   Reflection of Questionnaire

Demographic questions:

The first seven demographic questions in the questionnaire serve to provide an understanding of the respondents' backgrounds and social media usage habits. These questions make it possible to analyze the data and identify any trends or correlations based on factors such as age, gender, education, occupation, and social media usage.

Question Block A: Demographic Questions
What is your age?
What is your gender?
What is your highest level of education completed?
What is your occupation?
How often do you use social media platforms?
Which social media platforms do you use most frequently?
On average how much time do you spend on social media per day?

Table 3: Demographic questions of questionnaire

Asking about the respondents' age helps to analyze differences in the perception of emotional content and virality across various generations. This information is crucial to understanding how TikTok and other social media platforms may affect users of different age groups. Furthermore, collecting data on gender can reveal potential differences in how emotional triggers and branded content are perceived by male and female users. This information could be vital in tailoring marketing strategies to better engage with specific target demographics. It is also interesting to find out about the

43

participants education level, which can provide insights into their ability to critically assess and respond to branded content. As certain professions may be more likely to engage with specific types of content or be more receptive to emotional triggers, the occupation of respondents may influence their exposure to and interaction with branded content on social media platforms. Frequent users may have different perceptions on emotional triggers compared to occasional users. Therefore, knowing how often respondents use social media platforms is essential for understanding their level of exposure to and interaction with branded content. By identifying the social media platforms respondents use most frequently, one can better understand where they are most likely to encounter branded content and emotional triggers. This information helps determine the differences in marketing strategies and effectiveness across various platforms. Another important aspect that affects the questionnaire is that a higher daily usage could result in increased familiarity with the platform's features and a greater understanding of the factors contributing to virality. These demographic questions provide valuable context for interpreting the participants answers to the specific questions related to emotional triggers, virality, and branding marketing strategies on TikTok and other social media platforms that will be asked in the third block in the questionnaire.

General questions about social media:

The second part of the questionnaire aims to explore the participants perception of various social media platforms. The questions ask about more specific but still general questions related to social media usage. These questions are in total 3 and they allow for a better understanding of the unique aspects of each social media platform.

Question Block B: General questions about social media
Question 1: I find that the emotional impact of branded content varies across different social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok).
Question 2: I believe that certain social media platforms are more suitable for emotional branding than others.

Question 3: I think that the strategies used by brands to evoke emotions in their audience differ across social media platforms.

Table 4: General questions about social media

The three questions ask about emotional impact across platforms, suitability for emotional branding as well as different strategies for emotional branding. The first question asks respondents whether they perceive differences in the emotional impact of branded content across platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok). Through this information, one can get insights into how users respond to different emotional triggers on various social media platforms.

Furthermore, the second question aims to determine if participants believe that some social media platforms are more suitable for branding than others. This can help understand which platforms should be used by brands to effectively engage with customers.

The last question of this block asks participants if the think that brands employ different strategies on various social media platforms to evoke different emotions. This question can help identify the most appropriate and successful strategies to evoke emotions and can help tailor marketing to the different platforms.

These questions contribute to the research by highlighting the participants perceptions of emotional triggers and branding strategies across multiple social media platforms.

Specific questions related to TikTok:

The third part of the questionnaire asks about different constructs which are measured with varying questions. There are 5 different measure in total, these include: Emotional engagement and impact, virality and platform characteristics, user preferences and content types, emotional triggers and sharing behavior as well as brand success and marketing strategies.

Emotional engagement and impact
Question 5: I feel more engaged with emotionally charged content from brands on TikTok compared to similar content on social media platforms
Question 9: The use of music and sound effects in TikTok videos enhances the emotional impact of the content.
Question 21: I notice differences in the emotional impact and engagement of branded content between TikTok and other social media platforms.

Table 5: Emotional engagement and impact

These questions are asked to get a better understanding of emotionally charged content on TikTok and other social media platforms. It is essential to understand how users perceive and interact with emotional content to explore emotional engagement and impact. Furthermore, this information can assist brands in tailoring their marketing campaigns to evoke certain emotions from the customers, which can ultimately lead to more user engagement. In addition to that, asking about the role of music and sound effects while comparing it across platforms can provide insights into the effectiveness of TikTok as a marketing tool for businesses.

Virality and platform characteristics
Question 6: TikTok's short-form video format makes it easier for content to go viral compared to other platforms.
Question 18: I believe that the virality of content on TikTok varies across different generations.
Question 20: I believe that TikTok's algorithms play a significant role in the virality of emotional content from both regular users and brands.

Table 6: Virality and platform characteristics

It is vital to understand virality and platform characteristics to help reveal unique features that contribute to the spread of content on TikTok. When asking about the short-form video format and the role of algorithms on TikTok, it can present businesses with a better understand of the best practices for creating and sharing content on TikTok. Moreover, exploring how virality differs across generations allows

brands to create strategies and adapt maximize their reach and engagement with the target audience.

User preferences and content types
Question 7: I prefer to see emotional content from brands over regular users on TikTok.
Question 8: I find user-generated content from brands more engaging than their professionally produced content.
Question 14: The authenticity of a TikTok video is more important to me than its production quality.

Table 7: User preferences and content types

In order to identify what type of content resonates most with a brands audience on TikTok it is useful to investigate user preferences and different types of content.

In order to increase user engagement and customer loyalty, brands need to create content that resonates with the target audience. Therefore, understanding the user's appreciation for authenticity as well as understanding the user's preference of emotional content from brands versus regular users, can lead to increased traffic of the brand.

Emotional triggers and sharing behavior
Question 10: I am more likely to share a TikTok video that evokes strong emotions (e.g., happiness, sadness, excitement, etc.).
Question 17: I am more likely to follow a brand on TikTok if they consistently post content that resonates with my emotions.

Table 8: Emotional triggers and sharing behavior

When marketers understand the factors that make users more likely to follow a brand based on their emotional content, it can create the foundation for long-term marketing strategies. Furthermore, to get insights into how users respond to emotionally charged content on TikTok, it is necessary to explore emotional triggers and sharing behavior, which is asked with question 10. This can help brands to create emotionally charged campaigns which again leads to more user engagement and a

higher reach of the target audience. Therefore, it is necessary to know and identify the emotions that encourage users to share, like or comment content on TikTok.

| Brand success and marketing strategies |
|---|
| **Question 11: I believe brands on TikTok are successful at creating emotional connections with their audience.** |
| **Question 12: I am more likely to purchase from a brand if I have seen their emotional content on TikTok.** |
| **Question 13: I think TikTok is an effective platform for brands to reach a wide range of audiences.** |
| **Question 15: I believe TikTok challenges are an effective way for brands to engage with their audience.** |
| **Question 16: I think that integrating user-generated content into a brand's TikTok marketing strategy can generate more customers.** |

Table 9: Brand success and marketing strategies

To identify the most effective approaches to connect with the target market, generate more users and customers and increase sales, it is essential to examine marketing strategies and brand success on TikTok. To better achieve a brands goal, marketers have to refine marketing strategies on TikTok. This can be done by evaluating the effectiveness of various marketing tactics such as user-generated content or challenges or by the perceived success of brands in generating emotional connections with the audience.

4 Summary and Interpretation of collected Data

In this chapter the reader will find a comprehensive analyzation of the questionnaire. The demographic questions, the general questions about social media as well as the specific questions related to TikTok will be examined and interpreted. This will provide the reader with a clear understanding of the questionnaire results.

4.1 Demographics

What is your age?
103 Antworten

Legend:
- Under 18
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 or older
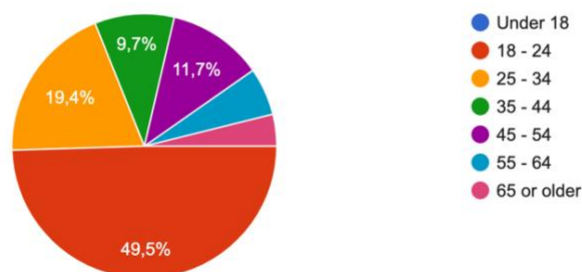
Graph 11: Demographics of participants: Age

This study drew upon a total of 103 participants. Primarily, the majority of participants (49.5% or 51 individuals) fell within the 18-24 age group. Conversely, the least represented group was those aged 65 or older, which constituted just 4.9% or a mere 4 individuals of the sample pool. Interestingly, a significant portion of participants (19.4% or 20 individuals) belonged to the 25-34 age bracket.

Unmistakably, the data leans towards the younger generation. Nonetheless, there were still 32 participants aged 35 or older, thus providing some substantial insights into potential generational differences. However, the notable imbalance in age distribution could possibly influence the generalizability of our findings, especially towards the older demographic.

Additionally, it's worth acknowledging that the researcher's own age group of 18-24 is notably over-represented. This overrepresentation is primarily due to the recruitment method that relied heavily on the researcher's social media followers. This circumstance could introduce a certain degree of bias as those within the

researcher's network may share similar perspectives or characteristics, thereby further impacting the overall generalizability of the findings.

Consequently, in the light of these facts, the study acknowledges a limitation in its ability to fully represent the views of all age groups, with a particular shortfall in the representation of those 65 and older. Hence, in future research, it will be critical to ensure a more balanced representation across all age groups. Despite this limitation, the study underscores the importance of the insights garnered, as they provide valuable information predominantly about the younger demographic.

What is your gender?
103 Antworten

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
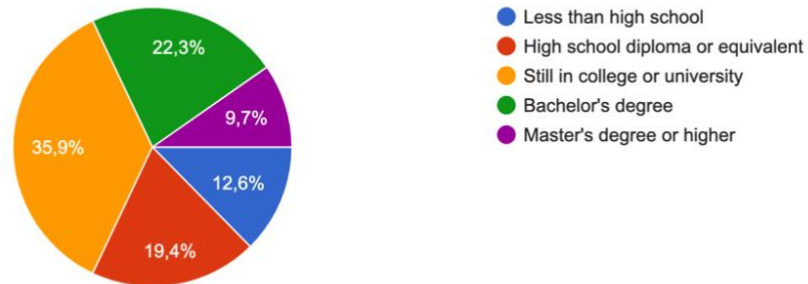- Prefer not to say

60,2%

38,8%
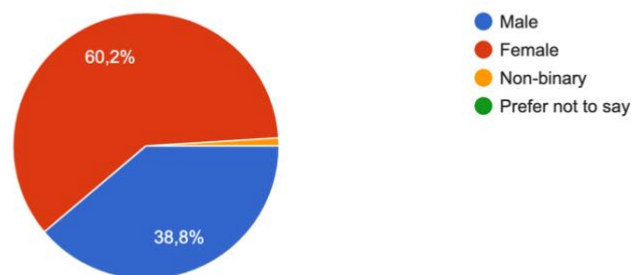
Graph 12: Demographics of participants: Gender

Female participants were in the majority, making up 62 of the totals, while 40 were male, and a single participant identified as non-binary. The gender imbalance might be attributed to the researcher's gender, being a female herself with a predominantly female social media following. However, this claim should be treated cautiously as it wasn't explicitly measured in the study.

The hypothesis that male participants are often less responsive to online questionnaires is a broad generalization and there is lack of sufficient data to validate it here. This study underscores the necessity for a balanced gender representation in future research. Despite this limitation, the insights gathered, particularly from the female respondents, are valuable.

What is your highest level of education completed?
103 Antworten

- Less than high school
- High school diploma or equivalent
- Still in college or university
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree or higher

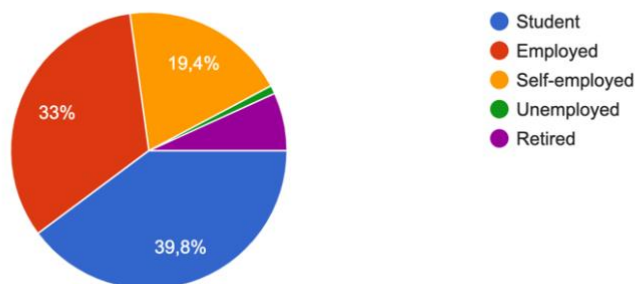**Graph 13: Demographics of participants: Highest level of education completed**

The survey next looked at participants' occupation or current educational status. The largest group (35.9% or 37 individuals) comprised of students still in college or high school. The group with a bachelor's degree was next with 23 participants.

Of note, 13 participants (12.6%) reported their highest educational attainment to be less than high school. This could suggest that these individuals are either still in high school or they have taken non-traditional educational paths.

A smaller fraction, 9.7% or 10 individuals, hold a master's degree or higher. This aligns with the age demographics data that was discussed earlier, as a significant number of participants are young and likely still on their educational journeys, limiting the number who could have achieved advanced degrees.


What is your occupation?
103 Antworten

- Student
- Employed
- Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Retired

Graph 14: Demographics of participants: Occupation

Upon asking about the participants' current occupation, it was expected to find that students formed the majority. There were 41 participants who identified as students, either in high school or higher education, representing the largest group of our survey respondents. This finding is consistent with the earlier question about participants' level of education, reinforcing the high presence of individuals engaged in education. Furthermore, 34 people are employed while 20 people are self-employed. 1 participant indicated that they are unemployed while 7 are retired.

How often do you use social media platforms?
103 Antworten
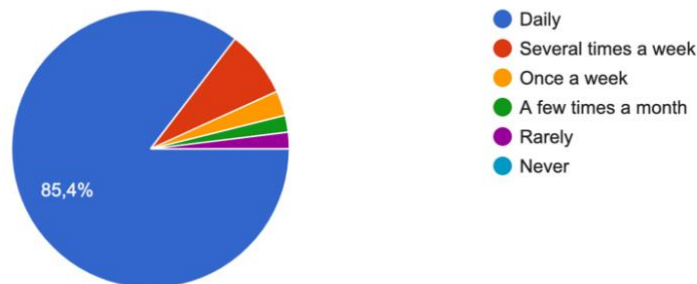
Graph 15: Demographics of participants: Frequency of social media usage

Of the participants surveyed, a significant majority (85.4% or 88 people) reported daily use of social media. Only a small portion, comprising of two individuals aged between 55-64 and 65 or older, indicated that they use social media sparingly. Interestingly, the survey did not find any participants who completely abstained from social media use. These findings suggest that across our varied demographic of age, gender, and occupation, the use of social media is omnipresent. While not every participant uses these social media platforms daily, the data indicates a prevalent connection to the digital world. However, it is crucial to not overstate the results. While the data conducted shows consistent social media use, one cannot definitively state that every internet-connected individual is a potential customer or consumer. The sample size and potential bias from collecting data on a social media platform should be considered when generalizing these findings.
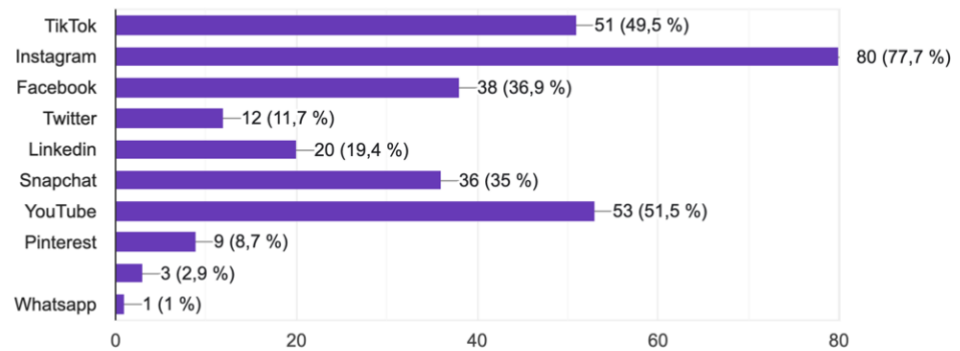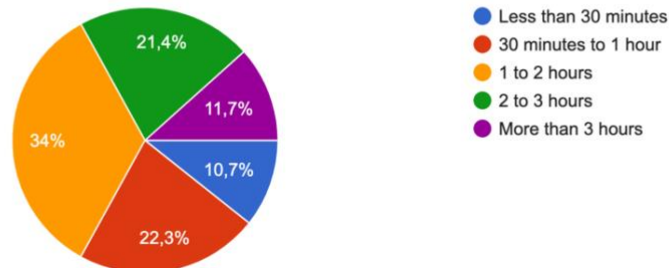
Graph 16: Demographics of participants: Frequent social media platforms

In this dataset, Instagram emerged as the most popular social media platform, with 80 out of 103 participants indicating it as their most frequently used platform. YouTube followed in second place with 53 users, and TikTok was a close third with 51 frequent users. These findings suggest that, in this study's specific demographic, there are clear preferences towards visually-oriented platforms like Instagram and TikTok, and multimedia platforms like YouTube. This could indicate a valuable opportunity for brands and businesses to reach these audiences through targeted campaigns on these platforms. However, it is essential to keep in mind the characteristics of the participant pool. Since the majority of the participants fall in the 18-24 age group, the given data might lean towards the preferences of younger users. Furthermore, the fact that data was gathered through the social media platform Instagram, might make respondents inherently more active on this platform.

On average, how much time do you spend on social media per day?
103 Antworten

- Less than 30 minutes
- 30 minutes to 1 hour
- 1 to 2 hours
- 2 to 3 hours
- More than 3 hours

**Graph 17: Demographics of participants: Social media usage time per day**

The final question in the demographic inquiry concerned the average daily time spent by participants on social media. The results show that a significant portion of the group (34% or 35 individuals) use social media for 1 to 2 hours each day. Only 11 respondents (10.7%) reported spending less than 30 minutes daily on these platforms, while 12 people (11.7%) spend more than 3 hours. Thus, it appears that the typical user's engagement with social media is roughly 1 to 2 hours per day. However, one can see a range in usage time, with some individuals spending significantly less or more time online. This highlights the varying importance and role social media plays in different individuals' daily routines.

4.2   Summary and Interpretation

In total there are 3 general questions about social media platforms that the participants had to fill out. It is important to note that they next questions were not mandatory to fill out. Therefore, some questions might not have 103 respondents, this will be indicated for each question where applicable. Furthermore, the use of a Likert scale makes it possible to compare the different graphs with each other. Hereby the numbers indicate the following: (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

I find that the emotional impact of branded content varies across different social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok)
103 Antworten
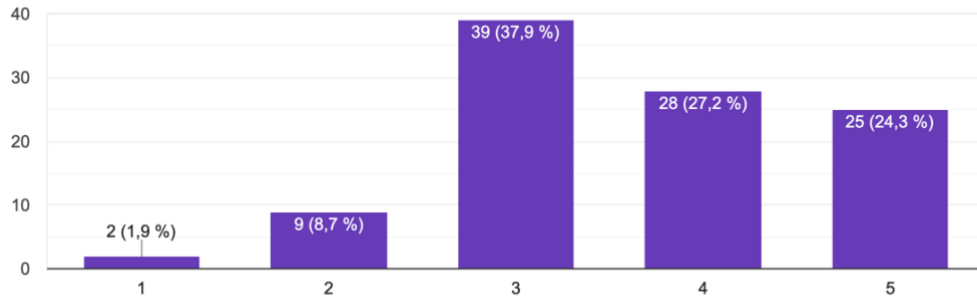
Graph 18: Impact of branded content

While a significant number of participants (39 individuals) remained neutral on the issue of differing emotional impacts of content across various social media platforms, it's worth highlighting that a substantial combined total of 53 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the idea of such differences. This suggests a common perception that branded content induces different emotional responses depending on the platform it is hosted on. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that only two participants strongly disagreed, and 9 participants disagreed with this perspective. This minimal opposition might signify a general acceptance of the diversity in emotional responses across platforms, though further study would be needed for a concrete conclusion.

Following the findings of Nisar & Whitehead (2016), companies are advised to build relationships with their consumers through various internet channels. Based on the responses to this survey, it seems wise for businesses to customize their content to suit each platform to potentially increase emotional engagement. However, it is also important to take into account the significant proportion of respondents who remained neutral. This could indicate uncertainty or lack of knowledge about the differences in content across platforms. One can state that, businesses may need to consider strategies to better inform consumers about their multi-channel content strategy. Additionally, further research is needed to explore this aspect in more depth.

I believe that certain social media platforms are more suitable for emotional branding than others
103 Antworten
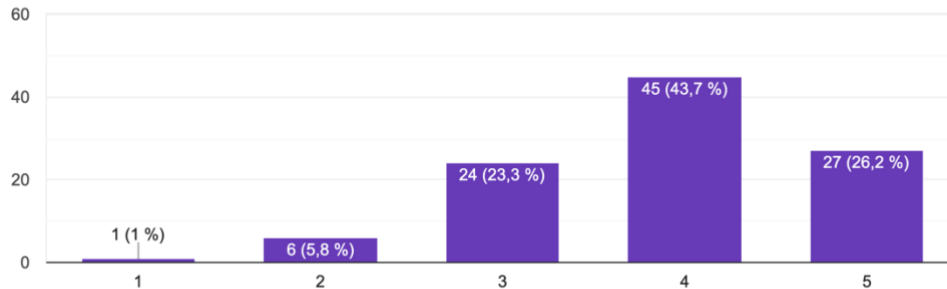
Graph 19: Emotional branding

The findings from this question align closely with the previous one. A majority of respondents - 45 in total - agreed that certain social media platforms are more effective for emotional branding. An additional 27 participants strongly agreed with this notion, indicating a common perception that branding varies across different platforms. Interestingly, only a single individual strongly disagreed and 6 disagreed, a viewpoint that might need further exploration in future research. These results support to the idea presented by Vandenbosch et al (2022), who argue that different social media platforms are better suited for different types of storytelling – Instagram for narratives via images and TikTok for stories through short video content. This suggests that the platform choice can significantly impact how audiences perceive and respond to branded content. Given these findings, businesses and marketers should strategically tailor their content to the storytelling style most effective for each platform. However, further research is needed to better understand how different types of content stimulate emotional responses and the implications of this for branding strategies.

I think that the strategies used by brands to evoke emotions in their audience differ across social media platforms

103 Antworten
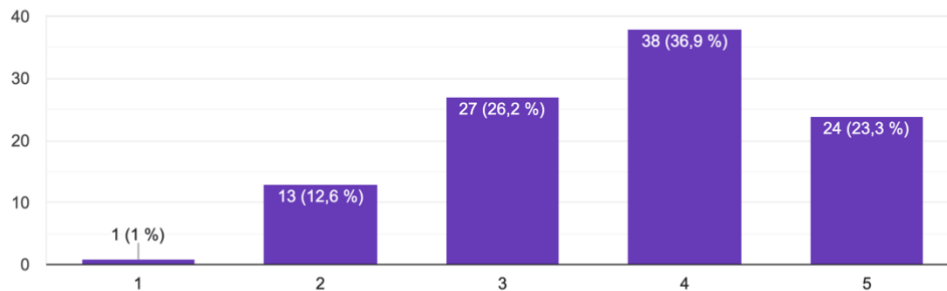
Graph 20: Strategies to evoke emotions

The final question in the general social media section explored the perception of differing strategies employed by brands to evoke emotions across various social media platforms. The majority, comprised of 38 individuals, agreed that different strategies exist, and an additional 24 people strongly agreed. However, the views were not concordant. With 27 participants opting for a neutral stance, while 14 participants expressed disagreement in varying degrees. Despite these differing viewpoints, there is a clear leaning towards the perception of different branding strategies across platforms. Yet, it is important to note the current gap in the literature, especially concerning the platform TikTok and the study of emotional triggers on it. The work of Choudhary et al. (2020) provides some insights, suggesting that positive emotions can foster deeper connections with audiences. Although their research doesn't focus on TikTok, the principles they propose could arguably apply across platforms, hinting at variations in emotional triggers. However, the neutral and disagreeing responses from the participants signal the need for more in-depth exploration in this area to fully understand the complexities of emotional branding across different social media platforms.

The following 16 questions are specifically related to TikTok, which participants were asked to fill out.

I feel more engaged with emotionally charged content from brands on TikTok compared to similar content on other social media platforms

103 Antworten
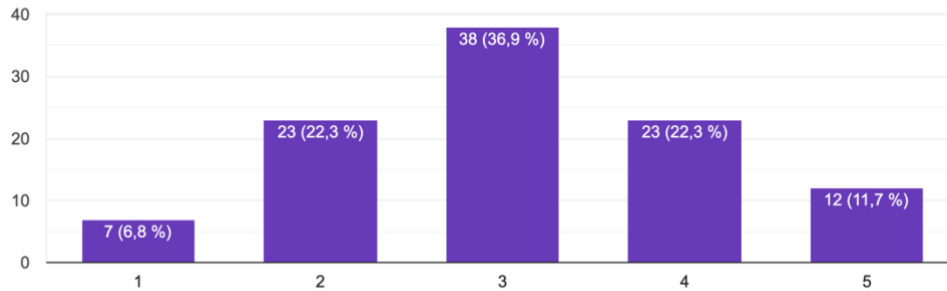
Graph 21: Emotionally charged content

The question investigating participant engagement on TikTok versus other social media platforms showcased interesting results. The majority of participants, numbering 38, expressed neutrality, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Equally, 23 participants fell on either side of the spectrum, agreeing or disagreeing that their engagement on TikTok is different. Interestingly, while only 7 participants strongly disagreed, almost double that number, 12 participants, strongly agreed with the statement. This may suggest a subset of users who find their engagement on TikTok markedly different from other platforms. However, with a substantial number of participants (35) agreeing or strongly agreeing and a fairly close number (30) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, the views appear to be quite diverse. Importantly, the majority were neutral, signaling a potential lack of consensus on TikTok's distinctiveness in terms of user engagement. The literature review did not provide a definitive framework for understanding the difference in emotionally charged content on TikTok versus other platforms. This could be due to the novelty of TikTok or differences in user behavior on the platform, amongst other reasons. Given these findings and the lack of supporting literature, it's difficult to assert a significant difference in the engagement on TikTok compared to other social media platforms. More research and exploration are needed in this area to draw more concrete conclusions.

TikTok's short-form video format makes it easier for content to go viral compared to other platforms
102 Antworten
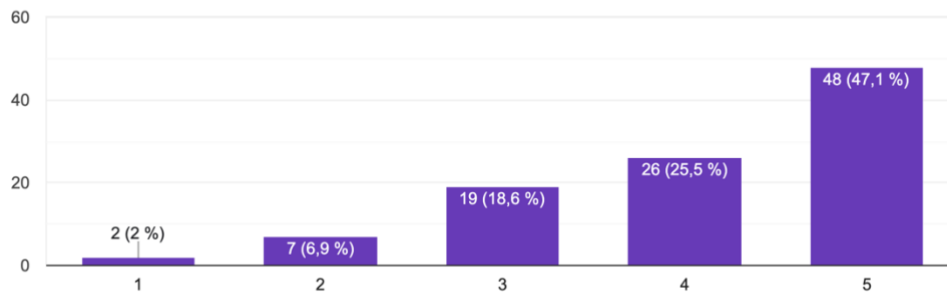
Graph 22: Short-video format and virality

Out of 102 respondents to the question about the virality potential of TikTok's short-video format, a strong agreement emerged. The number of 48 participants strongly agreed that TikTok's unique format aids in achieving virality, significantly more than other social media platforms. Conversely, only a small fraction of respondents, 2 people, expressed a strong disagreement, and 7 people simply disagreed. Meanwhile, a moderate number of participants, 19, were neutral on the issue, with 26 agreeing with the statement. While there is a lack of academic literature specifically discussing TikTok's format and virality, Saquete et al. (2022) provide some insight. They claim that emotional aspects of content, polarity, and emotional charge can drive content towards virality. TikTok's short-video format could potentially amplify these aspects, given its quick, engaging nature that demands immediate emotional responses.

In essence, this strong correlation found between TikTok's short-video format and perceived virality suggests that the platform might offer unique opportunities for content creators and marketers. Yet, further research is required to conclusively understand the nuances of this relationship.

I prefer to see emotional content from brands over regular users on TikTok
102 Antworten
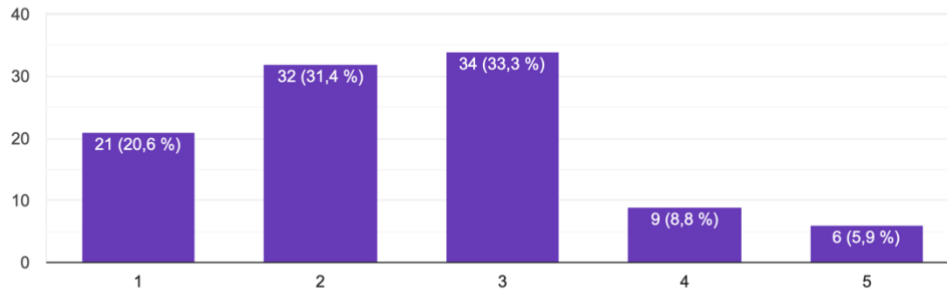
Graph 23: Emotional content from brands vs. regular users

102 participants shared their opinion in on this question, providing a clear insight into their content preferences. The graph illustrates a noticeable preference for user-generated content (UGC) as opposed to content directly produced by brands. A combined total of 53 participants expressed disagreement with brand-generated content (21 strongly disagreed, 32 disagreed), while a total of 15 people voiced agreement (6 strongly agreeing and 9 agreeing). In the middle, there are 34 neutral respondents. These results suggest that brands looking to increase engagement on TikTok may find more success in leveraging UGC rather than producing and pushing their own content. This could be due to a perceived authenticity in UGC; viewers may feel a deeper connection with content produced by individuals rather than corporate entities. In line with this, Geyser (2022a) pointed out that TikTok is a hub for UGC, with brands often collaborating with influencers to generate content on their behalf or setting up challenges for users to engage with. In conclusion, the survey respondents showed a clear preference for UGC over brand-generated content on TikTok. This could be a key insight for brands seeking to optimize their TikTok strategy, suggesting a shift towards UGC could be beneficial.

I find user-generated content from brands more engaging than their professionally produced content

103 Antworten
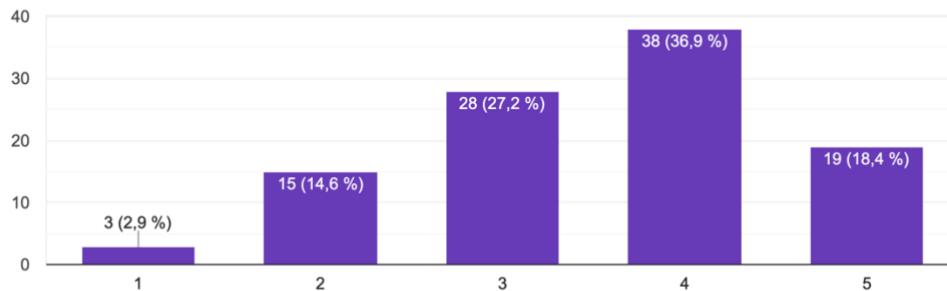
Graph 24: Engagement of content from brands vs. user-generated content

The survey asked participants if they found user-generated content from brands more captivating than their professionally curated content. The responses leaned noticeably towards agreement, with 38 individuals agreeing with this view, and 19 people strongly agreeing. However, neutrality was maintained by 28 participants, while 15 participants showed disagreement, and 3 expressed strong disagreement with the proposition. Referencing Geyser (2022a), it is evident that TikTok has evolved into the typical platform for user-generated content (UGC). Numerous brands have taken advantage of this trend, enlisting influencers to initiate dance challenges and other engaging activities on their behalf. From this, it becomes clear that brands would benefit from capitalizing on the power of UGC, achieved through collaborations with content creators.

The use of music and sound effects in TikTok videos enhances the emotional impact of the content

103 Antworten
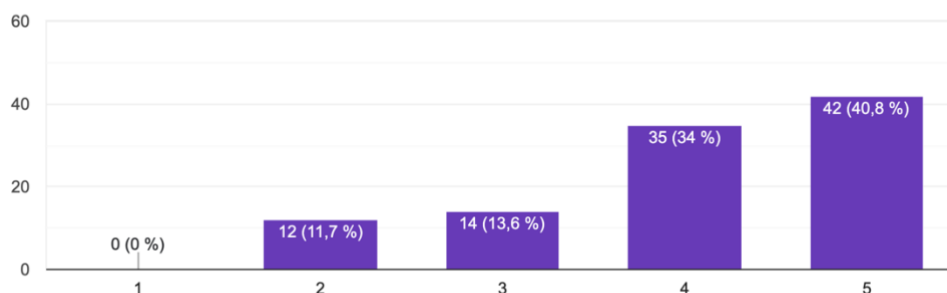
Graph 25: Music and sound effects

61

The question under examination seeks participants' opinions on whether the use of music and sound effects in TikTok videos enhances the emotional impact of the content. A compelling majority of the respondents, including 42 people who strongly agreed and 35 who simply agreed, endorsed this idea. Interestingly, 14 participants held a neutral stance, 12 disagreed, but no one strongly disagreed.

Choudhary et al. (2020) suggest that TikTok's popularity can be largely attributed to its unique approach to short-form video content. Users can enhance their videos with music, filters, and special effects. Therefore, one can conclude that the integration of music and sound effects plays a vital role in reaching the emotional resonance of TikTok content.

I am more likely to share a TikTok video that evokes strong emotions (e.g., happiness, sadness, excitement, etc.)
103 Antworten
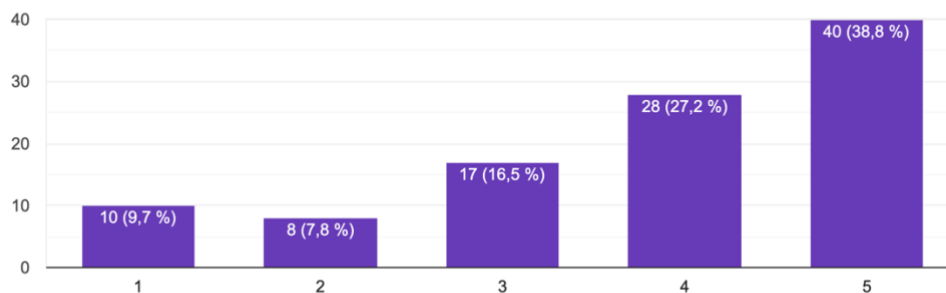
Graph 26: Shareability of content

The survey questioned participants about the shareability of content, specifically if the likelihood to share a TikTok video increases when it stirs intense emotions. The majority concurred with this proposition, with 40 individuals expressing strong agreement, and 28 agreeing. Meanwhile, 17 participants held a neutral stance. In contrast, 10 and 8 participants expressed strong disagreement and disagreement, respectively, indicating a general inclination towards agreement.

Research by Saquete et al. (2022) underscores this perspective, revealing that content evoking emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, fear, and surprise has a higher likelihood of being shared, primarily due to its emotional appeal. Notably, the study suggests content that evokes negative emotions tends to be shared more than content evoking positive emotions. From these findings, it is apparent that brands

should focus on creating content that evoke emotions, discusses controversial subjects, or induces laughter to enhance its shareability.

I believe brands on TikTok are successful at creating emotional connections with their audience
103 Antworten
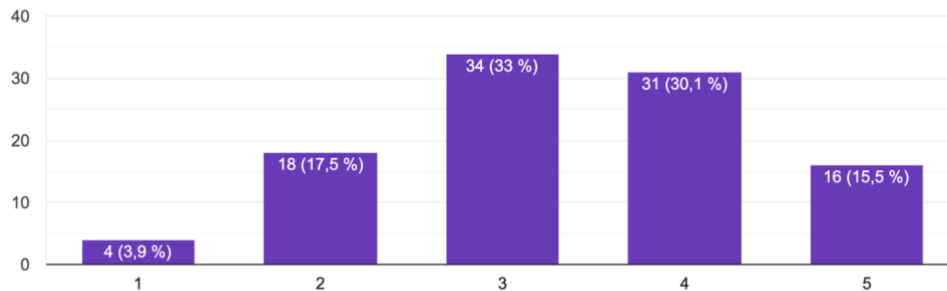
Graph 27: Emotional connections on TikTok

The subsequent question inquired whether the participants felt that brands successfully create emotional connections with their audience on TikTok. Interestingly, the responses were fairly split, with the majority, 34 people or 33%, maintaining a neutral stance. However, a considerable number of respondents, comprising of 31 individuals, agreed, and 16 people strongly agreed. On the contrary, 18 respondents disagreed, and four people strongly disagreed with the statement.

The current literature doesn't provide ample support to this statement due to the limited research available on the subject. Nevertheless, a thorough analysis of the results implies that participants are primarily neutral, with a slight inclination towards agreeing that brands are indeed successful at building emotional bonds with their TikTok audience.

I am more likely to purchase from a brand if I have seen their emotional content on TikTok

103 Antworten
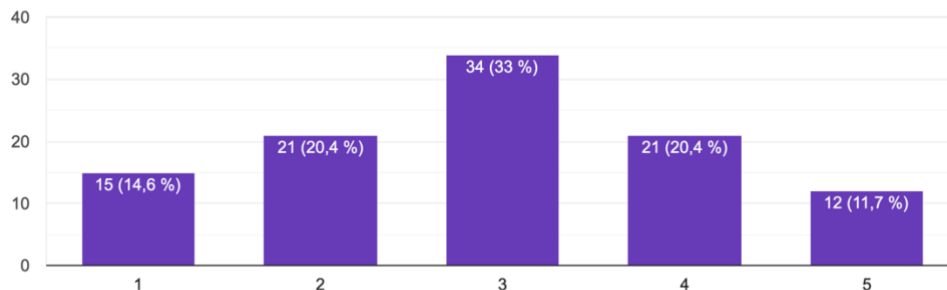
Graph 28: Purchase intention

The subsequent question asked whether participants were more likely to purchase from a brand if they had encountered their emotionally evocative content on TikTok. Interestingly, the responses were diverse, with a number of respondents (34 people) adopting a neutral position. However, it was intriguing to note that an equal proportion of respondents (21 people or 20.4%) either agreed or disagreed with the statement. The division of opinion was further highlighted by 12 people strongly agreeing with the statement, contrasted with 15 people strongly disagreeing. A minor preference towards disagreement could be inferred from the data as 33 people agreed, while 36 people disagreed with the assertion. Unfortunately, there is no direct literature to support this statement. Consequently, while brands may successfully create engaging videos on TikTok and foster strong connections with their audience, these survey results hint that people may not be more likely to purchase from a brand simply based on their TikTok content. As a result, for driving sales, brands may want to consider leveraging other social media platforms in conjunction with TikTok.

I think TikTok is an effective platform for brands to reach a wide range of audiences
103 Antworten
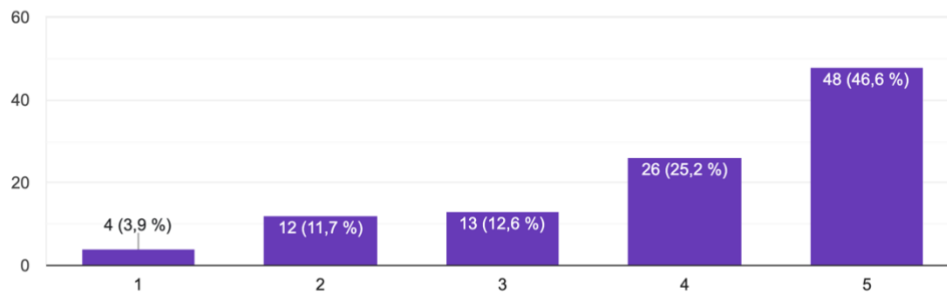
Graph 29: Effectiveness to reach a wide range of audience

The subsequent question sought the participants' opinion on TikTok's capacity to provide brands with a broad audience reach. The majority, composed of 48 participants, strongly agreed that TikTok serves as an effective platform for brands aiming for a wide audience reach. In addition to this, 26 participants agreed, while only 13 remained neutral. A small group composed of 16 participants (4 strongly disagreed and 12 disagreed) expressed skepticism towards TikTok's reach. The participants' perception aligns well with existing literature. For instance, Hayes et al. (2020) highlight that TikTok content can be easily shared through other social media platforms, thereby potentially reaching a large, diverse audience not limited to TikTok but encompassing major social media platforms. As such, it appears to be that TikTok indeed offers brands an avenue for achieving extensive audience reach via cross-platform sharing.

The authenticity of a TikTok video is more important to me than its production quality

103 Antworten
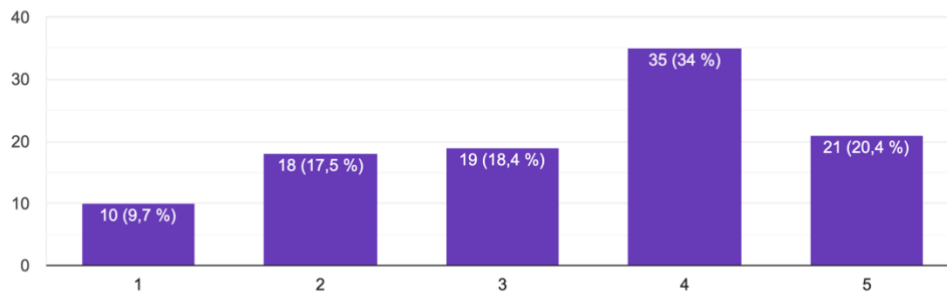
Graph 30: Authenticity of a TikTok video vs. production quality

The question aimed to compare the importance of authenticity versus production quality in a TikTok video for the respondents. Interestingly, a majority, composed of 35 participants, agreed that authenticity mattered more. This question was strongly agreed on by 21 individuals, while a slightly smaller group of 19 participants remained neutral. On the other hand, 18 participants disagreed, with an additional 10 expressing strong disagreement, summing up to 28 who leaned towards the importance of production quality. Current literature offers no direct support for these findings. Yet, a subtle inclination towards authenticity is discernable. Nonetheless, a considerable number of respondents highlighted the significance of production quality as well. Thus, it can be inferred that authenticity and production quality are perceived with nearly equal importance by consumers.

I believe TikTok challenges are an effective way for brands to engage with their audience
103 Antworten
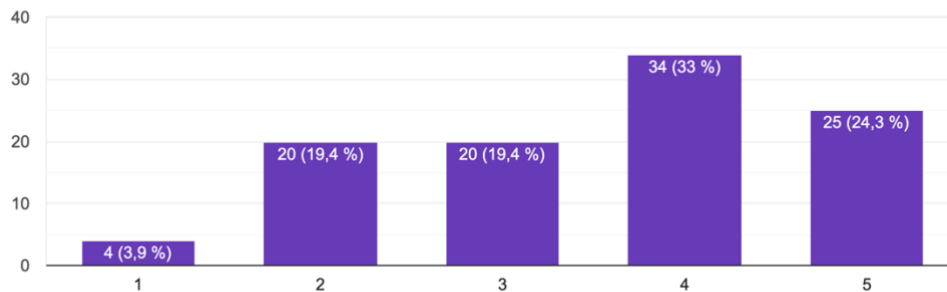
Graph 31: TikTok challenges

The question inquiries about the effectiveness of TikTok challenges as a means for brands to stimulate audience engagement. The data reveals a distinct trend, with a neutral attitude adopted by 20 participants, 34 agreeing, and 25 expressing strong agreement. On the contrary, 20 participants disagreed, and only a handful of 4 strongly disagreed. TikTok is renowned for its ability to initiate captivating challenges that inspire users to participate and create unique content (Choudhary et al., 2020). As such, it would be strategic for brands to collaborate with influencers or other content creators to devise challenges, generate sounds or music, and subsequently connect with potential consumers. TikTok challenges harness the power of trends, humor, and user creativity, key elements that resonate with the platform's demographic. By participating in these challenges, brands can position themselves as community members rather than merely promotional entities, which can increase engagement and foster a more positive brand perception. Therefore, TikTok challenges are not only effective for audience engagement but also for building a relatable and approachable brand image.

I think that integrating user-generated content into a brand's TikTok marketing strategy can generate more customers

102 Antworten
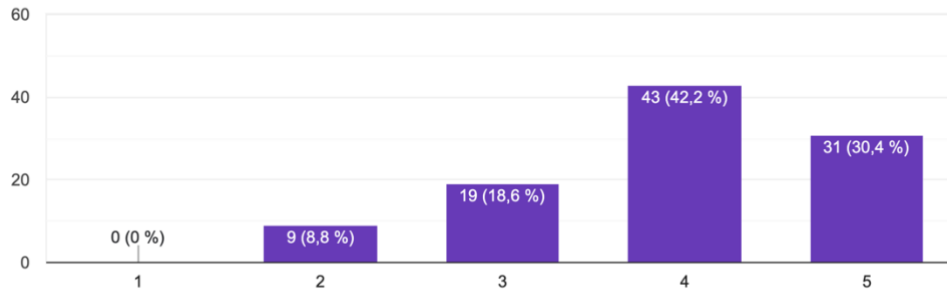
Graph 32: Integrating user-generated content into a brands TikTok marketing strategy

This question was answered by only 102 and asked about if integrating user-generated content into a brands TikTok marketing strategy can generate more customers. No one strongly disagreed while 9 people disagreed with this statement. However, while 19 stayed neutral, 43 people agreed and 31 strongly agreed with this question. Furthermore, as seen in a previous question, participants find UGC more engaging than the brands professionally produced content, which is in alliance with this question. This statement is in conformity with the study conducted by Laroche et al. (2013). In the study it is noted that social media content is now primarily produced, shared and consumed by users through UGC. It is worth noting that UGC can foster a greater sense of authenticity and trust in a brand. Given that UGC typically comes from unbiased sources, prospective customers often find it more reliable and relatable than traditional, professionally-produced brand content. Additionally, UGC can create a sense of community among users, further promoting positive engagement and customer acquisition. Therefore, brands that effectively integrate UGC into their TikTok marketing strategy are likely to see beneficial results.

I am more likely to follow a brand on TikTok if they consistently post content that resonates with my emotions

103 Antworten
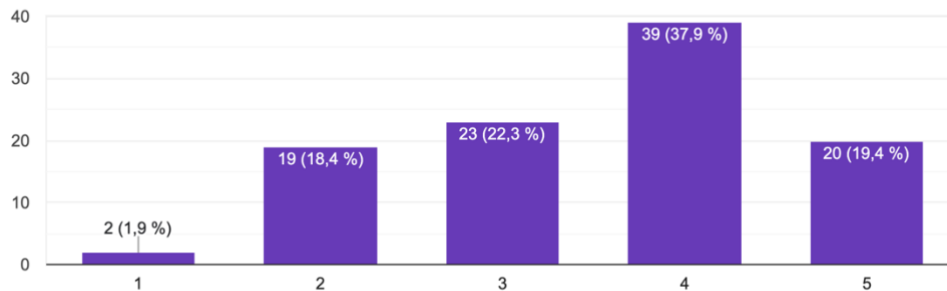
Graph 33: Content that resonates with emotions

This question asks about if a person is more likely to follow a brand on TikTok if they consistently post content that resonates with the participants emotions. 20 people strongly agreed, 39 agreed. 23 stayed neutral, 19 disagreed and only 2 strongly disagreed with this question. This indicates that people tend to follow brands more if they connect with them on an emotional level. While there may not be direct literature investigating the correlation between emotionally resonant content and the likelihood of following a brand on TikTok, studies in emotional marketing highlight the role of emotions in influencing consumer decision-making (Laroche et al., 2013). Brands that are capable of stirring emotional responses can often foster a deeper connection with their audience, enhancing consumer engagement and loyalty. This theory aligns with the observed trend in the survey responses, suggesting that TikTok brands that can tap into users' emotions may gain a following more effectively. Nonetheless, more specific research in this area would be valuable for further clarification.

I believe that the virality of content on TikTok varies across different generations
103 Antworten
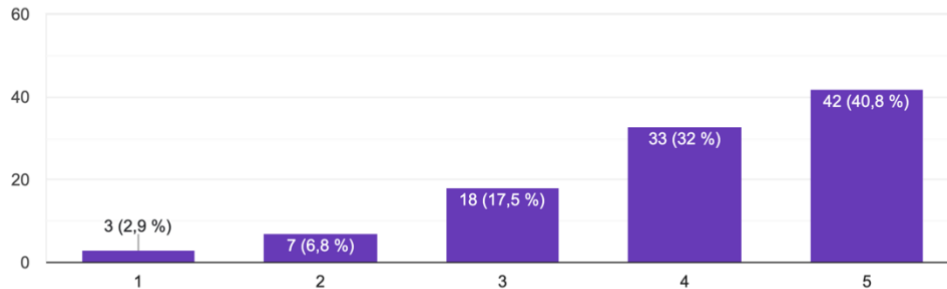
Graph 34: Virality across different generations

Regarding the question on whether participants perceive a difference in the virality of TikTok content across different generations, 42 respondents strongly agreed, and 33 agreed. A minority were neutral (18), disagreed (7), or strongly disagreed (3).

Although Saquete et al. (2022) explain several factors contributing to virality, their research does not specifically delve into generational differences. Given the strong consensus among the survey respondents, this appears to be an area that needs further exploration. For businesses and individuals aiming to broaden their reach and spread content widely across the internet, understanding these potential generational nuances in virality is crucial. Therefore, the need for further research investigating these differences in the context of platforms like TikTok becomes evident.

I believe that TikTok's algorithms play a significant role in the virality of emotional content from both regular users and brands
102 Antworten
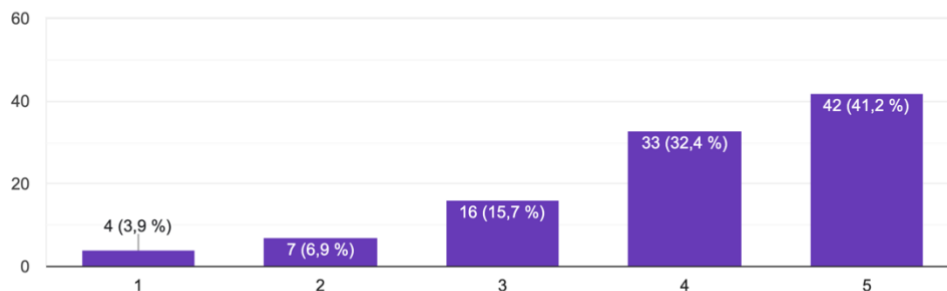
Graph 35: TikTok's algorithm

A significant number of participants (45 people) expressed strong agreement that there is a connection between TikTok's algorithm and virality for both regular users and brands. In addition, 33 people were in agreement, while 16 remained neutral. On the other hand, 7 people (or 6.9%) disagreed, and 4 strongly disagreed with this statement. As mentioned by Geyser (2022b), TikTok's algorithm decides on the content displayed on the user's 'For You' page, tailored to their individual preferences. However, Lovett et al. (2021) suggest that the algorithm is not universally understood due to its exclusivity and confidentiality. Given these insights, it is reasonable to infer that the algorithm plays a vital role in content virality and visibility on the 'For You' page. Nonetheless, the perspectives of those who disagreed or remained neutral require further exploration to uncover other viewpoints regarding the algorithm's role in virality.

I notice differences in the emotional impact and engagement of branded content between TikTok and other social media platforms

103 Antworten
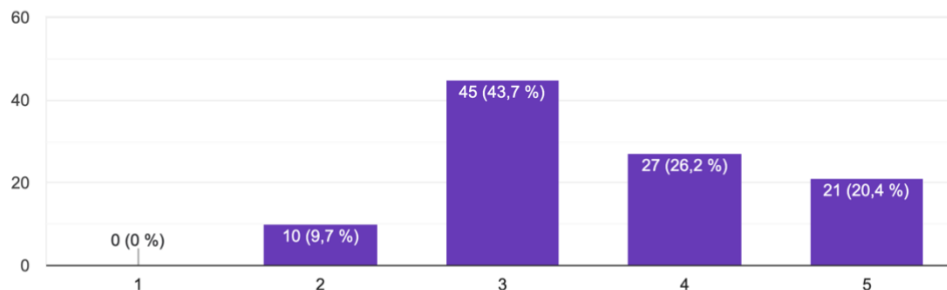
Graph 36: Difference of emotional impact and engagement

In response to the final question about noticing differences in the emotional impact and engagement of branded content across TikTok and other platforms, the data showed a noticeable trend. None of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, and only 10 out of 103 expressed disagreement. The most significant portion of the respondents, 45 people, were indecisive, indicating neutrality. Meanwhile, 27 respondents agreed and 21 strongly agreed with the statement. This suggests a perception of difference in the emotional resonance of branded content on TikTok compared to other platforms.

71

Relevant literature, like the work of Santora (2021), supports this observation, emphasizing that understanding the unique benefits of each social media platform can enhance user engagement and grow follower bases on other platforms.

In conclusion, there is a perceived difference in the emotional impact of branded content on TikTok compared to other platforms, as indicated by the respondents. However, due to the significant number of neutral responses, care should be taken when generalizing these findings.

5 Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to examine TikTok as a marketing tool while exploring emotional triggers that can lead to viral success on the platform. The study reveals several interesting insights about TikTok user behavior and perceptions. Participants equally valued authenticity and high-production quality in content, signifying the importance of a balanced content strategy. The effectiveness of TikTok challenges for audience engagement was strongly recognized, pointing towards a strategic opportunity for brands. Additionally, incorporating user-generated content (UGC) in a brand's TikTok marketing strategy emerged as a potential pathway for attracting more customers. The emotional resonance of content significantly influenced followership of brands, further underscoring the role of emotional marketing. Moreover, respondents acknowledged generational differences in content virality and a link between TikTok's algorithm and content virality. Lastly, respondents perceived a distinctive emotional impact of branded content on TikTok, as compared to other platforms. These findings provide valuable insights for brands aiming to optimize their presence and impact on TikTok.

The proposed research questions can partially be answered.

In what ways do social media marketing and branding strategies differ across platforms, and how do these differences impact the effectiveness of marketing campaigns?

Based on the questionnaire responses, user-generated content is favored by the participants over brand- specific content. While this study did not in the end explore the specific differences between platforms due to time constraints, questionnaire responses indicate a perceived difference of social media marketing and branding across platforms. The results show that for TikTok specifically, it is recommended for brands to integrate UGC into their marketing strategy, focusing on creating content that resonates with viewers.

What makes TikTok users enjoy or dislike emotional videos from brands compared to emotional videos from regular users, and how do these factors affect the success of advertising on the platform?

The study shows that users have a pronounced preference for authentic content. Interestingly, authentic content is often produced by independent creators not

affiliated with brands. The literature shows that authenticity can lead to trust in the creator which in turn can lead to loyalty.

How can a company incorporate TikTok into its marketing strategy to generate more customers and target different audiences?

When brands manage to produce authentic content that is specific for their target audience, possibly in affiliation with independent creators that produce content for them (UGC), brands are able to build a loyal user-base. Notably, micro- and nano-influencers seem to yield the best results as their content usually revolves around a niche that brands can tap into.

How do the key features of social media platforms, affect user psychology and the factors contributing to virality across different generations?

This research question has not been answered through the questionnaire and is therefore eliminated.

With these findings, we can accept the proposed hypothesis: While TikTok users are more likely to enjoy videos from regular users than from brands, videos from brands that feature user-generated content are more successful in generating engagement and positive sentiment among users.

In conclusion, this study shows the importance of emotional resonance and user-generated content in branded videos on TikTok for optimal user engagement and positive brand perception. Therefore, marketers should incorporate user-generated content into a business marketing strategy mix to increase user engagement, foster relationships and increase brand awareness. It is worth noting that the opposite, namely trying to push sales-videos on a brand's TikTok will likely not yield good results. These findings make sense in a social media environment that is flooded with information, ads and content: people like authenticity and will more likely buy from brands that produce authentic content.

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