

Research Article

Storytelling and Brand Advertisement: An Analysis of TikTok Influencers in Vietnam

Liem Bui Quoc* 

Professional Communication, RMIT University Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Abstract

TikTok has become a phenomenon when it attracts a big number of followers thanks to its creative video content and the users who make it, so brands choose TikTok as a channel of communication to endorse their brands in the users' videos via many narrative styles. Using the qualitative research with case study approach, the paper aims to cover three main points: (1) common storytelling techniques, (2) influencers' advertisement videos using these techniques and purchase intentions, and (3) micro influencers used for advertising campaigns on TikTok. The finding shows that the most common storytelling techniques on TikTok are humorous content, product review, storytelling dance, and making an experience relating to products and life; TikTok platform is used for influencer marketing in which micro/ nano influencers are hired to endorse a brand in their videos for advertisement via experience content and continuous engagement impacting their followers on purchase intention; the choice of influencers depends on a brand's budget and communication objectives besides other criteria but a mix of different types of influencers is more feasible. The research implicates the potential trend in using influencers in TikTok to create brand advertisement content with various storytelling methods in a brand advertising campaign in recent years.

Keywords

Storytelling, Tiktok, Influencers, Brand Advertisement, Brand-Endorsed Videos, Influencer Marketing

1. Introduction

E-commerce is changing from online shopping from websites and search-engine tools to more entertainment-driven platforms [48, 49]. Content-generated users, or content creators can become influencers on these platforms if their content can attract a lot of followers. TikTok is a platform allowing short-video creators to upload their content and attracting a big number of followers [36]. According to TikTok Revenue and Usage Statistics (2020), by 2020, this platform has been subscribed by more than 1.4 billion global users and gained advertising revenues of around \$16 billion.

Bloggers record their daily activities, opinions, stories and

other contents and post them on TikTok [52]. According to Statista, in Vietnam, TikTok ranked the fifth platforms in the top five with Facebook, Zalo, Youtube and Instagram, reaching 12 million users in 2020. Most of content shared on TikTok is created based on true information or entertainment news rather than advertisement, so it can attract others to watch and follow the bloggers. Audiences can show their opinions on the comment box once a brand is advertised among hundreds of videos produced by these bloggers-influencers. TikTok videos are made around a theme sharing the public's interest in certain common issues and

*Corresponding author: liem.buiquoc@rmit.edu.vn (Liem Bui Quoc)

Received: 4 January 2025; **Accepted:** 1 February 2025; **Published:** 17 February 2025



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2025. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

recently, stories about COVID-19 pandemic and health concerns. Users can upload a video, add hashtags, call for following and livestream to take donations from followers who can tip by using TikTok coins.

TikTok came to life in 2018 and quickly became the number one application used by generation Z and others [7]. Brands take this potential platform to launch their advertising campaigns to reach a big target audience. A brand can execute its plan by building its own account and posting advertising clips via this account, working with micro-influencers to make its content viral to a big number of audience and budgeting for communicating its brand on TikTok [4]. TikTok can earn money from brands and accounts with advertising, event communication and livestreaming. The platform also allows users to increase followers easily, protect the copyright, give technical support and attract brand partners [50]. This platform is a new media that helps brands to reach a potential broader audience thanks to its wide personalization and strong interaction [40]. More competitors appear and threaten the existing position of TikTok as Reels from Instagram, and YouTube Shorts from YouTube [38].

There is lack of research relating to this platform influencers affecting the consumers' purchase intentions in Vietnam and the drivers of hiring influencers for product replacement in their video storytelling [6]. The personal brands of influencers are built to maintain relationships with their followers and trigger good engagement in video content discussions. This draws attention from brands thanks to their interactive short videos and effective engagement strategies. A new wave of Internet celebrity is born, making the platform more commercially and professionally viable and its content more monetized. Therefore, this research aims to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the most common storytelling techniques used by the TikTok influencers?

RQ2: How does the TikTok influencers' advertisement videos impact the purchase intentions?

RQ3: What is the trend of brands' using micro influencers on TikTok platforms for their advertising campaigns?

2. Literature Review

In nowadays' society, the power of one's reputation or influence has been turned into a job: to be an agent of social influence. This role is associated with promises, such as ambitious but challenging work, offering debates that often surround ongoing or trending issues [12]. In general, this is a person who has access to the followers and can influence them to act on their counsel and vice versa. This can be done based on content production for Facebook, YouTube and TikTok [41]. With this, several companies following digital marketing strategies have grown significantly, resulting in greater brand attention to this medium, whereby their companies and brands can be presented, or even develop relationships with consumers [17].

People who create content or influencers interact with users and sell them simultaneously. This combination of entertainment and commerce is called "entertainment business" [48]. The video feed on TikTok has emerged as a large, billion-dollar force in marketing. For advertisers, these influencers are an interesting channel for approaching young audiences. As a result, influencers often embed convincing sponsored messages in their videos to earn money [5]. The impact of influencer videos on followers' lifestyle is recognized and recommendations are made for effective implementation in advertising campaigns [29].

Vlog is abbreviated as video blog that shows the everyday life of the content producer or a certain topic after videos, images, text and music are edited and added [24]. Short videos attract a lot of content creators and viewers owing to their low limits, short duration, and they are now more about capturing thematic life, supported with narration, opinion expression or storytelling and the viewers can engage as if they were in the stories [51]. Vlogs are chosen by marketers for their advertising campaigns thanks to their popularity and a large number of followers or subscribers. Thanks to vloggers' frequency of engagement with their followers, they both create popular video content and provide communication opportunities to advertisers who consider using influencers as a tactic in their campaigns [52]. Vlog is an interaction form used for microblogging and applied as a channel of communication. Vloggers can speak to their followers in their own ways by generating and hosting individual videos on TikTok or other platforms [46]. In terms of human behaviors, these videos are casual social content with both audio and visual texts, uploaded by the creators and decoded by subscribers [34].

With a huge number of followers, social media influencers are seen as a third-party endorser who can change others' behaviors and attitudes toward an issue via their content posted on social media. Brands regard them as sources of communication alliances to increase purchase intentions or brand awareness [14]. To increase social media coverage, brands cooperate with social media influencers to be inserted in their posts, video content with inspiring storytelling. TikTok, YouTube, Facebooks and other platforms have become channels of communication to publicize brand information and updated promotion programs to loyal followers [27]. Audiences place their trust in social media influencers from the stories they build, the knowledge they have and expertise they share on their fields, therefore they can impact the followers on peer purchase making decisions. This is one of the main reasons why brands partner with these influencers in brand advertising campaigns and one of the tactics in communication pathways [21]. Another reason is that they have good "emotional connections" with followers and become a consultant in giving opinions for certain issues they specialize in with more psychological proximity and intimacy [25, 1, 23].

Social media influencers have endorsed brands effectively and increased online discussions. The products become more

attractive to consumers in case they are exposed to the open conditions and love the people who post the content [20]. There are some purposes of hiring influencers for communication campaigns: increasing purchase intentions, reducing cost, and improving public reach. Brands decide to choose micro-influencers rather than macro-influencers because of their advertising budget, brand positioning and perceived relatability [3]. Social media should be well-planned, and influencers are well-chosen for better opportunities to achieve communication objectives and above-mentioned purposes. They share their positive opinions about brands in their posts via Instagram or TikTok and make them viral online through their daily supporting followers [15]. Most businesses have created their own account on social media platforms to build relationships with consumer community and publish crucial information to the public but mainly make sales. Influencers also want to make money or earn discounts from the sales revenue acquired from brand promotion or product sales [47]. They have turned into a digital phenomenon in which businesses co-brand with influencers to enrich their mutual public's awareness.

3. Research Methodology

This research uses the case study approach with five big micro-influencers on TikTok Vietnam, including Linh Barbie (17.5 million followers, <https://www.tiktok.com/@linhbarbie>), Tra Dang (16.2 million followers, <https://www.tiktok.com/@tra.dang>), Kien Review (9.6 million followers, <https://www.tiktok.com/@kienthanhle90>), Viet Phuong Thoa (8.6 million followers, <https://www.tiktok.com/@vietphuongthoa98>), Tran Thanh (6 million followers, <https://www.tiktok.com/@tranthanh123>). Linh Barbie introduces Tea+Plus, inviting her followers to enjoy tea with cakes during Tet holiday. Tra Dang advertises Gojek in her one video, attracting more than 12,000 likes and a lot of comments congratulating her to reach 16 million followers. Kien Review introduces a lot of products in terms of

product reviews with clips of how the products are used with his own narratives and voice-over. Viet Phuong Thoa posts a video with the placement of Hair Highlights filter application and 550,000 likes are given with 2,821 comments and 1,352 shares. The final influencer is Tran Thanh who introduces Oreo Socola Pie with 183,000 likes, 1,400 comments and 655 shares updated to 31 December 2023.

A content engagement measurement will be estimated for every short video with product advertisement via TikTok with the capture of spatiotemporal variation of video engagement. The heatmap will include two measure criteria: video frame size and video length [48]. Besides, social media metrics are used to analyze the engagement: number of shares, number of likes, number of comments, positive sentiment. Visual texts and audio texts can be used to measure the quality of content to see its effectiveness in attracting audience's engagement besides video content. This can support the research to see the influencer's video's engagement level as well as the interaction between the audience/ followers and the influencer. Engaging content differs among the videos, depending on the influencers' point of views, social trends and the demand of followers but can be categorized into humorous, entertaining, news or product review [39].

Table 1. Video measures: video frame size and video length (Bui, 2023).

TikTok influencers	Video frame size	Video length
Linh Barbie	9:16	12 seconds
Tra Dang	9:16	30 seconds
Kien Review	9:16	2 minutes
Viet Phuong Thoa	9:16	24 seconds
Tran Thanh	9:16	54 seconds

Table 2. Texts: visual texts and audio texts (Bui, 2023).

TikTok influencers	Visual-nonverbal	Visual verbal	Sound	Speech
Linh Barbie	6 seconds	6 seconds	12 seconds	0
Tra Dang	0	30 seconds	30 seconds	30 seconds
Kien Review	12 seconds	108 seconds	2 minutes	108 seconds
Viet Phuong Thoa	0	24 seconds	24 seconds	12 seconds
Tran Thanh	9 seconds	45 seconds	48 seconds	45 seconds

Table 3. When the brand is placed/ how long the brand is placed (Bui, 2023).

TikTok influencers	When the brand is placed	How long the brand is placed
Linh Barbie	Full video	12 seconds
Tra Dang	1 st second, 15 th second, 17 th second, 19 th second	4 seconds
Kien Review	9 th second, 16 th second, 24 th second, 31 st second	4 seconds
Viet Phuong Thoa	Full video	24 seconds
Tran Thanh	Full video	54 seconds

Table 4. Social media metrics: number of shares, number of likes, number of comments, positive sentiment calculated until 31 January 2022 (Bui, 2023).

TikTok influencers	Shares	Likes	Comments	Positive sentiment
Linh Barbie	75	66,600	266	640
Tra Dang	28	12,300	130	68
Kien Review	458	65,000	859	2,380
Viet Phuong Thoa	1,353	550,000	2,821	7,767
Tran Thanh	671	185,000	1387	749

Table 5. How the stories are told (Bui, 2023).

TikTok influencers	Direct	Indirect
Linh Barbie	X	
Tra Dang	X	
Kien Review	X	
Viet Phuong Thoa	X	
Tran Thanh	X	

4. Findings

4.1. Storytelling Techniques

TikTok has offered various storytelling techniques to content creators on its platform to attract and interact with viewers to communicate a certain brand. Creators use multiple techniques to tell their stories to engage viewers. That is why there are a rising number of influencers who can entertain, instruct and lead the viewers for purchase intentions. The following is some key storytelling techniques commonly applied on this platform: humorous content, product review, storytelling dance, making an experience.

Humorous content

The most common videos posted on TikTok are for entertainment or with a sense of humor [33]. The users are more likely to be creative for making the video content humorous to their followers [32]. TikTok users can tell their daily life stories and re-create trends with their humor thanks to the combination of humor techniques, sound aesthetics and available sources of applications. These effects support them to produce ‘fun’ and playful videos that can attract viewers to give comments, like, share and follow the accounts. TikTok commercials are content rather than videos and the influencers insert brands in their stories directly or indirectly and co-produce the content with the brands with the aim for more audience engagement.

Product review

TikTokers review products as the brand’s spokespersons to introduce the features and the uses of products, attract the viewers’ attention and stimulate their interests [28]. Besides the product reviews, more information is given as promotional or discount information or the brand popularity is reminded [9]. Viewers prefer getting product information from the influencers they follow since they feel more comfortable with the trustful information given by those influencers through product review videos. These videos are created as the reviewer’s experience in many forms of multimedia content to inspire the viewers to purchase. The stories follow what the reviewers know about the product, how the product is unboxed and used, where they buy the products and how reasonable the price is. Product reviews can be categorized as

good reviews and bad reviews, but the TikTokers choose to make good reviews to build cozy relationships with multiple brands.

Storytelling dance

Videos on TikTok take no longer than three minutes and this is a good chance for the users to show their dancing performance [44]. With a big population, the platform witnesses a lot of users using dance as a storytelling technique via music, trending lyrics, visual texts and audio texts. Influencers introduce a brand with their dance move, using popular song snippets and lip syncing [22]. Storytelling dance has become a trend on this platform, and it is used to build brand content and interact with the viewers. Many brands have worked with influencers good at dancing to design an inversion of a brand in the dancing performance and from this, they can influence the viewers' affection and their behavior changes. It was found that storytelling dance was attractive to followers as they understand the messages conveyed and the dancing talents that the influencers perform, so this can persuade their followers to act or come up with purchase intention. TikTok is more professionalized with the rise of videos of storytelling dance, brand advertising and content monetizing.

Making an experience

TikTok has become a good platform for users to share their experience in doing something like cooking, fixing, performing, visiting a place or showing their opinion about what they witnessed. This visual storytelling platform has extended entertainment context, bringing more leisure to viewers and this is an opportunity for brands to use the influencers for their brand advertising [13]. The users can take advantage of available video editing apps to create short form clips to tell their own stories or their daily life experience. An ecosystem can be developed via short-form video apps as YouTube Short, Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook to shape unique user experience thanks to big population of users and rapid changes in acceptance [45]. The followers surf TikTok to entertain themselves and gain information from a variety of user experiences and this encourages influencers to build more content to attract views and make money. The point to maintain the viewers and attract more viewers is the users have to diversify their content or experience and this can cost them more.

4.2. Brand Advertisement on TikTok

Advertisement is made with user-generated content

Customers today expect social proof before buying a brand. Advertising based on user-generated content can connect brands with target customers through social commerce. TikTok can create a popular brand image and increase its value in the eyes of users through the user's own creative content. Sharing brand experiences is considered equivalent to online word of mouth marketing in digital marketing. The public trusts real users, the influencers they love, so the inclusion of brands in user-generated content will be easier to reach and be accepted by the public.

Advertisement is vertically designed with the user-interface

TikTok has a huge global reach, becoming a powerful platform for brands to promote and connect with large audiences. In-feed video ad allows users to embed a video ad that can run automatically with on-sound because of the same user interface. Top view ads attract users' attention by making the video appear first when a user opens TikTok, suitable for a strategy to increase brand awareness and reach a large number of users and impressions. Brand takeover ads also appear first when the user opens TikTok which brings great performance thanks to its full screen and clickable feature. An important note for the advertisement is the technique of using hashtags and participating in the hashtag challenge to serve the ability to search and display and quickly reach the users. In addition, using effects for brand ads along with hashtag challenges makes the audience fall in love with the brand connection, resulting in a high level of engagement.

Advertisement is amplified with dance, music and sound effects

Lip-syncing or re-singing with created or available sound effects supports a brand to use this commercialized platform for brand advertisement. With viral sounds, stitching of videos and available video effects, brands can communicate directly with others in progressive social trends and movements. Thanks to the appearance of TikTok shop, influencers, and key opinion consumers (KOC), the platform is becoming an advertising network, allowing to monetize content and embed advertising. Brands tell their own stories through dance, music, and sound effects and use these powers to enhance their followers, connections and brand communities. Music challenge, dance challenge and sound challenge are a phenomenon of media storytelling and users can express themselves in many storytelling themes: nostalgia, love, family, friendship, advice, consultation and product reviews. This effort represents a transmedia aesthetic, using visual and audio effects for entertainment and performance art to communicate a brand in a very simple format.

Advertisement is experimented with the brand

ByteDance is a business model applied to TikTok app to experiment brand advertisement and develop business proposition via social networking and video sharing. Firms can launch brand communication campaigns thanks to this business model innovation to increase the demand for products. While many e-commerce platforms charge the users, the expectation for better profitability and economic balance increases and the users turn to platforms with no charge or at low costs. TikTok is very versatile at earning money, making revenues, advertising brands and monetizing businesses. Brand advertising is disclosed to persuade the users to choose influencer marketing videos with the products' level of integration into the storylines. These videos help create transparency and increase brand recognition for commercial purposes or purchase intentions.

4.3. TikTok Platform for Influencer Marketing

The effectiveness of humor

Humor can increase the effectiveness of messages that videos convey with advertising content. Previous research shows that influencers' levels of credibility and opinion leadership can enhance influencer-follower relationship, homophily and emotional contagion [2]. The humorous content is produced to entertain followers and attract the young audience, so the persuasion for purchase intention is more effective. With ludic nature, TikTok video content can be more oriented to entertainment rather than information, news and contacts. Therefore, influencers/ users can introduce products/ services in a more engaging and entertaining way.

The effectiveness of followers' hedonic experience

Influencers build their own identities by telling their own stories with photos, videos and daily activities. Their followers engage in the construction of their experiences and legitimization of their identities [2]. More brands use influencer marketing by adapting the traditional videos to TikTok videos, usually 15 seconds in length, to achieve their advertising objectives. Hedonic experience is vital for short videos platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts and users tend to follow the accounts that provide creativity and enjoyment. This motivates the followers to interact with the influencers and make decisions on whether to buy a product or download or share or re-post the videos. Influencers try to increase their followers' hedonic values to maintain and strengthen their levels of influencing and leading opinions.

Influencer-endorsed short videos

Brands employ TikTok influencer to be endorsed their short advertisement videos that focus on products and consumption experience messages. Users are emotionally motivated by the influencers and respond to the brand-related topics [11]. The influencers tell their own stories and then place products to attract current and potential followers to engage in the topics and a brand can be communicated and a product can be introduced. They are paid to promote the products to certain audiences and their followers and previous video content are checked carefully to see whether they are appropriate to the product or brand message. The point is that the influencers can respond to the stories but cannot reply to any comments or questions relating to the products. The appearance of influencers or their own stories can get the followers closer to the product or brand image and from that a brand can tell their own story or announce a promotion program. The level of commercial offerings and shop ability increases thanks to the connection between advertisers and creators via a call-to-action link within the video content.

Influencers as marketers

More brands run marketing campaigns via collaboration with well-known users on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. They become the brand marketers sharing the marketing messages to their followers and others as a challenging

task [18]. Influencers can do both jobs well: telling their own stories and doing marketing for a brand. One popular marketing tactic is affiliate marketing and with the TikTok Shop, they can even make sales, review products and communicate a brand. More effective content is more visual than text based and TikTok and Instagram become more advantageous thanks to their more appealing looks. The rich content format with available templates, images, visual images, sound, sound effects and visual effects allow users to create visual content more easily and they do marketing for their own, even open their own shops, sell their own products and then other brands. Differentiating influencer videos can increase sales for a brand if they are placed on the platforms at the right place and right time. Influencers have their own ecosystem and bring better hedonic and impulse experience to the viewers in general and their followers in particular.

4.4. Brand Engagement in TikTok Influencer

Brand influencers

Businesses communicate their brands on TikTok using brand influencers to promote purchase likelihood. Previous experience and engagement with the influencers make users decide whether to buy the product [30]. The platform allows for keyword targeting, attracting qualified traffic and reaching the consumers via various communication videos by using brand influencers. They are hot TikTokers with a lot of followers and a high interaction rate. The Creative Marketplace has shown these influencers can promote a brand with high engagement, high views, product discovery and brand recognition.

Consumer brand engagement

Consumer brand engagement (CBE) is affected by entertainment video content, eWOM, and positive interaction between the influencers and their followers on TikTok [42]. Trendy content can attract more views but cannot increase the brand engagement. This engagement is resulted in brand loyalty and brand awareness, bringing better success to a brand communication campaign. CBE reflects a consumer's brand-related cognitive, emotions and behaviors during the period of interaction with brand via the video content created by the brand content or influencer-endorsed videos. Consumers are more active than in the past and understand what a brand intends to tell them and decide whether to make a purchase. The CEB turns more online interaction as the means of communication is more with social media and therefore brand loyalty is enhanced.

Social-interactive engagement

The popularity of TikTok users as consumers makes brands change the way they attract social-interactive engagement [35]. Once this engagement occurs, brand-user interactive activities impact the decision-making processes. The understanding of engagement can benefit a brand from better exploration of social media platforms such as TikTok with higher interaction than others. The selection of social media

can change the brand content format if a brand wants to increase the positive engagement. From a consumer perspective, users have informal but direct communication with brands via other users that they follow as a way they can express their own identity. They are more engaging with the brand messages and purchase intention thanks to their sympathy with the content with brand endorsement created by influencers. Content creation is very important, making continuous social interactive engagement cycles.

eWOM engagement

Online purchases are influenced by product reviews from social media influencers via electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Customer online reviews become a major success of brands when users consider eWOM for making purchase decisions. Consumers can change their attitudes toward the brands and behavioral intentions because of eWOM and they seem to listen to the third party's voices rather than directly from the brands themselves [31]. eWOM on TikTok is understood as recommendations and product reviews via affiliate marketing for brands, having high influence on consumer's attitudes and behaviors. Both negative and positive reviews for a brand, product, service are accessible to all users online, including video platforms and text-based platforms. These reviews are personal experiences, so they can be personal opinions but with a high number of followers, they can get better support and if they are shared, they can go viral more easily. From a customer's perspective, information quality plays a vital role in the process of decision making. Therefore, this quality can enhance the relationship between the influencers and their followers, and they are responsible for making the accurate content available to help consumers to evaluate a brand or product.

4.5. Micro Influencers and Nano Influencers on TikTok

Micro-influencer marketing

Micro-influencer marketing has become a big phenomenon while brands use influencers to make sales. The fact is that micro-influencers have a better engagement rate and conversion rate than that from macro-influencers and mega-influencers [16]. Consumers believe in the personal experience and information provided by micro-influencers who have more persuasive power over their followers via personal connections. During and after COVID-19 pandemic, people want to stay connected with e-commerce websites and applications and there is an increase in time consuming on social media platforms. Brands look for cheaper marketing budget to promote the products, so they turn to contact micro-influencers for lower prices.

Micro and nano influencers

Brand-related content created by responsible nano influencers is evidence-based but both humorous and emotional. The content is combined with hashtags, tags, mention, supporting brands to market their products increasingly effec-

tively. They continue to grow and integrate brand advertorials into their content on TikTok in the niche community brands. Nano influencers have content posts higher than that from celebrities and mega influencers though they don't have massive audiences [37]. The content they produce can be inspirational and motivational, helping to foster brand images among their community of followers. Besides, they are diligent in replying to questions and comments from the audiences and enticing their fans to take purchase actions.

Mega or micro influencers?

Brands sponsor social media influencers for brand promotions, but the question is whether to choose mega or micro/nano influencers. The main reason is the budget for influencer marketing [8]. Some brands prefer mega influencers with millions of fans with high budget, but others choose micro influencers with hundred thousand of fans with lower budget. Decisions on influencer partnerships much depend on the video content quality, information quality, the level of influencing/ level of popularity and the interaction between the influencers and their fans. The content should be informational, entertaining and socializing. Mid-tier influencers can maximize the effectiveness of many advertising campaigns and the budgets are acceptable for brands. The content, once again, can increase the customers' engagement and their impressions on videos and the influencer identity also needs to match the brand image for better influencer selection.

How TikTok influencers impact on calls-to-actions?

Purchase intention can be derived and stimulated from influencer endorsement. Influencers have good knowledge of the product, good opinion about the product, good messages conveyed in the video content, bringing more trustworthiness to viewers. Those who don't know how to make decisions on purchase intention tend to seek advice from influencers or consider reliable reviews for actions. From this point, influencer marketing is one communication tool for a brand to reach their target audience quickly and effectively. Influencers' messages are important for impacting calls-to-actions, so they are clearly designed in the video content, allowing a better evaluation of this impact. An influencer's credibility depends on their experience, knowledge, expertise, transparency and authenticity. The higher the level of message trustworthiness is, the higher viewers believe in the influencers. So, if the messages are reliable, customers will care more about the products and intend to purchase them.

4.6. Choosing the Right TikTok Influencers

Choosing influencers to partner on TikTok

Evaluating the ranking and effectiveness of influencers on TikTok is not easy for a brand to choose collaboration with. Choosing influencers depends on their reputation, expertise that fit the brand image and their followers who can engage with the brand and interact with the brand values [19]. Critical determinants of influencers' effectiveness are their authenticity, social attractiveness, confidence, video content, trust-

worthiness, bringing the positive attitudes and behaviors toward the endorsed brand. Influencers with fewer followers can provide more knowledge of the products than that by mega influencers as they invest more time in research and producing content. The idea “less is more” remarks the micro-influencers' potentiality and brands need to have influencer planning to select the right type of influencers to partner with.

Niche TikTok ecosystem

There are also segmentations of TikTok influencers specializing in certain categories of products and making their own microcelebrity identities. The niche internet ecosystem is created by these influencers and reflects their agency within the platform [10]. Focused video content and life experiences shape their online personas and attract followers interested in this type of content. There are negotiations between the influencers and their followers in terms of content, for example, they can produce videos with topics required by their followers or answer questions relating to the produced content. They use specific hashtags of interests to identify content and attract followers with common interests to engage. They update and adapt the content in various platforms, making a digital ecosystem.

Privacy concerns amongst influencers

To attract followers, influencers share the experience of their lives, even in details, creating privacy concerns. To maintain the followers' engagement, they have to share their private life and lifestyle in a very competing influencing community. Sharing private information is desired by the ones who love and follow the influencers and they usually expect more in this sharing cycle. A certain degree of privacy is considered while more and more followers know what happens to the influencers, how they live their lives and why they make such decisions [43]. Self-disclosure becomes a challenging element as they must share their personal information if they want to be authentic online. However, they accept this if the benefits they share private information outweigh those they don't share. This requires them to evaluate the comfort of revealing privacy to the public or within the realm of their followers.

Choosing the right influencers

Influencer marketing represents the business-consumer operations through a collaboration with popular users on TikTok. Whether the conduction of this marketing campaign is successful or damaging depends a lot on choosing the right influencers. The choice is made by the objective of the campaign, so a brand can choose a mega influencer if they want to increase brand awareness nationally and micro-influencers if they want to focus on certain target publics [26]. In case the budget for the campaign is high, a mega influencer can be the brand ambassador and more budgets are spent and vice versa. Besides, niche influencers can interact with their followers more frequently though their video content is less of quality. The best recommendation is the use of both types of influencers and the control of communicated posts via their

channels and their personal lives. However, multiple influencers who share the same messages in various content posts can bore the audience and reduce the engagement. Additionally, building good influencer partnerships can reduce the costs and the brand image can be associated with the influencer identity.

5. Conclusions

The shift toward TikTok in recent years has risen to the entire influencer community and influencer marketing agencies. TikTok storytelling can vary from lip-synching, dancing and song covering to humorous content producing, product reviewing and experience sharing. Brand advertisement is made via user-generated content and user interface to interact with audiences thanks to a big number of followers that influencers attract and maintain relationships with day by day. Besides, with the development of influencers on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, more nano-micro influencers have appeared to tell their own experience, engage with their followers, produce brand-endorsed content and even make sales with affiliate marketing. The choice of hiring influencers on TikTok is much based on a brand's budget, its advertising objectives, and the quality of video content.

The research is limited to five influencers on TikTok and needs more studies of more influencers in the future to see how businesses use influencers on this platform to advertise their brands. The new era of influencer marketing continues to rise while more people use TikTok, and the appearance of Threads linked to Instagram in competition with Twitter. Several businesses in food and beverages, pharmacies, cosmetics and other industries do their communication campaign together with influencer marketing with popular influencers on these platforms. The right choice of influencers can bring huge success to brands and save budget in comparison to that for traditional media. They create rich content with a diversity of topics that can interest their followers and attract support from them once a brand is endorsed in the content. More storytelling techniques are applied for influencers to maintain and build more positive relationships with the viewers, enhancing their level of influencing on this more and more popular platform, TikTok.

Abbreviations

CBE	Consumer Brand Engagement
eWOM	Electronic Word-of-mouth

Author Contributions

Liem Bui Quoc is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Abidin, C. (2015). Communicative intimacies: Influencers and perceived interconnectedness. *Ada: A Journal of Gender New Media and Technology*, (8), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.7264/N3MW2FFG>
- [2] Barta, S., Belanche, D., Fernández, A., & Flavián, M. (2023). Influencer marketing on TikTok: The effectiveness of humor and followers' hedonic experience. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 70, 103149. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.103149>
- [3] Britt, R. K., Hayes, J. L., Britt, B. C., & Park, H. (2020). Too big to sell? A computational analysis of network and content characteristics among mega and micro beauty and fashion social media influencers. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 20(2), 111–118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2020.1763873>
- [4] Bereznak, A. (2019). 'Memes are the new pop stars: how TikTok became the future of the music industry', *The Ringer*. Available at: www.theringer.com/tech/2019/6/27/18760004/TikTok-old-to-wn-road-memes-music-industry (Accessed: 28 February 2021)
- [5] Boerman, S. C., & Van Reijmersdal, E. A. (2020). Disclosing influencer marketing on YouTube to children: The moderating role of para-social relationship. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 3042. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.03042>
- [6] Cantawee, S., Witoonphan, N., & Sammasut, T. (2021). Influencers Affecting Consumers' Purchase Intentions through VDO Advertising on TikTok Online Social Media in Chonburi Province. *UBRU International Journal*, 1(2), 11–23.
- [7] Cervi, L. (2021). Tik Tok and generation Z. *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 12(2), 198–204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19443927.2021.1915617>
- [8] Chan, T. H., Hung, K., & Tse, D. K. (2023). Comparing E-Commerce Micro-and Macroinfluencers in TikTok Videos: Effects of Strategies on Audience Likes, Audience Shares, and Brand Sales. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 23(4), 307–322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2023.2273253>
- [9] Chen, Z., Zhang, Q. (2021). A Survey Study on Successful Marketing Factors for Douyin (Tik-Tok). In: Nah, F. FH., Siau, K. (eds) *HCI in Business, Government and Organizations. HCII 2021. Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, vol 12783. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77750-0_2
- [10] Chen, R., & Li, E. P. (2023). *Growing and Shaping the User Base: The Transformation of TikTok*. SAGE Publications: SAGE Business Cases Originals.
- [11] Deng, D. S., Seo, S., Li, Z., & Austin, E. W. (2022). What people TikTok (Douyin) about influencer-endorsed short videos on wine? An exploration of gender and generational differences. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 13(4), 683–698. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTT-05-2021-0143>
- [12] De Veirman, M., De Jans, S., Van den Abeele, E., & Hudders, L. (2020). Unravelling the power of social media influencers: a qualitative study on teenage influencers as commercial content creators on social media. In *The regulation of social media influencers*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788978286.00015>
- [13] Du, X., Liechty, T., Santos, C. A., & Park, J. (2020). 'I want to record and share my wonderful journey': Chinese Millennials' production and sharing of short-form travel videos on TikTok or Douyin. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 25(21), 3412–3424. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2020.1810212>
- [14] Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public relations review*, 37(1), 90–92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.11.001>
- [15] Gan, T., Wang, S., Liu, M., Song, X., Yao, Y., & Nie, L. (2019, October). Seeking Micro-influencers for Brand Promotion. In *Proceedings of the 27th ACM International Conference on Multimedia* (pp. 1933–1941). <https://doi.org/10.1145/3343031.3351080>
- [16] Gerlich, M. (2023). The Power of Personal Connections in Micro-Influencer Marketing: A Study on Consumer Behaviour and the Impact of Micro-Influencers. *Transnational Marketing Journal*, 11(1), 131–152.
- [17] Guarda, T., Augusto, M. F., Victor, J. A., Mazón, L. M., Lopes, I., & Oliveira, P. (2021). The Impact of TikTok on Digital Marketing. In *Marketing and Smart Technologies* (pp. 35–44). Springer, Singapore.
- [18] Gumalang, R. F., Saerang, D. P., & Arie, F. V. (2022). The influence of content marketing, influencers and psychological factors on brand awareness of tiktok advertising. *Jurnal EMBA: Jurnal Riset Ekonomi, Manajemen, Bisnis dan Akuntansi*, 10(4), 128–138. <https://doi.org/10.35794/emba.v10i4.43476>
- [19] Haenlein, M., Anadol, E., Farnsworth, T., Hugo, H., Hunichen, J., & Welte, D. (2020). Navigating the new era of influencer marketing: How to be successful on Instagram, TikTok, & Co. *California management review*, 63(1), 5–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125620958166>
- [20] Kay, S., Mulcahy, R., & Parkinson, J. (2020). When less is more: the impact of macro and micro social media influencers' disclosure. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36(3–4), 248–278. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4183-8_4
- [21] Ki, C. W. C., & Kim, Y. K. (2019). The mechanism by which social media influencers persuade consumers: The role of consumers' desire to mimic. *Psychology & Marketing*, 36(10), 905–922. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21244>
- [22] Klug, D. (2020). "It took me almost 30 minutes to practice this". Performance and Production Practices in Dance Challenge Videos on TikTok. *arXiv preprint arXiv: 2008. 13040*. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2008.13040>

- [23] Kowalczyk, C. M., & Pounders, K. R. (2016). Transforming celebrities through social media: The role of authenticity and emotional attachment. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 25(4), 345–356.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-09-2015-0969>
- [24] Kumar, L., & Singh, D. K. (2024). A novel aspect of automatic Vlog Content Creation using generative Modeling approaches. *Digital Signal Processing*, 104462.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dsp.2024.104462>
- [25] Ladhari, R., Massa, E., & Skandrani, H. (2020). YouTube vloggers' popularity and influence: The roles of homophily, emotional attachment, and expertise. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 54, 102027.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.102027>
- [26] Lenger, A. D. (2022). How to choose the right influencer for a marketing strategy. *Applied Marketing Analytics*, 8(1), 89–104.
- [27] Markethub, (2016), Influencer marketing vs word-of-mouth marketing. Retrieved from
<https://www.markethub.io/influencer-marketing-vs-word-of-mouth-marketing/>
- [28] Mou, J. B. (2020). Study on social media marketing campaign strategy--TikTok and Instagram (Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology).
<https://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/127010>
- [29] Nadanyiova, M., Gajanova, L., Majerova, J., & Lizbetinova, L. (2020, June). Influencer marketing and its impact on consumer lifestyles. In *Forum Scientiae Oeconomia* (Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 109–120).
https://doi.org/10.23762/FSO_VOL8_NO2_7
- [30] Rach, M. (2021, May). The influence of brands and platform mechanics on creator content sovereignty on TikTok. In *Digital Marketing & eCommerce Conference* (pp. 35–42). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76520-0_4
- [31] Rimadias, S., Alvionita, N., & Amelia, A. P. (2021). Using social media marketing to create brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty on tourism sector in Indonesia. *The Winners*, 22(2), 173–182.
<https://doi.org/10.21512/tw.v22i2.7597>
- [32] Russell, A. M., Davis, R. E., Ortega, J. M., Colditz, J. B., Primack, B., & Barry, A. E. (2021). # Alcohol: Portrayals of Alcohol in Top Videos on TikTok. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 82(5), 615–622.
<https://doi.org/10.15288/jsad.2021.82.615>
- [33] Rutherford, B. N., Sun, T., Johnson, B., Co, S., Lim, T. L., Lim, C. C.,... & Chan, G. C. (2022). Getting high for likes: Exploring cannabis - related content on TikTok. *Drug and Alcohol Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dar.13433>
- [34] Sanchez-Cortes, D., Kumano, S., Otsuka, K., & Gatica-Perez, D. (2015). In the mood for vlog: Multimodal inference in conversational social video. *ACM Transactions on Interactive Intelligent Systems (TiiS)*, 5(2), 1–24.
<https://doi.org/10.1145/2641577>
- [35] Shen, Z. (2023). The platform revolution in interactive marketing: increasing customer-brand engagement on social media platforms. In *The Palgrave handbook of interactive marketing* (pp. 433–450). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-14961-0_19
- [36] Sidorenko-Bautista, P., Herranz de la Casa, J. M., & Cantero de Julián, J. I. (2020). Use of new narratives for COVID-19 reporting: From 360° videos to ephemeral TikTok videos in online media. *Trípodos*, 1(47), 105–122.
- [37] Soto-Vásquez, A. D., & Jimenez, N. (2022). Nano- & Micro-Influencers. In *The Emerald Handbook of Computer-Mediated Communication and Social Media* (pp. 305–321). Emerald Publishing Limited.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80071-597-420221018>
- [38] Sutherland, K. E. (2024). Producing Videos that Pop. In *Strategic Social Media Management: Theory and Practice* (pp. 503–562). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.
- [39] Syrdal, H. A., & Briggs, E. (2018). Engagement with social media content: A qualitative exploration. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 26(1–2), 4–22.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2017.1389243>
- [40] Tang, D. (2019). The New Situation of Marketing in the Self-Media Era-Taking Tik Tok as an Example. In 2nd International Workshop on Advances in Social Sciences (IWASS 2019) The (pp. 1557–1560).
- [41] Taylor, JA. Social media and the rise of influencers. *BDJ Team* 8, 12–13 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41407-021-0674-0>
- [42] Toni, M., & Mattia, G. (2022). Consumer brand engagement (CBE) in a digital environment: An application to TikTok. *Extending Boundaries*, 73.
- [43] Trifiro, B. M. (2023). Breaking your boundaries: How TikTok use impacts privacy concerns among influencers. *Mass Communication and Society*, 26(6), 1014–1037.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2022.2149414>
- [44] Vizcaino-Verdú, A., & Abidin, C. (2022). Music Challenge Memes on TikTok: Understanding In-Group Storytelling Videos. *International Journal of Communication*, 16, 26.
- [45] Wang, Y. (2020). Humor and camera view on mobile short-form video apps influence user experience and technology-adoption intent, an example of TikTok (DouYin). *Computers in Human Behavior*, 110, 106373.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106373>
- [46] Wood, M. (2019). What makes a vlog a vlog. *Diggit Magazine*.
- [47] Yadav, J., Misra, M., Rana, N. P. and Singh, K. (2022), "Exploring the synergy between nano-influencers and sports community: behavior mapping through machine learning", *Information Technology & People*, Vol. 35 No. 7, pp. 1829–1854.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/ITP-03-2021-0219>
- [48] Yang, J., Zhang, J., & Zhang, Y. (2021). First Law of Motion: Influencer Video Advertising on TikTok. Available at SSRN 3815124.

- [49] Yang, Y. (2022). *How Influencer-product Gender Congruency Impacts Influencer's Endorsement Effectiveness: A Cross-national Comparison between Douyin and TikTok Users in China and the USA*. Bowling Green State University.
- [50] Yao, M. (2021, June). Examination of Underlying Factors in Success of TikTok. In 2021 International Conference on Enterprise Management and Economic Development (ICEMED 2021) (pp. 296-301). Atlantis Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2991/aebmr.k.210601.051>
- [51] Zhang, H. (2020, December). Analysis on Vlog Story-telling Techniques and Advertisement. In 2020 3rd International Conference on Humanities Education and Social Sciences (ICHESS 2020) (pp. 68-72). Atlantis Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201214.468>
- [52] Zhang, X. (2020, March). Research on Emotional Design and Strategy of VLOG Under the Background of 5G Network. In International Conference on Modern Educational Technology and Innovation and Entrepreneurship (ICMETIE 2020) (pp. 185-191). Atlantis Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200306.104>