

Optimizing TikTok as a Digital Marketing Strategy: A Review of the Literature

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ABSTRACT : This study aims to explore the effectiveness of TikTok as a platform in digital marketing strategies through a qualitative literature review approach. Along with the rapid development of digital technology, TikTok has emerged as one of the most dynamic and influential social media, particularly among Generation Z and millennials. This study involved 15 scientific journal articles published between 2018 and 2024 that discussed TikTok marketing strategies, their impact on brand awareness, consumer engagement, and their influence on purchase decisions. The findings reveal five main themes: (1) TikTok's ability to increase brand visibility through viral short video content, (2) effective engagement strategies through storytelling, humor, and interaction, (3) the influence of user and influencer content on purchase intent, (4) the emotional role of micro-influencers in building trust, and (5) challenges in content consistency, reliance on algorithms, and ROI measurement. The study highlights TikTok's uniqueness in combining entertainment and commerce, making it a powerful tool in modern marketing strategies. These findings also support theories such as Customer Engagement Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model. This study provides important insights for business people, marketers, and researchers in utilizing TikTok effectively in the era of competitive digital marketing.

KEYWORDS: *brand awareness, influencer marketing, purchase decisions, social media, digital marketing, tiktok*

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has significantly changed the marketing landscape in the last decade. Social media, as one of the key products of the digital revolution, is now a strategic platform for companies to build relationships with consumers, increase brand visibility, and drive customer engagement. One of the social media platforms that has experienced the fastest growth is TikTok. Launched globally in 2018 by Chinese technology company ByteDance, TikTok has managed to attract the attention of millions of users around the world, including Indonesia, with its creative, dynamic, and easily viral short video content format.

According to the latest data from We Are Social (2024), TikTok has reached more than 1.5 billion global active users every month, making it one of the most influential platforms in digital marketing strategies. In Indonesia, TikTok is not only used by individual users, but also by business people, digital marketers, and MSMEs as a means of promotion, branding, and direct sales. With advanced algorithms that are able to tailor content to users' interests, TikTok provides an opportunity for brands to reach audiences in a more personalized and authentic way.

This phenomenon raises an important question about the effectiveness of TikTok as a digital marketing tool: what kind of strategies do brands use on TikTok? How much influence does TikTok have on consumer perception and purchasing decisions? What are the advantages and challenges of using TikTok in the context of digital marketing?

To answer these questions, this article was compiled with the aim of systematically reviewing various relevant literature regarding the practice and effectiveness of TikTok marketing. The approach used is a qualitative literature review, by examining findings from scientific journals, research articles, and industry reports in the last five years (2018–2024). It is hoped that this article can make a theoretical and practical contribution in understanding the role of TikTok as an integral part of today's digital marketing strategy.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing refers to all marketing activities that use electronic devices and the internet to reach consumers directly and measurably. According to Kotler et al. (2017), digital marketing allows companies to

build more personalized interactions with customers through various digital channels, such as social media, search engines, email, and websites. Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2019) emphasizing that digital marketing also includes data analysis to measure the effectiveness of campaigns in real-time, so that decision-making can be made quickly and precisely.

Social Media as a Marketing Tool

Social media has become an important tool in digital marketing strategies due to its interactive, community-based, and user-content-oriented nature. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) defines social media as "a group of internet-based applications built on the ideological foundations and technologies of Web 2.0, which enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content". In the context of marketing, social media allows brands to build long-term relationships with consumers through engagement, transparency, and two-way communication (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Characteristics of TikTok as a Marketing Platform

TikTok has a uniqueness that sets it apart from other social media platforms. With a short video content format of 15–60 seconds, TikTok allows for fast but engaging message delivery. One of TikTok's main strengths lies in its algorithm that is able to display content according to user interests For You Page/FYP, making every piece of content have a chance to go viral. In addition, TikTok also encourages active user participation through features such as duets, stitches, and hashtag challenges (hashtag challenge), which organically expands the reach of the campaign (Iqbal, 2023).

TikTok Marketing Strategy

Some of the main strategies that brands often use in TikTok marketing include:

- **Hashtag Challenge:** Invites users to create content with a specific theme as part of a viral campaign. This strategy increases user engagement and creates buzz around the product or service.
- **Influencer Collaboration:** Collaborating with TikTok creators who have a large and relevant follower base to promote products in a more natural and credible way.
- **User-Generated Content (UGC):** Utilizing user-generated content to increase trust and build community.
- **Live-stream Selling:** Provides space for real-time interaction and live transactions through TikTok's live streaming feature.

Research by Bui Quoc (2025) shows that TikTok campaigns that combine emotional approaches, storytelling, and interaction tend to get a high engagement rate and increase consumer purchase intent.

Supporting Theories

Some theories that can be used to understand the effectiveness of TikTok marketing include:

- **Customer Engagement Theory** (Brodie et al., 2011): Explain how consumers actively participate in brand activities through digital interactions.
- **Theory of Planned Behavior** (Ajzen, 1991): It is used to analyze consumer behavioral intentions based on attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of control over behavior.
- **Elaboration Likelihood Model** (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986): It can be used to explain how TikTok content affects the process of audience persuasion through central and peripheral channels.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the literature review method as the main technique for data collection and analysis. This method was chosen because it allowed researchers to explore and synthesize various previous studies that discussed the use of TikTok in digital marketing strategies. The literature review aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the trends, strategies, effectiveness, and challenges of TikTok marketing practices based on published scientific findings.

Data Sources

Data was obtained from scientific articles in reputable journals and databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and Sinta (2018–2024). Inclusion criteria include articles that discuss TikTok in a marketing context, use an empirical or conceptual approach, are available in English or Indonesian, and have been peer-reviewed.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is carried out through a thematic analysis approach, which is by identifying the patterns, concepts, and main findings of each article studied. This process includes several steps:

1. Read and understand the article thoroughly.

2. Identify key themes related to TikTok marketing (e.g.: strategy, engagement, influencers, sales conversions).
3. Categorize findings based on the approach used and the results obtained.
4. Synthesize findings to formulate a collective understanding of the effectiveness of TikTok as a digital marketing tool.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Based on the results of a review of more than 15 scientific articles and relevant industry reports, several key findings were found related to the effectiveness and practice of TikTok as a digital marketing medium. These findings are grouped into five main themes: (1) increasing brand awareness, (2) effective engagement strategies, (3) influencing purchasing decisions, (4) the role of TikTok influencers, and (5) challenges in the implementation of TikTok marketing.

Increased Brand Awareness

TikTok has proven to be an effective medium to increase brand awareness through short video content that easily goes viral. Several studies state that TikTok can increase brand visibility organically and quickly.

- Fauziyah & Putri (2023) researched @musclefirstofficial accounts and found that the intensity of interaction and visual branding on TikTok contributed greatly to supplement product awareness.
- Chai & Aulia (2024) explained that TikTok Affiliate helps local brands Kukai build brand awareness through promotional videos from users.
- Segarwati et al. (2023) highlighting the importance of visual storytelling to strengthen brand image on TikTok.
- Akbar et al. (2024) revealed that behind-the-scenes videos and tutorials are very effective in introducing brands to Gen Z.
- Iswati et al. (2025) researched Malaysian consumers and found that TikTok has high effectiveness in building brand recall, especially through the FYP and hashtag challenge features.

Effective Engagement Strategies

An effective TikTok marketing strategy is centered on interaction, collaboration, and participatory content.

- Salsabila & Fakhri (2023) researching the role of humor and entertainment in increasing the engagement rate of promotional content on TikTok.
- Jeaniefer et al. (2024) shows that live content and story-based content marketing generate higher engagement than direct promotion.
- Prabowo et al. (2025) stating that brands with educational and interactive content tend to have a higher rate of user participation.
- Diana & Widhiandono (2025) analyzed TikTok @Fujiiian and found that endorsements in a casual style were very well received by its followers.
- Nurhaliza et al. (2023), (Maharani et al., 2025), (Bagaskara et al., 2021), (Istiawanti et al., 2025), (Wilaga et al., 2025), (Febrisa et al., 2023), (Luthfiyatillah et al., 2020), conduct the research about social media that relationship with purchasing decisions.

Influence on Purchase Decisions

Some articles show that TikTok not only strengthens brand recalls, but also encourages purchase intent.

- Jeaniefer et al. (2024) found that product reviews on TikTok Shop directly influence consumers in making transactions.
- Ying et al. (2025) (through secondary reviews) states that trust in TikTok influencer content is higher than brand messaging.
- Chai & Aulia (2024) also confirms that the TikTok Affiliate scheme creates an impulse purchase stimulus through discounts and short reviews.

The Role of Influencers in TikTok Marketing

TikTok influencers play a crucial role in building an emotional connection with the audience, which impacts the perception and trust of the brand.

- Bui Quoc (2025) in his study in Vietnam found that influencer storytelling is more effective at creating emotional connections than direct promotion.
- Zhang & Zhao (2021) (quoted by Prabowo et al., 2025) emphasizing that TikTok micro-influencers have a higher engagement rate than macro-influencers because of the perception of authenticity.

Challenges of TikTok Marketing Implementation

Although TikTok promises great potential, several challenges are also found in the process of implementing a marketing strategy.

- Loyal (2024) highlighting the complexity of TikTok's algorithm and the need for a deep understanding for content to enter the FYP.
- Boeker & Urman (2022) and Zannettou et al. (2024) Shows how personalization variables and user behavior affect content visibility.
- Ling et al. (2022) emphasizing the importance of virality elements such as popular music, short captions, and thumbnail selection in influencing reach.
- Ahmad & Nurhayati (2023) stating that not all brands are able to maintain content consistency due to limited resources and creativity.

V. DISCUSSION

The results of a literature review indicate that TikTok has evolved from just an entertainment platform to one of the most strategic digital marketing tools, especially in reaching young audiences such as Generation Z and millennials. This discussion will summarize the theoretical and practical implications of previous findings, as well as highlight the advantages and challenges of TikTok as a marketing medium.

TikTok's Advantages in Marketing Strategy

TikTok presents various advantages that make it a superior medium for digital marketing campaigns, including:

- Personalization algorithm allows brands to reach their target audience more precisely and quickly (Boeker & Urman, 2022; Setyawan, 2024).
- Pendek Video Format which is addictive and easy to consume provides a high chance for content virality, so brand awareness increases organically (M. F. Akbar et al., 2024; Fauziyah & Putri, 2023).
- Two-way engagement (two-way interaction) encourages active consumer participation through features such as comments, duets, and stitches (Jeanieffer et al., 2024; Salsabila & Fakhri, 2023).
- Effectiveness of community-based promotions Hashtag challenges and user-generated content can create a snowball effect in the distribution of brand messages (Chai & Aulia, 2024; Prabowo et al., 2025).

Implications for Brand Engagement and Purchase Decisions

Some studies emphasize that strategies that prioritize Authenticity (authenticity) and storytelling personal content creators are more successful in creating emotional engagement and influencing purchasing decisions (Bui Quoc, 2025; Diana & Widhiandono, 2025). On the other hand, consumers tend to trust reviews or testimonials from fellow users more than formal advertising, making TikTok Shop and TikTok Affiliate effective channels for sales conversions (Chai & Aulia, 2024; Jeanieffer et al., 2024). Brands can also make buyers make purchases of goods and services (Dwiyanti et al., 2018), (Setiawan & Rabuani, 2019), (Maulani & Sanawiri, 2019), (Eliasari & Sukaatmadja, 2017), (Sinambela et al., 2020), (Catur et al., 2018), (Amelia et al., 2024), (Kustantia et al., 2021), (Fiorentino et al., 2021), (Khamil et al., 2023), (Sanosra et al., 2024), (Rosa et al., 2018), (Putra et al., 2020), (Qomariah & Zaman, 2020), (Qomariah et al., 2024), (Dinarso et al., 2024), (Maulana et al., 2025), (Nurchahyo & Riskayanto, 2018), (R. F. Akbar & Arianti, 2021), (Widyaputra & Djawoto, 2018), (Azwar et al., 2022). The practical implication of these findings is the importance of brands to develop content that is not only informative but also entertaining, relatable, and spontaneous to fit the social media consumption styles of younger generations.

Challenges in TikTok Marketing Practices

While TikTok offers many opportunities, its use as a marketing tool also presents several challenges that businesses should be aware of:

- Dependence on trends and algorithms cause the effectiveness of content is highly dependent on a particular time and momentum (Ling et al., 2022; Zannettou et al., 2024).
- Content consistency and creativity is the main key to success, but it requires a lot of resources both in terms of people, time, and production (Ahmad & Nurhayati, 2023).
- The ROI (Return on Investment) measurement of TikTok campaigns is often not immediately apparent, especially for long-term goals such as customer loyalty or brand equity.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings strengthen the concept of Customer Engagement Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model, which explain that messages conveyed in a fun and emotional way tend to be more accepted and remembered by the audience, especially if they come from trusted sources such as micro-influencers.

VI. CONCLUSION

The results of a literature review of 15 scientific articles show that TikTok has a strategic role in the world of digital marketing, especially in increasing brand awareness, engagement, and influence on purchase

decisions. Short video content formats, interactive features, and algorithms that support virality make TikTok one of the most effective social media in reaching young audiences, especially Generation Z and millennials. Some strategies that have proven effective in TikTok marketing include the use of hashtag challenges, collaborations with influencers, user-generated content, and live-stream selling. Studies also show that authentic, lightweight, and entertaining content is preferred by users and tends to generate high engagement rates.

However, the implementation of TikTok in marketing strategies also faces a number of challenges, including reliance on algorithmic trends, high demands for content creativity, and difficulties in measuring the impact directly on long-term sales. Therefore, business people need to have a deep understanding of TikTok's dynamics and flexibility in adjusting content strategies. Theoretically, the results of this study strengthen several approaches such as Customer Engagement Theory, Theory of Planned Behavior, and Elaboration Likelihood Model which explain the importance of emotional engagement, source credibility, and content relevance in shaping digital consumer perceptions and behaviors.

VII. SUGGESTION

Based on the findings and discussion, the following suggestions were submitted:

1. For business people: It is recommended to use TikTok strategically by prioritizing creative, authentic, and collaborative content. Using insight data from TikTok Business Analytics is also important in evaluating campaign effectiveness.
2. For the next researcher: It is necessary to conduct quantitative and mix-method empirical studies to measure the direct influence of TikTok on customer behavior, brand loyalty, and conversion rate. Cross-industry and cross-cultural studies can also provide a richer comparative perspective.
3. For policymakers and educators: TikTok can be used as a means of digital marketing education for MSMEs and local creatives, especially in improving content-based marketing skills.

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