

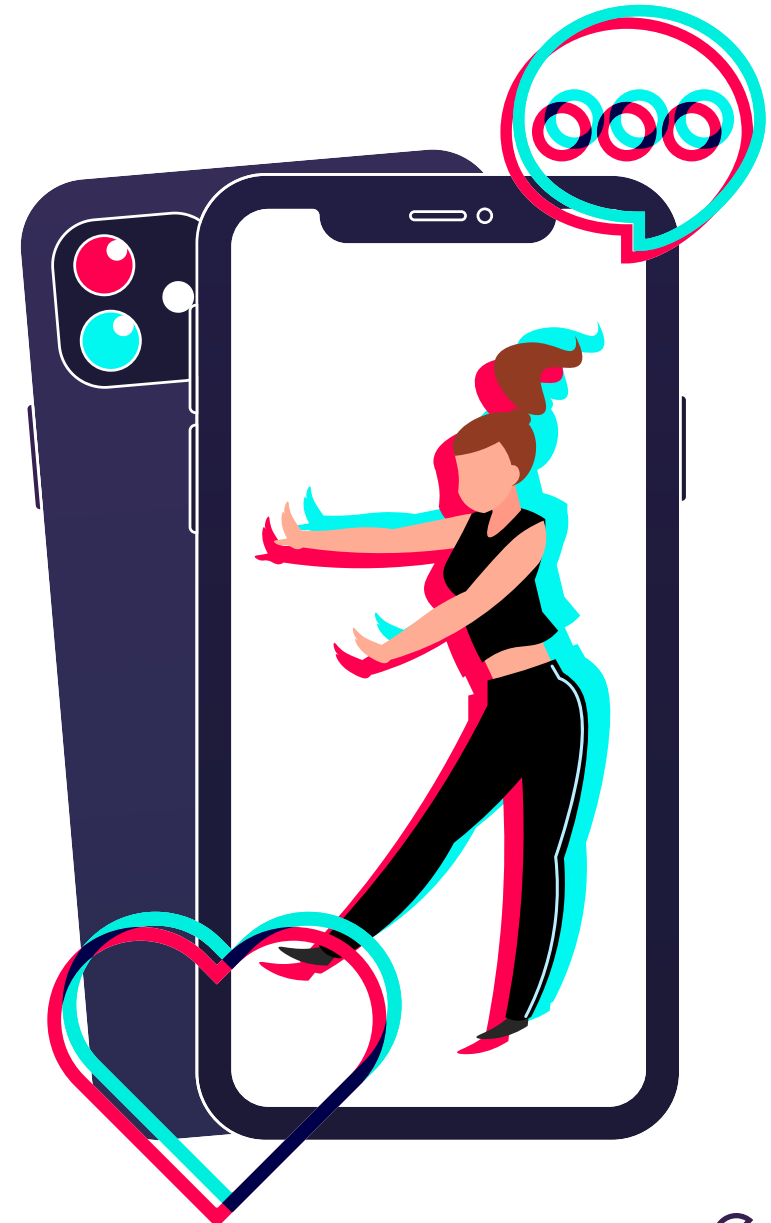
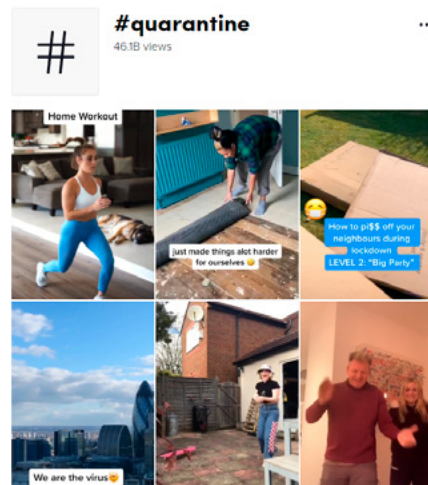
TIKTOK

-CHEAT SHEET

TikTok is an app that has taken the digital world by storm and has already built an impressive online community of 500 million active users worldwide and accumulated over 1 billion downloads.

With these landmark figures, it is no wonder that marketers want to include TikTok in their upcoming marketing strategy. However, TikTok is a highly innovative platform different from its counterparts, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

While TikTok's unique business model has left some people baffled as to how the app works, others have deemed it unsuitable for their industry because of its young demographic and emphasis on video content.



WHAT IS TIKTOK?

The app's viral, short-form, meme/music video format is simple with posts easy to create, enhance and edit; feeds are automatically and, importantly in the world of jaded app users, the content posted feels fresh, spontaneous, and genuine. By encouraging users to interact and collaborate, the platform combines the best aspects of creative user-generated content (UGC) and the 'social' element of social media.

As TikTok's popularity is being driven by Generation Zers for whom the quicker they can consume content, the better, TikTok fits into the previous penchants for Snapchat's bite-sized updates, Reddit's curated newsfeed, and the proliferation of social media's 'story' format.



WHY TIKTOK IS MORE THAN JUST AN APP

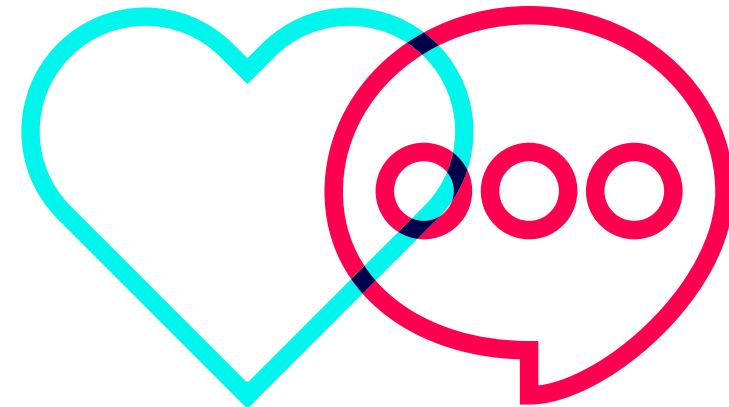
TikTok is often misunderstood by non-users, typically millennials or baby boomers, as merely a “cringey, lip-syncing” app. But upon closer inspection, the app is a demonstration of an evolved method of creating, publishing and distributing content.

TikTok’s success has shown how the app was purposefully designed to address the latest digital trends and consumer behaviour, which means studying what the app has done right can help us anticipate what the future of content marketing could look like.

Tomorrow’s target audience

TikTok’s users are mainly Gen Zs, which has created a window of opportunity for marketers to have a microscopic view of this mysterious age group. The surging popularity of TikTok has shown that this age group does, in fact, have an immensely impressive appetite for digital media.

TikTok has also highlighted that the time to engage with Gen Z is now. For the past decade and more, we have been adopting online strategies to reach Millennials without realising that by 2021, the oldest Gen Z will be 24. By next year, it’s predicted that this group will make up more than 25% of the workforce and we will see a huge surge in their spending power meaning our marketing strategies need to cater to the ‘not-so-young’ age group too.



The first digital natives

The significance of this demographic cohort is that they are the first-ever generation to be surrounded by technology from birth and are therefore called ‘digital natives’. They’re indigenous to the internet and their interaction with technology is inherently different from previous generations.

In particular, TikTok offers its users short, easily consumable clips in a ‘waterfall flow’ format which many assume that it is to cater for Gen Zs attention span averaging at 8-seconds. However, from the success of the app, these digital natives actually have a sophisticated filter for content that interests them. As marketers, this means that the future of our content requires precision and ever better understanding when targeting these fluent digital consumers.

HOW WILL WE BE MARKETING TO OUR AUDIENCE?

Creating opportunities for user involvement

TikTok has provided us with an insight into digital natives and their willingness to participate in brand engagements as long as there is an opportunity. Representation of this characteristic can be seen from TikTok's integration of high technology augmented reality filters and its thriving 'challenges' culture. The filter libraries often act as an instigator for users to gain inspiration to create content. Whereas hashtag challenges allow users to make videos attempting to do the same thing, like the #TumbleWeedChallenge, creating an online community of people who share the same interests.

This shows that the future of content marketing would see a stronger emphasis on creating marketing campaigns that can initiate user-generated content. For businesses, this would allow brand names to have a wider reach but also to form and foster a sense of community which in return enhances brand loyalty.

Personalising user experience

Another prominent reason for TikTok's success is its personalised feed. Mark Zuckerberg, a technological pioneer, describes this feature as 'almost like the Explore Tab that [they] have on Instagram'. Except, it's not. Unlike Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, where your primary feed consists of content from people you have chosen to follow and the explore tab is optional to which most users tend not to use, TikTok prioritises a fully personalised feed using an algorithm to generate content based on your interests, preferences and previous content you have engaged with.

This emphasis on user experience is fundamental to attracting and retaining its users. As content marketers, we should use the growing interest in personalised experience as a blueprint when considering marketing methods in the future. This could mean deeper research on audience traits and behaviour combined with a customised strategy for niche audience groups.

Top tip for TikTok marketers

Create marketing campaigns that initiate UGC by making it easy and fun to engage with your brand.

WHAT KIND OF CONTENT CAN WE EXPECT IN THE FUTURE?

Creativity will be the core of content marketing

Despite the integration of AI and machine learning, TikTok's core function is to have its users produce and edit their own videos within the app. These videos allow digital natives to exhibit their desire for self-expression and redefine what they believe is good content (as they then become viral by sharing, replicating and built upon). As technology becomes more and more readily available to help generate content, it will be much harder to cut through the noise. Content fuelled by unique creativity will undoubtedly be the way to help gain more traction.

Authentic marketing

Other than creativity, there will be a greater demand for authentic marketing. When Instagram entered the market, we saw a rise in the polished, professional content and the importance of a carefully curated feed. With TikTok, we can see that trait has been reverted. The younger communities prefer creating candid, unfiltered content, which may seem like low-quality to the untrained eye.

This doesn't mean that the future of content marketing is expected to stop producing high-quality content. Since digital natives grew up being highly familiar to overly decorated language and misleading statistics, there will be greater demand for authenticity from future content instead of forced perfection.

Emotional marketing

For many users, TikTok feels inviting in a way that hasn't existed since Vine. While humourous content may seem to be the only common denominator, it is actually the way it has allowed digital natives to utilise technology to interact and even form relationships that made both apps triumph.

In fact, humour is not the only emotion that prevails on TikTok. For example, Fanbytes developed the #YouCanCryChallenge, which encouraged TikTok users to promote mental health awareness. 3,000 people created a video displaying their raw emotions with the same soundtrack while stretching out their arms, giving the impression of a chain of people holding hands in solidarity.

Despite the unconventional interaction, these forms of relationships are equally desired both in the physical and digital world. This is to show that a heavy emphasis on emotional marketing will soon become the new norm and content marketers should create campaigns with the consideration of appealing to the sentimental side of future audiences.

COLGATE - PALMOLIVE'S SUCCESS

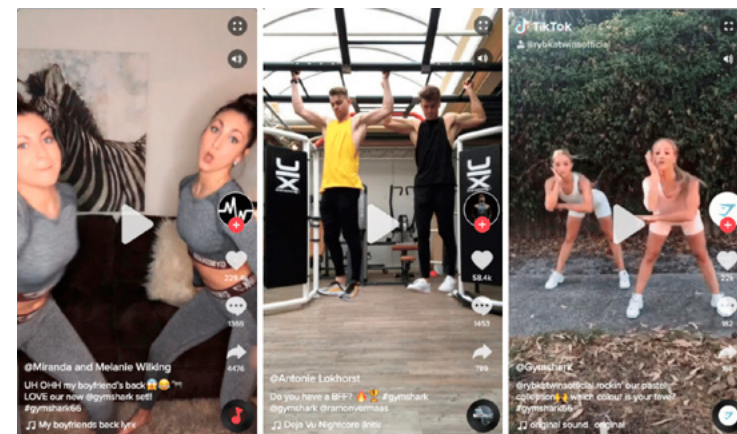
The consumer goods giant put TikTok at the centre of a major campaign in Asia, designed to celebrate World Smile Day. The activation encouraged people to film their smiles, which were then given an instant rating. It generated 1.6m user-generated videos and 2.5bn total views – numbers you cannot ignore. The FMCG brand launched a hashtag challenge called “Smile Challenge” that covered India, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines over six days. Colgate introduced a customised smile sticker that can detect and virtually score the TikTok user’s smile.



The effect on influencer marketing TikTok is rolling out the capability to include links to stores and content in both your bio and in videos. While this opens an opportunity to sellers, it could also pose a threat to Instagram’s influencer ecosystem as these features would make it easier for TikTok influencers to make money from their followers on the app. It’s worth noting that Instagram’s apparent content saturation has recently been highlighted, and the effects it is having on influencer success, many of whom are seeing close to record-low engagement levels.

GYMSHARK: MOVING INFLUENCER MARKETING TO TIKTOK

Google sees fast-growing TikTok as a threat to YouTube’s dominance among video content creators. With 41% of its user base aged 16 to 24, TikTok is also encroaching on Instagram’s territory. One brand that has leveraged TikTok to increase sales is clothing label Gymshark, who were already known for its well-designed influencer marketing campaigns on Instagram.



Gymshark has ported its influencer marketing expertise over to TikTok. Partnering with fitness and lifestyle influencers on the platform, the brand has furthered its reach and messaging.

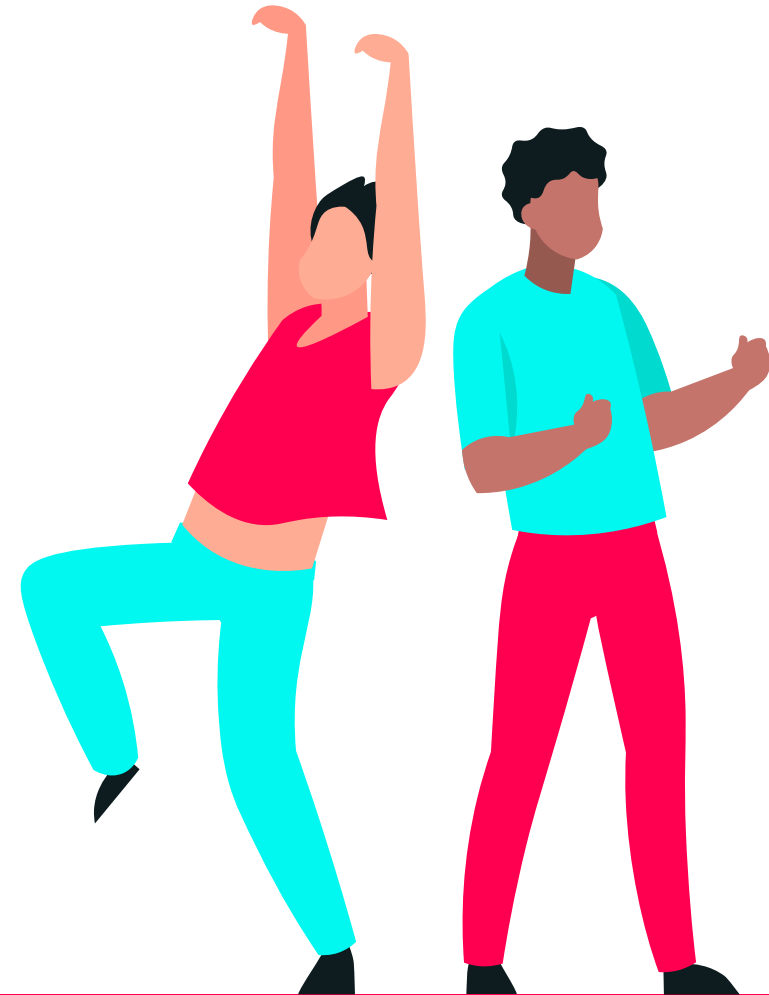
With TikTok actively working on its eCommerce capabilities, and working fast to take advantage of its recent explosive growth and popularity, brands and marketers need to be aware of TikTok’s increasing influence in this area.

PAID SOCIAL POTENTIAL

Advertisers can currently run the standard in-feed video ads with age, gender, and state-level geo-targeting, but there are signs TikTok is widening the opportunity, having promised interest, behavioural, more granular demo targeting over time.

TikTok is also rolling out a “managed service platform” which has brought the app into the biddable ads space, but still requires reps to run the ads. In other words, fully self-serve ads are not available just yet. TikTok has also offered takeover ads and sponsored hashtag challenges – hugely popular on the app - which are where users are prompted to post videos of them using a product, or participating in a (often manufactured) viral trend. These have so far only been available well-known brands with big budgets, but it’s worth keeping an eye out for wider rollouts, especially if your audience is primarily Gen Z.

TikTok has featured shoppable ads for some time, and is currently testing an option to shop in-app – a big trend in social media at the moment for brands looking to create a ‘frictionless’ shopping experience to users. This offering could theoretically allow any TikToker to turn the platform into a one-stop shop for his or her own online store. Its inclusion of more eCommerce tools will bring it closer to features included by Instagram in recent years that have made it an important tool for merchants and brand influencers.

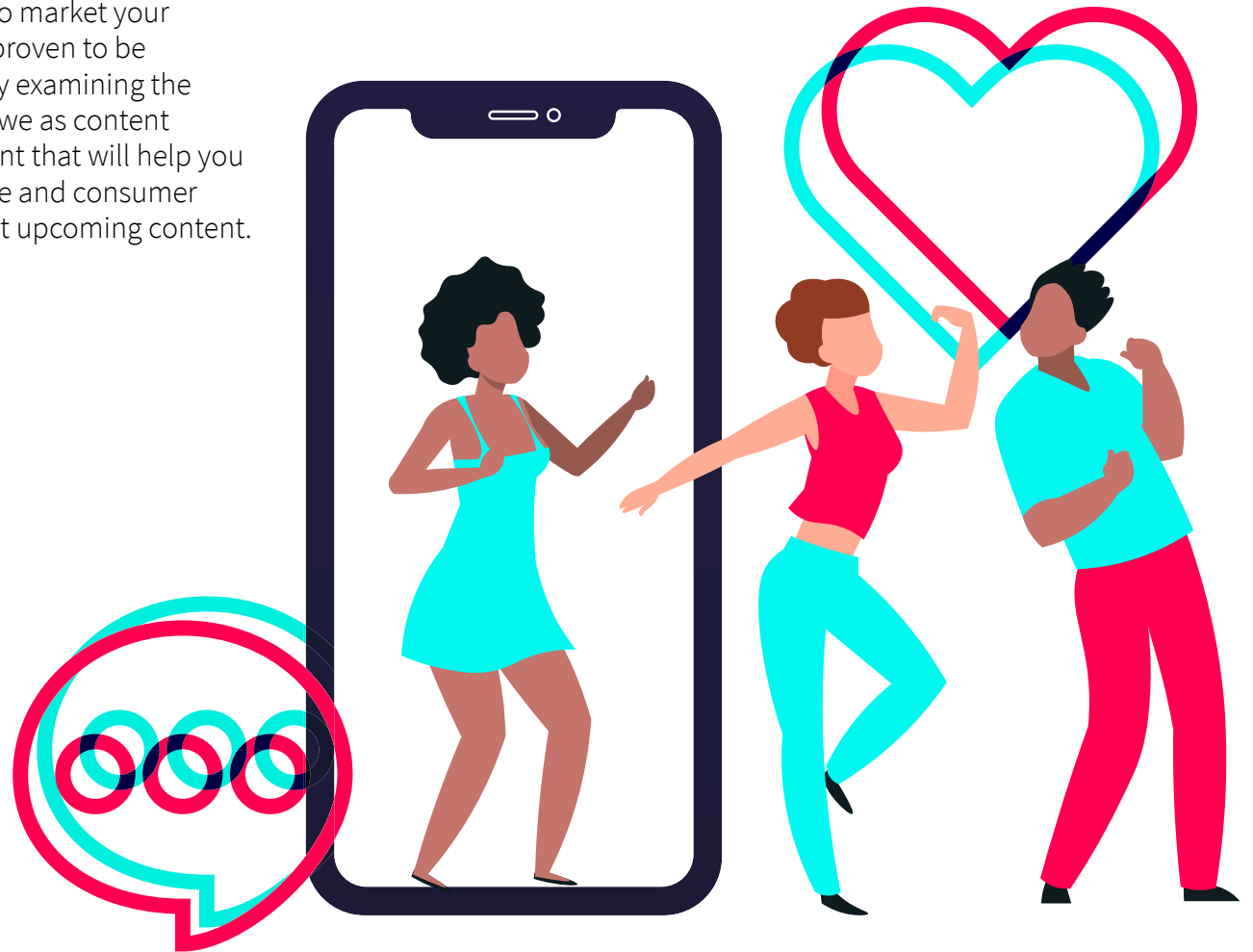


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FINAL THOUGHTS

Although TikTok may not be a suitable platform to market your content at the moment, their unique model has proven to be successful amongst our future target audience. By examining the elements that have made the app so favourable, we as content marketers will be able to create intentional content that will help you build greater cultural relevance, cognitive salience and consumer trust and formulate successful methods to market upcoming content.



ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning search and digital marketing agency with two decades of experience. Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Click was named Organic Search (SEO) Team of the Year 2020, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

We're here to help - whether you're looking to hire an agency to undertake technical and creative work behind the scenes until the present situation is clear, or you just need some free advice. You can get in touch using hello@click.co.uk.

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