

Research on the Current Development and Optimization of TikTok's Digital Marketing Strategies

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Abstract. This study examines the development and optimization of TikTok's digital marketing strategy. As TikTok has rapidly evolved into a dominant social media force, attracting over 1.2 billion monthly active users, it presents immense marketing potential for businesses. However, effectively leveraging TikTok requires comprehending and enhancing its marketing approach. Through a literature review and case study analysis, this research maps TikTok's transition from organic viral growth to a multi-faceted strategy involving influencer partnerships, diverse advertising formats, algorithmic personalization, localized efforts, and e-commerce integration. While previous studies have focused on TikTok's current evolution, this paper identifies an optimization gap and proposes recommendations to refine marketing strategies. Suggested optimization measures include building long-term user relationships through personalization and value delivery, strategically utilizing influencer/celebrity marketing to tap into user psychology, optimizing ad timing based on user behavior data, and localizing content. This study fills the academic gap in optimizing TikTok's marketing strategy, providing valuable practical insights. For businesses, it offers guidelines to maximize TikTok's marketing impact and promote brands effectively.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Process Optimization, TikTok.

1. Introduction

TikTok's exponential growth as a dominant social media platform, boasting over 1.2 billion monthly active users, has captured the attention of businesses and marketers globally. With users spending an average of 52 minutes daily on the platform, TikTok presents unprecedented commercial opportunities. However, the platform's marketing strategy continually evolves, necessitating an in-depth analysis of its development and optimization. The background of this research is that TikTok gets viral so rapidly. TikTok made its debut in 2016 and has enjoyed unparalleled success on the internet. By 2019, it had eclipsed the remarkable milestone of 1.5 billion downloads, surpassing Instagram and securing a spot among the most downloaded apps of the decade [1]. The research topic was chosen to address the critical need for understanding TikTok's marketing strategy, considering its immense impact on modern marketing practices. By examining scholarly papers and current industry data, this research aims to provide valuable insights to marketers seeking to capitalize on TikTok's potential effectively. Commercially, comprehending TikTok's marketing approach is essential for businesses aiming to create viral campaigns and foster brand engagement. Leveraging the platform's innovative advertising features and influencer collaborations is vital for driving sales and reaching a vast, engaged audience. Promoting a positive and sustainable digital ecosystem is crucial for both users and businesses in the long term. In conclusion, this research holds substantial commercial value by successfully empowering businesses to navigate TikTok's dynamic marketing landscape.

Presently, social media boasts a substantial user base, leading to shifts in interactions and dynamics among corporations, customers, and followers. TikTok, a social platform originating in China in 2016, was initially launched as Douyin with the intention of facilitating language practice. However, as its primary users skewed towards teenagers, its usage gradually transformed, with entertainment becoming its primary focus. Users have the option to upload videos they've made on their mobile devices easily. TikTok is presently the swiftest-expanding social platform, ranking as the fourth most globally downloaded app with approximately 500 million active users on a daily basis. This rapid

expansion prompted a global rebranding, resulting in the app being renamed TikTok [2]. TikTok app is based on the concept of short format video, offering users a wide selection of sounds and pieces of music and the option to add special effects and filters. From its inception, the app has witnessed a substantial surge in popularity. By October 2018, TikTok had emerged as the most frequently downloaded photo and video app globally on Apple's app store. With over 500 million active users, it was particularly favored in the United States, where it garnered more than 80 million downloads [1]. Jianyu Ma and Swei Yu point out that in China, TikTok is a conversation about the influence of its development in the field of e-commerce; they explain that TikTok application has great potential in the field of e-commerce, including as an online shopping media and marketing industry in the form of short videos [3,4].

In the reclaim of research on TikTok's digital marketing strategy, it is evident that a considerable number of studies have focused on its current development, analyzing trends and successful marketing strategies. However, limited attention has been directed toward obtaining further insights into optimizing TikTok's marketing approach. This apparent research gap necessitates a more profound investigation into the potential avenues for enhancing TikTok's digital marketing strategy. While the existing literature provides valuable information on the evolution of TikTok's marketing tactics, it often falls short of offering concrete recommendations to optimize its campaigns on the platform. Researchers have extensively explored case studies and user engagement metrics, but there remains a lack of systematic and empirical studies to guide TikTok in implementing and refining their strategies. The significance of optimizing TikTok's digital marketing strategy cannot be overstated, as it directly impacts the effectiveness of brand promotion and audience reach. Identifying specific areas for improvement, such as content creation, influencer marketing, and user targeting, could lead to higher levels of user engagement and brand loyalty. By comprehensively analyzing existing literature and examining TikTok's current marketing landscape, this study aims to bridge the gap between understanding its development and offering actionable insights for optimization. Drawing from the best practices observed in the literature and combining them with the latest industry trends, this research proposes evidence-based strategies to enhance TikTok's digital marketing efficacy. By optimizing TikTok's digital marketing strategy, businesses can leverage the platform's vast user base and high engagement levels, unlocking its full potential as a powerful tool for brand promotion and social media success.

This study explores the development and optimization of TikTok's digital marketing strategy, bridging the gap between existing literature on TikTok's marketing evolution and practical implementation for TikTok. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the study will comprehensively analyze scholarly papers and examine TikTok's current marketing landscape. The research will offer a chronological overview of TikTok's marketing strategy, identify areas for improvement, and propose evidence-based recommendations encompassing content creation, influencer marketing, and user targeting to optimize TikTok's digital marketing efficiency. The study seeks to provide valuable insights to enhance brand engagement and loyalty by addressing this research gap, contributing to digital marketing and social media platform development. Ultimately, the study will give some suggestions about optimizing the digital marketing strategies of TikTok based on the platform's unique features and user behavior.

2. Methods

This study uses qualitative research to investigate the development of TikTok's digital marketing strategy and its optimization. The research begins with a comprehensive literature review of relevant scholarly papers, academic articles, and industry reports focused on digital marketing, social media platforms, and TikTok's evolution. With the understanding of previous research, the study aims to gain insights into the historical and current trends in TikTok's digital marketing approach by analyzing and synthesizing the findings from these sources. Secondly, a case study approach will be utilized, focusing on a prominent brand's marketing campaign on TikTok. This detailed case study

will provide real-world insights into the brand's marketing strategy, implementation, and outcomes on the platform. The combination of the literature research and case study analysis will offer a holistic understanding of TikTok's marketing landscape and facilitate the identification of areas for optimization. This methodology thoroughly examines TikTok's digital marketing strategy, providing valuable insights to maximize its impact and strengthen its digital marketing metrics.

3. Results

3.1. Case Study Analysis of TikTok

TikTok's digital marketing strategy has undergone a remarkable evolution since its inception. Initially, the platform gained popularity primarily through organic growth, driven by its unique format of short-form user-generated videos. TikTok has continuously refined and diversified its digital marketing approach as it sought to monetize its massive user base and expand its reach. In the early days, TikTok was seen as a platform predominantly used by Gen Z and Millennials to share entertaining and creative videos. It was initially seen as a place for fun and self-expression rather than a hub for marketing and advertising. However, as its user base grew, so did its potential as an advertising platform. Compared to other social media platforms, short video APPs have become the most popular platforms in 2019. The number of daily active users (DAU) surged to 800 million, twice the average DAU of other online video platforms. In addition to the increase in the number of users, more and more investors and content creators are starting to get involved in short video APPs marketing with the development of platforms [5]. One vital element of TikTok's marketing strategy was cultivating partnerships with influencers and celebrities. Jutkowitz (2014) highlights that we stand at the cusp of a significant shift in the branding and organizational landscape, primarily driven by content. This is driven by the fact that a substantial nine out of ten companies are actively employing content marketing strategies to engage with consumers, foster interaction, drive conversions, and keep their products and brands in consumer memory [6]. TikTok recognized the power of these content creators to attract and engage audiences. Through influencer collaborations, TikTok could tap into the influencers' existing fan base, often numbered in the millions, and leverage their creativity and authenticity to promote the app. These partnerships helped boost TikTok's visibility and credibility, especially among younger demographics. Simultaneously, TikTok introduced various advertising options to cater to different marketing objectives. In-feed ads, for instance, allowed businesses to appear in users' feeds, offering seamless integration of promotional content into the user experience. Branded challenges encouraged user participation, fostering engagement by challenging users to create content around a specific theme or hashtag. Hashtag challenges, on the other hand, encouraged user-generated content and often went viral, amplifying brand reach. This diversification of ad formats was a smart move by TikTok, as it allowed businesses to tailor their marketing efforts to their specific goals, whether building brand awareness, driving engagement, or promoting products and services. Central to TikTok's success as an advertising platform is its algorithmic feed. TikTok's content recommendation system analyzes user behavior, interactions, and preferences to curate a personalized feed. This algorithmic approach ensures that users encounter content that aligns with their interests and preferences, including ads. This means that ads are more likely to be relevant and engaging to users, increasing the likelihood of positive responses and conversions. Moreover, TikTok's interactive features have been instrumental in fostering engagement. Features like duets, stitched videos, and augmented reality (AR) effects allow users to engage with branded content creatively. For example, users can participate in a branded challenge by creating unique videos with special effects, making them feel connected to the brand's message. This engagement not only benefits brands but also enhances the overall user experience. As TikTok expanded globally, it recognized the importance of localization in its marketing efforts. TikTok began partnering with local influencers and brands to connect with diverse audiences worldwide effectively. This approach ensured that TikTok could adapt its marketing strategies to suit regional nuances and cultural contexts, increasing its relevance in various markets. Additionally,

TikTok ventured into the world of e-commerce by collaborating with leading online shopping platforms. This integration allowed users to shop for products directly within the app, bridging the gap between content consumption and purchasing behavior. For advertisers, this meant the ability to track the impact of their campaigns more effectively, from awareness to conversion. TikTok's digital marketing strategy has evolved from its humble beginnings as a platform for organic user-generated content to a multi-faceted approach that includes influencer partnerships, diverse ad formats, algorithmic personalization, localized efforts, and e-commerce integration. This evolution has allowed TikTok to cater to its ever-expanding user base and adapt to the dynamic landscape of digital advertising. TikTok's success in digital marketing underscores its ability to stay ahead of the curve and provide valuable opportunities for brands and businesses to connect with their target audiences.

3.2. Development of TikTok's Digital Marketing Strategy

TikTok's marketing strategy has undergone a dynamic evolution since its inception, initially launched in 2016 by Chinese tech company ByteDance, TikTok aimed to captivate a younger audience with its short-form video format, innovative editing tools, and algorithm-driven content discovery. Early on, TikTok's marketing primarily focused on viral challenges and organic growth, encouraging users to create and share unique content using popular music tracks and creative filters. This strategy tapped into the platform's virality and rapidly gained traction among Generation Z and millennials. As TikTok gained popularity, the platform strategically shifted its marketing strategy to embrace brand partnerships and influencer collaborations. By engaging with influential content creators, brands leveraged their reach to a wide and engaged audience. These collaborations often resulted in sponsored challenges, where brands encouraged users to create content related to their products or services, effectively turning users into advocates. TikTok's "Hashtag Challenges Plus" program extended this approach by offering branded effects, banners, and links to e-commerce sites, enhancing brand exposure and interaction. Recognizing the potential for revenue generation, TikTok expanded its advertising options to cater to various business objectives. They introduced a self-serve advertising platform, allowing businesses of all sizes to create and manage ad campaigns. Ad formats like "Top View," which displays a brand's video when users open the app, and "Branded Hashtag Challenges," where brands sponsor trending challenges, became popular for marketers to engage with TikTok's highly active user base. Furthermore, TikTok continued to diversify its marketing strategy by incorporating e-commerce elements. The "Shop Now" button within branded videos enabled users to purchase products directly, seamlessly integrating social commerce with entertainment. This shift leveraged the platform's role as a content hub and a potential sales channel. In terms of targeting and personalization, TikTok introduced advanced advertising tools that allowed brands to target specific demographics, interests, and behaviors. This enabled advertisers to refine their campaigns and reach their desired audience effectively. By far, TikTok's marketing strategy has transformed from an emphasis on organic viral content to a multi-faceted approach involving brand partnerships, influencer collaborations, diverse advertising options, and integration of e-commerce features. This evolution underscores TikTok's adaptability and commitment to providing both users and marketers with innovative ways to engage, entertain, and achieve business objectives on this platform.

4. Discussion

4.1. Optimization of TikTok's Digital Marketing Strategy

This case study analysis and literature review findings provide valuable insights for optimizing TikTok's digital marketing strategy. The study highlighted the significance of creative and authentic content creation, influencer collaborations, and targeted user engagement. Besides, Peppers and Rogers identify the four elements of a content marketing strategy that could develop and sustain trust for a company or a brand: shared values with the customer, interdependence (mutual value in the relationship), quality communication, and non-opportunistic behavior [7,8]. Aligning these case study findings with the successful practices identified in the literature, the research proposes evidence-based

recommendations for TikTok aiming to maximize its marketing efforts. By implementing these optimization strategies, brands can potentially achieve higher levels of user engagement, foster brand loyalty, and capitalize on TikTok's immense marketing potential.

4.2. Building Long-Term Relationships with Users: A Strategic Approach

Building and maintaining long-term relationships with users in the digital realm is an intricate process encompassing several key strategies. Trust forms the foundational element of such relationships. Establishing trust begins with transparency and honesty in all your interactions. Users should feel confident that your company aligns with their values, respects their privacy, and delivers on its promises. Personalization plays a crucial role in fostering user loyalty. Businesses can tailor the user experience to meet individual preferences and needs by harnessing user data and behavioral insights. Personalized recommendations, content, and messaging demonstrate to users that you understand their unique requirements, making them more likely to continue engaging with your products or services. Furthermore, allowing users to customize their experiences through features like user profiles and preferences empowers them to personalize their interactions with your brand, enhancing their sense of ownership and connection. Long-term relationships also thrive when businesses consistently deliver value. Seeking user feedback through surveys, monitoring behavior to identify pain points, and communicating updates and enhancements show users that you're actively working to solve their problems and add value to their lives. Recognition and reward for loyalty are important for reinforcing long-term relationships. Implementing loyalty programs, exclusive offers, or personalized discounts for long-term users acknowledges their commitment and incentivizes continued engagement. Recognizing and celebrating user milestones, such as anniversaries or achievements within your platform, reinforces the value of the relationship and encourages users to stay engaged. Furthermore, proactively addressing issues and challenges is vital for maintaining long-term relationships. By anticipating potential problems and resolving them swiftly, you can turn negative experiences into opportunities for deeper trust and loyalty. Robust customer support and service mechanisms readily accessible to users can be invaluable.

4.3. Unlocking the Power of Influencer and Celebrity Marketing: Capturing User Psychology

In the ever-evolving digital marketing landscape, one strategy has consistently stood out for its ability to capture the essence of user psychology and create authentic connections with consumers: influencer and celebrity marketing. This dynamic approach taps into the fundamental human desire for connection, authenticity, and relatability, making it a potent tool for brands seeking to engage their target audiences on a deeper level. The essence of this content strategy is the belief that if we, as businesses, deliver consistent, ongoing valuable information to buyers, they ultimately reward us with their business and loyalty [9,10]. Influencers and celebrities often project an image of authenticity and credibility. They are perceived as genuine individuals who have built their reputations based on their interests, expertise, or personality. This authenticity resonates with users who have grown weary of traditional advertising and seek real, relatable connections. When influencers endorse a product or service, their followers are likelier to trust their recommendations because they believe the endorsement is based on genuine experience and preference. Besides, social proof plays a significant role in user psychology. When users see influencers or celebrities engaging with a brand, attending events, or using products, it creates a sense of validation. It triggers a Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), a powerful psychological motivator. Users want to be part of what's trending and what their favorite influencers are doing, driving them to engage with the brand or product. What's more, influencers and celebrities can uniquely elicit emotional responses from their followers. Whether it's humor, inspiration, empathy, or nostalgia, their content resonates emotionally. When brands collaborate with influencers who align with their target audience's emotional triggers, they can tap into these feelings to create a powerful connection with users.

4.4. Optimize the Ads Pitching Time

Optimizing TikTok's ads pitching time involves a strategic approach rooted in understanding user behavior, harnessing TikTok's ad scheduling features, and aligning ad content with the time of day. Jessie Boxin Mou points out that TikTok users are most active from 9 pm to 12 am in the evening, during which about 26.3% of the users are online [5]. Recognizing that TikTok's user base engages with the platform at specific intervals during the day, advertisers must tailor their scheduling to coincide with peak usage periods. Utilizing TikTok's ad scheduling tools, data analysis, and experimentation helps pinpoint optimal time slots. Ad content should be thoughtfully curated to match the mood and activity of users during various times, from lighthearted morning content to emotionally engaging evening ads. Leveraging trending challenges and hashtags further enhances visibility. Real-time monitoring and adaptability are critical, allowing advertisers to adjust quickly based on performance metrics. By strategically timing their ads, advertisers can effectively engage with their target audience and optimize campaign results on TikTok.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Key Findings

Royle and Laing discovered that contemporary digital channels are employed in digital marketing to establish more profound connections with customers. The evolution of TikTok is transitioning from a platform renowned for its concise and entertaining video content to a global digital advertising force. This section delves into the fundamental revelations that underscore the strategic progression of TikTok's digital marketing paradigm. Through a confluence of influencer alliances, inventive advertising modalities, algorithmically-driven personalization, regionally-adapted initiatives, and seamless integration with e-commerce, TikTok has not only undergone a profound transformation into an advertising authority but has also redefined the overarching terrain of digital marketing. The ensuing discussion elucidates key insights into this extraordinary metamorphosis.

Furthermore, content marketing holds significant value in both academic analysis and practical implementation within online contexts to attain business objectives. Ultimately, the study highlights potential optimization measures to stay competitive and deliver exceptional user experiences.

5.2. Research Significance

This research successfully addresses the academic gap by focusing on the optimization aspect of TikTok's digital marketing strategy. While previous studies primarily concentrated on TikTok's current development and successful practices, this research goes beyond providing practical recommendations for marketers to improve their strategies. The mixed-method approach combining literature research and case study analysis allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of TikTok's marketing landscape. The research contributes to digital marketing and social media platform development by filling this academic gap, offering valuable insights for academia and industry professionals.

5.3. Limitations and Future Study

One notable limitation of this research is the selection of a single case study. While the chosen case study provided relevant insights into a specific brand's marketing campaign, the findings may not fully represent TikTok's diversity of marketing approaches. Future research could consider incorporating multiple case studies to capture a broader range of marketing strategies and outcomes. Additionally, the findings may have a limited shelf life due to the rapidly evolving nature of social media platforms. Therefore, continuous monitoring and updates on TikTok's marketing trends are essential to maintain the relevancy and applicability of the proposed optimization strategies. Despite this drawback, the research provides a solid foundation for understanding TikTok's digital marketing optimization and offers valuable guidelines for marketers seeking to leverage the platform effectively.

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