

Development paper

TikTok Marketing Research: A Systematic Review of Trends, Theories and a Proposed Future Agenda

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Abstract

TikTok has become a significant platform in social media marketing, leveraging its algorithm-driven content dissemination and high user engagement. Despite its commercial significance, research on TikTok marketing remains fragmented. This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) following PRISMA guidelines to analyse peer-reviewed publications from 2016 to 2024, highlighting key themes, methodological approaches, and theoretical frameworks. The findings reveal a strong focus on influencer marketing, while content marketing and cross-platform strategies remain underexplored. From a methodological perspective, quantitative research is more commonly used, with limited insights into consumer motivations provided by qualitative and mixed-method approaches. The study also indicates the need for interdisciplinary research and proposes a structured future research agenda.

This study provides a comprehensive perspective of key trends and gaps, proposing a structured research agenda and an integrated conceptual framework. It offers practical insights for marketers navigating TikTok's evolving landscape, emphasising the need for innovative, adaptive marketing strategies.

Keywords: TikTok marketing; Systematic literature review; Future Agenda

1. Introduction

TikTok has rapidly emerged as a transformative global social media platform since its international launch in 2018. TikTok's algorithm-driven content dissemination enhances user engagement (Kaye *et al.*, 2022), while its Gen Z-dominated user base (60%) offers unique marketing opportunities (Smith and Anderson, 2023). This mechanism enables new creators to reach a broader audience, thereby enhancing content diversity and user engagement.

TikTok's Gen Z base (16-24) offers significant marketing potential due to its purchasing power and responsiveness to authentic content (Smith and Anderson, 2023). The platform's short-form video and trend-driven participation lead to higher conversions compared to others, building emotional connections and aligning brand messages with cultural trends (Zhang and Mao, 2023; De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, its integration of e-commerce boosts its commercial potential, exemplified by Douyin's \$200 billion GMV in 2022 (Ma, 2022). The platform's seamless merger of content and commerce continues to grow, with North America now accelerating its e-commerce functions.

Although TikTok's commercial significance has attracted growing academic attention, existing research remains fragmented, resulting in a lack of a holistic understanding of previous studies (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021). While prior SLRs on social media marketing (Tafesse and Wien, 2018; Kaur *et al.*, 2022) and influencer marketing (Hudders *et al.*, 2021) provide insights into social media engagement strategies and brand communication. Given the rapid growth of TikTok as a marketing tool and the pace of its platform updates, previous studies overlook platform-specific features such as TikTok's algorithm-driven content visibility. Current studies fail to integrate TikTok's algorithmic affordances (e.g., TikTok's personalised recommendations) with consumer behaviour theories (e.g., Use and Gratification Theory), limiting predictive frameworks. Additionally, rapid feature iteration (e.g., livestreaming) outpaces academic validation, creating strategy-practice gaps (Voorveld, 2019).

Current theoretical frameworks, such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), may not reflect the reality of user engagement on the latest TikTok platform, and therefore, newer theoretical extensions are needed to incorporate the changes in interaction patterns associated with the latest interactive marketing features. In response, this paper proposes a conceptual framework that integrates these existing theories while also highlighting TikTok's unique marketing features, thereby providing the theoretical implications.

SLR can consolidate diverse research, identify gaps, and provide an integrated framework and structured agenda (Paul and Criado, 2020). It clarifies theoretical foundations, tracks emerging trends, and bridges gaps between theory and practice, while setting future research directions.

This study identifies research priorities and suggests directions for TikTok marketing by mapping trends and gaps.

To achieve the research aim, this study has the following objectives:

- 1) To provide an overview of TikTok marketing research by identifying key trends in publication patterns, regional focus, and journal types through bibliometric analysis.
- 2) To critically evaluate the methodological and theoretical frameworks employed in TikTok marketing studies, highlighting their strengths and limitations in addressing the TikTok marketing issues.
- 3) To explore the dominant themes and methodologies in TikTok marketing research, identifying gaps in current literature using co-word analysis.
- 4) To propose a future research agenda for TikTok marketing, advocating for the adoption of advanced methodologies to address emerging challenges in TikTok marketing.

2. Systematic Literature Review Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR), the reproducible, robust approach (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003; Grant and Booth, 2009) following the PRISMA framework to ensure methodological transparency. This approach will reduce the subjectivity of literature selection (Mengist *et al.*, 2019). Bibliometric and qualitative analyses were combined to provide a holistic view of the research landscape. In response to the fragmented nature of existing TikTok marketing studies and the lack of a consolidated theoretical framework, bibliometric methods offer a rigorous means to identify dominant research themes, theoretical underpinnings, and emerging gaps (Donthu *et al.*, 2021). This study employs descriptive bibliometric analysis to reveal publication trends and key journal types, complemented by co-occurrence keyword analysis to uncover thematic structures and conceptual links within the field of TikTok marketing research. By integrating these methods, this study provides a systematic and data-driven synthesis of TikTok marketing articles, revealing critical conceptual developments and underexplored research avenues.

2.2 Data Collection

This SLR focuses on publications from 2016 to 2024, as TikTok (Douyin) was launched in September 2016 (Gerlieb, 2021). The literature was primarily sourced from two major academic databases, Web of Science and Scopus (Vergne and Wry, 2013), with EBSCO Business Source Premier and Emerald Insight used as supplementary business-focused databases.

The search strategy employed "TikTok," "Marketing," and "Brand" along with their synonyms as primary keywords to balance relevance and breadth. An advanced Boolean search strategy (using AND, OR, NOT operators) ensured comprehensive coverage of relevant literature (MIT Libraries, 2018). The specific search strings and

parameters are presented in the table below. Searching keywords were iteratively validated through: (1) Pilot analysis of 20 seminal papers' terminologies; (2) Exclusion of low-frequency terms (e.g., 'short video') to reduce noise.

Regarding marketing purposes, this study adopts a combined framework based on prior classifications. Mangold and Faulds (2009) identified three core purposes of social media marketing: promoting brand-related activities, connecting brands to users and reference groups, and communicating brand, product, or service information. Expanding on this, Ioană and Stoica (2014) added social campaigns and philanthropy as emerging purposes, while Tafesse and Wien (2018) further categorised social media marketing into: product-related marketing, brand-related marketing, and social interest marketing.

Table 2. 1 Selection Criteria for Included Studies

Dimensions	Inclusion criteria
A Themes	Only marketing research that focuses on brand image and awareness building or product or service promotion will be included.
B. Article types	English written; Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers;
C Time span	From 2016-2024
D Quality	Articles published on SCImago journal ranking Q1-Q3
E Non-duplicated	Only non-duplicated articles will be included.

The screening process (Figure 2.1) followed rigorous inclusion criteria (Table 2.1) and involved four stages:

1. Initial database search,
2. Removal of duplicates,
3. Keyword-based screening,
4. Full-text eligibility assessment.

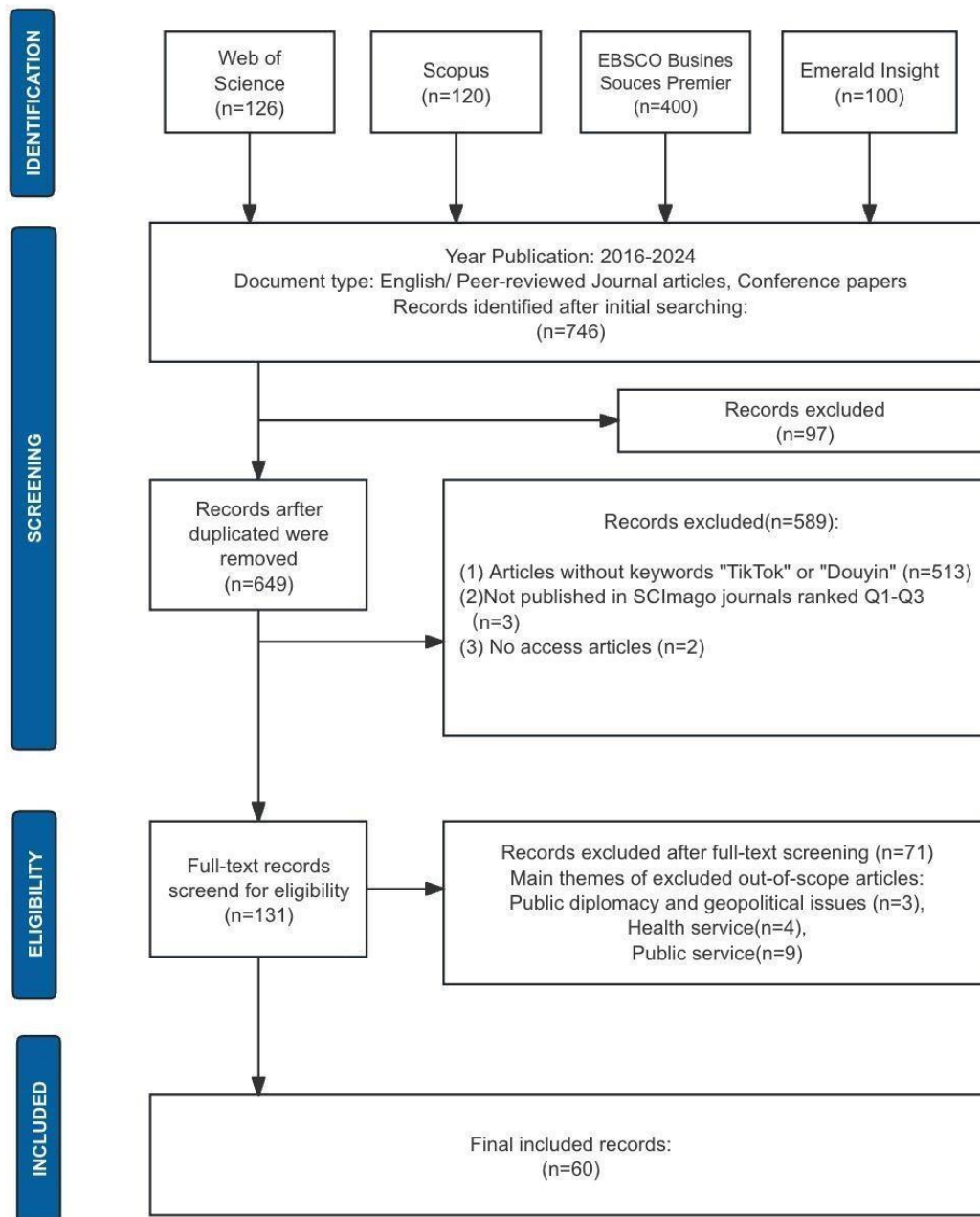


Figure 2.1 PRISMA-based reference searching and screening process

Q1-Q3 journal focus may exclude insights (for example, conference proceedings), but its overall high academic standard ensures the included articles. Non-English studies were excluded, despite potentially providing cultural insights, which is a limitation for cross-cultural generalisation.

Each stage ensured that only high-quality, relevant studies meeting the predefined criteria were included in the final analysis. From an initial pool of 746 articles, 60 met the inclusion criteria after a rigorous screening process.

2.3 Data Analysis

1. **Bibliometric Analysis:** Descriptive statistics were used to analyse publication trends, journal distribution, and regional focus.
2. **Preliminary Thematic Analysis:** NVivo 12 facilitated the categorisation of research topics, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks. The authors have cross-checked the reliability of the themes to enhance the validity of the study.
3. **Co-Occurrence Analysis:** Planned but ongoing; preliminary mention only without detailed results. VOSviewer visual map

3. Preliminary Results

This ongoing study has finished part of the data analysis objective 2, and the in-depth exploration of themes and methodologies through a bibliometric approach is still ongoing. This section presents the findings derived from the completed stages of data analysis, focusing solely on the results obtained so far.

3.1 Key Trends and Insights

Research on TikTok marketing surged after 2020, aligning with the platform's rapid global adoption. The highest number of publications appeared in 2023, reflecting increased academic interest post-COVID-19.

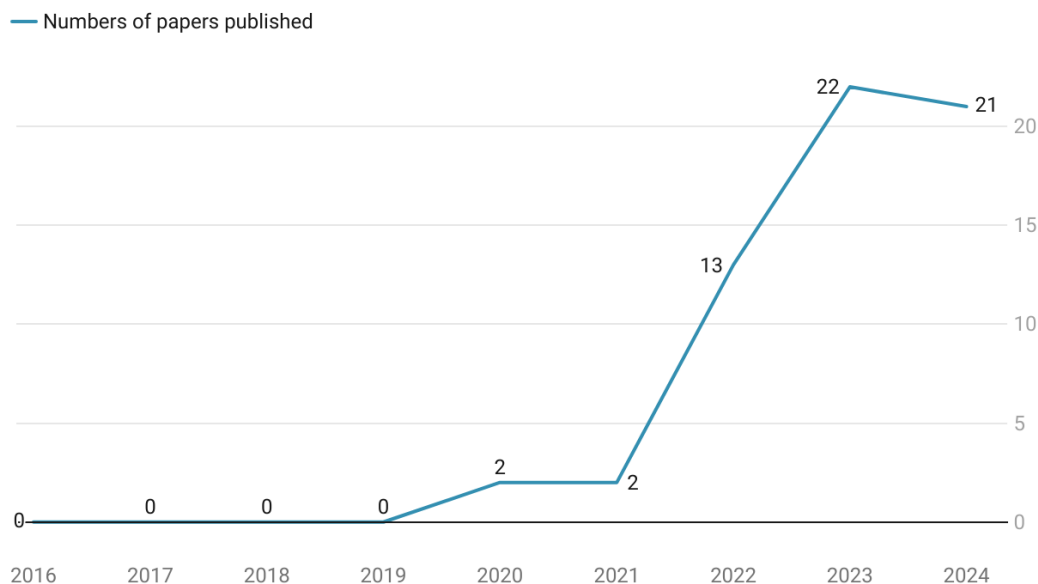


Figure 3.1 Trends in the growth of publications from 2016 to 2024 (as of the first quarter)

Data have shown that China 25%, Indonesia 10%, and the United States 10% dominate the research landscape. Regions such as Africa, South America, and the Middle East remain underexplored.

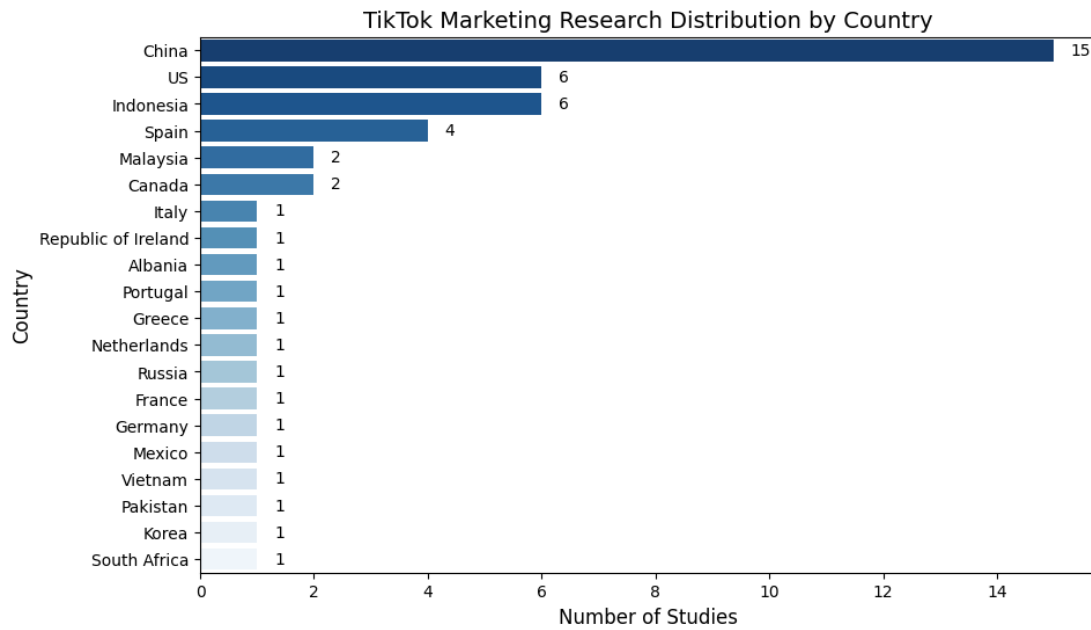


Figure 3.2 Geographical Trends in TikTok Marketing Research

The research theme-focused analysis revealed that influencer marketing is the most dominant research theme in TikTok marketing studies, with 24 out of 60 articles focusing on this topic. The central role of influencers aligns with the Social Influence Theory, highlighting how peer recommendations influence consumer purchasing decisions. This strong emphasis on influencer marketing suggests that scholars' attention has mainly centred on peer-driven brand communication and consumer persuasion. However, other marketing approaches, such as content marketing strategies beyond influencer collaborations or data-driven personalisation techniques, remain significantly underexplored, limiting a holistic understanding of TikTok's full marketing potential.

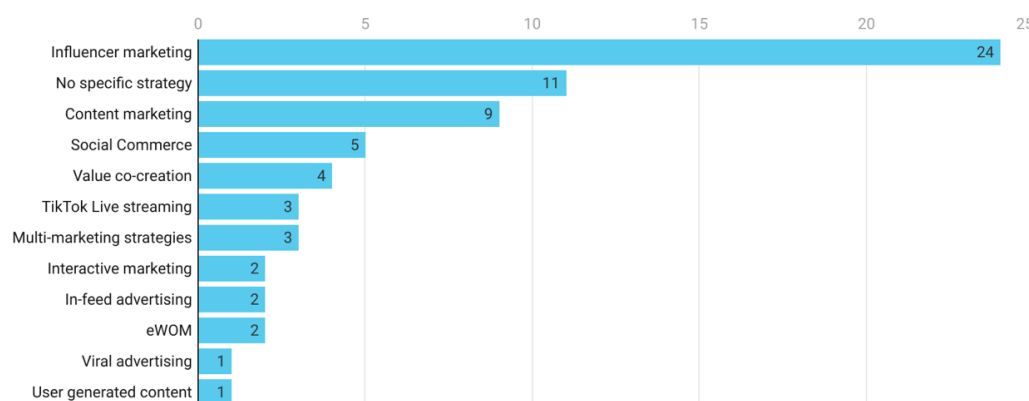


Figure 3.3 Frequency of occurrence of marketing strategies

Table 3.1 Research types and data collection methods of articles

Research Type	Data Collection Method	Number of articles	Proportions
Empirical	Quantitative	41	68.3%
Empirical	Mixed	5	8.3%
Empirical	N/A	4	6.7%
Empirical	Qualitative	3	5%
Case study	Qualitative	2	3.3%
Descriptive	Qualitative	1	1.6%
Conceptual	N/A	1	1.6%
Conceptual	Qualitative	1	1.6%
Review	Qualitative	1	1.6%
Unknown	Unknown	1	1.6%

For the methodological trends, quantitative methods dominate 68.3%, particularly surveys and field experiments. Qualitative approaches, 5% and mixed methods, 8.3% remain underutilised, limiting the depth of insights into contextual factors and consumer motivations.

Table 3.2 Summary of Theoretical Concepts in TikTok Marketing Research

Dimension	Theories and Concepts	Percentage (%)	References
Marketing and Branding	SMMA Framework	3.33%	Sheak & Abdulrazak (2023), Wahid et al. (2023)
	Brand Personality, Aaker's Five Brand Personality	5.00%	Yuan et al. (2022), Su et al. (2020)
	Theory of Brand Trust	1.67%	Zhang et al. (2022)
Communication Process	Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Two-step Flow, Persuasion Knowledge	6.67%	Lawrence & Meivitananli (2023), Wright & Cherry (2023)
	Use and Gratifications Theory	8.33%	Chen et al. (2024), Zhang et al. (2024)
Social Aspect	Social Influence Theory, Para-social Relationships	5.00%	Tartaraj et al. (2024), Hazari et al. (2023)
	Social Identity Theory, Trust Transfer	3.33%	Lawrence & Meivitananli (2023), Haq & Chiu (2024)
Cognitive and Behavioural	Value Co-Creation, Technology Acceptance Model	6.67%	Ruangkanjanases et al. (2023), Chen et al. (2023)

Dimension	Theories and Concepts	Percentage (%)	References
	Attention Theory, Information Adoption Model	3.33%	Yang et al. (2023), Indrawati et al. (2023)
	Casual Inference Theory	1.67%	Tian et al. (2024)
Organisational Behaviour			

The table above shows a selection of the dominant theories employed across the reviewed literature. According to this table, Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) emerge as core frameworks in the exploration of TikTok's marketing environment, but their application remains fragmented and underdeveloped.

UGT is widely used to understand user motivations in media consumption. While its application to TikTok's dynamic content ecosystem is insightful, it tends to overlook the platform's algorithmic impact on content visibility and user engagement. UGT primarily focuses on the user's active choice to engage based on their needs, such as entertainment, social interaction, or information-seeking. However, TikTok's algorithm-driven content curation influences these motivations dynamically, meaning users are not only passively seeking content but are also guided by what the algorithm chooses to promote. This gap in UGT application limits the understanding of how TikTok's content feeds shape user engagement.

On the other hand, ELM, which offers a dual route to persuasion (central and peripheral), is frequently used to explain user decision-making in the context of brand messages. However, traditional ELM does not fully account for the short-form, rapid consumption characteristic of TikTok, where user decision-making happens in a more emotionally engaged way. ELM's peripheral route appears to be more notable in the context of TikTok, but this model's central route is often overlooked, suggesting a need for adaptation. It fails to explain how repeated exposure to fast, emotionally engaging content influences long-term brand loyalty or attitude transfer on TikTok.

This analysis presents a clear pathway for future theoretical exploration, indicating that more platform-tailored theories are necessary to fully understand TikTok's unique marketing potential. By integrating and refining these frameworks, this study contributes to a more holistic understanding of how TikTok content drives user engagement, ultimately enabling marketers to design more effective, platform-specific marketing strategies that resonate with the rapidly changing landscape of social media marketing.

4. Discussions

4.1 Theoretical Implications

This study reveals key trends in TikTok marketing, though the findings are preliminary. Existing research provides valuable insights, but specific aspects of TikTok's unique characteristics remain underexplored, requiring further theoretical development. This section explores the theoretical implications and suggests a broader understanding of TikTok marketing by connecting trends to existing frameworks and identifying future research opportunities.

The lack of a theoretical framework integration

Many existing studies apply conventional theoretical models (e.g. the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), or Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)), which may not fully capture the fast-paced, visually driven, and emotionally engaging nature of TikTok. Such models often overlook the temporal compression of consumer decision-making that characterises short-form content platforms. With users' average attention span lasting merely 8.3 seconds (Kaye *et al.*, 2022), the classical "central route processing" requires urgent platform-specific adaptation. This necessitates a reconceptualisation of persuasion mechanisms within TikTok's technological affordances.

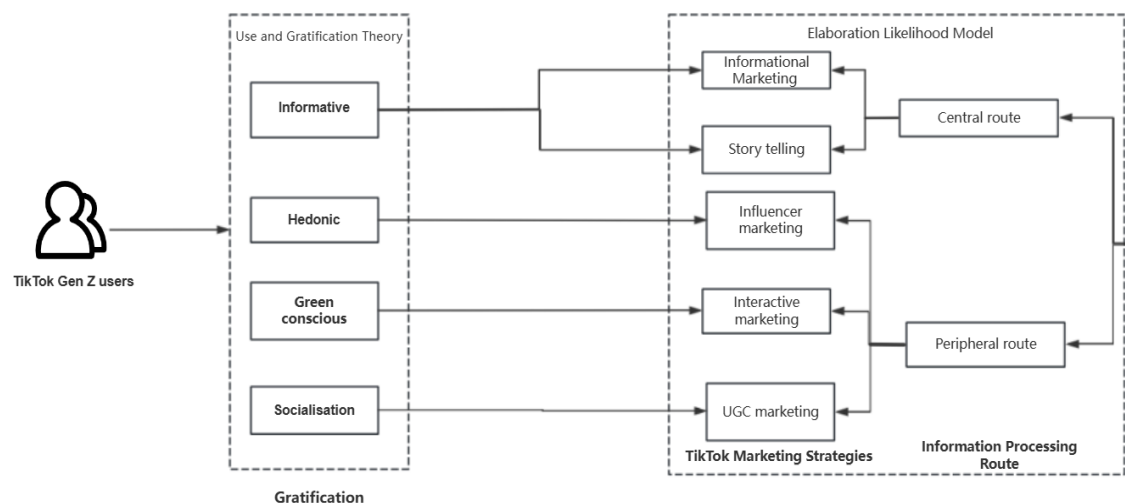


Figure 4.1 Example of integrated conceptual framework

To address the fragmented use of theory in existing TikTok marketing literature, this paper introduces an integrated conceptual framework that synthesises the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). This framework is proposed as a platform-specific extension designed to capture better the unique affordances and user behaviours shaped by TikTok's interactive ecosystem.

UGT explains media usage as driven by individuals' active pursuit of content that satisfies psychological, cognitive, and social needs (Katz *et al.*, 1973). In the TikTok context, users typically engage for reasons such as entertainment, escapism, identity expression, and social interaction. However, these motivations are deeply influenced by TikTok's algorithmic content delivery, which not only responds to but also shapes user gratification dynamically. For example, a user initially engaging for entertainment

may gradually transition toward information-seeking or identity construction due to exposure to specific content clusters promoted by the "For You" feed. This reflexive relationship between algorithm and gratification-seeking is a platform-specific shaping of UGT that existing models have not explicitly explored.

ELM, on the other hand, explains how individuals process persuasive messages through either a central route (analytical processing) or a peripheral route (emotional or heuristic processing), depending on their motivation and ability (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). TikTok's short-form, emotionally charged content environment challenges the traditional dichotomy. The platform compresses decision-making into a shorter period, favouring heuristic engagement cues such as music, fashion trends, humour, and creator credibility. Classical ELM would interpret this as peripheral processing. However, the intensity and frequency of such micro-interactions may significantly influence central belief systems, particularly in brand perception and user loyalty.

The innovation of the proposed framework lies in this two-directional map: UGT is used to model user motivations for engaging with TikTok content, while ELM captures the marketing mechanisms used to influence user attitudes and behaviours. Bridging these allows the framework to trace the complete user journey, from initial motivation to exposure, interaction, and ultimately to brand persuasion or consumer action. For instance, a user motivated by community belonging (UGT) may repeatedly engage with branded hashtag challenges (ELM), reinforcing the brand's emotional attachment and increasing conversion likelihood through repetition and social proof.

Furthermore, the proposed framework addresses platform specificity by aligning theoretical elements with distinct TikTok features:

- a. Duets and Stitches can be seen as both gratification tools (identity expression, community participation) and heuristic cues.
- b. Hashtag challenges serve as embedded persuasive mechanisms that operate across both UGT (enjoyable entertainment and creativity) and ELM (repetition and social endorsement).
- c. Algorithmic content curation serves as an invisible persuasive role that tailors the user journey, thereby reshaping both gratification-seeking and peripheral/central processing routes.

This framework also creates opportunities for future empirical validation. Mixed-method studies could explore how user motivations evolve through repeated interaction with branded content or how different creative formats affect the likelihood of central route processing on TikTok. By integrating UGT and ELM within TikTok's technological infrastructure, this model offers a more comprehensive, dynamic, and platform-relevant perspective on studying user engagement and marketing effectiveness.

The role of the platform features

While some studies acknowledge TikTok's participatory culture, many overlook features like duets and hashtag challenges, treating them as engagement tools while ignoring their role as co-creators of marketing outcomes. This overlooks how TikTok's algorithm prioritises co-created content, inflating the effect of influencer strategies (40%). This limited understanding risks overreliance on a single marketing approach.

Methodological Limitations

While existing research has made valuable contributions by using engagement metrics and self-report methods to measure observable user behaviours (e.g., likes, shares), these approaches have provided important insights into the quantitative dynamics of social media interactions. However, they often prioritise measurable behaviours over more cognitively meaningful actions, such as brand cognition formation or socio-cultural patterns of brand interaction. These aspects remain underexplored, limiting a deeper understanding of how users engage with content on platforms like TikTok. Future research can build upon these findings by incorporating more qualitative methods to capture the psychological drivers of user engagement.

4.2 Practical Implications

One notable gap in the current TikTok marketing literature is the scarcity of cross-platform and cross-country comparative analyses. While a few studies have looked at TikTok alongside platforms like Instagram or YouTube, there is a general lack of comparative research that truly explores how marketing strategies differ across these platforms or regions. TikTok's unique features, such as content discovery and co-creation, may function quite differently from those on other platforms. For instance, a marketing campaign that works well on Instagram, where users tend to engage more with influencer endorsements, may need to be adapted for TikTok, where users are more likely to interact with short-form videos and participate in trending dance challenges. Similarly, regional differences in content preferences or consumer behaviour remain largely unexplored. For example, users in the Middle East or Latin America might have different interactions with TikTok compared to users in North America or Europe. Future research could offer valuable insights by comparing the performance of marketing strategies across these platforms and regions, enabling marketers to tailor their campaigns more effectively and ensure that content resonates with local cultures and trends.

Another key implication is the overreliance on quantitative methods in TikTok marketing research. While tools like SEM (Structural Equation Modelling), regression analyses, and engagement metrics (such as views, likes, and shares) provide valuable data on user behaviour, these methods tend to focus on measurable outcomes and fail to capture the more unquantifiable psychological, cultural, and emotional drivers behind user decisions. For example, engagement metrics are often used to measure success based on visible actions, such as clicks or shares, however, these metrics don't account for why users share certain content or how emotional resonance with a brand

influences their decision-making. In a platform like TikTok, where emotions, humour, and creativity are the core to content, such metrics may miss out on how content makes users feel or how it aligns with their identity. Additionally, cultural norms and community-driven virality are essential factors that influence how TikTok content is consumed and shared, yet these are often neglected in quantitative research. Localised content creation and region-specific content trends play a significant role in user engagement, and these aspects cannot be fully captured through the usual self-report methods. For example, while TikTok's viral challenges often rely on cultural and social trends that vary from one country to another, current research rarely investigates these local contextual factors. As a result, marketers may be left with an incomplete understanding of why certain content performs well in one region but not in another. By integrating qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, ethnographic studies, or focus groups, future research can uncover these underlying motivations, offering marketers deeper insights into the emotional, cultural, and social factors that drive user interaction.

Additionally, there is a narrow concentration of research in specific industries, with the fashion sector being the most heavily studied area on TikTok. While fashion brands have been quick to leverage TikTok's visual nature, other sectors such as healthcare, finance, or education have received little attention in the literature. TikTok's diverse user base and range of content types present a unique opportunity for brands across various sectors to engage with users in creative ways. However, the lack of sector-specific research limits our understanding of how TikTok's marketing potential can be optimally realised across different industries. For instance, a financial institution or a healthcare provider might approach TikTok marketing very differently than a fashion retailer, and there is a need to explore how each sector can utilise TikTok's features in a way that aligns with their brand values and audience expectations. Industry-specific research can also shed light on ethical considerations, particularly in sectors such as healthcare and education, where trust and credibility are crucial. By focusing on a broader range of industries, future research can help marketers identify best practices for TikTok campaigns that go beyond the fashion sector, offering actionable strategies for brands in other areas.

In conclusion, while the use of quantitative methods and a focus on fashion marketing have advanced our understanding of TikTok marketing to some extent, there is still considerable room for more in-depth, refined research. By expanding the scope of research to include cross-platform comparisons, regional and cultural studies, and sector-specific analysis, future studies can provide more actionable insights for marketers. This would enable a more comprehensive understanding of why certain strategies are effective on TikTok, helping brands create more effective, culturally resonant campaigns that account for the platform's dynamic, emotionally driven interactions.

5. Conclusion and contributions

This study reviewed and assessed the current state of academic research on TikTok marketing, aiming to clarify dominant trends, theoretical usage, and methodological approaches. By conducting a structured literature review that combined bibliometric and co-word analyses, we identified key research patterns and revealed areas where knowledge remains limited. In particular, this review highlighted the concentration of studies in specific sectors and regions, the frequent reliance on behavioural metrics, and the restricted use of integrated or platform-specific theoretical models.

The theoretical implications discussed earlier point to the need for a more refined approach to understanding user engagement on TikTok. While existing research has applied classical theories, such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model and Uses and Gratifications Theory, their separate use does not fully address how users interact with platform-specific features or how persuasion unfolds in such fast-paced environments. This review addressed that gap by proposing an integrated framework that combines motivational and message-processing perspectives, providing a clearer understanding of how users both seek content and respond to marketing strategies on TikTok.

This proposed framework does not claim to provide a final model but instead invites further refinement based on platform-specific features. These elements shape not only what content is seen, but also how users form opinions and take action. The framework is therefore encouraging future studies to engage more closely with the unique characteristics of TikTok and similar short-form video platforms.

In terms of methodology, our analysis reveals that most studies have employed quantitative approaches, primarily relying on self-report surveys and performance analytics (e.g., likes, shares, views). While these methods have provided important insights into patterns of engagement, they leave limited room for understanding underlying motivations, cognitive processing, and cultural variation. As TikTok use expands globally and continues to diversify, future research would benefit from applying more qualitative and mixed methods, especially those that capture interactional and contextual dynamics.

Table. 5.1 Table of proposed future research directions

Dimension	Research Questions	Proposed Research Directions
Integrated theoretical framework	1. How do TikTok's algorithmic features impact user decisions and behaviour in short-form content?	Develop frameworks that capture algorithm-driven content and its influence on consumer behaviour.

Dimension	Research Questions	Proposed Research Directions
Platform Features Focus	2. How do features like duets and hashtag challenges shape marketing outcomes?	Investigate how platform features and user-generated content drive engagement and trust.
Measurement Bias	3. How can we capture the emotional and cognitive drivers behind TikTok engagement?	Use qualitative methods to explore psychological factors influencing user behaviour.
Ethical Considerations	4. What are the ethical implications of TikTok marketing effectiveness?	Investigation of ethical considerations (e.g., appearance anxiety) through practitioner interviews and user focus groups
Geographical Gaps	5. How do marketing dynamics operate in under-researched emerging markets?	Ethnographic studies of platform adoption in emerging markets like Middle Eastern/African contexts
Cross-cultural Studies	6. What cross-platform and cross-cultural variations exist?	Comparative qualitative analysis of user engagement across platforms (e.g., TikTok/Instagram Reels) in cross-cultural contexts
User Segmentation	7. How to further specify user segmentation of TikTok?	Conduct a qualitative follow-up of pre-identified users who engage with algorithmic recommendations and who are keen followers.

The table of research directions (Table 5.1) brings together the core issues identified in this review and divides them into seven focused areas. Each of these directions corresponds to specific gaps in the literature and identifies a practical directions that respond to challenges in theory, method, geography, ethics, and segmentation for future studies.

Together, these directions reflect a need for transition in the field. Rather than treating TikTok as a regular social media marketing channel, future research needs to take into account the platform's unique affordances: as a space with its cultural practices and user behaviours. This requires not only the integration of theory but also a deeper understanding of how content spreads, how value is co-created, and how persuasion operates in peer-driven and visually appealing environments.

In conclusion, this review aims to lay a foundation for more precise, critical, and context-related research. By identifying the limits of current work and mapping out specific opportunities for future research, the study provides an essential starting point for scholars and practitioners seeking to engage with the TikTok platform-based marketing in the future.

Theoretical Contribution

This study contributes to the development of theory by addressing the lack of conceptual integration in existing TikTok marketing literature. By synthesising the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the paper proposes a novel, dual-direction framework capable of explaining both why users engage with TikTok and how its content formats and features persuade them. This theoretical synthesis is tailored to the temporal, visual, and participatory reality of short-form content platforms, offering a more defined understanding than existing applications of traditional communication and behaviour study theory. It also suggests that conventional models of persuasive processing should be adopted to fit the dynamics of TikTok environments.

Academic Contribution

Methodologically, this paper advances TikTok marketing scholarship by providing a systematic, multi-method literature review that includes bibliometric mapping, thematic clustering, and co-word analysis. This approach enables the identification of dominant research patterns, geographical imbalances, and disciplinary blind spots in current studies. Furthermore, the study exposes a tendency towards instrumental and descriptive research, offering a structured research agenda that calls for greater theoretical engagement, cross-cultural comparisons, and qualitative depth. The paper thereby serves as a foundation for future scholarship seeking to position TikTok within broader debates in social media marketing.

Practical Contribution

From a practitioner perspective, this review synthesises academic insights into actionable implications for marketers and brand managers. By briefly introducing how TikTok's specific features (e.g., hashtag challenges, duets, algorithm) align with user motivations and persuasive strategies, the study offers an integrated lens for designing more effective, culture-related campaigns. It also highlights the need to move beyond surface metrics (e.g., likes and shares) and self-report data (survey), encouraging marketers to engage with psychological drivers and contextual factors that shape user engagement. The research agenda proposed in the final section offers strategic entry points for companies looking to adapt their marketing to platform-native dynamics, while promoting cross-industry and cross-market practices.

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