THE IMPACT OF TIKTOK CONTENT STRATEGIES ON USER ENGAGEMENT: FINDINGS FROM SLOVENIA

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Abstract: Social media has significantly transformed the ways in which consumers make decisions, enabling companies to influence users at every stage of the purchasing process. Among the fastest-growing platforms is TikTok, which is based on the creation and sharing of short videos, often enhanced with music, filters, and special effects. This study aims to examine the relationship between content types and user engagement on TikTok. A quantitative research metodology was employed, using a survey questionnaire with closed-ended questions that focused on users' perceptions and preferences regarding different content types. The research took place in Slovenia, the sample was random and responders were volontary. Social media channels (Instgram and Facebook) were used to deseminate link to survey. Folowing the social media paradigm of immediate response, the the time available to complete the survey was short (three days). The survey reached 201 respondents from which 70 surveys were finally fully completed. The results indicate that users most frequently engage with entertaining, creative, and educational content, whereas promotional posts that merely present a product or service achieve lower levels of responsiveness. The findings further suggest that influencers' presence alone does not guarantee higher engagement. These insights contribute to a better understanding of user interaction dynamics on TikTok and provide a basis for developing effective content strategies. The study has certain limitations, as the sample was convenient and relatively small, and the data relied on self-reports, which may affect validity. Nevertheless, it offers an empirical contribution to the study of user engagement on social media and opens opportunities for further research, particularly in comparative and longitudinal contexts.
Keywords: social media, TikTok, user engagement, content strategies, digital marketing.

1   Introduction

In the last two decades, social networks have become a key part of individuals' everyday lives and represent an important communication and marketing tool for companies (Wiguna, Mulyana & Wardoyo, 2023; Vukasović, Weis & Kramar, 2025). One of the most popular platforms today is TikTok. The platform allows users to create and share short videos, often accompanied by music, filters and special effects. The central feature of the TikTok platform is the "*For You* Page" (FYP) algorithm, which is based on the analysis of user behaviour and enables the individualised display of content (Boeker & Urman, 2022; Wang, 2022), distinguishing TikTok from other similar platforms.

The platform is extremely popular among different generations and is considered one of the fastest growing apps in the world (Lin, 2023; Guo, 2022). In 2022, more than half of users were between the ages of 13 and 24 (Rimadias, Alvionita & Amelia, 2021), but recently the age has been rising and more and more representatives of older generations can be found among active users. The average user visits the app eight times a day and spends approximately 46–52 minutes on it (Fan, Luo

& Wang, 2023; Mink & Szymanski, 2022). TikTok is an important space for digital marketing, self-expression, social activism and shaping public opinion (Compte & Klug, 2021; Simões, Baeta & Costa, 2023). Due to its effective and engaging algorithm, which allows content to go viral quickly, the platform is also used as a tool for visual culture, news consumption and political mobilisation (Ibrahim et al., 2025; Nie, 2023).

While research has mostly focused on user behaviour and analysis of the TikTok platform, the complex relationship between different content characteristics and measurable indicators of user engagement remains under-researched (Boeker & Urman, 2022). We assume that this connection is not random, and through our research we want to determine how different types of content influence user engagement/responses on the TikTok platform. We anticipate that not all types of content are equally successful, as users experience them differently and respond to them differently. In our research, we analysed different types of content – educational, entertaining, informative, sales-oriented, and trending – and based on our findings, we developed proposals for effective content creation strategies. The results of the study offer useful insights for optimising content creation and marketing strategies for companies present on the TikTok platform and have stimulated academic debate about content in the rapidly evolving digital environment.

2   Tik Tok

The development of social networks dates back to 2002, when Friendster (in 2002) and MySpace (in 2003) appeared and were among the first to gain widespread popularity (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Facebook was launched in 2004, initially for Harvard students, and then opened to the wider public in 2006 (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). YouTube (2005) and Twitter (2006) began to transform the way videos and short messages are shared (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Twitter, n.d.; YouTube, n.d.). Social networks have been booming since 2007, when they became part of everyday life. In 2010, Instagram joined the fray and quickly became popular for sharing photos and short videos (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

Social networks have completely changed the way consumers make decisions (Vukasović, Weis & Kramar, 2025). They enable companies to influence consumers from the initial stage of considering a purchase to the purchase itself and beyond (Fuchs, 2014). The digital space enables direct and cost-effective connections between businesses and consumers, providing marketers with invaluable data on various target demographic groups (Pietro & Pantano, 2012). The ability of social networks to encourage interactive dialogue and communication between peers has a significant impact on consumer attitudes and purchasing behaviour (Begum et al., 2020). The influence of user-generated content, such as reviews and recommendations, on purchasing decisions is significant. Due to its authenticity, this content is often perceived as more credible than traditional advertising (Pourkabirian et al., 2021). The influence of peers, which is further amplified by social media, plays a key role in shaping perceptions and driving purchase intentions (Martini et al., 2022). The shift towards promotion on digital networks has transformed consumers from passive recipients of information into active participants and even creators in the market ecosystem, leading to a redistribution of power (Madzunya et al., 2021).

The TikTok platform evolved from the Douyin app, which was launched in China in 2016. TikTok entered the global market with an international version in 2017 (Genoveva, 2022). Its global expansion accelerated in 2018 when ByteDance integrated TikTok with the highly popular app Musical.ly. This was a strategic merger that significantly increased the user base, especially among younger demographic groups (Montag et al., 2021). The platform's early success was driven by its targeted focus on user segments not previously covered by existing video hosting services, combined with its intuitive design (Rimadias et al., 2021). The platform's usage began to grow rapidly as it attracted significant public interest due to its short, algorithmically selected videos (Schellewald,

2021). The rapid growth of the platform, which has reached over 2 billion downloads since its international launch in 2017, highlights its significant impact on digital communication (Schellewald, 2021). This growth can largely be attributed to the recommendation algorithm, which creates a personalised "*For You* Page" for each user, encouraging high engagement and virality of content (Boeker & Urman, 2022).

It can be said that TikTok is now one of the most important social platforms in the world, with around 1.59 billion monthly active users (February 2025), placing it alongside the biggest apps such as WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook (We Are Social & Meltwater, 2025). This significant reach highlights the importance of understanding the effectiveness of content on the platform, especially given its highly viral dynamics and emphasis on user participation (Allué & Cárdaba, 2024). TikTok has become a participatory platform where users personally engage and express their opinions and personal interests (Mingyin, 2021). The unique characteristics of the platform require an in-depth understanding of what types of content drive measurable user engagement and go beyond passive viewing.

TikTok is currently a powerful marketing tool that enables closer contact and greater engagement with the target audience. Its effectiveness is based on a combination of the following characteristics: individualisation, virality and two-way communication. For companies that decide to actively market themselves on TikTok, it is essential to understand the demographics, create interesting content and know how the algorithm works. Its growing popularity among individuals and the increasing presence of companies indicate that TikTok is becoming one of the most important platforms for modern digital marketing.

2.1 *Growth in popularity of the TikTok app*

According to data, the number of users of the platform increased significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially among young people who used it to maintain social contacts while in isolation (Massie, 2020). TikTok became the most downloaded app in 2020 and 2021, a unique achievement with 318 million downloads in the first quarter of 2020 alone (Jacome Guerrero, 2023). Its exponential growth was driven by lockdowns and restrictions, which led to rapid digital transformation and virtual connectivity (Jacome Guerrero, 2023).

Even after the end of the global pandemic, TikTok's virality and cultural integration continued, as evidenced by its significant user base, which stood at 1.39 billion in 2022, including more than 1 billion monthly active users and 600 million daily active users (Jacome Guerrero, 2023) (Brooks et al., 2022) and grew to 1.59 billion monthly active users by February 2025 (We Are Social & Meltwater, 2025). In terms of user numbers, TikTok even surpassed Google in 2021, becoming the most popular online platform (Ebert et al., 2023). It has established itself as a new form of digital interaction that does not require perfection and encourages spontaneity, creativity and easy content production. It is available in 154 markets and 75 languages, demonstrating its broad global reach and adaptability (Jacome Guerrero, 2023).

2.2 *Users of the TikTok social network*

Knowing the demographic structure of TikTok users is important for understanding its social and cultural impact, as it gives us insight into the prevailing trends and communication strategies that are consistent with them. TikTok is most popular among the younger population. More than 62% of users are between the ages of 10 and 29, meaning that Generations Z and Alpha dominate the platform (Lin, 2023). According to data, 41% of TikTok users are between the ages of 16 and 24, highlighting its strong presence among the younger demographic (Mink & Szymanski, 2022). Approximately 22.4% of users in the United States are between the ages of 20 and 29, further confirming the dominance of younger adults on this platform (Sun, 2021). Research has shown that users on the TikTok platform are evenly represented across genders and ethnic groups, demonstrating the platform's broad reach (Mingyin, 2021). The ratio of men to women is roughly equal (53% men, 47%

women) (Ibrahim et al., 2025). Understanding user behaviour and preferences is essential for optimising content visibility, which requires testing different styles and themes of videos (Can & Portela, 2024).

Based on user demographics, companies on TikTok mainly target:
- young consumers with high digital literacy;
- trend-conscious individuals who are quick to respond to pop culture;
- users who value authenticity and humour over more professionally produced content.

When creating content, companies must take into account that TikTok has a target audience that is extremely sensitive to authenticity and transparency, which requires a thoughtful and ethical approach to marketing strategies (Can & Portela, 2024). Due to the young age of its users, companies must consider ethical challenges – from data use to the impact of ads on body image and mental health. As a result, TikTok has already committed to restricting content that promotes unrealistic beauty standards or unhealthy habits.

3　　　Method

The research, conducted in Slovenia, is based on a quantitative method. We asked TikTok users about their preferences – what type of content they most enjoy watching on TikTok, what they think about more commercial content, etc. We conducted an online survey. We invited respondents to complete the survey via social media, and the sample was random – we shared the link to the survey using the snowball method, and anyone who wanted to could complete it.

The survey sample included 201 volunteers of all ages. Since the condition for participation in the survey was an active user account on the platform and regular monitoring of published content, we ultimately recorded 70 valid surveys. The collected data were processed using SPSS.

Women accounted for 66% of the survey participants, while men accounted for 34%. In terms of age, the majority of respondents (44%) were between 27 and 34 years old, confirming the assumption that TikTok is no longer just a platform for younger generations. A good quarter (26%) belong to the 18-26 age group, while 20% of respondents fall into the 35-44 age group. Relatively few respondents are younger than 18 (1%), older than 45 to 54 (7%) and older than 55 to 64 (1%).

Based on the assumption that TikTok users are mainly representatives of the younger generation, we conclude that the trend is reversing and that TikTok is no longer a platform exclusively for young people. More and more older people are deciding to create a profile on TikTok, even if only to follow content and not to post regularly. The highest percentage of users are in the 27-34 age group, followed by the 18-26 and 35-44 age groups, which represent approximately the same percentage. The age structure confirms that the adult population is also an important segment of TikTok users.

None of the respondents have primary education, 37% have completed secondary education, while half have higher or tertiary education. Thirteen percent of respondents have a master's degree, and none have a doctorate. The results among respondents indicate a relatively high level of education among users of the platform.

4　　　Results

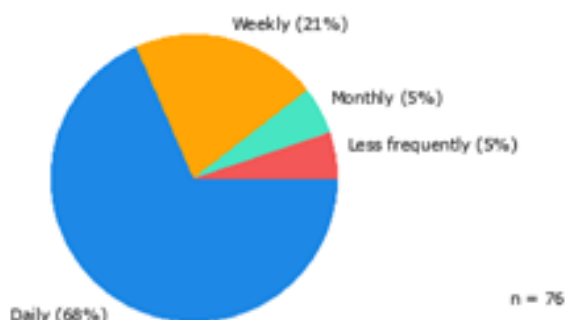### *4.1　　Presentation of data and results*

4.1.1　　Inclusion/exclusion questions and general questions about the use of the TikTok platform

At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked whether they had a TikTok profile. 80% of respondents confirmed that they had a profile, while 20% did not have a profile and completed the survey. This data indicates the high prevalence of the platform among respondents, which is an important starting point for further analysis of user behaviour. 86% actively use TikTok, while 14% have a profile but do not actively use the TikTok platform, which is why they completed the survey. The responses show that a significant percentage of respondents, despite having an active profile on

the platform, are not present. For the purposes of the study, we needed participants who regularly follow content on the platform.

The results show that 68% of respondents use TikTok daily, indicating a strong attachment to the platform. A further 21% of respondents use the platform on a weekly basis, indicating a medium level of engagement. The platform is used less frequently by 5% of respondents who use it monthly and an additional 5% who use it even less frequently. The results show that the majority of users are not just casual visitors, but are regular users of the platform and therefore represent a suitable sample for our research.
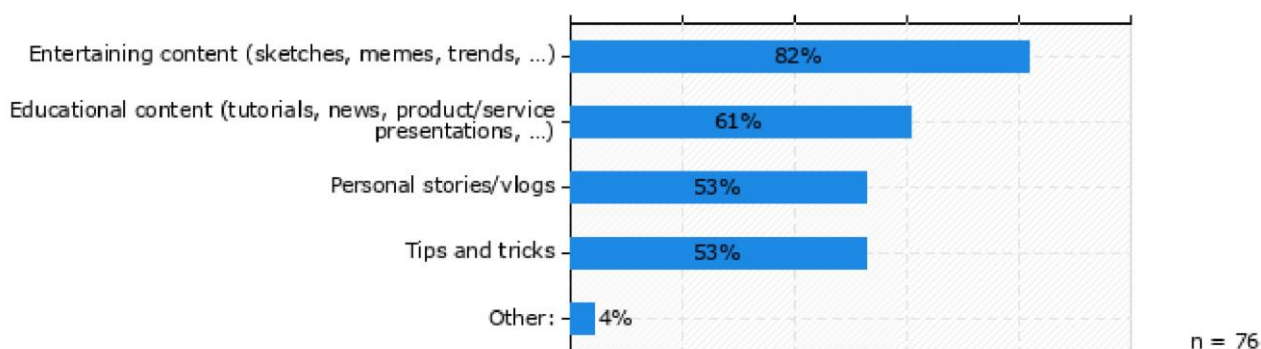
Figure 1. *How often do you use TikTok?*

4.1.2   User preferences regarding TikTok content

We then asked respondents about their preferences regarding the types of content that attract their attention, allowing them to select multiple answers. 82% of users responded that they are attracted to entertaining content. Educational content is interesting to 61% of respondents, followed by personal stories and vlogs, which attract 53% of users. The same percentage of respondents are looking for tips and tricks (53%). Four percent of respondents said they were attracted by other content, such as cooking, recipes and politics. The results confirm that users are most attracted to entertaining and educational content, as well as content in which they find added value or benefit.
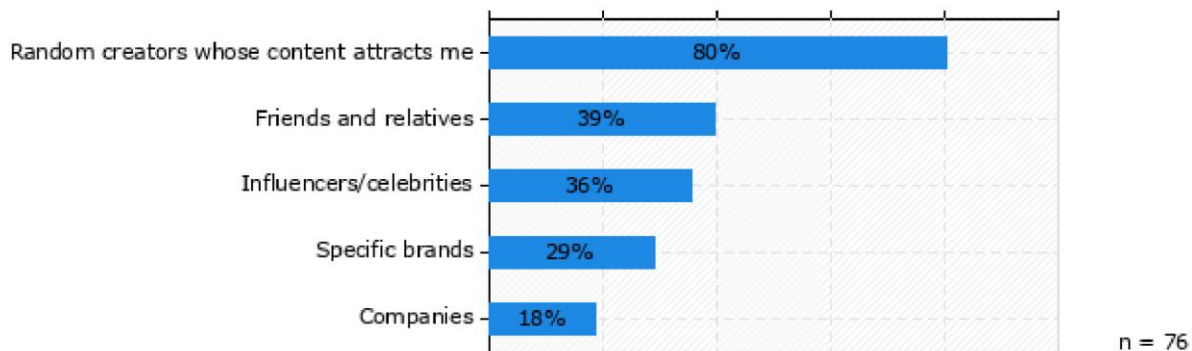
Figure 2. *What content attracts your attention the most?*

Most respondents (80%) said they follow random creators whose content attracts them, which emphasises the importance of content quality. Approximately 39% follow friends and relatives, while 36% follow influencers and famous people. A smaller proportion of respondents follow specific brands (29%) and companies (18%). The responses confirm the assumption that content itself is the most important factor on the TikTok platform. If the content attracts the user, they will follow the creator regardless of who they are or whether they know them, whether they are an individual or a company.
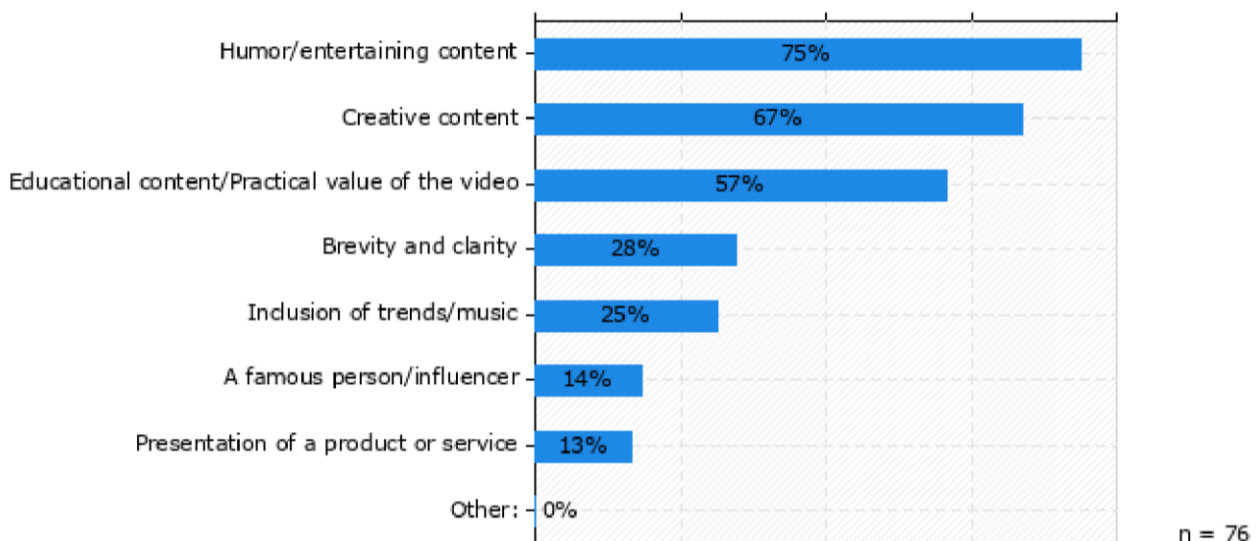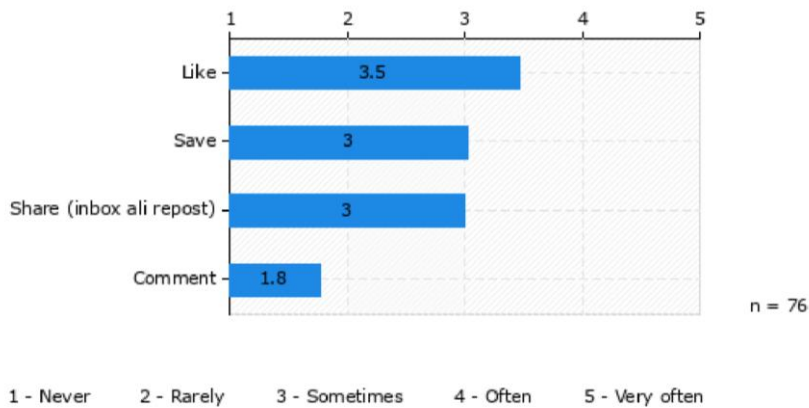
Figure 3. *Who do you follow on TikTok?*

When asked about the reasons that attract users to respond to a post, 75% of respondents said that they most often react to entertaining content that contains humour. Creative content attracts 67% of respondents, while just over half (57%) are also influenced by the educational or useful aspect of the content. Shorter and clearer content attracts 28% of users, while 25% of respondents react to posts that include trends and music. Content featuring influencers and famous people attracts only 14% of respondents, while content showcasing products or services attracts 13%, indicating that promotional content alone does not generate much response unless it is placed in an entertaining or creative context. The findings suggest that successful content must be both entertaining and creative. In addition, it must have added value that users recognise as useful or beneficial in order for them to respond to it. The fewest users respond to posts that only show a product or service, and surprisingly few are attracted by famous faces.

Figure 4. *What attracts you most to respond to a post (like, comment, save, share)?*

We then investigated how often they respond to posts that attract their attention. We combined the answers into an average, which shows us how often users on the platform respond to content that attracts them and which method they choose most often. Respondents most often respond to posts by liking them, which they do between rarely and often. Saving, sharing and commenting rank lower on the frequency scale – rarely or very rarely. This means that attention does not necessarily translate into high user engagement or response. The results indicate that users seldom engage with posts, even when they find the content appealing. to posts on the TikTok platform, even if they find the content appealing. They most often respond with a like, and least often with a comment.

Figure 5. *How often do you respond to a post that catches your attention?*

	1	2	3	4	5
Like			3.5		
Save		3			
Share (inbox ali repost)		3			
Comment	1.8				

n = 76

1 - Never   2 - Rarely   3 - Sometimes   4 - Often   5 - Very often
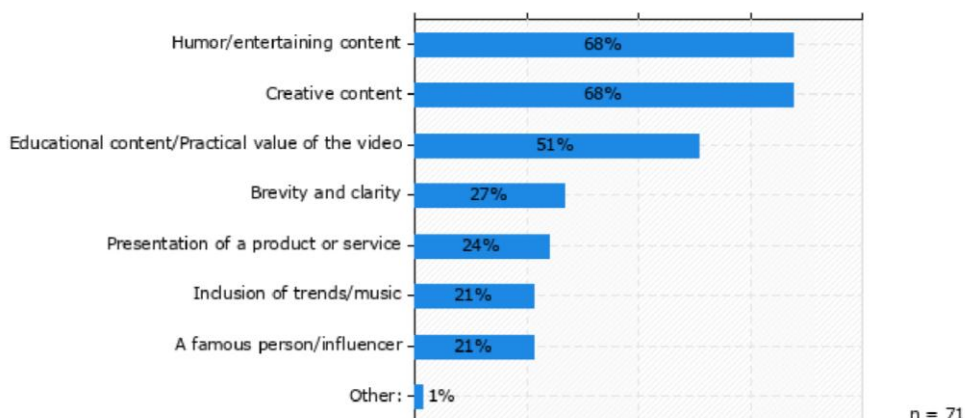
4.1.3   Users' attitudes towards sales content

We investigated whether users actively follow posts by companies they are interested in on the TikTok platform. The responses showed that 41% of respondents do not actively follow posts by companies they are interested in. Almost the same proportion follow this content occasionally (39%), while only 20% follow it regularly. The responses indicate that users are not actively engaged in following company posts on the TikTok platform. Companies could turn this trend to their advantage by creating more content that interests and attracts users. This would make it easier to build a community of active users who would regularly follow their activities on the profile.

We asked survey participants what attracts them to view a random company post on the "For you page". Multiple answers were possible. Two answers prevailed among the respondents – entertaining content and creative content, which were chosen by 68% of users. The useful and educational value of a post attracts slightly more than half (51%), while shorter and clearer content attracts approximately 27% of respondents. Fewer respondents are attracted by product or service displays (25%), current trends or music (21%) and the presence of influencers or famous people (21%). 1% of respondents chose the option "Other" and stated: "Nothing attracts me, I scroll past in the first second." Judging by the responses, most users are attracted to posts that are entertaining, creative and contain an educational component that users perceive as useful.

Figure 6. *What attracts you to view a random post on the "For you page "?*

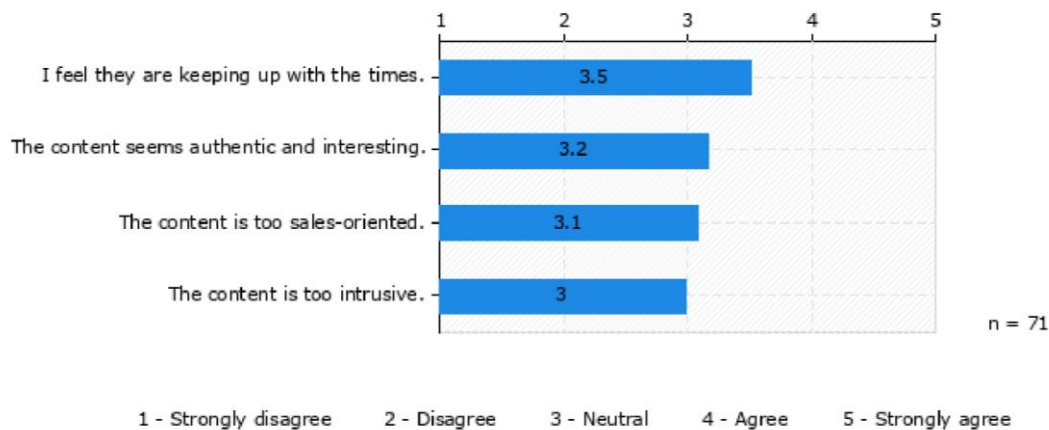|	
Humor/entertaining content	68%
Creative content	68%
Educational content/Practical value of the video	51%
Brevity and clarity	27%
Presentation of a product or service	24%
Inclusion of trends/music	21%
A famous person/influencer	21%
Other:	1%

n = 71

We surveyed respondents' opinions about companies that regularly post on TikTok. For each statement, they responded on a scale from "1 – Strongly disagree" to "5 – Strongly agree." Respondents partially agree or agree that companies are keeping up with the times with their presence and that the content is authentic and interesting. At the same time, opinions on the sales orientation of the content are mixed, as many partially agree that the content is too sales-oriented and sometimes even intrusive.

This indicates a need for a subtle balance between marketing and authenticity, which is crucial for users. There were no drastic differences in the responses to this question, from which we can conclude that users find it important for companies to be present on the TikTok platform, but they are not particularly attracted to their content, nor do they find it overly intrusive or sales-oriented.
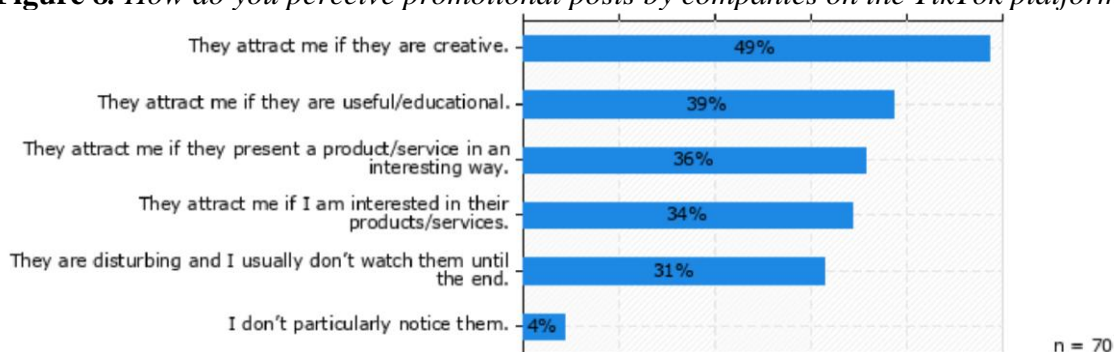
Figure 7. *What is your opinion of companies that regularly post on the TikTok platform?*

This was followed by a question about trust in brands that create creative content on the TikTok platform. 44% of respondents believe that this content does not significantly increase trust, while 41% note that it depends on their personal perception of the content. Only 11% believe that creative content increases their trust in a brand, which shows that creativity is important, but not enough on its own to build trust; it must also have concrete value and relevance for the user. Four per cent of respondents said that it depends on how close they feel to the company. Judging by the responses, creative content does not significantly influence the building of trust in a brand, or rather, it depends on whether the content attracts the user. For the user to notice the content, several conditions must be met, which lead to the building of trust in the brand.
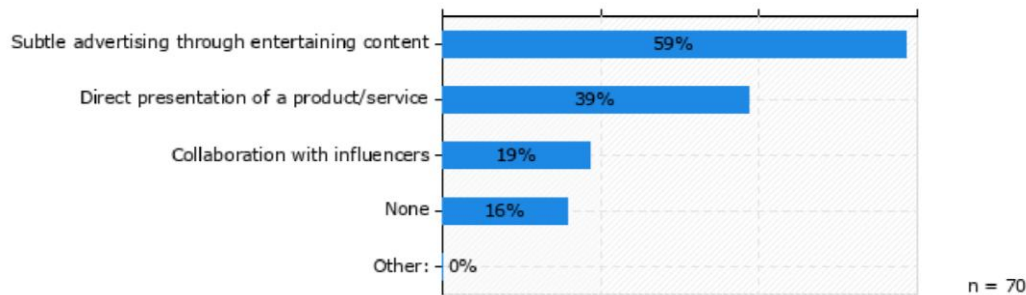
When it comes to companies' promotional posts, almost half of respondents (49%) confirm that they are attracted by creative content. 39% of respondents are attracted by posts if they are useful or informative, 36% are attracted by an interesting presentation of a product or service, while 31% find promotional posts annoying and therefore do not follow them to the end. Four percent of respondents said they do not particularly notice such posts. This is important information for companies, as the results reveal key user preferences that should be understood and taken into account when creating promotional content and strategies for the TikTok platform. From the responses, we can conclude that promotional posts are interesting to users if they have added value – they are creative, teach them something new or present products/services in an interesting way.

Figure 8. *How do you perceive promotional posts by companies on the TikTok platform?*

When it comes to the types of promotional content that most attract users on TikTok, 59% of respondents expressed a preference for subtle advertising through entertaining content, while 39% are attracted by content that directly presents a product or service. Influencers are considered a less important factor, with only 19%, indicating a shift towards authenticity of content as such and a decline in the influence of famous personalities. 16% of respondents chose none of the above, and no one chose the option "other". Based on the responses, we can conclude that users are most attracted to promotional content that is presented as entertaining and therefore not perceived as typical sales content.

Figure 9. *Which forms of promotional content on TikTok appeal to you the most?*

Do companies motivate you to visit their website or purchase their products/services through their presence and posts on TikTok?

We then investigated whether companies motivate respondents to visit their website or purchase their products/services through their presence and posts on the TikTok platform. 61% responded that they are mainly motivated by interesting content. 19% said that companies motivate them to visit their website or make a purchase through their posts, while the same percentage said the opposite. A smaller percentage (1%) pointed out that motivation depends on whether the product is interesting or whether they had already intended to buy it. Therefore, if the content published by a company is interesting enough for the user, it will encourage them to visit the website or purchase the product/service promoted in the post.

4.2   Testing hypotheses

The study set out three hypotheses.

H1: The type of content (e.g. informative, entertaining, promotional) has a significant impact on the level of user response (measured by likes, comments, shares, etc.).

The results of the study confirm the link between these two factors. Users most often respond to entertaining content (75%), followed by creative content (67%) and educational content that they perceive as useful (57%) (Figure 4). Content that merely displays a product or service is significantly less effective in encouraging user response. This indicates that content containing emotional or informative elements generates a higher level of engagement and response. Users choose media based on their needs – whether for entertainment, information or social connection. In practice, this means that brands seeking to increase engagement need to tailor their content to satisfy multiple needs simultaneously, rather than focusing exclusively on the sales message. Based on the results of the study, we confirm the hypothesis.

H2: Content in which users are addressed by recognisable representatives (e.g. brand ambassadors, employees or influencers) achieves a higher level of user response than content without such individuals.

The results of the study reject this hypothesis. Only 14% of users respond to content featuring famous personalities (Figure 6), influencers attract only 19% of respondents to promotional posts (Figure 9), and influencers attract 21% of users to view random posts on the "*For you* page" (Figure 4). (Figure 4). These results indicate that individual recognition alone is not a sufficient factor for generating high levels of engagement. Usability, creativity and content quality remain key elements,

with influencers only able to increase the effect if they are connected to brand values and their presence adds authenticity or additional informative value to the message. In line with influence models in marketing, recognition has limited impact if it is not supported by a high level of credibility and expertise on the part of the representative.

H3: Companies' promotional content on TikTok achieves a higher level of engagement when it includes elements of entertainment, creativity or useful information than when it merely displays a product or service.

The results of the study confirm the hypothesis. Users respond least to posts that merely display a product or service (Figure 4, Figure 8), while promotional posts that are creative or entertaining receive significantly more attention. 59% of respondents said they were attracted by direct advertising through entertaining content, while 39% were motivated by the usefulness or educational value of the post (Figure 9). This means that a sales message alone is not a sufficient trigger for engagement. Companies must therefore tailor their promotional content to the expectations of users, who demand a combination of authenticity, creativity and added value. When interpreting the results, it is important to emphasise the difference between H1 and H3. H1 refers to general content on the TikTok platform (entertaining, creative, educational, promotional), where it was found that the type of content significantly influences the level of user responsiveness. H3, on the other hand, refers exclusively to promotional content from companies and points out that this only achieves a higher level of engagement when it is designed in a creative, entertaining or user-friendly way. H3 thus complements the findings of H1 by highlighting the specific requirements that users have when accepting advertising content.

5   Conclusion

The results of the study confirm that the types of content on the TikTok platform have a significant impact on the level of user engagement. It was found that entertaining, creative, and educational content that offers users perceived added value encourages the highest level of engagement, while purely sales-oriented posts are significantly less effective. This is supported by Xiao, Lin, Li, and Zhang (2022), who identified performance expectancy, entertainment value, and tie strength as strong positive predictors of engagement, while the sales approach is negatively related to user responses. A large meta-analysis by Pan, Blut, Ghiassaleh, and Lee (2024) reinforces this, showing that content features with informational or hedonic value (e.g., fun, novelty, useful information) exert some of the strongest effects on attitudes and engagement, more so than the presence of a famous creator. The study further rejects the hypothesis that content featuring influencers or celebrities is inherently more effective, as it was found that the creator's recognition alone does not necessarily lead to a higher response rate. Authenticity and relevance of content remain key factors in building trust and long-term engagement. Research on authenticity strategies demonstrates that influencer recognition yields significantly higher engagement only when authenticity is managed effectively (Munnukka, Uusitalo, & Karjaluoto, 2024). Similarly, multimodal analyses indicate that visual and speech/text features are the most significant drivers of engagement, exceeding the impact of celebrity status or follower numbers (Zhao, Zhang, & Wu, 2024; Zhang, Li, & Chen, 2025). Finally, experimental work shows that creative use of visual-audio features—such as varied image complexity and speech rate—further enhances engagement levels, particularly when the content is authentic and relatable (Xiao, Li, & Mou, 2024; Yu, Chen, & Sun, 2024).The contribution of the research is that it provides an empirical basis for understanding the link between content and user behaviour on TikTok, highlighting the importance of adapting communication strategies to the specific dynamics of the platform. It provides guidelines for companies and content creators to develop more effective digital marketing strategies based on a combination of entertainment, education and authenticity.

Despite its important findings, the study also has certain limitations. The sample was opportunistic and relatively small, which limits the possibility of generalising the results to the entire population of TikTok users. In addition, the data was collected through self-reporting, which may affect the objectivity of the responses due to socially desirable responses. The study focused on only one platform and did not include comparisons with other social networks, which could have provided broader insight into the specific characteristics of user engagement. Furthermore, the study did not examine the long-term effects of content strategies, but focused on current user preferences and perceptions. In addition, the characteristics of the TikTok platform itself, which is highly dynamic and subject to rapid changes in algorithms, trends and user practices, must also be taken into account. As a result, user behaviour patterns can change in very short periods of time, which may affect the sustainability and generalisability of the findings.

The study contributes to the existing literature on social media use by providing empirical insights into differences in user responses to different types of content on TikTok. This opens up space for further scientific debate on the factors influencing user engagement and provides a starting point for comparative studies between different platforms. For further research, it would be useful to expand the sample to a more representative population, include longitudinal studies to track long-term trends, and compare user engagement across different platforms. A particularly interesting direction would also be to analyse the interactions between algorithmic recommendations, content design and user responses. As a rapidly evolving platform, TikTok offers rich opportunities for understanding consumer behaviour and designing innovative marketing strategies.

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