

ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TIKTOK-BASED DIGITAL MARKETING COMMUNICATION: A SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS STUDY OF CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT:

This research aims to assess the effectiveness of TikTok-based digital marketing communication by examining consumer engagement through a Social Media Analytics (SMA) approach. The study addresses a research gap concerning the limited use of Social Media Analytics to examine TikTok as an integrated digital marketing communication ecosystem in emerging markets. In the Industry 4.0 era, the rapid shift from text-based communication to short-form video content has transformed the way brands interact with consumers. TikTok has emerged as a dominant social media platform due to its interest-based algorithm, which enables content dissemination beyond conventional follower-based networks. This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in the perspectives of digital marketing communication and consumer engagement, this study employs a qualitative Social Media Analytics approach utilizing Social Media Analytics to analyze engagement indicators, including views, likes, comments, shares, and user-generated interactions within selected viral marketing campaigns in Indonesia. Data were collected through digital observation and discourse analysis of 36 purposively selected publicly accessible TikTok marketing videos uploaded by verified brands, business accounts, and Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) in Indonesia between January and March 2026. The selected content met predefined inclusion criteria based on marketing relevance, audience engagement, and public accessibility. The findings reveal that TikTok marketing communication effectiveness emerges from the interaction between algorithmic visibility, authentic storytelling, influencer credibility, and participatory audience engagement rather than from isolated promotional activities. Interactive platform features including challenges, duets, and stitches further strengthen consumer participation by encouraging user-generated communication and content diffusion.

Keywords: *Consumer Engagement, Digital Marketing Communication, Social Media Analytics, TikTok*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has brought significant changes to communication and marketing practices in the modern era. Over the past five years, digital marketing has experienced unprecedented global growth, driven by the increasing penetration of internet access, mobile technology, and social media platforms. According to the Digital 2025 Global Overview Report (DataReportal, 2025), the number of global internet users reached more than 5.5 billion, representing approximately 68% of the world's population, while social media users exceeded 5.2 billion, accounting for nearly 64% of the global population. During the same period, the average daily time spent using social media remained above two hours, indicating that digital platforms have become an integral component of everyday communication and consumer decision-making. Consequently, businesses have increasingly shifted marketing investments from conventional media toward digital and social media-based communication strategies to enhance customer engagement, brand visibility, and purchasing behavior. Social media is no longer limited to functioning as a platform for social interaction, but has also become a strategic medium for companies, businesses, and individuals to build brand image, increase consumer engagement, and expand market reach. One of the social media platforms experiencing tremendous growth is TikTok.

Among various social media platforms, TikTok has demonstrated the fastest growth during the last five years. Since 2020, TikTok has expanded from an entertainment-oriented application into one of the world's largest digital communication ecosystems, surpassing one billion monthly active users and becoming one of the most downloaded mobile applications worldwide. The platform's algorithm-driven recommendation system enables content to reach audiences beyond traditional follower networks, creating unique opportunities for brands to disseminate marketing messages organically. This rapid expansion has encouraged companies ranging from multinational corporations to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to integrate TikTok into their digital marketing communication strategies, particularly through influencer collaborations, short-form storytelling, and user-generated content campaigns.

The growth of social media has fundamentally changed the way organizations communicate with audiences, enabling interactive, participatory, and user-centered communication models in digital marketing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Existing studies on TikTok marketing have primarily examined influencer marketing, consumer engagement, and brand communication effectiveness from specific perspectives rather than adopting an integrated communication ecosystem approach (Kaye et al., 2021; Barta et al., 2023; Wahid et al., 2023). In the context of Industry 4.0, digital platforms increasingly shape consumer behavior, particularly among younger generations who prefer audiovisual and short-form content consumption (Kemp, 2024).

In Indonesia, the significance of TikTok has increased substantially alongside the rapid expansion of the digital economy. Indonesia consistently ranks among the countries with the largest TikTok user communities globally, supported by high smartphone penetration and an increasingly digital-oriented consumer culture. The platform has become an important communication channel not only for entertainment purposes but also for product promotion, brand engagement, and social commerce activities. Despite this rapid adoption, empirical research examining TikTok as an integrated digital marketing communication ecosystem remains relatively limited. Existing studies predominantly investigate isolated variables such as influencer effectiveness, purchase intention, or electronic word-of-mouth, while comparatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how algorithmic visibility, participatory communication, storytelling, and audience engagement collectively contribute to marketing communication effectiveness. This gap provides the primary motivation for the present study.

TikTok offers a concept of short, creative, interactive, and easily accessible video content for various groups of society, especially younger generations. Its popularity has made TikTok one of the most effective digital platforms for supporting marketing communication strategies.

The increasing use of TikTok has transformed the approach to digital marketing communication. Previously, marketing strategies mainly focused on conventional media or platforms based on text and images. However, short audiovisual content has now become one of the most preferred forms of communication among audiences. TikTok enables users to create creative content through features such as music integration, visual effects, filters, and the "For You Page" (FYP) algorithm, which allows information to spread rapidly and widely.

TikTok's algorithm-driven recommendation system allows content to reach broader audiences regardless of follower count, making the platform distinct from traditional social networking sites (Kaye, Chen, & Zeng, 2021). This mechanism contributes significantly to the rapid diffusion of marketing messages and viral trends in digital communication ecosystems. This condition provides significant opportunities for companies and business actors to promote products and services in a more effective, interactive, and efficient manner.

In the context of digital marketing communication, TikTok is not only used as a promotional medium but also as a platform to establish emotional relationships with consumers. Marketing strategies on TikTok often utilize storytelling approaches, influencer marketing, viral trends, and user-generated content to increase audience attention and participation.

Previous studies have shown that influencer marketing and user-generated content on TikTok positively affect consumer trust, engagement, and purchase intention (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Omar & Dequan, 2020). The participatory nature of TikTok enables brands to create more authentic and emotionally engaging communication strategies. Despite the growing body of literature on TikTok marketing, most previous studies have primarily focused on influencer effectiveness, purchase intention, and consumer behavior using quantitative approaches. Recent review studies likewise conclude that the existing literature remains fragmented, with most investigations concentrating on influencer marketing, purchase intention, and consumer behavior, while relatively limited attention has been devoted to examining TikTok as an integrated marketing communication ecosystem. This fragmentation further justifies the need for holistic qualitative investigations capable of explaining the interaction between platform algorithms, communication strategies, and audience participation. Limited research has examined TikTok as a comprehensive digital marketing communication ecosystem through a Social Media Analytics perspective, particularly in the context of emerging markets such as Indonesia. Therefore, further investigation is needed to understand how algorithmic visibility, content

authenticity, influencer participation, and audience engagement collectively contribute to marketing communication effectiveness on TikTok.

This study contributes to the literature by integrating Social Media Analytics, audience engagement indicators, and participatory communication theory to explain marketing communication effectiveness on TikTok. Unlike previous studies that focused on individual marketing variables, this research adopts a holistic communication perspective that examines the interaction between platform algorithms, content strategies, and consumer participation.

Through these strategies, companies can build brand awareness, improve engagement, and influence consumer purchasing decisions. Therefore, TikTok has become an important medium to analyze in the development of contemporary digital marketing communication strategies.

Nevertheless, the use of TikTok as a marketing medium also faces several challenges. The highly competitive content environment requires creativity and innovation in delivering marketing messages. In addition, rapid changes in algorithms and trends force marketing communication strategies to continuously adapt in order to remain relevant to audience needs. Not all marketing content is capable of attracting users' attention, making it necessary to understand user interaction patterns and the effectiveness of digital communication conducted through TikTok.

Based on these phenomena, this study aims to analyze the role of TikTok in digital marketing communication strategies through a social media analytical study approach. This research is expected to provide an understanding of how TikTok is utilized as a marketing communication medium, the forms of strategies used in delivering promotional messages, and their impact on audience engagement and brand image. Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to serve as both academic and practical references for the development of digital marketing communication strategies in the era of social media.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design using a Social Media Analytics (SMA) approach to investigate how TikTok facilitates digital marketing communication and consumer engagement. A qualitative approach was selected because the objective of the study was not to measure causal relationships statistically but to obtain an in-depth understanding of communication patterns, audience interactions, and participatory marketing practices occurring within TikTok's digital ecosystem. Social Media Analytics was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to systematically observe naturally occurring digital interactions, user-generated content, and engagement behaviors that cannot be adequately captured through conventional survey methods. The methodological design of this study was developed with reference to the qualitative research frameworks proposed by Creswell and Creswell (2018), Patton (2015), and Denzin (1978), which emphasize contextual interpretation, purposive data selection, and triangulation to ensure analytical credibility. Through this approach, researchers can analyze marketing communication forms, user interaction patterns, and the meanings contained within social media content.

The type of research used is descriptive-analytical research. Descriptive research aims to describe the phenomenon of TikTok usage as a digital marketing communication medium, while the analytical aspect seeks to understand the communication strategies applied in marketing content. The focus of this study includes marketing content formats, the use of TikTok features, audience interactions, and the effectiveness of digital marketing communication conducted through the platform. The unit of analysis in this study focuses on TikTok marketing content produced by business accounts, influencers, and brands actively engaged in digital marketing campaigns. Rather than involving human participants as research informants, this study treated publicly accessible TikTok marketing content as the primary unit of analysis. Therefore, the research objects consisted of promotional videos uploaded by verified brands, business accounts, and Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) actively conducting marketing campaigns on TikTok. The study focused on publicly available content to ensure transparency, replicability, and ethical compliance without collecting private user information. The research particularly examines short-video promotional content with high engagement rates, including likes, comments, shares, and audience participation through hashtag challenges and interactive features.

The sources of data in this study consist of primary and secondary data. The observation process was conducted from January to March 2026 to identify marketing communication trends, viral campaigns, and audience interaction patterns on TikTok. During the observation period, A total of 36 TikTok marketing videos were purposively selected for analysis, representing promotional campaigns from the beauty, food and beverage, fashion, and MSME sectors. The selected content originated from verified brand accounts, influencer collaborations, and user-generated campaign materials that consistently generated high audience engagement during the observation period from selected brands and influencers were systematically reviewed to identify recurring communication patterns, audience engagement characteristics, and participatory marketing

strategies. Primary data were obtained through observation of marketing-related content uploaded to TikTok, including promotional videos, digital campaigns, and influencer marketing content.

Researchers observed business accounts, brands, and content creators actively using TikTok as a marketing medium. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from scientific journals, books, articles, and other literature relevant to digital marketing communication and social media studies. This study applied “*purposive sampling*” techniques by selecting TikTok content considered relevant to digital marketing communication strategies.

Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative social media research to select information-rich data relevant to the objectives of the study (Patton, 2015). The selected samples included viral promotional videos, influencer collaborations, and branded campaigns with significant engagement metrics. For the purpose of this study, viral content refers to marketing videos that generated substantially higher engagement than average platform interactions, indicated by a combination of high view counts, comments, shares, and user participation through content recreation or hashtag-based activities. The selection criteria were intended to ensure that the observed content represented successful examples of TikTok-based marketing communication. The inclusion criteria for selecting TikTok content were established prior to the observation process. Eligible content had to satisfy five criteria: (1) uploaded during the observation period between January and March 2026; (2) produced by official business accounts, verified brands, or recognized Key Opinion Leaders; (3) intended primarily for marketing or promotional communication; (4) demonstrating substantial audience engagement through views, likes, comments, shares, or user-generated participation; and (5) publicly accessible for observation throughout the research period. Content that did not meet these criteria, including personal videos unrelated to marketing activities or duplicate promotional materials, was excluded from the analysis.

Data collection techniques included digital observation, documentation, and literature study. Digital observation was conducted by examining marketing communication patterns in TikTok content, such as the use of hashtags, music, captions, video visualization, and user engagement indicators including likes, comments, and shares. The analytical indicators used in this research include audience engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares), visual communication strategies, hashtag utilization, storytelling approaches, influencer involvement, and user participation patterns. The collected data were coded and categorized according to predetermined analytical dimensions, including content creativity, brand authenticity, influencer involvement, audience engagement, hashtag utilization, and user participation. Recurrent themes and communication patterns were subsequently identified through thematic analysis to facilitate interpretation of marketing communication effectiveness on TikTok.

Audience engagement is considered a crucial indicator in digital marketing communication because it reflects the effectiveness of marketing messages in attracting audience attention and encouraging interaction within digital platforms (Brodie et al., 2013). Documentation techniques involved collecting screenshots, interaction statistics, and archives of content relevant to the research topic. Literature study was conducted to obtain theoretical foundations and concepts supporting the research analysis.

During the observation process, each selected video was systematically reviewed using a structured observation sheet. The researcher documented the characteristics of each marketing campaign, including content format, storytelling style, visual presentation, hashtag utilization, influencer involvement, audience engagement indicators, and user participation patterns. Following data collection, the observed content was coded according to predetermined analytical categories before being compared across brands to identify recurring communication patterns and thematic similarities.

The data analysis technique used in this study follows the interactive analysis model, consisting of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, researchers selected and categorized data relevant to the research focus. In the data presentation stage, the data were organized descriptively to facilitate understanding and analysis. Finally, the conclusion drawing stage aimed to identify patterns, relationships, and meanings regarding TikTok’s role in digital marketing communication strategies.

To ensure data validity, this study applied source and theory triangulation techniques. This research utilized publicly accessible social media content without involving private user data. Therefore, the study maintained ethical standards by ensuring that no personal or confidential information was disclosed during the research process. Triangulation techniques are applied to improve the credibility and validity of qualitative findings through the comparison of multiple data sources and theoretical perspectives (Denzin, 1978). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data from various TikTok accounts and literature sources, while theory triangulation involved the use of multiple perspectives from digital marketing communication and social media theories.

2.1 *Trusworthiness of The Study*

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability principles. Credibility was strengthened through data triangulation across multiple TikTok accounts and supporting literature sources. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the observed marketing communication context. Dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of the observation and analytical procedures, while confirmability was ensured by grounding interpretations in observable engagement indicators and documented social media content.

Therefore, the findings of this research are expected to possess a high level of validity and credibility. In addition, the study adopts a communication and media studies perspective to understand how TikTok facilitates interactive and participatory marketing communication in the digital era.

2.2 *Conceptual Framework*

This study conceptualizes TikTok as an interactive digital communication ecosystem in which algorithmic visibility, short-form video narratives, influencer participation, and audience engagement collectively shape the effectiveness of digital marketing communication strategies. In the context of social media marketing, TikTok enables brands and businesses to establish participatory communication patterns through interactive features such as hashtags, duets, stitches, comments, and viral challenges.

The conceptual framework of this research emphasizes the relationship between content creativity, brand authenticity, and user interaction in influencing audience engagement and marketing communication effectiveness. In addition, the platform's algorithm-driven recommendation system plays a significant role in increasing content visibility and accelerating the diffusion of promotional messages across digital audiences. Therefore, TikTok is viewed not only as a promotional medium, but also as a participatory communication platform that facilitates emotional connections between brands and consumers in the digital era.

To support the analytical process, this study focuses on several key indicators in observing TikTok marketing communication activities, including audience engagement, storytelling approaches, influencer involvement, hashtag utilization, visual communication strategies, and user participation patterns. These indicators are used to understand how digital marketing communication is constructed, distributed, and responded to within TikTok's social media environment.

Based on the observation and analysis process, several significant patterns were identified regarding the utilization of TikTok in digital marketing communication strategies. The findings demonstrate how content characteristics, audience interaction, and platform algorithms contribute to marketing effectiveness in contemporary digital environments.

3. **RESULT DAN DISCUSSION**

3.1. *Results*

Based on the results of digital observations conducted on TikTok marketing content from "January to March 2026", this study identified several significant patterns regarding the use of TikTok as a digital marketing communication platform. The findings indicate that TikTok has transformed marketing communication into a more interactive, participatory, and entertainment-oriented communication model. Marketing effectiveness on TikTok is influenced not only by promotional messages, but also by audience engagement, content authenticity, and the platform's algorithmic distribution system.

The observed TikTok marketing content in this study included promotional campaigns from several Indonesian business sectors such as beauty products, culinary brands, fashion businesses, and local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Several publicly accessible TikTok accounts and campaigns observed during the research process included content from brands such as Somethinc, Scarlett Whitening, and Mixue, which actively utilized influencer collaborations, short-video storytelling, hashtag trends, and user-generated content strategies to increase audience engagement and brand visibility. During the observation period, the selected campaigns consistently generated engagement indicators exceeding average platform interaction levels, particularly in terms of comment frequency, content sharing behavior, and user-generated participation. These engagement patterns were used as analytical criteria to identify communication effectiveness across different marketing content formats.

These accounts were selected because they consistently appeared in TikTok trending marketing content and generated substantial audience engagement during the observation period. Furthermore, these brands

represent different consumer sectors and marketing approaches, allowing the study to capture diverse manifestations of digital marketing communication practices within the TikTok ecosystem. Across the observed marketing campaigns, audience interaction was consistently dominated by comments, likes, and content sharing, while user-generated participation occurred mainly through hashtag challenges and video recreation. Educational and emotionally engaging content generally encouraged longer discussion threads, whereas trend-based campaigns generated wider content dissemination through user participation. Although engagement metrics varied across brands, a common pattern emerged indicating that authentic storytelling and interactive communication stimulated higher audience involvement than purely promotional content.

To enhance analytical rigor, all observed TikTok marketing content was coded using six analytical dimensions developed from the conceptual framework and supported by previous digital marketing communication literature (Table 1). The coding process focused on identifying recurring communication characteristics rather than measuring statistical relationships. Each observed video was reviewed repeatedly and classified according to dominant communication patterns before cross-case comparisons were conducted among the selected brands.

Table 1. Analytical Coding Framework Used for TikTok Marketing Content Analysis

Coding Dimension	Observation Focus
Content Creativity	Creative concept and originality
Storytelling	Narrative style
Brand Authenticity	Natural promotional presentation
Influencer Strategy	KOL involvement
Audience Engagement	Likes, comments, shares
User Participation	Challenge, duet, stitch

The selected content was analyzed based on communication patterns, audience interaction, visual presentation, and participatory marketing strategies implemented through TikTok features such as hashtags, duets, stitches, and viral challenges. Comparative observation revealed notable differences in communication strategies among the selected brands. Somethinc primarily emphasized educational storytelling by combining product tutorials with skincare information, resulting in intensive audience discussions reflected in the comment section. Scarlett Whitening relied heavily on influencer endorsement and testimonial-based communication, generating substantial audience appreciation through likes and positive interaction. In contrast, Mixue adopted trend-oriented participatory marketing by encouraging users to recreate promotional content through hashtag challenges and short-form videos, thereby producing higher levels of user-generated participation than the other observed brands. These findings suggest that different communication strategies stimulate different forms of audience engagement despite operating within the same platform ecosystem.

Table 2. Examples of Observed TikTok Marketing Content

Brand	Content Type	Dominant Engagement Pattern
Somethinc	Product tutorial and skincare education	High comments and shares
Scarlett Whitening	Influencer review and testimonial videos	High likes and audience interaction
Mixue	Trend-based promotional challenge	High participation and content recreation

The analytical summary presented in Table 2 was developed directly from repeated observations of the selected TikTok campaigns rather than being adapted from previous literature. The recurring appearance of algorithm-driven visibility, authentic storytelling, influencer participation, and user interaction across different brands indicates that these dimensions constitute the dominant communication mechanisms underlying successful TikTok marketing campaigns within the Indonesian digital environment.

The examples presented in Table 2 illustrate how different brands utilize diverse communication approaches on TikTok to stimulate audience engagement and increase content visibility. Although the content formats vary, successful campaigns consistently emphasize authenticity, trend adaptation, and interactive audience participation. These accounts were selected because they demonstrated high levels of audience interaction and represented various forms of digital marketing communication practices commonly found within TikTok's social media ecosystem.

Several Indonesian brands such as beauty and food & beverage companies utilized TikTok trends, influencer endorsements, and hashtag campaigns to increase audience interaction and content visibility. Observed promotional content frequently adopted informal communication styles and short storytelling narratives to encourage audience participation.

3.1.1 TikTok algorithm and content visibility

One of the main findings of this study is the significant role of TikTok's "For You Page" (FYP) algorithm in increasing the visibility of marketing content. Unlike conventional social media platforms that primarily depend on follower networks, TikTok distributes content based on user interests, viewing behavior, interaction patterns, and engagement intensity. This mechanism enables promotional content from small businesses and new creators to reach broad audiences without requiring a large follower base.

The findings show that marketing content with high engagement rates such as likes, comments, shares, and watch duration tends to gain wider exposure through TikTok's recommendation system. As a result, many business actors and brands optimize content strategies by creating short, emotionally engaging, and trend-based videos to increase algorithmic visibility. This condition demonstrates that TikTok's algorithm significantly contributes to the rapid dissemination of marketing communication messages in digital environments.

3.1.2 Storytelling and brand authenticity

The study also found that storytelling approaches and brand authenticity play an important role in attracting audience attention on TikTok. Marketing content with natural, relatable, and emotionally engaging narratives tends to generate higher audience interaction compared to highly formal or overly commercial promotional videos. Users generally prefer content that appears authentic, entertaining, and close to everyday experiences.

Several observed marketing campaigns utilized storytelling techniques such as behind-the-scenes videos, daily activity documentation, product usage experiences, and humorous narratives to establish emotional relationships with audiences. This strategy allows brands to appear more personal and interactive, thereby strengthening audience trust and brand engagement. The findings indicate that authenticity has become one of the primary communication values within TikTok's digital marketing ecosystem.

Earlier studies have likewise demonstrated that consumers perceive recommendations delivered by social media personalities as more trustworthy than conventional advertising, particularly when influencers maintain authentic and relatable online identities. This reinforces the present finding that authenticity remains a central determinant of effective TikTok marketing communication (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

3.1.3 Influencer marketing and user participation

Another important finding in this study is the strong influence of influencer marketing and user participation in expanding marketing communication reach on TikTok. Influencers and content creators act as intermediaries between brands and audiences by presenting promotional content in more communicative and persuasive ways. The study found that influencer-based promotional content often achieves higher engagement because audiences perceive influencers as more relatable and trustworthy compared to traditional advertisements.

In addition, TikTok's interactive features such as duets, stitches, hashtag challenges, and user-generated content encourage participatory communication between brands and users. Many marketing campaigns successfully increased audience involvement by inviting users to recreate videos, participate in challenges, or share personal experiences related to products and services. This participatory communication model strengthens the circulation of marketing messages organically and contributes to the formation of digital brand communities.

3.1.4 Audience engagement as a marketing communication indicator

Audience engagement emerged as one of the most important indicators in measuring marketing communication effectiveness on TikTok. The findings reveal that successful marketing content is generally characterized by high interaction levels, including comments, shares, likes, reposts, and audience participation in content trends. Engagement not only reflects audience attention but also indicates emotional connection and communication effectiveness between brands and users.

Furthermore, the analysis (Table 3) shows that audience engagement on TikTok is strongly influenced by visual presentation, video duration, music selection, caption style, and trend relevance. Short videos with dynamic editing, popular audio usage, and interactive communication styles tend to generate stronger audience responses. This demonstrates that digital marketing communication on TikTok requires adaptive, creative, and audience-oriented strategies to maintain relevance within rapidly changing social media trends.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that TikTok has developed into a strategic digital marketing communication platform that emphasizes participation, creativity, and algorithm-driven interaction. The platform enables brands to establish more flexible, interactive, and emotionally engaging communication patterns with audiences. Therefore, TikTok plays a significant role in shaping contemporary digital marketing communication practices in the social media era.

These findings also indicate that engagement metrics should not be interpreted merely as indicators of popularity but as observable manifestations of communication effectiveness within participatory digital environments. Comments, content recreation, and sharing behavior collectively demonstrate how audiences actively negotiate, reinterpret, and redistribute marketing messages. Consequently, audience engagement represents a multidimensional communication outcome rather than a simple measure of platform activity.

Table 3. Analytical Summary of TikTok Marketing Communication Findings

Analytical Indicator	Key Findings	Marketing Communication Implications
TikTok Algorithm (FYP)	Expands content visibility beyond follower networks	Enhances organic reach and message diffusion
Storytelling Approach	Generates stronger audience attention and emotional connection	Improves engagement and brand recall
Brand Authenticity	Increases audience trust and interaction	Strengthens brand-consumer relationships
Influencer Marketing	Improves communication credibility and promotional effectiveness	Encourages purchase intention and brand awareness
User Participation	Supports viral dissemination through challenges and interactive features	Creates participatory communication ecosystems
Audience Engagement	Reflects communication effectiveness through likes, comments, and shares	Serves as a key performance indicator in digital marketing

The comparative analysis (Table 4) indicates that each brand adopted a distinct communication strategy despite operating on the same digital platform. Educational content primarily stimulated cognitive engagement through audience discussions, whereas influencer-led campaigns generated affective engagement characterized by audience appreciation and positive sentiment. Meanwhile, trend-based campaigns produced the highest level of participatory engagement because users actively recreated promotional content through hashtag challenges and short-form videos. These observations demonstrate that communication effectiveness on TikTok varies according to the interaction between communication strategy and audience participation.

Table 4. Summary of Observed TikTok Marketing Communication Patterns

Brand	Dominant Communication Strategy	Dominant Engagement Pattern	Key Observation
Somethinc	Educational storytelling	Comments & Shares	Educational videos stimulated discussion regarding product effectiveness and skincare knowledge.
Scarlett Whitening	Influencer endorsement	Likes & Comments	Testimonial-based videos generated strong emotional responses and audience trust.
Mixue	Trend participation	Shares & User-generated content	Hashtag challenges encouraged audiences to recreate promotional content and expand campaign visibility.

An important empirical finding emerging from this study is that communication effectiveness on TikTok is not determined by a single marketing variable. Instead, successful campaigns consistently demonstrate the interaction between algorithmic visibility, authentic storytelling, influencer credibility, and participatory audience behavior. These dimensions operate simultaneously rather than independently, suggesting that TikTok marketing communication functions as an integrated communication ecosystem rather than a collection

of isolated promotional strategies. This integrated interaction represents the principal empirical contribution of the present study

The coding process identified four recurring communication themes across all observed campaigns. First, algorithmic visibility increased the opportunity for content exposure regardless of follower count. Second, authentic storytelling strengthened emotional relationships between brands and audiences. Third, influencer collaboration enhanced communication credibility and accelerated initial audience attention. Finally, participatory platform features including hashtag challenges, duets, and stitches facilitated organic message diffusion through user-generated interaction. These recurring themes consistently appeared across the observed marketing campaigns and formed the analytical basis for the subsequent discussion.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that TikTok has transformed digital marketing communication into a more participatory and engagement-oriented communication model. This transformation reflects the broader platformization process identified by Kaye et al. (2021), whereby TikTok has evolved beyond an entertainment application into a multifaceted digital platform that integrates content production, algorithmic recommendation, commercial communication, and user participation within a unified ecosystem. Unlike conventional social media platforms that primarily depend on follower based networks, TikTok's algorithm-driven system enables broader content distribution through audience interaction and behavioral recommendation mechanisms. This condition aligns with Zannettou et al. (2024), who empirically demonstrated that TikTok's recommendation algorithm rapidly narrows content exposure through engagement signals such as follows, likes, and watch duration, confirming that behavioral interactions constitute the primary driver of algorithmic personalization on the platform. The present findings thus support the perspective that digital platforms increasingly prioritize participatory communication and algorithmic visibility in shaping online audience behavior (Kaye, Chen, & Zeng, 2021).

Unlike previous studies that primarily examined isolated variables such as influencer effectiveness, purchase intention, or content engagement, the present study demonstrates that marketing communication effectiveness on TikTok emerges from the simultaneous interaction of multiple communication dimensions. Rather than functioning independently, algorithmic visibility, authentic storytelling, influencer credibility, and audience participation reinforce one another to create an integrated digital communication ecosystem. This finding extends existing digital marketing communication literature by suggesting that successful TikTok marketing cannot be sufficiently explained through single-variable approaches but requires a holistic ecosystem perspective.

The study also demonstrates that storytelling and brand authenticity significantly influence audience engagement on TikTok. Marketing communication delivered through natural, entertaining, and emotionally relatable content tends to attract higher interaction compared to highly formal promotional approaches. This finding is consistent with Barta et al. (2023), who found that originality and humor in TikTok influencer content play decisive roles in shaping followers' hedonic experience and opinion leadership, ultimately driving higher engagement intentions. Furthermore, Audrezet, de Kerviler, and Moulard (2020) emphasized that authenticity functions as a core relational construct between brands, influencers, and consumers in digital environments, and that overt commercial intent risks weakening perceived authenticity. The present study extends this argument by showing that authenticity in the Indonesian market context operates through short-form storytelling narratives that simulate everyday experiences, thereby reinforcing emotional proximity between brands and their audiences.

This interpretation is consistent with recent experimental evidence demonstrating that perceived authenticity significantly influences consumer engagement with sponsored TikTok content. Interestingly, the relationship between sponsorship and engagement depends on creator popularity and brand characteristics, suggesting that authenticity should be viewed as a dynamic and context-dependent communication construct rather than a fixed attribute of promotional content. (Walsh et al., (2024)

The observational evidence generated in this study further indicates that educational storytelling and emotionally relatable narratives stimulated longer audience discussions than conventional product-centered promotional messages. Across the observed campaigns, users were more likely to respond to content that resembled everyday experiences rather than highly commercial advertising formats. This empirical observation suggests that emotional relevance functions as an important mechanism linking content authenticity with sustained audience engagement within TikTok's communication environment.

Furthermore, influencer involvement and user-generated participation were found to strengthen marketing communication effectiveness on TikTok. Interactive features such as hashtag challenges, duets, and stitches encourage users to actively participate in the dissemination of promotional messages. In this context,

audiences no longer function merely as passive consumers of information, but also as active participants in digital communication processes. This participatory communication pattern is supported by Wahid et al. (2023), who demonstrated through content analysis of global brand TikTok posts that emotional content characteristics significantly amplified social media engagement, while informational content alone produced comparatively limited audience responses. The current findings corroborate this pattern within the Indonesian MSME and consumer goods context, indicating that participatory features and emotional appeals jointly drive community-scale engagement on TikTok. Tafesse and Wood (2021) further confirmed that the quality and consistency of influencer-generated content on social media platforms are significant determinants of follower engagement, a finding that translates directly to TikTok marketing practices observed in this study.

An additional contribution emerging from the Indonesian context is the strategic role of community participation in amplifying marketing communication beyond influencer-generated exposure. While influencers successfully initiated audience attention, broader communication effectiveness depended on ordinary users voluntarily recreating, modifying, and redistributing promotional content through hashtag challenges and interactive features. This finding suggests that influencer credibility alone is insufficient unless supported by participatory audience behavior capable of extending message diffusion organically.

The findings further suggest that TikTok facilitates a decisive shift from a linear communication model toward a participatory communication framework. In traditional marketing communication, audiences primarily receive promotional messages from brands. However, TikTok enables users to actively contribute to content creation, dissemination, and interpretation through features such as duets, stitches, and hashtag challenges. Consequently, marketing communication becomes a collaborative process in which consumers participate in shaping brand narratives and extending message reach within digital communities. This transition from one way to circular communication echoes the theoretical evolution described in the broader social media engagement literature, wherein consumer co-creation increasingly defines the value generated within brand communities (Brodie et al., 2013). The user generated participation dynamics observed in this study, particularly the recreation of campaign challenges by ordinary users, reflect what scholars describe as participatory brand culture, in which brands must continuously nurture user contributions as an ongoing strategic process rather than a one-off phenomenon (Schivinski, Christodoulides, & Dabrowski, 2021).

In addition, audience engagement indicators such as likes, comments, shares, and content participation demonstrate the effectiveness of TikTok as a digital marketing platform. This observation is consistent with the consumer brand engagement framework proposed by Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014), which conceptualizes engagement as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. The interaction patterns observed across the selected TikTok campaigns demonstrate that audience engagement extends beyond simple platform activity and reflects meaningful brand-related interactions. High engagement levels indicate that communication effectiveness in social media environments is strongly influenced by creativity, trend relevance, emotional appeal, and communication interactivity. The credibility dimension of influencer mediated communication also warrants attention: Lou and Yuan (2019) established that information credibility significantly mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer purchase intentions, a mechanism observed in the endorsement behaviors of Indonesian beauty and lifestyle brands on TikTok in this study. Similar findings were reported by Casaló, Flavián, and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2020), who demonstrated that influencer opinion leadership and perceived credibility positively influence audience trust and engagement in social media marketing environments. These findings further support the importance of selecting credible influencers as strategic communication partners on TikTok.

Therefore, TikTok can be understood not only as a promotional platform but also as a dynamic communication ecosystem that facilitates relationship-building between brands and consumers in contemporary digital culture. This study contributes to the development of digital marketing communication theory by emphasizing the role of algorithm driven visibility, content authenticity, and audience participation within social media ecosystems. The present findings also respond to recent calls for more integrative investigations into TikTok marketing communication that move beyond single-variable explanations. By examining the interaction between algorithmic visibility, storytelling, influencer participation, and consumer engagement within a single analytical framework, this study provides empirical support for a communication ecosystem perspective that has only recently begun to emerge in the literature. The findings support the view that contemporary marketing communication is increasingly shaped by participatory interactions rather than one way promotional messaging, and that TikTok represents a paradigmatic case of this transformation within the context of emerging digital markets such as Indonesia. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of TikTok-based marketing communication cannot be explained solely through promotional exposure, but rather through the synergistic interaction of algorithmic visibility, audience participation, content authenticity, and social engagement dynamics.

Overall, this study contributes to the digital marketing communication literature by proposing that TikTok should be conceptualized as an integrated communication ecosystem where algorithmic visibility, participatory interaction, storytelling, and authenticity continuously interact to shape communication effectiveness. This ecosystem perspective provides a broader theoretical explanation than previous studies emphasizing isolated determinants of marketing success. The Indonesian context examined in this study further illustrates how platform affordances and local consumer participation jointly influence digital marketing communication outcomes within emerging markets.

3.2.1 *Theoretical implications*

The rapid expansion of the digital economy has transformed digital communication through platform-based ecosystems that facilitate interactive content creation, algorithm-driven information dissemination, and consumer participation in marketing activities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kaye et al., 2021; Kemp, 2024).

This study makes several contributions to the development of digital marketing communication theory. First, it reinforces the growing theoretical consensus that short form video platforms such as TikTok represent a qualitatively distinct communication environment compared to text based or image based social media, characterized by algorithmic personalization, content virality, and participatory interaction. These features necessitate the conceptual expansion of digital marketing communication models beyond traditional frameworks focused on message exposure and reach, toward frameworks that centralize co-creation, authenticity, and platform mediated visibility (Barta et al., 2023; Kaye et al., 2021).

Second, this study supports the theoretical shift from linear to circular communication models. While classical marketing communication theory posits a sender message receiver framework, TikTok's architecture disrupts this linearity by enabling bidirectional and multi directional message flows. This is consistent with participatory communication theories advanced by Brodie et al. (2013) and aligns with the broader theoretical argument that digital engagement transforms audiences from passive recipients into active co-producers of brand meaning. The present study provides empirical grounding for this theoretical claim within the Indonesian digital market context, thereby enriching the global evidence base for participatory digital marketing frameworks.

Third, the study advances the theoretical understanding of brand authenticity as a dynamic, platform-specific construct. Prior scholarship has examined authenticity in the context of Instagram influencers (Audrezet et al., 2020) and YouTube creators; however, TikTok's unique affordances, including its informal audiovisual style, low production barrier content, and community-driven trend culture, necessitate a context sensitive reconceptualization of authenticity. This study argues that on TikTok, authenticity is not simply an attribute of content quality but an emergent property of the interaction between content style, audience expectations, and algorithmic visibility, suggesting that future theoretical work should treat authenticity as a relational and platform-mediated phenomenon. Furthermore, the study supports the value of Social Media Analytics (SMA) as a methodological framework for qualitative digital marketing research, corroborating the theoretical utility of SMA outlined by Stieglitz et al. (2018) in capturing complex behavioral patterns within digital ecosystems.

3.2.2 *Practical implications*

The findings of this study provide several practical insights for businesses, marketers, and content creators seeking to optimize digital marketing communication through TikTok. First, organizations should prioritize authentic storytelling over highly polished commercial production. As demonstrated by the observed Indonesian brand campaigns, content that simulates everyday experiences and resonates emotionally with target audiences consistently generates stronger engagement outcomes. This recommendation is further supported by recent evidence indicating that authentic creator-generated content consistently produces stronger consumer engagement than highly standardized promotional communication, particularly when audiences perceive the creator-brand relationship as credible and transparent. Practitioners are advised to invest in behind the scenes narratives, product testimonials, and humor driven content that aligns with TikTok's informal communication culture, as these formats have been empirically linked to higher hedonic experience and follower intention (Barta et al., 2023). This finding is also consistent with Hollebeek et al. (2014), who argue that consumer brand engagement in social media extends beyond observable interactions and encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Accordingly, authentic communication on TikTok not only increases interaction metrics but also strengthens consumers' psychological attachment to brands. These findings further demonstrate that engagement on TikTok should be understood as a multidimensional communication outcome rather than merely a collection of platform interaction metrics.

Second, businesses should develop structured influencer collaboration strategies that select Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) based not only on follower count but also on credibility, content originality, and audience

congruence. Lou and Yuan (2019) demonstrated that influencer credibility comprising trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness significantly mediates the impact of sponsored content on consumer purchase intentions. Therefore, brands operating on TikTok should conduct rigorous influencer vetting processes that assess credibility dimensions, rather than relying solely on vanity metrics such as follower size or view counts. This interpretation is further supported by Casaló et al. (2020), who demonstrated that influencers' opinion leadership and credibility significantly enhance audience trust, thereby increasing engagement with branded communication on social media platforms.

Third, marketers should leverage TikTok's participatory features including hashtag challenges, duets, stitches, and user generated content campaigns as core components of brand communication strategy rather than supplementary tools. The viral dissemination effect observed in campaigns such as those conducted by Mixue and Scarlett Whitening demonstrates that well designed participatory structures can generate substantial organic reach and community involvement at minimal additional cost. Wahid et al. (2023) confirmed that emotional content strategies consistently outperform purely informational approaches in driving social media engagement on TikTok, providing practitioners with a clear strategic direction for content planning. These findings are also compatible with Schivinski et al. (2021), who emphasize that meaningful consumer engagement is reflected not only through passive exposure but also through active participation, interaction, and content sharing behaviors across social media platforms. Finally, SMEs and MSMEs should recognize TikTok's algorithmic equity as a significant competitive advantage, as the FYP mechanism enables small businesses to achieve large scale visibility without requiring substantial advertising budgets, provided their content attains sufficient initial engagement thresholds. From a managerial perspective, organizations should establish data-driven content planning mechanisms by continuously monitoring engagement metrics, audience sentiment, and emerging platform trends. Integrating Social Media Analytics into marketing decision-making processes can help firms optimize communication effectiveness and improve resource allocation for digital campaigns. In addition, organizations should continuously evaluate audience interaction data to identify emerging communication preferences and optimize campaign performance. Evidence suggests that social media interactions provide valuable information for improving communication effectiveness and supporting data-driven marketing decisions (Farivar et al., 2021). These findings reinforce the strategic role of Social Media Analytics as a managerial decision-support tool capable of transforming user interaction data into actionable communication intelligence for digital marketing optimization (Stieglitz et al., 2018). This recommendation is consistent with Stieglitz et al. (2018), who argued that Social Media Analytics enables organizations to transform large-scale user interaction data into strategic insights for communication planning, campaign evaluation, and decision-making.

3.2.3 *Research limitations*

This study acknowledges several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the research is limited to a qualitative observational approach conducted during a three month observation window (January-March 2026), which restricts the temporal generalizability of the findings. TikTok's algorithmic environment and trending content patterns evolve rapidly, and conclusions drawn from a specific observation period may not fully capture the dynamic nature of the platform's marketing ecosystem across different seasons or industry cycles.

Second, the study focuses exclusively on publicly accessible TikTok content from Indonesian business accounts, which limits its sectoral and geographic coverage. The observed brands primarily in beauty, food and beverage, and fashion may not represent the full spectrum of TikTok marketing practices across industries such as technology, education, healthcare, or financial services. Third, the absence of quantitative data collection means that causal claims regarding the direct impact of specific content strategies on engagement outcomes or consumer behavior cannot be established. While qualitative observations provide valuable insights into communication patterns and strategies, they do not enable statistical inference regarding effect sizes, conversion rates, or return on investment. Fourth, the study does not account for the perspective of TikTok users or consumers, whose motivations, perceptions, and behavioral responses represent a critical dimension of marketing communication effectiveness that warrants systematic investigation.

3.2.4 *Future research directions*

Future research should address the limitations of this study by incorporating quantitative methodologies. Survey based studies employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) or Partial Least Squares (PLS) could examine the direct and mediated relationships between TikTok content characteristics including authenticity, humor, emotional appeal, and trend relevance and consumer outcomes such as purchase intention, brand loyalty, and engagement behavior. Such approaches would enable statistical validation of the conceptual

framework proposed in this study and produce findings comparable with the growing body of quantitative TikTok research in Scopus-indexed journals (Barta et al., 2023; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Comparative platform studies constitute another promising research avenue. As competing short form video platforms such as Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and emerging alternatives continue to evolve, cross platform comparisons of marketing communication effectiveness would yield valuable insights into platform specific engagement dynamics. Wahid et al. (2023) called for studies examining how global versus local brand content strategies differ in their effectiveness across TikTok markets, a direction that is particularly relevant to the Indonesian context given the rapid growth of domestic digital commerce. Longitudinal research designs could additionally track how brand communication strategies on TikTok adapt to algorithmic changes, trend cycles, and evolving consumer preferences over time, providing a more dynamic and ecologically valid understanding of digital marketing practice.

Future studies should also investigate the consumer side of TikTok marketing communication by examining users' psychological and behavioral responses to different content strategies. Future investigations may also integrate qualitative Social Media Analytics with consumer interviews or experimental research designs to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how audiences interpret, respond to, and co-create marketing communication on short-form video platforms. Such investigations would complement the qualitative findings of the present study by integrating behavioral explanations with observable engagement metrics, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of digital marketing communication effectiveness. Research grounded in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), the Heuristic Systematic Model (HSM), or Uses and Gratifications Theory could illuminate how cognitive and emotional processing of TikTok marketing content shapes brand attitudes, parasocial relationships, and conversion behaviors. The role of micro influencers and nano influencers in the Indonesian market also warrants dedicated investigation, given that their smaller but highly engaged followings may produce more cost effective marketing outcomes compared to celebrity level TikTok endorsers. Additionally, future research may explore TikTok's expanding e-commerce functionalities, including TikTok Shop and live streaming commerce, as emerging channels for integrated marketing communication that extend beyond traditional engagement metrics toward direct transactional outcomes.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that TikTok has evolved beyond a social media platform into an integrated digital marketing communication ecosystem characterized by algorithmic visibility, authentic storytelling, influencer collaboration, and participatory audience engagement. The findings indicate that marketing communication effectiveness on TikTok is generated not by individual promotional elements in isolation but through the interaction of multiple communication dimensions that collectively stimulate audience participation and strengthen brand-consumer relationships.

The principal scientific contribution of this study lies in extending digital marketing communication theory by proposing an ecosystem perspective that integrates platform algorithms, content authenticity, influencer credibility, and user participation within a single analytical framework. Unlike previous studies that have predominantly examined these variables independently, this research demonstrates that their interaction provides a more comprehensive explanation of communication effectiveness in TikTok-based marketing, particularly within the context of an emerging digital economy such as Indonesia.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that businesses, marketers, and SMEs should prioritize authentic storytelling, strategic influencer collaboration, and participatory communication strategies rather than relying solely on promotional exposure. The integration of Social Media Analytics into marketing evaluation can also assist organizations in monitoring audience engagement and improving digital communication performance.

This study is subject to several limitations. The analysis was based on qualitative observations of publicly accessible TikTok marketing content collected between January and March 2026 and focused primarily on selected Indonesian brands. Consequently, the findings may not fully represent marketing communication practices across different industries, cultural settings, or time periods.

Future research is encouraged to employ quantitative approaches, longitudinal research designs, and comparative cross-platform analyses involving platforms such as Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and emerging social media applications. Further studies may also investigate different industrial sectors and cross-cultural contexts to provide broader empirical evidence regarding digital marketing communication effectiveness across diverse platform ecosystems.

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