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TikTok as a communication platform for brands

Bachelor Thesis
Winter 2022/2023
Bachelor of Business Administration



This bachelor's thesis has been written in a double degree programme between SeAMK and its double degree partner institution, and it meets the requirements in form of SeAMK double degree partner institution

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Hannover, den 31.01.2023

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara Ghiasi', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sara Ghiasi

Table of Contents

Confidentiality Note.....	III
List of abbreviations	VII
List of figures	VIII
List of tables	IX
Thesis abstract	X
1 The Rise of TikTok.....	1
1.1 Introduction to the topic.....	1
1.2 Research question and methodology	2
2 Communication via TikTok.....	5
2.1 Defining TikTok	5
2.2 The means of communication of companies	7
2.2.1 The power of community commerce	10
2.3 About the target audience.....	11
3 Comparable platforms	15
3.1 Instagram	15
3.2 Facebook	19
3.3 The key differences of the platforms.....	22
3.4 Interim conclusion	24
4 Indicators of success on TikTok.....	26
4.1 Communicating via benchmark campaigns	26
4.2 Selection criteria	27
4.3 Best practices	29
4.3.1 Guess	30
4.3.2 Congstar	31
4.3.3 Kaufland	32
4.4 Learnings	33

5 Critical view of the communication opportunities	35
5.1 Selection of the experts and interview method	35
5.2 Content analysis on MAXQDA.....	37
5.3 Expert interviews' findings	38
5.3.1 Motives for using TikTok	38
5.3.2 Avoidance of entanglement within social media channels	40
5.3.3 Potential risks of TikTok as a communication channel.....	44
6 Recommendation and Outlook for brands.....	47
6.1 TikTok's management of user data.....	47
6.2 Outlook on TikTok as a communication channel	48
Appendices	52
Appendix 1: Interview guidelines for employees of a company	52
Appendix 1.1: Guideline in German	52
Appendix 1.2: Guideline in English.....	54
Appendix 2: Interview guidelines for Content Creator.....	56
Appendix 2.1: Guideline in German	56
Appendix 2.2: Guideline in English.....	58
Appendix 3: Expert interview with Jonathan Oesterle.....	60
Appendix 4: Expert interview with Julian Lenzer.....	70
Appendix 5: Expert interview with Hasti Shemirani.....	77
Appendix 6: Code system for the data analysis on MAXQDA	85
Appendix 6.1: Data analysis using the coding system	86
Appendix 7: Data analysis on MAXQDA.....	87
References	88
Publications.....	88
Internet sources	90
Interviews.....	104

Statutory declaration.....	105
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List of abbreviations

Ad	=	Advertisement
AI	=	Artificial Intelligence
AN	=	Audience Network
Approx.	=	Approximately
Bpb	=	Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung
BPM	=	Beats per Minute
BVB	=	Ballspielverein Borussia
CC	=	Content Creator
DACH	=	Deutschland(D)-Österreich(A)-Schweiz (CH)
DIM	=	Deutsches Institut für Marketing
DM	=	Direct Messages
ER	=	Engagement Rate
FYP	=	For-You-Page
Gen	=	Generation
GIF	=	Graphics Interchange Format
i.e.	=	id est
IE	=	Instant Experiences
K	=	Thousand
KPI	=	Key Performance Indicator
LGBTQ	=	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer
Ltd.	=	Limited
M	=	Million
Q&A	=	Questions and Answers
SME	=	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SMM	=	Social media marketing
UGC	=	User-generated content
US	=	United States
VR	=	Virtual Reality
WM	=	Weltmeisterschaft

List of figures

Figure 1: The components of Community Commerce	11
Figure 2: Timeline of the platforms' releases	24

List of tables

Table 1: Main differences between the platforms	23
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Thesis abstract

Degree Programme: Bachelor of Business Administration

Specialisation: Gateway to International Business

Author: Sara Ghiasi

Title of thesis: TikTok as a communication platform for brands

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Peter Schütz, Miia Koski

Year: 2023

Number of pages:105

Number of appendices: 7

This bachelor thesis examines the social network TikTok and the extent to which it can be an important addition to a company's communication strategy. To substantiate the answer in detail, TikTok and the main competing Meta platforms, Instagram and Facebook were examined first and compares to create a fundamental understanding for the following paper. Then, benchmark campaigns were described and why and how they are instrumental to elicit success on TikTok. The empirical part of this work is composed of expert interviews, in which three experts with different backgrounds in TikTok were interviewed to get their opinion and assessment of the status, key features, and future of TikTok. The theoretical findings obtained in the literature review and the results of the expert interviews conducted as part of this work serve as a basis for the evaluation of the main thesis. The results show that despite some points of criticism, the experts were in favor of integrating the platform into a brand's communication strategy and emphasized the high potential for success. The TikTok platform has an established place among social networks, and companies have a great chance of success if they familiarize themselves with the platform, its target audience, and its special features. Nevertheless, companies need to be aware of the risks, such as the criticism due to displaying obscene content and data privacy breaches, whereby Meta platforms have also breached data privacy regulations.

¹ Keywords: TikTok, communication, success, target audience

1 The Rise of TikTok

1.1 Introduction to the topic

Nowadays, life without social media is unthinkable for many people. Via smartphones, social media is accessible to everyone everywhere. As of 2022, over 85% of the population in Germany uses social media.² Social media allows sharing various media such as texts, images or videos, and information. That is done on social networks which are internet-based platforms where one can exchange and communicate with other users. For this purpose, user profiles are usually created, which require the provision of personal data, such as age or e-mail addresses.³

The use of social media is very popular among companies too. In 2021, nearly 60% of companies in Germany use social media.⁴ As noted, incorporating social media into a company's communications has great potential as *"90% trust peers on social networks (even strangers); only 15–18% trust brands."*⁵ With social media, marketing gained another means besides traditional marketing such as print and radio, and tradigital marketing like emails and search engine marketing. Social media marketing (SMM) focuses on platforms for which dialogue and engagement are from utter relevance.⁶ By communicating on social media, companies can strengthen their customer relations and interact with customers, for example, through detailed feedback systems. SMM also offers great advantages in findability, as potential customers do not have to enter a search engine first to become aware of a company. This is accompanied by website traffic generated via social media which is a more cost-effective alternative than placing paid web pages in search engines. In general, SMM is a low-cost addition to the marketing strategy. Since users see what their friends or family like on social media, this insight works like a personal recommendation, pursuing a user to buy something from the brand or at least inform himself. Direct recommendations are also possible, as users share content with their contacts.⁷

² We are social, Hootsuite (2022), p.100

³ Schmidt, J.-H. (2017), pp.11

⁴ Eurostat (2022)

⁵ Cited after Brown, D. (2022)

⁶ Tuten, T. L., Solomon, M. R. (2018), p.20

⁷ Weinberg, T. (2014), pp.10

The most popular social networks in Germany include Facebook and Instagram. As social media pioneers, the platforms are leaders in SMM: In 2022, 47% of businesses worldwide used Facebook and 24% Instagram. Whether for designing the company profile or presenting products: Over the years, the platforms achieved a high position and are almost indispensable in marketing.⁸ Indisputably, social networks play an ever-increasing role in our society as they serve as a means of communication, a platform for product placement, and a modern form of self-expression.

Now, another network, which was initially placed behind Facebook and Instagram, is gaining in importance, namely TikTok.⁹ Their unique selling point (USP) is that the platform offers content almost exclusively in short video format, called TikToks. These can be created, edited, and published on the platform.¹⁰ Especially during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, TikTok clearly triumphed: Experts speak of 315 new installations within the first quarter in 2020. This is the highest download rate of an app within a quarter.¹¹ To give a brief example of what TikTok can achieve: Jennifer Lopez posted a video on both, TikTok and Twitter. Although she had 40 million more followers on Twitter at the time, the video was viewed 69 million times more on TikTok.¹² Given its growing relevance and the possibilities to customize content, TikTok is now also crystallizing as a platform that offers companies to market brands stories, values, and products.

1.2 Research question and methodology

Hardly any company can now ignore social networks. Many companies are now integrating them into their marketing and communications plans. At first glance, SMM on an additional platform associates more work, as resources such as employees, time and money must be invested until results are achieved. The unlimited uploading of content is also a challenge, as it does not allow companies to stand out. Therefore, introducing new platforms needs to be well thought out, especially with a new platform like TikTok, which, despite significant growth, could turn out to be a temporary trend.

⁸ Stelzner, M. A. 2022)

⁹ Faktenkontor, IMWF (2022)

¹⁰ Lewanczik, N. (2022)

¹¹ SensorTower (2020), p.2

¹² Doyle, B. (2023)

Until now, there has been no scientific work comparing the leading social networks and applying sound expert knowledge to assess the relevance of TikTok in a company's communication strategy. In this respect, the research question to be answered in this thesis is as following:

Is TikTok an additional relevant element in a brands communication strategy?
If so, why, and how?

The thesis contains a theory-based elaboration and an empirical investigation. Thus, primary, and secondary research are applied to answer the research question as detailed as possible. The remainder of the thesis is divided into five chapters. The specific content of each subsequent is explained below:

Chapter two exclusively focuses on TikTok and its characteristics. For this purpose, the platform's origins are outlined briefly, followed by a description of the platform's functionality. To round off, the main content formats are noted, followed by an introduction to the platform's algorithms. Furthermore, the role of the advertising manager of the platform is discussed to show which functions companies can use in their communication strategy. In the comparison of the ad managers, the various types of media are mentioned, but not the exact areas of the platform in which the ads are to be used. This was deliberately omitted not to lose focus on the number and types of ads. In this context, the concept of community commerce, which TikTok pursues, is explained. A detailed audience analysis is then provided, including the main target group characteristics and the number of users. To compare the numbers of platform users and their demographics more effectively, the paper primarily references results obtained within Germany.

Chapter three describes Instagram and Facebook platforms using the same criteria as in the previous chapter, but in less detail to not neglect the focus on TikTok. The descriptions serve to conclude the third chapter with a comparison of the three platforms. After the main differences are highlighted, an interim conclusion that lists the unique criteria of TikTok is incorporated to create a starting point for the following chapters.

The fourth chapter serves to find out which factors contribute the most to the implicit success of TikTok. The first step explains benchmark campaigns and how they can be used as a tool in SMM. The following subchapter presents the tool TikTok offers to

measure success and what important key performance indicators (KPIs) exist in SMM. Then, three TikTok campaigns are presented, and the success is measured with one chosen KPI. In addition, the used communication means are reviewed to evaluate whether best practices can be drawn from it.

The fifth chapter provides a critical examination of the communication opportunities on TikTok. Therefore, experts in this area were selected and interviewed for this paper. The interviewees are introduced at the beginning of the chapter. At the same time, a brief methodological description of the interviews is provided. The analysis software MAXQDA, which was used to evaluate the content of the interviews, is then explained. This is followed by the chapter on interview findings, which summarizes the most important findings and explains what conclusions were drawn. Additional facts were added to the findings to substantiate the experts' statements.

In the final chapter, data security as an important risk of digital platforms is pointed out first. This is examined to create a comprehensive portrait of TikTok as a communication platform for brands and to evaluate whether TikTok is another relevant element in SMM. Next, the appendixes and source references are listed.¹³

¹³ Due to the nature of the topic and digital focus of the thesis, mainly internet sources were used. To ensure the reliability of the sources, among other, official publications of the platforms were used.

2 Communication via TikTok

2.1 Defining TikTok

The beginnings of the Chinese app go back to September 2016 when the app Douyin was founded by Zhang Yiming, the founder of Beijing Bytedance Technology Ltd., or simply ByteDance. Outside of Chinese markets, the platform retained the company's name. One of its biggest competitors, Musical.ly, which had essentially the same features as TikTok, was founded two years earlier. In November 2017, ByteDance bought the platform for about one billion US dollars, after which Musical.ly merged with TikTok, gaining the former app's users and international platform. TikTok is free to install on iOS and Android devices.¹⁴

TikTok's mission, according to its homepage, is "to inspire creativity and bring joy".¹⁵ Its main premise is that 15-second to 10-minute videos can be recorded and shared with other users.¹⁶ These so-called TikToks can contain songs, sound effects, filters, and special effects.¹⁷ When logged in, one gets access to all videos of TikTok users who do not have a private profile. It is possible to make the profile private so that followers must be approved first before the requesters can view a user's posted content.¹⁸ The videos can be hashtagged to expand their reach. A hashtag defines a certain category and makes it easier to find videos of the same category.¹⁹ One can like, comment, and share TikToks on various apps.²⁰ In addition, one can respond directly to a TikTok of a user and respond with the duet function, where the video replied to appears next to the video of the newly shot video.²¹ User-generated challenges are also popular on TikTok. They involve a particular trend and are then imitated by numerous users. Examples of TikTok challenges are dances or certain activities.²² The home page differentiates between a For-You-Page (FYP) and a page that only displays content from followed users. On both pages, the videos are displayed

¹⁴ Fan et al. (2022), p.34

¹⁵ TikTok (2022c)

¹⁶ Lewanczik, N. (2022)

¹⁷ Sbai, A., Zarou, Y. (2020), pp.57

¹⁸ TikTok (2018)

¹⁹ Sbai, A., Zarou, Y. (2020), p.71

²⁰ Sbai, A., Zarou, Y. (2020), p.52

²¹ TikTok (2019b)

²² Sbai, A. (2020)

in an endless loop to scroll through.²³ TikTok also works without a profile, with only registered users being able to post content or interact with a creator via likes or comments.²⁴ The minimum age for using TikTok is 13 years, or the minimum age, specified in the respective country and region.²⁵

Content on TikTok is mainly in the form of short videos and stories. The latter is a feature introduced for the first time in August 2021, where one can add multiple stories which disappear after 24 hours. Stories can consist of photos and videos.²⁶

Further functions are Direct Messages (DMs). These enable communication between two users and allow one to send and receive TikToks and text messages. Unlike comments, DMs are a private form of communication as the "direct" part implies that it is not visible to others.²⁷ TikTok also added the livestream function, which appeared for the first time in 2019.²⁸ Here, one can stream alone or join and invite other users. In addition, users can donate money in the form of gifts to creators who go live. The livestream can have diverse themes, for example, a Q&A mode.²⁹

The algorithm of TikTok decides what videos are displayed and is composed of various factors. On the one hand, it is influenced by the interest users indicate when registering. Based on this, the platform can filter in advance which videos the user might like. User interaction also plays a role in finetuning the content of displayed videos. It measures which videos are liked, commented on, and shared. Furthermore, interaction includes the accounts and their content that a user follows. Video information is also included when passing interactions like hashtags, filters used, sound and video descriptions. Set up on this information, TikToks are selected that have similar information. Moreover, the algorithm evaluates favorably when a video is watched to the end. Its topic is then classified as particularly relevant and shown more often to other users. Finally, the account settings influence the algorithm. Here, factors such as the set language and location are evaluated to select future video playback.³⁰

²³ Sbaji, A., Zarou, Y. (2020), p.23

²⁴ TikTok (2022a)

²⁵ TikTok (2018)

²⁶ Ceccio, L. (2022)

²⁷ TikTok (2019a)

²⁸ ConFace (2019)

²⁹ TikTok (2021a)

³⁰ TikTok (2020a)

2.2 The means of communication of companies

As noted in the previous chapter, companies take advantage of the current challenges and background sounds preferred by the algorithm to display their content more often. Here, the companies have room to maneuver as to how they want to place their advertising. TikTok provides many different ad formats, mainly in the typical short video format.

The platform offers a self-service instrument for marketing purposes. At the end of June 2020, the platform presented their commercial tool “TikTok for Business”, where several tools can be used so that brands can design and post campaigns to interact with TikTok users. The in-feed ads can be edited with the app's common effects, such as music, sound effects, and voice-overs.³¹ Also, "call-to-action" buttons can be added, such as "Learn more" or "Download now". These ads appear seamlessly in the feed, as they are not different from ad-free TikToks due to the short video characteristic.³² In line with the motto „Don't make ads, make TikToks", the platform encourages users not to run traditional ads but to repackage them in the platform's typical short video format. A direct contact person is provided to assist the companies using the system.³³ The above model is supported by the role of the “TikTok Ads Manager”. This offers companies the opportunity to optimize their marketing campaigns with the help of additional creative tools and performance measurement functions. This is intended to help small companies and start-ups to become active and successful on their platform on a large scale. As part of this vision, TikTok announced the TikTok Hub for the Small and Medium enterprises (SME) sector, a consulting platform in the ads Manager area, which will show efficient and individual strategies to facilitate entry into the platform.³⁴ The following five types of ads can be found in ads Manager:

For one, there are In-feed ads. These videos can last up to 60 seconds and appear as the user scrolls through the content.³⁵ Because of the natural integration into the stream, these advertisements are less obtrusive to viewers. To market their goods or services, brands may leverage this format in a variety of ways, such as by consistently

³¹ Puris, K. (2020)

³² Fanbytes (2021), p.5

³³ Puris, K. (2020)

³⁴ TikTok (2021e)

³⁵ Johnstone, T. (2022)

uploading engaging content, taking part in hashtag challenges, or using influencers to promote their product or service.³⁶

This TikTok ad format is the equivalent of a sponsored post on Facebook or Instagram. Therefore, it looks just like any other TikTok ad on users' FYPs. In-feed ads, like all TikTok videos, allow users to use songs or sounds in the background. In addition, advertisers can change the call-to-action of these ads and choose from options like "Learn more" or "Download now." This makes them suitable for many advertising options, such as promoting apps, music, or websites.³⁷

Another tool is the Hashtag challenge on TikTok which can be created by creators, celebrities or sponsored by brands. They are often composed of different components such as text, sound, and movements and then played out on the Discover page. Often, they are choreographically simple dances that anyone can copy and therefore quickly gain popularity. This is often also increased by the selection of the audio element. TikTok offers users a wide selection of sounds for this purpose, which are complemented with audio files the users can upload themselves.³⁸

The user-generated content (UGC) of a hashtag challenge is available to companies as a sponsored Branded Hashtag Challenge. Thereby, brands can associate their ad with a hashtag for increased discoverability. The video ads encourage TikTok users to extend the campaign by recording similar videos and using the associated hashtags.³⁹

The ads are promoted on the "Discover" page as well and direct users to the challenge page. Along with a description of the hashtag challenge, the page also contains the TikToks users published for the corresponding hashtag.⁴⁰ Therefore, Hashtag challenges can be particularly suitable for promoting interaction with a target group.

In addition, the Ad Manager offers Brand Takeover Ads, a three-second image or a 3-5 second GIF that is displayed to the user in full-screen mode when the TikTok app is opened. It is an ideal advertising opportunity to achieve brand awareness by directly confronting the user with the ad. An integrated call-to-action then directs users to the appropriate landing page. With this ad, companies receive an exclusive advertising

³⁶ Fanbytes (2021), p.5

³⁷ Worb, J. (2020)

³⁸ Sbai, A. (2020)

³⁹ Johnstone, T. (2022)

⁴⁰ Sbai, A., Zarou, Y. (2020), p.55

opportunity, as users are not shown more than one brand-takeover-ad per day.⁴¹ For this reason, this type of ad, which can also be combined with other ad formats such as a hashtag challenge to maximize success, is also one of the most expensive.⁴²

A similar counterpart to the brand takeover is TopView. This video ad format plays in the FYP for up to 60 seconds, shortly after the app is opened. So, TopView is not among the first things seen when opening the app, but it will be the first in-feed post after three seconds of use.⁴³

Finally, brands can advertise through Branded effects. Branded Effects are interactive filters whereby brands can present their products in through augmented reality (AR). The user triggers visual effects through facial expressions or movements, causing it to move. These elements are available to TikTok users to increase brand awareness.⁴⁴

Furthermore, companies can make use of influencers for their brand communication. Influencers are well-known on social networks and have a large reach. They usually exert a lot of influence on their network, as they can promote to their audience personal recommendations or advice. Therefore, they often can act as advertising ambassadors for companies and use their platform to promote certain topics and information.⁴⁵

Influencer marketing is based on a collaboration with an influencer, also known as Content Creator (CC). This type of marketing is particularly authentic, as influencers often maintain a personal relationship with their community, and the presentation of the product is perceived as a recommendation. Advertising placements by influencers are therefore more accepted than advertising messages from brands.⁴⁶ What needs to be considered is the right match between choosing the right CC, the industry, and the appropriate target audience.⁴⁷

Companies have two options to find suitable influencers for their product: On the one hand, they can research on their own and send requests to the CCs independently. On the other hand, TikTok also has a service for this form of advertising: On the "TikTok

⁴¹ Johnstone, T. (2022)

⁴² Worb, J. (2020)

⁴³ Worb, J. (2020)

⁴⁴ TikTok (2021b)

⁴⁵ Deutsches Institut für Marketing (DIM) (2021)

⁴⁶ DIM (2021)

⁴⁷ Rabach, T. (2018), pp. 168

Creators Marketplace", companies can find suitable influencers themselves. The free tool is available for registered companies only and helps the company to filter out suitable influencers from the active members. Companies can filter for the right CC using various categories, such as reach, target audience, average views, or industry. The tool further offers various analytics like the reach of posted videos or the country of origin of users.⁴⁸

Lastly, a brand's account is also well suited for media communication, although advertising is not exclusively related to paid ad opportunities mentioned above.

This communication strategy can be seen on some TikTok profiles of soccer first-division clubs from Germany. Clubs like Borussia Dortmund soccer club (BVB) have different formats on their profiles where they provide insights from soccer matches as well as exclusive behind-the-scenes insights.⁴⁹

The goal is to increase reach by creating more private and less scripted content. This strategy creates closeness to the viewers who are perhaps not yet soccer fans.

2.2.1 The power of community commerce

In collaboration with Publicis Groupe and WARC, TikTok published a study on the role of social communities on consumers' purchase decisions. The study surveyed 2230 social-media-savvy consumers in eleven markets spread across four continents. The results show that people move from being disinterested observers to active buyers through social media communities. For example, more than three-quarters of all respondents said that social media platforms inspired them to make purchases, even if they did not actually want to shop. CCs seem to play a central role here, as they are the main drivers when it comes to discovering and presenting new products for their community. These two findings also apply to Germany. Here, 86% of consumers bought a product or service after it was promoted or reviewed on social media. TikTok as a platform performed particularly well, as 74% of users said they like to browse the app for the latest trends and challenges.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ TikTok (2022d)

⁴⁹ TikTok (2021c)

⁵⁰ WARC (2021)

This buying behavior, encouraged by the community, is called community commerce and is a subtype of social commerce. It describes the combination of community, entertainment, and shopping. Here, the mouth-to-mouth propaganda is of particular importance, as products are recommended by users for users.⁵¹

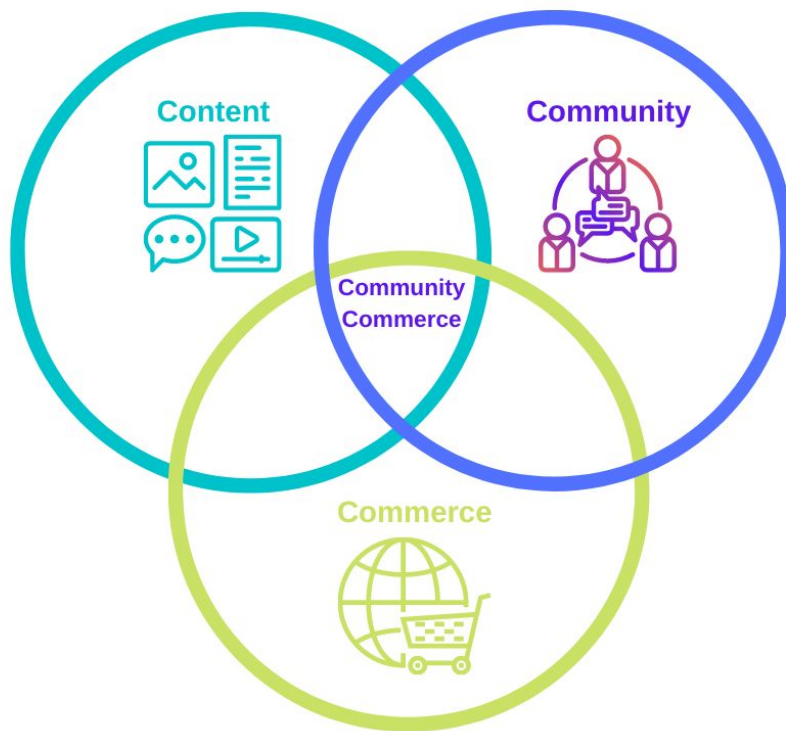


Figure 1: The components of Community Commerce⁵²

As an example of community commerce, users can find products presented by the community under the hashtag #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt. Above all, SMEs and brands of all sizes should have the chance to be discovered. The hashtag is intended to boost brands' e-commerce and was already accessed 12.4 billion times in April 2022.⁵³

2.3 About the target audience

To identify the target audience more precisely, the following chapter and the naming of the target audience of the other social media channels refer to the usage figures within Germany.

⁵¹ TikTok (2021d)

⁵² Own illustration, according to WARC (2021)

⁵³ TikTok (2022e)

TikTok has 15 million monthly active users in Germany as of the end of 2022.⁵⁴ Latest figures show that there, the platform is particularly popular with the younger generation: In 2022, 65.1% of users are under 24 years old - making it an ideal platform to appeal to Generation (Gen) Z. 30% of users, on the other hand, are 24-34 years old, which means they fall into Gen Y, also known as Millennials.⁵⁵ It is important to mention that opinions differ when it comes to the classification of the years of the different generations. To provide a better classification, Gen Z is defined for the birth years from 1996 to 2010⁵⁶, and Millennials from 1980 to 1995.⁵⁷

According to this classification, today's 24-year-olds and all younger ones belong to Gen Z and make up the majority of TikTok users. Like any other generation, this one was significantly influenced by events that had a lasting impact on media behavior and consumer behavior. Hereafter, the PESTEL analysis is used to illustrate the various factors in the period of Gen Z. This framework analyzes macro-environmental factors that may impact an organization or industry. The acronym PESTEL stands for Political, Economic, Sociocultural, Technological, Environmental, and Legal.⁵⁸

Gen Z is the first generation to come of age in the post-9/11 world, which shaped their worldview and attitudes toward politics. Events such as the war between Russia and Ukraine, the exit of Great Britain from the European Union, and the financial crisis in Greece have shown how unstable the political situation in the world can be. Members of Gen Z are mostly politically active and socially conscious, and they have been involved in various social and political movements such as Black Lives Matter and the fight against climate change.⁵⁹

From an economic perspective, the Great Recession in 2007 had a significant impact on Gen Z as the crisis was followed by an economic upswing and increased purchasing power. At the same time, globalization and digitalization have boosted the purchasing power of Gen Z in e-commerce.⁶⁰ Despite this, many members of Gen Z are highly

⁵⁴ Blog2Social (2022)

⁵⁵ Start.io (2023)

⁵⁶ The following Gen Alpha, starting from birth year 2011, is not considered since members are not allowed to be officially registered on TikTok (TikTok 2018)

⁵⁷ Unicum (2023)

⁵⁸ Fahey, L., Randall, R. K. (2001), pp.189

⁵⁹ OC&C (2019), pp.4

⁶⁰ OC&C (2019), pp.4

entrepreneurial and are aiming or have already started their own businesses at a younger age compared to previous generations.⁶¹

Gen Z is a diverse generation what is reflected in their attitudes toward social issues such as immigration and LGBTQ rights.⁶² Members of Gen Z are the first to fully grow up with widespread access to the internet and social media which impacts their communication and socialization patterns.⁶³ The Covid-19 pandemic also had a major impact, as young people were continuously in virtual space without personal contact with the outside world. This not only led to listlessness but also negatively influence the personality afterward.⁶⁴

As "digital natives"⁶⁵, Gen Z has grown up with technology and the internet being part of their daily lives.⁶⁶ Therefore, digital media are part of their private and professional lives which in turn influences how they consume media, learn, and interact with others. This development has led to new industries and job opportunities too.⁶⁷

Climate change is a major concern for Gen Z, and they are actively advocating for action on this issue. The use of technology and Internet influenced the environment, and Gen Z is aware of the need to balance the benefits of these technologies to protect the environment.⁶⁸

Growing up with a greater awareness of issues related to privacy and data security, Gen Z is more likely to be concerned about how their personal information is used online. This led to increased pressure on companies and governments to strengthen data protection laws and regulations.⁶⁹

Based on this, the values of freedom and individuality are particularly important to this generation, as they strive to achieve these for themselves and for others, and to realize their own potential. Gen Z is also in favor of justice, diversity, and multiculturalism. By being born into a digital age, mobile devices are indispensable for Gen Z. Communication takes place largely via the Internet, which changes the way people in

⁶¹ Lindzon, J. (2021)

⁶² OC&C (2019), pp.20

⁶³ OC&C (2019), p.12

⁶⁴ Eberhardt, H. (2021)

⁶⁵ Statista (2020), p.25

⁶⁶ OC&C (2019), p.12

⁶⁷ OC&C (2019), pp.20

⁶⁸ OC&C (2019), pp.4

⁶⁹ Fromm, J. (2018)

this age group contact each other and where they obtain information. Real life is increasingly merging with digital life.

The second key group of TikTok's target group is Gen Y, which stands for those born between 1981 and 1994. Since they had their formative teenage or childhood years around the turn of the millennium, they are also called Millennials.⁷⁰ In the following, this generation is called Millennials to better differentiate in the reading flow.

This generation has also grown up in a time characterized by increasing complexity and constant change and therefore shares certain similarities with Gen Z. Both generations are used to accessing digital media. Millennials have experienced every technological development and are familiar not only with smartphones and laptops, but also with cell phones and computers.⁷¹ Both generations are therefore well versed in the use of "new media".

⁷⁰ Statista (2020), p.5

⁷¹ Statista (2020), pp. 5

3 Comparable platforms

3.1 Instagram

Instagram is an app released in October 2010⁷² and developed by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger.⁷³ The app quickly became a success and was able to register twelve million users after one year after its release.⁷⁴ In the same year, Instagram was named app of the year by the American technology company Apple. Only two years after the release of Instagram, the app was bought by Facebook for \$1 billion. Just like TikTok, the app is free and downloadable for both android and iOS.⁷⁵

The social network, which can only be accessed by registered users, specializes in sharing images and videos with the entire world and its followers. These can be edited with different effects and can be hashtagged when posted.⁷⁶ The videos can be up to 60 minutes.⁷⁷ The reaction to posts is through likes, comments, and sharing the posts. The main screen when opening the app is the own feed, where the posts and stories of the followed people advertisements are displayed.⁷⁸ As with TikTok, the profile can be set to private on Instagram, so that follower requests must first be approved by the user. After that, the new follower can see the posted content of a user. The minimum age for using the platform is 13 years unless the specified minimum age in the respective country and region says otherwise.⁷⁹

In addition to images and videos, Instagram's content formats include stories. Since 2016, users can share a post in the form of a video or photo with their followers for 24 hours, which automatically deletes after the time has elapsed.⁸⁰ Meanwhile, posts from other public Instagram users can be shared in the story too.⁸¹ Another content format are reels. Here, users can create and discover short videos. The reel can be edited with effects before uploading and add audio. With a private profile, the reel is only

⁷² Instagram (2010)

⁷³ Instagram (2011)

⁷⁴ Instagram (2011)

⁷⁵ Mortsiefer, H. (2012)

⁷⁶ Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (bpb) (2019), pp.20

⁷⁷ Meta (2023c)

⁷⁸ Bpb (2019), pp.20

⁷⁹ Instagram (2022)

⁸⁰ Instagram (2016)

⁸¹ Instagram (2018)

shared with the followers, but with a public profile, the reel reaches the explorer area of the entire Instagram community. Just like a feed post, reels can be liked, commented, and shared with users or in the story.⁸² Also, reels are played in an endless loop.⁸³

Other features of Instagram include DMs which were introduced shortly after Instagram was acquired by Facebook. Here, one can send both photo and video messages in addition to text messages. Later, voice memos were added.⁸⁴ In addition, one can open a livestream where subscribers see what one is filming in real time - for example, one's location and activity in that very moment. The stream can last up to an hour and viewers can respond with comments and likes. The feature extends by teaming up with viewers or other creators and opening a virtual event together. Afterwards, the livestream can be downloaded and posted on the account.⁸⁵

The algorithm on Instagram considers three factors the most when displaying content on a user's homepage. First, it looks at the user's relationship with the creator of the post. The more interaction the user has with the creator, for example, leaving messages or comments, the higher the post will be ranked. The interests of the user are acknowledged too. Here, one can look at the interaction of the user concerning the content, whether it is liked or commented on. Another influential factor is the relevance of a post, in which the platform determines trending topics and then declares the content as relevant or not. The topicality of the post plays a role here as well.⁸⁶

Based on the other criteria for the homepage algorithm, Instagram determines how likely one is to act with the displayed content. Information such as likes, location and time of the post are evaluated to determine the popularity and relevance of the post. In addition, the platform tracks profile views from the user to see which creator might be perceived as interesting.⁸⁷

The advertising options on Instagram are diverse, so different ad formats can be integrated almost seamlessly into the user experience. It is important to note that to

⁸² Instagram (2020b)

⁸³ Instagram Business Team (2021)

⁸⁴ Instagram (2013)

⁸⁵ Meta (2023a)

⁸⁶ Mosseri, A. (2021)

⁸⁷ Mosseri, A. (2021)

advertise on Instagram, it is mandatory to have a Facebook page and a Facebook company account in addition to the Instagram account. After that, the Instagram account can be linked to both pages and the advertising can be placed.⁸⁸

Since Instagram and Facebook both belong to Meta, they offer the same advertising options for both platforms.

Up Front, one can place Photo Ads. These consist of an image including a call-to-action button and associated text. Facebook itself recommends using meaningful product images or attention-grabbing pictures.⁸⁹

Story Ads are displayed between organic story posts in full-screen mode and can have different formats like a video or photo. However, they can appear for longer than 24 hours. With the swipe-up function in the story ads, one can redirect users directly to a landing page.⁹⁰

With Video Ads, one can create short videos that last up to 10 minutes, which can be placed in many areas on the platforms, for example, in the feeds or stories.⁹¹ A subcategory is Slideshow Ads, which consist of video-like templates such as still images or text data with background sound or animation. This format can be used, for example, to simplify the presentation of a process. Slideshow Ads are characterized by their short loading time and are thus loaded and displayed on the respective end devices even at low connection speeds.⁹² Another sub format for mobile Video Ads is Poll Ads. The video is linked to a Poll with two possible answers. Poll Ads give companies the opportunity to get in touch with users and ask them about their preferences and feedback on their products.⁹³

There are also Lead Ads. These ads have an integrated form function called Instant Forms. With their help, users can be asked to sign up, for example for your program or newsletter. These lead ads can be created on Facebook and played on both Facebook and Instagram.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Meta (2022c)

⁸⁹ Meta (2022q) / Meta (2022s)

⁹⁰ Meta (2022v)

⁹¹ Meta (2022w)

⁹² Instagram Business Team (2016) / Meta (2022u)

⁹³ Meta (2022d)

⁹⁴ Meta (2022b)

For advertising with more than one medium, Carousel Ads are a suitable option. Here, up to ten videos and images are displayed and swiped through in one advertising unit. For example, the Carousel Ad can show several products, tell a story step by step or display a panoramic image. Through a call-to-action link, users can go directly to the purchase page for the displayed products.⁹⁵

For Collection Ads, which are displayed only on mobile devices, one selects one main video or main image, which can be supplemented with up to four smaller images or videos in a grid-like layout. This way, the product can be presented and shown how they are used in action. Collection Ads are particularly suitable for digitizing classic catalogs and advertising materials. They can provide a call-to-action link, which leads the viewer directly to the purchase process.⁹⁶

Reel Ads use videos in portrait format length up to 30 seconds. These are displayed within "Reels," the associated Meta profile, and in the Explore section. In the Reels tab, the ads appear between organic reels and can be commented on, liked, saved, and shared, just like conventional reels.⁹⁷

Another way to expand one's advertising is to add Instant Experience (IE). This is possible for example with video, image, and carousel ads. For Facebook, users can click on these ads so that the IE opens in full format. The advantage is that users do not have to leave the Meta platforms and still land on their landing page with content from the brand.⁹⁸ IEs can also be linked together, giving users access to even more quickly landed mobile content.⁹⁹ Although this ad format is also offered for Instagram, the IE is not clickable.¹⁰⁰

In addition, there is the possibility to advertise Branded Content on the platforms. This usually goes hand in hand with marketing through influencer, as brands can look for advertising ambassadors who promote their products and label this as advertising. This way, advertising can be easily integrated in the form of a posts, stories, or reels.¹⁰¹ However, Instagram does not offer a marketplace like TikTok to find suitable influencers; companies need to search for influencers themselves.

⁹⁵ Meta (2022h)

⁹⁶ Meta (2022i) / Meta (2022j)

⁹⁷ Instagram Business Team (2021) / Meta (2022e)

⁹⁸ Meta (2022n)

⁹⁹ Meta (2022r)

¹⁰⁰ Meta (2022k)

¹⁰¹ Instagram Business Team (2019) / Meta (2022g)

An ad format exclusively on Instagram is an advertisement for the store, called Instagram Shop. Linked products in posts or stories lead to the Shop and where they can be bought directly on the platform.¹⁰² In the tab of the Shop, one will find a product catalog of various brands that have been selected by Instagram, based on personal interests.¹⁰³ It is also possible to use Influencers to market products.

At the end of 2022, Instagram recorded approx. 29 million monthly active users, of which 31.7% belong to Gen Z while fewer users belong to the Millennials, namely 29.8%. In addition, 29.3% make up the percentage of Generation X.¹⁰⁴ Members of Gen X were born in the years 1965 to 1979.¹⁰⁵ They are “Digital Immigrant” in terms of technology as they grew up when technological advancements were on the rise.¹⁰⁶

3.2 Facebook

The social medium Facebook was founded in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg with his fellow students Dustin Moskovitz, Eduardo Saverin and Chris Hughes, who acted as co-founders.¹⁰⁷ They pursued the goal of creating a platform with Facebook so that people could communicate more efficiently with their environment.¹⁰⁸ After integrating the platform at various universities¹⁰⁹, Facebook managed to generate one million active users in the same year.¹¹⁰ Gradually, Facebook evolved and after its first world-wide-web appearance, it was available as an application in 2008.¹¹¹ In 2012, Facebook bought Instagram for a record of one billion US dollar. In addition, the instant messaging service WhatsApp is part of the Meta Group since 2014, as has the virtual reality hardware manufacturer Oculus VR.¹¹²

On Facebook, every user has a profile page, and here, too, registration is necessary. On this page, one can share information about oneself and upload status messages in

¹⁰² Instagram (2020a)

¹⁰³ Mosseri, A. (2020)

¹⁰⁴ Napoleoncat (2023)

¹⁰⁵ Unicum (2023)

¹⁰⁶ Statista (2020), pp.25

¹⁰⁷ Kirkpatrick, D. (2010), p.35

¹⁰⁸ Kirkpatrick, D. (2010), pp.150

¹⁰⁹ Kirkpatrick, D. (2010), p.37

¹¹⁰ Kirkpatrick, D. (2010), p.103

¹¹¹ Kirkpatrick, D. (2010), pp.280

¹¹² Kluska, C. (2021)

form of texts, photos, and videos.¹¹³ The videos can be from medium to 240 minutes long.¹¹⁴ Uploads can be shared publicly or made private, for example, only for oneself or a certain group of people. Visitors can leave messages on the profile that are visible to the public or only to their friends or publish comments on the profile owner's own posts.¹¹⁵ Alternatively to public messages, users are able to send each other personal messages or chat. Posts are displayed on the newsfeed, which shows not only the latest posts from one's network, but also from public profiles or company pages that one subscribed to or liked. This creates a personal stream of news. Moreover, groups can be set up for common areas of interest, and friends can be invited to events. The platform also offers online games.¹¹⁶ The minimum age to create a Facebook profile is 13¹¹⁷ and as with the other social media channels compared, Facebook offers the option of making the profile private.¹¹⁸

The main content format besides the status posts is Facebook Reels. Facebook Reels became accessible to the entire world in February 2022. This includes the "Remix" feature, which allows users to create their own video based on an existing and publicly shared video. The remix can contain both parts of the video and the entire video. For this purpose, Facebook published the monetization of the short videos up that are up to 60 seconds long, whereby this option was subsequently expanded after initially three test countries.¹¹⁹

In addition, Facebook released the "Facebook Stories" in 2017. These have the same features as the stories on Instagram, meaning one can upload both photos and videos and they are viewable for 24 hours.¹²⁰

For the algorithm of the "feed", which is the home page on Facebook, the platform has named three main criteria that determine the order of posts. Firstly, the author plays a role, as content is more likely to be displayed by creators with whom the user interacts the most, such as friends or companies. Secondly, the type of content is also relevant.

¹¹³ Bpb (2016), pp.37

¹¹⁴ Meta (2023b)

¹¹⁵ Bpb (2016), pp.37

¹¹⁶ Weinberg, T. (2014), pp. 223

¹¹⁷ Bpb (2016), p.10

¹¹⁸ Bpb (2016), pp.25

¹¹⁹ Meta (2022o)

¹²⁰ Hayes, C. (2017)

For example, videos are displayed if one has reacted to them more often and vice versa. The third factor is the popularity of a post - the more interactions a post already has, the more likely it is to appear in the feed of others.¹²¹

The Ads Manager in Facebook is necessary for publishing and then managing sponsored content. To control the advertising as targeted as possible, the platform offers a variety of ads.¹²² Since the advertising options mentioned in the above chapter apply to Instagram and Facebook, only exclusive ads to Facebook are listed below.

One special feature offered by Facebook is the Audience Network (AN). This enables the expansion of ads through a catalog of external apps and websites, where the campaigns are played. This increases both the target group and the reach, since the AN reaches people regardless of where they are online.¹²³

The Messenger Ads are displayed between messages in the "Facebook Messenger" tool. Clicking on the ad takes the user to a detailed view containing a call-to-action link.¹²⁴ This advertising format is well suited to increase reach of almost one billion users in the Facebook Messenger.¹²⁵

Moreover, there are Playable Ads, an interactive advertising format that is displayed only on mobile devices and in Audience Network. Therefore, these ads are particularly appealing to providers of smartphone games. The format consists of three parts, where first a demo video is played. Afterward, one can try the game. After trying the demo version, if the user is still interested, one can click on a call-to-action link to install the game.¹²⁶

Event Ads can be used to advertise a (virtual) event that was previously created on Facebook. Among other, it is possible to receive acceptances and cancellations and sell tickets via the ad.¹²⁷

¹²¹ Meta (2022p)

¹²² Meta (2022l)

¹²³ Meta (2022m)

¹²⁴ Meta (2022f)

¹²⁵ We are social, Hootsuite (2022), p.170

¹²⁶ Meta (2022t)

¹²⁷ Meta (2022a)

Facebook is the most popular social medium in Germany, with approx. 43 million active members in December 2022. The platform is increasingly used by Gen X. Here, Gen X represented a total of 34.8% of users. Millennials are in second place with a clearer gap of 27.1%. The third-largest user group belongs to Gen Z with 22.8%.¹²⁸

3.3 The key differences of the platforms

The following table illustrates the main differences between the platforms.

Criteria	TikTok	Instagram	Facebook
Year of release	2016	2010	2004
Number of users per month in Germany	15 million	29 million	43 million
Main target groups	Gen Z, Millennials	Gen Z, Millennials	Gen X, Millennials
Content format	-TikToks (Videos) (10 minutes) -Stories	-Post (Pictures and videos (60 minutes)) -Stories -Reels (Videos)	-Post (Texts, pictures, and videos (240 minutes)) -Stories -Reels (Videos)
Platform focus	-Video	-Picture and video	-Text, picture, and video
Algorithm	-Based on individual interest	-Based on content popularity	-Based on content popularity
Ad Manager formats	-In-feed ads -Branded Hashtag Challenge -Takeover Ads -TopView -Branded Effects	-Photo Ads -Story Ads -Video Ads -Poll Ads -Lead Ads -Slideshow Ads -Carousel Ads	-Photo Ads -Story Ads -Video Ads -Poll Ads -Lead Ads -Slideshow Ads -Carousel Ads

¹²⁸ Napoleoncat (2023)

		-Collection Ads -Reel Ads -Instant Experience -Branded Content	-Collection Ads -Reel Ads -Instant Experience -Branded Content
Additional ad formats	-TikTok Creators Marketplace	-Instagram Shop	-Audience Network -Messenger Ads -Playable Ads -Event Ads

Table 1: Main differences between the platforms

Looking at the differences above, the first thing to notice is that Facebook is the most used platform. This is due, among other things, to the fact that it was founded earlier and that there are more older people in the world due to demographic change. Since this audience falls into the target group of Facebook, it is natural that statically speaking, Facebook is in the first place.

The main content formats differ as well. TikTok is an almost exclusively video-based platform since its launch. Instagram started with images and gradually introduced video formats in posts, stories, and reels. Facebook, on the other hand, was initially focused on text in the form of status messages. There are options to post status messages containing videos and photos. After the acquisition of Instagram, Facebook also added stories and reels to its main content formats.

Along with this comes the different content focus. TikTok content focuses on music, dance, and other forms of creative expression. Instagram is a more universal social media platform with a stronger focus on visual aesthetics and personal branding. Facebook, however, is a more general-purpose social media platform allowing users to share a wide variety of content. Because TikTok and Instagram are based on videos and images, it is a comparatively a creative place. On Facebook, a lot can be expressed as text. Channels like Instagram and Facebook rely primarily on the network of users. When opening the apps, the content of the users one follows is displayed first. TikTok, on the other hand, puts an individual video selected by the algorithm in the foreground.

Looking at the platform's algorithms, one sees that Instagram and Facebook are more geared towards the public due to their prioritization. Clicks and interactions influence the distribution of content implying interests to the preferences of individual users. TikTok deviates from this arithmetic as the algorithm selects videos specific to a user's interest groups.

Concerning the ad managers, the Meta Manager for Instagram and Facebook is larger and more complex. According to experts, the size of the manager could be overwhelming.¹²⁹ This could involve taking more time to understand the program, learn the meaning of individual ads and how to control the manager.

3.4 Interim conclusion

All platforms released different features over the years. These are similar and to give an overview of the features mentioned, the following timeline was created including the added features and the release dates.

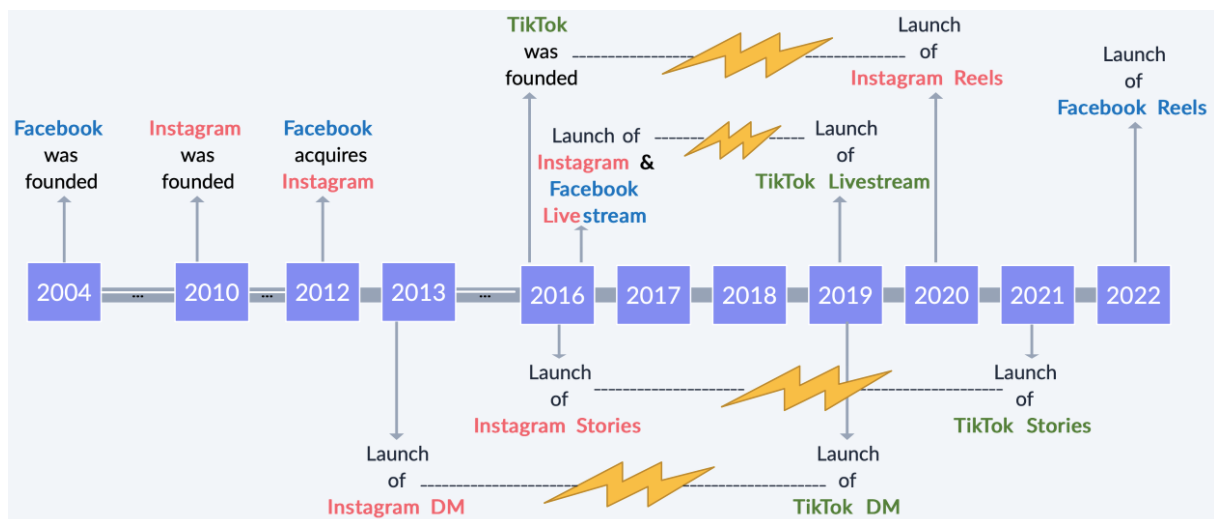


Figure 2: Timeline of the platforms' releases¹³⁰

The above timeline includes the years the platforms and the related features were released. The lightning bolts appear when the same feature went live but on another platform. There is no lightning bolt between the releases of the reels on Instagram and

¹²⁹ Lenzer, J. (2022)

¹³⁰ Own illustration

Facebook, as these platforms are now part of the Meta Group and are no longer in direct competition. Looking at the timeline, one can assume that some functions have been copied – Instagram's Reels might base on TikTok's, TikTok in turn released the Story feature later than Instagram, and since Facebook is the oldest platform, one could argue that the Like-button was adopted on the other two platforms. Whether copied or adapted, Facebook and Instagram must have noticed that short videos are a success, which is why the integration of these must take place to continue to be competitive.

Overall, TikTok has become relevant nowadays because it offers a unique and engaging way for people to share and discover content. The platform's short video format and focus on music and creativity make it particularly popular with younger users, who have the freedom to express themselves and connect with others. Additionally, TikTok's algorithms can help to amplify content, meaning it has the potential to reach a wide audience quickly. This can make it a powerful tool for users to share their ideas and messages with the world, and for businesses to reach and engage with their target audiences. TikTok is developing into a shopping platform, which is made clear by its community commerce goal. This creates an opportunity for brands to market their vision and products, as the platform can be used for both online marketing and e-commerce. Overall, TikTok's popularity and relevance can be attributed to its ability to provide an engaging platform for creativity and self-expression.

4 Indicators of success on TikTok

4.1 Communicating via benchmark campaigns

Benchmarking is a continuous evaluation process of products and services concerning the achievement of best performances, success, or quality criteria points. The aim is to identify differences and their reasons for improving them. Benchmarking is understood to be predominantly competition-oriented. Benchmarks represent the comparative value obtained in the benchmarking process.¹³¹

There are a few key elements to consider when structuring a benchmark campaign. For one, the time frame for the benchmark campaign should be identified. It could be a specific period, such as a month or a quarter, or it could be ongoing. Also, one must identify metrics to be tracked and compared. These might include reach, engagement, or other relevant metrics to the business and SMM goals. Furthermore, competitors or industry standards must be selected to be compared. A direct competitor could be a company in the same industry and a similar target audience. The data collection is relevant as well. Here, one can collect the ways in which one can collect data for the benchmark campaign. This might involve using social media analytics tools, surveys, or other methods to gather the necessary data. Once the data is complete, it must be analyzed to see how the performance compares to the other competitors or industry standards. Then, the areas where the company is outperforming, or underperforming will stand out so that one can use this information to improve marketing efforts.¹³²

Some specific reasons why benchmarking is essential in marketing include identifying best practices. Benchmarking allows companies to determine what strategies and tactics are working well for competitors and others in the industry. Therefore, benchmarks can contribute to the marketing efforts.

Benchmarking also helps to understand what is possible and reasonable to achieve. It allows setting realistic and achievable goals rather than unrealistic goals that may be difficult or impossible to achieve.

¹³¹ Spendolini, M. J. (1992), pp. 8

¹³² Spendolini, M. J. (1992), pp. 167

In addition, benchmarking provides a way to track progress over time and see how efforts are paying off. Comparing current to past performance, one can see how the strategy is evolving and what is not working.

By benchmarking, one can identify areas for improvement relative to your competitors or industry standards. It helps to focus efforts in the areas that will influence the company's success.¹³³

The above benefits can be applied to benchmarking in the social media area. Brands should compare themselves to competitors to see if efforts are paying off and how to learn from the best performer in the industry. Here, it is possible to distinguish the considered metrics. For example, published posts, follower growth, mentions, and comments are quantitative metrics measured by a slope. On the other hand, metrics like engagement, conversion, and retention-rate rather measure the quality of the interaction and how those changes depend on the content. These metrics are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Before uploading the first videos, companies can familiarize themselves with the platform and see whether their competitors or comparable companies are already producing videos. Thus, companies get an idea of which content TikToks contain and how it is received by users. This makes it easier to determine the structure of future campaigns and whether an account will be worthwhile.

4.2 Selection criteria

TikTok offers the possibility to upgrade the account to the TikTok Pro version. It allows account holders like companies and CCs to access analytics data divided into Overview, Content, and Followers.¹³⁴

In the "Overview" section, one can view the profile performance retrospectively within the last seven or twenty-eight days. The performance includes the video views, the number of followers, and the profile visits. The "Content" section gives the account holder an overview of the videos from the past seven days and whether one of the videos is currently trending. With a click on one of the videos, the numbers for the

¹³³ Spendolini, M. J. (1992), pp. 22

¹³⁴ TikTok (2019c)

following KPIs are shown: Likes, comments, shares, total play times, total views, and average watch time. The insights about the traffic source tell whether viewers came to the video through their FYP, search, hashtags, sounds, or the visit on the profile. In addition, the origin of the users who viewed the video is displayed. In the "Followers" section, account holders can view demographic information about their followers, such as gender. Usage habits on TikTok are also shown, such as which videos or sounds the viewers have called up in advance.¹³⁵ Based on these findings, a creator could derive his strategy for his content.

The above KPIs can be inserted into formulas to be compared for a set period. The engagement rate (ER) is the metric that analyzes content on social platforms and any other content. A high ER indicates the quality and popularity of the content, so the higher the metric, the better the content. Measuring interactions is an important part of competitor analysis. Also, the ER enables a comparison between small and large companies through the key figure. It shows the development of the content by displaying how many people interact with the content in proportion to the reach.¹³⁶

Two formulas to calculate an ER are, for example:¹³⁷

$$x = \frac{\text{number of likes} + \text{number of comments}}{\text{numbers of followers}} \times 100$$

or

$$x = \frac{\text{number of likes} + \text{number of comments} + \text{number of shares}}{\text{numbers of followers}} \times 100$$

The above calculations show that engagement includes various interactions. Nevertheless, it is necessary to look at them individually to determine whether the engagement rate makes sense for the brand's strategy. Although the number of followers is significant, not all followers will necessarily see the content. On the other

¹³⁵ TikTok (2020c)

¹³⁶ Sehl, K. (2021)

¹³⁷ Sehl, K. (2021)

hand, some non-followers will see the content. Weighing likes and shares, sharing is more significant since the sharer is considered a multiplier. A like comes from one viewer only and takes less time than sharing the content. Regarding time and effort, a comment is at the midpoint as it does not serve as a multiplier but brings more interaction with the content than one like.¹³⁸

The reach is about determining the number of individual users reached with a post or campaign. Different from impressions, the latter measures how often a post was seen. It also happens that users see one post more than once. For example, seeing the post ten times equals ten impressions but only a single point in the range. Reach is a good KPI if the aim is to increase brand or company awareness. It can also be used as a key figure in various benchmark campaigns to compare their performance.¹³⁹

A conversion or end action is an executed action. Examples of a conversion would be when a prospective customer of a product registers for a newsletter, clicks on a link, or purchases the product. To measure the cost efficiency of the conversion, the cost-per-action (CPA) can be calculated. It takes the amount spent on the campaign and divides it by the number of conversions. For obtaining accurate figures, it is crucial to clearly define the campaign's goal to focus on a specific conversion.¹⁴⁰

According to experts, another important key figure is the retention rate. In the context of TikToks and reels, retention indicates how long a user watches the content. It has a positive influence watching videos to the end. Thus, the video is rated as important and gets pushed into the algorithm. The retention rate shows how the content performs and is accepted.¹⁴¹

4.3 Best practices

In the following, three companies are highlighted, each with a concrete example of how brand communication via TikTok was carried out. To measure success, the ER is used, as an external viewer has no insight into internal KPIs such as reach or retention. Also,

¹³⁸ AMZ-Marketing (2023)

¹³⁹ Roch, M. (2019)

¹⁴⁰ Roch, M. (2019)

¹⁴¹ Lenzer, J. (2022) / Oesterle, J. (2022)

the calculation refers to the second formula since the inclusion of the additional component, namely the number of shares, provides a more accurate rate. The figures used for the calculations refer to the status of the respective access date of the source.

4.3.1 Guess

The fashion brand GUESS is the first brand to launch a Branded Hashtag campaign on TikTok in the United States of America.¹⁴² With the hashtag #InMyDenim, users should tell a little story in which they showed themselves unfinished at the beginning to appear in a ready-made style at the end. The special feature was that users who opened the app during the 6-day campaign were forwarded directly to the campaign landing page. The campaign includes the song "I'm A Mess" by Bebe Rexha.¹⁴³ As support, the brand engaged well-known influencers @ourfire with a reach of 2.3 million followers (Stand of September 4th 2018) and @madison_willow with a reach of 983,000 followers (Stand of September 4th 2018).¹⁴⁴

In this case, Guess has launched a branded hashtag campaign with the help of influencers and a selected sound. By introducing the campaign directly with a song, the brand can establish a trend in this context and make it easier to imitate the challenge with the appropriate song. Influencers also increase the probability that more attention will be drawn to the campaign because of their existing reach

In the following, the ER of the #InMyDenim post of Guess and the cooperating Influencer is calculated to contrast.

Post from @Guess in cooperation with @madison_willow:¹⁴⁵

$$ER = \frac{40,600+319+539}{983,000} \times 100 = 4.22\%$$

Post from @ourfire:¹⁴⁶

$$ER = \frac{433,100+5,351+6,322}{2,300,000} \times 100 = 19.34\%$$

¹⁴² Williams, R. (2018)

¹⁴³ Brybe (2020)

¹⁴⁴ Williams, R. (2018)

¹⁴⁵ McGrane, A. (2019)

¹⁴⁶ Brybe (2020)

During the campaign, Guess could encourage 5,550 users to create their own version of the video idea. In total, they reached 10.5 million video views and added over 12k followers to their corporate account. The ER of the brands' account totaled 14.3%.¹⁴⁷

4.3.2 Congstar

The second example is Congstar, a German mobile phone company. As a pioneer of other mobile operators, they already had a TikTok account in 2019.¹⁴⁸ In the summer of 2022, Congstar called a campaign called "Ehrlich #stehtdir" with the included hashtag, which translates to "Honestly #suitsyou". The campaign's message is to provide authentic and personal insights into a person's life. Interviewees talk about challenges they have faced in their everyday lives and how they have dealt with them. Others gave behind-the-scenes glimpses of shooting videos.¹⁴⁹

For this, well-known CCs like @kenn2go (2.4M followers, Stand of November 10th 2022) promoted videos to the hashtag on their profile, where they put a branded effect designed like a game. This was all about "capturing good vibes and dodging bad vibes".¹⁵⁰ Congstar also pulled in other creators to collaborate and promote the collaboration on their channel, like @memira.x (3.6M followers, Stand of November 10th 2022) and @emiirbayrak (5.8M followers, Stand of November 10th 2022). Moreover, Street surveys were conducted in which interviewees were asked personal questions about their relationship with each other.¹⁵¹ The benefit for customers was getting more data volume within two all-net flat plans until August 31st 2022 at no extra charge.¹⁵²

Congstar used a Branded Hashtag Challenge as an advertising means. The company supported the challenge with influencers giving them the opportunity to increase their reach not only through hashtags but also through the awareness of the influencers.

¹⁴⁷ Brybe (2020)

¹⁴⁸ Gaska, K., Folten, M. (2022)

¹⁴⁹ Congstar (2022a)

¹⁵⁰ Gaska, K., Folten, M. (2022)

¹⁵¹ Gaska, K., Folten, M. (2022)

¹⁵² Campillo-Lundbeck, S. (2022)

The combination with the branded effect allows interactive and playful content viewers can use.

Following is the calculated ER of a TikTok where street surveys were conducted as part of the campaign. Therefore, people were asked about the person that always had their back.¹⁵³

Post from @Congstar:¹⁵⁴

$$ER = \frac{36,300+63+52}{365,800} \times 100 = 9.95\%$$

The second ER also refers to TikTok on the Congstar account where different content creators talk about eating disorders.¹⁵⁵

Post from @Congstar:¹⁵⁶

$$ER = \frac{111,000+395+335}{365,800} \times 100 = 30.54\%$$

4.3.3 Kaufland

Another example comes from Kaufland, a German supermarket chain. In November 2021, they teamed up with Tim Hendrik Walter, known as “Herr Anwalt”. On his channel, he discusses law and answers questions from everyday life. His content style has already convinced 4.4 million users to follow him (Stand of November 2nd 2021).¹⁵⁷

In cooperation with Kaufland, the lawyer, who is always smartly dressed, first appears in a hip-hop style, trying to rap, which he perceives as unpleasant. Eventually, he drops the role and instead talks about the entry-level opportunities in various fields at Kaufland. He also highlights the benefits, such as above-average pay and opportunities for advancement.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ Gaska, K., Folten, M. (2022)

¹⁵⁴ Gaska, K., Folten, M. (2022)

¹⁵⁵ Congstar (2022b)

¹⁵⁶ Congstar (2022b)

¹⁵⁷ Kaufland (2021a)

¹⁵⁸ Birkner, H. (2021)

Instead of advertising a product, as Guess and Congstar did, Kaufland uses cooperation to draw users' attention to their job opportunities. So, they put benefits of the jobs into a video with a successful and, in this case, self-ironic CC on TikTok. Kaufland have used no other method here than influencer marketing.

This cooperation includes only one video, with the ER shown below.¹⁵⁹

Post from @Kauflanddeutschland:¹⁶⁰

$$ER = \frac{104,400+2054+2325}{746,900} \times 100 = 15,56\%$$

In 2021, the supermarket chain received the social media award for food retailing for the second time in a row for highest interaction within a year in its sector. This award clarifies that Kaufland is constantly managing to produce content tailored to the target groups and, in this case, to engage in employer branding in addition to brand awareness. Least also speaks for including Kaufland in TikTok's best practices campaigns.

4.4 Learnings

What stands out is that the aforementioned companies operate in different industries: Guess is a fashion brand, Congstar operates as a mobile phone worshipper, and Kaufland is a German supermarket chain. Nevertheless, the companies used TikTok trends such as Branded Hashtag Challenges and influencers and thus successfully addressed their target group on TikTok. Afterward, the companies can increase their brand awareness with further content and thus promote themselves in the long term.

In this context, the CC Herr Anwalt can profit as well. On his channel, he focuses almost exclusively on legal topics. Instead of copying trends and dances, he created his format with an intro where he addresses regular topics, which increases his recognition value. He combined advertising for Kaufland with his TikTok content, which

¹⁵⁹ Kaufland (2021b)

¹⁶⁰ Kaufland (2021b)

does not break his format. Through his format and sharing his knowledge, he also promoted himself and his law firm.

It can also be helpful to focus on recruiting via TikTok, as Kaufland did. Through their humorous cooperation, they achieved brand awareness and primary for their job opportunities.

The content and high engagement of Congstar's campaigns show that the TikTok community seems to celebrate not being perfect but authentic and honest. Looking at the campaigns of Guess and Kaufland, creative and humorous content is well received, too.

The examples also show how relevant TikTok CC can be for brands and companies since the ERs of the TikToks that include influencers have a higher engagement. CCs on TikTok bring a lot of knowledge and produce content tailored to the platform. Also, since CC already have a relationship with the community, they probably know how to better generate reach. Therefore, when planning a TikTok campaign, it might make more sense to work with TikTok CCs than with celebrities.

5 Critical view of the communication opportunities

5.1 Selection of the experts and interview method

The goal of the data collection combined with the theoretical content is to answer the following research question - "To what extent TikTok is another relevant component of the communication strategy for brands?". To answer this question, a qualitative approach is used in this work, as little scientific literature is available on this subject. Therefore, expert interviews were chosen as a method to gain new information and detailed knowledge about the platform and its function as a communication channel for companies. Practical insights and personal experience should help support the theoretical findings.

The virtual exchange platform "Zoom" was chosen to interview the selected experts as it allows for recording of each interview. The online option was the best choice for the interviews since the interviewees live in different cities in Germany. Therefore, it was more time and cost-efficient to conduct the interviews via Zoom, as both the interviewee and the interviewer could stay in their hometown. The interviews were conducted between December 9th to 22nd 2022 in German to avoid language barriers, as this is the native language of all interviewees. The questions were determined in advance and sent to the interviewees so that they could prepare their answers.

The first selection criterion required that employees of companies incorporate social media for communication purposes. Here, the company needed to publish content on TikTok regularly, i.e., that it has built up a reach whether through follower numbers or views. These can give them knowledge about processes and SMM management in their organization. To determine the right level of work experience and identify potential experts, the platform LinkedIn was used to acquire the experts.

First, general questions were asked to filter out the interviewee's expertise, the communication platforms of the company, and their success to-date. Through the TikTok-specific questions in the second part, factors for success on TikTok and best practices regarding content creation are established. The last questions were about future perspectives. The answers can help weigh the extent to which the platform retains its importance and whether it would still make sense for new companies to enter the market. The guideline is included in Appendix 1.

The guidelines for content creators differ from the objectives of the questions. The general questions provide information about their motivation for creating a profile on TikTok and the creator's viewership. In the TikTok-specific part, the questions revolved around content creation, its main components, and how promotional collaborations work. The answers provide insight into the advertising process and whether it is worthwhile for creators and companies to place ads. Finally, content creators were asked for their opinion on the future of TikTok and any potential disadvantages and risks in the evaluation. The CC was contacted through her management. The respective guideline is depicted in Appendix 2.

The first interviewee is Jonathan Oesterle, the Junior Manager in global social media for football at Puma. As a Content Manager, he manages, among others, the global channels for soccer. Prior to Puma, Mr. Oesterle worked at Adidas in the Global Brand Communication Team for the football segment. Thus, he has relevant knowledge in the field of SMM.¹⁶¹

The second person interviewed is Julian Lenzer. He has over ten years of experience in marketing. As the social media specialist at Red Bull, he works extensively on the cultural topics of dance and music and is responsible for the "Red Bull Rap 100" channels on Instagram and YouTube.¹⁶²

Hasti Shemirani, better known as @hastijuneee, has built up a remarkable reach of 1.4 million followers on TikTok (Stand of December 22nd 2022) within two years. On the platform, she entertains mainly with dance videos and has also placed advertisements. Therefore, she has extensive knowledge about the behavior on the platform and working with companies. However, she is not only a CC but, due to her year of birth in 2005, is also a representative of the Gen Z.¹⁶³

The respective interviews were conducted in the same order as shown in Appendix 3, 4 and 5.

¹⁶¹ Oesterle, J. (2022)

¹⁶² Lenzer, J. (2022)

¹⁶³ Shemirani, H. (2022)

The diversity of the interviewees' experience with the platform and their professional backgrounds made possible to look at different perspectives on the topic and consider them when evaluating this issue for this paper.

5.2 Content analysis on MAXQDA

After the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed using online tools such as Tucan or Trint. Due to the use of Anglicisms, all transcriptions were incorrect, which is why they were thoroughly checked afterwards. In addition, filler words which would have disturbed the reading flow, were removed from the transcription.¹⁶⁴

The structured qualitative content analysis according to Kuckartz was selected for the analysis. This is particularly suitable for topic-oriented analyses which must be provided with subcategories for more precise evaluation.¹⁶⁵ Subsequently, the transcripts were exported into MAXQDA. The computer-aided analysis tool allows marking within the text and coding certain topics. Due to the online editing, one can adjust the analysis as desired, which brings a high flexibility¹⁶⁶. After uploading, the interviews were read through again, important text passages were marked in advance and, where necessary, brief comments and initial analysis ideas were added.

Then, the formation of codes and subcodes proceeded, with the codes based on specific interview questions. For example, one question asked about important KPIs on TikTok, so the code was named accordingly. Sometimes multiple subcodes were created for a chapter to separate important aspects, such as with the inappropriate content. Here, the subdivision is important to show the extent of the content and to give concrete examples.

Text sections that did not fit any of the codes and were irrelevant to the study were not coded. Sections can also be labeled with more than one code if it relates to more chapters. Opinions held by more than one interviewee can be weighted in the analysis process to be marked as important. The complete coding system and an overview on analyzing the interviews is in Appendix 6 and 7.

¹⁶⁴ Kuckartz, U. (2018), pp.166

¹⁶⁵ Kuckartz, U. (2018), p.188

¹⁶⁶ Kuckartz, U. (2018), pp.174

MAXQDA automatically stores the text sections in the respective code folder after assigning them to a code, making it possible to display only a specific code with its text sections by filtering the code.¹⁶⁷

5.3 Expert interviews' findings

5.3.1 Motives for using TikTok

Looking at the companies' motives for using TikTok, it is immediately apparent that the experts work with companies that created an account early on. They justify their early entry into new platforms with the potential opportunity for the platform to grow and for the company to build up its reach at an early stage.¹⁶⁸

Another motive is the ability to address target groups. Here, the interviews show that the target group has not changed regarding demographic data for either company. The age range of RedBull's target group is 18–34-year-olds, i.e., a mix of the older Gen Z representatives and most Millennials. Puma's target group is 13-39 years old meaning the brand also addresses Gen Z and Millennials to a larger extent.¹⁶⁹

Both companies are targeting Gen Z, which according to statistics, is the most represented.¹⁷⁰ Oesterle highlighted that it makes sense to use a platform on which this target group is largely represented. Shemirani also confirms that Gen Z makes up most of her audience.¹⁷¹

As noted in chapter 2.1, companies can use TikTok as a marketing tool by communicating via their profile or CCs. The interviewees described their experiences with the ad manager to be positive. It is considered inexpensive and, due to its small size in contrast to Meta ad Manager, is arranged clearly and is easy to use. In addition, companies do not have to create the content, for example, when cooperating with a CC, but can also sponsor a posted video via its link. The ad manager also receives positive feedback for this function. According to the experts, TikTok gears towards generating reach, whereby it can happen with advertising that other components, such

¹⁶⁷ Kuckartz, U. (2018), p.178

¹⁶⁸ Lenzer, J. (2022) / Oesterle, J. (2022)

¹⁶⁹ Lenzer, J. (2022) / Oesterle, J. (2022)

¹⁷⁰ Start.io (2023)

¹⁷¹ Oesterle, J. (2022) / Shemirani, H. (2022)

as likes, tend to fade into the background. Therefore, it is recommended that companies evaluate the use depending on strategic goals.¹⁷²

According to the CC, there are two common ways for cooperation; either CCs write to the desired brand themselves or via their managers or the brands contact the CCs. To simplify communication, companies can create a briefing by presenting their brand and values and outlining the key data of the product or brand to be promoted. They can, for example, provide the CC with their wishes and no-go's, after which the CC can decide whether to proceed with collaboration. Usually, brands also approve the content, meaning they control the content in the end.¹⁷³

Shemirani received split feedback. Thus, both positive and negative resonance can occur for CCs and the corresponding brands. If the CC is well-known, the negative resonance may even disappear or, at least, be limited.¹⁷⁴ Since the ad manager was solely rated as positive, it would be advisable for brands to try it if they are interested in an in-app ad creation. A cooperation with CCs can be designed in different ways and is particularly striking as they are quite simple to manage.

Apart from that, other advantages of TikTok were mentioned by the experts. First, Shemirani refers to TikTok's setup with the FYP. By having all videos play on the FYP, brands potentially always can reach their customers. Similarities in both feel and format can make it easier for customers to produce content and play it. In addition, the principle of virality can have great advantages, as reach is not solely dependent on brand awareness.¹⁷⁵ As an example, Oesterle mentions a cooperation with the soccer player Neymar: *"The shoe was visible for barely ten seconds and after he reposted it, we suddenly had almost 150 million views. You can't compare that to any other advertising medium, especially with such cheap production. It's definitely a platform with a lot of potential, not only to reach the target audience but also a high reach"*¹⁷⁶

To be successful, the content must be tailored to the target group. What this consists of is discussed in detail in the next subsection.

When identifying reasons for companies to use TikTok, motives of the beneficiaries and the target group need to be taken into consideration. It is important to understand

¹⁷² Lenzer, J. (2022) / Oesterle, J. (2022) / Shemirani, H. (2022)

¹⁷³ Shemirani, H. (2022)

¹⁷⁴ Shemirani, H. (2022)

¹⁷⁵ Oesterle, J. (2022) / Shemirani, H. (2022)

¹⁷⁶ Oesterle, J. (2022), Quote from the interview translated into English (JO:32)

the target group and its characteristics and assess whether a company wants to address that specific target group at all.

Matching TikTok's mission, CC Shemirani agrees that she enjoys posting videos of herself because it is her passion, and she can remain authentic. Through her honest and entertaining videos, she managed to create a great reach in a very short time. Above all, the interpersonal aspect is not neglected on the platform: Both as a private person and as a CC, Shemirani values connecting, whether with other CCs or with the community. The former can have the advantage of recommending brands to each other for collaborations and the latter, for example, can protect against hate attacks and keep engagement on the channel high. One surprising statement was that within her circle of friends some use TikTok to research places or possibilities to livestream the last soccer World Cup. Shemirani confirms that the platform does not have to be used exclusively for entertainment, but she would not recommend it as a search engine or exclusively for educational purposes.¹⁷⁷ Yet, this trend is not unique to the CC's friends: In fact, more and more young people are using the platform to get information on various topics such as Covid or the climate change. However, when more scientific questions are entered into TikTok, there is a great risk of receiving false information. From a sample of 540 search results on 27 topics, almost one-fifth of all answers turned out to be wrong.¹⁷⁸ Despite or perhaps because of this misappropriation of TikTok, these findings point to the popularity and versatility of the platform and also its extensive use.

5.3.2 Avoidance of entanglement within social media channels

In addition to TikTok, Puma and RedBull use different platforms for their marketing strategy, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Discord, among others.¹⁷⁹ Although the key features of the platforms differ, they are undeniably similar in terms of their functions. Hence, the question arises to what extent one differentiates between the platforms when creating content or whether it would be possible to post uniform content across similar platforms.

To answer this question, the unique properties of TikTok are elaborated upon first. Then, the experts' recommendation as to whether universal content would be useful is

¹⁷⁷ Shemirani, H. (2022)

¹⁷⁸ Brewster et al. (2022)

¹⁷⁹ Lenzer, J. (2022) / Oesterle, J. (2022)

presented. To support this opinion, TikTok and the Meta platforms are compared to show certain differences. Finally, the KPIs are named with which it is possible to measure the quality of the content on TikTok.

In the context of the identified target group, the quality of engaging content is important as it encourages the user to consume additional content.

TikTok is a video platform, and even though photos to swipe can be uploaded, it is recommended to use the video format. Due to their maximum duration, the videos are kept short. The vertical format 9:16 is certainly the easiest to film with a cell phone, which already requires this format. According to the experts' experiences, low-key content performs better than elaborately produced content. Here, they strive to produce content that they expect to be well received by the audience. This speaks for authentic and creative content in the form of storytelling.¹⁸⁰ To improve content, all experts recommend imitating trends, such as challenges or sounds. A one-to-one imitation is not necessary since an individual modification of a trend can also lead to a positive reaction and popularity of the then-newly emerging trend.¹⁸¹ *"For example, you should include a wow effect at the beginning of a video so that when you appear on their FYP, people don't click away right away. At the end of the video, you should do something cool so that people watch the video again and like it"*, Shemirani advises.¹⁸² Lenzer and Oesterle consider the frequency of posting for their respective companies to be sufficient since both claim to post regularly. One advantage of TikTok is that the algorithms' settings of the FYP will not let followers to be spammed with the content of accounts they follow. However, this means a lower probability of appearing on a user's FYP when new posts are made, which is why the frequency must be kept consistently high.¹⁸³

Although it is theoretically possible to create universal content to advertise on all social media channels, it is not recommended either by experts or the platforms.

Due to the similar functions of the platforms, the created content can also be similar, for example, in the reels and TikTok format. Still, according to the experts,

¹⁸⁰ Lenzer, J. (2022) / Oesterle, J. (2022)

¹⁸¹ Lenzer, J. (2022) / Oesterle, J. (2022) / Shemirani, H. (2022)

¹⁸² Shemirani, H. (2022), Quote from the interview translated into English (HS:14)

¹⁸³ Lenzer, J. (2022) / Oesterle, J. (2022)

differentiations should be made. Oesterle comments, "*We've noticed that when TikTok content is posted on Instagram, people don't always get that kind of humor. If the video is trending on TikTok, most people already get the point if viewers are on both platforms. That's where you must be careful about adapting it.*"¹⁸⁴ Shemirani supports differentiating content statistics on different platforms to serve different categories. This would encourage the target groups to consume content on the respective platforms. The different content formats of the platforms will be beneficial for this.¹⁸⁵

A common example of using one format on multiple platforms is the uploading of TikToks as Reels, especially on Instagram. To counter this, Instagram has announced that videos originating from other services that are not taken specifically for the photo-sharing platform will no longer be highlighted frequently in the Reels tab. TikTok videos are usually marked with a logo when downloaded, so the algorithm will be programmed to recognize videos that already contain a logo or watermark and downgrade their importance.¹⁸⁶

Due to the experts' criticism and the limitations in the success of universal content on the part of the platform, it is not advised for companies to re-use content on other platforms.

According to the experts, the platforms differ as a means of communication for brands. Different target groups require different type of content, for example, Gen Z-ers are mainly engaged on TikTok, while Gen Z and Millennials are represented on Instagram. Therefore, a company focusing exclusively on Gen Z has a better chance of reaching them with the TikTok platform. While TikToks must include a large entertainment factor, experts experienced that this is not necessary on Instagram. There, a product spotlight in the form of images can be sufficient to create engagement.¹⁸⁷

At TikTok, they emphasize that success comes from understanding how the platform works and what content the audience wants to see. To be successful, one should stick to viral trends at best, while content on Instagram can be generic. That said, TikTok's algorithm is designed better than Instagram's for going viral. On the other hand, Instagram works better in relying on many followers seeing the content. It's harder to

¹⁸⁴ Oesterle, J. (2022), Quote from the interview translated into English (JO:21)

¹⁸⁵ Shemirani, H. (2022)

¹⁸⁶ DerStandard (2022)

¹⁸⁷ Lenzer, J. (2022) / Oesterle, J. (2022)

predict that with the FYP on TikTok, which means one must prove themselves anew with every video. Another advantage of TikTok is the timeliness of the platform. The experts have positive experiences in growing their community over time, whereas this growth is not likely to be achieved on older platforms, such as Twitter or Instagram. Shemirani adds that it is hard to get away from the platform once one starts using it. One video can quickly turn into hours spent on TikTok. She started to spend much longer on TikTok compared to using Instagram. The run of the platform is said to be very high, as it is growing daily in terms of creators. Shemirani shows that more and more creators are focusing on TikTok. There can be influencers with millions of followers on TikTok, but they might only have a few thousand followers on Instagram.¹⁸⁸

Regarding the ranking of the KPIs, the experts have different opinions. Both mention KPIs that can be extracted directly, such as likes, comments, shares, and views. Both mention followers and their growth as well. Still, these are of secondary importance as most of the content is played on the FYP. Due to the algorithm, it is also possible that some videos get less attention, which causes some posts to flop. This highlights the importance of views over the number of followers. Here, views go hand in hand with the retention rate, which indicates how long and whether a user has viewed the content until the end. In addition, to reach, impressions are used as an important KPI. Both experts spoke about the importance of engagement, which offsets the interactions against each other.¹⁸⁹

It must be mentioned that TikTok is a serious competitor for the Meta platforms, as they are ahead in categories of social media user behavior such as retention time. Here, with 95 minutes, the retention time on TikTok is almost twice longer than on Instagram and Facebook. The platform for short videos is also ahead of YouTube, a platform for all types of videos.¹⁹⁰ This context can be particularly important for companies because *"the longer people use an app, the more advertising they can see"*.¹⁹¹ In contrast to the other platforms, TikTok is almost a guarantee when it comes to displaying advertising that is actually seen. TikTok can show an engagement rate

¹⁸⁸ Lenzer, J. (2022) / Oesterle, J. (2022)

¹⁸⁹ Lenzer, J. (2022) / Oesterle, J. (2022)

¹⁹⁰ Chan, S. (2022)

¹⁹¹ Firsching, J. (2022)

for all videos of just under 6% in 2021, while the Meta platforms do not even reach 1% on a combined basis.¹⁹² This makes TikTok the most interactive social medium currently on the market.

5.3.3 Potential risks of TikTok as a communication channel

Even though TikTok is a platform that offers opportunities for both businesses and individuals, it also carries risks.

First, there is the risk of trademark infringement by the company. According to copyright law, a creator of a work is its author, who may determine the distribution of its content.¹⁹³ Consequently, music is protected by copyright, meaning brands cannot freely choose from music or film clips in TikTok trends and challenges.¹⁹⁴ In the case of the energy drink manufacturer Bang Energy, the company was sued for the third time for violating the copyrights of Warner Music and Sony Music, using music by licensed artists.¹⁹⁵ Therefore, companies must create their own or modified versions of a trend. RedBull, for example, uses AI to create a sound library with unlicensed sounds and dialogs like the trend sounds regarding content and BPM. Puma, on the other hand, counteracts the ban by using the accounts of sponsored soccer players for the trends since these are not affected by the ban as non-commercial accounts.¹⁹⁶

TikTok allows companies to carry out these infringements, as the platform does not block the sounds for company accounts.¹⁹⁷ A dissuasion can thus always threaten companies that are unaware of the rule. TikTok also refers to these rules with the advice to inform about regulations as posting content is everyone's responsibility.¹⁹⁸

Furthermore, from the perspective of the brands, there is a risk of loss of their investments since it is not possible to predict whether a campaign will achieve the desired success or not. Concerning KPIs, TikTok cannot provide accurate demographic data of the target audience. In addition, the analysis of the data can only

¹⁹² Cucu, E. (2022)

¹⁹³ TikTok (2023)

¹⁹⁴ Lenzer, J. (2022) / Oesterle, J. (2022)

¹⁹⁵ Brittain, B. (2022) / Lenzer, J. (2022)

¹⁹⁶ Lenzer, J. (2022) / Oesterle, J. (2022)

¹⁹⁷ Lenzer, J. (2022)

¹⁹⁸ TikTok (2022b)

involve users from 18 years old, which creates a gap considering that registrations on the platform are allowed starting from 13 years of age.¹⁹⁹

Following on from the last point, according to Shemirani, TikTok cannot check users' ages reliably. As a CC, Shemirani often encountered content from users under the specified age limit.²⁰⁰ *"But they've somehow managed to arrange it so that you don't hear much from them anymore [...]"*²⁰¹ - Here, Shemirani refers to content from minors and states that TikTok actively tries to filter this content.²⁰² In this context, this may be positive, but the platform is also accused of banning content that reflects badly on the government in China, the country in which the parent company Douyin is located. An example is the viral TikTok of an American woman, whose video draws attention to the Chinese city of Xinjiang where the Muslim minority population, the Uyghurs, are prosecuted. As a result, her account was suspended from the platform for a month. Her previous political content, for example about Osama bin Laden, has been removed occasionally in the past, but this is the first time that her account got blocked.²⁰³ The repression of content goes further as TikToks on Xinjiang are used specifically as propaganda to distract from the Uyghurs. There are official videos from the Xinjiang police account in which officers speak out faithfully to their homeland. What is striking is that these officers appear to be of Uyghur descent.²⁰⁴ There are also TikToks showing the more peaceful sides of Xinjiang, such as the landscape and costumes, rather than the concentration camps and detention centers where the Uyghurs are being held.²⁰⁵

According to the platform, content containing (sexual) abuse and violence in any form is not allowed to be uploaded. To prevent this, content is displayed with the warning that some users find the content disturbing. Nevertheless, TikTok does not keep up with filtering, meaning users can see violent, extremist, and obscene postings. As an active user, Shemirani could see these forbidden contents. Andrew Tate is cited as an example. Tate shared misogynistic and homophobic content in 2022, stating women

¹⁹⁹ Lenzer, J. (2022) / Oesterle, J. (2022)

²⁰⁰ Shemirani, H. (2022)

²⁰¹ Shemirani, H. (2022), Quote from the interview translated into English (HS:30)

²⁰² Shemirani, H. (2022)

²⁰³ Harwell, D., Romm, T. (2019)

²⁰⁴ Cockerell, I. (2019)

²⁰⁵ Cockerell, I. (2019) / Cockerell, I. (2020)

are not free to party in clubs or talk to the opposite sex. Here, it is noticeable that despite the deletion of his account, users could disseminate his content without them, or the content being blocked. These videos received enormous publicity getting liked millions of times. Even among the comments, sympathizers of his opinion found themselves together and reaffirmed their opinion.²⁰⁶

These inappropriate contents can lead to traumatization of the (underage) audience. From these points, one can conclude that TikTok does not follow the removal of this content and cannot protect the audience. Moreover, the censorship and removal of videos critical of the regime shows that the platform and its parent company are acting in their own interests and are concealing the oppression of the Uyghurs. This also shows that not all types of violations are punished in the same way. Companies may be criticized as they are operating on platforms that violate their regulations and cannot filter their content to protect viewers.

²⁰⁶ Pozarek, A. (2022) / Shemirani, H. (2022)

6 Recommendation and Outlook for brands

6.1 TikTok's management of user data

Another risk of TikTok is how the platform handles the data of its users. In 2020, former US President Donald Trump announced the banning of TikTok in the US. An executive order was introduced due to the suspicion that ByteDance would store the data of US citizens and that the Chinese government would have access to this data. TikTok would share terms of use with its parent company, which would access the platform to user data. In this context, the Senate has issued a ban prohibiting US politicians from installing TikTok on government-issued devices. An interesting anecdote is that the executive order was published on the same day as Facebook reels.²⁰⁷ One could assume the former US president wanted to refer to the American platform so that an alternative is directly in the frame.

TikTok reacted shocked at the executive order, saying they never shared user data with the Chinese government. The platform feels blindsided by the ban as it was not approved by the courts. TikTok also denies automatically deleting videos critical of the government.²⁰⁸ However, after Trump's term in office, his successor Biden issued the ban on TikTok and sanctions against nine other Chinese apps on the grounds the government first wanted to examine the national security risks posed by foreign apps.²⁰⁹

In the meantime, TikTok is taking several steps to regain the trust of the US. Therefore, the US Data Security Department is focusing on expanding data protection policies and protocols to strengthen the protection of user data in the US. They state that only a few people are part of the security team to minimize access to data. Still, due to the international nature and size of the business, different employees in different countries may have access to this data.²¹⁰

The accusation of data misuse has resurfaced recently. In 19 of the 50 US states, TikTok is at least partially banned. The states in question include Louisiana and West

²⁰⁷ Allyn, B. (2020)

²⁰⁸ TikTok (2020b)

²⁰⁹ Tagesschau (2021)

²¹⁰ Beckerman, M. (2022)

Virginia. A connection between the bans enacted in the states and the success of the Republican Party there is discernible.²¹¹

After, at Christmas time last year, ByteDance employees accessed the data of American journalists without permission. TikTok admitted to this accusation, and four employees got dismissed.²¹²

6.2 Outlook on TikTok as a communication channel

Based on the thesis findings, several reasons are found why a company should incorporate TikTok into its communication strategy.

TikTok is worthwhile for companies because they can achieve wide reach. The algorithms help to amplify content, meaning that it can reach a wide audience quickly, also potentially higher than on Instagram and Facebook. The latter assumption was recently underscored by CCs who say that their content and that of colleagues is doomed by Instagram's algorithms.²¹³ This is particularly useful for businesses looking to build awareness and drive engagement with their products or services. By creating content that resonates with users and showing their products or services, businesses can use TikTok to drive sales and conversions. Brand awareness can increase when the target audience is addressed and expanded appropriately to the platform. Companies need to adapt to the topicality and fast pace of TikTok, making it a good tool to stay up to date on the latest trends, both in terms of target audience and industry. Moreover, companies can get inspiration for their communications strategy outside of TikTok. The short video format and focus on music and creativity make it a great platform for creating engaging and entertaining content so that businesses connect with their audiences and build their reputation. TikTok is particularly popular with younger users and can be a powerful way for businesses to reach and engage with this demographic.

Regarding the target group, brands must necessarily specify. Depending on the product, the platform is suitable. In the B2C area, TikTok is mainly suitable for addressing Gen Z and, in the second move, Millennials as well. If the target group

²¹¹ Holland, M. (2022)

²¹² Dampz, N. (2022)

²¹³ Jibber with Jaber (2023)

differs, one can still market the brand on TikTok and collect sympathy points. Kaufland also shows that it can be helpful to communicate recruiting efforts on such a large platform. Yet, for distributing a product mainly tailored to Generation X or older, the platform Facebook, for example, would be more suitable than TikTok. Meanwhile, B2B would be rather difficult, as the platform is predominantly for entertainment and not for brokering business customers.

While TikTok is known for its focus on entertainment and creativity, it can be used for other purposes. So, it is not only a tool for marketing and brand promotion, but also to share the news. Furthermore, TikTok has been used by individuals to raise awareness about social issues and to connect with like-minded individuals around the world.

On TikTok, it is necessary to actively follow trends to be successful and generate reach. Therefore, internal capacity must be divided accordingly. It is also advisable to make creative content that is humorous and authentic. If a company wants to appear strictly serious or untouchable, TikTok would not be a suitable platform.

Brands must carefully consider the risks and benefits of using TikTok as a communication channel and take steps to mitigate any potential risks. The biggest threats appear to be trademark infringement and potential data breaches. Trademark infringement is particularly tricky since it can happen unintentionally and carry a lot of financial burdens. In the case of data misuse, company data such as account data, addresses, or other confidential data may be passed on to third parties, in this case, through TikTok or Douyin.

In the case of the latter, it must be remembered that TikTok is not the only social media platform criticized for data misuse. The Meta Group, with its subsidiaries Facebook and Instagram, has already been increasingly criticized for this issue.

Facebook's alleged biggest scandal occurred in 2018 when Facebook users filed a class action lawsuit over data misuse. Facebook violated several US federal and state laws by allowing app developers to access users' data for years without their consent. One of those companies was Cambridge Analytics (CA), a British political consulting firm, which had access to data of approx. 87 million users. These were used in Trump's 2016 presidential campaign to create voter profiles. To resolve this dispute, Meta offered a settlement of 725 million US dollars. This is the largest settlement amount to

date in a data breach litigation.²¹⁴ Concerning the scandal, Facebook announced six measures to protect their users' data. These included the company reviewing third-party apps that had access to the data and notifying users whose data had been leaked. Also, users are asked to disable data access from apps that have not been used in the last three months.²¹⁵

Despite the introduced measures, users' data were leaked again in 2021, triggered by a hacker attack. Therefore, private data such as telephone numbers, dates of birth and email addresses of around 533 million users were published. Although Facebook admitted that the data came from another leak in 2019 that has stopped, it was subsequently proven that the leaked data was current.²¹⁶ Following an investigation by the Irish Data Protection Commission, Meta was in breach of an article of the General Data Protection Regulation, which made the data leak possible. As a result, Meta received a fine of 265 million euros.²¹⁷

Shortly after the CA scandal, Instagram also dealt with allegations of data misuse. Instagram's verified advertising partner Hyp3r collected and stored data from users. According to Instagram's terms of use, it is not allowed to collect data in an automated way. However, the American marketing company collected the data using publicly available profiles. This lack and unreliable control on the part of the platform allowed Hyp3r to circumvent the rules. The company created a comprehensive profile database, including photos from stories that disappeared after 24 hours and locations.²¹⁸

The examples from the Meta Group show that the risk of data misuse goes hand in hand with all the popular social media networks. The risk concerning data misuse on the Meta platforms is the same as on TikTok, the differences in these cases are only the extent or the collectors of the data. Just because more data was stolen from Facebook in one case than from Instagram, it does not mean that more data cannot be stolen from Instagram in the next case. This also applies to TikTok. So, if companies do not want to take this risk, they would have to remove their profiles from all digital platforms, strictly speaking.

²¹⁴ Raymond, N. (2022)

²¹⁵ Meta (2018)

²¹⁶ Peters, F. (2021)

²¹⁷ Peters, F. (2022)

²¹⁸ Price, R. (2019)

According to the experts, SMM has gained another important channel with TikTok. However, TikToks' special features and USPs must be considered to communicate successfully on the platform. Also, it is important to remember that TikTok is just one of many social media platforms available, and it may not be the best fit for every business. It is crucial to carefully consider marketing goals and target audience when deciding which social media platforms to use as part of your marketing efforts. Likewise, it is important to assess the platform holistically. While virality is left to chance, one can influence how successful brand communication is via TikTok. One must adapt to the creativity and authenticity of the platform and thus, to the language of its biggest audience, Gen Z.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guidelines for employees of a company

Appendix 1.1: Guideline in German

Ziele

- ➔ Nutzungsmuster und Nutzungsmotive herausfinden
- ➔ Bedeutung und Einbettung von TikTok in das Social Media Marketing

Forschungsfrage

Ist TikTok ein zusätzliches wichtiges Element in der Kommunikationsstrategie einer Marke? Wenn ja, warum und wie?

- ➔ Experteninterviews zur Untermauerung der theoretischen Erkenntnisse

Informationen zum Interview

Experte:

Info zum Experten:

Position des Experten:

Datum, Uhrzeit:

Interviewende Person:

Kontakt für Rückfragen:

Vorwort

Vielen Dank, dass Sie sich Zeit genommen haben.

Das heutige Interview findet im Rahmen meiner Bachelorarbeit zum Thema „TikTok als Kommunikationsplattform für Brands“ statt. Ich möchte Sie unter anderem zu der Motivation des Unternehmens befragen, TikTok im Social Media Marketing einzubauen und wie Sie persönlich die Zukunft der Plattform bewerten würden.

Das Interview wird maximal eine Stunde dauern.

Darf ich das Gespräch aufzeichnen? Nach der Auswertung wird das Interview gelöscht.

Wenn Ihrerseits keine weiteren Fragen bestehen, würden wir jetzt mit dem Interview beginnen!

Fragen

Allgemein

- 1-Zunächst bitte ich Sie, etwas über Ihre berufliche Erfahrung im Bereich Marketing und Social Media zu erzählen.
- 2-Welche Plattformen benutzen Sie bisher für Ihre Kommunikationsstrategie?
- 3-Wie bewerten Sie den Erfolg Ihres Unternehmens auf den verschiedenen Plattformen und an welchen Kriterien machen Sie Ihren Erfolg fest?
- 4-Versuchen Sie mit verschiedenen Plattformen verschiedene Zielgruppen anzusprechen und wenn ja, welche konkret?

TikTok Spezifisch

- 5-Seit wann und warum betreiben Sie Marketing auf TikTok?
- 6-Wie hat sich der Unternehmensaccount auf der Plattform entwickelt und schätzen Sie Ihre bisherige Vermarktung als erfolgreich ein?
- 7-Welche Erfolgskennziffern sind für Sie bei TikTok besonders relevant und wie haben sich diese entwickelt?
- 8-Unterscheiden Sie bei der Contenterstellung zwischen den verschiedenen Plattformen und wenn ja, wie?
- 9-Welche Inhalte stellen Sie auf TikTok und wie sehr achten Sie dabei auf Trends?
- 10-Inwiefern hat sich Ihre Zielgruppe seit dem TikTok Auftritt verändert?

Weiterführende Fragen und Zukunftsaussichten

- 11-Nutzen Sie die Werbemöglichkeiten in dem Anzeigenmanager auf TikTok und können Sie diesen weiterempfehlen?
- 12-Was fehlt Ihnen für die Optimierung Ihrer Marketingstrategie auf der Plattform TikTok?
- 13-Werden Sie in Zukunft weiterhin auf TikTok kommunizieren und wenn ja, im gleichen oder höheren Ausmaß?

Appendix 1.2: Guideline in English

Goals

- ➔ Patterns of use, motives for use
- ➔ Importance and embedding of TikTok in social media marketing

Research question

Is TikTok an additional relevant element in a brand's communication strategy? If so, why, and how?

- ➔ Interviews to underline theoretical findings

Interview information

Expert:

Information about the expert:

Expert's position:

Date, Time:

Interviewer:

Contact for queries:

Foreword

Thank you very much for your time.

Today's interview is part of my bachelor thesis on "TikTok as a communication platform for brands". Among other things, I would like to ask you about the company's motivation for incorporating TikTok into social media marketing and how you would assess the platform's future.

The interview will take a maximum of one hour.

May I record the interview? After the evaluation, the interview will be deleted.

If there are no further questions on your part, we would start the interview now!

Questions

General

- 1-First, I would like you to share a little about your professional experience in marketing and social media.
- 2-Which platforms do you use for your communication strategy so far?
- 3-How do you evaluate your company's success on the different platforms, and what criteria do you use to determine your success?
- 4-Do you try to target different audiences with different platforms, and if so, which ones specifically?

TikTok Specific

- 5-Since when and why have you been marketing on TikTok?
- 6-How has the company account performed on the platform, and do you consider your marketing to date as successful?
- 7-What success metrics are most relevant to you on TikTok, and how have they evolved?
- 8-Do you differentiate between the various platforms on content creation, and if so, how?
- 9-What content do you put on TikTok, and how much do you pay attention to trends?
- 10-In what ways did your audience change since you started on TikTok?

Further questions and future perspectives

- 11-Do you use the advertising options in the ad manager on TikTok, and can you recommend it?
- 12-What are you missing to optimize your marketing strategy on the platform TikTok?
- 13-Will you continue to communicate on TikTok in the future, and if so, to the same or a higher extent?

Appendix 2: Interview guidelines for Content Creator

Appendix 2.1: Guideline in German

Ziele

- ➔ Nutzungsmuster und Nutzungsmotive herausfinden
- ➔ Bedeutung und Einbettung von TikTok in das Social Media Marketing

Forschungsfrage

Ist TikTok ein zusätzliches wichtiges Element in der Kommunikationsstrategie einer Marke? Wenn ja, warum und wie?

- ➔ Experteninterviews zur Untermauerung der theoretischen Erkenntnisse

Informationen zum Interview

Experte:

Info zum Experten:

Datum, Uhrzeit:

Interviewende Person:

Kontakt für Rückfragen:

Vorwort

Vielen Dank, dass du dir Zeit genommen haben.

Das heutige Interview findet im Rahmen meiner Bachelorarbeit zum Thema „TikTok als Kommunikationsplattform für Brands“ statt. Ich möchte dich unter anderem zu deiner Motivation befragen, Content auf TikTok zu veröffentlichen, für Unternehmen zu werben und wie du persönlich die Zukunft der Plattform bewerten würdest.

Das Interview wird maximal eine Stunde dauern.

Darf ich das Gespräch aufzeichnen? Nach der Auswertung wird das Interview gelöscht.

Wenn deinerseits keine weiteren Fragen bestehen, würden wir jetzt mit dem Interview beginnen!

Fragen

Allgemein

- 1-Wie bist du auf die Plattform TikTok gestoßen und warum hast du dich dafür entschieden, einen Account anzulegen?
- 2-Bist du noch auf weiteren Social-Media-Plattformen aktiv und wie ist dort deine Reichweite im Vergleich zu TikTok?
- 3-Wie begründest du deinen Erfolg auf TikTok und wie erklärst du dir die Unterschiede bezüglich deiner Reichweite auf den verschiedenen Plattformen?
- 4-Unterscheidet sich deine Zuschauerschaft auf den Plattformen und wenn ja, inwiefern?

TikTok Spezifisch

- 5-Unterscheidest du bei der Contenterstellung zwischen den verschiedenen Plattformen und wenn ja, inwiefern?
- 6-Welche Inhalte stellst du auf TikTok und wie sehr achtest du dabei auf Trends?
- 7-Du hast bereits Werbung auf TikTok für Unternehmen, wie AboutYou oder Spotify, gemacht. Bekommst du oft Werbeanfragen von Unternehmen und wie läuft der Prozess typischerweise ab?
- 8-Welche Vorgaben machen dir die Werbepartner und wollen die Werbepartner deinen Content vor Veröffentlichung freigeben?
- 9-Wie reagiert deine Community auf Werbung und fallen dir Unterschiede bei der Reaktion auf den verschiedenen Plattformen auf?
- 10-Was unterscheidet TikTok von anderen Social-Media-Kanälen für Content Creator und Unternehmen?
- 11-Hast du schon einmal Werbung im Anzeigenmanager von TikTok erstellt und wenn ja, kannst du diesen weiterempfehlen?

Weiterführende Fragen und Zukunftsaussichten

- 12-Ist TikTok deiner Meinung nach nur eine Plattform zur Unterhaltung und Weiterbildung?
- 13-Wie prognostizierest du die zukünftige Entwicklung der Plattform hinsichtlich seiner Creator und Zuschauer?
- 14-Gibt es auch etwas an TikTok, das du kritisch siehst?

Appendix 2.2: Guideline in English

Goals

- ➔ Patterns of use, motives for use
- ➔ Importance and embedding of TikTok in social media marketing

Research question

Is TikTok an additional relevant element in a brand's communication strategy? If so, why, and how?

- ➔ Interviews to underline theoretical findings

Interview information

Expert:

Information about the expert:

Expert's position:

Date, Time:

Interviewer:

Contact for queries:

Foreword

Thank you very much for your time.

Today's interview is part of my bachelor thesis on "TikTok as a communication platform for brands". Among other things, I'd like to ask you about your motivation for publishing content on TikTok, promoting companies, and how you personally would evaluate the future of the platform.

The interview will take a maximum of one hour.

May I record the interview? After the evaluation, the interview will be deleted.

If there are no further questions on your part, we would start the interview now!

Questions

General

- 1-How did you discover the platform TikTok and why did you create an account?
- 2-Are you active on other social media platforms, and how is your reach there compared to TikTok?
- 3-How do you explain your success on TikTok and the differences in your reach on the different platforms?
- 4-Does your audience differ on the platforms, and if so, how?

TikTok Specific

- 5-Do you differentiate between platforms regarding content creation, and if so, to what extent?
- 6-What content do you put on TikTok, and how much do you pay attention to trends?
- 7-You advertised on TikTok for companies such as AboutYou or Spotify. Do you often get advertising requests from companies, and how does the process typically work?
- 8-What guidelines do companies give you, and do they want to approve your content before publishing?
- 9-How does your community respond to ads, and do you notice differences in their response on different platforms?
- 10-What differences TikTok from other social media channels for Content Creators and businesses?
- 11-Have you ever created ads in TikTok's ad manager, and if so, can you recommend it?

Further questions and future perspectives

- 12-Is TikTok only a platform for entertainment and education, in your opinion?
- 13-How do you predict the platform's development in terms of its creators and viewers?
- 14-Is there anything about TikTok that you are criticizing?

Appendix 3: Expert interview with Jonathan Oesterle

Interviewee: Jonathan Oesterle,

Junior Manager Global Social Media Football at Puma

Interviewer: Sara Ghiasi

Date: 09.12.2022

Location: via Zoom

SG: *Zunächst bitte ich dich, etwas über deine berufliche Erfahrung im Marketing und Social Media zu erzählen.*

JO: Ja, das kann ich gerne machen. Im Studium habe ich schon einige Praktika gemacht und mich langsam an den Bereich Marketing herangepircht. In Köln habe ich Sportmanagement und Sportkommunikation studiert und auch sehr Marketing-lastige Inhalte gehabt. Mein erstes Praktikum in Köln war im Marketing für eine Werbeagentur, dort war ich anschließend Werkstudent. Dann war ich für ein Volontariat in Ghana und habe ein bisschen mit Social Media angefangen und die Kommunikation gemacht. Ich bin danach bei Adidas gelandet. Dort hatte mich für ein Praktikum beworben und bin das erste Mal professionell mit Social-Media-Marketing in Kontakt gekommen, da ich bei Adidas Football im Global Brand Communication Team war. Ich habe mehrere Stationen durchlaufen, also war es nicht nur Social Media, sondern zum Beispiel auch Retail, Planung, Kampagnenplanung, mit welchen Spielern wir welches Produkt bewerben möchten, und so weiter. Daher auch der Social-Media-Schwerpunkt. So habe ich meine Motivation und Vorerfahrung sammeln können für den Job, den ich heute habe. Nach Adidas bin ich noch mal an die Uni gegangen, habe meine Bachelorarbeit fertig gemacht und bin dann tatsächlich noch mal zu Adidas für vier Monate, bevor ich zu Puma gegangen bin.

Jetzt bin ich im Global Social Media zuständig für Puma Football. Wir haben einen eigenen Channel auf Social Media und ich bin jetzt seit April, also seit sieben oder acht Monaten, dort. Ich bin zuständig für die globalen Channels rund ums Thema Football, wenn es darum geht, jeden möglichen Fußball Content zu bespielen. Ich manage auch die Channels von Spielern wie Neymar, Memphis, und viele mehr. Da bin ich immer dabei, wenn etwas auf dem Channel hochgeladen werden soll, wenn eine Kampagne am Start ist oder ein Spieler seine eigene Kollektion hat. Ich bin sozusagen der Content Manager von dem Kanal und habe noch ein Creative Team an meiner Seite,

beziehungsweise vor allem eine Person, mit der ich sehr eng zusammenarbeite. Diese spielt mir den ganzen Content, wie Fotos und Videos zu, also ist es sehr ineinandergreifend. Das heißt, ich mache manchmal auch kreative Arbeit.

SG: *Welche Plattformen benutzt ihr bisher für eure Kommunikationsstrategie?*

JO: Wir unterscheiden zwischen dem Puma Main Channel und Puma Football. Wir wollen clustern, aber auf TikTok haben wir nur einen Account, wo wir den gesamten Content reinspielen.

Wir benutzen TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook und Discord. Letzteres ist noch etwas neuer, sehr USA basierend. Es geht eher in die Richtung eines größeren Chatrooms. Wenn neue Plattformen aufpoppen, möchten wir natürlich so schnell wie möglich rein, um zu gucken, ob das für uns hilfreich sein kann. Falls sich diese Plattform größer entwickelt, ist man als Unternehmen dann schnell oder von Anfang an dabei.

SG: *Wie bewertest du den Erfolg von Puma bisher auf den verschiedenen Plattformen und an welchen Kriterien macht ihr den Erfolg fest?*

JO: Kommen wir erstmal zu den Kriterien, also die KPIs, die wir immer benutzen. Im Social Media sind es, vor allem wenn es um Videos geht, die Plays und die Views. Sonst arbeiten wir auch viel mit der Engagement Rate. Auch die Reach ist sehr wichtig. Als Beispiel: Wenn man ein Bild im Feed veröffentlicht, sieht man, dass es vielleicht 100.000 Leute erreicht, das ist dann die Reach. Es engagieren aber nur 10.000 durch Likes und Comments. Das sind unter anderem unsere Main KPIs zum Draufschauen. Manchmal werden auch die Impressions herangezogen. Alles andere, wie die Frequency, also wie oft wir posten, wird auch getrackt, denn es gilt: Je öfter man postet, desto mehr Leute kann man erreichen. Vor allem mit den heutigen Algorithmen ist es nicht mehr so, dass man die Leute damit nervt oder zuspammt, denn die Posts erreichen sowieso nicht alle Follower. Also kann es sein, dass man mit einem Post nur 100.000 von seinen 5 Millionen Followern erreicht. Ein großer Teil von den Followern sieht den Content also gar nicht. Deswegen ist es auch ein Ziel, eine relativ hohe Frequency zu haben, man relativ viel postet und viele Leute erreicht.

Den Erfolg auf den verschiedenen Plattformen zu bewerten, ist schwierig. Ich rede jetzt über Puma Football, weil ich dort tätig bin. Wir orientieren uns immer stark an Adidas und Nike, unseren zwei größten Konkurrenten, und wissen natürlich, dass wir da erstmal an dritter Position sind. Wir schrecken aber nicht zurück, uns zu vergleichen, da Puma wirtschaftlich vor allem dieses Jahr sehr gut unterwegs war und besonders stark am Wachsen ist, wohingegen andere Marken ein bisschen Schwierigkeiten mit dem Wachstum haben.

Was den Erfolg auf Instagram betrifft, hat Puma Football 5 Millionen Follower, wohingegen Adidas 31,9 Millionen Follower hat und Nike bei 45,4 Millionen Follower liegt. Das sind natürlich Welten, die Konkurrenten erreichen viel mehr Leute mit ihren Posts. Da sind wir nicht ganz so erfolgreich, wenn es um Follower auf Instagram geht. Wenn es aber um die Engagement Rate geht, würde ich sagen, trotz dessen, dass wir noch relativ klein sind, haben wir eine aktive Community, die viel interagiert, weswegen unsere Engagement Rate eigentlich ziemlich hoch ist. Das heißt, es kann auch oft sein, dass wir zum Beispiel Posts haben, die ein besseres Engagement haben als die von Adidas und Nike, wobei die viel mehr Follower haben. Wir haben auf jeden Fall noch Potenzial auf Instagram.

Auf TikTok hingegen sind wir ziemlich gleich auf mit Adidas und Nike, wir haben mit TikTok auch relativ früh angefangen. Wir haben da 3,3 Millionen Follower aktuell, wohingegen Adidas 3,5 hat und Nike circa 3,1. Das heißt, dass wir da sogar über Nike stehen, was die Followerzahl betrifft und mit den Likes über Adidas. Wir sind auf TikTok schon relativ erfolgreich, auch weil wir schon von Anfang an verstanden haben, wie die Plattform funktioniert und was die Zielgruppe sehen will.

Für Twitter gilt dasselbe wie für Instagram, da haben Adidas und Nike eine relativ große Reach. Die erreichen wir noch nicht ganz, auch wegen unserer Markenbekanntheit im Allgemeinen. Da gibt es also noch Luft nach oben. Es ist aber ein bisschen schwieriger auf Twitter und Instagram zu wachsen, weil die Plattformen an sich nicht mehr die am stärksten wachsenden sind, im Gegensatz zu TikTok, wo noch ein hohes Potenzial von Wachstum auf der Plattform ist.

Auf jeden Fall sind wir auf TikTok erfolgreicher als auf Instagram und Twitter.

SG: *Versucht ihr mit den verschiedenen Plattformen verschiedene Zielgruppen anzusprechen und wenn ja, welche konkret?*

JO: Ja, auf jeden Fall. Also bei unserer Fußball-Zielgruppe ist es so, dass wir die ein bisschen unterscheiden. Der Football-obsessed Teen ist zwischen 13 und 19 Jahren, trainiert Fußball, verfolgt Fußball und ist einfach fußballverrückt, aber eher jünger. Dann haben wir noch zum Beispiel eine Zielgruppe „Fußballfans“. Die sind nicht nur zwischen 13 und 19, sondern können auch älter sein, bis zu einem Alter von 39 Jahren. Dann haben wir eine dritte Zielgruppe, die aktiven Spieler. Die sind circa 18 bis 30 Jahre, die wirklich unsere Produkte nutzen und auch verfolgen. Also haben wir verschiedene Zielgruppen mit verschiedenen Profilen und mit den verschiedenen Plattformen kann man definitiv verschiedene Zielgruppen ansprechen. Was man merkt, ist, dass auf TikTok eine deutlich größere Zielgruppe unterwegs ist als auf Instagram. Die sieht man nicht nur der Zahl der Follower. Bei TikTok startet die Analyse erst ab 18 Jahren, was ein bisschen misleading ist. Wahrscheinlich liegt das an den Regularien von der App, aber wir wissen, dass die Zielgruppe deutlich jünger ist als 18 Jahre. Auf Instagram zum Beispiel haben wir weit bis 39 Jahren auch Leute dabei, die uns verfolgen. Deswegen ist es klar, dass wir uns auf TikTok anpassen müssen an die Zielgruppe, auch an die Sprache von TikTok, auch an die Sprache von Generation Z, während auf Instagram Generation Z und Generation der Millennials vertreten sind. Wir haben bemerkt, dass bei der Veröffentlichung von TikTok Content auf Instagram die Leute nicht immer diese Art von Humor verstehen. Wenn das Video auf TikTok ein Trend ist, dann verstehen schon die meisten den Sinn, wenn die Zuschauer auf beiden Plattformen unterwegs sind. Da muss man vorsichtig sein, dass man das anpasst. Auf TikTok ist die Zuschauerschaft eher jünger, auf Instagram etwas älter und auch mehr in Richtung eines bestimmten Produkts. Auf Instagram geht es viel um Produktbilder, unsere Zuschauer wollen eher unsere neuen Schuhe oder neue Trikots auf Bildern sehen. Wenn wir zum Beispiel auf TikTok posten, reicht es nicht, nur ein Produktbild oder ein gewöhnliches Video zu posten, es muss schon im typischen Stil eines TikToks sein. Das heißt, es muss auf dem Trend basieren oder kreativ gemacht werden. Bei Twitter würde ich sagen, dass es ähnlich ist wie auf Instagram, auch die Zielgruppe ähnelt sich und ist älter als auf TikTok. Das heißt, wir versuchen auf jeden Fall unseren Content an die verschiedenen Zielgruppen anpassen.

SG: *Seit wann und warum betreibt Puma Marketing auf TikTok?*

JO: Das habe ich tatsächlich vorhin erst nachgeschaut. Wir haben den Account seit November 2019, das heißt, wir sind relativ früh eingestiegen. Wenn wir mitbekommen, dass es eine neue App gibt, die gehypt wird, dann überlegen wir uns, wie wir darauf zugehen. Wir müssen abwägen, ob wir die Ressourcen intern haben, ob das Potenzial vorhanden ist und ob wir uns als Brand gut positionieren können.

Wenn man eine neue Plattform wie TikTok sieht, die so stark wächst, dann möchten wir das nicht missen wollen. Vor allem, wenn dort eine Zielgruppe vertreten ist, die sehr viel Einfluss auf andere Generationen hat. Deswegen ist es für Puma sehr wichtig, auf TikTok vertreten zu sein. Für Puma Football ist es auch enorm wichtig. Die letzten Statistiken haben ergeben, dass mehr als 60 % der TikTok User Fußball in einer Art und Weise folgen, was natürlich sehr viel ist. Die Plattform ist an sich auch sehr Football-lastig. Das merken wir daran, dass immer, wenn wir Fußball Content ausspielen, da dieser in der Regel besser performt als beispielsweise Running Content.

SG: *Wie hat sich der Unternehmensaccount auf der Plattform entwickelt und schätzt du die bisherige Vermarktung von Puma als erfolgreich ein?*

JO: Seit den acht Monaten, wo ich dabei bin, ist er auf jeden Fall stetig gewachsen. Am Anfang war es nicht ganz klar, wie TikTok funktioniert, was wir da machen und was wir genau posten und ob es wie bei Instagram abläuft. Ich glaube, Puma hat das von Anfang an ziemlich gut gemacht. Wenn ich jetzt allgemein von anderen Brands ausgehe, kam das Verständnis eher spät, dass Low-Key Content total ausreicht. Wenn man das Handy nimmt, um was abzufilmen, performt dies besser als wenn man mit der Kamera Aufnahmen mit vielen Effekten shootet. Das langweilt die Zuschauerschaft auf TikTok, es muss real und authentisch sein.

Die bisherige Vermarktung würde ich schon als erfolgreich einschätzen, weil wir doch von den Views und von unserer Reach her und wie wir unsere Produkte platzieren, größere Reichweiten haben als unsere zwei größten Wettbewerber. Dies ist ein sehr, sehr großer Meilenstein für Pumas Social Media.

SG: *Welche Erfolgskennziffern sind für dich bei TikTok besonders relevant und wie haben sich diese entwickelt?*

JO: Als Erfolgskennziffer sind die Plays sehr relevant, genauso wie Engagement, Likes und Shares. Wenn man noch ein bisschen tiefer in die Materie reingeht, ist die Retention Rate auch ein wichtiges Mittel. Sie gibt an, wie lange ein User dein Video schaut. Je höher diese Rate ist, desto länger schauen die Leute das Video und das bestimmt im Endeffekt den Algorithmus mit. Wird das Video länger geschaut, dann wird es anderen Usern öfter angezeigt, was natürlich positiv ist. Die Plays und Likes sind neben der Retention am aussagekräftigsten, weil diese KPIs über den Erfolg des Videos oder wie viral es geht, entscheiden.

Wir bedienen uns an Softwares, manchmal auch an den Analysetools von TikTok oder Instagram selber. Wir benutzen meistens Sprinklr. Das ist ein Analysetool, womit man sich die Insights einfach anzeigen lassen kann. Wir haben das nicht viel größer entwickeln lassen oder machen es komplizierter als es ist, sondern sind eigentlich relativ straight forward mit diesen Zahlen, die dann herangezogen werden können.

Es geht auch ein bisschen um die Follower Growth, woran man sehen kann, wie gut der Channel wahrgenommen wird. Es kann sein, dass ein Video stark performt und das nächste gar nicht. Was ungemein hilft, sind Videos, die viral gehen. Zum Beispiel hatten wir im September ein Video mit Neymar und Anthony, das mittlerweile über 60 Millionen Views und über 10 Millionen Likes hat. Da hat man direkt den Sprung in der Anzahl der Follower gesehen. Da haben wir, glaube ich circa 400.000 Abonnenten innerhalb wenigen Wochen gewonnen. Das heißt, dass solche viralen Videos extrem hilfreich für den Erfolg von einem Channel sind. Im Vergleich zu anderen Plattformen kann man beobachten, dass wenn das gleiche Video auf Instagram gepostet wird, das nicht ganz so auffällt wie auf TikTok, weil der Algorithmus anders ist. Da sind wir beispielsweise nämlich nicht so viral gegangen.

Wenn wir zum Beispiel beim Fußball sportliche Erfolge haben und dann den richtigen Content posten, haben wir auch diesen Peak. Zum Beispiel haben Manchester City und AC Milan dieses Jahr die jeweilige nationale Meisterschaft gewonnen. Beide sind Puma Clubs, da haben wir auch entsprechend darauf reagiert und einen großen Zuwachs an Followern gehabt, wohingegen es Monate gibt, in denen wir wenig wachsen. Dies war aber auch schon in den Jahren zuvor so. Das heißt, es gibt bestimmte Trends, auch Jahreszeiten, für jeden Channel, die sich auch stark zum Beispiel am Wettkampfkalender der jeweiligen Sportart orientieren.

SG: Unterscheidet ihr bei der Content Erstellung zwischen den verschiedenen Plattformen und wenn ja, wie?

JO: Ja, auf jeden Fall. Wir differenzieren, was auf TikTok und was auf Instagram kommt. Manchmal können sich Sachen überschneiden, weil wir bei Puma Football einen ähnlichen Style fahren wie auf TikTok. Wir veröffentlichen Low-Key Content, locker mit einem iPhone gefilmt, weil wir glauben, dass das Kommunizieren auf Augenhöhe mit der Community wichtig ist und mehr konsumiert wird auf der Plattform. Diese Art von Content ist interaktiver. Wir schauen sehr auf Trends um, wie gesagt, so viel Reach wie möglich zu kriegen und um in derselben Sprache wie unsere Consumer zu sprechen, weil das am besten ankommt.

Auf Instagram kann es ein bisschen generischer sein. Da braucht man keinen Trend nachgehen, sondern einfach eine coole Idee haben. Wenn beispielsweise ein neuer Schuh rauskommt, haben wir für den gebuchten Spieler drei Videoideen. Die eine ist ein Trend für TikTok, dann ein Video, bei dem das Produkt näher beleuchtet wird und noch ein normales Video, bei dem der Spieler in einem Sprintduell ist.

Auf TikTok machen wir hauptsächlich Video-Content, mittlerweile kann man auch Bilder hochladen zum durchswipen. Auf Instagram haben wir auch ziemlich viel Video-Content, da wir generell diese Strategie fahren. Da bewerben wir auch unsere Produkte mit Fotos, genauso wie auf Twitter.

Das heißt, wir clustern auf jeden Fall den Content nach Plattform.

SG: Welche Inhalte stellt Puma auf TikTok und wie sehr achtet ihr dabei auf Trends?

JO: Wir stellen Content auf TikTok, den wir auch selber sehen. Das heißt, gar nichts mit einer professionellen Kamera gemacht was übermäßig bearbeitet wurde, sondern im 9:16 Format mit dem Handy aufgenommen, weil es sonst nicht authentisch genug wäre. Wir achten sehr auf Challenges und Sounds, was ein bisschen schwieriger ist, da man sich als Unternehmen rein rechtlich in einer Grauzone befindet. Wir dürfen zum Beispiel nicht offizielle Sounds hinter unseren TikToks dahinter spielen, da es sonst eine Werbung von uns ist und als Werbemaßnahme gesehen wird. Dann müssten wir theoretisch dafür zahlen. Deswegen ist es nicht ganz einfach, jeden Trend mitzumachen. Manche Marken gehen das Risiko ein, manche nicht. Ich glaube, es kommt drauf an, wer welches rechtliche Verfahren bereits an der Backe hat. Es kursiert

zum Beispiel das Gerücht, dass die Marke Gymshark im Millionenbereich nachzahlen hat, weil die Sounds verwendet haben, die sie nicht verwenden durften. Wir sind auf jeden Fall auf unseren eigenen Channel eingegrenzt und müssen vorsichtig sein. Was aber ganz interessant ist und was man machen kann, ist die Kanäle von unseren Partnern und Spielern dazu zu benutzen. Da sind wir zum Beispiel frei, weil die nicht limitiert sind, was die Sounds angeht, da sie kein Unternehmen sind.

SG: *Inwiefern hat sich die Zielgruppe seit dem TikTok Auftritt verändert?*

JO: Wirklich verändert hat sich die Zielgruppe dadurch nicht, nur die Wege, wie wir sie erreichen. Ich denke, dass Generation Z die Zielgruppe ist, die die meisten Brands versuchen, anzusprechen. TikTok ist dafür ein sehr effektives Mittel, weil da die Zielgruppe zum größten Teil vertreten ist.

Zum Beispiel haben wir vor einem Monat einen Trend auf Neymars Channel gepostet, wo unser Fußballschuh zu sehen war. Der Schuh war knapp zehn Sekunden zu sehen und nachdem er es repostet hat, hatten wir auf einmal fast 150 Millionen Views. Das kann man mit keinem anderen Werbemedium, vor allem mit so günstiger Produktion, vergleichen. Es ist auf jeden Fall eine Plattform mit sehr viel Potenzial, nicht nur um die Zielgruppe, sondern auch eine hohe Reach zu erreichen.

SG: *Nutzt ihr die Werbemöglichkeiten in dem Anzeigenmanager auf TikTok und würdet ihr diesen weiterempfehlen?*

JO: Gerade bei bezahlten Kampagnen benutzt Puma die Werbemöglichkeiten. Ob ich sie weiterempfehlen kann, muss ich ehrlich sagen, weiß ich nicht, weil ich im Organic Team bin. Alles, bei dem eine bezahlte Kampagne dahintersteckt, machen andere Kollegen, ich bin für die Social-Media-Aktivitäten zuständig. Deswegen kann ich tatsächlich nicht sagen, ob wir das weiterempfehlen können oder nicht.

SG: *Was fehlt dir für die Optimierung eurer Marketingstrategie auf der Plattform TikTok?*

JO: TikTok könnte sich bezüglich der Guidelines für Marken verbessern. Die Guidelines könnten klarer formuliert definiert sein, was Unternehmen machen können

und was nicht. Es besteht die Gefahr, dass Unternehmen bei der Contenterstellung Sounds benutzen, so wie es jeder andere macht, die im Endeffekt nicht benutzt werden dürfen, aufgrund von Lizenzen oder Rechten. Ansonsten, wenn man das Prinzip von TikTok versteht und diese Viralität auch auslösen kann, ist es natürlich von großem Vorteil für jede Marke.

Auf TikTok muss man sich mit jedem Video beweisen, so dass ein Video immer gesehen wird. Auf Instagram hat man beispielsweise seine Follower und weiß auch, wie viele von den Followern tatsächlich den Content sehen. Sowas kann man auf TikTok nicht voraussagen. Es kann sein, dass man eine Kampagne platziert, die für das Unternehmen wichtig ist, wo ein Haufen Geld drinsteckt und auch Partner involviert sind. Aber im Endeffekt, wenn man nicht die Sprache von TikTok spricht oder, aus welchem Grund auch immer, das Video nicht performt, war dieses gesamte Investment umsonst. Das kann aus der Sicht der Marken sehr frustrierend sein.

Aus der Sicht des Konsumenten, so aus meiner eigenen privaten Sicht auch, ist dies der Reiz daran, dass man gut sein muss und es verstehen muss, damit man auf der Plattform erfolgreich ist. Die Markenbekanntheit kann nicht alleinig darüber entscheiden, wie hoch die Reach oder wie viele Plays dein Content bekommt. Aus Markensicht wäre es natürlich toller, wenn man sagen könnte, dass man eine bestimmte Zahl an Views bekommt.

SG: *Wird Puma in Zukunft weiterhin auf TikTok kommunizieren und wenn ja, im gleichen oder höheren Ausmaß?*

JO: Auf jeden Fall wird Puma weiterhin auf TikTok kommunizieren, weil es so effektiv ist. Wenn wir von der Frequenz reden, dann nicht im höheren Ausmaß, weil wir relativ viel posten. Für die Zukunft lässt sich an dem Content selbst, damit man eine höhere Treffsicherheit hat, noch einige Stellschrauben machen, auch an den internen Strukturen. Ich bin mir sicher, dass in Zukunft noch mehr Ressourcen dahinterkommen, als es jetzt schon sind, zum Beispiel wenn es darum geht, wie viele Leute man im Team haben will oder wer etwas wie managt, genauso was die Produktion angeht.

Interessant ist, dass es ja verschiedene Bereiche gibt, wie bei uns beispielsweise Football oder Basketball. Zum Glück hatte Puma Football schon lange begriffen, wie wichtig Social Media für das Marketing ist, wohingegen man bei manchen anderen

Kollegen merkt, dass wenn die zum Beispiel auf Shootings gehen, erstmal alles Kommerzielle für die Webseite gestaltet wird und der Content für Social Media in den letzten 15 Minuten geschootet wird. Erstaunlich, wie verschiedene Teams in verschiedenen Unternehmen einfach verschiedene Gewichtungen haben. Jeder hat eine andere Sicht darauf, wie wichtig Social Media im Endeffekt ist, aber ich denke, es ist sehr wichtig.

Appendix 4: Expert interview with Julian Lenzer

Interviewee: Julian Lenzer,
Social Media Specialist at Red Bull

Interviewer: Sara Ghiasi

Date: 19.12.2022

Location: via Zoom

SG: *Zunächst bitte ich dich, etwas über deine berufliche Erfahrung im Marketing und Social Media zu erzählen.*

JL: Ich habe vor inzwischen zehn Jahren in der Werbung begonnen. Ich war in verschiedenen Werbeagenturen. Anfangs eher welche, die sich auf klassische Werbung fokussiert haben, sprich alles, was eher so ein bisschen TV Out-of-Home Print war. Da habe ich ein paar einschlägige Erfahrungen gemacht, die mich dann zum Digitalmarketing geführt haben und habe dann die letzten neun Jahre eigentlich im Digitalmarketing verbracht, insbesondere mit Fokus auf Social-Media-Marketing. Ich habe hier für Kunden in der Automobilbranche, also Mercedes Benz, Porsche, BMW, aber auch mit einem starken Fokus auf Fast-Moving Consumer Goods gehabt. Ich habe unter anderem für Ferrero viel gemacht, also Nutella, Yogurette, Duplo, Hanuta, Ovomaltine und viele Spirituosen. Jetzt bin ich seit zwei Jahren und drei Monaten bei Red Bull als Social Media Spezialist und kümmere mich da vor allem um die Kulturthemen, das heißt alles, was das Thema Tanz und das Thema Musik betrifft und verantworte hier den Instagram-Kanal und den YouTube-Kanal von „Red Bull Rap 100“.

SG: *Welche Plattformen benutzt ihr bisher für eure Kommunikationsstrategie?*

JL: Fangen wir mal bei den klassischen an. Also alle Meta Plattformen, sprich Facebook und Instagram, WhatsApp jedoch nicht wegen den Datenschutzbestimmungen hier in Deutschland. Darüber hinaus Twitter, YouTube, Twitter und Strava. Letzteres ist eher eine Sportplattform. Wir haben auch Discord, wobei wir hier nicht in der klassischen Weise One-to-Many-Marketing Kommunikation machen, sondern da eher auf Communitybuilding setzen. Wir haben auch Digital TV.

Mit Red Bull TV sind wir auch bei DAZN, Magenta, Weibo und ansonsten nutzen wir auch Google ADS und so weiter.

SG: *Wie bewertest du den Erfolg von Red Bull bisher auf den verschiedenen Plattformen und an welchen Kriterien macht ihr den Erfolg fest?*

JL: Wir sind sehr erfolgreich in dem, was wir machen. Das ist plattformunabhängig. Das zeigt sich daran, dass wir stetig wachsen und auch sehr viele Follower haben. Im digitalen Raum haben wir weniger Monster oder Coca-Cola als Konkurrenz, sondern eher Netflix, Amazon und Disney plus. Da geht es uns darum, dass die Leute unsere Inhalte konsumieren und nicht unbedingt die Inhalte anderer Plattformen. Auch hier sehen wir stetiges Wachstum.

SG: *Versucht ihr mit den verschiedenen Plattformen verschiedene Zielgruppen anzusprechen und wenn ja, welche konkret?*

JL: Wir versuchen nicht unbedingt, verschiedene Zielgruppen anzusprechen. Wir haben unterschiedliche Playgrounds. Das heißt, wir haben eigene Accounts für Tanz, Skateboarden, Musik, Surfen, Running, alles Mögliche. Grundsätzlich ist unsere Zielgruppe gleich, es sind immer 18- bis 34-Jährige.

SG: *Seit wann und warum betreibt Red Bull Marketing auf TikTok?*

JL: Wir sind seit März 2019 auf TikTok. Ich glaube, wir waren auch eine der ersten Marken, weil wir nicht mit dem Trend mitschwimmen wollen, sondern Trendsetter sein möchten und so versuchen, immer neue Plattfortmtrends mitzunehmen. Wir versuchen auch immer abzuwägen, welche Plattformen Sinn machen. Denkt man in der Vergangenheit beispielsweise an Clubhouse, hatten wir keinen Auftritt da, weil wir hier kein Potenzial gesehen dadurch unsere Zielgruppe zu erreichen.

SG: *Wie hat sich der Unternehmensaccount auf der Plattform entwickelt und schätzt du die bisherige Vermarktung von Red Bull als erfolgreich ein?*

JL: Ich schätze dir Vermarktung als sehr erfolgreich ein. Wir sind einer der größten Markenaccounts im DACH-Bereich und haben auch hier, was unsere Zielgruppe angeht, die richtigen Leute erreicht. Wir haben aktuell noch einen sehr starken Fokus auf unser Sport-Marketing und versuchen das jetzt aber mit anderen Initiativen mehr in Richtung Kulturthemen, wie Musik und Tanz, auszubauen

SG: *Welche Erfolgskennziffern sind für dich bei TikTok besonders relevant und wie haben sich diese entwickelt?*

JL: Die klassischen Kennziffern sind natürlich unter anderem Follower, wobei der meiste Content auf der FYP gesehen wird. Dementsprechend sind Follower eher zweitrangig und auch ein großer Account wie wir kann mal Flop Beiträge haben, die nur ein paar 1000 Views machen. Dann hat man wieder was, was Millionenfach angesehen wird. Für uns ist die wichtigste Kennzahl die Views, also wie viele Leute unseren Content sehen und vor allem auch, wie lange sie den Content anschauen. Die Retention Rate ist für uns am wichtigsten. Videos gehen erst viral, wenn man eigentlich über 100 % Watchtime hat. Wenn man dann wirklich 130 % Watchtime hat, wird das Video in einer größeren Bubble angezeigt. Engagement ist natürlich trotzdem nicht zu vernachlässigen, egal auf welcher Plattform, weil das immer eine gute Kennziffer ist, um die Qualität von Content zu bewerten. Trotzdem merkt man auf TikTok, dass auch Verweildauer auch eine Art von Engagement, die von der Plattform gemessen wird. Eine unserer Maßnahmen ist, dass wir uns in diesem Jahr besonders auf Live-Events fokussiert haben und mehr Live-Content anbieten wollten. Das ist zum einen gewünscht seitens TikTok, dass man mehr live geht und mehr live kommuniziert, um Kontext zu kreieren. Das haben wir dieses Jahr in verschiedenen Ausführungen gemacht und dementsprechend sind nicht nur Views und Follower wichtig, sondern auch wie viele Leute live zugeschaut haben.

SG: *Unterscheidet ihr bei der Content Erstellung zwischen den verschiedenen Plattformen und wenn ja, wie?*

JL: Ja, das tun wir. Wir versuchen beispielsweise auf Red Bull TV eher Long-Form-Formate zu kreieren, wie Dokumentationen und Serien, die bis zu 90 Minuten sein können. Wir sind hier eher im Breitbild-Format, sprich 16:9 und auf TikTok, YouTube

Shorts und Instagram in einem vertikalen Format, was deutlich kürzer ist. Wir unterscheiden nicht nur bei der Länge des Formates und Länge des Contents, sondern auch im Inhalt. Wir haben in den letzten Monaten gemerkt, dass Hochglanzformate und Hochglanzcontent oft nicht so gut funktionieren. Wir versuchen, es echter zu halten und Unterhaltung zu schaffen und Storytelling zu betreiben, anstatt nur krasse Stunts und Hochglanzshots mit der Drohne zu shooten. Das kann funktionieren, ist aber keine Garantie. Wir versuchen uns dabei zu fragen, was die User sehen möchten, womit sie sich identifizieren und womit wir sie länger an unserem Content halten können.

Man kann durchaus unterscheiden zwischen den Plattformen, wobei man hier sagen muss, dass wir auf sehr vielen Plattformen sind. Auf Strava geht es mehr um Fitness Tipps und weniger Inspiration und mehr edukativ. Auf Facebook sieht man, dass die Zielgruppe älter ist und dementsprechend auch das Feedback aus der Community anders ist. Man hat ab und zu ein paar Babyboomer in den Kommentarspalten, die die Stunts, die wir machen, kritisieren, nach dem Motto, Muss das denn sein oder Umweltverschmutzung, Das ist doch lebensmüde. Das hat man auf Facebook, während es auf anderen Plattformen mehr zelebriert wird. Aber ich glaube, dass Facebook ein Sonderfall ist und auch Twitter, weil wir auf Twitter wenig mit Video kommunizieren, sondern eher textbasiert. Darüber hinaus, wenn ich jetzt von meinem Playgrounds Musik rede, ist die Deutsch Rap Bubble sehr kritisch. Wir haben als Claim „Red Bull verleiht Flügel“ und das beinhaltet auch, dass wir Newcomern eine Chance geben. Wenn wir dann Newcomer haben, die die Leute nicht kennen, dann reagieren sie sehr kritisch und abweisend, wobei ich glaube, dass das ein generelles Problem im Deutsch Rap ist, dass die Leute nicht so offen sind für Newcomer sind.

SG: *Welche Inhalte stellt Red Bull auf TikTok und wie sehr achtet ihr dabei auf Trends?*

JL: Wir haben das Problem, dass wir ein kommerzieller Account sind und dementsprechend kommerzielle Musik und Sounds nicht nutzen können. Ich weiß, dass es von anderen Firmen gemacht wird, die auf aktuelle Trends aufspringen und diese Sounds dann nutzen. Das ist aber eigentlich nur ein Lawsuit-in-the-making. Gerade dieses Jahr hat „Bang Energy“ in Amerika einen riesigen Lawsuit, da sie kommerzielle Musik benutzt haben und im Influencer Marketing ebenfalls gesagt haben, dass sie bestimmte Songs nutzen sollen. Das ist rechtswidrig und sie sind jetzt

vor Gericht und müssen riesige Strafen zahlen. Dementsprechend sind wir sehr limitiert, was Trends angeht und müssen gucken, dass wir eigene Trends setzen oder ohne Trends viral gehen. Wir haben die Red Bull Audio-Library, bei der wir über 40.000 Songs haben, die wir nutzen können. Hier haben wir eine Artificial Intelligence, bei der wir populäre Songs nehmen und einspeisen können. Die AI liefert unsere Songs mit dem gleichen BPM aus dem gleichen Genre, aber lizenzfrei, so dass wir sie nutzen können.

Wir arbeiten jetzt dran, eine eigene Trend-Sound-Audio-Library aufzubauen, weil natürlich auch gerade das Thema Dialog zum Beispiel sehr wichtig ist auf TikTok. Durch die Serie „House of Dragons“ ist zum Beispiel ein Trend entstanden mit den zwei Hauptdarstellerinnen. Das ist etwas, was wir nicht nutzen können, weil es markenrechtlich geschützt ist, aber wir versuchen, Dialoge unter zum Beispiel Athleten oder Tänzerinnen oder Musikerinnen zu benutzen, um solche Trends selbst zu kreieren. Ob die Community es dann aufnehmen wird, wissen wir aktuell nicht. Man kann Viralität nicht vorbestimmen, aber wir hoffen auf das Beste. Mich wundert es auch, dass TikTok nicht strenger ist, weil sie dadurch selbst in der Kritik stehen könnten. Sie bieten Marken die Möglichkeit, Markenrechtsverletzungen durchzuführen. Ein bekanntes Beispiel ist der Account vom ersten FC Mainz, die oft beispielsweise Family Guy Videos nehmen und dann die Logos der Clubs draufpacken, um eine Geschichte zu erzählen. Es ist kreatives Storytelling, was ein Trend auf der Plattform ist und die Zielgruppe voll erreicht, aber es ist eine Markenrechtsverletzung von Warner Entertainment. Dass an dieser Stelle TikTok nicht einschreitet und das verhindert, wundert mich.

SG: *Inwiefern hat sich die Zielgruppe seit dem TikTok Auftritt verändert?*

JL: Die Zielgruppe ist schon seit 20 Jahren gleich, auch, bevor wir TikTok gehabt haben. Wir schauen bei unserer Zielgruppe, wenn wir Zielgruppenanalysen oder Follower-Analysen machen, auf klassische demografische Angaben wie Alter, Geschlecht und Wohnort und weniger auf beispielsweise Interessen, weil wir hier sagen, dass das zu sehr in die Daten der Nutzer eingeht und deswegen möchten wir das nicht.

SG: *Nutzt ihr die Werbemöglichkeiten in dem Anzeigenmanager auf TikTok und würdet ihr diesen weiterempfehlen?*

JO: Wir haben dieses Jahr angefangen mit den Werbeanzeigenmanager innerhalb TikTok zu arbeiten und haben hier sehr positive Erfahrungen gemacht. Daher würde ich sie auch empfehlen. Es kommt aber auf die strategische Ausrichtung der Unternehmen an, weil man ganz klar sagen muss, dass TikTok ein Reach-Treiber ist, weil man hier sehr günstig Reichweite und Views einkaufen kann. Das ist uns wichtig. Andere Firmen haben beispielsweise das Ziel von einem Abverkauf von einem Produkt, das sie gerade vermarkten. Hier kann ich leider nicht sagen, wie gut das funktioniert, weil wir das nicht gemacht haben. Wir haben beispielsweise eine Funktion genutzt, um unsere Livestreams, die wir dieses Jahr gemacht haben, mit Reichweite zu fördern. Das hat sehr gut funktioniert und daher sind wir aktuell sehr zufrieden mit den Funktionen des Anzeigenmanagers.

Mich persönlich erinnert der Anzeigenmanager auf TikTok an den Anzeigemanager von Facebook aus 2014. Damals war der noch ein bisschen reduzierter und nicht so überladen wie jetzt. Inzwischen ist der Ad Manager von Meta so komplex, dass er schnell überfordernd und unübersichtlich sein kann. Da ist der Ad Manager von TikTok sehr handlich.

SG: *Was fehlt dir für die Optimierung eurer Marketingstrategie auf der Plattform TikTok?*

JL: Wir haben immer wieder mal Gespräche mit TikTok, weil wir auch eine der Marken sind, die für sie sehr spannend ist, wenn es um Content Strategien geht und haben auch unsere Wünsche geäußert. Eines der wichtigsten Sachen für uns aktuell immer noch das Thema KPIs. TikTok ist da immer noch sehr intransparent, was die Daten angeht. Wir haben wenig Einsicht über demografische Daten. Wir haben die Regel bei uns, dass wir nicht mit Influencern zusammenarbeiten, deren Follower zu 50 % unter 18 Jahre sind, weil wir die nicht erreichen möchten. Hier kann uns TikTok oft gar nicht sagen, ob das so ist oder nicht. Ein bisschen mehr Detailgrad in den KPIs wäre schön. Was die Möglichkeiten angeht, glaube ich, sind sie aktuell sehr gut, aber es gibt immer Verbesserungsmöglichkeiten.

SG: *Wird Red Bull in Zukunft weiterhin auf TikTok kommunizieren und wenn ja, im gleichen oder höheren Ausmaß?*

JL: Ja, werden wir. Wahrscheinlich im gleichen Ausmaß, weil wir schon sehr aktiv sind. Wir haben nicht jeden Tag einen Beitrag und werden aber, was bestimmte Sachen angeht, es auch erhöhen. Ich hatte es schon angesprochen, dass wir dieses Jahr sehr viel TikTok-Live gemacht haben und das hat so gut funktioniert, dass wir das nächste Jahr verstärkt machen werden. Wir haben hier deutlich bessere Zahlen, als wenn man versucht, die Leute erst auf unsere Plattform zu kriegen, wie Red Bull TV oder auf dem YouTube Channel, weil TikTok hier im Vergleich zu YouTube oder Instagram Live den besseren Algorithmus hat und die besseren Werbemöglichkeiten, um während eines Livestreams neue User und neue Zuschauer auf den Livestream zu kriegen.

Appendix 5: Expert interview with Hasti Shemirani

Interviewee: Hasti Shemirani,
Content Creator on TikTok

Interviewer: Sara Ghiasi

Date: 22.12.2022

Location: via Zoom

SG: *Wie bist du auf die Plattform TikTok gestoßen und warum hast du dich dafür entschieden, dort einen Account anzulegen?*

HS: Als TikTok früher Musical.ly war, fand ich das da auch schon supercool. Ich habe dann für mich einen kleinen Privataccount gehabt und da mal ein Video gepostet für meine Freunde. Dann kam der Switch zu TikTok und ich habe gesehen, dass immer weniger Lyp-synch-Videos geostet werden, sondern es immer kreativ wurde, mehr in Richtung Lifestyle. Dann kam ein Boom mit der der Musik und dem Tanzen und ich dachte mir, dass ich das auch machen will. Gegen Anfang 2020 war das, da habe ich mit 15 noch angefangen diese Tanzvideos zu machen und habe dann gemerkt, dass sie nicht so gut ankommen. Ich habe dann ein bisschen rumprobiert, habe noch ein bisschen Lifestyle Content versucht und habe von meinem Tag mit gefilmt. Es kam auch gut an bei der meiner Community und ich konnte mir dann auch relativ schnell über ein paar Monate schon meine ersten 10.000 Follower aufbauen. Da war ich schon sehr froh drüber.

SG: *Bist du noch auf weiteren Social-Media-Plattformen aktiv und wie ist deine Reichweite im Vergleich zu TikTok?*

HS: Ich bin tatsächlich am aktivsten auf TikTok. Ich habe mal eine Zeit lang auch Instagram gemacht, aber da bin ich eher nicht aktiv. Aber ich plane aktiver zu werden, weil ich glaube, dass es auch wichtig ist, wenn ich diesen Influencer Status noch weiterführen möchte. Ansonsten bin ich nur auf TikTok. Ich habe mal vor zwei Jahre ein YouTube-Video gepostet, habe das aber wieder liegen gelassen, weil das mit der Schule nicht mehr vereinbar war, da es zu viel Zeit eingenommen hat. An sich bin ich nur auf TikTok richtig aktiv, auf Instagram poste ich nicht regelmäßig. Bei Instagram Reels posten die Leute ja hauptsächlich was auf TikTok ist, sie kopieren es einfach

nur rein. Da denke ich mir, dass man die jetzt auch einfach bei TikTok schauen könnte, wenn man sich sowieso lieber Videos anschaut. Auf Instagram sind es immer noch sehr viel Bilder neben den Videos.

SG: *Wie ist deine Reichweite auf Instagram im Vergleich zu TikTok?*

HS: Der Unterschied ist krass. Auf TikTok habe ich jetzt 1,4 Millionen Follower und auf Instagram habe ich 12,6 K, weil ich da überhaupt nicht aktiv bin und kaum poste. Das ist ein bisschen schade, aber ich arbeite dran.

SG: *Wie begründest du deinen Erfolg auf TikTok und wie erklärst du dir die Unterschiede bezüglich deiner Reichweite auf den verschiedenen Plattformen?*

HS: Ich habe mir das sehr schnell angewöhnt, nach den ersten geposteten Videos, wie ich es machen soll. Zum Beispiel sollte man am Anfang eines Videos einen Wow-Effekt einbauen, dass die Leute, wenn du auf ihrer FYP erscheinst, nicht direkt wegklicken. Am Ende des Videos sollte man noch etwas Cooles machen, so dass die Leute das Video nochmal anschauen und es liken. Diesen Dreh hatte ich schnell raus und wenn man dann seine Schiene gefunden hat, wie zum Beispiel Lifestyle früher bei mir, kommt der Erfolg eigentlich relativ schnell. Ich habe verstanden, was ich machen kann und muss und was mir auch Spaß macht. Ab dann konnte ich es variieren und schauen, was ich dazu machen kann und welcher Content weniger gut ankommt. So habe ich eine Balance gefunden, wie man ganz gut so kurze Videos machen kann, die gut bei den Leuten ankommt. Das Problem bei Instagram ist, dass ich nicht professionelle Fotografen habe, die mir helfen und auch nicht Leute kenne, die mit mir gerne Fotos machen gehen. Deswegen mache ich meistens immer Selfies und dann habe ich immer das Gefühl, dass ich den Dreh noch nicht raus habe und nicht genug weiß, wie ich die Balance bei Instagram finde, etwas zu kreieren was gut ankommt und ich dabei noch Spaß habe. Das muss ich noch für mich herausfinden.

SG: *Unterscheidet sich deine Zuschauerschaft auf den Plattformen und wenn ja, inwiefern?*

HS: Ich habe auf Instagram gesehen, dass mir zwischen 15- und 30-jährige am meisten folgen und auch relativ viele Männer im Vergleich zu den Frauen. Das liegt wahrscheinlich daran, dass ich dort nur 12,6 K Follower habe. Auf TikTok sind es am meisten im Bereich zwischen 12- bis 18-Jährige meine Videos schauen. Das liegt bestimmt daran, dass wirklich junge Kinder und Jugendliche auf TikTok sind und gerne sich Videos anschauen, statt sich Fotos anzuschauen.

SG: *Unterscheidest du bei der Contenterstellung zwischen den verschiedenen Plattformen und wenn ja, inwiefern?*

HS: Der Plan war ursprünglich, dass ich das, was ich auf TikTok poste, auch auf Instagram zu posten. Quasi das, was alle anderen auch machen, einfach nur per Screen Recorder mein Video auf Instagram hochzuladen. Deswegen könnte ich pauschal nicht sagen, ob ich da einen Unterschied sehe, vor allem da zurzeit mein Instagram eh auf Eis gelegt ist. Bei TikTok konzentriere ich mich auf meinen Musik Content mit zum Beispiel Tänzern. Auf meinem Instagram Account wollte ich eigentlich Comedy Videos machen und weniger Fashion Videos, weil ich das auch gemerkt habe, dass Comedy oder die lustigen Reels besser ankommen. Also da würde ich es in Zukunft so machen und es wirklich unterscheiden, damit auf beiden Plattformen unterschiedlicher Content ist und somit auch auf beiden Kanälen Videos geschaut werden.

SG: *Welche Inhalte stellst du auf TikTok und wie sehr achtest du dabei auf Trends?*

HS: Trends sind das Allerwichtigste, was man machen kann. Gerade, wenn Sounds trenden, Tänze oder einfach ein Meme aus dem Internet muss man sofort aufspringen und dabei sein. Ich frage mich direkt, wie ich den Trend in mein Video einbauen kann um meine eigene Version von diesem Trend machen. Das sage ich auch jedem, der mich fragt, wie ich diesen Erfolg geschafft habe. Es mag blöd klingen, aber am hilfreichsten ist es, auf Trends aufspringen und mitmachen. Man muss natürlich nicht, wenn man den Trend blöd findet, genauso eine eins-zu-eins Version machen. Man kann wie gesagt seine eigene Version raus machen und rumprobieren. Das kommt dann meistens auch sehr gut an. Wenn man seine eigene Version posten, können sich wiederum andere Leute anschließen und ihre Version mithilfe deiner Version

hochladen und so weiter. Dadurch entstehen auch nur diese Communitys und die vielfachen Trends auf der FYP.

SG: *Du hast bereits Werbung auf TikTok für Unternehmen wie AboutYou und Spotify gemacht. Bekommst du oft Werbeanfragen von Unternehmen und wie läuft so ein Prozess typischerweise ab?*

HS: Ich kriege auf TikTok circa jede Woche eine Anfrage. Diese schickt mein Management, bestehend aus meiner Managerin und weiteren Mitarbeitern, in unsere gemeinsame WhatsApp Gruppe und fragt mich, ob ich Interesse hätte, mit den Marken zusammenzuarbeiten. Entweder fragen die Marken mich an oder mein Management fragt bei interessanten Marken an, ob sie Lust auf eine Kooperation hätten. Nachdem ich zusage, bekomme ich ein Briefing und schaue, ob mir was zu dem Produkt und den Eckdaten einfällt und ob es in meinen Content reinpasst. Wenn dies zutrifft, dann sage ich eigentlich direkt zu, aber man sollte trotzdem aufpassen, nicht jede Anfrage willkürlich anzunehmen. Man muss schauen, ob die Anfrage und Marke zu einem selbst passen. Bisher habe ich circa 70% aller Anfragen angenommen.

SG: *Welche Vorgaben machen dir die Werbepartner und wollen die Werbepartner deinen Content vor Veröffentlichung freigeben?*

HS: Im Briefing befindet sich meistens eine Dos & Don'ts Liste mit Dingen, die du machen darf und nicht machen sollst. Dazu gibt es eine Präsentation, die beinhaltet, was diese Marke widerspiegelt und was sie supportet. Wenn ich zusage, dann muss ich dieses Video innerhalb einiger Tagen drehen. Es sollte zum Beispiel nicht eine Woche dauern, bis ich das Video in die Gruppe reinschicke. Genau, wenn ich das Video abgedreht habe, schicke ich das in die Gruppe rein und meine Managerin leitet es an den Kunden weiter. Der kann dann entweder sagen, dass alles passt oder er noch was auszusetzen hat. Dann kriegt mein Management das Feedback und dann sagt mir dann, dass ich das noch ein bisschen überarbeiten muss. Die meisten meiner Kunden wollten vor Posting des Videos nochmal drüber schauen. Anschließend kann ich das Video hochladen und wir besprechen nochmal, wann ich das Video hochladen soll, welche Hashtags ich einbaue, wie die Caption aussieht, und so weiter. Sobald

das steht, richten wir ein „Go-Live-Date“ ein, welches ich mir auch in meinem Kalender eintrage, damit ich das Video auch fest an diesem Tag poste.

SG: *Wie reagiert deine Community auf Werbung und fallen dir Unterschiede bei der Reaktion auf den verschiedenen Plattformen auf?*

HS: Da ich keine Werbung auf Instagram mache, kann ich nur über die Reaktion auf TikTok sprechen. Da ist es immer ein bisschen gespalten. Ich hatte zum Beispiel mal innerhalb eines Monats vier Kooperationen gepostet und da wurde in den Kommentaren gemeckert, dass ich jetzt ja nur noch Werbung poste. Aber ich denke, dass das eher Leute waren, die mich auf ihrer FYP sehen und nicht wirklich verfolgen. Tatsächlich ist es bei mir so gewesen, dass als ich angefangen habe die Werbung zu posten, meine Kommentare nur mit positiven Rückmeldungen gefüllt waren. Alle waren superstolz auf mich und haben sich mit mir über meine ersten Werbungen gefreut. Also meine Community ist einfach die Beste, ich kann mir nie keine bessere Community vorstellen. Ich habe auch noch nie Hate oder einen Shitstorm bekommen, weil meine Community mich so supportet und hinter mir steht. Es gibt immer ein paar Ausnahmen, die dumme Kommentare schreiben aber für meine Community bin ich sehr dankbar.

SG: *Was unterscheidet TikTok von anderen Social-Media-Kanälen für Content Creator und Unternehmen?*

HS: Ich finde, dass es viele Vorurteile gegenüber TikTok gibt. Manche denken, sie öffnen TikTok nur um ein kurzes Video zu schauen, dabei scrollt man dann immer weiter und auf einmal werden aus fünf Minuten drei Stunden, die man auf der App verbringt. Alle Videos werden auf der FYP angezeigt und ich denke, dass es für Unternehmen sehr verlockend ist, da sie ihre Kunden immer ansprechen werden. Zudem ist TikTok gerade sehr populär. Wenn ich mir anschau, wie lange ich damals, als ich auf Instagram aktiver war, Zeit auf Instagram verbracht habe versus wie lange ich Zeit auf TikTok verbringe, liegen dazwischen Welten. Deswegen denke ich, dass das Videoformat für Unternehmen interessanter ist als das Bildformat, da man seine Message detaillierter rüberbringen kann. Außerdem gibt es bei Instagram viele verschiedene Formate, wie Bilder, Story, Reels, den Shop und so weiter. Auf TikTok

hast du nur die FYP auf der du entlang scrollst und das vereinfacht das Erlebnis für Unternehmen, als auch für Kunden.

SG: *Hast du schon einmal Werbung im Anzeigenmanager von TikTok erstellt und wenn ja, kannst du diesen weiterempfehlen?*

HS: Ich persönlich habe das noch nie gemacht. Ich weiß aber, dass ich bei der Werbung für Spotify den Link vom geposteten Video in unsere WhatsApp Gruppe reingeschickt und mein Management diesen Link wieder an den Kunden weitergegeben hat. Dieser konnte dann mit dem Link das Video auf meiner Seite pushen, das wurde dann als Werbeanzeige gepusht und auf anderen FYP angezeigt. Das habe ich bisher einmal gemacht und es hat erstaunlich gut funktioniert. Die Ratio von Views und Likes ist zwar sehr unterschiedlich, denn du hast ein sehr viele Views, aber nur um dann vielleicht so ganz wenig Likes. Der Anzeigenmanager ist auf jeden Fall ein cooles Tool, mit dem man viel machen kann und auch viele Benefits von trägt. Zwar kriegt man nicht viele Likes, aber die Leute wissen dann über die Werbung Bescheid.

SG: *Ist TikTok deiner Meinung nach nur eine Plattform zur Unterhaltung und Weiterbildung?*

HS: Nein, das würde ich nicht sagen. Ich habe jetzt zum Beispiel ganz viele Freunde auch durch TikTok kennengelernt. Das Zwischenmenschliche und dieses Connecten mit deiner Community und auch anderen Creatoren ist sehr wichtig. Als Creator kann man sich auch gegenseitig mit anderen Werbekampagnen irgendwie verknüpfen. Wenn eine Kampagne beispielsweise gar nicht in meinen Content passt, kann ich dann durch mein Management einen anderen Creator vorschlagen. Daher ist es als Content Creator immer gut viele Connections zu haben, da sie dich anderen Werbepartnern empfehlen können. TikTok ist auch eine Weiterbildung-Plattform, aber nicht komplett. Man sieht auch ein bisschen Blödsinn manchmal beim Scrollen. Trotzdem kenne ich Leute, darunter auch meine Freunde, die TikTok als Google benutzen. Sie geben zum Beispiel die Weganfrage zum Brandenburger Tor in Berlin ein, wobei ich nicht denke, dass das ein gutes Mittel dazu ist. Auch zurzeit der WM haben sie die Liveübertragung nicht auf der Tagesschau gestreamt, sondern auf TikTok. Für reinen Educational

Stuff oder wie meine Freunde als Suchmaschine würde ich TikTok definitiv nicht nutzen.

SG: *Wie prognostizierest du die zukünftige Entwicklung der Plattform hinsichtlich seiner Creator und Zuschauer?*

HS: Zurzeit ist TikTok richtig am Blühen. Es ist noch gerade etwas neuer und es kommen von Tag zu Tag viele neue Creator dazu. Das gilt aber tatsächlich weniger für TikTok Deutschland, hier sind es eher die alten Hasen, die auf der Plattform quasi regieren, wie @videozeugs, @24Tim oder @julesboringlife. Sie haben ihre starken Communitys, was sie sehr krass pusht. Es kann natürlich sein, dass das irgendwann abnehmen wird und neue Creator ins Spotlight kommen, aber das ist relativ unwahrscheinlich. Ich hoffe, dass in zwei, drei Jahren dieser Hype um den Status als TikToker verschwindet und es nicht mehr als cringe wahrgenommen wird und man mit Stolz sagen, dass man diese coolen Videos postet. Es sind ja keine Videos, die ich nicht fühle, sondern es ist das, was mich repräsentiert. Es sind meine Passion und meine Leidenschaft, die ich in diesen Videos, zum Beispiel beim Tanzen oder beim Singen reinpacke. Selbst wenn ich ein komisches Video mache, wo nur rumspringe oder so, ist es immer noch echt und authentisch. Ich hoffe, dass sich diese Vorurteile ändern.

SG: *Gibt es auch etwas an TikTok, das du kritisch siehst?*

HS: Ich habe früher sehr viele Kinder auf TikTok gesehen, zwischen 7 bis 12 Jahre. Das hat TikTok nicht gut gemanagt, sie müssen die Kinder auf jeden Fall herausfiltern, damit die keinen Account haben. Aber das haben die jetzt irgendwie gut geregelt, dass man von denen jetzt nicht mehr viel mitbekommt, sondern eher die Älteren ab Teenageralter trenden. Trotzdem kommt TikTok nicht schnell genug hinterher, wenn Leute zum Beispiel halbnackte Inhalte in Videos posten. Das ist mir in letzter Zeit sehr oft passiert und dann denke ich mir, dass Kinder, die 12 Jahre oder jünger sind, so etwas schauen und es verstörend sein kann. Auch Leute, die zum Beispiel ein rechtsextremistisches Weltbild haben, können Videos posten, ohne dass es von vornerein verboten wird. Manchmal hat ein Video, wo die Leute Hitler für seine „Errungenschaften“ für Deutschland loben, dann 1 Million Likes und das ist sehr

besorgniserregend. Letztens sah ich Gruppierungen von Leuten, die sich gegen Menschen mit Kopftuch aussprechen. Auch Andrew Tate ist zum Beispiel jemand, der sehr frauenfeindlichen Content gepostet hat und ihm wurde auf der Plattform eine sehr große Reichweite gegeben. Auch die Kommentare zu seinen Videos waren unterirdisch, er wurde von Leuten in seiner Meinung gepusht und sowas ist echt traurig. Es gibt zwar immer mehrere Einzelpersonen, die dann auf diesen Mist aufmerksam machen und sich fundiert dagegen aussprechen, aber trotzdem gibt es immer welche, die dann mit einem Andrew Tate sympathisieren. Daher habe ich Bedenken, wenn TikTok da nicht härter durchgreift.

Appendix 6: Code system for the data analysis on MAXQDA²¹⁹

Liste der Codes		
Codesystem		120
Potential risks of TikTok as a communication channel		0
Level of detail of KPIs		2
Risk of loss		2
Trademark infringement		8
Inappropriate Content		0
Conclusion		2
Right-wing Extremism		1
Obscene content		1
Underage user		2
Misogynistic		2
Avoidance of entanglement within social media channels		0
Creating Content on TikTok		0
KPI		8
Format		3
Frequency		4
Content		14
Platforms for social media marketing		0
Comparing the platforms		21
Content differentiation		6
Motives for using TikTok		0
CCs motives		5
User's motives		5
Companies' motives for using TikTok		0
Advertising opportunities		0
Acceptance of advertising		5
Advertising creation		6
TikTok Ads manager		6
Target audience		8
Potential advantages for companies		2
TikToks Homepage		2
Virality		2
Involved from the very beginning		3
Sets		0

²¹⁹ Own illustration, derived from MAXQDA

Appendix 6.1: Data analysis using the coding system²²⁰

Codierte Segmente

Code: Motives for using TikTok > Companies' motives for using TikTok > TikTok's USP > Advertising opportunities >

6 codierte Segmente (aus 1 Dokumenten, 0 Dokumentgruppen)

<

²²⁰ Own illustration, derived from MAXQDA

Appendix 7: Data analysis on MAXQDA²²¹

Dokument-Browser: Interview HS (37 Absätze)

k > Advertising opportunities > Advertising creation

wachsen

0/0

Aa a* abc ab ycd

SG: Unterscheidet sich deine Zuschauerschaft auf den Plattformen und wenn ja, inwiefern?

HS: Ich habe auf Instagram gesehen, dass mir zwischen 15- und 30-jährige am meisten folgen und auch relativ viele Männer im Vergleich zu den Frauen. Das liegt wahrscheinlich daran, dass ich dort nur 12,6 K Follower habe. Auf TikTok sind es am meisten im Bereich zwischen 12- bis 18-Jährige meine Videos schauen. Das liegt bestimmt daran, dass wirklich junge Kinder und Jugendliche auf TikTok sind und gerne sich Videos anschauen, statt sich Fotos anzuschauen.

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²²¹ Own illustration, derived from MAXQDA

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Ich versichere an Eides statt, dass die vorliegende Arbeit mit dem Titel

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Hannover, den 31.01.2023

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara Ghiasi', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sara Ghiasi