Creating engaging marketing in TikTok for football teams

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Abstract

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This research-based thesis focuses on researching Tiktok marketing and more specifically, what makes football related Tiktok marketing engaging.   TikTok is a huge platform that has been gaining momentum during the last few years. The platform has not yet been studied in that much detail, so new research is still quite welcome from the topic.   The research was conducted by using a mixed-methods research. Five users of the application who follow football teams were interviewed in the process, as well as the professional Tiktok admin of the Finnish mens national team. From these findings the author created recommendations for football teams.   The findings provided interesting data about the behaviour-styles of both the Tiktok users and the admin inside the application and in content creation. The types of content football fans like to watch was found, and also tips for beginner-level Tiktok admins were found from the interview conducted with the professional admin.   Clear, definite instructions are provided for football teams at the end of this thesis, which were based on the data that was collected during the research. The tips can provide the Tiktok admins of professional football teams useful data which they can use in their marketing and content creation.
Keywords   Tiktok marketing, Digital marketing, Professional football team, Content marketing,   Engagement

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1   Introduction

1.1   Background

This is a research-based bachelor's thesis in the marketing specialization programme of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences International business program. In this thesis the aim is to find solutions for football teams regarding creation of engaging content for their Tiktok marketing. In the thesis, you will be introduced how Tiktok generally works and the main characteristics of the application, and how this knowledge is important in finding user engagement within the app. The author will also go through some case examples about the success stories of Tiktok in terms of football teams. You will also be explained how Tiktok marketing differs from the traditional sports marketing.

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has aggressively accelerated the growth of Tiktok in terms of the number of users and accounts created. As an example, in the United States the use of the application rose by 180% in the start of the pandemic, especially amongst 15–25-year-olds (Statista 2022). This rapid growth in the users can also be seen as an opportunity to increase organizations reach in the world of Tiktok, which makes this research very topical.

With new technologies, much more emphasis has been put on social media, due to the large masses of target audience. Sports teams have noticed that connecting with the fans through social media is very important. Engaging with fans through social media has been successful in not only the existing target groups, but also with new upcoming target groups. Men's sports teams have been able to engage female fans with social media, who are outside the main target group of these men's sports teams. (Blakey & Seymour 2021, 43.)

Tiktok as an individual social media has also brought new heights into the marketing and content creation of sports teams inside the application. At first it was the top football teams in the world who took use of the growing market, when Barcelona and Real Madrid started to utilize the application in 2020 (Iazzi 2021). Clubs and teams with a bigger fanbase are at an advantage when moving to Tiktok marketing and content creation, because they have a larger following and fanbase to begin with, however, Tiktok as a platform makes it possible to reach incredible heights in terms of reach by making smart and engaging content. The Russian team Spartak Moscow (@fcsm) is a prime example of this. They have gathered a following of 2.5 million followers on the platform (Tiktok 2022), even though their international fanbase is much lower than the bigger teams in Europe.

The purpose of this research is to find the ways engaging Tiktok content can be made by conducting a qualitative interview to Tiktok users who follow football. From this data the author then finds the most effective way Tiktok marketing can be done by football teams and provide football teams with tips and advice on how to gather a bigger reach on Tiktok. The benefits of the bigger reach are increases in the teams marketing reach and fanbase, which aids the club both reputationally and financially.

1.2 Research question

The research question for this research-based thesis is going to be: **How to create engaging Tiktok marketing content as a football team?** From this research question three investigative questions were created. The three investigative questions are:

Table 1. Investigative questions.

Investigative question:	Research method:
IQ1: What are the characteristics of Tiktok marketing and content creation?	Literature review, desktop research
IQ2: What kind of football themed Tiktok marketing is considered engaging by the users of Tiktok?	Interviews
IQ3: What kind of content football teams should create in order to create the largest possible engagement rates?	Mixed method data analysis

1.3 Demarcation

The author only focuses on finding solutions for football teams. The qualitative research respondents are Tiktok users who follow football-related content. The research is also demarcated so that it only involves European football teams and their content. This is why the end results, and the authors personal recommendations are also meant to be mainly for European football teams.

The Tiktok marketing of individual athletes or football players will also not be involved in the research. This thesis will solely focus on finding solutions for the official Tiktok accounts of football teams.

1.4   Benefits

The benefits of this research-based will largely be for football teams wanting to begin their Tiktok marketing. The recommendations provided are based on the research. Football teams can then use these recommendations to modify their Tiktok marketing accordingly.

The author also receives important experience about multiple important skills. Conducting the interviews is helpful experience and working with close relations to the whole football marketing industry is beneficial to the author.

Studying Tiktok as a marketing platform is also very helpful since Tiktok is relatively new as a platform, so generally the research done about the application is still at a limited stage. New research, like this one, adds important data to the knowledge pool we currently have about Tiktok.

Focusing specifically on football fans who use Tiktok daily as my target group provides important data for the admins who run football teams in Tiktok. The topic of the research is new, so the data can provide important benefits for teams who have not planned their Tiktok content creation and are not using that to their full potential.

1.5   International aspect

The required international aspect of this thesis is fulfilled. The Tiktok channels used in the research are all international teams, and not all from Finland. Although location is a factor in the Tiktok algorithm (Tiktok 2020), the app itself is very international, and content comes to your feed from all over the world. The content respondents will evaluate are mainly in English, and the interviews were also carried out in an international way speaking English.

Tiktok is a global phenomenon and succeeding in the content creation can create a worldwide spread and success in an international way.

1.6   Risks and risk management

There are relatively little risks relating to this research-based thesis. This research is not done together in collaboration with a company, so the author does not have to be careful with some classified information a company might have. The biggest risks of the project relate to the research phase and the qualitative interviews. It is important to keep the data I collect classified, and the interviewing process must be done in a way, where the respondents do not get ideas fed to them by the interviewer.

The possibility of the project being cancelled is small. The schedule is structured, and there are no financial risks that relate to this research project. When taking to account all the possible risks and the way author manages them, it is safe to say that this research-based thesis is on a safe ground.

1.7 Key Concepts

Tiktok – an application where users can share video-based content. It is the fastest growing social media in the world (Dellatto 2021).

Viral trends – 'Going viral' describes something that quickly becomes very popular amongst the users of the internet (Cambridge University 2022). Viral Tiktok trends are types of videos, that the users recreate within the social media platform, in hopes of their version of the trend going viral (Stelzner 2021). Viral trends hold a huge importance in succeeding in Tiktok marketing, and they are not considered as copying of content (Stelzner 2021).

Internet meme – A concept that started to spread during the 21st century through digitalisation. They often take the form of an image or a video. Meme is a unit of cultural information spread in the form of imitation (Rogers 2021). Memes are often involved in Tiktok content.

Social media marketing – this term can be defined (Barker & al. 2013, 3) as a term that describes the usage of social networks like Tiktok and Facebook, online communities, blogs or wikis for marketing, sales, public relation, or customer service purposes. According to Barker & al. (2013, 3), social media marketing has three important aspects:

Table 2. The three important aspects of social media marketing. (Barker & al. 2013, 3)

1. Creating a buzz. This means that the created content must have the characteristics to go viral.
2. Trying to create ways where fans can promote the company themselves, for example sharing and fan pages.
3. It is also important, that the content is based around online conversations. The marketing is not controlled by the organization, but instead tries to encourage the fans to have their own say.

Tiktok creator fund – A fund created by Tiktok. The aim is to reward the content creators from creating content that succeeds in the platform. (Tiktok 2021)

Tiktok algorithm – series of mathematic equations, which are implemented by Tiktok to try to find the type of content that you enjoy watching the most. The social media will recommend these recommendations to the "For you" page inside the social media. (Tiktok 2020)

Professional football team – can be defined as a club or a team, that can employ players and staff professionally. In order to be called professional and not semi-professional the contracted individuals have to be able to play football as a full time job, rather than a part-time job (Dictionary 2022).

Content marketing – High quality digital content can be in the form of a text, image or video. In their book, Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid & Cruz (2020, 230) define content marketing in the following way: content marketing is the strategic process of creating and amplifying content for the purpose of informing, entertaining and building awareness of your brand. In this thesis, digital content marketing is studied in the form of Tiktok videos.

Engagement – The dictionary of the university of Cambridge defines engagement as 'a process that encourages people to being interested in the work of an organization'. (Cambridge University 2022)

2   Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this thesis is divided into the parts that are relevant in this study according to the author. First, the author researches Tiktok as a platform. Then, the author analyses social media and fan engagement in social media. These topics are then linked together with the digitalisation of the football industry. The behaviour of football fans as a target group is also researched. The theory of video engagement completes the theoretical framework in this research-based thesis.

2.1   Tiktok

Firstly, it is important to know what Tiktok is and how it works. It is a social media, where the users of the application can create short videos and publish them for other users to see. Users can use the in-app video editor, and the app also provides a very large music library, from where the user can then select appropriate music to use with the videos.

Unlike many other social media applications, Tiktok does not require registration to watch content, but commenting, liking and creation of own content requires a registration. Tiktok also makes it very easy to eat through endless of hours of content, due to the built-in algorithm, that constantly tracks the user and optimizes the users feed to match the users' preferences. Jumping into Tiktok marketing can be seen with huge potential, because posts generally experience better engagement rates in Tiktok than with any other social media platform (Geyser 2022). According to Tiktok itself (2020), the app creates the personal videofeed, which is called the "ForYou" page, from the following elements:

1. User interactions (Videos you like, creators you follow, comments you post)
2. Video information (The types of captions, sounds and hashtags you watch)
3. Device and account settings (Language preference, country setting and even the type of the device)

Tiktok is the latest social media that has risen to "super social media" -like status. At the end of the year 2021, Tiktok had a whopping 1.2 billion annual users, which is an astonishing growth from the year 2018, in which the app only had 85 million annual users (Iqbal 2022).

The amount of information and studies that focus on Tiktok is still limited when compared to the other large social medias and the likes of Facebook and Twitter, but the platform is constantly being researched further.

2.1.1 Tiktok and revenue generation

What makes Tiktok attractive for businesses and organizations, is of course the large sums of revenue that can be generated with the app through advertising and sponsorships. Tiktok also has its own revenue creating program, that is not dependant on the account's individual partnerships and sponsorships (Tiktok 2022). Tiktok creator fund is a reward system implemented by the app itself to show the appreciation they have for their amazing creator community (Tiktok 2021). Creators receive funds from the app based on how well their content succeeds in the app. There is not a limit in how much content creators can earn with the Tiktok creator fund, it is only dependant on the success of the content created (Tiktok 2021).

In terms of revenue generated, bigger than the creator fund are the individual partnerships and sponsorships that Tiktok accounts endorse on their content (Bain 2021). Football teams are no exception to this, and the accounts of football teams reach millions and millions of views with their content (Iazzi 2021). Views and reach are revenue in advertising and sponsorships, and if we look at some of the biggest success stories in football related Tiktok accounts, we can see a huge financial opportunity. The Tiktok account of a Russian team FC Spartak Moscow is a relatively unknown and unfollowed team in the European footballing world, but in Tiktok they can match the big clubs. If we look at the estimated Tiktok revenue of Spartak Moscow (Influencermarketinghub 2022), we can draw a conclusion that every team can attract big attention and gain major financial benefit from succeeding in content creation inside the app, no matter what their starting reputation is.
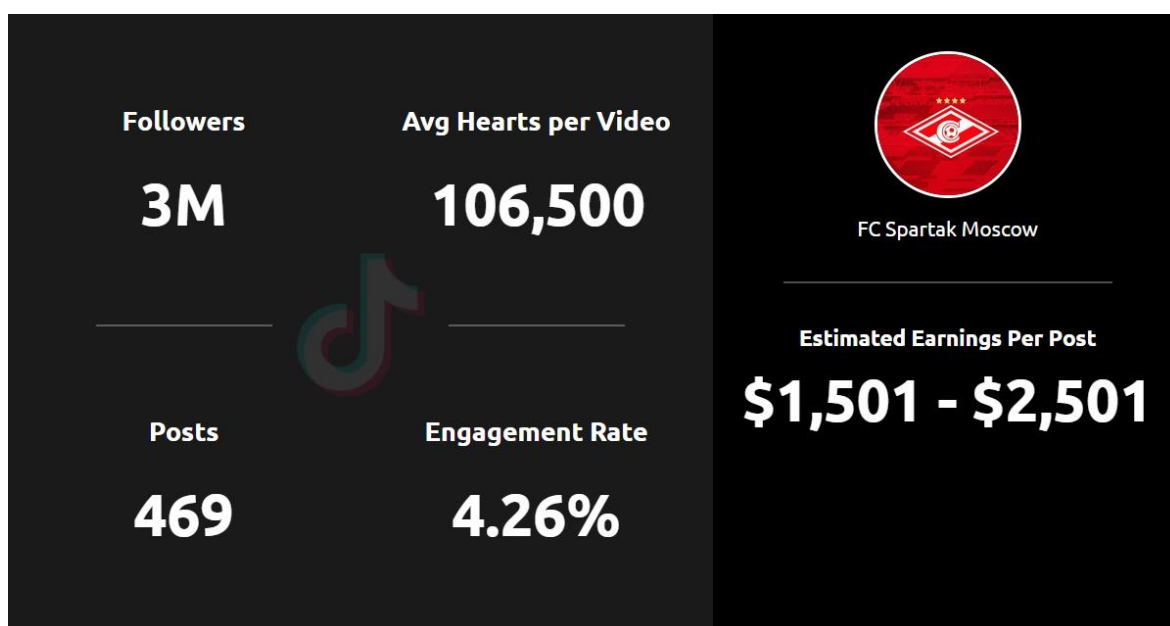
Followers	Avg Hearts per Video	
3M	**106,500**	FC Spartak Moscow
Posts	Engagement Rate	Estimated Earnings Per Post
469	**4.26%**	**$1,501 - $2,501**

Photo 1. The estimated earnings of FC Spartak Moscow Tiktok account. (Influencermarketinghub 2021).

2.1.2   Viral trends dominating Tiktok

The content in Tiktok holds great variety, from humour to more serious content, and from black and white to colourful. Unique content is created every day. When looking at which type of content to create from a business perspective, following trends is ranked as the most worthwhile strategy by Forbes (Bringe 2021). Following trends is a reactive strategy, which makes content creation significantly easier for marketers. Trends essentially provide a ready-made content creation plan for businesses to use. Without a plan, companies fail in social media (Barker, Barker, Bormann & Neher 2013, 1). These ready-made Tiktok trends make it easier for brands to enter to the world of Tiktok marketing. Marketing can be reactive rather than proactive.

An example of a Tiktok trend could a video, where an individual user or an organization would try to recreate a dance made famous by a large Tiktok star, or a largely viral video created by a user. Users essentially insert their own version of the video in hopes of their video gathering large reach.

2.2   Fan engagement in social media

Social media has always been an important factor with sport businesses, organizations and teams in creating engagement with the fans of the teams (Jinnah & Pegoraro 2012). According to Blakey & Seymour (2021, 40) the aim of social media is to create content that is then shared across the social media by the users. The authors also state (2021, 40), that the main purpose of social media is to build communities, that boost the engagement rates of the content in those communities. The evolving social media has revitalised the way fans can interact with their teams on social media (Brodie & Hollebeek 2016). The most engaging content that fans like to watch on the social media pages of sports teams are the following:

Table 2. Most popular topics in the social medias of sports teams. (Blakey & Seymour 2021, 42)

o	Personal opinions about the team
o	Game strategy
o	Season prospects
o	The future of the team
o	Game stats

According to the fan engagement model (Fowler & Wilson 2016), fan engagement consists of both match day and non-match day activities. One of the most important parts in the model, is to connect fans during non-match days. This is where the quality of the content shared in the team's social media comes into play, and good content leads to more engagement. (Fowler & Wilson 2016)
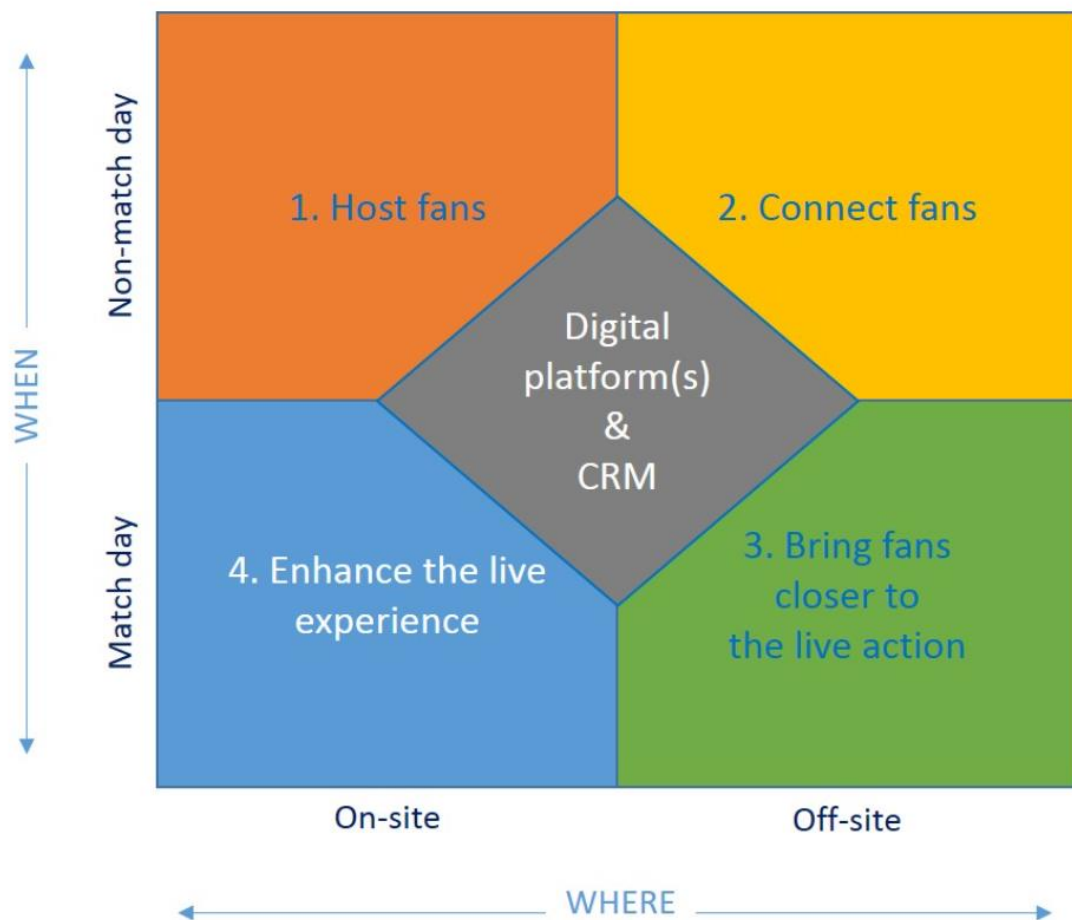

Figure 1. The fan engagement model (Fowler & Wilson 2016).

2.3 Rapid digitalisation in the footballing world

Already in the year of 2010, online sports marketing was ranked as the best foundation for sports teams to build communities amongst their fanbase (Loakimidis 2010).

The digitalisation of the football world has changed the way a fan can enjoy the game. Before the global digitalisation caused by the rapidly advancing technology, football fans could only listen to the games on radio, see them on the television, go see the match live or talk about it with friends. Nowadays, the broadband connection, the smartphone age and the evolving social media have changed the ways fans can engage with their favourite teams. (Chadwick, Chanavat & Desbordes 2018, 300)

Broadband connection

- Has been an essential part in making digitalisation possible. Has been a key in revolutionazing the way sports fans spend their leisure.

Smartphone era

- Has equipped sport marketers with tools never seen before. The constantly expanding number of smartphone users provides sport organizations many more possibilities to monetize themselves.

Social media phenomena

- The multiple different platforms social media platforms have strengthtened sports fans engagement with their favourite teams. A huge part of sports teams' marketing happens through different social platforms.

Figure 2. Three elements that have enabled the fast digitalisation of the footballing industry. (Adapted from Chadwick, Chanavat, & Desbordes 2018, 300-301)

2.3.1 The new possibilities of rapidly growing Tiktok

Tiktok is an attractive platform, because it has sort of flipped the traditional social media upside down. The fact that the app promotes the quality of the content over the size of an existing follower base is something that makes it unique. (Taulli 2020)

Therefore, knowing what kind of content engages the users of the app is very important, because that essentially determines the reach and potential of your marketing in the app. The fact that no huge financial investment is needed to start your marketing process in Tiktok makes it an attractive platform for all organizations, including football teams.

This makes this study very current and beneficial: the author is trying to find solutions for football teams about which content best engages their target audience.

2.4 Football fans as a target group

The study of this research-based thesis will focus on one target group, football fans. According to Parry, Jones & Wann, football fans feel that they want to belong to a bigger community. This often leads to a long-lasting, loyal partnership between the fan and the favourite team of the fan. (Parry, Jones & Wann 2014)

The research part of this thesis will focus on football fans and their perceptions of football related content in Tiktok. Studies about this target group are so far relatively limited in

terms of Tiktok related data. "Football Tiktok" has developed into its own definition. Tiktok is good at building its own communities amongst its users because of the algorithm. The algorithm offers football content to those, who watch football content, which makes sure the viewers of the content are somewhat loyal to the content presented in the interview.

2.5   Content marketing

The most important part of any digital or social media marketing is the content. (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid & Cruz 2020, 255) Content in digital marketing can come in any form, for example text, videos or images, but according to Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid and Cruz, (2020) the type of the content does not necessarily matter. The important thing is finding out the wants and the needs of the target audience and creating content that fits the buyer persona of your target audience. Having talented content marketing can have massive boosts to the community engagement of companies. (Heinze & al. 2020, 255)

In order to create successful content marketing, it has to be done right. The below figure 3 (adapted from Heinze & al. 2020) describes the content marketing cycle.

Figure 3. The content marketing cycle.
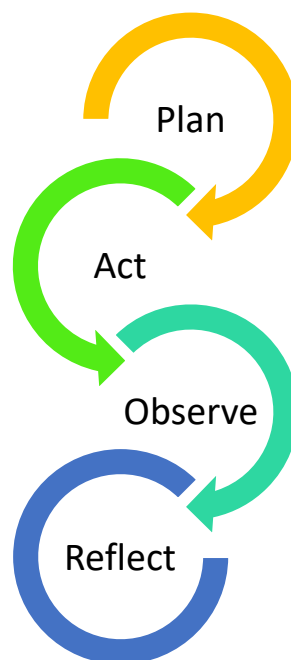
2.5.1   Video content marketing

According to David Brock, people prefer when a text or instructions have been summarized to a short video, and visuals also create a better experience than text-based formats (2019). We can argue that one part of the major success that Tiktok has been able to gather, is due to the fact that the whole application is only video-based content.

Brock also states, that picking a niche, or a particular market is important in video marketing. This is also something that Tiktok uses well, because of the algorithm. The algorithm makes sure the topics you find interesting are recommended to you at your for you page. (Brock 2019)

Understanding your audience is also listed as a very important factor (Brock 2019). This is one of the reasons that this thesis is very topical and useful for football teams. Understanding football fans and how they react to Tiktok marketing can provide substantial financial benefits for football teams.

One of the key areas of engaging audiences through digitalised video marketing is the length of the content. In Tiktok, according to Influencermarketinghub, the optimal length of a Tiktok video for a standard advertisement is 9 to 15 second in length (2021). The same 9 to 15 seconds length of the video is also confirmed to being the best by Sociallypowerful (2021).

2.6   Engagement marketing

The main idea of this thesis is to provide football teams with instructions for Tiktok use. The main purpose of the instructions is to equip the reader with knowledge, that enables the reader to create as engaging content as possible for the right target audience. So how can we define engagement? According to Goodman & Goodman (2012), creating engagement means creating content that the audience finds interesting and relevant, and content that gets the audience to take an action (Goodman & Goodman 2012). In the Tiktok world, taking an action means subscribing, liking or commenting the to the account of the team or the content of the team.

So, what makes the engagement marketing such an effective tool to utilize? It takes advantage of people's personal networks. According to Goodman & Goodman (2012), everyone has a personal network, and we constantly share information about our own networks amongst our networks. Engagement marketing is built around the idea, that people share a story about the company in question themselves. This is where social media excels: in the days before social media, companies did not have a clue when someone was talking or referring to them, or in which ways. There was also no way to have an influence how companies could be represented in the word of mouth marketing. (Goodman & Goodman 2012).

Nowadays, the situation is completely different. Different social media tools that have evolved through digitalisation have flipped the situation upside down. Social media provides companies an easy way to track how they are seen, talked, and shared about. According to Goodman & Goodman (2012), engagement marketing revolves around one golden idea: when you are able to connect with your audience online, you stop speaking to customers and start talking with them, wonderful things begin to happen. The major force of today's social media amplifies this effect: when you like or share something in social media, your whole personal network can see that activity. Therefore, engagement marketing has never been this important as it is nowadays.

2.6.1 Tiktok engagement

So, now we know that targeting social media with engagement marketing is highly important these days, but how does Tiktok differ from other social medias in terms of engagement rates? Tiktok as a platform has been able to create a platform, where enagement rates are generally very high. Users do not think twice about sharing, liking or posting, because it has lowered the stigma of engagement due to the high volume of content people are exposed to when using the application. (Voeth 2020).

In comparison to other large social medias, Tiktok holds huge potential in terms of engagement amongst users. According to research done by the Influencer marketing hub (2021), where 10 000 Tiktok accounts were studied, Tiktok engagement rates range from 3% to 9% based on the accounts following. In Instagram, regular engagement sets around 3% to 6%. Therefore, it can be said that Tiktok is a good platform when searching for engagement amongst users.

3   Research

In this chapter the author will go through the research methodology, the aim of the research and the structure the interviews will be conducted is also presented. The ethical and privacy related issues and how they are handled by the author is also included in this chapter.

3.1   Research design and methodology

The research of this thesis is divided into three different phases with different functions. The author's goal was to create an authentic, reliable research that can provide benefits to football teams.

Table 3. Research design phases.

Research Phase		Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Respondent/ Data source	→	Literature from the topic	Football fans using Tiktok	Professional Tiktok content creator for Huuhkajat
Data collection method	→	Literature review	Structured interview	Semi-structured Interview
Data analysis method	→	Theoretical knowledge review	Mixed method analysis	Qualitative analysis
Relation to investigative question	→	IQ1	IQ1 & IQ2	IQ1 & IQ2

3.1.1   Phase 1

The phase 1 of the research consists of the theoretical knowledge base. This involves literature review from the topic, and finding information about Tiktok, more specifically what kind of content football teams often post in Tiktok. Finding information about the way Tiktok works in terms of trends and how the application works was also included in phase 1. This phase 1 is explained in more detail in chapter 2, the theoretical knowledge chapter.

3.1.2   Phase 2

For phase 2, the author decided to select a structured qualitative interview research model. The phase 2 interview involves interviewing five users of the application, who

regularly use the application, and whose content consists largely of football related Tiktok content. Mixed methods analysis interview, that involves both qualitative and quantitative elements was selected as the research method for phase 1. According to Daymon & Holloway (2002, 4), qualitative methods are often associated with an interpretive worldview. The author saw this as an important factor, it was important that the respondents were able to express their opinions and feelings freely, as the author saw this as an important part of finding engagement in Tiktok.

The author used the book by Daymons & Holloways (2002) "Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications" also as a guidebook when planning and structuring the interview itself for phase 2. According to the book, unstructured interviews provide the largest amount of data, but unstructured interviews also contain the highest amount of irrelevant information. (Daymon & Holloway 2002, 170) Because on phase 2, the author focuses on such a narrow topic and is only interested in characteristics and emotions the users of the application feel when watching the content and ranking them from best to worst, the structured interview model was selected. This helps the author in being efficient in the data collection process.

In phase 2, the authors main objective is to seek for the style on videos and content football fans find engaging and interesting. The author categorized different types of content created by football teams to different categories. According to authors own research and user experience inside the application, there are three main types of videos football teams release, and these are the content types that were used when interviewing the users of the application. These categories are presented in the below table (table 4).

The author also wanted to find out how the respondents see Tiktok in general, and how do they feel about the application.

Table 4. Content categories used in the interview process (phase 2).

Content type	Content description
Meme-related content	Humorous videos that relate to trends or trending music/sounds. Often involves jokes, is very far from "official" content, and holds a great resemblance to user-created content.
Behind the scenes footage	Unique footage from behind the scenes of the club. Footage that can involve footage from training, or short clips of player interviews.
Match footage	Short highlight clips from a football match, can involve some editing tricks or humorous music with the match footage.

In the phase 2 interview, the respondents are shown 15 Tiktok content videos from the channels of professional football teams. The respondents are then asked to describe emotions and characteristics those videos woke amongst the respondents. The qualitative method of describing the videos in their own words provides usable data, because qualitative data is often used in interviews where the focus interpretive views of the respondents.

In addition to this, the phase 2 involves a quantitative element, where the respondents are asked to rate videos using the engagement scale the author created specifically for this research (figure 4). The respondents are asked to rate videos from 1 to 10, with 10 being the most engaging. This qualitative method was selected, because the author is then able to also provide data-based evidence about the most effective video types football teams could focus on creating. The engagement scale is shown in the below figure (figure 4).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

1 = Not engaging at all, I would not watch this again.

10 = Really engaging. I would like to see more content like this.

Figure 4. Phase 2 interview Tiktok content engagement scale.

3.1.3   Phase 3

The phase 3 of the research is a semi-structured interview with the Tiktok admin of the Huuhkajat Tiktok account. The Finnish national men's football team, nicknamed Huuhkajat, has a large 36 500 follower base in Tiktok, and the account has over 146 000 likes inside the application. This shows that the account has the characteristics and volume to succeed in both national and international levels. Getting advice from the admin of a large account like this provides the research with lot of good data and information about Tiktok.

This interview is done in the way of a semi-structured qualitative interview. The author's personal background as a sports journalist backs up this research method, because of the routine in hosting interviews. The semi-structured interview model offers the type of flexibility that is generally valued in qualitative interviews (Daymon & Holloway 2002, 169). This means, that the interview has a pre-determined topic guide, but the goal was to keep the conversation open.

3.2   Research target group

The research phase 2 target group of this research consists of football fans who are regular Tiktok users as well. This enables the author to strike to the main target audience that football teams are trying to reach with their marketing efforts. The target group consists of five 23–26-year-old males.

This demographic group was targeted by the author due to data that was found about how different demographic groups watch football and are exposed to football related content online. According to GWI Audience report (2015), 16 to 24-year-olds watch the most English Premier League matches online. In addition to that, men are more than twice likely to be Premier League fans than women (Global Web Index 2015).

Main proportion of Tiktok users are also under the age of 29; according to Statista (2021), people under the age of 29 form 47.4% of the whole audience in the platform. This makes my target group very logical for this research. Based on this research, we can argue, that my target group (males aged 23-26) is the group football teams should focus in their Tiktok marketing.

3.3   Research content selection

The 15 videos used as analysable content for phase 2 of the study was done by the author. The author first categorized three different categories football related Tiktok

content could be divided into (table 3), and then selected five videos from different international Tiktok accounts that fit into these categories.

There were only a few guidelines that the author followed when selecting the content to be analysed. These guidelines are described in the below table (table 4):

Table 5. Author's guidelines for research content selection.

The content must be from an official football team's page.
The team must be categorized as a professional football team.
The content cannot contain any controversial language or anything else that might be disturbing to the respondents.

The purpose for these guidelines is to ensure that the interview stays relevant to the topic of this thesis and provide a controversial-free environment to the respondents. The author had originally planned to use a professional Russian team FC Spartak Moscow and its content in the interview process, but due to the situation in Ukraine, this part of the interview was replaced with another team from another country.

3.4 Data collection from the research

The author collects the data from the phase 2 interviews through coding and quantitative analysis. The conversations held with the respondents are compared with one another, and similarities in the answers are searched. The numerical value ratings of each video are also compared to one another. The author seeks to find styles and categories for the videos, and then provide an engagement score for each of the categories and styles found. This is done via quantitative analysis through the engagement scale (figure 3) that the author created for this research. Based on the data collected from this research, the author creates recommendations that are presented at the end of the paper by ranking the most suitable and effective methods for Tiktok content creation for football fans.

The data collected from the phase 3 of the research is done by recording the interview and writing the answers and questions to the results section.

3.5 Validity and ethics of the research

The author has taken the necessary steps to follow the ethical guidelines of research. The author has familiarised himself with the skills needed to organize a qualitative interview. Daymon & Holloway's (2002, 175) instructions about asking questions in interviews was used when planning and conducting the research (table 5).

Table 6. Asking questions in interviews. (Daymon & Holloway 2002, 175)

What not to do	What to do
o No leading questions	o Guide responses
o No ambiguous questions	o Phrase questions clearly
o No double questions	o Ask one question at a time
o No jargon	o Use participants' language

The author also follows the ethical guidelines for the conducted interviews. The respondent's identity has been kept hidden, so there is no way to connect the respondents ID numbers to names. The author decided to name the respondents by numbering them from 001 to 005, in order to protect the personal identities of the respondents.

The interviews were also held in a quiet room without any disturbance, so that the respondents are in a comfortable, relaxing scenario when answering to the research.

All of the five respondents are daily consumers of football teams' content in Tiktok, so the data received from the research can be seen as very reliable to football teams who want to target this specific target group and create more fan engagement in Tiktok.

3.6 Research objective

The objective of the research is to provide football teams an insight to their target group, and what type of content engages football fans in Tiktok. This involves things like the styling, duration, editing, theme, and music of the content.

Finding the optimal way football content can be presented in Tiktok is the main research objective for the author. Based on this research, the author is able to provide important data-based research to football teams that can help and guide the teams in their social media managing efforts.

By collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from the respondents and from the interview with a professional social media manager, an accurate prospection of the wants

and needs of a football oriented Tiktok user can be achieved, and valuable tips for football teams wanting to start their Tiktok journey are provided.

By using the data this research provides, a blueprint of a successful football related Tiktok video targeted for football fans can be created. This blueprint is presented in the final part of this thesis. This blueprint will resemble the style of a guidebook, trying to provide useful insightful data and technical know-how about the content marketing in Tiktok aimed for football teams.

4   Results

In this chapter, the author analyses the results and the findings of the research and all of its phases. The analysis happens through mixed methods, so both data-based quantitative research and qualitative research through open answers and coding are used.

4.1   Phase 1

The phase 1 research consisted of researching the accounts of professional football teams and study what kind of content their channels provide. The author concluded that the channels consist mainly of three types of content, which are shown in table 4. From the data that was gained from phase 1, phase 2 and phase 3 of the research were constructed. The below table shows the channels of the researched professional teams in phase 1. The researched teams were also the teams whose content was used in the phase 2 interviews.

Table 7. The researched teams in phase 1.

Team name	Tiktok channel name	Follower amount
AS Roma	@asroma	2.2 million
FC Barcelona	@fcbarcelona	14.9 million
HJK Helsinki	@hjkhelsinki1907	2703
Paris Saint-Germain	@psg	25.6 million
Real Madrid	@realmadrid	12.2 million

4.2   Phase 2 – the user view

The phase 2 of the interview included interviewing five users of Tiktok in detail with a mixed methods interview that had both qualitative and quantitative elements.

4.2.1   The Tiktok using habits of the respondents and general feelings about the application

All five of the respondents use the application daily. All of the respondents also are exposed to the content of professional football teams every time they use the application. In the below table, the author categorises basic information about the respondents.

Table 7. Basic information and Tiktok usage habits of the respondents.

Respondent ID:	Age of respondent at the time of the interview:	Number of times the respondent uses Tiktok daily:	Number of times the respondent bumps into content created by a football team when using the app:
001	23	More than three	Every time
002	22	More than once	Every time
003	22	More than once	Every time
004	25	More than once	Every time
005	25	At least once	Every time

The 5 respondents were also asked about their general feelings about the application, these findings are presented in the below table (table 8).

Table 8. The positive & negative associations of the respondents towards Tiktok.

Respondent ID:	Positive associations to Tiktok:	Negative associations to Tiktok:
001	It is very new, and it has revolutionised social media.	Has some bad sides, might include harmful content for children and cause addiction.
002	Videos are funny and often relatable.	-
003	Very funny and very engaging towards the viewer.	Very, very addictive. It has influenced my ability to focus on other things.
004	Can be very educational, funny and engaging.	Consuming it sometimes might be difficult because the content is so short, and there are so many distractions because of the tailor-made content the app provides you with.
005	The variety of the content and the 'for you' page.	Can be highly addicting.

4.2.2   The most engaging football content amongst the respondents

The author presented the respondents with 15 Tiktok videos from the three different categories (5 videos from each) that professional football teams post (table 4). The results of the average engagement rates of each category are presented in the below table 9, and the results of each presented video individually are presented in the table 10.

Table 9. The engagement ratings of each category.

Averages / Type:		
Match footage:	Meme Related footage:	Behind the scenes footage:
6,5	6,2	5,1

Table 10. The average engagement scores of each video used in phase 2 research.

| Meme /Match /BTS | Video # | Respondent # | | | | | AVG/Score |
		1	2	3	4	5	
BTS	1	4	7	3	8	5	5,4
Match	2	5	8	4	9	3	5,8
Match	3	3,5	9	2	5	5	4,9
Meme	4	6,5	4	6	9	6	6,3
Meme	5	4	6	8	8	5	6,2
BTS	6	3,5	7	7	10	6	6,7
BTS	7	4,5	8	3	9	4	5,7
Meme	8	4	8	10	8	5	7,0
Match	9	6	10	8	9	7	8,0
BTS	10	2	6	4	4	5	4,2
Meme	11	1,5	7	8	5	6	5,5
Match	12	5	8	6	8	3	6,0
BTS	13	1	7	1	7	2	3,6
Meme	14	3,5	6	6	8	7	6,1
Match	15	9	8	5	9	7	7,6
							5,9

4.2.3   The positive characteristics of the studied videos with higher-than-average engagement score

To get a better insight about what made some of the videos more engaging than the others, the characteristics of every video was studied. The videos that were ranked higher than the average engagement score of 5,9 (shown in table 10), were analysed in more detail by the author. From the table 10 we can see that the videos 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 14 & 15 were ranked above the average by the five respondents. The better-than-average ranked videos were described using the following descriptions by the five respondents:

- Respondent 001

- Good use of the memes
- Funny and well used humour
- Seeing a celebrity do something funny in a video is good
- Emotion of the players was nice to see
- Impressive and respectful content
- Editing was done well which made the video good
- The high level of skill shown by the player in the video
- Throwback videos are always great to see
- I knew the meme which made the content interesting

- Respondent 002

- Funny, well implemented humour
- Seeing a famous person dancing in the video was very good
- Seeing to the locker room of the team was engaging
- The meme I knew made the video interesting
- The editing of the video made it good
- Seeing a professional player doing something that takes a lot of skill was very engaging
- At first, I did not realise the meme inside the video, but once I figured it out it made the video funny
- I was very impressed with a throwback clip, it was very interesting to see

- Respondent 003

- I liked seeing a famous football person I knew in the video
- Wholesome atmosphere
- Good use of the meme and the joke
- Funny and creative humour
- Seeing a famous person from the club giving his best dancing was engaging
- Seeing dressing room celebrations made me happy and it was also interesting
- Storytelling in the style of a meme made the video perfect
- Very clever use of meme together with the sound, very humorous content
- Seeing impressive short clips from a match is interesting

o   Throwback content

o   Respondent 004

o   Clever and smart use of a trend
o   Funny and humorous
o   I liked not mixing the meme with football content and keeping them
    separate from each other
o   Famous persons taking part in funny Tiktoks makes me laugh, minus
    influencers who only post funny content. It might get repetitive if you always
    post silly content
o   Seeing behind the scenes was interesting, you almost felt like you were
    part of the team
o   I enjoyed seeing the team take part in a trend, that had nothing to do with
    them, they just joined the conversation
o   I like seeing the talent of the players in short match clips
o   I enjoyed seeing a throwback clip, got my attention more than a current clip

o   Respondent 005

o   Seeing a meme I knew was good
o   Seeing a famous football person dance was creative and humorous
o   Combining the clip with good editing and timing the sound well made the
    Tiktok engaging
o   Seeing a team do something that is not related to them in any way was
    interesting
o   I like the not so serious vibe of the video, matching sound to the clip was
    good
o   The throwback together with a rare clip made the video really engaging

4.2.4   The negative characteristics of the studied videos with lower-than-average engagement score

The author also wanted to find out what kind of characteristics the videos that did not
exceed the average engagement score, so that based on the results characteristics from
video that did not succeed could be provided to football teams. 7 out of the 15 videos
shown to the respondents had a lower engagement rating than 5,9. From table 10 we can
see that videos that scored below 5,9 were the videos 1, 2, 3, 7, 10, 11 & 13. The

characteristics of how these videos were described by the respondents are provided below:

- Respondent 001

- Boring idea of the Tiktok
- Poor editing
- Seeing match clips without editing would have improved the clip
- Not having the understanding about a meme made the video confusing
- Weird and almost cringeworthy jokes
- Too long
- Too repetitive
- Poor execution
- Poor levels of enthusiasm from the persons in the video

- Respondent 002

- Boring, not enough contend inside the video
- Repetitive
- Can sometimes be confusing when you do not understand the joke

- Respondent 003

- Humorous videos that do not make you laugh are poor
- Not understanding the meme or joke in the video
- Not having enough excitement or content in the sound of the video
- Not having the sound in sync with the clip is annoying and should be avoided
- Too lengthy
- Very boring and not having enough content can be a very bad thing for a channel

- Respondent 004

- Too much editing can cause confusion when it gets in the way of the clip
- Using a trend 'just to use a trend' has a confusing effect on the viewer
- Unprofessional when the sound and clip do not match
- Too lengthy

- Respondent 005

- Too short videos
- Boring
- When the video is trying too hard to be impressive with editing
- Too basic content without anything special in it causes the viewer to feel like the video has been posted just for the sake of posting it
- Visually uninteresting
- Too lengthy
- Unprofessional visual execution with editing and the misplacing of sound is annoying

4.2.5 Common problems the respondents see football teams make

The author also wanted to find out what football teams should avoid when they create content in Tiktok. The respondents were asked about common problems they have come noticed football teams do when they try to engage with fans through Tiktok. The below table (table 11) provides the response of each respondent.

Table 11. Common problems the respondents have faced in football teams' Tiktok

Respondent number:	Problems in football team content creation:
001	Overflooding the Tiktok channel with too much meme-content. There has to right amount of that, even though that content is often humorous, the app is full of it also in other areas than Tiktok.
002	When a video tries to be too funny but fails in that. Also, bad editing is something that does not engage me to the video.
003	If the video is very basic, and it does not have enough interesting spice or content in it. Social media managers should focus on creating content that is not too bland.
004	If the content is too long or boring, or if the content is not related to things I like in a team.
005	If the timing of the sound is not matched with the clip, if the editing is bad, or if the

	video does not have a clear idea and feels rushed.

4.3   Phase 3 – the professional view

The phase 3 of the research was based around an interview with the professional Tiktok admin of the Finnish men's national football team. The interview was a semi-structured interview, and the questions and answers are listed in this part 4.3.

- Can you tell me about your personal background as a social media expert?

  o My background is a master's degree in sports and health sciences, but I also studied economics and marketing as a minor. During my studies, I was part of the sporting club Liikunnan Riemu, and that is where my social media career started to evolve. I came to work to Palloliitto around a year ago, and that is when I started to work with social media in a professional way. I have worked with multiple social media channels, and I am also responsible for other social media accounts at Palloliitto. I was the admin of the Instagram page of Opetushallitus. In my personal life, I am not very active in social media, at least I do not post a lot there. But I like to follow kinds of sport in social media.

- Do you feel that studying marketing helped with your job as a Tiktok admin, or do you feel it is more the type of job you learn from when you do it?

  o Especially marketing and corporate communications is the type of work where you'll learn from the work itself. University studies are very theoretical, where you'll learn to lead with information and theory. Social media is especially a world of its own, huge phenomena are created constantly and no one can know how they are going to behave. Tiktok is based on algorithms, and although they give some detail about how those algorithms work, only them can know for sure how they work. Therefore, I feel that being an is the type of work where you'll learn by doing it, but of course theoretical studies can provide some benefits, especially if you want to make a difference in the society with your channel, for example.

- What kind of skills do you think a Tiktok admin should have?

- o One huge thing is the video editing skills, nowadays there are so many platforms where you can edit videos, some are easier and some are more difficult, but it requires that you are able to use some of them. It demands creativity, even though Tiktok is a lot about copying other people's trends. I would say that so much of the work is not what you can learn from the books, it is about having the courage to try things, having a visual eye for the videos. Your skills develop as you create the content. One benefit of Tiktok that the videos do not have to be excellent in quality, but rather the relaxed atmosphere and the 'funny-factor' is the key. I would say that it is a platform that is easy to begin creating content.

- Do you use TikTok's own video editing tool, or do you edit with other editing tools?

    - o Basically, I use every single other tool but the TikTok's own tool. I use Adobe Premiere Pro quite a lot, TikTok's own video editor does not have the capabilities to edit football match footage for example where you want to follow the movement of the ball, these sorts of details are created with computer software's. Football has a lot of elements that can be boosted with editing, you can zoom, target, create slow-motion replays. TikTok and its own video editor does not have the capabilities to create these.

- How do new ideas for TikTok videos usually come to you?

    - o Creating new ideas is mainly my responsibility, because our Tiktok channel is operated mainly by myself, but I also get tips for from my colleagues about video ideas from a match for example. Another thing is when I see a trend or a piece of music, I get an idea how that trend could be used with our content. Usually, the idea for the video comes from the raw clip itself. It is good to remember, that Tiktok is not all about just following every trend and just collecting views, it is also about the way we want to be seen in the social media by creating content that matches that plan.

- How have you handled the copyright related issues?

    - o We have the rights to our match footage, but there are things and rules that relate to the footage. We for example, cannot publish the footage immediately after a match. We follow these guidelines that have been set to us, but we do not have the resources to follow and track how some private accounts use our footage. We use the material that we have the

rights to, you must be very precise in copyright issues, especially in commercial uses. These days, it is very difficult to have eyes everywhere, so we cannot track everyone who might use our footage.

- Have you noticed a type of a Tiktok video that has been particularly successful at your channel?

  o I have noticed that the match footage is mostly the most successful type of content. Right now, our most successful clip is a short skill from a match of the Under-21 national team. It does not need to be a goal; it can be anything interesting from a match. Of course, other type of content can be successful, one that has been popular for us is a meme-content we made using pictures. These are ideas that I have now, but our account was created only a year ago, so maybe I have not yet seen enough to say which is the best category, but these are my findings so far.

- Do you think the execution of the video is more important than the idea of the video in TikTok?

  o It differs so much; you never know what will succeed. I personally do not want to see it in a way, where you would only strive to create content that can reach the biggest possible audience. The most important thing for me is to not stress and just the fact you start making different videos. Eventually you will get better at making the videos in both the execution of the clips and the ideas for new clips. Tiktok is very different as a platform, and the content is not created the same way content is created for other platforms like Facebook or Instagram. Instagram reels is very similar to Tiktok, so Tiktok content can be used in the reels.

- What kind of advice you could give to beginner-level Tiktok admins of football teams?

  o Important is to just be brave and go there. Creating content and not stressing too much about it. You can begin from that one match clip and just add music to it. The fact that makes TikTok easier, is that copying others is allowed, so you can follow and look at what others have done and adapt the idea to your content. You do not need to invent the wheel over and over again. Also, the scrolling culture of Tiktok is very present. I would

rather put the interesting content at the beginning of the video than at the end of the video. You only have a few seconds to engage your audience before the audience moves to another video.

- Is it important to you keep pushing content repeatedly just to have your page full of content?

  o If the content is relevant. I would say that it is important to have a clear idea of why you are in the platform, so that you don't waste your time there. If you only publish once a month without a clear plan, it might be a waste of time.

- What do you think of the international growth possibilities of Tiktok content?

  o There are huge possibilities. It has been very interesting for me to follow where these videos can spread easily. Of course, if you only publish in Finnish, there might be a language barrier. For example, our most popular videos have spread all over the world. The trending music influences this for sure, so using the trending pieces of music might be useful. Our videos have also spread to worldwide audiences, one good example is a Tiktok we made, that spread all the way to Laos. Football is a worldwide sport, so that also helps with the engagement of international audiences. Great goals or pieces of skills are always interesting, no matter from which part of the world the video is from.

- Do you agree if I say to you, that the optimal length of a Tiktok video is 9 to 15 seconds?

  o The optimal video length of 9 to 15 seconds sounds about right, I have noticed a similar trend. This might differ when a trend is longer in purpose, but usually shorter content seems to be the way to go.

5   Conclusion

In this chapter, the author will go through and analyse the results of the research that was made and provide recommendations for football teams based on the results of the research. The author also provides some ideas for further research that could be made from this topic, and the personal learning that was gained from this project is also provided in this chapter.

5.1   Key findings and recommendations for football teams in Tiktok content creation

In this chapter the author lists recommendations and findings from both phases of the research. First, the findings from phase 2 of the research are analysed, and after that the phase 3 of the research is analysed.

5.1.1   Research findings – users of the application (phase 2)

First, the author analyses the results of the phase 2 of the research, which focused on the user-side of Tiktok. One of the goals of the research was to find the most engaging style of football content according to the users, and from table 9 we can see, that the most engaging content style was match footage with an average engagement rating of 6,5/10. The second-best category in terms of engagement was meme-related footage with a score of 6,1/10, and in third we have the behind-the-scenes footage with an average score of 5,1.

Each category's videos had some positive scores and some negatives (table 10), but from the results we can argue that the behind-the-scenes footage should not be prioritised over the match footage or meme-related footage, especially when trying to create content as a new team inside the platform. Maximising the match footage and meme-related footage achieves higher engagement rates than behind-the-scenes footage according to this research. The author's recommendation is to still publish content from all of the three categories, but to focus on making more content from the two successful categories and leaving behind-the-scenes footage to minimal.

The positive characteristics and associations of the most engaging videos are listed in the part 4.2.3 of this thesis. There were a few common themes and thoughts that were brought up multiple times by the respondents. All of the five users thought that it was engaging to see a famous footballing person take part in a Tiktok video, even more so if the famous person was doing something silly or funny, for example a dance, in the video. Well-used humour, well-timed sound and a clever use of a trend were also listed as

important factors. Information about TikTok trends can be found in the part 2.1.2 of this thesis.

One video type that was also seen as very engaging by the respondents were the so called 'throwback' videos. This is something football teams should consider posting. A throwback video is content that can be from years ago, often this is match footage. According to this thesis, users of the application are very engaged to throwback content. Something that was also seen as an important factor in engaging content was the successfulness of the editing of the video. Therefore, the author can give out a recommendation to football teams that they should explore the possibilities to feature famous persons or throwback footage in their TikTok's as much as they can. Also creating content where the editing is done in a visually pleasing way should not be underestimated by the content creators of the teams.

The author also studied negative characteristics and associations which were found from the videos that were not considered engaging by the respondents (results part 4.2.4, so football teams could then avoid creating content that is not successful.

A common finding that was found from the non-successful videos was that the video was not considered engaging when the viewer did not understand the joke, the meme or the trend in question. Therefore, when starting out your Tiktok journey as a football team, you should focus on trends and memes that are largely popular. Using a trend that is not that well-known can cause confusion amongst your viewers.

The respondents also felt non-engaged when the video was too long. The author's recommendation is to keep the videos under 15 seconds, the same recommendation that was also suggested by Sociallypowerful (2021).

When creating a video or a trend with a particular sound or theme, the sound should be matched with the video. The respondents felt unengaged if the sound of the Tiktok was not in sync with the video. Again, focusing on the technical side and the editing is highly recommended.

The table 11 also provides some concrete, practical tips that football teams are recommended to look through to avoid these 'common pitfalls' the respondents had stumbled into as users of the application.

5.1.2   Research findings – a professional TikTok admin (phase 3)

The author conducted a semi-structured interview (appendix 3) with a professional Tiktok admin of the Finnish men's national football team. The aim of was to see the viewpoint of the content creators, and not just only the users of the application.

The phase 3 interview results matched quite accurately with the results gained from the phase 2 research. According to both users of the application (table 9) and the admin of Huuhkajat, the most popular content is match footage with meme-content being in second place. This is a clear finding that that footage should be maximised in football teams' Tiktok content creation when trying to reach large audiences with maximum engagement.

From the interview the author can also recommend, that admins of football teams learn to use an external editing software in addition to TikTok's own video editor. The editing software's can provide the extra delicacy of touch to the videos, that boost the engagement of the clips. It is beneficial, if the admin is a creative person.

The author can also recommend based on the research that beginning TikTok admins start to regularly follow other Tiktok channels, to gain new ideas for content. One must take an advantage of the fact, that in TikTok copying an idea is not frowned upon.

The content should be aimed to be kept short in length, 9 to 15 seconds in length is good to keep in mind. According to the admin of Huuhkajat, the scrolling culture of TikTok is very much in power, and content creators should aim to put the most engaging parts of the videos at the beginning of the video, because you only have a few seconds before the user moves on to a new video.

Especially for beginner-level admins, aiming to push content with relevant content is very important according to the interviewed admin. Being too inactive in the posting can be harmful to the algorithm of TikTok.

The Tiktok admin of the Finnish men's national football team sees huge possibilities for TikTok and the international growth that can come with it. Especially football content can spread all over the world since it is such a large sport. English should be used in the videos when aiming to target international audiences, because of the language barrier native languages could bring.

5.2 Characteristics of an engaging Tiktok video – a summary table

With the below table (table 12), the author provides a table that has been collected from the data of the research. The table aims to provide a quick and easy summary for football teams to help in their planning of new content.

Table 12. Characteristics of an engaging football Tiktok video

Popular styles of videos for football Tiktok
• Match footage
• Meme content

Optimal length of video
• 9 to 15 seconds

Engaging themes for football TikTok's
• Humorous
• Visually pleasing editing
• Videos featuring famous persons
• Throwback match footage with
• Footage that matches with the sound

Editing software
• Professional software that allows creation of little tweaks like zooming, following movement etc.

Language of the content
• English to help with the international possibilities

5.3 Suggestions for further research

Even though this research project was able to provide many good tips and advice to football teams trying to create TikTok's, the research of the topic can be continued in the future. Further research can be considered as important, due to the speed Tiktok is growing as a platform. In the future, Tiktok marketing can be even more topical than today.

Further research could be similar research about different Tiktok video types, but with a larger respondent group. Further research could also involve comparisons to other type of content, like for example traditional video marketing. One research topic could also be research about football Tiktok in comparison to other sports in Tiktok.

Doing further research about Tiktok is important and topical not only due to the size of the social media, but also that current research about the platform is many years behind other social medias, like Instagram and Facebook. The author believes this will even out in the future, and more research about Tiktok will be made available eventually. Currently, the

platform is so new that the most effective ways it can be used are still somewhat unknown.

5.4   Personal learnings

The author was able to learn many things when writing this research-based thesis. The author's own personal goals and ambitions are related to digital marketing and the sporting industry, so this thesis was able to provide important learnings in terms of the platforms and material that was studied for this research. Studying Tiktok and its many possibilities equipped the author with important know-how about the the social media as a platform. These skills can be especially useful in the future in the field of digital marketing.

The author also held a total of 6 interviews during this research project, which even greatly enhanced the personal interviewing skills of the author. Planning and conducting qualitative interviews can be somewhat tricky, but the experience gained from this project in the interviewing process helps the author in the future in his further master studies. It was noticeable, that in qualitative interviews it is important to keep the questions as wide as possible to get the best possible data. The responses need to come from the respondents themselves, and the questions need to be structured in a way, where the respondents can explain themselves in a broad way, rather than quickly with little detail.

With the data that was gained from the interviews, the author gained an understanding about Tiktok as a platform both from the viewpoint of the user and the creator. Gaining the viewpoint of both parties provided important knowledge about Tiktok, and what type of content succeeds in the application in the footballing industry. Gaining the knowledge about the work process of a professional content creator contained information about the process in creative work in general, which is useful information in the field of digital marketing.

The research process helped the author to understand and compare sources better, and to being more critical towards different sources. Being able to select high-level references for studying is important in the upcoming master studies of the author.

The thesis project also provided good experience in many personal skills, like the ability to schedule a project, the ability to sustain pressure and stress and the ability to work hard in continuous sessions. These skills are important skills in the future of the author.

The author can reflect on the importance of good scheduling. In a project like this, the plan changed from time to time, which made the scheduling of the project quite tricky, but the

author was able to manage with that, and learn, that timetables could be managed even better by focusing more on scheduling.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Overlay matrix

Investigative question:	Theoretical framework	Research method	Information base
IQ1: What are the characteristics of Tiktok marketing and content creation?	- Digital marketing - Tiktok marketing - Content marketing - Engagement marketing	- Literature review - Desktop study	- Online and offline sources
IQ2: What kind of football themed Tiktok marketing is considered engaging by the users of Tiktok?	- Tiktok marketing - Digitalisation of the footballing world	- Qualitative & Quantitative research	- Interview with football fans who use the application (phase 2 research)
IQ3: What kind of content football teams should create in order to create the largest possible engagement rates?	- Tiktok marketing research - The research created by the author	- Qualitative interview with professional Tiktok admin of Huuhkajat - Results from the qualitative & quantitative research	- Phase 2 research - Phase 3 research - Author's conclusions based in research data

Appendix 2. Phase 2 thesis interview template

ID Number of respondent:

This is an interview for my Bachelor's thesis "Creating engaging marketing in Tiktok for football teams". You will be shown 15 Tiktok videos from the accounts of international football teams, and you are then asked questions about the content presented. First, we go through some basic information about your Tiktok using behaviours.

1. How often do you use Tiktok, and how do you generally feel about the social media?

2. How often do you bump into football related content inside Tiktok?

3. Are you subscribed to any professional football team's Tiktok channel? To which and why? If not, why are you not? What makes you subscribe to a Tiktok channel?

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Next, we are going to look through some videos. First, watch the video as many times as you want, and then we will discuss the videos together.

Videos #1-15:

- What kind of thoughts or feelings this content provoked in you?

- What in particular was interesting about the video and what was not?

- How engaged were you to this content (1 = I would not want to see content like this again, and 10 = that you enjoyed the content and would like to see more content like this)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

1 = Not engaging at all, I would not watch this again.

10 = Really engaging. I would like to see more content like this.

All of these videos were part of three categories I had created before this interview. These different categories can be seen from the below table:

Content type	Content description
Meme-related content	Humorous videos that relate to trends or trending music/sounds. Often involves jokes, is very far from "official" content, and holds a great resemblance to user-created content.
Behind the scenes footage	Unique footage from behind the scenes of the club. Footage that can involve footage from training, or short clips of player interviews.
Match footage	Short highlight clips from a football match, can involve some editing tricks or humorous music with the match footage.

4. What category would you describe as the most interesting to you personally?

5. If you were a content creator yourself for a professional football team, what kind of content would you strive to create?

6. In a Tiktok video, do you find the idea or the execution of the video (editing, visual look, etc. more important, or maybe both equally?

7. If you throw me an estimate, how many engaging videos you would have to see from a team, in order to subscribe to a Tiktok channel?

8. What are the common reasons football teams can fail in their Tiktok football content creation efforts?

Appendix 3. Phase 3 thesis interview template

This is an interview for my Bachelor's thesis 'Creating engaging marketing in TikTok for football teams'.

- Can you tell me about your personal background as a social media expert?

- Do you feel that studying marketing helped with your job as a Tiktok admin, or do you feel it is more the type of job you learn from when you do it?

- What kind of skills do you think a Tiktok admin should have?

- What kind of personal attributes a Tiktok admin might require?

Content creation:

- Do you use TikTok's own video editing tool, or do you edit with other editing tools?

- How do new ideas for Tiktoks come to you?

- How have you handled the copyright related issues?

- Have you noticed a type of a Tiktok video that has been particularly successful at your channel?

- Do you think the execution of the video is more important than the idea of the video in TikTok?

After the publish:

- What kind of advice you could give to beginner-level Tiktok admins of football teams?

- Is it important to you keep pushing content repeatedly just to have your page full of content?

- What do yo think of the international growth possibilities in Tiktok?

- Do you agree if I say to you, that the optimal length of a Tiktok video is 9 to 15 seconds?