



The Best of Both Worlds – Spark Ads for Brand Growth on TikTok

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ABSTRACT

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Spark Ads has become the new standard way of paid advertising for brands on TikTok in Finland. This thesis aims to showcase what Spark Ads are and how brand can combine them with effective organic content on TikTok to create and foster positive brand growth. TikTok, its features and interface as well as a TikTok marketing tool is covered widely to gain understanding about Spark Ads. The thesis delves deeper into Spark Ads, how they are created and managed, different ad objectives, and how they should be combined with organic content. Social media experts detail how effective brand content should be made on TikTok.

The research methodology for this thesis included a comprehensive literature review of existing studies about TikTok and TikTok marketing, theoretical frameworks such as Social Influence Theory and Keller's Brand Equity Model and qualitative interviews with social media experts, with over 10 years of combined knowledge of this very recent subject matter. These interviews provided valuable insights into the practical application of Spark Ads and organic content strategies in real-world marketing scenarios. Through these methods, this thesis provides a comprehensive understanding of TikTok and Spark Ads and the role of Spark Ads and channel-specific organic content in driving brand growth.

This thesis showcases that by creating a balance between paid boosting Spark Ad efforts, effective organic content and community interaction, brands can establish a clear presence on the platform that creates brand awareness, driving audience engagement, brand loyalty, and positive brand growth.

Key words: social media marketing, tiktok, spark ads, organic content

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	6
2	THESIS PLAN	7
2.1	Thesis topic.....	7
2.2	Objective and purpose	7
2.3	Research questions.....	8
2.4	Working methods and data	9
2.5	Data processing activities.....	9
3	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	11
3.1	Social Influence Theory.....	11
3.2	Keller's Brand Equity Model (CBBE)	12
3.2.1	CBBE Pyramid.....	13
4	TIKTOK	15
4.1	What is TikTok?	15
4.2	TikTok interface	16
4.2.1	Home page and FYP	17
4.2.2	Tabs	18
4.3	Features.....	20
4.3.1	Duet and Stitch	20
4.3.2	Sounds and music	20
4.3.3	Live streaming	21
4.3.4	Effects and filters	21
4.4	TikTok as a marketing tool	22
4.4.1	Ad organizations stages	22
4.5	Ad types on TikTok.....	22
4.5.1	In-Feed video ads.....	23
4.5.2	TopView ads	23
4.5.3	Brand Takeover and Shopping ads	23
5	SPARK ADS	24
5.1	What are Spark Ads?	24
5.1.1	Spark Ad format benefits.....	24
5.2	Creating and managing Spark Ads	25
5.2.1	Creating Spark Ads	26
5.2.2	Manage Spark Ads	26
5.2.3	Spark Ads organization on TikTok Ads Manager	26
5.3	Spark Ad objectives.....	28
5.3.1	Reach ad objective	28

5.3.2 Focused view ad objective	29
5.3.3 Traffic and community interaction ad objectives.....	29
5.3.4 Lead generation ad objective	29
5.3.5 App promotion, website conversions and shop purchase ad objectives.....	29
6 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS	31
6.1 Interview as a form of qualitative research	31
6.1.1 Professionals interviewed.....	31
6.2 Spark Ads by social media professionals	32
6.2.1 Spark Ads for positive brand growth	33
6.2.2 Spark Ad negatives	33
7 ORGANIC AND PAID CONTENT ON TIKTOK	35
7.1 Organic brand content on TikTok.....	35
7.2 Creating effective brand videos	36
7.2.1 Fast cuts and the 3-second rule.....	36
7.2.2 Visual elements	36
7.2.3 Sounds and music	37
7.2.4 TikTok Trends.....	37
7.2.5 Community Interaction.....	37
7.3 Creating TikToks not Ads.....	37
7.4 Downsides of organic strategies	38
7.5 Organic meets Spark Ads	39
7.6 Leveraging Spark Ads for brand growth	39
7.6.1 Support from marketing psychology	40
7.7 Spark Ads maintain authenticity.....	40
8 Applying theoretical framework.....	42
8.1.1 Applying Social Influence Theory.....	42
8.1.2 Social proof.....	42
8.1.3 Authority.....	43
8.2 Applying Keller's Brand Equity Model.....	43
9 CONCLUSION.....	44
9.1 Framework applications regarding Spark Ads and growth	44
9.2 Fostering positive brand growth.....	45
10 DISCUSSION	46
REFERENCES	47
APPENDICES.....	55

GLOSSARY

For You Page (FYP)

TikTok's For You Page refers to the TikTok app's landing page. The FYP is a scrollable feed that is filled with recommended content that the user may like. This is generated by the TikTok algorithm.

Call To Action (CTA)

A Call to Action is a marketing term that refers to an action the marketers want the audience to take. A call of action can be for example a direct link to a website, or a suggestion to like a video.

TikTok algorithm

A system that defines what content appears on a user's For You Page. The algorithm is based on the user's signals towards content such as engagement, watchtime, and hiding or following brands and other factors such as the keywords mentioned in video titles, hashtags language preferences, and location.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the fast-paced world of social media, few platforms have gathered as much attention and cultural significance as TikTok. Quickly grown to a worldwide phenomenon, TikTok has reshaped how individuals consume and engage with content and brands. With its short-form video format, TikTok has become a platform for both users and brands, that embraces creativity, entertainment, and community interaction. As TikTok's popularity grew, brands and businesses eagerly sought opportunities to leverage its popularity. Initially, when TikTok made its debut in Finland, organic strategies proved effective for brands that dared to embrace the platform in their marketing strategies. However, as TikTok grew, a problem arose. It became increasingly difficult to gain visibility organically.

To address this problem, TikTok revealed a new and innovative marketing solution in 2021 – TikTok Spark Ads. Spark Ads offer a unique opportunity for brands to improve reach by boosting organic content posted on the platform while maintaining authenticity and creativity. Since then, Spark Ads have become a powerful tool for brands to advertise on TikTok. However, success with only paid advertising is not guaranteed. By combining effective, channel-specific organic content with Spark Ad boosting, brands can foster positive brand growth.

This thesis seeks to explore and analyze the role that Spark Ads play in driving brand growth on TikTok, particularly in combination with organic content strategies. By diving deeper into the effectiveness of Spark Ads, the creation of compelling organic brand content, the importance of interactivity and fostering community interaction, this thesis aims to provide valuable insights for brands looking to create positive brand growth on TikTok.

2 THESIS PLAN

The following thesis plan introduces the thesis topic, objective, and purpose of the thesis. The thesis plan will also include the main research question as well as the sub-questions formulated.

2.1 Thesis topic

The aim of this thesis is to guide brands on how they can utilize paid advertisements on TikTok to create positive brand growth. Brands can use this thesis to start utilizing TikTok Spark Ads and see how effective organic content is created that combined with paid advertisements creates growth. This thesis also explains the role that community interaction plays in fostering growth. There are several ways to market a brand, service, or product on TikTok, this thesis will only focus on brand content and Spark Ads. Due to the nature of TikTok and Spark Ads, this thesis will focus on B2C marketing efforts.

2.2 Objective and purpose

As TikTok gained popularity, brands, especially the ones with target audiences that fit TikTok's user base, started to gain interest in the platform. TikTok provided an interesting and new way to advertise that had not been seen before at that magnitude. TikTok's emphasis on creativity and allowed brands to connect with users in innovative and entertaining ways, encouraging the creation of fun and resonant content (TikTok, 2023).

When TikTok was first introduced in Finland, the brands that were brave enough to venture into the platform, were able to find success with high view counts and community creation, with creativity and TikTok specific content that was new and fresh (Karhu, 2024). But as the platform became more saturated with content, it became increasingly challenging to stand out. After TikTok recognized this challenge, they introduced Spark Ads, a way to help brands amplify their

presence and achieve greater visibility on the platform (TikTok for Business, 2022).

This thesis aims to help brands create effective organic content that combined with Spark Ads can create positive brand growth. This thesis will detail what effective organic content is and how it's made, as well as the importance of creating channel-specific content and the role that community interaction plays in fostering brand growth. Spark Ads are a relatively new marketing tool, but it has become a prominent part of TikTok marketing for brands in Finland. Approaching and integrating Spark Ads for TikTok can be challenging, this thesis aims to ease the process.

The theoretical framework for this thesis was formulated by Kelman's Social Influence Theory and Keller's Brand Equity Model. These were chosen after observing certain phenomenon's on TikTok by the author and their close relation to the subject matter.

2.3 Research questions

The objective of the thesis can be formulated into a main research question:

How can brands combine Spark Ads with organic content on TikTok to create positive brand growth?

To fully understand and address this primary research question, it is important to explore the subject matters deeper. These subjects formulated sub-questions that would provide depth, clarity and structure for the reader. The sub-questions formulated are:

1. How to create effective organic content on TikTok?
2. What are Spark Ads and how to utilize them?

2.4 Working methods and data

The primary data for this thesis was gathered from expert interviews. The interviews were conducted with social media marketing professionals with a deep understanding of TikTok marketing, effective organic content, and Spark Ads. Both professionals have an impressive track record of not only working with big brands but also creating positive brand growth for new accounts. Both professionals work at MySome, a leading social media agency in Finland.

Insights provided by these interviews will be used as the primary data due to the subject matter being quite unexplored. This data provides for not only deeper knowledge but also real-life experiences in using TikTok marketing and Spark Ads. Secondary data for this thesis was collected from reliable sources in relation to the subject matter. Up-to-date information about Spark Ads was collected from TikTok. TikTok also shares their research recourses on their website. Other sources used were academic studies, marketing theory literature, and internet articles. This data provided a solid material base which allowed for deeper analysis of TikTok, Spark Ads and organic content.

2.5 Data processing activities

The goal of the research is to gain deeper knowledge about TikTok marketing, Spark Ads and organic TikTok content from social media marketing professionals with real life experience related to the subject.

The thesis author acted as the data controller and is responsible for protecting the privacy of the data subjects and for complying with data protections laws. As this thesis was created without a commissioner, Tampere University of Applied Sciences acts as the data controllers. The purpose of the data collected is thesis research and used only for this thesis, and the lawful basis for processing the data is consent from data subjects.

The sources of data included two separate interviews with social media professionals. The recordings will be held on the author's personal phone and

erased after the thesis process is over. The data will be analyzed in the thesis and will only be used for this project. The interviewees were informed about the data processing activities and consent was acquired through the informed consent form. Data needed for the form was written by the data subjects.

This data included:

- Place and date
- Signature
- Name
- Phone number
- Email address

The personal data collected that was included in thesis:

- Name
- Workplace
- Job title
- Recording of interview

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter aims to showcase and elaborate on the theory and models supporting the thesis analysis. Together they form a theoretical framework to support the functionality of Spark Ads on TikTok. According to Luft et al. (2022) a theoretical framework helps to explain a phenomenon through a particular lens and challenges and extends existing knowledge within the limitations of that lens.

The framework forms the types of questions asked, guides the method by which data are collected and analyzed, and informs the discussion of the results of the study. Frameworks connect the researcher to existing knowledge and reveal the researcher's subjectivity (PhD Assistance, 2019).

When choosing these frameworks three important steps were considered by the author. The first step was to choose theories relevant to the research questions, purpose, and thesis analysis. These aspects ensure that the theories contribute meaningfully to the thesis. The second step was to examine how the theories and models would offer conceptual lenses through which the topics could be analyzed and interpreted. The last step was to select theories that correspond with the research methods chosen in the thesis.

3.1 Social Influence Theory

Social influence theory (Kelman, 1958, 1961; Becker et al., 1995) explores and explains how individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors can be influenced by their social networks. According to this theory, there are three types and levels of social commitment: compliance, identification, and internalization (Hwang, 2014).

Compliance is a subjective norm that occurs when an individual is influenced by the norm with the desire to be liked or to gain favor. Identification, a social identity that refers to an individual's membership in a group, occurs when someone is influenced by the group norm to fit in or be a member of the group. Internalization occurs when an individual is influenced by the belief in a collective wisdom.

Internalization is a group norm that is unspoken beliefs of rules, behaviors, or values that the group has for its individuals (Drew (PhD), 2023). The social influence theory offers a useful theoretical lens to understand the underlying mechanisms of how social dynamics can be utilized for paid TikTok marketing strategies.

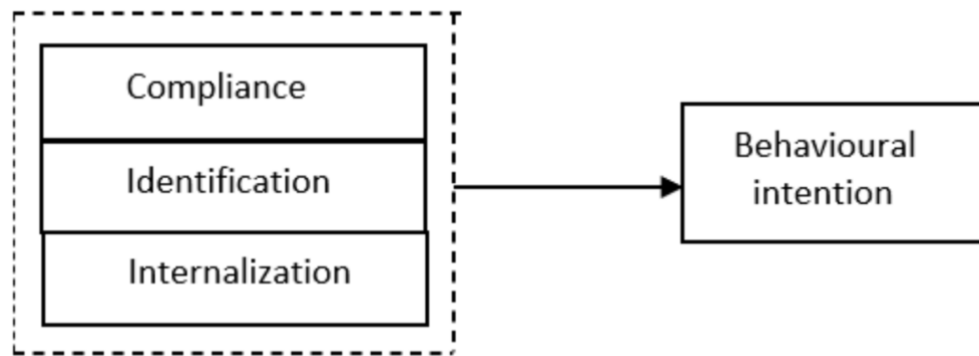


Figure 1. Kelman's Social Influence Theory (SIT).

3.2 Keller's Brand Equity Model (CBBE)

A key element when trying to create positive brand growth is realizing how the brand is perceived. How a brand is perceived on TikTok is affected by many factors such as the content that it creates, how it engages with its community, and type of image consumers have of that brand beforehand. Creating a positive brand image is key when growing a brand (Zulfikar, 2023).

In 1993, Keller presented a conceptual model of brand equity, as well as the Customer-Based Brand Equity Model (Purani & Jeeshha, 2022). Which according to Keller (2001, p3): "Holds the basic premise that the power of a brand lies in what customers have learned, felt, seen, and heard about brands over time" and provides a framework for measuring, growing and managing brand equity.

3.2.1 CBBE Pyramid

The CBBE is constructed of four steps or levels that are focused in achieving an outcome that contributes towards the growth of brand equity. Keller conceptualizes the CBBE model as a pyramid.

The first level (Figure 2) identifies Brand Salience, which is all about brand recognition and awareness. Customers need to identify who “you” or the brand is. The broader identity of the brand needs to be recognized by the customer first to build brand equity (Keller, 2001).

The second level is about establishing Brand Meaning. What are you and why should customers care about the brand? Brand meaning is made up of two categories, Brand Performance and Brand Imagery. Performance is brands demonstrating how they fit the needs of the customers, through their products for example. Brand Imagery is how the brand's beliefs align with the customers' social and psychological beliefs. It is often important for customers to see what the brand stands for (Keller, 2001).

Brand response, the third stage in the Keller model, encompasses the customer's opinions and perceptions of the brand (Kuhn, Alpert & Pope, 2008). How do the customers respond to the brand's marketing efforts and how do they think and feel about the brand? According to Keller (2001, p13), “Brand responses can be distinguished according to brand judgments and brand feelings, that is, in terms of whether they arise more from the “head” or the “heart”.

At the top of Keller's pyramid (figure 2) is Consumer Brand Resonance. Resonance focuses on the relationship that the brand has with its customers. How the brand is connected to the audience and how it resonates with its audience.

Brand resonance can be broken down into four categories:

1. Behavioral loyalty – how often and how much a customer purchases from a brand.
2. Attitudinal attachment – when customers ‘love’ the brand and view the brand as something special.

3. Sense of community – when customers have a sense of community with the brand and other individuals affiliated with it.
4. Active engagement – the fourth category described by Keller (2001, p15), “Perhaps the strongest affirmation of brand loyalty occurs when customers are willing to invest time, energy, money, or other resources into the brand beyond those expended during the purchase or consumption of the brand”. When customers engage with the brand beyond the resources spent during purchase.

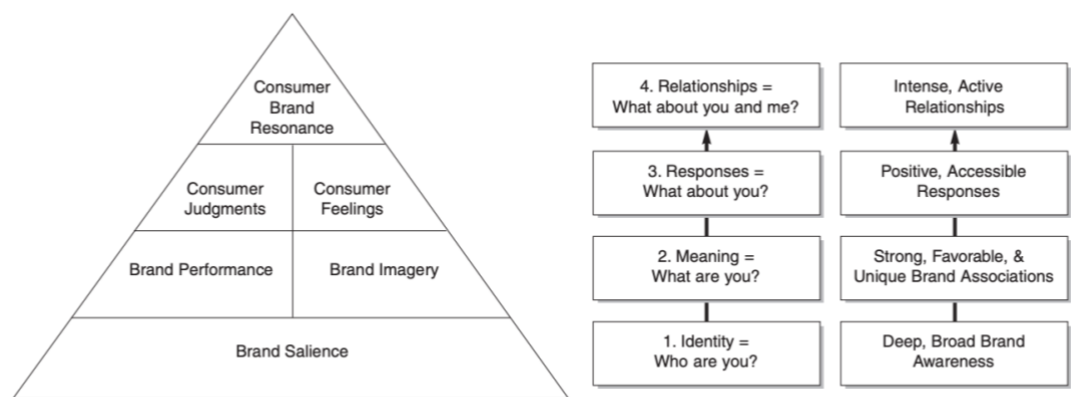


Figure 2. Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model (Keller, 2001).

4 TIKTOK

4.1 What is TikTok?

TikTok has become the leading social media platform for short-form mobile video (TikTok, 2023). The mainly mobile-based application allows its users to create and share short-form or now longer videos or photos effortlessly. Originally launched by a Beijing-based technology company called ByteDance in China, an app called Douyin, later known as TikTok, was launched in 2016, revolutionizing how content is created and consumed. Douyin had attracted over 100 million users within a year of its launch and launched internationally in 2017. Also in 2017, ByteDance acquired the social media app called Musical.ly. In 2018, Douyin and Musical.ly merged into TikTok (LaFleur, 2023).

Many Chinese apps have failed to succeed outside of the Chinese markets, the merger with Musical.ly added 80 million US-based users on the platform. TikTok saw an explosion in popularity in 2019 and 2020, with a staggering 1 540 million downloads during those two years. TikTok surpassed one billion users in 2021 and is expected to surpass 1.8 billion users by the end of 2024 (Iqbal, 2024).

TikTok quarterly users 2018 to 2023 (mm)

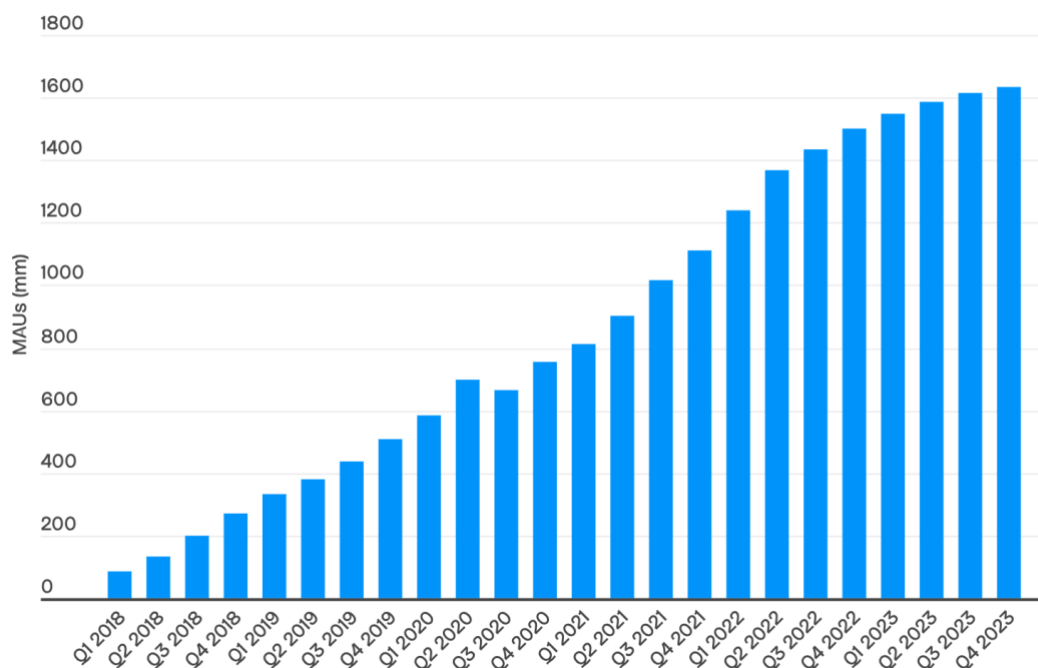


Figure 3. TikTok quarterly users 2018 to 2023 (Iqbal, 2024).

TikTok's popularity can be largely attributed to its creative and joyful nature. It has unique content creation, -consuming, and -sharing abilities. It's easy and intuitive design, complemented by a vast music collection, enabled users to craft captivating videos. TikTok promotes creativity, entertainment, laughter, and joyful content. These factors combined with TikTok's remarkable algorithm, which defines what a user sees on the For You Page, rocketed TikTok to be the number one platform for younger demographics. Most users on TikTok are 18–34-year-olds (Iqbal, 2024).

TikTok worldwide age demographics 2023 (%)

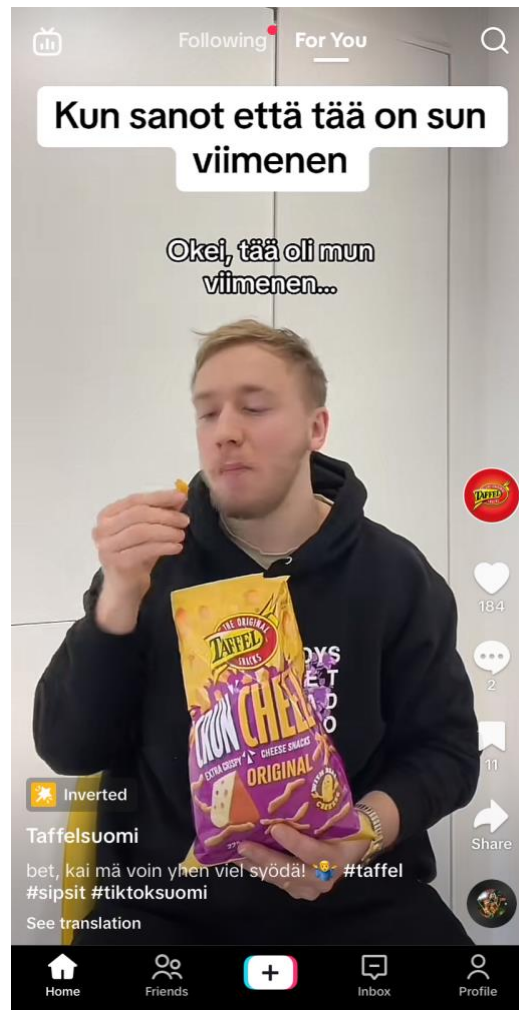
Age bracket	Percentage of users
18-24	36.8
25-34	32.6
35-44	16
45-54	8.3
55+	6.3

Figure 4. TikTok worldwide age demographics 2023 (Iqbal, 2024).

According to ByteDance's advertising resources, TikTok had 1.42 million users aged 18 and above in Finland in early 2023 (DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, 2023).

4.2 TikTok interface

The TikTok main interface in Finland shares similarities with most mainstream social media platforms. The bottom panel shows all the different pages or tabs available for the users. The buttons from left to right are Home, Friends, Create, Inbox, and Profile. The buttons on the side of the interface are Like, Comment, Save, and Share. The user can also follow the creator from the user's profile picture.



Picture 1. A screenshot from TikTok's For You Page and Home tab (TikTok 2024).

4.2.1 Home page and FYP

The Home page is where most of the action happens. The home page is the first thing a user sees when they open the application. The first video on the users FYP start playing right after the app is opened. Users can start seamlessly consuming videos, or they can press the search button and search for videos, start live-streaming, or move to any other tab that is available.

The TikTok home tab shows users two separate content feeds, the For You Page and the Following Page. The For You Page (FYP) is a personalized feed that

recommends videos for users to consume (support.tiktok.com, 2024). Users on TikTok spend the most amount of time scrolling on their For You Pages, and it is designed to show users new, relevant, and interesting content based on their interests.

As mentioned, this page is also the landing page on TikTok and is the first thing that the user sees when they open the application. The FYP is controlled by TikTok's algorithm, which uses the user's data such as the videos they view, engage with, dislike, as well as their account activity and demographic information to create customized FYP feeds. The FYP can evolve over time and become more personalized. The more the users spend time on TikTok and the FYP, the better it becomes at recommending users videos that they would more probably enjoy. Following tab is another separate feed that only includes content from creators and accounts that the user follows on their account (McLachlan, 2024).

4.2.2 Tabs

The friend's tab is a personalized feed separate from the others. It is available for users right on the landing page but is a tab rather than a feed. The friend's tab is a feed only dedicated to the user's friend's content. Users on TikTok can add other users as friends and if they do it back, their videos are shown on this Friends feed. According to TikTok, this tab can also be the discover feed for some users (support.tiktok.com, 2024).

The create button opens the content creation interface. This is where all the content such as videos, photos, and text posts can be created, uploaded, and edited. Users can also add sounds to the content from the add sound tab. Users can also add effects to customize and add detail to videos. These effects can be added during or after recording a video (support.tiktok.com, 2024).



Picture 2. A screenshot of TikTok's content creation interface (TikTok 2024).

The inbox tab is where the users receive notifications about activities happening in the app such as likes, comments, shared videos, direct messages, followers, and all other activities. Story posts from other users can also be viewed in the inbox tab (support.tiktok.com, 2024).

The profile tab is where the user can see who they are following, who follows them, video drafts, liked videos, saved content, reposts, profile picture, and username. The profile tab also includes creator tools, where profile insights, analytics, and more can be seen. Users can also edit their profile- and privacy settings (support.tiktok.com, 2024).

4.3 Features

According to TikTok, their mission is to inspire creativity and bring joy and the features implemented into the platform enforce this statement. Users can engage with each other through videos in new and innovative ways and express creativity with many tools. The TikTok application provides a low barrier of entry designed to make content creation easy and fun for any user. Videos and photos can also be edited and modified in-app (TikTok, 2023).

4.3.1 Duet and Stitch

Users can Duet and Stitch other creators' videos. Dueting is an innovative feature where users can create side-by-side videos, promoting collaboration and offering a new way to engage with already existing content. (later.com, n.d.) Stitching is a similar feature to dueting but offers users the ability to use a particular part or parts of another creator's video in their video. These features allow creators to interact with each other. A Video reply is a way a creator can interact with commenters. A user can create a video, rather than a text comment, replying to a comment that they have received in a previous video. This feature promotes more detailed creator and personable interactions with viewers and creators (LaFleur, 2023).

4.3.2 Sounds and music

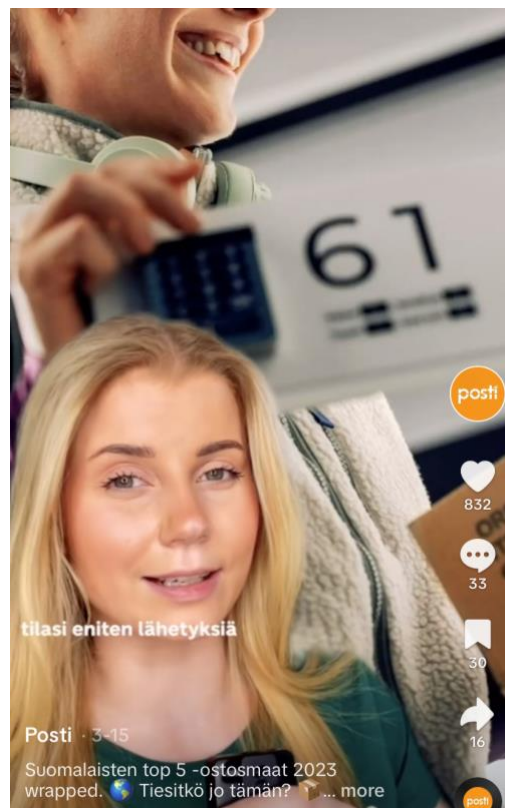
TikTok is not only a visual platform but an audiovisual platform and has an extensive library of Sounds and Music to choose from for videos. Music and sounds are in the foundation of TikTok from the use of popular songs - old or new to lip-syncing videos, dances, and viral sounds. These are features that are highly prominent in the success of TikTok (Nycz, 2023). Sounds and music can be created by anyone or chosen from TikTok's music library. Another popular feature regarding sounds is Voice-overs. Users can use the voice-over feature to narrate over a video (www.iconosquare.com, 2022).

4.3.3 Live streaming

Live streaming is another feature that has become more popular on TikTok. This feature allows users to go LIVE and have access to all filters, effects, and camera control but unlike in regular videos, there is no time limit. The live streaming feed can be accessed from the top-left icon on the home page (TikTok, 2024).

4.3.4 Effects and filters

Effects and Filters are highly popular and prominent features on TikTok. Filters are visual elements that can change the look and feel of the user's video. Effects can change the way the users look, and the way they move, create an interactive game, remove a background, add falling glitter, and a lot more. Effects allow users to have creativity and express themselves more freely. One of the most popular effects for example is the green screen effect, which automatically detects the creator's outline and removes the background, allowing them to insert any background into the video that they choose (Geyser, 2024).



Picture 3. A screenshot from a video posted by Posti, where the green screen effect is utilized (TikTok 2024).

4.4 TikTok as a marketing tool

TikTok marketing is using the social media platform TikTok to promote a brand, product, or service through different means. TikTok marketing can help businesses increase their brand awareness, sell a product or service, drive app installs, build a community, generate leads, provide customer service, reach new audiences, and more (Hirose, 2024). As TikTok grew in popularity businesses naturally started looking for ways to leverage the platform to promote their brand and products and in 2020 TikTok introduced a new marketing platform called TikTok for Business. TikTok for Business gives brands and marketers the tools to advertise and engage with the TikTok community while staying creative and authentic. The platform allows anyone to create or change their current account into a business account and start marketing efforts through TikTok Ads (TikTok for Business, 2021).

4.4.1 Ad organizations stages

TikTok Ads are content that brands or creators pay to share with a specific or custom audience. TikTok ads have three different stages of organization:

1. TikTok Ad, a single piece of content advertised.
2. TikTok Ad Group, a group of different TikTok ads
3. TikTok Campaign, a collection of TikTok ad groups.

All of these are managed in the TikTok Ads Manager as well as the objectives of the advertisement and more.

4.5 Ad types on TikTok

There are a lot of different types of ads available on TikTok for brands to choose from. They differ in functionality, visual aspects, engagement, and objectives. Each advertiser can choose what form of ad fits their specific objective or creative goals the best. Ad types on TikTok are always changing and evolving. More are being added and old, non-effective types are deleted. In this thesis, the most

prominent ad formats available for most countries are showcased. Spark Ads are introduced and analyzed in the next chapter of this thesis (Hirose, 2023).

4.5.1 In-Feed video ads

TikTok In-Feed video ads are a popular form of advertising on TikTok. A video ad is like a regular video posted by anyone, but it is created from TikTok Ads Manager and any interaction with the ad leads to a specific landing page or site. Whereas an engagement, a click of a profile, would regularly lead to the creator's profile, in a video ad format that engagement leads to a landing page. These ads appear in the user's FYP as a regular post would (Rosie, 2023).

4.5.2 TopView ads

TopView ads appear on the user's FYP when first opening the app. The ad plays as a full-screen ad for the first few seconds and then transforms into a regular in-feed ad. TopView ads are unskippable for the first few seconds and the ad can be anywhere from 5-60 seconds long. TopView ads also lead to a predetermined landing page when interacted with. This ad captivates any user for a moment and guarantees a wide reach and a high number of impressions as it is unmissable (Johnstone, n.d.).

4.5.3 Brand Takeover and Shopping ads

Brand Takeover is a similar ad format to TopView ads but appears full-screen for 5 seconds without transforming into a regular in-feed ad. When interacting with this ad, it will take the user to any external or internal landing page (Rosie, 2023).

Shopping ads allow brands to showcase their products and services directly within TikTok. Advertisers can showcase products through live streams and in-feed ads. TikTok has three different shopping ad formats. Video shopping ads, Catalog listing ads, and Live shopping ads (Adamik-Borowska, 2024).

5 SPARK ADS

5.1 What are Spark Ads?

Spark Ads is a native TikTok ad format that enables brands to leverage organic posts and their features in advertising. This format lets brands publish ads on their own organic TikTok posts and organic posts made by other creators - with authorization. Spark Ads utilize content from real TikTok accounts, guaranteeing that every view, comment, share, like, and follow obtained through video promotion is credited to organic posts from brands (ads.tiktok.com, 2023).

Spark Ads allows brands to transform and leverage organic content into TikTok ads. A brand can use their own organic TikTok videos for Spark ads or organic posts made by other TikTok creators. Spark Ads utilize content from real TikTok accounts, guaranteeing that every view, comment, share, like, and follow obtained through video promotion is credited to organic posts from brands. Unlike in-feed ads, Spark Ads only promote already existing organic content. This leaves that content to live on the business's profile page whereas in-feed ads are only shown if there is budget left (ads.tiktok.com, 2023).

TikTok introduced Spark Ads globally in July of 2021, as a one-of-a-kind solution for brands to leverage authenticity and creativity to grow by sharing organic content. With Spark Ads, brands can connect with communities by delivering organic content for greater authenticity. The Spark Ad format is prevalent on TikTok due to its cost-effectiveness, authentic feel, and how it aligns with TikTok's entertaining and creative nature (TikTok, 2023).

5.1.1 Spark Ad format benefits

Spark Ad offers the best of both worlds of organic and boosting with the ability to combine the reach and abilities of TopView and In-Feed Ads with the authenticity, features, and engagement of an organic post. A Spark Ad functions similarly to an organic post with added benefits. As with organic content, other users can use the same sound or music in their videos and engage with the brand with stitching

and Dueting videos. Users can share reactions in the comment sections, where the brand can also join the conversations and boost community engagement. Spark Ad videos can also be liked, shared, and saved just as users would be able to with regular organic posts.

With Spark Ads, it is possible to add a call-to-action button at the bottom of the video to drive users onto the brand's landing page. A part of the landing page will pop up to the users in the brand TikTok profile and can be then examined further but can be clicked away. This way the user stays on TikTok, and the call-to-action button does not take the user away from the platform. This added exposure to the landing page can increase the ad's click-through rate. According to TikTok, the impact of boosting organic posts with Spark Ads are clear: "Spark Ads have a 134% higher completion rate and 157% higher 6-second view-through rate than standard In-Feed Ads. Spark Ads' new profile landing page UI also delivers a 69% higher conversion rate and 37% lower CPA than ever before" (TikTok For Business, 2022).

The Spark Ad format, combining organic and paid strategies has the following benefits: Authentic and unique brand experiences, Increase in ad performance, Innovative features, Long-lasting marketing impact, and improved ROI (TikTok For Business, 2022).

5.2 Creating and managing Spark Ads

There are two ways a TikTok Account can create Spark Ads, linking and advertising through an authorized account or by authorizing individual posts. The TikTok page must be a business account to create Spark ads. An account can be linked with a TikTok for Business user or authorizing an account, along with its posts, in the business center. Accounts can also authorize individual posts and create Spark Ads through an authorization code. This way only the individual posts are authorized for advertising instead of the whole account (ads.tiktok.com, 2023).

5.2.1 Creating Spark Ads

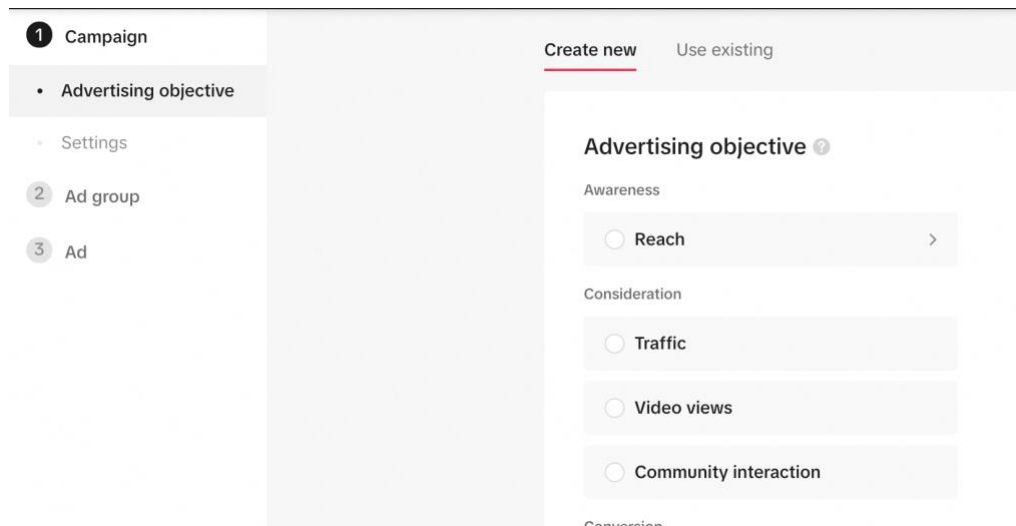
To create Spark Ads for individual posts, the creator must access the menu from their profile page and toggle on Ad Setting from Creator Tools. Once this is done, the creator can choose the creative they want to advertise. This can be any piece of organic content published on their page. From the video, they click More Options and Ad Settings. From there, they need to toggle on Ad Authorization and generate an authorization code. After saving and going back one step to Ad Settings, the video code will be ready to be used. The code can then be used in the TikTok Ad tab. Once the TikTok Account for Spark Ads is toggled on, and the right account is chosen, the code can be applied in the post authorized by account tab and the “Authorize TikTok post” button (strikesocial, 2022).

5.2.2 Manage Spark Ads

Spark Ads are created and managed in TikTok Ads Manager, where brands can create campaigns and choose different ad objectives. As mentioned earlier in this thesis TikTok Ads have three stages of organization. Spark Ads are organized in a similar manner.

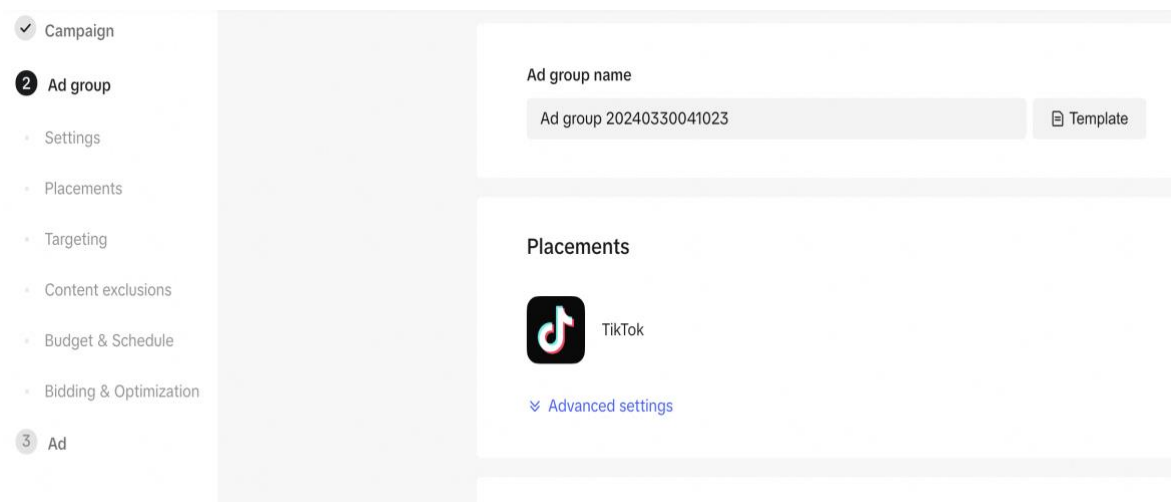
5.2.3 Spark Ads organization on TikTok Ads Manager

On the TikTok Campaign page, the objective, name, and budget can be determined. The budget can be either a daily spend budget, where the ad will use the amount in one day, or a lifetime budget, where the ad will spend the budget evenly throughout the allocated run time (TikTok, 2022).



Picture 5. Creating a campaign in TikTok Ads Manager (TikTok Ads Manager 2024).

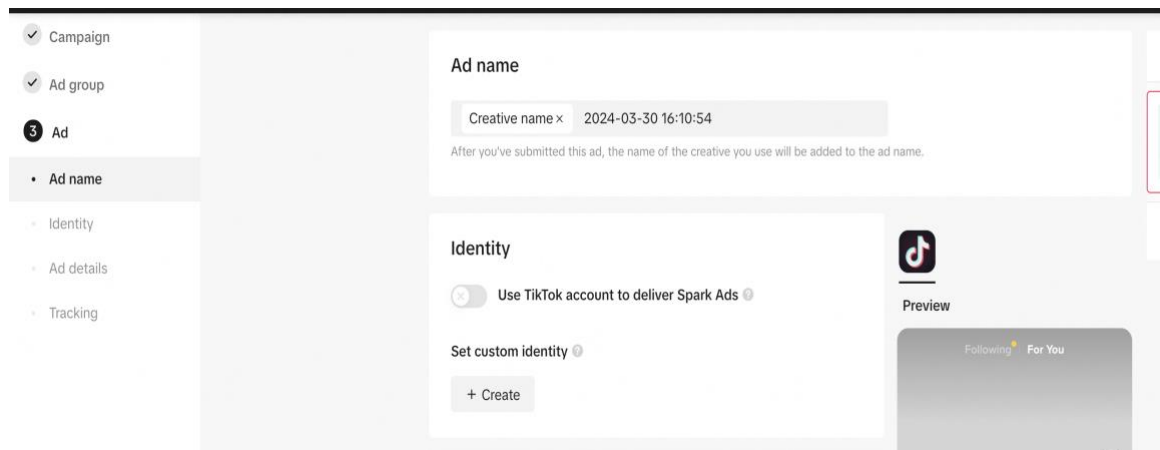
The TikTok Ad Group page is where the ad target demographics can be determined. Options for demographics are location, gender, age, language, spending power, device, and interest & behaviors. Advertisers can also choose to include or exclude custom audiences. Other settings on the Ad Group stage are Content exclusions, more precise Budget & Schedule, and Bidding & Optimization (TikTok, 2022).



Picture 6. Creating an Ad Group in TikTok Ads Manager (TikTok Ads Manager 2024).

The Ad Stage is where the Ad Name, Identity, Ad Details, and Tracking can be managed. The Identity tab is where the account to be advertised is chosen. There are two account options when delivering Spark Ads, connecting an authorized

account with its posts to the TikTok Ads Manager or authorizing individual TikTok posts by accounts. After choosing the account, in the Ad Details section, the right posts can be chosen (TikTok, 2022).



Picture 7. Ad section from TikTok Ads Manager (TikTok Ads Manager 2024).

5.3 Spark Ad objectives

Spark Ads support auction and reach & frequency ad types. Auction and reach include objectives such as reach, video Views, community Interaction, traffic, App installs, conversions, lead generation, and shop purchases. While reach & frequency objectives include reach, traffic, and video views. Brands need to recognize these different ad types and know how to align, leverage, and combine them to reach campaign objectives.

5.3.1 Reach ad objective

The reach ad objective allows the ad to be shown with the maximum number of impressions in the targeted audience at the most efficient price. Reach campaigns raise awareness for the advertised product or service for larger audiences (ads.tiktok.com, 2023).

5.3.2 Focused view ad objective

Focused view ad objective delivers ads to users who are most likely to engage with an ad actively – by viewing it for at least 6 seconds or interacting with the video within the first 6 seconds. Interaction with a post includes actions such as liking, following, sharing and music clicks. This ad objective offers a way for brands to drive positive engagements and to show ads to users who are paying attention (ads.tiktok.com, 2023).

5.3.3 Traffic and community interaction ad objectives

The traffic ad objective is designed to drive users to a predetermined landing page. Brands can use this ad objective to drive traffic toward a website or an application (ads.tiktok.com, 2023).

Community interactions is an ad objective designed for community building. Advertisers can drive follower growth or page visits (ads.tiktok.com, 2023).

5.3.4 Lead generation ad objective

Advertisers looking for leads and potential prospects can use the lead generation ad objective. With this ad objective, the user can press a CTA button on the lead ad that will either open an instant form where the user can learn about the business, leave their contact information, and signal interest in a product or service, or redirect the user to a website where they can leave their contact information (ads.tiktok.com, 2023).

5.3.5 App promotion, website conversions and shop purchase ad objectives

App promotion objective is used to drive users to install and engage with an app. The app promotion objective supports two different types. App installs, getting

new users to install and act on the app. As well as the app retargeting type, that is meant to re-engage existing users to act on the app (ads.tiktok.com, 2023).

The website conversion objective is like the traffic objective. This objective sends user to a website, or TikTok instant page, to perform a specific action such as making a purchase or adding an item to the cart (ads.tiktok.com, 2023).

Lastly, the shop purchase or the product sales objective is to promote TikTok shop products. This objective is aimed to drive positive ad performance and overall TikTok shop growth (ads.tiktok.com, 2023).

6 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

6.1 Interview as a form of qualitative research

An interview is a form of qualitative research. Aspers and Corte (2019) define qualitative research as: “an iterative process in which improved understanding to the scientific community is achieved by making new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon studied” (p. 155). Interviewing is the most common format of data collection in qualitative research (Jamshed, 2014). The interviews were semi-structured to allow for flexibility. Semi-structured interviews are the preferred data collection method for the researcher to understand the participant's unique perspective rather than a generalized understanding of a phenomenon (McGrath, Palmgren and Liljedahl, 2019). In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer has a set of predetermined questions that are open-ended unlike in structured interviews where the answer options are often fixed (Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik, 2021).

6.1.1 Professionals interviewed

For this thesis, two social media professionals, with over 10 years of combined work experience in social media marketing, were interviewed, providing a unique perspective of Spark Ads. The author coordinated the interviews and conducted them in person. The interviews aimed to explore the use of Spark Ads in TikTok brand marketing. The primary objective was to find out how and why they use Spark Ads for TikTok marketing to facilitate brand growth. The secondary objectives were to learn about effective organic content and if there are downsides of the usage of Spark Ads in brand marketing. The two interviewees were Senior Social Media Specialist and Team Lead Juha Karhu, and Creative Kalle Huuskonen.

6.2 Spark Ads by social media professionals

Both of the individuals described that Spark Ads on TikTok were the main way of using paid advertising on TikTok. Huuskonen (2024) details that over 90% of paid efforts created for brands, smaller and bigger, were through Spark ads. When asked why, Huuskonen details that through his experiences, he has noticed that Spark Ads are the most efficient way of combining the features and positives of organic content with paid advertising efforts. "Spark ads allow us to create content native to TikTok while being able to grow a community for these brands. We don't have to isolate marketing for specific brands, products, or services while leaving out conversation and interaction. With Spark Ads, we can combine them, creating community interaction and entertaining content." Huuskonen (2024) explains.

Karhu (2024) describes that it is rare only to create organic content for brands anymore and most content produced will be boosted with Spark Ads. Brands want to have a presence on the platform, and Spark ads allow them to create reach and visibility through the organic presence. Karhu explains how as the platform has grown substantially, the ability to receive wide organic reach has gotten more difficult. Huuskonen (2024) mentioned, similarly, that going "viral" has been getting harder as the platform has grown: "A few years ago, we were able to create videos for brands, that would consistently reach wide audiences organically. Now we are able to create consistency through utilizing paid methods such as Spark Ad on TikTok."

Spark Ads have been used to ensure that the resources invested into creating content would be worthwhile and that the content reaches bigger audiences and more importantly, the right audiences. According to Karhu, the factors that are taken into account when creating organic content are the TikTok Algorithm, posting times, the quality of the content, how the account is performing in general, competition, and how the content is received right after being posted. Karhu (2024) states: "It feels hazardous to leave the success of content at the mercy of all these factors, most being unpredictable."

6.2.1 Spark Ads for positive brand growth

When asked about positively creating brand growth both highlighted the importance of quality organic content and community interaction. “A community that is invested in the brand and the brand's story, enforces brand resonance and loyalty.” Karhu (2024) explains.

“We think that community management is super important for brands. Combining engaged audiences and quality content creates brand growth effectively, that's the reason we do it”, Huuskonen (2024) states. Community interaction and quality content create community growth that helps the brand to grow. Organic features such as commenting, responding to comments, interacting with the community outside of the brand's profile page, and having an overall presence on the platform, make the brand seem more relatable and likable. Thus creating positivity towards the brand (Karhu 2024).

Can there be negative brand growth? According to Huuskonen, there can: “For example, when brands create content that does not fit into the native feel of TikTok and have huge budgets with Spark Ads or create brand growth only through raffles, the brand account will most likely grow but not lead into anything.” Both spoke about the effect of inconsistent boosting and the importance of how the profile page looks to a new user. An “always-on” method, where posts are consistently boosted, is recommended by both. Karhu (2024) explains this as such: “I think of a brand's profile page as a type of display window. On TikTok, video views are visible when looking at the page and if some videos have a high number of views and the others don't, this can create a weird feeling for the consumer.” Both Karhu and Huuskonen (2024) recommend that brands use Spark Ads as the main paid advertising strategy on TikTok.

6.2.2 Spark Ad negatives

Neither interviewee was able to mention many negatives about combining organic with Spark Ads. Karhu mentions that if a brand has more regional product offers, for example, this can be hard to execute through Spark Ads as it still lacks more detailed location targeting in Finland. Huuskonen found difficulties with

scheduling ads and posts but mentioned budgeting as the main negative: “boosting with Spark Ads require resources from clients and those are not always available.”

7 ORGANIC AND PAID CONTENT ON TIKTOK

As this thesis aims to help brands create positive brand growth while combining organic content with paid boosting, it means that a brand needs to be able to create organic content that would create a positive effect and image for the consumer. This chapter displays what organic content is, how organic content should be made on the platform to create a positive effect, and lastly, how organic, and paid methods should be combined to create positive brand growth.

7.1 Organic brand content on TikTok

Organic social media marketing efforts are ways a brand promotes itself or its products and services without paid methods. On TikTok, organic content means that a brand creates content on the app but does not use any paid advertisements or paid boosting (Asante et al., 2022). TikTok is seen as different from the other social media platforms by users and brands need to recognize this when creating TikTok marketing and content strategies. According to a study by Nielsen (2021) an average of 79% of TikTok users find content on TikTok to be unique or different globally from that of competitors. Authenticity, creativity, and fun lie at the heart of TikTok content, and in 2021 TikTok created a mantra for all brands to follow: “Don’t Make Ads, Make TikToks” (TikTok for Business, 2021). This was an invitation to all brands to create TikToks – content that fits the unique style and tone of the platform and not regular ads that the audiences are used to. TikTok has a sense of community, and users see brands as part of it (Barac, K. 2023).

A study by Nguyen, Tran & Nguyen (2024) called “Factors Affecting Users’ Brand Awareness through Social Media Marketing on TikTok” aimed to explore and measure the factors affecting the brand awareness of users through social media marketing communications on TikTok. In the study, six factors positively impacted brand awareness: trends, electronic word of mouth, influencers, entertainment, interaction, and storytelling. The study also found that the use of trends was the most significant factor impacting the brand awareness of TikTok users.

7.2 Creating effective brand videos

Senior Social Media Specialist Karhu (2024) described that the number one most important factor in the success of organic content is of course the content itself. Huuskonen described 5 important factors when creating an effective brand video for TikTok.

7.2.1 Fast cuts and the 3-second rule

TikTok is a fast-paced platform, and when competing for the user's attention the first 3 seconds of a video are the most important. Creating “a hook”, a line or effect that intrigues the audience to keep watching the video, helps the user stop scrolling and keep engaging with the video. Even if the user stays to watch the video, it must still be fast-paced and engaging (Huuskonen, 2024).

7.2.2 Visual elements

Even though the TikTok Style is to be authentic it does not mean that the video must look visually unappealing. Huuskonen (2024) explains how good lighting, vibrant colors, and the quality of a TikTok make all the difference. TikToks should also include text and subtitles for when the creator is speaking. This creates engagement and interest. A visual way to increase brand retention is by using the brand's distinct visual elements in the video such as colors, and clothing. According to a study by Kantar (2022), creatives with a brand logo throughout the ad are 58% more likely to see an uplift in purchase intent (TikTok for Business, n.d.).

7.2.3 Sounds and music

Huuskonen (2024) believes TikTok audio is just as important as video. Background music, viral sound effects, and voice-overs are examples of how a brand can utilize audio to boost videos. Brands can create sounds or music for others to use and engage with their community. A meta-analysis study by Kantar (2024) shows that creatives prominently featuring music are 80% more likely to see ad recall uplifts (TikTok for Business, n.d.).

7.2.4 TikTok Trends

TikTok uses the word “trend” to describe the creative formats, ideas, and behaviors that get a lot of attention on TikTok, and in turn, influence what people do on the platform (TikTok, 2023). There are a lot of videos on TikTok that may look similar, this is due to trends Huuskonen (2024) explains. Trends are not only for users but also often free for brands to benefit from. When a brand participates in a trend it paints them as more fun, relatable, and authentic to users.

7.2.5 Community Interaction

Lastly, Huuskonen (2024) explains how community interaction is vital when creating on TikTok. A brand story on TikTok is not built alone by the brand but co-created with its community. A brand can interact with its community in many ways such as with features, mentioned earlier in this thesis, such as duetting, stitching, and responding to video comments. Utilizing these features helps brands improve their connection with their audience, create more dynamic videos, and effectively publish creative ideas.

7.3 Creating TikToks not Ads

TikTok presents a unique opportunity for brands to connect with their already existing audiences and be discovered by new ones through organic content

strategies. As highlighted above, TikTok's emphasis on authenticity, creative nature, and community engagement sets it apart from other social media platforms. When creating brand content on TikTok, the mantra "Don't make Ads, Make TikToks" should be remembered. This mantra was also familiar with Huuskonen and Karhu. "It should be remembered that creating "ads" for TikTok is not the same as maybe for other platforms. TikTok embraces entertainment and fun, and we try to keep that in mind when creating brand content." Huuskonen details. Sometimes traditional ads that have a disrupting nature can be off-putting and create negative brand views (Karhu, 2024).

7.4 Downsides of organic strategies

While organic marketing strategies on TikTok can be highly effective in reaching and engaging audiences, they also come with certain downsides. Organic content may not reach as many users as with paid strategies. Organic content is dependent on the TikTok algorithm, which may not distribute the content if it chooses to. This creates unpredictability and inconsistent results. Creating effective organic content also takes time, effort, and creativity (Bacehowski & Baker, 2022). Brands may lack the know-how to utilize trends entertainingly or lack the resources to post consistently on the platform.

Competition is also fierce on the trendy TikTok platform, with 34 million videos posted daily on TikTok and more than 5 million businesses using TikTok in the United States (Anderson, 2024). A lot of content is posted on the platform daily and getting noticed can be difficult.

Karhu (2024) details the difference between organic strategies when TikTok first started gaining popularity in Finland versus now in 2024: "In the beginning, the organic reach that brands received on TikTok was immense, but now as the platform, users, and the number of brands has grown widely, the organic reach that we can get is nowhere near the older amount when the platform first got introduced." Karhu (2024) also states that time, effort, and other resources are used when creating brand content, using Spark Ads ensures that those resources are not wasted, the videos get enough reach and reach the correct audiences.

7.5 Organic meets Spark Ads

Paid social media marketing efforts are becoming increasingly important due to the saturation of content and to reach target audiences. Paid social advertising efforts are done when brands financially promote or boost their brand, products, or services (Geist, 2022). On TikTok, boosted posts are distinguished by a "sponsored" or "promoted" tags that appear at the bottom of the ad post. These appear when the content is boosted into For You Pages but are not seen when looking at them on the brands profile page.

In 2021, TikTok revolutionized brand advertising with the launch of Spark Ads, offering brands a powerful tool to merge organic content with paid solutions. This solution meant that brands could still create content that connected with their audience, was authentic and fun, but would also benefit further from paid strategies. Spark Ads also offered features such as detailed targeting. Brands could choose target audiences and create content specifically for these audiences. This optimizes engagement and view counts as content is now showed to audiences that would be more likely to enjoy them (Huuskonen, 2024).

7.6 Leveraging Spark Ads for brand growth

Organic strategies lay a groundwork for brands to work with. Without effective organic content, boosting with Spark Ads can create negative effects, such as negative brand image. Integrating Spark Ads into organic strategies that are effective and created channel-specific amplifies these efforts driving further brand growth while maintaining the authenticity and features of organic content.

One of the main advantages of Spark Ads is enhancing the reach and targeting of branded content. With different ad types, listed earlier in this thesis, brands can target audiences that would better suit the specific target audience through features like age, interests, location, and previous behaviors towards the brand (TikTok For Business, 2022).

Brands can now target more relevant audiences which in turn could uplifts engagement, build more positive, loyal communities, and create sales opportunities. Enhanced visibility of Spark ads negates one of the main negatives of organic content, which is the difficulty of getting noticed by users. Spark Ad campaigns allow for more predictability in results when compared to organic content. A certain number of resources invested into a boosted post allows for a certain number of views.

7.6.1 Support from marketing psychology

Spark Ads strategies receive advantages from marketing psychology. As Kelman's Social Proof Theory would suggest, humans as social creatures tend to copy the actions of others in social environments (Sheng & Basha, 2022). Spark ads that drive engagement on boosted posts would be more likely to receive engagements from new users due to the "bandwagon effect" (Sheng & Basha, 2022), mentioned earlier in the thesis. Users would assume that engaging with a post due to a high level of engagement would be the correct action (Abdul Talib and Mat Saat 2017, p. 34).

7.7 Spark Ads maintain authenticity

Spark ads allow brands to interact with their community on TikTok. Boosted posts act the same way as organic posts and co-creation abilities such as stitching, dueting, and answering to comments are all available. According to Keller's Brand Equity Model, (2001, p15) "...brand loyalty occurs when customers are willing to invest time, energy, money, or other resources into the brand beyond those expended during the purchase or consumption of the brand". These features are central to TikTok's fun and creative nature and by utilizing them brands can build and strengthen their brand equity.

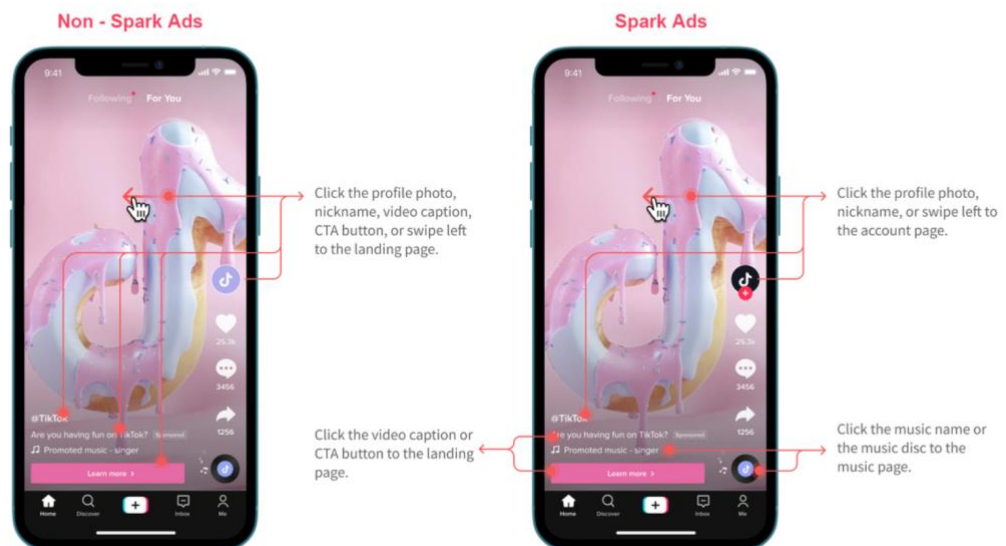
Boosted posts by Spark Ads maintain organic features and authenticity when compared to non-Spark Ads. Users seeing a post boosted by Spark Ads can click the profile photo, nickname or swipe left to the account page. As well as click the

music name or music disc on the music pages. (Figure 11) Non-Spark Ads direct users to landing pages when they interact with the post (ads.tiktok.com, 2023).

Maintaining authenticity is crucial because it helps brands blend in the feed and does not separate users' other content from brand content. This creates the effect that brands can be seen as friends on TikTok. When ads look and feel like regular content, they blend seamlessly into a user's FYP. This also reduces the likelihood of users skipping or ignoring the content because it appears to be another engaging and relevant post rather than an intrusive advertisement.

Non-Spark Ads versus Spark Ads

Demo:



Picture 8. Non-Spark Ads versus Spark Ads (TikTok 2023).

8 Applying theoretical framework

8.1.1 Applying Social Influence Theory

On TikTok, Kelman's Social Influence Theory can explain how Spark Ads use social dynamics such as social proof and authority to shape user perceptions and actions. Social proof is a psychological phenomenon where individuals assume the actions of others are the correct behaviors to follow (Abdul Talib and Mat Saat 2017, p. 34).

8.1.2 Social proof

Humans are social creature who tend to copy the actions of others, especially in social environments (Sheng & Basha, 2022). When looking at certain phenomena on TikTok, the effect of social proof can be seen. A piece of content with high number of engagements and views, could lower the threshold of engaging for the next user seeing the video. If the action assumed by others is liking the post, other users would be more inclined to like it as well assuming it was the "right" thing to do. This effect can also be referred to as the "bandwagon effect" (Sheng & Basha, 2022). This effect also enables viral or widely popular content. Spark Ads can utilize this phenomenon in an effective manner. When a post is boosted by Spark Ads, it is pushed to users who are more likely to enjoy that content and/or engage with it, creating a higher number of views and engagements (Karhu, 2023).

When asked about the effects social proof on TikTok, Social Media Specialist Karhu (2024) stated: "In my opinion yes, it can be seen throughout social media. If a post has more likes, shares, or comments, the next has a lower threshold to surpass to engage with a post. No one wants to stand out or be seen as different from others"

8.1.3 Authority

Authority is another social dynamic explored in Kelman's Social Influence Theory that is widely observed across social media. Authority is closely linked with influencers. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2019), an influencer affects or changes how other people behave. Influencers use their platform to "influence" their audience's decisions regarding topics such as purchasing choices, advice, recipes, and beliefs.

Users look up to influencers and trust their opinions. That is why they are valuable on social media. If an authority that is trusted by an individual, product or service recommendations are more valid (Gambhir & Ashfaq, 2023). Influencers are popular assets in brand advertising in Finland and across social media. They are also widely used in Spark Ads campaigns. If an influencer creates a collaboration post for example, it can be boosted by an agency or another individual, creating more visibility.

8.2 Applying Keller's Brand Equity Model

Keller's model provides a structured framework for brands to understand and manage their presence on TikTok. The model emphasizes the importance of brand- and community interaction, factors which are a key element in fostering and creating a community and audience that is positive and engaging towards the brand. Applying Keller's model for TikTok marketing can help brands create strategies around strengthening brand equity, co-creation, and community interaction. This would help brands with creating positive and loyal communities. The importance of community interaction was also highlighted by Huuskonen (2024): "As the brands story is built with the community, utilizing TikTok's unique features to create a connection with the audience is vital".

9 CONCLUSION

TikTok is an interesting and different social media platform. Captivating millions of users in a short amount of time with its unique attention span shortening video format. It has evolved overtime into an application with more and more features, and different media formats such as longer videos, photo carousels and live streaming capabilities. It has almost redefined social media and has other platforms such as Instagram imitating the video format (Sood, 2021). TikTok embraces creativity, fun and authenticity in a new way never seen before (TikTok, 2023).

Marketers were hesitant to join TikTok due to thinking that it is just for entertainment (Nguyen et al., 2024, p. 113). The platform has now become a powerful marketing channel for many. As more and more brands and users joined, the market became saturated with content. Getting noticed was becoming more difficult. To combat this problem TikTok introduced TikTok for Business and Spark Ads. Spark Ads allowed for a new and innovative way of gaining exposure, while staying authentic to the channels creative, relatable, and fun nature (TikTok, 2023) Since then, the use of Spark Ads has become a powerful tool in paid advertising for brands on TikTok in Finland (Karhu, 2024).

The main objective of this thesis was to explore and analyze how Spark Ads can be combined with organic content to create brand growth on TikTok. Other objectives that the thesis discusses are creating effective organic content on TikTok, and Spark Ads and how they are utilized. The foundation for this thesis was laid through the authors own experiences working in social media marketing, data found on the internet, theoretical frameworks, and qualitative interviews conducted with social media professionals.

9.1 Framework applications regarding Spark Ads and growth

Kelman's Social Influence Theory was able to demonstrate how Spark Ads can leverage certain social dynamic seen widely on social media but more specifically

on TikTok. Content with a higher number of engagements and views attract increasing amounts of engagement due to this. Spark Ads boost posts, showing them to targeted audiences, creating attraction that potentially lowers the threshold of engaging because of social proof and the “bandwagon effect” (Sheng & Basha, 2022).

Keller’s Brand Equity Model closely links with another key finding in this thesis, the importance of brand interaction in fostering brand growth. The model provides an approach for brands to build and manage their presence on the platform. Keller’s model shows that co-creation, an important factor in Spark Ad marketing, effectively creates brand loyalty (Keller, 2001).

9.2 Fostering positive brand growth

Spark Ads offers the best of both worlds – allowing brands to create ads from organic TikToks while maintaining the native feel and functionality of organic posts (TikTok for Business, 2023). In fostering growth, community interaction plays a big part (Huuskonen, 2024). Utilizing organic features to interact with TikTok communities and users, allowing users to interact with the brand, is one of the key elements in a brand presence on TikTok (Nguyen et al., 2024, p. 113).

Keller’s Brand Equity Model shows that the strongest brand loyalty occurs when users interact with a brand outside the resources expended during the purchase or consumption of the brand. According to Karhu (2024) the most important part for the success of Spark Ad marketing campaign is the content itself. As TikTok states brands should “create TikToks and not ads”. Brands should create content native to TikTok, with visual elements, utilizing sound and music, trends, and storytelling to be best leveraged with Spark Ads.

By creating a balance between Spark Ad boosting, authentic and entertaining content and community interaction, brands can create a presence on TikTok that makes an impact and fosters positive brand growth.

10 DISCUSSION

This thesis came to be due to three empirical remarks made by the author while working as a Social Media Coordinator at a social media agency working with brands in Finland. First, Spark Ads are widely used in brand marketing on TikTok. Second, they are effective in fostering brand growth, and third, Spark Ads are a new and unfamiliar concept to many and as an advertising strategy, not widely written about. The author wants to help brands guide their way through Spark Ads, and organic content and effectively combine them to foster and create brand growth through an engaging community on TikTok.

This thesis was particularly significant for the development of the expertise of the author. Social media marketing and especially TikTok content creation and -marketing are closely linked to the authors work and delving deeper into this subject has allowed better performance and enhanced abilities to help clients and colleagues on the subject matter with deeper knowledge.

What was most surprising while writing this thesis was how important the community building aspect was in creating brand growth. This was first noticed when creating the theoretical framework and studying Keller's models, but it was later emphasized in the interviews by Karhu and Huuskonen as well. The importance of the quality of the content advertised also became one of the key points of this thesis.

The ability to critically evaluate older marketing theory and its relationship to marketing on a new platform TikTok, had to be utilized during the thesis process. The research process was difficult since limited amount of scholarly literature on Spark Ads or TikTok. Due to this, the thesis relied on a combination of expert interviews, individual knowledge and material found from the internet. However, this provided an interesting opportunity to provide fresh insights and perspectives about the subject matter surrounding brand growth on TikTok and Spark Ads effectiveness.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview questions

Interview questions:

Question 1: What is your name and what do you do at MySome?

Question 2: What makes a good organic TikTok video?

Question 3: Can you describe your experience using TikTok Spark Ads for brand marketing and growth?

Question 4: Why do you utilize Spark Ads in TikTok marketing campaigns?

Question 5: What makes Spark Ad campaigns effective?

Question 6: What challenges have you faced when doing purely organic content?

Question 7: Are Spark Ads widely used in Brand Marketing on TikTok? Why?