How can companies use TikTok for marketing?

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Master in Business Administration

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August, 2024

Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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Abstract

This study delves into the complex dynamics of TikTok marketing in the digital age, emphasizing its key role as a marketing platform in China. TikTok's unique content creation and dissemination mechanism reshapes consumer content consumption and provides new avenues for businesses to directly engage with customers. However, the platform also faces significant challenges such as content saturation, algorithm dependency, and privacy issues, which require strategic adaptability of the enterprise to effectively utilize its products.

Our main goal is to explore ways to improve TikTok's marketing efficiency, focusing on creating unique and engaging content, understanding and adapting to algorithmic changes, and promoting deeper user engagement. Using qualitative analysis, gather insights from various stakeholders, including users and marketing professionals. This method provides a detailed understanding of the factors that affect user engagement and the effectiveness of different marketing strategies on TikTok.

These findings are expected to contribute in theory and practice, deepen understanding of the complexity of social media marketing, and provide actionable strategies for businesses to optimize their marketing efforts on TikTok in a dynamic and competitive digital market.

Keywords: TikTok, short-video platform, corporate marketing, data analytics

JEL Classification: M31, L82

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Resumo

Este estudo aprofunda a complexa dinâmica do marketing TikTok na era digital, enfatizando seu papel fundamental como plataforma de marketing na China. O mecanismo exclusivo de criação e disseminação de conteúdo da TikTok remodela o consumo de conteúdo do consumidor e fornece novas vias para as empresas se envolverem diretamente com os clientes. No entanto, a plataforma também enfrenta desafios significativos, como saturação de conteúdo, dependência de algoritmos e questões de privacidade, que exigem adaptabilidade estratégica da empresa para utilizar efetivamente seus produtos.

O principal objetivo deste estudo explorar maneiras de melhorar a eficiência de marketing do TikTok, com foco na criação de conteúdo único e envolvente, compreensão e adaptação a mudanças algorítmicas e promoção de engajamento mais profundo do usuário. Usando análise qualitativa, colete insights de várias partes interessadas, incluindo usuários e profissionais de marketing. Este método fornece uma compreensão detalhada dos fatores que afetam o engajamento do usuário e a eficácia de diferentes estratégias de marketing no TikTok.

Espera-se que essas descobertas contribuam na teoria e na prática, aprofundem a compreensão da complexidade do marketing de mídia social e forneçam estratégias acionáveis para que as empresas otimizem seus esforços de marketing no TikTok em um mercado digital dinâmico e competitivo.

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List of abbreviations

AIDA - Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action

CBBE - Customer Based Brand Equity

CDJ - Consumer Decision Journey

KOLs - Key Opinion Leaders

UGC - User Generated Content

1 – Introduction

In the wave of the digital age, social media platforms, especially TikTok, have become one of the most influential marketing tools in China. TikTok is unique in its innovative content creation and sharing mechanism, which not only changes users' content consumption habits, but also provides enterprises with unprecedented opportunities to interact directly with consumers (Abidin, 2020). With the rapid growth of the user base of the platform, how to effectively use the marketing potential of TikTok has become an urgent problem to be solved. This research will deeply analyze the role of TikTok in digital marketing and explore how enterprises can use TikTok strategically to carry out brand promotion and customer communication and aims to improve user participation and conversion rate, thus driving business success (Appel *et al*., 2020).

Although there are many opportunities for marketing on TikTok, there are also some specific challenges and problems. These issues mainly include:

1. Content saturation and high competitiveness: As more and more enterprises and content creators pour into TikTok, the content competition of the platform becomes extremely fierce. Brands need to constantly innovate aims to stand out among numerous videos, which puts higher demands on content creativity and production (Astuti, 2020).

2. Algorithm dependency: TikTok's user recommendation system relies heavily on its algorithm, which means that enterprises must accurately understand and adapt to this algorithm to ensure that its content can be displayed to target users first. The opacity and frequent adjustments of algorithms increase the uncertainty of market strategies.

3. The challenge of user engagement: Although short videos can quickly attract user attention, user engagement is often shallow, making it difficult to maintain long-term user relationships and loyalty. Enterprises need to build deep user interaction and participation while quickly attracting users (Barta *et al*., 2023).

4. Privacy and data security issues: In the process of precision marketing, enterprises need to collect and analyze a large amount of user data. How to legally and compliantly process this data while ensuring user privacy is an issue that needs to be taken seriously (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2010).

5. Uncertainty of the regulatory environment: China's Internet regulatory policies are strict and evolving, and enterprises' marketing activities on TikTok need to strictly comply with relevant laws and regulations. Policy changes may have an impact on the already formulated market strategies.

6. Brand image and content matching issue: In the pursuit of high click through rates and widespread exposure, enterprises may produce content that does not match the core values of the brand, which may significantly damage the brand image.

In response to these problems, enterprises need to take careful consideration and make strategic adjustments when formulating TikTok marketing strategies to ensure that their marketing activities can effectively attract users while also continuously enhancing the long-term value of the brand.

In view of the problems existing in TikTok's marketing, this study aims to explore a series of strategic goals to improve the marketing efficiency and effect of enterprises on the TikTok platform. Firstly, the research will focus on how to create unique and attractive video content in a content saturated and highly competitive environment, ensuring that the content not only highlights but also aligns with the brand's core values. At the same time, considering the importance of TikTok algorithm, this study will deeply analyze algorithm recommendation mechanisms to help enterprises better understand and adapt to these mechanisms, so as to optimize the visibility of content and user participation. In addition, considering the difficulty of maintaining long-term user engagement, this study will also explore how to enhance user engagement and loyalty by constructing highly interactive content and activities. This includes understanding how to use TikTok's interactive features, such as challenges and live broadcast, to promote active user participation. In dealing with data privacy and security, this study will explore how enterprises comply with regulatory requirements when collecting and using user data to ensure the security of user information and maintain public trust in the brand. In the meantime, this study also focuses on the impact of the change in the regulatory environment on TikTok marketing strategies, to help enterprises make flexible strategic adjustments in the changing policy environment.

In order to systematically explore the effective marketing strategies of enterprises in TikTok, this study uses qualitative analysis methods and interviews to investigate the views of professional groups on the business development of TikTok. The interview will provide relevant information for the thinking and motivation behind TikTok's marketing strategy. Through interviews, this study can establish a multi-dimensional perspective to understand and evaluate the complexity and diversity of TikTok marketing. This will help enterprises in practice, especially those seeking to improve their market strategy in the dynamic and competitive environment of TikTok.

The first chapter is the background of this study. The next chapter will introduce the literature review, including TikTok user behavior, marketing strategies and social media

marketing best practices. In addition, this chapter will also discuss the consumer psychology and socio-cultural factors related to TikTok, providing a theoretical basis for understanding how users interact with content. Chapter 3 is methodology. Chapter 4 conducts in-depth analysis and exploration of the interview results. Chapter 5 provides a summary and outlook for the entire dissertation.

2 – Literature review

2.1 TikTok and marketing

In today's rapidly evolving digital media era, TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential social media platforms globally. As a platform mainly based on short videos, TikTok allows users to create, share and watch videos, covering dance, food, travel, education and other content categories. Since its launch, TikTok has rapidly achieved great success worldwide, especially among young users. Its unique content form and high interactivity make it a cultural phenomenon in the new era (Khang *et al*., 2012).

The marketing value of TikTok lies in its extremely high user activity and algorithm optimization of the platform. The algorithm of the platform can accurately push content to the most likely interested users, and this highly personalized recommendation greatly improves the viewing and interaction rates of the content. For brands, this means being able to directly showcase advertising and brand content to potential customers through precise targeting. In addition, TikTok also provides a wealth of advertising products and cooperation modes, such as brand challenges, customized filters and live broadcast functions, which are effective tools to connect brands and consumers and enhance brand influence.

Through TikTok, enterprises and brands can use creative and interactive content strategies to achieve a wide range of user coverage and brand exposure at a relatively low cost. Successful TikTok marketing cases are usually highly innovative and timely and can quickly capture users' interests and current trends. Therefore, it is crucial for any enterprise that wants to use digital marketing to promote brand growth to have a deep understanding of TikTok's functions and user group preferences and develop attractive content and accurate market positioning strategies (Kozyreva *et al*., 2020).

2.2 TikTok's digital marketing strategy from different perspectives

1. Wide user coverage and high user engagement:

TikTok has more than hundreds of millions of active users, which provides the brand with opportunities to reach different ages, regions and interest groups. Young users are particularly active, which enables brands to develop special strategies for this important market segment. The design of the platform encourages users to generate content and participate in interactions, such as through likes, comments, and sharing, enhancing their sense of participation. This kind

of participation not only enhances user awareness of the brand, but also increases the potential for content dissemination, making viral marketing easier to achieve.

2. Content innovation and trend leading:

One of TikTok's core advantages is its capacity to swiftly respond and amplify popular trends, which brands can leverage this by timely launching creative content related to current hot topics to attract user attention. For example, participating in a challenge on TikTok or using popular songs can quickly improve brand visibility. In addition, TikTok's diversified video editing tools allow users and brands to create visually attractive content, which is often easier to share and spread.

3. Accurate target market positioning:

TikTok's algorithm recommends content based on user's behavior, interest and interaction history, which provides a highly accurate target market positioning opportunity for brands. By setting specific advertising targets, such as geographical location, age group, gender, and interests, brands can ensure that their advertising content is only displayed to the user group most likely to be interested in their products or services. This precise positioning helps to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of advertising placement, thereby optimizing marketing budgets (Li *et al*., 2020).

4. Diverse advertising forms and cooperation models:

TikTok provides a variety of advertising forms and cooperation methods for brands, including traditional advertising spaces, launching brand challenges, customized AR filters and brand effect advertising. Brands can also choose to cooperate with well-known TikTok creators to promote their products or services by using their influence and creativity. This type of collaboration typically generates high levels of user engagement and content sharing, thereby bringing greater exposure and influence to the brand.

5. Instant feedback and analysis tools:

TikTok provides a powerful background analysis function, allowing brands to monitor their advertising performance and user interaction in real time. This includes viewing video views, user participation details, likes and sharing statistics, etc. By analyzing this data, brands can better understand which content is effective and which is not attractive enough and adjust their content strategy and advertising investment accordingly.

6. Global market exposure:

TikTok has emerged as a leading social media platform in numerous countries and regions. This presence offers brands a global entry point, enabling them to promote their products across diverse cultures and regions. For brands aiming to penetrate the international market, TikTok

serves as a valuable platform for adapting content to attract users from various countries, thereby establishing a widespread global brand influence.

Through these detailed analyses, we can see the multi-dimensional value of TikTok in the field of modern digital marketing, and how brands can effectively use this platform to promote their market strategies and business growth (Li & Cai, 2011).

In the diversification strategy of digital marketing, the TikTok marketing platform plays a central role, with all departments collaborating precisely around this core to maximize the influence of content and the market penetration of brands. Firstly, the content department is responsible for creating engaging video content, such as challenges, tutorials, and other creative videos, which are key to attracting and maintaining user attention. This part of content needs to be innovated continuously and keep up with the popular trend to ensure that the content can stand out on the highly competitive platform of TikTok. The operations department plays a crucial role in user interaction. By managing interaction in the comment section, organizing online activities and promotions, the operations department has strengthened the connection between users and brands, improving user engagement and brand loyalty. In addition, the operations team also needs to monitor user feedback and promptly adjust strategies to respond to user needs and market changes (Hayes & Li, 2023).

The data analysis department utilizes the powerful tools provided by TikTok to track and analysis user behavior data, video performance, and participation metrics. These data are an indispensable part of developing effective marketing strategies, helping marketing teams optimize content release times, identify target audiences, and evaluate the effectiveness of advertising placements.

The marketing department is responsible for planning and executing advertisements. This includes selecting appropriate advertising types, such as open screen ads or information flow ads, identifying target user groups, and managing advertising budgets. Through precise market positioning and creative advertising solutions, the marketing department strives to improve advertising conversion rates and investment returns.

The cooperative development department seeks and maintains cooperative relationships with other brands or influential creators. This kind of cooperation can not only expand the brand's influence, but also achieve resource sharing and mutual benefit through joint marketing activities.

Finally, the market research department ensures that brands can quickly respond to market changes and consumer demands by continuously tracking market dynamics and user preferences. Through in-depth market insights, brands can adjust their content strategies and

marketing activities in a timely manner, ensuring a leading position in a fiercely competitive market.

Figure 2.1 summarizes the composition of TikTok marketing. To sum up, TikTok, as a comprehensive marketing platform, provides a powerful tool for the brand to enhance its market performance and user participation through the collaborative work of its multiple departments, so as to promote the growth and expansion of the brand.

Figure 2.1 TikTok marketing composition
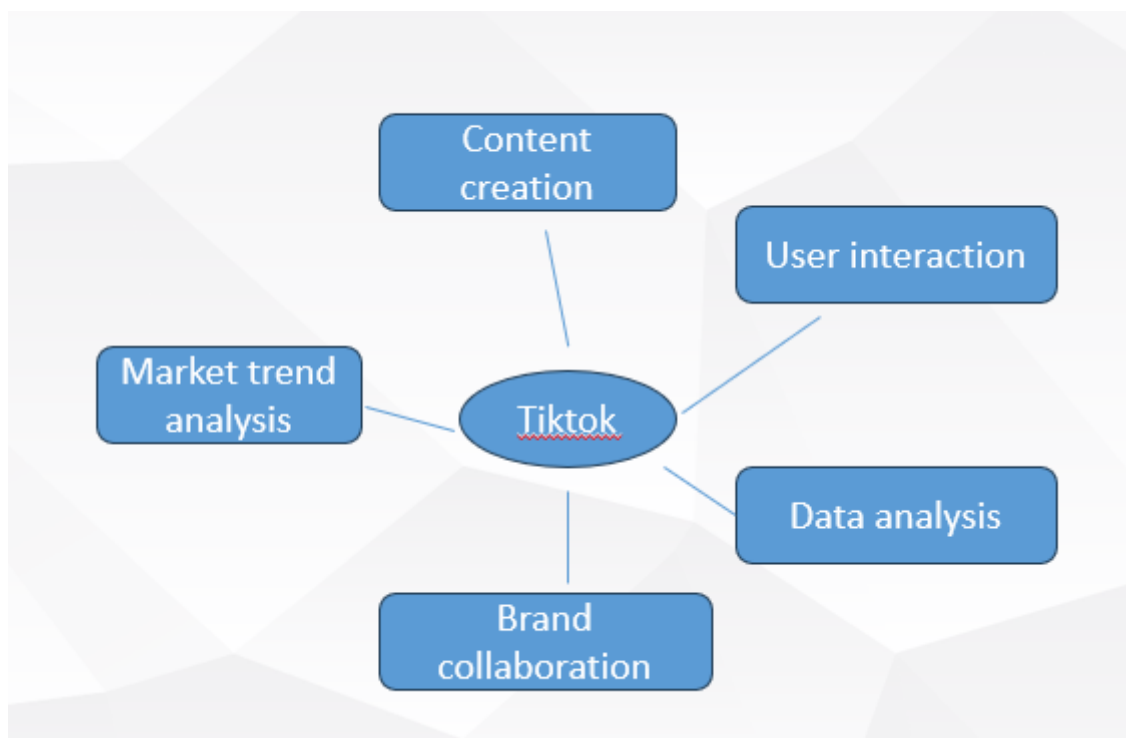
Source: Self-elaborated

2.3 Social medias affect consumer behaviors

The research centered on defining and classifying social media, and they proposed a classification method to distinguish various types of social media platforms and their functions. In the thesis, they defined social media as a platform enabling users to create and share content by highly accessible and interactive web applications. This theory provided a framework for comprehending the basic structure and role of social media. The research has revealed that the success of social media largely depends on user engagement and creative content. It emphasized that it is crucial for businesses to understand the characteristics of different social media platforms and the preferences of their user base (Ogundele *et al*., 2013).

Social media can change people's communication and relationship building methods. They explored how technology enables people to maintain relationships across time and space constraints and analyzed how this connectivity enhances or weakens interpersonal interaction. It emphasized the role of social media in fostering a sense of community and belonging. The research has shown that technology does not simply replace face-to-face communication but provides new ways of communication and relationship maintenance. They pointed out that while social media can strengthen connections, it may also lead to superficiality in relationships, emphasizing the breadth of reconnection rather than its depth (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016).

The research concluded how social media facilitates the organization of collective actions in unprecedented ways. This research centered on the influential role of social media in collective action. By eliminating the need for traditional organizational structures, this perspective unveiled the potential of social media to mobilize social change. It has demonstrated that social media is a crucial tool in promoting social mobilization and collective actions, such as in political protests and charity events, where it can swiftly disseminate information and organize large groups, showcasing its potential as an organizational tool (Rimadias *et al*., 2021).

As for the "communicability" of social media content and its dissemination among users, the study emphasized the significance of cultural participation and content sharing in cultivating digital cultural values by concentrating on the process of content creation, circulation, and reception. This research has pointed out that the communicability of content on social media is a key determinant of its cultural value. By sharing, commenting, and remaking content, users infuse original information or media works with new meaning and vitality, fostering cultural diversity and engagement (Sasmita & Achmadi, 2022).

Social media has become an important force in influencing user behavior in a variety of ways that are profound and complex. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and others have dramatically changed the way human access information and entertainment by providing a place for content sharing and interaction. Users have easy access to diverse content from across the globe, which not only fulfills their need for information, but also influences their purchasing decisions and lifestyle choices.

Social media reinforces this effect with personalized content recommendation algorithms. These algorithms tailor content feeds to the user's behavior and preferences, making it more likely that users will see information that matches their interests. This highly personalized promotion deepens user engagement, but it can also lead to the information cocoon effect, that is, users may only be exposed to information with similar views, limiting the field of view (Shen, 2022).

Social media also facilitates instant interaction between users, which not only strengthens interpersonal ties, but also forms a powerful social effect. People's behavior on social media is greatly influenced by their friends and followers, and this group dynamic can significantly affect individual behaviors and opinions, thus invisibly promoting the popularity of certain trends and ideas.

Social media platforms have become a crucial method for brand marketing. Businesses and brands use social media for precision marketing, directly influencing consumers' buying behavior through various advertising and promotional activities. Brand stories, consumer reviews, and marketing strategies through KOLs and influencers all greatly shape consumers' brand perception and propensity to consume (Siu *et al*., 2004).

Social media affects user behavior and social dynamics by changing access to information, deepening user engagement, facilitating human interaction, and driving business marketing strategies. These platforms are not only technological products, but also important forces shaping modern social relations and cultural trends.

These studies collectively provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how social media influences consumer behaviors and cultural participation, offering in-depth insights into the role of social media from various perspectives.

2.4 The cultural characteristics of the target market

Through a deep understanding of these consumer behaviors theories, marketers can more effectively design and implement marketing strategies on platforms such as TikTok to attract and retain target consumer groups. In the global market environment, cross-cultural consumer behaviors research enables brands to grasp the nuances of consumer behaviors across different cultural backgrounds, allowing for the design of more targeted marketing strategies. Below are the theories and research findings of several scholars in this field:

The theory of cultural dimensions they focused on is fundamental for understanding cross-cultural consumer behaviors. They characterized the cultural traits of various countries and regions using Hofstede Cultural Dimension Theory, which was created by researcher Geert Hofstede: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint (Nickerson, 2023). Their findings indicated that in collectivist cultures, such as China, consumers tend to value the social status and identity associated with brands, whereas in

individualistic cultures, such as the United States, consumers prioritize the personalization and uniqueness of products (Vargo & Lusch, 2011).

The Hofstede Cultural Dimension Theory revealed the relation between global marketing and advertising, particularly in the context of cross-cultural brand and product communication. It has demonstrated that advertising and marketing strategies must be tailored to the cultural preferences of the target market. For instance, in cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, consumers prefer brands that offer clear product information and assurances (Wang & Zhang, 2023).

The researcher developed a model that includes seven cultural dimensions to elucidate interpersonal relationships in international business and management. He found that in relationship-oriented cultures, such as China, building trust and forging relationships are essential for business success, while in task-oriented cultures, such as the United States, the emphasis is on efficiency and results (Wang, 2020).

Researchers discovered how cultural values affect consumer behaviors and decision-making. The research showed that core values specific to different cultures significantly impact consumer purchasing behaviors and brand loyalty. For instance, cultures that value harmony may prefer brands that are aligned with environmental or social responsibilities (Wang *et al*., 2009).

These theories and research findings offer vital insights for international brands aiming to effectively position themselves and communicate within the global market. By thoroughly understanding the cultural characteristics of their target markets, brands can devise and execute marketing strategies more effectively, particularly on social media platforms like TikTok, which demand precise tactics to engage and retain the target consumer group.

2.5 Digital marketing

Digital marketing strategy is a broad and rapidly evolving field that encompasses various theories and practices. The following is an overview of research conducted by relevant scholars:

Researchers revealed various aspects of marketing, including digital marketing. They extensively explored how to apply the 4P marketing theory—product, price, place, and promotion—in the digital age. This research emphasized that in the digital environment, enterprises need to focus more on customer engagement and customer relationship management, optimizing user experience and improving conversion rates through data-driven marketing (Zhang & Seta, 2018).

CDJ model proposed by two experts from McKinsey & Company, which was an extension of the traditional marketing funnel. The CDJ model highlighted various touchpoints in the consumer purchasing process—from awareness and consideration to purchase and loyalty—emphasizing that brands need to provide continuous support and interaction throughout the consumer's entire decision-making process in the digital age (Zhang *et al*., 2015).

Researchers have made significant contributions to the theory of brand awareness and brand assets, which were particularly important for digital marketing strategies. The CBBE model underscored the importance of building a strong brand in digital marketing. The establishment of brand assets should be based on a clear brand knowledge structure, including brand awareness, brand image, brand association, and brand loyalty (Chen & Zhang, 2021).

The intersection of information technology and social impact, which was crucial for understanding the role of social media in digital marketing. This research disclosed how social media has transformed the dissemination of information and public participation. The theory highlighted the importance of collective intelligence and behavior in driving the dissemination of brand messages (Shen, 2019).

Researchers have made outstanding contributions to viral marketing and permission marketing. Their permission marketing theory emphasized the importance of establishing lasting relationships with consumers, rather than relying on disruptive advertising. It advocated that in the digital age, brands should earn consumer approval by providing valuable and relevant content, thereby fostering higher engagement and loyalty (Iyer *et al*., 2012).

These theories provide robust strategic guidance for digital marketing, helping brands position themselves and implement effective marketing activities in rapidly changing market environments.

2.6 Consumer specific needs

Researchers argued that technological development redefines industrial structures and the nature of business competition. This insight helped us understand how highly integrated social and e-commerce platforms form and impact market strategies, especially in rapidly digitizing environments like China (Lee *et al*., 2019).

Researchers explained how emerging technologies or business models can disrupt existing markets. In China, platforms such as WeChat and Alipay exemplify disruptive innovation by integrating various services—social networking, payment, and e-commerce. The convenience

of these one-stop services redefines both user experience and corporate marketing strategies (Rathore *et al*., 2016).

Cultural differences affect business behavior and organizational management. This research was based on Hofstede Cultural Dimension Theory (including universalism and particularism, as well as collectivism and individualism) to analyze regional differences in consumer behavior. For example, in the strong collectivism of southern China, community building and word-of-mouth marketing on social media and e-commerce platforms are particularly important (Van & Song, 2020).

Consumer behavior in different cultural contexts through various cultural aspects based on Hofstede Cultural Dimension Theory, such as power distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity, avoidance of uncertainty, long-term and short-term orientation, and indulgence and restraint. The research has shown that in China can helps to understand the rapid popularity of mobile payments and digital platforms in daily life, as well as how these platforms adjust their marketing strategies through data analysis (Yin, 2017).

The theories mentioned above provide a comprehensive perspective that aids in understanding China's unique digital marketing environment and consumer behavior. They highlight the profound impact of technology-driven market changes, along with cultural and regulatory factors, on marketing strategies. By applying these theories, it is possible to more effectively design digital marketing strategies tailored for the Chinese market. When targeting this market, brands must consider regional differences and accurately position their products and strategies through regional market research. This involves not only the selection of advertising content and channels, but also considerations of product pricing, promotional activities, and the geographical adaptation of customer services. Through this approach, brands can more effectively connect with and meet the specific needs of consumers in different regions.

2.7 Overview

The above explored the transformative influence of video clips and platforms like TikTok on consumer behavior, emphasizing the strategic application of the AIDA model, which maps the consumer's journey from initial attention to the final action. It underscores the central role of interactive content and influencer collaborations in crafting effective digital marketing campaigns. Notably, the unique market dynamics in China—characterized by integrated e-commerce capabilities and ubiquitous mobile payment systems—demand bespoke digital marketing approaches. These strategies must navigate the complex landscape of strict internet

regulations and deep-seated cultural nuances. The discussion also delves into how cultural traits significantly affect consumer behavior and marketing tactics, underscoring the necessity for brands to customize their strategies to meet the varied and evolving needs of a global audience. This analysis reaffirms the critical importance for brands to harness the interactive and communicative strengths of platforms like TikTok to engage meaningfully with users across diverse cultural contexts.

3 – Methodology

3.1 Research objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore a series of strategic objectives to improve the marketing efficiency and effect of enterprises on the TikTok platform.

1. How can creators develop unique and engaging video content in a market saturated with competition, ensuring that the content not only stands out but also aligns with the brand's core values?

2. What mechanisms underlie TikTok's algorithm recommendations? Understanding these mechanisms can help businesses better adapt and optimize content visibility and user engagement.

3. How can businesses enhance user engagement and loyalty by creating highly interactive content and activities?

4. How can enterprises comply with regulatory requirements when collecting and using user data to ensure the security of user information and maintain public trust in the brand?

3.2 Research methods

To thoroughly explore the multifaceted aspects of TikTok marketing, this research adopts a qualitative analysis approach. Utilizing interviews allows for an in-depth understanding of data from both macro and micro perspectives, enabling a more precise assessment of various marketing strategies and the factors influencing user behavior. Qualitative research through interviews complements quantitative data by surveying diverse populations, offering a broader perspective that future researchers might find useful.

This study employs semi-structured interviews, a flexible method that merges the features of both structured and unstructured interviews. This approach aims to gather detailed information through open-ended questions while allowing interviewees the freedom to share personal insights and experiences. The primary advantages of semi-structured interviews lie in their adaptability; researchers can tailor the depth and direction of the conversation based on its flow, facilitating a deeper understanding of the interviewees' perspectives on complex topics. Furthermore, this format lets respondents express their thoughts in their own words, enhancing the authenticity and richness of the data.

By conducting semi-structured interviews, this research systematically explores how TikTok serves as a marketing tool for various market participants and how its use influences brand strategies and consumer decision-making. Additionally, this method aids in examining TikTok's adaptability and innovation within the evolving market landscape.

3.3 Research design

3.3.1 Interviewee selection

To gain a comprehensive understanding of creating engaging and unique video content on TikTok, it is essential to consult with experienced content creators and brand managers. These professionals can offer valuable insights and practical strategies for producing standout content that reflects core brand values in a saturated and competitive environment.

For insights into TikTok's algorithm and its recommendation mechanisms, consider engaging with technical experts or algorithm engineers associated with the platform. They can provide official and detailed explanations on how the algorithms function and how businesses can leverage these mechanisms to enhance content visibility and user engagement.

Engaging with marketing strategists and social media analysts is crucial for understanding how to boost user engagement and loyalty through highly interactive content and activities. These experts possess a deep knowledge of market dynamics and can offer strategies that effectively enhance user interaction.

Legal advisors and data protection experts are key resources for understanding how to comply with regulatory requirements during the collection and use of user data, ensuring the security of user information and maintaining public trust in your brand. These specialists can offer guidance and best practices concerning data protection regulations on the TikTok platform.

Conducting semi-structured interviews with experts from these diverse fields will provide a multifaceted understanding of TikTok's marketing strategies. This approach will significantly enhance the marketing efficiency and effectiveness of businesses on the platform.

Next is the framework for how to choose interviewees. For each interview question, 5 interviewees were selected, for a total of 20 interviewees. The interviews were conducted between May and June 2024, and due to privacy reasons, the real names of the interviewees cannot be identified in this thesis, only their occupations.

1. Clarify research objectives and needs

Identify the information that is desired to learn from the interview, such as knowledge of TikTok's marketing strategy, algorithm optimization strategies, or ways to increase user engagement.

2. Set standards for inclusion and exclusivity

Inclusion criteria: Select content creators, brand managers, or algorithm engineers with in-depth knowledge of TikTok marketing.

Exclusivity criteria: Exclude those who have nothing to do with or less experience with TikTok marketing.

3. Online research related experts

Identify and reach out to experts in the industry through Google, research portals or relevant professional forums.

Examine relevant professional thesis, speeches, or research reports to find interviewees who may contribute to the research topic.

4. Consider diversity and representation

Respondents with different career backgrounds, work experience, and company size (from startups to large enterprises) were selected to ensure the comprehensiveness and depth of the findings.

After determining these standards, potential interviewees were searched and reached out through online searches and relevant professional forums. After reviewing the candidate's previous professional thesis, research reports and other content that can be retrieved on the Internet, to assess their compliance with the research topic. To ensure the diversity and representativeness of this research, individuals from different professional backgrounds, with varying work experiences, and from companies of different sizes were selected. This helps to ensure that the research results cover a wide range of perspectives and strategies in the market. Through this process, five interviewees for each question were selected for semi-structured interviews. These respondents are content creators, brand managers, algorithm engineers, market strategists, and data protection experts, among others. Their professional knowledge and experience can provide rich perspectives and in-depth insights for the research.

3.3.2 Questions

1. Regarding the issue of content creation:

How do you define the content of "success" on TikTok?

How do you ensure the uniqueness and attractiveness of content in a content saturated environment?

How do you ensure consistency with the brand's core values when creating content?

2. Regarding the TikTok algorithm:

How do you understand the recommended algorithm of TikTok? What indicators does it mainly rely on to recommend content?

What strategies or techniques can help businesses optimize content to adapt to this algorithm?

3. Regarding user engagement and loyalty:

What types of content or activities do you think can most enhance user interactivity?

What successful cases do you have to share that have effectively increased user engagement and loyalty?

4. Regarding data security and regulatory compliance issues:

What measures do you usually take to ensure the security of user data when collecting and using it?

How do you respond to and comply with laws and regulations related to data?

The above questions will serve as the basis for the interview, helping to gain in-depth and specific insights from the interviewees. The design of interview questions aims to guide respondents to discuss their experiences and strategies in detail, while providing rich qualitative data for subsequent analysis and discussion behavior.

3.4 Ethical considerations for research

When conducting interviews, it is essential to address ethical concerns and uphold the principles of information security and privacy protection. Participants must strictly adhere to voluntary participation. The key ethical considerations for this study are as follows:

Before the interview begins, all participants must be provided with complete information regarding the purpose and process of the study, as well as their rights. They will receive an information consent form that emphasizes their participation is completely voluntary. It assures them that they can withdraw at any time without any repercussions. The consent form also specifies that all interview content is confidential and intended solely for research purposes.

To protect participant privacy, all personal information gathered during the interview will be anonymized, ensuring that no data can directly identify any individual. All electronic data

will be stored on password-protected computers, with stringent security measures in place to prevent unauthorized access or data breaches.

Upon completion of the research, all relevant data will be handled in compliance with the regulations set by the research institution. Should the data be retained for future academic purposes, we will continue to ensure its anonymity and security. If not, it will be securely destroyed.

These measures aim to respect the dignity and rights of the participants while maintaining ethical standards and the quality of the research. This approach is not only a responsibility towards the participants but also a crucial foundation for ensuring the reliability and validity of the research findings.

3.5 Validity and reliability of data

For the process of pre-test, first of all, the sample selection is small, and only one or two interviewees can be selected to conduct it. The total number of pre-test interviews is 2, which are mainly selected from Internet channels and some research reports. The main purpose of this step is to assess the clarity and understandability of the interview questions, ensuring that they are formulated unambiguously and effectively guide the interviewees to provide the necessary information. After the initial interview, the respondents' feedback on the interview questions was collected. These include whether the questions were easily expressed, whether respondents were able to accurately explain the ideas of the interview questions, and whether they felt any questions were vague or caused confusion. Based on this feedback, the interview questions are refined and adjusted, the wording of the questions is improved, and the expressions that may cause misunderstanding are removed or modified.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data in this study, a number of measures were taken to enhance the trustworthiness and accuracy of the findings. These measures are integral to the research design, contributing to the scientific rigor and practical relevance of the research conclusions. To enhance the reliability of the results, pre-testing was performed during the design phase of the interview. This involved initially conducting interviews with a small sample of the target audience to gather their feedback on the clarity and comprehensibility of the interview questions. Based on this feedback, the questions were refined and optimized to ensure precise problem formulation and to eliminate any potential ambiguities. This step improves the consistency of data collection across interviews and improves the overall effectiveness of the study.

This study ensures that there is a strong alignment between the interview questions and the research objectives. All interviews are designed to directly gather information pertinent to the research goals, thereby ensuring that the data collected is both relevant and reliable.

4 – Results

4.1 Interview results

According to the interview data included in the appendix, various perspectives on TikTok's marketing effectiveness and strategies emerge. The insights gained will be presented according to several key themes: content creation, algorithmic understanding, user interaction enhancement, and data security and compliance.

In the realm of content creation, both content creators and brand managers stressed the importance of producing unique and engaging content. They believe that successful content should quickly capture widespread attention and foster high levels of engagement. For instance, one brand manager described how they set their products apart in a crowded market by embedding them within a creative narrative, enhancing content uniqueness and deepening the emotional bond between the brand and its consumers.

The interviews also revealed that TikTok's algorithm plays a critical role in marketing success. Technical experts clarified that TikTok's algorithm favors content that engages users for longer durations and prompts repeated interactions. Thus, a deep understanding of and adaptation to this algorithm is crucial for boosting content visibility and user engagement. These experts also recommended regular use of TikTok's analytical tools to monitor user behavior and feedback, which helps further refine content strategies.

Marketing strategists and social media analysts offered insights into enhancing user interaction and loyalty. They noted that real-time interactions, such as live Q&A sessions, and participatory activities like brand challenges, significantly boost user engagement. Through examples of successful campaigns, such as a challenge that greatly increased brand visibility and interaction, the practical effectiveness of these strategies is evident.

On the topic of data security and compliance, legal advisors and data protection experts underscored the importance of adhering to regulations when collecting and utilizing user data. They advised implementing stringent data encryption and access controls to secure user information. Additionally, they provided guidance on how to transparently display privacy policies and terms of use, ensuring compliance with the latest data protection laws.

Upon meticulous analysis of these interviews, a nuanced understanding of TikTok as a marketing tool emerges, enabling an evaluation of the practical effectiveness and feasibility of various strategies. This comprehensive view aids in optimizing TikTok marketing strategies.

Given TikTok's diverse and competitive environment, different content types and advertising strategies yield varying results based on their unique characteristics. To deeply understand effective marketing on TikTok, this thesis will analyze and compare the actual outcomes of various strategies through a series of tables. These will include analyses of user behavior, content creator characteristics, marketing strategy comparisons, and advertising effectiveness. Each section aims to uncover key factors behind successful marketing on TikTok.

Analysis of user behavior derived from the research report provided by the interviewees. As shown in Table 4.1, young users (ages 18-24) predominantly enjoy entertainment videos, showing the highest interaction rates between 8 PM and 10 PM, with an average viewing duration of 15 minutes and up to five interactions per session. This suggests strong appeal and engagement with entertainment content among younger audiences. Conversely, users aged 25 to 34 tend to prefer educational content, with average viewing times of 12 minutes, primarily active between 7 AM and 9 AM, and averaging three interactions per session. This indicates that this age group may value content's practicality and educational worth, often engaging with it before work for self-improvement. Users aged 35 to 44 show a preference for health and fitness content, with a reduced average viewing time of 10 minutes, active times between 3 PM and 5 PM, and an average of two interactions per session. This trend may reflect a growing lifestyle and health consciousness in this demographic. For users over 45, there is a greater focus on news content, with the shortest average viewing time of eight minutes, peak activity from 1 PM to 3 PM, and the least engagement, at just one interaction. This indicates that older users might use TikTok more passively, mainly for information gathering.

Overall, the distinct behavioral patterns of different age groups on TikTok provide crucial data support for content creators and marketers. This information enables them to target audiences more accurately and tailor content strategies and promotional plans to the preferences and peak times of specific user groups. By employing this approach, brands can significantly enhance user engagement and amplify the impact of their content.

Table 4.1 TikTok user behavior analysis

User grouping	Viewing preferences	Average viewing time	Active time period	Average number of interactions
18-24 years old	Entertainment videos	15min	8-10 pm	5 times
25-34 years old	Educational content	12 min	7-9 am	3 times
35-44 years old	Health and Fitness	10 min	3-5 pm	2 times
over 45 years old	News	8 min	1-3 pm	Once

Source: Self-elaborated

Table 4.2 "Analysis of characteristics of content creators" will offer insights into the backgrounds, content styles, and user engagement techniques of successful content creators on TikTok. This data is crucial for understanding the factors that contribute to the wide dissemination and high interaction rates of content.

On TikTok, different types of content creators exhibit distinct models of success, shaped by their backgrounds, content styles, and methods of interaction. Individual creators often gain popularity for their personalized and humorous content. They primarily connect with their audience through live interactions, boasting an impressive average viewing rate of 75%. This suggests their strong ability to attract and retain audience attention. Small businesses, on the other hand, typically produce educational content and engage their audience through Q&A sessions. This strategy enhances brand visibility and delivers value, achieving an average viewing rate of 60%. Although educational content may not attract as large an audience as quickly as entertainment content, it can establish trust and authority within niche groups.

Large brands usually engage their audience through storytelling and participatory activities, focusing on enhancing brand image and user loyalty. Even though their average viewing rate stands at 50%, this strategic approach is vital for developing long-term brand value.

Influencers, with their personal charm and lifestyle-oriented content, hold significant sway on TikTok. They interact with fans primarily through comments, achieving an average viewing rate of 80%. This high rate underscores the effectiveness of influencers in maintaining audience interest and engagement, particularly in forging emotional connections between themselves and their followers.

Overall, each type of content creator on TikTok leverages unique strengths. The key to their success lies in selecting content styles and interaction methods that align with their brand or personal image. This analysis provides invaluable insights that can assist brands and marketers in more accurately identifying suitable partners and crafting content strategies that resonate with the preferences of their target audience.

Table 4.2 Analysis of characteristics of content creators

Content creator category	Backgrounds	Content styles	Methods of interaction	Average viewing rate
Individual creator	Personal	Personalized and humorous	Live interaction	75%
Small business	Enterprise	Educational nature	Q&A interactive	60%
Large brand	Enterprise	Brand story	Activity participation	50%
Influencer	Personal	Life sharing	Comment interaction	80%

Source: Self-elaborated

The effectiveness of different marketing strategies, including content marketing, live broadcast, KOLs cooperation and challenge activities, is evaluated through Table 4.3 to determine which strategies are most effective and how to select appropriate strategies according to the specific needs of the brand.

Different marketing strategies deployed on the TikTok platform exhibit distinct characteristics and outcomes. According to the content of Table 4.3, we can assess the performance of each strategy based on target user groups, expected effects, actual outcomes, and cost-effectiveness.

Content marketing primarily targets young audiences (18-30 years old) with the objective of enhancing brand awareness. This approach has effectively increased the viewing rate by 30%, demonstrating a substantial return on investment. This makes it particularly well-suited for businesses focused on long-term brand development and expansion of their user base.

Live streaming marketing appeals to a broader audience and aims to boost real-time interaction. It has achieved a 50% increase in actual interaction rates. Though the cost of this

strategy is moderate, it yields significant returns, making it ideal for events or promotions that demand instant feedback and high user engagement.

Collaborations with well-known KOLs target specific demographic groups and aim to build brand trust. This strategy has led to a 25% increase in conversion rates. Despite its higher cost, it significantly enhances brand image and customer loyalty, making it appropriate for marketing campaigns with precise objectives and upscale brand positioning.

Challenge activities are particularly directed at young people and content creators, with the goal of encouraging user-generated content. This strategy has resulted in a 70% surge in user engagement. With its low cost and exceptionally high returns, it is especially effective for boosting a brand's social media presence and user interaction.

From this analysis, it is evident that various TikTok marketing strategies possess unique advantages and suitable applications. Brands should select the most appropriate strategy based on their market positioning, budget, and specific objectives to maximize both marketing impact and economic benefits. By strategically choosing and implementing these approaches, brands can differentiate themselves in the competitive digital marketing landscape and effectively engage with a broad spectrum of TikTok users.

Table 4.3 TikTok marketing strategy comparison

Marketing strategies	Target user groups	Expected effects	Actual outcomes	Cost-effectiveness
Content marketing	Young people (18-30 years old)	Enhance brand awareness	30% increase in viewing rate	High investment, high return
Live streaming marketing	Wide user base	Increase real-time interaction	50% increase in interaction rate	Moderate cost, significant return
KOLs cooperation	Accurate target audience	Enhance brand trust	25% increase in conversion rate	High investment, moderate return
Challenge activities	Young people and creators	Promote user generated content	70% increase in user engagement	Low investment, extremely high return

Source: Self-elaborated

Table 4.4 will dissect the performance metrics of different ad types on the platform, including their ability to attract users, enhance click-through rates, and boost conversion rates. This analysis aims to assist marketers in optimizing their ad spend and improving ROI.

Advertising analysis on TikTok reveals that various ad formats exhibit distinct performance characteristics across several dimensions: timing of delivery, user reach, click-through rates, conversion rates, and user feedback. Video ads, for instance, are typically launched on weekend evenings and have reached approximately 1 million users, achieving a click-through rate of 3.2% and a conversion rate of 1.5%. The user feedback on these ads is overwhelmingly positive, indicating that video ads are highly effective at capturing attention and driving conversions during times when users are likely to be leisurely browsing.

Banner ads, on the other hand, are generally placed during weekday mornings and reach about 500,000 users. They have a click-through rate of 1.8% and a conversion rate of 0.7%, with user feedback being moderate. This suggests that while banner ads are somewhat effective in garnering initial user attention, they fall short in conversion potential and user satisfaction, likely due to their lower interactivity and visual appeal.

Brand challenges have shown considerable success, covering around 2 million users, with a click-through rate of 5.5% and a conversion rate of 2.8%, accompanied by very positive user feedback. These ads enhance user engagement and improve brand perception through ongoing interaction and participation throughout the week, indicating high marketing effectiveness and user satisfaction.

Information flow ads are broadcast throughout the day, reaching about 800,000 users with a click-through rate of 2.0% and a conversion rate of 0.9%. User feedback on these ads is average. While information flow ads are advantageous in maintaining constant visibility, their performance in attracting clicks and conversions is relatively modest, which may be linked to the relevance and appeal of the content.

In summary, each type of TikTok advertisement exhibits distinct strengths and limitations. Video ads and brand challenges have proven effective in capturing user attention and driving conversions, especially noted for garnering positive user feedback. In contrast, banner ads and information flow ads, while capable of achieving certain exposure, show room for improvement in fostering deeper user engagement and conversion. When selecting advertisement types and developing marketing strategies, brands should consider the characteristics of their target audience, the creativity and appeal of the ad content, and strategic timing to maximize the effectiveness and return on investment of their advertising efforts.

Table 4.4 TikTok advertising effect analysis

Advertising type	Launch time	Number of users covered	Click through rate	Conversion rate	User feedback
Video ads	Weekend evenings	1 million	3.2%	1.5%	Very positive
Banner ads	Weekday mornings	500,000	1.8%	0.7%	Moderate
Brand challenges	Full week	2 million	5.5%	2.8%	Very positive
Information flow ads	All day	800,000	2.0%	0.9%	Average

Source: Self-elaborated

The results of the above tables provide theoretical and data support for effective marketing on the TikTok platform, and help brands develop more targeted and effective strategies.

Next, a thorough analysis of the interview content is conducted to comprehensively assess the impact of TikTok as a marketing tool and pinpoint potential avenues for enhancement. This analysis seeks to respond the research objectives and identify ways to enhance the effectiveness of TikTok marketing strategies.

Content creation strategies

According to interview data, successful content creation on TikTok requires not only creativity and appeal but also a strong alignment with the brand's core values. This alignment is crucial because TikTok's predominantly young user base tends to engage more with brands that demonstrate authenticity and social responsibility. For instance, one brand manager highlighted how emphasizing the brand's commitment to sustainable development has strengthened their market positioning and boosted consumer brand awareness. This insight suggests that content effectively communicating a brand's values and social responsibility is more likely to attract attention and engagement on TikTok.

Understanding the algorithm

From the interviews, it's clear that a deep understanding of TikTok's algorithm is vital for optimizing content visibility. Several technical experts stressed the importance of comprehending user behavior and preferences and leveraging this insight in content creation and dissemination strategies to maximize exposure. For example, experimenting with different video styles and themes, and then analyzing which types resonate most using TikTok's

analytical tools, allows businesses to fine-tune their content strategies dynamically. This approach underscores the necessity for businesses to continually adapt to TikTok's algorithm updates to stay competitive.

Enhancing user interaction and loyalty

Improving user interaction and loyalty is another critical aspect of TikTok's marketing strategy. Marketing strategists and social media analysts from the interviews agreed that creating highly interactive content significantly boosts user engagement and brand loyalty. Real-time interactions and participatory activities not only capture immediate user attention but also sustain long-term engagement by providing meaningful experiences. For example, several brands have significantly enhanced user engagement and brand perception by hosting interactive online challenges and Q&A sessions. These initiatives not only elevate brand visibility but also strengthen the emotional connection between the brand and its users.

Through this nuanced analysis, we aim to provide actionable insights that can help refine TikTok marketing strategies, ensuring they are more effective and resonate better with the platform's dynamic user base.

4.1.1 Content performance analysis

According to the data presented in Figure 4.1, four distinct types of TikTok content demonstrate unique interaction trends over a three-month period. Educational videos have experienced a steady increase in user engagement, with likes climbing from 120,000 to 140,000, comments rising from 3,000 to 4,000, and shares growing from 150 to 200 between January and March, 2024. This upward trend suggests that educational content is gaining recognition and affection from viewers who not only watch but actively participate through discussions and sharing, likely due to the informative and inspiring nature of these videos.

Entertainment videos have shown outstanding performance in the same timeframe, with likes increasing from 300,000 to 350,000, comments from 5,000 to 6,000, and shares from 250 to 350. The compelling appeal and emotional resonance of entertainment content make it highly engaging, resulting in the highest interaction rates among all content types.

In contrast, brand advertisements have exhibited a relatively modest growth, albeit with some improvement—from 80,000 to 90,000 in likes, 2,000 to 2,500 in comments, and 100 to 130 in shares. This smaller growth rate indicates that while advertising content does achieve exposure, it generally garners lower user engagement and sharing willingness, highlighting the challenges in captivating users.

UGC has also displayed a positive trend, with likes increasing from 150,000 to 170,000, comments from 4,500 to 5,500, and shares from 200 to 250. The authenticity and originality of UGC typically resonate well with audiences, as evidenced by the high levels of participation and willingness to share among peers.

Overall, different content types on TikTok exhibit varied interactive dynamics. Entertainment videos remain the most popular due to their engaging nature and ease of consumption, while educational videos and UGC also show stable growth and robust user engagement. Brand advertising, on the other hand, requires more innovative approaches and strategies to boost interaction and engagement. These insights are invaluable for content creators and brands aiming to refine their content strategies to enhance user engagement and satisfaction.

Figure 4.1 Analysis of TikTok content
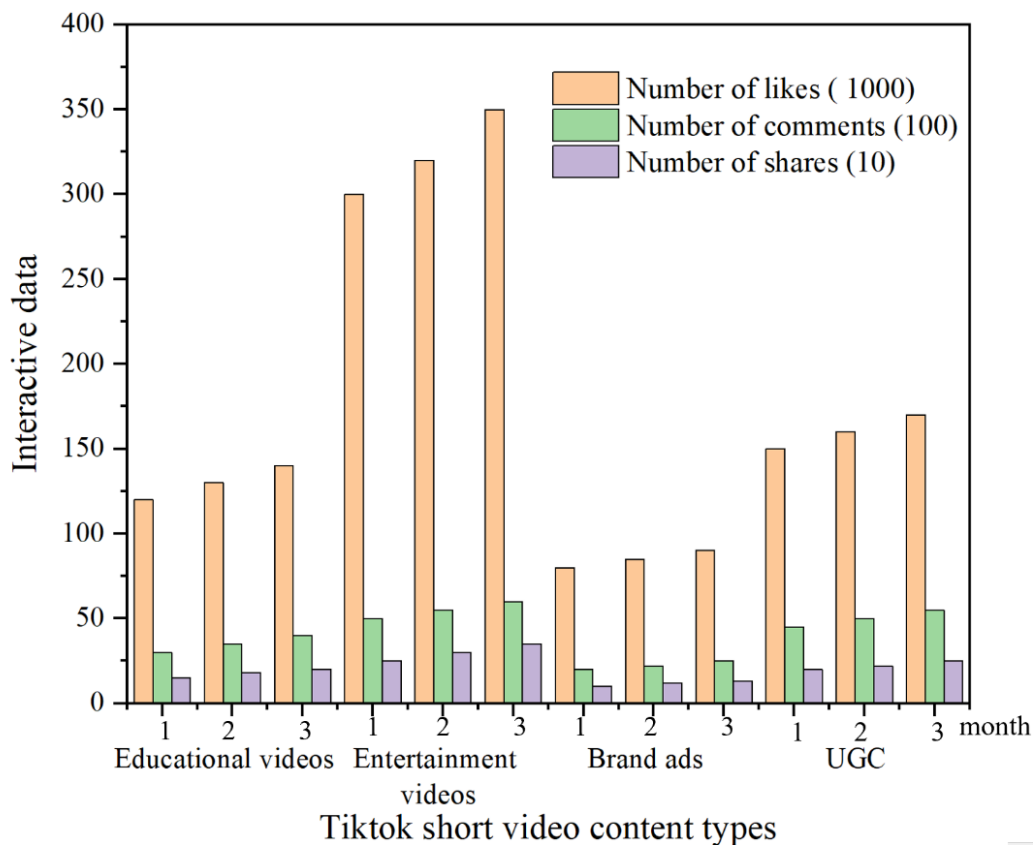
Source: Self-elaborated

4.1.2 User engagement in-depth analysis

The data presented in Figure 4.2 provides insights into the performance of various types of TikTok content, focusing on user viewing time, repeat viewing rates, and save counts. This analysis helps us understand the content's appeal and the depth of user engagement it elicits.

Educational videos have an average viewing time of 90 seconds, with a repetition rate of 25%, and they have been saved 150 times. These metrics suggest that while educational videos may not hold the longest viewing durations, they successfully capture the audience's interest, encouraging viewers to watch them multiple times and save them for future reference or review.

Entertainment videos lead in terms of engagement, boasting the highest average viewing time at 120 seconds. Their repetition rate reaches 40%, and they have been saved 300 times—significantly outperforming other content types. These figures indicate that entertainment videos not only draw viewers back repeatedly but also promote a high level of engagement and emotional connection. The content's enjoyable or emotional appeal likely drives viewers to save these videos for repeated enjoyment.

Brand advertisements show weaker performance, with an average viewing time of just 30 seconds, a repeat viewing rate of 10%, and only 50 saves. This highlights the challenges brand advertisements face in capturing and retaining user attention, likely due to the overtly commercial nature of the ads or a lack of creative content that resonates sufficiently with users.

UGC holds an average viewing time of 70 seconds, a repeat viewing rate of 30%, and 200 saves. Although UGC does not match entertainment videos in viewing duration, it performs admirably in terms of repeat viewings and saves. This indicates that users find peer-created content engaging enough to warrant multiple views and saves, possibly because of its authenticity and originality, which offer greater resonance and perceived value.

In summary, the varying performance across different content types on TikTok offers critical insights for content creators and brands looking to refine their strategies. There is a notable need to enhance the appeal and engagement of brand advertising and to leverage the potential of educational and UGC content to enrich the learning and engagement experiences of users. These insights are crucial for optimizing content to better meet user preferences and behaviors on the platform.
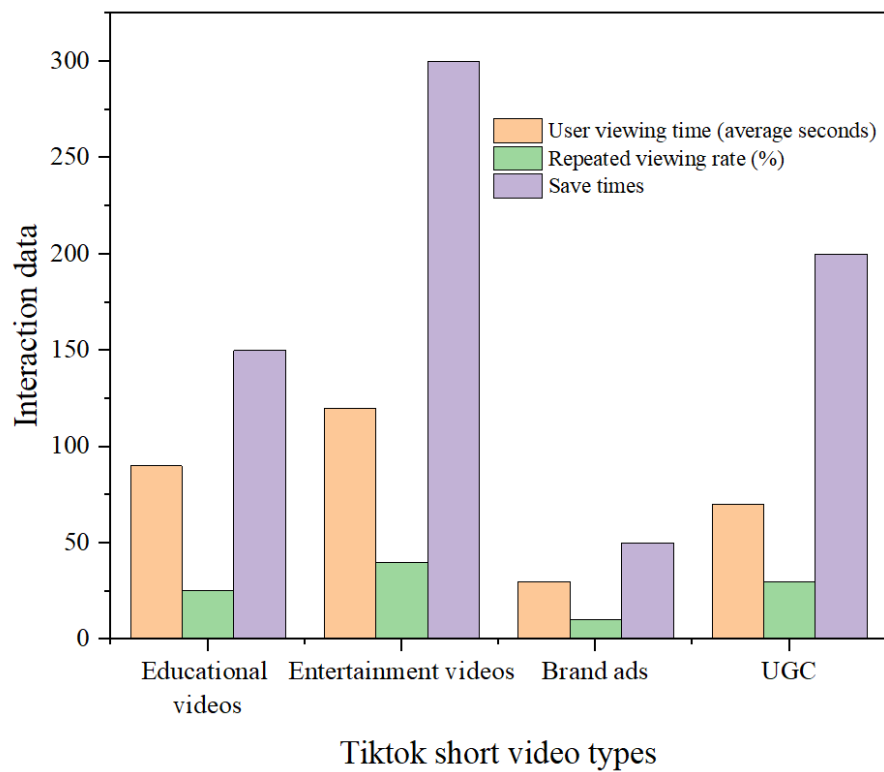
4.1.3 Algorithm performance evaluation

Figure 4.3 provides a detailed look at the visibility and user interaction rates of different types of TikTok content within algorithmic recommendation systems. This analysis is crucial for understanding how algorithms influence content exposure and user engagement.

Educational videos have reached a visibility of 2 million through algorithmic recommendations, but their user interaction rate stands at only 15%. This suggests that while educational content can secure a significant level of exposure via algorithms, the nature of this content typically requires more time and effort from users to fully engage, which might explain the lower immediate interaction rates. Nevertheless, the educational value and in-depth information provided by such videos could have a lasting impact on specific audience segments, an effect not immediately apparent in short-term interaction metrics.

Entertainment videos have shown exceptional performance in this dataset, achieving up to 5 million views through algorithm recommendations with a user interaction rate of 25%. This high level of engagement indicates that entertainment content, known for its appealing and easily digestible nature, not only wins algorithmic favor but also effectively attracts substantial

user interaction. Such content often features strong visual appeal and emotional pull, readily prompting user actions like likes, comments, and shares.

Brand advertisements have a visibility of 1.5 million from algorithm recommendations, but a notably low user interaction rate of only 5%. This low engagement points to the inherent challenges that brand advertisements face in captivating users and generating interaction, primarily due to their commercial focus. Furthermore, if the advertising content lacks creativity or fails to align with user preferences, it can struggle to perform well within algorithmic systems.

UGC showcases a visibility of 3 million and a user interaction rate of 20%, surpassing both educational videos and brand advertisements. UGC, with its inherent personalization and originality, tends to resonate well and engage other users effectively. Its authenticity and novelty frequently elicit positive interactive feedback on social platforms.

In a word, this data not only highlights the varied performance and engagement of different content types on TikTok but also underscores the critical role of algorithmic recommendations in shaping content visibility. Content creators and brands can leverage these insights to refine their strategies, enhancing user interaction and aligning with the requirements of algorithmic optimization to secure better outcomes in the competitive landscape of social media.

Figure 4.3 Survey results of algorithm performance evaluation
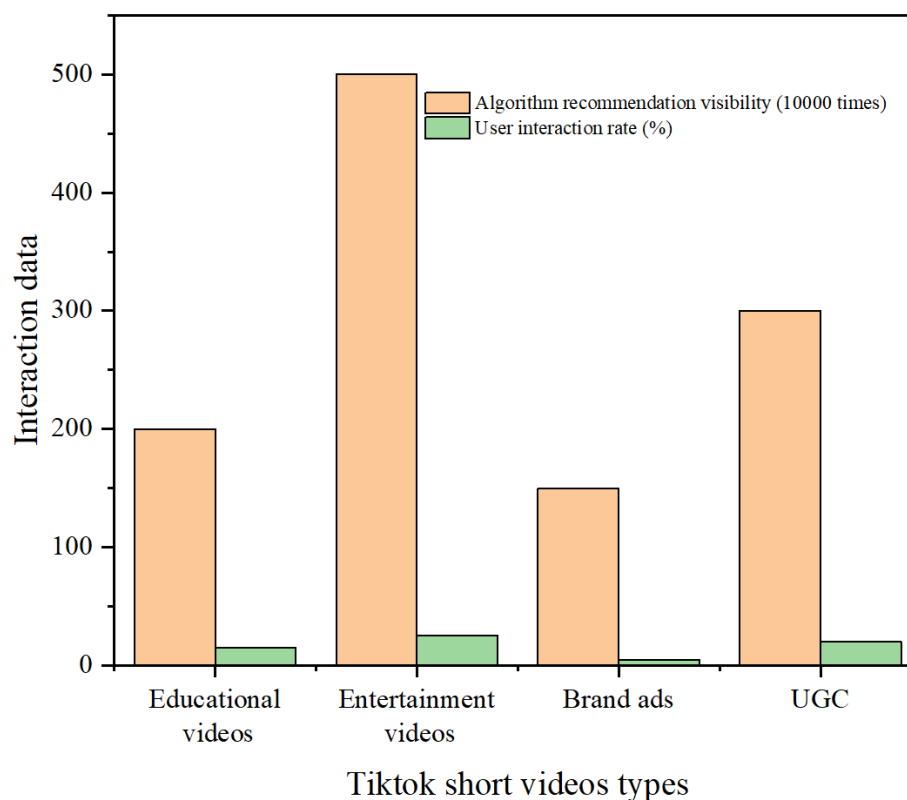
Source: Self-elaborated

4.1.4 Effect of brand core value transmission

Figure 4.4 illustrates the alignment between different types of TikTok content and brand values, indicating the extent to which each content type communicates the core values of the brand. Analyzing these data allows for a deeper understanding of how effectively different content types maintain brand image and promote brand values.

Educational videos show an 80% alignment with brand values, suggesting that this content type effectively communicates values related to education. This high level of consistency is likely because educational videos are often centered around themes like knowledge dissemination, information sharing, or learning techniques, which naturally resonate with educational brands. A high consistency percentage indicates that these videos not only attract audiences interested in learning but also significantly boost the brand's perception as an educational authority.

Entertainment videos, however, exhibit only a 50% alignment with brand values. While this content type is effective in attracting large audiences and generating significant interaction, it faces challenges in consistently conveying the brand's core values. Entertainment content often prioritizes enjoyment and viewer engagement, which may sometimes diverge from or dilute the brand's fundamental values, especially if the pursuit of viewer attention compromises the representation of the brand image.

Brand advertisements content achieves the highest alignment at 90%, which aligns with expectations since the essential goal of brand advertising is to clearly express the brand's message and values, and to strengthen the brand image. High consistency in this context indicates that brands are intentional about integrating their values into their advertising strategies, ensuring that each advertisement reflects the brand's core philosophy and enhances brand identity.

UGC shows a 60% consistency with brand values, indicating that even though this content type is not directly controlled by the brand, users often consider brand values when creating content. This level of consistency generally reflects strong brand loyalty and identification among the user base, suggesting that users tend to create content that is in harmony with the brand's values, reinforcing a clear and positive brand image.

Concisely, these insights are invaluable for brands aiming to evaluate and refine their content strategies. They highlight the importance of ensuring that all published content not only attracts but also retains audience attention while effectively communicating and reinforcing

brand values. For content types with lower consistency, brands may need to revisit and possibly revise their content creation approaches to better reflect their brand's core values and ethos.

Figure 4.4 Research results on the transmission effect of brand core values
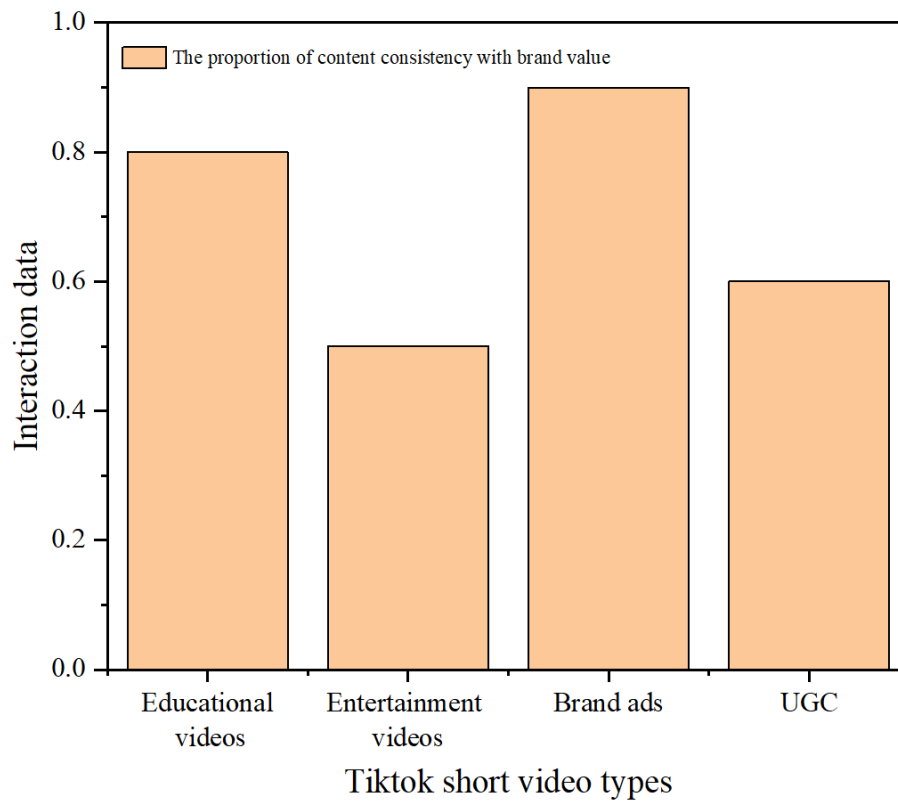
Source: Self-elaborated

4.2 Interview summary

The discussion on data security and compliance shows that enterprises must strictly comply with data protection regulations when using TikTok for marketing. From the interview, it was learned that correctly handling user data and ensuring its security is the foundation for gaining user trust and maintaining brand reputation. Therefore, enterprises need to implement high standards of data protection measures and ensure that all marketing activities comply with relevant laws and regulations.

Upon conducting in-depth analysis of these crucial aspects, it was established that TikTok possesses the potential to serve as an effective marketing tool. Additionally, areas requiring further investigation and enhancement were pinpointed. These analysis results will provide theoretical and practical support for formulating more effective TikTok marketing strategies, and help enterprises gain a foothold in the competitive digital marketing environment.

This study delved into the examination of TikTok as a digital marketing tool, focusing on content creation, algorithm adaptation, user interaction, and data security. It identified how strategic content design and precise algorithm adaptation can enhance user engagement and brand awareness, positioning these elements as central to effective digital marketing strategies. Practical applications of these findings are particularly relevant for enterprises using TikTok, offering strategies to optimize content processes and improve understanding of algorithmic changes to bolster marketing efforts.

Additionally, the study highlighted ongoing challenges and emerging research opportunities, such as the impact of algorithms on user behavior and the development of ethical marketing practices. This calls for ongoing research to adapt to the evolving digital marketing landscape and technological advances.

Despite providing valuable insights, this study has limitations including its small, geographically and demographically narrow sample size and its reliance on qualitative data, which may affect the objectivity of some conclusions. Moreover, the analysis of TikTok's algorithm lacked a detailed technical evaluation, relying instead on public data and expert insights. This research sets the stage for further studies to explore these limitations and refine understanding of social media marketing dynamics.

5 – Conclusion

In the development of the digital age, TikTok has become one of the powerful tools of marketing activities for Chinese enterprises. TikTok stands out in its innovative content creation and sharing mechanism, which not only changes users' content consumption habits but also provides unprecedented opportunities for direct interaction between businesses and consumers. With the rapid growth of the platform's user base, how to effectively utilize TikTok's marketing potential has become an urgent problem to be solved. This thesis explores the complexity and multidimensional role of TikTok as a digital marketing tool, particularly how it influences brand consumer interaction on a global scale. This chapter aims to integrate various aspects of the research, summarize the research results, and provide guidance for future research directions. After in-depth data analysis and discussion, this thesis aims to provide readers with a deeper comprehension of TikTok's effectiveness as a marketing tool.

Although TikTok has its important role in marketing, it is facing a series challenges, such as content saturation, high competitiveness, algorithm dependence, shallow user engagement, privacy and data security issues, and constantly changing regulatory environments. Therefore, when formulating TikTok marketing strategies, companies need to carefully consider and make strategic adjustments to ensure that their marketing activities not only effectively attract users, but also continuously enhance the long-run value of its brand.

This study is dedicated to exploring and evaluating the strategy and effectiveness of TikTok as a digital marketing tool. The core objectives of the research include: firstly, to create unique and engaging video content to enhance enterprises' market performance and user interaction on TikTok; secondly, make in-depth analysis of TikTok's algorithm recommendation mechanism, so that enterprises can better adapt to and optimize content strategies, improving the exposure rate of content and user engagement; the third is to enhance user engagement and loyalty by creating highly interactive content and activities. Thus, the specific goals of this study include:

1. Evaluate the current practices of TikTok marketing:

Analyze and evaluate the current marketing strategies of brands on TikTok and understand how they use the platform to attract users.

2. Explore user behavior and preferences:

Study the behavior patterns and preferences of TikTok users to determine which content types and interactions are most attractive to the target audience.

3. Analyze the impact of algorithm recommendations on marketing effectiveness:

Gain a deeper understanding of TikTok's algorithm recommendation mechanism and evaluate how these mechanisms affect content visibility and user engagement.

4. Explore content innovation and brand influence:

Identify and analyze innovative content strategies, and study how they can help brands establish and expand their influence on TikTok.

5. Evaluate the impact of data security and privacy policies on marketing strategies:

Consider data protection regulations and study how brands can implement effective marketing strategies while ensuring user data security.

6. Suggestions for improving and optimizing TikTok's marketing strategy:

Based on the research results, provide practical and feasible suggestions and strategies for brand optimization of TikTok marketing activities.

This thesis adopts semi-structured interviews and literature review research methods to ensure a comprehensive evaluation and in-depth understanding of TikTok's marketing strategy.

Collect detailed first-hand information through semi-structured interviews with industry experts, brand managers, content creators, and technical analysts. The goal of this interview is to gain a profound understanding of TikTok's algorithms, user behavior, content strategy, and marketing effectiveness. A comprehensive review of existing literature, including academic research, industry reports, and market analysis, lays a theoretical foundation for studying and expanding existing knowledge.

The combination of these methods not only deepens the understanding of this phenomenon, but also improves the reliability and effectiveness of research results through multiple data sources and analysis techniques. This comprehensive methodological framework provides a solid foundation for exploring the complexity and dynamism of TikTok as a powerful digital marketing tool.

This study summarizes its core values and long-term impacts. Through a comprehensive analysis of TikTok, this study has gained a deep comprehension of the dynamics of social media marketing, particularly its applications in content creation, algorithm adaptation, user interaction, and data security.

It also reveals how to improve user engagement and brand awareness through creative content design and precise algorithm adaptation. These findings strengthen the core position of content marketing and technology adaptation in modern digital marketing strategies.

The results of this study have direct application value for practical fields, especially for enterprises engaged in TikTok marketing. The strategic recommendations proposed in the study, such as optimizing the content creation process, gaining a deeper understanding of algorithm

changes, and enhancing user interaction, are practical methods that companies can immediately adopt when implementing social media marketing. These suggestions will help businesses more effectively utilize platforms such as TikTok to achieve their marketing goals.

What's more, this study identifies some unresolved issues and new research opportunities in current social media marketing research. It can encourage future scholars to delve deeper into the impact of algorithms on user behavior and how to develop ethical marketing strategies to ensure that technological advancements are accompanied by increased social responsibility.

Through comprehensive analysis and discussion, this study highlights the significance of continuous research and adaptation to the rapidly changing digital marketing environment. With the continuous development of technology and the evolution of user behavior, enterprises and researchers need to constantly update their understanding and strategies to maintain competitiveness and relevance.

However, any research inevitably encounters some research limitations, indicating areas that need further attention and improvement in future research, which can provide a more solid foundation for subsequent studies.

1. Sample representativeness and scope

Respondents were selected primarily from available resources, which may limit the diversity and breadth of the sample and may be biased as these individuals may have similar backgrounds or viewpoints to the author.

2. Limitations of data collection methods

This thesis adopts a qualitative research method, mainly relying on interviews to collect data. Although this method can provide in-depth insights, it may lack statistical significance that can be validated with quantitative data.

3. Algorithm depth and technical analysis

This thesis may not delve into the specific technical details of TikTok's algorithm, which due to platform policy restrictions or algorithm complexity. The understanding of algorithms may be based solely on public information or industry consensus, rather than in-depth technical analysis.

4. Universality of survey results

The research results may overly rely on specific cases or the experiences of individual respondents, which may limit the generalizability of the research conclusions.

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Annex A – interview

In order to ensure fairness in interviews in this study, only five individuals were interviewed for each field of question. The following is a summary of the results of interviews with all interviewees.

Interviewee source: Based on personal internship, classmates, and network connections, as well as online platforms conducting research on relevant experts.

Interview time: between May and June 2024

Part 1 - Content Creators and Brand Managers

Regarding the issue of content creation:

Content creators generally believe that successful content can attract widespread attention and high levels of interaction in a short period of time. Several experienced brand managers have mentioned that successful video content can often evoke emotional resonance, such as humor, surprise, or motivation, thereby promoting the connection between users and content.

Concerning the uniqueness and attractiveness of content: Multiple respondents emphasized the importance of using unique perspectives and innovative presentation technologies to create unique content. For example, a brand successfully distinguishes itself from similar products in the market by placing its products in a highly creative story background.

As for the consistency between content and brand value: Brand managers discussed how they plan content to reflect the brand's core values and mission. For example, a brand that emphasizes sustainable development can strengthen its market positioning and consumer brand awareness by releasing video content showcasing its environmental efforts.

Part 2 - TikTok Platform Technical Experts

Regarding the TikTok algorithm:

The TikTok algorithm preferentially recommends content that users spend a long time and interact more frequently. They explained that the algorithm predicts and displays potential interesting content by analyzing the user's historical interaction data.

Strategies for optimizing content: It is recommended to regularly use TikTok analysis tools to monitor user behavior and feedback, and further improve content strategies. For example, testing different video styles or themes through A/B to determine the most effective type of content that attracts users.

Part 3 - Marketing Strategists and Social Media Analysts

Regarding user engagement and loyalty:

Expanding on the concept of real-time interaction and participatory activities, these tactics offer brands a dynamic platform to connect with their audience in a more personal and immersive way. For instance, real time interaction (such as on-site Q&A) and participatory activities (such as brand challenges) can significantly increase user engagement. They shared some cases, such as a successful online challenge that significantly increased the brand's online visibility and user engagement by encouraging users to upload personal videos related to the brand.

A successful case study on improving user engagement and loyalty: An analyst described a case of stimulating community vitality through UGC By encouraging users to create and share videos. This strategy not only increased brand loyalty by making users feel valued and appreciated but also sustained interaction over time as users continued to contribute to the brand's narrative.

Other analysts echo this sentiment, highlighting the importance of fostering a vibrant and engaged community around a brand.

Part 4 - Legal Counsel and Data Protection Experts

Regarding data security and regulatory compliance issues:

Implementing strict data encryption and access control is crucial for protecting user information. They mentioned that multi factor authentication and regular security audits are important measures to improve data security.

In relation to compliance with data related regulations: Legal advisors provide practical guidance, such as clearly displaying privacy policies and terms of use in the user interface, and designing data collection processes to ensure compliance with the latest data protection regulations.