

Project Dissertation Report on

**Factors contributing to the Growth in userbase of
TikTok: an exploratory study**

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CERTIFICATION FROM THE INSTITUTE

This is to certify that the Project Report titled “The rise and Rise of TikTok : an exploratory study”, is a bonafide work carried out by Yatin Khhurana, of MBA 2018-20 and submitted to Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, Bawana Road, Delhi-42 in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Master of Business Administration.

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Yatin Khurana, student of MBA 2018-20, of Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, Bawana Road, Delhi-42, declare that the final project report on "The Role of Search Engine Optimization and Content of a Website in User Acquisition", submitted in partial fulfilment of Degree of Masters of Business Administration, is the original work conducted by me. The information and data given in the report is authentic to the best of my knowledge.

This report is not being submitted to any other University for award of any other Degree, Diploma and Fellowship.

Yatin Khurana

Place:

Date:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am using this opportunity to express my gratitude to everyone who supported me throughout the course of this MBA project at Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University. One of the most important tasks in every good study is its critical evaluation and feedback which was performed by my faculty guide Dr. Shikha N. Khera. I am thankful to faculty mentor as well as my colleagues for investing their precious time to discuss and criticize this study in depth and explain the meaning of different concepts and how to think when it comes to problem discussions and theoretical discussions.

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ABSTRACT

TikTok is a video sharing social networking service /mobile application . It is owned by Bytedance , which first launched it as Douyin in 2016 and merged it with musical.ly in 2017 and relaunched it as TikTok . Musical.ly was a similar app started by two entrepreneurs in 2014 .

Within two years TikTok has achieved a userbase of 800million active users in just two years and is number 7 in the list .

Facebook tops the list with 2.5 billion users that is three times the TikTok user base . Facebook has been in existence for around 14 years .

Instagram at number six position has one billion active users and it also started ten years ago .

Whatsapp at number three , Facebook messenger at number four and Wechat and number five are mobile texting apps and not a network in itself . Facebook messenger also borrows the userbase of Facebook .

That leaves Youtube at number two , with one billion users . It is around for fifteen years .

Reddit and Twitter are behind TikTok and with roughly 400 million users

One can now very clearly infer that within three years of starting , TikTok has made its place in the market leaders and has threatened the legacy build by its competitors over a decade .

This , apart from appreciation , calls for study , so that insights can be drawn in respect to business environment of entertainment sector , strategies employed by firm to excel , identifying untapped market opportunities and sustaining and consumer behavior .

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9.1 References

1. Introduction

“ In future, everyone will be world famous for fifteen minutes “

~ Andy Warhol ^[1.1]

And this is the business opportunity TikTok seized upon , making everyone world famous for fifteen minutes .

TikTok is a video sharing social networking service /mobile application . It is owned by Bytedance , which first launched it as Douyin in 2016 and merged it with musical.ly in 2017 and relaunched it as TikTok . Musical.ly was a similar app started by two entrepreneurs in 2014 .

Within two years TikTok has achieved a userbase of 800million active users in just two years and is number 7 in the list ^[1.2] .

Facebook tops the list with 2.5 billion users that is three times the TikTok user base . But what is to be noted here is Facebook has been in existence for around 14 years .

Instagram at number six position has one billion active users and it also started ten years ago .

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This , apart from appreciation , calls for study , so that insights can be drawn in respect to business environment of entertainment sector , strategies employed by firm to excel , identifying untapped market opportunities and sustaining and consumer behavior .

1.1 History and Evolution of TikTok

TikTok is owned by Bytedance and is a merger of two apps, Douyin and musical.ly .

musical.ly

musical.ly Inc. was founded by longtime friends Alex Zhu and Luyu Yang in Shanghai, China. The first prototype was released in 2014 .

Before launching musical.ly, Zhu and Yang teamed up to build an education social network app, through which users could both teach and learn different subjects through short-form videos (3–5 minutes long). After having investors fund this venture, it took them about 6 months to build the product. However, once launched, this online self-learning platform did not get enough traction and the content produced was not engaging enough.

With some money left from the original investment for this failed venture, Zhu and Yang started to look for new ideas. They decided to shift their focus to the entertainment industry. The main idea was to create a platform that incorporates music and video in a social network. The team's judgment at the time was that the short music video was not very widely popular before, and the fundamental reason was that although people are willing to watch short videos, the supply was small, as there were too few people who were willing to shoot and share.

The first version of musical.ly was officially launched in August 2014.

At the beginning, the team launched the app in both the Chinese and American markets. However, compared to the domestic market's tepid reaction, their app was particularly popular in the American teenager market. As their team size was small, they decided to mainly focus on the U.S. market. The product quickly accumulated a group of loyal users, and although the total number of the users continued to be not very large, the activity level of the users was very high.

In July 2015, the app began to attract millions of users . In May 2016, Musical.ly reached 70 million downloads, with over 10 million new videos posted every day.

ByteDance

Bytedance is a Chinese internet technology company . It was founded by Zhang Yiming in 2012. Zhang is a Chinese internet Entrepreneur . Its Products are

Toutiao , which started out as a news recommendation engine and gradually evolved into a platform delivering content in a variety of formats, such as texts, images, question-and-answer posts, microblogs, and videos. Toutiao offers its users personalized information feeds that are powered by machine learning algorithms. A content feed is updated based on what the machine learns about a user's reading preferences.

TopBuzz, a content platform for videos, articles, breaking news and GIFs launched in the U.S. in August 2015 and later in Brazil in 2016

ByteDance also started Gogokid in 2018, an online English learning platform for children that provides one-on-one classes with native English speakers.

Bytedance also started Resso , a "social music streaming app" which allows users to highlight and share lyrics, comments and other user generated content with each other alongside streaming of full-length tracks .

The kind of Platforms which Bytedance has started and has also acquired various mergers like Flipgram and News Republic which are aligned with the main firms vision .

They acquired musical.ly Inc and merged it with their platform Douyin to create a larger video community, with existing accounts and data consolidated into one app,

Business Idea

The team of musical.ly first launched an education app . their reaction of it's launch ^[1.3] :

"The day we released this application to the market we realized it was never going to take off," Zhu said. "It was doomed to be a failure." His team had missed that the videos took too long to create. Lesson planners had a hard time condensing their expertise into three minutes. Content creation and consumption needed to be within minutes and seconds, not hours. It wasn't entertaining, and it didn't attract teens

That's when they realized he could combine music, videos, and a social network to attract the early-teen demographic. launched Musical.ly in July 2014. Immediately, they saw the numbers were great. Around 500 people were downloading it a day, but more importantly, they kept coming back.

Because the users were coming back , they realized that their app has retaining capability . For the next 10 months the app kept growing, but too slowly .

They therefore decided to make some changes in interface . In April 2015, the company made a few small design tweaks to the app, including moving the logo in the videos. They had realized that when people shared the music videos, the logo was cropped out on Instagram and Twitter. The repositioned it so now it was easy to see what a Musical.ly video.

Two months later, on July 6, it hit the No. 1 app in the iTunes app store. Since then, the app has never fallen out of the top 40 apps in all of iTunes.

Two years later Bytedance purchased it at 800 million dollar , and merged it with Douyin a similar app and launched it as TikTok .

And eventually within two years after the merger TikTok is among the top market leaders, has a userbase of 800 million which is one third of what Facebook , the market leader , has achieved in a span of 15 years . TikTok has verily defeated other players like Twitter and Reddit in terms of user base . Though a social media network is to be compared on many other parameters but the very defining characteristic of a network is the users it has .

2. Literature Review

2.1 Designing the road map

This study was to explore the causes of such a stellar rise in the performance of TikTok . It was necessary to set a basic framework or simple directions in which exploration shall follow

Two Important books that is 'Competitive Advantage' by Micheal Porter and 'Strategic Market Management by David Aaker has helped in designing the basic outline . The concepts taken in from it are

a. Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Michael Porter in his landmark books 'Competitive advantage' and ' Competitive strategy ' has established the fact that a firm excels in competition through its competitive advantage sustained over time .

There are five Strategic Thrusts to Sustainable competitive advantage ^[2.1]

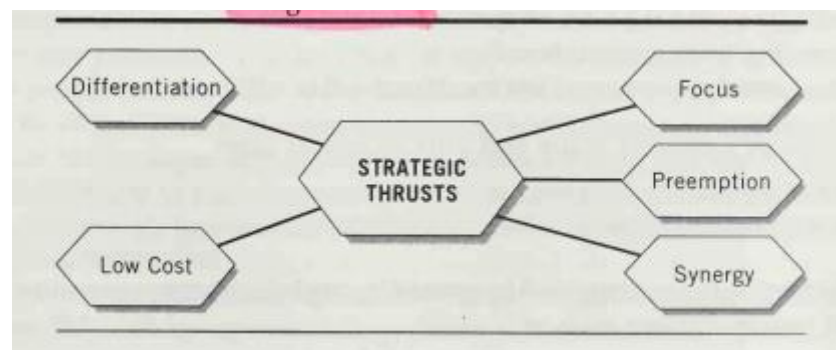


Figure 2.1 Five strategic thrusts of competitive advantage
Source : Strategic Market Management by David A Aker

This provide the basic framework to analyze the sustainable competitive advantages of TikTok .

Porter has identified a basic tool for diagnosing and enhancing the competitive advantages , that is the value chain analysis ^[2.2] .

Value chain analysis required identification of primary activities of the firm , the secondary supports and linkage within the value chain .

Cost advantage is when cumulative cost of performing value activities is less than competitors cost .

This requires determining the relative cost of competitors . And Then Gaining cost advantage through Cost drivers or Reconfiguring the value chain .

The Diagnosis present for differentiation is by first identifying sources of differentiation , determining the cost of differentiation , and then creating buyer value by employing buyers value chain .

Industry segmentation can be of use to competitive advantage .

b. External and Internal analysis

David A Aaker in his book Strategic market management devices a framework for analysis

The division is first of External analysis and Internal analysis .

External analysis is divided again in customer competitor market and environment analysis .^[2,3]

Internal analysis is divided in two parts one is performance analysis and other is determinants of strategic options that is the review of past and current strategy , the strategic problems

EXTERNAL ANALYSIS	SELF-ANALYSIS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer analysis: Segments, motivations, unmet needs. • Competitor analysis: Identity, strategic groups, performance, image, objectives, strategies, culture, cost structure, strengths, weaknesses. • Market analysis: Size, projected growth, profitability, entry barriers, cost structure, distribution system, trends, key success factors. • Environmental analysis: Technological, governmental, economic, cultural, demographic, scenarios, information need areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance analysis: Profitability, sales, shareholder value analysis, customer satisfaction, product quality, brand associations, relative cost, new products, employee attitude and performance, product portfolio analysis. • Determinants of strategic options: Past and current strategies, strategic problems, organizational capabilities and constraints, financial resources and constraints, strengths, weaknesses.

Figure 2.2 : Overview of analysis

Source : Strategic market management by David A Aker

As per the research methodology and data collection method adopted , internal analysis is kept outside the scope of this study

c. Basic Outline

The study is also therefore divided in three parts

Part a : Competitive Advantage

1. Cost advantage
The roots of Edutok
And, Low cost content
2. Differentiation factors
Diffusing creator consumer segments
3. Focus
Approaching zero digital divide
4. Innovation
Towards minimal engagement time
5. Synergy
Is Tiktok your Secret sponsor

Part b : External analysis

1. Customer
Unmet needs of Social media users
2. Competitor
The ideal content supply chain network
3. Market
Life of a trend
4. Environment
Funneling down the best content

2.2 Setting Directions of individual chapters

Part a

Chapter 1 : Cost advantage

The roots of Edutok

This chapter compares the features of TikTok with Youtube tutorials and Tiktok . This required two things first , a framework to distinguish MOOC with other online courses and secondly , a model for evaluation .

Jonathan Habor , has done a exploratory study in MOOCs and his work was published by MIT press . He spent a year taking different courses and comparing the results to formalize theory related to MOOCs. This work was reffered so as to distinguish TiktOk , Youtube tutorials and MOOCs . The contituents he mentioned for Moocs ^[2.4] are

- Lectures
- Reading
- Discussions and Community
- Assesment
- Organizing as a course
- Graduation/Credit

After this it was required to Identify a model on which this would be evaluated . a cost benefit analysis is suggested by UNESCO education also but seeing the complexities of the case in discussion another model was reffered to . Evaluation models , viewpoints on educational and human service evaluation by Stufflebeam , Madaus and Kellaghan has theorized program evaluation . They have covered Historical models , Traditional and still prevelant models , method oriented models , accountability oriented models , advocacy models and metaevaluation in detail . After a thorough reading , The CIPP model was found most appropriate for this case . The CIPP model evaluates as ^[2.5]

ur Types of Evaluation

Context Evaluation	Input Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To define the institutional/ service context • To identify the target population and assess its <i>needs</i> • To identify pertinent area <i>assets</i> and <i>resource opportunities</i> for addressing the needs • To diagnose <i>problems</i> underlying the needs • To judge whether <i>goals</i> are sufficiently responsive to the assessed needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify and assess <i>system capabilities</i> and alternative service <i>strategies</i> • To closely examine planned <i>procedures, budgets, and schedules</i> for implementing the chosen strategy
Process Evaluation	Product Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify or predict <i>defects</i> in the procedural design or its implementation • To provide information for the programmed decisions • To record procedural events and activities for later analysis and judgment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To collect descriptions and judgments of <i>outcomes</i> • To relate outcomes to <i>goals</i> and to <i>context, input, and process</i> information • To interpret the effort's <i>merit</i> and <i>worth</i>

Figure 2.3 : CIPP Evaluation Framework

Source : Evaluation Models by Stufflebeam , Madaus , Kellaghan

Low cost content

This section has two small case descriptions to put low cost content into perspective . Also this section compares the cost of a Youtube channel and TikTok piece . To estimate the running cost of a Youtube channel ^[2.6] insights were taken from 'Youtube for dummies' from Wiley and sons 'for dummies' series.

Chapter 2 : Differentiation

Diffusing Creator Consumer Segments

This chapter dealt with how TikTok is different from its peers . So to explore the area of differentiation guidance was taken from David A Akers ' Strategic market management' . The following segment ^[2.7] helped in framing the entire chapter

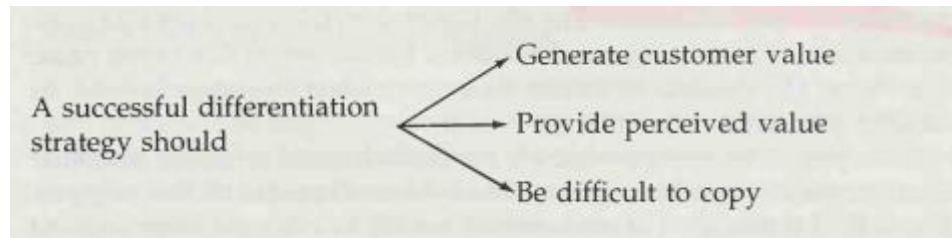


Figure 2.4 : Differentiation strategy

Source : Strategic Market Management by David A Aker

Chapter 3 : Focus

Approaching zero digital divide

This chapter dealt with the uncanny observation that TikTok has minimal digital divide . To explore the reasons why digital divide exists and how TikTok bridged it , study by Van Dijk , who has contributed in CDA was referred ^[2.8] .



A cumulative and recursive model of successive kinds of access to digital technologies. Source: van Dijk (2005), p.

22.

Figure 2.5 : cumulative and recursive model of acces to digital technologies

Source : Digital skills by van Dijk

Chapter 4 :Innovation

Towards minimal engagement time

The founders of TikTok , or rather founders of musical.ly (the app which was merged with Douyin to make TikTok) have said that the defining feature of their service is engagement time .

But , this leads to the question if engagement time is important in media consumption or not . Engagement time follows a important aspect in every form of entertainment bu a guiding model for this chapter was framed with the help of an essay by Edgar Allen Poe . Poe is the most distinct and recognizable name in English literature . He wrote an essay ‘ Philosophy of composition’ to explain how he composed his small poem ‘The raven’ .’The raven’ is one of his defining works .

The essay identifies three elements in composition ^[2.9] ,

- the length ,
- the method ,
- and the unity of effect .

Chapter 5 : Synergy

Is TikTok your Secret Sponsor

TikTok like its peers is a platform for content. But it is also a great platform for content , because number of stars coming from here are more than its peers . This gives an insight into the sponsoring nature of TikTok . TikTok not only hosts your content but also pushes it . On other platforms , pushing content requires a separate wing that is media planning and buying . To draw comparison , the book ‘ Media Planning and Buying’ , by Arpita Menon was referred to . The dimensions for comparison were decided upon as the building blocks of media strategy ^[2.10]

There are five key building blocks of a media strategy. All five elements come together to make up a media strategy. The key questions for each of the elements are as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| i. Target group definition | WHO? |
| ii. Market prioritization | WHERE? |
| iii. Media weights | HOW MUCH? |
| iv. Media mix | WHAT? |
| v. Scheduling | WHEN |

Part b

Chapter 1 : Customer

Unmet needs of social media users .

Roger Kaufman has strengthened the needs assessment methodologies .A more robust book based upon his theories and other contemporary theories 'A practical guide to needs assessment' ,by Kavita Gupta was referred . The chapter does a needs gap analysis ^[2.11] which is illustrated as

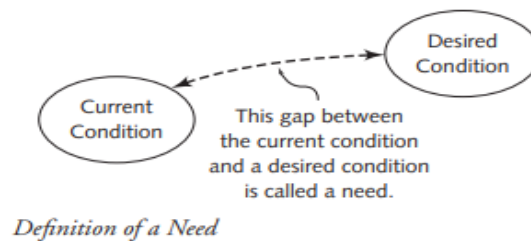


Figure 2.6 : need gap analysis model

Source : Practical guide to needs assessment by Kavita gupta

Chapter 3 : Market

Life of a trend

Gartner is a global research and advisory firm . It has developed a widely used approach to new technology , that is Gartner hype Cycle ^[2.12] . This was used to analyze trend behavior on Tiktok and on other networks



Source : Gartner.com

3. Rationale of study

- The entertainment industry of India alone is 45million US dollars . Globally the industry holds much more monetary worth . But Content production at TikTok is in many cases without any investment .

This study will help us identify how can money be optimized in such an expensive industry

- Social media is not just an IT service nor just a population logged in into the network . It is both , and there are multiple roles it plays .

This study will help us identify what are different user roles and what are different roles a network plays , and how these roles are linked .

- TikTok user demographics suggest that the majority of users on TikTok are those who are new to technology and are less skilled . This means that Tiktok has actually removed the Digital divide , on its platform .

This study will therefore help in identifying how the digital gap can be minimized

- The distinct feature of TikTok is engagement time . Every piece on TikTok gets an average of 15sec . And 15sec is relatively a very very small time for engagement , and still it is the most engaging app .

This study therefore helps in identifying what role does engagement time plays in various art-forms and entertainment media

- Fresh talent emerges on every social media . But the number of talent emerging from TikTok is much higher than other platforms.

This study therefore studies whether TikTok is just a platform or also a sponsor .

- TikTok Achieved this userbase in just two years and is in the top 10 list . The market leaders took about six to ten years to achieve this much userbase . This definitely hints at a displacement of users .

This study therefore explores what were the shortcomings of other networks

- A popular content creator requires investment (both time and money) and resources (content creation and management) .

This study therefore understands the optimization in content supply chain

- The digital landscape is seeing a lot of trends and the trend cycle is evolving from medium to medium .

This study therefore studies the characteristics of a Trend and stages in a trend

- On an average a user spends 52 minutes on TikTok daily . With an average TikTok piece running for 15 sec only this translates into 200 different TikTok pieces daily.

This study therefore attempts to understand what are the characteristics of engaging content

4. Research Objectives

- To find the operational cost advantage and creation cost advantage of content on TikTok
- To identify difference in user roles , that is creator consumer divide and service provider role , that is functional difference between a network and a platform
- To illustrate how TikTok is reducing the digital divide
- To observe how engagement time is evolving in other mediums of art and entertainment
- To distinguish between a content sponsor and a content platform and asses how TikTok has seized market through this segmentation
- To identify the unmet needs of other social media users
- To identify the supply chain of content in entertainment and identify how TikTok optimizes it
- To identify the nature of a trend cycle
- To understand the attributes and characteristics of engaging content

5. Research Methodology

This chapter discusses the conceptual framework of the research ^[5.1] in the order of

**Research Philosophy → Research approach → Research choice → Research strategy →
Data collection Techniques and procedures**

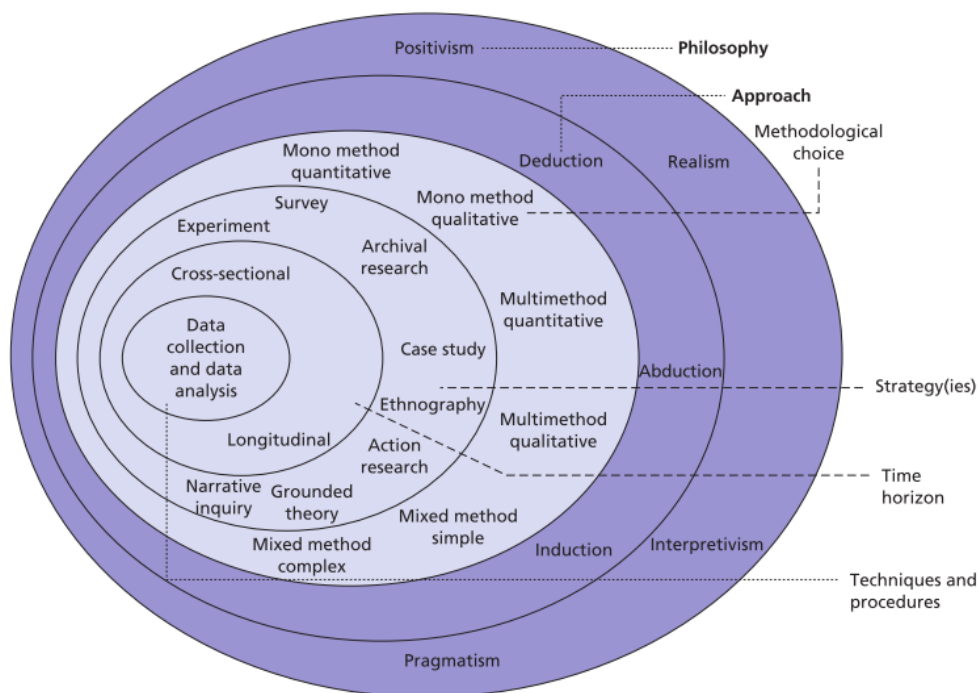


Figure 5.1 : Framework for defining research methodology

Source : Research methods for business students by Saunders , Lewis , Thornhill

5.1 Research Philosophy

This deals with the nature of knowledge , the development of knowledge and the views through which the world(field of research) is viewed . The research philosophy is arrived at through three major criterion : epistemology , ontology and axiology ^[5.2] .

Ontology : What is the nature of reality

Epistemology : what is considered acceptable knowledge

Axiology : What is the role of values

Ontology

It is concerned with the nature of reality , the major division is objectivism and subjectivism , that is the phenomena in consideration is dependent or independent of social actors .

Epistemology

It deals with what constitutes of acceptable knowledge , the major division is positivism , realism and interpretivist where positivism is collecting data of observable reality and making law like generalizations through regularities and causal relationships , realism is simply collection and understanding of data and interpretivist requires researchers to be empathic and consider the difference in the role of humans as social actors . This is further classified into phenomenology and symbolic interactionism .

Axiology

It studies the judgement about the values . It discusses chiefly if the research and the researchers are value bound or value free .

Pragmatism

It is a multimethod approach, it suggests that there are many different methods of undertaking the research as there are many different methods of interpreting the reality .

The philosophy followed is Pragmatism

Because primarily it is an exploratory research . It identifies and evaluates avenues where causes of success can be found . The very nature of it requires that the subject be

approached with multiple perspectives . It therefore is necessary that we do not stick to one philosophy alone

5.2 Research approach

The research approaches are deduction , Induction and abduction ^[5.3]

	Deduction	Induction	Abduction
Logic	In a deductive inference, when the premises are true, the conclusion must also be true	In an inductive inference, known premises are used to generate untested conclusions	In an abductive inference, known premises are used to generate testable conclusions
Generalisability	Generalising from the general to the specific	Generalising from the specific to the general	Generalising from the interactions between the specific and the general
Use of data	Data collection is used to evaluate propositions or hypotheses related to an existing theory	Data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns and create a conceptual framework	Data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns, locate these in a conceptual framework and test this through subsequent data collection and so forth
Theory	Theory falsification or verification	Theory generation and building	Theory generation or modification; incorporating existing theory where appropriate, to build new theory or modify existing theory

Figure 5.2 : Research approach

Source : *Research methods for business students* by Saunders , Lewis , Thornhill

The approach followed is Induction

Because Conclusions are drawn from the observations .

Observations made are specific to the user , art piece , content creator et cetra , but these observations are used to generalize certain phenomena and concepts .

A conceptual framework is devised based upon the observations and or observations are linked to existing frameworks . This helped in making causal relationships and thus highlighted the causes .

5.3 Research purpose

The purpose of the study is classified ^[5.4] as

Reporting study

This kind of a study provides summation of data , recasting of data to achieve deeper understanding and or generate statistics for comparison .

Descriptive study

This kind of a study provides insights into all dimensions of research problem that is the what when why how and where

Causal Explanatory

This kind of a study identifies a cause and substantiates its causality

Causal predictive

This kind of a study identifies a cause and uses it to predict future outcome

Exploratory study

This kind of a study is used when the topic or subject in consideration is new . Because there is no existing framework or formal theory , this type of research operates mainly on insights drawn on the subject and is a preliminary research in nature .

The results obtained in this research are not directly helpful in making decisions but they give direction to further research , for example , this type of research does not start with a hypothesis , but instead explores the subject and generates multiple hypothesis, with respective decision variables , units of measurements et cetra as results . These hypothesis are further tested for causation in a separate research .

The research purpose is Exploration

Because there is less research pertaining to TikTok . Though Research exists in abundance regarding Social media in general , as it had many implications in society and business , but TikTok has acted as a disruptive entrant in the social media marketplace . A comparative study or a framework to compare does not exist owing to its dynamic nature and the portfolio nature of entire media market , that is a user generally uses all platforms for marketing purposes , unless of course it is in conflict with the firms objective .

5.4 Research strategy

The data strategy ^[5.5] is twofold on the outset that is

Mono method

Monomethod uses either Quantative or Qualitative approaches

Quantative

Deals with relationships of variables represnted numerically and analysed through tatistical ,methods

Qualitative methods

It has a theoretical perspectives , operates within non standardized data , uses non probabilistic smapling techniques and a variety of analytical procedure

Multiple method

It uses mixed model approach for data collection and analysis

This study follows mixed model as certain insights are quantative in nature and certain are qualitative

5.5 Data collection Techniques

Qualitative techniques ^[5.6] use

- In Depth Interviews
- Observation/Ethnography
- Projective and psychological testing
- Archival research
- Case studies
- Expert interviewing
- Document analysis

Secondary Data

- Internet

Certain Insights are borrowed from other researches as is and used for direct comparison . As the research follows , certain topics required framing of a phenomena and a bird eye description of it . In such cases , to put the phenomenology in perspective , secondary data is borrowed as is .

Qualitative methods chosen are Observation and Case studies

5.5.1 Observation

It is the primary source of data collection in this study . It Collects data mostly visually and records it , though it contains a full range of monitoring behavioral and non behavioral activities and condition

Non behavioral Observation

- Record analysis
- Physical condition analysis
- Physical process analysis

Behavioral Observation

- Non verbal analysis
- Linguistic analysis
- Extralinguistic analysis
- Spatial analysis

Type of Study

- Participant Observation
 - It requires researcher to participate in or closely observe the phenomena being researched . It requires Observing , Recording and analyzing .
 - Data is analyzed like any other Qualitative data with the intention of developing theory
 - A prevalent form of analysis is analytic induction . this may lead to initial hypothesis being redeveloped more than once
- Structured Observation
 - It is concerned with frequency of events , oftenly characterized by high level of predetermined structures and quantitative analysis .

This study follows participant observation method for data collection

Observer Participant relationship

This method ^[5.7] requires to justify a relationship between observer and participant . In This study the complete observer method is chosen

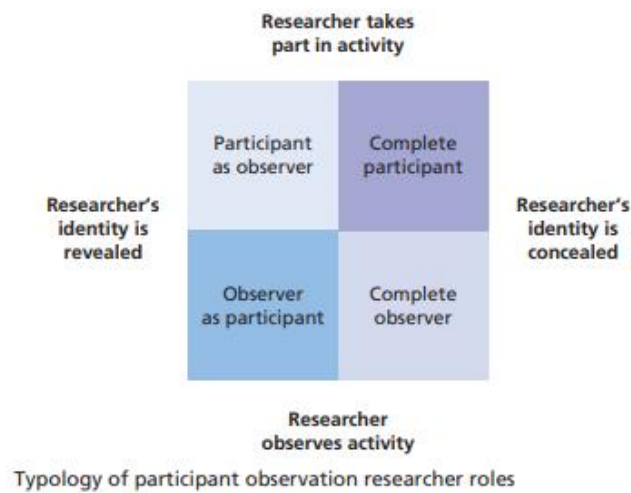


Figure 5.3 : Typology of participant observation research roles

Source : Research methods for business students by Saunders , Lewis , Thornhill

5.5.2 Case studies

A case study is an empirical method ^[5.8] that

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context,
- especially when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.

5.6 Data Analysis

5.6.1 Observation analytical techniques

The data generated from Observation ^[5.9] is of type

Types of data generated by participant observation	
Data type	Explanation
Primary observations	Those data where you would note what happened or what was said at the time. Keeping a diary is a good way of doing this
Secondary observations	Statements by observers of what happened or was said. This necessarily involves observers' interpretations
Experiential data	Those data on your perceptions and feelings as you experience the process you are researching. Keeping a diary of these perceptions proves a valuable source of data when the time comes to write up your research. This may also include notes on how you feel that your values have intervened, or changed, over the research process
Contextual data	Those data related to the research setting; for example, roles played by key informants and how these may have changed; organisational structures and communication patterns that will help you to interpret other data

Source: Developed from Delbridge and Kirkpatrick (1994)

Figure 5.4 : Types of Data generated by participant observation

Source : Business research methods by Donal cooper

The data collected is in terms of recorded observations

- Therefore analysis follows analytic induction and developing of theory
- It is a narrative account summarizing the observations

Participant observation has high ecological validity but may be affected by

- observer error, lack of understanding or overfamiliarity with the setting
- observer bias , when observers own subjective view interferes with interpreting the setting objectively
- and observer effects. When participant change their behaviour in presence of the observer

These issues may be minimised or overcome by

- observer familiarisation,
- interpretive rigour,
- informant verification, participant adds insights to observation
- habituation , participants become habitual to observation by conducting multiple sessions
- and the observer using strategies to explore and validate interpretations.

Using these strategies can allow the benefits of gaining intricate and rich data to prevail over concerns about unreliable data.

5.6.2 Case Study analytical Techniques

Data from case studies is of type ^[5.10]

- Pattern Matching
 - This technique matches findings based on case with predicted ones If empirical and predicted patterns are similar then internal validity is strengthened
- Explanation building
 - It follows iterative nature , that is there is initial explanatory proposition , which is compared with collected data and then the earlier proposition is revised
- Time series Analysis
 - There is a relevant measure which is identified and is tracked over time ,generally for finding patterns and trends
- Logic Models
 - The logic model stipulates and operationalizes a complex chain of occurrences or events over an extended period of time, trying to show how a complex activity, such as implementing a program, takes place. The events are staged in repeated cause-effect-cause-effect patterns,
- Cross case Synthesis
 - It applies to analysis of multiple case studies . The research synthesis is aggregating findings across a series of individual studies

6. Outline of study

The entire study is divided into two parts

Part a , which deals with the competitive advantages

And part b , which deals with the external environment analysis

Part a is further subdivided into five sub chapters , each dealing with the five strategic thrusts of Competitive advantage

Cost advantage

This is looked from two perspectives that is the operational cost advantage and creation cost advantage . The first portion titles 'roots of Edutok' deals with the operational cost advantage by comparing it with other MOOCs and the second portion 'low cost content' identifies the creation cost

Differentiation

Roles of other social media platforms are discussed here , and also roles of users are discussed . Taking these two as the horizons , a differentiating factor is identified

Focus

The target group is analysed in detail , and also why other media platforms could not tap this group. This section also draws insights into the prevalent digital divide

Innovation

This portion discusses the role of engagement time in entertainment , as this is the key innovation employed

Synergy

This discusses how TikTok is actually helping its users apart from just hosting its content

Part b is further subdivided into four sub chapters each dealing with the avenue of analysis

Customer

Competitor

Market

Environment

7.a.1.1. The roots of EduTok

The founders actually observed a very high dropout rate from MOOCs and created a short form video app to address this issue .

Vision of founders and musically

Zhu and Lang actually raised capital for an educational app and made Cicada ^[7.1] . This was a short educational video concept . That is the users were supposed to make small videos of 3 to 5 minutes . It had its own drawbacks , like it took too much time to create videos . Planners found it hard to condense a topic in three minutes . Content consumption too was to be in very short time . So the app failed but this format was more suited to entertainment therefore they made musical.ly and then later merged it with Douyin to create Tiktok .

Objectives of Edutok

As far as stats are concerned ^[7.2] , last year reports said #EduTok has 10 million content pieces and 1.8 billion views . This was at the launch of official Edutok mentorship program . TikTok officially partners with edtech startups like Josh talks and The nudge , This mentorship program aims at giving first time internet users a access to soft skill knowledge and learning

Is it a Mooc

TikTok is massive , It is online , and it is open for all , but is it a course . Let's Evaluate the constituents of an ideal MOOC , and also if Youtube tutorial channel qualifies for it or not .

	Coursera	Youtube	TikTok
Who	Michigan State university	wolfcrow	
Course name	Cameras Exposure and Photography	Playlist : Learn cinematography for beginners	#vfx
Credentials	4.7 stars 2341 ratings 129047 enrolled	blue tick 203 k subscribers 102k views on playlist	6.6 billion views

The figure displays three screenshots side-by-side, comparing educational content across different platforms:

- Coursera:** A screenshot of a course titled "Cameras, Exposure, and Photography" by Peter Glendinning. It shows a 4.7-star rating from 2,341 ratings, with 129,047 students enrolled. The course is offered by Michigan State University and is free to enroll in, starting May 06.
- YouTube:** A screenshot of a playlist titled "Learn Cinematography - for Beginners" by the channel wolfcrow. The playlist has 48 videos, 106,789 views, and was updated yesterday. It is described as "The simplest way to learn cinematography. Do it right the first time."
- TikTok:** A screenshot of the #vfx hashtag page. It shows 6.6 billion views for the hashtag. The top videos include "make some clone vfx #thesuhaikhan" and "The heart was made to be Broken VFX:".

Figure 7.1 contd.....
over next page

	Coursera	Youtube	TikTok
Lectures	<p>week 1 , 9 videos 64 min</p> <p>week 2 , 10 videos 119 min</p> <p>week 3 , 7 videos 84 min</p> <p>week 4 , 7 videos 87 min</p>	<p>Total 48 videos</p> <p>Average of 7 to 8 mins per video can be considered .</p> <p>One video less than 3 min and 5 videos of more than 15 min are in the video , based upon respective content and its detailing .</p>	<p>15 sec per video</p> <p>#behindthescene 422.9m views</p>
Reading	11 reading materials	none	none
Discussions and community	forums	comments , the first video in the playlist had 60 comments	<p>usually we go to a bts video and on clicking either the hashtag or sound we can see how many peers used it . Just clicked one the hashtag once and checked the top video sounds. It had 720.9 k videos</p>
assesment	quizes	self assesment : you learn the tricks you employ them , and assess yourself .	<p>you learnt it , you try it , you upload it . The metrics will come up themselves . Taking the top video won't give the idea of the genral learnings a user can have but the top video on the above hashtag when refernced to another learner had 3.7m views</p>
Organizing as a course	5 courses each divided over a week content and lecture plan	<p>Single videos clubbed as a playlist .</p> <p>Too much repetition like two videos 15 camera shots, angles and movements and 10 essential camera shots and how to find best camera angles . Or Video on exposure traingles covers Aperture , video on aperture and f stop also covers the same topic . But other Youtube tutorial or channels usually do it a s a series , but again , less or minimal organization as a formal course</p>	<p>You are viewing your feed , a video would come up randomly based upon your prefernces or you like a video you go the users profile and look for a behind scene video . The best part is that the time of a video is 15sec average , and they are in abundance , you may keep finding it again and again , and check at your will</p>
Graduation/cr edit	certification	self assesment	<p>utility , that is you learn a skill you display a skill . The assesment you chose to learn from the other person that is views and likes metric are applied to your piece also .</p>

Figure 7.1 : TikTOK vs Youtube vs Coursera

The CIPP evaluation

Context Evaluation

Target population : first time internet users or non tech savvy users

Needs : lack of soft skills and certain hard skills pertaining to entertainment , like video and audio

Resource Opportunities : formal course in videography and or audio mixing is not feasible , especially for the above target group

Responsive : This format has blurred the line between hobby , aspiration and profession

Input Evaluation

Behind the scenes video in a way require no input as such . Also , given the nature of a TikTok user channel , the videos are multiple in number and covering a wide variety , even if not a wide variety another 15 sec video among the already present 15 sec video does not interfere with the channel objectives or existing content plan or content strategy of the channel . Also it be noted that the nature of feed is such that a robust content plan is not required at all , hence the input is minimal .

Process Evaluation

Peer to peer : that is a friend is the best teacher , you are learning from someone in your network alone , and then the format is such that the teacher student divide is simply not there .

Watch and learn : You are browsing the feed , you noticed a trick you need to learn , you check for the #bts of it . This point is worth noting as self motivation does not last long . the cidaca app was being developed in the starting only because the founders observed a very large MOOC dropout rate . Here the content consumption or lecture (if you call it) is less than a minute , enough for the brief span of self motivation generated within the user .

Product Evaluation

Goal fulfillment : In the end a teaching process is only beneficial if the goals of learning be achieved . All elements of a TikTok piece that is cinematography , editing , mixing , et cetera is concerned , that the other user definitely learns , as the users also then recreates the same piece using the same techniques .

Efforts Merit evaluation and assessment : Here the duplicity of a concept or technique does not affect the reception . The concept is meant to be recreated . Mainly because consumption time is very less . Your learnings are assessed by the same metrics of views and likes . This is more transparent as the viewers get a basket of videos on same concept , so the comparison is not biased .

7.a1.2 Low cost content

An Indian movie on an average has a budget of 20 to 50 crores . So it definitely comes as surprise when in 2016 a Telugu movie 'Ice cream' ^[7.3] , was made on a budget of 2 lakh 11 thousand . It was made using Flowcam technology has only two actors and one set . The movie earned 5 crores . Like wise an average film crew is of 200 members , but the same director made another movie 'Dongal mutha' ^[7.4] with crew of 7 and in just 5 days , and a budget of 7 lakhs . One can argue that the short film industry or independent fil industry works on even less . Or say the sudden rush of content on Youtube is seeing a lesser crew and budget , but the above movies were commercial films . The economies of commercial movie are different , say the very director happened to be bypassing movie distribution overheads by engineering the concept of crowd distribution for the movie 'Anukshanam' ^[7.5]

A very rough estimate of the global cosplay industry is 45 billion dollars ^[7.6]. This industry is mainly supported on 'The anime' industry but other comic and fictional characters in movies and books have also inspired many cosplay ventures . There are cosplay fairs , cosplay competetions , exhibits , and of course the cosplay dress and makeup industry . But then there is a small lowtime internet celebrity by the name 'lowcostcosplay' ^[7.7] with 504million fb followers . He uploads at a frequency of one post per day and an average reach of 50K per post . He just uses daily household props to make a cosplay . His popularity that to in such a budget intensive domain do hints at a possibility or potentiality of success in low budget .



Figure 7.2 Profile of lowcostcosplay

This calls to review the economics of content generation on TikTok versus other platforms , say Youtube .

Camera requirements : none , as content generated through front camera of your mobile is also very popular

Accessories : many tiktok users do have a tripod and selfie ring and many other range but a lot of viral content is shot with just handheld techniques in natural light .

Content strategy and plan : a lot of Youtubers and other players invest heavily in searching and designing an ideal content , then scripting it and then shooting it . On tiktok a piece is just 15 secs , here instead of investing in content strategy one can simply shoot and leave the audience to judge it . Also , here there is less cataloguing facility , therefore it is not suited for series format .

7.a.2 Diffusing creator consumer segments

A differentiation strategy runs threhold

- Generate customer value
- Provide customer value
- Be difficult to copy

But the problem is TikTok behaves neither as social network for engagement with friends nor as a platform alone to simply host content . Here the mode of engagement itself is performances

Generate Customer value

This brings to a very basic differentiation , as to who the customer is . Is the user a creator of content or is the user consumer of content . For example majority of people access Youtube as consumers and the relation with the creator is through comments or say performer audience divide is visible . Whereas on Twitter a user is a content contributor/creator . The content mostly is in the form of threads and the user is an active participant in there . Though user identity merges into their content alone , as in in a thread the user is recognized more by the content or tweet and less by personal id . On Facebook and Insta , the content form is the activities a user perform . To put in other words the activities you are performing itself is the content . like checking in at a restaurant . One can also distinguish this as content on FB and Insta is always watermarked but the user is seldom recognized through the watermark So one can distinguish the majority of users based upon the user profile on scale from consumer to creator as

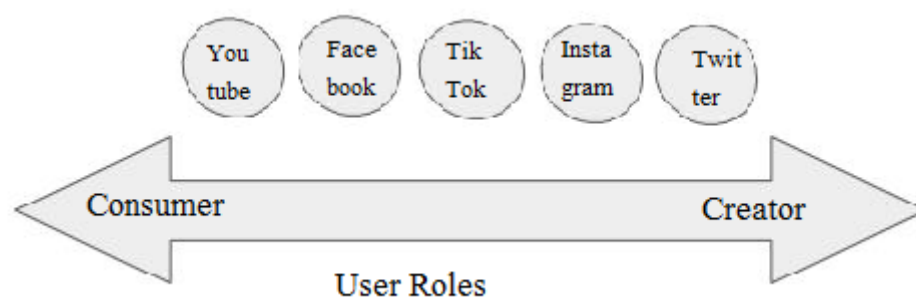


Figure 7.3 : User roles

Provide Perceived value

Again this brings to the role of service provider . Is the Service provider a Platform for content or is a network for Engagement . One can argue that Twitter is a mode of engagement , but that again it is for celebrities . For a general user , unless the account settings are strictly private , the engagement is simply with just random strangers . An interaction on personal level is less , basically a user is identified with the content alone .

From a scale of being a Network for Engagement to being a Platform for Content

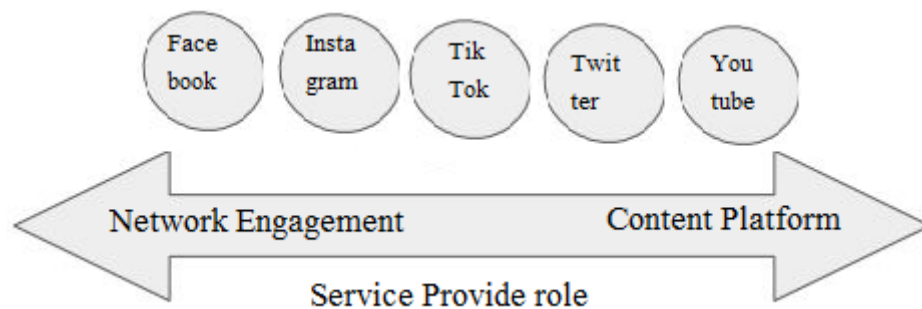


Figure 7.4 : Service provider roles

The Differentiating factor

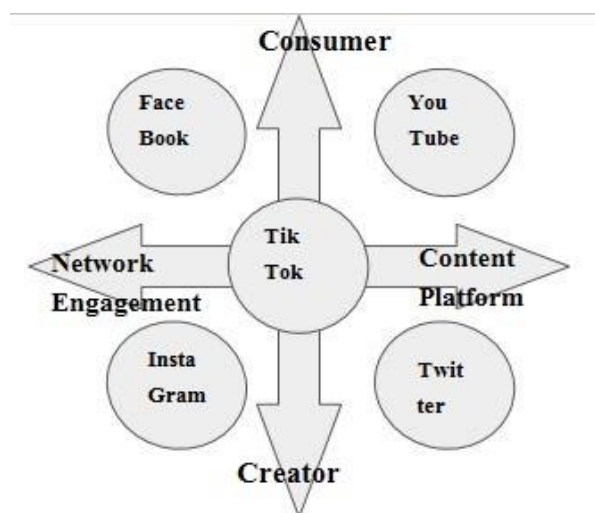


Figure 7.5 Differentiating factor

Here it is observed that everyone is on this side of the stage . That is the only mehod available to engage with others is through performances . And audience interaction is very minimal . That is you are actually collaborating with a fellow star and not interacting merely with your audience . Though the divide is seeping the content but the format is not so . It is intended as platform where the structure of performer and audience is very flat . Say , checking in an restaurant is engaging for your friends alone if you are not a content creator and you will therefor share it on FB and insta ,

but on Youtube you have an audience base and your content will be curated accordingly . On tiktok , your daily activities can be shared only as a performance . That is whether you have an audience or do not have an audience each activity is treated as performance .

7.a.3. Focus : approaching zero digital divide

@User97395319 has not even used a name and has posted over 80 videos . He has gained 16 thousand followers , 2.5 lakh likes and 2.5 million views . He is a farmer by profession and makes small videos while farming . As per TikTok standards this id is not widely popular , but if we again see the demography of mostly popular and viral content then it is more related to worker , laborers , construction worker and other informal sectors . They have presentable stats on Tiktok but on any other platform they have minimal representation . We will not dwell into social issues relating to class representation but we can very safely infer that this section forms the lower segment in the digital divide . And it also is the most popular one here and as we can see in direct competition with celebs . So is Tiktok actually about to remove the digital divide ? The reasons cited for a digital divide is the access at various levels . The following illustration briefs how the divide is minimized

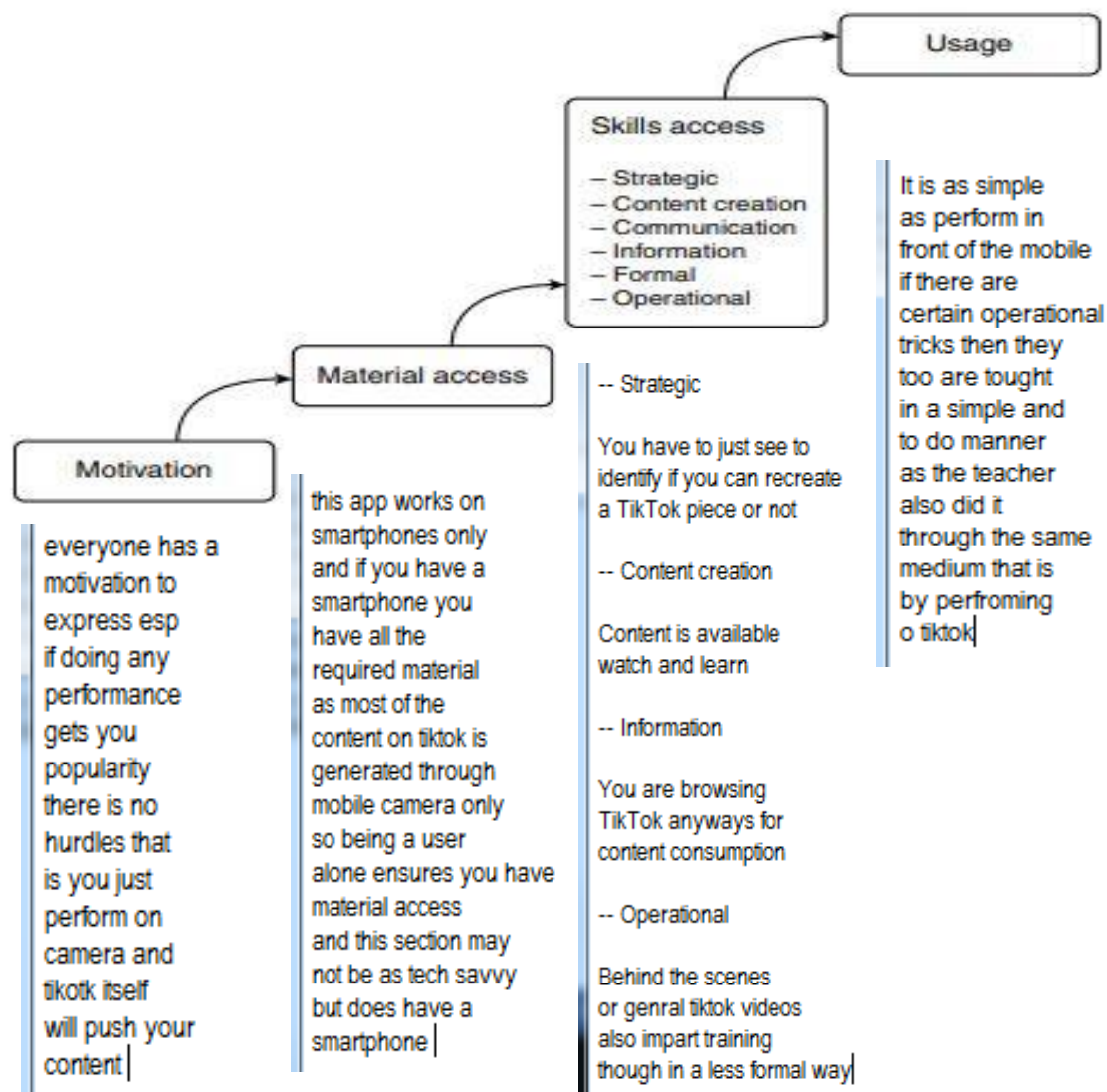


Figure 7.6 : Skill access evaluation of TikTok

7.a.4. Innovation : Engagement time

Foundation of musical.ly

The founders realized that the high dropout from MOOCs is a business opportunity . They identified that the reason is engagement time . They therefore designed cidac a educational app , where learning and teaching was to be through videos of 3 to 5 minutes . That app failed but it developed into musical.ly , the only difference was domain was shifted from education to entertainment , the concept remaining same , that is minimum engagement time .

But what is the role of engagement time in other entertainment forms

Evolution of other content

Prose

“For sale: baby shoes, never worn”

Chapter V , Ernst Hemmingway

Hemmingway has won the Nobel prize in literature , he was a novelist , journalist and has written in other forms as well . As a part of an anthology Ezra Pound , another prominent poet of earlier times commissioned very very short stories and Hemmingway and other famous writers joined this anthology . It was titled ‘In Our Times’ and had 18 chapter , ranging from 75 to 180 words . With this chapter five as mere 6 words .

Of the previous century O Henry is the most celebrated short story writer (O Henry award is named after him) , and his most celebrated short story is The gift of Magi , which has more than 10 movie adaptations and in various languages , including Raincoat in Hindi . This short story is just a little over 2000 words .

Then of course there is the most important and defining novelist in English literature , Charles Dickens , who is known for his very lengthy works . Pickwick Papers (800 pages) , Oliver Twist (600 pages) , David Copperfield (850 pages) , Tale of two cities (350 pages) , Great expectations (500 pages) and nearly all of his popular work is very lengthy and given the themes of the books , it is justifiably so . But then again , His one work which stands out is The Christmas Carol (less than 100 pages) , which is a short novel or novella , as popularly called .

Proust , who has written ‘In Search of Lost Times’ the defining work of French Literature is in seven volumes , each volume spanning over a 1000 pages . Many forums have also kept this work on top in the list of books we never finish , owing to its length , (check this telegraph article for instance) . The Ironic part is Proust have admitted ^[7.8] that the entire work is an inspiration from Gerard De Nervals 30 page novella ‘ Sylvie’ , so deep is the interlinkage that the Sylvies exploration and technique is the dominant theme in the first three volumes of lost times .

The SMS wave and Twitter content format is also a notable illustration .

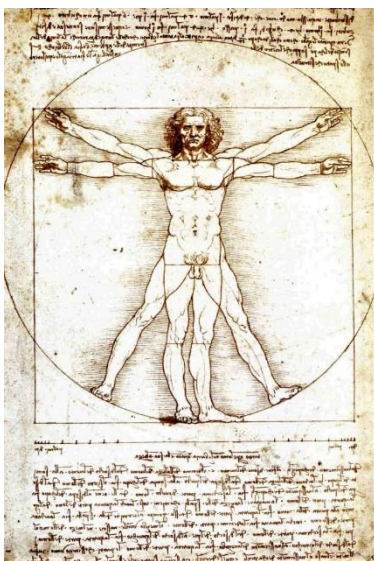
Art and Sculpture

Renaissance	→	Minimalism , modernism and neo mannerism
Leonardo Da Vinci	→	Pablo Picasso
Most popular	→	Among top 30 most expensive painitngs
		120million dollar

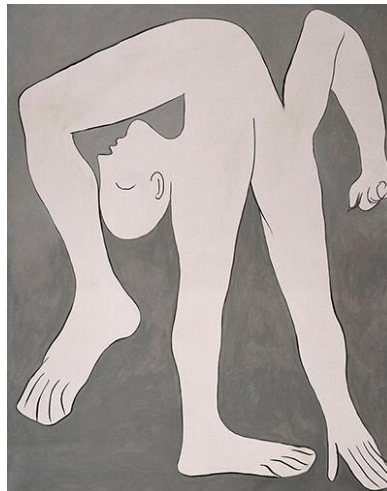
Mona Lisa



Dora Maar Au chat



Leonardo Da Vincis Vitruvian Man



Pablo Picasos l'Acrobat

Figure 7.7 Comparision of work of Da Vinci and Picasso

This is not a commentary on art , but just an observable trend towards minimalism , and eventually progressing into mashup type of pieces .

Music

1930s saw a Jukebox wave .

1980s saw a mixtape wave .

2010s saw a mashup wave .

This clearly suggest a movement of a single large piece to fragmented and mixed collection of pieces

Video

Video format is a little complex to summarize , there is a very clear observable trend that movie lengths have moved from 3 hours to less than ninety minutes . There is a flood of short movies and it is formalized to an extent that there are regular short movie festivals , dedicated award categories et cetra , but then again , With rise of OTT platforms , mini series and full length series have emerged at its fullest . The conclusion is hard to draw as to whether we have moved to short content from here , when a movie run time has reduced from 180 to 90 ins but a tv series runs into 30 to 40 hrs . Though yes vlogs have been condensed into vines .

Theatre to Tiktok

Edgar Allen Poe in his essay Philosophy of composition defines three elements

Length

"There is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art—the limit of a single sitting"

Theatre creation and consumption both are lengthy processes . Also the consumption method is such that one has to choose between many theatre players . On TikTOK the legth is 15 sec that is you can consume the content in lesser time than deciding wether or not ot consume the content . Also creation is less effort taking if not effortless

Method

Theatre requires a lot of content strategizing . On Tiktok the content , the backdrop , the dialogue , the direction ,the actors , just every thing is available in abundance that you can try and learn from feedback in lesser time than researching on required content and or strategizing .

Unity of Effect

The final effect on theatre and tiktok is same . Entertainment , though provoking , Intensity of actors.

7.a.5. Synergy

Is TikTok your secret sponsor

TikTok has also emerged as a platform for advertising and marketing . But what if you are a non professional . Many trends and creators were found to be never engaging in media planning or formal marketing activities . They simply upload their performance piece and still they achieved metrics as one would receive if they hired a personal manager . So does this means that tiktok is also supporting or pushing your content . That happens on other mediums also but the format is such that even though there is an abundance in content , in a very short window of roughly fifteen seconds anyone can be pushed . There is no such fight as is for a slot on TV , or trending section of Youtube . A traditional media strategy has five building blocks

Target Group Definition

TikTok has two feeds , one 'Following' and one 'For you' . The following is used to catch with fellow peers but most of the time their pieces also shows up in 'For you' section . The 'for you' section is specially curated for the user using Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning . This selection is based upon your past preference and engagements . So basically TikTok is employing the most advanced methods to give you a defined target group

Market Prioritization

Prioritization is a concern when there are limited resources . Now consumption through traditional media is time consuming . But in tiktok even if you are engaging for a minute you will see four different pieces .

Media weights

There is a feature unique to TikTok , that is it catalogues the videos as hashtags , audio and creator . So if the audio is engaging enough , then it is promoted without promoting the creator . This gives flexibility in song promotion .

Media mix

On an average a user spends 52 minutes on TikTok , that is a user views roughly 200 pieces . This in itself suggests a possibility of a very diverse tiktok feed . If you are watching 200 different pieces daily then the difference in those pieces would of both actor and concept . A space for pushing anyone and everyone's content is generated

Scheduling

This is also a unique feature of TikTok . Your content may or may not be suited to the viewer , but based upon the reaction your content may be pushed further either intensely or moderately . Because the window is of just 15 secs , this gives the flexibility of user to actually consume your content and then decide rather than decide first whether or not to consume your content .

7.b.1 Needs gap analysis

A needs gap analysis first defines the current condition , the desired condition and the gap between that is termed as needs .

Current Condition

Though the top 100 list ^[7.9] would give bias to the observation , but let's take that as the starting point . On Twitter and Instagram the top 100 list by followers show that all in the list are already celebrities . They are either musicians or athletes or from movie business or politician or simply someone who is popular in some other field . But Youtube for instance has majority of people from the Youtube community only . That is their source of fame is entirely due to Youtube . The same is on tikTok .

Desired condition

The above observation brings us to an inference that the desire is of followers or popularity . Another reason to identify this as the chief desire is because all metrics on all platforms translates only to reach and popularity . This definitely is up for further research that whether the quantification nature of all metrics has generated a desire to reach more and more people or it simply was existing in users and the metrics are only a reflection of it .

Gap

One gap is clear that if you are not popular or an existing celeb already , Facebook , Instagram and Twitter means a very big competition . Youtube also requires at least a basic knowledge of content SEO and investment . Say all Youtube celebs , have spent years building the userbase , but the TikTok celebs were not even having a userbase on youtube and have spent lesser time .

So the market need can be easily narrowed down to popularity of the user . But how has tiktok made it available so easily to its users . One reason is its focus is on homegrown celebs only . That is other celebs can use it as a platform for their marketing activities but the focus is on the entire community as such . Also the format is such that there really is space for smalltimers to excel . Even if say a user with more viewership gets to jump up the ladder , the only benefit the user has is that his video was in the feed only a minute earlier than the video of a newcomer . That is if a user simply happens to be browsing for a minimal time of say an extra minute he will get a newcomers video in the feed . The brevity of content piece has made the hierarchy irrelevant .

7.b.2 Ideal content supply chain network

Content as defined for TikTok be a small audio video clip . But to understand the constituents in its creation process the content is more appropriately treated as snippet of a movie . Basically a small dialogue an act a person singing a blooper or any such performance , but its definition as a snippet or clipping taken out of a larger movie stands most appropriate .

This brings about the content as an act , and its constituents be a cinematographer , a scriptwriter , actor , director , background score and other crew . So if you are to make an act , you need all of these people . And this is barrier which TikTok has removed .

Collaborative content . What if you are an actor , why would you need the rest of the constituents or you are a scriptwriter still you would be needing others . But on tiktok the remaining roles are optional and still your content gets a platform . The scene is already directed and dialogues are written , you as an actor just have to act . Or you have just written a script or dialogue , done a very poor directing of it but still , others remaking it will only take the concept and act on it , or you just give an audio , and others use it as a playback as and when they find appropriate . It is this flexibility or the sourcing method which makes this platform stands out . On other platforms , you have to arrange all the remaining constituents , manage them and then make your act , but here this becomes optional , all the rest is there ready for use . If you are a contributor , then again you don't have to search for other members , they will take your content . So this can be summed up as a depository , where all scriptwriters deposit their scripts , all musicians deposit their audios , and actors and performers take acts from this depository and perform . Also , You can check for feedback . This platform can be used to first try out a concept than employing or investing into the whole it.

This definitely has made tiktok an ideal substitute for other platforms .

7.b.3 Life of a trend

Memetics is a new branch in entertainment . Traditional media also hold many examples of featuring certain memetic techniques but primarily this belongs to the Digital media . One thing that is observed is there are dedicated platforms like Facebook and Reddit for to host this . Youtube runs with compilations of these memes . An inference can be drawn that people on social networks have a high propensity to engage in trends . But a trend fades away . So this requires repeated generation of trends . But then again is there an intrinsic difference between trends of other platforms and of TikTok .

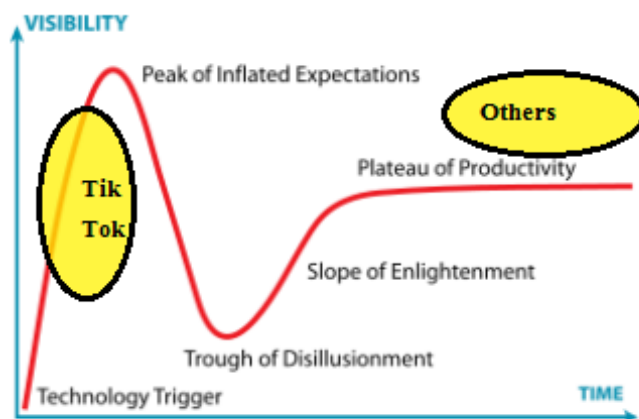


Figure 7.8 Hype cycle trends of tiktok vs other platforms

How it benefits TikTok is not clear , but a general observation shows that most of the trends are found on TikTok in the first stage of hype cycle , whereas other platforms take the trend through the entirety of the cycle . Memes on other platforms are generally adaptations of a running concept or a trend .

Lets take a blooper . The blooper on other platforms will go viral , and then it will adapt and evolve . It will be merged with other past trends or bloopers . It will become a template and be used for commentary on other topic et cetra . That is it will after going viral will reach the plateau of productivity phase of hype cycle . This cycle suggests that when a technology I introduced the inertia it garners at trigger point generates a lot of hype about the technology . But there is a gap between actual performance and initial hype . That is why after a certain phase it normalizes where other market players or contributors develop the technology and brings evolution of it .

Whereas the same blooper , if is suited to the concept of tikTok piece , will trend . Other users will recreate it . That is they will enact the same thing . Another option is they will comment upon it or modify it via duet . Though modifications of a trend differs from cases to cases , a generalization can be made that the trend cycle is not taken to the second phase of the hype cycle , as illustrated above .

7.b.4 Funneling down the best content

TikTok has imposed two major restrictions on all content, that is the content cannot be political and the content cannot be obscene in nature ^[7.10]. Definitely it can have reference to political characters and certain happenings but its innate nature cannot be so. TikTok has been suppressing politically charged content and has been surrounded with controversies thereof ^[7.11]. But tiktok has remain firm in keeping its content no political and above the belt. Should a platform do this or not, is a different concern, but one can very firmly say that politics and obscenity are not among the compulsory elements of good content.

No monetization. This is a very important aspect of content. The returns usually guide the content nature or creation. The performance of the content in market or its earning capability is what actually decides in which kind of content one is to invest. But again Tiktok has proven that money shall never be the object of content creation. It can definitely be a secondary objective but never the primary one. All of the content is copyright free, and if someone is marketing its content on tiktok then the users get fair use benefits. Whereas say upon youtube even a cover of a song gets copyright infringement. One can definitely say that characteristics of a content is that it should be copyright free and for non monetary purposes.

One final aspect is that content created or hosted on other medium also has a major share on Tiktok. But the entire song is never hosted on tikotk. Only a snippet of it. Same for videos. That is, the very nature of TikTok is such that it skims the best fifteen seconds of your work. Through multiple iterations you can know that in a song which fifteen seconds are the best or in a movie or a video likewise. This funneling aspect may not directly define the attributes of a good content but can definitely act as a tool for feedback collection, and as appropriate to the performer, can use the outcomes in future content creation.

8. Conclusion

The findings can be summarized as

The reason behind tiktok success is

- It facilitates content creation and management at lower costs

- It is designed to assist the weaker sections of the digital divide

- It sponsors your content on its merit value with giving less weightage to your past viewership when compared with other platforms

- It blurs the audience and performer divide

- It gives the smallest engagement time per piece . This brings a number of benefits , that instead of deciding whether to go for a content or not , you can actually consume the content piece and instead decide if the content was good or not . Once this pre consumption judgement is removed , a redundant step and a bias to the content or expectations also reduces . Also with such a small engagement time , it can bring in the widest range of content . That is in a small time period you get a very broad and a versatile range of content .

Other notable findings

- Content creation should not be motivated by money alone , and should be copyright free , apolitical and not have obscenity .

- Content creation is a collaborative work , but collaboration as a process requires effort . Tiktok acts a repository of content , and facilitates for hassle free collaboration

Recommendations for Further study

An in depth study of cross media performance must be done to better identify platform identity , Say , the performance of compilations of a tiktok trend on Youtube channels can be recorded and likewise performance of snippets of certain youtube video on Tiktok . This will help develop insights in finding suitability of content with a platform .

Advertisement and its configuration needs to be studied further . For example , on other media an Ad is distinctly identified as an ad . In certain youtube videos , ads are placed as a part of content . But on Tiktok , distinction between an ad and a content piece is blurred .

Limitations

Owing to the nature of data , quantative analysis could not be done . Because the content pieces are not categorized properly , that is a mismatch in hashtag and content piece is very common . This springs up the issue of inconsistent and unreliable data .

Also , the feed is designed based on user engagement , that means every session will be entirely biased , hence is highly invalid for generalizing patterns . Triangulation and similar techniques need to be employed for more robust results

9. Annexure

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