

Exploring the impact of TikTok affiliate marketing on creativity among art and design students

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Abstract. The researcher investigates the impact of TikTok affiliate marketing on creativity among art and design students at University Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, Malaysia. This article presents a SWOT analysis through the practical experience within one semester. The approach was implemented during an advertising class, where students engaged in creative idea generation and video editing to compete against each other. The student's assessment relied on data analytics, measuring both sales performance and video engagement. Notably, the assessment process involved the global TikTok community as "world citizens" became assessors, effectively measuring the impact and creativity of the students' marketing efforts. As a result, the students displayed enthusiasm for this assignment, as it transcended the conventional boundaries of a typical academic task. Beyond merely seeking a grade, students were immersed in an experiential learning process that introduced them to the dynamic world of digital marketing on demand. Moreover, their participation in TikTok affiliate marketing enabled them to access additional benefits, such as free product reviews, selling commissions, and the opportunity to support local entrepreneurs through promotion. Overall, this research highlights the potential of TikTok affiliate marketing as an effective tool for fostering creativity and practical skills among art and design students, empowering them with valuable insights into the digital marketing landscape while contributing positively to the wider business ecosystem.

1 Introduction

TikTok, a social media platform renowned for its short-form video content, has rapidly evolved from a medium for entertainment to a potentially transformative tool in the realm of education [1]. With over a billion monthly active users globally, TikTok's influence cannot be overlooked, particularly among younger generations. In this age of digital immersion, educators and students alike are beginning to harness the power of TikTok as an engaging and innovative educational resource. TikTok provides a range of opportunities to construct a stimulating and captivating educational setting that effectively captures the interest of students [2]. Prior research indicates that TikTok has

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been utilized extensively for educational objectives in medical education [3], sport science [2], and many collaborative e-learning in higher education [4]. Previous study also has indicated that TikTok has the potential to serve as a platform for informal education and digital activism [5].

One current emerging phenomenon is TikTok affiliate marketing, wherein content creators collaborate with brands to promote products or services, presenting a novel form of influencer marketing [6–8]. The rise of TikTok affiliate marketing has fundamentally transformed the landscape of marketing and advertising. TikTok's affiliate marketing platform has created a fresh chance for art and design students specializing in advertising to explore a new modern advertising campaign. However, affiliate marketing has not been thoroughly studied, as evidenced by the paucity of available studies on the subject [9].

Therefore, this study focuses to uncover the impact of TikTok affiliate marketing on the creative processes and the learning outcomes of art and design students. By employing an experimental syllabus on TikTok affiliate marketing in advertising courses class, the researcher intends to gain comprehensive insights into this burgeoning phenomenon through a SWOT analysis. The findings of this study will not only benefit academia but also offer practical insights to marketing professionals, educators, and artists, empowering them to navigate the evolving landscape of creative expression and marketing strategies in the digital era.

2 Literature review

2.1 TikTok as an innovative platform for student creativity

TikTok has emerged as a vibrant and highly influential creative platform for teacher and students across various fields [4,10,11]. According to Vizcaíno-Verdú and Abidin [10], TikTok is a suitable platform for the development of the teacher micro-celebrity, whose identity is founded on values and practices that go beyond mere (self-)branding. This perception appears to be closely related to teachers' micro-celebration, who are engaged in providing content that broadens the instructional perspective through creative posts. For art and design students, in particular, it serves as an exceptional canvas for self-expression and experimentation. With its short-form video format, TikTok encourages students to condense their ideas and creativity into brief, engaging clips, teaching them to communicate effectively and concisely. This social network offers opportunities for educational content creation, knowledge dissemination, and collaborative learning [4]. It's a platform that values innovation, visual storytelling, and trends, allowing art and design students to harness their talents in creating captivating and visually appealing content. TikTok's emphasis on music and sound also encourages students to explore the fusion of audio and visuals, promoting creativity and originality in their work.

TikTok is the cheapest and most enjoyable tool for creating excellent marketing content for digital marketing purposes and people had to get creative to come up with material for TikTok [12]. This platform provides an opportunity for students to reach a global audience and engage with a diverse community. This exposure helps students understand the power of viral content and the impact of audience feedback, which are

valuable lessons in the creative and advertising industries. TikTok's algorithm-driven content discovery and the potential for content to go viral can be an exciting learning experience for students, teaching them about the importance of audience engagement and the dynamics of online trends.

2.2 The Potential of TikTok affiliate marketing for advertising class

TikTok affiliate marketing is a digital marketing strategy that leverages the popular short-form video platform TikTok to promote products or services and earn commissions for sales generated through affiliate links [7]. It involves content creators, often referred to as TikTok influencers, creating engaging and entertaining videos that showcase or review products while including affiliate links in the video description or comments. When viewers click on these links and make a purchase, the influencer earns a commission. For art and design students majoring in advertising, TikTok affiliate marketing presents a unique learning approach. The student can use the platform to gain hands-on experience in creating persuasive and visually appealing content that drives consumer engagement and product sales, which are fundamental skills in the field of advertising [13]. Moreover, it allows students to understand the intricacies of influencer marketing and the importance of audience targeting in digital advertising, both of which are vital aspects of modern advertising campaigns.

This learning approach offers students practical exposure to the evolving landscape of digital marketing, where creativity and visual storytelling play a significant role. It enables them to apply their artistic and design skills to real-world marketing scenarios, helping them develop a better understanding of how aesthetics, brand identity, and persuasive messaging work together to create successful advertising campaigns. As mentioned by Dwinanda et al [13], personalization and interactivity play the most significant role in the formulation of advertising value. Additionally, the data-driven nature of affiliate marketing on TikTok allows students to analyze the performance of their campaigns, optimize strategies, and refine their creative skills, all of which are highly relevant for careers in advertising where measurable results and creativity go hand in hand. In essence, TikTok affiliate marketing provides art and design students with a dynamic and hands-on approach to learning that aligns with the demands of the advertising industry in the digital age.

3 Research methodology

The research investigating the impact of TikTok affiliate marketing on creativity among art and design students at University Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, Malaysia involved a structured experimental approach. Initially, the researchers designed and developed a specialized syllabus focused on TikTok affiliate marketing. The syllabus included theoretical concepts, practical applications, case studies, and hands-on exercises related to TikTok affiliate marketing specifically tailored for an advertising class.

Following the syllabus development, the researcher implemented the experimental curriculum over the course of one semester. This phase involved active participation and engagement from 15 students who were enrolled in the advertising class. Throughout the

semester, the students were exposed to the TikTok platform, its affiliate marketing potential, strategies to create engaging content, and how to incorporate affiliate links effectively. The students worked on assignments, projects, and campaigns within the TikTok ecosystem, gaining practical experience and insights into the dynamics of the platform.

After the implementation period, the researcher gathered data on the outcomes of the experimental syllabus and student involvement in TikTok affiliate marketing. The findings were then analyzed using a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis framework adopted from [14]. This analytical approach allowed the researchers to categorize and evaluate the data based on the identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats [15] associated with TikTok affiliate marketing's impact on creativity within the context of art and design students at the University Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, Malaysia.

4 SWOT analysis of TikTok affiliate marketing on creativity among art and design students

4.1 Strengths

Based on the experimental class conducted for one semester, the researcher had found that TikTok affiliate marketing stands as a robust platform for art and design students, offering a creative outlet for concise, visually engaging content, thereby honing their storytelling and communication skills. Its extensive global reach enables students to showcase their work to a diverse international audience, facilitating exposure and networking opportunities. Furthermore, active participation in TikTok affiliate marketing provides students with practical hands-on experience in digital marketing, an invaluable skill set that aligns with the demands of advertising and design careers. These strengths collectively empower students to refine their creative talents, gain global recognition, and bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, preparing them for success in the creative industries.

4.2 Weaknesses

While TikTok affiliate marketing offers various benefits to art and design students, it also comes with certain challenges. Creating compelling TikTok content can be time-consuming, demanding significant effort and resources from students. Additionally, TikTok's audience primarily consists of younger users, limiting its suitability for products or services targeting older demographics. Furthermore, the success of TikTok campaigns is often dependent on the platform's algorithm, which can be unpredictable, posing challenges when teaching consistent marketing strategies. Finally, the platform's history of privacy concerns may raise apprehensions among students, educators, or parents regarding data security, necessitating careful consideration and communication of privacy measures in the educational context.

4.3 Opportunities

TikTok Affiliate Marketing provides art and design students with a variety of opportunities. It allows students to actively engage with real-world marketing strategies, bridging the gap between theory and practice. The global reach of the platform facilitates networking opportunities with industry professionals and influencers, which may lead to mentorship and career opportunities. The analytics tools provided by TikTok enable students to gain insight into campaign performance, thereby fostering data-driven decision-making skills. Additionally, the innovative and creative nature of TikTok encourages out-of-the-box thinking that can be applied not only within the platform but also in other digital marketing channels, thereby preparing students for the dynamic and competitive advertising and design landscape.

4.4 Threats

The potential threats associated with TikTok affiliate marketing for art and design students are multifaceted. Firstly, the platform's highly competitive nature means that students' creative content may struggle to gain visibility amid the vast daily uploads. Additionally, TikTok's frequent algorithm updates can unpredictably affect the reach of students' content, making it challenging to consistently engage with their target audience. Negative associations tied to TikTok, such as issues related to cyberbullying and harmful content, could raise concerns about the platform's suitability for educational purposes. Lastly, the long-term viability of TikTok as a marketing platform remains uncertain, as it may face regulatory challenges or shifts in user preferences over time, potentially impacting the relevance of students' acquired skills and knowledge. Therefore, while TikTok offers opportunities, students must be mindful of these potential challenges.

5 Suggestions

The outcomes of the experimental class on TikTok Affiliate Marketing indicate several compelling reasons for other higher institutions to consider its implementation in their courses.

First, it effectively stimulates students' imagination and idea generation, nurturing their creative skills by engaging them in the creation of compelling advertising videos. The competitive aspect, with the potential to earn commissions, serves as a strong motivator for students, encouraging them to produce their best creative content (See Fig 1).



Fig. 1. The students competing each other to produce their best creative content in class.

Moreover, this educational approach provides students with an opportunity to receive various product samples from sellers, allowing them to gain practical experience in using real products in their marketing campaigns. Additionally, it promotes community engagement as students help and promote products from local SMEs, contributing to the local economy (See Fig.2).



Fig. 2. The students with the product samples from SMEs.

The integration of digital analytics in assessing student performance fosters digital literacy and equips students to analyze their work in a data-driven context. By evaluating the engagement metrics generated by data analytics, students gain a practical understanding of the impact of their creative content, aligning well with the demands of the digital marketing landscape.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the research on TikTok Affiliate Marketing's impact on art and design students in an advertising context at the University Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, Malaysia, reveals several key findings. TikTok proves to be a potent platform for enhancing creativity, imagination, and practical skills among students, preparing them for the dynamic advertising and design industries. The inclusion of commissions, product samples, community engagement, and data-driven assessment enriches the educational experience, bridging the gap between academia and professional practice.

However, despite the fact that TikTok Affiliate Marketing can be a valuable educational tool, it may not be an optimal long-term career path for students due to a number of critical factors. First, the viability of TikTok as a reliable source of income is

not encouraging. The platform's trends, global market issues, and user preferences are susceptible to rapid change, which can impact the income generation's stability. Second, the algorithmic unpredictability of TikTok presents a significant obstacle. Its frequent revisions can result in fluctuating content visibility, making it difficult for content creators to maintain a steady income. These factors highlight the significance of diversifying one's skills and exploring other avenues in the ever-changing landscape of digital marketing and advertising, while TikTok Affiliate Marketing serves as a valuable learning opportunity.

Indeed, an important consideration for the applicability of TikTok Affiliate Marketing is the regional availability of TikTok and its associated features. It's crucial to emphasize that this approach may not be applicable in countries where TikTok's shopping features, including TikTok Shop, are blocked or restricted. As of the latest information available, these countries include Afghanistan, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, France, India, Latvia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States, and the most recent addition, Indonesia.

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