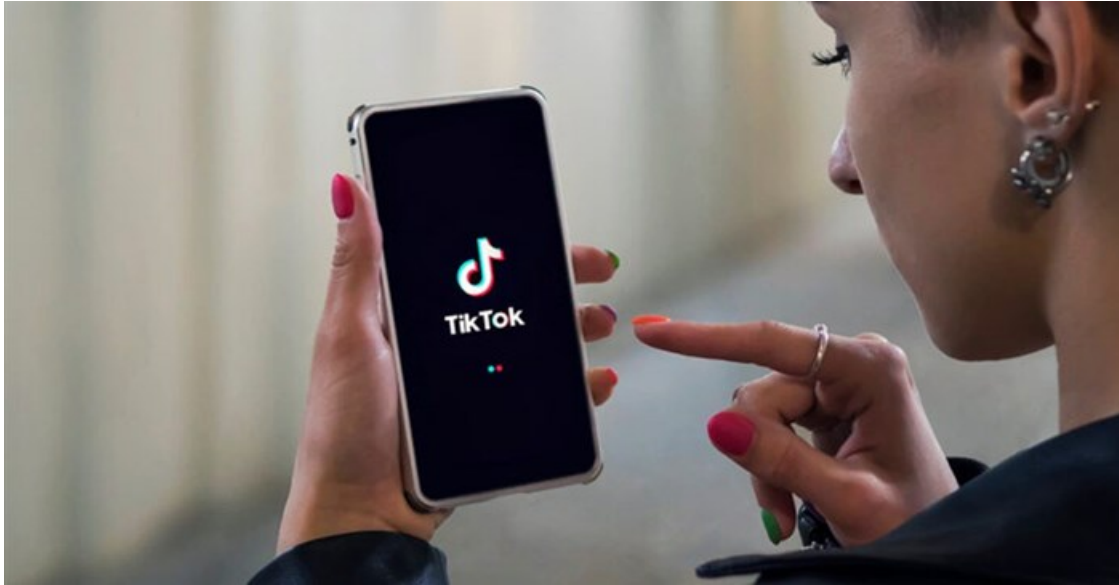


5 ways brands can take advantage of the TikTok as a search engine trend

By [Erin Deetlefs](#)

8 Aug 2023

Most marketers think of TikTok as competing for users and digital marketing spend with the likes of Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat, but with a growing portion of Generation Z consumers turning to TikTok as their social media platform of choice, it is increasingly, if inadvertently, capturing traffic that would usually go through web and mobile search on Google.



Source: © Search Engine Journal [Search Engine Journal](#) a growing portion of Generation Z consumers turn to TikTok as their social media platform of choice

With nearly 12 million users in South Africa — 55% of them born after 1996 — TikTok has organically grown into a one-stop destination for all kinds of content.

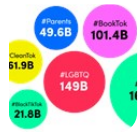
Along with lip-syncing videos and viral dance clips, TikTok has attracted communities and content creators that span every field of human interest.

The platform has become an immense repository of information about everything from DIY, finance, fitness and cooking to travel, entertainment and news.

The content is presented in a snappy, creative, authentic and relatable way that resonates with a visually literate, digital-native audience that has grown up with social media.

Along with the depth of content, TikTok's algorithms are also good at presenting users with content they will find interesting, based on previous interactions with the platform.

That's why many Gen Z users will turn to TikTok first when they want to know how to ask their boss for a raise, which attractions are worth seeing in London, or which kitchen gadgets are essential purchases for a home chef.



TikTok communities: Aligning with authentic connections in the digital space

Danette Breitenbach 10 Jul 2023



Brands need to take note

Forward-thinking brands shouldn't overlook this trend, and the opportunity to reach a massive, highly engaged audience. With TikTok's targeting and optimisation tools maturing fast and the platform growing into an e-commerce destination with in-app shopping, it offers marketers a range of compelling ways to drive conversions and build their brands.

TikTok doesn't offer a paid search product yet, but it offers a range of solutions that help brands to create high-performing ads and engage with their audience. It is a platform where trends and challenges go viral in a matter of hours.

How brands can take advantage

Here are how brands can take advantage, along with best practice tips that are working well for our clients:

1. In-feed ads

These ads appear in users' *For You* feed and seamlessly blend in with organic content. They can be images or videos up to 60 seconds long and often include a call-to-action (CTA) button.

Tips:

- Grab the user's attention within the first few seconds.
- Use high-quality visuals.
- Create a clear, compelling message.
- Consider adding engaging captions or subtitles to accommodate sound-off viewing.
- Vertical-orientation videos tend to be the top performers.

2. Brand takeovers

This format is a full-screen, immersive ad that appears when users open the TikTok app. These ads usually last a few seconds and can include images, Gifs, or videos.

Tips:

- Use eye-catching visuals.
- Convey your message concisely.
- Use a strong call-to-action to encourage users to act as soon as they see the ad.

3. Branded hashtag challenges

Brands can create their own challenges, encouraging users to participate and create content using a specific hashtag. These challenges often go viral and generate substantial user engagement.

Tips:

- Keep challenges simple, relatable, and aligned with brand values.
- Provide clear instructions.
- Offer incentives or prizes for participation.
- Collaborate with influencers or popular creators to boost reach and engagement.

4. Branded effects

Branded effects are custom filters, stickers, or augmented reality effects that users can apply to their videos. Brands benefit from users adding these effects to their content and promoting their products or services.

Tips:

- Create effects that are visually appealing and align with your brand image.
- Encourage users to try the effects by promoting them through in-feed ads or branded hashtag challenges.

5. Influencer collaborations

Brands can partner with popular TikTok creators or influencers to amplify their message and reach a dedicated, relevant audience. Influencers can create content featuring a brand's products or services and provide authentic recommendations.

Tips:

- Choose influencers whose audience aligns with the brand's target market.
- Give influencers creative freedom while providing guidelines to ensure brand consistency.
- Establish clear objectives and metrics to measure the success of the collaboration.

Unlocking TikTok's potential for brands

Most brands are barely scratching the surface of how they are using paid media on TikTok to engage with their next generation of customers. Those who jump in now can gain an advantage using the platform to create innovative executions that position them strongly with a young audience that is receptive to creative messaging and approaches.

Brands that excel on this platform will be those that are willing to think outside the box, take calculated risks and create captivating shareable content that feels real, transparent, personalised and relatable.

They will also take the time to understand the interests and values of their users, so that they can create content that hits the right notes and stands out in a competitive market.

While TikTok won't displace Google as the world's leading search engine any time soon, digital marketers should certainly start thinking about what it means for their search engine optimisation strategies. This includes using hashtags effectively and considering how to optimise branded TikTok content for discoverability through TikTok itself and other search engines like Bing and Google.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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