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THE TIKTOK EFFECT: NAVIGATING VIRALITY, LONGEVITY, AND UNCERTAINTY

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TREND, DIGITAL, MARKETING



Troy Ayala

TikTok's meteoric rise has reshaped the beauty industry, democratizing brand exposure and redefining consumer behavior. With over 1 billion active monthly global users as of May 2024, TikTok provides an unparalleled platform for beauty brands to reach diverse audiences. Home to multiple trends like "skin

cycling,” “trad wife,” and “cold girl makeup,” the platform’s power to catapult niche products into household staples overnight, is undeniable. For instance, brands like CeraVe, Huda Beauty, Made by Mitchell, Glow Recipe, and Rare Beauty have leveraged TikTok’s algorithm to achieve exponential growth. According to Statista, live sales account for the majority of beauty and personal care e-commerce sales on TikTok. In January 2023, around 89% of sales came from live sales, while 11% originated from video sales.

The platform thrives on authenticity and relatability, with user-generated content often outperforming traditional advertising. Micro-influencers—those with fewer than 100,000 followers—have emerged as the linchpin of this ecosystem, offering high engagement rates that rival or surpass their macro counterparts. TikTok’s “For You” page algorithm ensures that content from smaller creators and brands can achieve virality, fostering a level playing field for brands.

TikTok’s influence drives measurable business outcomes. “Unlike other platforms, TikTok bridges the gap between brand discovery and purchase. Their use of influencers and creative content appeals to consumers so they know they are buying products they can trust,” Alex Nisenzon, CEO of Charm.io, a premier ecommerce intelligence platform, tells BeautyMatter via email. “Beauty brands in particular have benefited from TikTok Shop. Beauty has consistently been the top-selling product category on TikTok Shop, driving over \$1.5 billion in revenue in 2024 US sales alone,” he continues. Beauty-related hashtags like #SkincareTok and #MakeupTok amassed billions of views combined, with users admitting TikTok influenced their purchasing decisions. This phenomenon underscores the platform’s ability to bridge the gap between discovery and purchase.



Notably, TikTok’s integration of e-commerce features, such as TikTok Shop and Live Shop, further streamlines the consumer journey. Although it set out to generate up to \$20 billion in global sales through livestream in 2023, reports indicated that in 2024, it generated up to \$17.5 billion in US GMV. British-born beauty brand, Made by Mitchell, reportedly made up to \$12 million in 12 hours, live streaming on TikTok. This proves how much brands can promote products directly within the app, reducing friction in the path to purchase, and even sometimes causing overnight virality.

"TikTok offers a unique user experience that has yet to be replicated elsewhere effectively. From fast-paced videos to real-time livestreams, TikTok succeeds in driving impulse purchases more so than other traditional marketing methods."

BY ALEX NISENZON, CEO, CHARM.IO

Challenges of Overnight Success

While virality offers unparalleled opportunities, it also presents significant challenges, particularly for new entrepreneurs. Brands that achieve overnight fame often struggle with supply chain management, inventory shortages, and

quality control. This could lead to prolonged stockouts, frustrating consumers and risking brand loyalty. Additionally, sustaining consumer interest post-virality is a formidable challenge. TikTok's fast-paced nature means that trends are ephemeral, often lasting mere weeks. Brands must navigate this volatility by diversifying their marketing strategies and focusing on long-term brand equity rather than fleeting hype.

"After a video goes viral, don't pivot too quickly. Lean into the exact format, hook, or trend that drove the initial success," Jenny Qian, founder of Astrobabe, a TikTok viral beauty brand famous for its press-on eyeshadow that takes five seconds to apply, says to BeautyMatter. Astrobabe has experienced many viral moments, increasing its followership by 275% within four days of a single viral video, and its sales by 82%, BeautyMatter learns. "TikTok's algorithm rewards consistency, so create a follow-up series that expands on the original video. [For example], 'Part 2,' 'You Asked, We Answered,' or 'Here's How It Works.' For Astrobabe, we extended virality by turning a single eyeshadow tutorial into a series of creative looks paired with trending sounds." Qian continues.

Regular authenticity also resonates deeply with TikTok's audience. "[Viral] founders should post consistently, speaking directly to the camera to create a personal connection. Phone-shot content is key—it feels spontaneous and relatable, which resonates strongly with TikTok's audience. Brands like Rare Beauty do this well," Quynh Mai, CEO and founder, Qulture, a creative agency with a portfolio of Calvin Klein, NARS, and Marc Jacobs, tells BeautyMatter. "On TikTok, storytelling is everything. Content should inform, entertain, or inspire. Raw, unfiltered, and authentic moments resonate more than overly curated posts. Founders should avoid hard sells and focus on building trust," Mai continues.

Experts also suggest that when virality hits, brands need to ensure that they possess scalable processes. To mitigate the risks of stockouts, brands should prepare to invest in flexible supply chain solutions capable of scaling up production during demand surges. "When virality hits, [brands need to] ensure their operations can handle the influx. Invest in scalable fulfillment systems, fast customer service responses, and a website optimized for conversions," Qian says. "During our viral moment, we launched exclusive product bundles,

leveraging urgency to convert new followers into buyers,” she adds.

Nisenzon adds that “TikTok offers a unique user experience that has yet to be replicated elsewhere effectively. From fast-paced videos to real-time livestreams, TikTok succeeds in driving impulse purchases more so than other traditional marketing methods.” While TikTok’s influence on the beauty industry is undeniable, its future remains uncertain. Brands must balance short-term gains with long-term resilience by adopting multichannel strategies, prioritizing authenticity, and preparing for potential platform disruptions. Whether TikTok remains a dominant force or becomes a case study in digital disruption, its impact on the beauty industry will be remembered as a pivotal chapter in the evolution of modern marketing.

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