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# TIKTOK AS AN EFFECTIVE MARKETING TOOL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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### Abstract:

This study is to explore the potential of TikTok as a marketing tool for higher education institutions, employing literature review approach. The use of literature review in the study may have allowed for a deeper exploration of the experiences and perceptions of individuals who have used TikTok as a marketing tool for higher education institutions. The writing examines how TikTok can effectively promote higher education institutions and reveals that it offers a distinctive platform to highlight campus culture, values, and programs in a dynamic and captivating manner. TikTok can increase knowledge of the academic programs offered by higher education institutions, which can lead to greater brand awareness and engagement with prospective students. Therefore, this study concludes that TikTok has the potential to be a valuable marketing asset for higher education institutions seeking to engage with prospective students and build their brand image. Overall, it appears that TikTok has the potential to be a valuable marketing asset for higher education institutions seeking to build their brand image and engage with prospective students. TikTok emerges as a promising channel for higher education institutions to navigate and thrive in the digital age. By connecting its creative prowess while manoeuvring its challenges, institutions can authentically showcase their academic programs, elevate brand recognition, and foster deeper connections with prospective students. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of TikTok as a marketing tool may depend on various factors, such as the target audience and the specific goals and strategies of the higher education institution and need for further studies.

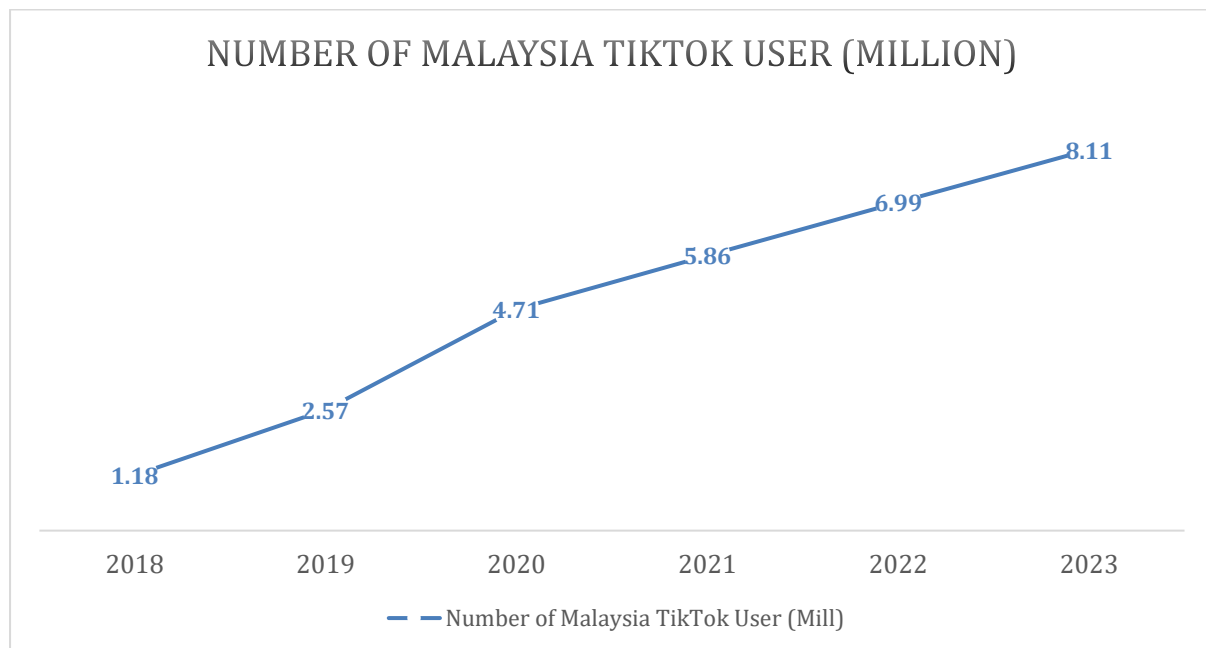
### Keywords:

TikTok, Marketing Tools, Social Media, Higher Education, Brand Awareness.

## Introduction

TikTok has emerged as one of the most popular social media platforms in recent years, particularly among younger generations. The video-sharing application has become a cultural phenomenon, with over a billion active users worldwide, providing users with a creative outlet to showcase their talents and interests in short, bite-sized videos. TikTok, on the other hand, is more than just a platform for entertainment and personal expression, it also provides tremendous opportunities for businesses and organizations to reach new audiences and promote their products and services. TikTok has quickly emerged as a powerful marketing tool for colleges and universities looking to attract and engage prospective students in the field of higher education. Higher education institutions can effectively promote their academic programs in an engaging and authentic way that resonates with TikTok's younger user base by leveraging the platform's unique features and creative potential.

The objective of this paper is to explore the effectiveness of TikTok in promoting academic programs in higher education to prospective students. While TikTok has emerged as a popular social media platform among younger generations, its effectiveness as a marketing tool for higher education institutions remains largely unexplored. Specifically, there is limited research on the effectiveness of TikTok campaigns in promoting academic programs, campus culture, and student life to prospective students. While TikTok's engaging and creative content has the potential to capture the attention of prospective students, the short-form video format and limited targeting capabilities may limit its effectiveness in conveying the unique features and benefits of a particular institution. There is a need for research to explore the effectiveness of TikTok campaigns in promoting academic programs in higher education.



**Figure 1: Number of Malaysia TikTok User 2018-2023**

Source: Statista Research Department, 2023

The popularity of TikTok has seen a remarkable surge in Malaysia over the past few years. In 2018, the number of TikTok users stood at 1.18 million, marking the initial steps of its presence in the country's social media landscape. This number nearly doubled in 2019, with an

impressive rise to 2.57 million users. The subsequent year, 2020, witnessed an even more substantial leap as the user base soared to 4.71 million, underlining the platform's increasing appeal among Malaysians.

As the world grappled with the challenges of the pandemic in 2021, TikTok's growth in Malaysia remained resilient. The user count surged to 5.86 million, further cementing its position as a significant player in the country's social media scene. The year 2022 marked yet another notable milestone as TikTok's user base in Malaysia continued its upward trajectory, reaching 6.99 million users. The platform's momentum showed no signs of slowing down, as the year 2023 witnessed a considerable expansion to 8.11 million users. This remarkable growth underscores TikTok's role in capturing the attention and engagement of Malaysians across different age groups and demographics.

These statistics reveal a compelling narrative of TikTok's rapid evolution and growing influence in Malaysia. From its modest beginnings in 2018 with 1.18 million users, TikTok has witnessed exponential growth, amassing an impressive user base of 8.11 million in just five years. The platform's ability to resonate with Malaysians and provide an engaging platform for creative expression and content consumption has undoubtedly contributed to its meteoric rise, making it a vital part of the country's social media landscape. (TNR, 12, single spacing, justify)

### **Literature Review**

In today's digitally interconnected society, social media platforms have transformed into dynamic landscapes for communication and interaction, facilitating connections among individuals and offering avenues for convenience and efficiency (Gesmundo et al., 2022; Feldkamp, 2021). Among these platforms, TikTok has emerged as a notable contender, capturing the attention of modern society, particularly among younger generations, and demonstrating a distinct potential as a promoting tool. With over a billion active users globally, TikTok provides a unique space for users to share short, engaging videos that showcase their talents, interests, and perspectives. This paper explores into the multi-layered world of TikTok as a social media platform with unparalleled marketing advantages, presenting a comprehensive exploration of its potential within the context of higher education marketing.

#### ***Tiktok as One of Social Media Platform***

According to Gesmundo et.al. (2022) and Feldkamp, J. (2021), modern people use social networks to connect with one another. In today's society, there is a digital social landscape that allows for interactions while also providing convenience and efficiency. TikTok is a video-sharing social media platform that allows users to upload and watch content as they see fit. This study is deemed a resource to business owners, marketing students and professionals, and academic institutions that hope to generate further information on the existence of TikTok and its marketing advantage.

TikTok and Instagram are among the most prevalent and fast-growing social media channels employed by marketers to connect and interact with their desired demographics, Mou, J. B. (2020).

#### ***Tiktok as Marketing Tools***

One of the most popular social media is TikTok, which is developing rapidly. This efficient application was downloaded over 738 million times in 2019 and has climbed to 1,8 billion users worldwide by the end of 2022 (Business of Apps, 2023). TikTok is now available in a

variety of countries and languages. Furthermore, the number of TikTok users multiplies year after year, with more than 800 million active users monthly. 41% of users are between the ages of 16 and 24, and they spend an average of 52 minutes per day using this application Ma & Hu (2021). Given the number of active users on TikTok, this application could be a viable social media platform for marketers to approach and attract customers. TikTok includes valuable features such as videos that anyone can watch, like, and comment on in order for an influencer or marketer to introduce or sell a product or service Anderson, (2020).

TikTok is an application that allows users to create a video with a duration of 30 seconds to 3 minutes with different music. The TikTok application is a social media platform used in the system for the application user to upload a video, which is then shared with other users. Tiktok is the most popular and popular app among college students Wardah et al. (2020).

According to Yosep et al. (2021), TikTok is an affordable and entertaining solution for generating high-quality marketing content for digital marketing objectives. It enables the promotion and display of product activities across a diverse range of digital marketing channels, while also minimizing unnecessary expenditure.

TikTok is a social media platform that has grown rapidly in popularity, particularly among younger generations. As a result, many higher education institutions are now using TikTok as a marketing tool to promote their academic programs, campus culture, and student life to prospective students. There have been studies conducted in the past that have investigated the potential of TikTok as a platform for marketing.

According to Akbari et.al (2022), user-generated content on TikTok can significantly impact consumer engagement with higher education institutions. They found that TikTok users are more likely to engage with educational content that is easy to reach and interesting. Similarly, Brown and Wilson (2020) conducted a study on the influence of user-generated content on brand engagement in higher education marketing on TikTok. They found that user-generated content has a positive impact on brand engagement, particularly when the content is relevant, authentic, and engaging.

TikTok, according to Hao et. al. (2022), has a significant impact on young adults' perspectives, preferences, knowledge, and purchasing behavior. TikTok also can help to motivate users. Thus, by using TikTok higher education can engage with potential students by showcasing campus life, student activities, and academic offerings.

TikTok is a relatively new social media platform. Despite the fact that TikTok is a new social media platform, it already has a large number of active users. This popularity can be advantageous for digital marketing purposes, and many researchers have investigated TikTok's effectiveness in digital marketing Peng, (2021); Haenlein et al. (2020); Li et al. (2021).

Davis (2021) argues that educational institutions can leverage TikTok's user-generated content to connect with prospective students and build a strong brand image. The researcher suggests that institutions should focus on creating content that resonates with their target audiences, such as campus life, student experiences, and academic programs. In addition, the TikTok university accounts demonstrate the best effectiveness and the most brand-building value to the university target audience, Saiokhat Berdiieva, O. Goroshko (2022).

In conclusion, the literature suggests that TikTok can be an effective marketing tool for higher education institutions. The use of user-generated content has been found to significantly impact consumer engagement, leading to increased interest in educational institutions. Future research could explore how TikTok can be used to promote different types of educational programs and the impact of TikTok marketing on student enrolment.

### ***Tiktok Building Brand Awareness***

Rimadias.S et.al. (2021) suggests that TikTok can be used as a tool to build brand loyalty, awareness and image, and it is found that consumer brand engagement positively affects brand loyalty, brand awareness, and brand image. They found that TikTok is particularly effective in promoting institutions that offer creative or unique programs. Meanwhile, Johnson (2020) explored the effect of user-generated content on consumer engagement on TikTok in the context of higher education marketing. Her findings indicate that user-generated content can increase consumer engagement with educational institutions on TikTok.

Gesmundo et.al. (2022), this study discovered that TikTok marketing campaigns can significantly influence brand awareness among millennials. Thus, higher education can take advantage of these opportunities to attract potential students and use TikTok as a marketing tool.

Gumalang et.al. (2022), mention that, concurrently content marketing, influencers, and psychological factors have a significant impact on TikTok advertising brand awareness among university students. Content marketers are encouraged to constantly improve their strategies in order to provide the most recent breakthroughs and build relationships with customers and potential customers in order to increase consumer brand awareness. It can be concluded that TikTok is recognised as one of the marketing tools that are able to build brand awareness.

### **Methodology**

The systematic literature review approach undertaken in this study on the effectiveness of TikTok as a marketing tool for higher education institutions involves a comprehensive examination of existing scholarly research, empirical studies, and industry reports. By synthesizing and analyzing a diverse range of literature, this approach seeks to gain understanding of the strategies, outcomes, challenges, and potential of utilizing TikTok for marketing purposes in the higher education sector. Through this method, the study aims to provide a rigorous foundation for evaluating TikTok's role as a contemporary and innovative marketing avenue for higher education.

### **Conclusion**

Over the past few years, TikTok has risen to become one of the most popular social media platforms, particularly among younger audiences. Recognizing its potential as a marketing tool, higher education institutions have started to utilize TikTok to reach and engage with prospective students.

One key advantage of using TikTok for higher education marketing is the platform's ability to showcase the unique culture and personality of a higher education provider to wider audiences. By creating and sharing short-form videos, higher education institutions can highlight various aspects of campus life, student experiences, and academic programs, effectively differentiating their institution from competitors and attracting students who are a good fit for their culture and values. TikTok also presents an opportunity for higher education institutions to reach a



broader audience, particularly international students, given the platform's global reach. By creating content that is relevant and engaging to international students, higher education providers can effectively promote their brand and increase visibility in the market.

The investigation into TikTok's role as a potent marketing tool within the realm of higher education reveals interesting insights into its potential and effectiveness. With its meteoric rise, TikTok has garnered immense popularity, particularly among the younger demographic, positioning itself as an influential medium for engagement, Mou, J. B. (2020). This platform's ascent has presented a unique avenue for educational institutions aiming to establish new connections with potential students. Beyond its role as a channel for creative expression, TikTok provides an authentic channel through which higher education entities can showcase their academic offerings and campus life styles. The study underscores the potential of TikTok's video format and its engaging attributes to captivate and intrigue potential students, highlighting its viability as a platform for promoting academic programs, Saiokhat Berdiieva, O. Goroshko (2022). However, this potential centre on the strategic construction of content, resonating with the platform's Furthermore, the study recognizes the influential role of user-generated content on TikTok, which augments consumer engagement and positively influences brand recognition and perception, making TikTok an enticing avenue for enhancing brand loyalty and awareness, Gesmundo et.al. (2022).

The findings also shed light on the imperative of strategic planning and optimization, necessitated by TikTok's distinctive attributes. While the platform's marketing potential is obvious, certain challenges persist. The study underscores the significance of precision in content delivery due to TikTok's concise video format and limited targeting capabilities. In light of this, educational institutions are encouraged to craft content that not only captures attention but also adeptly communicates the distinct attributes of their academic programs, Gumalang et.al. (2022).

In summary, TikTok can serve as a powerful marketing tool for higher education institutions seeking to reach and engage prospective students. By leveraging the platform's unique features, higher education institutions can effectively increase brand awareness and promote their distinct culture and personality.

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