



## Optimizing Tiktok For Enhancing Brand Awareness In MSMEs: A Case Study of Kopi Toko Tua

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Tiktok; brand awareness; digital marketing

### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study investigates the strategic use of TikTok to enhance brand awareness at the MSME Kopi Toko Tua, focusing on its role in engaging Gen Z consumers and strengthening brand identity. **Methodology:** This research adopts a qualitative case study approach using in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation involving the business owner, marketing team, and selected customers. The collected data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. **Results:** The results indicate that storytelling-based content, vintage-modern visual aesthetics, and soft-selling communication strategies effectively increase audience engagement and foster emotional connections with the brand. However, inconsistent posting schedules and limited utilization of TikTok's interactive features were identified as key challenges limiting optimal performance. **Novelty:** This study highlights TikTok as a lifestyle-driven branding platform rather than merely a promotional tool for MSMEs. **Findings:** Audience segmentation, lifestyle-oriented narratives, and responsiveness to trending content are critical in shaping positive consumer perceptions and encouraging offline purchase decisions. **Originality:** The originality of this study lies in its focus on TikTok-based narrative branding within a local MSME context, which remains underexplored in prior social media marketing studies. **Conclusions:** Strategic and consistent use of TikTok content can significantly enhance brand awareness and consumer engagement for MSMEs. **Type of Paper:** Qualitative Case Study.

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed global communication and business landscapes. In Indonesia, this digital transformation has deeply affected Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which play a vital role in the national economy. MSMEs contribute approximately 61.07 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and absorb more than 97 percent of the national workforce (Kemenkeu.go.id, 2024). One of the most prominent impacts of this shift is the emergence of social media as a powerful marketing platform. Among various platforms, TikTok has seen exponential growth. As of 2024, Indonesia has become TikTok's largest user base, with 157.6 million active users (Kompas.com, 2024). This development

offers both promising opportunities and significant challenges for MSMEs, especially in adapting to changing consumer behavior influenced by algorithm-based, short-form video content.

From a marketing theory perspective, social media supports direct interaction, emotional engagement, and sustained brand communication. The integrated marketing communication framework (Kotler and Keller, 2016) highlights the importance of consistent and personalized messaging in cultivating strong consumer relationships. TikTok's content distribution algorithm favors relevance and engagement, which allows small businesses to achieve virality despite having a modest number of followers. Furthermore, Aaker's theory of brand awareness (1996) underscores visibility, recognition, and emotional appeal as key components in building customer loyalty. These theoretical foundations suggest that TikTok has the potential to serve as an effective branding tool for MSMEs. Nevertheless, many MSMEs in Indonesia encounter difficulties in creating impactful content due to limited digital competence, insufficient planning, and inconsistent content management (Haoe et al., 2023; Maulida Sari and Setiyana, 2020).

Previous studies have largely concentrated on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and e-commerce marketplaces when analyzing digital marketing strategies for MSMEs (Abidin Achmad et al., 2020; Rahayu et al., 2020). While these platforms have supported the digitalization of MSME marketing, research that specifically addresses the unique storytelling features of TikTok remains scarce. In particular, there is limited scholarly attention on how MSMEs can utilize TikTok's visual, short-form format for storytelling that enhances emotional connections with consumers. Prior literature suggests that narrative-based content can strengthen audience engagement by fostering authenticity and relatability (Rimadias et al., 2021). Given the interactive nature of TikTok, the platform appears well-suited for such strategies, yet this potential has not been fully explored in either academic research or MSME practice.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the strategic use of TikTok by MSMEs with a focus on storytelling, visual coherence, and user interaction. The research is centered on Kopi Toko Tua, a local coffee shop in Bandung that actively uses TikTok but has not yet optimized its content strategy. Initial observations show inconsistencies in posting themes and schedules, as well as limited utilization of participatory features. This study is grounded in Aaker's theory of brand awareness and supported by concepts from digital visual communication, including emotional resonance and interactive design. The research aims to (1) examine the TikTok content strategy implemented by Kopi Toko Tua, (2) evaluate its effectiveness in increasing brand awareness, and (3) explore audience perceptions and engagement with the content. This study contributes to the theoretical discourse on social media branding and offers practical insights for MSMEs seeking to build strong brand identities through platform-specific content strategies.

## METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the strategies employed by Kopi Toko Tua, a local MSME, in utilizing TikTok to enhance brand awareness. The qualitative method was selected to gain an in-depth and contextual understanding of complex phenomena and the subjective experiences of key actors involved in digital marketing. This aligns with Sugiyono's (2019) argument that qualitative research is suitable for exploring individual and group behaviors, motivations, and perceptions in natural settings using methods such as in-depth interviews and direct observations. Focusing on a single case allows for a detailed exploration of content strategy, audience interaction, and the broader implications of TikTok usage for brand development.

The data collection process followed a structured qualitative framework comprising four stages: (1) defining research indicators, (2) identifying key informants, (3) conducting field data collection through interviews and observations, and (4) triangulating data sources. This framework is illustrated in Figure 1 (see below), which outlines the interaction between research questions, instruments, informants, and analysis stages.

Data were obtained through structured and unstructured interviews, direct observation of the official TikTok account (@kopitokotua), and documentation review. The key informants were selected purposively based on their roles in social media strategy and direct experience with the brand. These included the business owner, two marketing team members, and four customers familiar with the brand's TikTok content. Interview questions were guided by predefined indicators such as content theme, visual style, emotional messaging, and audience engagement. Observations

focused on posting patterns, use of TikTok features (e.g., effects, sounds, captions), and the consistency of visual identity.

The primary data sources were field interviews and observational notes, while secondary data included internal marketing reports, academic references, and statistical data on TikTok usage (Harmoni & Bangsa, 2023; Kara, 2023). The researcher acted as the main instrument, applying reflexivity, adaptability, and situational awareness during data collection (Bichi et al., 2019).

To ensure credibility, this study applied triangulation across three dimensions:

- Source triangulation, by comparing insights from business owners, marketing staff, and customers;
- Technique triangulation, by combining interviews, observations, and document analysis;
- Time triangulation, by conducting data collection at multiple intervals to verify consistency over time (Susanto et al., 2023).

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman (1994) interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

- In the data reduction stage, raw data were transcribed and categorized based on recurring codes such as “storytelling structure,” “visual consistency,” “content frequency,” and “audience interaction.”
- In the data display stage, patterns were visualized through thematic matrices and narrative summaries. For example, one theme “Emotional Branding through Storytelling” emerged from repeated mentions of customer feelings toward nostalgic content and behind-the-scenes videos.
- The conclusion drawing/verification process was conducted inductively, using constant comparison across data sources and seeking saturation of key insights.

Table 1 below presents an example of initial coding categories developed during the data reduction phase:

**Table 1. Sample Initial Coding Categories and Emerging Themes**

Code	Description	Emerging Theme
SC-1: Story Clip Format	Short video using narrative sequences	Structured storytelling
VC-2: Visual Consistency	Use of colors, filters, and typography	Brand identity through visual design
FQ-3: Posting Frequency	Gaps or regularity in content uploads	Engagement inconsistency
UI-4: User Interaction	Responses to comments or challenges	Audience participation and feedback

This methodological design not only provides a comprehensive understanding of how TikTok functions as a storytelling platform for MSMEs but also allows for evidence-based recommendations to enhance brand awareness through strategic digital content planning.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the research based on observations, interviews, and documentation involving both business actors and customers of the MSME Kopi Toko Tua. The primary focus of the study is the optimization of TikTok as a tool to enhance content interaction and stimulate purchase intention. The results are delivered descriptively using qualitative analysis techniques, emphasizing meaning and interpretation as experienced by the subjects involved.

Fieldwork was conducted from April to May 2025 at the Kopi Toko Tua café located in Bandung. The café combines vintage and modern minimalist design, creating a photogenic and relaxing atmosphere. This ambiance supports aesthetically pleasing visuals and is frequently used as a backdrop for TikTok content production. Observations revealed that daily activities among the

team centered on content creation. The marketing staff routinely used smartphones, tripods, and mobile editing apps like CapCut to record and edit videos directly on-site. Customers often contributed by reacting spontaneously or participating in planned content. This organic interaction aligns with TikTok's participatory culture.

Visual storytelling was deeply embedded into the café's operations. For example, a dedicated manual brewing station served dual functions as a working space and a filming location. Behind-the-scenes videos that capture authentic moments were shared frequently and well-received, strengthening emotional connections between the brand and its followers.

Interviews with the internal team (IU1, IU2) and customers (IP1, IP2) confirmed the strategic use of storytelling. IU2 described the content planning process, which focused on themes such as the café's origin story, weekly drink specials, and community collaborations. IU1 emphasized the emotional narrative around the café's identity, targeting a young, creative demographic. IP2, a loyal customer, expressed emotional attachment to the brand after engaging with visually pleasing and story-driven videos. However, IP1 noted that despite discovering the brand through TikTok, not all content maintained the same level of appeal or relevance.

Although the account had reached 18,700 followers by May 2025 up from around 9,000 in January 2024 engagement rates remained inconsistent. Some videos garnered over 30,000 views, while others failed to exceed 1,000. IU2 acknowledged the limited use of features such as trending audio and duet/challenge formats. Weekly evaluations were conducted, but real-time responsiveness to trend cycles remained underdeveloped.

**Table 2. Summary of Thematic Findings from Field Data**

Theme	Description	Supporting Data
Storytelling and Emotional Branding	Use of origin stories and visual aesthetics to build emotional connection	IU2 interview; IP2 testimony; observation of content
Visual Consistency and Aesthetic	Minimalist vintage visuals applied across TikTok content and café design	On-site observation; content review
Audience Interaction	Customers involved in filming; comments and DMs as feedback loops	Observation; IP2 and IU2 interview
Strategic Planning and Scheduling	Weekly content themes, scheduled posting, use of CapCut and analytics	IU2 statement; content calendar documentation
Underutilization of TikTok Features	Rare use of challenges, trending sounds, or duet features	IU2 interview; analytics comparison

## DISCUSSION

The findings show that one of Kopi Toko Tua's main strategies in using TikTok is the integration of narrative storytelling and visual consistency. This aligns with Aaker's (1991) theory that brand awareness can be strengthened through emotional and sensory stimuli. The use of nostalgic design and authentic content enhances relatability and recall, especially among younger audiences who prioritize lifestyle alignment in brand perception.

These observations support Rimadiaz et al. (2021), who argue that storytelling can significantly influence brand loyalty when executed with emotional appeal. TikTok's format, which favors concise, visual narratives, complements this approach. Content such as behind-the-scenes videos and customer reactions promotes intimacy and community feeling. IP2's feedback confirms that such content made them feel like "part of the brand," rather than just a buyer.

However, this strategy faces limitations. As Almrafee (2023) notes, consistency in thematic focus and posting frequency is vital to maintaining visibility. The brand's inconsistent engagement patterns highlight missed opportunities for growth. Despite increased followers and some high-performing videos, Kopi Toko Tua's performance fluctuates, likely due to inconsistent integration with platform trends and user-generated content (UGC). Genoveva (2022) emphasizes the importance of utilizing TikTok's interactive tools, which are underused by the brand.

This is further reinforced by Kotler et al. (2022), who stress that consumers are no longer passive audiences but co-creators of brand meaning. The limited use of features like duet or stitch reduces the opportunity for virality and audience participation. Although weekly planning is in place, the content lacks real-time responsiveness, which is crucial for a platform as dynamic as TikTok.

In practical terms, the study reveals that the café has successfully established a basic content infrastructure but needs improvement in analytics application, trend adaptation, and community-driven content. The observed growth in followers and brand visibility suggests positive momentum. However, compared to the pre-TikTok period when customer discovery relied heavily on word-of-mouth and Instagram the TikTok presence has contributed to a 40 percent increase in first-time visits (based on internal data from IU1). This transition from online discovery to offline action confirms TikTok's value in driving foot traffic through emotional branding.

This study expands the literature on MSME branding by demonstrating that TikTok is not merely a promotional space, but a platform for narrative-based identity building. It reinforces Kartajaya's (2022) view that emotional and lifestyle-oriented branding is more effective for contemporary consumers than hard-selling approaches. This study expands the literature on MSME branding by demonstrating that TikTok is not merely a promotional space, but a platform for narrative-based identity building. It reinforces Kartajaya's (2022) view that emotional and lifestyle-oriented branding is more effective for contemporary consumers than hard-selling approaches. This research is limited in scope, focusing on a single business in a specific urban setting. The qualitative nature and small sample size restrict generalizability. Additionally, the fast-paced evolution of TikTok's algorithm means that insights may require continual updating. Future research could employ comparative or longitudinal approaches, or integrate quantitative metrics (such as engagement ratios or conversion rates) to complement narrative findings.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the strategic utilization of TikTok as a digital marketing platform significantly enhances content engagement and boosts consumer purchase intention, particularly among Generation Z. Kopi Toko Tua successfully applies historical storytelling and a strong visual identity to build brand awareness and emotional connection. However, consistency in engagement remains a challenge because platform features such as trending audio, interactive formats, and scheduled posting have not been fully utilized. These findings align with the research objectives and emphasize the importance of creative, audience-oriented content in influencing digital consumer behavior.

### Contributions

This research makes several key contributions that can be grouped into theoretical, practical, and methodological aspects.

- Theoretical contribution: The study extends the discussion of emotional branding in digital platforms by demonstrating how narrative-based content on TikTok fosters emotional resonance with consumers. It adds to the limited academic literature on MSME digital marketing strategies using short-video platforms.
- Practical contribution: The findings provide practical insights for MSME practitioners, showing that soft-selling and culturally grounded storytelling outperform traditional promotional tactics. These approaches are particularly effective in appealing to younger, digitally savvy audiences.
- Methodological contribution: By combining content analysis with consumer interviews, the study presents a replicable model for exploring consumer behavior on social media. It highlights the value of qualitative methods in capturing nuanced user experiences and content perceptions.

### Recommendations for Practice and Research

For practitioners, it is recommended to adopt a more consistent content schedule and fully explore TikTok's features, such as trending audio, interactive polls, and duet formats. Content should remain authentic and aligned with the brand's cultural identity to maintain relevance and build stronger customer relationships. Future research should consider a longitudinal design to evaluate how content influences customer retention over time. Broadening the research scope to include MSMEs in different sectors or regions can improve the applicability of the findings. Additionally, experimental studies comparing different content strategies can help identify the most

effective formats for fostering engagement and driving purchasing decisions among diverse consumer segments.

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