Viral Content Impact on Local Brand Growth

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Abstract

This research analyzes the influence of viral marketing, content type, and content quality on the development of local brands on the TikTok platform, with user retention as an intervening variable. Living in the digital era, TikTok has become one of the most effective platforms to establish brand awareness by creating viral marketing that can attract the users' attention widely. Aside from that, diverse forms of content and quality of the content published will also exert a significant effect on developing positive perceptions toward local brands. The quantitative approach of this study collected data from questionnaires circulated to users on TikTok who have engaged in any form of activity with a local brand on the platform.

The path analysis model test shall be among the independent variables: viral marketing, content type, and content quality; intervening variable: user retention; and dependent variable, which is local brand development. From the research findings, it follows that viral marketing, content type, and content quality are significantly affecting user retention, affecting local brand development. Retention of users has been cited as the most influential aspect in solidifying the relationship between the efficiency of marketing strategies on TikTok and the performance of local brands. The contribution of this study will be towards the strategies of digital marketing, especially on how to use social media as an effective tool in raising brand awareness and building consumer loyalty.

Keyword: Viral Marketing, Content Type, Content Quality, User Retention, Development of Local Brand.

1. Introduction

As we all know, the digital scene has quite possibly been evolving at a record pace to this very day, and TikTok is already one of the foremost names in terms of social media engagement and marketing. TikTok became one of the fastest-growing platforms in the world, enabling local names to broaden their audience and create brand recognition via word-of-mouth viral marketing and compelling video content. Viral marketing exploits the power of TikTok algorithm to showcase user-generated and shareable content allowing brands to get maximum exposure at minimum advertising expense. Putting user interaction at the forefront allows brands to increase engagement and retention, both of which are essential for long-term growth.

One of the main reasons behind TikTok's success is the various types of content that can be offered to users, educational, entertaining or promotional materials and all such materials are relatively less in length, which suits different kinds of users. This flexibility enables local brands to formulate campaigns that are personal and emotionally relatable, complementing the effectiveness of their overall marketing strategy. In addition, the quality of the content is very important for building trust and loyalty. Elements like creativity, aesthetics and clarity play a key role in driving visitors to engage with content so much that they come back for more jumping into the funnel each time becoming a customer.

This paper investigates simultaneous impact of viral marketing, content type (entertaining & informative) and content quality on the development of local brands in TikTok with mediating role played by user retention. Local brands can identify aspects of these dynamics to construct effective experience strategies to maintain advantages in the digital marketplace. The discoveries are intended to give actionable understanding on how online media, for example, TikTok can enable independent companies to associate with their crowd and enterprise development reasonably.

2. Literature Review

2.1 User Experience

Viral marketing refers to the rapid spread of information through social media interactions, enabling brands to achieve massive visibility without substantial advertising costs. Moldovan et al. (2019) emphasize that creativity and informativeness are critical to the success of viral campaigns. TikTok's algorithm, which prioritizes high-engagement content, facilitates the distribution of viral materials, allowing brands to leverage user-generated content for organic reach and engagement. The platform's hashtag challenges, often amplified by influencers, further demonstrate the potential of viral marketing in fostering consumer participation and strengthening brand awareness.

2.2 Content Type

The type of content significantly impacts user engagement and the effectiveness of marketing strategies. Omar and Dequan (2020) highlight that educational and entertaining content resonates more deeply with TikTok users, making it more likely to be shared and

discussed. Local brands often utilize promotional content, such as discounts and special offers, to drive conversions while maintaining an engaging and user-friendly approach. By tailoring content types to audience preferences, brands can create campaigns that not only capture attention but also encourage long-term interactions.

2.3 Content Quality

High-quality content, encompassing clarity, creativity, and visual appeal, is pivotal in attracting user attention and fostering engagement. According to Smith et al. (2020), visually appealing and creatively designed content can significantly enhance user retention and loyalty. On TikTok, content quality also reflects a brand's professionalism, influencing consumer trust and perceptions. Effective content strategies involve balancing technical aspects, such as video resolution and audio clarity, with compelling storytelling that aligns with brand values and audience expectations.

2.4 User Retention

User retention measures the extent to which users remain engaged with a brand over time. TikTok's engagement-first algorithm encourages recurring interactions, making it a vital metric for evaluating the success of marketing campaigns. Jones et al. (2020) argue that consistent and relevant content is key to maintaining user interest and fostering loyalty. High retention rates not only enhance brand visibility but also translate into stronger consumer relationships, which are essential for sustained growth in competitive digital markets.

2.5 Local Brand Development

Local brands can utilize TikTok's features to enhance their market presence, increase engagement, and drive sales conversions. Feng et al. (2019) highlight that the platform's ability to amplify content through user interactions makes it a powerful tool for scaling brand awareness. By integrating viral marketing, diverse content types, and high-quality visuals, local brands can establish meaningful connections with their audiences, fostering loyalty and encouraging repeat purchases. TikTok provides a cost-effective solution for local businesses aiming to compete in a global marketplace.

3. Material and Method

This study employs a quantitative research approach to analyze the effects of viral marketing, content type, and content quality on local brand development, with user retention acting as a mediating variable. The research focuses on TikTok as the primary social media platform due to its significant role in shaping user engagement and brand interactions. The data collection was conducted through an online survey, distributed between October 2024 and November 2024. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, targeting TikTok users in Indonesia who had interacted with local brand content at least once in the past three months. This sampling method ensured that the collected data was directly relevant to the research objectives, focusing on individuals who actively engaged with TikTok's features. The questionnaire was structured to capture insights into the respondents' perceptions of TikTok's

marketing features, including their experiences with viral marketing campaigns, preferences for content types, and evaluations of content quality. Additionally, the survey aimed to assess how these factors influenced their retention and loyalty to local brands. To ensure validity and reliability, the survey questions were pre-tested on a small group of TikTok users before full-scale distribution.

3.1 Design Study

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3.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS version 4.0, a robust software tool for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This method was chosen for its suitability in handling complex models with multiple variables and small sample sizes. The software facilitated the evaluation of the measurement model (validity and reliability) and the structural model (hypothesis testing and path analysis). The measurement model was tested for convergent validity, using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores of 0.50 or higher as the threshold, and composite reliability values above 0.70 to confirm internal consistency. Discriminant validity was assessed by ensuring that the square root of each AVE was greater than the correlation coefficients with other constructs. The structural model was evaluated using R-square values to determine the explanatory power of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Higher R-square values indicated a stronger predictive relationship within the model. Hypothesis testing was performed to analyze the significance of the relationships between variables, with a p-value threshold of 0.05 used to determine statistical significance. Both direct and indirect effects were examined to understand the role of user retention as a mediator. Mediation analysis employed the Variance Accounted For (VAF) method to assess whether the mediating variable fully or partially explained the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Full mediation was concluded when the direct effect became insignificant after accounting for the mediating variable, while partial mediation was

determined when both direct and indirect effects were significant. This methodological approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how viral marketing, content type, and content quality influence local brand development through user retention. By integrating advanced statistical techniques, the study offers actionable insights for local brands aiming to leverage TikTok for sustainable growth and competitive advantage in the digital marketplace. The research model can be seen as follows:

Figure 1. Research Model

4. Result

This study employs a methodology to assess how local brand development and user retention are impacted by viral marketing, content type, and content quality. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) procedure produced the data. The analysis's findings indicate that, with the biggest association in this model (a path coefficient value of 0.685), Viral Marketing (X1) significantly affects Local Brand Development (Y). Although the value is quite low, other factors like Content Type (X2) also have an impact on Local Brand Development (Y) of 0.070. Furthermore, with a value of 0.249, Content Quality (X3) has a considerable impact on Local Brand Development (Y). On the other hand, the direct effect of Content Type (X2) on the User Retention variable (Z) is seen at 0.162, is higher than the Content Quality (X3) effect, which is only 0.148. However, with a coefficient value of 0.304, viral marketing (X1) contributes comparatively little to user retention (Z). According to the test results, the latent construction value of Local Brand Development (Y) has an R-Square score of 0.713. This indicates that Viral Marketing, Content Type, and Content Quality account for 71.3% of the variation in Local Brand Development, with other variables outside the model accounting for the remaining portion. In contrast, the User Retention (Z) R-Square is 0.433, meaning that Viral Marketing, Content Type, and Content Quality account for 43.3% of the variation in User Retention, with other factors outside the model.

Table 1. Results of Convergent Validity with AVE (Average Variance Extracted)

Variabel	AVE	Criteria	Result
Viral Marketing (X1)	0,615	0,50	Valid
Content Type (X2)	0,650	0,50	Valid
Content Quality (X3)	0,728	0,50	Valid
Local Brand Development (Y)	0,763	0,50	Valid
User Retention (Z)	0,848	0,50	Valid

Source: SmartPLS4 Output, processed by the researcher, 2024

Based on Table 4.2, the results of the convergent validity test using AVE indicate that all indicators of variables X1, X2, X3, Y, and Z are deemed valid, as the loading factor values meet the criteria of > 0.5. The average variance extracted (AVE) values greater than 0.5 indicate that the research instruments are of good quality and reliable. Therefore, the indicators in this questionnaire are appropriate and accurate for use as measurement tools.

4.1 Data Reliability Test

This test aims to evaluate the reliability of the statements in the questionnaire. Accordingly, it is expected that these statements can produce consistent and accurate data. If the composite reliability (rho_a), composite reliability (rho_c), and Cronbach's alpha values of a variable exceed 0.7, the variable is considered to meet the reliability standards.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variabel	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Criteria	Result
Viral Marketing (X1)	0.951	0.952	0.963	>0,70	Reliabel
Content Type (X2)	0.845	0.864	0.888	>0,70	Reliabel
Content Quality (X3)	0.865	0.871	0.903	>0,70	Reliabel
Local Brand Development (Y)	0.922	0.927	0.941	>0,70	Reliabel
User Retention (Z)	0.850	0.855	0.894	>0,70	Reliabel

Source: SmartPLS4 Output, processed by the researcher, 2024

Based on Table 4.3, the results of the reliability test indicate that all statement items for variables X1, X2, X3, Y, and Z are deemed reliable. This is evidenced by the composite reliability (rho_a), composite reliability (rho_c), and Cronbach's alpha values, which meet the criteria of > 0.7. Therefore, the indicators in the research questionnaire can be considered consistent and reliable measurement tools.

4.2 Model Fit Test

The PLS model is considered to meet the model fit criteria if the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value is < 0.10 and the Normed Fit Index (NFI) is > 0.9. Based on Table 4.4, the SRMR test results show a value of 0.073, which is below the 0.10 threshold, thus meeting the model fit criteria. However, the NFI value of 0.764 is still below 0.9, indicating that it does not meet the model fit criteria as the value is not sufficiently high.

Table 3. Model Fit Test Results

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.073	0.073
d_ULS	1.721	1.721
d_G	1.122	1.122
Chi-square	564.187	564.187
NFI	0.764	0.764

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed by the researcher, 2024

4.3 Variance Inflation Factor Test

The multicollinearity test aims to identify whether there is a correlation between independent variables in the regression model (Ghozali, 2016). The presence of multicollinearity can be observed through the tolerance value and variance inflation factor (VIF). Ideally, the VIF value should be less than 5.0. If the VIF value exceeds 5.0, it indicates the existence of collinearity between variables within the structure (Sarstedt et al., 2017).

Table 4. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Test Results

	VIF
X1.1	3.958
X1.2	3.065
X1.3	3.519
X1.4	13.157

X1.5	15.986
X2.1	2.145
X2.2	1.832
X2.3	1.694
X2.4	1.690
X2.5	2.280
X3.1	1.981
X3.2	2.074
X3.3	1.920
X3.4	2.407
X3.5	1.871
Y1	2.803
Y2	2.429
Y3	2.774
Y4	1.942
Y5	3.415
Z1	3.040
Z2	3.280
Z3	2.823
Z4	3.020
Z5	2.554

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed by the researcher, 2024

Based on the test results in Table 4.9, most of the question items have VIF values < 5.0, except for X1.4 with a value of 13.157 and X1.5 with a value of 15.986. This indicates the presence of collinearity between constructs for these two items, as their VIF values exceed the ideal threshold of 5.0. Therefore, it can be concluded that the research instrument shows potential collinearity in certain constructs that need to be addressed.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

The primary purpose of hypothesis testing is to determine, based on the available data, whether the null hypothesis can be rejected and the alternative hypothesis can be accepted, or vice versa.

4.5 Direct and Indirect Relationships Between Variables

Direct hypothesis testing aims to evaluate whether exogenous variables have either a direct or indirect influence. This testing uses path coefficients and p-values as the basis for analysis. Decisions are made based on the following criteria: if the p-value at a 5% significance level is > 0.05, then H0 is rejected; if the p-value at a 5% significance level is < 0.05 and the t-statistic > 1.96, then H0 is accepted; and if the t-statistic < 1.96, then H0 is rejected. The complete results of direct hypothesis testing are presented in the following table

Table 5. Results of Direct and Indirect Hypothesis Testing

Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values	Conc
X1 -> Z	0.304	0.305	0.149	2.036	0.042	Accepted
X2 -> Z	0.070	0.085	0.099	0.704	0.481	Rejected
X3 -> Z	0.249	0.229	0.130	1.906	0.057	Accepted
X1 -> Y -> Z	0.094	0.093	0.124	0.762	0.446	Rejected
X2 -> Y -> Z	0.023	0.024	0.044	0.529	0.597	Rejected
X3 -> Y -> Z	0.024	0.028	0.044	0.547	0.584	Rejected

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed by the researcher, 2024

This study demonstrates that there are six hypotheses to be tested overall to determine whether the relationships are significant or not.

5. Discussion

This study uses a quantitative approach to analyze the impact of viral marketing, content type, and content quality on local brand development on the TikTok platform, with user retention as a mediating variable. Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0, including validity tests, reliability tests, model fit assessments, and hypothesis testing. The validity test results indicate that all indicators have AVE values above 0.50, demonstrating that convergent validity is met. Reliability test results also show Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability values for all variables exceeding 0.70, making the data reliable. The model fit assessment yields an SRMR value of 0.073, which meets the model fit criteria, although the NFI value of 0.764 has not reached the threshold of 0.9. Based on the hypothesis testing, viral marketing (X1) shows a positive and significant influence on user retention (Z) with a T-statistic value of 2.036 (> 1.96) and a P-value of 0.042 (< 0.05). This indicates that well-designed viral campaigns can enhance user engagement and loyalty to local brands on TikTok. However, content type (X2) does not have a significant influence on user retention,

as reflected by a T-statistic value of 0.704 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.481 (> 0.05). Content quality (X3) also shows a positive relationship but is not yet statistically significant concerning user retention, with a T-statistic value of 1.906 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.057 (> 0.05).

The mediation effect test reveals that local brand development (Y) is not yet able to mediate the relationship between viral marketing, content type, and content quality with user retention. These results emphasize the importance of more direct strategies focusing on user engagement to strengthen the relationships between these variables. This study highlights the significance of viral marketing in enhancing user retention, particularly through relevant and interactive content. However, content type and quality need to be supported by other strategic elements to create a more significant impact on user loyalty. In the context of local brand development, focusing on marketing strategies that target direct user engagement is more effective than relying solely on the mediation effect of local brand development. Local brands on TikTok can leverage the platform's algorithm to strengthen user engagement by creating relevant, engaging, and sustainable content.

6. Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations

This study found that viral marketing has a positive and significant influence on user retention on the TikTok platform. This indicates that well-designed viral marketing strategies, such as interactive campaigns and relevant content, can drive higher user engagement. However, content type does not have a significant influence on user retention, suggesting that users may prioritize other factors such as content quality or relevance over its category. Content quality shows a positive tendency toward user retention, although its influence is not statistically significant. These findings highlight that aspects such as creativity and visual appeal are important but may not be sufficient to sustain user engagement without the support of other elements such as personalization or contextual relevance. Furthermore, the study indicates that user retention plays an important role in strengthening the relationship between marketing strategies and local brand development, although the mediating effect of this variable is not statistically strong. This suggests that to more effectively drive local brand development, businesses need to focus on multiple strategic elements, including enhancing content quality, campaign relevance, and marketing innovation. The findings of this study underscore the importance of using TikTok as a cost-effective marketing tool for local brands to build consumer awareness and loyalty. However, the study also recommends adopting a more in-depth and personalized approach to improving user retention and achieving long-term success in the competitive digital marketplace. For future research, it is suggested to explore other factors that may influence user retention and the success of local brands, such as content personalization or community engagement, to gain more comprehensive insights into the dynamics of marketing on social media platforms.

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