

CROSS-CULTURAL EXAMINATION OF SAMSUNG'S MARKETING STRATEGIES ON
DOUYIN AND TIKTOK

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ABSTRACT

Wenxin Chen: Cross-cultural examination of Samsung's marketing strategies on Douyin and TikTok (Under the direction of Eva Zhao)

This thesis project aims to investigate the use and effects of tech companies' content marketing strategies on Douyin and TikTok through a cross-cultural case study on Samsung. Qualitative content analysis is used to analyze Samsung's 60 high-performing and low-performing Douyin and TikTok posts to examine the use of content gratification factors and the executions of the hashtag, influencer and metanarrative strategies. Quantitative sentiment analysis is used on 1,400 comments to evaluate public feedback through engagement and sentiment scores. Based on a modified internet gratification framework, results revealed a consistent focus on information-seeking, personal status and aesthetic experience gratifications among marketers and audiences across cultures with failed content motivations of monetary compensation and diversion. Qualitative content examinations also indicated a potentially culture-based strategy use and effects on Douyin and TikTok. As metanarrative outweighs other strategies with culturally consistent central and supportive narrative patterns, hashtag and influencer strategies attained moderately supportive engagement and sentiment with successful challenge-focused hashtags on TikTok and effective influencer and brand partnership tactics on Douyin. While experience sharing and group recognition remain part of the primary focuses in user comments, user-driven organic sharing was also a significant comment function for Douyin users. While future research is required for more generalizable results among tech brands, all the preliminary results and analyses shed light on the existing marketing patterns and user interactions for the current tech marketing strategies on TikTok and Douyin while offering exploratory culture-based perspectives for cross-cultural TikTok marketing campaigns.

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1. Introduction

As one of the most fast-paced industries worldwide, the information technology (IT) industry, a compound collection of IT services, computer and telecom equipment, and software (Information Technology Global, 2022), is facing a multitude of challenges. According to the Information Technology Global Market Report (2022), the global IT industry is expected to experience an 11.2% growth rate in the 2022 financial year, marking a \$ 9,325.69 billion global market value by the end of 2022. Despite the growth, vast challenges of public distrust, talent competition, and skillset gaps have also arisen due to the continual impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the high-profile data breaches over the past year (Ravid & Englund, 2022). While a series of the financial and political impacts caused by the pandemic would potentially fade out, the increasingly challenging industrial competition and public distrust will continue (Keller et al., 2011) and thus requires the companies to take strategic actions in marketing and communication.

As the companies maintain their marketing focus on traditional platforms like Facebook and Twitter (Seyyedamiri & Tajrobehkar, 2019), TikTok has attracted companies given its increasing number of users and higher return on investment (ROI) rates (Cohen, 2022). While Facebook lost 46% readership for its sponsored ad between 2021 and 2022 (Abel, 2021), TikTok can retain audiences with a 31% purchase rate of 61% over other platforms (TikTok, 2022). This signifies a promising solution to tech companies' ongoing public distrust and lack of online interactions.

Past research has examined TikTok's video posts and viewer motivations in political advertising and public health campaigns. However, few have taken technology companies and brands as a specific subject despite public distrust and the lack of awareness of the products and technologies (Ravid & Englund, 2022). Moreover, past comparative studies on Douyin and TikTok have primarily focused on quantitative analysis to identify general patterns in the

narrative settings, yet have failed to evaluate the causes or effects of those intercultural differences. This study provides a targeted analysis of tech companies' industrial marketing issues and takes TikTok's experience-sharing focus and cultural orientations into consideration.

This study is intended to be a case study for a cross-national, comparative analysis. Samsung is selected as the subject for the cross-national case study with over 1.5 million followers on both Douyin and TikTok platforms and active user engagements of 500 per post from July to December 2022. This is to ensure the effectiveness and timeliness of the investigated strategies.

The purpose of the case study is to investigate Samsung's current content marketing strategies and the potentially culturally focused effects for Chinese Douyin and the US-based TikTok based on the narrative settings, engagement, and comments. While the uses and gratifications theory (UGT) works as the theoretical framework that focuses on the motives and gratifications of marketers and media users, a series of analyses on social media marketing strategies from the use of hashtags and narratives to influencer marketing look into specific viewer gratifications in specific needs across cultures. To examine the narrative and presentation patterns among TikTok videos, texts and comments, the study analyzed 60 posts (30 Douyin posts, 30 TikTok posts) and 1,400 comments (500 Douyin comments, 900 TikTok comments) between July and December 2022. Each post set includes 15 highest-engagement (i.e., the sum of likes, shares and comments) posts and 15 lowest-engagement posts for comparative analysis. All sampled posts were coded through multi-layer analytical and narrative factors to determine the culturally differentiated factors. In the meantime, reactive factors of engagements and the sentiment scores of comments are examined to explore potential cross-cultural variations.

Given an existing gap in the demanding needs of tech marketing insights and the lack of research available, the purpose of this thesis project is to bridge the knowledge gap in the ongoing high-tech marketing trends. Through a narrative and visual analysis, this study provides sustainable, applicable marketing insights on current and future cross-cultural tech marketing.

2. Literature Review

This literature review begins with a general overview of the existing challenges of tech marketing and TikTok's role in potentially solving the long-existing credibility problem. After that, a discussion of the uses and gratification theory as the theoretical framework follows to investigate the influential factors leading people to or away from brands. After identifying TikTok's content and structural application to the theoretical model, a section on influencer marketing, hashtag challenges and metanarratives is set to uncover some exemplary TikTok marketing strategies identified in past scholarship. This section concludes with a set of research questions related to culture-based content analysis of digital marketing for IT companies.

2.1 The Long-Existing Credibility Challenge in Tech

Although technology has been favored and popularized over the past decades, tech companies have constantly faced the constant conundrum of distrust and competition. Product development and manufacturing have brought substantial up-front costs to technology companies, while the increasingly rising competition and public expectations have pushed for faster product development and promotion (Keller et al., 2011). At the same time, the uncertainties audiences hold for tech companies and new technology have significantly undermined the public's interest in tech brands and products, eventually leading to underperformed marketing outcomes and generally lower consumer loyalty (Keller et al., 2011).

Facing all challenges, tech companies have primarily been taking pricing strategies to draw audiences' attraction and motivations to purchase. Meanwhile, corporate brands have become a reputational strategy to increase their credibility and trust among audiences before the popularization of social media. According to Hultink and Schoormans (1995), tech companies and sales representatives primarily take penetration-pricing strategies by attracting primary

audience attention with low initial prices, along with some tailored product promotions based on their broad audiences. As a result, pricing strategies have proven successful in driving direct purchases. However, constant direct communication on new products and technological advancements is required for most customers because most audiences are utterly unaware of product launches and technological upgrades (Hultink & Schoormans, 1995). In the communication process, corporate reputations and brand images of big technology companies have also been proven to take a significant role in raising product reliability, thus driving consumers to action (Hultink & Schoormans, 1995). All strategies have indicated the public preference for price-driven strategies and a general information-driven need among audiences to build up their awareness of the products while reaffirming the existing credibility of both technologies and corporations.

2.2 TikTok: Experience-Focused Persuasion

While traditional marketing brings a gap for marketers to fulfill consumers' needs for brand and product information, the current social media platforms create a great solution with fast-spinning content marketing. Content marketing is a "strategic marketing approach for creating and distributing valuable, consistent and relevant content to attract and retain customers" to "deliver engaging relationships, consumer value and measurable success for brands" (Ho et al., 2020, p.134). As social media bring in more options for timely updates and extensive audience reach, Ho et al. (2020) have also noted the balance of direct sales and informational and its impacts on effects such as content emphasis and potential user responses.

Given concerns for the potential strategic impairment of the general marketing strategies, TikTok made its way to one of the most popular social media platforms and built up brands' credibility among audiences through experience-driven engagements. TikTok has built its

commercialization on audience engagements and turned its internal sphere into a “word-of-mouth” marketplace to engage potential and current consumers with “an infinite loop of discovery, consideration, purchase, review and participation” (TikTok, 2022, p.1). According to TikTok’s global retail report (2022), 58% of TikTok active users discover new products and services they are interested in while using the app. And TikTok users are 84% more likely to purchase the products they come across on the platforms than other social media tools (TikTok, 2022). In disseminating and collecting user-generated content, TikTok magnifies the role of average users and eliminates credibility boundaries between experience sharing and opinion sharing (Ku et al., 2012), increasing the potential to lead average users to the promoted products and services. As TikTok takes a more optimized operation mechanism to engage users in viewing, sharing and participation, the platform increases the brand credibility through the experiences and advocacy of others. It could help undermine the public’s concerns for tech products and (or) brands in their purchase considerations (Ku et al., 2012).

In examining the cross-cultural TikTok messaging and marketing for tech companies like Samsung, reviewing past theoretical frameworks and platform-based strategies is essential. As the uses and gratifications theory (UGT) brings a user-centric theoretical background for analyzing internal user motivations, analyses of the existing strategies like influencers, hashtags and narratives give practical applications of UGT in identifying needs and gratifications of audiences, as well as the intercorrelations among strategies across cultures.

2.3 Theoretical Framework: Uses and Gratifications Theory

Regarding social media analysis, especially its connections to modern-day marketing and consumer psychology, the uses and gratification theory (UGT) has been one of the most-quoted theories in published studies. Instead of focusing on the impacts of media and marketers, UGT

seeks to know why and how people are actively looking for information on media to satisfy specific needs (Katz et al., 1973). In evaluating audiences' media-related needs, Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch have backtracked audience satisfaction to the following three sources: media content, media exposure and the specific social contexts of the posted media (Katz et al., 1973). In the research, Katz et al. (1973) also looked into five types of typical motivation that drive and gratify audiences' interests: tensions and conflicts, the awareness of problems, real-life opportunities, social values and the audience's expectations towards certain media. While tensions and conflicts create urgent pressures for direct messaging and mass media consumption regarding the subjects, awareness of problems and real-life opportunities approach audiences with familiarities and satisfy their needs by supplementing the required information and (or) solutions. In addition, social values and audience expectations function as two fundamental public interests for brands to affirm social values as needed and reinforce the established corporate identities in their released content.

While the traditional UGT provides a solid theoretical framework, digital-age studies have emphasized social media analysis, specifically online user engagements and user-generated content. Shao (2009) concluded that the consumption, participation and production of user-generated media are "analytically separate but are interdependent in various aspects" (Shao, 2009, p. 9). User interactions start with content production, where some audiences have found gratification through self-expression and self-actualization. Other audiences consumed the content for information, interaction and entertainment, leading more potentially active audiences to participate in social interactions and community development (Shao, 2009). A study by Song et al. (2004) further examines the conceptualizations of gratifications in the modern-day new media and details seven primary gratifications that appeared in the modern new media:

“information seeking, aesthetic experience, monetary compensation, diversion, personal status, relationship maintenance, and virtual community” (p. 384). Both studies emphasize the different roles of media for their audiences. User-generated content and activities should be interrelated in user gratifications and evaluated bilaterally in social media content analysis.

With that said, failed gratifications happen in everyday marketing practices, most of which are caused by audiences’ internal and external disruptions. According to Vatelau and Winter (2021), individual concerns often become the primary causes keeping audiences from accessing the media and (or) gaining gratification. Such concerns primarily lie on internal concerns like extensive time consumption and the potential influence of low-quality content on TikTok, along with various outside factors like personal information leakage and cyberbullying (Vaterlaus & Winter, 2021). As the discussions on TikTok’s political debates and privacy violations continue to unfold, audiences’ concerns on the platform should be considered to accompany their informational and emotional needs in the qualitative analysis of video narrative elements.

2.4 Influencers, Hashtags and Narratives: Identifications of TikTok’s Content Strategies

To analyze the effectiveness of the posts and their resulting responses, one should first identify the overarching content strategies and the intended goals behind the contents of posts. The strategies of influencer marketing, hashtag challenges and narratives have stood out in the review of past scholarship. All strategies increase viewer acceptance and conversions by gratifying different emotional drives. Guarda et al. (2021) identify TikTok’s creator-driven algorithms as part of the successful elements for the growth and impacts of digital marketing over the past years through the rise of social media influencers and trending hashtags, while scholars like Kim et al. (2017) found video-based narrative ads to receive generally more positive effects on viewer attitudes towards videos and brands. As such, it is essential for the

study to understand the functions and goals of the strategies in order to accord the factors with their strategies.

2.4.1 Influencer Marketing

In evaluating TikTok's marketing framework, recent studies have indicated the disproportionate usage of influencer marketing on TikTok. Influencers are popular users and prominent opinion leaders on social media, often seen as role models by their followers (Barta et al., 2023). The acts of paid advertising with influencers sum up the idea of influencer marketing. This strategy has been endorsed by most companies, organizations and businesses worldwide, bringing enormous profits to the industry. According to Geysler (2022), the global influencer marketing industry continues to grow to 16.4 billion dollars in 2022. Moreover, the number of influencer marketing service offerings worldwide increased by 26% in 2021 (Geysler, 2022), indicating the business's rising attention and need for influencer marketing.

The popularization of influencer marketing on TikTok is built under two structural and emotional premises. First, TikTok's optimization algorithm and its user experiences are built in a way that inter-engages the audience base of the influencers and the brands. TikTok algorithms often cross-list a brand's sponsored videos with the videos from influencers a user follows in every user visit to advertise for brands while keeping the users engaged (Tram, 2022). Thus, integrating the promotion on TikTok with influencers could maximize a brand's overall exposure on the platform and build up a larger pool of potential consumers. Second, the influencers tend to break down the audiences' emotional defense towards a promotion while building trust and relatability through conversations. A survey suggests that most audiences use TikTok to feel engaged by the TikTok posts they view, to follow the influencers they have followed, and to socialize online by viewing their friends' posts and likes (Tram, 2022). As the users voluntarily

engage with influencers and sponsored videos, the messages receive a better chance of acceptance (Freberg et al., 2011). The sense of relatability arising from shared thoughts and experiences with the influencers will help build a connection between the audiences, the brand, and the product, increasing the chances of action.

Although this platform primarily evaluates overall social media strategies, this influencer framework is considered applicable for closely examining TikTok influencer marketing. It helps categorize qualitative performance data and insights on content effectiveness besides direct engagement. Its exploration of the congruence and interconnectivity between activities and platforms can be instrumental to the cross-examination for content analysis.

2.4.2 Hashtag Challenges: An Identity-Driven Action for User-Generated Content

Apart from influencer marketing, hashtag challenge is another popular marketing strategy stricken repeatedly by marketers and researchers across industries over the years (Guarda et al., 2021; Ng et al., 2021; Ahlse et al., 2020; Eriksson Krutrök, 2021). A hashtag challenge is a user-based content strategy promoted organically by brands through self-created trending hashtags and an appeal of challenges with instructions (Guarda et al., 2021). An example of a successful hashtag challenge campaign would be #ReviveonPhotoSi, where PhotoSi, an Italian photographic printing started a campaign in 2020 inviting TikTok users to recreate an old picture and share the videos on the TikTok community (TikTok, 2021). With the collaboration of 12 influencers and TikTok's ad sponsorship, the hashtag challenge received over a billion views and reached over 12 million users in total, increasing the purchase rate of PhotoSi by 25% (TikTok, 2021). This strategy has been proven effective in Ng et al.'s (2021) experiment, which discovered a pattern of social contagions that eventually led to a higher participation rate among the tested audiences (Ng et al., 2021).

As hashtag challenges expand their awareness among audiences through trends and interactions, studies have also identified a series of motivations, including community sharing, identity recognition, emotion sharing, and information seeking through hashtag-based content analysis. Ahlse et al. (2020) identified six primary motivation categories through qualitative interviews: “Entertainment,” “Socializing,” “Personal Identity,” “Information Seeking,” “Convenience,” and “Status” (p. 51). These motivations lead to more profound indications of the emotional recognition of self and communities in multiple case studies (Eriksson Krutrök, 2021). For example, emotional hashtags like “#grief” function as a signal for belonging and building relations with hashtag-based communities (Eriksson Krutrök, 2021). In the meantime, hashtags, to some extent, limit the scope of viewers to audiences who also consistently use or browse posts under similar hashtags, thus creating a relatively private space for the users to share recognition of each other’s identities and exchange their thoughts and emotions on the platform (Eriksson Krutrök, 2021). The findings could be essential to the study in analyzing user content consumption, as it explores the impacts of hashtags based on the consideration of user motivations that would help understand users’ potential choices to participate in specific TikTok challenges and build more targeted audience performance parameters.

2.4.3 Immersive, Emotional Storytelling: Adapted Digital Metanarratives

Apart from the typical influencer and hashtag marketing strategies on social media, the adaptations of digital, short-video storytelling on different social media platforms including TikTok, have been part of the research focus over the years. While traditional narrative advertising follows a strict rule filling the narrational roles and layers, other scholars have analyzed different social media narratives and concluded that marketers and businesses are

reaching audiences on TikTok and Douyin through layered, emotion-driven metanarratives accompanying audience-centered interactions.

Narrative advertising typically follows the traditional construct of narratives and presents the product and service information to the audiences through stories and (or) arguments. Narrative refers to one or more episodes with actors acting upon a sequence of events to achieve specific goals and outcomes (Escalas, 1998). Altman (2008) also identifies three narrative layers in narrative analysis: narrative materials, narrational activities, and drives. The narrational materials are categorized by the characters and their actions (Altman, 2008). Moreover, the narrational activities of following (“readers’ sense of following a character from action to action and scene to scene” (Altman, 2008, p. 15) are integral parts of the analysis (Altman, 2008). To evaluate the following activities, the counts of the following units are used to identify the number of sections in which the characters are followed by the camera and the narrative continuously (Altman, 2008). Lastly, the correlations and (or) impacts of texts and narratives are cross-examined as part of the narrative drives argued in Altman’s research (Altman, 2008). These scholars offer a specific narrative definition and a detailed narrative structure used in categorizing key elements in traditional narratives. However, the traditional definitions of narratives focus on the fundamental structure and categorifications of narrative, yet the content aspects that investigate the gratifications of narratives remain unexplored.

As most literature on narratives emphasizes the structure and functions of the narratives, recent content analyses on social media narratives found that many businesses nowadays, especially large, cross-national corporations, tend to use metanarratives to bring resonance in user emotions and social values on social media. A metanarrative is “a set of stories that, when combined, constitute a master narrative that circulates in society and legitimizes one main idea”

(Bonnin & Alfonso, 2019). A metanarrative usually consists of one central narrative showing the brand's core value. At the same time, other provisional stories bring in a themed relationship with more details to the central narrative (Bonnin & Alfonso, 2019). A metanarrative usually covers key issues and builds credibility among specific audience groups through additional, provisional stories (Bonnin & Alfonso, 2019). In the case of tech marketing, metanarratives are usually built on a sociocultural basis, according to Bonnin and Alfonso, to relieve audiences' fear and discomfort with advanced machines and AI (Bonnin & Alfonso, 2019). To answer users' concerns with more relatable stories, companies like IBM and Cisco dig into audiences' social stock of knowledge and develop a story to bring solutions to the audiences' social language (Bonnin & Alfonso, 2019; Paltridge, 2021). The sociocultural backgrounds bring audiences relatability and increase the acceptance of the stories while "feeding" the audiences with multiple provisional stories in different places to prevent information overload, further increasing audiences' acceptance of the solutions.

2.5 Potential Culture-bound Content Variation of TikTok and Douyin

With both TikTok and Douyin posts being included for examining cross-cultural marketing patterns, potential cultural differences between the two platforms must first be addressed. However, as two platforms with similar functions yet drastically different target markets, a comparison of TikTok and Douyin has yet to be discussed in extant research. Research on TikTok marketing also tends to analyze one platform or combine TikTok and Douyin as one universal data source. In analyzing potential cultural differences, cultural variations in general social media marketing and the unique affordances of TikTok vs. Douyin should be considered. For example, Men and Tsai (2011) highlighted the different ways companies portray their

openness, professionalism, and interactivity on social media in China and the U.S. Sun et al. (2020) offered a series of detailed content preferences observed on Douyin and TikTok.

Past literature has found varying engagement tactics on the Chinese and US social media platforms, even under the same messaging strategies, due to different information demands. Men and Tsai (2011) examined over 500 user posts on Chinese and US social network sites and found corporate disclosure, information dissemination and interactivity to be the consistently employed messaging strategies. However, the choice for content may vary drastically under the culturally-driven information demands, even when following the same messaging strategy under similar social media settings. In branding and corporate messaging, companies focus more on practical engagements with audiences with direct information and conversations about corporate development and specific products on Chinese social media (Men & Tsai, 2011). In contrast, companies more frequently use depictions of mission statements and company histories on US-based social media platforms with significantly fewer viewer interactions (Men & Tsai, 2011). The potential variations in social media portrayals should be considered when examining Samsung's Douyin and TikTok.

Accompanying general culture-based variations for Chinese and US social media marketing, the Chinese and US audiences have shown more variations on Douyin and TikTok in genre and narrative preferences due to potential cultural and lifestyle differences, which can be reflected in their TikTok performances. For the analysis of the general user lifestyles, studies have found that TikTok users are prone to active lifestyles with more outdoor settings and active human actions like playing sports. In contrast, Douyin users prefer more static lifestyles with indoor settings and entertainment and (or) relaxation activities (Sun et al., 2020). Moreover, regarding the diversity of video tags, the research has also shown drastic variations in label

diversities. According to Sun et al. (2020), TikTok videos tend to include a variety of items in one video, while an average Douyin post tends to have a clear subject line and restricted object presentation in the video to make sure the key objects receive the most content focus. Regarding the promoted product types, Sun et al. (2020) found accessories and appliances to be more popular on Douyin, whereas electronics have taken the lead on TikTok.

The past cross-cultural analysis offers an overview of the potential content variations across cultures and leads the way for qualitative content analysis. Although the existing literature leaves gaps in tech marketing in the digital age and TikTok's cross-cultural content analysis, it offers solid theoretical foundations on marketing frameworks and the general TikTok marketing strategies that will help explore more culture-based content motivations and strategies for technological TikTok marketing.

3. Research Questions

Based on the past literature on the UGT and relevant social media content strategies, the study focuses on the theoretical and practical implications of tech brands' marketing strategies on TikTok, specifically how strategies work independently and (or) collaboratively to obtain different user gratifications (information seeking, aesthetic experience, monetary compensation, diversion, personal status, relationship maintenance, or virtual community) (Song et al., 2004). Additionally, the study looks to examine the presentations of strategies through video elements across cultures. Therefore, the research questions are proposed as follows:

- (1) What are the major gratifications fulfilled by Samsung's TikTok (US) and Douyin (China) content?
- (2) How do Samsung's content strategies (i.e., influencers, hashtags, metanarratives) differ between its Douyin and TikTok accounts?
- (3) What are the patterns of communal participation in public engagement with the brands' Douyin and TikTok posts?

4. Methods

The research aims to evaluate the cross-cultural uses and performances of the social media marketing strategies on Douyin and TikTok. Thus, a case study was conducted to increase understanding of a potentially under-explored research area.

The cases selected for this research were Samsung's #Flip4 and #Fold4 product launches and promotions on Douyin and TikTok. The specific accounts and campaigns are chosen for two reasons. First is because of Samsung's large, active follower bases on both platforms. Samsung has over 1.2 million followers and over 700 average engagements on both Douyin and TikTok platforms. The traffics ensured the amount and timeliness of the contents and user interactions. Moreover, as one of the first foldable phone series on the market, Samsung's Flip and Fold Series has received huge amounts of focus and controversies since its global release on August 10, 2022 (Samsung, 2022).

To investigate user sentiment and behavioral change towards Flip4 products and Samsung's strategies throughout the campaigns, this study expanded the scope of sample selection from the related Douyin and TikTok posts during the time of release to a six-month time span (from July to December, 2022). Investigating this campaign helped bring an updated view of the potential audience's unawareness and concerns about the updated technologies (Hultink & Schoorsmans, 1995). Finally, a review of the marketing acts for a tech-advancing product series developed by an international industry leader gave a comprehensive view of the strategies and actions taken, thus ensuring more transferrable and applicable results.

4.1 Data Collection

Since the product was launched globally in August 2022, the cross-cultural, mix-method content analysis study included videos with relevant product hashtags posted between July 1 and

December 31, 2022. For this study, the following product-related hashtags were selected for sample identifications: #FlexEveryAngle, #GalaxyZFlip4, #Flip4, #Fold4, #flip and #fold. After sampling all posts of Samsung's official TikTok and Douyin accounts sent out in the time and scope of the Flip4 product campaign, all Douyin and TikTok posts went through a second round of sampling to evaluate their social media performances based on the total engagements. 15 top and worst-performing posts were selected for each platform, leading to a total of 60 posts in the sample. Additionally, 500 Douyin comments and 900 TikTok comments were scraped to understand the engagement effects of these posts.

4.2 Coding Scheme

The video content and comment data analyses were carried out on both qualitative and quantitative basis.

4.2.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

The qualitative content analysis examined the posts based on the following primary analytical categories: the intended gratifications, the type of content strategies and the characteristics of the post (see Appendix A for the coding factors and the theoretical backings).

Regarding the use of content gratifications and strategies, the literature suggested seven gratification factors of digital media users: virtual community, information seeking, aesthetic experience, monetary compensation, diversion, personal status and relationship maintenance (Song et al. 2004). The categories and subcategories of content gratifications were adapted under similar contexts and coded to identify the use of each gratification (see Appendix B for gratification coding factors). While the sample post may fit into multiple subcategories of one content gratification, the code would only count once for each post under each gratification factor.

After identifying the gratification factors, the posts were furtherly coded quantitatively based on the potential content strategies. All strategies were coded based on each strategy's discovered content patterns under the corporate-based social media marketing context. The hashtag strategy was coded based on trending hashtags and branded hashtag challenges. Trending hashtags, in this study, are defined as popular hashtags with over 40 user-generated videos and 1 billion total engagements. On the other hand, branded hashtag challenges are defined as brand-sponsored hashtag challenges that engage audiences with catchy names and appeals for user participation (TikTok, 2022). In the meantime, the influencer strategy is identified based on the popularity of the characters (over 40,000 followers on TikTok/Douyin) in sample videos (Geysler, 2023). The metanarrative strategy requires the identification of all four following narrative factors: actors, actions, temporality and causal links (Altman, 2008; Bonnin & Alfonso, 2019). Comparisons were made among the counted frequencies of gratifications and the strategies in top and worst-performing video posts across Douyin and TikTok platforms to evaluate the use of Samsung's content strategies across cultures.

While the gratification and strategy categories were coded deductively based on the adaptations of previous theories and frameworks, most post characteristics, including integrative product presentations, post timings, narrational drives, number of characters, motion styles, place of actions and overall color schemes, are examined inductively through open coding under selective gratification and strategy categories. The purpose of the selective examinations in different categories was to investigate, compare and analyze content patterns among high and low-performing posts across platforms in formulating cultural-based insights into the use and effects of gratifications and strategies.

4.2.2 Quantitative Analysis of User Reactions

In this study, the effects of gratification factors and strategies were evaluated quantitatively by cross-examining user engagements and comment sentiments. User engagements show direct numeric responses from the audiences. In this case, the sum of likes, collections and shares was calculated for each Douyin and TikTok post as the total user engagement. In the meantime, sentiment values brought in quantifiable sentiment outcomes indicating the general user attitudes. To evaluate the sentimental reactions to the intended gratifications and strategies, all comments are collected from the platforms during the initial data collection, while 30 comments were selected for each post in sampling based on the following two factors: popularity (number of likes) and recency (most recent comments). This study prioritized comments with more engagement (likes and replies) over recency, as both platforms order comments based on the likes and replies received. As a result, a total of 900 comments are gathered from TikTok for further analysis. However, for Douyin, only 500 comments were collected due to the lack of sufficient Douyin comment samples.

After the initial comment selection, AFINN and the Senta module from PaddleHub were used for English and Chinese sentiment analyses to properly evaluate public attitudes in the corresponding language settings with quantitative sentiment scores. Both tools were validated for inter-coder reliability before running the full Douyin and TikTok comment sets. To systematically compare the sentiment outcomes, all sentiment scores were normalized to scores between 0 and 1. The purpose was to establish a comparable and consistent scale for the received sentiments on both platforms. The closer the sentiment score is to 0, the more negative the comment is (Tang et al., 2022). All average sentiment scores were further cross-examined with user engagements to evaluate the popularity and acceptance of the content strategies across

cultures, followed by a general pattern review for the comments received to synthesize the user-interaction patterns and the potential cultural variations on both platforms.

4.2.2.1 Inter-coder Reliability of Afinn and Senta.

For this study, the intercoder reliability of both Afinn and Senta was assessed using ReCal to assist in evaluating the validity of the retrieved sentiment values (Freelon, 2010). 150 comment samples were randomly selected in each Douyin and TikTok comment set. All samples were run through the corresponding sentiment tools to receive the machine-based sentiment scores. After normalizing the values to the same range, all sentiment scores were furtherly converted to three nominal categories: positive (0.55-1), neutral (0.45-0.55) and negative (0-0.45). At the same time, manual sentiment labeling was also conducted using the same scoring method to obtain a comparable set of scoring samples. With both machine-based and manual sentiment ratings, intercoder reliabilities were computed with Krippendorff's α s of 0.75 for Afinn-based TikTok sentiments and 0.832 for Senta-based Douyin sentiment scores. Both values were over 0.7, representing substantial agreements in reliability testing.

5. Results and Analysis

5.1 Video-Based Statistics

While analyses were based on the content gratifications and strategies, some preliminary results were drawn from the structural information, such as posted timings and video lengths indicating the user attention flow during a product release and their attention span for each video.

First and foremost, some variations were also found among Douyin and TikTok samples based on their posted timings (Table 1). Based on the product launch date and the schedule of promotional events, the research time frame was analyzed in three phases: pre-event period (July 1 to August 9, 2022, the day before the release); during-event period (August 10 to September 30, 2022 based on the scheduled time and coverage of Flip4 related paid and social media coverage and integrative events) and post-event period (October 1 to December 31, 2022).

Among all top-performing posts, 93.3% of the TikTok samples were posted before and during the campaign, while Douyin samples comprise 53.3% of the successful trending posts. However, among all low-engaged posts, around 73.3% of the Douyin samples were posted during the campaign period. In contrast, most low-performing TikTok posts (73.3%) were shared post-campaign. The results indicated potentially culturally specific audience attention patterns for product-related events on the two platforms. As Douyin audiences showed a stronger inclination to pay attention to during and post-event video promotions, TikTok's user attention was better attracted in the pre-event and event periods.

Table 1

Douyin and TikTok post timings

Douyin (N=15), n(%)		TikTok (N=15), n(%)	
HP Samples	LP Samples	HP Samples	LP Samples

Pre-event	1 (6.67)	0 (0)	3 (20)	0 (0)
During-event	7 (46.47)	11 (73.33)	11 (73.33)	4 (26.67)
Post-event	7 (46.47)	4 (26.67)	1 (6.67)	11 (73.33)

Note. HP Samples refer to high-performing samples. LP Samples refer to low-performing samples.

The videos ranged from 5 to 105 seconds in length with a shorter duration span on TikTok samples. The average duration for a high-performing Douyin sample post is around 25 seconds, 29.5% longer than the high-performing samples on TikTok (19.3s). As for the low-performing posts, TikTok samples showed a higher average duration of 23.07 seconds, 46.3% longer than Douyin’s (16.8s). The results indicate a potentially higher attention span of TikTok users than Douyin audiences. However, it may also be caused by the amount of included information and the narrative complexities.

Apart from the video timings and structures, the received engagements and engagement scores of Douyin and TikTok samples also suggest a generally higher user action response in engagement on TikTok but a significantly more positive user attitude on Douyin. Based on Douyin and TikTok engagements, TikTok samples primarily receive higher engagements than Douyin posts. The highly-engaged TikTok posts received 61569.6 average engagements, while the best-performing Douyin samples only received an average of 5940.7 engagements. The same patterns were found in low-performing posts, where the low-performing TikTok samples (886.9) received 13 times higher audience engagements than the Douyin counter half (67.5). Though the variation can be accounted partially due to a higher number of active users on TikTok (1,000 million monthly active users) than Douyin (600 million monthly active users) (Ruby, 2023), the drastically higher engagements on TikTok could still potentially be an outcome of both platform

traffics and cultural implications. When it comes to user sentiments, Douyin posts (0.7155) generally receive higher sentiment scores than TikTok samples (0.5276), suggesting more positive user attitudes and potentially higher user support. In the meantime, minor cultural differences have been found in high-performing and low-performing posts for the two platforms. As the sentiment scores of TikTok posts correspond with the engagement levels, Douyin’s high-performing posts received a slightly lower average sentiment score than the low-performing half.

Table 2

Engagement and Sentiment Overviews

	General Performance		HP Samples		LP Samples	
	ASC	AE	ASC	AE	ASC	AE
Douyin	0.7155	3044.1	0.7065	5940.7	0.7244	67.53
TikTok	0.5276	31228.26	0.5300	61569.6	0.5252	886.9

Note. HP Samples refer to high-performing samples. LP Samples refer to low-performing samples. ASC refers to the average sentiment score. AE refers to the average engagement.

5.2 Empirical Analysis of Content Performances

5.2.1 Intended Gratifications (RQ 1)

All seven gratifications (personal status, virtual community, aesthetic experience, information seeking, relationship maintenance, monetary compensation, diversion) were identified as intended content gratifications based on the addressed coding factors (Table 3). Douyin videos include slightly more gratifications functions (2.8 gratifications per post) than their TikTok counterparts (2.7 gratification functions per post). Among all gratification factors, info-seeking and personal status are the two primary gratifications for Douyin and TikTok

samples. Aesthetic experiences were also included in over half of the Douyin and TikTok posts in presentations of the vibrant color themes and backgrounds. At the same time, the inclusion of other minor gratification factors, virtual community, relationship maintenance, monetary compensation and distraction vary based on the platforms (Table 3). All factors work collaboratively to attract and retain users' attention on different engagement levels, increasing the public's exposure and acceptance of Flip4's designs and tech-based solutions and mounting the audience's expectations to actions of purchases.

Table 3

Observed Gratifications of 60 Douyin and TikTok video samples

Gratification Factors	Douyin Samples (N=30), n(%)		TikTok Samples (N=30), n(%)	
	High-performing Posts (N=15), n(%)	Low-performing Posts (N=15), n(%)	High-performing Posts (N=15), n(%)	Low-performing Posts (N=15), n(%)
Factor 1: Information Seeking	14 (93.33)	13 (86.67)	15 (100)	14 (93.33)
Factor 2: Virtual Community	7 (46.67)	4 (26.67)	2 (13.33)	5 (33.33)
Factor 3: Aesthetic Experience	9 (60)	5 (33.33)	10 (66.67)	10 (66.67)
Factor 4: Monetary Compensation	0 (0)	4 (26.67)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Factor 5: Diversion	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (6.67)

Factor 6: Personal Status	13 (86.67)	11 (73.33)	7 (46.67)	13 (86.67)
Factor 7: Relationship Maintenance	3 (20)	2 (13.33)	2 (13.33)	2 (13.33)

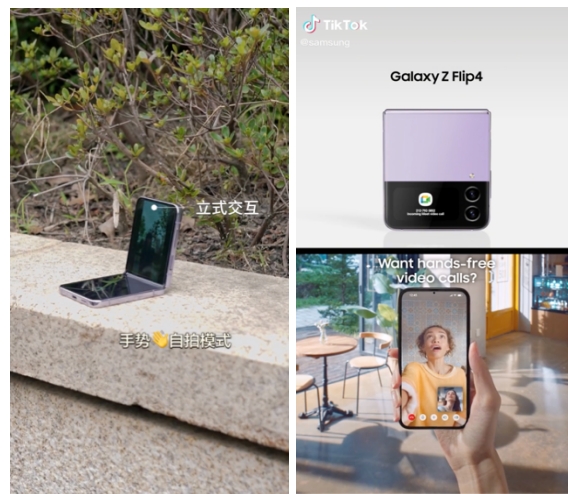
5.2.1.1 Commonly Used Gratifications.

Information Seeking. In this case, Information Seeking was mainly used to present product-related information, from the introductions of product functions, software adaptations and upcoming product events. Based on the results, both TikTok and Douyin samples showed strong preferences for using informational appeals in the videos and descriptive texts as their primary gratification elements. Over 97% of TikTok posts and 90% of Douyin posts included information-seeking factors, 52% of which are high-performing posts.

In maximizing the visual effects of videos, most Information-Seeking videos use combinational presentation methods in delivering key messages. Among 56 Information Seeking samples, 75% of them included more than one use of verbal, visual and textual presentations in videos. For instance, in showcasing Flip4's FlexCam and gesture recognition functions, Douyin sample #7 visually presented a character's video-filming process with the textual introductions of key functions [Figure 1]. The same patterns were also found in TikTok samples, as visual and textual representations were used to introduce the Google Meet to Flip4 software collection [Figure 2]. As visual presentations remain the focus as the character free their hands in video chats with the help of Flip4, the textual explanations of the products provide both the context and introduction of functions that increase the audience's understanding of the promoted function and the narrative.

Figures 1 & 2

Visual and Textual Information Presentation



Note. Figure 1 features a young woman creating a Douyin video on a street, with visual presentation the filming process and textual introductions of the vertical filming and interaction function and gesture selfie mode. In Figure 2, the video introduces Google Meet in the Flip4 series, with actors using a Flip4 for hands-free vertical filming while video chatting.

5.2.1.2 Same Gratification, Different Presentations.

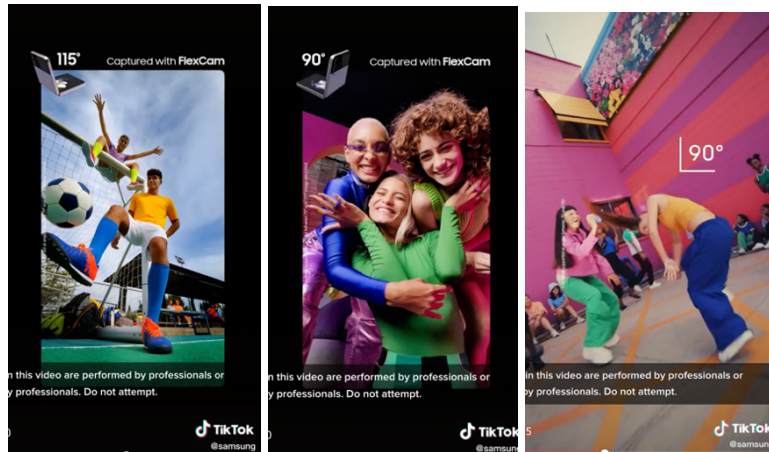
Personal Status. Apart from information-seeking gratification, personal status is another essential factor in all TikTok and Douyin samples. Among 60 video samples, 24 Douyin samples and 20 TikTok samples included visual and verbal elements implying traits for personal status, among which 45.5% are highly-engaged posts. Most selected Douyin and TikTok posts to show the general consistencies in building the individual statuses towards an efficient and healthy lifestyle or belongs to a “cool” youth group. However, all statuses are presented under potential cultural preferences and context.

TikTok posts generally drive the videos and (or) narratives in group recognition and show strong preferences to portray the personal statuses of young, energetic users actively engaged in

group interactions and sports. The selected TikTok samples under the personal status categories share an average of 3.6 characters in each video, and 64.5% are in active motion in outside settings with the phone users in the group's center [Figures 3, 4 & 5]. On the contrary, most Douyin videos show preferences that drive the videos and (or) narratives with personal interests. They are usually engaged in individual and (or) interpersonal activities in indoor, quiet settings. All selected Douyin examples share an average of 2.1 characters in the posts, and over 55% are sitting or standing still indoors for entertaining and (or) business purposes.

Figures 3, 4, & 5

Character Presentations in Outdoor, Group Settings



Note. The above figures are collected from three different TikTok samples that demonstrate the use of Flip phones, specifically the use of FlexCam in different group activities, including sports activities, partying and socializing.

Moreover, the Douyin creator also planted the concept of the Flip4 series for gift-giving among couples and has made the phone a gift for its romantic light purple color and the resemblance to the jewelry box. Both Douyin and TikTok portraiture of personal statuses provides different expectations for the audiences. As the more active and social Gen-Z users in

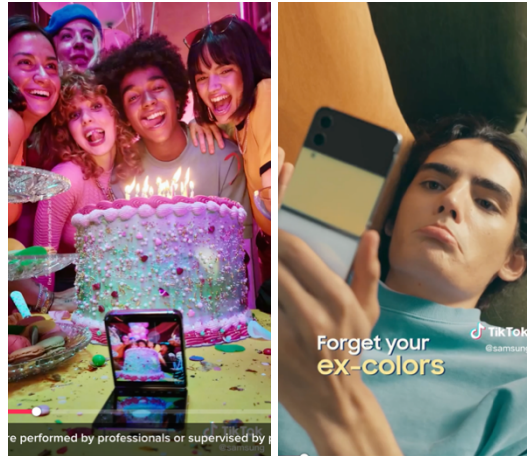
the Americas and Europe are presented with a phone with flexible camera settings to be used for different sports-filming and socializing purposes, Douyin users fit themselves into the personal status of TikTok creators, business individuals, and couples that prioritize the FlexCam and small screen Quickview function primarily for personal interests.

Aesthetic Experiences. In the analysis process, gratifications for aesthetic experiences were also observed in Douyin and TikTok content. As the third most commonly used factor for both platforms, Aesthetic Experience is observed to be used more often on Douyin (66.67%) than on TikTok (46.67%), although the aesthetic TikTok posts have a higher high-performing rate (64.3%) than Douyin's (50%). In addition, the emphasis and focus of such experiences vary drastically. TikTok posts use Aesthetic Experience to present diverse and trendy colors Flip4 series has included distinctive aesthetic elements. While most videos present color diversity through characters and scenes, some videos emphasize the suitability of one or multiple colors to the users' lifestyles. Multiple samples use vibrant colors like bright pink, orange and fluorescent green on characters' attires and backgrounds to intentionally implant the concepts of diverse color options [Figure 6].

Meanwhile, some posts focus on portraying a fast-changing, fashionable lifestyle to bring resonance and expectations to the target audiences and show them different ways a Flip4 can be an essential part of their life. For instance, in TikTok sample #19, the creators build three different scenarios where different characters use a Flip4 with a color best fits their occasions and personalities [Figure 7]. Such presentations not only offer the audiences the aesthetic feelings from the videos but also an inspiration that a Flip4 would bring that aesthetic experience to life, leading them to react and purchase.

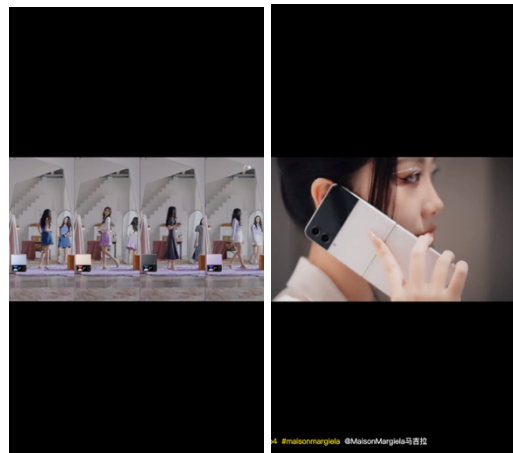
Figures 6 & 7

TikTok Video with vibrant colors & versatile lifestyles (TikTok Samples # 1 & 19)



Figures 8 & 9

Douyin Video with chic color settings & simplistic lifestyles (Douyin Samples # 2 & 23)



As for the illustration of aesthetic experiences on Douyin, the use of vibrant color settings remains applicable to some posts, while both lifestyles of both fast-changing urban fashion and modern simplicity are introduced in videos. As multiple Douyin samples include colorful character attires and backgrounds in their videos, the versatile, fashionable lifestyle is fully presented in Douyin sample #23, showing a girl going to work in different outfits with Flip4 in different colors [Figure 8]. On the contrary, in Douyin sample #8, Samsung created a video of a girl using a white Flip4 while shopping at Maison Margiela, a fashion brand and collaborator on

the Flip4 series [Figure 9]. With the same goal to gratify users' preferences and expectations in aesthetic experiences, the different choice of aesthetic experiences allows for the full illustration of occasions, making it possible to vary audience groups and fulfill gratifications across cultures.

5.2.1.3 Failed Gratifications.

Monetary Compensation. Among all 30 Douyin posts, five included monetary compensations verbally and textually in videos to increase the public focus on their upcoming live-streaming events. Yet, all five sample posts were listed as the 15 lowest-engaged posts among all Douyin video posts, receiving an average of 67.3 engagements and an average sentiment score of 0.6358, 11.14% below Douyin's sentiment mean.

After evaluating the received engagements and sentiments, I further examined the videos and corresponding text descriptions to investigate the narrational patterns for this specific post type. As part of the promotions for Flip4's upcoming events, all monetary video-driven samples showed a similar narration pattern of emphasizing the forthcoming events in videos and texts yet minimizing and blurring the mentioning of monetary incentives. All sample videos and texts clearly described the live-streaming events with clear access instructions and uses of relevant event and product hashtags. However, no details regarding specific monetary incentives are included in the videos or the texts. In those instances, incentives were only mentioned briefly as welfare ('fu li', representing a combination of monetary-driven promotion measures such as discounts, promo codes and test samples) without any context or details, as the visual product presentations are included to raise public interests on the products and lead users to the events.

Diversion. While most factors include entertainment elements in their videos for the user attention, the Diversion factor only occurred in one TikTok sample to promote Fold4's collaborated use with other products with the irrelevant mentioning of a dog and potato chips. By

showing the scenes of potato chips and the dog on a sofa, the video created an entertainment scenario indicating that using Fold4 with Samsung’s newly launched smartwatch can be just entertaining as spending the weekend eating snacks with pets. However, the post did not receive positive feedback from audiences with a total of 975 engagements, 31 times lower than the average engagement. Similar irresponsiveness was also observed in sentiment outcomes, as the Tiktok samples received a sentiment score of 0.5048, 5.31% below Tiktok’s average.

5.2.2 Strategy Categorizations (RQ 2)

All three strategies were identified in the high-performing and low-performing Douyin and TikTok samples. Based on the evaluation factors (Table 4), a total of 23 uses of strategies were identified on both platforms. The metanarrative strategy was most frequently used on both TikTok and Douyin, with 16 appearances in each sample set, whereas slight cultural patterns were observed in the use of the hashtag and influencer strategies. Based on the results, hashtag strategy was used more often among TikTok samples, while influencer and brand collaborations were more often found in Douyin samples.

Table 4

Observed strategy use in Douyin and TikTok video samples

Strategy	Douyin Samples (N=30), n(%)		TikTok Samples (N=30), n(%)	
	High-performing Posts (N=15), n(%)	Low-performing Posts (N=15), n(%)	High-performing Posts (N=15), n(%)	Low-performing Posts (N=15), n(%)
Influencer and Brand Collaboration	2 (13.33)	2 (13.33)	1 (6.67)	1 (6.67)
Hashtag Strategies	2 (13.33)	1 (6.67)	2 (13.33)	3 (20)

Metanarratives	6 (40)	10 (66.67)	6 (40)	10 (66.67)
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In addition to the general use of strategies, the results also showed distinctive cultural engagement and sentiment patterns. Overall, Samsung receives considerably higher engagements on TikTok as users show more passionate attitudes toward Douyin with a higher average sentiment score (Tables 5 & 6). When it comes to strategies, the metanarrative offers consistent performances with the moderate levels of user actions and sentimental changes compared to the other two strategies. Hashtag receives the maximum user engagements on both Douyin and TikTok for the use of trending hashtags and the promoted hashtag challenges. Significant sentimental variances were found in the influencer strategies across platforms, as the user sentiments peaked on Douyin.

Table 5

TikTok and Douyin engagement by strategies

User Engagement	Influencer and Brand Collaboration			Hashtag			Metanarrative		
	Mean	Median	SD	Mean	Median	SD	Mean	Median	SD
<i>Douyin</i>									
General	2509.5			4506.3			2855.6		
HP Posts	4968.5	4968.5	82.7	6772.0	6772.0	4213.0	7502.2	7194.0	2958.3
LP Posts	50.5	50.5	0.7	75.0	75.0	NA	67.7	67.0	9.8
<i>TikTok</i>									
General	6659.0			45896.1			41987.7		
HP Posts	12625.0	12625.0	NA	158638.5	158638.5	184583.9	110457.7	68374.0	114806.5
LP Posts	693.0	693.0	NA	799.2	715.0	132.9	905.7	941.0	157.5

Note. For general video categories, N=30; for HP (high-performing) and LP (low-performing) post sets, N=15.

Table 6*TikTok and Douyin sentiment scores by strategies*

User Sentiment	Influencer and Brand Collaboration			Hashtag			Metanarrative		
	Mean	Median	SD	Mean	Median	SD	Mean	Median	SD
<i>Douyin</i>									
General	0.7887			0.8100			0.7484		
HP Posts	0.8503	0.8503	0.1198	0.9207	0.9207	0.1090	0.7845	0.7959	0.1644
LP Posts	0.7271	0.7271	0.3218	0.5888	0.5888	NA	0.7267	0.6594	0.2433
<i>TikTok</i>									
General	0.5356			0.5310			0.5289		
HP Posts	0.5258	0.5258	NA	0.5227	0.5228	0.0235	0.5337	0.5353	0.0129
LP Posts	0.5455	0.5455	NA	0.5343	0.5333	0.0097	0.5260	0.5278	0.0139

Note. For general video categories, N=30; for HP (high-performing) and LP (low-performing) post sets, N=15.

To account for statistical patterns and variances, examinations on the cross-cultural applications of the three strategies were conducted in the form of pattern-based content analysis to evaluate the video topics, narratives and framings under each strategy.

5.2.2.1 Metanarratives.

32 narratives were identified (16 TikTok posts, 16 Douyin posts) among the Douyin and TikTok samples with moderate user performance outcomes in engagements and audience sentiments, compared to the other two strategies. While the problem-solving innovative tech experience is considered the core central narrative for both Douyin and TikTok platforms, the informative and emotion-driven narratives on Douyin and TikTok platforms vary in frequencies and presentations, leading to contrasting performances on the two platforms.

Core Central Narratives.

Despite the diverse narrational forms and content, similar patterns in the actors, actions, temporality and causal links reveal consistent metanarrative elements showing one key message:

the users experience different problems using flat-screen smart phones. Flip4 has created solutions for every problem you have encountered with its advanced technologies. New functions and settings like foldable, high-resolution screens, convenient Quickview windows, FlexCam functions and software adaptations solve all the problems and make you a “cool” person in life.

How Is the Central Narrative Supported?

Based on the collected sample narratives, the central narrative is supported by informative and emotional narratives with distinctive cultural emphases. Among all 32 metanarrative posts, 12 samples (4 Douyin samples, 8 TikTok samples) are informative posts focusing on demonstrating a particular function or solution to a specific user problem, with the rest 20 samples (12 Douyin samples, 4 TikTok samples) counted as emotion-driven videos looking for identity recognition and emotional resonance with more product presentation and limited product information (Table 6). The results indicate a cultural preference for emotional appeals on Douyin, whereas both informative and emotional narratives are equally used on TikTok.

Apart from the varied use of the two types of narratives, the user responses to the narratives also varied on the two platforms. While emotion-driven narratives tend to be more successful on TikTok in engagements and sentiments, informative narratives have more potential for high engagement and user sentiments on Douyin. 62.5% of the emotion-driven narratives are found in the high-performing samples on TikTok, compared to a mere 33.3% on Douyin. Opposite patterns were observed for informative posts, with a higher proportion of Douyin informative narratives found in high-performing samples (50%) but a significantly lower rate for high performances on TikTok (12.5%). Regarding user sentiment, emotion-driven narratives (0.5308) receive a slightly higher sentiment mean than informative narratives (0.5270) on TikTok.

However, on TikTok, informative narratives (0.8924) receive a significantly higher average sentiment score than emotional narratives (0.7004), indicating a stronger acceptance rate for informative narratives despite the limited presence on the platform.

Although the performances varied, the illustration of informative narratives remained similar on both platforms. Most informative narratives appeal to the audiences by having characters solving a real-life problem. Almost all informative narrative samples on Douyin and TikTok include one or multiple real-life issues that an ordinary phone user could face, and offers a solution using a Flip4. Over 60% of the selected posts posit issues related to complex camera angles with Flip4's FlexCam function as solutions. Quickview screen was also a key promoted function with characters in 5 narratives experiencing inconvenience using the phone without unlocking the phone. To emphasize Flip4's functions, close-up shots are used in all samples when characters use the products. Without overwhelming users with huge amounts of narrations, informative narratives build the public's awareness and interest on real-life issues a potential consumer can relate to. As the audience reflects their experiences on the problem, offering Flip4 as solutions on the other end of the causal links helps increase audience acceptance to the product, increasing the chance of engagement and purchase.

Unlike the uniform, solution-focused informative narratives, emotion-driven narratives increase the audience's acceptance and action with an expected personal identity of the potential audiences, and the different cultural expectations lead to diverged content illustrations on Douyin and TikTok. Among the Douyin and TikTok samples, two types of narrative identities are presented with variances in personal/interpersonal and group settings. Statistically, group settings had three times the presence rate than personal or interpersonal settings on TikTok, whereas 75% of emotion-driven Douyin narratives are set in personal and interpersonal settings. Categorically

speaking, group-based narratives tend to emphasize the identities of characters by fixing the camera focus on the group scenes and the characters. The products become a tool for group and social gatherings and characters become the center of attention when using the product. For instance, in TikTok samples #2, 3, 10, 17 and 22, all scenes prioritize characters over products with a character holding the product or a small product picture on the corner. All characters are presented as active group members either by standing in the center or actively participating in group activities. The presentation patterns show a strong indication between the phone and group identities, that by owning and sharing the use of the product, the user will become a “cool” figure and active member among the groups.

As group-based narratives establish links between the identity of a Flip user and a popular group member, personal narratives prioritize the concept of ownership, specifically the satisfaction of ownership. In Douyin sample #2 and TikTok Sample #3, the narrative visualized the internal struggle of a Flip4’s potential buyer through her constant focus on foldable items after coming across a Flip4. The characters’ anticipation was only fulfilled after purchasing the product. More direct emotional patterns are also found in TikTok samples #6 and #15, where the character or narrator directly asks the audience to compare their phones to Flip4. By creating the expected personal identities, emotion-based narratives magnify the feelings of need and satisfaction for owning the products, thus urging consumers to action.

5.2.2.2 Hashtag and Hashtag Challenges.

Samsung on TikTok: Self-Created Hashtag Challenges.

Similar to the use of metanarrative, hashtag challenges are also common strategies used among Douyin and TikTok samples. In sum, hashtag-related strategies were used in 8 posts on both platforms, with a slight tendency on TikTok (5 samples) over Douyin (3 samples) (Table 4).

Unlike the cross-platform consistencies generally found in Douyin and TikTok narratives, Samsung used different types of hashtags on Douyin and TikTok platforms and potentially led to contrasting audience responses in engagements and comment sentiments.

In introducing the foldable FlexCam function, the hashtag challenge #FlexEveryAngle was primarily used on TikTok to increase the audiences’ awareness of Flip4’s FlexCam function with active user participation and advocations for user-generated content. The challenge requires a user to take a series of quick shots following the guided poses on the challenge’s video filter [Figure 10], some of which may be difficult to pose and frame without a Flip4 phone filmed half-folded on the ground (Samsung, 2022). The challenge winners will receive a Flip4 phone as the prize (Samsung, 2022).

Figure 10

An overview of the #FlexEveryAngle challenge filter (Samsung, 2022)



Note. The picture shows an overview of Samsung’s #FlexEveryAngle Hashtag challenge. To participate in the challenge, TikTok users need to flip their cell phones at certain angles and take a series of pictures following the posing instructions.

Among all 30 selected TikTok samples, five are posted under the challenge for function introduction and campaign promotions. The two introductory videos became the most trending video posts in the entire product campaign, while the other three videos are follow-up videos posted two weeks after the challenge release to maintain the popularity of the challenge with

actors participating in the challenge with friends under different group settings. Although the number of the least-engaged posts outcount the highest-engaged Douyin samples, the outcomes of the challenge remain generally successful, with over 400 user-generated videos and over 45.4 billion total views (TikTok, 2023).

Samsung on Douyin: Trending Hashtags as Awareness-Driven Strategies.

As TikTok creators focused on creating and running Flip4's hashtag challenge, Samsung's Douyin account takes advantage of the existing hashtags and actively participates in the trending hashtags. Among all 30 Douyin posts, three samples included hashtags with over 15 billion views, two of which are among the 15 most-engaged posts, receiving over 13,000 total engagements. Two of the three samples are high-performing posts participating in more relatable trending hashtags, such as #YouDeserveIt (14.3 billion total views) instead of a particular hashtag challenge. When posting under hashtags, the content is tailored to capture audience interests while maximizing the showcase and introduction of Flip4's functions. For instance, when creating content under the hashtag #YouDeserveIt, Samsung's Douyin creator chose to present the use of Flip4's Quickview function, a more practical function that would be considered convenient across age groups, instead of the major selling points like the FlexCam and colorful designs (Douyin sample #2). Besides that, the creators also switched the commonly used narrative construct from students or young professionals in entertainment settings to a working professional sitting in a cafe to build emotional connections with the broader audiences.

Opposite to the outstanding performances of hashtag challenges on TikTok, Samsung received one of its lowest user engagements on the one post participating in the #CupRelayChallenge, potentially because of the potential irrelevancy between the video characters and the target audiences. The challenge is originally set for friends and families to

create shots when each of them raises their glasses, bottles, or cups to the camera (Douyin, 2022). To participate in the challenge, Samsung's Douyin creator produced a video of multiple Samsung Flip4 and Fold4 users flipping their phones and approaching their phones to the camera. Each video clips include the presentation of a product and a brief textual explanation of its key function. Although the video does fit the challenge theme to some degree, the video settings and the characters' outfits suggest office and (or) business settings and would not match with the audiences' gratification in finding their sense of belongings in a leisure setting with friends and family. The inconsistencies between the hashtag function and Flip4 built up a sense of unfamiliarity between the brand and the public and thus led to less positive user responses, along with a more drastic performance variation within the strategy category.

5.2.2.3 Influencer and Brand Collaboration.

Influencer Patterns and Performances.

As similar strategies of high-profile account collaborations, influencer marketing and brand collaborations were used on Samsung's Douyin and TikTok accounts. Initial samplings discovered three influencers on TikTok and one influencer on Douyin. However, the TikTok influencer post was filtered out in the final sampling. It does not match the top 15 highest- or lowest-engaged post categories, indicating moderate user attraction and engagement levels on TikTok. In contrast, Samsung invited Genhong Liu and Vivi Wang for the Douyin collaboration. Liu is a fitness expert on TikTok who designed a series of heavy-set home-based fitness programs with over 70 million followers on Douyin (Douyin, 2023). As his live-streaming workout partner on Douyin, Vivi Wang also went viral for her comical expressions during workouts and her audience connectivity (Koetse, 2022). The collaboration post received

over 5,000 engagements and a significantly higher sentiment score of 0.766, becoming one of the most popular videos in the Flip4 Campaign.

In accounting for the success of Douyin's influencer post, the popularity of the collaborated influencer, culturally preferred narrative settings, and the audiences' potential self-projection to Wang can all be effective engagement-driving factors. First and foremost, with a 70 million follower base and approximately 100 million daily user traffic (Li, 2022), Liu's credibility and popularity directly increase Flip4's exposure and acceptance among younger audiences.

In addition to Liu's popularity, the scene setting and audiences' self-projection of Wang can also build recognition and resonance between audiences and characters, thus increasing the chances of interactions. Despite Liu's generally active change of environments and relatively active actions, as the female lead and the emotional resonant of most of Liu's followers, Wang mainly stayed still, sitting and standing in a relaxing home environment watching videos using Flip4 (Douyin sample #7). As Liu brought his popularity to Flip4's coverage, Wang's emotional correlations helped build a familiar self-projected scene where the audiences could imagine themselves at home spending time using a Flip4 cellphone. This familiarity could increase the audiences' acceptance of Flip4 and Samsung, thus increasing the amounts of engagements and sales.

Other Influencer-Related Posts: Brand Collaborations.

Similar to using influencers, the research results also identified Samsung's corporate collaboration with other high-profile brands in receiving user traffics on Douyin and TikTok. Among all Douyin and TikTok samples, one fashion-related brand collaborator (@MaisonMargiela) was identified on Douyin, while 2 (Roblox and @Zepeto) were identified in the TikTok samples.

In promoting the collaborations, Samsung took different promotion strategies on the Douyin and TikTok platforms. For the Douyin platforms, Samsung expanded the news about the collaboration and the collaborated products through repeated posting from November to December 2022 with three different TikTok posts. As a collaboration with a popular fashion brand, the first introductory video shows a model using Flip4 while shopping at a Maison Margiela store. The other two videos, posted approximately three weeks later, shared information about the collaborated promotion events. Although the initial post received a generally positive user response with 4,910 engagements and one of the highest sentiment scores (0.935), the public attention and sentiments fade between the event-related posts with an average of 50.4 engagements and an average sentiment score of 0.727.

As for the collaborations on TikTok, Samsung only posted once for each partnership. To indicate the collaborations with the two popular gaming brands, the videos showed the avatars from the collaborating brands using Flip4 in the games' settings and called for users' actions to try out the games with Flip4 (Samples #12 and 29). Both videos received generally positive sentiment outcomes (0.5258 for the Roblox post and 0.5455 for the ZEPETO post), yet the received engagements vary drastically, with TikTok's Roblox collaboration sample receiving 12,625 engagements and the other on ZEPETO collaboration receiving 693 engagements.

Despite the successful performances of Douyin's influencer collaboration post, the general low engagement of some unsuccessful collaboration posts led to lower engagement counts on both strategies. On the other hand, the higher engagement scores in influencer and brand collaborations led to a generally positive sentiment outcome for the strategy on both platforms, indicating a strong sense of user acceptance and satisfaction.

5.3 Active Audience Interactions with Brands & Audiences (RQ 3)

5.3.1 Brand-Audience Interactions on the Ongoing User Problems

Apart from the statistical findings in the audience's actions and general attitudes, Douyin and TikTok audiences actively engage with the brand and among audiences through direct comments. Direct brand-audience interactions usually include informational requests on specific user problems. User problem requests focus on sharing a problem the audience was potentially faced with a product, some requesting the brand's assistance. Although both Douyin and TikTok accounts show a general lack of response in comments, the Douyin account does a better job of promoting brand-audience interactions by introducing the new consumer support series, including step-by-step tutorials to solve the common user problem. Samsung also added a new user-support video glossary (over 1.53 million total views) with 20 past tutorials it has created to help users with the search and navigation.

Even though Samsung did not directly get back to the comments on Douyin, the video contents and profile settings offer some fast solutions to their audiences' inquiries, showing signs of active audience listening. As a result of the different interaction methods, Samsung receives a significant number of complaints for their lack of responses on TikTok and general customer services [Figures 11 & 12]. In contrast, Douyin audiences only tend to complain about product qualities and show more sentimental support with a higher average sentiment score (0.748 on Douyin, 0.528 on TikTok).

Figures 11 & 12

User Complaints on Product and Service Issues



sami.mira1

Don't buy anything from them! They took my money, and never delivered my item!!And they don't want fix anything

1-2 0 [Reply](#)



oscarsdad777

Scammers. Try using Samsung Care Plus. They transfer you for hours and never get to a rep.

2022-11-12 2 [Reply](#)



Eyuel

IMAGNE THEM REPLYING😏

2022-9-14 1 [Reply](#)

5.3.2 User-Generated Comments: Experience-Focused Virtual Communities on Douyin and TikTok

As some audiences posted their comments for the interactions with the brands, a majority of the comments show an organic virtual community with viewers actively engaged in discussions and experience sharing. In the comments of all Douyin and TikTok samples, three topics came up the most in the user discussions and sometimes even resulted in heated comment debates: Apple vs. Samsung, nationalist debates on Douyin, and the trendiness of Flip4's foldable design [Figures 13 &14]. One of the most popular debates in the comments is the constant comparisons of Samsung products and services with Apple's. Some users randomly share their preferences which unintentionally leads to more interactions with other audiences. Similar user engagement patterns also happened to the nationalist debate on Douyin, where some users mistakenly noted Samsung as a domestic brand ("guo huo"), a series of comments were left correcting their mistakes, recognizing and accepting a foreign tech brand as a native brand, and some even further the debate on the choice of using native cellphone brands like Huawei or foreign brands like Apple and Samsung. Debates on both platforms bring like-minded users to opinion recognitions while others carry on the debate. The comment section functions as a virtual chat group among the users where they can draw connections for similar views on Samsung and (or) products as it builds a broader community for Douyin and TikTok users interested in the debate.

Figures 13 & 14

User Debates in Douyin and TikTok comments



While the previous debates emphasize the users' choices and experiences with other cellphone brands, the discussion on Flip4's trendiness opens up more general discussions on aesthetic designs and nostalgia that builds emotional recognition among the commented users. Users drive the discussions based on the resemblance of Flip4 to the flip and slider phones in the 2000s and 2010s, sharing thoughts on the social trends and their nostalgia. For instance, as Douyin post #6 shares a video of a Fold4 cellphone's light display, over 500 commenters shared their thoughts on this nostalgic social trend. In sharing their thoughts and memories, the commenters drew emotional connections and recognition with other audiences. For younger users without the experience of flips, slider phones, or any memories of the 2000s, novelty to the topics could also drive their interest to read and engage in the comment-based virtual community and increase overall engagement.

5.3.3 User-Driven Shares in Douyin Comments

As users form and engage with the comment-based, discussion-based virtual communities on Douyin and TikTok, the sample Douyin comments also indicate strong patterns of direct shares using the "@" function of the comments. Initially set as a method to mention other users in posts and comments, many Douyin users use this function as a more direct way to share their

interested videos with comments in just one step. Among all 500 Douyin comment samples, 66 comments include the inter-user messaging by mentioning their user names. Most comments are motivated by a direct interest in the video, the product, or a common experience they share related to the product. While the share option on the videos only directly shares the video, these commented users share their interests and thoughts with the video altogether with just one comment. Moreover, the comment receivers are directly led to the video when trying to access and understand the context of the message. This act helps to increase the audience span of posts in general and increase the acceptance levels of the new audiences through their connections, trust, and shared interests built with the commenters.

6. Discussion

The findings from this study provide a cross-cultural analytical framework for Samsung's marketing strategies on Douyin and TikTok. With the cross-evaluation of high-engaged and low-engaged posts on both platforms, more content-based analyses were made to examine the causes of performance variations under the same gratifications and strategies. Based on the qualitative and quantitative results, some insights can be summarized and compared with the past literature.

The current findings did reveal some consistencies in the use of content gratifications in the new media and TikTok-based contexts. However, the use and fulfillment of some gratification do not match existing research findings. Overall, the gratification categories are prevalent in the Douyin and TikTok samples. All seven gratifications were identified in a video-based social media setting with all coding criteria relevant to the proposed research model (Song et al., 2004), indicating a consistent user need and pursuit for the content on user-generated media.

Though the general gratification categories remain, variations were both found in the performance of the proposed gratifications. Information seeking was prevalently used in Douyin and TikTok posts with shared content themes on the products and a generally high inclusion in high-performance posts. This finding is in line with previous findings (Song et al., 2004; Eriksson Krutrök, 2021), which indicates that information seeking is one of the most primary factors that drive the users' acts of access to the media. The content-based findings also indicate a positive effect of combining visual, textual and verbal presentations in the informative posts. Similar integrated presentations were also affirmed by Li et al. (2022), that a combinational use of visual, textual and verbal interactions helps construct the intended messages and strengthen both emotional and informative appeals.

Besides information-seeking, personal status and aesthetic experience are also two significant gratification factors in the case study with strong cultural variations. The findings also match the results of previous findings (Song et al., 2004; Ahlse et al., 2020). Personal status was identified as an influential gratification factor that motivates intertwined user focuses from personal identity, status to the needs of socialization into their content expectations (Ahlse et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the aesthetic focus has been an important indicator for other social media platforms, where visual factors are primary indications for taste leadership and increase general user awareness (Ki et al., 2019). The potential cultural variations in group and individual settings are also compatible with the past cross-cultural TikTok video analysis, which suggests that outdoor group settings are more often preferred by the general TikTok audiences, whereas indoor, interpersonal and personal settings are more often seen in Douyin videos (Sun et al., 2020).

Apart from the generally positive performing factors, this study also finds monetary compensation a rare and ineffective motivation for Douyin and TikTok. The results contradict the previous findings, where monetary compensations act as an influential motivation factor for user engagement (Song et al., 2004) or an engagement-driven action in maintaining long-term brand-consumer relationships (Kujur et al., 2020). The lack of viewer response may be caused by the limited information expansion, as the monetary incentives are not mentioned in text descriptions or the front sections of the videos.

Similar trends can also be found in the analysis of strategies. Qualitative analysis of the use and performances of hashtag-related strategies revealed some inconsistent performances among posts using trending hashtags. As we consider the emotional and structural recognition for hashtag viewers and followers, the results can be explained by the potential indifference and

even repulsion of the hashtag-based communities caused by the unmatched content presentations in videos (Eriksson Krutrök, 2021).

As for influencer marketing strategies, the comparatively high user engagements and sentiment scores indicate some consistency with the previous findings (Freberg et al., 2011; Barta et al., 2023). The inconsistent performances in brand collaborations can also be caused by the unmatched user preferences in brand selection and presentations, as most collaborated brands represent different user communities with shared common interests (Yang, 2022). While the potential impacts of algorithm support could not be analyzed without the accounts' back-end data (Tram, 2022), the effects, the use of emotional appeals and advocations as role models can still be accounted as part of the content tactics for Samsung's influencer strategies.

In addition to the previous influencer and hashtag strategies, Samsung's metanarratives also showed consistent messaging on both platforms to eliminate the audience's concern for new technologies by rebranding Flip4 as a technological and socializing solution. This finding ties well with previous case studies of metanarratives on B2B tech brands with the brands in both studies using metanarratives as fear-relieving solutions (Bonnin & Alfonso, 2019). As the B2B brand samples focused on creating an idealized concept for the narratives (Bonnin & Alfonso, 2019), Samsung focused on creating real-life application examples, especially informative narratives.

In evaluating the user feedback, two primary findings were identified in the Douyin and TikTok user comments: the community-based discussions, and the use of comments as information-sharing functions. Similar community-driven discussions were also found and analyzed in past case studies based on the user interactions in general social networks found that a small yet highly functioning test audience communities within SSN communities can turn

topics into a related heated discussion by emphasizing the tightness of the network (Ganley, 2009). At the same time, the sharing function was also found to be used in some hashtag-related comments as the followers' habits to index and share information using the "@" function (Hassan et al., 2021).

7. Limitations

While the study provides an insightful evaluation of the effectiveness of the content elements within Samsung's TikTok and Douyin posts, the study faces three limitations. First, the case study only covers a small number of samples from one brand, bringing little basis for the generalization of results to the tech marketing industry. Besides, the study primarily evaluates the effectiveness of potential strategies via TikTok engagements and comments, thus limiting the research scope to a selective audience group rather than the general population. Large scales of primary research like surveys and interviews should be conducted to properly address the effects to bring in actual, case-based audience feedback. Lastly, audio presentation and impacts should also be considered a key influence for video-based content marketing and are worth investigating. However, it is left out due to the research frame of the study.

8. Conclusions

Facing the long-existing credibility challenge, the rise of Douyin and TikTok has provided potential opportunities for tech companies to communicate with new and existing audiences in a more video-driven, user-interactive environment. The goal of this study was to analyze the varied presentations and effects of video-based marketing strategies in a cross-cultural context. By analyzing the cross-cultural TikTok and Douyin campaigns of Samsung, the study identified the uses of seven gratifications across cultures. Three primary gratifications have been identified: information seeking, personal status and aesthetic experience. Monetary compensation and diversion were identified as failed gratifications by the unstructured video messaging and the low engagements received.

Three content strategies were examined for culturally oriented content creations and performances based on the gratification factors. Metanarrative was the most frequently used and culturally consistent strategy among all three, with a consistent messaging goal to eradicate technical concerns and propel user actions through practical problem-solving and emotion-driven stories. Trending hashtags and hashtag challenges received the highest user engagement on both platforms with drastic user performance due to the unmatched video content countered by the hashtag communities. Significant cultural diversions were found in the use of influencer-related strategies. As influencer-related content received positive performances Douyin, brand-related account collaborations outnumbered influencers and varied performances on TikTok.

In response to the content strategies, user interactions were also examined to identify potential user interaction patterns. Group-based virtual conversations have been found on both platforms with various focuses on experience sharing and opinion exchange, while the mentioning function was consistently used on Douyin as user communications. By revealing the

different user patterns in response to gratifications and strategies on Douyin and TikTok, the findings of the study can be used to better understand the potential cultural differences between Douyin and TikTok in content creation, strategy execution and user responses.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Coding Factors and Theoretical Backings

Coding Factor	Considerations	Theoretical Backings
Gratifications		
Identification of One or More Intended User Gratifications	Which of the seven user gratifications (personal status, virtual community, aesthetic experience, information seeking, relationship maintenance, monetary compensation, diversion) are applicable for the sample post? See Appendix B for the gratification loading factors.	Seven types of gratifications of the new media (Song et al., 2004)
Primary Strategies		
Hashtag Strategy	Do the video posts include trending hashtags and branded hashtag challenges (like #FlexEveryAngle in the sample Douyin and TikTok videos? For this study, trending hashtags are popular hashtags with over 40 user-generated videos and 1 billion total views on TikTok. Branded hashtag challenge is a brand-sponsored hashtag challenge that engages audiences with catchy names and appeals for user participation (TikTok, 2022).	Effective hashtags can become social media challenge events and emotional triggers to fulfill audiences' user gratifications (Guarda et al., 2021; Ng et al., 2021; Eriksson Krutrök, 2021).
Influencer and Brand Collaboration	Is he/she an influencer or an ordinary user?	Freberg et al. (2011) have proved influencers to be effective in conversions and increase the

	For this study, influencer refers to a public opinion leader with over 40,000 followers on TikTok (Geyser, 2023).	number of acceptance and purchases.
Metanarrative	<p>Is the post a narrative or not?</p> <p>The determination of a narrative is based on identifying the following four narrational elements: actors, actions, temporality, and causal links (Altman, 2008; Bonnin & Alfonso, 2019).</p>	Kim, Ratneshwar and Thorson's research (2017) indicates that video-based narrative ads generally received more positive effects on viewer attitudes toward brands.

Narrative-related content factors

Number of characters	How many main characters appear and interact in the video samples? One, two, or multiple?	Sun et al. (2020) found a general cultural presence of group settings on TikTok and a strong preference for personal and interpersonal settings on Douyin.
Narrational drives	<p>What motivates the characters to move forward in the narrative? Personal interest, group recognition, or social impact?</p>	Altman defines the "narrative drive" in his research as the "tendency to read texts as narratives" (Altman, 2008, p. 19). The sources of the narrative drive vary from personal, social to cultural aspects (Altman, 2008).
Action styles	Are the characters active or generally still?	Sun et al. (2020) found that stillness is preferred by Douyin content creators and viewers, while active motions like sports are more often portrayed on TikTok.
Place of actions	Are the characters at home/ outside?	Sun et al. (2020) found indoor settings preferred by Douyin content creators and viewers, while outdoor settings are more often portrayed on TikTok.

Other considering factors

Timing	Is the post sent pre-event, during-event, or post-event?	A context analytical Factor evaluating other potential causes of surged or dropped performances.
Integrative product presentation	For visual, textual and audio product presentations and introductions, does the post use more than one presentation form in the video samples?	Moves 1, 4 & 5 in the genre of covert short-video advertisement (Li et al., 2022). Lien and Chen demonstrated that concrete texts in narrative advertisements enhance viewers' imagery toward products, increasing conversions (Lien & Chen, 2013).
Color schemes	What is the color scheme or filter of the video samples, default, vintage, black & white, or vibrant?	According to Yoo and Kim, the picture presentation of products in advertisements, specifically narrative ads, effectively improves the virtual viewing experience, enhancing the viewers' mental imagery and thus increasing the chances to purchase (Yoo & Kim, 2014).

Appendix B

Gratification Loading Factors (Song et al., 2004)

Gratifications	Coding Criteria
Factor 1: Information Seeking	Learn about upcoming events Get useful product information Learn the use of specific functions or apps Get information about customer care programs
Factor 2: Virtual Community	Get support/recognition from others Share similar preferences (apps, brands, services, etc.)
Factor 3: Aesthetic Experience	Videos with pleasing/vibrant color schemes Content collaboration with fashion brands Videos introducing functions with attractive, interactive product presentation
Factor 4: Monetary Compensation	Mention discounts, credits, or free samples in videos
Factor 5: Diversion	Entertainment factors irrelevant to products
Factor 6: Personal Status	Find details that reflect belonging to “cool” youth groups Find information that reflects a tech-sassy lifestyle Find information that reflects a user’s relationship status
Factor 7: Relationship Maintenance	Get in touch with existing users Get in touch with users in other audience groups
