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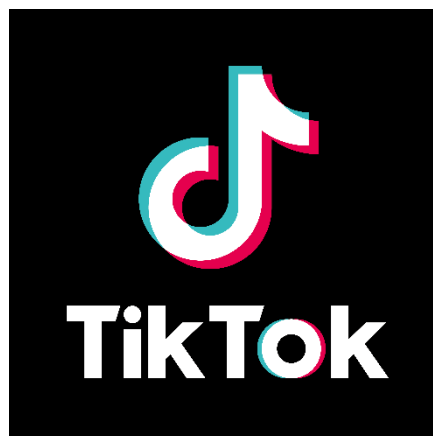
Small and Medium-sized business and their use of TikTok as a tool for digital marketing

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Abstract

Digital marketing has expanded significantly in recent years and has become a crucial type of marketing for many businesses, including SMEs. SMEs are important for the economy of Greece representing 19.3% of the country's GDP. 99.9% of all businesses in Greece are small or medium-sized and they employ a significant part of the workforce.

TikTok has emerged as a very popular platform in recent years and many SMEs have successfully utilized it to grow their business, expand their customer base and reach new audiences. This dissertation uses quantitative and qualitative data in an attempt to examine how SMEs utilize digital marketing in general and TikTok marketing in particular, what are the perceptions of the future of digital marketing and TikTok, the type of TikTok content that is most effective, as well as identify the limitations and weaknesses of TikTok. The results highlight that social media marketing is the most popular type of digital marketing, but many SME owners are still hesitant to adopt TikTok as a tool. However, among those who utilize TikTok most are moderately to highly satisfied with it and those who are most consistent and persistent with it tend to be most satisfied. The results suggest that TikTok is a new but dynamic platform and although many SME owners are still hesitant, its future looks very promising, especially as video content is identified by most as the most important feature to the future of digital marketing.

ΜΙΚΡΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΣΑΙΕΣ ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΣΕΙΣ ΚΑΙ Η ΧΡΗΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΤΙΚΤΟΚ ΓΙΑ ΨΗΦΙΑΚΟ MARKETING

Όνομα: ΜΑΡΙΑ

Επώνυμο: ΚΟΥΛΟΓΛΟΥ

ABSTRACT

Το ψηφιακό μάρκετινγκ έχει αναπτυχθεί σημαντικά τα τελευταία χρόνια και έχει εξελιχθεί σε κρίσιμο τύπο μάρκετινγκ για πολλές επιχειρήσεις, συμπεριλαμβανομένου μικρές και μεσαίες επιχειρήσεις. Οι μικρές και μεσαίες επιχειρήσεις είναι σημαντικές για την ελληνική οικονομία, εκπροσωπώντας το 19.3% του ΑΕΠ της χώρας. Το 99.9% όλων των επιχειρήσεων στην Ελλάδα είναι μικρομεσαίες επιχειρήσεις και απασχολούν μεγάλο μέρος του εργατικού δυναμικού.

Το TikTok έχει αναδειχθεί σε μια δημοφιλή πλατφόρμα τα τελευταία χρόνια και πολλές μικρομεσαίες επιχειρήσεις το έχουν χρησιμοποιήσει με επιτυχία για να επεκτείνουν την επιχείρησή τους και να αποκτήσουν νέο κοινό. Αυτή η διπλωματική εργασία χρησιμοποιεί ποσοτικές και ποιοτικές πληροφορίες στην προσπάθεια να εξετάσει το πώς οι μικρομεσαίες επιχειρήσεις χρησιμοποιούν το ψηφιακό μάρκετινγκ γενικά και το TikTok ειδικά, το είδος του περιεχομένου που είναι πιο αποτελεσματικό για TikTok μάρκετινγκ καθώς και να εντοπίσει τους περιορισμούς και τις αδυναμίες του TikTok. Τα αποτελέσματα δείχνουν πώς το μάρκετινγκ στα κοινωνικά μέσα δικτύωσης είναι το πιο δημοφιλές είδος μάρκετινγκ, αλλά πολλοί ιδιοκτήτες μικρομεσαίων επιχειρήσεων είναι ακόμα διστακτικοί να το υιοθετήσουν σαν εργαλείο. Ωστόσο, από αυτούς που χρησιμοποιούν το TikTok, οι περισσότεροι εκφράζουν μέτρια ή υψηλή ικανοποίηση και εκείνοι που το χρησιμοποιούν πιο συστηματικά εκφράζουν την υψηλότερη ικανοποίηση. Τα αποτελέσματα δείχνουν ότι το TikTok είναι μια καινούρια αλλά δυναμική πλατφόρμα και πολλά υποσχόμενη, ακόμα και αν κάποιοι ιδιοκτήτες μικρομεσαίων επιχειρήσεων είναι ακόμα διστακτικοί, ειδικά αφού το περιεχόμενο video εντοπίζεται ως το πιο σημαντικό στοιχείο για το μέλλον του ψηφιακού μάρκετινγκ.

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Introduction

The creation of the Internet and the technological advancements of the last few decades made it possible for people from different parts of the world to communicate instantly and at little cost. This possibility for long distance, real-time interaction and communication eventually led to the creation of chat rooms, forums and later social media platforms. One of the earliest examples of social media was Six Degrees (1997) which made it possible for users to connect with friends and share updates with each other. It paved the way for other more complex and advanced platforms like MySpace (2003) and eventually Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok. In this day and age, social media has become a regular part of daily life with billions of users. Social media is particularly popular among the young. The percentage of young people that use social media in wealthier countries is close to 90%. (Ortiz-Ospina, E. (2019))

TikTok is a social media platform where users post short video content. It started in mainland China as Douyin in 2016 and quickly gained more than 100 million users. The Chinese company ByteDance created TikTok to expand globally and launched it in 2017. The user interface of TikTok and Douyin is similar, but the two platforms operate separately. (Davis. (2018)) TikTok soon became fairly popular and by 2020 it had reached two billion downloads globally. (Carman, A. (2020)) In the United States alone, it's estimated that more than a third of adults use TikTok. (Beshay (2025)) As TikTok's engagement is increasing each month, its unique and distinctive features make it a dynamic and promising channel for marketing and advertising.

In particular, TikTok provides tools and opportunities for multiple digital marketing strategies. Brands can use influencer marketing, branded content, popular challenges and hashtags, user-generated content, AI features and robust data analytics to create the right kind of content that will successfully reach the desired audience, increase brand awareness and create business growth.

Because TikTok is a new platform, there is little research surrounding its effectiveness as a marketing tool. Therefore, it's of critical importance to investigate and explore how consumers and businesses interact with each other in this growing and fast-paced platform and what kind of opportunities, limitations and threats marketers could face when using it.

Aim

This dissertation aims to investigate and analyze the potential of TikTok for digital marketing, especially when it comes to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In particular, the purpose of this paper is to research the way consumers interact with businesses online and their decision-making process when it comes to digitally purchasing products. The paper also seeks to analyze the benefits and opportunities that TikTok provides as a marketing tool as well as the potential threats and challenges that it could pose for businesses. To research these questions, we use quantitative data derived from questionnaires as well as qualitative data collected from interviews with carefully selected small business owners that utilize TikTok for marketing. The questionnaires are given to selected business owners, digital marketing specialists and other marketing experts to help examine the insides of digital marketing strategy.

Theory

TikTok as a social media platform

TikTok is a social media platform that allows users to create, share and discover short-form videos. It became a cultural phenomenon creating various viral trends and changing the way people consume content. In recent years, it has also become a significant platform for digital marketing, enabling businesses to engage audiences through authentic and innovative content strategies.

The immense popularity of TikTok has a lot to do with the way it utilizes its algorithm to constantly learn about each user's interests and hobbies, what they like and dislike. It presents them with personalized content based on individual interests. Its short form videos use music and visual content in a clever way to grab the user's attention and promote joy and entertainment. TikTok is easy to use, and its advanced editing features encourage users to think creatively and innovatively.

By reshaping the social media landscape and enhancing content interaction within its platform, TikTok has crafted a distinct identity for itself. The platform's full adoption of short video formats has ignited a trend that leads to higher engagement. Compared to written text or static images, short videos offer a quicker and more engaging way to share and consume content. Although video content was already widely used in social media platforms, TikTok provided ways to create, edit and discover short videos in an easy and innovative manner that has never been popular before. In this day and age, video content stands as the most preferred format for consuming information.

Other features that help shape the identity of TikTok are music, sound and hashtags. By incorporating music or sound into their videos, users help the platform categorize and organize content, as the app uses these audio elements to group and classify videos within its ecosystem. Users can easily find videos similar to the ones they are currently watching by clicking on the music or sound at the bottom of the screen. This feature, along with the use of hashtags to organize and categorize content, not only makes it easier for users to discover new videos but also fosters a culture of video memes. A meme refers to content that spreads quickly across the internet through imitation or repeated use. Memes play a key role in the lives of millennials and Gen Z, allowing them to connect with others over shared interests (Donald P. Bellisario (no date)), exchange experiences, and express themselves.

The global COVID-19 pandemic played a major role in accelerating its viral success. (Feldkamp, 2021) With lockdowns and restrictions in place, people turned to digital platforms to stay connected and find entertainment, paving the way for TikTok's rise in popularity.

Small and medium-sized businesses.

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) maintain revenues assets and number of employees that vary depending on the country and industry. They outnumber large companies and play an important role in a country's economy and innovation. (Liberto, 2024)

Small and medium-sized businesses represent 99% of all businesses in Europe. (SME definition, (no date)) The European Commission defines SMEs as companies with fewer than 250 employees, annual revenues not exceeding 50 million euros, or a balance sheet total of up to 43 million euros. SMEs are immensely important for a country's wealth creation, employment and economic growth. (Ibarra and co., 2020)

Small and medium-sized businesses in Greece

99.9% of all businesses in Greece are small or medium-sized businesses, making them an important pillar of the Greek economy. 56% of employees in total for SMEs (Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs), no date) and they represent 19.3% of GDP. (SEV Hellenic Federation of Enterprises, no date)

According to Statista.com, (Statista, 2024) there were around 719,296 small businesses in Greece in 2022. The majority of these businesses (673,5619) were micro enterprises that employed between zero and nine people. Moreover, there were 41,584 businesses that had about 10 to 49 employees and 4,151 medium-sized businesses with 50-249 employees.

However, SMEs in Greece face various difficulties including over-taxation, lack of access to working capital, fierce competition with foreign markets, limited capacity to adapt to high value business initiatives and limited ability to exploit EU initiatives and funding programs largely because of the inability of the government to accelerate the process and also because of the poor decision making of SME owners. As a result, Greek SMEs are vulnerable to European competition.

Consumer behavior in the digital age

Although some consumers still prefer the experience of visiting a physical store, online shopping is on the rise. E-commerce allows users to access a wide variety of products and compare prices and quality. They can read reviews from other buyers to better evaluate whether the product or service is worth it. Another factor is convenience, as e-commerce allows users to buy things from the comfort of their own home. In 2024, retail e-commerce sales are estimated to exceed 4.1 trillion dollars worldwide. (Statista, Topic: E-commerce worldwide, 2025) In 2023, 106.8 million people used social networks for shopping, and it is estimated that this figure will grow by 10.6% by 2027. (Statista, 2025)

Facebook is the most popular social commerce platform among US buyers, with 60.9% of social media users having recently bought something via Facebook in 2024. TikTok takes second place with 35.5% of respondents having made a recent purchase there in 2024, followed by Instagram (34.3%) and YouTube. (26.4%) (Willens, 2024)

According to research, (Abouraia, 2023) men are more likely to make frequent online purchases than women which can possibly be attributed to a higher degree of comfort and familiarity. Individuals with higher education, higher income levels and those with white-collar jobs are also more likely to engage in online shopping. On the other hand, while age can influence consumer behavior, its impact on online shopping was found to be less important compared to other demographic factors.

Men generally have a more positive attitude towards e-commerce. (Kanwal and co. (2021)) Social influences affect consumer behavior for both genders but it's more pronounced in women. Male shoppers are often motivated by convenience, lack of sociality and cost saving. On the other hand, female online shoppers are often influenced by social and fashion trends. (Sarkar and Das, 2016)

Analytics provide a useful tool for marketers when it comes to analyzing consumer behavior. Descriptive analytics use past data to identify patterns and trends. Predictive analytics use statistical models and machine learning to forecast future consumer needs and behaviors. Prescriptive analytics use predictions to prescribe the best course of action for businesses. Key-performance Indicators (KPIs), click-through rates and conversion rates are also important to understand how consumers interact with online businesses and digital marketing.

Digital Marketing Strategies

Digital marketing, a phenomenon that has revolutionized the world of marketing, predates TikTok and originates from the early days of the Internet. (DigitalDefynd, 2024) In fact, the term can be traced back to the early 1990s. In the beginning it took the form of email marketing campaigns, clickable banner ads (Monnappa, 2025) and simple database marketing. (Schoenbachler et al. (1997) It has evolved a lot since then because of technological advancements and the Internet becoming increasingly popular. It is a growing industry, worth 366 billion dollars in 2023 and expected to grow annually by 13.6% during the following decade. (Flores, 2025)

There are many ways to utilize the online world for marketing, including content marketing, social media marketing, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), paid advertising and influencer marketing.

Content marketing is defined as the marketing strategy that involves producing and sharing valuable and relevant online material to attract customers and boost interest and engagement. (What is Content Marketing?, no date) Social media marketing is about companies being active on social media sites with the purpose of promoting their brand, building online communities, interacting directly with existing and potential customers and becoming quickly aware of new trends and opportunities. Those who practice Search Engine Optimization optimize websites and content to rank higher in search engines like Google. More specifically, SEO is about improving the appearance, usefulness and positioning of the content in order to rank higher in organic search results. Paid Advertising is about using social media and search engines like Google and various websites to promote content via paid ads and pay-per-click-marketing. The website displays the ad, and the business has to pay the host for each click on said ad. Influencer Marketing is about using people who have a lot of followers and fans on social media to promote your business or product. E-mail marketing utilizes e-mail to promote a product or service. (Team, 2024)

Social media is immensely important for a lot of these digital marketing strategies, like influencer marketing, paid advertising and SEO. Social media has become a vital part of digital marketing, offering businesses new and exciting opportunities to interact with their target audiences.

Literature Review

Methodology

The literature review for this dissertation examines both academic papers and industry articles in order to achieve a better understanding of the role of TikTok as a marketing tool, especially when it comes to small and medium-sized enterprises. The industry articles were chosen based on relevancy to the topic and credibility of the site. The academic papers were selected from academic database journals.

TikTok as a marketing tool

TikTok provides exciting and dynamic opportunities for digital marketing as it is accessible, affordable and has a user-friendly interface. Small and medium-sized businesses can easily utilize it to reach a wide and diverse audience of customers. The benefit of the short video format is that it encourages businesses to get bold and creative when promoting their product so that it can spread quickly and effectively reach the target audience. (Yang and co. 2019) A study that interviewed in-depth 17 entrepreneurs (Chen, 2023) found that they use TikTok primarily to interact with customers and build a connection with them as well as to encourage word-of-mouth advertising. The desire to increase audience engagement, entertainment, and information sharing drives entrepreneurs to use TikTok for social media marketing. In addition, entrepreneurs may also turn to TikTok to satisfy their need for creativity and spontaneity, which might be restricted on other social media platforms.

Another study from 2023 (Julianti, 2023) found that TikTok usage is linked to increased sales. It notes that an increasing number of brands are utilizing TikTok for promotion and advertisement, collaborating with influencers to boost their visibility. The coefficient of determination of 0.648 suggests that 64.8% of the variability in sales increase can be attributed to TikTok usage, while 35.5% can be attributed to other factors.

According to Capterra's TikTok Marketing Survey, (Dawson, 2023) 78% of SMEs using TikTok report a positive return on investment, 52% are planning to boost their spending related to TikTok marketing and 21% are keeping their budgets the same. In-feed ads, which closely resemble organic content, are the most effective for boosting conversions. Other content formats that are particularly successful include shopping ads, branded effects, trending challenges, and live videos.

TikTok is a fast-moving platform where trends are constantly changing. Creating appealing and entertaining content is key for TikTok marketing. Unlike other social media platforms, TikTok encourages innovation and creativity. Businesses have to be flexible and stay aware of the current trends in order to create unique and fresh content and connect with their audience. According to one study, (Feldcamp, 2021) it's essential for businesses to be familiar with TikTok's culture and hashtag system so that they can use it effectively for marketing. Social media hashtags are used to categorize content and make it easier to discover for users. They are used in many social media platforms including Instagram and X and are especially important for TikTok. Businesses can create unique hashtags for their brands or use existing ones to join conversations and connect with customers. Hashtags help increase visibility, potentially reaching a broader audience beyond the business' followers. Popular hashtags can attract likes, comments and shares from people who are interested.

Research (von Oehsen and Soto Betancourt, 2021) explored the effectiveness of TikTok as a platform for boosting website traffic for small businesses. In order to fill the gaps in existing literature, the study performed an experiment to determine and analyze the platform's

features that are most successful in increasing brand awareness, based on video views. Moreover, it examines changes in website traffic before and after implementing TikTok marketing to determine its impact.

The findings of the study show that combining hashtags and sound is the optimal way to generate the highest number of views. Sound was the most impactful feature on its own. The results suggested that TikTok was beneficial in increasing website traffic. However, the study had some limitations because of time constraints as well as restrictions surrounding commercially licensed sounds for business accounts. Therefore, the study was unable to provide definite and conclusive answers, and more research was recommended.

Another tool that businesses can use for digital marketing is TikTok challenges. TikTok challenges are activities where the users of the platform imitate the behavior posted by others, they record and post these activities and dare others to try the same. Examples include dance challenges, singing challenges and others like the ice-bucket challenge where users were encouraged to pour a bucket of ice-cold water over their head.

According to one study on adolescents, (Roth and Co. 2021) most participants find these challenges enjoyable and experience positive feelings after completing them. Overall, the respondents had a positive view of TikTok challenges and enjoyed the likes and attention that came from participating in them. Businesses could create their own branded challenge, incorporating their products in a way that aligns with the challenge and encourages the users to participate. One example is the #inmydenim challenge from Guess: the participants had to create a messy look first and then create a stylish look using denim. The 6-day campaign went viral, and Guess gained 12,000 new followers on its profile account. (Guess TikTok challenge & case study, no date)

Another example of this is Chipotle's #LidFlip challenge where participants were trying to flip the lid onto the burrito bowl without using their hands. The purpose was to spread awareness of their new Cinco de Mayo deal with free delivery for digital orders. Within 6 days there were 110,000 videos of the challenge and within a month, the challenge reached 230 million views and the digital sales of the company among the Gen Z audience hit a new record. Chipotle also became one of the most followed brands on TikTok. Other examples of challenges initiated by brands include #ThousandDollarCrocs by Crocs, #MyCalvins by Calvin Klein and #YouOwnIt by MAC cosmetics. (Emplifi, 2025) In all of these cases, the brands cleverly used TikTok challenges to promote themselves.

One academic article from 2024 (Tan, 2024) investigated how TikTok challenges affect brand recognition and how they're associated with viral marketing. The article recognizes three types of challenges:

- 1) Creative Challenge: It encourages users to create content around specific themes and topics.
- 2) Skill Challenge: It encourages users to show a particular skill or talent.
- 3) Public Welfare Challenge: It associates social topics and public welfare projects with a social media challenge to raise awareness or funds

Brands need to incorporate their own brands and products into these challenges in order to encourage TikTok users to interact with the brand or product. This helps raise awareness and increases engagement with the customers. It's also a very low-cost marketing strategy that even SMEs can afford. There are certain conditions that help a challenge go viral, including:

- 1) The content has to be unique and innovative so that the users will want to participate.
- 2) The content has to reach the users on an emotional level.
- 3) Users need to feel that participating in the challenge will enhance their social image.
- 4) The challenge needs to be reasonably easy to imitate.
- 5) The platform needs to support and promote the challenge.

The article also identifies certain risks with relying on TikTok challenges. These risks include the users being tired and bored with challenges, the risk of the company getting backlash because of negative opinion, the risk of poor content quality and potential changes in platform policy. The companies that want to use challenges for marketing need to consider having a mechanism in place to respond to these possible risks.

Influencer marketing (What is influencer marketing? (2023)) is defined as the engagement of popular social media content creators by businesses/corporations to advertise their products and services. These engagements or collaborations have been taking place informally since the early days of social media and have grown significantly in popularity during the last decade. According to a survey from 2014, (What is influencer marketing, 2023) this phenomenon was dominated by a small number of "power influencers". However, in recent years there has been a rise in influencers with a smaller follower base. A 2024 survey (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2025) with participants that work in the marketing and PR fields showed that most prefer micro (26%) and nano (44%) influencers over macro-influencers (17%) and conventional celebrities (13%). In the same report, 85% of participants expressed faith in the effectiveness of influencer marketing, an increase compared to previous years. A 2022 analysis (What is Influencer Marketing, 2023) showed that influencer marketing appears to create a positive Return on Investment (ROI) for brands. Paying influencers as monetary compensation for their services appears nowadays more common (41%) than giving them free products to engage their promotion (31%). (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2025) Based on research by Lou and Yuan (2019), influencers appear to have a closer relationship with their audiences than celebrities, something that makes them appear more trustworthy and credible. A study (Belanche and Co, 2021) that involved 372 followers of a well-known fashion influencer, found that when there is a strong alignment between the influencer and the consumer, the level of congruence between the influencer and the product affects how well the consumer connects with the product. When the influencer and product align well, consumers are more likely to feel a connection to the product, leading to more positive attitudes, and increased intentions to purchase or recommend it. This alignment boosts the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns. Consumers are influenced by posts from influencers in four keyways: raising brand awareness, showcasing expertise, fostering brand preference, and influencing purchasing choices. According to one study on influencer

marketing, (Chopra and Co., 2020) both the perception of influencers and the belief in one's ability to control their behavior and increase their knowledge in one specific area, had a positive effect on consumer behavior. On the other hand, peer influence did not have any effect. Moreover, factors like personal relevance, inspiration, and trust were found to have a positive effect on consumer behavior, while perceived risk had no influence. Effective influencer marketing requires selecting the right influencers who can provide personalized advice, share compelling stories, and offer recommendations that engage their audience. (Chopra and Co, 2020) Influencers use giveaways, product placement, social media challenges, unboxing videos, sponsored content and product reviews to advertise the product or service. One example of successful influencer marketing is the collaboration between fitness and fashion influencer Danielle Bernstein and Fiji Water. (Fatima, InBeat Agency, 2025) Thanks to Bernstein's promotion, the hashtag #FijiWater saw a significant increase in usage, with over 190,000 posts on Instagram.

A lot of TikTok influencers have a significant reach and credibility with their followers. Businesses can partner with them to create sponsored posts, hashtags and challenges, product reviews and unboxing videos. They can even collaborate with influencers to co-create an exclusive product line or limited-edition item that can then be promoted through the influencer's platform. A 2024 report showed that TikTok is the most popular influencer channel with 69% of brands preferring it over Instagram (47%), YouTube (33%) and Facebook (28%). (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2025)

A study conducted by Zhao and Wagner in 2023 explores how various experiences of TikTok users on the platform impact their purchase intention. The study focuses on the effect of commitment to both influencers and the platform, while customer type is considered a moderating factor. It sheds light on three key experience types: informational, entertainment, and parasocial relationships.

By analyzing 458 valid responses from TikTok users using structural equation modeling, the research finds that all three experience types significantly strengthen user commitment to influencers and the platform. Ultimately, this commitment influences the users' intention to purchase products or services. Moreover, customer type plays a unique role as repeat customers are more affected by their commitment to influencers, while potential customers are more influenced by their commitment to the platform.

Another study from Indonesia, (Al Faruq Abdullah and Co.,2023) used questionnaires distributed to 95 respondents in order to examine what makes users follow a TikTok account. It explores how SMEs can evaluate how they can utilize relevant content, engagement and trustworthiness to assess whether users will follow their accounts. The results emphasize that user engagement, likes, comments and interactions and content relevance are key to drive following, while reputation can boost engagement and not necessarily lead to a bigger following. As a result, SMEs should focus on producing personalized and engaging content in order to increase interactions with their customers. The study suggests further exploration of the factors that can increase customer engagement.

Viral marketing refers to content that can spread quickly, much like a virus. Because of the Internet and social media, viral messages have increased rapidly in the form of memes, videos, written posts and others. The sharing tools of social media platforms allow content to be shared, not just within one platform but across multiple platforms, making the phenomenon of viral marketing an appealing option. As a result, businesses can promote their message on a very wide scale within a very short period of time, something that was not possible in the past. Brands can use viral marketing to increase their reach and sales. Viral marketing isn't just for big brands and can be utilized by any business regardless of its size. (UpViral, 2024) Some factors (Hamidi and Uyan, 2020) for viral marketing include:

- 1) Being informative, spreading the right message to consumers to inform them about the product.
- 2) Being entertaining fulfills the needs of the consumers for joy and art.
- 3) Being not annoying. Consumers are often irritated by ads and attempts at viral marketing. Companies might need to find a way to bypass that.
- 4) Being a credible and trustworthy source.

Even though some companies create strategies to achieve virality, sometimes what becomes viral is difficult to predict and control. (Kagan, 2024) One example of viral marketing is the “Real Beauty Sketches” by Dove where a woman would describe herself to a sketch artist hidden behind a curtain and he would draw a beautiful and accurate sketch of her based on this description, challenging negative self-perception. The ad promoted self-acceptance and self-confidence and successfully utilized video content across social media and Youtube to become viral and create a discussion around self-image. Viral marketing has been shown to affect the consumers' purchasing decisions (Ali Hamed, 2017) and impulse buying. (Hamidi and Uyan, 2020)

According to studies, (Tovar, 2024) TikTok users are more receptive to brand messaging, calls to action, and breakthrough ads compared to the general Internet audience. Over 5 million businesses use TikTok, many of them small. Users spend, on average, 95 minutes per day on the platform. Its overall engagement rate is significantly higher than other leading platforms, (HOM team, 2023) and it has integrated Shopify (Learn how to boost sales | TikTok Shop Academy | United States, no date) to drive sales from this engagement. Shopify is an ecommerce platform that helps sell products online. (What is Shopify and how does it work? (2025)) Users can browse and buy products directly in the app or via the brand's website, and influencers can add affiliate links to earn commissions.

TikTok's live shopping feature offers an important opportunity for ecommerce as it allows SMEs to connect with customers in an instant. One example of this is the beauty brand PLouise which does 12-hour live events answering questions from customers and communicating directly with them. The owner speculates that 45% of the company's 31.5-million-pound sales can be attributed to TikTok. The company has 2.9 million followers on the platforms and gained 29.000 just from the livestream alone. (Loyst, 2024)

The TikTok algorithm is a system which decides which content will be shown to which users. Taking into account the user's likes, shares, comments as well as how much time they spend watching a certain video, it promotes content that the user will likely be interested in. (Smith,

2021) This algorithm is one of the main reasons why TikTok is so popular and addictive as it caters to each individual's interests and personality. Understanding how the algorithm works is key for any marketer that wishes to succeed on TikTok.

According to a study where 28 TikTok users who also produce content for the platform were interviewed, (Klug and Co., 2021) three main assumptions were identified about how the app's algorithm works. Firstly, the respondents mentioned the overall engagement with a specific post (likes, comments, shares), makes it more likely for a similar post to appear to the user's "For You" page. Secondly, the producers believed that posting a video during a specific time during the day makes it more likely to go viral. The third factor mentioned was the correct use of trending hashtags. These assumptions are important because they determine how influencers and video posters interact with the platform and what kind of steps they take to make sure their videos become popular. The researchers tested these assumptions and found that the first two were accurate. However, the third one (using multiple popular hashtags) was found to not significantly affect content recommendation. The interviewed also mentioned some other, less popular assumptions to how TikTok algorithm works, like that making shorter videos, directly addressing the audience and using popular sounds and music increasing the chance of it being recommended to the trending section.

One of the main benefits of using TikTok, especially for small business marketing, is that it erases the need to hire expensive videographers or editors to produce high-quality content, as required on other platforms like YouTube. Instead of investing heavily in production, businesses can instead use their budget for TikTok advertising, which allows for precise targeting by age, gender, and location. This gives small businesses a direct and efficient way to engage with their ideal audience. Once the ad campaign is set up, reaching the desired target group becomes quick and straightforward, with TikTok offering a detailed, step-by-step guide in its Ads Manager for ad creation. (How it works | TikTok for Business, no date)

TikTok culture emphasizes personal, relatable and often humorous content. Businesses can create relatable and clever emotional content that resonates with people's feelings on a personal level in order to increase trust and build a strong sense of connection with them. Based on the findings of Hutchins and Rodriguez, (2017) emotional content is key to capturing the attention of social media users. Another study from 2013 (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013) found that emotionally charged Twitter posts receive more retweets and attention than neutral ones. To thrive on TikTok and attract views, businesses need to grab users' attention right from the beginning of their video. Given TikTok's short video format, there is only a brief window to make an impact. If the content doesn't capture the audience's interest in the first few seconds, there's a high chance they will lose focus and quickly scroll to the next video. According to research, (Liu and Co.,2018) the short video format is the most effective nowadays as the consumers' patience for longer videos has decreased, (Asif and Kazi, 2024) making TikTok one of the most relevant tools for digital marketing.

A qualitative study by Halle Brennan (2021) focused on analyzing the case studies of The Washington Post and Gymshark as both businesses started using TikTok marketing during the coronavirus pandemic. The purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding on

how brands and marketing experts can utilize TikTok to create successful and meaningful campaigns.

According to the study, The Washington Post was quick to embrace TikTok, gaining more than 900,000 followers and 37.4 million likes by spring of 2021. The newspaper used humor, music and the platform's weirdest special features to reach a younger audience and keep them entertained. One example of using humorous content is how they posted a video of a news team discussing The Bachelorette Tv show instead of the Democratic political debates. Analyzing the activities of The Washington Post on TikTok, the author mentions 4 tips for brands who wish to use TikTok marketing:

- 1) Share important information.
- 2) Speak your mind. According to research most people believe that companies should speak out about issues they care about.
- 3) Interact with other organizations.
- 4) Have fun, embrace self-depreciation and small mistakes.

This approach helped the newspaper appear more relatable and attracted younger readers. It also helped the brand earn the trust of Gen Z by reshaping its image.

Gymshark is a company selling sports and fitness clothing. By spring of 2021, it had 2.5 million followers on TikTok and 39.9 million likes.

Gymshark was primarily known for collaborating with influencers on Instagram and it followed a similar strategy on TikTok. Many users are turning to TikTok for fitness related content with the hashtag #fitness having more than 44 billion views on a global scale. Gymshark produces an average of 40 videos a month, participates in workout challenges and creates partnerships with lifestyle and fitness influencers.

For example, the company promoted the "66 Days Change your Life" which relied on six influencer accounts to help increase brand awareness and connection with the customers. The brand's reliance on user-generating content and interactions with the users is one of the key reasons for its success.

Another example of a product going viral because of TikTok is Dubai Chocolate. It is a chocolate bar filled with knafeh and pistachio sweet cream. The idea for the chocolate originates from a store in UAE and it quickly gained popularity in multiple countries including Greece. TikTok played a key role in its success (Caims, 2024) as it was promoted by multiple influencers, creating a trend where people wanted to taste it for themselves. The hashtag related to Dubai Chocolate #kunafachocolatebar has been used over 200 million times on TikTok, collecting more than 500 million views and inspiring many chocolate brands to experiment, creating their own versions. (Tabbara, 2024)

The book industry has also been impacted by the rise of TikTok. To be more specific, Booktok is a subcommunity of TikTok that focuses on literature. Several viral challenges like "Book bingo" and "30-day reading challenges" have captured the attention of audiences encouraging users to share their interest in reading with others. Various authors have reported an increase in sales after going viral on TikTok, including Coleen Hoover. (Perdamgaard, 2025) It has also popularized the genre of romantacy, with book series like Fourth Wing and

ACOTAR becoming international best sellers. During the pandemic, print book sales rose by 9% in the US. Part of this increase can be attributed to TikTok. (Bateman, 2022)

According to a 2023 survey on small and medium sized retailers and restaurants, (Capterra's 2023 TikTok Marketing Survey) TikTok performs better than Facebook and Instagram when it comes to organic engagement. More specifically, 96% say they get more engagement from TikTok than Instagram and Facebook. Among those that run paid ads on TikTok, 51% report a positive return on investment (ROI) and 46% report breaking even. The main TikTok marketing strategies used by SMEs include taking advantage of popular trends (53%), focusing on a specific niche (51%), and educating customers about their products and brand (51%). However, 45% report that generating a return on investment (ROI) from TikTok's eCommerce marketplace has been difficult. 77% reported an increase in sales due to TikTok in the past year and 85% expressed a desire to increase their TikTok advertising spending in the future. Another 2022 survey on small and medium-sized businesses (Alice, 2023) found that of the 58% that had been using TikTok for the previous 6 months, 59% reported a growth in revenues, 42% said that TikTok helped protect their business from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and 32% indicated that TikTok helped them raise capital. 81% said that the usage of TikTok is easy and 73% said it was entertaining.

Generation Z is defined as the generation born between 1997 and 2012. (Greiger, 2024) Gen Z represents potential customers whose spending power is increasing every year. Generation Z spends a lot of time online and mostly views influencers as trustworthy. Using digital channels like TikTok and Instagram, as well as influencer marketing could be key to reach the Gen Z audience. According to some research, Gen Z views TikTok as equally trustworthy to older social media platforms and brand should take this trust into consideration and use creativity and open-mindedness to reach the youth. (Rezek, 2022)

Another study (Genoveva, 2022) sought to find how TikTok affects the brand awareness of SMEs particularly among generation Z consumers. In the digital age, marketing has become more interactive, allowing for more personalized approaches and TikTok is highlighted as especially popular among Generation Z. The study aims to understand how three factors: content marketing, influencers, and psychological factors, influence brand awareness for SMEs from the point of view of Generation Z. Using a sample of 238 people, the study found that all three factors had a positive and significant effect on brand awareness for SMEs. In particular, content marketing had the largest impact (63.5%), followed by psychological factors (34.2%) and influencers. (21.6%)

Hasim and Sterlina (2022) conducted a study on how small and medium-sized industries in the plus-size clothing industry adapted during the pandemic. SMEs were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic because of the lockdowns and restrictions on outdoors activities. The research focuses specifically on how the plus-size clothing industries turned to the digital world TikTok marketing to survive. It found that these enterprises adapted and even thrived by offering trendy and in-demand clothing, creating content on TikTok and using the right influencers and using other platforms like Instagram to promote product catalogues, Shopee for ecommerce and Whatsapp for customer service.

TikTok demands fewer resources compared to traditional marketing campaigns, (Yudhistira and Muflichah, 2022) making it an appealing option for SMEs. However, SMEs also have a limited capacity to handle certain risks because of their restricted budget and this could make them cautious when it comes to using TikTok. In particular, TikTok paid advertising is more expensive compared to other platforms, like Instagram and Facebook, (Influencer Hub, 2025) leading businesses to prefer organic content marketing over paid ads.

An article (Themba, 2022) analyzed 6 case studies of small businesses using TikTok for marketing. It emphasizes how small companies can use engaging, honest and personal content and In-Feed ads to reach new audiences, increase website traffic and sales. Some strategies mentioned in the article include promoting fun videos, showing the audience how the products are used and running a discount campaign.

For example, Princess Polly is an online fashion retailer from Australia. Their TikTok content emphasized the importance of ethical, sustainable fashion, promoting the personality of the owner and focusing on fun content that could resonate with the youth. Princess Polly used an auction ad campaign to promote discount codes for the products and managed to reach a wide audience and increase their website traffic. They connected well with younger audiences reaching a 1.05% click-through rate and a 15X return on ad spend.

Threats and limitations of TikTok

The rapid growth of TikTok has allowed brands to build online communities, promote their products and connect with existing and potential customers in new and exciting ways. However, aside from the benefits, there are also risks and limitations when it comes to using TikTok for digital marketing. For example, the data privacy of the users has become a topic of heated discussions with many experts, politicians and regulators voicing concerns and calling for the regulation of the platform. The app collects sensitive personal information from its userbase, often without their explicit knowledge. (TikTok use and privacy risks, no date) Such information includes age, personal contacts, relationship status, email addresses, phone numbers, preferences, searches etc. Given that TikTok is owned by a company based in China (ByteDance) there are concerns that user data could be available to Chinese government agents, especially after China's National Intelligence Law of 2017, (PRC National Intelligence Law) which requires all individuals and organizations to "support, assist, and cooperate" with national intelligence initiatives. Theoretically, China could use TikTok to spread misinformation and promote pro-China political narratives. As a result, various countries including India and the United States attempted to ban or restrict TikTok. In 2020, India banned TikTok over national security concerns, particularly with the app having over 200 million users. (Travelli and Raj, 2024) Similarly, the United States passed a legislation on March 13, 2024 (Vanian, 2024) that would completely ban the app's operations unless ByteDance executes a qualified divestiture determined by the US president. The legislation had significant bipartisan support from both the Republican and the Democratic party. Following some changes, the act was

passed again by the House and the Senate, before being signed into law by the president on April 24, 2024. If the app is not sold, the ban would take effect at the earliest date of January 19, 2025. (Williams, Saenz and Liptak, 2024; Woo, Andrews and Peterson, 2024) On January 18, TikTok was banned in the United States but was restored 12 hours later because of the agreement of President Trump to delay the ban. (Gerken, McMahon and Rahman-Jones, 2025)

TikTok is a fast-paced, chaotic platform that evolves daily, which makes it difficult to build a sustainable, long-term identity on it. The trends and user preferences are constantly shifting and changing, and it can be hard for brands to keep up with current trends, remain popular and not become outdated. Viral content can be unpredictable and many attempts to create viral content fail. (Watts and Peretti, 2007) Viral content can also be hard to control. The message might reach some people who are not the intended customers, or they might change the message and add misleading information to it. This might result in misinformation and corruption of your original marketing message. (Hamidi and Uyan, 2020) In order to secure long-lasting popularity and remain relevant, it is important that companies follow the newest trends, keep the content fresh, use popular music, challenges and memes and update their content regularly and consistently. Even if they follow these guidelines, some brands don't manage to become popular online, making TikTok a risky and sometimes unreliable option. This lack of predictability and security is something that brands should carefully consider.

Another consideration is reputation management. One unsatisfied customer might post an unflattering review and go viral. When using online marketing, your business is left open to criticism and negative comments. It's vital for the company to have a good reputation online and handle critical comments with grace. (The impact of viral marketing and reputation management, 2012)

Moreover, there are certain limitations when it comes to TikTok's short video format. A typical TikTok video lasts from a few seconds to one minute, making it not suitable for certain firms to properly explain their message. Consumers might not immediately understand what the brand is about, which can make them ignore a product or service they would otherwise be interested in. Companies may need to rely on supplementary content or link to external websites for additional details. However, TikTok's design encourages users to scroll down in a quick manner and not carefully consider what they're watching making it hard to capture and hold their attention for long so that they can seek out the additional details. Businesses need to find a delicate balance between staying fresh and engaging, while still ensuring their core messaging isn't lost in the noise. In order to succeed, brands should be prepared to not only produce content quickly but also adapt and react with flexibility to the shifting trends, making sure that their strategy is always aligned with what is currently popular among TikTok users.

Additionally, TikTok's core userbase involves young adults and teenagers, which means that it might not be a suitable marketing option for all businesses. For example, a brand that wants to reach people over 50 years old might face difficulties finding its desired audience on TikTok. Since TikTok's main audience is so young, brands may also need to be careful about their messaging. Otherwise, they could receive criticism

about promoting harmful ideas to the youth. For example, TikTok has been accused of glorifying unrealistic body standards, eating disorder content and self-harm to emotionally vulnerable young people. According to one report, hashtags about eating disorder content had over 13.2 billion views. Suicide content was promoted to new users within 2.6 minutes. (Center for Countering Digital Hate, 2022) Brands ought to take care that their content is ethical and appropriate for young people. However, recent stats show that the percentage of older people using TikTok is growing. 13% of adult TikTok users in 2024 were found to be in the 45-54 demographic compared to 8% in 2022. 14% of users were 55 plus compared to 9% in 2022. (Duarte, 2025) This could lead to new opportunities to target older audiences.

Another concern is the toxicity and bullying on the platform. Nearly half of US teens (46%) report having experienced some type of online harassment according to a 2022 survey. (Vogels, 2022) Online harassment can include name-calling and spreading false rumors. For businesses, bullying can take the form of people leaving negative reviews en masse for reasons that are unrelated to the quality of the product or service. The owner of the business can also be doxxed and harassed on a more personal level. Doxxing is when people online spread the personal information of someone (usually their real name, home address and phone number) so that other social media users can harass them. (NYCLU (2024) Doxxing: How to stay safe and protect yourself) This type of harassment can damage a business' reputation, cause customer loss and even potentially lead to legal action. It can also have negative consequences for the owner's and business workers' mental health. (Swansea University, 2018) Small businesses can be severely affected by this type of toxicity because of their limited resources.

To sum up, there are certain limitations and threats when it comes to using TikTok for digital marketing. The app faces legal action and bans in some countries and there are fears over user privacy and safety. Even though TikTok is easy to use and cost effective, brands might struggle to reach their core audience and hold their attention. However, if used properly, TikTok offers a lot of opportunities for success. It is important that brands have a deep understanding of TikTok and its capabilities, limits and metrics.

Research methodology

The research question aims to analyze how companies utilize digital marketing, how popular and effective TikTok is as a marketing tool and what are its identified limitations. The research methodology ensures that the results are credible and trustworthy, while also allowing for further assessment and examination.

Questionnaires are sent to selected businesses that utilize a form of digital marketing. The questionnaires contain detailed questions about the type and size of business and its experiences in the digital world. The respondents are business owners, digital marketing specialists and other employees who work closely with the marketing department. They are asked to answer questions about digital marketing in general, whether they utilize TikTok in

particular, how effective TikTok is and what are its perceived problems. They are also asked about the future of digital marketing and TikTok as a tool. Moreover, eight carefully selected small businesses were interviewed in order to gain a deeper and more personalized understanding of people's experiences. We used ten carefully crafted questions for the interviews.

Research philosophy

Quantitative research is a deductive strategy that aims to empirically test and analyze a theory through exploring numeric patterns. (UTA Libraries, Quantitative and Qualitative Research: What is Quantitative Research?, no date) It is the prevailing research framework in social sciences. It includes methodologies such as questionnaires and structured observations or experiments. Quantitative research produces reliable and factual data that can usually be generalized to a larger population. (Verhoef and Casebeer, 1997) It relies on observable and measurable data to examine a sample population and create knowledge about the social world.

Qualitative research focuses on asking open-ended questions that cannot be easily answered by numerical data. Its purpose is to investigate people's personal experiences and insights that cannot be quantified. (Tenny, Brannan and Brannan, 2022) Quantitative and qualitative research are not mutually exclusive and the combination of them can help us gain a deeper insight into real world problems.

TikTok is a relatively new platform and its marketing capabilities haven't been studied in depth. For this reason, this research uses an exploratory approach that aims to examine the question rather than offer final and conclusive data. (Business Research Methodology) It also adopts an inductive approach where theories are produced towards the end of the study as a result of observations rather than proposing a hypothesis at the beginning of the study. (Business Research Methodology) The inductive approach offers a flexible method to explore the question and enables the emergence of new theories and patterns.

The research philosophy of this paper has been developed with a clear focus on understanding how small and medium-sized businesses utilize digital marketing and how they perceive TikTok as a marketing tool. It utilizes exploratory and inductive approaches to ensure flexibility and discover new data and trends on the digital marketing world.

Research Design and Data Collection

We use the quantitative method to ensure the collection of standardized data that can be analyzed statistically, shedding light onto trends and patterns of how businesses utilize digital marketing. A sample of 39 differently sized businesses were surveyed although only the small and medium-sized were selected for the study and the rest were rejected. Utilizing a structured questionnaire, this dissertation seeks to examine the world of digital marketing in general and the perception of TikTok marketing in particular. The survey is available in English and Greek as many respondents are not fluent in the English language.

The questionnaires were distributed to business owners, marketing managers or carefully selected employees that work closely with the digital marketing department. (digital marketing specialists etc.) The questionnaire was designed to produce quantitative data as

well as qualitative insights. (for example, it asked questions about how the participants perceive the future of TikTok marketing or what is making them hesitant to use TikTok) The questionnaires included close-ended, multiple-choice questions as well as some optional open-ended questions.

The questions include demographic information about the respondents, the size and type of the business and its digital marketing strategy. It asks questions about the effectiveness of various digital marketing channels, the future of digital marketing and the perceived effectiveness of TikTok as a marketing tool. The survey was distributed online, using email and social media, as well as offline, by hand.

For qualitative research we used 8 open-ended questions to interview 8 selected business owners and recorded their answers. The interviewed were selected based on their frequent usage of TikTok, hoping to get more detailed answers from those who are deeply familiar with the platform. The questions were carefully crafted to help us gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Ethical Considerations

The respondents were informed about the nature and purpose of the survey and thus were able to provide informed consent before participating in it. They were assured of their right to anonymity and privacy as well as the right to anonymity for their company. Personal data was kept private, and the rights of the participants were respected throughout the whole process. The collected responses were not manipulated or altered. Data integrity, transparency, informed consent and credibility were some ethical principles taken into account during the process.

Limitations

While this paper provides valuable information regarding digital marketing and TikTok as a marketing tool, there are some limitations that should be considered. First of all, the sample size is limited and not all of the respondents utilized TikTok for digital marketing which means that they might not have extensive knowledge on the subject. Second of all, the data collection relied on self-reported surveys which means there could be some subjective bias in the responses. Moreover, the rapid technological advancements and the evolution of TikTok and digital marketing means that the results might become outdated soon. Future research should consider tracking the changes over a longer period of time. Additionally, the survey design might create some limitations as it took the form of a questionnaire and might not reflect the complexity of the full experiences of the respondents. Some participants might have also interpreted some questions differently than some others, influencing the credibility and generalizability of the study.

Regarding the results of qualitative research, while they can be valuable to gain a deeper insight into the problem, they can also be affected by subjectivity and bias. The interviewed businesses were carefully selected to be enthusiastic users of TikTok and might therefore not be representative of the average small business that uses digital marketing. It also includes a

relatively small sample of only 8 respondents. The interpretation of the responses can also be affected by the researcher's own perspectives

Further research is recommended to examine the subject, and it could benefit from a larger and more diverse sample and more extensive and detailed questions.

Results

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of a detailed analysis of the digital marketing strategies of small and medium-sized businesses and the effectiveness of TikTok as a marketing tool. The research question that this dissertation poses is the following: What are the marketing capabilities of TikTok and how can it become a valuable tool for small and medium-sized businesses. In order to examine this question, we use a mixed-method study that includes both qualitative and quantitative data. The questions focused on the interactions of businesses with the digital world, the strengths and limitations of TikTok as a marketing tool. The results are analyzed in two different sections, one for quantitative and one for qualitative data.

Quantitative results

39 questionnaires were distributed to business owners, marketing managers and specialists and other employees. One of the respondents claimed they were not using any form of digital marketing for their business and were therefore excluded from the research. 8 other respondents claimed that their business was big according to the definition of the European Commission (more than 249 employees) and were therefore excluded too because the dissertation focuses on small and medium-sized businesses. The remaining 30 participants reported that their small or medium-sized business uses a form of digital marketing, and their responses were taken into consideration.

73.3% of the respondents reported that their company has 1-9 employees, 23.3% reported having 10-49 employees and 3.3% reported having 50-249 employees. (Figure 1) 15 of the participants said their business operates in retail, 3 in professional services, 4 in the field of technology, 2 in hospitality, 1 in manufacturing, 1 in transportation, 1 in wholesale, 1 in organizing events for children and 2 in the video game industry. (Figure 2) 14 of the respondents said their industry has been operating for more than 8 years, 9 for 1-3 years, 4 for 4-7 years and 4 for less than 1 year. (Figure 3) The overwhelming majority of the businesses was located in Greece (86.7%), 2 businesses were primarily located in other European countries, 1 in Asia and 1 in North America. (Figure 4)

When it comes to the participants, 23 were the owner of the business, 1 was a marketing manager, 2 were digital marketing specialists and 4 had other roles. (Figure 5) The participants varied by age, 12 were in the 26-35 age cohort, 4 were 18-25, 8 were 36-45 and 6 were 46-55. (Figure 6) 10 of the respondents had a Special Training Institute Diploma, 7 had a Bachelor's Degree, 5 had a Master's and 8 were high school graduates. (Figure 7)

29 out of 30 businesses reported using social media marketing, 21 use Search Engine Optimization (SEO), 3 use pay-per-click ads, 10 use content marketing (blogging) and 2 use influencer marketing. (Figure 8) 14 (46.7%) said they measure the success of digital

marketing using social media engagement, 19 (33.3%) use conversion rates (sales), 4 (13.3%) use website traffic and 2 mentioned Return on Investment (ROI). (Figure 9) 83.3% said their company allocates less than 10% of their budget to digital marketing, 13.3% use 10-30% of the budget and 1 business 31-50% of the budget. (Figure 10) 40% said they have a formal digital marketing strategy, 56.7% said they don't and 1 mentioned currently developing a formal strategy. (Figure 11) 43.3% mentioned the main purpose of their digital marketing efforts is to increase brand awareness, 40% mentioned sales and conversions, 10% mentioned building an online community and 6.7% mentioned customer retention. (Figure 12)

Regarding the difficulties that companies face surrounding digital marketing, 25 mentioned budget and resources limitations, 13 lack of knowledge or expertise, 13 mentioned time limitations, 10 the difficulty measuring the success of digital marketing, 8 talked about the competition from larger businesses and 2 clicked the "Other" option. (Figure 13) Of those that clicked "Other" one mentioned the exhaustion that comes with being a 1-person business making it difficult to spend a lot of effort on marketing and the other said their company simply doesn't need a lot of digital marketing. 46.7% of the respondents expressed low confidence in their ability to use digital marketing, 36.7% expressed moderate confidence, 6.7% expressed high confidence and 10% no confidence. (Figure 14)

When it comes to TikTok marketing, 19 of the 30 businesses mentioned not using TikTok and 11 said they do use it. (Figure 15) When it comes to the reasons why the companies don't utilize TikTok, 4 mentioned they don't think it's effective enough, 5 mentioned they don't know how to use it, 7 intend to start using TikTok in the future and 3 clicked on the "Other" option. (Figure 16) 2 of those who clicked on the "Other" option said their business is not compatible with TikTok and 1 mentioned they were unsure of the effectiveness of TikTok.

Of those who currently utilize TikTok marketing, 6 expressed high satisfaction, 2 moderate satisfaction and 3 low satisfaction. (Figure 17) Half of the respondents expressed moderate optimism about the future of TikTok (50%), 10 low optimism (33.3%), 3 high optimism (10%) and 6.7% no optimism. (Figure 18)

46.7% of the respondents said the most important feature of social media marketing is sharing content, 36.7% said it's building an online community and 16.7% said it's interacting with customers. (Figure 19) Most respondents (56.7%) said they expect to increase their company's use of digital marketing in the future. 30% said they plan to maintain the current level of digital marketing and 13.3% were not sure. None of the respondents said they are planning to reduce the level of digital marketing. (Figure 20)

21 of the respondents believed the innovations in video content will have the biggest impact on their business, 13 mentioned AI and 15 believed video search and smart devices will be the most influential. (Figure 21) 1 of the respondents expressed uncertainty about the question because of the rapid evolution of technology.

Finally, when asked about what resourced would help improve their digital marketing efforts, 21 chose more budget allocation, 12 better digital marketing tools or software, 10 hiring specialized digital marketing experts and 17 chose the option "Access to digital marketing training and education". (Figure 22)

Qualitative results

We interviewed 8 small business owners that use TikTok digital marketing. For reasons of privacy, we'll use R, D, E, A, K, W, IF and F instead of the real names of the businesses.

R is a small business that sells handmade scented candles and other products. We asked the owner to introduce themselves and tell us when their business was created and what inspired its creation. They told us that they created the business in 2021 and were inspired by childhood memories of their mother creating handmade scented candles. When asked why they chose TikTok, they said it's very popular and it's easy to use TikTok to reach all age demographics. Also, they can use the algorithm to their advantage to reach their desired audience and advertise their products effectively. We then asked them about what type of content is best for TikTok marketing and they replied that it depends on the type of business and the owner themselves. They said that they have collaborated with influencers in the past but unsuccessfully. They said they chose the influencers based on view counts which was the wrong approach and that they should have chosen them based on relevancy to the products and their work-related data. The participant didn't identify any difficulties to using TikTok, they said it just needs creativity and imagination. They believe that TikTok helped their business tremendously and that they would advise other small businesses to use it too and be patient and persistent with it.

D is a graphic design company created in 2022. The 35-year-old owner spent years working as a graphic designer for other companies and finally decided to create their own enterprise inspired by their love for graphic design and their desire for independence. They started using TikTok to reach a wider and younger audience and find new customers. They believe the short form video format of TikTok is effective and say they get inspired by current trends when it comes to creating content although they don't follow them very closely. The owner of D says the company has not collaborated with influencers on TikTok or other platforms although it's something they would consider in the future. When asked about the difficulties of using TikTok for marketing, the respondent says that TikTok is a platform that evolves rapidly and it's hard to remain well-informed about the new technologies and popular trends. They believe TikTok has helped their business "significantly" and say that it inspires them to evolve as a business owner. They would advise other small business owners that want to use TikTok for marketing to post original and authentic content and to not always try to copy other businesses and also to get education and training so that they become knowledgeable about digital marketing in general.

E is a company that sells ecological and environmentally friendly products and aims to reduce plastic waste. Firstly, they introduced themselves and then said they started their business in 2020 during the first wave of the pandemic. They started it after they made the personal choice to live a more environmentally friendly life and reduce their use of plastic. After trying many ecological products for themselves, they decided to open an e-shop where they would sell the best ones according to their experience. When asked why they chose TikTok, the respondent replied that it was an amateurish attempt at first to share their enthusiasm of low waste products with other people. However, they soon realized the true strengths of TikTok as a marketing tool as well as the need of the TikTok community for eco-friendly products as well as information about the low waste way of life. When asked about the type of content that is more successful on TikTok, they stressed the importance of professionalism, sharing important information and personal experiences. They personally choose to not participate in popular TikTok trends, like doing dance choreographies, because

they believe it's not professional. They personally have not worked with influencers because they do the marketing themselves as they know the products better than anyone. When asked to identify the difficulties of using TikTok for marketing, they said that TikTok marketing requires being innovative, something that requires a lot of time, thought and work. Content creators should not get disappointed when they don't get the desired results. They also talked about how negative comments can dissuade people in the beginning. The participant believed that TikTok has "undoubtedly" helped their business grow by raising brand awareness. When asked to give advice to other people who want to use TikTok for marketing, they said that it's important to "find their own personality" on the platform so that they can distinguish themselves and attract attention. Ways for someone to distinguish themselves can include ways of speech, the colors and pros they use etc. It's also important to post consistently and produce quality content.

A is a small business that sells sewn products like small bags and scrunchies. It was created by a person in their 30s during the COVID-19 lockdown. The owner always wanted to work in the fashion industry and create their own business that would allow them to express their creativity. They chose TikTok because it was interesting and fashionable. They noticed that small businesses in foreign countries could get really popular on TikTok and tried to do the same in Greece. Regarding the content that is most effective for marketing, the owner replied that the trends change every day now. They strongly believe in the content that showcases the face behind the business as well as what happens backstage. A hasn't collaborated with influencers but they would like to try it in the future. When it comes to identifying the difficulties of TikTok marketing, they said you must always be informed about the new trends and upload high quality content. You must always work fast to stay updated, something that can be challenging considering the workload that small businesses have. They believe TikTok has helped their business especially in the beginning. However, nowadays there are too many small businesses and it's easy to remain unnoticed. The advice they would give to small businesses that want to use TikTok is to make sure they follow their own style and not just blindly follow the trends. It's also important to believe in their business and upload content on a daily basis.

K is a small business that creates its own skincare products, mainly body creams, body scrubs and shimmer oil. They started their business in 2022 because of the young owner's passion for chemistry and skincare. The owner chose TikTok because it's the best platform to organically reach new customers and promote your business at low or no cost using authentic and creative content. It's also a great platform to connect directly with customers and build an online community. When asked what type of content is more effective for marketing, they mentioned that you have to post frequently and consistently and not be afraid to show your personality. You have to be imaginative and creative and aware of current trends. K has worked with certain small influencers that have a decent engagement rate, and the owner believes it has slightly helped her business grow. Regarding the challenges of using TikTok, the owner says that the algorithm changes quickly and what works one week might not work the next. You have to be consistent, adaptive and ready to reinvent yourself if you wish to remain relevant. The respondent believes that TikTok has "undoubtedly" helped their business grow and that they mainly rely on Instagram and TikTok for promotion. The advice they would give to other small business owners that wish to use TikTok is to be consistent with it and not be afraid to show your face and get personal.

W is a small business that sells homemade candles. Their business models are wholesale and retail. The owner started their business in 2024 because of their love for scented candles. They began creating candles as a hobby and it turned into something more. They chose TikTok out of necessity so that their business can gain recognition and increase sales. They see TikTok as a channel to reach the people. The type of content they believe is more effective is the relaxing and simple content as well as showing the reality of the work behind the scenes because people want relatability. People don't seek "perfection" and instead like to see when things go wrong. They tried to collaborate with influencers in the past but didn't because of the inflated payments they asked for. The company has a limited budget and couldn't afford it. The difficulty of using TikTok for marketing is that people use TikTok primarily for relaxation, not to buy products. Therefore, businesses should always invent relatable ways to approach the users. Their business statistics show that TikTok is beneficial for their business which is why they keep using it. They would advise other businesses to post relaxing content because this is what people see. TikTok users can relax and laugh at simple content. According to the owner of W, simplicity and honesty are key to utilizing TikTok effectively.

IF is a small handmade jewels business operated by a 31-year-old. She started the business in 2020. Because of the COVID-19 quarantines, the owner felt the desire to expand her hobby of making handmade jewels and seasonal items and create a business. She chose TikTok because she wanted to use all digital channels to promote her business. TikTok was very popular when she started her business, and she was sure it would be a useful tool. When it comes to what type of content is most effective, the owner says that TikTok is a platform that caters to a varied range of interests. She tries to pay attention to every relevant trend on the platform, from funny videos to informative ones. She believes the most effective type of content is showing how the products are created and packaged as well as introducing the people who have worked for the business and showing their mistakes/funny moments. Also, another type of content that is effective is when the owner makes gift recommendations or showcases fitting combinations of jewels and clothes. The business hasn't worked with influencers yet however she would consider it based on their aesthetic and number of followers. The owner says TikTok is an easy-to-use platform and she doesn't identify any problems with it except that you have to post frequently and consistently. She believes TikTok has helped her business by fostering engagement with her customers as well as helping her create videos that she can use on other platforms. She would advise other creators to post consistently and understand that TikTok is not just a platform to sell products but also to create a relationship with your customers and therefore focus on the type of content that fosters that relationship.

F is a small business that sells handmade jewelry. Firstly, the owner introduced themselves as a 22-year-old student who works full-time for the sake of the business as well as being a student. They began creating jewelry in 2020 as an amateur, but their business was created officially in 2022. They were inspired to create their own jewelry after they bought a piece from another small business, but it broke quickly, and they decided to create something on their own. The participant identified TikTok as "the best social media platform today" because you can promote your products to hundreds of people at no cost. They also believe it provides a "more authentic" way of advertising as it provides a way for the content creator to show aspects of their true personality. In their opinion, the type of content that is most

effective for marketing depends on the time period. At the time of the interview, they believed the most effective type of content is the funny and relatable content as well as the type of content that provides answers to people's problems. F has worked with influencers before, and the owner chose the influencer based on their aesthetic and the personality they presented in their content. They say they like working with other people. When it comes to identifying the difficulties of using TikTok for marketing they say that you can never be sure about what will go viral. Moreover, a video going well doesn't automatically mean that sales will increase. The participants believe that TikTok helped their business and raised awareness for their brand. Finally, the piece of advice they would give to other small business that want to use TikTok for marketing is to be authentic as there are hundreds of businesses on TikTok and it's important for a business to show its uniqueness.

Discussion

The findings provide key insights into the digital marketing strategies that small businesses utilize. This discussion analyses the results based on existing literature and highlights the implications and limitations of the results.

Digital marketing strategies among small and medium-sized businesses

Social media marketing is widely utilized with 29 out of 30 businesses using a form of social media marketing. Previous research has shown that businesses prefer social media because it allows them to use innovative ways to connect and bond with their customers. (Tiago and Verissimo, 2014) SEO is the second most popular digital marketing strategy with 21 out of 30 businesses utilizing it. However, other, less cost-effective, strategies like pay-per-click ads and influencer marketing are less popular. This is probably because most small businesses have a limited budget and 83.3% of the businesses admit they allocate less than 10% of their budget to digital marketing.

When it comes to the limitations of digital marketing, 25 out of 30 participants cite difficulties regarding lack of resources and budget constraints. 13 out of 30 people cited time constraints, 13 out of 30 lack of knowledge and expertise and 10 cited difficulty measuring ROI or success. One previous study (Michaelidou and Co., 2011) that shown that small and medium-sized businesses perceive certain barriers when it comes to social media marketing, namely lack of knowledge, lack of compatibility with the business and limited resources. Another study by Taiminen and Karjaluo (2015) also found that SMEs are limited by lack of knowledge of how to use digital marketing, budget and time constraints. These challenges highlight the need for better access to training and resources. In fact, the respondents themselves identified the following ways to improve their digital marketing strategies: more budget allocation to digital marketing (70%), access to training and education (56.7%), better digital marketing tools or software (40%) and hiring digital marketing experts (33.3%).

TikTok marketing

Despite TikTok's rapid growth, only a limited amount from the sample utilizes it for marketing. More specifically, only 11 out of 30 businesses currently use TikTok for marketing. When asked about the reasons for this hesitation, 5 talked about lack of

knowledge of how to use TikTok, 4 talked about perceived lack of effectiveness, 2 expressed concerns regarding the compatibility of TikTok with their business model. Interestingly, 7 participants expressed the desire to start using TikTok in the future, suggesting a recognition of its potential. (Figure 23) Most respondents belonged to the 26-35 age group. We notice that participants aged 46 and above are less likely to use TikTok than those aged 45 and below. (Figure 24) However, no reliable conclusion can be made about demographics and TikTok use because of the limited sample size. More research is recommended to examine the relationship between age and TikTok use.

Among the 11 companies that utilize TikTok, 6 express high satisfaction, 2 moderate and 3 low satisfaction. 50% of the respondents say they're moderately optimistic about TikTok as a marketing tool, 33.3% are slightly optimistic, 10% are very optimistic and 6.7% are not optimistic.

However, when it comes to those interviewed, they all expressed high satisfaction about TikTok as a marketing tool and said they believe it helped them grow as a business. This disparity could be because, when it comes to interviews, we carefully selected business that clearly had a deep knowledge of how TikTok works hoping to get more a more detailed and personal outlook on the platform. This could mean that consistent use of TikTok can lead to better results for the business.

Moreover, all eight businesses that were interviewed expressed different motivations for using TikTok, but a common response was that the platform offers the company the ability to raise brand awareness and reach a wide and young audience at low to no cost. F also emphasized how TikTok enables companies to be authentic and show their personality when promoting their products. The owner of IF also mentioned that TikTok allows them to create videos with ease and that they can use these videos in other platforms too.

Regarding the most effective type of content for TikTok marketing, R and F emphasized being adaptive, as the strategy might be different depending on the time period and the type of business. F specifically mentioned that funny and personal content might be the most popular nowadays. E placed importance on being professional and posting high quality and informative content. D says they get inspired by current trends but don't necessarily copy them as uniqueness and originality are important. A also expressed the importance of showing the face behind the business as well as the process that happens backstage. Similarly, IF also mentioned that it's effective to show what's happening behind the scenes and how the products are created and packaged as well as introducing the people who work for the business. W mentioned posting content that helps people relax as well as showing the reality of how the business operates to be relatable. The importance of authenticity is corroborated by a recent Business Insider article (Jankowicz,2024) that highlighted how storytelling and showing the company's challenges and failures could be effective for TikTok marketing. For example, a company named Cat Burglar Co. Experienced a rapid increase in sales after posting a personal video highlighting her struggles with the business after giving birth. Indeed, a 2023 study (Guo and Co., 2023) showed that TikTok users may spend more time watching negative than positive content.

When it comes to the difficulties of using TikTok, the respondents mentioned the uncertainty about what will go viral, the fast-paced and constantly evolving nature of the platform, the time and effort that is required to be creative and imaginative. Indeed, various experts have

talked about how viral marketing is unpredictable and hard to control. (Bryant Media Group) One of the respondents also mentioned the negative comments that can affect businesses, especially the new ones. As other research notes, nearly half of US teens have experienced online harassment. (Vogels, 2022)

Each participant that was interviewed offered practical advice for small businesses that want to try TikTok marketing. Some common recommendations were being consistent and patient, posting authentic, high-quality and unique content and staying well-informed. More specifically, R, IF, A and K expressed the importance of posting regularly and consistently and not getting disappointed if the results are not immediate. This is supported by other sources that mention that frequent and consistent engagement with social media is key for successful digital marketing. (Adobe Express, no date)

F, A, D and E talked about being authentic and finding a unique style instead of just copying others. Company A stressed the importance of staying informed about new trends and D recommended getting special training and education. The owner of W highlighted the importance of simplicity and honesty. IF highlighted the need to foster a relationship with the customers.

Future digital marketing trends

The participants expressed their desire to expand their digital marketing efforts. 56.7% said they expect that their use of digital marketing will increase in the following years. 30% said the current level of digital marketing will be maintained the same and 13.3% were unsure. None of the respondents expected that their digital marketing efforts would be reduced. Video content trends were identified as the technological feature most likely to impact their business with 70% saying they believed it would affect their business. 50% mentioned that smart devices and voice search will most likely have an impact in their business and 43.3% mentioned AI. The focus on video content emphasizes the growing influence and importance of platforms like TikTok, YouTube and Instagram Reels.

Implications and recommendations

The research provides several implications. First of all, businesses who want to improve their digital marketing efforts should consider adopting strategies that would allow them to better allocate their budget and resources. Secondly, TikTok could be an important tool for marketing, when utilized correctly. Most companies who utilized TikTok expressed high satisfaction. Among those interviewed, they all believed TikTok marketing was highly beneficial for their business. However, TikTok marketing requires effort to be successful and some might also need additional education and training to use it efficiently.

Future research could examine a larger sample of businesses to gain better insights into their strategies and limitations. Moreover, studies tracking SMEs over long periods of time could provide valuable information regarding their long-term evolutions and strategies.

Conclusions

Social media marketing is an important and viable digital marketing outlet for small and medium-sized businesses. More specifically, the findings suggest that social media marketing is the most prevalent type of digital marketing largely because of its low cost and ability to

foster a relationship with the customers. However, there are some limitations related to budget constraints, time limitations and lack of relevant expertise.

TikTok as a relatively new platform is growing but still facing uncertainty. Only 11 out of 30 businesses to whom we distributed questionnaires said they're actively using TikTok at the moment. Lack of knowledge of how to use TikTok, lack of compatibility with the business model, algorithm unpredictability, rapidly changing trends and the fast evolution of technology are identified as some limitations of TikTok. Despite the constraints regarding lack of resources and lack of knowledge, the companies recognize the importance of digital marketing, and most expect growth in that area. While the respondents of the questionnaires had mixed views on TikTok, the businesses that were interviewed expressed high satisfaction with it, something that can be attributed to the fact that these businesses were selected among those who use TikTok consistently. Allocating resources more effectively and having better access to training and education could be key strategies to improve the companies' digital marketing efforts.

Moreover, the findings also highlight the unpredictable nature of viral marketing as companies struggle with what type of content will be popular and have to rely on experimentation and personal experience. Despite this, companies that are persistent and authentic appear to be the most successful on the platform.

Video content is believed to play a crucial role in the future of digital marketing strategies. Companies will need to adapt to new technologies including AI, voice search and smart phone use.

What is the size of your business?

30 responses

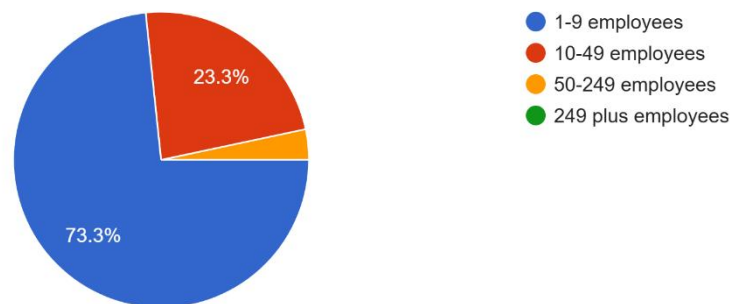


Figure 1. What is the size of the business?

What industry does your business operate in?

30 responses

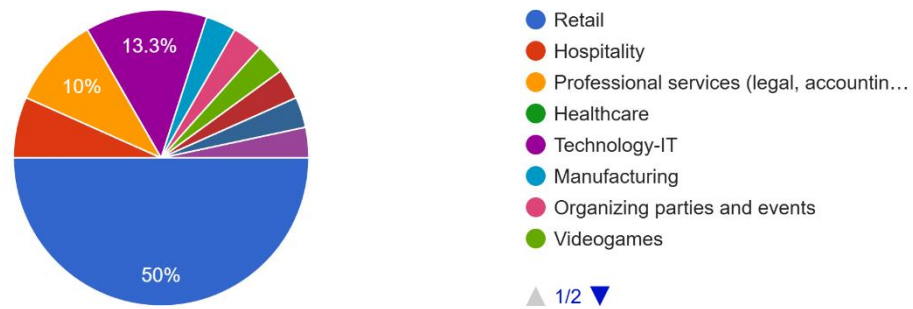


Figure 2. What industry does your business operate in?

How long has your business been operating?

30 responses

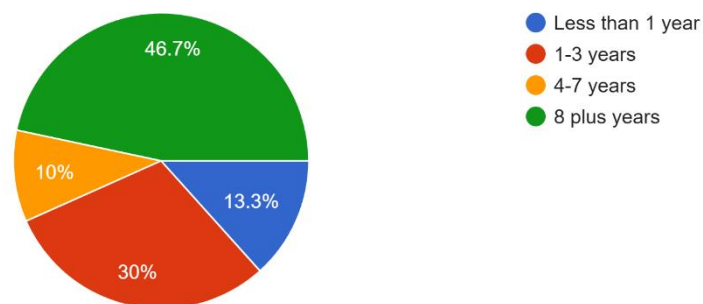


Figure 3. How long has your business been operating?

Where is your business primarily located?

30 responses

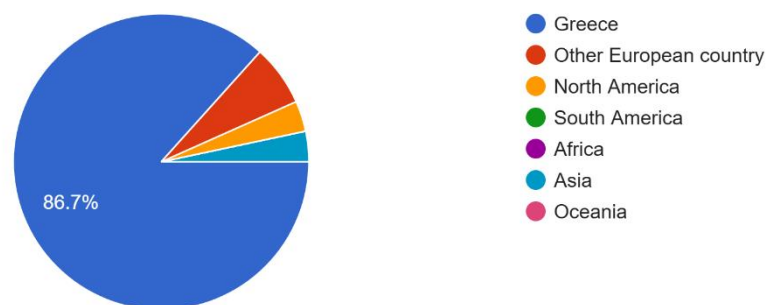


Figure 4. Where is your business primarily located?

What is your role in the business?

30 responses

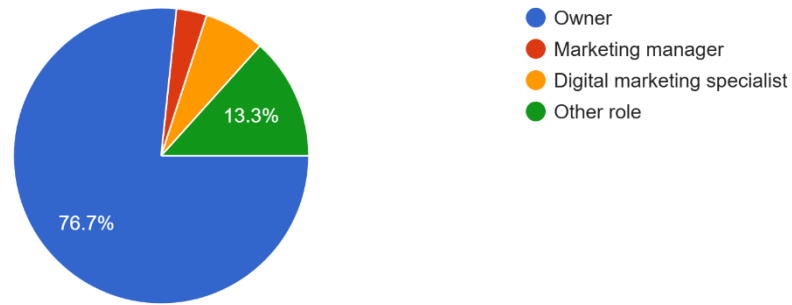


Figure 5. What is your role in the business?

What is your age group?

30 responses

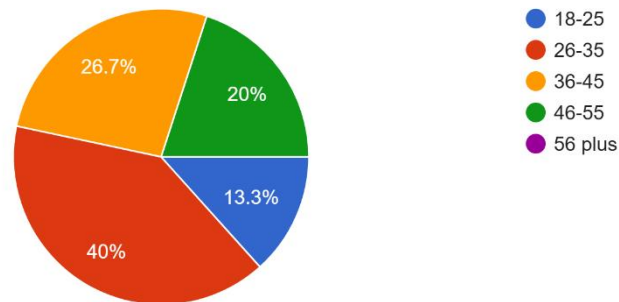


Figure 6. What is your age group?

What is your educational level?

30 responses

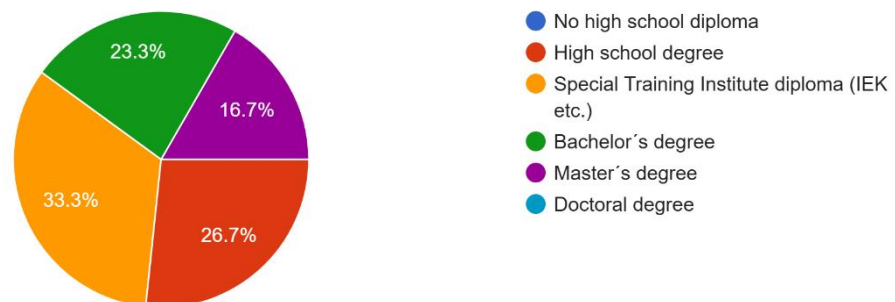


Figure 7 What is your education level?

What forms of digital marketing does your company currently use?

30 responses

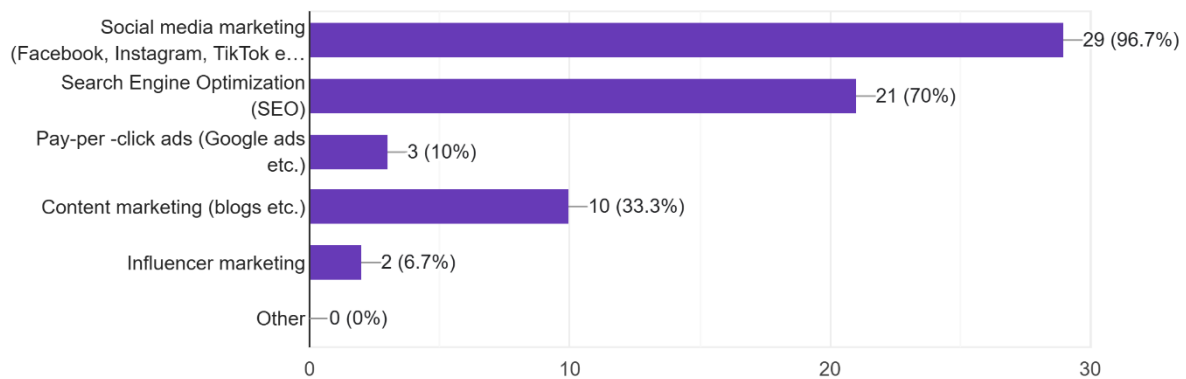


Figure 8. What forms of digital marketing does your company currently use?

How do you measure the success of digital marketing?

30 responses

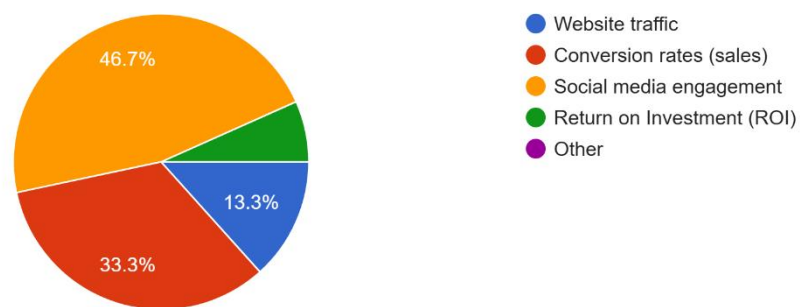


Figure 9. How do you measure the success of digital marketing?

How much of your company's budget is allocated to digital marketing?

30 responses

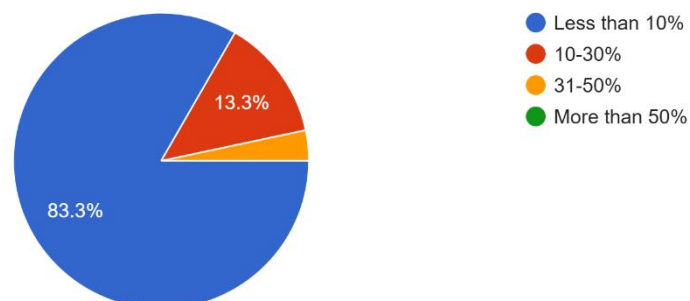


Figure 10. How much of your company's budget is allocated to digital marketing?

Do you have a formal digital marketing strategy'

30 responses

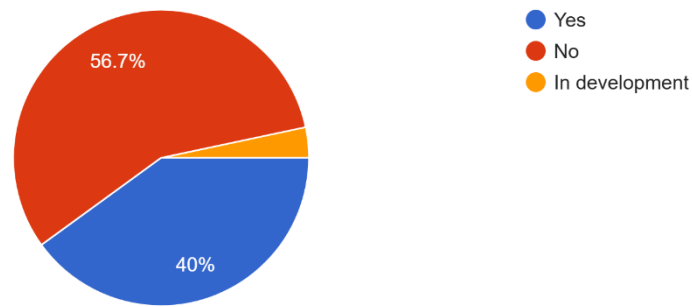


Figure 11. Do you have a formal digital marketing strategy?

What is the primary goal of your digital marketing efforts?

30 responses

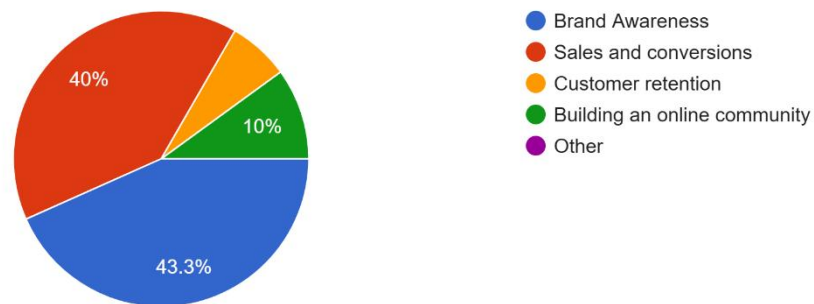


Figure 12. What is the primary goal of your digital marketing efforts?

What difficulties does your company face when it comes to digital marketing?

30 responses

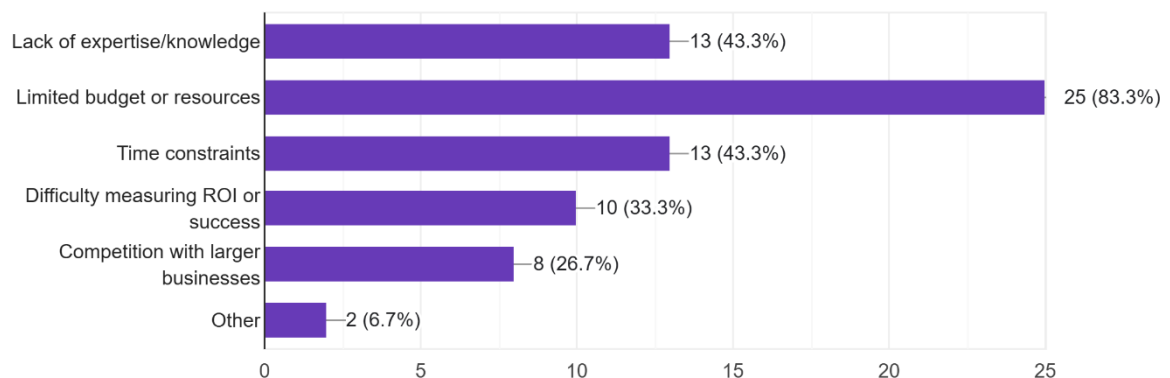


Figure 13. What difficulties does your company face when it comes to digital marketing?

How confident are you in your ability to utilize digital marketing effectively?

30 responses

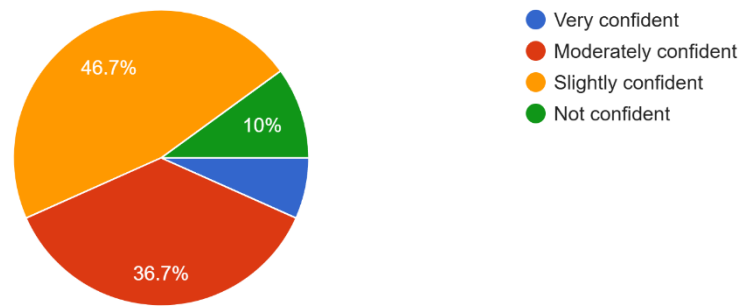


Figure 14. How confident are you in your ability to utilize digital marketing effectively?

Does your company utilize TikTok for marketing?

30 responses

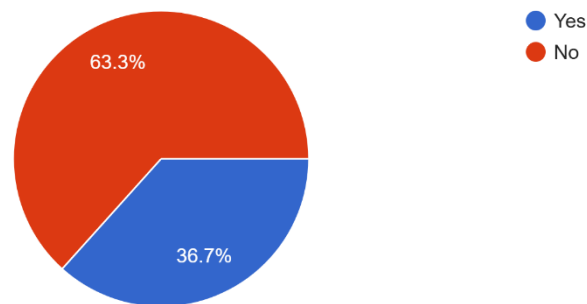


Figure 15. Does your company utilize TikTok for marketing?

If your business does not utilize TikTok, what are the reasons that make you hesitant to try it?

20 responses

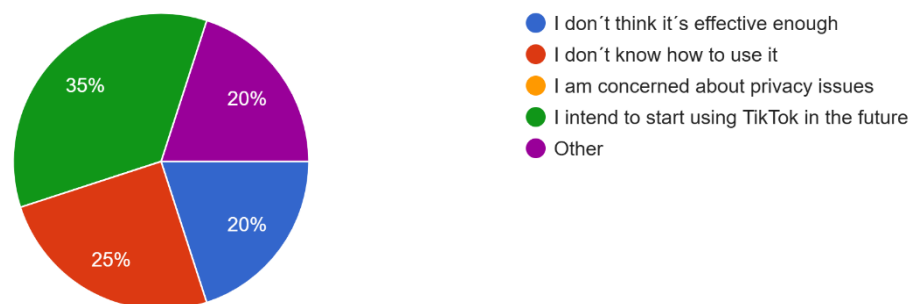


Figure 16. If your business does not utilize TikTok, what are the reasons that make you hesitant to try it?

If the company utilizes TikTok for marketing purposes, how satisfied are you with TikTok as a marketing tool?

30 responses

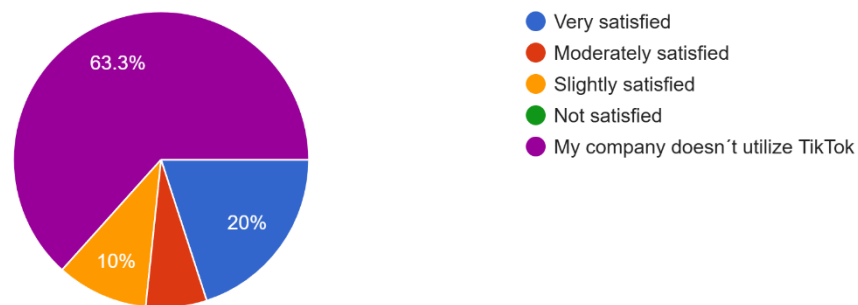


Figure 17. If the company utilizes TikTok for marketing purposes, how satisfied are you with TikTok as a marketing tool?

In general, how optimistic are you about TikTok as a marketing tool?

30 responses

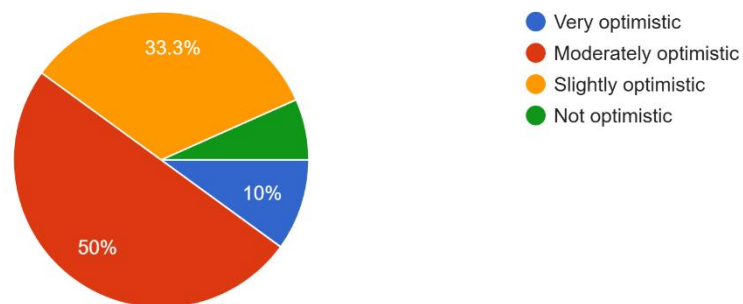


Figure 18. In general, how optimistic are you about TikTok as a marketing tool?

What is the most important feature for you when using social media for marketing?

30 responses

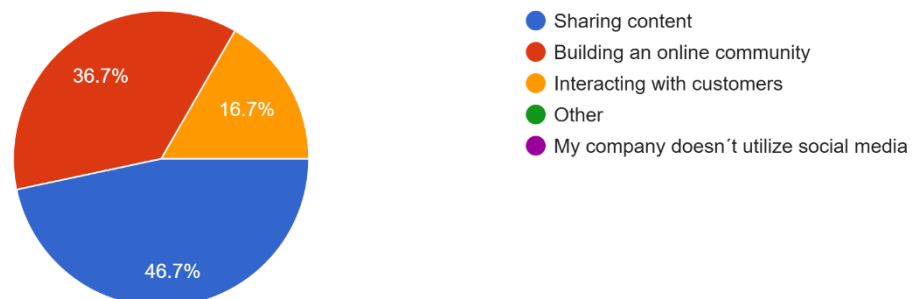


Figure 19. What is the most important feature for you when using social media for marketing?

How do you anticipate your business' use of digital marketing evolving in the following 1-3 years?

30 responses

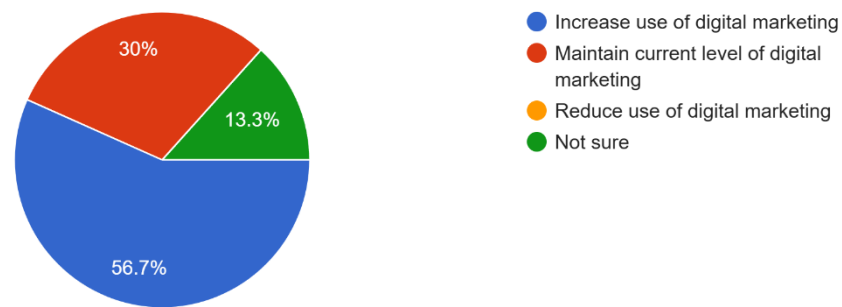


Figure 20. How do you anticipate your business' use of digital marketing evolving in the following 1-3 years?

Which digital marketing trends do you believe will have the most significant impact on your business in the near future? (Select all that apply)

30 responses

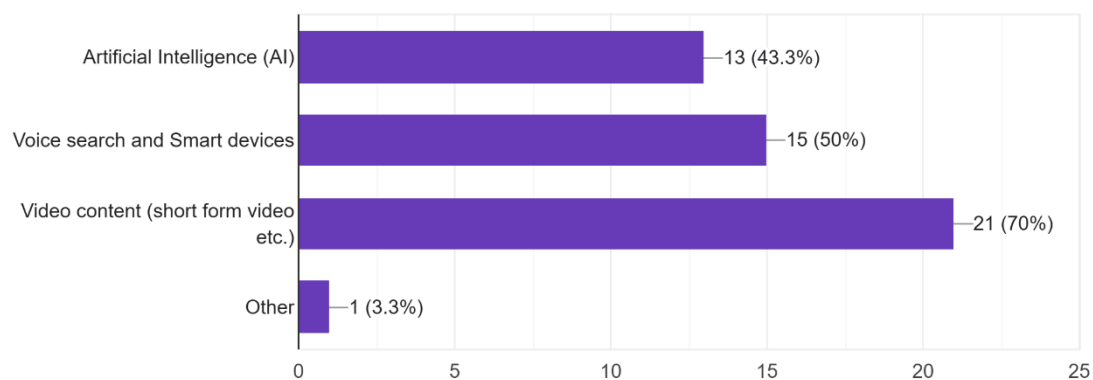


Figure 21. Which digital marketing trends do you believe will have the most significant impact on your business in the near future?

What additional support or resources would help you improve your digital marketing efforts?

30 responses

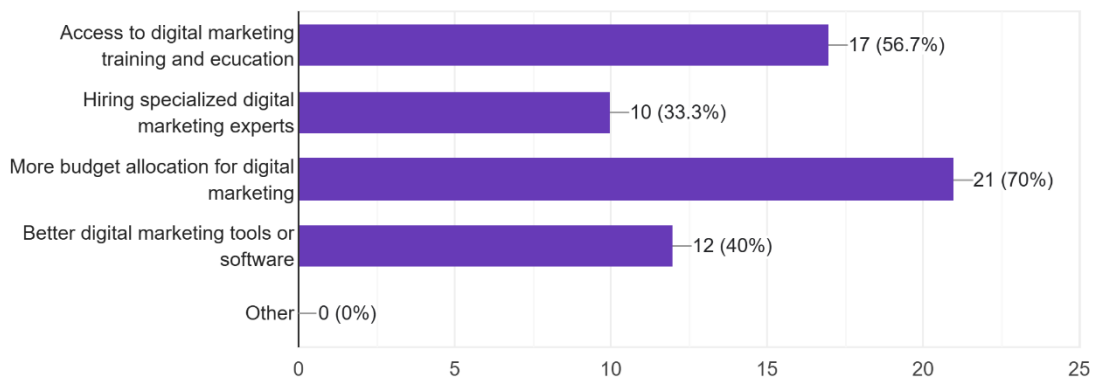


Figure 22. What additional support or resources would help you improve your digital marketing efforts?

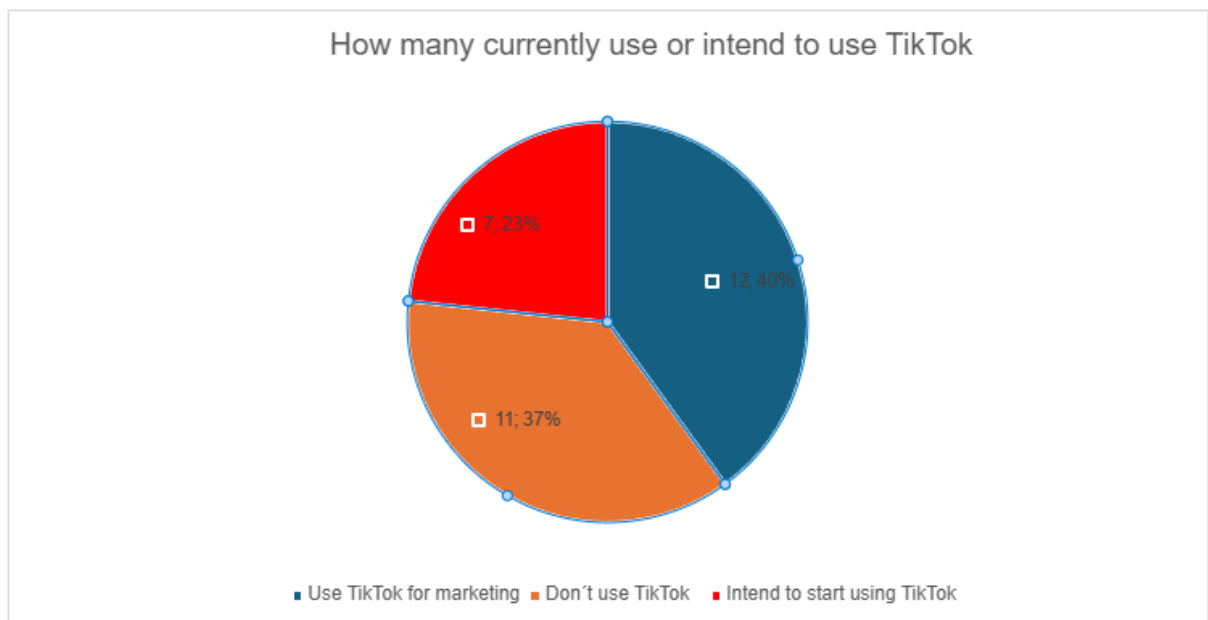


Figure 23. How many currently use or intend to use TikTok.

Ages	Age of participants	Uses TikTok	Doesn't use TikTok
18-25		4	2
26-35		12	5
36-45		8	4
46-55		6	6
55 plus		0	

Figure 24. Ages and TikTok use.

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The use of Digital marketing by small and medium-sized businesses

* Indicates required question

What is the size of your business? *

- ☐ 1-9 employees
- ☐ 10-49 employees
- ☐ 50-249 employees
- ☐ 249 plus employees

What industry does your business operate in? *

- ☐ Retail
- ☐ Hospitality
- ☐ Professional services (legal, accounting etc.)
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Technology-IT
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Other:

← If you answered "Other" in the previous question, please specify below your business sector (optional)

Your answer

How long has your business been operating?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-7 years
- ☐ 8 plus years

What is your role in the business? *

- ☐ Owner
- ☐ Marketing manager
- ☐ Digital marketing specialist
- ☐ Other role

If you answered "Other" in the question above, please explain your role

Your answer



Preview mode: What forms of digital marketing does your company currently use? *

- ☐ Social media marketing (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok etc.)
- ☐ Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- ☐ Pay-per -click ads (Google ads etc.)
- ☐ Content marketing (blogs etc.)
- ☐ Influencer marketing
- ☐ Other

If you answered "Other" in the question above, please explain your answer

Your answer

How do you measure the success of digital marketing? *

- ☐ Website traffic
- ☐ Conversion rates (sales)
- ☐ Social media engagement
- ☐ Return on Investment (ROI)
- ☐ Other

If you answered "other", please specify how you calculate success

Your answer

How much of your company's budget is allocated to digital marketing? *

- ☐ Less than 10%
- ☐ 10-30%
- ☐ 31-50%
- ☐ More than 50%

Do you have a formal digital marketing strategy' *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ In development

What is the primary goal of your digital marketing efforts? *

- ☐ Brand Awareness
- ☐ Sales and conversions
- ☐ Customer retention
- ☐ Building an online community
- ☐ Other

If you answered "other", please explain your answer

Your answer

If you answered "Other" in the question above, please specify the reasons why you don't utilize Tiktok

Your answer

What is the most important feature for you when using social media for marketing? *

- ☐ Sharing content
- ☐ Building an online community
- ☐ Interacting with customers
- ☐ Other
- ☐ My company doesn't utilize social media

If you answered "Other" please, explain your answer

Your answer

How do you anticipate your business' use of digital marketing evolving in the following 1-3 years? *

- ☐ Increase use of digital marketing
- ☐ Maintain current level of digital marketing
- ☐ Reduce use of digital marketing
- ☐ Not sure

← Which digital marketing trends do you believe will have the most significant impact on your business in the near future? (Select all that apply) *

- ☐ Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- ☐ Voice search and Smart devices
- ☐ Video content (short form video etc.)
- ☐ Other

If you answered "Other" in the question above, please explain your answer

Your answer

What additional support or resources would help you improve your digital marketing efforts? *

- ☐ Access to digital marketing training and education
- ☐ Hiring specialized digital marketing experts
- ☐ More budget allocation for digital marketing
- ☐ Better digital marketing tools or software
- ☐ Other

If you answered "Other" in the question above, please explain your answer

Your answer

← What is your age group? *



- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ 56 plus

What is your educational level? *

- ☐ No high school diploma
- ☐ High school degree
- ☐ Special Training Institute diploma (IEK etc.)
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree

Where is your business primarily located? *

- ☐ Greece
- ☐ Other European country
- ☐ North America
- ☐ South America
- ☐ Africa
- ☐ Asia
- ☐ Oceania



Thank you for completing this questionnaire! Your responses are invaluable to our research. If you would like to participate in follow-up interviews or receive a summary of the findings, please provide your company's name, which will remain private.

Your answer

Submit

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Interview questions

- 1) Could you introduce yourself to us?
- 2) Could you tell us when you started your business and what inspired you to do it?
- 3) Why did you choose TikTok as a platform for marketing?
- 4) What type of content do you believe is more effective when it comes to TikTok marketing?
- 5) Have you worked with influencers before? If yes, how did you choose them?
- 6) What are the difficulties to using TikTok as a marketing tool?
- 7) Do you believe that TikTok has helped with the promotion of your business and products?
- 8) What pieces of advice would you give to other small and medium-sized businesses that want to use TikTok for marketing?