

Comparing Content-Driven and Influencer-Driven Strategies in TikTok's Beauty Care Industry of Sri Lanka: A Comments-Based Study on Audience Engagement

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Abstract

With the rapid growth of social media platforms, TikTok has become a powerful medium for beauty care brands to build authentic connections with audiences. However, in Sri Lanka, limited scholarly attention has been given to how TikTok users engage with beauty-related content. This study examines in what way content-driven and influencer-driven promotional strategies differ in generating audience engagement in the beauty care industry. By comparing TikTok user responses to product-focused versus influencer-focused content, it explores effects on perceptions, trust, and interaction, offering practical insights for digital-era marketers. Adopting an interpretive, qualitative research design, purposive sampling was employed to select TikTok beauty care videos. User comments were collected using the Apify TikTok Comment Scraper, resulting in a dataset of over 3,000 comments. The thematic analysis was applied to uncover underlying sentiments, attitudes, and engagement dynamics where the data were systematically organised and manually coded to identify recurring themes and patterns. Findings reveal that influencer-driven content often cultivates deeper emotional and parasocial relationships, enhancing trust and relatability. In contrast, content-driven videos tend to generate more product-centered discussions that emphasise product quality, features, and performance. These results highlight that both strategies serve complementary roles in shaping consumer engagement and brand perception. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering a comparative understanding of influencer credibility versus content quality in driving authentic engagement within Sri Lanka's cultural and social media landscape. From a practical perspective, the insights provide actionable recommendations for marketers, beauty brands, and influencers to design effective TikTok campaigns that balance emotional connection with informative content, ultimately strengthening consumer trust and engagement.

Keywords: audience engagement, beauty care industry, content marketing, influencer marketing, TikTok