



NET NATIVES

**CHALLENGES, CATS
AND CLIPS:**

**THE STUDENT
MARKETER'S GUIDE
TO ADVERTISING AND
CONTENT ON TIKTOK**

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THE TIKTOK PHENOMENON

With two billion downloads globally, more than 500 million active users worldwide, and an average daily view time of 52 minutes, TikTok continues to take the world by storm. As the fastest-growing social media platform in the world, it's already giving Twitter and Snapchat a run for their money, surpassing them both in popularity. What's more, 41% of TikTok's audience are users aged between 16 and 24 years old, which isn't surprising considering the app was originally created to appeal to under-18s, reflecting the habits and behaviours of this age group. So every student-specialist marketer worth their salt should already have TikTok on their radar.

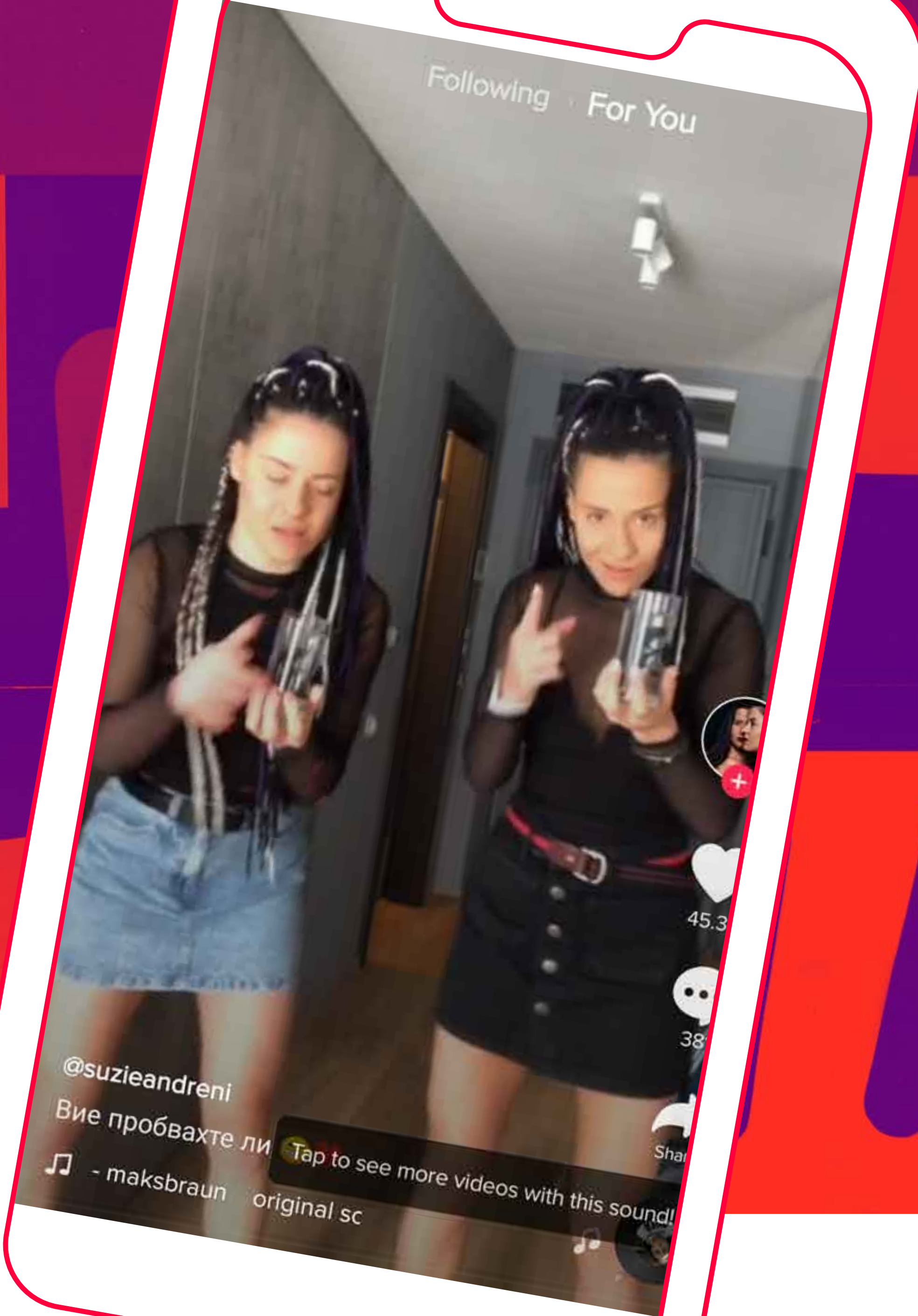
TikTok is less saturated with brands than its older counterparts, presenting a major opportunity to advertisers. Look at Crocs, who created a TikTok account in October 2019 specifically to reach Gen Z customers with their Post Malone #ThousandDollarCrocs challenge. Within a week, they had 84,000 more followers on TikTok than on Twitter. The Gen Z audience are there, and waiting, for the brands who get it right.



It may feel like a step into the unknown, but TikTok is a must for any student marketer. We now include TikTok as standard in every media plan we produce (where TikTok answers the challenge of your campaign brief), and it's automatically included as standard by Akeru. The AI scans TikTok alongside billions of data points and automatically creates personalised student media plans that predict outcomes and where marketers only pay for guaranteed performance. Every lead that comes through from TikTok, goes straight into your CRM and you'll be able to see exactly which advert led to the enquiry and enrolled student. Making your first steps in the world of TikTok a little easier.

In this whitepaper, we'll explore the recipe to achieving authentic TikTok cut-through and creating compelling content strategies that work for you, and how to work with the student audience. We'll look at the kind of results we've already seen from the platform and what we can learn from them. We'll also address the effects of coronavirus, which may only be temporary, but has shifted online behaviour, and what you must consider as a result. And then, once you've got everything you need to kill it on TikTok, we'll go through how you can quickly, easily and effectively attribute true ROI to your campaigns.

Making a name for yourself on any social media platform is an art, but here's a useful resource to help you get it right on an app that's still forging its path – and you could have a hand in leading it.





HOW TIKTOK IS KEEPING THE WORLD CONNECTED

We know that TikTok has rocketed through the ranks of the App Store and Google Play in the past two years, performing incredibly well in its amount of downloads and active users, and being the first-ever app to generate a billion downloads in a single quarter. But TikTok's latest surge came from the millions of individuals drawn to the app as we all sought out new ways to stay connected during lockdown.

The short, snappy, engaging and positive nature of TikTok lends itself amazingly to those stuck indoors and forced to slow down in every other aspect of life. TikTok's videos are heart-warming reminders that we aren't alone, and there's solidarity in millions of others doing the same abstract dance challenges.

So before we go any further, let's look at the effects of coronavirus

To talk about the online landscape in 2020, we must address the elephant in the room; coronavirus. While we've always had a focus on evolution and forward-thinking, the pandemic and global lockdown have accelerated the need for adaptation exponentially.

As the world flocked to social media to stay connected during lockdown, digital consumption increased. All major players have announced healthy reports for the year to date. And with heightened engagement, activity and downloads, what's most interesting is how consumers have changed how they consume. From apps and mobiles, to desktop browsing. Who would have guessed that 2020 would be the [year of the desktop resurgence?](#)

But it makes sense. People remained at home, and instead of tube-hopping to work, and from restaurants to friends' houses, they were working, playing and socialising from home. Consumers are moving back to laptop and smart TV screens offering bigger and better viewing conditions.

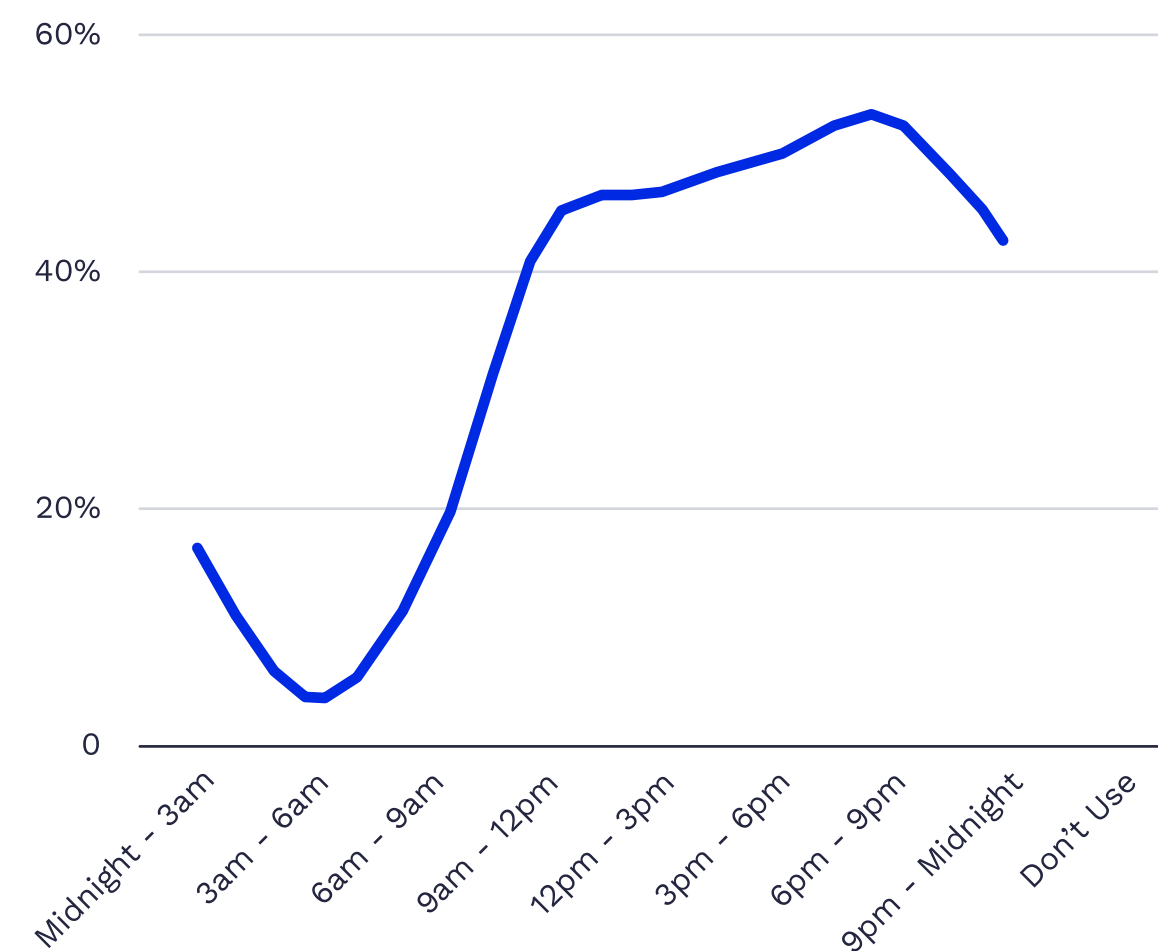
However, amongst a sea of long-form, lean-back content found on YouTube and Facebook, TikTok completely bucks the trend. During a time where the behaviour on the Apptopia has shifted, TikTok is seeing incredible growth, So what does this show? By authentically capturing the sentiment and experience of lockdown all over the world, TikTok has cultivated true cut-through.



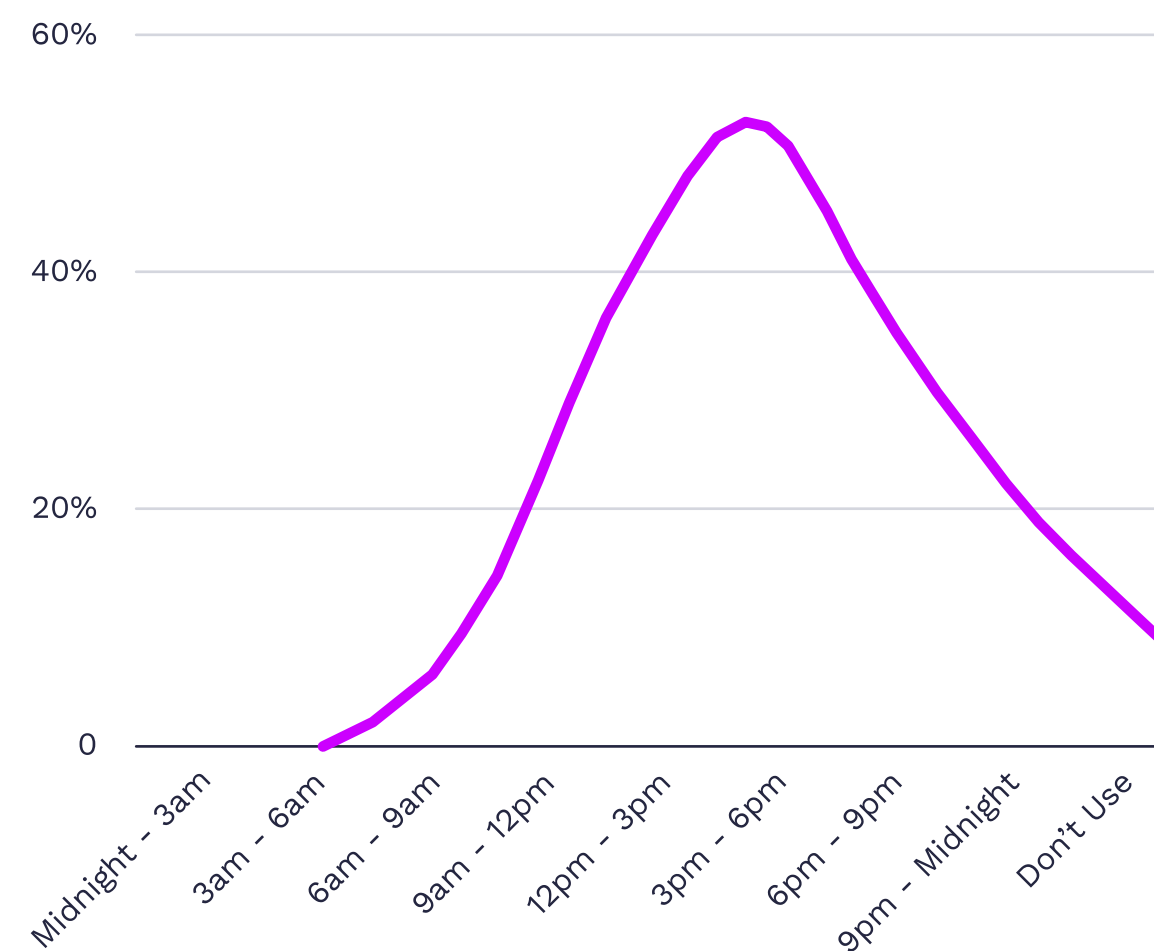
And what else can we learn from the data?

The usage for TikTok throughout the day is very different from what we see on Facebook, but it is very similar to that of Facebook Messenger. Which makes sense; TikTok connects people, and this engagement curve is reflected by the other hyper-connected publishers like Reddit and Quora. The learning here is that people are driven to connect and engage with their friends during lockdown. And TikTok is really benefitting from that.

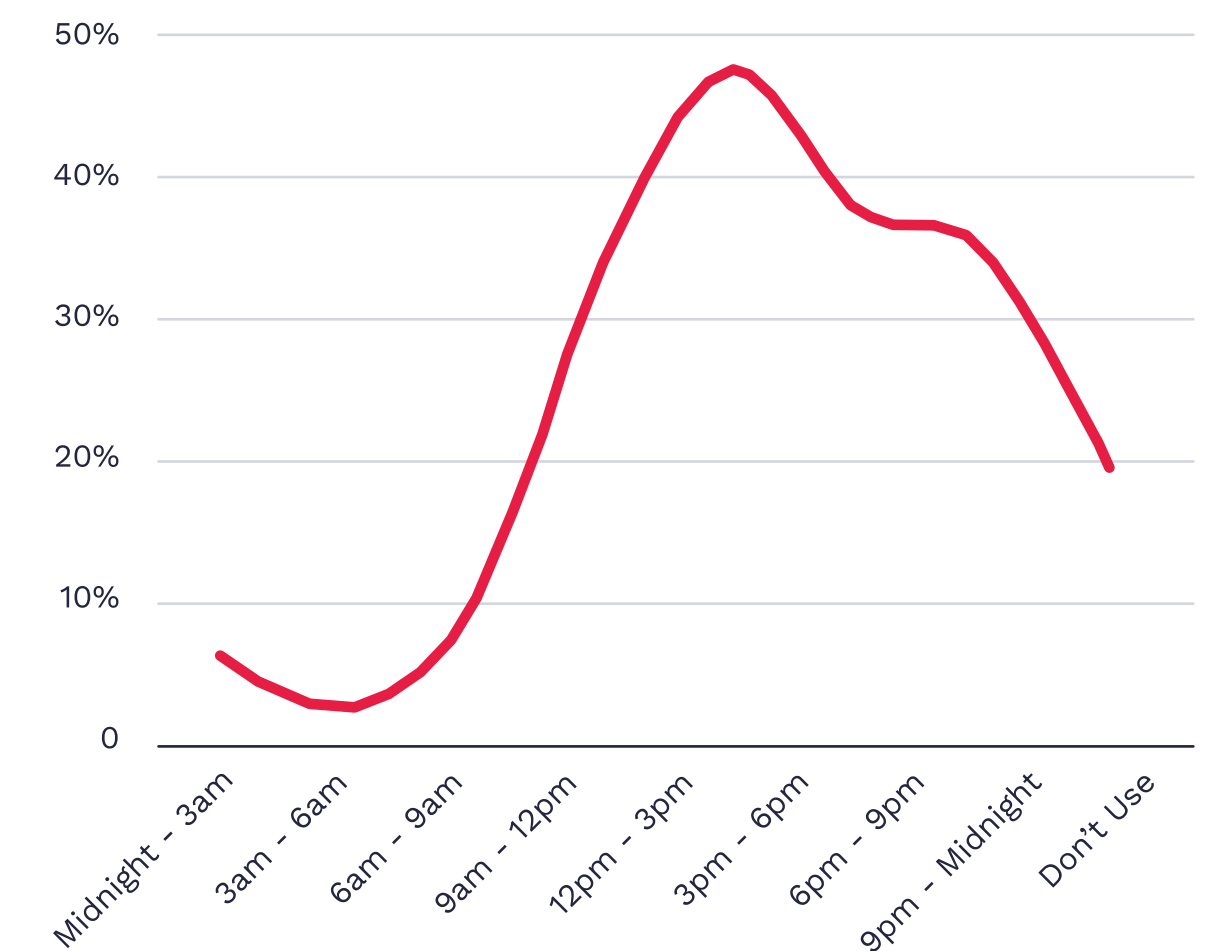
Facebook



FB Messenger



TikTok



At its peak, TikTok's engagement reaches up to nearly 50%, and it's most likely undivided attention. Because, while Facebook Messenger shows similar trends, its primary purpose is messaging, in which users drift away whilst awaiting replies. In contrast, TikTok users are active on a single app, purposefully looking for and consuming content. This sets the scene for why native advertising on TikTok is so effective and important.

CASE STUDIES OF COMPELLING CAMPAIGNS



The First Ever UK Student TikTok Campaign

In early 2019, TikTok launched a beta version of its ads offering. Since then, big names like Nike, Fenty Beauty and Apple Music have used TikTok ads to promote their products in unique, visually compelling campaigns. With advanced targeting and unique ad creation features, the TikTok Ads platform is unlike many of its predecessors. And when used effectively, it can help you tap into one of the most lucrative pool of users.

We couldn't wait to get started. So for the first-ever TikTok UK student campaign, we advertised our Student Hut Fresher's Box, to see how this new app would fare. To understand how it was working and what it was achieving, we ran a like-for-like campaign on Snapchat. TikTok demonstrated superb efficiencies for reach and engagement. It delivered 211% more impressions than Snapchat and we only spent 23% more, working out to be about 60% cheaper than Snapchat overall.

Sound too good to be true? Try it out yourself. And if you pair it with Akeru Advertising, you can plug guaranteed advertising performance straight into your CRM, meaning that you'll be able to track and measure ROI from every TikTok lead.

We've seen the same positive result from institution campaigns too. With TikTok being so attractive to Gen Z, including students, it has made the platform the ideal medium for reaching our target audience.



However, there is also scope for the platform to be utilised at other stages of the funnel too. TikTok's platform marketing options continue to expand, and new opportunities arise as a result, making it one to watch. They recently announced an augmented reality expansion, that will allow users to interact with the visual elements of ads and increase engagement levels.

Already, we are seeing that the platform has the potential to be far more than another standard placement option for your upper-funnel activity. Despite TikTok being synonymous with the goals of reach and awareness, with one particular institution campaign we found that it also proved very effective for driving cheap traffic. We saw an impressive level of engagement with the ads in terms of clicks and traffic at a strong overall CTR (considering the nature of the platform) and a very low CPC overall.

So, what can we learn from this? While there are other platforms that can, and will, offer a far higher conversion rate, these results suggest that TikTok could be well utilised as another cost-effective channel for campaigns at the consideration stage. This is particularly true when looking to drive traffic to landing pages, whilst also raising brand awareness at the same time.

HOW DO TIKTOK ADS WORK FOR BRANDS?

When it comes to [advertising opportunities](#) on TikTok, there are plenty of options for brands and businesses to explore:

- **In-feed ads**
- **TopView**
- **Brand takeover**
- **Branded hashtag challenge**
- **Custom influencer packages**

The recently launched TikTok for Business aims to get marketers on board using a content-first strategy with their ‘Don’t Make Ads, Make TikToks’ campaign.

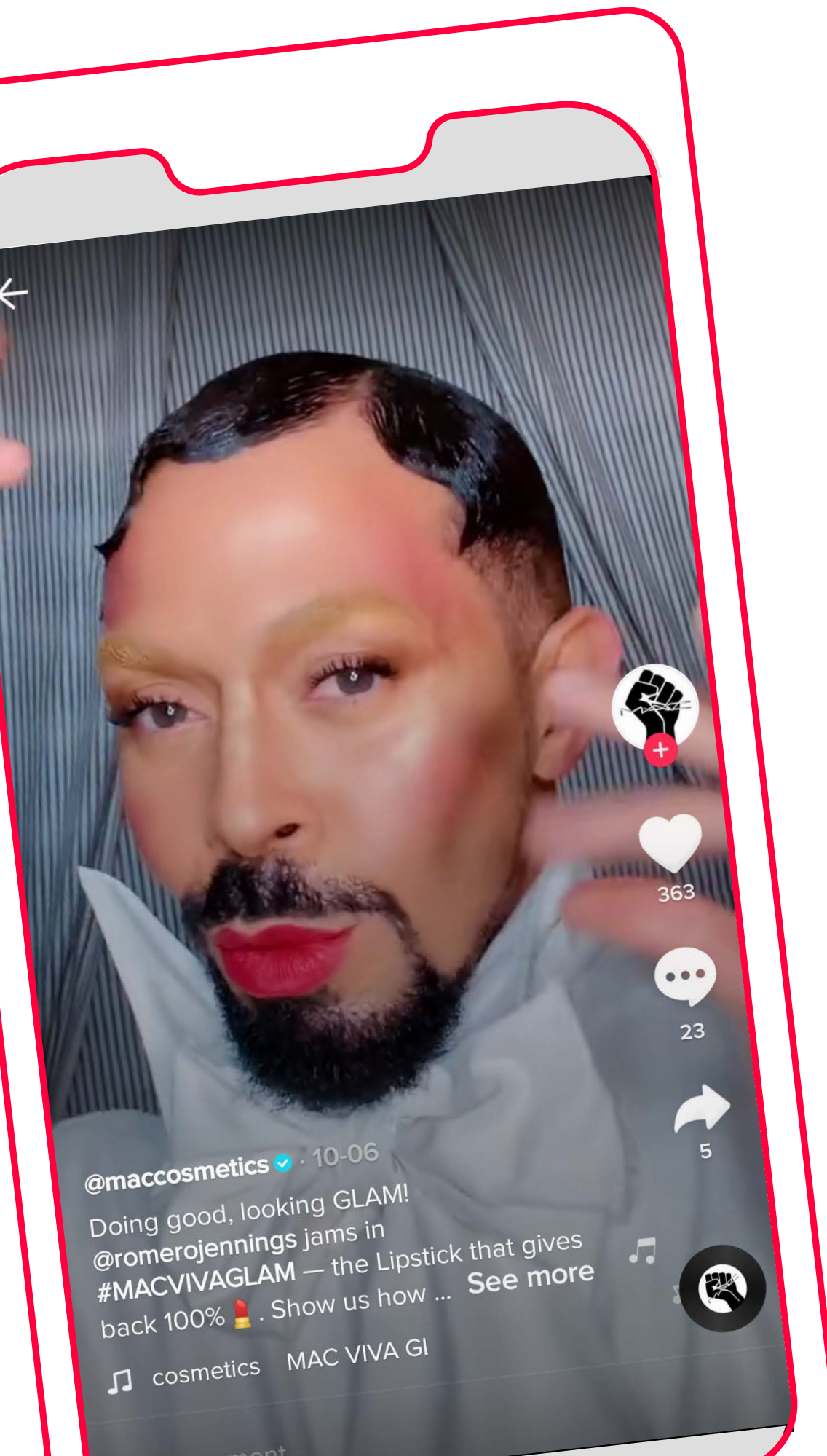
TikTok for Business allows marketers to access tools to help their content be found and followed on the app, and gives ideas on how to create meaningful, authentic native content, making it easier to achieve a successful campaign on the platform.

Options like in-feed ads have a clear ‘Sponsored’ label when they appear on the ‘For You’ page, as well as a new clickable pop-up call to action, such as ‘learn more’ or ‘book now’ (perfect for that [virtual open day](#) campaign).

And while we’ve already seen some fantastic results, you don’t need to take our word for it. Fashion retailer giant Levi’s has recently recorded significantly high engagement and increased traffic to its website, with product views more than doubling for every product shown with TikTok’s new ‘Shop Now’ button.

So in the same way you can create eye-catching, impactful ads for other social media platforms, which can raise awareness or drive traffic, you can do the same on TikTok.

The potential is there, and the audience is waiting - you just have to get the messaging, strategy and creative right.



How to balance Organic vs. Paid Content

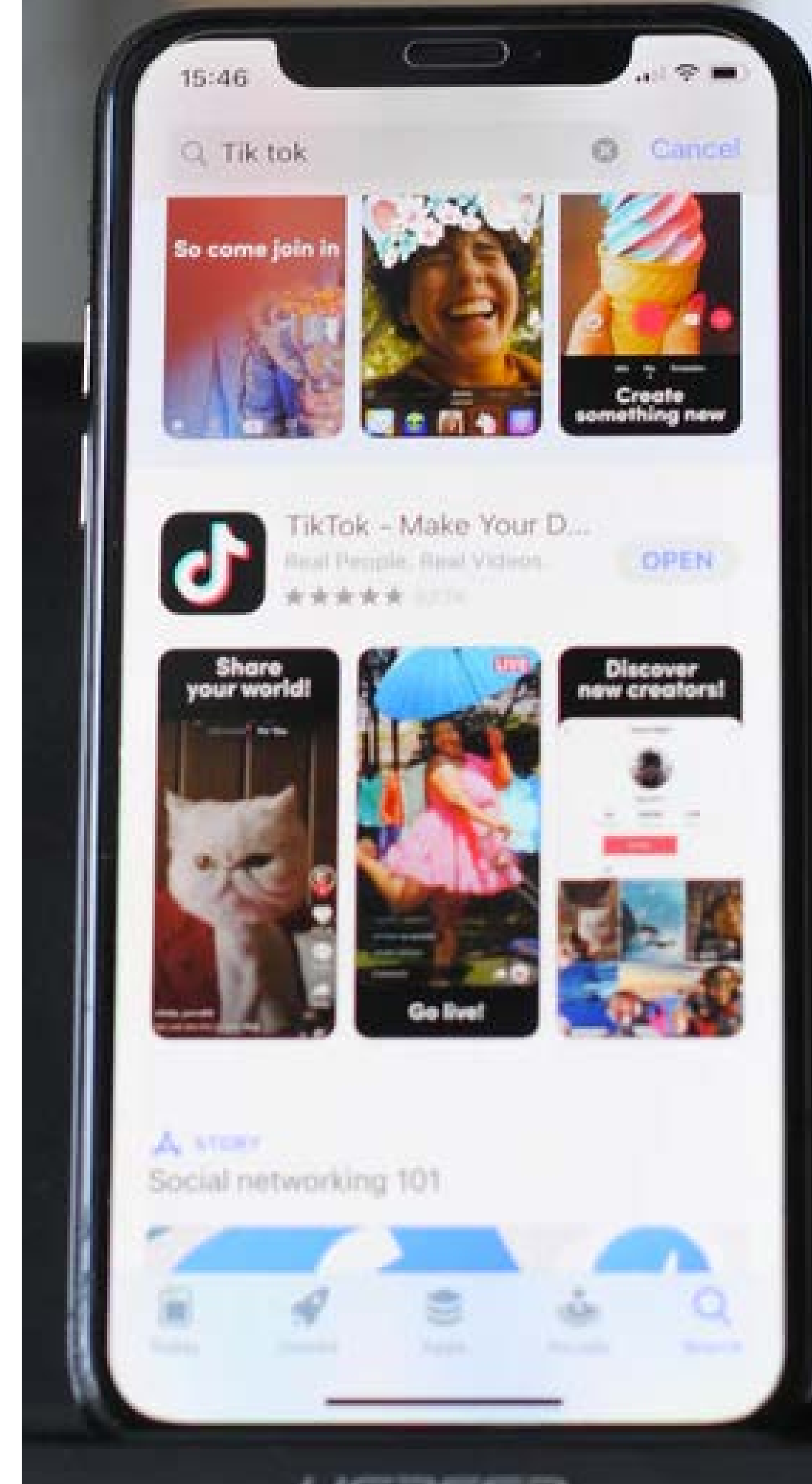
While there's a difference between organic and paid content, both are equally important to a successful TikTok presence. Building an authentic, relatable brand account with organic content will only strengthen any advertising you do on the platform, and raising brand awareness in the meantime. But similarly, pushing forward with paid advertising will elevate and supercharge your brand's limited organic-only reach. As we always recommend; be bold, be creative and be yourselves in everything you do online. And that's when you'll unlock the student audience.

TikTok is extremely accessible for marketers who want to try running a paid campaign for the first time. The informal nature of the platform means that your videos don't have to be the highest quality, or produced in any specialist formats. And with TikTok, anyone can give it a go. Your campaigns can be live in the click of a button using a marketing platform like Akero Advertising.

The following chapters offer advice that applies to both paid and organic content. TikTok is unique. Their adverts have a native look and feel, and aren't something you're

used to seeing on Instagram or Facebook. So don't even think about dusting off your old creative assets! Anything sponsored shouldn't look out of place on users' 'For You' feed.

Take the time to consider your creative strategy, the message you're trying to convey, and who you want your audience to know you as, and let that seep into your paid adverts. Forget what you think you know and allow authentic, relatable content that TikTok unapologetically demands to shine through.



STOP
HATE
FOR
PROFIT™



Brand Safety

We said before. And we'll say it again. Advertising must be approached ethically and with care. As an agency, we ensure any of our clients' advertising is only going to be placed and tracked on the appropriate, relevant, brand-positive sites for their audience. We combine whitelists, blacklists and semantic technologies to filter out sites and placements that could cause brand damage. And take this a step further by looking at platforms' core values and practices before investing substantial budgets.

TikTok is still a fairly new platform, and has faced a few problems since its launch. Following hacking claims by protest group Anonymous, and allegations of data breaches, TikTok was pulled from the App Store and Play Store in India in June 2019, and it remains to be seen if other countries may follow suit. Previously TikTok has also been criticised for not removing inappropriate content, censoring videos and being selective with its users, but TikTok says it has since taken steps to improve brand safety and removed 'outdated' guidelines.

It's far from perfect. But with Facebook recently facing a large-scale boycott over #StopHateForProfit and Twitter being criticised for fake news, it needs to be considered alongside other platforms on its own merits. We know that, for Gen Z, it's proving to be an essential space. So if it's right for your brand, it should be forming a key part of your student marketing strategy.

THE RECIPE TO CREATING THE PERFECT #LEARNONTIKTOK

You're probably wondering where institutions fit on TikTok. Isn't it for dancing, pets and funny pranks? TikTok have recently directed their efforts to establish and nurture #LearnOnTikTok. Which is where institutions and student-centred brands come in...

TikTok empowers users to share knowledge in many different ways and wants to see even more of that on their platform. #LearnOnTikTok aims to share and encourage educational content that promotes learning new skills, habits or information, with videos that feel inspiring and actionable to users. Content which adds real value to the student audience will be promoted further by TikTok, offering a fantastic platform for you to get started, especially during a time where conventional education and classroom teaching is not always accessible.

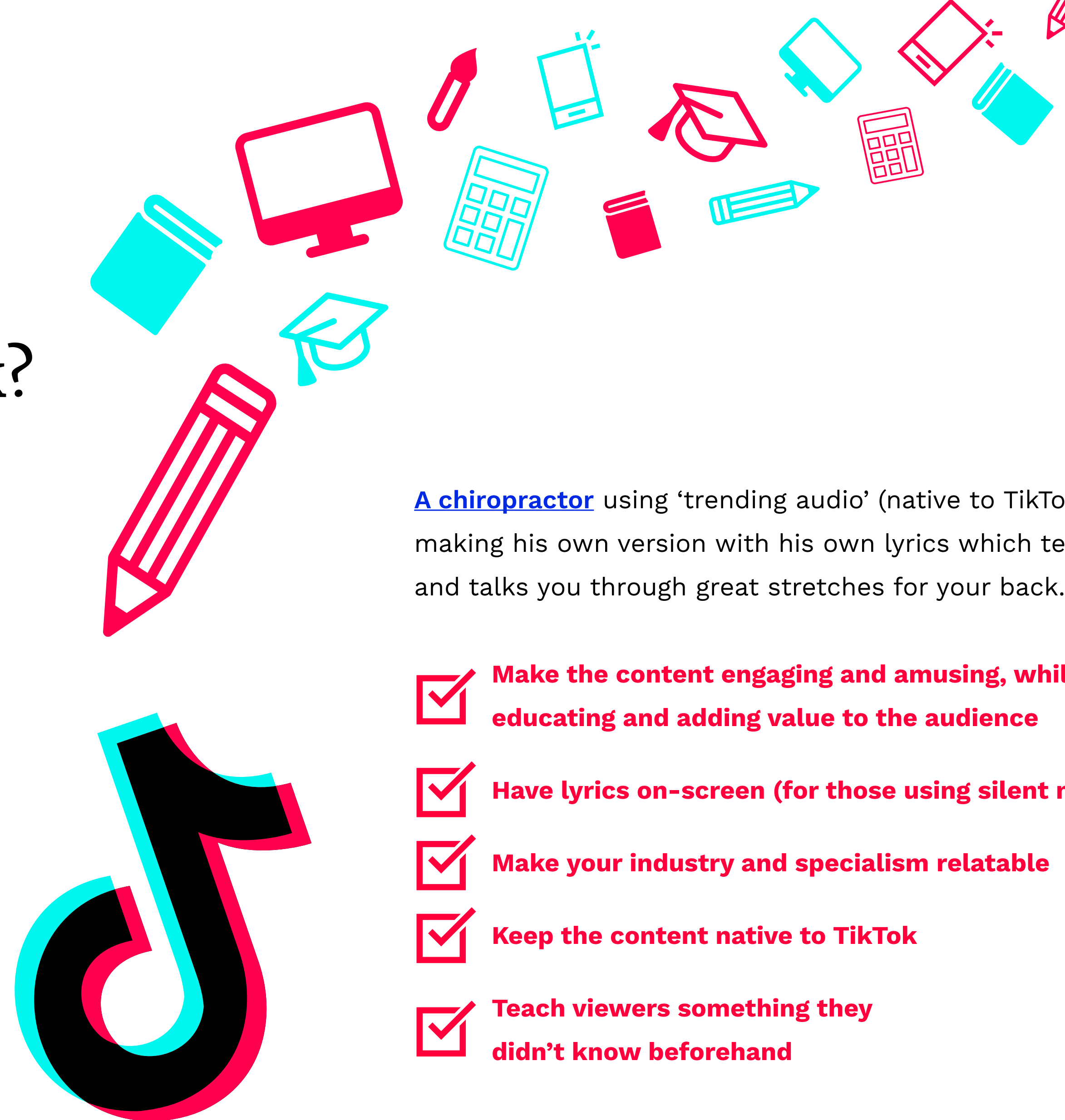


But what counts as educational content on TikTok?

A whole host of things. And the platform allows for a lot of creative license to ensure content feels authentic to your brand and audience. From DIYs to life hacks, motivational speeches to advice, and science to Excel cheats.

The key is to be creative and unique to your brand. Do you have a niche specialism that's worth shouting about? Maybe you have an amazing group of students that can showcase what they've been learning at your institution?

Here's what our friends at TikTok pulled out as fantastic examples of engaging, creative educational content for your #LearnOnTikTok inspo...



[A chiropractor](#) using 'trending audio' (native to TikTok) and making his own version with his own lyrics which teaches and talks you through great stretches for your back.

- Make the content engaging and amusing, while educating and adding value to the audience**
- Have lyrics on-screen (for those using silent mode)**
- Make your industry and specialism relatable**
- Keep the content native to TikTok**
- Teach viewers something they didn't know beforehand**

Or what about getting your students to produce content around their revision and memory techniques? [Julia Ravey](#) guides her audience through a complex memory technique and here's why her videos work.

- ✓ **Opt for a two-part video to make each part more consumable**
- ✓ **Use different locations and editing it so it's really succinct, with fast frames**
- ✓ **If publishing a longer video; use a very short snappy edit**
- ✓ **Finish with a 'cliffhanger' ending**
- ✓ **Create content that is relatable**

And let's make this even more niche. Is one of your lecturers the ultimate Cambridge Referencing genius? Or do you have a faculty member that has an infinite bank of A-star book recommendations? [One user on TikTok](#) has created a whole account with nearly 140,000 followers who watch and learn very small titbits of Excel knowledge, 15 seconds at a time. Here's why it works:

- ✓ **Very condensed, easily consumed tutorials**
- ✓ **Use short and snappy frames to make a laborious task engaging and do-able**
- ✓ **Inject humour into an otherwise taxing task**
- ✓ **Make a series of mini tutorials so that people come back and review the profile, building followers quickly**
- ✓ **Make content hyper-relevant; the account becomes an expert in that niche area**
- ✓ **Switch between cameras, on a face to be human and relatable and then on a screen to show more detail**
- ✓ **Use trendy audios, they help you become more discoverable**

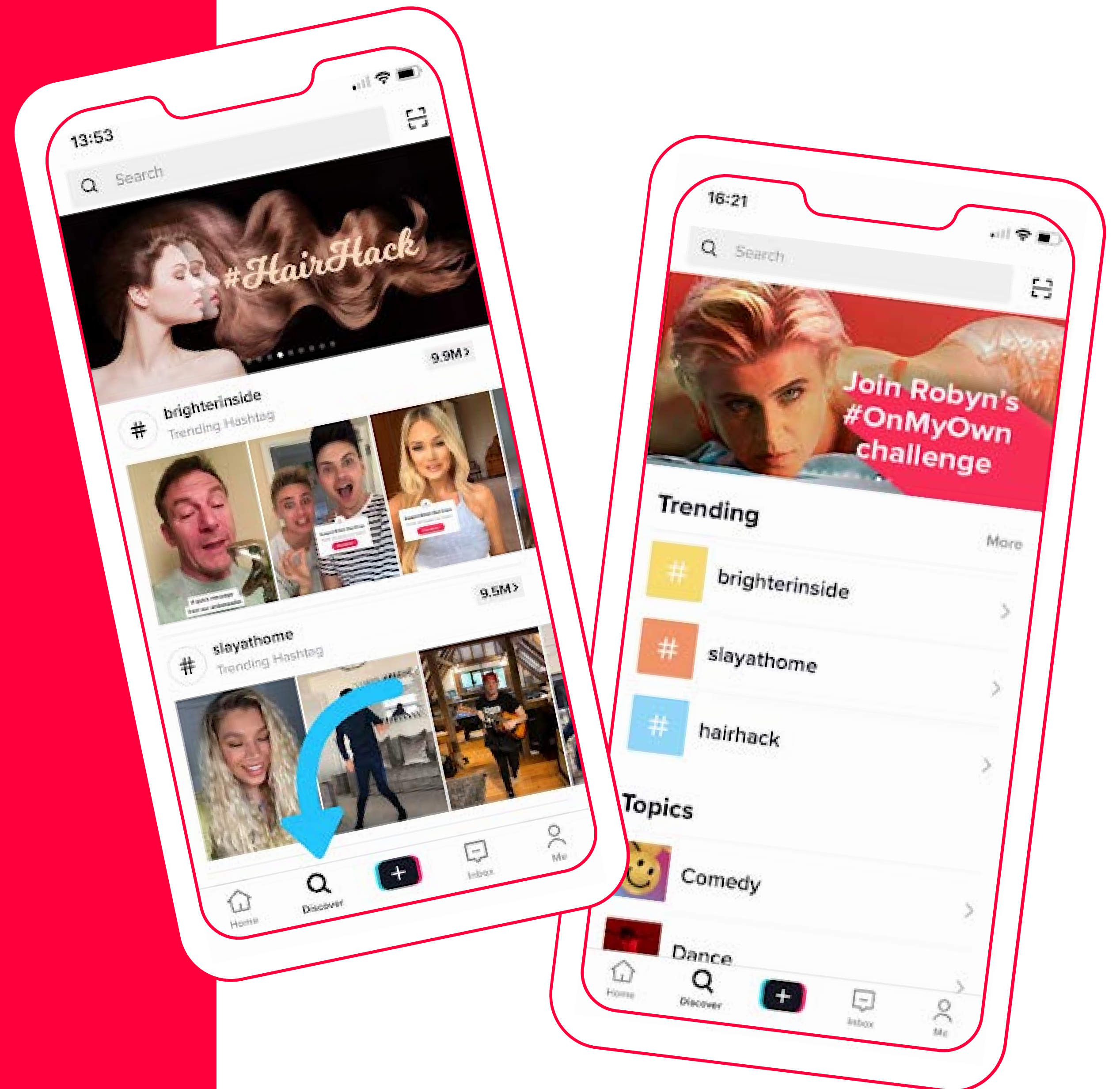
Top tip from the TikTok experts:



Keep it short. The more people watching your video to the end, the higher chance it will be served out across the platform, building your following and viewership.

Unlike most social media platforms, TikTok is hugely driven by user-created content and trend culture. But as we saw with the creative chiropractor, content inspired by trends, but created with an original spin is a great way of cutting through the noise.

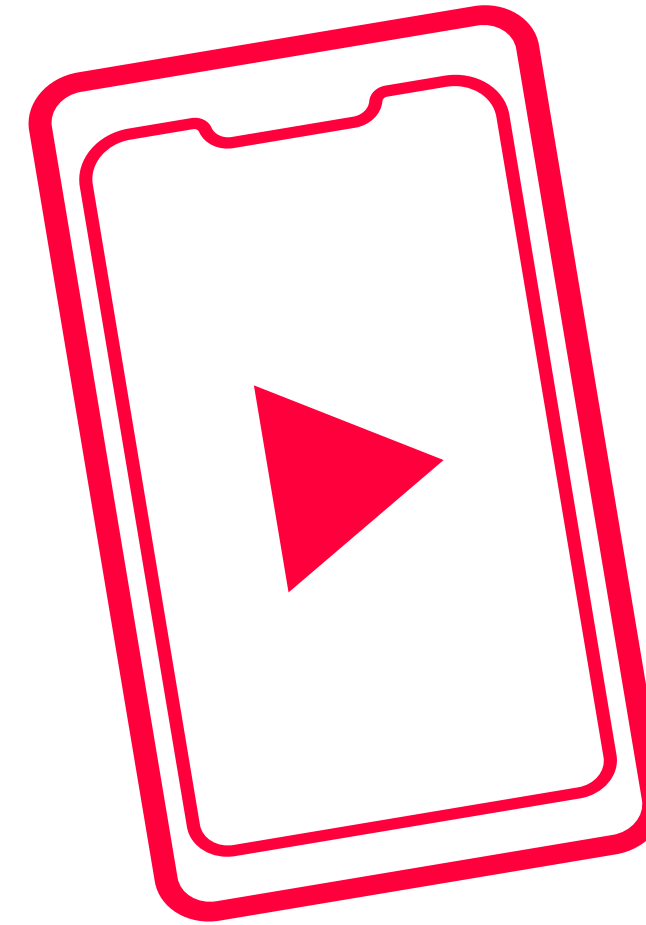
If you're not sure where to start, check out TikTok's Discovery Page for inspiration. Here you'll find trending hashtags based on your geographical location, as well as a breakdown of popular videos by category.



SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT AROUND THE TIKTOK ALGORITHM

In different digital arenas, followers are the currency. However on TikTok, content is king. Accounts with two-figure follower counts can amass millions of views on a new video. And unlike Instagram or YouTube which reward accounts with big followings, TikTok has levelled the playing field when it comes to achieving viral status.

Here are a few things to help you get the most out of your account, raising awareness and reach alongside your advertising efforts. But before that, we should point out that TikTok are famous for keeping their cards close to their chest, whether that be analytics and data or algorithms, so don't expect any roadmaps from inside their walls anytime soon. For now, here's what we've found...



Power to each video

The reason your TikTok can go viral and amass an army of viewers without an army of followers is because the TikTok algorithm takes into account the interactions on each individual video, rather than your profile as a whole.

Which then also means...



Aging like a fine wine

The TikTok algorithm is constantly monitoring the performance of all your videos - even the older ones. So don't be surprised if a video from way-back-when suddenly gets some new attention. It could be that the audio has been picked up by a trend or a trending hashtag was coincidentally used.

Speaking of which...



Boost your discoverability

Hashtags and sounds (i.e. the music you use in your TikTok video) are two fantastic ways to boost the discoverability of your content.

For example, TikTok videos that have trending hashtags in the caption will be pulled into relevant discovery pages, and could even get boosted to more 'For You' pages.

In addition to the more conventional hashtags like #fyp, #foryou, and #foryoupage, it's always a good idea to include hashtags that are niche to your content. This will help the TikTok algorithm understand what your content is about, and who might be interested in it.

And using trending audio is another sure way of getting more eyeballs. Just look at how [the National and Global Charts have been affected by TikTok trends.](#)

Finally, not so much an algorithm tip, but more good practice. Once you press publish on your TikTok, share it to your other platforms too. This is great for driving your well-established following (for example Instagram) to TikTok and introducing them to a new side of your online personality. Sharing TikToks across platforms is super simple and if you're producing fun, creative and entertaining content, why not get it out there – sharing is caring, right? With a 15-second TikTok, you could pop it on your Instagram Story or Reels. And paired with a swipe up link to an appropriate landing page or a CTA to follow you on TikTok, you could be doubling your marketing success.



CREATING AN ENGAGING CONTENT STRATEGY

We've got the insights to show that TikTok is where students are right now. Don't believe us? TikTok has [straight-up cults forming](#). We've had inspiration from the TikTok experts on the dos and don'ts for the platform, and we know **#LearnOnTikTok is the place to be.**

So, you're ready to give it a go. But you click on the app, and suddenly there's music blaring out of your phone and the content has started; complicated dances, loud voices, little heart emojis everywhere. We get it, it can be overwhelming and intimidating for anyone as a first-time experience.

Where do we start? Do we jump on a trend? Which trend? What song do we use? What effects should we use? Is it going to make people cringe? Should we be funny? How funny? How do we be funny? Will the content be on-brand? Will anyone see it?

Our advice:

Keep it simple. Keep it student.

Think about what your students care about and what they're interested in. How can you add value with your content, messaging and brand to students' lives and experiences?

But the thing with TikTok, opposed to any other platform, is that the whole app is focused on the individual experience. We said it earlier, but it's a content-led, user-first platform, typically from a single point of view. And your content, whether advertising or organic content, needs to adopt that style too. You won't get away with simply posting montage videos of your campus, or studio-lit interviews with professors. It's got to showcase the individual student experience, native to TikTok, to really cut-through.

The first place to start? **[StudyTubers and Study Influencers](#).**

Authentic, true and relatable. Give your students the floor. As a brand, creating first-person student perspective is near-impossible to replicate, without forming an alliance with actual students.

Okay, you've kept it simple. You've kept it student. Now what? 🙌

Don't sell. Solve.

The next piece of advice goes back to the recipe of a successful TikTok and is where universities can really come into their own.

And it's this; Help people. Guide and inspire them. Solve their problems. It's not, and should never be, 'this what we've got and lets tell the world about it.'

Think about your students first. What problems are they confronted with? Whether personally or academically, and centre your strategy around them. How you can add value to their lives? And how you can help them with these problems.

Since the disruption of coronavirus, focus has been placed on universities to help, support and solve, and not to simply sell their courses, campus or lifestyle. And you should take those lessons post-Covid onto TikTok.

Start with the problem. And if you don't know the problem, stop and ask. Gather a focus group, commission [our Opinion Panel](#), and talk to your students. Understand how they think and tap into the insights you've gathered as you connect with them.

Through Student Hut's long-term [Student Tracker](#) project, we have amassed a whole stretch of student concerns, sentiments and insights, many addressing problems with mental health and wellbeing, accommodation, and university experiences.

HALF OF STUDENTS DON'T THINK THE ONLINE LEARNING PROVIDED BY THEIR INSTITUTION IS GOOD ENOUGH.

88% OF STUDENTS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH. BUT ONE IN 10 STUDENTS ARE NOW UNABLE TO ACCESS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FROM THEIR UNIVERSITY.

ALMOST 30% OF STUDENTS LIVING WITH HOUSEMATES DURING LOCKDOWN FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THEIR LIVING SITUATION.

And that's just for starters.

What is your edge? What can you offer? What can you do to help fix these problems? Can you create messaging and content around issues with studying? Or around success? Or future careers? Or fitting in?

Connect through communication and your understanding of students' experiences. Speak your own truths and provide information on what's unique to your institution and students. And engage with solutions and guidance for the problems they're facing.

WHAT IS GOOD: TIKTOK INSPIRATION

Here are some examples of existing TikTok brand accounts creating their own quality content and connecting to their brand identities.

The Washington Post [@washingtonpost](#)

Their one thing is ‘truth’

The Washington Post uses their content to give an all-access look at their operations, and to fact-check and myth-bust common misconceptions.

They have amassed a following of over 400,000 in under a year, positioning themselves as a creative powerhouse and shifting their reach to a new, global, and younger demographic in the process.

They communicate and live these values with everything they do. Despite being a highbrow publication, their TikTok is not overly serious, keeping the content relevant and native to the platform.

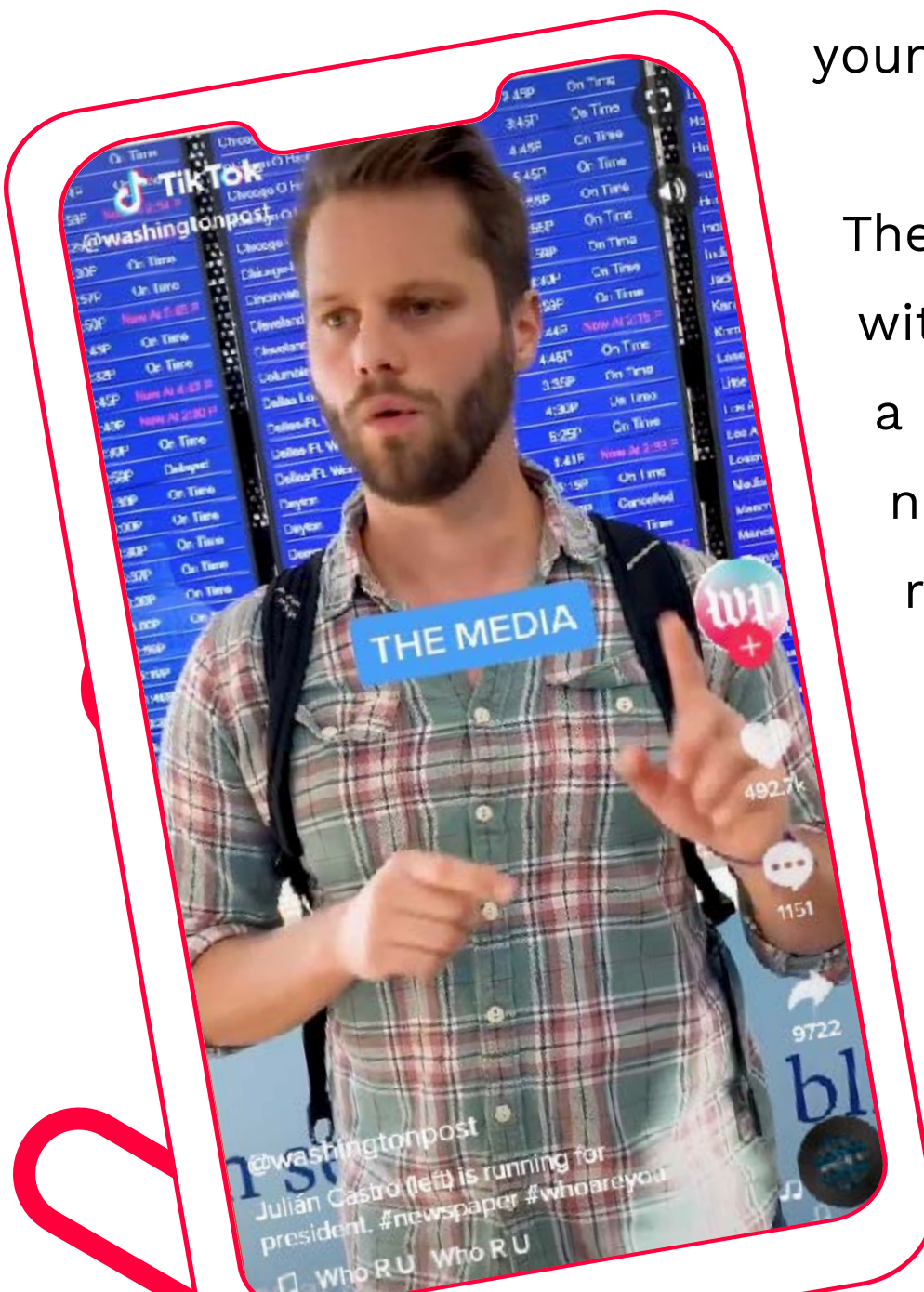
Both of these brands have created really engaging and cohesive TikTok content strategies that are true and authentic to both their values and their audiences. And they effectively link back to that one big idea. What’s yours: community, truth, empowerment, or something else entirely?

Gymshark [@gymshark](#)

Their one thing is ‘challenge’

Gymshark’s content is simple, visual, and all about setting and beating personal challenges, whatever they are.

Their brand values and proposition is present on their TikTok feed. Gymshark focus on setting individual challenges, not necessarily being the fittest, or strongest. It’s about competing with yourself. And with that, they’ve built a loyal and strong community of all shapes, sizes and levels of fitness. And diversity is something [we know is important](#) to the Gen-Z audience.



STUDY INFLUENCERS, ASSEMBLE

We've said it before and we'll say it again; empower your students. Whether it's YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, or TikTok, let your students do the talking for you. Authenticity is key in the new age of advertising and rather than trying to fake a student-feel, make it authentic.

“Don't just make content for the sake of making content. Make sure you're talking about things that you're passionate about.”

- Eve Cornwell,
Student Influencer

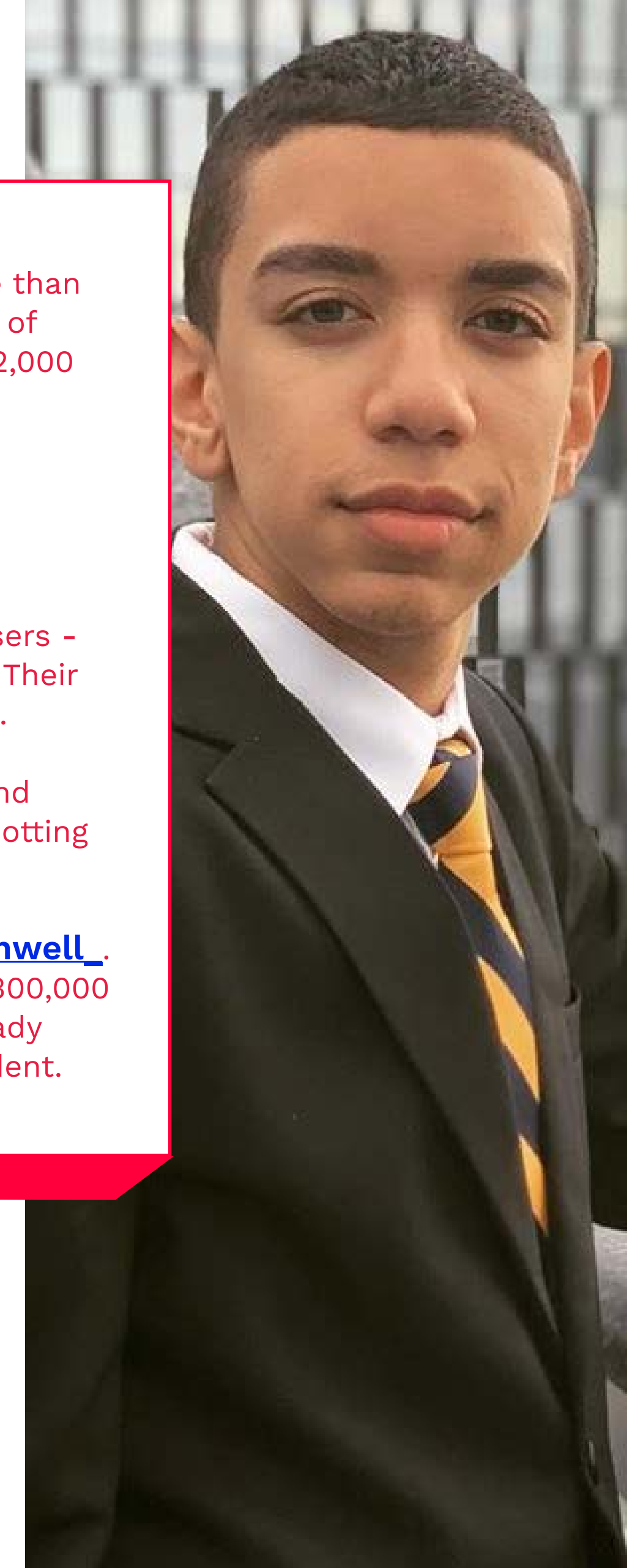


STUDY INFLUENCERS, ASSEMBLE

Compressing important lessons into bite-sized clips (complete with a backing track), the students of TikTok are revolutionising the way lessons are taught. Focusing on subjects from Calculus to Law, these Study Influencers are leading the way in this new era of user-generated content. We've picked out five of the best to inspire you...

1. Triggered by trigonometry? [@ludus](#) is your man. With a channel featuring more than 150 quick-fix solutions to common mathematical muddles, he is truly the voice of reason when it comes to crunching the numbers. His loyal following of over 352,000 users speaks for itself.
2. [@alexis_loveraz](#) from New York is another good one to follow for top tips on mathematics. It doesn't stop there though; beyond making content for maths students, his impressive TikTok portfolio also covers Geometry and Chemistry.
3. For Literature, take a look at [@ya.books](#). This TikTok is shared between two users - Morgan and Riley - who, between them, get through books at an alarming rate. Their channel is jam-packed with recommendations and analyses of all things fiction.
4. [@revision_tips_UK](#) gives general advice for revision and exam prep - from mind maps to mock exam tips. This account also shares revision papers for screenshotting purposes, for students who want to give their hands a rest from taking notes.
5. Last but not least, we have the self-styled 'e-tourney' Law student, [@evecornwell_](#). Eve has been on the Study Influencer scene for a while, racking up more than 300,000 subscribers on YouTube. Since making the jump to TikTok, her content has already garnered over 220,000 likes as she hilariously documents her life as a Law student.

And don't forget, as well as creating new content with your own students, you can connect with existing Study Influencers at your institution, or those who are hoping to attend in the future. Reach out and make those connections, and ensure you're not only part of the conversation, but leading the way in your institution-specific areas.



You've seen what you can do on TikTok, the opportunity it presents to your audience and the potential to get your brand in front of millions of hyper-engaged eyeballs. So what now? You've got the inspiration, the ideas, and the strategy. Now it's time to get started with advertising on TikTok, and you can do this using Akero.

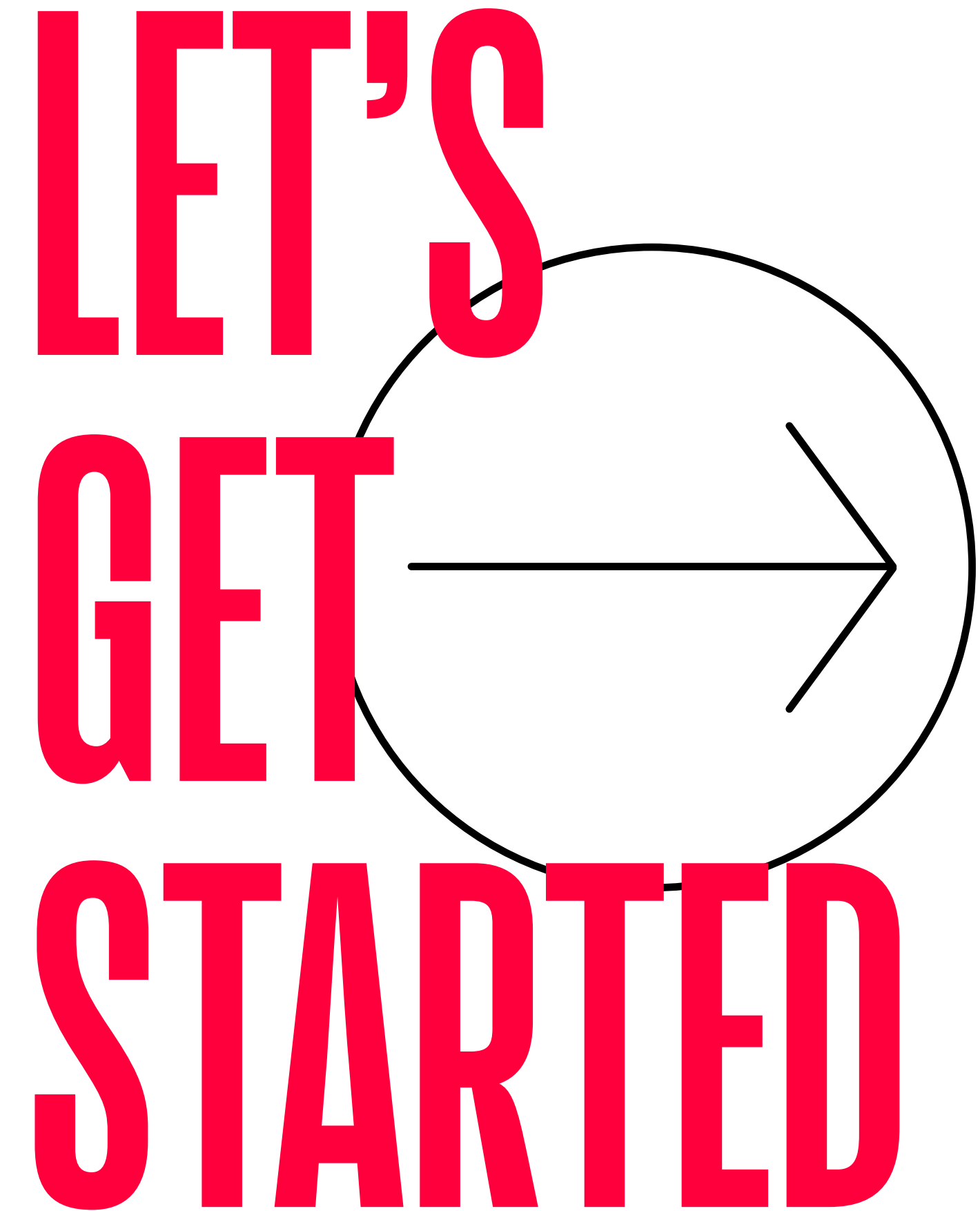
Akero allows you to take advantage of the best of human expertise and artificial intelligence to guarantee your TikTok advertising performance. Our experts review your brief against the AI recommendations, and make suggested amends based on your campaign requirements: automated planning combined with real-world understanding. Giving you back more time to focus on your strategy and creative, to achieve that authentic, relatable TikTok content.

So how does it work? Akero scans TikTok alongside billions of data points across Google, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn and Bing plus more than 100,000 news and lifestyle websites.

The AI then automatically creates personalised advertising plans that predict outcomes and are performance-guaranteed, making it easy to achieve your TikTok goals and truly understand your student audience.

Akero allows you to track and attribute ROI with ease: all your leads can be plugged straight in to over 750+ popular CRMs and platforms, including Salesforce, Hubspot and Slate, and you can see which enrolled student came from which advert, providing a single source of truth for all your advertising campaigns.

So, what are you waiting for? If you want to book your first TikTok campaign, [get in touch with our experts today.](#)



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