

Understanding Consumer Engagement Through Short-Form Video Content: The Role of Entertainment, Informativeness, Authenticity, and Platform Features

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Abstract

Short-form video now one of the most effective forms of digital marketing, especially for the Gen Z audience using TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts. Nonetheless, research into which content features have the highest impact on engagement is scant. The objective of the study is to examine consumer engagement through entertainment, informativeness, authenticity and platform features in Generation Z consumers. Based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model, the research is a quantitative survey with about 400 to 500 respondents. SPSS and SmartPLS will be used to analyse data for the purposes of testing hypothesised relationships. It is hoped the findings will fill a gap in digital marketing and consumer behaviour literature whilst providing both theoretical insights for researchers, as well as practical advice for marketers and video content creators looking to drive engagement from short-format videos.

Keywords

Short-form video marketing; Consumer engagement; Generation Z; Entertainment; Informativeness; Authenticity; Platform features; Social media marketing; Digital marketing; Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model.

1. Introduction

The idea is that digital technology has evolved so fast to the point where it already transformed an entire marketing sphere, in which social media emerged as one of the most strong forms of brand change today, along with two-way communication between some brands and consumers. Short-type video content is one of the most existing digital contents lately with massively popular apps similar to TikTok, Instagram Reels Guy and YouTube Shorts. A concise visual- and interaction-driven format which enables brands to capture consumer attention in minimal timeframes, resulting in improved engagement metrics. Whether it be for entertainment value, information to help them make better buying decisions or product discovery, the Gen Z demographic are the most active user group on these platforms due to us being digital natives. There has been a shift towards short-form video marketing, but while businesses are spending more on it, there is still a limited understanding of the content properties used to maximise consumer engagement. Thus, this study examined the role of entertainment, informativeness, authenticity and platform features on GenZ engagement providing significant theoretical contributions as well as practical insights into digital marketing approaches of today.

2. Background and Problem Statement

Digital technologies have changed the way businesses interact with consumers. With marketing homes of bulletins, via the advising/presentation center of social media, it has moved from simply networking gear to advertising and marketing channels that enable brands with interactive content material being personalised for a number of audiences. On the other hand, short-form video content (like TikTok, Instagram Reels & YouTube Shorts) has become one of the best digital marketing formats due to its quick ability to captivate people in less than 10 seconds. These short snippets have become a content staple amongst the younger Generation Z audience of overactive users on these platforms. Short-form video marketing has gone mainstream but marketers are still more often caught in a struggle trying to understand what features of content actually drive consumers. Most prior research has focused on either more general social media engagement or targeted specific platforms and relatively few studies have simultaneously examined

entertainment, informativeness, authenticity and platform characteristics effects on Generation Z consumers engagement. Additionally, the field of behavioural analytics when it comes to likes, shares and comments is quite broad but without thoroughly analysing what triggers interactions. This gap restricts marketers from advancing data-driven content strategies designed to cultivate deeper connections with consumers. Thus, the objective of this paper is to explore how these specific aspects of short-form video content affect Generation Z consumers' engagement level in terms of also providing some academic contributions and marketing implications.

3. Literature Review

Short-form video has become the way to connect brands with consumers in an effective manner through short and simple catchy visual content. Channels like TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts have traditionally become large avenues for product promotion, brand loyalty building, and consumer action. Identify the two essential changes in space existed mainly in place where businesspeople worked. Social media have supported the relationship between businesses and consumers through two-way communication (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Most recently, the same position is taken by Manic (2024), who scratches the matter of how short-form video content has emerged as a leading format of digital marketing in part because it attracts and retains users like no other digital media.

One of the most synergistic concepts of digital marketing research to gain prominence is consumer engagement (Brodie et al. 2011). Customer engagement is a multi-dimensional interaction between consumers and brands that occurs on three levels: cognitive, affective and behavioral (Dessart et al. 2011). In the same direction, Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie (2014) refines and validates a consumer brand engagement scale establishing that more engagement lead to better relationships with the brand and influences not only consumers' attitude toward brands but also consumers behavioural intention. These studies contribute in a robust theoretical way to gaining a better understanding of consumer behaviour on branded content in social networks.

Previous studies have found that consumer engagement is influenced by the characteristics of content. Entertainment is a major driver, as people tend to spend more time watch content that they found more enjoyable and emotionally appealing, leading to increased viewing time, sharing behaviour and positive brand perceptions (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011). Furthermore, informativeness is a crucial factor in the context of engaging with user-generated content, as consumers tend to engage more if advertisements provide useful, relevant and timely information about products or services (De Vries, Gensler and Leeflang, 2012). Moreover, authenticity is increasingly probable to be the key issue in digital marketing since research has shown that transparency and authenticity help consumers trust a brand more (Lou and Yuan 2019), which result in better website traffic results. Moreover, social media users engagement also includes platform-specific features including those that use recommendation algorithms, interactive tools, music integration and editing functions (Voorveld et al., 2018).

While emerging research focuses on short-form video marketing, there are large knowledge gaps that must be filled. Finally, Wu and Su (2025) show that short-form video marketing enhances consumer engagement, which in turn has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention; Manic's research content suggests that the importance of short-form video content in digital marketing is increasing. While the studies widely consider engagement traits, most of them are either platform-specific or look at engagement as an aggregate of behavioural features like likes, comments and shares. Less research has explored how, among the Generation Z consumers, the effects of entertainment value and informativeness and authenticity of advertisements and platform features simultaneously relate to their multi-dimensional construct of consumer engagement. Filling this gap will enable a fuller understanding of how short-form video marketing impacts consumer engagement and articles with recommendations on how to best leverage strategies for organisations seeking to develop their digital marketing efforts.

4. Research Gap

While past research shows a positive effect of short-form video marketing on consumer behaviour, important gaps in the literature remain unfilled. While it is valid that a lot of current research bases on single platforms specifically TikTok (Zhang et al. Second, previous research has mainly focused on the impact of behaviour (e.g., likes, comments, shared and views) while consumer cognition or affective responses received less attention. Third, the literature has largely limited analysis to factors like entertainment, informativeness, authenticity and platform features studied in isolation rather than framing them as part of a holistic framework. Second, while there is some empirical evidence for the antecedent factors of short-form video use and consumer behaviours related to these platforms, only those consumers from the Generation Z who were active users are considered in this paper. As a result, this research aims at filling these voids by exploring both direct and indirect effects of entertainment, informativeness, authenticity and social media

platform features on consumer engagement based on Generation Z consumers providing theoretical and practical suggestions for digital marketing studies.

5. Research Aim, Objectives and Research Questions

Research Aim

This study aims to examine the effects of entertainment, informativeness, authenticity and platform features of short-form video content on consumer engagement among Generation Z consumers.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the impact of entertainment on consumer engagement in short-form video posts.
2. To assess the impact of informativeness placed on consumers messages among generation z consumer engagement.
3. To explore the link between perceived authenticity and consumer engagement.
4. To measure the influence of platform features on user engagement.
5. To explore the relative impact of these factors in predicting consumer engagement and recommendations to develop effective short-form video marketing strategies.

Research Questions

RQ1: What role does entertainment play in consumer engagement with short-form video content?

RQ2: Does informativeness have an effect on Generation Z consumer engagement?

RQ3: What is the implication of perceived authenticity on consumer engagement?

RQ4: How do platform features affect consumer engagement?

RQ5: What type of influence has the most impact on Generation Z consumers—entertainment, informativeness, brand/authenticity or platform features?

6. Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Model

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) provides the theoretical foundation for this study in that it explains the link between external stimuli, internal psychological states and consequent behavioural responses. In this regard, entertainment, informativeness, authenticity and platform features are regarded as the stimuli (S) encountered by consumers while exposing to short-form video content. These stimuli affect the organism (O) - here signified by consumer engagement, which includes cognitive engagement (involvement), emotional engagement and cognitive behavioural engagement with branded content. The resulting response (R) in consumers is demonstrated through the willingness to interact with, share, and develop positive study attitudes towards brands that are then equal to purchase intention and brand loyalty.

Drawing from this framework, the conceptual model that is proposed aims to explore how participation on various platforms as well as the characteristics of entertainment, informativeness and authenticity all affect Generation Z consumers' engagement. It provides a theoretical foundation by which the relative impact of these factors may be explored as well as a potentially usable framework for empirical testing of the relationships through a survey and quantitative data collection.

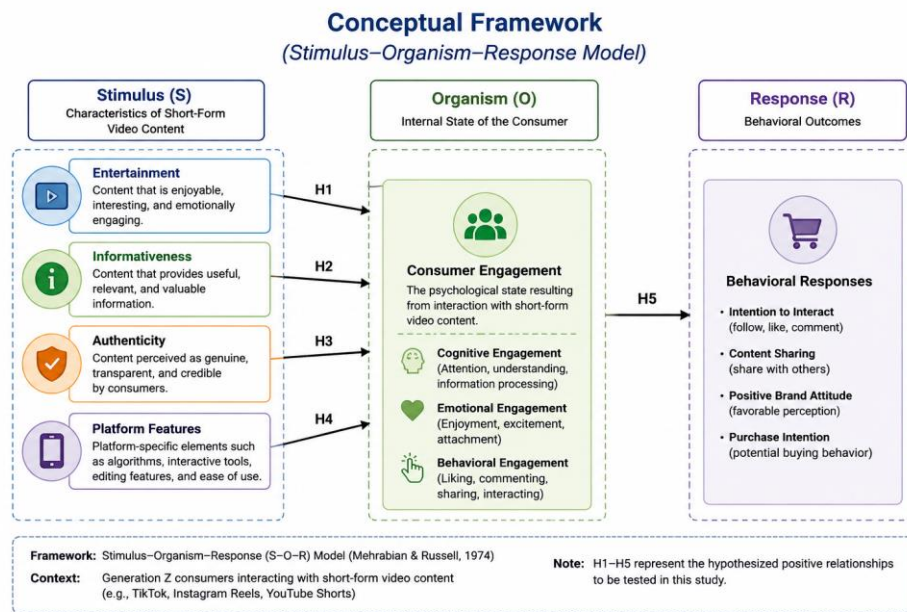


Fig 1 - Conceptual frameworks

7. Research Methodology

Quantitative research approach using a descriptive cross-sectional survey study design to assess the impact of entertainment, informativeness, authenticity and platform features on consumer engagement by Generation Z consumers. A quantitative method is apt as it tests hypothesised relationships between variables and allows for a statistical analysis of data. Target Population The target population is consumers from 18 to 28 years old (Generation Z) that frequently use short-form video based platforms TikTok, Instagram Reels and Youtube shorts. Brand will use nonprobability convenience sampling to select a sample of 400–500 respondents through online distribution of a structured questionnaire on social media platforms, university networks and at online communities. This is a sufficiently large sample for performing sophisticated statistical procedures such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

A self-administered online questionnaire consisting of 2 sections will be the method for collecting primary data. The initial segment will collect the respondent's demographics such as age, gender, education and the frequency of usage of short-form video platforms. Section two will assess the study constructs, through previously validated Likert-scale items selected from the existing literature. Entertainment, Informativeness, Authenticity and Platform Features were measured on a five point Likert Scale (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree).

The data will be analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics for conducting descriptive statistics, reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) and correlation analysis. Then, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) will be applied using either SmartPLS 4 or AMOS to test both the measurement and structural models. Measurement model assessment includes indicator reliability, composite reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The proposed hypotheses will then be tested through the examination of path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) values for analysis of significance levels through bootstrapping will then be performed over the structural model. Such a methodology should yield strong empirical insight on what drives consumers to engage with short-form video uploads; particularly among the Generation Z consumer class, and thus offer actionable outputs for digital marketers seeking to optimise their efforts.

8. Ethical Considerations

All participants will be protected in accordance with established ethical principles throughout the course of this study. Ethical approval will be taken before data is collected, and it will be obtained from the relevant institutional review board or ethics committee. Completing the questionnaire, through this online survey, will be completely voluntary and informed consent will be obtained from respondents prior to their completion. Please note that participants will be told (a) the purpose of the study, (b) participation is voluntary and they may withdraw from answering questions at any time without penalty to themselves or their affiliates, (c) responses are confidential.

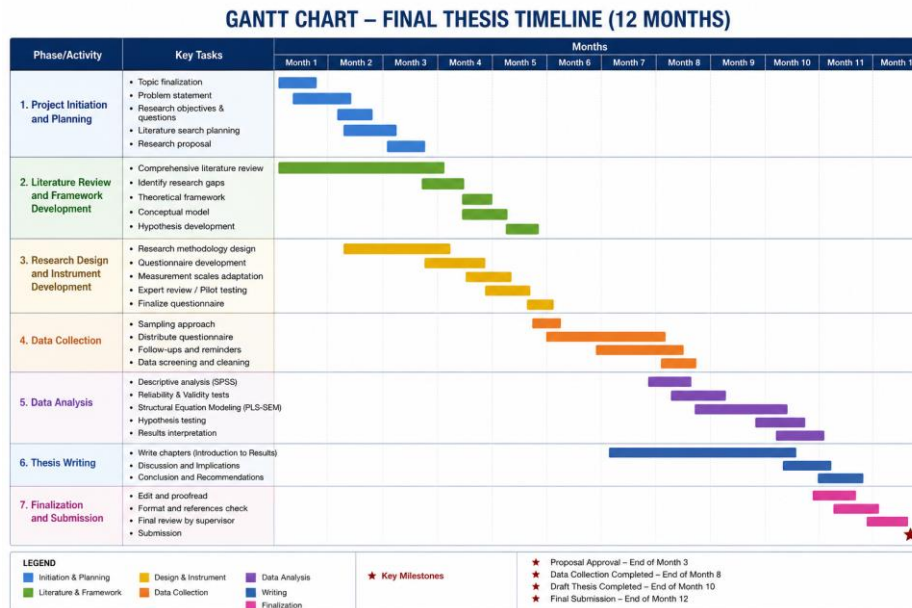
Only anonymized data will be collected and all data will be stored securely, used only for academic research purposes in line with applicable data protection and research ethics/compliance guidelines.

9. Expected Contribution

We expect that the study will advance theory and practice in the field of digital marketing. Hypothetically, it aims to advance the S–O–R model by exploring how entertainment, informativeness, authenticity and platform features interactively affect Generation Z consumers' engagement in short-form video marketing. This will contribute to the growing body of literature on consumer engagement with relevant empirical evidence from a fast-changing digital context.

Applied further, extending the study's findings will help marketers and brand managers, content-makers & social media strategists understand which areas of their moves matter most to consumers. This type of research may aid marketers in developing a more accurate, participatory method for short-form video marketing that increases engagement with audiences, enhances brand loyalty and overall advertising effectiveness. The research may also be a starting point for future studies on demographic segment, sector and social media platform consumer behaviour.

10. Timeline



10. Conclusion

Short-form video content has grown into another primary vehicle used for marketing that interacts with brand engagement among Generation Z consumers in the digital environment. Organisations attempting social media marketing should learn the determinants of consumer engagement to build viable and sustainable strategies. This proposed study utilises the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework to explore entertainment, informativeness, authenticity and platform features in short-form video platforms and aims to address current literature gaps by providing empirical evidence of consumer engagement. The results are intended to enhance academic knowledge, as well as provide recommendations with potential implications for marketers and content creators targeting consumers seeking improved engagement in short-form video marketing campaigns.

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