

An Analysis of TikTok Engagement Optimization Strategies: A Case Study of the Bakpia Juwara Satoe Account

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Abstract

The rapid growth of TikTok as an algorithm-driven social media platform has encouraged small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to adopt innovative digital marketing strategies to enhance audience engagement. This study aims to analyze the engagement strategy implemented by Bakpia Juwara Satoe, a local culinary brand that utilizes TikTok as a primary communication and promotional medium. Employing a qualitative research design with a descriptive case study approach, this research explores how content planning, visual presentation, interaction management, and credibility-building practices contribute to audience engagement.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with account managers, participant observation of audience interactions, and analysis of internal TikTok analytics and content archives. The findings reveal that Bakpia Juwara Satoe applies an adaptive–predictive content planning strategy, supported by strong visual identity, the use of attention-grabbing hooks, and active two-way communication in the comment section. Additionally, authentic storytelling and transparent product information play a crucial role in strengthening audience trust and sustaining engagement.

The study concludes that effective TikTok engagement for SMEs is not solely dependent on video-centric content, but rather on strategic relevance, visual consistency, and relational communication. These findings contribute to the literature on social media marketing by demonstrating the potential of alternative content formats and engagement-oriented strategies for culinary SMEs operating in competitive digital environments.

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technology has fundamentally reshaped the ways in which people access, consume, and evaluate information (Kemp, 2024). Social media platforms have increasingly replaced traditional media as primary sources of news, entertainment, and cultural discourse, particularly among younger audiences (Salma & Albab, 2023). In this context, TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential digital platforms, characterized by algorithm-driven content distribution and high levels of user participation (Azhar & Ardiansah, 2022). Its ability to disseminate content beyond follower-based networks has transformed TikTok into a strategic communication space for brands, communities, and digital media outlets (Angelin & Paramita, 2024).

Indonesia represents one of TikTok’s most significant markets, with a rapidly growing user base that positions the platform as a central arena for information exchange and trend formation (Kemp, 2024). This level of penetration has intensified competition for audience attention, encouraging content creators and businesses to develop more adaptive and engagement-oriented communication strategies (Fadhilah & Nurjanah, 2024).

Within this competitive environment, Bakpia Juwara Satoe operates as a local culinary brand that actively utilizes TikTok as a promotional and branding medium (Permana et al., 2025). Unlike many business accounts that rely solely on short-form video trends, Bakpia Juwara Satoe also employs structured visual narratives and informational content to communicate product value and brand identity (Saputra et al., 2025). Despite operating in a saturated digital marketplace, the account demonstrates relatively strong audience interaction, indicating the presence of an effective engagement strategy (Fauzi & Kusmayadi, 2025).

This study aims to analyze how Bakpia Juwara Satoe designs and implements its TikTok content strategy to enhance audience engagement (Salma & Albab, 2023). By examining content planning, visual presentation, interaction management, and credibility-building practices, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on digital marketing and social media engagement within the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (Fadhilah & Nurjanah, 2024).

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Audience Engagement in Social Media

Audience engagement is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct that reflects the intensity of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral interactions between users and digital content (Dessart et al., 2015). In social media contexts, engagement extends beyond passive consumption and involves active participation such as commenting, sharing, and co-creating meaning within online communities (Dessart et al., 2015). Prior studies emphasize that engagement functions as a strategic outcome of marketing communication, as it strengthens brand–consumer relationships and increases long-term loyalty (Alalwan, 2018).

Within algorithm-driven platforms, engagement is also closely associated with content relevance and perceived value. Research in digital marketing demonstrates that informative, entertaining, and aesthetically appealing content significantly increases users' willingness to interact with branded posts (Alalwan, 2018). Accordingly, engagement metrics are frequently used as key performance indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of social media strategies across industries.

TikTok Engagement and Content Strategy

TikTok represents a distinctive social media environment due to its reliance on algorithmic content distribution rather than follower-based networks (Zhao & Zhou, 2021). The platform's For You Page (FYP) enables content to reach broad audiences regardless of account size, thereby intensifying competition for user attention (Zhao & Zhou, 2021). As a result, creators and brands must prioritize strategies that capture attention rapidly and encourage sustained interaction.

Previous studies indicate that TikTok engagement is influenced by several interrelated factors, including content planning consistency, early attention hooks, visual differentiation, and interactive communication in comment sections (Salma & Albab, 2023). Visual identity and storytelling clarity further contribute to audience perception of credibility and usefulness, which in turn increases engagement behaviors such as saving and sharing content (Dessart et al., 2015; Zhao & Zhou, 2021).

Social Media Marketing for Small and Medium Enterprises

For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), social media platforms provide cost-efficient tools for brand building and consumer engagement (Kotler & Keller, 2016). TikTok, in particular, offers opportunities for SMEs to compete with larger brands by leveraging creative storytelling and authentic communication styles rather than high production budgets (Alalwan, 2018).

Empirical research shows that SMEs that actively manage interactions and present credible, transparent information tend to achieve higher engagement levels and stronger consumer trust (Dessart et al., 2015). These findings suggest that effective TikTok strategies for SMEs are grounded not only in content creativity, but also in relational communication and consistency. This theoretical perspective provides a foundation for analyzing the engagement strategy implemented by Bakpia Juwara Satoe.

Research Methods

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design using a descriptive case study approach to explore engagement strategies in a natural digital context (Sugiyono, 2019). Qualitative methods are appropriate for examining meanings, strategies, and interactions that cannot be fully captured through numerical indicators alone (Creswell, 2018). The case study approach allows for an in-depth and contextualized understanding of how engagement strategies are developed and implemented on TikTok (Yin, 2018).

Research Setting and Object

The research was conducted between October and November 2025 within the TikTok platform ecosystem (Salma & Albab, 2023). The primary object of analysis was the TikTok account of Bakpia Juwara Satoe, a local culinary brand representing traditional Indonesian food products (Permana et al., 2025). Although the promotional activities are digital in nature, the operational base of content production and strategic decision-making is located in Central Java, Indonesia, which enabled access to contextual and organizational insights (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data Sources and Collection Techniques

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with individuals directly involved in managing the TikTok account, allowing the researcher to obtain firsthand strategic perspectives (Creswell, 2018). Additional primary data were obtained through participant observation of audience interactions within comment sections, which provided insights into engagement dynamics and communication patterns (Fadhilah & Nurjanah, 2024). Secondary data were gathered from academic journals, digital marketing studies, and industry reports relevant to TikTok engagement and social media marketing (Kemp, 2024).

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2014). This analytical process enabled the identification of recurring themes related to content planning, visual strategy, interaction management, and credibility formation (Salma & Albab, 2023).

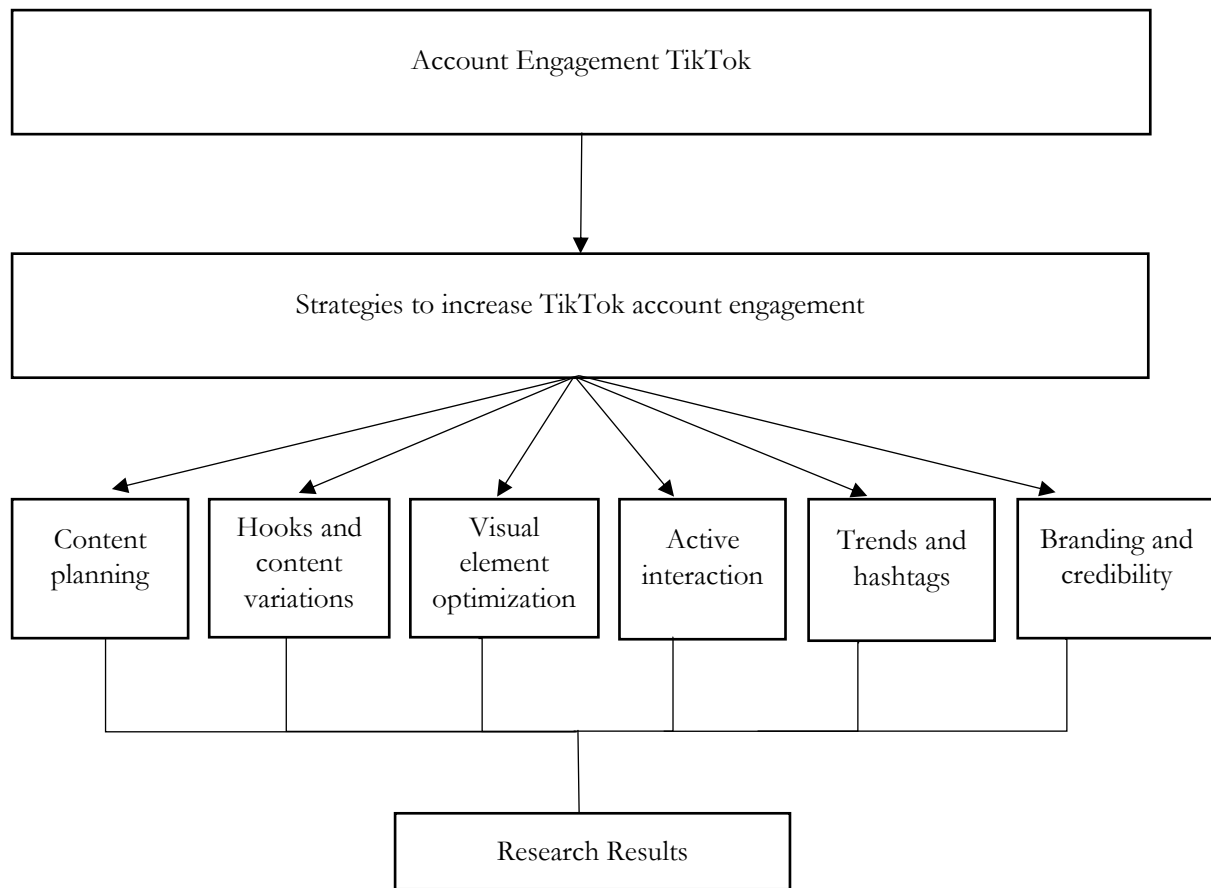


Figure 1. Research Framework

Results and Discussion

Adaptive and Predictive Content Planning

The findings indicate that Bakpia Juwara Satoe applies an adaptive and predictive approach to TikTok content planning, allowing the brand to anticipate emerging trends rather than merely reacting to viral content after it peaks. This strategy aligns with the concept of proactive content management, which emphasizes early relevance as a key driver of engagement on algorithm-based platforms (Zhao & Zhou, 2021). Consistent scheduling and thematic coherence further enhance visibility and algorithmic favorability, as previously identified in studies on TikTok engagement optimization (Salma & Albab, 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, this approach supports the argument that engagement is not solely generated by creativity, but also by strategic timing and contextual relevance (Alalwan, 2018). For SMEs such as Bakpia Juwara Satoe, predictive planning serves as a competitive advantage by enabling early audience capture with relatively low production costs.

Visual Strategy and the Effectiveness of Photo-Based Content

Although TikTok is predominantly associated with short-form video, the results demonstrate that photo-based and static visual content can effectively generate engagement when supported by strong visual identity and narrative clarity. This finding corroborates prior research suggesting that visual differentiation and aesthetic consistency significantly influence user interaction on social media platforms (Dessart et al., 2015; Haidar & Martadi, 2021).

The use of attention-grabbing opening slides as visual hooks reflects established principles of digital attention economics, where users decide whether to engage with content within the first few seconds of exposure (Zhao & Zhou, 2021). Consequently, the visual strategy implemented by

Bakpia Juwara Satoe functions as a deliberate interruption of scrolling behavior, increasing the likelihood of likes, saves, and comments.

Interaction Management and Community Engagement

Active interaction management emerges as a central determinant of sustained engagement. The findings show that Bakpia Juwara Satoe consistently encourages audience participation through calls to action and responsive communication within the comment section. This practice is consistent with engagement theory, which conceptualizes engagement as a relational and dialogic process rather than a one-way transmission of information (Dessart et al., 2015).

Empirical studies in social media marketing confirm that brands that actively respond to user feedback tend to foster stronger emotional bonds and higher loyalty levels (Alalwan, 2018). In this study, interaction management not only increases short-term engagement metrics but also contributes to the formation of a brand-centered online community.

Credibility Building through Authentic Storytelling

The discussion further reveals that credibility plays a critical role in shaping audience engagement. Bakpia Juwara Satoe integrates authentic storytelling with transparent product information, reinforcing audience trust and perceived brand integrity. This finding aligns with marketing communication literature that emphasizes authenticity as a core determinant of consumer engagement, particularly among younger digital audiences (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Dessart et al., 2015).

By presenting behind-the-scenes narratives and contextual product stories, the brand moves beyond promotional messaging toward relational communication. Such practices strengthen engagement by positioning the brand as both informative and relatable, a strategy that has been shown to be effective for SMEs operating in highly competitive digital environments (Alalwan, 2018).

Implication and Conclusion

This study concludes that high engagement on TikTok can be achieved through alternative strategies that do not rely exclusively on video content. Bakpia Juwara Satoe demonstrates that static photo slides, when supported by adaptive content planning, strong visual identity, active interaction management, and credible storytelling, can effectively compete within algorithm-driven social media environments.

Practically, these findings suggest that independent media and niche content creators can optimize engagement by prioritizing relevance, authenticity, and community interaction rather than high-production video formats. Academically, this research contributes to social media studies by challenging the assumption that TikTok engagement is inherently video-dependent. Future research is encouraged to employ mixed-method or quantitative approaches to further examine the relationship between content format and specific engagement metrics across different digital niches.

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