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## TikTok Tactics:

Comparative Analysis of High-End and Budget-Friendly Skincare Brands' strategies on TikTok and Instagram.

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## Table of contents:

<b>0. Introduction.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Literature review.....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 Digital Marketing.....	6
1.2 Social Media.....	9
1.3 Social Media Marketing.....	10
1.3.1 The rise of Social Media Marketing.....	10
1.3.2 Video Marketing.....	13
1.4 TikTok.....	17
1.4.1 History of the app.....	17
1.4.2 How does TikTok work?.....	18
1.5 Skincare and social media.....	20
1.6 Previous research on beauty and dermatology brands on social media.....	22
1.6.1 “Social Media, Social Me: A Content Analysis of Beauty Companies’ Use of Facebook in Marketing and Branding”, Shen Bin and Kimberly Bissell, 2013.....	22
1.6.2 “Overview of TikTok’s most viewed dermatologic content and assessment of its reliability”, Villa-Ruiz et al., 2020.....	23
1.6.3 “Dermatology on TikTok: Analysis of content and creators”, Nguyen et al., 2021.....	23
1.6.4 “Developing Promotion Strategy on Instagram for Lip Glaze Launch by Skin-crave Company”, Nawwal Maghfirah and Annisa Rahmani Qastharin, 2022.....	24
1.6.5 “What Makes Luxury Brands Win the Hearts of Gen Z on TikTok? An Exploratory Study”, Yan-bo et al., 2022.....	24
1.6.6 “Evaluating the Content and Quality of the Top 50 #Cosmeticdermatology Instagram Posts”, Pecora et al., 2024.....	25
1.6.7 “How Luxury Fashion Brands Leverage TikTok to Captivate Young Consumers: An Exploratory Investigation Using Video Analytics”, Yan-bo et al., 2024.....	25
1.6.8 Conclusion.....	26
<b>2. Data and Method.....</b>	<b>27</b>
2.1 Research questions and hypotheses.....	27
2.1.1 Research questions .....	27
2.1.2 Hypotheses.....;	27
2.1.2.1 How do high-end skincare products companies use TikTok in comparison to budget-friendly skincare product companies and, if a difference in use appears, what can explain this difference?.....	27
2.1.2.2 Why would those two types of skincare brands establish themselves on TikTok?.....	29
2.2 Data and method.....	29
2.2.1 Selection of the brands.....	30
2.2.1.1. High-end brands.....	31

2.2.1.2. Budget-friendly brands.....	32
2.2.2 Data collection.....	34
2.2.3 Method.....	35
<b>3. Results.....</b>	<b>37</b>
3.1 Quantitative results.....	37
3.2 Qualitative results.....	41
<b>3.2.1 High-end brands.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>3.2.1.1 Estée Lauder.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>3.2.1.1.1 TikTok.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>3.2.1.1.2 TikTok vs. Instagram.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>3.2.1.2 La Mer.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>3.2.1.2.1 TikTok.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>3.2.1.2.2 TikTok vs. Instagram.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>3.2.1.3 Sisley Paris.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>3.2.1.3.1 TikTok.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>3.2.1.3.2 TikTok vs. Instagram.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>3.2.1.4 Tatcha.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>3.2.1.4.1 TikTok.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>3.2.1.4.2 TikTok vs. Instagram.....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>3.2.1.5 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>3.2.2 Budget-friendly brands .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>3.2.2.1 The Ordinary.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>3.2.2.1.1 TikTok .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>3.2.2.1.2 TikTok vs. Instagram.....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>3.2.2.2 The INKEY List.....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>3.2.2.2.1 TikTok.....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>3.2.2.2.2 TikTok vs. Instagram.....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>3.2.2.3 COSRX.....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>3.2.2.3.1 TikTok.....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>3.2.2.3.2 TikTok vs. Instagram.....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>3.2.2.4 Neutrogena.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>3.2.2.4.1 TikTok.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>3.2.2.4.2 TikTok vs. Instagram.....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>3.2.2.5 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>101</b>

<b>4. Discussion.....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>4.1</b> How do high-end skincare products companies use TikTok in comparison to budget-friendly skincare product companies and if a difference in use appears, what can explain this difference?.....	105
<b>4.2</b> Why would those two types of skincare brands establish themselves on TikTok?.....	112
<b>5. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>6. Works cited.....</b>	<b>118</b>

## 0. Introduction

For a very long time, before social media, businesses were able to regulate the discourse around them and their brand, however, with the development of social media, the conversation has shifted on the side of consumers (Kaplan and Haenlein: 2010). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 60), social media has existed for as long as sixty years, and it started “when Bruce and Susan Abelson founded ‘Open Diary’ an early social networking site that brought together online diary writers into one community”. The further development of the internet and its facilitated access allowed more and more platforms to gain popularity and as a result, people witnessed the emergence of iconic social networks such as Myspace (2003) and Facebook (2004) (Kaplan and Haenlein: 2010). It was not long before businesses used this opportunity to communicate with their (potential) clients. As Kaplan and Haenlein already argued in 2010, “[s]ocial [m]edia allow firms to engage in timely and direct end-consumer contact at relatively low cost and higher levels of efficiency than can be achieved with more traditional communication tools. This makes social media not only relevant for large multinational firms, but also for small and medium sized companies” (67).

Unsurprisingly, academics started to look at the influence of social media marketing on consumers. Social media has therefore been studied for many years now, as an efficient tool for businesses to influence consumers’ buying behaviour, consumer loyalty, etc... However, as Kaur and Kumar (2021: 1040) explain, “[t]he impact of social media on consumer behavior is studied extensively, but there are a few [...] studies from a business perspective”. This study will consequently focus on how businesses use social media, which type of content they put out and what is the purpose of their presence on social media.

The research focuses on TikTok as a social media platform and its different uses by businesses. More than ten years ago, Facebook was considered to be the most popular social media platform (Kaplan and Haenlein: 2010). Now, it is thought as outdated and only used by older people and other platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are considered more popular (Haenlein et al: 2020). When studying social media, it is also critical to keep in mind that each platform has its own culture, as Haenlein et al (2020: 11) explain: “[m]arketing managers have known for decades that communication rarely follows a “one size fits all” strategy. [...] [L]iterature has therefore recommended segmenting markets, developing differentiated offers for specific segments, and that the young, especially, require proper understanding and communication”. One should therefore not study social media as a whole but rather focus on a specific platform to effectively grasp the extent of its possible uses. This study will consequently focus

on TikTok, as the culture and target of this social media platform is different from the others. It is argued in recent literature that “TikTok is the cheapest and most enjoyable tool for creating excellent marketing content for digital marketing purposes. It can promote and show product activities in a broad range of digital marketing without wasting money” (Akbari et al. 2022: 160). Nevertheless, as Wahid et al (2022: 113) suggest, “TikTok is a relatively new social media platform. Despite its recent popularity, the implementation of TikTok for SMM is still in its infancy”. Conducting a study on the type of content posted on the platform is important because not many studies have been conducted on the subject.

Lastly, the businesses that will be studied are skincare businesses. As Kaur and Kumar (2021: 1040) claim, “[i]n the beauty and wellness industry, social media is quite useful because of its unique features. It is highly used to advertise beauty and fitness-related products and services. But there is a dearth of academic research in this industry compared to other industries [...]. Social media usage in this industry has excelled; still, very little research has been carried out”. As an attempt to help filling the gap on research conducted in the use of the beauty industry, this study will therefore analyse the utilisation of TikTok by skincare brands and the reason why they decided to use this specific platform. This will be done by analysing the content posted by eight brands, four high-end brands and four budget-friendly brands, to understand their marketing communication strategies on TikTok. The first segment of this dissertation will be dedicated to theory and a literature review on digital marketing, social media, social media marketing, TikTok, and finally skincare and social media. Then the method of data collection will be explained. After that, results will be shared and discussed. Finally, the conclusion will lead to further research possibilities.

## **1. Social media marketing**

### **1.1. Digital Marketing**

To understand what social media marketing entails, understanding digital marketing (DM) is key. According to Ryan, DM appeared as early as “in the late 1990s” (Ryan 2014: 2). The development of internet and networking technologies can however be traced back to almost thirty years earlier, when in 1969, ARPA, (the former name of DARPA, the Defense Advances Research Project Agency) connected two computers to the ARPANET for the first time (Ryan: 2014). Two years later, Ray Tomlinson, an engineer involved with ARPANET, developed the initial software that could send emails from a user on one host computer to the mailbox of another user on a different host computer (Ryan 2014: 9). In 1974, the word “internet” was used for the first time (Ryan: 2014). In 1989, Tim Berners-Lee, a British programmer employed at

CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research) introduced a concept for connecting and retrieving information across the expanding internet using 'hypertext' links. Following this emerging concept, the initial webpage on the internet was created at CERN and became accessible on August 6, 1991 (Ryan: 2014). Ryan explains that in the span of six years after that, “the web grew at an astonishing 850 per cent per annum, eclipsing all expectations” (Ryan 2014: 10). He also points out interesting numbers to illustrate this information: “In August 1995 there were 18,957 websites online; by August 1996 there were 342,081. Note there are now *approximately 635 million* websites online” (Ryan 2014: 10). The fast development of the internet, and with that the number of websites and brands such as Amazon and Google establishing themselves online (Ryan: 2014), testifies of the growing interest for the online sphere, and marketers as well as marketing experts and academics were no exception.

Lamberton and Stephen argue in “A Thematic Exploration of Digital, Social Media, and Mobile Marketing: Research Evolution from 2000 to 2015 and an Agenda for Future Inquiry” (2016) that, from the start of the new millennium, “digital media platforms have revolutionized marketing, offering new ways to reach, inform, engage, sell to, learn about, and provide service to customers” (2016: 146). Digital platforms have made it easier for brands as well as for customers to interact with each other and have led to new behaviours and experiences for both parties (Lamberton and Stephen: 2016). Nevertheless, the transition to these new technologies and therefore DM has not been that easy for marketers, as Lamberton and Stephen point out in their research. They have identified three “eras” regarding DM research. The first era (between 2000 and 2004) recognised the early potential of digital platforms, not only because of them making it easier to find information, but also because they gave way to online word-of-mouth (e-WOM) communication and the creation of communities. Digital platforms and internet became “a decision tool” (154), not only for customers but also for brands who could understand the customers’ needs more easily (155). In the second era (between 2005 and 2010), internet steadily became part of everyday life and saw the rise of e-WOM, online expression, and the beginning of social media and user generated content (UGC), “with everyone from global brands (e.g., McDonalds) to musicians (e.g., Bon Jovi) to local dentists starting to use Facebook (then Twitter and others) as a digital marketing content channel” (Lamberton and Stephen 2016: 165). Even though research and theory on DM was flourishing, marketers struggled to adapt this theory in real life, failing to understand the implications of this new type of marketing as well as failing to incorporate DM in their already existing marketing strategies (Lamberton and Stephen: 2016). Finally, the third era (between 2011 and 2014) witnessed the boom of social media and, “increasingly, people both were shaped by marketing and actively shaped markets”

(Lamberton and Stephen 2016: 159). At that point, it had become crucial for brands and companies to develop a DM strategy to adapt to these ever-growing and emerging technologies (Ryan: 2014).

DM can be defined as “activities, institutions, and processes facilitated by digital technologies for creating, communicating and delivering value for customers and other stakeholders” (Kannan and Hongshuang 2016: 23). Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019: 44) also define DM as follows: “The application of digital media, data and technology integrated with traditional communications to achieve marketing objectives”. Those two definitions highlight the fact that DM is a process that facilitates marketing strategies on digital platforms using online technology in combination with traditional marketing activities. As Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019: 44) argue: “for digital marketing to be successful there is still a need for integration of these techniques with traditional media such as print, TV, direct mail and human sales and support as part of multichannel marketing communications”. One must therefore recognise and remember the three main traditional types of media channels when considering DM: paid media (advertisement etc.), owned media (content owned and published by companies themselves) and earned media (content published about the companies by third parties) (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick: 2019). Moreover, as Quesenberry (2019: 93) argues, marketers tend to blend those three types of media channels in DM, which he calls “converged media”. Just like any other marketing strategy, marketers establishing DM strategies also need to be clear about targeting and positioning their brand/company online. It is therefore crucial that the DM strategy aligns itself with the traditional marketing strategy that already exists within the companies.

However, there also exists specifics to DM strategies. First and foremost, having a website is essential because, as Ryan (2016: 35) explains, a website is “the hub of your digital world – and perhaps the most important element in your whole digital marketing strategy”. The DM strategy should seek to generate engagement with the website. Online PR is another important key element of DM (Ryan: 2016; Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick: 2019). For companies using online platforms, including press releases, article sharing, and blogs, to shape a positive reputation for their brands and reaching their target audience is vital (Ryan: 2016; Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick: 2019). Other key digital media channels and strategies include search engine optimisation (aligning content with search intent for organic traffic), online partnerships (establishing enduring promotions via third-party sites or email communications), display advertising (such as using advertisement banners on websites), email marketing (newsletters for example), content marketing (creating and sharing content to attract and engage target audiences), as well as social media marketing. (Ryan: 2016; Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick: 2019). Because this study

focuses on the use of a specific social media platform, social media marketing will be looked at in more detail in the following section.

## **1.2. Social Media**

Before delving into social media marketing, social media should be defined. Social media can be defined as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 61). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 60-61), Web 2.0 is “a term that was first used in 2004 to describe a new way in which software developers and end-users started to utilize the World Wide Web; that is, as a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion”. Another definition of Web 2.0. is suggested by Constantinides (2014: 42)

Web 2.0 is a collection of interactive, open source and user-controlled Internet applications enhancing the experiences, collaboration, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes. Web 2.0 applications support the creation of informal users’ networks facilitating the flow of ideas, information, knowledge and promote innovation and creativity by allowing the efficient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing of content.

This definition gives more insight into the possible use of Web 2.0. and social media. However, Constantinides (2014: 42) also adds that Web 2.0. and social media should be differentiated: “Social Media support dialog (peer to peer) and social networking. Dialog and social networking allow the democratization of knowledge and information, transforming individuals from content consumers to content producers”. It should thus be understood that social media platforms are “Web 2.0 applications enabling the creation, editing and dissemination of user-generated content” (Constantinides, 2014: 42). Social media is a part of Web 2.0. and those two terms are not interchangeable.

Shen and Bissell (2013: 630) add to the definition of social media that “social media have been dedicated to social interactions, including but not limited to, weblogs, microblogging, Facebook, Twitter, wikis, podcasts, and so on”. Social media is therefore focused on interaction, or as Cesaroni and Consoli (2015: 258) explain, social media is used as a “friendly social networking between individuals in their private life”. In other words, these platforms are used to strengthen relationship and communication between users, as Ananda et al. (2014: 1-2) also clarify: “[p]rior to the emergence of social media, Internet contents were a sort of one-way communication but, with the rise of social media, communication has shifted to a through two-

way –or more– communication”. Shen and Bissell (2013: 631) agree by stating that “[t]he communicative model embedded in social media, on the other hand, has evolved to a two-way experience”. The main advantage of social media is therefore their ability to make people interact with each other.

### **1.3. Social Media Marketing**

#### **1.3.1 The rise of Social Media Marketing**

Even if “[social media] was primarily created for communication purposes [, it] has recently gained tremendous popularity in the marketing world. It plays a critical role in the promotion of businesses” (Kaur and Kumar, 2021: 1042). Now more than ever, social media marketing (SMM) has taken over the business world. SMM is used more and more by business and has become even bigger since the COVID-19 pandemic, as Joshi et al (2022: 92) explain, “[t]he COVID-19 crisis is accelerating the trends that were already shaping the market and the industries, such as the use of e-commerce sites”. This is explained by the fact that during the pandemic, “most people found themselves on their phone, scrolling through social media, seeing more and more online ads, reviews, and content about products from micro-celebrities and from other people who have used the product” (Joshi et al, 2022: 92). Brands used this opportunity to develop their SMM strategies even further.

However, SMM is not a new phenomenon. According to Shen and Bissel (2013: 632) “93% of businesses use social networking for marketing and branding”. SMM has therefore been used by marketers for years. On that matter, Constantinides (2014: 41) argues that “understanding the role of technology in shaping the marketplace and more importantly engaging the Social Media as part of the marketing toolbox [has become] a strategic imperative”. Brands must therefore be present on social media to have a successful marketing strategy. SMM is now a fundamental part of the marketing strategies of a lot of businesses and has completely changed the way organisations communicate with their clients (Ananda et al, 2014). Social media platforms are now used “for sharing and participating in a variety of activities [and] represent an increasingly important way for brands to communicate with attractive audience segments” (Ashley and Tuten, 2015: 15).

Social media, which was first used by people to communicate and create relationships is thus now used in the same way by organisations and businesses. It “is one the most effective means used by brands and business owners, for advertising products and staying in touch with their consumers. These strategies ultimately build consumer trust leading to brand loyalty” (Joshi et al, 2022: 92). SMM is therefore not only used to advertise to consumers but it also

“helps to build a strong relationship between customers and brands” (Kaur and Kumar, 2021: 1043) and “deliver unique and valuable brand experiences” (Khan, 2022: 1). SMM is about the creation of an experience around the brand itself or, in other words, “a virtual community where firms, suppliers and customers can communicate, collaborate, co-produce and improve products/services” (Cesaroni and Consoli, 2015: 257). SMM “provides a chance to get closer to the target audience, in a more personal, directed and segmented way, allowing companies to get closer to consumers more effectively and get to know their needs and desires more directly” (Guarda et al, 2021: 37). SMM is about creating a relationship between the brand and its (potential) clients in order to make the specific target audience relate to the organisation itself. This will of course “drive [the consumers] engagement” (Haudi et al: 2022: 962) but will also “ultimately [impact their] choices upon purchasing a product and affects consumer decision making, as consumers always prefer to make safe risk-free decisions which are shaped as a result of a positive brand image” (Joshi et al, 2022: 89).

Interaction between the brand and the consumers as well as the relationship-building is not the only factor that makes SMM strategies successful among brands. Haudi et al (2022: 962) argue that “five main strengths of social media marketing [are] interaction, entertainment, trendiness, customization, and word-of-mouth”. Interaction is therefore one aspect of SMM, however, entertainment (entertaining content), trendiness (content relating to current, trending subjects), customisation (the opportunity for consumers to customise the product to a certain extent) and word-of-mouth (consumers talking to other consumers) are other integral aspects of SMM. If all of those aspects are well executed, it will lead to “generation of word-of-mouth advocacy, development of brand loyalty, increase in brand awareness, closer relationships with customers, management of customer service issues, or educating media and public about company-related issues” (Ananda et al, 2014: 2) but also “potentially drive traffic to brand locations on and offline” (Ashley and Tuten, 2015: 17), which are the main goals of SMM (Ananda et al: 2014).

It should however be noted that social media should not be used as the only channel by brands and organisations that wish to have an effective marketing and communication strategy. Brand should rather use SMM “as an integrated component in a marketing communications campaign, as an ongoing corporate communications channel, and/or as a series of microcampaigns specifically designed for digital exposure” (Ashley and Tuten, 2015: 15). SMM is “an integrated means and set of actions by which a company or organization expects to achieve its marketing objectives and meet the requirements of its target market through the use of social media tools and properties” (Ananda et al, 2015: 5). SMM is therefore a segment of

organisations and businesses' marketing and communications strategies rather than a strategy in itself, it is "the final step of a consistent strategic effort to improve the product/service, the organization and the traditional corporate website" (Constantinides, 2014: 43-44). Brands should therefore have an existing marketing strategy and established online and offline presence before integrating SMM in their strategy.

It is also quite important to understand that each social media platform is different, as explained earlier. As Wahid et al (2022: 106) argue, "SMM is highly contextual" therefore "[t]he architecture, audience, and culture of social media differ from one platform to another" (Wahid et al, 2022: 108). Consequently, the content posted on each platform should be adapted to the platform itself. Haenlein et al (2020: 11-12) explain for example that a "picture that works well in a print advertising or a Facebook campaign may flop on Instagram, and a video that makes a great Instagram story may barely reach any likes on TikTok. [...] [F]irms must realize that these platforms have their own culture, language, idioms, and styles and that those need to be reflected in their content". Understand the specifics of each platform is therefore crucial in establishing an efficient SMM strategy.

SMM is also a great opportunity for brands, businesses, and organisations whose target audience are younger people. As Khan (2022: 1) explains, "[o]pposite to baby boomers and Generation X, Millennials have more regular, persistent contacts with brands and develop loyalty via social media". Generation Z (Gen Z for short) is also a segment of the population that is ever-so growingly present on social media. To get an idea of what age groups are understood by millennials and Gen Z, the European Commission defines both generations as follows: "millennials are people born roughly between 1981 and 1995, and Gen Z are those born approximately between 1995 and 2012" (European Labour Authority: 2023). For instance, Haenlein et al (2020: 6) suggests that "[o]n Instagram, 60% of users in the United States are younger than 34, and on TikTok, nearly 40% of users are teenagers between 10 and 19 years" and that their "media consumption patterns [...] are fundamentally different from the ones seen in older generations". SMM should in theory be adapted to appeal to those younger generations as they are the main users of social media. In that regard, Khan (2022: 2) even explained SMM activities as a tool used to create "a two-way communication [to seek] empathy with young users", reinforcing the idea that SMM mostly target millennials and Gen Z.

This also explains why entertainment and trendiness are such important aspects of SMM. Khan (2022: 2) argues that social medias users are "pleasure-seekers who are being amused and entertained, and who experience enjoyment [...]. It is the play and fun outcome that arose from the social media encounter". In order to be entertaining, content posted on social

media should also be trendy. Trendiness “signifies discussion about the latest and hot news on social media (Khan, 2022: 2). Shen and Bissell (2013: 634) call this aspect of SMM viral marketing: “Viral marketing, also called viral advertising or buzz marketing, refers to the spread of the original message about products or services through interactions among consumers or relevant users”. If the content posted by brands, businesses or organisations is trendy, it will lead to their message becoming viral and consequently, to them gaining more interaction and potential future clients.

### **1.3.2. Video Marketing**

While SMM has definitely taken an immense place in marketing strategies, another branch of marketing has also experienced an increase in recognition: video marketing. Scholars have agreed throughout the years that video marketing has seen a rise in popularity (Teixeira et al.: 2012; Costa-Sánchez: 2017; Quesenberry: 2019; Brock: 2021; Shewale: 2024). In 2019, Quesenberry (2019: 144) predicted that by 2021 82% of the world’s internet traffic would be online videos. As expected, as of the sixteenth of January 2024, “video accounts for 82.5% of global internet traffic” (Shewale: 2024). Furthermore, it is reported that online videos reach an audience of about 92.3% among global internet users (Shewale: 2024). Most importantly, 91% of consumers express a desire for increased video content from brands. The imperative for brands to diversify their marketing strategies by incorporating video content is thus evidently clear.

Video marketing is a type of content marketing, which is a strategic marketing approach defined by Quesenberry (2019: 226) as “focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience—and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action”. Content marketing is a type of owned media, published by the brands themselves to sell their products. Video marketing is a sub-type of content marketing as brands create those videos and post them on the internet themselves. Shewale (2024) argues that video marketing strikes a balance between engagement and conversion, including activities such as boosting brand awareness and website traffic, generating leads, and driving sales. Moreover, Brock (2021: 6) argues that “with the right video [brands] can lend personality to [their] organization and build up a relationship of trust and authority”. Video marketing is consequently seen as a powerful marketing strategy for brands, companies and organisations.

Video marketing can help marketers prevent advertisement avoidance, as “ad avoidance is a major concern for advertisers and broadcasters” (Teixeira et al., 2012: 144). Similarly, Calvert (2008: 208) argues that “advertising is most effective when consumers do not recognize it

as advertising”, which is where video marketing becomes relevant. Costa-Sánchez (2017: 19) explains that video marketing is “more emotional content” than other types of content marketing which makes it easier for customers to identify with the brand but also boosts the message's potential for going viral. Emotions are indeed crucial in marketing as Teixeira et al. (2012) point out in their study on emotion-induced engagement in internet video advertisements. They found that videos that provoked feelings of joy and/or surprise were more likely to retain more of the attention of viewers: “the emotions joy and surprise influence viewer retention directly and indirectly through their influence of attention concentration, which in turn affects viewer retention. Both joy and surprise led to concentration of attention, which reflects the attention-gaining power of advertisements at those moments” (Teixeira et al., 2012: 156). Video marketing is a good way to induce such emotions in consumers and hold their attention, making it easier for viewers to digest those advertisements.

Researchers have identified different types of videos used for video marketing (cf. Table 1). These types include but are not limited to advertising, viral/meme/comedy, tutorials, interviews, and product reviews. The full list features in the table together with a description of each type.

<b>Video Type</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Host video</b>	Videos posted on the brands' website. They intend to give information about the brand, its service and/or products.	(Costa-Sánchez: 2017)
<b>Advertising</b>	Videos with the purpose of making the brand and its products more popular.	(Costa-Sánchez: 2017), (Quesenberry: 2019), (Brock: 2021)
<b>Viral/Meme/Comedy</b>	Sub-category of the advertising category. Advertisements that take advantage of social media and its high-shareability potential.	(Costa-Sánchez: 2017), (Quesenberry: 2019), (Brock: 2021), (Shewale: 2024)
<b>Vlogs/ Influencers</b>	Videos featuring an individual, potentially an influencer, discussing a topic relevant to	(Quesenberry: 2019), (Brock: 2021), (Shewale:2024)

	their field or niche. Vlogs must be posted regularly.	
<b>Tutorials</b>	Instructional videos relating to one's industry/niche. Audiovisual guide for a product.	(Costa-Sánchez: 2017), (Brock: 2021), (Shewale: 2024)
<b>Interviews</b>	Videos intended to build trust and humanise the organisation. It also increases the sense of community. This can involve engaging with either customers or members of the company.	(Costa-Sánchez: 2017) (Brock: 2021)
<b>Events/ Brand identity</b>	Videos of events happening within the company such as anniversaries, Christmas events, client's day, ...	(Costa-Sánchez: 2017), (Brock: 2021)
<b>Presentations</b>	Videos of talks or presentations done for the company.	(Brock: 2021)
<b>Animations</b>	Animated videos. sub-category for advertising, tutorials, or educational videos.	(Brock: 2021)
<b>Music Video</b>	Videos involving music.	(Shewale: 2024)
<b>Live Streams</b>	Videos streamed in real time.	(Quesenberry: 2019), (Shewale: 2024)
<b>Educational</b>	Videos acting as a source of information either related to the company or brand itself or a specific area linked to the organisation and/or its products.	(Costa-Sánchez: 2017), (Shewale: 2024)
<b>Product Reviews</b>	Videos demonstrating how a product works and/or performs.	(Costa-Sánchez: 2017), (Shewale: 2024)

<b>Sports Clips</b>	Videos related to sports, showing sports highlights.	(Shewale: 2024)
<b>Gaming</b>	Videos related to video games, either someone playing a game or highlights.	(Shewale :2024)

**Table 1. Types of videos used for video marketing.**

Although those types of video marketing are the main categories identified by researchers, this does not mean that multiple categories cannot be found in one video or that another category could not emerge with time.

Video marketing is well established in the marketing community as 91% of marketers use videos as a marketing tool (Shewale: 2024). It therefore comes as no surprise that video marketing would be used in SMM strategies as well. Shewale (2024) reports that YouTube is the most used platform when it comes to video marketing, with 90% of marketers posting their videos on the platform. Its success among marketers comes from the fact that YouTube videos can then be shared on other social media networks such as Twitter and Facebook (Quesenberry, 2019: 145). Other popular platforms where marketers post videos include Facebook (86%), Instagram (79%), LinkedIn (79%), Twitter (54%) and TikTok (35%) (Shewale: 2024). It has also been reported that 90% of consumers consume video content using mobile devices (Shewale: 2024). Another interesting statistic to look at is the fact that almost half of all internet users search for videos related to a product they want to buy before visiting a store and making a purchase (Shewale: 2024). It has therefore become crucial for brands to post videos on their social media accounts to meet the expectations of potential clients.

With the rise of video marketing on social media platforms, short video marketing appeared in its turn. Wang (2021: 1) defines short videos as “a new type of video whose video length is counted in seconds, which mainly relies on mobile intelligent terminals to achieve fast shooting and beautification editing and can be shared and seamlessly docked in real time on social media platforms”. According to Han (2022: 196), “short video platforms are one of the leading media for new media marketing”. This is confirmed by the fact that “66% of consumers report short-form videos as the most engaging content” (Shewale: 2024). Short videos marketing is consequently successful and convenient not only for marketers and brands but for consumers as well, as Han (2022: 196) argues: “for merchants, this new media marketing method takes less time, the short video generation method is simple, and the marketing cost can be controlled. For the audience, the length of the video is only 15 seconds, and the time to receive the video information is short, which will not cause a time burden, and can also have an

entertainment effect”. The attractiveness of short videos for marketing purposes is therefore undeniable and marketers should adapt their strategies to include them, especially if they want to reach younger audiences.

The ever-growing buying power of the youth must indeed be considered (Calvert 2008: 206). If brands want to target younger people and reach them, using social media is mandatory. Hazari and Sethna (2022: 2) explain that “Gen Z is expected to become the largest generation of consumers in the world” which makes them “a rich source of engagement for marketing messages”. Catering to younger audiences has become a necessity for brands. Moreover, the video consumption of teenagers and young adults is significant: “teenagers under the age of 18 watch an average of 2.5 hours of mobile videos per week, and the time to watch online videos is 1.2 hours; Young people aged 18-24 watch mobile videos for an average of 4.7 hours per week” (Wang, 2021: 1). Companies and organisations wanting to appeal to teenagers and young adults consequently need to choose which platform to post on according to their chosen target audiences. For example, Quesenberry (2019: 147) reports that Instagram is especially popular among younger people. In 2020 the platform introduced a new feature: Instagram Reels (Menon: 2022). This new feature follows the new-found success of short videos on social media platforms. Menon (2022: 2) explains that “Instagram Reels have many audio-video editing features and effects controls, and the viewers can see and navigate through the videos by swiping up”. YouTube also introduced “YouTube shorts” which allows users to post short videos on the platform and to swipe up from one video to the other.

However, these features were introduced only after TikTok, the new rising social media platform made vertical short videos popular (Menon: 2022). Menon (2022: 2) even goes as far as saying that those new features on Instagram and YouTube could be seen as “visibly recycled from [TikTok]”, sometimes pushing people to publish “their Tik Tok videos on Reels” (Menon, 2022: 2). Despite it being the last popular platform to post videos for marketing purposes (Shewale 2024), TikTok has undeniably become a force in SMM and especially short video marketing (Han, 2022: 195).

## **1.4. TikTok**

### **1.4.1 History of the app**

According to Haenlein et al, (2020: 7), “the most important social media sites [were] Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok”. In January 2023, the most popular social media platforms were Facebook (2,958 million users), Youtube (2,514 million users), Whatsapp and Instagram (both with 2,000 million users), Wechat (1,309 million users) and TikTok (1,051

million users) (Statista). It is also arguable that TikTok is one of the most popular social media platforms for young people, as most TikTok users are in their 20s (Haenlein et al: 2020). As the statistics found on the website Khoros confirm, in 2022, 27.37% of TikTok's users were aged 13–17, 39.91% of TikTok's users were aged 18–24, and 25.11% of TikTok's users were aged 25–34 (Khoros 2022: no page). In comparison, the biggest age group for Facebook and Instagram are people aged between 25 and 34 with 32% for Instagram and 31% for Facebook (Zhou 2023: no page). While it is undeniable that social media platforms are mostly used by younger generations, Tiktok is arguably the most popular one among young people.

One can therefore wonder about the reasons for such popularity, as TikTok is a relatively new platform when compared to Facebook and Instagram. TikTok was launched in 2016 by ByteDance (Hayakal: 2022; Guarda et al: 2021; Haenlein et al: 2020). This company also owns Douyin, the official TikTok counterpart in China (Haenlein et al: 2020; Guarda et al: 2021). The Tiktok app “is currently available in 154 countries and available in 75 different languages, being in the top 25 in 135 of those countries” (Guarda et al, 2021: 39). The growth of TikTok has been outstanding ever since its launch. Wahid et al (2023: 108) state that “[i]ts number of global monthly active users increased by 45% within one year, from 689 million in 2020 to more than 1 billion in 2021[.] Engagement also grew 15 times between 2017 and 2019, and confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic intensified the consumption of TikTok content”. Guarda et al (2021: 38) adds that in October 2018, TikTok “was the most downloaded photo and video app in the Apple store worldwide”. In April 2020, TikTok was the most popular social media overall (Guarda et al: 2021). TikTok gained “more users during March 2020 than Instagram gained in a full quarter in 2019, making it the world's fastest growing social media platform” (Hayakal, 2022: 3). This is quite surprising because, as of 2021, Instagram was considered “the most popular social media platform, particularly for businesses and entrepreneurs” (Akbar, 2021: 43). It is therefore impossible to ignore the social force that TikTok has become, as Wahid et al (2023: 108) argue: “TikTok has established itself as a key player in the social media game”.

#### **1.4.2. How does TikTok work?**

One of the main reasons for TikTok's success is how different it is from the other social networks. First of all, TikTok is a video based social media platform, while Instagram and Facebook are more photo focused. According to Guarda et al (2021: 42),

TikTok offers its users something that Instagram does not. As the focus of the network is to create short videos to be shared with followers and other users, the platform allows the person to use all their creativity. Whether through filters or challenges, TikTok also manages to hold

the attention of its community, which spends the day searching and watching the most different types of content.

Even though Instagram allows users to post videos, especially through the Reels feature, “many users [...] [find] it difficult to be familiar with the Reels interface” (Menon 2022: 2) and tend to prefer posting videos on TikTok or upload videos taken and edited on TikTok onto Instagram Reels (Menon: 2022). Regarding Facebook, Guarda et al (2021: 42) argue that “[d]espite being constantly evolving, [Facebook] feels threatened by TikTok [...] because the network has a simplicity and is able to make videos go viral in minutes. In addition, the short video platform is able to reach an audience that Facebook cannot attract interest in”. Tiktok therefore offers particular features that neither Facebook nor Instagram, two of the most popular social media platforms, can offer.

The videos on TikTok are based mainly “on some form of the sound piece, which can represent snippets from songs, dialogue pieces from movies or TV shows, or sound elements produced and uploaded by other users” (Haenlein et al, 2020: 23). It can therefore be argued that TikTok is a sound-based app. Hashtags are also used to search specific topics and make one’s video grow within the community who share similar interests. For example, people who like to make TikTok videos about books will use the hashtag #booktok in order to make their videos appear in the feed of people who share the same interest.

The way TikTok works is also different from other social media platforms. There are two main home pages on TikTok. The “Following” page allows TikTok users to see the videos posted by the people they follow. The “For you page” is where “TikTok sends personalized recommendations to each of its users” (Guarda et al, 2021: 38). The “For you page” is fuelled by “artificial intelligence algorithms, which decide which content a user sees on his or her feed” (Haenlein et al, 2020: 19). Quesenberry (2019: 114) defines an algorithm as follows: “an algorithm is a formula or set of steps used for solving a problem such as how to rank content to decide what is seen in social media feeds”. Most of the videos that are pushed in this feed by TikTok’s algorithm are videos that use trendy sounds and hashtags, but TikTok’s algorithm also considers what the user likes, shares, comments, and watches to push videos that match their interests, as Huang et al. (2023: 2) explains: “Through the algorithm promotion mode of big data analysis, it will be able to accurately predict consumers' reading preferences and consumption needs according to their reading habits in Tik Tok short video, so as to effectively push related content and achieve accurate promotion of brand information”. However, this also means that “[i]n most cases, whether a given video becomes successful [...] cannot be predicted” (Haenlein et al, 2020: 21). For that reason, it can also be argued that the number of

followers on TikTok does not have the same impact and importance as the number of followers on Instagram or the number of likes on Facebook, it is the algorithm that decides what each user sees on their “For you page” and a post that goes viral does not ensure that the following video from the same creator, whatever the number of followers may be, will also be successful.

Regarding the kind of content found on TikTok, all the videos used in video marketing listed in Table 1 can also be found on TikTok. The particularity of TikTok, as mentioned above is that it combines video marketing strategies and the ideal platform to post short videos to, making it one of the most successful social media platforms for social media video marketing. However, companies wishing to use TikTok in their SMM strategies must establish a clear brand positioning on their page in order to have the most successful use of the app possible. As Huang (2023: 3) argues: “looking at TikTok mini-videos with high praise rate, frequent reprints and a large number of comments, it is not difficult to see their common features, that is, clear positioning, outstanding features, rich originality, etc., which can usually be widely discussed by people, so they are easily pushed to the hot spots in Tik Tok and become the key topics for discussion”. In other words, becoming successful on Tiktok as a brand means adapting to the platform, showing originality and a particularly clear brand positioning to make the brand recognisable among all the others.

### **1.5. Skincare and social media**

Beauty, and skincare products in particular, have gained enormous popularity on social media as of recently. As Kaur and Kumar (2021: 1039) explain “[b]efore the advent of social media, this industry mostly relied on campaigns and celebrity advertisements to attract customers. A massive transformation from traditional marketing to social media marketing is observed in the 21st century”. Following the sudden increase of SMM during the COVID-19 pandemic, “there has [also] been considerable interest in the use of social media in medicine, especially in the fields of dermatology, aesthetics and skincare” (Hayakal, 2022: 2). Joshi et al (2022: 91) explain that

the beauty industry although not as negatively impacted compared to the other industries, has also faced its own set of obstacles and as a result there is now a rapid shift to the digital world and marketing. Due to ongoing lockdowns, people [have been] stuck indoors and have a lot more free time compared to pre-pandemic times. This has caused a shift in the beauty priorities from applying a full face of makeup to spending more time caring for their skin and adapting new skin care routines.

As a result of this growth in interest for beauty product during past lockdowns, an ever-growing curiosity for skincare has surged on social media platforms, including TikTok as

“social media is quickly becoming the foremost tool for gathering and sharing information, social and professional networking, and communication regarding health topics” (Joshi et al, 2022: 93). A great number of social media platforms users use those networks to educate themselves about health and consequently, skincare. Hayakal (2022: 3) explains that “for example, ‘#acne’ searches more than doubled from 3 billion to 6.7 billion from September 2020 to February 2021 and has reached 26.9 billion views [in 2022]”.

The information users find on social media “impacts [their] choices when it comes to making decisions related to purchasing a certain skincare product” (Joshi et al, 2022: 89). Moreover, as Joshi et al (2022: 92) argue, “[s]ocial media has become the platform of choice for people seeking immediate access to information. They have become so omnipresent and compelling that many people are using them to research health care providers and communicate with them about their issues”. Joshi et al (2022: 91) even discuss the fact that social media applications have become platforms “where users form tight knit communities where they connect, share information and even provide emotional support”. Social networks are therefore not only used to look for information about a certain product, but also to communicate about it with other users, ask for advice and recommendation regarding a particular skin problem and even talking directly with dermatologists or skin experts. Haykal (2022: 2) adds that “[p]eople are more likely to seek a dermatologist or a cosmetic physician who is active on social media”.

This is why “those capable of using this tool efficiently stand to benefit significantly” (Joshi et al, 2022: 86). This is even more relevant when looking at TikTok because of its algorithm. TikTok’s algorithm shows users videos related to their interests, recent searches, and viewings. “[T]his algorithm [therefore] eases the promotion of dermatologists' videos among skincare videos” (Joshi et al, 2022: 87). It is thus profitable for skincare businesses to be present on TikTok and use sounds and hashtags that are currently popular and going viral on the platform to boost their own videos. Understanding the way TikTok works for skincare brands is primordial, as the subject is extremely popular right now. According to Joshi et al (2022: 91), “the most frequent skincare concerns being searched and discussed on social media platforms being acne, blackheads, eyebags, skin redness, dry skin and the various ways to counteract them”. Videos on TikTok “talk about medical information, advice, dermatologic treatments, awareness messages, prevention highlights, tips, skincare routines, products, trends, aesthetic procedures, demonstrations and reviews” (Hayakal 2022, 3). If users search those keywords on TikTok, they are thus more likely to come across more and more videos on the subject and businesses that adapt according to

the trends will see their videos become more and more popular, especially skincare business as the subject is extremely popular at the moment.

## **1.6 Previous research on beauty and dermatology brands on social media**

Empirical research has been conducted about social media content by beauty and dermatology brands. However, to my knowledge, none have analysed the type of content posted on TikTok by skincare brands while comparing high-end and budget-friendly brands. The following subsections review previous studies relating to beauty, skincare, dermatology, and social media and highlight key insights from the research that are particularly relevant within the framework of the empirical investigation conducted as part of this dissertation.

### **1.6.1 “Social Media, Social Me: A Content Analysis of Beauty Companies’ Use of Facebook in Marketing and Branding”, Shen Bin and Kimberly Bissell, 2013.**

Shen and Bissell’s research, although focusing on the use of Facebook for marketing purposes rather than TikTok, gives highly useful insight into the different type of content that might be posted by beauty companies in social media. The purpose of their study was to understand how beauty brands used social media, and especially Facebook “to analyze the way beauty companies use Facebook to engage and interact with their fans, consumers, and clients” (Shen and Bissell 2013: 630). They based their study on the following six brands: Estée Lauser, MAC Cosmetics, Clinique, L’Oréal, Maybelline and CoverGirl.

The analysis was conducted in a span of nine months and the data collected was based on content analysis of each brand’s Facebook page. To have a reasonable amount of data, Shen and Bissel chose to only select posts published in the first fourteen days of each month between January 2011 and September 2011. A total of eighteen weeks of content was therefore analysed. They chose to exclude posts that were about something else than makeup (such as hair products, skincare, or body moisturizer, ...). They additionally divided the brands into two categories: High-end brands and department stores brands. Shen and Bissell identified five different categories of post content: event, product, promotion, entertainment and other. They found out that most of the posts for all six brands fitted in the “entertainment” category, and that the posts that generated the most interactions were interactive ones, surveys in particular.

### **1.6.2 “Overview of TikTok’s most viewed dermatologic content and assessment of its reliability”, Villa-Ruiz et al., 2020**

This study conducted by Villa-Ruiz et al. focuses on the type of content that is the most viewed on TikTok regarding dermatology. While the research does not focus on skin-care products, it does analyse a related topic: dermatology. As mentioned above, dermatology has gained a lot of popularity on social media and especially TikTok. It is therefore relevant to look at such research as skin care can be considered a sub-theme of dermatology. Villa-Ruiz et al. used information from the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey to make a list of the twenty most common skin conditions and searched for these conditions as hashtags on TikTok. They then selected the eight conditions with the most videos, and for each one, identified the top 25 videos based on engagement (views, likes, comments, and shares). Videos that were not about dermatology, paid advertisements, and videos in languages other than English were excluded. They analysed a total of 171 videos for this study.

Their study is relevant to this dissertation in the view of the type of content posted on TikTok related to dermatology that they identified. Villa-Ruiz et al. discovered eight different types of content categories (in order of popularity): patient experience/testimony, education, clinical demonstration/live procedure, product review/nonpaid advertisement, beauty/skin care tip, patient support, self-promotion, and humour/entertainment. They focused on the “education” category in order to qualify the reliability of such videos and of the content creators that posted them by doing some background research on the creators and having board-certified dermatologists review the videos.

### **1.6.3 “Dermatology on TikTok: Analysis of content and creators”, Nguyen et al., 2021**

Nguyen et al.’s research is quite similar to Villa-Ruiz et al.’s study as it also analyses dermatology content posted on TikTok. Unsurprisingly, their research method is also comparable: they selected the top 10 dermatologic diagnoses and procedures and searched for them in the form of hashtags on TikTok. They then selected the first 40 videos for each concern. No further detail is given about possibly excluded videos. Next, Nguyen et al. established three categories in which they classified the videos: “creator (health care professional [HCP], personal, business, professional organization), content (education, promotional, patient experience, entertainment), and impact (views, likes, comments, shares)” (488). The number of videos analysed is also considerable as they examined a total of 544 videos. Their results regarding the type of content somewhat differ from Villa-Ruiz et al.’s

findings: the most popular content category is “educational” and “entertainment” is the second most popular, while it was the least popular in Villa-Ruiz et al.’s research. “Dermatologic procedures” is the least popular content category.

#### **1.6.4 “Developing Promotion Strategy on Instagram for Lip Glaze Launch by Skincrave Company”, Nawwal Maghfirah and Anisa Rahmani Qastharin, 2022**

Maghfirah and Qastharin's study focuses on the digital marketing strategy employed on Instagram during the launch of a product from a specific brand: the lip glaze by SkinCrave. This research is interesting in the context of this dissertation as it studies the marketing strategy of a skincare brand on Instagram. Even though this dissertation focuses on TikTok, a comparison with Instagram will also be made. Moreover, the fact that Maghfirah and Qastharin analyse the content of a skincare brand is entirely relevant to the research.

Maghfirah and Qastharin interviewed participants that met several criteria: people between 20 and 25 years old who suffer from sensitive skin. The participants also had to live in urban areas and be from the upper middle-class. Finally, they had to actively follow skincare brands on Instagram. The interviews focused on social customer insight and experience strategy. The results relevant to this dissertation related to the type of content that interests the interviewees and therefore, young (Gen Z) users of social media. The types of content identified includes informative content (showcase, ingredients explanation, product comparison), product demonstration (detailed product showcase, product usage tutorial, product demonstration on different skin), user generated content (brand community) and testimonials (before and after content, review from customers). Their study does regrettably not classify the categories from most to least popular as the aim was only to understand the users’ experience of SkinCrave’s marketing strategy on Instagram.

#### **1.6.5 “What Makes Luxury Brands Win the Hearts of Gen Z on TikTok? An Exploratory Study”, Yan-bo et al., 2022**

Yan-bo et al.’s research analyses the content posted by luxury fashion brands on TikTok and their campaign strategies used to attract Gen Z customers. Their study is pertinent for this dissertation as it gives valuable insight into the type of content that luxury brands might post on TikTok. Even if the study does not focus on skincare, it is still quite interesting to understand the posting patterns of luxury brands on TikTok, in particular those made to attract Gen Z users, highlighting the different marketing opportunities available to brands on the platform. Their main research questions try to identify the marketing

strategies used to attract young users but also how those fashion luxury brands differentiate themselves on the platform.

For their research, Yan-bo et al. selected four luxury brands: Louis Vuitton, Ralph Lauren, Gucci, and Burberry. No indication is given regarding how many videos they analysed or the selection of those brands. After their analyses, Yan-bo et al. identify five primary categories of content and campaign strategies. The different content strategies are “Brand image and fashion show”, “Original music”, “Entertainment and/or Discovery”, “Social Responsibility” and “Opening all comments”. The identified campaign strategies are “Using branded hashtags”, “Crafting challenges to engage Gen Z”, “Endorsing other challenges”, “Collaborating with influencers” and “Endorsing ‘new talent’ (existing followers less than 2000)”. All those strategies aim to engage with Gen Z users of TikTok and testify of an effort made by fashion luxury brands to adapt their marketing strategies to the platform.

#### **1.6.6 “Evaluating the Content and Quality of the Top 50 #Cosmetidermatology Instagram Posts”, Pecora et al., 2024**

This study, conducted by Pecora et al. does not focus on the type of content related to dermatology posted on social media (especially Instagram) but rather their quality. However, to achieve their research goal, they also divided the content that they found on Instagram into different categories. The posted videos collected by Pecora et al. were chosen by searching for the hashtag #cosmetidermatology on Instagram. They then selected the first 50 Instagram posts using the hashtag. Pecora et al. then analysed the posts to identify different types of content, types of post, the profession and qualifications of the post creator and the number of likes, comments, and followers.

What is of interest for this dissertation is the type of content that they identified: “Education about cosmetic dermatology”, “Skincare/beauty recommendations from physician and nonphysician”, “Product advertisement”, “Patient testimonials”, and “Posts unrelated to cosmetic dermatology”. The most popular category was the educational category, closely followed by product advertisement while the least popular category related to the skincare/beauty recommendations from physicians.

#### **1.6.7 “How Luxury Fashion Brands Leverage TikTok to Captivate Young Consumers: An Exploratory Investigation Using Video Analytics”, Yan-bo et al., 2024**

Yan-bo et al.’s research is remarkably similar to their 2022 study on luxury brands and TikTok. The purpose of their study is also to understand how fashion luxury brands use

TikTok to attract young customers. In this context, three research questions were formulated: whether luxury fashion brands employ customised strategies on TikTok, what type of content they share on the platform, and what methods they use to interact with their TikTok audience. These questions are clearly pertinent to this dissertation.

Even though the selected brands are the same as in their previous paper (Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Burberry, and Ralph Lauren), their research is much more precise than their first study regarding their selection process and study method. They selected those four brands following comprehensive research, considering three key dimensions: their rankings in luxury brand assessments, their origin, and their social media performance based on existing academic literature. Two other important selection criteria were brands that did not have the same country of origin and that were not from the same luxury corporation. They also identified three Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to estimate the overall performance of each brand they selected.

The data that they used in their research was collected in a period of six months, from March 17 to August 5, 2022. Yan-bo et al. focused on the brands' official TikTok pages but also on other content endorsed by the brands as well as hashtags linked to the brands. They identified several marketing strategies that might be used by the luxury brands on their TikTok: distinctive technical functions (using hashtags and linking their official TikTok accounts to other social media platforms), crafting high-quality content (use of original sound, storytelling, showcasing commitment to social responsibility, and behind the scenes footage), collaborating with influencers, and maintaining an exclusive brand image (consistent communication on brand image).

### **1.7.8 Conclusion**

While several studies have delved into the utilisation of social media by beauty and fashion brands, none have specifically focused on skincare brands and their engagement on TikTok. Although a limited number of studies have examined the usage of the platform by fashion luxury brands, there is a notable absence of research encompassing both luxury/high-end skincare brands. No research has conducted a comparative analysis of TikTok utilisation between high-end and affordable skincare brands. This dissertation sets out to fill this research gap. The seven studies examined in this section will serve as a basis to identify a framework of potential content categories for short videos on TikTok (cf. section 2.2.3 below). This theoretical framework as well as Table 1 will serve as the foundation for the research methodology in this dissertation.

## **2. Data and Method**

This study will focus on owned media and especially content marketing in the form of short videos posted on TikTok. In other words, this study will analyse media posted directly by the brands themselves on their main TikTok accounts. The purpose of this study is to determine possible motivations as well as habits of different skincare brands on TikTok. To try to understand the use of TikTok by those brands, two research questions will first be asked. Next, four hypotheses will be formulated to try to answer the two research questions. Lastly, the chosen brands will be presented, and the data collection method will be explained.

### **2.1. Research questions and hypotheses.**

#### **2.1.1. Research questions**

The questions this dissertation is going to try to answer are the following: How do high-end skincare products companies use TikTok in comparison to budget-friendly skincare product companies and if a difference in use appears, what can explain this difference? The following question will also be addressed: Why would those two types of skincare brands establish themselves on TikTok?

#### **2.1.2. Hypotheses**

##### **2.1.2.1. How do high-end skincare products companies use TikTok in comparison to budget-friendly skincare product companies and, if a difference in use appears, what can explain this difference?**

Each studied brand has a specific brand image to maintain. Consequently, it can be argued that the content will automatically be a different type of content depending on the brand image itself. The content posted on social media is directly related to the brand image building of the brand. It is not unreasonable to assume that high-end companies will have a more classic approach (resembling advertisement one can see on TV or on other social media platforms) to their content in comparison to budget-friendly companies who may go for a more fun, young and original approach to their content on TikTok.

Parisi (2020: no page) explains that luxury brands, such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci or Dior “frequently post small snippets of marketing campaigns that premiered elsewhere and were not designed for TikTok”. She adds that “luxury content tends to be slick, highly produced and tightly controlled” (no page). On the other hand, fast fashion brands such as “Fashion Nova” publish more casual videos, which are more effective on TikTok, as Parisi explains: “The most effective campaigns on TikTok tend to be informal, organic and fun” (no page). This implies that budget-friendly companies are more likely to accommodate their content to the specific

functionalities of TikTok and not just repost their already existing campaigns on the platform. To verify that, a comparison with what has been posted on their brands' Instagram page will be done, as “cross-platform studies can also broaden our understanding of platform-specific [...] use and its effects” (Hase et al. 2023: 1500). Instagram will be used for comparison because the two platforms have similar features, as Hase et al (2023: 1502-3) explain:

Instagram and TikTok are characterized by higher levels of visibility. Both mainly revolve around images/videos (Instagram) or videos (TikTok). In addition, algorithmic curation is similarly high or even higher: TikTok, for instance, does not even offer chronologically sorted feeds. Since linking in posts is restricted, both platforms afford less hypertextuality. Users can partly circumvent this, for instance via Instagram Stories or links in bios. Both platforms also afford less interactivity: Audiences can comment on or like posts, but public sharing of such is more restricted; in contrast to Facebook Reactions, both platforms do not offer emoticons to react towards regular posts.

The following hypothesis can be suggested in view of what was mentioned above:

**H1:** Budget-friendly companies use TikTok in a more specific way than high-end companies who are more likely to post their already existing campaigns (specifically those from Instagram) without specifically adapting to the new platform itself.

It can be argued that high-end brands will try to target older generations while affordable brands will try to focus more on millennials and Gen Z costumers. This hypothesis can be formulated based on the fact that a younger audience is likely to have less budget to invest in such products and will therefore prefer to turn to budget-friendly brands. On the other hand, older millennials and older generations in general are more likely to be able to pay more and therefore be clients from high-end brands. This suggests that budget-friendly brands may try to make themselves appear younger and more fun by using viral trends for their own products, in order to appeal to millennials and Gen Z. High-end brands will, by contrast, tend to build an image based on luxury, experience, quality, and exclusivity. As Granot et al. argue, “luxury brands market [...] to niche customers by striving to maintain their brand’s exclusive image” (2013: 31). Moreover, “consumers older than 55 tend to have the most positive attitudes toward luxury and associate luxury with elegance” (Granot et al. 2013: 32). The content is expected be adapted to reach different audiences, as those different audiences have different expectations.

**H2:** The type of content is adapted to the target audience of each brand and the image they want to reflect; while high-end brands will target older audiences by building a luxury image, budget-

friendly brands will target younger audiences by presenting themselves as more accessible and “cool”.

#### **2.1.2.2. Why would those two types of skincare brands establish themselves on TikTok?**

The first obvious reason would be to stay up to date with new technological and social progress. TikTok is the newest social network that is being used more and more in the world, as it has been argued in previous sections. It is therefore logical that brands would want to expand their reach by joining the new trending platform.

**H3:** Skincare brands join TikTok to stay up to date and to try to reach the broadest audience possible.

Moreover, TikTok is notably popular among the younger generations, i.e., among millennials and Gen Z. Brands could therefore want to be present on TikTok to reach to younger audiences and bring new clients. However, there must be a nuance here: this might be less true for high-end brands whose target audience is probably older generations, as suggested above. Notwithstanding this fact, high-end brands could also be trying to reach a broader and/or younger audience through TikTok. More and more brands are establishing a presence on TikTok in order to target a new group of people: Gen Z (Parisi 2020; Yan-bo et al. 2022; Yan-bo et al. 2024). This statement is also true for luxury brands. For instance, out of the thirty most influential fashion luxury brands on social media, 26 of them have a TikTok account (Visibrain 2023: 4). According to Yan-bo et al. (2024: 1), “luxury brands are renowned for catering to royalty, celebrities, and social figures, embodying exclusivity, uniqueness, refinement, elitism, heritage, craftsmanship, premium price, and super quality”. However, in recent years Gen Z has proven to have an incredible purchasing power for luxury brands. TikTok has therefore become the ideal social media platform to reach those younger audiences, even for luxury brands (Yan-bo et al. 2022; Yan-bo et al. 2024). As it has been argued before, SMM is also used to create an experience for the customer. Using TikTok could therefore be another way of creating those experiences and consequently reach younger and/or new audiences who would relate to the brand, for both affordable and high-end brands.

## **2.2. Data and method**

This section will begin with an explanation of the selection criteria for the eight studied brands, accompanied by a short presentation for each company and their social media accounts.

All the information provided on the brands can be found on their official website page and their TikTok and Instagram accounts<sup>1</sup>. The prices cited in the presentation are in euro and come from the European version of each brand's website. If no European version of the official website is available, the prices are taken from official European retailers. Next, a thorough explanation and detailed breakdown of the data collection and research method will be provided, based on the previously established theoretical framework.

### **2.2.1 Selection of the brands**

The brands that will be studied have to meet to the following criteria:

- 1) Have a verified (official) TikTok account.
- 2) Have a verified (official) Instagram account.
- 3) Both accounts on TikTok and Instagram must be active.
- 4) Be marketed in the English-speaking world i.e., have their account posting exclusively in English or have an account dedicated to an English-speaking country such as the United-States or the United-Kingdom.
- 5) If they also do makeup and other products, and/or if they post about other subjects than skincare, this content will be excluded from the analysis.

The first two criteria have been established as a necessity as the research will analyse the brands' TikTok accounts and compare them to what has been posted on their Instagram accounts. The accounts need to be verified/official to make sure that the content posted on their pages is indeed created and published by the brands themselves. Naturally, accounts on both must be active to have enough content for the analyses as well as making relevant comparisons. The brands also need to be marketed to the English-speaking world because this dissertation is written in English. It therefore facilitates the research. Moreover, it also excludes content that might be targeted at a specific culture or group of people. Finally, videos about other products than skincare products will be excluded as they are not relevant to this study. As many skincare brands can fit those criteria, extensive research on the internet has been undertaken to find the brands that answered the most to those criteria for both high-end/luxury skincare brands and budget-friendly/affordable brands<sup>2</sup>. Following this research, eight brands have been selected. The four high-end brands are Estée Lauder, La Meer, Sisley Paris and Tatcha and the four budget-friendly brands include The Ordinary, The INKEY list, COSRX and Neutrogena.

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<sup>1</sup> All data from the brands' TikTok and Instagram account have been collected during the month of January 2024. This data is subject to changes as time passes.

<sup>2</sup> Websites specialised in women's fashion and beauty such as [www.vogue.com](http://www.vogue.com), [www.businessinsider.com](http://www.businessinsider.com), [www.instyle.com](http://www.instyle.com), [www.glamour.com](http://www.glamour.com), [www.elle.com](http://www.elle.com), [www.byrdie.com](http://www.byrdie.com), and [www.whowhatwear.com](http://www.whowhatwear.com) have been researched.

### 2.2.1.1 High-end brands:

#### 1) Estée Lauder:

Estée Lauder is a makeup, skin care, hair care, and fragrance brand under the Estée Lauder Companies Inc. The brand is globally recognized for manufacturing, marketing, and selling high-quality skincare, makeup, fragrance, and hair care products in 150 countries around the world. The brand was founded in 1946 in New-York and is the flagship brand of the Estée Lauder Companies Inc. The company describes their product as innovative, sophisticated, high-performance, and iconic. They also claim to have a “deep understanding of women’s needs and desires”. Their key product is the Advanced Night Repair Serum (€60 for 20ml - €210 for 115ml), of which 22 bottles were sold every minute in 2019. They gather a total of more than 62 million followers across different media social platforms. Their TikTok account (@esteelauder) counts 178,3K followers and 886,3K likes across all their TikTok videos. Their Instagram account (@esteelauder) counts 4,5 million followers. Both accounts are active and post exclusively in English. Their skin care products vary in price from €10 (for the mini version of a lotion) to €490 (for a moisturising cream).

#### 2) La Mer :

La Mer is a subsidiary brand of the Estée Lauder Companies Inc. The brand was created by Dr. Max Huber in California; he led 6,000 experiments for 12 years to create the perfect hydrating cream, based on a fermentation process and ingredients of the sea: Crème de la Mer, their flagship product (€105 for 15ml - €2650 for 500ml). The brand was founded in 1965 and purchased by Estée Lauder in 1991, after the death of Dr. Max Huber. Their TikTok account (@lamer) gathers a total of 24,1K followers and 74,9K likes across all their TikTok videos. Their Instagram account (@lamer) counts 1,1 million followers. Both accounts are active and post exclusively in English. Their skin care products vary in price from €35 (for the small version of a cleanser) to €730 (for a serum).

#### 3) Sisley Paris:

Sisley Paris is a French family business which describes itself as innovative, with great quality products, and recognised natural ingredients. Sisley Paris was created in 1976 by Isabelle and Hubert d’Orano. They launched their key product the “Crème Réparatrice” (€135 for 40ml – €170.5 for 50ml) in 1980. Nowadays, the company is still run by the same family, as their children are the heads of Sisley Paris. They are present in 100 countries and have 7694 shops around the world. Their TikTok account (@sisleyparisofficial) gathers a total of 199,1K

followers and 672,2K likes across all their TikTok videos. Their Instagram account (@sisley-parisofficial) counts 635K followers. Both accounts are active. Despite being based in Paris (France), the brand posts exclusively in English both on TikTok and Instagram. Their skincare products vary in price from €37.5 (for a face brush) to €1,191 (for a set of three products).

#### 4) Tatcha

Tatcha was founded by Vicky Tsai in San Fransisco in 2009, after a trip to Kyoto, Japan, inspired her to begin a learning journey about natural Japanese ingredients. The products are developed in Tokyo, Japan where scientists find ways to combine Japanese traditional botanicals with proven clinical ingredients. Their purpose is to “bring [...] harmony from skin to soul”. Their best-seller is the Dewy Skin Cream (€29 for 10ml – €112 for 75ml). Their TikTok account (@tatcha) gathers a total of 93,7K followers and 1,7 million likes across all their TikTok videos. Their Instagram account (@tatcha) counts 1,2 million followers. Both accounts are active and post exclusively in English. Their skincare products vary in price from €17.50 (for blotting papers) to €123 (for an essence).

<b>Brand</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>TikTok fol- lowers</b>	<b>TikTok likes</b>	<b>Instagram followers</b>	<b>Price range</b>
Estée Lauder	New-York, USA	178,3K	886,3K	4,5M	€10 – €490
La Mer	California, USA	24,1K	74,9K	1,1M	€35 – €730
Sisley Paris	Paris, France	199,1K	672,2K	635K	€37.5 – €1,191
Tatcha	San Fran- cisco, USA	93,7K	1,7M	1,2M	€17.5 – €123

**Table 2. data summary for high-end brands’ TikTok and Instagram accounts.**

### **2.2.1.2 Budget-friendly brands:**

#### 5) The Ordinary: @theordinary on TikTok

The ordinary is part of DECIEM, an umbrella of brands owned by The Estée Lauder Companies Inc. The brand was founded in Toronto in 2016 and emphasises quality products and treatments that use effective clinical technologies at a low price point. The brand aspires to bring skin care innovation based on more familiar technologies to the market, while promoting

integrity. Their most popular product is the Glycolic Acid 7% Exfoliating Toner (€9.30 for 100ml – €13.90 for 240ml). Their TikTok account (@theordinary) gathers a total of 1,4 million followers and 18,1 million likes across all their TikTok videos. Their Instagram account (@theordinary) counts 2,2 million followers. Both accounts are active and post exclusively in English. Finally, their products vary in price from €5 (for a serum) to €158 (for set of six products).

6) The INKEY list: @theinkeylist on TikTok

The INKEY List was founded in 2018 by Colette Laxton and Mark Curry and is a UK-based company. The founders believe that knowledge, especially about skin care, leads to better decisions and better product choices. The brand presents itself as a help for the customer, to better understand skincare and all the ingredients. Their values include knowledge, quality and efficacy, transparency, and equality. Their most popular product is the Hyaluronic Acid Serum (€10 for 30 ml). Their TikTok account (@theinkeylist) gathers a total of 497,6K followers and 11,7 million likes across all their TikTok videos. Their Instagram (@theinkeylist) counts 576K followers. Both accounts are active and post exclusively in English. Their products vary in price from €7.50 (for mini cleansing balm) to €65.88 (for a bundle of six products).

7) COSRX: @cosrx\_official on TikTok

COSRX was founded by Jeon Sanghoon in South-Korea in 2013. The brand focuses primarily on customers' feedback and individual experience to develop products that will help them gain self-confidence. The brand is available in 146 countries and has won a total of 119 Global Beauty Awards from 2014 to 2021. Their best-selling product is the Advanced Snail 96 Mucin Power Essence (€20.99 for 100ml). Their TikTok account (@cosrx\_official) gathers a total of 214,3K followers and a total of 1,4 million likes across all their TikTok videos. Their Instagram account (@cosrx) counts 574K followers. Both accounts are active and post exclusively in English, despite COSRX being founded in South Korea. Their products vary in price from €3.50 (for a sheet mask) to €29.99 (for toner pads).

8) Neutrogena: @neutrogena\_us on TikTok

Neutrogena was founded by Emanuel Stolaroff in the US in 1930 by. The brand has been owned by Johnson & Johnson since 1994. The brand emphasises their inclusivity by presenting themselves as the brand “for people with skin”. Neutrogena wants to help people understand skin care and their skin needs. Their main values are advocacy, education, expertise, and transparency. Their best-selling product is the Hydro Boost Water Gel with Hyaluronic Acid (€14.99). Their TikTok account (@neutrogena\_us) gathers a total of 167,4K followers and 4,3 million likes. Their Instagram account (@neutrogena) counts 961K followers. Both accounts are active

and post exclusively in English. Their products vary in price from €5.09 (for wipes) to €23.99 (for a serum).

<b>Brand</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>TikTok fol- lowers</b>	<b>TikTok likes</b>	<b>Instagram followers</b>	<b>Price range</b>
The Ordinary	Toronto, Canada	1,4M	18,1M	2,2M	€5 – €158
The INKEY list	London, UK	497,6K	11,7M	576K	€7.5 – €65.88
COSRX	Seoul, South- Korea	214,3K	1,4M	574K	€3.5 – €29.99
Neutrogena	Los Angeles, USA	167,4K	4,3M	961K	€5.09 – €23.99

**Table 3. data summary for budget-friendly brands' TikTok and Instagram accounts.**

### **2.2.2 Data collection**

A mix of qualitative (content analysis) and quantitative approaches will be used in this study. The brands' activity on TikTok will be quantified (number/frequency of posts) as it will make it possible to characterize the brands' presence on the social media platform. The quantitative methodology will first be explained, followed by the qualitative methodology.

### **2.2.3 Method**

First, data will be manually collected from TikTok during a one-month collection period, from September 1, 2023, to September 30, 2023, to make it possible to discover how frequently the brands under study publish. Even though this study focuses on the month of September, the number of videos posted through the months of October and November will also be considered to estimate the posting consistency of each brand. The same data collection will be conducted on each brand's Instagram account. It is important to stress that only videos (in the form of Reels or not) will be considered as this study focuses on short videos posted by the brands. Finally, the number of videos posted on both platforms (and which are the same) will be collected. This will serve as the quantitative analysis as it will allow a comparison of the brands' posting habits on both social media platforms.

The qualitative investigation focuses on content analysis. Following previous work on beauty and dermatology brands on social media (cf. section 1.6), the collected videos will be classified into six content categories: educational, customer experience, entertainment, advertisement, brand image reinforcement, and other (cf. table 2).

Type of content	Explanation
Educational	Videos about ingredients, skincare and skin concerns in general, or the brand/company in itself. Not specifically trying to sell a product but rather to inform.
Customer experience	Videos about real-life experience with the products and/or brand. Those videos can include product reviews, demonstration, and tutorials.
Entertainment	Videos crafted with the purpose of entertaining online consumers with humour, memes, or viral trends.
Advertisement	Videos with the clear intent of selling a product. Can include campaigns, promotions, reduction codes, offers, new product drop, or any other strategy to directly influence the consumer to buy the product.
Brand image reinforcement	Videos that highlight the brand's values, image, and story. Can include content about the brand's social or environmental engagement for example. Can also show behind the scenes footage.
Other	Any other video that does not fit in the first five categories.

**Table 4. video content categories.**

The videos will then be fully examined to highlight what features, actions or behaviours in general specific to TikTok were observed. They will be divided as follows: music, hashtags, collaboration with influencers/celebrities, endorsing existing challenges/trends, creating new challenges/trends, comments, storytelling, using TikTok specific features, and others (see table 3). The list of features, actions, or behaviours is partly based on findings from the research reviewed in section 1.6.

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Music	Videos that use music, especially trending music on TikTok or music created by the brand itself.
Hashtags	Videos using hashtags, either popular hashtags on TikTok or brand specific hashtags (created by the brand itself).
Collaboration with influencers/celebrities	Videos showcasing influencers/celebrities endorsing the products or the brand.
Endorsing existing challenges/trends	Videos crafted around existing challenges and/or trends going viral on TikTok
Creating new challenges/trends	Videos explaining/showcasing new challenges created by the brands themselves.
Comments	Videos having the comments opened. Can also include videos where the brand is actively participating in the comments by replying to users.
Storytelling	Videos telling a story, either around the products or the brand.
Collaborating with health professionals	Videos where health professionals (dermatologists, scientists, etc.) endorse the products and/or the brand.
Using TikTok specific video features	Videos using TikTok specific features such as duets, stitches, effects, video reply, ... (Oladipo: 2023)
Other	Any other strategy that does not fit in the nine above mentioned categories.

**Table 5. features, actions, or behaviours in general specific to TikTok.**

Finally, the results of these analysis will be compared with videos that can be found on the brands' Instagram page for the same period. This comparison will highlight the similarities and/or difference of uses of both platforms. These analyses will therefore help determine if the high-end and budget-friendly brands post differently on the platform. Based on those results

some elements of answer as to why it might be different (or not) will be given to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Quantitative results

In this section, six set of data will be examined; the number of TikTok videos posted by each brand per month, the number of videos posted by each brand on Instagram per month, the number of videos posted on both platforms per month and finally the average length of the TikTok videos. The average number of likes and comments on both TikTok and Instagram for each brand will also be examined. This data will help understand the posting frequency of each company as well as a possible difference in behaviour on TikTok and Instagram and the engagement that the eight brands generate.

Table 4 includes the number of videos posted on TikTok for the months of September, October and November 2023 for the eight studied brands. It also shows the total of videos published on TikTok for the two sub-categories of brands (high-end and budget-friendly).

<b>Brands</b>	<b>September</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>Total</b>
Estée Lauder	13	11	17	41
La Mer	22	14	12	48
Sisley Paris	3	3	8	14
Tatcha	19	18	17	54
<b>Total high-end</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>157</b>
The Ordinary	15	6	12	33
The INKEY List	28	27	25	80
COSRX	10	8	23	41
Neutrogena	17	5	7	29
<b>Total budget-friendly</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>183</b>

**Table 4. number of TikTok videos posted per month and total for the 3-month period.**

As can be seen from Table 4, the high-end brands posted a total number of fifty-seven TikTok videos during the month of September and a total of one hundred and fifty-seven videos for the three-month period. In comparison, the budget friendly brands posted a total number of seventy TikTok videos in the month of September and one hundred eighty-three videos for the three-month period. In the month of October, both categories of brands produced the same number of videos as the total of videos posted equals forty-six. For the month of November, the budget friendly brands posted sixty-seven TikTok videos as opposed to fifty-four videos posted by the high-end brands. The first conclusion that can be drawn, is that the budget-friendly brands analysed in this thesis published an equal or higher number of videos on TikTok than the high-

end brands during the relevant period for this study. The budget-friendly brands posted on average 16.56% more on TikTok than the high-end brands, for the studied period.

The same analysis but for the videos posted by each brand on Instagram was done. The results can be seen in Table 5.

<b>Brands</b>	<b>September</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>Total</b>
Estée Lauder	4	11	9	24
La Mer	21	28	31	80
Sisley Paris	12	15	17	44
Tatcha	7	10	10	27
<b>Total high-end</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>175</b>
The Ordinary	21	7	16	43
The INKEY List	22	23	17	62
COSRX	10	8	8	26
Neutrogena	11	5	3	19
<b>Total budget-friendly</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>151</b>

**Table 5. Number of videos posted on Instagram per month and total for the 3-month period.**

For the month of September, the high-end brands posted a total of forty-four videos on Instagram while the budget-friendly brands posted sixty-four videos on the platform. However, for the month of October and November, the high-end brands posted more videos on Instagram than the budget-friendly brands: sixty-four against forty-three and sixty-seven against forty-four for the high-end brands and the budget-friendly brands respectively. In total, the high-end brands posted one hundred and seventy-five videos on Instagram for the three-month period while the budget-friendly brands posted a total of one hundred and fifty-one videos on the platform for the same period. Looking at the total number of videos and the three-month period, it is reasonable to assume that the month of September is an anomaly and that in general, the high-end brands post more videos on Instagram than the budget-friendly brands. The high-end brands post on average 15.89% more on Instagram than budget-friendly brands.

Then, the number of the same videos that were posted on both platforms by each brand was analysed and the results can be observed in Table 6.

<b>Brands</b>	<b>September</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>Total</b>
Estée Lauder	0	4	1	5
La Mer	3	0	0	3
Sisley Paris	1	2	4	7
Tatcha	2	2	0	4
<b>Total high-end</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>
The Ordinary	5	0	0	5
The INKEY List	4	5	3	12

COSRX	10	8	8(+1) <sup>3</sup>	27
Neutrogena	3	3	0	6
<b>Total budget-friendly</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>51</b>

**Table 6. Number of the same videos posted on both platforms per month and total for the 3-month period.**

For the whole three-month period, the budget-friendly brands published a larger number of videos on both platforms than the high-end brands. The high-end brands published a total of nineteen videos that were the same on Instagram and TikTok while the budget-friendly brands posted a total number of fifty-one of the same videos on both platforms. This means that the budget-friendly brands posted on average 168.42% more videos which are the same on TikTok and Instagram than high-end brands.

The length of each TikTok video for each brand was examined. The results of this analysis can be seen in Table 7.

<b>Brands</b>	<b>Longest video</b>	<b>Shortest video</b>	<b>Average length<sup>4</sup></b>
Estée Lauder	88	5	25
La Mer	52	14	28
Sisley Paris	29	10	19
Tatcha	31	5	13
<b>Average high-end</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>21.25</b>
The Ordinary	27	5	14
The INKEY List	69	5	21
COSRX	82	13	41
Neutrogena	56	7	20
<b>Average budget-friendly</b>	<b>58.5</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>24</b>

**Table 7. TikTok video length in seconds for the month of September 2023.**

The average length of videos for the high-end brands and the budget-friendly brands is almost the same: the average length for the high-end brands' TikTok videos is 21.25 seconds as opposed to 24 seconds for the budget-friendly brands, which makes a difference of 12.94%. However, it is difficult to argue that this information means that budget-friendly brands post longer videos than high-end brands. The average length of the shortest videos<sup>5</sup> shows that the shortest videos for budget-friendly brands (7.5s) are shorter than the high-end brands' average length for their shortest videos (8.5s). On the other hand, the average length for the longest videos is

<sup>3</sup> One photo-slide post on Instagram was posted in the form of a video on TikTok, hence the +1.

<sup>4</sup> calculated for all the videos published in the month of September 2023. Rounded up

<sup>5</sup> The average length of the shortest and of the longest videos have been calculated by doing an average of the shortest video for each set of brands. This was done to have one representative number for the high-end brands and one representative number for the budget-friendly brands in order to make the comparison easier.

higher for the budget-friendly brands (58.5s) than for the high-end brands (50s). No clear conclusion can therefore be drawn from this data set.

Even though one video going viral on TikTok is not an indicator of success, as mentioned in earlier sections, an average number of likes and comments per brand can give an indication of the engagement of the studied brands on the platform. The average number of likes and comments per brand can be found in table 8.

<b>Brands</b>	<b>Average comments number</b>	<b>Average likes number</b>
Estée Lauder	11	295
La Mer	5	163
Sisley Paris	7	1,084
Tatcha	70	7,161
<b>Average high-end</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2,175</b>
The Ordinary	1,432	92,784
The INKEY List	104	7,911
COSRX	6	324
Neutrogena	7	755
<b>Average budget-friendly</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>25,443</b>

**Table 8. Average number of comments and like per brand for September 2023 on TikTok.**

These results show that on average, the budget-friendly brands generate more engagement than the high-end brands on TikTok. The Ordinary gathers the most engagement across all the analysed brands. Tatcha leads in terms of engagement among high-end brands. The same analysis has been done on Instagram and the results can be found in table 9.

<b>Brands</b>	<b>Average comments number</b>	<b>Average likes number</b>
Estée Lauder	75	6,389
La Mer	21	997
Sisley Paris	30	2,290
Tatcha	62	2,180
<b>Average high-end</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>2,964</b>
The Ordinary	297	8,822
The INKEY List	420	1,700
COSRX	61	2,194
Neutrogena	36	1,996
<b>Average budget-friendly</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>3,678</b>

**Table 9. Average number of comments and like per brand for September 2023 on Instagram.**

This table shows that the gap between the high-end brands and the budget-friendly brands is smaller on Instagram than on TikTok. Even though the budget-friendly brands generate somewhat more engagement than the high-end brands, the gap is not as big as on TikTok. The Ordinary is still the leader on engagement among all eight brands. Tatcha, which was

leading the high-end brands on TikTok, is not the leader anymore. Instead, Estée Lauder seems to be more successful on Instagram than all the other high-end brands.

## **3.2. Qualitative results**

### **3.2.1. High-end brands**

#### **3.2.1.1. Estée Lauder**

##### **3.2.1.1.1. TikTok**

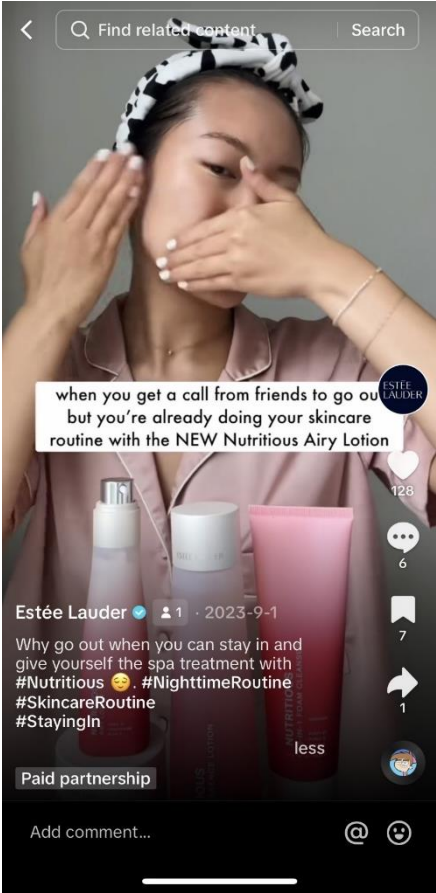
As found through the quantitative research, Estée Lauder posted thirteen TikTok videos about their skincare products during the month of September 2023. Based on the previously established theoretical framework, the videos posted on Estée Lauder's TikTok account can be classified in two different content categories: entertainment (7) and customer experience (6). Some of these videos could arguably be categorised as "advertisement" as they promote one specific product. However, all of the TikTok videos for each brand could go in the advertisement category as the main purpose is to entice potential clients to buy the products. In this investigation, a TikTok video has only been put into the "advertisement" category if the consumer is directly invited to buy the product, either by offering a discount, redirecting to a link, announcing a date for the launch of a new product, talking about a special event for said launch and inviting people to go, or explaining the ingredients of the products or its benefits in great detail, as a selling argument. Otherwise, the TikTok video have not been considered as fitting into the "advertisement" category.

The seven videos that fit into the "**entertainment**" category are rather diverse, as entertainment can pertain to a lot of different content. Humour can be a form of entertainment. For example, picture 1 illustrates the "What I bring to the table" trend on TikTok. This trend consists in getting some things out of your bag and putting them on a table in front of you. The intent is of course humoristic as "what I bring to the table" means "what is my contribution to something" and here it is used as a sort of self-mockery, as what the person "brings to the table" is mainly material and futile. Other examples, not related to skin care or any brands are illustrated by pictures 2 and 3. The "what I bring to the table" trend mostly involves women and does not relate to skincare or beauty in general. Consequently, the main purpose of such videos is to entertain and not really to sell or talk about an experience with a product. Picture 4 also illustrates a TikTok video whose main purpose is to make the user laugh. The sound that is put onto

the TikTok video is the sound of a phone ringing and the person in the video is not answering because she is busy doing her skin care.



Picture 1

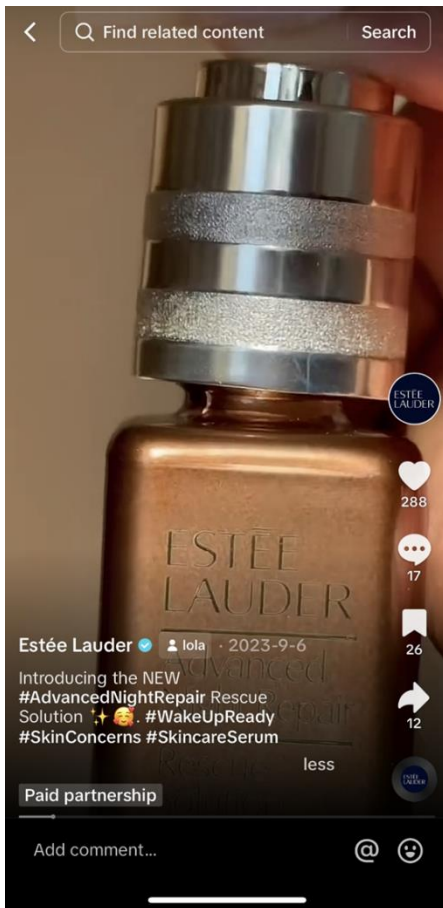


Picture 2

Humour is not the only type of entertainment that Estée Lauder uses in its videos. Picture 5 displays a TikTok which uses another type of entertainment than humour: ASMR videos. ASMR stands for “Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response,” which is described as a static-like sensation that travels from the scalp down the spine in response to specific sensory triggers (Bryan: 2024, no page). ASMR videos use sound triggers to help viewers experience this sensation. Such videos are quite popular on TikTok and Estée Lauder replicates them with one of its products, to appeal to this niche audience. This type of video is also meant to entertain, while not specifically using humour. Picture 6 shows another type of video which is also very popular on the platform: reorganising one’s bag. These types of videos, with other ones such as “what’s in my bag” videos have always been popular, even on YouTube, and are considered quite entertaining by audiences. It is therefore another type of TikTok video, made by Estée Lauder with the main purpose of entertaining users.

These videos were not categorised as “advertisement” because they do not highlight one specific product, its benefits, characteristics or uses. They don’t invite the user to buy the product either, by referring to a link in the description or offering a discount.

Six videos have been identified as fitting into the “**customer experience**” category. Those videos are however hard to label as genuine customer testimonials. They are made by TikTok content creators: Stephanie Zheng (@collectionofvial, 10.7K followers), april (@april\_lockhart, 41.7K followers), Trevor Barrett (@trevorbarret, 988.9K followers), lola (@lola.odetola, 98.9K followers), Ashley Yaniz (@ashleyyaniz, 16.7K followers), and Royce (@\_skincarewithroyce, 120.6K followers). The only exception is Lily Bloomberg (@tsal-lensmom) who only has 509 followers on the platform, which suggests that her testimonial might be more genuine. The authenticity of those reviews/testimonials can therefore not be verified. However, the content creators do speak about their experience with one or multiple skincare products from Estée Lauder. Furthermore, some of these videos are tagged with the tag “Paid partnership”, as illustrated in picture 7, which implies that the ones who do not exhibit that tag, as pictured in picture 8, are unpaid testimonials, even though they were made by influencers/content creators. Those untagged videos can be recognised as genuine testimonials or customer experience videos.



Picture 7



Picture 8

Testimonial TikTok videos are considered to fit the “customer experience” category because the person that is speaking talks about their experience with the product or why the product is important to them. For example, in one of those TikTok videos, the speaker talks about “mandatory minis that [she] always bring[s] in her toiletries bag when [she] travel[s]”. Another one explains that one of the creams “will not only make the skin look a little more alive and hydrated but will also help us with the make-up”. Another interesting video is one where the speaker directly talks about her own skin problems and how one Estée Lauder product helped her recover: “the new advanced night repair rescue solution has everything that I look for when choosing a product for my irritated skin, and my skin feels instantly soothed and calmed after application, which is such a relief”. The product, its use and how it works is therefore highlighted in those kinds of videos.

The thirteen videos on TikTok showcased various features, actions, or behaviours specific to the platform. These included the use of hashtags (13), comments (13), collaboration with influencers/celebrities (13), storytelling (7), endorsing existing challenges/trends (5), using TikTok's unique video features (1), and incorporating music (1).

Each video features both **hashtags** in their descriptions and open **comments**, along with the presence of an **influencer**. The use of hashtags differs from video to video depending on

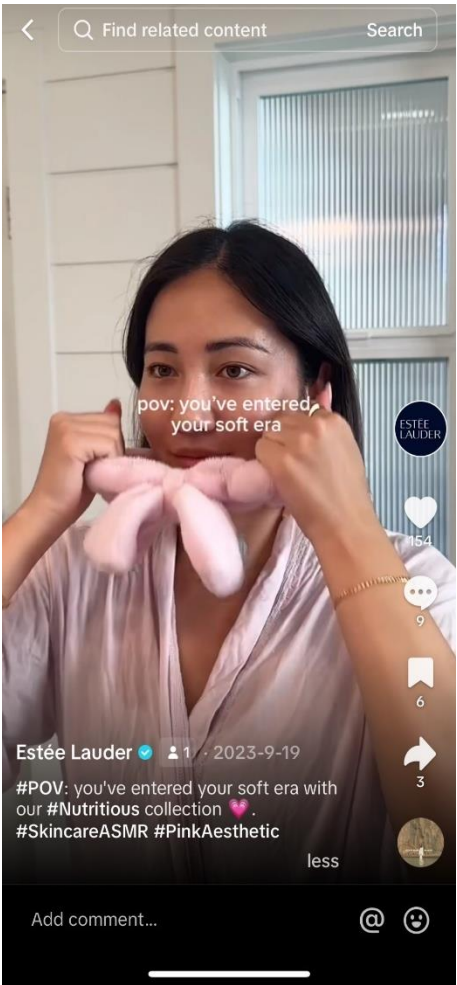
the theme. For example, in picture 8, hashtags such as #LongWeekend and #LabourDayWeekend are put into the description because they relate to what the speaker is saying. On the other hand, when the video is about one specific product or collection, a hashtag with the name of the product/collection is also added. For instance, in pictures 5, 6, and 7, products from the Night Advanced Repair collection are showcased, and thus the hashtag #AdvancedNightRepair is added in the description. Each video has between three and five hashtags in the description.

More than half of the collected videos use the **storytelling** technique to appeal to their audience. An example of storytelling is the TikTok video represented in picture 9. This video showcases an influencer preparing herself to go to bed, lighting candles, doing her skincare, making herself tea, all with the purpose of showcasing the products. Another example is when the speaker starts his story by explaining how his skin became tired after joining an architecture program at university and losing his sleep, but we “could not even tell” thanks to Estée Lauder’s serum. These stories give the user the impression that they can relate to the product showcased or talked about in the TikTok video.

Surprisingly, only one TikTok video uses **music**. As established earlier, TikTok is essentially a sound and video-based platform. It is therefore quite unexpected that almost no TikTok videos posted by Estée Lauder during the month of September 2023 feature music. However, five TikTok videos used **trending sounds**, such as the sound of a telephone calling, the voice of someone saying “this right here is my favourite thing ever, in the history of forever. I think about this every day” or the sound that is used with the “What I bring to the table” trend. Those sounds were trending and going viral during the month of September 2023. Trending sounds are categorised in the “endorsing existing challenges/trends” category because they must be separated from music. Music only encapsulates original songs (instrumental or not) that have not been modified or remixed. Any other sound, voice or remixes of music used will be referred to as “sounds”, as defined in section 1.4.2.

The one video editing **feature specific to TikTok** that was used is answering to a comment with a video, as illustrated in picture 10. This is a feature specific to TikTok as the platform allows users to answer to comment directly in the form of a TikTok video.

In conclusion, Estée Lauder’s preferred type of content for their TikTok videos are customer experience and entertainment content. Moreover, all of their TikTok videos published during the month of September 2023 have their comments opened and have hashtags in the description. All their videos also have an influencer in them, even though not all of them are paid partnerships. More than half of the videos use a storytelling technique, and five videos use an existing trend. Music does not seem to be of importance for Estée Lauder as only one TikTok video uses it.



Picture 9



Picture 10

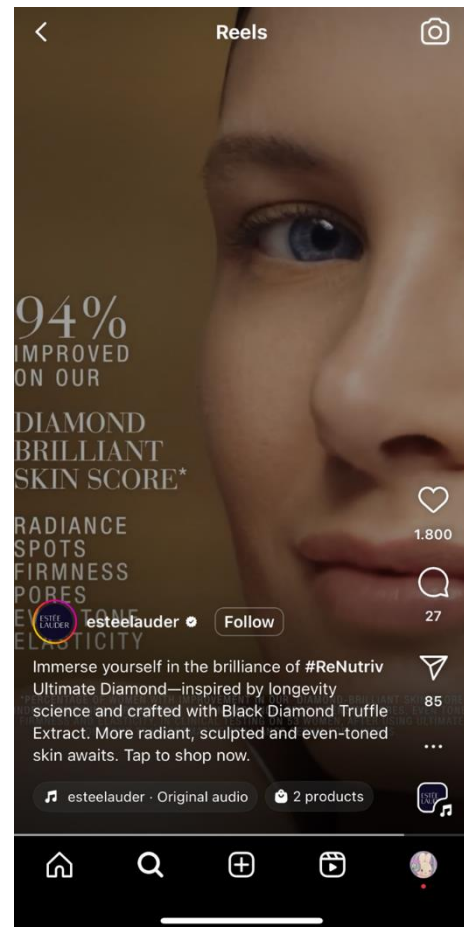
**3.2.1.1.2. TikTok vs. Instagram**

Compared to their TikTok account, Estée Lauder posts a lot less videos on Instagram, as only four videos related to skincare were posted on the social network during the month of September 2023, and none being the same on TikTok and Instagram. The four videos that were posted on Instagram are all (what seems to be) high-budget productions. They do not have the same feeling of “amateur” videos that the one on TikTok have, and they all advertise a collection of products that is not talked about on TikTok at all: The ReNutriv collection, and especially the Limited edition of the ReNutriv Ultimate Diamond Crème in collaboration with Gracie

Studio. This product is one of their most expensive (between €210 and €490). As illustrated with pictures 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15, the look and feel of the videos are much more luxurious and resemble TV advertising, which is why they can be categorised as “advertisement”.



Picture 13



Picture 15

**Hashtags** are also used on Instagram but not as much as on TikTok. There are a maximum of two hashtags per video. All of the Instagram videos have **music** and their **comments** open. The music is an instrumental melody, resembling classical music and once again inspiring luxury and calmness. Only one of the videos features someone talking but the voice is very robotic and only mentions the ingredients and properties of the ReNutriv serum. In other words, it is rather straight to the point. This video (illustrated in pictures 13 and 15) is the one that looks the most like a TV commercial. There is also an invitation in the description to “tap to shop now”, which indicates that this video was made for the sole purpose of advertising the product, something that is not present at all on Estée Lauder’s TikTok account.

**Storytelling** is also used in Instagram videos, however, in a very different way: here the story told is one of luxury and legacy. It gives the impression that Estée Lauder’s skincare products are made for Hollywood stars and that Estée Lauder has a long history of expertise which is why they are the best and inspire beauty and luxury. **No influencer** is present in their

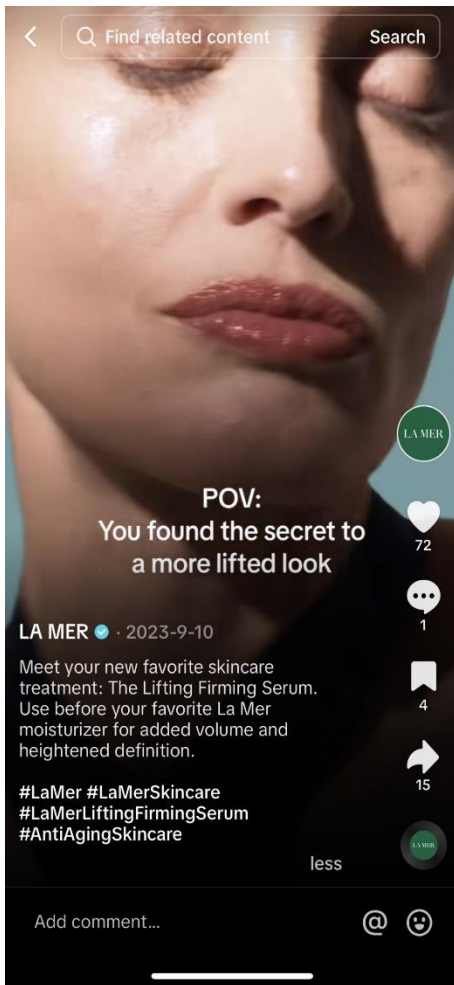
Instagram videos to talk about their experience with a product. Instead, their **global ambassador** Bianca Brandolini, can be seen but she does not speak in the videos. She is only seen using the product and then going to the Venice Film Festival, which furthers accentuates the difference between the storytelling on TikTok and Instagram.

### **3.2.1.2. La Mer**

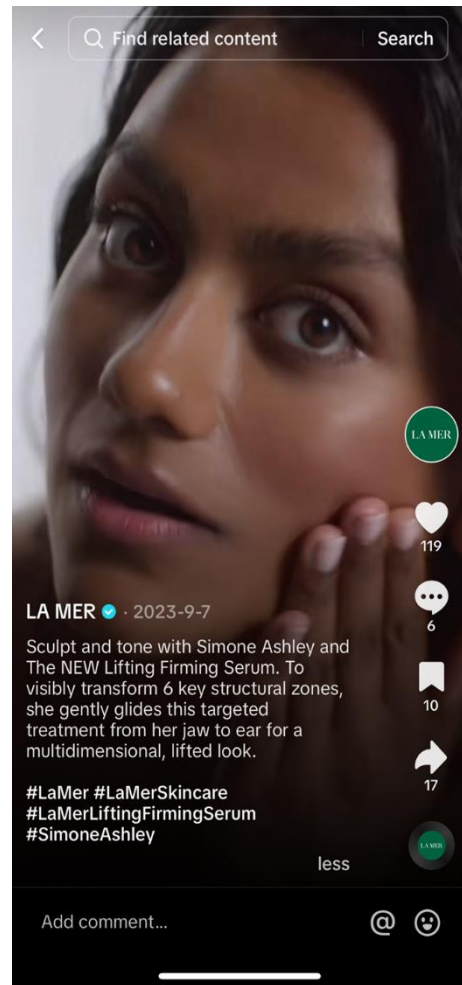
#### **3.2.1.2.1. TikTok**

As shown in section 3.1, La Mer posted twenty-two TikTok videos about their skincare products during the month of September 2023. The videos posted on La Mer's TikTok account can be classified in five different content categories: advertisement (8), customer experience (7), entertainment (4), educational (2), and brand image reinforcement (1).

The eight TikTok videos placed in the “**advertisement**” category were clearly designed with their intent of selling the product and could not be placed in any other category. A lot of the videos resemble what is exemplified in picture 16. A somewhat high-budget production video that highlights a specific product to entice users to buy it. Compared to the videos in the “entertainment” category that will be analysed below, it is obvious that they were not filmed with a phone, and a great deal of production has been done to create a video that is comparable to TV commercials. Picture 17 comes from another advertisement for the same product, and it has the same “high production” feeling. However, in both of these videos, there is also text added onto the video through the TikTok editing feature. The text added in picture 17 is the most interesting: “POV: You found the secret to a more lifted look”. The term “POV” (point of view) is used a lot on TikTok. For example, the hashtag #POV has more than 58.1M results on the platform. This is a very popular form of content on the platform. La Mer using it on a non-amateur video shows that they try to adapt those videos to TikTok. Finally, they also post the same kind of video but with celebrities such as Simone Ashley, as illustrated in picture 18. These videos were clearly to promote a specific product, namely the Lifting Firming Serum and they do feel more produced than simple videos taken with a phone. Consequently, those videos are placed in the “advertisement” category.



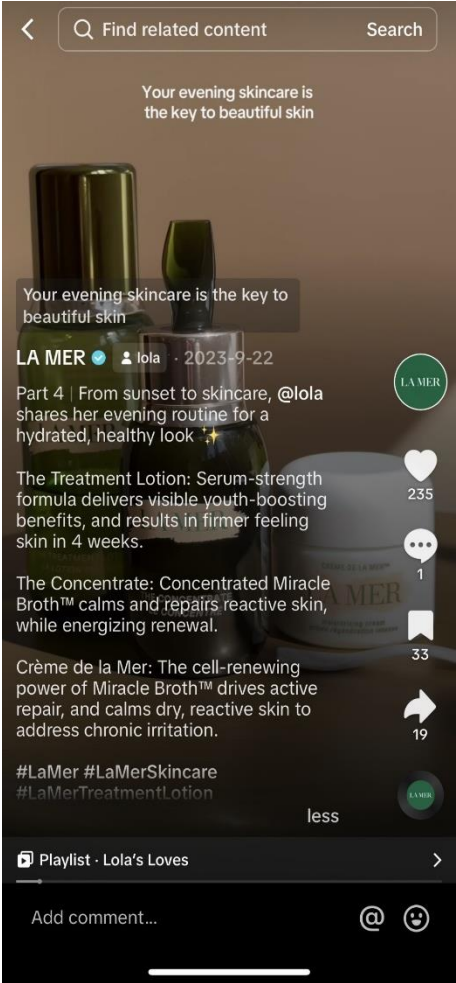
Picture 17



Picture 18

The seven TikTok videos placed in the “**customer experience**” category are almost all the same: they portray the nighttime routine of different content creators, and all of them include their nighttime skincare routine where they use one or several La Mer products, as exemplified in picture 19. There are two exceptions: one video where the speaker goes to get a facial at one of La Mer institutes and talks about her experience at that institute (picture 20), and another one where the speaker shows what she did that day and ended the TikTok with her nighttime skincare routine, including La Mer products (picture 21). Even though these TikTok videos contain people speaking about their experience or personal use of different La Mer products, they do seem staged and not spontaneous. However, none of the TikTok videos that have been placed in the “customer experience” category have the “Paid partnership” tag. This could either indicate that the collaboration between those content creators and La Mer is entirely unpaid or that La Mer does not disclose their paid partnerships. Either way, those videos were placed in the “customer experience” category because they share an experience with La Mer products. It could be argued that these videos might go into the “brand image reinforcement” category because they also associate a particular atmosphere and ambiance with La Mer’s products.

However, because the use of products is highlighted rather than just an ambiance or atmosphere associated with the brand, they are categorised as “customer experience”.

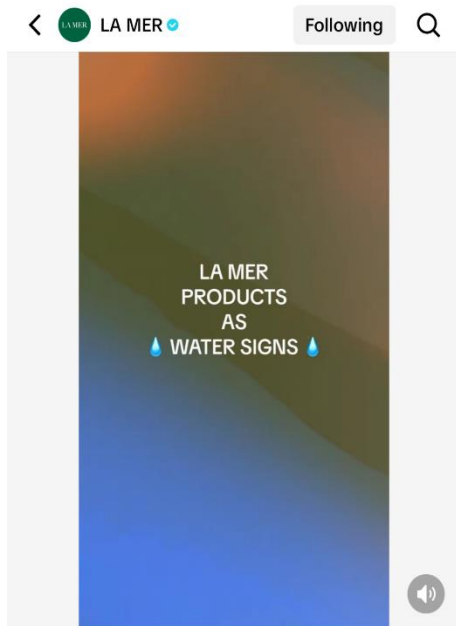


Picture 19



Picture 21

The videos categorised as “entertainment” for La Mer are rather more difficult to explain. Unlike Estée Lauder, La Mer does not make use of humour in its TikTok videos. La Mer did, however, create four TikTok photo sliders that can be considered “entertainment” content as they do not try to sell a product as obviously as the other TikTok videos published on their account for the same period. Those sliders are illustrated in pictures 22, 23, 24, and 25. They associate the signs of the zodiac with different La Mer products. For example, “Aries” is associated with the treatment lotion and “Pisces” is associated with the hydrating infused emulsion. The first intent of that TikTok is arguably not to sell a product per se but to grab the attention of users and entertain them with a niche interest while still shedding light on some of their products. Other than those four TikTok photo sliders, no other video can be placed in the entertainment category.



### The Zodiacs as La Mer Products: Water Signs

#LaMer #LaMerSkincare #LaMerEmulsion  
#LaMerMist #LaMerConcentrate #Horoscope  
#ZodiacSigns #WaterSigns #Pisces #Scorpio  
#Cancer

Add comment...

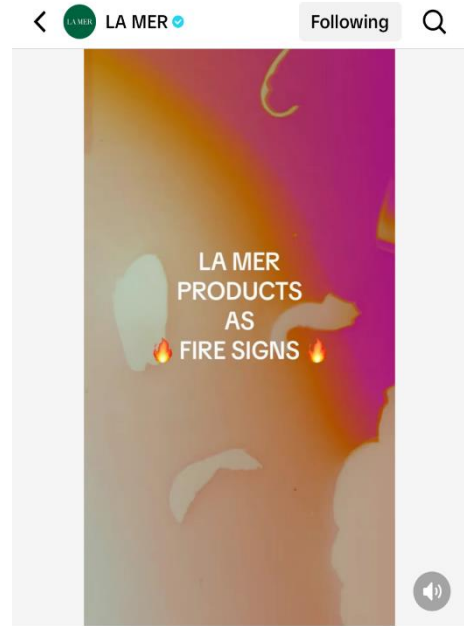
67

7

118

4

Picture 24



### The Zodiacs as La Mer Products: Fire Signs

#LaMer #LaMerSkincare #LaMerLipVolumizer  
#LaMerTreatmentLotion #LaMerRenewalOil  
#Horoscope #ZodiacSigns #FireSigns #Aries  
#Sagittarius

Add comment...

80

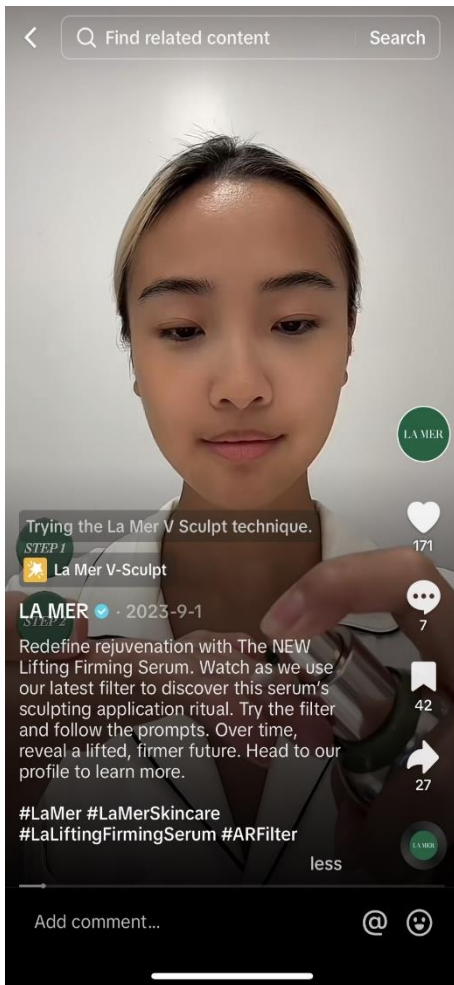
4

11

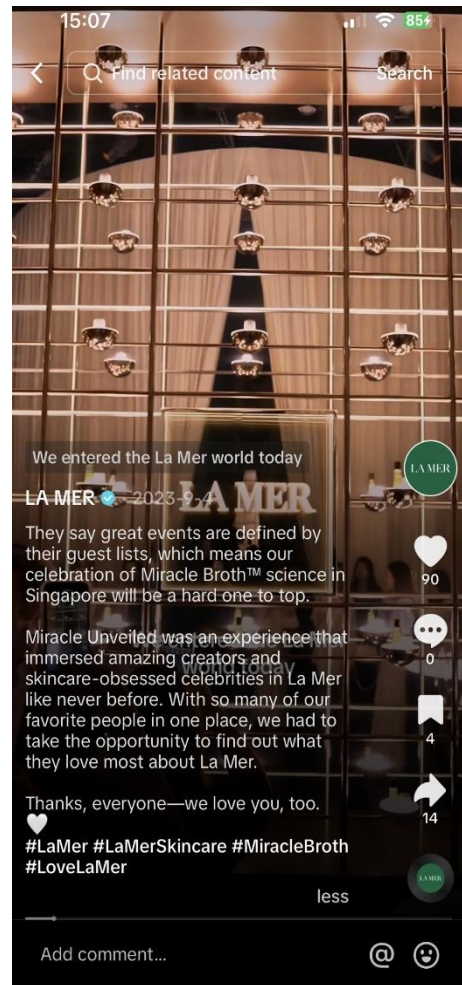
4

Picture 25

Both of the TikTok videos that can be identified as “**educational**” explain the La Mer V Sculpt serum application technique that is supposed to help sculpt the face, as illustrated in pictures 26 and 27. These videos are considered educational because they teach a specific technique, developed by La Mer themselves.



Picture 26

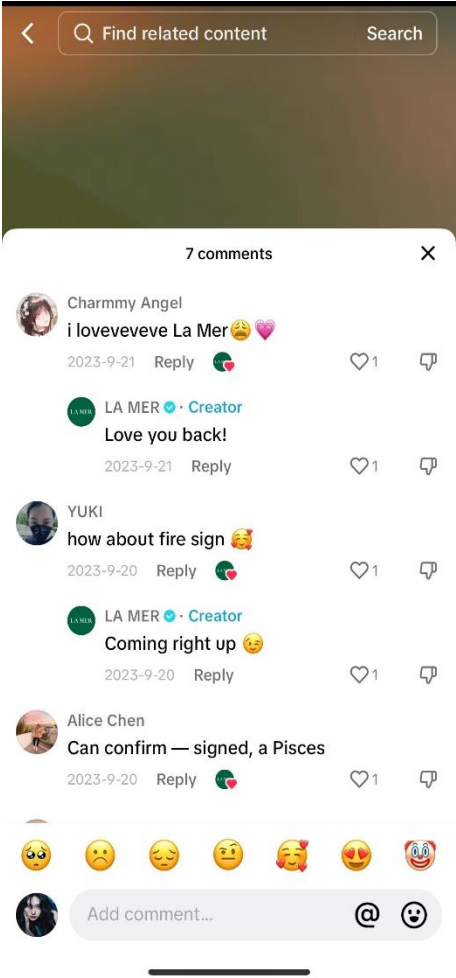


Picture 28

The last category is “**brand image reinforcement**”. Only one video fits in that category and is illustrated in picture 28. This TikTok video showcases an event organized by La Mer themselves, and they describe it as “an experience that immersed amazing creators and skin-care-obsessed celebrities in La Mer like never before”. This TikTok video is also highly produced and includes celebrities. However, it is not categorised as “advertisement” because it does not try to sell a specific product. Rather, the TikTok video immerses the viewer in La Mer’s world, showing luxury and elegance. The celebrities present in the video cite their favourite La Mer product against a golden and luxurious background. Everything in the TikTok video is there to build the brand image of La Mer. Of course, all their other TikTok videos try to build this image as well, but in this video, the main purpose is to present La Mer as a luxury, elegant, and premium brand that is used by celebrities.

The TikTok specific features, actions, or behaviour that have been identified are hashtags (22), comments (22), music (12), storytelling (6), using TikTok specific features (6), endorsing existing challenges/trends (4), collaborations with influencers/celebrities (3), and creating new challenges/trends (2).

**Hashtags** were used in all the TikTok videos. Two hashtags are always present in the description: #LaMer and #LaMerSkincare. If the videos mention a specific product, the name of the product is also mentioned in the hashtags, as in picture 20 with #CremedeLaMer or picture 15 with #LaMerLiftingSerum. If a celebrity is present in the video, their name is also mentioned in the description in the form of a hashtag, as seen in picture 17 with the hashtag #SimoneAshley. **Comments** are also open for all the TikTok videos, and La Mer sometimes likes and answers some of these comments, as illustrated in picture 29.



Picture 29



Picture 30

**Music** was used in more than half of the TikTok videos that were posted during the month of September. However, the music that was used is not music that was specifically trending on TikTok; it was music that heightened the sphere and ambiance that La Mer wants to associate with its brand, as mentioned above.

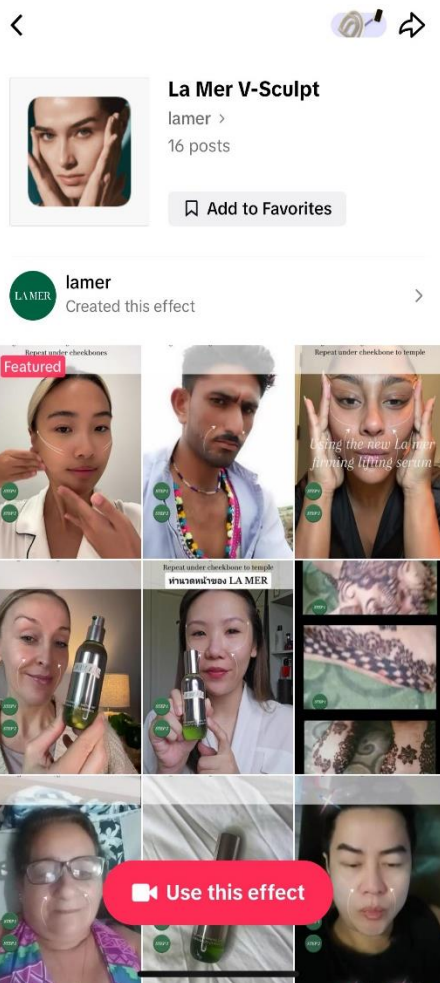
**Storytelling** seems to be quite important for La Mer, especially as it helps build the La Mer brand image. La Mer’s preferred type of storytelling technique is, as described before, the nighttime routine. Content creators will tell a story about their nighttime routine, how they wind down after a busy day, and include a mention of one of La Mer’s products, as illustrated in

picture 30. La Mer also uses **TikTok specific editing features**, such as using filters and picture carousels, as mentioned above.

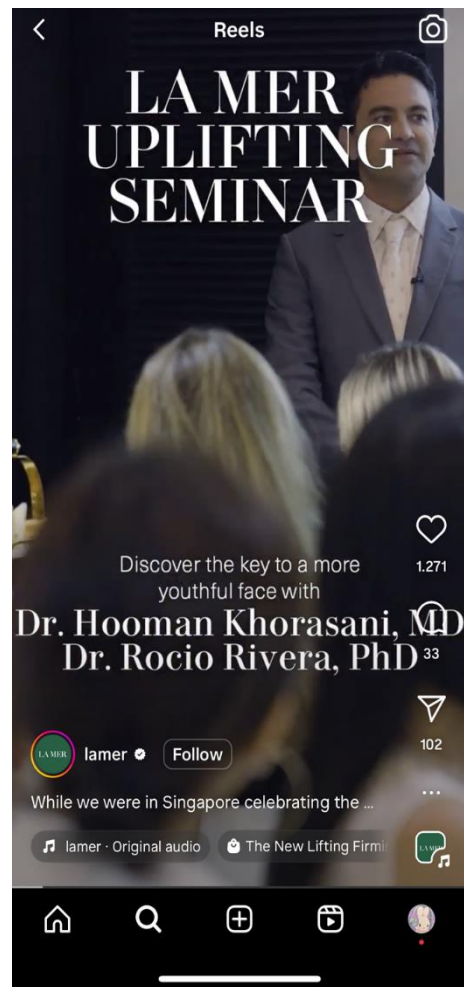
**The trend** that they endorsed in four TikTok videos for the month of September is the “La Mer products as zodiac signs” (pictures 22, 23, 24, 25) trend. This trend was not created by La Mer and many brands, companies, and users used this trend with their twist. La Mer jumped on the bandwagon to participate in the trend that was going viral at the time. Regarding **influencers and celebrities**, three TikTok videos showcase one (or more) celebrity(ies), two of them being with Simone Ashley and the other one being the TikTok video about La Mer’s event.

Lastly, in two other TikTok videos, La Mer did try to **create a new trend** with the La Mer V sculpt technique. The TikTok videos about that technique invited users to use the filter La Mer created for the occasion and try it for themselves. As of the time of writing this dissertation, the filter was used sixteen times on TikTok, as shown in picture 31.

These results show that La Mer’s content on TikTok is a little more diverse than Estée Lauder’s as La Mer’s videos could be categorised as educational, customer experience, entertainment, advertisement, or brand image reinforcement videos. La Mer posts quite a lot of high-quality videos that seem fit for other channels such as TV. “Customer experience” type of videos and storytelling seem to be the most important type of content for La Mer on TikTok, apart from the more obvious advertisements videos. The brand also tapped in TikTok specific features with the creation of its own filters and the use of picture carousels.



Picture 31

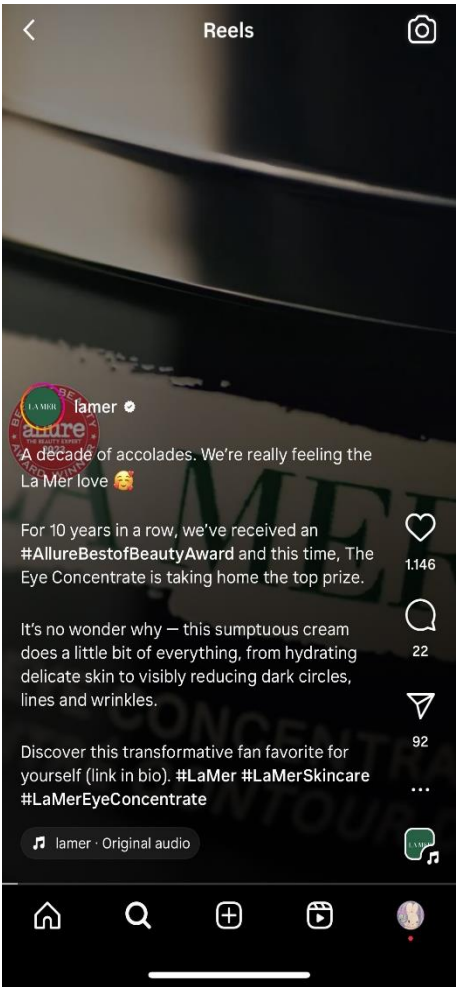


Picture 32

### 3.2.1.2.2. TikTok vs Instagram

The number of videos related to skincare posted by La Mer on Instagram and TikTok during the month of September 2023 is almost the same: twenty-two videos posted on TikTok, and twenty-one videos posted on Instagram. Surprisingly, only three of those videos are the same on Instagram and on TikTok. The videos are the two campaigns with Simone Ashley and one of the advertisements for their Lifting Firming Serum. The three videos were each posted on the same day on both platforms. The Lifting Firming Serum has also been promoted in other videos on Instagram but in a completely different manner. The emphasis was put on the scientific aspect of the product and the trustworthiness of La Mer’s skincare expertise. For example, La Mer showed footage of a seminar they held in which scientists explain the benefits of the products, as illustrated in picture 32 and 33. Pictures 34 and 35 show the description of this video, explaining in detail who the guests were and what they talked about. This type of video fits into the “**brand image reinforcement**” category and is an example of the brand “**collaborating with health professionals**”. This is a type of feature that is completely absent from La Mer’s TikTok account for the studied period.

Furthermore, **brand image reinforcement** seems to be a lot more important to La Mer on Instagram than on TikTok. Two major themes were not dealt with at all in the TikTok videos: The Allure Best of Beauty Award and their engagement during Climate Week, as illustrated in pictures 36 and 37. Two videos are dedicated to the Allure Best of Beauty Award, which La Mer won for the cream Eye Concentrate and three videos are dedicated to the Climate Week. These two themes reinforce La Mer’s brand image: a brand of expertise, quality and a brand that cares about the environment and acts towards more sustainability. This is something that is not pushed on TikTok.



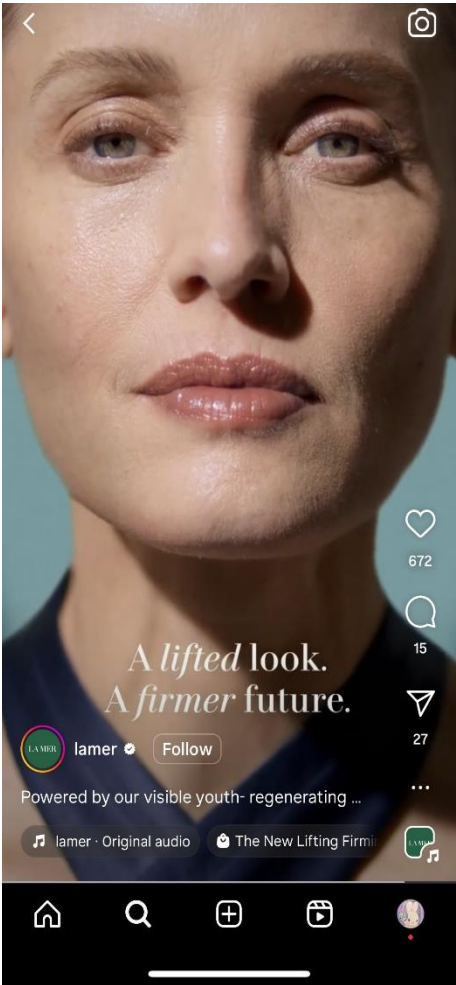
Picture 36



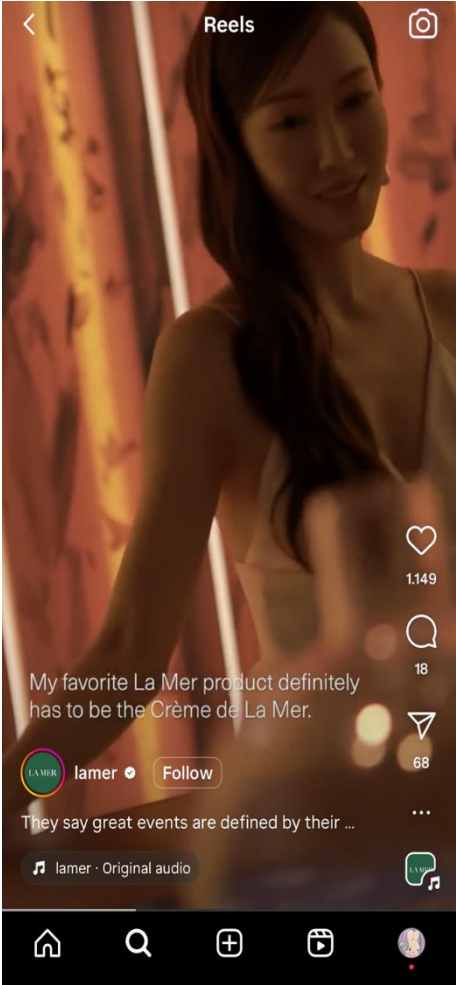
Picture 37

Nevertheless, a lot of the videos posted on Instagram are also very similar to the ones posted on the TikTok account, as illustrated by picture 38 for example. Compared to picture 17, the model is the same, the conveyed message is the same (the new serum gives you firmer skin and a more lifted look), but the way it is formulated as well as the font used, is different. The **music** is also not the same. This is also true for a video posted about their “Love La Mer” event. The video is extremely similar to the one posted on TikTok, however some of the footage slightly differs and the subtitles are also in a different font, as illustrated in picture 39. Although

La Mer publishes similar content on both platforms; the brand does adapt a few elements to fit into both social networks' norms. Additionally, the videos posted on Instagram are always high-quality, high-production videos, including music and sometimes voice overs. None of the videos posted on their Instagram account seem to be recorded by exterior content creators, as opposed to TikTok, where most of the videos have a more “amateur” feel, emulating user-generated content, which is why most of the videos posted on La Mer’s Instagram account fit into the “**advertisement**” category. The features that are the same on both platforms are the use of **hashtags** and open **comments**, which are present in all videos posted on Instagram by the brand.



Picture 38



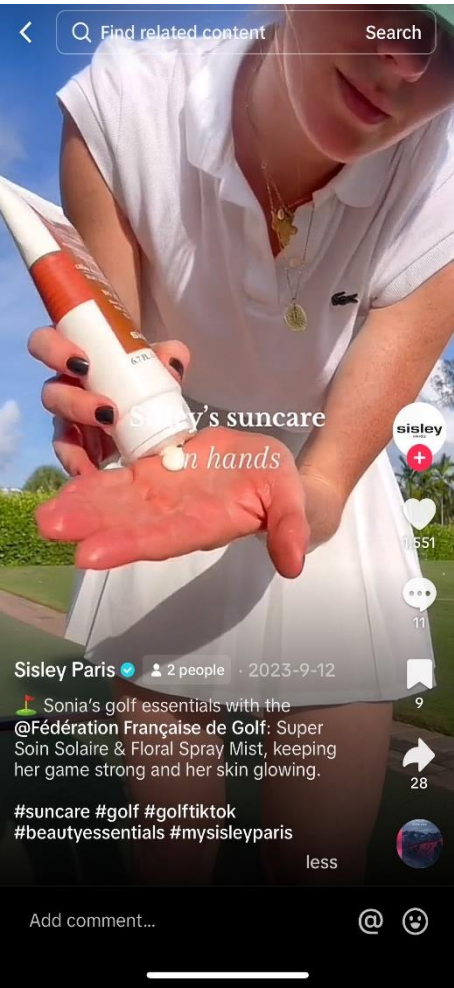
Picture 39

### 3.2.1.3. Sisley Paris

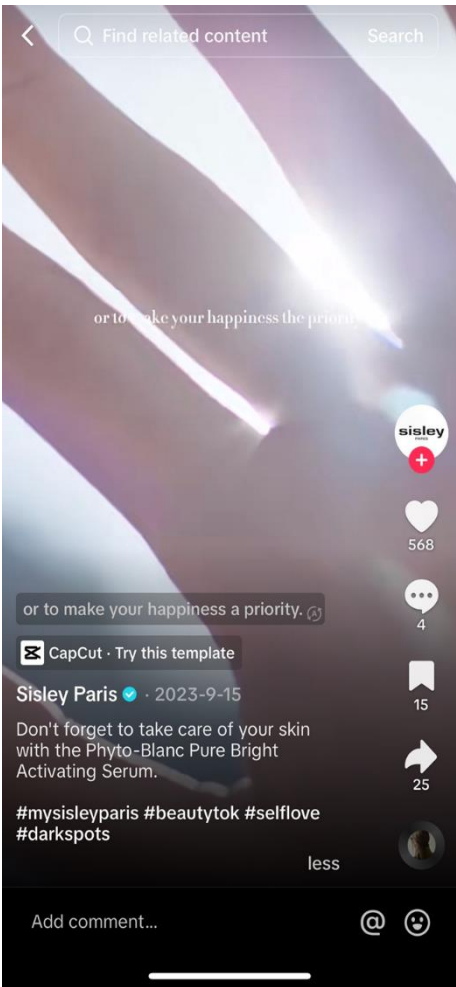
#### 3.2.1.3.1. TikTok

As revealed in section 3.1, Sisley Paris posted three TikTok videos about their skincare products during the month of September 2023. The videos posted on Sisley Paris’ TikTok account can be classified in two different content categories: customer experience (2) and brand image reinforcement (1).

The two TikTok videos that are classified in the “customer experience” category both showcase a content creator using more than one of Sisley Paris’ products. One video shows a woman playing golf and applying different kinds of sunscreen products (as seen in picture 40), the other one is a “get ready with me” type of video (as seen in picture 41). Both of these TikTok videos highlight the use of specific products, while showing how they can be used, which is why they are categorised as “customer experience”. Once again, it is difficult to know if those TikTok videos are the result of paid partnerships or not and therefore to evaluate their genuine character. Nevertheless, because the products are shown “in action”, almost like a demonstration of how to use the product, these videos can be classified as “customer experience” rather than any other category.



Picture 40



Picture 42

The TikTok video that is categorised as “brand image reinforcement” does not emulate user generated content like the other two videos, but is rather a high-quality video, showcasing one specific product. The reason why it has been classified as a “brand image reinforcement” and not “advertisement”, is because of the voice over. The voice over of this TikTok video praises self-love, self-care and making yourself a priority. The feeling that this video emanates

is calm, and soothing. This helps to build a particular image for Sisley Paris' brand: it is a brand used for self-care and self-soothing. Moreover, the white dominating colour suggests calmness and purity, almost like being at the spa, as seen in picture 42. This video does not particularly entertain or obviously advertise the product. It does not showcase a particular experience or information about the product itself either. The most fitting category is therefore “brand image reinforcement”.

The TikTok specific features, actions, or behaviour that have been identified are hashtags (3), comments (3), music (2), storytelling (2), collaboration with influencers/celebrities (1), and endorsing existing challenges/trends (1).

All videos posted on Instagram have open **comments**. Similarly, **Hashtags** are in the description of all three TikTok videos and comments are opened for all of them as well. The hashtags do not refer to the products shown in the videos, (as was the case in the Estée Lauder and La Mer videos) but rather to Sisley Paris themselves, as the hashtag #mysisleyparis is in the description of the three videos. The other hashtags refer to the specific themes of each video, such as #golf, #suncare, #selflove, or #grwm (get ready with me). **Music** is used in the two “customer experience” videos, and the third video has a voice over. **Storytelling** is used in the TikTok video about the sunscreens, as it shows a woman going golfing and applying sunscreen when she arrives. The second video is the video that praises self-love. Finally, **the trend** that is endorsed is the “get ready with me” trend, which is also the TikTok video that was made in **collaboration with a celebrity/influencer**: Chelsey Weimar (@chelseynoellweimar on TikTok).

As Sisley Paris only published few videos on TikTok, it is difficult to deeply analyse their content. Based on the few TikTok videos available, it is possible to say that customer experience and brand image reinforcement is their preferred type of content to post on TikTok. Storytelling and music also seem of importance for Sisley Paris. Finally, collaborating with influencers such as Chelsey Weimar is also important for the brand.

#### **3.2.1.3.2. TikTok vs Instagram**

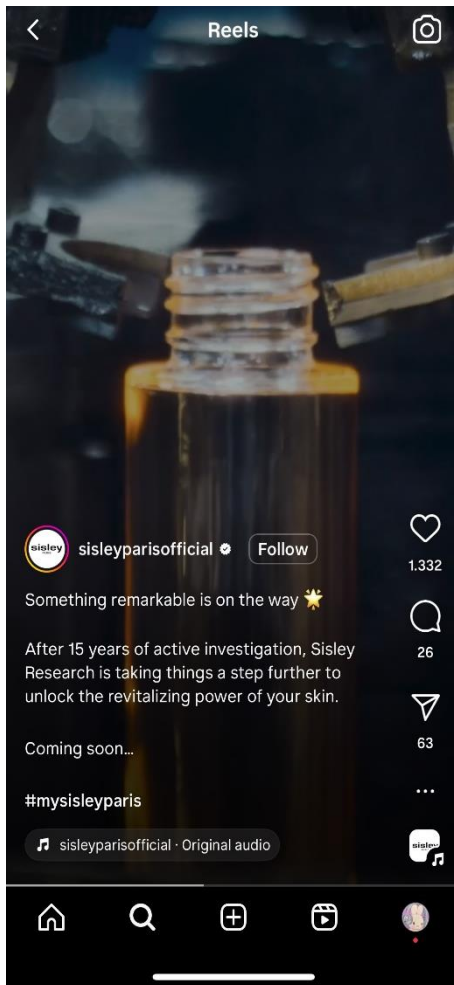
Sisley Paris publishes a lot more videos on Instagram than on TikTok, as was clear from section 3.1 above. For the month of September 2023, Sisley Paris posted fourteen videos related to skincare on Instagram, compared to only three videos on TikTok. Only one of those videos is the same on TikTok and Instagram: the “get ready with me” video, which was posted on Instagram first. This is most likely because this video was made in collaboration with model and **influencer** Chelsey Weimar. Her account on Instagram, @chelsey\_weimar, has a lot more followers (106K) than on TikTok (2,447), which could explain why Sisley Paris decided to post

her video on Instagram even before posting it on TikTok. The fourteen videos can be grouped in the following categories: advertisement (5), customer experience (3), brand image reinforcement (2), and entertainment (2).

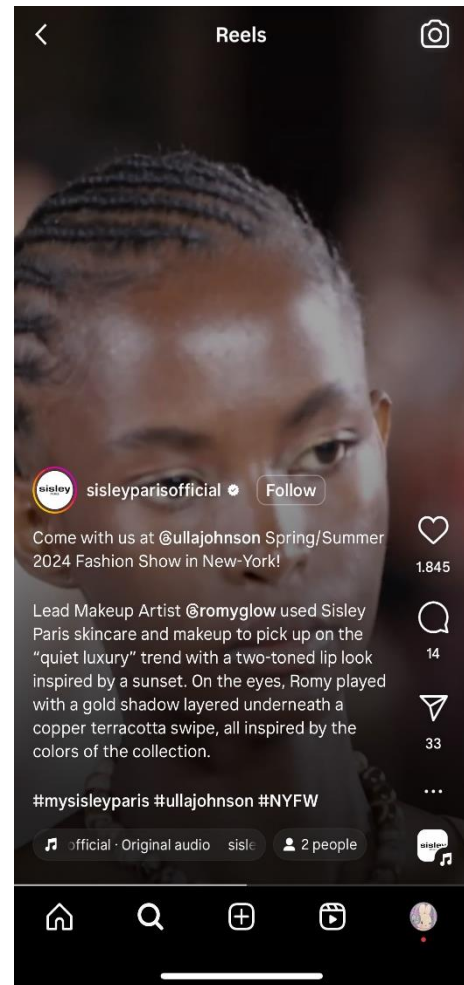
The “**advertisement**” videos highlight one specific product and are either about its ingredients and benefits for the skin or simply display the product in an aesthetically pleasing setting, as illustrated in picture 43 for example. One video is especially interesting because it is a teaser for a new product (picture 44), something that neither La Mer nor Estée Lauder did in their videos posted on Instagram for the month of September 2023. The video shows how the bottle is made and with that teases a new product.

The “**customer experience**” videos are the “get ready with me” video with Chelsey Weimar, a tutorial on how to use a dark spot corrector, and a demonstration of a mask routine. All three videos showcase how to use one or more products and are filmed in a way that emulates user generated content. Like every video of that type, it is hard to determine if the videos are the result of a paid partnership or if it is a genuine testimonial. However, because of the content of the videos, they will go into the “customer experience” category.

The two “**brand image reinforcement**” videos are behind the scenes footage of Ulla Johnson’s Spring/Summer 2024 Fashion Show, where Sisley Paris did the skincare and makeup for the models, as illustrated in picture 45. This reinforces Sisley Paris’ image as a luxurious beauty company. The two videos categorised as “**entertainment**” are a teaser/trailer for a new episode of “A Morning With”, made with Lauren Santo Domingo. “A Morning With” is a show created by Sisley Paris where they follow inspiring personalities during their morning routine. This is clearly made to entertain users.



Picture 44



Picture 45

Even though there are a lot more videos posted on Instagram than on TikTok, almost all of the videos posted on Instagram use the same features, actions, or behaviour that have been identified for TikTok: music (12), hashtags (12), comments (12), collaboration with influencers/celebrities (3), storytelling (3) and endorsing existing challenges/trends (1). They are also used in the same way. For example, the hashtags also never refer to the products displayed in the video; instead, they refer to the general theme, with hashtags such as #ullajohnson and #NYFW, as pictured in picture 45. However, most of the videos only have one hashtag: #mysisleyparis.

The type of content posted on Instagram does not really differ from the type of content posted on TikTok: “brand image reinforcement” and “customer experience” are types of content that Sisley Paris also likes to use on the brand’s Instagram account. Nevertheless, “advertisement” is the dominating type of content that the brand publishes on its Instagram account. However, the features, actions and behaviour found in the videos are different on TikTok and Instagram.

### 3.2.1.4. Tatcha

#### 3.2.4.1.1 TikTok

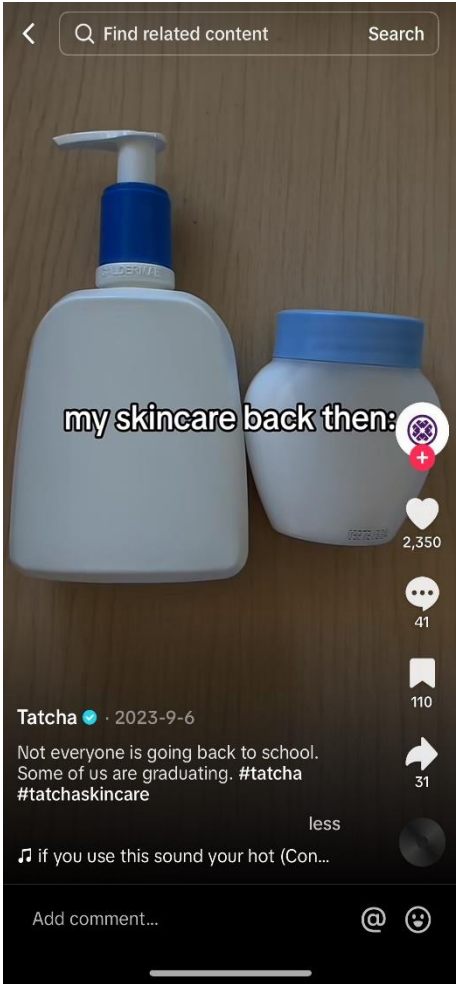
As examined in section 3.1, Tatcha posted nineteen TikTok videos about their skincare products during the month of September 2023. Based on the framework in section 1.6, the videos posted on Tatcha' TikTok account can be classified into five different content categories: entertainment (8), advertisement (4), customer experience (3), brand image reinforcement (3), and educational (1).

Eight TikTok videos are considered as “**entertainment**”. These TikTok videos can be divided into three different sub-categories: lifestyle, organisation and other. “Lifestyle” videos are similar to videos categorised as brand reinforcement videos in the way that they do not put a particular product in the spotlight but rather try to evoke a feeling or mood. However, they are not brand image reinforcement videos because the brand itself is not highlighted in the videos. The first TikTok video is a cooking skincare recipe that is supposed to help improve the quality of the skin. The second video is just made up of a few clips of what the person in the video has supposedly been up to in life lately: going to the spa, running, cooking, applying skincare, drinking coffee... Some products do appear or are briefly mentioned in those videos, but they are not the focus, which is why the videos are considered entertainment rather than brand image reinforcement image.

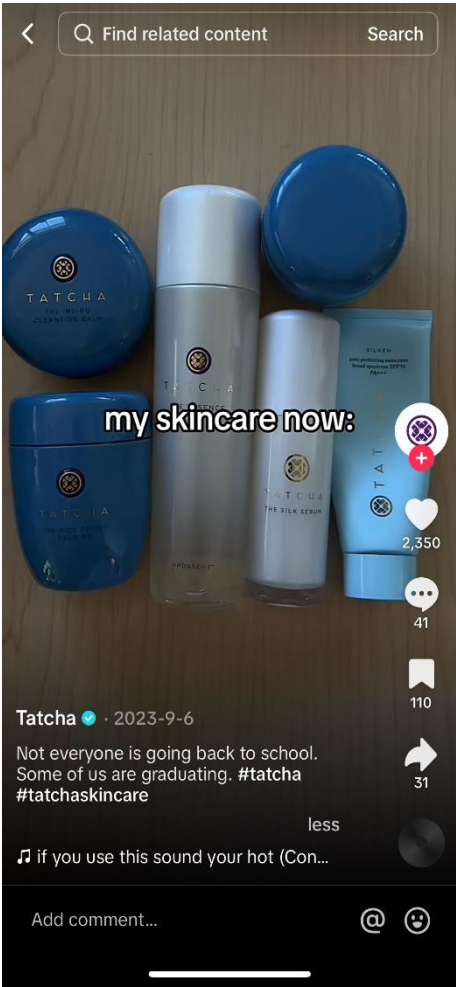
The second sub-category is “organisation”. Such videos have been mentioned before, for other brands. This refers to videos such as “what’s in my bag” videos. For Tatcha, three videos are concerned. They are “what’s in my bag”, “pack my bags with me” and “reset my workspace”. These three TikTok video all have the same purpose: to show how the content creator organises their bags or their workspace, while briefly showing the products as well. Similarly to the lifestyle videos, no specific product is highlighted in that any product is only quickly displayed. As argued earlier, those types of videos have been considered entertaining for a long time.

Finally, the third sub-category is “trending sounds videos”. Those videos are specifically made to fit a certain trending sound at that time in order to entertain the consumer. The intent is not humoristic per se, but rather to adapt the content to trending sounds. For example, one of the videos uses the song “Kill Bill” by SZA, as a particular extract from that song was trending. The video first shows white products, without a brand and, when the lyrics say “I’m so mature”, the products change and become Tatcha products, as illustrated in pictures 46 and 47. This implies that Tatcha products are an upgrade, or better, compared to other products. The second

video also uses a part of a song that was trending: “What You Wont Do For Love” by Bobby Caldwell, where he can be heard singing “I guess you wonder where I’ve been”. As shown in picture 48, the text on the video reads “wonder where I’ve been? At home!” while briefly showcasing two of Tatcha’s products. Finally, another sound that was trending, and specific to skin-care, is a voice that says, “calling all skincare junkies, to show me your favourite ...” and then goes on to name a few types of skincare products. The user in the video is then showing some Tatcha products in relation to what the sound is saying. These types of videos are considered entertaining because they use sounds that are trending at the time while adding a twist to it, making the videos fun and light to watch. They also do not give the feeling that the brand is trying to sell something to the viewer.



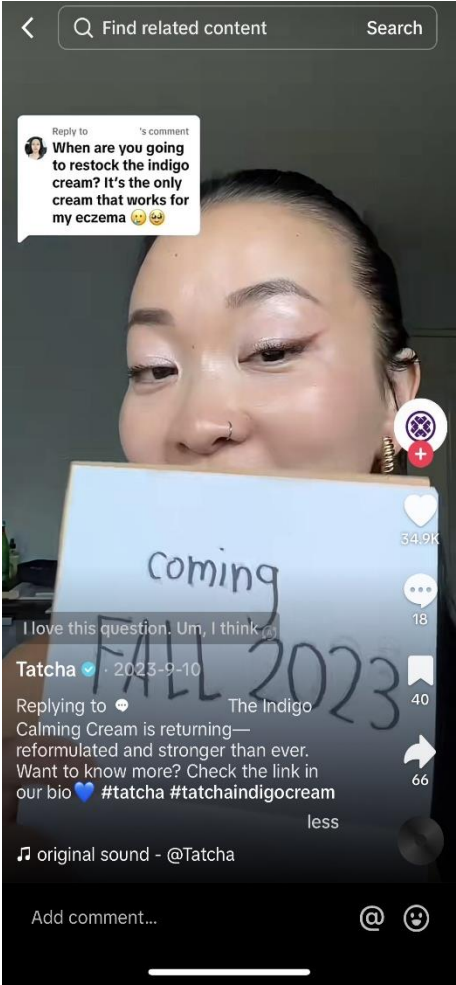
Picture 46



Picture 47

Four videos have been categorised as “**advertisement**”. Two of those TikTok videos are related to each other as they present the restock of Tatcha’s Indigo cream. The first video reveals that the cream is going to come back in fall 2023, as a response to someone’s comment under another TikTok (as shown in picture 49) and the second one is the announcement of its restock. The video first showcases a great number of comments asking for the cream (as illustrated in

picture 50), which highlights the high demand. The speaker then describes what features of the cream have been improved, such as “improved blendability” and they also introduce the new name: “Indigo CALMING cream”. The video ends with the text “now available”. Those videos are clear advertisements for the Indigo calming cream and its restocking as they insist on meeting customers’ need and indirectly invite people to buy it, as they also refer to the website in the description of their video. The combination of the text “available now” and the link to the website in the description is an indirect call to action.



Picture 49



Picture 51

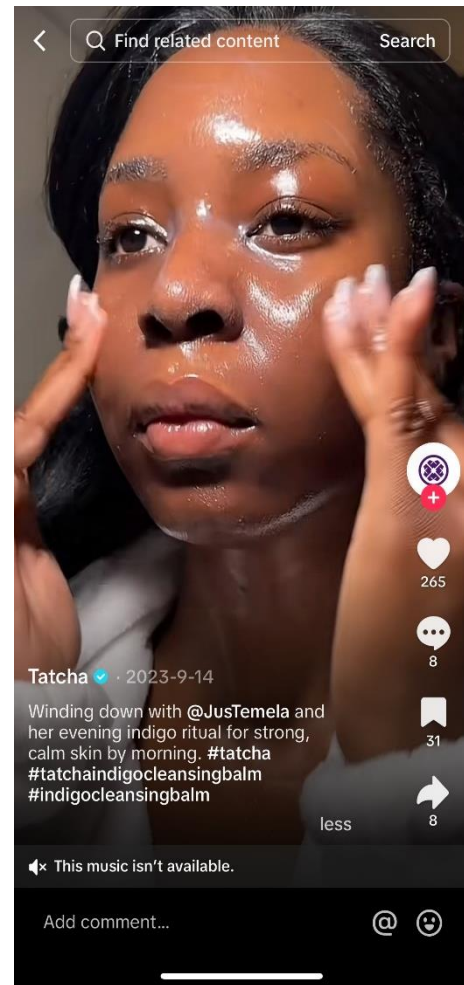
The third TikTok video in this category is quite similar to what has been described above. It showcases another product, the Kissu Lip Mask, and highlights the fact that the specific colour “Wisteria” is a limited edition of the product and is “now available for a limited time”. This is an obvious advertisement for the limited edition of the lip mask, as it incites people to buy the limited edition, playing on the fear of missing out. Moreover, the description says, “shop now!”, as shown in picture 51. This is a clear invitation (call to action) to buy the product, and quickly, before it sells out.

The fourth video is a video comparing two of Tatcha's products, the Indigo Overnight repair and the Indigo Calming Cream. The speaker in the video describes the ingredients and the specific use of each product, explaining what differs. The detailed explanation of the ingredients as well as the description of how to use the product blurred the lines between the "educational" category and the "advertisement" category, which made it harder to categorise this video. However, what compelled the choice of putting it in the "advertisement" category was that at the end of the video, the question "which cream are you going for?" is an implied invitation to buy the product. The video that was placed in the "educational" category earlier did not include an invitation to buy the product. Moreover, the speaker in the "educational" video studied earlier asks people to leave a comment if they have any questions about the products, further demonstrating the educational/informational character of the video, rather than trying to sell the product explicitly. The fourth video discussed here is however subtly trying to convince people to buy either one of the creams.

Three TikTok videos fit in the "**brand image reinforcement**" category. Two of these videos concern a product and the seal of approval from the National Eczma Association or the Allure Best of Beauty Award 2023 that it got, as shown in picture 52 and 53. These two videos help to reinforce Tatcha's brand image as two institutions recognise the brand as a skincare expert and strengthens Tatcha's product legitimacy in the skincare world. The third one is a video showing an event organised by Tatcha themselves. Much like the event organised by La Mer, Tatcha's event showcases the atmosphere that the brand wants to be associated with. The video is quite short, and no one talks in it; however, the cool toned, blue and purple colours as well as the light visible breeze evoke a feeling of zen, calm and luxury. This feeling is heightened by the flowers present all over the walls. This TikTok video is therefore clearly used for brand image reinforcement purposes.



Picture 53



Picture 55

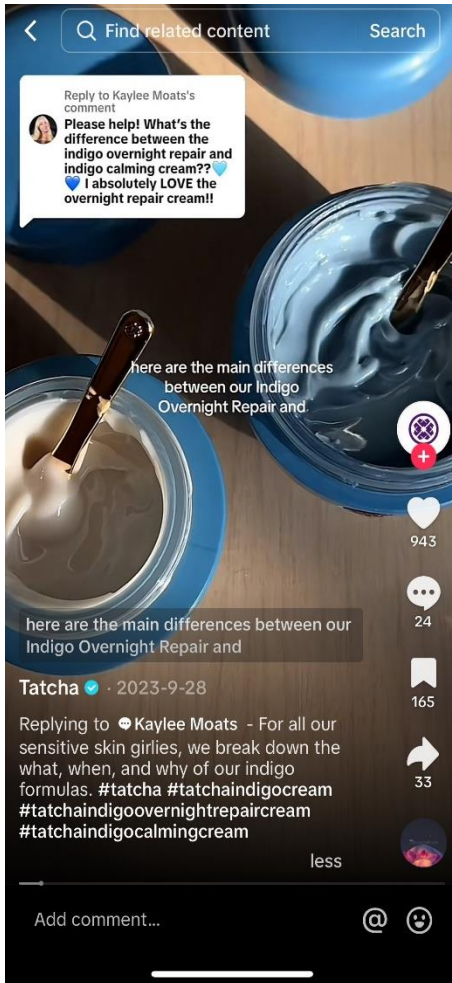
The three videos categorised as “**customer experience**” are very similar: three different content creators showcase their use of one or more Tatcha products. Two of them are videos with only music and no voice-over. The person in the TikTok video shows how the product can be used, as seen in pictures 54 and 55. The third video is more humorous. The person in the video describes his nighttime routine and starts by saying “a lot of people have *not* been asking about this, but I figured I’d share my wind down ritual anyway, ‘cause you know, why gate-keep?”. This sets the comical tone for the rest of the video. If the content creator did not highlight the benefits of, and demonstrate how to use the products, this video could also have gone into the “entertainment” category because of this humorous element. This video does not have music; there is a voice over instead. The three videos have the same characteristics and elements, even though they have been made differently. Therefore, they are all categorised as “customer experience”.

Finally, the only “**educational**” TikTok video is a demonstration of the differences between the old version of Tatcha’s Indigo Cream, and the new version that has been reformulated and renamed the Indigo Calming Cream. The video explains the differences in ingredients and

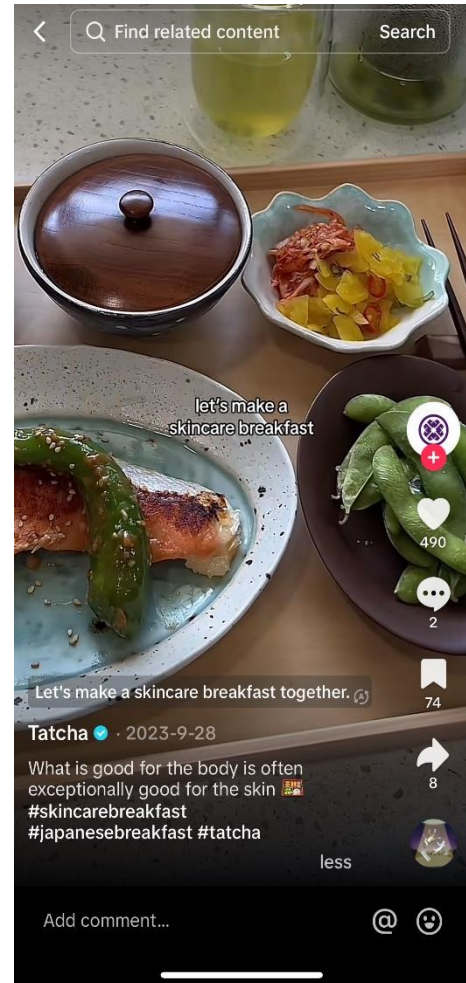
texture of the new formula. This video has been categorised as educational as it describes the properties of a specific product and seeks to inform consumers on what changed in the formula of the cream. Unlike the “advertisement” video highlighting the changes in the new indigo calming cream, there is no direct or indirect call to action.

The identified aspects related to TikTok include comments (19), hashtags (19), music (10), endorsing existing challenges/trends (7), collaborating with celebrities/influencers (3) storytelling (2), and using TikTok's specific video features (2).

**Comments** are opened in all of Tatcha's TikTok videos posted during the month of September 2023. Moreover, Tatcha is directly responding to comments, as shown in picture 56. The two videos using a TikTok specific feature are videos that answer to a comment with another TikTok video, as shown in picture 57. **Hashtags** are also used in the description of all of their videos. The hashtag #tatcha is present for all videos and then the use of hashtags differs from video to video. If one specific product is showcased, then the hashtag with the name of the product will be included, as illustrated with picture 58. If no product is specifically put forward in the video, then the hashtags will be more about what is in the video, as exemplified with picture 59, which are the hashtags under the skincare recipe. Hashtags such as #skincarebreakfast and #japanesebreakfast are present while there are no hashtags for the product that is briefly seen during the video.



Picture 57



Picture 59

**Music** is used in more than half of the TikTok videos. There are two types of music used in Tatcha's TikTok videos: pieces of music that were going viral at the time and music that helps create a specific mood for the video. For example, the music in the video about Tatcha's event is only used to set the calm mood of the video. Music is also used as a background sound for some of the videos, like the video explaining that the Indigo Calming cream got the seal of approval of the National Eczma Association. Viral parts of songs are also used in Tatcha's TikTok videos as illustrated by the songs "What You Wont Do For Love" by Bobby Caldwell and "Kill Bill" by SZA (cf. above). **Trending song remixes or sounds** is separated from original songs (music), as explained in section 3.2.1.1. and are placed in the "endorsing existing challenges/trend" category.

During September 2023, Tatcha's page featured three influencers/content creators: Kirk Brown (@kirkandre, with 15.9K followers on TikTok), Temela (@justemela, with 133.8K followers on TikTok), and Schae Graham (@schaebreezy, with 22.5K followers on TikTok). These individuals are associated with the three "customer experience" videos available on Tatcha's account. The inclusion of influencers in the "customer experience" category once again raises

questions about the authenticity of these videos. It is noteworthy that the "Paid Partnership" tag is absent from all three videos.

Two videos use **storytelling**: the nighttime routine video that uses a humoristic tone, which tells a story about how the content creator in the video goes to bed after a long day and is tired because of his day, and the lifestyle video about the life of the content creator. Both of these TikTok videos tell a specific story while including one or more Tatcha product(s) even if just quickly.

Finally, two videos use **a specific TikTok editing feature** which is replying to a comment with another new TikTok video.

These results suggest that Tatcha prioritises entertainment content above any other type of content; however, the brand still generates videos that can fit into all of the different content categories. Educational content is the type of content that Tatcha produces less. Regarding TikTok specific features, actions, and behaviour, comments and hashtags are used in all of their TikTok videos. Tatcha also uses a lot of music and trending sounds. Storytelling is used as well, but to a much lesser extent than in the other brands' videos examined above.

#### **3.2.4.1.2. TikTok vs Instagram**

Tatcha posts a lot less videos on Instagram as the findings in section 3.1 demonstrate. Only seven videos were posted on the platform during the month of September 2023, with two common videos on TikTok and Instagram. The two videos that were posted on Tatcha's TikTok account as well as on the brand's Instagram account are the video featuring Bobby Caldwell's song "What You Wont Do For Love" (**entertainment**) and the video illustrated in picture 54, featuring the limited edition of Tatcha's Kissu Lip Mask in the colour Wisteria (**customer experience**). These two videos were posted on TikTok first. Another video, which has not been posted on Tatcha's TikTok account, is a video in which the person in the video discusses what products she likes to take on vacation, and these products include mini versions of multiple Tatcha products. This video can thus be categorised as **customer experience** as one person shares her experience with specific products and what she likes about them.

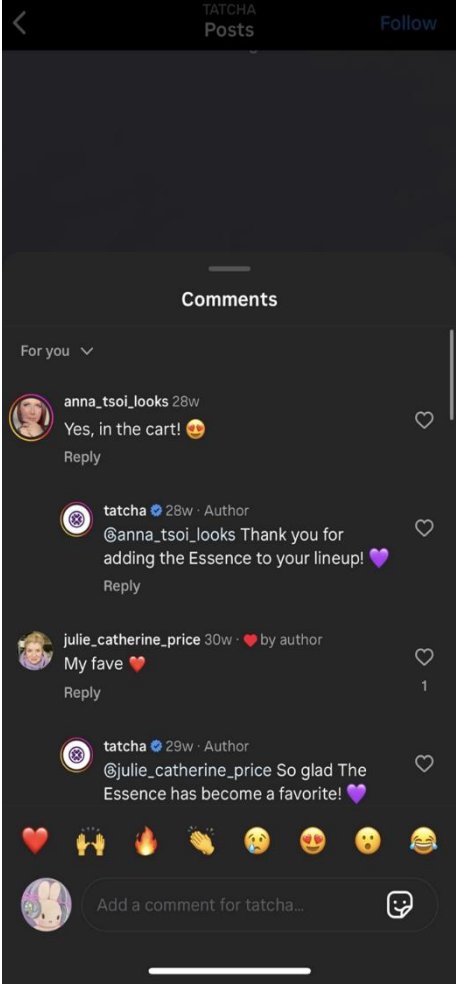
The four other videos can clearly be categorised as "**advertisement**". The videos focus on one specific product and are of higher-quality production. They do not have the same "amateur" characteristic than the videos on TikTok exhibit. The content on TikTok seems to have been filmed directly from the brand's phone while most of the videos on Tatcha's Instagram page seem to have been filmed with a higher quality camera, as illustrated in pictures 60 and 61. It should also be noted that some of the videos are about the same products as on TikTok: The Indigo Calming Lip Cream and the Kissu Lip Mask. The same products are therefore

advertised on both platforms but with different videos. Unlike La Mer, **brand reinforcement image** videos are present on TikTok but completely absent from Instagram. Like La Mer, one of Tatcha's products won the Allure Best of Beauty Award. While La Mer shared the news on Instagram and not on TikTok, Tatcha did the opposite. **No educational content** has been posted on Tatcha's Instagram account during the month of September 2023.

The TikTok specific features, actions, or behaviour that have been identified are comments (7), music (6), and storytelling (1). The **comments** are opened for all Tatcha's videos on Instagram and the brand also responds to some of them, as shown in picture 62. **Music** is also used in almost all of the brand's videos on Instagram for the studied period. **Storytelling** is used in the video about the mini products, as the speaker explains that those products are essentials when she travels, and she takes "a piece of home" with her and she is "so excited for [her] trip". Surprisingly, **no hashtags** were used in the description of Tatcha's videos, as opposed to the use of hashtags on TikTok.



Picture 61



Picture 62

On Instagram, for the studied period, Tatcha therefore preferred to publish videos that can be categorised as “advertisement” and “customer experience”. “Entertainment” is only represented with one video and no educational” or “brand reinforcement” videos were published on Tatcha’s Instagram account. Comments are opened under all the videos and music is also used in almost all of them. Storytelling is barely used as a technique on Instagram, as was also the case on TikTok. One big difference is the use of hashtags, which are completely absent from Tatcha’s Instagram.

### 3.2.1.5. Conclusion

Table 10 summarises findings regarding the type of content that each high-end brand preferred to publish on their TikTok account for the month of September 2023. Table 11 summarises what specific strategies the high-end brands used in their videos published on TikTok for the same period.

	<b>Estée Lauder</b>	<b>La Mer</b>	<b>Sisley Paris</b>	<b>Tatcha</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Customer experience</b>	7	7	2	3	<b>19</b>
<b>Entertainment</b>	6	4	0	8	<b>18</b>
<b>Advertisement</b>	0	8	0	4	<b>12</b>
<b>Brand image reinforcement</b>	0	1	1	3	<b>5</b>
<b>Educational</b>	0	2	0	1	<b>3</b>
<b>Other</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

**Table 10. data summary for high-end brands’ content on TikTok.**

	<b>Estée Lauder</b>	<b>La Mer</b>	<b>Sisley Paris</b>	<b>Tatcha</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Hashtags</b>	13	22	3	19	<b>57</b>
<b>Comments</b>	13	22	3	19	<b>57</b>
<b>Music</b>	1	12	2	10	<b>25</b>
<b>Collaborating with celebrities/influencers</b>	13	3	1	3	<b>20</b>
<b>Endorsing existing trends/challenges</b>	5	4	1	7	<b>17</b>
<b>Storytelling</b>	7	6	2	2	<b>17</b>

<b>Using Tiktok specific video features</b>	1	6	0	2	<b>9</b>
<b>Creating new trends/challenges</b>	0	2	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Collaborating with health professionals</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Other</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

**Table 11. data summary for high-end brands' strategies used on TikTok.**

This data clearly shows that the preferred type of content for high-end brands' videos posted on TikTok is "customer experience", closely followed by "entertainment". Their least favourite and frequent type of content is "educational". "Brand image reinforcement" is not quite popular on TikTok for high-end brands and "advertisement" content is mildly popular.

Regarding the strategies that were identified in the brands' videos on TikTok the most frequent ones were comments and hashtags, which were present in the entirety of the videos for each brand. Music was used for less than half of the videos but is still the most popular feature used by the brands, after comments and hashtags. In September 2023, the high-end skincare brands under study showed equal use of collaborating with celebrities/influencers, endorsing existing trends/challenges, and storytelling. However, collaborating with influencers slightly outshone the other two activities in terms of popularity. Few videos used TikTok specific features and almost no videos displayed new trends/challenges created by the brands. Finally, none of the fifty-seven videos posted by the high-end brands made use of a collaboration with health professionals.

Table 12 presents the findings connected with the content preferences of each high-end brand for their Instagram accounts during September 2023. Table 13 outlines the specific features, actions, or behaviours used by these high-end brands in the videos that they posted on Instagram during the same period.

	<b>Estée Lauder</b>	<b>La Mer</b>	<b>Sisley Paris</b>	<b>Tatcha</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Advertisement</b>	4	11	5	4	<b>24</b>
<b>Brand image re-inforcement</b>	0	7	2	0	<b>9</b>
<b>Customer experience</b>	0	1	3	2	<b>6</b>

<b>Entertainment</b>	0	0	2	1	<b>3</b>
<b>Educational</b>	0	2	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Other</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

**Table 12. data summary for high-end brands' content on Instagram.**

	<b>Estée Lauder</b>	<b>La Mer</b>	<b>Sisley Paris</b>	<b>Tatcha</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Comments</b>	4	21	12	7	<b>44</b>
<b>Music</b>	4	21	12	6	<b>43</b>
<b>Hashtags</b>	4	21	12	0	<b>37</b>
<b>Storytelling</b>	2	2	3	1	<b>8</b>
<b>Collaborating with ce- lebrities/influencers</b>	1	2	3	0	<b>6</b>
<b>Creating new trends/challenges</b>	0	2	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Endorsing existing trends/challenges</b>	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Collaborating with health professionals</b>	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Using Tiktok specific video features</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Other</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

**Table 13. data summary for high-end brands' strategies used on Instagram.**

The data clearly indicates that during September 2023, "advertisement" emerged as the favoured content type for the high-end skincare brands on Instagram, especially for La Mer. Following closely behind is "brand image reinforcement", once again because of La Mer. In contrast, "educational" content was the least popular content type. Categories such as "entertainment" and "customer experience" were notably absent.

Regarding the strategies observed in videos published during the same period, comments predominated, with music and hashtags closely behind. On the other hand, collaborating with health professionals, endorsing existing trends/challenges, and creating new trends/challenges were the least popular. Storytelling and collaborating with celebrities/influencers were moderately popular among Instagram videos shared by high-end brands during the analysed period.

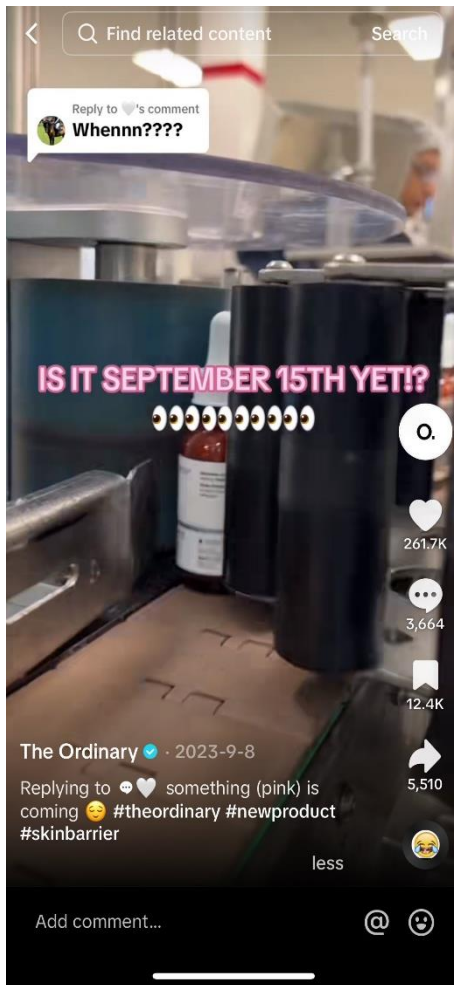
## 3.2.2. Budget-friendly brands

### 3.2.2.1. The Ordinary

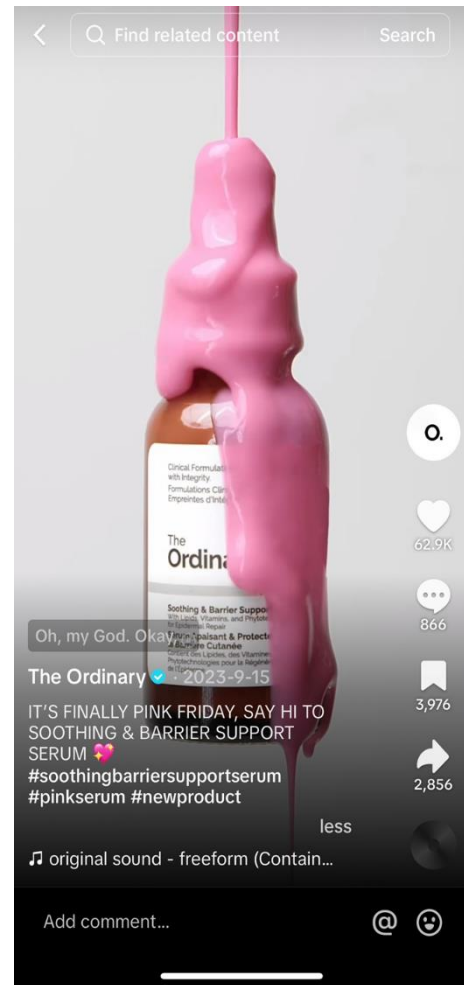
#### 3.2.2.1.1. TikTok

As section 3.1 highlights, The Ordinary published fifteen TikTok videos during the month of September 2023. These videos can be classified into four different content categories: advertisement (6), educational (6), entertainment (3), and brand image reinforcement (1).

Out of the six videos that can be categorised as “**advertisement**”, four TikTok videos discuss the new product that The Ordinary launched in September, the Soothing & Barrier Support Serum. As opposed to the “advertisement” videos for high-end brands, the videos published by The Ordinary are not high-production videos. They are recorded with what seems to be a phone rather than a high-quality camera, as illustrated in pictures 63 and 64. If however, the quality of the video seems higher than a normal phone recording, the video will not be overly produced compared to other brands such as Estée Lauder or La Mer, as shown with picture 65. The two other videos that can be categorised as advertisement discuss two other products and are also filmed with a phone rather than a high-quality camera, as illustrated with pictures 66 and 67. The fact that these videos are not high quality, highly produced video as they exhibit an “amateur” character makes the advertisement character less aggressive. Although the videos do not include a link or an invitation to buy the product, they can still be considered “advertisement” because they focus on one product and describe its benefits or discuss the launch of a new product.



Picture 63

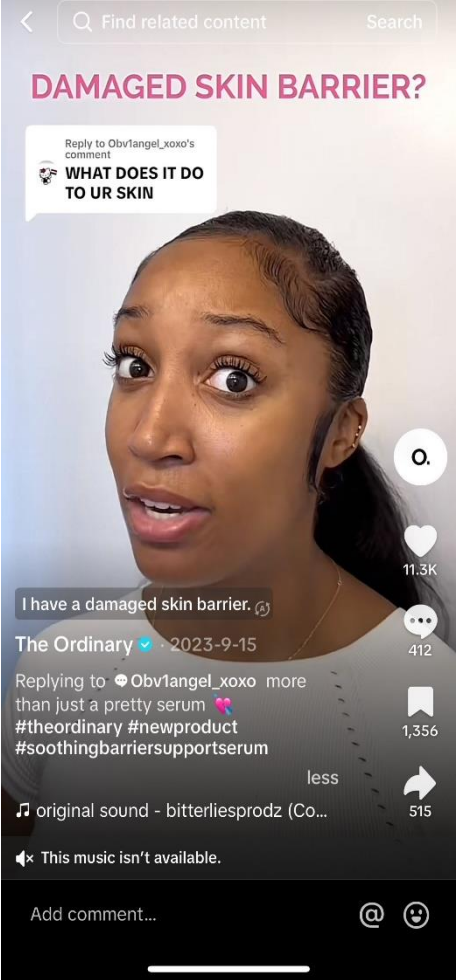


Picture 65

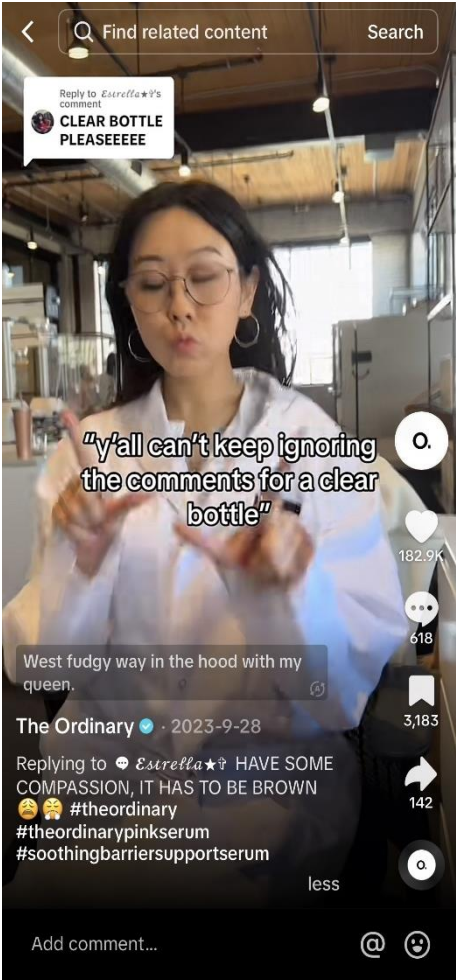
Six videos can be categorised as "**educational**". The line between "educational" and "advertisement" is very thin for The Ordinary, especially because of the release of the new serum. For example, the video illustrated in picture 68 explains what the new serum does to the skin. The reason why this video was put in the "educational" category rather than in the "advertisement" category is because it directly answers the question of a user. Even though one of the purposes of this TikTok video is to ultimately make consumers want to buy the product, the main goal was to answer the question. Another video explains what other products from The Ordinary can be mixed with the new serum, which can arguably be considered to have an educational purpose and not a clear commercial one. Other videos that don't include the new serum have themes such as why can the skin become flaky after the application of multiple products, why one should add an antioxidant in one's routine and how to know if the skin barrier is compromised.

Three videos can be categorised as "**entertainment**". The first TikTok video is illustrated in picture 69. It is a close-up of an unnamed product with the text "what is this? Wrong answers only". The main intention of this video is to create engagement and invite people to

comment with funny answers. Picture 70 depicts the second “entertainment” video where two employees at The Ordinary participate in a trend. The trend consists in doing a dance on the song “Wassup Gway” by Famous Sally & YB. This song and the trend associated with it were particularly viral at the time of collection and a lot of people, including celebrities were participating.



Picture 68



Picture 70

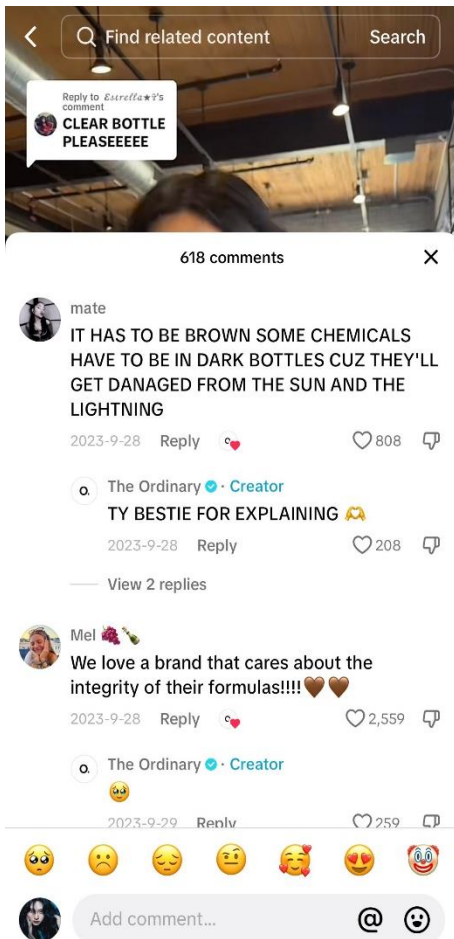
Finally, the “**brand image reinforcement**” video is a video in which one of The Ordinary’s employees takes the viewer on a day at work with her, as shown in picture 71. In that TikTok video, the employee shows behind the scenes footage of how TikTok lives are organised at The Ordinary. This video is considered as brand image reinforcement as it includes behind the scenes footage which showcase the working atmosphere at The Ordinary.

The identified strategies specific to TikTok include hashtags (15), comments (15), endorsing existing challenges/trends (9), music (6), and using TikTok's specific editing features (6).

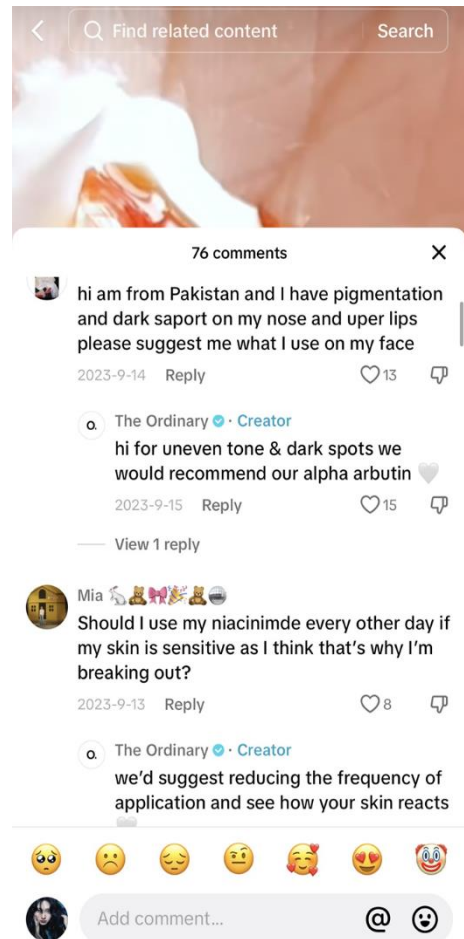
**Hashtags** are consistently used across all the descriptions of brand’s videos. The use of the different **hashtags** by The Ordinary isn't always consistently applied, however. Although

the hashtag #theordinary is typically included in most of the brand's descriptions, as evidenced in pictures 63, 64, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, and 71, there are instances where this hashtag is missing, as seen in picture 65. When the video focuses on a particular product, a hashtag with the product's name is used, like #soothingbarriersupportserum or #lashandbrowserum. Additionally, more general hashtags related to the video's theme, such as #skintok, #newproduct, or #skinbarrier, may be included.

**Comments** are also open in all of the videos. The brand also answers some of the comments. The language that they use in their responses is specific language used on the internet, mostly by younger users, such as “period”, and “bestie”, as illustrated by pictures 72 and 73. They also answer questions asked by users directly in the comments, as shown in picture 74. The Ordinary can thus be seen to use comments to engage and connect with its audience.



Picture 73

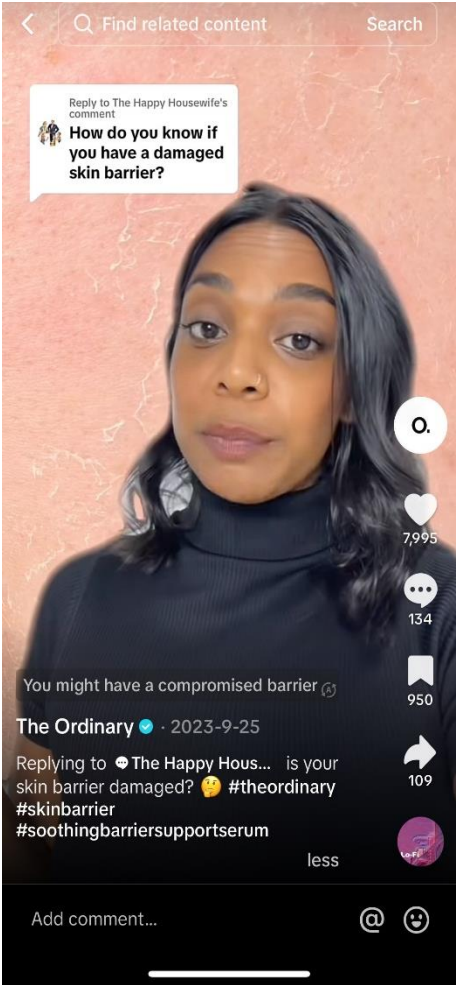


Picture 74

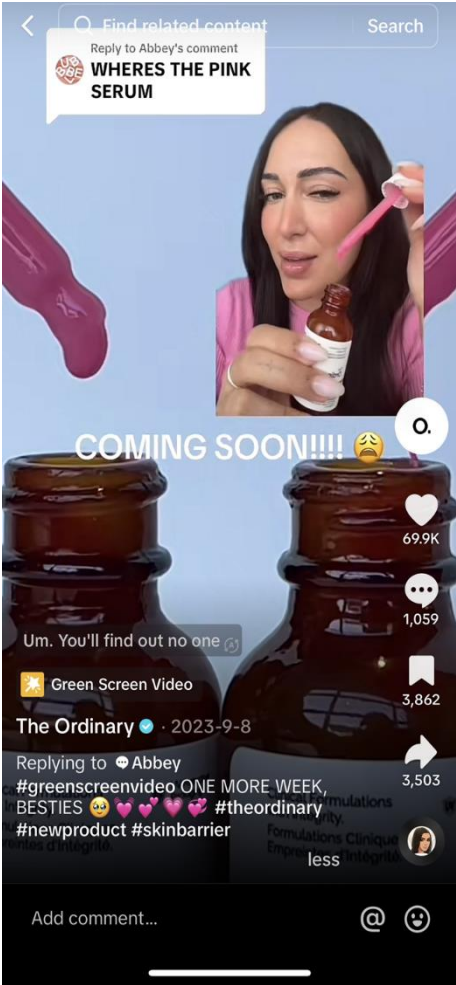
Nine videos also **endorse existing trends**. Most of the trends are trending sounds, such as popular remixes of songs like “ASAP” by the group New Jeans or “Écoute Chérie” by Charline Mignot. A lot of the time sounds with sped up or slowed down versions of songs will go viral on TikTok. Apart from song remixes, there are also sounds of people saying something

funny. For example, the TikTok video illustrated on picture 63 shows the process of the making of the bottle of the new pink serum and a text that reads “Is it September 15<sup>th</sup> yet !?”. The sound that is used is someone saying “Ay, go, more passion, more passion, more passion, more energy, more energy, more footwork”. This sound is typically used on TikTok on videos where something needs to be done quickly. Because the video is about the release of the new product the sound complements the content of the video very well. Finally, there is also music that is used in combination with a specific dance move, like the song “Wassup Gway”, which can be considered a challenge. **Music** is also used in six videos from The Ordinary. Music is used as background music when one person is talking in the video.

Lastly, **specific editing TikTok features** are used six times. These features include the use of the green screen effect<sup>6</sup>, as shown in picture 75, and answering comments directly with a new TikTok video, as shown in picture 63. In two instances, both features were combined in on TikTok video, exemplified in pictures 75 and 76.



Picture 75



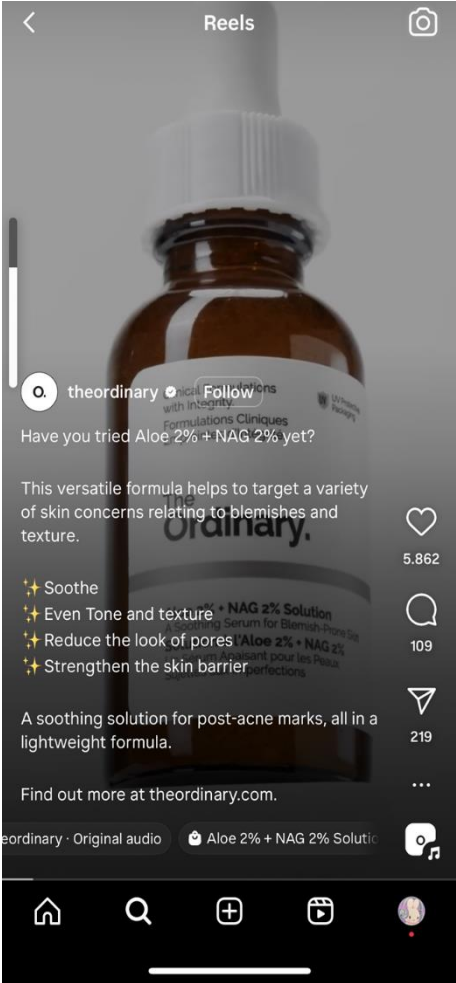
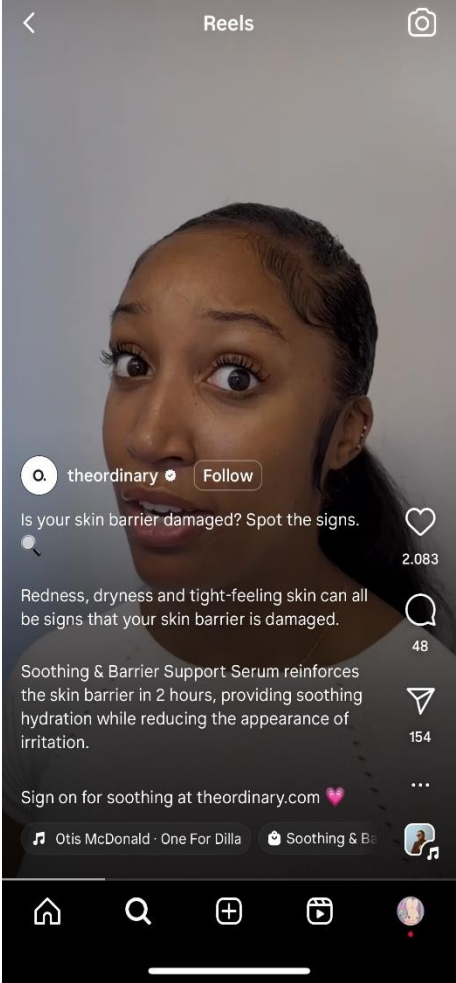
Picture 76

<sup>6</sup> The green screen effect is an effect where an image is put in the background of the video, and someone appears in front of it. The background image acts like a green screen.

These results show that the most frequent types of content by the brand The Ordinary are “advertisement” and “educational”, while “customer experience” is completely absent from the brand’s TikTok account for the month of September 2023. The brand also uses hashtags and comments for all the videos and uses a lot of trending sounds and challenges in their own videos. The Ordinary does not collaborate with celebrities/influencers or health professionals, and no new challenges were created.

**3.2.2.1.2. TikTok vs. Instagram**

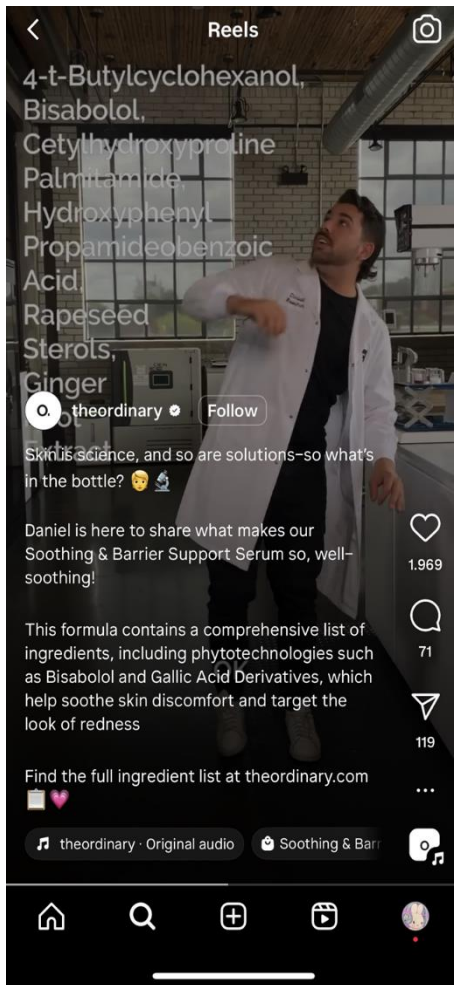
As shown in section 3.1, The Ordinary posted twenty-one videos on the brand’s Instagram account in September 2023, three of which were the same as on TikTok. The videos that are the same are about the new serum. All the videos were posted on TikTok first. There are also three videos that are very similar to the ones posted on TikTok with only a few details that change, like the music, the font of the text, or the cuts. In addition, two videos were re-used from TikTok, but the specific editing features were taken out of the videos before posting them on Instagram. For example, the TikTok video illustrated in picture 74 was re-used and re-edited and the comment that it originally answered was removed, as showcased in picture 77. This was not the case for any of the brands studied above except La Mer.



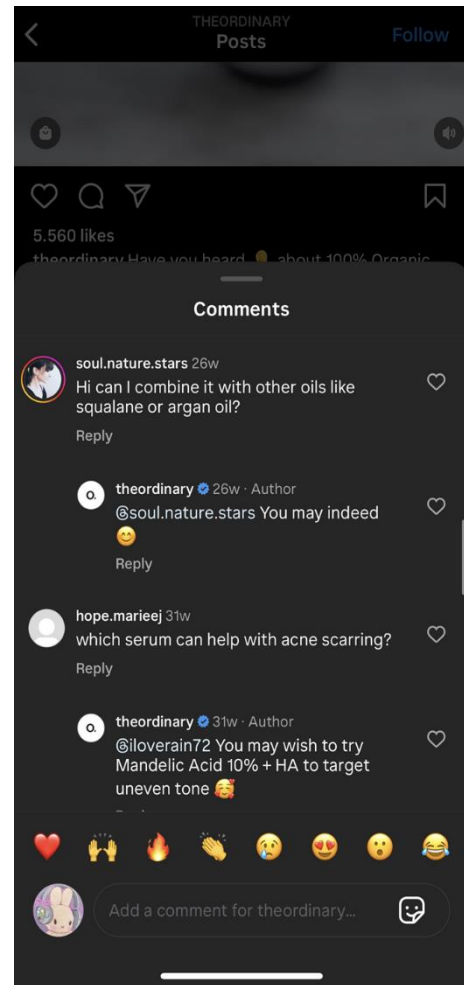
The different categories of videos that can be found on The Ordinary's Instagram account for September 2023 are advertisement (15), and educational (6).

The “**advertisement**” videos on Instagram are very similar to one another. The product is presented against a white background and showcased from different angles with some of the ingredients and benefits being highlighted in the video as well as in the description of the video, as shown by pictures 78 and 79. Those videos are obviously not filmed with a phone but with a high-quality camera. The products in those videos are not mentioned on the brand's TikTok account. Other videos categorised as “advertisement” are less traditional and use humour. However, the main purpose of these videos is to sell the product that is showcased in the video by explaining the product's benefits in detail. Once again, the line is rather thin between “advertisement” and “educational”. However, it is pretty clear that the main purpose of the videos categorised in the first category is to convince the user to buy the product. What makes it even clearer, is the fact that the user can click on a button directly on the video to buy the product. This button is only present on those videos.

Six videos were placed in the “**educational**” category. For example, one video (illustrated in picture 80) details the ingredients of the new serum and how they work together. Moreover, the description redirects users to the full ingredients list on the website. This video is therefore more educational than trying to persuade users to buy the product. Another educational video presents the products from the brand that can help blemish-prone skin for instance. The "educational" videos, as opposed to the "advertisement" ones, seem to use less forceful persuasive tactics in promoting products. Instead, their emphasis lies more on communicating information rather than pushing for sales. There is no specific call to action.



Picture 80



Picture 81

Some TikTok specific features, actions or behaviour that were identified in the videos published on the brand's Instagram in September 2023 are comments (21), music (17), existing trends/challenges (2), and (possibly) collaborating with health professionals (1).

**Comments** are open for all the videos and The Ordinary answers some of them with useful information or react to feedback given by clients, as shown by pictures 81 and 82.

**Music** is used as background sound for videos where someone is talking. When no one is talking, the music is louder and the only form of sound in the video. The music is always instrumental. No music with lyrics is present on the videos posted on the brand's Instagram account for the month of September 2023. There are however two videos that contain **trending sounds**, such as the aforementioned sound "Ay, go, more passion, more passion, more passion, more energy, more energy, more footwork". The video explaining which products can be beneficial for acne prone skin uses a sound enumerating "two of these, one of these, one of these, one of these, that's all".

The video showcasing the ingredients of The Ordinary's latest serum features a presenter in a lab coat within a laboratory setting. The speaker uses terms like "we formulated...",

suggesting involvement in the product's creation. Despite this, the speaker's background or profession is unknown. Although only their name is disclosed, leaving uncertainty regarding their status as a healthcare professional. The Ordinary presumably set out to convey the of **collaborating with a health professional**.

During the observed period in September 2023, The Ordinary predominantly shared videos on Instagram falling into the categories of "advertisement" and "educational". No other categories were represented. All videos had open comments, and most incorporated music, with only two featuring trending sounds. It is noteworthy that, hashtags were absent from the brand's Instagram posts but present on TikTok. Although no influencer collaborations were noted, a collaboration with an alleged healthcare professional was published.

### **3.2.2.2. The INKEY List**

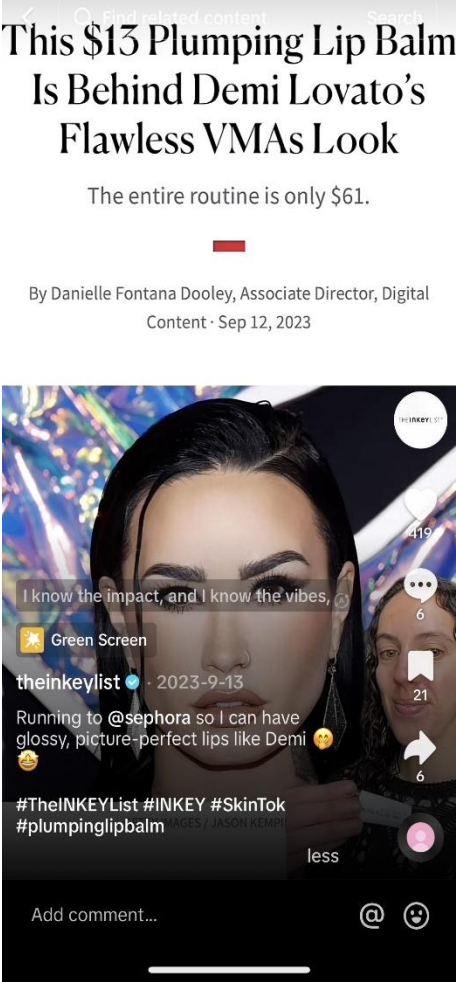
#### **3.2.2.2.1. TikTok**

In Section 3.1, it is shown that The INKEY List published a total of twenty-eight TikTok videos in September 2023. The videos shared on The INKEY List's TikTok account can be categorised across all five content types: advertisement (12), customer experience (7), entertainment (4), brand image reinforcement (3), and educational (2). It should be noted that during the studied period, the INKEY List released a new product, the Tripeptide Plumping Lip Balm, which features in twenty-seven out of the twenty-eight published videos.

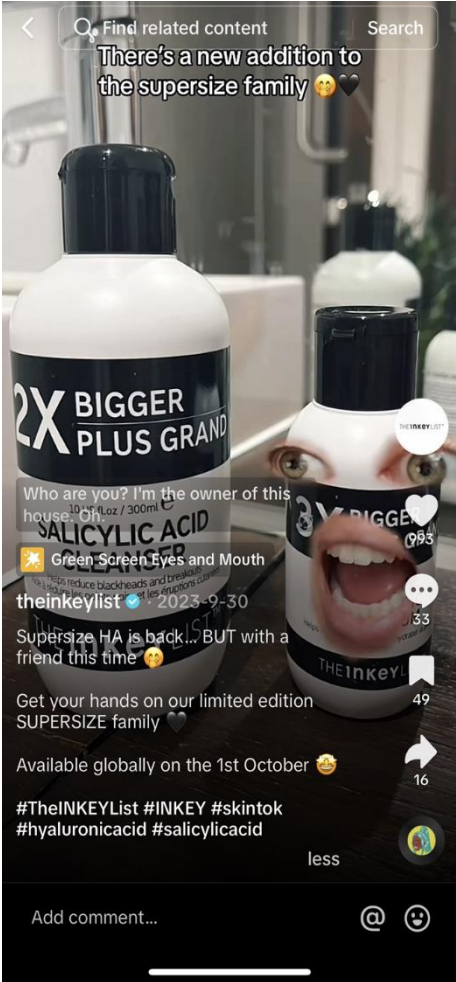
Twelve videos were identified as “**advertisement**”. Eleven out of the twelve videos advertise the launch or the brand’s newest product, the Tripeptide Plumping Lip Balm. Like The Ordinary’s “advertisement” type of videos, the INKEY List’s ones are not high-produced, high-quality videos. Instead, the videos are filmed with a phone and feel more authentic and spontaneous. Nevertheless, the main purpose of these TikTok videos is to incite the user to buy the product. To achieve this, The INKEY List uses different techniques.

The use of press articles to support their arguments, as seen in pictures 83 and 84, is one of the techniques employed by the brand. These videos show individuals next to press articles with the brand prominently featured in the headlines, serving as evidence for the claims made about the Tripeptide lip balm. Another technique is to present the product, its benefits and characteristics in combination with trends and/or trending sounds, such as a sound saying “Is it an addiction? Is it an addiction? No, I don’t think it is an addiction”, or “Me? Obsessed with you? Yes!”. The video illustrated in picture 85 is about one of the brand’s other products which also employs this technique and uses a sound that says “Who are you? I’m Pam, who are you? I’m the owner of this house”. Then, there are videos where the viewer is taken into different physical

shops to see where the product is actually located, as exemplified with pictures 86 and 87. What all those videos have in common is that they all invite the viewer to visit either online or physical shops to buy the product highlighted in the video, which is why they can be categorised as “advertisement” type of videos. The invitation to visit the shops is an indirect call to action to buy the product.



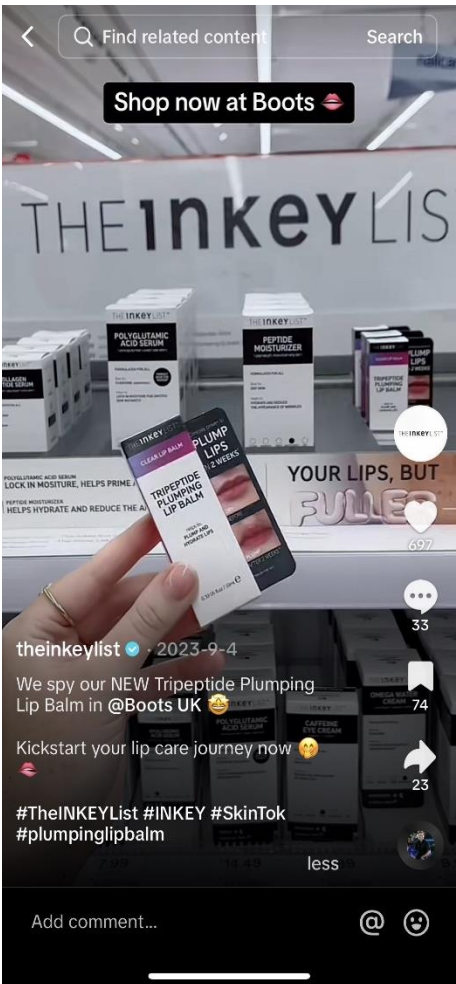
Picture 83



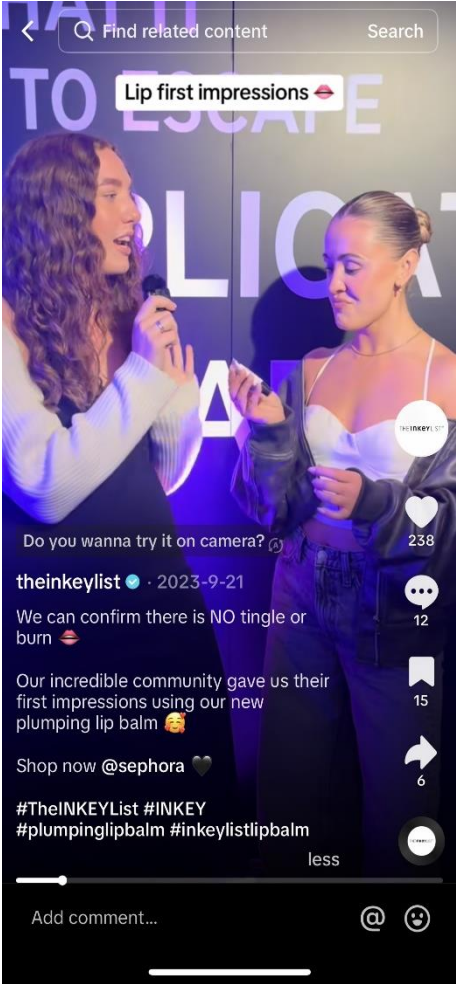
Picture 85

“Customer experience” is also a popular category within The INKEY List’s TikTok account. Something that the brand likes to do is to directly interview customers, sellers, or attendees of the events that the brand organised, as shown in picture 88. In this video, multiple guests are asked questions about their first impression of the product, if it is tacky, if it tingles, ... Directly collecting the opinion of people is something that has not been done by any of the other brands studied until now. Another type of shared experience are videos where the co-owner of the brand, Colette, shares her own experience of the product and how it worked for her. The authenticity of these videos is harder to ascertain, as she is one of the owners of the brand. However, they do provide an account of a personal perspective on the product, thus falling under the 'customer experience' category. Additionally, there are two videos featuring

content creators who express their opinions and experiences with the lip balm. One video, created by Jasmine Adetunji (@jasadetunji, 162K followers), highlights it as her favourite balm. The second video, by Beauty with Phia (@sophia.puliafico, 727 followers), showcases the increase in lip size after using the product for four weeks by measuring her lips. All those videos fit into the “customer experience” category as they explain the opinions and experiences of various people with the product.



Picture 86



Picture 88

Four videos were categorised as “entertainment”. Although all these videos are also about the new lip balm, there is a nuance when comparing them to the ones in “advertisement”: instead of focusing on the benefits of the lip balm or on what it does in detail, they just talk about it, without trying to sell it. For example, in one video the caption reads “POV: when the social team go to film lip content/but it’s a sellout” combined with a trending sound saying “mother... where is it? Where the f... is it? I swear to God!”. The purpose of the video is to be funny, while sharing the fact that the product is so popular that it is sold out. The purpose of this video is therefore not primarily to make the user want to buy the product by redirecting them to the website or the shop, but rather to entertain them. Two other videos also have a

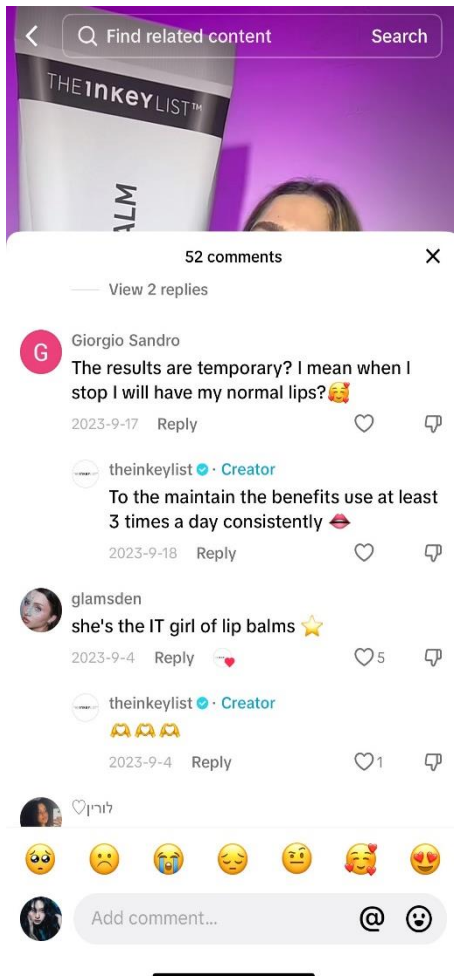
humoristic tone and aim to make the user laugh with trending sounds and/or challenges. The last video shows how the lip balm can be transformed into a keyring to always have it on hand and the text reads “POV: You have to take your new plumping lip balm everywhere”.

The category “**brand image reinforcement**” can be applied to three videos. These three videos showcase one specific event each: the five-year anniversary of the brand, the Manchester event for the launch of the Tripeptide Lip Balm, and the Miami launch event of the Tripeptide Lip Balm. Those videos show footage of the events and Colette, interacting with the guests and attendees. The videos are categorised under "brand image reinforcement" as they contribute to creating a perception of a vibrant, fun, young brand through footage from the parties.

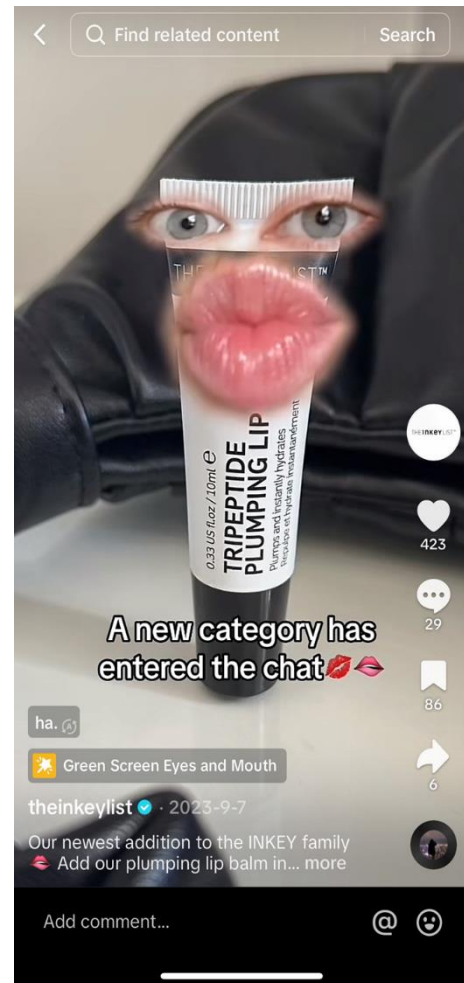
Finally, two videos were categorised as “**educational**”. One video features a FAQ (frequently asked questions) session about the new lip balm, where an employee from the brand's product development team answers questions such as “Can it be used on sensitive skin?” and “Is it vegan?”. The other video addresses a question regarding the product's compatibility with lipstick, with Colette answering the question. Being directly related to questions about the product, these two videos can clearly be classified as "educational."

A few of the specific strategies used on TikTok by the INKEY List in the brand’s TikTok videos were already addressed in the sections above such as the use of trending sound and collaborating with influencers. The full list thereof includes comments (28), hashtags (28), endorsing existing challenges/trends (17), using TikTok specific video features (8), collaborating with celebrities/influencers (5), other (3), music (2) and collaborating with health professionals (1).

Each TikTok video has its **comments** opened. The INKEY List also answers some of those comments, as illustrated with picture 89. **Hashtags** are also used under every video, and they are always the same two hashtags: #TheIKEYlist and #INKEY. Depending on the product showcased in the video, a hashtag related to that product is also present, such as #plumping-lipbalm or #inkeylistlipbalm. The hashtag #SkinTok is also used for most of their TikTok videos, but not all of them.



Picture 89



Picture 92

The INKEY List uses a lot of **trending sounds and/or challenges** in their TikTok videos. Several of these sounds have been mentioned earlier. They are utilized across all content categories, except for customer experience, because in this category, individuals are speaking in the video, and adding additional sounds would interfere with clarity.

**Specific video features** are also used in the brand's TikTok videos including reacting to a comment with another TikTok video, green screen, filters, and photo sliders. These are illustrated in pictures 90, 91, 92, and 93.

Five videos feature **celebrities/influencers**. Two of these videos are the two videos where an influencer is sharing their experience with the product mentioned earlier. The three other videos are the videos about the events, where multiple celebrities/influencers can be seen. However, none of them are tagged in the video or description.

A **new type of action** was identified in the INKEY List's TikTok video: **interviews**. No other brand has used this strategy so far. The INKEY List conducted interviews with a variety of participants, including passersby, event guests or attendees, and beauty shop employees. This approach is an effort to promote the new product by asking relevant questions to these

individuals. Moreover, the interviewer offers the interviewees an opportunity to try the product. This direct interaction with potential customers not only contributes to potential sales but generate immediate reactions to the lip balm as well, creating possibly engaging content for the brand's TikTok page.

**Music** is used in only two videos, and it is used as background music. One video, namely the FAQ video, showcases a **health professional**. The woman in the video is a member of the product development team and has therefore scientific, credible and trustworthy answers to the questions asked.

In conclusion, The INKEY List's most frequent type of content is "advertisement" type of videos, followed by "customer experience" videos, which include a new type of strategy, interviews. "Educational" type of content is the least popular for the brand. The most popular features, actions and behaviour are comments, hashtags and endorsing existing challenges/trends. No storytelling or creation of new trends/challenges were identified.

#### **3.2.2.2.2. TikTok vs. Instagram**

As revealed in section 3.1, The INKEY List published twenty videos on Instagram during the month of September 2023, out of which only four were the same as on TikTok. Three out of the four videos were posted on Instagram first. Four other videos are very similar to the ones posted on TikTok but have different music/sound and/or different editing features and footage. For the twenty-two videos posted on Instagram, five types of content categories were identified: customer experience (8), advertisement (5), entertainment (4), educational (3), brand image reinforcement (1), and other (1).

"**Customer experience**" is the leading type of content posted on Instagram by the brand. One of these videos is the same as on TikTok: the interview in front of the Boots store. The other videos are videos of Colette (one of which is also the same as the one posted on TikTok) or other content creators about different products. The content creators are Hannah St Luce (@hanstluce, 285K followers), Chloe Ramsden (@glamsden, 3,496 followers), Lelli (@aboutlelli, 14K followers), and Rae Dang (@creator.raedang, 765 followers). In the videos, the content creators don't give their opinions on the products (they do not talk) but demonstrate how the products work instead.

"**Advertisement**" is also quite popular on the INKEY List's Instagram account. These videos are quite like the ones that can be found on the brand's TikTok account except for the content. One video where Colette is going to shop for the Lip Balm at Sephora is the same as on TikTok. For all those videos, the "amateur" feel is the same. No highly produced, high-quality videos can be found on the brand's Instagram for the studied period. This is also true

for videos categorised as “entertainment”: the content differs (except for the keyring video), but the overall feel when watching the videos is the same. One video of a content creator was used and fits in this category. The content creator is Dani (@upsidedowndani, 3,216 followers).

Three videos were identified as “educational”. Two of these are quite similar to what can be found on the brand’s TikTok account; however, one is different. The other co-founder of the brand, Mark, talks about the ingredients of the lip balm, as illustrated in picture 94. Mark never appeared on the TikTok account in the videos published in September 2023. Moreover, the look and feel of this video are quite different. It has been edited with specific visuals so as to come across as more scientific and trustworthy, as exemplified in picture 95.



Picture 95



Picture 96

One video was categorised as “brand image reinforcement” and it is a video about a launch event for the new lip balm. The video shows other footage than the videos on TikTok. Instead of showcasing scenes from the party, it focuses on the behind-the-scenes narrative of how the models featured in the promotional content for the lip balm were invited to the event.

Finally, one video was categorised as “other”. The video presents a giveaway, offering viewers a chance to win five of the brand's top-selling products and their latest lip balm. This

giveaway was organised in celebration of the brand's fifth anniversary. The differing promotional approaches across platforms is quite striking: while the brand highlighted the anniversary with some party footage on TikTok, The INKEY List chose to mark the occasion with a giveaway on Instagram.

A specific set of strategies were identified in The INKEY List's Instagram videos: comments (22), music (13) collaborating with celebrities/influencers (6), endorsing existing challenges/trends (6), and storytelling (1).

**Comments** are open for all of the brand's Instagram videos, and like on TikTok, the brand also answers comments, as shown in picture 96. Like The Ordinary, The INKEY List does not use **hashtags** in the description of their Instagram videos.

**Music** is used in a lot more videos on Instagram than on TikTok. It is used as background music but sometimes it is also used to highlight the content of the video. For example, one song that is used in a video has lyrics that repeat "I'm in love, I'm obsessed", and in the video the content creator showcases the lip balm and explains all its benefits. The song used in combination with the content of the video highlights the opinion of the creator.

As mentioned before, some videos were made in **collaboration with influencers**. These videos are all in the "customer experience" category, except for one which is in the 'entertainment' category.

In contrast to brand's the rather frequent use of music use on Instagram, only six videos use **trending sounds**. What is particularly noteworthy is that these sounds are sounds that were trending on TikTok at the time. Surprisingly, a few of these videos were not even posted on TikTok. This indicates that The INKEY List uses sounds that are popular on TikTok for content shared on Instagram.

Finally, only one video used the strategy of **storytelling**, which is the video showing how the models for the campaign about the new lip balm were also invited to the launch event. This video is categorised as storytelling because it tells the story of those two women and their experience with working with the brand.

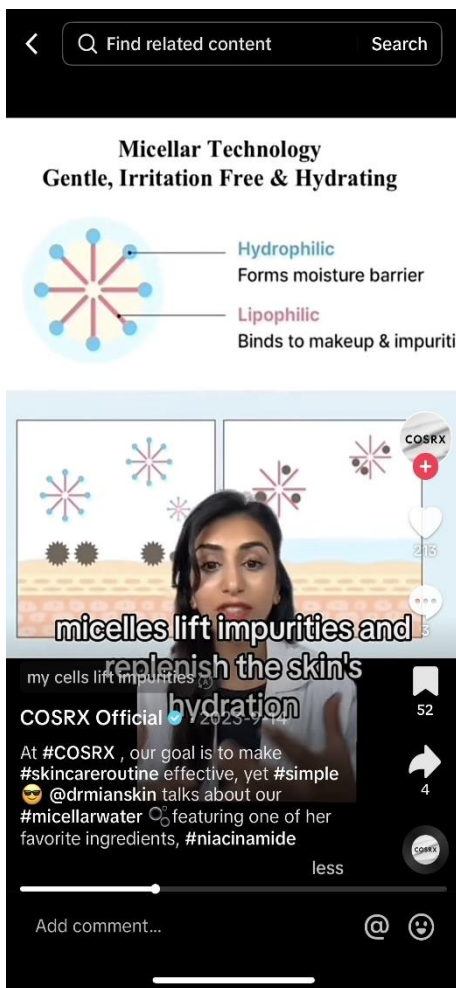
In summary, on Instagram, The INKEY list prefers to publish "customer experience" content, followed by "advertisement" type of videos. The least frequent type of content is "brand image reinforcement". When it comes to the use of TikTok specific features, actions and behaviour in those videos, comments are opened for all the videos of the brands posted on Instagram for the analysed period. More than half of the videos also use music. Collaborating with influencers and trending sounds are also sometimes used by the brand but are not as popular. Finally, storytelling is used in only one video on Instagram.

### 3.2.2.3. COSRX

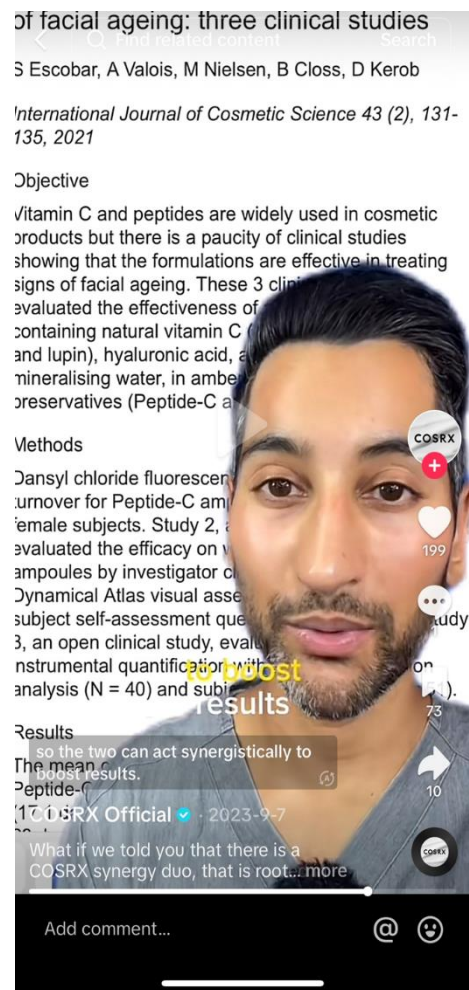
#### 3.2.2.3.1. TikTok

COSRX published ten TikTok videos during the month of September 2023, (cf. section 3.1). These ten videos can be categorised as follows: educational (4), entertainment (3), advertisement (2), and customer experience (1).

Almost half of the videos posted by COSRX on TikTok for the month of September 2023 are categorised as “**educational**”. These videos focus on the ingredients of some of the products with a very scientific approach. For instance, the TikTok video depicted in picture 97 features a background presentation with detailed information on how the product interacts with the skin, including illustrations and someone explaining everything in detail. The background switches to presentation from a white background when necessary. Some of their claims are even backed-up by scientific papers, as shown in picture 98. All the videos in that category follow the same editing style. COSRX focuses on educating customers on the ingredients of the brand’s product and why they are effective depending on the customers’ needs.



Picture 97

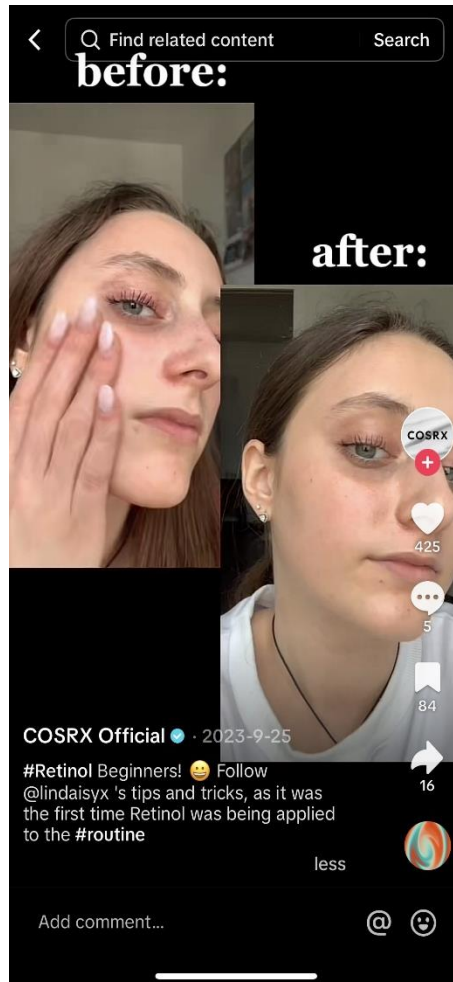


Picture 98

Three videos were categorised as “**entertainment**”. The videos placed in that category use humour to try to relate to the brand’s audience. One video stages one of the employees as a doctor that must explain different products to Gen Z. This results in funny explanations such as “Here’s the COSRX skincare routine for our glow-up besties! Say less sis, mother is mothering”, “the Vitamin C-23 Serum really understood the assignment, it slays” and “we stan a self-care queen”. This is all language that is typically used by Gen Z on TikTok and across other social networks. The two other videos in this category also use humour and have aim to make the user laugh, which is why they are placed in the “entertainment” category.

Two videos can be categorised as “**advertisement**” as they advertise the release date of two new products. One video is about the repackaging and re-release of the snail cream and offering a limited time sale. The other one is about the launch of the Low pH Niacinamide Micellar Cleansing water. The main purpose of these videos is to advertise the (re)release of these products and incite users to buy said products. The description of those videos includes in which shops it will be possible to buy the products and from which date. This is an undirect call to action.

Finally, one video can be categorised as “**customer experience**”. The video showcases a content creator, Linda Firpo (@lindaisyx, 71.8K followers), and how she uses retinol. Linda even showed a side-by-side comparison of her skin before and after using the product, as illustrated in picture 99.



Picture 99

The different type of strategies used in the ten TikTok videos posted by COSRX for the studied period were identified as comments (10), hashtags (10), music (5), collaborating with health professionals (4), using TikTok specific features (4) and collaborating with celebrities/influencers (1).

**Comments** are open under all the brand’s TikTok videos. However, unlike most of the other analysed brands, COSRX does not answer comments. **Hashtags** are also used in the description of all the videos published on their TikTok account for the month of September 2023. The brand’s use of hashtags is not systemic. For example, the brand sometimes uses the hashtag #COSRX, sometimes they do not. They also used some of the following hashtags depending on the video: #Routine, #Retinol, #Skincare, #simple, #dermatologist... The uses of hashtags

and the number the brand uses depends on the video and COSRX has no fixed hashtags that it uses for every video. **Music** is used in half of the videos as background sound.

The analysis reveals that COSRX tends to **collaborate with health professionals** that also have a TikTok account. The four health professionals are facial plastic surgeon Prem Tripathi (@drprempathi, 658.3K followers), cosmetic dermatologist Kiran Mian (@drmiaskin, 174.1K followers), licensed skincare consultant Skye (@skyesfskin, 16.1K followers) and cosmetic dermatologist Noman Mohamed (@drnomzzy, 378.1K followers). These health professionals could also be considered influencers due to their activity on the platform and their number of followers. This collaboration therefore has the potential to bring visibility as well as credibility to COSRX's products.

The brand uses the **TikTok specific video feature** of the green screen in their educational videos. As explained earlier the speaker in the video showcases presentations, images and other elements to back up their claims. To do so, they use the "green screen" feature that allows creators to set a specific background, as exemplified in pictures 97 and 98.

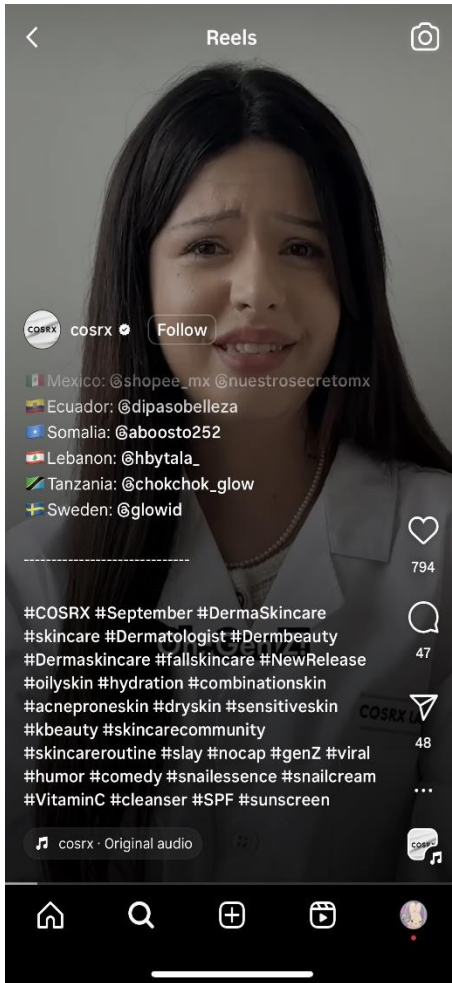
Finally, one video was made in **collaboration with an influencer**, the customer experience video made by @lindaisyx.

In short, on TikTok, for the month of September 2023, COSRX preferred to publish educational content, closely followed by entertaining content. No brand image content was posted on the brand's TikTok account for the same period. Among the strategies that they used in the videos, comments and hashtags were popular, even though COSRX does not use comments to interact with the users. What seems to be their main strategy is to collaborate with health professionals.

#### **3.2.2.3.2. TikTok vs. Instagram**

COSRX posted ten videos on their Instagram account during the month of September 2023. The ten videos are the same as the ones posted on TikTok and were posted on the same day on both platforms. The analysis for the type of content is therefore the same and will not be repeated for Instagram.

On the other hand, the strategies, even though they are the same, are used in a different manner. For example, **hashtags** are used far more profusely on Instagram by the brand. As exemplified with pictures 100 and 101, a lot of hashtags are used in the description of the videos posted on COSRX's Instagram account. The brand also replies to **comments**, unlike on their TikTok account, as illustrated with picture 102.



Picture 100



Picture 102

In conclusion, even though the videos posted are the same, COSRX engages more with their audience on Instagram than on TikTok as they use more hashtags to bring in more users and replies to comment to interact more with potential customers.

### 3.2.2.4. Neutrogena

#### 3.2.2.4.1. TikTok

As shown in section 3.1, Neutrogena published seventeen TikTok videos during the month of September 2023. The seventeen videos were grouped in five categories: educational (6), entertainment (6), brand image reinforcement (4), and other (1).

Six videos have been categorised as “**educational**”. An example is shown in picture 103. These videos feature a range of essential products tailored to specific skin needs for college students. The TikTok videos highlight these products and elaborate on how they address particular needs such as hydration, acne and skin renewal based on the products’ ingredients. Two other videos are “true or false” videos, answering questions relating to skincare in general. The last video gives advice regarding SPF application. These videos all try to give information to

consumers without trying to sell a specific product which is why they are categorised as “educational”.



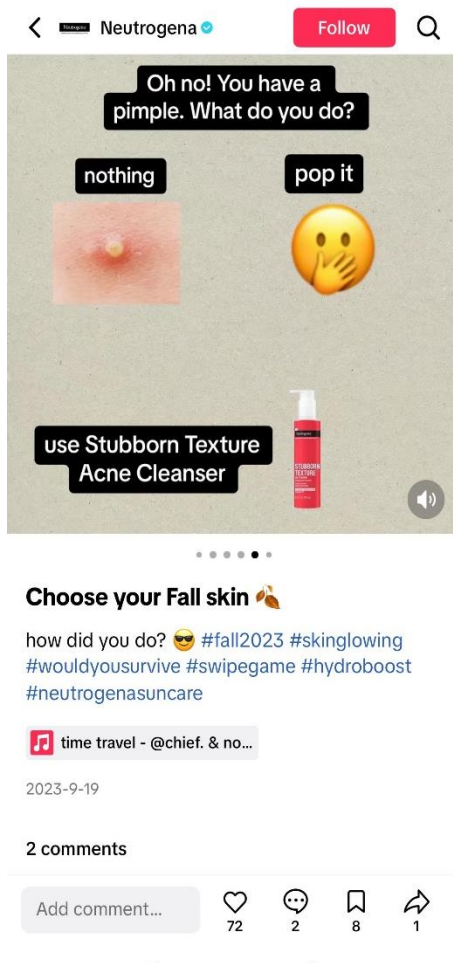
Picture 103



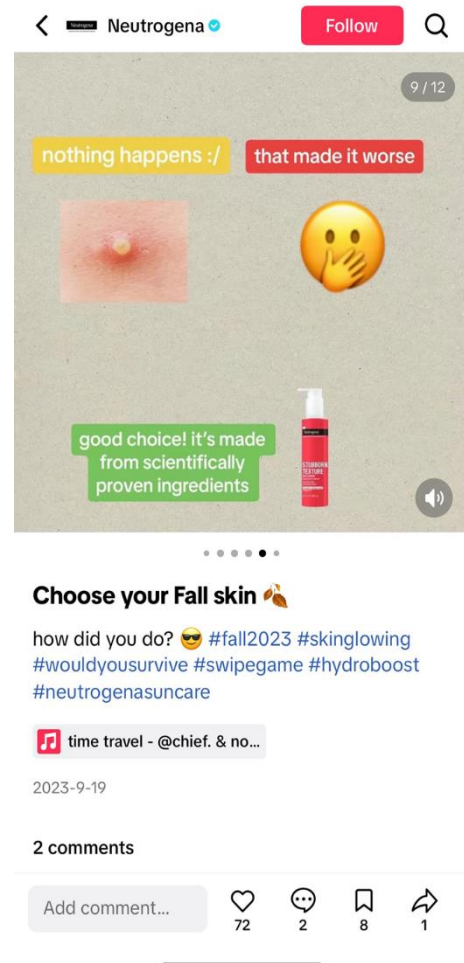
Picture 104

The same number of videos were placed in the “entertainment” category. The first video showcases friendship bracelets being made, as illustrated by picture 104. The bracelets are matching the colour of some of Neutrogena’s products. The video features a remix of instrumental tracks by Taylor Swift, targeting "Swifties" (Taylor Swift fans) who typically make and exchange friendship bracelets at her concerts. It can be argued that Neutrogena is trying to appeal to this specific audience with this video. Another video is an ASMR video using one of Neutrogena’s products to produce the relaxing sounds. In other videos, humour is incorporated by blending popular sounds like "Ricky, when I catch you Ricky" with text that reads "when your bestie tries to go to bed with makeup on." Another type of humoristic video is a person acting sad, in combination with sad music, and a text that reads “me after bestie begs me to stop telling them about my skincare routine”. As was the case with the other budget-friendly brands, these videos use “Gen Z language” such as “bestie”. Another video demonstrates how to use a product by presenting it as a magic trick with a funny sound. Finally, a photo slider named “will

you have a skin glow up this fall?” is a multiple-choice game where users must select one option to see if they will indeed have better skin this fall. The point is to not choose an option that results in a red answer. Some of the choices and answers are illustrated in pictures 105 and 106.



Picture 105

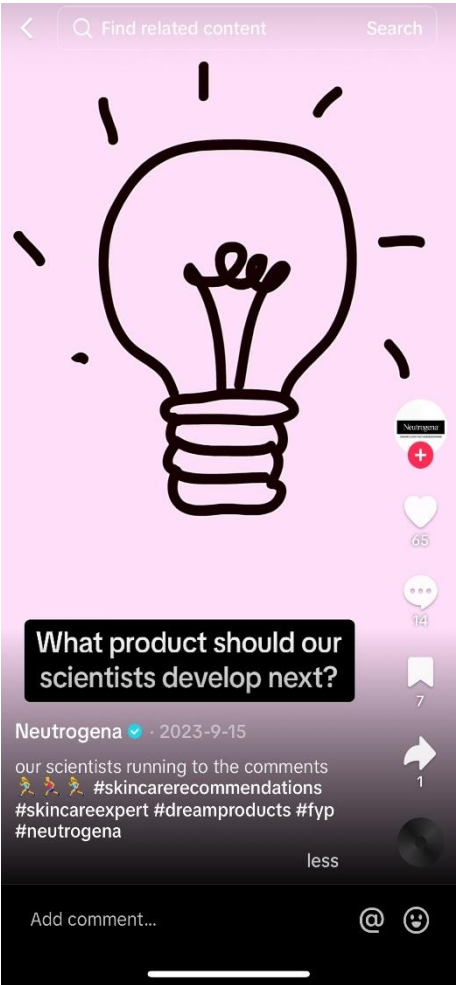


Picture 106

Four videos were classified as “**brand image reinforcement**”. One of these videos is an announcement for a meet and greet event with Syndey McLaughlin-Levrone, the new brand ambassador for Neutrogena. She is the Track and Field World Record Holder and was announced as brand ambassador in a previous TikTok video (which is also categorised as “brand image reinforcement”). The meet and greet video is classified as a “brand image reinforcement” video because it is about an event that Neutrogena organises with one of its ambassadors, who is supposed to represent the brand. She can be considered as (one of) the face(s) of the brand and therefore she represents its image. The two other videos are teasers for the event “The Great Face Race” that Neutrogena organised. This event is a competition led by Syndey McLaughlin-Levrone where four teams (team hydrate, team regenerate, team balance, and team clear skin) compete against each other to “fight skin aggressors”, “perfect their skincare routines” and “put their skincare knowledge to the test”. The winners of the race will win \$25,000 for charity.

These videos are therefore also placed in the “brand image reinforcement” category as they not only showcase different products but also the social engagement of the brand in a fun atmosphere.

Finally, the video that was placed in the “other” category is a video where Neutrogena directly asks users to comment what type of product they would like for the brand’s scientists to develop, as illustrated in picture 107. No other studied brand has asked costumers for insights into new products that directly.



Picture 107



Picture 108

The strategies found in Neutrogena’s TikTok videos for the period of September 2023 are comments (17), hashtags (17), music (13), endorsing existing challenges/trends (5), storytelling (5), using TikTok specific video features (3) and collaborating with celebrities/influencers (1).

**Comments** are open under all Neutrogena’s videos. They also sometimes answer comments as showcased in picture 108; however, this is quite rare. **Hashtags** are also used in all the descriptions of their videos. The use of hashtags is also quite diverse and not the same under every video. Many different hashtags are used depending on the video, for instance: #skintok,

#skincaretok, #neutrogena, #skinscience, #neutrogenapartner, #beauty, or #hydroboost. The hashtags used depend on the content of the video, and no specific strategy can be determined. **Music** can be found in thirteen videos and is used as background music in all of them.

Five videos **endorse an existing trend**, mostly **trending sounds**, such as the aforementioned “Ricky, when I catch you Ricky” sound, or the sound that is used in the magic trick video. Another sound is a sound where someone laughs and says, “Oh no no no no”. A trend that is used in one of Neutrogena’s videos and is not a trending sound is the ASMR trend, as explained earlier. Finally, the photo slider multiple choice game is a trend that could be seen all over TikTok at the time, not only for skincare products.

**Storytelling** is also used in five videos. The three videos about the college essential arguably tell some sort of story: as you start college you will need products to answer to your skin needs. While this storytelling approach may be lighter compared to others studied, such as the TikTok featuring an architecture student posted by Estée Lauder, it still integrates Neutrogena’s product into a particular narrative. The other two ones are the videos that read “me after bestie begs me to stop telling them about my skincare routine” and “when your bestie tries to go to bed with makeup on”. These videos tell a funny story that include Neutrogena’s products.

Three **video features specific to TikTok** are used in the TikTok videos posted by the brand in September 2023: voice-overs and a photo-slider. The photo slider is the multiple-choice question game. The voice-overs are robotic voices that read the text that is written on the video out loud. This feature was used in the “true or false” videos to read the questions and answers.

The **celebrity** that is present in some of Neutrogena’s TikTok video is the athlete Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone. She is present in three of Neutrogena’s videos but because it is the same person, she will only be counted one time. She has a TikTok account, @syda\_kid24, (25.1K followers) but does not seem very active on the platform as she published only four videos, three of them being in 2020 and one in 2022.

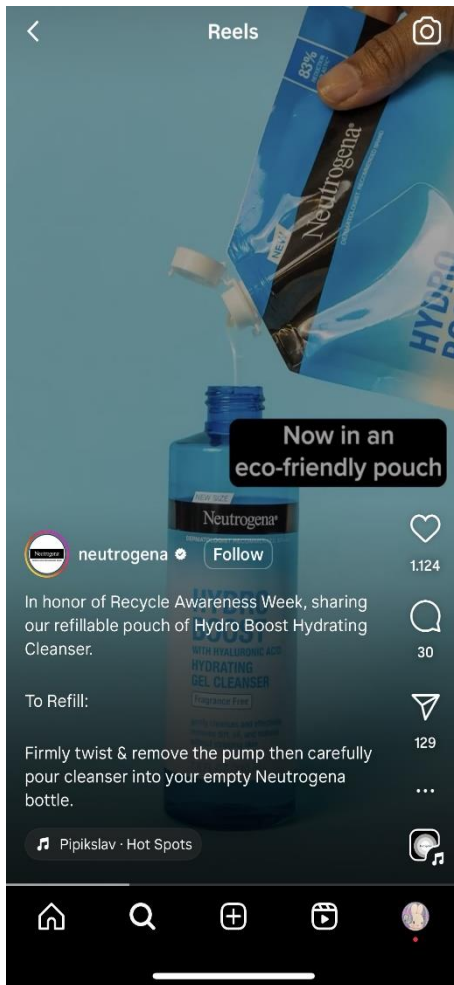
In summary, during September 2023, Neutrogena's most frequent content types of videos on TikTok were education and entertainment, with an equal number of posts in each category. No “customer experience” videos were posted during that period. The strategies that are the most popular with the brand videos on TikTok are comments, hashtags and the use of music as background sound. Storytelling is also surprisingly used as a strategy; it was hardly ever used by the other budget-friendly brands under study.

#### 3.2.2.4.2. TikTok vs. Instagram

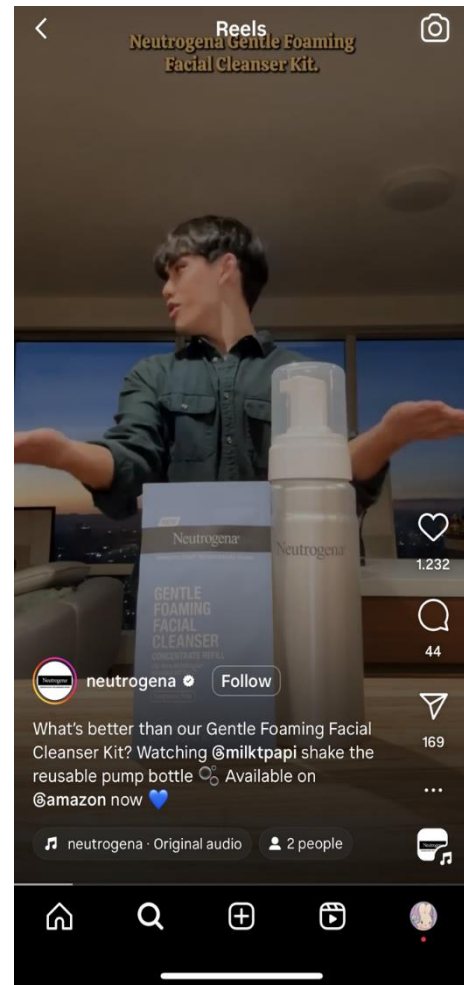
As highlighted in section 3.1, Neutrogena published eleven videos on Instagram during the month of September 2023, three of which are the same on TikTok. The three videos that were posted on both platforms are the three videos where Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone is mentioned: the announcement of her new ambassadorship and the two “The Great Face Race” teasers. The eleven videos posted on Instagram can be categorised as brand image reinforcement (6) advertisement (4), and customer experience (1).

Two additional videos were posted on Instagram, focusing on Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone and “the Great Race” event, contributing to the "**brand image reinforcement**" category alongside the three videos already shared on TikTok. The sixth video in that category is a video about a “back to school” event held in Austin, Texas and feature footage and a photo montage of the event.

Four videos have been categorised as “**advertisement**”. Two of these videos are videos that do not have an “amateur” feel, as illustrated in pictures 109 and 110. The product is positioned against a clean, solid-coloured background, giving the overall visual a promotional content feel. Another video that is categorised as “advertisement” features an influencer, Newt (@milktpapi, 1.8M followers on Instagram) as he does the promotion of a new product, the Gentle Facial Cleanser Kit, as illustrated in picture 111. This video is not categorised as “customer experience” because Newt informs viewers that the product is available on Amazon and this information is repeated in the description, which is an indirect invitation to the user to buy the product on Amazon. The last video of this category also advertises a new product, the Ultra Sheer Face Serum, by detailing its benefits.



Picture 110



Picture 111

Finally, one video was categorised as “**customer experience**”. This video also features an influencer, Lisa Asano (@lisa\_asano, 506K followers on Instagram), who shares her skincare routine. The video also includes the Gentle Facial Cleanser Kit; however, Lisa does not focus solely on that product but show various other products. She also does not refer to Amazon in the video, which is why it has not been categorised as “advertisement”. The video ends with Lisa eating on her couch. This video resembles other studied “customer experience” videos such as La Mer’s.

The strategies used in the brand’s videos published on Instagram during the month of September 2023 are comments (11), music (8), hashtags (4), collaborating with celebrities/influencers (3), endorsing existing challenges/trends (2), and storytelling (1).

Like on TikTok, Neutrogena opens the **comments** for all their videos on Instagram. The brand answers comments on Instagram more frequently than on TikTok. **Music** is used in eight videos, and like on TikTok, it is used as background sound. **Hashtags** are only used in four descriptions, all about “the Great Face Race” or Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone. The hashtags used are #NeutrogenaPartner and #GreatFaceRace. No other hashtags were used.

Three **celebrities or influencers** appear in Neutrogena's videos on Instagram that were published in September 2023. As explained before, these celebrities/influencers are Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone, Newt, and Lisa Asano.

Two **trending sounds** were used in two videos published by the brand on Instagram. One sound says “wow” repeatedly and the other sound says “What do you think about this? I love it! What about this? I love it more! What about this? I looove it!”. Both of those sounds are used in two of the “advertisement” type of videos; the sounds therefore directly refer to the products showcased in the video and complement the content of the video.

Finally, one video uses **storytelling** as a technique: the Lisa Asano skincare routine. As explained earlier, her videos showcase her skincare routine and then shows her going to sit on her sofa, watching a movie and eating. This is very similar to the nighttime routine videos analysed for La Mer in an earlier section.

In short, on Instagram, for the studied period, Neutrogena therefore liked to post “brand image reinforcement” videos the most, followed by “advertisement” videos. Only one video was categorised as “customer experience” and no other category is represented. Comments are open for all videos and the brand sometimes interacts with users, and does so more than on TikTok. The use of hashtags is even more scarce than on TikTok. Music was used in the same way as on TikTok. Celebrities and influencers were also featured in some of the videos, especially athlete Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone.

**3.2.2.5. Conclusion**

The results described in section 3.2.2 regarding the budget-friendly brands are shown below. Table 14 illustrates the total number of videos that were published by the budget-friendly brands on TikTok according to each category.

	<b>The Ordinary</b>	<b>The INKEY List</b>	<b>COSRX</b>	<b>Neutrogena</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Advertisement</b>	6	12	2	0	<b>20</b>
<b>Educational</b>	6	2	4	6	<b>18</b>
<b>Entertainment</b>	3	4	3	6	<b>16</b>
<b>Customer experience</b>	0	7	1	0	<b>8</b>
<b>Brand image reinforcement</b>	0	3	0	4	<b>7</b>
<b>Other</b>	0	0	0	1	<b>1</b>

**Table 14. data summary for budget-friendly brands' content on TikTok.**

From those results, “advertisement” is the category that the budget-friendly brands tend to post more frequently on the platform, for the studied period. It should be noted that this is essentially because of The INKEY List and the launch of their new Lip Balm in September 2023. This is closely followed by “educational” content, a type of content that is slightly more popular than “entertainment” videos for the budget-friendly brands. “Customer experience” and “Brand Image reinforcement” are not as popular for the studied budget-friendly brands. Finally, one brand, Neutrogena, proposed another type of content which could be called “direct questions”. This type of video, directly asking users for their opinions, was not found in any other brand analyses for this study.

Table 15 details the strategies that were used in those videos during the month of September 2023 for each studied budget-friendly brand.

	<b>The Ordinary</b>	<b>The INKEY List</b>	<b>COSRX</b>	<b>Neutrogena</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Hashtags</b>	15	28	10	17	<b>70</b>
<b>Comments</b>	15	28	10	17	<b>70</b>
<b>Endorsing existing trends/challenges</b>	9	17	0	5	<b>31</b>
<b>Music</b>	6	2	5	13	<b>26</b>
<b>Using TikTok specific video features</b>	6	8	4	3	<b>21</b>
<b>Collaborating with celebrities/influencers</b>	0	5	1	1	<b>7</b>
<b>Storytelling</b>	0	0	0	5	<b>5</b>
<b>Collaborating with health professionals</b>	0	1	4	0	<b>5</b>
<b>Other</b>	0	3	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Creating new trends/challenges</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

**Table 15. data summary for budget-friendly brands' strategies used on TikTok.**

The most frequently used strategies by the budget-friendly brands for the month of September 2023 are comments and hashtags. These features are present in every video published on the TikTok account of each studied brand. After that, the most used strategy is endorsing

existing challenges or trends. This is typically done in the form of using trending sounds and relating them to specific products of the brand. COSRX is the only studied budget-friendly brand that does not use trending challenges or trends, while The Ordinary and The INKEY List used that strategy for more than half of the TikTok videos posted on their account. Music is also used extensively by the budget-friendly brands, especially Neutrogena. The studied brands also used a lot of TikTok specific video editing features like using the green screen editing feature, answering comments with a new TikTok video, or using voice-overs generated by TikTok. Strategies that were not as popular were collaborating with celebrities/influencers, storytelling and collaborating with health professionals. The Ordinary is the only studied budget-friendly brand that did not use any of those three strategies. Storytelling was only used by Neutrogena. No budget-friendly brand tried to create a new challenge or trend. However, one brand, The INKEY List, introduced a new type of strategy which is conducting interviews of potential customers, event guests, or shop employees, present in three of the brand’s videos.

Table 16 shows the type of content that the budget-friendly brands posted on Instagram during the month of September 2023.

	<b>The Ordinary</b>	<b>The INKEY List</b>	<b>COSRX</b>	<b>Neutrogena</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Entertainment</b>	15	4	3	0	<b>22</b>
<b>Educational</b>	6	3	4	0	<b>13</b>
<b>Customer experience</b>	0	9	1	1	<b>11</b>
<b>Advertisement</b>	0	5	2	4	<b>11</b>
<b>Brand image reinforcement</b>	0	1	0	6	<b>7</b>
<b>Other</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

**Table 16. data summary for budget-friendly brands’ content on Instagram.**

It can be concluded that the budget-friendly brands prefer to post “entertainment” videos on Instagram for the studied period. This is mostly due to The Ordinary that posted fifteen out of the twenty-two “entertainment” videos. “Educational” content is the second-most popular type of content that the budget-friendly brands post on their Instagram account. It should be noted that Neutrogena posted zero videos in those two categories. “Customer experience” and “advertisement” are equally as popular as one another. However, The INKEY List is responsible for nine out of the eleven “customer experience” videos. “Brand image reinforcement” is the

least popular type of content that budget-friendly brands published on Instagram during the month of September 2023 and was mostly used by Neutrogena.

Table 17 showcases which strategies were employed by budget-friendly brands in the videos published on their Instagram account for the period analysed.

	<b>The Ordinary</b>	<b>The INKEY List</b>	<b>COSRX</b>	<b>Neutrogena</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Comments</b>	21	22	10	11	<b>64</b>
<b>Music</b>	17	13	5	8	<b>43</b>
<b>Hashtags</b>	0	0	10	4	<b>14</b>
<b>Collaborating with celebrities/influencers</b>	0	6	1	3	<b>10</b>
<b>Endorsing existing trends/challenges</b>	2	6	0	2	<b>10</b>
<b>Collaborating with health professionals</b>	1	0	4	0	<b>5</b>
<b>Using TikTok specific video features</b>	0	0	4	0	<b>4</b>
<b>Storytelling</b>	0	1	0	1	<b>2</b>
<b>Other</b>	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Creating new trends/challenges</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

**Table 17. data summary for budget-friendly brands’ strategies used on Instagram.**

The results shown in table 17 indicate that open comments are the most frequently used strategy among the budget-friendly brands on Instagram. Interestingly, the second most employed strategy is not hashtags but rather music, which has significant popularity in Instagram videos posted on these budget-friendly brands' accounts. Music is used as background sound in most of these videos. Hashtags are the third most popular feature used by the budget-friendly brands on Instagram; however, only fourteen videos use hashtags for the studied period and only two brands (COSRX and Neutrogena) use them. Endorsing existing challenges/trends and collaborating with celebrities/influencers have the same popularity among the studied budget-friendly brands on Instagram. It should however be noted that The Ordinary does not collaborate with influencers or celebrities while COSRX does not endorse any challenge or trend.

Collaborating with health professionals is somewhat popular as well as using TikTok specific features. These two strategies are however only used by Neutrogena. Those features are present in videos that were posted on both platforms and on TikTok first. Storytelling is not quite popular. One interview was published on The INKEY List's Instagram account. Finally, no brand created a new challenge or trend on their Instagram account either.

## **4. Discussion**

In this section, the analysis will delve into the results in relation to the research questions and hypotheses that lie in the heart of this dissertation. This study aimed to address two specific research questions, each supported by a set of two hypotheses. The results presented in section 3 provide a basis for an attempt at validating these hypotheses, thus providing potential answers to the research questions. Through a detailed discussion of the finding, this section will try to address these research questions and evaluate the validity of the hypotheses.

### **4.1. How do high-end skincare products companies use TikTok in comparison to budget-friendly skincare product companies and if a difference in use appears, what can explain this difference?**

**H1:** Budget-friendly companies use TikTok in a more specific way than high-end companies who are more likely to post their already existing campaigns (specifically those from Instagram) without specifically adapting to the new platform itself.

As shown in the sections above, the high-end brands post on average more on Instagram than on TikTok while the budget-friendly brands post more on TikTok than on Instagram. What came as a surprise is that the budget-friendly brands post more of the same videos on both platforms (twenty-two videos in total for September 2023) than the high-end brands do (six videos in total for September 2023). The first conclusion that could be drawn is that the high-end brands do adapt their content more to TikTok than the budget-friendly brands because they post different videos on both platforms. However, what also emerged from the analysis that most of the time, the budget-friendly brands post their videos on TikTok first and then on Instagram, which indicates that the content posted on the brands' Instagram is in fact first thought out for TikTok. Some of the brands like The INKEY List also use music or sounds that were trending on TikTok for their Instagram videos. This seems to suggest that some of the videos posted during the month of September 2023 on Instagram were already posted earlier on the brand's TikTok account. An example would be a video in which Colette is seen using the new Lip Balm. The video was posted on TikTok on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023, while the exact same video, with the same trending sound, was posted on Instagram on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Another similar

video in which Colette shows the results of using the Lip Balm after four weeks was posted on TikTok on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, on Instagram.

The fact that the studied budget-friendly brands prioritise creating content for TikTok most of the time can also be verified simply by the number of videos posted by each brand on each platform. The high-end brands posted fifty-seven videos on TikTok while the budget-friendly brands posted seventy TikTok videos for the same period. The budget-friendly brands are therefore more active on TikTok than the high-end brands, which indicates that they prioritise TikTok more when it comes to video content marketing.

La Mer is the perfect example of a high-end brand that does not adapt really well to TikTok. The brand has the least number of average likes (163) and comments (5) on TikTok out of all the high-end brands. Furthermore, La Mer also has the least followers (24,1K) and total number of likes (74,9K) on TikTok among all the other high-end brands, (cf. section 2.2.1). On the other hand, the brand has 1,1 million followers on Instagram, which makes it the third most followed high-end brand on Instagram, coming very close to second place with Tatcha, which has 1,2 million followers. The reason why La Mer might not be as popular on TikTok compared to its peers or to its own success on Instagram, is because the content that the brand posts on TikTok is not adapted to the platform. Even though La Mer only has three exact same videos posted on both platforms for the month of September 2023, the brand does post a lot of the same footage, only re-worked enough to make it look like the videos are not the same: the music changes, the font of the text changes, some of the footage is not in the same order... Nevertheless, the footage is still essentially the same as the one posted on Instagram, meaning highly produced, high-quality commercials.

Compared to the most popular high-end brand on TikTok, Tatcha (70 comments on average and 7,161 likes on average), the contrast is quite striking. All the videos posted by Tatcha on TikTok imitate user generated content or “amateur” content. No highly produced, high-quality videos can be found on the brand’s TikTok account. More of those high-quality video feature on Tatcha’s Instagram account, however. The difference in videos posted by Tatcha on both platforms arguably reflects a willingness to adapt to TikTok and create videos specifically for the platform. This is also true for Estée Lauder and Sisley Paris. Both of these brands post more highly produced high-quality videos on Instagram rather than on TikTok. Maghfirah and Qastharin’s (2022: 295) study already established that one of the most liked types of content by Gen Z is user generated content. Posting videos that have the same look and feel as user generated content on TikTok is therefore one of the best strategies to appeal to Gen Z. This was also argued by Parisi (2020: no page): luxury brands tend to repost their marketing campaigns on

TikTok rather than creating specific content for the platform. She also added that the content that worked the best for brands on TikTok was more “casual” rather than “slick, highly produced and tightly controlled” (no page) content.

This strategy is also used by all the studied budget-friendly brands, except COSRX. COSRX posted exactly the same ten videos on TikTok and Instagram during the month of September 2023. Moreover, their content is not specifically thought out with TikTok in mind first as the brand does not use a lot of TikTok specific features or trending sounds and challenges in their videos compared to other budget-friendly brands. COSRX incidentally has the least number of total likes (1,4 million) out of all the budget-friendly brands on the brand’s TikTok account, even though Neutrogena is the brand that has the least number of followers (167,4K) on the platform. This suggests that the number of followers does not necessarily account for a page’s popularity on TikTok, as argued in section 1.4.2. Neutrogena also differentiates content from its TikTok account and its Instagram account. Moreover, videos on the brand’s Instagram are more highly produced and high-quality than the ones on TikTok.

The best players are The Ordinary and The INKEY List, with respectively 1,4 million followers and 18,1 million likes, and 497,6K followers and 11,7 million likes on TikTok. Both of these brands understand what strategies work for TikTok but also for Instagram as they are the two most popular budget-friendly brands on Instagram as well, with 2,2 million followers for The Ordinary and 576K followers for the INKEY List. The higher-quality videos are posted on Instagram rather than on TikTok. However, the INKEY List is less popular on TikTok than The Ordinary. This could be because the brand also reuses videos for both platforms while only adapting or changing a few of the features such as the music, the font or re-arranging the order of the footage. However, no high production high-quality videos were posted on the two brands’ TikTok accounts.

The first hypothesis was that budget-friendly companies use TikTok in a more specific way than high-end companies who are more likely to post their already existing campaigns (specifically those from Instagram) without necessarily adapting to the new platform itself. This hypothesis cannot be entirely validated. Most of the brands, even high-end brands, do adapt their videos to TikTok and Instagram respectively. Most of the brands seem to understand that highly produced content is more popular and appropriate on Instagram rather than on TikTok, where user generated content, and “amateur” content is more appreciated (Maghfirah and Qastharin’s: 2022, Parisi: 2020). Some brands in both categories, such as La Mer and COSRX, do struggle more with this idea as the videos that they post on both networks are not specifically adapted to the platforms themselves. Even though most of the studied brands do adapt their

videos to both social networks to a certain degree, this does not mean that they are all as popular. The type of content as well as the strategies used in those videos have their importance in determining the success of the videos, which is why budget-friendly brands might be more popular on TikTok than high-end brands in general. This concept will be explored further through the answer of the second hypothesis.

**H2:** The type of content is adapted to the target audience of each brand and the image they want to reflect; while high-end brands will target older audiences by building a luxury image, budget-friendly brands will target younger audiences by presenting themselves as more accessible and “cool”.

As seen above, most of the brands under study post highly produced, high-quality videos on Instagram and “amateur” videos, imitating user generated content on TikTok. While this is true for most of the brands, the type of content and strategies used by both types of brands is very different and shows that budget-friendly brands tend to adapt their content and especially strategies to TikTok, in an effort to appear more fun and approachable, notably to appeal to younger generations.

The types of content that are posted the most by the high-end brands on TikTok are “customer experience” and “entertainment”. The content that the high-end brands post more on Instagram is “advertisement” and “brand image reinforcement”. On the other hand, the type of content that is posted the most by the budget-friendly brands are “advertisement” and “educational” on TikTok and “entertainment” and “educational” on Instagram. The high-end brands and budget-friendly brands therefore tend to post different types of content on both platforms. Only taking the type of content into account, it may seem that the high-end brands do adapt their content to the platform and try to appeal to younger audiences on TikTok by sharing less advertisement types of videos and more entertainment and customer experience. It is interesting that the budget-friendly brands are nevertheless more popular on TikTok than the high-end brands, which may be explained by the strategies used.

Budget-friendly brands endorse a lot more of existing challenges and trends while also using more TikTok video editing features such as replying to a comment with a new TikTok video, using the green screen effect or the voice-over effect. Budget-friendly brands actually use almost double those features than high-end brands (as seen in tables 10 and 14). Endorsing more existing challenges and trends and using more of TikTok’s video editing features arguably makes the content of the video more fun, approachable and interactive for the budget-friendly brands, even though the videos are categorised as “advertisement” and “educational”. It should be noted that, as pointed out before, the line between advertisement, educational, and

entertainment categories is very thin for budget-friendly brands. Blurring those lines with the help of trending sounds and music as well as TikTok video editing features, and interacting with the audience through answering comments (either in the comments directly or with another TikTok video) makes the videos look more informative and less aggressively commercial, which is arguably more attractive to younger users, as the findings in this dissertation seem to suggest.

A great example of why it is better for brands to endorse already existing trends and challenges is La Mer. La Mer tried to create a challenge by creating a new filter on TikTok and encouraging people to use it and show their routine. However, as shown in an earlier section, at the time of this study, the filter had been used only sixteen times on TikTok. It is thus reasonable to conclude that the challenge La Mer created did not achieve its intended objective of going viral. Endorsing already existing challenges or trends is undoubtedly the best way to become successful on TikTok for skincare brands, as shown with The Ordinary and The INKEY List for example, the two most popular brands on the platform out of all eight studied brands. This was also argued by Parisi (2020: no page). She used the example of Gucci: the fashion luxury brand tried to create its own challenge as well but failed. It is only when the brand endorsed a trending sound and challenge created by a TikTok user that was going viral that the videos “brought in far more engagement than Gucci’s more manufactured attempts” (2020: no page). Out of all the brands, The Ordinary and The INKEY List are the ones that endorsed the most already existing trends or challenges during September 2023 (nine times for The Ordinary and seventeen times for The INKEY List). In addition, COSRX, the least successful budget-friendly brand, did not endorse already existing challenges or trends for the same period. This further highlights the importance of endorsing already existing trends and challenges as a way to connect with the audience, especially on TikTok, and for all types of skincare brands.

As explained in other sections (cf. section 1.4.2), TikTok is a sound based social network. The use of music and sounds is therefore crucial for brands if they want to succeed on the platform. This study revealed that, although the high-end brands use a lot of instrumental music and music in general for the background of their videos (mostly on the “customer experience” videos), they do not make frequent use of trending sounds or trending remixes of songs. In contrast, the budget-friendly brands use a lot more of trending sounds or specific parts of music that are trending. This ensures that their videos tend to go viral more regularly or are at least more likely to go viral on the platform, which is most probably one of the reasons why the budget-friendly skincare brands are more successful on TikTok on average than the high-end brands.

The studied high-end brands also use less TikTok editing features and endorse less already existing challenges and trends (cf. section 3.2.1.5). The strategies that are the most frequently used by the high-end brands are storytelling and the use of influencers or content creators. Because of the lower number of total likes and followers of the high-end brands on TikTok, it can be argued that those types of strategies are less popular with Gen Z and younger users in general. These types of strategies are mostly used in Instagram as well but are not adapted to TikTok. Another indicator that such strategies are not adapted to that specific platform is that the budget-friendly brands, which are generally more popular on TikTok according to the number of likes, followers and comments, do not use storytelling and influencers frequently. Influencer marketing is quite popular on Instagram, and it seems like the high-end brands believe that those strategies will work on TikTok as well. However, the limited success of their videos compared to the budget-friendly brands' videos shows that these strategies are not quite adapted to TikTok.

It should nevertheless be noted that COSRX is an exception within the budget-friendly brands, as the brand uses "healthcare influencers". As mentioned in an earlier section (cf. section 3.2.2.3.1), COSRX resorts to dermatologist experts to support their products and present them as trustworthy. Although this is comparable to the use of influencers, these "healthcare influencers" already have a niche audience, which is already interested in skincare, and anything related to skin issues, making it easier for the brand's content to reach the right audience. This could be considered a good strategy to try to implement as it has been previously argued that more and more people use social media to find health care experts (Joshi et al 2022: 92, Hayakal 2022: 2). As discussed earlier, at the time of this study, COSRX was the least popular budget-friendly brand in terms of total number of likes, and average number of comments and likes for September 2023. It thus seems that the brand did not succeed in turning that strategy to their advantage. This further showcases the supposed inefficiency of influencers on TikTok that came out of the findings of this dissertation, especially for skincare brands.

Another important aspect of this analysis is that the category "brand image reinforcement" is present in very different ways for both types of brands. Brand image reinforcement videos are certainly a good way for brands to establish a particular image. This type of content is used a lot by the high-end brands. This is probably due to the fact that, as discussed by Yan-Bo et al. (2024), "maintaining an exclusive brand image is critical for luxury [...] brands to satisfy consumers' social status and hedonic needs" (7). In contrast, budget-friendly brands' use of brand image reinforcement videos is quite scarce as they tend to focus more on the products themselves, which is why their number of "educational" videos is quite high, both on TikTok

and Instagram. Educational content is quite popular among successful brands on TikTok, especially beauty brands, as explained by Parisi (2020: no page). The budget-friendly brands highlight their products, their benefits, how they work and their efficiency. When the budget-friendly brands use “brand image reinforcement” videos, the content that they show is fun footage of parties for example, like The INKEY List’s launch parties in Miami and Manchester. Brand image reinforcement content for high-end brands is more focused on feelings of luxury, calmness and establishing legacy rather than being fun and young. The image mirrored by this different use of brand image reinforcement and educational videos is very different for budget-friendly brands and high-end brands. While the budget-friendly brands try to appear more fun and younger while still trustworthy and with quality products, the high-end brands try to appear more luxurious but not too serious either with their significant use of “entertainment” type of videos. Yan-bo et al.’s findings also show that luxury brands have the tendency to “adopt a relatively formal approach to content delivery [but also to] occasionally employ an unexpected, playful, and entertaining style” (Yan-bo et al. 2024: 10), which mirrors the findings of this dissertation regarding brand image reinforcement.

Language is also very important on TikTok. The language used by some of the brands in comments or in the text directly on the video tends to be adapted to Gen Z, as explained in sections above. Words like “bestie”, “slay”, “queen”, “mother” and so on are words especially used in the language of young people online, especially younger millennials and Gen Z, who are the main users of TikTok. Using this kind of language therefore seems to be an attempt to relate to the audience. As reported above, only some of the budget-friendly brands (The Ordinary, The INKEY List, and COSRX) use this language, making them look more young, fun and relatable to younger users.

Tatcha is the most successful high-end brand out of the four studied in this thesis. Even though the brand has less followers on TikTok (93,7K) than Estée Lauder (178,3K) and Sisley Paris (199,1K) for example, the total number of likes is well above those two brands (1,7 million likes for Tatcha against 886,3K for Estée Lauder and 672,2K for Sisley Paris), and the average number of likes and comments for the period of September 2023 is also superior to all the other high-end brands. Like budget-friendly brands, Tatcha does not use the strategies of storytelling and collaborating with influencers or celebrities but endorses a lot more of existing trends and challenges as well as TikTok specific video editing features instead. Out of all the high-end brands, Tatcha is the one that behaves the most like a budget-friendly brand, which makes the brand appear more fun and younger and therefore more appealing to younger audiences.

Moreover, Tatcha's price range is also the lowest among high-end brands, which could explain why the brand chooses to focus on strategies targeted at younger millennials and Gen Z.

According to the second hypothesis posed that the type of content is adapted to the target audience of each brand and the image they want to reflect; while high-end brands will target older audiences by building a luxury image, budget-friendly brands will target younger audiences by presenting themselves as more accessible and "cool" (Granot et al. 2013: 31-32, Parisi 2020: no page). The elements discussed in this section helped to confirm this hypothesis. It was discovered that the high-end brands tend to use the same strategies as on Instagram while also continuing to promote an image of luxury and elegance. The budget-friendly brands adapt their content to cater to younger audiences, with more strategies used that are specific to and successful on TikTok, such as endorsing new trends and challenges and using the editing features that TikTok offers. This ensures that the videos posted by the budget-friendly brands on the platform tend to go viral more frequently, which explains why the budget-friendly brands are more successful on TikTok on average, even though some exceptions such as Tatcha for the high-end brands or COSRX for the budget-friendly brands.

#### **4.2. Why would those two types of skincare brands establish themselves on TikTok?**

**H3:** Skincare brands join TikTok to stay up to date and to try to reach the broadest audience possible.

This hypothesis was partially verified with the help of the literature review. It has been reported that skincare and dermatology in general saw a boom in popularity on TikTok recently, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the lockdowns and people being more on social media and particularly on TikTok, which also witnessed a gigantic increase in users during the same period (Kaur and Kumar: 2021, Hayakal: 2022, Joshi et al.: 2022, Villa-Ruiz et al.: 2020, Nguyen et al.: 2021). It is therefore arguable that skincare brands joined TikTok in an attempt to reach the broadest audience possible. Findings from this study also introduced additional elements to help verify this hypothesis.

As explained in the section above, high-end brands tend to adapt less to TikTok and therefore to be less successful on the platform than budget-friendly brands. Looking at the engagement that both types of brands generate on both platforms can help to verify this hypothesis. (cf. table 8 and table 9.) For budget-friendly brands, the average number of likes and comments in TikTok is significantly higher than the average number of likes and comments on Instagram for the studied period. In contrast, the engagement is almost the same on TikTok and on Instagram for high-end brands, although high-end brands generate on average almost double the number of comments on Instagram. Moreover, the number of followers for each brand is

higher on Instagram than on TikTok, even for budget-friendly brands. However, budget-friendly skincare brands (except for The Ordinary) all have less followers on Instagram than high-end skincare brands. The findings show that budget-friendly brands do reach a lot more users than high-end brands on TikTok. Their audience is thus broadened and their presence on TikTok could therefore be explained by the desire to expand their audience.

Regarding high-end brands, their presence on TikTok could also be explained by the fact that such brands want to broaden their audience and reach a target group that does not follow them on Instagram. This hypothesis is also supported by Parisi (2020) who argues that “TikTok is [...] more popular among primarily a younger Gen-Z audience, whereas a platform like Instagram has a much broader appeal and a more traditional brand-user relationship. Brands that want the youngest, most progressive consumers should focus on TikTok” (no page). Even though the high-end brands generate less engagement on TikTok than on Instagram, the target audience is not the same and therefore it is a good strategy to try to differentiate communication channels in an effort to reach new audiences, even for the high-end brands.

One high-end brand that was specifically successful in doing so is Tatcha, as discussed above. Tatcha is the high-end brand that generates the most engagement on TikTok. Furthermore, the brand generates less engagement on Instagram and is the third most popular brand on Instagram as well, after Estée Lauder (number one) and Sisley Paris (number two). This suggests that Tatcha joined TikTok to broaden its audience: it adapted its content to the platform and succeeded in doing so.

In conclusion, hypothesis 3 can be verified to a certain degree. When looking at the engagement of both types of brands, it is clear that if the main purpose of joining TikTok for skincare brands is to stay up to date with new channels of communication and reach the broadest audience possible, the studied budget-friendly skincare brands were the most successful in reaching this goal. Their engagement was shown to be substantially higher on TikTok than on Instagram, while the engagement of high-end skincare brands is roughly the same on both platforms.

**H4:** Skincare brands join TikTok to reach younger and/or new audiences.

The results have shown that both types of brands (high-end and budget-friendly) try to cater to younger audiences by joining TikTok, as TikTok is mainly used by younger millennials and Gen Z (Haenlein et al: 2020, Parisi: 2020, Khoros: 2022, Zhou 2023). It has also been demonstrated that budget-friendly skincare brands are more successful on the platform and therefore succeed in reaching younger audiences. Some high-end brands are somewhat

successful like Tatcha, which is the most effective high-end brand on the platform, as it generates the most engagement compared to the other brands in that category. This is probably because like the budget-friendly brands, it has been found in this dissertation that Tatcha does not only adapt the type of content to TikTok but also uses the same strategies as budget-friendly brands, such as endorsing existing trends and challenges, using TikTok videos editing features and adapting the language.

There is also a clear difference between the content that they post on Instagram and TikTok, reflecting their intention to target different audiences on each platform. This is especially true for the budget friendly brands as they post 16.56% percent more than the high-end brands on TikTok while the high-end brands post more on Instagram. Moreover, if the same video is posted on both platforms, it will be posted on TikTok first for budget-friendly brands most of the time.

It is noteworthy that some of the high-end brands advertise completely different products on both platforms, presumably due to the fact that certain products will reach different audiences. Estée Lauder, Tatcha, Sisley are all high-end brands that advertise different products on both platforms. For example, it has been explained that Estée Lauder profusely advertised the ReNUTRIV Ultimate Diamond Crème on Instagram while not talking about it at all on TikTok (cf. section 3.2.1.1.2). If, however, the brands do advertise the same product on both platforms, the campaign will be different and more highly produced and luxurious on Instagram than on TikTok, like Tatcha and the videos about the Indigo Calming cream or the Kissu Lip Mask (cf. section 3.2.4.1.2). The Ordinary, the most successful brand out of all the eight studied brands, adapts its content to both platforms and advertise different products on both platforms, depending on what the brand thinks will be more successful for younger users. For example, all of their videos posted in TikTok except one were about their new pink serum. The Ordinary probably estimated that this product, mainly due to its colour, would be more successful amongst younger consumers, and therefore on TikTok. On Instagram, the new serum was also advertised but with a lot less intensity and many other products were mentioned and advertised. Other products are advertised on the brand's Instagram page, which are not talked about at all on their TikTok account for the studied period (cf. section 3.2.2.1.2). The Ordinary therefore decided to focus on the pink serum on TikTok while showcasing more diverse products on their Instagram page, probably because the brand thought that the different audiences would be interested in different products.

Because TikTok is the most popular amongst younger Millennials and Gen Z, it is only logical that if a brand joins the network, their main goal would be to reach younger and new

audiences. However, it is also undeniable that budget-friendly brands are the most successful in doing so. The fourth and last hypothesis can therefore be partially verified.

## **5. Conclusion**

The aim of this research was to identify the differences between the use of high-end skincare brands and budget-friendly skincare brands on TikTok, by comparing their presence and strategies to those used in the videos that these brands posted on Instagram. Video marketing, and especially short video marketing is seen more and more as a powerful marketing strategy for brands, companies and organisations, which is why TikTok is becoming more and more popular in marketer's strategies when including social media strategies. Moreover, this study specifically focused on the beauty sector, with an emphasis on skincare brands. This sector is a sector that has seen an exponential growth of popularity on social media these past few years, at the same time as the number of TikTok users exploded. Despite the substantial presence of the beauty sector and especially skincare brands on TikTok, there is a notable lack of research on how skincare brands are using the platform. This dissertation therefore aimed to fill that research gap by analysing how some budget-friendly brands and some high-end brands used TikTok in comparison to Instagram.

In total, eight brands were analysed. These brands were divided into two groups: high-end brands (Estée Lauder, La Mer, Sisley Paris and Tatcha) and budget-friendly brands (The Ordinary, The INKEY List, COSRX, and Neutrogena). These brands were selected after establishing a set of criteria and thorough research to find the eight brands that fit those criteria the best. The data was manually retrieved and analysed from each brand's TikTok and Instagram accounts. The results and discussion revealed that budget-friendly brands tend to adapt their content more effectively to the unique dynamics of TikTok compared to high-end brands. This is primarily because budget-friendly brands aim to engage with younger audiences, who constitute the majority of TikTok users. This strategic adaptation allows these brands to better resonate with the platform's demographic, thereby enhancing their visibility and engagement. This analysis and answers to the hypotheses helped answer the two research questions that this dissertation aimed to answer.

The first research question was "how do high-end skincare products companies use TikTok in comparison to budget-friendly skincare product companies and if a difference in use appears, what can explain this difference?". It has been found that the studied high-end and budget-friendly skincare brands do have different strategies when it comes to creating and posting video content marketing on TikTok. The difference in those strategies can be explained by

the fact that both types of brands want to reflect a particular image to target two different specific audiences. As a result, the high-end brands tend to adapt their content less to TikTok or rather to use strategies that work well on Instagram but cannot really be applied to TikTok. In contrast, strategies used by the budget-friendly brands seem more tailored to the platform and therefore to a younger audience, especially younger millennials and Gen Z, which are the main users of TikTok. The second research question was “Why would those two types of skincare brands establish themselves on TikTok?”. This question has been partially answered. Skincare brands, whether high-end or budget-friendly, join the platform to first broaden their audience as much as possible but most importantly to reach younger audiences.

This study encountered some limitations, especially regarding the second research question. Interviews with the studied brands could have been conducted to gain in-depth insights into why high-end and budget-friendly brands create a TikTok account. The answers could then be compared to the findings in this dissertation and verify or not the hypothetical answers found through the study of the quantitative and qualitative results.

Another limitation is that this dissertation solely focused on video content marketing and therefore, only videos were analysed. While TikTok is a video and sound-based platform, Instagram is primarily photo-based. This may have biased the results as photos and videos are different ways to create visuals and therefore may result in different category types or strategies for example. The strategy of each brand on Instagram can therefore not be summarised only based on the videos. Furthermore, Instagram has existed for a longer period of time than TikTok. TikTok is relatively new compared to Instagram, and this shows in the number of followers for each brand for instance. Each studied brand has more followers on Instagram than on TikTok. This does not mean that engagement is automatically better in Instagram, as found through the research. Instagram is however a more established social medium among users which can also influence the success of the brands’ communication strategies on Instagram and consequently on TikTok as well.

Furthermore, this dissertation focused on videos published in a very limited period of time, from September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, to September 30<sup>th</sup> 2023. The results might therefore not represent an entire brand’s communication strategy either on TikTok or Instagram. Rather the results only give a sample of what type of content high-end and budget-friendly brands post on their TikTok and Instagram account as well as which strategies are preferred for both types of brands. This research could be extended over a longer period to provide a fuller picture of the communication and marketing strategies used by high-end and budget-friendly brands and the differences that may arise.

The results of this research also brought up some interesting questions that could be worth researching further in future work. It has been concluded that influencers were not as popular on TikTok for skincare brands as they were on Instagram. Most budget-friendly brands do not make use of influencers and celebrities in TikTok but sometimes do on Instagram, while high-end brands still use that strategy on TikTok, but with less encouraging results on average. Moreover, budget-friendly brands such as COSRX use influencers but are not as engaging and popular as budget friendly brands that do not make use of influencers such as The Ordinary and The INKEY List. Research on the popularity of influencers on TikTok and consequently among younger millennials and Gen Z should be conducted in order to understand if a true shift in marketing strategies for skincare brands on social media is happening or if those results are only related to the specific scope of this study.

Another question that is worth investigating is the popularity of The Ordinary. As revealed in the analysis, The Ordinary is the most successful brand out of all eight studied brands. Deeper research on the brand's popularity and the reason why it is as successful, both on Instagram and TikTok could be conducted and could ultimately be used as a guide to other skincare brands that would be interested in developing a presence on TikTok and Instagram. One element of answer is that The Ordinary manages to target younger audiences in a more efficient way than the other seven brands. Researching The Ordinary's strategy further could help to understand how to build a successful communication strategy on social media with younger Millennials and Gen Z as a target. Another way to investigate The Ordinary's impact and any other skincare brand's impact on TikTok and on younger users is to interview young users of the platform to understand what they like and what they find engaging, especially on TikTok.

On May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024, TikTok published a study on beauty brands on TikTok and how to optimise their content and create campaigns that have more chance to go viral and reach a maximum of users on the platforms<sup>7</sup>. Unfortunately, TikTok's study could not be used for this dissertation as the timing of its release was too short. However, some of the tips given in that study correlate with some of the findings in this dissertation: TikTok encourages brands to interact with their audience by responding to comments and asking questions directly to the users. Moreover, advertising the launch of a new product on TikTok generally results in more success for the campaign. Some of the most successful studied brands such as The Ordinary, The

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<sup>7</sup> Make your beauty SMB glow on TikTok this Spring, 14 May 2024, [https://www.tiktok.com/business/en/blog/2024-beauty-blog-tiktok-smb?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTA-AAR0uSn7AGUIVSSF98ee5Et9YVeEGmBoqB9YxLMit\\_PekY0pGjbH1XlkQKhA\\_aem\\_AdTbNQdUsx0bJG-tEVgfdR3xbnpMxtpz6L3a\\_fUBvg3rNM-wJ5WFGPFi2aGP9kmR4r1qppwOSlear9SKsE0\\_V8z7m](https://www.tiktok.com/business/en/blog/2024-beauty-blog-tiktok-smb?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTA-AAR0uSn7AGUIVSSF98ee5Et9YVeEGmBoqB9YxLMit_PekY0pGjbH1XlkQKhA_aem_AdTbNQdUsx0bJG-tEVgfdR3xbnpMxtpz6L3a_fUBvg3rNM-wJ5WFGPFi2aGP9kmR4r1qppwOSlear9SKsE0_V8z7m)

INKEY List and Tatcha already use this strategy, as it has been discussed. The study also confirms that educational content is the most successful type of content on the platform for beauty brands, as it has also been argued in this dissertation. TikTok's study therefore helps to verify some of the claims that have been made in this dissertation but also give even more insight into what can help make a beauty brand successful on the platform.

Finally, a more general research question could be whether the conclusions drawn in this thesis could be applied to other sectors. This thesis focused on skincare brands, but it could also have been conducted for other beauty related brands such as make-up brands, or hair-care companies. The framework for this study could also be adapted and applied to other sectors than the beauty industry if a gap in such research needs to be filled.

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