



A Discovery Expedition through TikTok



With Facebook launching in 2004, it was possible for everyone with access to the internet to connect with friends and even complete strangers within seconds. The arousal of social networks thereby ultimately changed the way we communicate. But as we all know today, Facebook wasn't the last resort. Eventually, it was complemented and partly even replaced by Whatsapp, Instagram and others. In 2019, a new player entered the field, playfully combining video and audio elements. What was before marketed under the name of musical.ly became the next big thing for Gen Z: TikTok.

TikTok is since its launch the fastest growing social media platform worldwide with today more than 1 billion users worldwide. While the platform is growing in public awareness and interest, media as well as marketers try to develop a better understanding of how to successfully place and manage content within this loud, quirky, and often disturbing environment.

Rage comics for Facebook, dancing dads and singing babies for TikTok. Okay, cute things always work, but why is everyone obsessed with baked feta pasta?

In this seminar our students get the opportunity to have a closer look on what makes content go viral on TikTok and develop implications for modern marketing concepts. Together, we will dismantle the importance of different components of a TikTok posts including hashtags, emojis, topics, visuals, sounds and textual elements.



Seminar thesis and presentation

Students are required to hand in a seminar paper with up to 24 pages max. The seminar paper will be divided into an individual part (6-9 pages) and a group work (8-16 pages).

While the individual part should give an overview about current social media research and insights into what is known about virality factors so far, the group work focuses particularly on TikTok and its formula for successful content.

Additionally, a 2-3 minute video presentation has to be submitted that wraps up the seminar paper and points out the most important findings and implications.

The seminar ends with a 2-3 day conference on a weekend with overnight stay (approx. 30km away from Muenster) where every group will get the opportunity to present their findings to the other participants and engage in lively discussions about virality.

Seminar topics:

While marketing research has invested substantial resources in understanding the drivers of user engagement and content virality within the existing range of social media networks, the yet uncharted and significant differences of TikTok (i.e. user group, presentation format, algorithm, music support, video format, etc.) make it very likely that not all insights from previous research can be transferred to TikTok. We thus aim at benchmarking previous social media research insights within the realm of TikTok to give social media managers and content creators actionable insights about how to design content to reach maximum user engagement.

Topics include the following content touchpoints:

- 1.) The impact of network size on engagement**
- 2.) The impact of day time and week day on**
- 3.) The impact of hashtag usage on engagement**
- 4.) The impact of emojis usage on engagement**
- 5.) The impact of topics on engagement**
- 6.) The impact of visuals on engagement**
- 7.) The impact of musical elements on engagement**
- 8.) The impact of textual cues on engagement**



Students will be provided with the state of the art crawling tools or/and data, which will allow them to extract and analyze data from TikTok. While we appreciate previous analytical knowledge and experience with Python and R, it is not mandatory for participation. Registered students will be provided with detailed tutorials, training material and support upfront to ensure a smooth and successful participation.

Timetable

Topic	Date	Location
Kick-off	14./15.10.2021	MCM
Selection of topics	18.10.2021	Learnweb
2 individual meetings with supervisor	upon request	
Submission of seminar paper	03.03.2022	
Feedback seminar paper	07./08.03.2022	
Submission of video	11.03.2022 (10 AM)	
Seminar and presentations	11.03.-13.03.2022	tba

The time table may be subject to change, according to preferences and schedule of the instructor and the ongoing Covid19 pandemic.

Recommended starting literature

De Vries, L., Gensler, S., & Leeflang, P. S. (2012). Popularity of brand posts on brand fan pages: An investigation of the effects of social media marketing. *Journal of interactive marketing*, 26(2), 83-91.