

Inside DSW's TikTok evolution

Article

For shoe retailer DSW, TikTok is a place to test, learn, and have fun. In this excerpt from our new report, "[Marketing in the Short-Video Landscape](#)," Maria Wollenburg, DSW's manager of social media and content, shares what the company has done on the social platform and what was learned in the eight months since launching its first TikTok paid ad campaign.

DSW joined TikTok because it sparked joy. The effects of the pandemic "accelerated our speed into TikTok," Wollenburg said. "I think we would have eventually played around in the

space, but we noticed the popularity of it, and that it brought so much joy to people, so we said, 'OK, let's try it.'"

The retailer's first foray was a hashtag challenge ad campaign called #TooManyShoes. It incorporated a catchy jingle, a team of five TikTok influencers, and even celebrity Jennifer Lopez. The campaign ended up being wildly successful. "We worked with a company called Movers+Shakers. They wrote custom music for us and then helped us figure out what our challenge would be. We saw a billion views with the hashtag [in just a few days]."

TikTok is a "try space." "Every other social channel we're on, we have very specific KPIs [key performance indicators], and we have certain metrics that we need to hit. But TikTok is this free space. One of our graphic designers was like, 'I love TikTok.' And we were like, 'You're hired.' She's been working with our team to come up with new things to do, new stuff to try, things that are trending."

TikTok is also a safe space. "With Instagram and Facebook, you really are this beautiful picture. And unfortunately, if you show flaws, the comments then seem to immediately point them out. But on TikTok, that's not the way people interact and engage there, so it allows us to be human."

Organic engagement isn't necessarily a slam dunk. "From our own content that we're posting, we're not seeing anywhere near a billion views. The platform is made for creators, and so that is what you see. Even though I actively follow DSW, I'll go days without seeing our videos."

It's OK for a shoe retailer to dance around and be a ghost. "We're averaging 16 videos a month. Most of them are shoe-focused. Some are just trending. One of the women on my team was like, 'Guys, there's this really funny stuff where people are having photo shoots as ghosts. We should be ghosts.' And I was like, 'Are you actually going to put a sheet on and dance around?' And she said, 'Absolutely.' And she did it. So, that's where we are today. Yes, we're making sure shoes are somewhere in the grand scheme of it, but we're also bringing humor and a human element into the brand."