

Why Retailers Need to Pay Attention to TikTok

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eMarketer Editors

Video-sharing app TikTok was the darling of VidCon this year. The media latched onto its low-fi approach of seeding creators all over the conference, where fans could easily interact with them. By contrast, YouTube creators were often cordoned off into formal presentations and meet-and-greets.

“Platforms like TikTok are beginning to emerge as a channel for influencers to grow their brand. We think that’s one to keep an eye on,” said Melanie Cohn, senior manager of brand engagement at Dunkin’ Brands, who was interviewed for our latest report, [“Video Ads in Social Media 2019: Creators Are in Demand on Social Properties. Here’s Why —and What It Means for YouTube.”](#)

Dunkin’ isn’t the only brand eyeing the emerging platform.

In August, Macy’s teamed up with TikTok influencers for a video challenge that tied in with its “All Brand New” back-to-school ad campaign. Macy’s invited TikTok users to submit their own videos showing off their style. The campaign also included a TV spot and integration into the Snap Originals show, “The Dead Girls Detective Agency,” from NBCUniversal.

TikTok has also helped Chipotle Mexican Grill connect with creators for stunts such as its “lid flip” challenge. The restaurant chain partnered with YouTuber David Dobrik to challenge TikTok users to perform their

own lid-flipping trick with a Chipotle burrito bowl. The six-day campaign had 104 million video starts and 110,000 submissions, according to a June 2019 CNBC article.

“What excites me about TikTok is the reach and the impact that we can have in a way that's really fun and engaging around the brand,” said Tressie Lieberman, vice president of digital marketing and off premise at Chipotle. “It's not about building a mass following toward Chipotle or really any other brand because it's a very different platform.”

And subscription box retailer FabFitFun is also eyeing the emerging platform, according to Leslie Emmons Burtney, vice president of marketing for the company. “We're always testing, and we're definitely looking at TikTok [for that].”

According to Debra Aho Williamson, eMarketer principal analyst and author of the “Video Ads in Social Media 2019” report, brands should know that, unlike YouTube, TikTok videos are short, quirky and frequently involve challenges and themes, where creators invite followers to upload their own videos based on the challenge or theme.

And the vast majority of marketers have not yet started using TikTok. As of February 2019, just 4% of US social media marketers were using the platform, compared with 49% using YouTube, according to research by Sprout Social.

In addition to buying paid advertising, brands will be able to partner directly with TikTok creators, as they do on other properties.

Social Media Platform Usage Among US Social Media Marketers* vs. US Internet Users, Feb 2019

% of respondents

	Social media marketers*	Internet users
Facebook	89%	66%
Instagram	65%	41%
Twitter	50%	22%
YouTube	49%	35%
Facebook Messenger	44%	13%
LinkedIn	38%	6%
Pinterest	28%	17%
Snapchat	28%	14%
WhatsApp	15%	3%
Twitch	6%	2%
TikTok	4%	2%

Note: ages 18-73; *as part of their brand's social strategy
 Source: Sprout Social, "Sprout Social Index Edition XV: Empower & Elevate," May 7, 2019

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Report by Debra Aho Williamson Sep 05, 2019

Video Ads in Social Media 2019

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 BY DEBRA AHO WILLIAMSON
 CONTRIBUTORS: ANN DENNIS, WILSON GONCALVES, NANCY WILKINSON, CHUCK BERTLINGER

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