

# What Marketers Should Know About TikTok Ad Formats and a Roundup on Partnership News

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Ad Formats

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e.l.f. Cosmetics

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**I**t's now been more than a year since TikTok launched in the US, and in that short period, the Chinese-owned short-form video app has capitalized on the viral nature of its platform by partnering with a number of brands and slowly unveiling a slew of advertising capabilities.

TikTok is also leveraging its growing community of creators for influencer marketing. Recently, TikTok **began testing two new features** that would allow influencers to add links in their videos to ecommerce sites (similar to Instagram's "swipe up" feature in Stories), along with the ability to place URLs within a profile page. Only a small group of TikTok users have access to these features in the testing phase, and it is not clear when it will be implemented platformwide.

TikTok has used **shoppable in-feed ads** for brand partners in the past and now lets users shop within the app as part of its Hashtag Challenge Plus feature (see below). But this is the first time that influencers will be given these tools, which could help drive social commerce and make TikTok a more lucrative platform for influencers and brands alike.

Below is a roundup of TikTok's current ad offerings and some of its biggest brand partnerships to date.

## Ad Formats

TikTok has been somewhat vague regarding which formats have been officially launched in the US market. A representative from the company told us in September that its hashtag unit was still the only ad product officially available in the US, but a leaked pitch deck obtained by **Ad Age** last month indicated that TikTok offers five ad formats:

**In-Feed Video:** A native format that uses the immersive, short-form video style seen in TikTok user videos.

**Hashtag Challenge:** Allows brands to engage with users by encouraging them to create and share content using a hashtag.

**Hashtag Challenge Plus:** An [upgrade of the hashtag challenge format](#) that features a shopping category embedded in the second tab of the challenge page. Users can tap on the Discover tab to view and buy products. Upon selecting one of the products, users are taken to a location within TikTok where they can purchase the product.

**Brand Takeover:** A full-screen, immersive ad format that appears when the app is launched.

**Branded Lens:** As described in the deck published by Ad Age, this format lets marketers create and promote their own two- or three-dimensional lens to the TikTok audience.

**Top View:** A version of the Brand Takeover ad unit that fades into an in-feed video ad. Buyers of these 15-second units can enjoy category exclusivity, according to the deck published by Ad Age.

These ad units began appearing sporadically on the app shortly after it launched in the US. In August 2018, clothing company [Guess](#) activated the first branded TikTok campaign in the US with its [#InMyDenim](#) hashtag challenge and food delivery app [Grubhub](#) was reportedly testing video ads on TikTok as early as January 2019. Fashion retailer [Hollister Co.](#) also ran a series of in-feed video ads last spring. But major US brands have only in recent months begun advertising on the platform en masse.

## e.l.f. Cosmetics

Cosmetics brand e.l.f. launched a paid campaign in October targeting TikTok's Gen Z user base. Using the popular "Hashtag Challenge" ad unit, the brand recently launched its [#eyeslipsface](#) campaign, encouraging TikTok users to create videos showing off their makeup using an original song created for the activation. e.l.f. Beauty also purchased a 24-hour takeover ad, which prompted users to participate in the challenge upon opening the app.

"Gen Z is a huge audience for us," said Kory Marchisotto, CMO of e.l.f., in an interview with eMarketer about the news of the partnership. "It's of critical importance to make sure we're not only where they are, but also serving up content that's relevant to them."

Marchisotto says it's not just TikTok's demographic that has e.l.f. interested in the platform. "I think [TikTok] is bringing something very different. Instagram has become highly polished, it's still the coffee table book, it's very curated. On TikTok, everybody's out there to have fun and express themselves in unique ways."

## Walmart

Walmart TikTok's list of advertisers also includes the largest company in the world. Walmart launched its #SavingsShuffle hashtag challenge in late September and promoted the campaign using a roster of TikTok influencers. "It's kind of one of those seminal moments when you start seeing those kinds of brands," said TikTok vice president Blake Chandlee at Advertising Week in New York City. The brand used the hashtag challenge Explore tab—which pops up when a user taps on a hashtag—to advertise a variety of shoppable products and ask users to guess Walmart's best-selling item. (The answer: toilet paper.)

## NFL

In perhaps the largest US branding effort to date, TikTok **announced a multiyear partnership** with the NFL that will allow third-party brands to sponsor content on the NFL's TikTok account. When the announcement was made prior to the 2019 season, the NFL began posting using the hashtag #WeReady. Although **the NFL told AdAge** that it did not pay to promote the hashtag, the organization plans to use the Hashtag Challenge feature in the future. The NFL also hopes to generate user engagement by inviting fans to create TikTok-centric content to support their favorite teams and players.

## Ralph Lauren

As the official outfitter of the US Open Tennis Championships, Ralph Lauren was one of the first brands to use TikTok's shoppable Hashtag Challenge Plus feature to show off its collection for the 2019 tournament. **The challenge** asked TikTok users to post a video wearing Ralph Lauren products using the hashtag #WinningRL. At the end of the contest, creators of the top three videos with the highest engagement were awarded free US Open gear.

## Macy's

The department store kicked off the back-to-school shopping season by bringing its omnichannel “All Brand New” campaign to TikTok using the platform’s Hashtag Challenge. The challenge encouraged students to post videos wearing back-to-school outfits, and if users tapped on the hashtag, a “Shop Now” prompt appeared above Macy’s official videos linking to its website.

## Kroger

For its own back-to-school campaign, Kroger became the one of the first brands to use TikTok’s shoppable Hashtag Challenge Plus feature. The grocery chain promoted its #TransformUrDorm campaign, which encouraged college students to show off their decorated dorm rooms. Similar to Macy’s, the campaign allowed users to tap on the sponsored hashtag, which led to a separate Explore tab showcasing Kroger products and direct links to its ecommerce channel.

## Chipotle

One of TikTok’s most notable US partnerships was with Chipotle, which worked with the video platform twice on hashtag challenges. For Cinco de Mayo, the restaurant chain asked fans to post their best “lid flip”—where users flipped an aluminum dish lid onto a Chipotle plate and then used the hashtag #ChipotleLidFlip—to promote its free delivery offer. The brand went viral on TikTok in August when it announced a new challenge, #GuacDance, which became TikTok’s highest-performing branded challenge in the US.

To learn more about TikTok, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our recent report:

**Report** by Debra Aho Williamson Oct 30, 2019

## Marketing on TikTok

### MARKETING ON TIKTOK

Separating Fact and  
Fiction About This Buzzy  
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OCTOBER 2019  
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