

MARKETING

## Luxury must approach TikTok with authentic storytelling

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*Industry leaders discuss ways brands can use TikTok as a tool for conversion and growth. Image credit: Getty*

By NORA HOWE

Luxury brands have an opportunity to build trust with consumers by incorporating TikTok into their marketing strategies.

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TikTok has emerged as, not only a widely popular social media platform but as an authentic space due to the organic, unpolished nature of its content. During a virtual session at Tinitiv's [2021 Social Media Advertising](#) webinar on March 17, industry experts discussed how the authenticity of TikTok impacts the customer journey, how brands should approach advertising on TikTok and examples of successful campaigns.

"When you can go on TikTok and discover other people who align with your values and beliefs, you feel represented and supported," said Valerie Bartlett, sales lead of U.S. independent agency team at [TikTok](#), Austin.

### Talking of TikTok

At its core, TikTok aims to inspire creativity and simply ignite joy among its users. Ms. Bartlett further emphasized how TikTok is a place users go to be their authentic selves, as opposed to other platforms like Instagram, where content is highly curated and glossy.

"[TikTok] is not about conformity or blending in," she said. "It's a place to stand out."

The social platform is driven by its users' sense of community and relatability, according to Ms. Bartlett. She shared that adding creativity and joy will result in discovery a formula that seems to apply to the majority of TikTok's content.

Ms. Bartlett noted that the community cannot thrive without authenticity, therefore making it a necessary element to the platform.

"When you are real, you foster connection, community, engagement and, ultimately, results," she said.

As seldom brands want to be perceived as inauthentic, especially now, Ms. Bartlett defined authenticity as real, trusted, genuine and natural, suggesting that brands produce TikTok content within three themes: educational, relatable and inspirational.

There are a number of best practices that Tinuiti suggests brands need to keep in mind for a successful TikTok experience. In its [2020 TikTok Advertising Guide](#), Tinuiti highlights the dos and don'ts of launching creative advertising on the platform.

[@gucci](#) Gucci's new video project for [@tiktok](#) will feature talents that took part in the [##GucciModelChallenge](#) including [@thvmxxs](#) . Voice by [@morganpresleyxo](#) [original sound - Gucci](#)

### *#GucciModelChallenge on TikTok*

Since TikTok is known for its storytelling formats, Tinuiti suggests three storytelling themes that seem to work best on the platform: first person; thought bubbles and instructions; narration.

Stories on the app are predominantly told through music and audio, so it is crucial that brands use relevant music. The right music will not just show that a brand is trendy, but it can impact the TikTok algorithm, ultimately yielding more viewership, according to Tinuiti.

Brands should also stay up to date with trends, and strategize how they can add new interpretations to these trends.

During the webinar, Ms. Bartlett noted that TikTok is built from the consumer up, and most trends occur organically. Brands do not necessarily have to create the trend, but they should know how to appropriately use and interact with it.

Italian fashion house Gucci jumped on a trend that a young TikTok user started, [#GucciModelChallenge](#), where the narrator describes elements commonly found in the brand's editorial ads while donning whatever they have in their closet that best matches the narrative ([see story](#)).

By joining trends, brands can expose their content beyond their followers due to the platform's algorithm and show that they not only understand trends, but are creative enough to add to them.

Group director of paid social at Tinuiti and panelist Avi Ben-Zvi further suggested that brands steer clear of repurposing content from other platforms.

As stressed by both professionals throughout the webinar, TikTok is immensely different from platforms like Instagram and Facebook, therefore content that works on Instagram will not work on TikTok.

"First and foremost, think about what it is like to scroll on TikTok as a user and consumer," Ms. Ben-Zvi said. "Do not think about creative or brand marketing, yet, just think about your own journey through the For You' page."

TikTok's proprietary algorithm favors content over followers, so users with a significant following may not necessarily see significant viewership, while users with only a handful of followers could go viral.

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### *Aaron Grushow's TikTok of a \$78 million Bel Air home*

Tinuiti advises brands to focus on being able to simply post the right content and the right time to perform well and get boosted within the algorithm.

"From an organic creative perspective, what works well is utilizing and working with TikTok creators," Ms. Bartlett said. "They are the ones who know how to make good content for TikTok because they know TikTok."

"To find the right creators for your brand, you just need to get on the app and see what is out there," she said.

All sectors welcome

From beauty and fashion to real estate and home improvement, brands from a multitude of sectors can discover

success through TikTok.

While TikTok may be best-known for its popularity among Generation Z consumers, its use as a legitimate marketing tool continues to grow, even in the world of luxury real estate.

While it may seem as if TikTok is not an ideal match for prospective luxury real estate clients, many brokerages and agents believe there is a lot of untapped potential by using the platform. With its emphasis on short-form content, the platform also has lower overhead costs than other high-production efforts ([see story](#)).

Italian accessories label Furla used a branded hashtag challenge to encourage users to replicate dance moves to a bespoke soundtrack driving over 124 million views, brands are jumping on the opportunity to connect and engage with younger audiences found on the short-form video app ([see story](#)).

"Virtually any business can work on TikTok, and I don't say that for every platform," Tinuiti's Mr. Ben-Zvi said.

"Based on the type of user growth and types of content on the platform, there is a place for nearly every vertical.

"Some businesses may have an easier time, but do not discount the platform because the barrier might be a bit challenging," he said. "You just need to get a little creative."

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