

3 key recommendations for brand engagement for marketers

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Growth sits in the unknown and uncomfortable, and brands must be brave enough to experiment to unlock it. What drives those who keep growing and moving forward? How can brands in South Africa break through?



Source: © 123rf [123rf](#) Jochen Bischoff, head of global business solutions, Africa, TikTok asks what drives brands

One of the key takeaways for marketers to navigate through the constantly evolving cultural trends, which are very much fueled by digital platforms these days, is the "Creative Bravery" transformative mindset, introduced in TikTok's *What's Next Trend Report*.

TikTok has democratized creativity for everyone as the barriers for content creation have been lessened, which has set a new bar for brands.

Today, taking strategic risks and being vulnerable is the ultimate brand strategy, where leaning into micro insights and showcasing quirks can be your superpower.

Brands demonstrating Creative Bravery in their daily behaviour and strategies, regularly piquing global curiosities and flipping traditional story arcs on TikTok will build deeper community connections, and trust and see the most success on the platform.

Local resonance, global appeal

TikTok allows South African brands to engage with a global audience through uniquely local stories.

Brands are encouraged to delve into local user engagement trends and demographic insights, ensuring their strategies are data-informed and tailored to the nuanced South African audience.

Such strategic narrative crafting elevates brand visibility and deepens authenticity and audience connection. A good example of this is the campaign by King Price, a South African insurance company, that utilised TikTok's best creative practices and frequent creative testing, which brought significant results: the quality of traffic increased twice and conversion rate increased six times.

Winning hearts through creative storytelling

Diverse voices, collaborative formats, and subject matters are flipping everything we know about traditional storytelling on its head. Brands that master creative storytelling are the ones that have the most opportunities to capitalise on this.

In this dynamic environment, traditional product showcases are overshadowed by narratives that forge genuine connections with the audience.

Brands need to focus on unpredictable, collective stories with a flair that has no beginning, middle, or end, giving users a vested interest in how a story transpires. Intriguing narrative structures help guide viewers past the first few seconds of the ad, hold the viewer's attention longer and foster a deeper brand-user relationship.

Thus, ads intended to make users curious keep them watching 1.4 times longer.

2 things marketers need to be aware of

What should marketers be aware of?

1. Keep in mind that TikTok users appreciate community-fueled storytelling: they are 1.3x more likely to feel that they can co-create content and feed off each other compared to traditional social media. Users are no longer passively consuming content, opting instead to keep conversations going, and part of the fun for them is to thread unexpected stories together in gripping and surprising ways.

The collaborative spirit of TikTok is reinventing typical story arcs, leading to disruptive narrative formats that surprise audiences and capture their attention while also inspiring them to join in on the fun.

2. TikTok community connects around fandom stories and storyline formats based on a blend of fantasy and manifestation - adopting a fake-it-til-you-make-it persona for audiences to tap into, fantasising about their dream #delusionship (delusional relationship), manifesting confidence and adopting aspiring mindsets to get closer to their dreams.

More than 70% of TikTok users say it's easy for strangers to connect and bond around shared life experiences on TikTok.² Brands can tap into those manifested realities and help users develop stories that provide them with comfort and a spark of lightheartedness in an overwhelming reality.

3 key recommendations for marketers

1. Give the users an equal seat at the table to shape your brand's identity and narrative. Explore ways of contributing to

an existing conversation or invite co-creation by incorporating suggestions and comments you receive into subsequent videos.

2. Enter conversations with a flair of fun to build accessible connections with audiences around joy, confidence, and comfort. For example, the Among Us gaming brand does this by leaning into in-jokes and community-specific references.
3. Rely on the most innovative technology to enhance your performance and use the toolkit that TikTok provides for brands to amplify their creative storytelling.

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