THE IMPACT OF TIKTOK ON THE GENERATION OF ENGAGEMENT FOR FASHION BRANDS A profile analysis of Zara

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KEY WORDS

TikTok Digital communication Engagement Zara Hashtags Digital content

ABSTRACT

TikTok, with its visual content and setup, has emerged as a powerful platform for fast fashion. This study examines how Zara uses TikTok to communicate with consumers, promote products and strengthen its brand. Content strategies, interaction with users and the impact on brand perception were analysed. Collaborations with content creators and special launches were found to broaden the audience and generate greater engagement. Video length also influences success, with an inverse correlation between length and likes. This analysis provides insights to understand and optimize brands' presence on TikTok.

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1. Introduction

he intersection between fashion and social media has forged a type of intrinsic relationship that has changed the communication dynamics of brands in this sector. This digital omnipresence has therefore become imperative for fashion companies seeking to reach a diverse, broad audience that is difficult to have an impact on in certain age segments and with whom they want to establish a two-way dialogue, thus challenging traditional communication paradigms.

Hapsari et al. (2023) highlight the value of implementing a social media marketing strategy, as it contributes to the creation of brand awareness, trust and perceived value, which in turn contributes to brand loyalty in the fashion industry. The importance of using social media lies in achieving the objective of reaching the right audience and creating attractive content that reflects the exclusivity of their offers (Bazi et al., 2023).

Other research examines the type of content used by fashion brands on social media (Ahmed et al., 2023; Fetais et al., 2023). In this regard, the analysis of successful fast fashion brands reveals the use of a content strategy focused on the product and on conveying specialization (Umbara and Rinawati, 2023). In other cases, the strategy is more focused on generating the feeling of scarcity and applying game mechanics to boost word of mouth (Chen, 2022), while luxury brands choose to communicate their environmental commitment, collaborations with other brands and the use of celebrities (Yuanchen, 2023).

The importance of this digital presence of brands is reflected in the fact that 85% of Internet users in Spain use social media, representing 30.2 million, a figure that has remained stable in terms of penetration. The growth of user profiles is especially seen among young people aged 18 to 24, reaching 94%. The most popular social media among the general population are Facebook followed by Instagram, with the number of spontaneous mentions of TikTok having increased 6 percentage points compared to 2022 to place it in the top 5 of the most popular social networks and the most preferred among its users (IAB Spain, 2023). This trend highlights the importance of social media as a primary channel for brand-customer interaction in the context of fashion.

Brand strategies on social media have therefore become essential for customer engagement and building brand identity (Bazi et al., 2023). Content creators, as key agents in this process, play an essential role in developing and publishing content aimed at the target audience (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2022). This approach aligns with the idea that authenticity and emotional connection are crucial in the communication strategies of fashion brands (Prawira and Ahmadi, 2023).

Another important aspect that the strategic use of social media contributes to for a fashion brand is the ability to segment and thus reach different customer profiles. Market segmentation is a vital component of fashion brand strategies, with demographic, geographic and psychographic factors exerting a significant influence on the identification of target audiences (Umbara and Rinawati, 2023). Social media, by offering precise targeting opportunities, allows brands, organically or through paid campaigns, to effectively present their positioning, selecting platforms and content that connect with their specific audience (Bazi et al., 2023). The effectiveness of these strategies is measured through customer engagement, an indicator that can be assessed by analysing, both qualitatively and quantitatively, content shared on social media (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2022).

New social media platforms such as TikTok have become increasingly important in companies' marketing strategies. This platform is characterized by dynamic content that gives users a sense of connection and higher engagement rates than other social media platforms (Ortiz et al., 2023). Hidayanto and Akbar (2022) argue that TikTok is a strategic platform for attracting and engaging Generation Z, while Bazi et al. (2023) suggest that it employs specific tactics that seek to balance exclusivity and accessibility.

Industry studies point to a significant increase in the use of TikTok as a marketing platform for fashion brands, currently receiving the most attention due to its rapid growth, its creative possibilities and the opportunities it provides to the marketing field (Rach, 2021). Through it, informative content elicits higher engagement rates than emotional content, with the singularity that non-verbal information has hardly any significant effects (Wahid et al., 2023). An analysis of the communication activity of European and North American companies on TikTok revealed a correlation between the increase in followers and the increase in posts, with reach increasing as content production is

encouraged. Moreover, TikTok tends to innovate narratively, which is far from conventional advertising and marketing formulas (Bautista et al., 2021).

In this respect, Zara, recognized as one of the leading global fashion brands, has clearly moved towards an active TikTok strategy. Recent research on this company (Angelica, 2022; Cristófol and Carrasco, 2023; Castillo-Abdul et al., 2022; Putra, 2022; Wijaksana, 2022;) ranges from its use of TikTok to the effect of its videos on its audiences.

Zara's transition to a more pronounced brand strategy on TikTok is manifested through an increased presence on the platform, diversification of content and proactive interaction with users (Interbrand, 2023). The constant adaptation and evolution of Zara's digital strategy on TikTok raises fundamental questions about how it is adapting its content in such a changing framework and what results this implementation had in terms of effectiveness and interaction throughout 2023.

2. Objectives

Firstly, the main objective is to analyse the reach and visibility of Zara's posts on TikTok in order to determine the effectiveness of the brand's content strategy and evaluate its reach among the platform's users.

The secondary objectives are as follows:

- 1. To evaluate the engagement rate of Zara's TikTok posts.
- To compare the performance of different types of Zara content on TikTok in order to identify which type of content generates the highest level of interaction and understand user preferences.
- 3. To identify trends and patterns in Zara's strategy on TikTok during the study period, such as changes in content style, recurring themes and collaboration strategies, with the aim of understanding the evolution of the brand's strategy on the platform and its ability to adapt to the TikTok environment.

3. Method

The main hypothesis put forward in this study is linked to Zara's need to diversify its channels, with the aim of being present in all the media its target audience browses. Based on this premise, the following hypotheses are established:

- H1: TikTok, as a digital communication tool, provides Zara greater visibility and notoriety, ensuring the brand is top of mind by posting its own content on a secure platform where they can control the information the target audience receives. On the other hand, it is also taken into account that TikTok's algorithm favours all those accounts and posts that follow its criteria, positioning them better and giving them greater visibility.
- H2: Zara adjusts the format and content of its posts (length, music, time of posting, day of the
 week, etc.) to the platform's algorithm, which allows its posts to go viral and its account to be
 positioned.

To address the hypotheses put forward and given that TikTok is a social network on the rise and relatively unexplored from an academic perspective, a research method based on Krippendorff's (1990) content analysis is proposed. For Ruiz Olabuénaga (2012), this method is systematic and objective because it uses procedures, variables and categories that respond to study designs and analysis criteria. In this way, Zara's content on TikTok can be examined in two ways. First, through a qualitative methodology that focuses on monitoring the activity recorded in Zara's feed during the selected period, also using thematic content analysis techniques that allow the main themes and subthemes present in the videos (for example, product promotions, fashion shows, fashion tutorials, etc.) to be identified. Second, a quantitative methodology that focuses on measuring and quantifying variables and patterns, such as the number of likes, comments and shares, to examine the interaction between users and the brand.

The variables that make up the study were collected from public data provided by TikTok on Zara's posts: title, date of post, time of post, region, length (seconds), type of content, number of views, number of likes,

number of comments, number of shares, number of downloads, number of WhatsApp shares, favourites, % engagement rate, % likes, % shares and % comments.

Firstly, the title provides ample information about the use of hashtags and how the video is positioned, as well as whether a character has been tagged, which may provide more visibility. The date and time of the posts are also relevant concepts, since the video is not positioned in the same way and therefore does not reach the same number of users. On the other hand, the length of the videos, the region where they are posted and the type of post provide powerful information, as they show whether the video has been positioned thanks to its length or other elements such as the music used, the promotion, etc.

Likes, comments, WhatsApp shares, downloads and views of each post are also quantified. From this data, percentages of these and the engagement rate for each post are generated. The number of views indicates whether the reach has been satisfactory.

The percentages of individuals who liked, commented on or shared each post are calculated by dividing the likes, comments or shares by the number of views and then multiplying by one hundred.

With regard to the engagement rate, it is calculated by dividing the sum of likes, comments and shares by the number of views and multiplying by 100. Clarity on the correctness of the proposed hypothesis depends largely on careful consideration of these essential data.

Taking into account the variables set out in the previous point, 115 TikTok posts, posted by Zara during a calendar year covering the period between March 2022 and February 2023, were analysed. The reason for studying this entire period is due to the need to observe all phases of the commercial period in terms of digital communication. Furthermore, it avoids any potential bias or distortion that may arise from selecting only a limited portion of the content. By exploring and examining each video, more subtle patterns and trends can be identified that might go unnoticed in a sample-based analysis. Similarly, by considering the entire universe of videos, the internal and external validity of the results obtained is maximized. The findings and conclusions drawn from this study can be generalized with greater confidence, as they will be based on a full sample of content posted by Zara on TikTok during the analysis period.

Due to the amount of information that needed to be examined, a database was created in which all the variables of each post were displayed. The design of a template helped to visualize the data in a clearer, more functional way, making it easier to present the results.

The fieldwork was carried out between January and February 2024. During this period, data was collected directly from Zara's TikTok posts in order to obtain detailed, accurate information. To do so, a systematic observation method was followed. In addition, categorization and coding techniques were applied to identify patterns, trends and relationships between the variables studied. The study was therefore conducted in an objective, impersonal manner to avoid personal bias and to maintain a scientific perspective throughout the process. Data collection was carried out in a rigorous, systematic manner following an established protocol to ensure the validity and reliability of the results obtained.

Finally, two external tools (Exoylt and FanPage Karma) were used to collect quantitative data. In addition, an intensive analysis was also carried out and a custom database was created in Excel, with different evaluation criteria that were not included in the aforementioned platforms.

4. Results

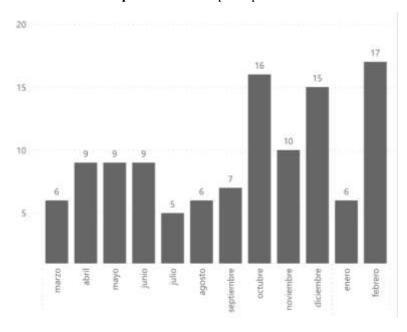
4.1. Zara's profile

First, an analysis was carried out of 115 videos posted by Zara on its official TikTok account corresponding to the selected period. Since launching its TikTok account in March 2021, Zara has posted approximately 300 videos, which have accumulated a total of 30 million likes.

It should be noted that Zara's profile on TikTok is universal for all countries, which makes it easier to control information. Consequently, the content is published from Spain, the brand's place of origin and corporate headquarters. Although the country's main language is Spanish, many TikTok posts feature content in English, both in text and audio. This particularity is closely related to the creator and the content of the video, as it is possible to distinguish between content produced directly by the brand and collaborations with other creators.

4.2. Posts

In relation to the volume of posts, Zara is moving away from the premise of posting on a daily basis. An average of 10 videos were posted per month. However, it is worth noting, as shown in Graph 1, that the months of February, October and December stand out significantly in terms of the number of posts.



Graph 1. Number of posts per month.

Source: Authors, 2024.

After analysing the content of the videos from these three months, it is clear that, of the total number of posts in February, a total of 11 videos were created in collaboration with content creators. In addition to these posts, five were specifically related to the launch of a capsule collection for men: ZaraXRhuigi.

The month of October, on the other hand, was characterized by an abundance of brand-specific content, presenting new collections, stores and seasonal accessories. However, it is important to highlight that there were 6 posts related to content creators, of which 4 focused on beauty.

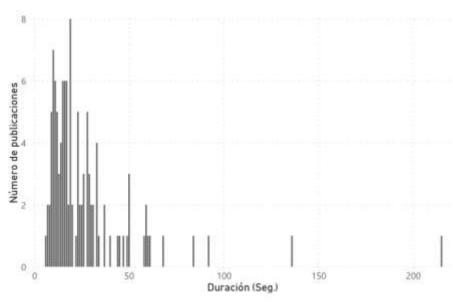
In relation to the month of December, there was a notable presence of the brand's own posts related to the Christmas campaign. In addition, 7 videos were identified in which influencers participated, as well as 4 posts highlighting a special collection called ADER ERROR X Zara Collection.

Collaboration with content creators and special launches of products or collections play a significant role. These partnerships enable audiences to be expanded and the impact and influence of content creators to be leveraged, generating greater engagement and visibility for the brand.

Another notable aspect is that all the analysed posts were promoted. This indicates that Zara had invested financial resources to expand the audience of these videos. As a result, the growth of the account is assured, since the algorithm positions the content on users with a preference for that type of video.

4.3. Length of posts

A relevant aspect is the length of the videos, as this data plays an essential role in the position of a post. Currently, as shown in Graph 2, Zara's videos generally do not exceed 50 seconds in length, with the exception of special moments. Videos that exceed this length are those that require more exposure time, such as beauty talks, *get ready with me* or collaboration presentations, among others. Most posts are between 5 and 30 seconds long, and an average length of 27 seconds.



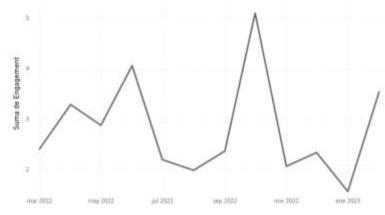
Graph 2. Length of posts.

Source: Authors, 2024.

4.4. Engagement and number of posts

Post engagement refers to video interactions divided by reach, which in the case of TikTok corresponds to views, multiplied by 100. A higher value indicates better results, meaning the post has generated interest and has been shared.

As can be seen in Graph 3, three notable peaks can be identified compared to the rest of the year. The month of October stands out significantly, followed by the months of June and February.



Graph 3. Engagement trend by month.

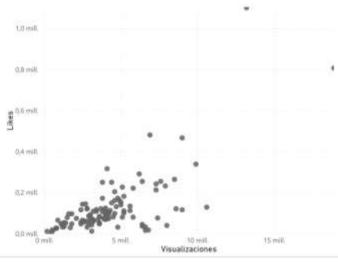
Source: Authors, 2024.

Considering the results in Graphs 1 and 3, it can be inferred that there is a direct relationship between the number of TikTok posts published and engagement. The months of October and June, which stand out for having a higher number of videos posted, also present greater interaction in terms of engagement. This indicates that a higher frequency of posting contributes to greater audience participation and increased interaction.

The relationship between the number of posts and engagement indicates that a higher frequency of posting contributes to generating greater user participation, which is crucial to strengthening the connection with the audience and encouraging interaction.

4.5. Relationship between views, likes, shares and comments

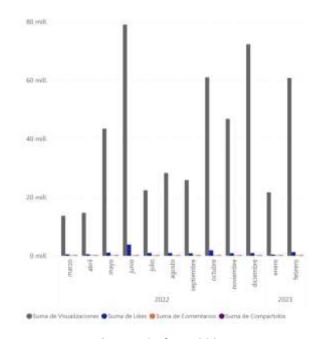
In relation to the total views during the selected year, a total of 500.6 million were recorded. However, the average number of views per post is 4.2 million. There is a relationship between the number of views and the likes received. As can be seen in Graph 4, it can be deduced that as the number of views increases, so does the number of likes the posts receive.



Graph 4. Relationship between views and likes.

Source: Authors, 2024.

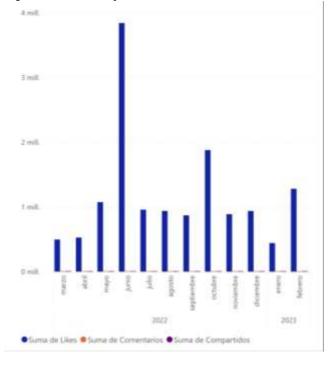
Graph 5 shows the months with the highest number of views, which are June, December, October and February. It is important to note that, as mentioned above and shown in Graph 1, February, October and December are also the months with the highest posting activity throughout the year.



Graph 5. Relationship between views, likes, comments and shares.

Source: Authors, 2024.

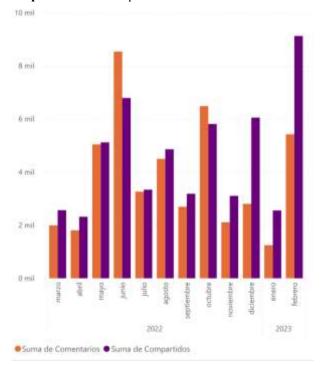
Graph 6 shows that the months with the highest number of views (June, December, October and February) also have the highest number of likes. Over the course of the year, the account managed to obtain a total of 14.5 million likes, which is equivalent to an average of 123,300 likes per video.



Graph 6. Relationship between likes, comments and shares.

Source: Authors, 2024.

In relation to Graph 7, it can be observed that the months of June, October and February stand out for the number of comments received on the posts. The months of February, June and December also stand out for the number of TikTok posts shared.



Graph 7. Relationship between comments and shares.

Source: Authors, 2024.

Furthermore, according to the graph above, it is clear that the number of shares exceeds the number of comments. The total number of shares reaches 58,100, while comments are slightly lower, at 48,500. The average is 492 shares and 411 comments per video.

4.6. Relationship between views and length

Views are also related to video length. Graph 8 shows that when video length is closer to the minimum number of seconds, the number of views is higher. That is why videos of around the average length, 27 seconds, have the highest number of views.

Graph 8. Relationship between views and length.

5 mil.

Source: Authors, 2024.

4.7. Hashtags with the most views and likes

According to the analysis of the most popular hashtags in terms of views, a significant overlap was observed with the most popular hashtags in terms of likes (Figure 3). This indicates that there is a strong correlation between the visibility of a hashtag and the level of interaction it generates.

The most popular hashtags in terms of views, as seen in Figure 3, include #zara, #zaraTikTok, #zarabeauty, #zaracreators, #zaraman, #aderrerorxzara, #cycleatoz, #zaracreator, #itsfriday and #happynewyear. These hashtags managed to capture the attention of a wide audience on TikTok, contributing to increased reach and visibility of Zara-related posts.

Hashtag #gara 193.0M #zaratiktok 93.3M 84.2M #garabeauty Wgaracreators 73.0M 45.5M #zaraman #adererrorxzara 37.3M #cyclestoz 37.3M #zaracreator 27.9M #itsfriday 20.1M #happynewyear # 19:4M

Figure 3. Hashtags with the most views.

Source: Exolyt (2023).

On the other hand, as can be seen in Figure 4, the hashtags that received the most likes were #zara, #zaraTikTok, #zarabeauty, #zaracreators, #itsfriday, #zaraman, #zaracreator, #fatherhood, #fridayvibes and #beauty. These hashtags demonstrate TikTok users' preference for Zara-related content, including beauty, content creators and topics related to Fridays and fatherhood.

Figure 4. Hashtags with the most likes.

Hashtag		Likes			
#zara	_	5.2M			
#zaratiktok	-	3.4M			
#zarabeauty	-	3.1M			
Wzaracreators	-	2.7M			
Witsfriday	•	1.6M			
Rzaraman	•	1.3M			
#zaracreator	•	1.1M			
#fatherhood	•	1.1M			
#fridayvibes	1	480.0K			
Wheauty	f. 1	465.7K			

Source: Exolyt (2023).

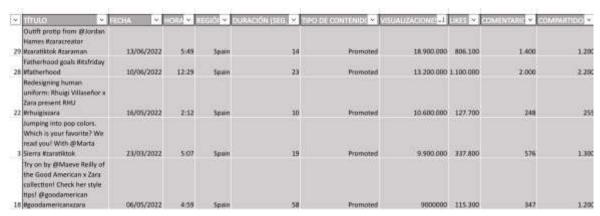
Overall, it can be concluded that the most popular hashtags both in terms of views and likes are closely related to the brand and its different aspects, such as fashion, beauty and collaborations. These results suggest that the strategic use of relevant, engaging hashtags can play a crucial role in the success and engagement of posts on TikTok.

3.8. The most viewed, most liked, most shared and commented posts.

Following the analysis of the database containing the most relevant data on Zara's TikTok posts, the veracity of the correlations set out in the previous sections has been verified.

Table 4 presents a set of five posts that received the highest number of views. It is worth noting that the length of the first four is less than the average recorded, which is 27 seconds. The fifth post is an exception, however, as it is a tutorial related to a capsule collection. It is also worth highlighting the presence of the hashtags used, which are related to those previously identified as the most popular in terms of views and likes.

Figure 5. The most viewed posts.



Source: Authors, 2024.

On the other hand, Table 5 presents a set of posts that received the most likes during the study period. Interestingly, three of the five most liked posts are also among the most viewed. Furthermore, the average length of the most liked TikTok posts is below the average length recorded. This finding highlights the existence of a significant relationship between the length of the TikTok posts and the number of likes received.

Figure 6. The most liked posts.

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Fatherhood goals #itsfriday 28 #fatherhood	10/06/2022	12:29	Spain	23	Promoted	13.200.000	100.000	2,000	2.200
Outift protip from @Jordan Harnes Azaracreutor 29 Waratiktok Azaraman	13/06/2022	5,49	Spain	14	Promoted	18.900.000	805.100	1.400	1.200
SOUND ON: Candy crush! — W Mishiday 26 #fridayvibes @Rocks&Rolls	03/06/2022	11:36	Spain	31	Promoted	6,900,000	480.100	1 300	866
GRWM @jaeldorotan #beauty #zarabeauty 32 #tutorial	27/06/2022	2:17	Spain	19	Promoted	9000000	465.700	1.100	467
Jumping into pop colors. Which is your favorite? We read you! With @Marta 3 Sierra #caratiktok	23/03/2022	5.07	Spain	19	Promoted	9.900,000	337.800	576	1.300

Source: Authors, 2024.

In relation to the most shared TikTok posts, as shown in Table 6, there is a notable association between these and the most viewed, most liked hashtags. This finding supports the existence of a direct relationship between the appropriate selection of hashtags and the frequency with which the content is distributed among users. It is important to highlight the hashtags #zaracreators, #fatherhood, #itsfriday and #zara, which stood out in terms of shares.

Figure 7. The most shared posts.

TITULO	FECHA Y	11(41(7)) Y.	STREET, A	DURACIÓN (SEG. M	TIPO DE CONTENIDO Y	VISUALIZACIONE: Y	III DS Y	COMENTARIC > C	OMPARTIDO J
Fatherhood goals #itsfriday 8 #fatherhood	10/06/2022	12:29	Spain	23	Promoted	13.200.000	1,100.000	2.000	2.200
Going into the week like 9 #mondaymood	01/08/2022	11:33	Spain	11	Promoted	4.800.000	172.000	801	1.800
Check out our skate collection with Harumal 9 #zaracreators #zara	01/02/2023	10:28	Spain	29	Promoted	2.800.000	119.300	803	1.700
METAVERSE VALENTINE'S TALE. Available at Zepeto 1. #zara #zarazepeto	05/02/2023	9:59	Spain	8	Promoted	3.200.000	62.700	1.500	1.400
POV: Monday mood 4 #monday #zara	30/05/2022				Promoted	5.800.000	220.600	1.300	1,400

Source: Authors, 2024.

Similar to the results previously presented, Table 7 shows a relationship between the most commented posts and the use of relevant hashtags. In this case, the most commented hashtags stand out, coinciding with those that were also viewed the most or obtained the highest number of likes. The hashtags #zaracreators, #fatherhood, #itsfriday, #zaraTikTok and #zara were observed to be highly commented on by TikTok users. This reinforces the idea that the right choice of hashtags can encourage greater user interaction and engagement with posts.

Figure 8. The most commented posts.

w	TÍTULO 🔀	FECHA ♥	Hamilton 💉	REGION Y DUR	ACIÓN (SEG. 📯 TIPO S	DE CONTENIDE 🔀 VISL	JALIZACIONEI Y	Use ×	COMENTARICAL CO	MARTIDO ~
	Fatherhood goals #itsfriday #fatherhood	10/06/2022	12:29	Spain	23	Promoted	13.200.000	1.100.000	2.000	2.200
200	The perfect seam! Sporty for Kids and Athleticz collection. @rolandpollard @jaydenpollard16 #zaracreators.	18/10/2022		Spain	31	Promoted	2.500.000	142.200	2.000	1.100
	Our Zara logo has been spotted in Seoul! #zaratiktok #zara	13/05/2022			17	Promoted	8.500.000	263.500	1.900	1.000
5.5	Have you tried our liquid eyeshadow? #zarabeauty	03/08/2022	1:37	Spain	7	Promoted	5.200.000	181,100	1.900	350
	METAVERSE VALENTINE'S TALE, Available at Zepeto Rzara Rzarazepeto	05/02/2023	9:59	Spain		Promoted	3 200 000	62.700	1.500	1.400

Source: Authors, 2024.

5. Conclusions

Firstly, a comprehensive analysis of the reach and visibility of Zara's posts on TikTok has been carried out, which has allowed us to evaluate the effectiveness of Zara's content strategy and determine its penetration among TikTok users. The data collected reveal a significant reach among users, indicating that Zara's strategy has been successful in capturing the attention and interest of the target audience.

In addition, the proposed secondary objectives have been achieved. The engagement rate of the posts has been evaluated, considering metrics such as likes, comments and shares, which has provided a detailed understanding of the level of interaction and participation of users with Zara's content on TikTok. These results indicate that Zara's content strategy has managed to effectively engage the audience, generating an active, favourable response from TikTok users.

The performance of different types of content published on TikTok, such as in-house videos, collaborations and tutorials, has also been compared, which has allowed us to identify which type of content generates a higher level of interaction and to understand user preferences. By comparing the performance of different types of content, a clear correlation has been identified between the type of content and the level of interaction. Collaborations and tutorials have been shown to be particularly effective in generating higher levels of engagement. This finding provides valuable information for optimizing the content strategy, allowing efforts to be focused on those types of content that generate greater participation and response from the audience.

The analysis of trends and patterns in the strategy has also revealed Zara's ability to adapt to the TikTok environment and keep up with user preferences and changes in behaviour. This demonstrates Zara's strategic agility in adjusting its content and collaborations based on current trends, which in turn has contributed to its success in terms of reach, engagement and visibility on TikTok.

Therefore, this study has answered the research hypotheses formulated, since it has been possible to confirm that TikTok provides Zara greater visibility and notoriety, ensuring the brand is at the top of mind of the target audience and adapts the format and content of its social media posts according to TikTok's algorithm. By following these practices, Zara seeks to take advantage of the specific features of the platform's algorithm to increase visibility and engagement with its posts. The ultimate goal has been to make its posts go viral, meaning they are widely shared and generate greater reach, thereby contributing to a better position and visibility of Zara's account on social media.

Taken together, these results validate the effectiveness of Zara's content strategy on TikTok, demonstrating significant reach, positive user engagement, and adaptability to the platform. These findings provide a solid basis for decision-making and future improvements to Zara's TikTok strategy, with the aim of further strengthening its presence and connection with the audience on this fast-growing platform.

However, such research is not without limitations, such as the fact that TikTok's algorithm, which determines what content is shown to users, is complex and not fully disclosed to the public. This can make it difficult to fully understand how and why certain Zara videos achieve more engagement than others. Moreover, some data, such as private views or non-public interactions, may not be available to researchers.

Several possibilities can be considered as future lines of research, such as comparing the content of Zara's TikTok account with that of other fashion brands using the same indicators, or comparing the content of the account in different countries, taking into account cultural and social differences.

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