

The Impact of Short Video Platform Content Marketing on Consumers' Willingness to Buy - Take TikTok as an Example

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ABSTRACT

As short-video applications like TikTok have gained prominence in recent years, content marketing has been recognized as an essential means through which consumer behavior can be shaped. The current research focuses on investigating the effects of TikTok content marketing on purchase intention and constructs a theoretical model in which the intermediary effects of platform interaction, user engagement, and the moderating effect of brand awareness are considered. For the testing of hypotheses, quantitative techniques and regression analysis were adopted. According to the empirical data from a survey of 150 TikTok users followed by regression analysis, the following conclusions were derived: first, content marketing has a positive effect on purchase intention. Second, although there is no direct mediation effect of platform interaction, a sequence of mediation path from content marketing to platform interaction to user engagement to purchase intention was observed. Third, brand awareness shows no significant moderation effect.

Keywords: Content marketing; Consumer purchase intention; Quantitative research approach

1. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of the Internet, marketing methods have undergone great changes, among which the content marketing of short videos has become one of the most potential marketing methods. This shift is primarily driven by consumers' growing preference for dynamic, easily digestible visual formats over traditional static advertisements. As of December 2025, according to CNNIC's 57th Statistical Report ^[1] on the Development of China's Internet, it can be learned that the number of short video users in China is 1.074 billion, accounting for 95.4% of the total proportion of netizens. This near-universal penetration highlights short video platforms as a crucial digital infrastructure for modern communication. As of 2025, Douyin (the mainland Chinese version of TikTok, hereafter referred to uniformly as TikTok for international readership consistency) reached 780 million daily active users (DAU), making it the largest short video platform in China. Its sophisticated recommendation algorithm excels at matching content with individual interests, creating a highly sticky environment for targeted brand exposure. Secondly, the proportion of consumers who choose to buy goods on the platform is increasing rapidly ^[2], and by December 2025, the transaction volume of the platform has increased by more than 50 times year-on-year. By integrating immersive storytelling with seamless in-app shopping features, the platform effectively triggers latent needs and shortens the consumer decision-making process. It can be seen that as a product of modern background, TikTok is loved by many users. At the same time, the upgrading of the business model has also enabled the platform to continuously create value and grow rapidly ^[3]. This seamless evolution from social entertainment to comprehensive "interest e-commerce" provides a vital context for studying modern purchase intentions.

2. THEORY

2.1 Shortcomings of existing research

Lack of a unified analysis framework for integrating platform interaction, user participation and brand awareness. Existing research or separate analysis of platform interaction behaviors such as likes, comments, sharing, or focus on users' in-depth participation behaviors such as viewing time and participation in challenges, or take brand awareness as a precursor or result variables ^[4]. Few studies examine at the same time: "platform interaction to user participation to willingness to buy", this chain intermediary path, and rarely studies take brand awareness as a regulating variable to test its boundary role in the process of user participation affecting the willingness to buy ^[5-7]. This single perspective makes us unable to answer clearly: does content marketing promote purchases through "shallow interaction" or "deep participation"? What role does brand awareness play in it?

2.2 Research purpose and Research questions

2.2.1 Research Purpose

This article aims to build and test an integrated theoretical model and systematically examine the impact mechanism of TikTok short video content marketing on consumers' willingness to buy. Specifically, this study will:

- (1) Test the chain intermediary effect between platform interaction and user participation between content marketing and purchase intention;
- (2) Examine the regulating role of brand awareness in the above path, that is, whether brand awareness will enhance the impact of user participation on the willingness to buy.

2.2.2 Research Questions

Main Research Question

"The Influence of Content Marketing on Consumers' Purchase Intention in Short Video Platform -Taking TikTok as an Example"

Sub-questions

- (1) RQ1: What types of platform interaction (liking, sharing, commenting) are most effective in increasing consumer purchase intention?
- (2) RQ2: How does user engagement with TikTok content influence the development of purchase intention?
- (3) RQ3: Does brand awareness moderate the relationship between user engagement and consumer purchase intention?

3. HYPOTHESES

H1: Short-form video content marketing on TikTok positively influences consumer purchase intention.

H2: Platform interaction positively mediates the relationship between content marketing and purchase intention.

H3: User engagement positively mediates the relationship between platform interaction and purchase intention.

H4: Brand awareness positively moderates the relationship between user engagement and purchase intention.

4. METHOD

This study adopted quantitative research method to verify the hypothesis relationship between short video content marketing, platform interaction, user participation, brand awareness and consumer purchase intention. The standardized data that meet the requirements of statistical analysis were collected by questionnaire survey.

4.1 Data Collection

(1) Sampling Process: A non-probability purposive sampling strategy was adopted. An online questionnaire was distributed from January 1 to April 5.

(2) Sample Capacity: A total of 150 questionnaires were returned. After excluding 20 invalid

responses (incomplete, straight-lining, or completion time ≤ 2 minutes), 130 valid responses were retained, yielding an effective response rate of 86.7%.

While the sample size was modest for complex mediation analysis, the study focused on effect sizes and confidence intervals alongside significance tests to avoid overinterpretation of p-values.

4.2 Measures

This study used the questionnaire survey method to collect data, and the measurement of all variables adopted the Likert 5-point scale (1 = "very disagree", 5 = "very agree"). The questionnaire was divided into two parts: the first part collected demographic information (gender, age, TikTok usage frequency, and areas of concern); the second part measured the core concepts of the study, including short video content marketing perception, platform interaction, user participation, brand awareness and purchase willingness.

For example:

Question: “I think TikTok brand short videos are usually very interesting”

Option: “1 = very disagree 2 = relatively disagree 3 = average 4 = relatively agree 5 = very agree”

4.3 Sample Characteristics

At present, I have collected 150 questionnaires. After data cleaning (excluding samples with too short filling time, all answers were the same and the total score is abnormally low), 130 questionnaires were finally valid data.

Table 1. Sample Characteristic display

Characteristic	Category	N (130)	%
Gender	Male	56	43.08%
	Female	74	56.92%
Age	Under 18 years old	3	2.31%
	18-25	41	31.54%
	26-30	24	18.46%
	31-40	39	30%
	41-50	18	13.85%
	51-60	2	1.53%
	Over 60 years old	3	2.31%
TikTok Usage	1-2 times per week	12	9.23%
	Within 1 hour per day	69	53.08%
	More than 1 hour per day	49	37.69%

5. RESULTS

Based on the theoretical framework and the content of the questionnaire, I divided the 23 measurement questions into five core variables: short video content marketing perception (questions 5, 6, 7, 8), platform interaction (questions 10, 11, 12), user engagement (questions 13, 14, 15, 16, 17), brand awareness (question 18, 19, 20) and purchase intention (questions 21, 22, 23). All questions were scored from “1 = strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree” using the Likert 5-point scale.

After data cleaning (excluding samples with too short filling time, all answers were the same and the total score was abnormally low), the average of the questions belonging to each variable was calculated for each respondent as the final score of the variable. Therefore, the value interval of each variable was 1 to 5 points, and the higher the score, the stronger the perception or behavior of the respondent in this dimension. The results were shown as follows.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for each variable

Variable	Maximum Value	Minimum Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Variance	Kurtosis	Skewness
Content Marketing	4.75	1.25	3.75	0.624	0.389	2.663	-1.099
Platform Interaction	5	1	3.533	0.96	0.922	0.475	-0.9

Table 2. (continued) Descriptive statistics for each variable

Variable	Maximum Value	Minimum Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Variance	Kurtosis	Skewness
User Engagement	4.6	1	3.514	0.843	0.711	1.437	-1.164
Brand Awareness	5	1.667	3.919	0.628	0.394	2.328	-1.043
Purchase Intention	5	1.667	3.886	0.664	0.441	1.255	-0.992

The average value of all variables is higher than the theoretical median value (3 points), which shows that the respondents' perception, interaction, participation and purchase intention of TikTok content marketing are at the upper-middle level. Among them, the average value of brand awareness and purchase intention is the highest (3.919 and 3.886 respectively). The absolute value of the deviation and peak of each variable is within the acceptable range, and the data is approximately normally distributed.

5.2 Reliability Analysis

Table 3: Reliability Analysis Outcome

Variable	Cronbach's α	Number of Terms
Content Marketing	0.716	4
Platform Interaction	0.742	3
User Engagement	0.839	5
Brand Awareness	0.646	3
Purchase Intention	0.696	3

The results of the reliability analysis show that the Cronbach's α coefficient of the user engagement scale is 0.839, indicating that it has good confidence; platform interaction ($\alpha = 0.742$) and content marketing ($\alpha = 0.716$) reach an acceptable level; purchase willingness ($\alpha = 0.696$) and brand awareness ($\alpha = 0.646$) are slightly lower than the standard of 0.7. Considering that brand awareness and willingness to buy are both mature scales and there are few questions (3 questions each), the low α coefficient may be affected by the number of questions, so the original questions are still retained for follow-up analysis.

5.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix of Key Variables

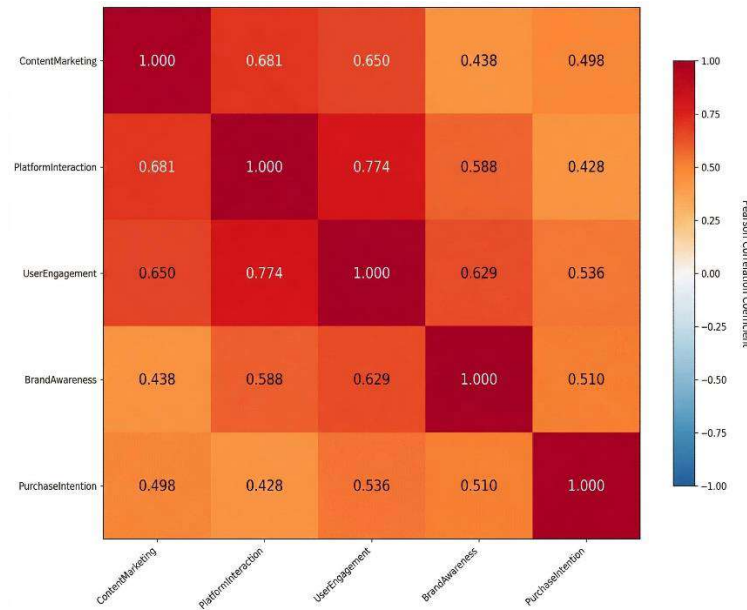
	Content Marketing	Platform Interaction	User Engagement	Brand Awareness	Purchase Intention
Content Marketing	1(0.000***)	0.681(0.000***)	0.65(0.000***)	0.438(0.000***)	0.498(0.000***)
Platform Interaction	0.681(0.000***)	1(0.000***)	0.774(0.000***)	0.588(0.000***)	0.428(0.000***)
User Engagement	0.65(0.000***)	0.774(0.000***)	1(0.000***)	0.629(0.000***)	0.536(0.000***)
Brand Awareness	0.438(0.000***)	0.588(0.000***)	0.629(0.000***)	1(0.000***)	0.51(0.000***)

Table 4. (continued) Pearson Correlation Matrix of Key Variables

	Content Marketing	Platform Interaction	User Engagement	Brand Awareness	Purchase Intention
Purchase Intention	0.498(0.000***)	0.428(0.000***)	0.536(0.000***)	0.51(0.000***)	1(0.000***)

Note: ***, **, and * represent significance levels of 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Figure 1. Pearson Correlation Analysis Heatmap of Social Media Marketing Metrics



Based on the relevant analysis results of Table 4, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- (1) There is a significant positive correlation ($p < 0.01$) between all variables, which is in line with theoretical expectations and provides preliminary support for subsequent hypothesis tests.
- (2) The strongest correlation between platform interaction and user participation ($r = 0.774$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that users' shallow interaction (like, comment, share) on TikTok is highly related to in-depth participation (long-term browsing, following accounts, participating in challenges), and supports chain mediation. The rationality of the path.
- (3) Content marketing also shows a strong positive correlation between platform interaction ($r = 0.681$, $p < 0.01$) and user participation ($r = 0.650$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that the higher the quality of short video content, the more active the user interaction and participation behavior.
- (4) The willingness to buy is significantly positively correlated with all previous dependent variables, among which the highest correlation with user participation ($r = 0.536$, $p < 0.01$), followed by brand awareness ($r = 0.510$, $p < 0.01$) and content marketing ($r = 0.498$, $P < 0.01$), prompting users to participate may be a key intermediate link in promoting the willingness to buy.
- (5) All correlation coefficients do not exceed 0.85, indicating that there is no serious multiple collinearity problem between variables, and subsequent regression analysis can be carried out.

In the results of the confidence analysis, Cronbach's α of brand awareness is 0.646, which is lower than the standard of 0.7. This is because there are only 3 questions on the brand awareness scale, and Cronbach's α is directly related to the number of questions, as Cronbach's α is positively influenced by test length. Fewer questions will lead to low α . Studies

have pointed out that $\alpha > 0.6$ can be regarded as an acceptable level in exploratory studies ^[7] (Nunnally, 1978). Given the exploratory nature of this study, an α of 0.646 is considered marginally acceptable.

5.4 Hypothesis Test

For the chain mediation analysis (testing H2 and H3), which involves all five core variables (content marketing, platform interaction, user engagement, brand awareness, purchase intention), listwise deletion was applied to handle missing responses on any of the 23 measurement items. Consequently, the effective sample size for the mediation and moderation models was reduced from 130 to 70. This reduction is explicitly acknowledged, and the analysis is based on the complete-case sample to ensure consistency across all regression models.

5.4.1 Main effect test (H1)

Table 5. Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Content Marketing and Purchase Intention

	Standardization coefficient β	t	P	VIF	R ²	adjust R ²	F
Constant	-	4.463	0.000***	-			
Content Marketing	0.498	4.741	0.000***	1	0.248	0.237	F=22.473 P=0.000***

Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

Note: ***, **, and * represent significance levels of 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Linear regression analysis shows that content marketing has a significant positive impact on the willingness to buy ($\beta = 0.498$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 24.8% of the total variation ($R^2 = 0.248$). Therefore, H1 is established.

5.4.2 Chain Mediation Effect Test (H2 & H3)

Table 6. Chain Mediation Effect Model Coefficient

	Purchase Intention	Platform Interaction	User Engagement	Purchase Intention
Constant	1.897	-0.397	0.437	1.797
Content Marketing	0.53	1.048	0.309	0.308
Platform Interaction			0.543	-0.067
User Engagement				0.333
R ²	0.248	0.464	0.627	0.33
Adjust R ²	0.237	0.456	0.616	0.299
F	F(1, 68)=22.473, P=0.000***	F(1, 68)=58.826, P=0.000***	F(2, 67)=56.372, P=0.000***	F(3, 66)=10.815, P=0.000***

Note: ***, **, and * represent significance levels of 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Table 7. Summary Table of Mediation Effect Testing Process Results

Effect	Path	Coef.	SE	t	P	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Direct	Content Marketing to Purchase Intention	0.308	0.152	2.029	0.047**	0.005	0.611

Table 7. (continued) Summary Table of Mediation Effect Testing Process Results

Effect	Path	Coef.	SE	t	P	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Indirect	Content Marketing to Platform Interaction	1.048	0.137	7.67	0.000***	0.775	1.321
	Content Marketing to User Engagement	0.309	0.138	2.244	0.028**	0.034	0.584
	Platform Interaction to User Engagement	0.543	0.089	6.071	0.000***	0.365	0.722
	Platform Interaction to Purchase Intention	-0.067	0.118	-0.564	0.575	-0.303	0.17
	User Engagement to Purchase Intention	0.333	0.13	2.561	0.013**	0.073	0.592
Total	Content Marketing to Purchase Intention	0.53	0.112	4.741	0.000***	0.307	0.753

Table 8. Indirect Effect Analysis

Path	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLC	Boot ULC	z	p
Content Marketing to Platform Interaction to User Engagement to Y	0.189	0.093	0.006	0.373	2.027	0.047**

Note: ***, **, and * represent significance levels of 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

It can be seen from the results that:

first of all, content marketing has a significant positive impact on platform interaction ($a_1 = 1.048$, $p < 0.001$), platform interaction has a significant positive impact on user participation ($d = 0.543$, $p < 0.001$), and user participation has a significant positive impact on the willingness to buy ($b_2 = 0.333$, $p = 0.013$). The direct effect of content marketing on the willingness to buy is also significant ($c' = 0.308$, $p = 0.047$).

Secondly, the indirect effect of the chain intermediary path “content marketing to platform interaction to user participation to willingness to buy” is 0.189 (Boot SE = 0.093, 95% CI [0.006, 0.373]), the confidence interval does not include 0. The open-chain intermediary effect is remarkable, therefore, H3 is established.

However, the separate intermediary path “content marketing to platform interaction to willingness to buy” of platform interaction is not significant ($b_1 = -0.067$, $p = 0.575$), so H2 is not valid. This shows that platform interaction cannot convey the impact of content marketing on the willingness to buy alone, and must play a role through user participation in this deeper involvement behavior.

5.4.3 Regulatory Effect Test (H4)

Table 9. Test of the Moderating Effect of Brand Consciousness

Variable	Model 1: User Engagement Only				Model 2: User Engagement + Brand Awareness				Model 3: User Engagement + Brand Awareness + Interaction Term (User Engagement × Brand Awareness)			
	Coef	Std. Error	t	P	Coef	Std. Error	t	P	Coef	Std. Error	t	P
Constant	2.403	0.291	8.253	0.000**	1.713	0.418	4.1	0.000**	1.995	1.168	1.709	0.092*
User Engagement	0.422	0.081	5.237	0.000**	0.28	0.101	2.781	0.007**	0.189	0.367	0.513	0.609
Brand Awareness					0.303	0.135	2.242	0.028**	0.226	0.326	0.694	0.49
User Engagement*Brand Awareness									0.024	0.093	0.259	0.796
R ²		0.287				0.337				0.338		
Adjust R ²		0.277				0.317				0.308		
F	F(70, 1)=27.421, P=0.000***				F(2, 67)=17.035, P=0.000***				F(3, 66)=11.221, P=0.000***			
ΔR ²		0.287				0.337				0.338		
ΔF		ΔF(1, 70)=27.421, P=0.000***				ΔF(1, 67)=5.025, P=0.009***				ΔF(1, 66)=16.864, P=0.000***		

Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

Note: ***, **, and * represent significance levels of 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

The coefficient of interaction (user participation×brand awareness) is 0.024, $p = 0.796$, which does not reach a significant level. Therefore, H4 is not established, that is, brand awareness cannot significantly adjust the impact of user participation on the willingness to buy. Regardless of the level of brand awareness, user participation itself has a strong effect on promoting the willingness to buy.

5.5 Robustness Test

5.5.1 Multicollinearity Test

Table 10. Multicollinearity Test

	VIF
Constant	-
Content Marketing	2.007
Platform Interaction	3.014
User Engagement	3.022

Table 10. (continued) Multicollinearity Test

	VIF
Brand Awareness	1.729
Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention	

The VIF value of all independent variables is less than 5, indicating that there is no serious multiple collinearity problem.

5.5.2 Bootstrap Robustness

The confidence interval of the indirect effect estimated by Bootstrap (5000 times) has been used in the chain intermediary analysis. The results (Table 7) show that the 95% CI [0.006, 0.373] of the critical path does not contain 0, indicating that the intermediary effect is stable.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

This study constructed and tested the chain intermediary model of TikTok short video content marketing affecting consumers' willingness to buy, and draws the following main conclusions:

TikTok short video content marketing has a significant positive impact on consumers' willingness to buy (H1 established). The stronger the quality of content marketing (interesting, information richness, creativity), the higher the willingness of consumers to buy. This verifies the effectiveness of short video content marketing in the digital age.

Platform interaction cannot be used alone as an intermediary variable between content marketing and purchase intention (H2 is not valid). Although simple likes, comments, sharing and other shallow interactive behaviors can increase brand exposure, it is not enough to directly transform into purchase intentions. This may be because shallow interaction is a low-input behavior, lacking emotional engagement and trust accumulation.

The chain intermediary path "content marketing to platform interaction to user participation to willingness to buy" is significantly established (H3 established). Content marketing first stimulates users' platform interaction (likes, comments, shares), and then promotes users to participate in a deeper level (browsing for a long time, following accounts, participating in challenges), and finally improving their willingness to buy. This reveals the complete psychological chain of "shallow interaction to deep participation to purchase conversion" in short video marketing.

Brand awareness cannot significantly regulate the impact of user participation on the willingness to buy (H4 is not established). Regardless of the level of brand awareness, as long as users have established deep participation and emotional connection with the content, their willingness to buy will be significantly improved. This finding emphasizes the importance of the content itself and the interaction mechanism. On emotional-driven platforms such as TikTok, brand awareness is not a decisive factor.

In summary, the main theoretical contribution of this study is that platform interaction and user participation are integrated into a unified chain intermediary framework for the first time, and the boundary conditions of brand awareness are tested, revealing the "shallow and deep" mechanism of short video content marketing affecting consumers' willingness to buy. In practice, it is recommended that brands should not only create attractive content on TikTok, but also design an interactive path to guide users from "like" to "follow, challenge, and browse deeply" to achieve a higher conversion rate.

6.2 Limitations

Although this study has drawn some meaningful conclusions, there are still the following limitations:

(1) The sample size is small and convenient sampling is used. The effective sample of this study is 130 copies (70 copies after the complete matching of the dependent variables in the chain intermediary analysis). Although the Bootstrap method (5,000 resampling) adopted in this study enhances the reliability of small sample analysis to a certain extent, and the 95% confidence interval of the chain intermediary effect [0.006, 0.373] does not contain 0, the confidence interval is close to 0, indicating that the scale of the effect is relatively small and unified the counting accuracy is limited^[8]. Therefore, the findings of this study should be regarded as a preliminary exploratory conclusion, and future studies need to be verified by larger samples.

(2) The credibility of brand awareness is low. The Cronbach's α of the brand awareness scale is 0.646, slightly lower than the standard of 0.7, which may affect the test of the adjustment effect. This measurement limitation may have contributed to the non-significant moderating effect of brand awareness (H4). Future research should adopt refined brand awareness scales with more items to enhance internal consistency^[9, 10].

(3) The research sample is limited to Chinese TikTok users. Short video platforms with different cultural backgrounds (such as TikTok overseas version, Instagram Reels) may have different user behavior patterns, and the cross-cultural promotion of the conclusion needs to be tested^[11, 12].

In a word, this study provides preliminary empirical support for the effect mechanism of TikTok short video content marketing, which can be deepened and expanded in terms of sampling, measurement, design and cross-cultural in the future.

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