From Scroll to Heart

Exploring Consumer Engagement on TikTok through Brand Personification Strategies

by

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates the impact of personified brand strategies on consumer engagement on TikTok, a popular social media platform. The research explores how global consumer brands utilise brand anthropomorphism, with a distinction among brand ambassadors, brand spokespersons, and user-generated content (UGC), to engage with consumers on TikTok.

Methodology: A quantitative content analysis method is employed to analyse brand content posted on TikTok. The analysis focuses on consumer engagement metrics, such as comments, to assess the effectiveness of different personified brand strategies in building consumer-brand relationships.

Findings: The study unveils a significant but unexpected revelation regarding brand anthropomorphism and its impact on consumer engagement on TikTok. Contrary to expectations, brand anthropomorphism exhibits a noteworthy negative correlation with consumer engagement, signalling complexities in consumer perceptions and preferences. Additionally, the presence of brand ambassadors on TikTok demonstrates a significant yet negative relationship with consumer engagement, further underscoring the nuanced nature of these dynamics.

Theoretical Contributions: This study extends existing theories of consumer-brand relationships by exploring the unique context of TikTok. It provides new insights into the complexities and potential challenges of personified brand strategies on this platform, highlighting how traditional branding approaches may not always align with consumer engagement dynamics in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Managerial Implications: The findings offer practical guidance for marketers on TikTok, emphasising the importance of authenticity, careful alignment of brand messages with consumer values, and the potential risks associated with brand anthropomorphism and brand ambassadors. By leveraging these insights, businesses can optimise their strategies to better engage with TikTok's young, dynamic audience and build more effective consumer-brand relationships.

Originality/Value: This thesis offers a novel exploration of personified brand strategies on TikTok, contributing new insights into marketing, branding, and consumer behaviour. The study expands upon existing theoretical frameworks by empirically testing hypotheses related to brand anthropomorphism, brand ambassadors, spokespersons and user-generated content on TikTok. It sheds light on the nuances of consumer-brand interactions in the digital age.

Keywords: Consumer Engagement, TikTok, Personified Brand Strategies, Brand Anthropomorphism, Content Analysis

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1   Introduction

The introduction chapter sets the stage for the thesis by providing essential background and context on the evolution of advertising from traditional media to digital platforms, with a particular focus on TikTok. It outlines the research purpose, emphasising the investigation of personified brand strategies and their impact on consumer engagement. Additionally, the chapter highlights the contributions this research seeks to make to both academic and managerial knowledge. Finally, it provides an overview of the thesis structure, guiding readers through the subsequent chapters.

Imagine tuning into your favourite TV show only to be interrupted by a flood of commercials. This has been the norm for decades, but the digital age is changing everything. In traditional media, advertisements were often seen as interruptions – moments that broke the flow between TV shows or songs on the radio. Viewers tuned in for the programs, not the advertisements, and listeners sought music, not commercials. While these interruption-based marketing strategies proved effective for decades, they also led to user frustration and negative brand perceptions (Kim, 2018; Mailchimp, n.d.).

Today, the marketing landscape has transformed dramatically, driven by rapid technological advancements and shifts in consumer behaviour (Hypervsn, 2023). Social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools for brands, enabling them to connect with their audiences in ways previously unimaginable. These platforms offer unprecedented engagement opportunities and seamless integration of advertising into the user experience.

Among social media platforms, TikTok has gained immense popularity, particularly among younger demographics. It has become a vibrant hub for creative expression and content consumption (Statista, 2022). Launched globally in 2016 by the Chinese company ByteDance, TikTok's rise is a testimony to its unique appeal and innovative format (D'Souza, 2024). Remarkably, nearly 70% of TikTok's global user base is under the age of 34, underscoring its strong resonance with a predominantly youthful audience (Statista, 2024a). Recognising the expectations of this younger demographic for integrated advertising and collaborative content creation from brands is essential (Ortiz, Los Santos Corrada, Lopez, Dones & Lugo, 2023). By producing content that aligns with the preferences of TikTok's younger users, brands can cultivate meaningful and trustworthy relationships with consumers (Ibáñez-Sánchez, Flavián, Casaló, & Belanche, 2021). Offering a variety of interactive and creative elements, TikTok goes beyond short videos to engage its users; features include picture posts, visual filters, live streaming, green screen effects, duets, and stitches.

As brands navigate this dynamic digital landscape, they face the challenge of crafting compelling strategies to gain the attention and loyalty of consumers (Santoso, Wright, Trinh & Avis, 2020). Popular digital marketing strategies include digital storytelling, which uses narratives to create emotional links with consumers (González Romo, Garcia-Medina, & Plaza Romero, 2017), and leveraging search engine optimisation (SEO) techniques on TikTok (Nur, Rabbiana, Diba & Fitroh, 2023). At the heart of this challenge lies the strategy of brand personification – imbuing brands with human-like characteristics to create relatable and

engaging content (Cohen, 2014). Unlike conventional advertising, the personification of brands has established itself for years and allows brands to connect on a personal level by creating characters and narratives that resonate with users (Aaker, 1997). This thesis explores personified brand strategies on TikTok and their influence on consumer engagement. Through a systematic investigation, this research aims to uncover the nuances of brand-consumer relationships in the digital era and shed light on the strategies that resonate most with TikTok's diverse user base. By examining the intersection of branding, social media, and consumer behaviour, the researchers seek to contribute valuable insights to academia and industry.

1.1   Background & Context

In the bustling landscape of modern marketing, where advertisements inundate every aspect of our daily lives, it is worth pausing to ponder: To which advertisements do you find yourself connecting? And conversely, which ones do you instinctively ignore? This seemingly simple question unveils the intricate dance between brands and consumers, highlighting the evolving dynamics of consumer-brand relationships in the digital age.

Over the past two decades, the marketing landscape has undergone a vast shift, driven by the rise of the Internet and digital communication channels (Kopp, 2022). This transformation has fundamentally altered how brands engage with their audiences, transitioning from a traditional push-marketing approach to a more nuanced pull-marketing strategy. Unlike its predecessor, which sought to compel consumers through intrusive advertisements, pull-marketing aspires to be a magnet, drawing consumers in through emotional resonance and genuine connection (Hypervsn, 2023). The central goal? Building iterative relationships that transcend transactional interactions and foster lasting brand loyalty.

In light of these changes, campaigns have transitioned from mere advertising to immersive content experiences that extend beyond content creation. Brands no longer produce content to deliver monologues; instead, they strive to facilitate dialogues, build communities, and engage with audiences on a personal level. The shift towards dialogue-driven marketing underscores the pivotal role of consumer engagement as a cornerstone of consumer-brand relationships (Wu, Dodoo, & Choi, 2023). Moreover, companies have increasingly embraced a listening-first approach, prioritising the voices and needs of their customers in shaping their marketing strategies. Personified brand strategies can glimpse consumer-brand relationships as they align with this shift towards digital-driven marketing and consumer engagement.

As brands increasingly focus on creating personal connections with consumers, TikTok proves to be the ideal channel for such engagement. Unlike other social media platforms, TikTok thrives on creativity, spontaneity, and genuine expression, making it a perfect environment for brands to showcase their personality and connect with consumers on a deeply human level (TikTok, 2023). TikTok is a platform that emerged as a flagship of intimacy amidst the chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic. Known for its unparalleled engagement levels and insatiable appetite for authentic content, TikTok has rapidly ascended to the forefront of digital marketing, offering brands a unique opportunity to foster meaningful connections with their audience (Li, Guan, Hammond & Berrey, 2021). TikTok has quickly become the 5th most popular social network globally, boasting 1.5 billion active users (Statista, 2024b). What sets it apart is its remarkable growth trajectory. Research reveals that in 2022, TikTok earned the title of the

"fastest growing media brand worldwide," with its brand value soaring by 215% (Statista, 2022). The platform's success lies in attracting a diverse audience and encouraging consumer engagement (MacKinnon, Kia & Lacombe-Duncan, 2021), underscoring its growing importance in marketing, communication, and social media branding strategies. From leveraging the power of influencers and brand ambassadors to fostering co-creation opportunities with users, brands on TikTok are exploring diverse avenues to establish close, authentic relationships with their audience (Li et al., 2021; Teo, Tee & Liew, 2023; The Drum, 2021). TikTok's ability to democratise content creation, giving brands of all sizes an equal footing to engage with their audience and drive meaningful interactions, is what makes it unique. However, navigating the TikTok landscape is akin to traversing uncharted waters. As a relatively young platform, TikTok remains devoid of extensive research, making it inherently unpredictable regarding content virality and consumer engagement. Despite this uncertainty, brands are drawn to TikTok's appeal, captivated by its potential to humanise their identities and cultivate authentic connections with consumers.

In an era characterised by a growing emphasis on human-centred thinking, brands acknowledge the increasing importance of nurturing deep connections with consumers. The idea of humanising brands has risen to be a flourishing method for fostering consumer-brand relationships and enhancing consumer engagement (Kim, Sung & Moon, 2020; Tuškej & Podnar, 2018). At the core of this endeavour is the concept of personified branding strategies - a prevalent approach brands adopt to engage with consumers through social media channels (Chen, Lin, Choi, & Hahm, 2015; Wu, Dodoo, & Choi, 2023). Brand personification can come in different forms, such as integrating human characteristics into objects or using people to represent the brand (Chen et al., 2015; Cohen, 2014). From brand ambassadors to animated mascots, personified brand strategies have become increasingly prevalent in marketing campaigns, aiming to forge deeper connections with consumers. One demonstration of personified brand strategies is using mascots such as the Michelin Man for Michelin or the Duracell Bunny. These mascots, recognised and utilised for years, embody the personality and values of the brand, serving as familiar symbols that consumers readily relate to and engage with (Cohen, 2014). In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift away from mascots towards utilising real human faces, such as brand ambassadors, spokespersons, or UGC creators (Cohen, 2014; Li et al., 2021; Teo, Tee & Liew, 2023).

Among other things, brands are increasingly utilising humans to represent their brands. For example, they form partnerships with influencers who have cultivated authentic connections with their audience, recognising that consumers are more drawn to genuine personalities and relatable experiences. A prominent example is Kylie Jenner's collaboration with Fashion Nova. In this collaboration, Kylie Jenner, a widely recognised and influential social media personality, frequently showcases Fashion Nova's clothing in her posts, stories, and videos. Her authentic style and massive following help Fashion Nova reach a broader audience, creating a sense of personal endorsement and trust. Moreover, research has demonstrated that human or personified brand attributes wield a profound influence on consumer-brand relationships, shaping perceptions and nurturing emotional connections (Han, Cui & Jin, 2021; Jeong, Kim & Chung, 2022; Kim, Sung & Moon, 2020; Wu, Dodoo, & Choi, 2023). However, due to the platform's unique user behaviour and algorithmic complexities, the impact and effectiveness of personified brand strategies, particularly within TikTok, remain to be explored and analysed. Here, the literature shows gaps concerning the relevance and applications of personified brand strategies on TikTok. Firstly, there is a need to investigate the effectiveness of these strategies in constructing consumer-brand relationships on the platform. In addition, examining branding strategies tailored to TikTok's diverse user base, more specifically, exploring the effectiveness

of the different types of anthropomorphism in the TikTok environment, is crucial as users' sentiments towards the strategies have changed and adapted to the dynamic and fast-paced environment. This thesis endeavours to shed light on the role of personified brand strategies in building brand relationships via social media, with a particular focus on TikTok and aspires to offer insights that can inform and enhance brand strategies in the digital era by delving into the nuances of consumer-brand interactions on this expanding platform.

1.2   Research Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to delve into the relevance and effectiveness of personified brand strategies on TikTok, aiming to gain a comprehensive understanding of the branding strategies employed in this digital context and their implications for cultivating consumer-brand relationships. Furthermore, this research seeks to investigate the impact of personified content on fostering dialectic consumer-brand relationships, measured through consumer engagement metrics over time. By examining the extent to which personified branding strategies are applied and assessing the variations in engagement among different strategies, this study aims to uncover valuable insights into consumer-brand dynamics on TikTok. While numerous studies have explored the effects of brand personification on consumers across various social media platforms (Chen et al., 2015; Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2021; Kim, Sung & Moon, 2020; Lim, Rosales, Salazar & Pantoja, 2022; Wu, Dodoo, Choi, 2023), limited research has been conducted on TikTok, despite its status as a popular short-form video platform with significant influence, particularly among younger generations (Brooks, Christidis, Carah, Kelly, Martino & Backholer, 2022; Lin & Nuangjamnong, 2022; Su, Baker, Doyle & Yan, 2020). This research endeavours to fill this gap in the literature and contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer-brand relationships in the digital era, explicitly focusing on the unique context of TikTok. Through this investigation, the researchers aim to create greater knowledge about the efficacy of personified brand strategies on TikTok and their role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviours. By shedding light on these dynamics, the thesis seeks to advance the discourse on social media branding strategies and provide actionable insights for marketers navigating the digital landscape.

Therefore, the study addresses the following research question:

What is the effect of different personified brand strategies and consumer engagement on social media platforms, specifically TikTok?

1.3   Research Contributions

The research contributes novel insights into the relevance and impact of personified brand strategies on TikTok. It provides a nuanced understanding of how branding strategies operate in this digital context and their implications for building consumer-brand relationships. By exploring the effectiveness of these strategies in fostering engagement and relationship dynamics, the research adds to our understanding of consumer behaviour in the digital era.

Furthermore, the research advances theoretical understanding by extending the application of brand personification strategies to the unique context of TikTok. The study challenges traditional notions and highlights the complexity of branded content on TikTok by examining the negative impact of brand anthropomorphism and brand ambassadors on consumer engagement. It builds upon existing consumer-brand relationships and brand personification theories, adapting them to social media platforms' dynamic and interactive nature. By empirically testing hypotheses related to consumer engagement and the differential impacts of various anthropomorphic strategies, the research contributes to the refinement and validation of theoretical frameworks in the field. This study underscores the importance of authenticity, trust, and value alignment in contemporary branding strategies, offering new insights and setting the stage for future research to further explore these nuances in digital marketing.

From a practical perspective, this study provides valuable managerial contributions by uncovering key insights for effectively implementing personified brand strategies on TikTok. The findings emphasise the gap between currently applied personified brand strategies and consumers' needs, underlining the importance of aligning brand personalities with consumer identities to foster meaningful connections and drive engagement. The research highlights the need for authenticity and relatability in brand communications, particularly given TikTok's predominantly young audience. Practical recommendations for marketers include investing in a deep understanding of target audience demographics, ensuring alignment between brand image and the characteristics of brand ambassadors or content creators, and prioritising authenticity, transparency, and consistency in brand interactions. By adhering to these strategies, brands can enhance consumer engagement, build trust and credibility, and ultimately drive business success on this dynamic platform.

Ultimately, the research benefits stakeholders such as brands, marketers, and consumers by providing valuable insights into the dynamics of consumer-brand relationships in the digital age. By understanding the factors that drive engagement and relationship-building on TikTok, brands can create more authentic and compelling content that resonates with their audience, improving brand perception and loyalty. Additionally, by fostering meaningful interactions between brands and consumers, the research contributes to creating a more engaging and user-centric digital environment, benefiting society.

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

This chapter provides an overview of the structure and organisation of the thesis, outlining the main sections and their respective contents.

The introduction section prepared the groundwork by introducing the research topic and providing background information on consumer-brand relationships in the digital age. It discussed the emergence of TikTok as a prominent social media platform and its implications for brand communication strategies. Following the introduction, the literature review chapter delves into relevant literature on consumer-brand relationships, focusing on concepts such as consumer engagement and personified brands. Additionally, it explores branding strategies on social media, specifically emphasising brand anthropomorphism. The theoretical framework and development of hypotheses section presents the theoretical foundations of the study, including Brand Personality Theory and Self-Congruity Theory. It outlines the development of

hypotheses based on these theoretical frameworks and constructs a research model to guide the empirical investigation. Moving forward, the methodology chapter describes the research approach, design, and data collection methods employed in the study. It discusses the operationalisation of variables, sampling procedures, and data analysis techniques used to test the hypotheses. The findings section presents the study's empirical results, including descriptive analyses and linear regression results. These findings offer insights into the effectiveness of personified brand strategies on TikTok and their impact on consumer engagement. Following the findings, the discussion chapter explores the implications of the results and their relevance for theory and practice. It delves into key themes such as brand anthropomorphism, brand ambassadors, brand spokespersons, and user-generated content, highlighting their role in shaping consumer-brand relationships on TikTok. Finally, the conclusion summarises the study's main findings and offers theoretical and managerial contributions to the field. It also discusses the limitations of the research and suggests directions for future research in this area.

By following this structured outline, the thesis aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of personified brand strategies and their impact on consumer engagement on TikTok, contributing to both theoretical understanding and practical applications in the field of digital marketing.

2   Literature Review

This chapter delves into the extensive body of literature surrounding consumer-brand relationships and the role of brands on social media platforms, with a particular focus on TikTok. The chapter begins by exploring the complexities of consumer-brand relationships, examining the concept of consumer engagement and its relevance in the digital age. It then transitions to an analysis of brands' presence on social media, discussing branding strategies companies employ to engage with audiences effectively. Within this context, particular attention is given to personified brand strategies, which aim to establish deeper connections with consumers by embodying human-like characteristics. By structuring the literature review in this manner, the chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical frameworks and empirical insights that underpin the subsequent analysis of consumer-brand interactions on TikTok.

2.1   Consumer Brand Relationships

In the realm of modern marketing, brands no longer exist in isolation but are closely interwoven with the reality of consumers' lives. The evolution of consumer-brand relationships has been a central focus in marketing literature, reflecting a shift from transactional exchanges to dynamic, multifaceted interactions (Blackston, 1993; Fournier, 1998). Gone are the days of one-sided communication, where brands simply broadcast messages to passive audiences. Instead, today's marketing landscape is defined by the pursuit of genuine connections, where brands strive to become integral parts of consumers' narratives (Brodie, Ilić, Jurić & Hollebeek, 2013; Keller, Parameswaran, & Jacob, 2011). This paradigm shift has reshaped how brands approach engagement, emphasising the need to cultivate trust, authenticity, and emotional resonance with consumers (Hypervsn, 2023). This chapter delves into the complexities of consumer-brand relationships, exploring the underlying dynamics, mechanisms, and implications of these evolving connections.

Historical Perspectives

Consumer-brand relationships (CBR) have become a focal point within marketing literature, departing significantly from traditional transactional models (Hypervsn, 2023; Bertilsson, 2017). At its core, CBR delves into the complexity of interactions and connections between consumers and brands, underscoring the significance of fostering meaningful and enduring relationships. Blackston's seminal work in "Beyond Brand Personality: Building Brand Relationships" (1993) laid the groundwork for this shift, emphasising the depth and complexity of these connections beyond mere transactions. Expanding on this foundation, Fournier (1998) proposed that consumers perceive brands as relationship partners comparable to human interactions. This conceptual leap broadened the understanding of brands as integral components of consumers' relational landscapes, prompting marketers to devote greater attention to nurturing deep, long-term connections with customers. Fournier's (1998) typology provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the diverse forms of consumer-brand

relationships, ranging from best friendships to fleeting engagements. These relationships serve as conduits for consumers to derive meaning within their psycho-socio-cultural contexts, highlighting the multiplex nature of consumer-brand interactions. By acknowledging the various forms these relationships can take, marketers can tailor strategies to satisfy the needs and preferences of their target audience, ultimately fostering deeper connections and enhancing brand loyalty. Fournier's Brand Relationship Quality Model (BRQ, 1998) further delineates dimensions such as brand trust, attachment, loyalty, and advocacy, offering a robust framework for assessing the depth and quality of these relationships.

Dimensions of Consumer-Brand Relationships

Various models and concepts have emerged in the literature to deepen the understanding of consumer-brand relationships and the interplay of different theoretical frameworks. For instance, brand commitment (Sung & Choi, 2010), brand attachment (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005), brand love (Ahuvia, 2005), brand trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), and brand loyalty (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978) have been identified as key dimensions shaping these interactions. It becomes evident that consumer-brand relationships are multidimensional and interdisciplinary (Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2014), necessitating a comprehensive approach to understanding their complexities. The brand relationship concept has also been pivotal in elucidating brand loyalty, which the American Marketing Association (AMA; n.d.) defined as "The situation in which a consumer generally buys the same manufacturer-originated product or service repeatedly over time rather than buying from multiple suppliers within the category". Or as Fournier (1998) conceptualised it as enduring connections rooted in deep-seated emotions towards the brand. Studies also demonstrate that consumers can develop feelings of love for brands (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2008; Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012), elevating relationships to a more profound level. Moreover, emerging concepts such as brand authenticity (Beverland, Farrelly & Quester, 2006) and brand intimacy (e.g., Fournier, 1998; Reich & Pittman, 2020) underscore the evolving dynamics of consumer-brand interactions towards more emotional and trustworthy connections.

In response to the evolving landscape, brands have endeavoured to humanise their identities by adopting brand personality traits (Aaker, 1997). Aaker's (1997) seminal work on brand personalities emphasises the importance of imbuing brands with human-like characteristics to enhance consumer engagement and foster meaningful connections. According to Aaker (1997), brand personality traits represent a set of distinctive attributes and qualities that consumers associate with a brand, much like they would with a person. By strategically defining and communicating a brand's personality, marketers aim to differentiate their offerings from competitors and create a unique identity that resonates with consumers. Adopting brand personality traits enables brands to establish emotional connections with consumers, eliciting feelings of affinity, resonance, and loyalty (Aaker, 1997).

Digital Age and Consumer Empowerment

With the arrival of the digital age, characterised by the proliferation of internet access, social media platforms, and mobile devices, consumers are now more interconnected and empowered than ever before (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This interconnectedness has fundamentally transformed the way brands engage with consumers, shifting the focus from one-way communication to interactive and participatory experiences (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Moreover, changing consumer values and preferences have contributed to the growing importance of CBR in marketing strategies. Modern consumers, particularly millennials and Generation Z, prioritise authenticity, transparency, and meaningful connections with brands (Dahlen, Lange, & Smith, 2010). They seek brands that align with their values, beliefs, and

lifestyles, viewing them not just as providers of products or services but as companions on their journey. In this context, fostering genuine relationships with consumers has become essential for brands to remain relevant and competitive in today's marketplace (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Particularly within social media, where authenticity holds significant value, platforms like TikTok have emerged as intimate spaces offering users a sense of authenticity and safety (Hendriana, Dwinanda & Syaripuddin, 2022). Studies indicate that intimacy and authenticity influence consumer engagement within social media (Barta & Andalibi, 2021; Şot, 2022), emphasising the need to delve deeper into understanding consumer behaviour, relationships, and interactions on online platforms. As consumers actively engage with brands on social media platforms, the construct of consumer engagement emerges as a cornerstone of consumer-brand relationships (Veloutsou, 2009; Wu, Dodoo, & Choi, 2023). Furthermore, brands increasingly recognise the value of evoking positive emotions and creating memorable experiences that resonate with consumers more deeply.

Despite the potential benefits, establishing and nurturing consumer-brand relationships presents formidable challenges for marketers. While there is a managerial belief that cultivating deep relationships can yield brand loyalty and advocacy (Bertilsson, 2017; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), the enigmatic nature of consumer responses and diverse motivations pose significant hurdles. Understanding and navigating these complexities are essential for marketers seeking to build enduring connections with their target audience. Social media's advent has further reshaped consumer-brand relationships' dynamics, offering unprecedented opportunities for direct communication and engagement (Abeza, O'Reilly, & Séguin, 2014; Williams & Chinn, 2010). Thus, understanding the evolving landscape of consumer-brand relationships in the context of social media becomes imperative for contemporary marketers.

2.1.1 Consumer Engagement

Understanding consumer engagement is essential for comprehending the dynamics of modern consumer-brand relationships. Consumer engagement, as conceptualised by Hollebeek (2011, p. 6) in the context of customer brand engagement, refers to "the level of a customer's motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterised by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity in brand interactions" and plays a significant role for relationship building with brands. Weitzl and Einwiller (2018, p. 456) view consumer engagement as "the connection that consumers form with a specific brand based on their interactive, personal experiences with it". It encompasses active participation, emotional connection, and cognitive investment in brand-related activities and experiences (Brodie et al., 2013). Consumer engagement goes beyond purchase behaviour to encompass interactions such as brand interactions on social media, participation in brand communities, and advocacy for the brand. Brodie et al. (2013) emphasise that consumer engagement is a multifaceted construct that reflects the quality of the relationship between consumers and brands, influencing brand perceptions, loyalty, and advocacy. In essence, consumer engagement represents the degree to which consumers invest their time, attention, and resources to build and maintain brand relationships.

In today's digital landscape, social media platforms have emerged as key arenas for fostering consumer engagement and building brand relationships. Platforms like TikTok offer unique opportunities for brands to connect with consumers in a social media context, facilitating immersive experiences and fostering a sense of community (Ha & Perks, 2005). Here, consumers engage more deeply with brands that offer a heightened sense of social presence,

leading to stronger brand relationships (Wang, Lin, & Lu, 2012). Additionally, foundational research in the context of consumer-brand interactions suggests that brands that provide content and experiences that are visually appealing, cognitively fluent, and easily digestible are more likely to elicit positive consumer responses and facilitate consumer engagement (Nelson-Field, Riebe, & Newstead, 2013). A more recent study further supports that, for example, factors such as the creative, contextual, and content elements of brand posts on social media influence the engagement shown by customers (Rahman, Mutum & Ghazali, 2022). On platforms like TikTok, where content is consumed rapidly and attention spans are short, brands that create content that is visually stimulating and easy to comprehend are more likely to capture and retain consumer attention, leading to increased engagement (Choi & Rifon, 2012).

On TikTok, users engage with content through actions such as commenting, liking, sharing, and saving videos. These interactions, including comments, likes, and shares, serve as indicators of the video's popularity and consumer engagement (Cheng & Li, 2024; Wahid, Karjaluoto, Taiminen & Asiati, 2023). Research by Kim and Yang (2017) on Facebook engagement revealed that sensory and visual aspects of content often drive likes, suggesting an affective motivation behind them. Conversely, interactive and rational content attributes prompt commenting, reflecting a cognitive trigger. Shares, according to their findings, can be motivated by cognitive, affective, or a combination of both factors (Kim & Yang, 2017). Cheng and Li's (2024) study on TikTok engagement behaviour reinforces earlier findings, indicating that likes are predominantly emotion-driven, while cognitive processes play a role in sharing and commenting. Notably, commenting on TikTok signifies active engagement, as it requires more involvement than other actions (Kim & Yang, 2017). Within consumer-brand relationships, comments serve as platforms for positive interactions between consumers and brands (Xiao, Li & Zhang, 2023), fostering a sense of community and belonging on TikTok where users can share thoughts and express support for others and brands alike (Barta & Andalibi, 2021).

As consumer-brand relationships continue to evolve in the digital age, it becomes increasingly imperative for marketers to explore the intricacies of these relationships on emerging social media platforms like TikTok. Understanding how consumers perceive and engage with brands on platforms like TikTok can provide marketers with insights to enhance consumer engagement and foster stronger brand relationships. By delving deeper into the nuances of consumer-brand relationships in the context of TikTok and other social media platforms, marketers can unlock opportunities to create authentic, visually compelling content that resonates with consumers and cultivates meaningful connections.

2.1.2   TikTok Redefining Consumer-Brand Relationships

TikTok stands out amidst the crowded landscape of social media platforms, embodying unique attributes that distinguish it from its counterparts. Unlike traditional platforms like Facebook, which rely on user-controlled content discovery, TikTok adopts a "recommendation-first" approach, instantly captivating users with its curated content (Medium, 2020). This captivating experience is central to TikTok's algorithm, which tailors content based on individual preferences, engagement history, and interests, creating a personalised user journey (Matamoros-Fernández, 2023). This algorithmic precision, often potentially addictive, ensures users are presented with content perfectly aligned with their tastes, fostering continuous engagement (Medium, 2020). Moreover, TikTok's interactive features, including likes, comments, shares, and saves, blur the line between content creation and consumption, encouraging users to actively shape the platform's content landscape (Schellewald, 2023). This

dynamic interaction model not only boosts consumer engagement but also cultivates a sense of ownership and community among TikTok's diverse user base.

TikTok's impact is undeniable in the realm of branding and consumer engagement. Recent research underscores its influence on consumer behaviour, highlighting its pivotal role in shaping purchase intentions and brand perceptions (Sichtmann, Davvetas & Diamantopoulos, 2019). Brands leveraging TikTok recognise the platform's emphasis on authenticity and self-expression, shifting towards relational brand strategies to foster deeper connections with consumers (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Su et al., 2020). TikTok's dynamic environment allows brands to interact with consumers strategically, fostering brand awareness and driving purchase intent (Gesmundo, Jordan, Meridor, Muyot, Castaño & Bandojo, 2022). Furthermore, TikTok's creative ethos and emphasis on authenticity enable brands to convey their identity in novel and engaging ways, resonating with diverse demographics and enhancing brand image (Hendriana, Dwinanda & Syaripuddin, 2022). The platform's capacity for authentic storytelling and intimate interactions facilitates genuine connections between brands and consumers, fostering brand loyalty and advocacy (Barta & Andalibi, 2021; Şot, 2022). Su et al. (2020) highlight how the rise of TikTok mirrors the shift in consumer culture, emphasising the increased importance of authentic branding strategies such as storytelling and self-brand connections. Furthermore, they describe the essence of the platform as follows: "...TikTok's raison d'être is creating easy, engaging content for pure entertainment..." (Su et al., 2020, p. 443). These unique characteristics are responsible for the platform's success and attract brands to capitalise on and showcase their identity, especially for brands striving to establish connections with broad demographics and enhance their brand image. Authentic interactions and storytelling of a brand on TikTok allow a brand to interact intimately with consumers, strengthening brand loyalty (Hendriana, Dwinanda & Syaripuddin, 2022).

In essence, TikTok's ascent mirrors the evolving landscape of consumer culture, emphasising the growing significance of authentic brand communication and self-expression. As brands navigate this dynamic ecosystem, TikTok presents a unique opportunity to forge meaningful connections, amplify brand narratives, and engage with consumers on a deeper, more authentic level.

2.2   Brands on Social Media

2.2.1   Social Media Branding Strategies

The use of social media has become a common practice for many brands in their marketing for various reasons. Not only does social media allow brands to reach a diverse audience all over the world, but it also allows them to target specific demographics efficiently by communicating with meaningful and original messages, which in turn increases brand visibility and brand awareness (Kusumasondjaja, 2018). Furthermore, a brand's consumer engagement on social media enhances consumer-brand relationships by strengthening trust, commitment, and loyalty (Dessart, 2017). Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) emphasise its ability to improve brand performance, customer satisfaction and innovation. This makes social media a relevant marketing tool for brands.

Diverse social media strategies allow brands to enhance their online presence and proficiently engage with users. First, it is important to differentiate between organic vs. paid strategies. On the one hand, the company can choose the organic tactic, where content is distributed "naturally" to the audience. On the other hand, the paid tactic involves monetary investments to make the advertisements reach a broader audience (Qutteina, Hallez, Mennes, Backer & Smits, 2019). However, the effectiveness of these strategies hinges on their intrusiveness. Intrusive marketing tactics, which disrupt the user experience, often lead to negative perceptions (Nielsen & Huber, 2009). In contrast, non-intrusive approaches seamlessly integrate the brand message into the content, delivering relevant material tailored to individual interests, thereby enhancing brand perception (da Silva, Rodrigues, de Paula Matos, Mais, Martins, Claro & Horta, 2021).

Moreover, compared to traditional advertising, brands' videos uploaded on social media are not ads that users are forced to watch in between their favourite content, but rather, they constitute the actual content that users willingly engage with. This unique aspect, for example, TikTok content, blurs the line between advertising and entertainment, giving brands an opportunity to create engaging and authentic content that resonates with their target audience. However, while TikTok offers a platform for organic content dissemination, brands still need to balance promotional messaging and user-generated content to maintain authenticity and relevance.

Transitioning from the broader landscape of social media utilisation by brands, the focus now shifts towards the specific realm of branding strategies tailored for these platforms. In this dynamic environment, where brands fight for consumers' attention amidst a sea of content, the imperative for brands to deploy effective and impactful strategies becomes paramount. While various content strategies abound, the significance of personified branding strategies cannot be overstated. Personified branding, particularly on platforms like TikTok, offers brands a unique opportunity to establish genuine connections with their audience by embodying human-like characteristics and fostering relatable interactions. Research suggests that TikTok, as an authenticity and personal connections-seeking platform (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Su et al., 2020), might hold much potential for personified branding strategies since they stand out as particularly effective in capturing users' attention and fostering engagement (Han, Cui & Jin, 2021; Jeong, Kim & Chung, 2022; Trong, Kim, Ngoc, Huy, 2023; Wu, Dodoo & Choi, 2023). By humanising the brand and creating content that resonates with users on an emotional level, personified branding strategies not only enhance brand perception but also cultivate loyalty and advocacy among consumers (Aaker, 1997). Therefore, in exploring the intricacies of personified brand strategies, this research seeks to shed light on their efficacy and relevance in cultivating meaningful brand-consumer relationships and driving engagement on social media platforms, particularly within the context of TikTok.

2.2.2 Personified Brand Strategies

Personified brand strategies, a well-established branding approach utilised for decades, encompass a strategic approach that imbues brands with human-like characteristics, effectively transforming them into relatable entities that resonate with consumers on a deeper level (Jeong, Kim & Chung, 2022). Throughout this literature review, the chapter will navigate various topics related to personified brand strategies, exploring their theoretical underpinnings, practical applications, and profound impact on consumer-brand relationships. These topics include brand anthropomorphism, covering specific strategies such as spokespersons, brand ambassadors, and

user-generated content. This exploration sheds light on the multifaceted nature of personified brand strategies and their remaining significance in the current marketing landscape.

In a time characterised by instant two-way communication on social media platforms, building intimate relationships through informal communication has become paramount (Jeong, Kim & Chung, 2022). In contemporary marketing discourse, humanising brands and their content has emerged as an effective approach to drive consumer engagement and form strong consumer-brand relationships (Kim, Sung & Moon, 2020; Tuškej and Podnar, 2018). Here, brand personification has received special attention from scholars and practitioners as a major communication tool in presenting brands to consumers (Chen et al., 2015; Delbaere, McQuarrie & Phillips, 2011; Men & Tsai, 2015). This approach capitalises on the human tendency to anthropomorphise non-human entities, such as brands, by endowing them with personality traits, emotions, and behaviours (Epley, Waytz & Cacioppo, 2007). According to research, the greater the congruity between these human characteristics and consumer perceptions, the stronger the preference for the brand (Aaker, 1997). As delineated by Cohen (2014), this approach encompasses various interpretations, ranging from anthropomorphising the brand itself to incorporating real individuals in advertising campaigns. By describing multiple facets of brand personification, Cohen (2014) discusses possible interpretations of brand personification, including anthropomorphised objects, animals, and persons. Furthermore, Chen et al. (2015) further categorise brand personification into distinct forms: brand anthropomorphism, where human characteristics are attributed to brands or products as well as celebrity endorsers or human characters embodied with specific traits; zoomorphism, which involves animals endowed with humanlike characteristics and behaviours; and teramorphism, wherein objects are personified with humanlike traits and behaviours.

In the realm of personified brand strategies, several iconic brands have effectively imbued human-like characteristics into their identities since the early 1900s. Consider Coca-Cola's jolly and jovial portrayal of Santa Claus in its holiday advertising campaigns. This personification not only reinforces the brand's association with warmth and happiness but also taps into cultural traditions, resonating with consumers on a sentimental level (Rokka & Ulver, 2023). Another notable example is Kellogg's use of Tony the Tiger as a brand mascot for their Frosted Flakes cereal. Tony the Tiger embodies confidence, energy, and fun, resonating with children and adults alike (Cohen, 2014). Through his animated persona and memorable catchphrase "They're Gr-r-reat!", Tony the Tiger has become synonymous with the Frosted Flakes brand, evoking feelings of nostalgia and positivity among consumers (Bertilsson, 2017). Furthermore, Nike's empowering portrayal of athletes as heroes in its "Just Do It" campaigns encapsulates the brand's ethos of perseverance, determination, and excellence (Holt, 2002). Nike motivates and inspires consumers by personifying these values through relatable human stories, fostering emotional connections beyond mere product features.

Marketing literature extensively documents the positive impact of personified brands on consumer-brand relationships (Chen et al., 2015; Cohen, 2014; Han, Cui & Jin, 2021; Jeong, Kim & Chung, 2022; Kim, Sung & Moon, 2020; Wu, Dodoo & Choi, 2023). Trong et al. (2023) found that brand personification strategies, intimacy, and brand reputation are important value factors in customers' minds toward their behaviour, which creates positive emotions and interactions between consumers and brands. Similarly, Jeong, Kim, and Chung (2022) demonstrated that personified brand visuals are more effective in engaging consumers than non-personified visuals, mediated by the social presence consumers perceive from brands, further enhancing consumer-brand connections. Recent studies, such as those conducted by Wu, Dodoo, and Choi (2023) and Chen et al. (2015), have delved into how anthropomorphised

brands leverage different communication strategies on various social media platforms, shedding light on the nuanced dynamics of brand-consumer interactions in digital spaces. These studies reveal the widespread adoption and effectiveness of brand personification strategies across platforms like Twitter and Facebook in modern marketing practices.

However, it is essential to note that while personified brand strategies offer numerous benefits, they also present potential challenges and limitations. For example, maintaining authenticity and consistency in brand persona across various touchpoints and platforms can be challenging (Tarnovskaya, 2017). Additionally, there is a risk of consumer backlash if brand personification comes across as inauthentic or gimmicky (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman, 2000). Acknowledging these considerations allows marketers to develop more nuanced and effective personified brand strategies.

In the digital age, platforms like TikTok have emerged as fertile ground to proliferate personified brand strategies. With its emphasis on authentic and relatable content, TikTok provides brands with a unique opportunity to connect with consumers in meaningful ways (Hendriana, Dwinanda & Syaripuddin, 2022). This is where the anthropomorphism of the brand comes in handy, as brands may leverage the informal and engaging nature of the platform to build genuine connections with their audience. The ability to humanise brands and create authentic narratives resonates deeply with TikTok's user base, fostering a sense of intimacy and trust that transcends traditional marketing tactics.

2.2.2.1 Brand Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism, derived from the Greek words "anthropos" (human) and "morphe" (shape or form), refers to the inclination of individuals to attribute human-like qualities to inanimate objects or abstract concepts. This cognitive phenomenon serves several purposes, including providing comfort, making sense of the world, and facilitating social interaction (Guthrie, 1993). People commonly perceive human features in natural formations and attribute human goals, beliefs, and emotions to animals, reflecting the pervasive nature of anthropomorphism in human cognition (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007). Guthrie (1993) delineates three forms of anthropomorphism: partial, literal, and accidental. Partial anthropomorphism occurs when individuals attribute some human traits to their possessions, such as gadgets or vehicles. In contrast, literal anthropomorphism involves genuinely believing that an entity possesses human-like qualities. Accidental anthropomorphism, exemplified by perceiving faces in cloud formations, stems from the human tendency to discern familiar patterns in ambiguous stimuli. Epley, Waytz and Cacioppo (2007) proposed an Anthropomorphism Theory to elucidate the psychological determinants underlying anthropomorphism, emphasising the role of elicited agent knowledge, effectance motivation, and sociality motivation in shaping individuals' propensity to anthropomorphise.

As noted by Portal and Bendixen (2018), brand anthropomorphism enhances the value that a brand creates for an organisation. Brand anthropomorphism, according to Golossenko, Pillai and Aroean (2020), involves imbuing brands with human-like characteristics, thereby transforming them into relatable entities that resonate deeply with consumers. This strategic approach encompasses four key factors: appearance, moral virtue, cognitive experience, and conscious emotionality. Appearance pertains to the similarities between the brand and human attributes, while moral virtue involves the demonstration of qualities such as kindness, honesty, and dependability. Cognitive experience encompasses the perception of brands possessing mental states akin to humans, while conscious emotionality entails the awareness of human emotional states. An illustrative example of brand anthropomorphism can be seen in M&M's,

the iconic candy brand, which has anthropomorphised its chocolate candies by creating colourful characters with distinct personalities. These characters, including Red, Yellow, Blue, and Green, are prominently featured in M&M's advertising campaigns and packaging. Each character possesses unique traits and quirks, contributing to their relatability and endearment to consumers of all ages. Trong et al. (2023) further delineate two distinct customer aspects of brand anthropomorphism: firstly, it is triggered when customers perceive a physical resemblance between a brand and a person; secondly, it occurs when customers identify parallels between personified brands and their self-concepts. Additionally, Tuškej and Podnar (2018) uncovered that respondents' perceptions of brand anthropomorphic cues positively influenced their engagement with brands on social media, underscoring the role of brand anthropomorphism in fostering consumer engagement and interaction on digital platforms.

In exploring the diverse landscape of brand anthropomorphism, Cohen (2014) offers insightful categorisations illuminating this phenomenon's multifaceted nature. One interpretation involves the brand itself adopting human-like characteristics, while another interpretation refers to the brand presenting characters with human-like traits. This spectrum extends to utilising real individuals in advertising, where people embody certain product benefits or values associated with the brand. Moreover, the concept extends to cases where the brand is personified by its founder or a prominent figure closely associated with its identity. These nuanced approaches reflect the complexity of brand-person relationships and brands' various strategies to resonate with consumers. Cohen (2014) introduced distinct categories of humanised branding strategies, three of which will be explored further in this study: ambassadors, spokespersons, and user-generated content. The following chapters aim to uncover how brands utilise these strategies to imbue their identities with human-like qualities and cultivate stronger connections with their audience.

Brand Ambassadors
Social Media offers various avenues for brands to strengthen their brand image and expand their reach, with one effective approach being the use of celebrities and influencers as brand ambassadors. Collaborating with celebrities gives brands access to a broader audience and enhances their brand image. Celebrities, renowned for their authenticity, can capture consumers' attention, thereby increasing consumer engagement (Yu, Lin & Chen, 2013). This heightened engagement often translates into a positive perception of the brand, ultimately leading to increased purchases (Mishra, 2019). Similarly, influencers play a pivotal role in driving purchase intentions on TikTok (Lin & Nuangjamnong, 2022). Brooks et al. (2022) further highlight how influencers boost brand awareness and cultivate a favourable brand image by creating authentic content that resonates with their audience. Additionally, influencers foster consumer engagement by nurturing the relationship and trust between the brand and its viewership (Teo, Tee & Liew, 2023).

A notable example of a celebrity ambassador is the renowned Swiss tennis player Roger Federer, a brand ambassador for prominent brands such as Uniqlo, Lindt, and On Shoes. Conversely, a well-known influencer example is Addison Rae, a TikTok influencer with over 80 million followers, who represents multiple brands on her channel, including Vital Proteins, Nerds Candy, and Samsung.

Recognising the nuances between celebrities and influencers regarding their effect and function in brand promotion is essential. Influencers garner a following on TikTok through their expertise, authenticity, and relatability (Lim et al., 2022). Their authentic and engaging brand promotion stems from personal connections and the credibility and trustworthiness of their

following. On the other hand, celebrities are typically well-known public figures from the entertainment or sports realms, and their association with a brand can significantly amplify its visibility and desirability (Rebecca, Cung, Audina & Nuraryo, 2022). Moreover, celebrities bring wide recognition and prestige to brand partnerships. As social media continues to evolve, the lines between these two categories will likely continue to blur, underscoring the multifaceted nature of influencer marketing and the diverse strategies brands employ to connect with consumers.

Spokesperson
Spokespersons play a crucial role in brand anthropomorphism, serving as direct verbal advocates for a brand's messaging. Unlike celebrities or influencers, spokespersons typically embody the brand's values and ethos, delivering persuasive messaging to convince consumers of the brand's merits and benefits. This category often involves the creation of brand-made content where spokespersons articulate key messages and product claims, thus becoming the face of the brand (Cohen, 2014). Notably, spokespersons are not necessarily exclusive to one brand and may be replaceable, akin to actors or employees fulfilling a specific role. For instance, one example is the "Old Spice Guy" campaigns featuring male characters who embodied the brand's persona with memorable catchphrases like "Smell Like a Man, Man." This specific campaign led to a remarkable 106% increase in Old Spice sales during six months, showcasing the impact of a well-chosen spokesperson (Incitrio, 2015). Research indicates that spokespersons can significantly enhance brand equity and foster customer loyalty and trust (Lu, 2023). However, the effectiveness of spokespersons depends on the alignment between the spokesperson's attributes and the brand's image (Cui, Tu & Itoh, 2023). For example, Wu and Ma (2021) discovered, "In China, brand spokespersons will have a relative impact on Chinese consumers. In good circumstances, the spokesperson will increase consumer trust in the brand and thus increase the sales of products".

It is vital for brands to critically evaluate the use of spokespersons, particularly in emerging digital platforms like TikTok, where unique characteristics may challenge the applicability of previous research findings. Unlike traditional marketing channels, TikTok boasts a distinct user demographic (Statista, 2024a) and content consumption behaviour characterised by short-form, visually captivating videos and an emphasis on authenticity and intimacy (Barta & Andalibi, 2021; Şot, 2022). This platform's dynamic nature prompts brands to reconsider the effectiveness of traditional spokesperson strategies, as the audience's expectations and engagement patterns may differ significantly from those on conventional media channels.

UGC Content
User-generated video content (UGC) is a cornerstone of contemporary marketing strategies, particularly on platforms like TikTok, where authenticity and relatability reign supreme. As highlighted by Li et al. (2021), users tend to resonate more with content created by their peers due to its authentic and less advertorial nature. This authenticity fosters a deeper connection between users and the content, increasing engagement levels (Li et al., 2021). Unlike traditional advertising, which often feels scripted and detached from reality, UGC provides a window into the lives and experiences of real people, making it more relatable and compelling to audiences. The power of UGC lies in its ability to tap into the collective creativity and experiences of a diverse community of users. Brands leverage UGC to showcase their products or services in real-life situations, allowing consumers to see the products presented by ordinary people (Pramesti & Alversia, 2023). This approach humanises the brand and builds trust and credibility among consumers, as they see authentic endorsements from their peers rather than polished marketing messages (Li et al., 2021).

Moreover, UGC serves as a valuable source of social proof for brands. When users see others like themselves engaging with a brand or product positively, they are more likely to trust its quality and value (Pramesti & Alversia, 2023). This social validation drives further engagement and encourages consumers to share their experiences, creating a cycle of user-generated content that amplifies the brand's reach and impact (Pramesti & Alversia, 2023). A clear demonstration of UGC is illustrated in the TikTok video by Nespresso. In this portrayal, an untagged woman without any celebrity or influencer status is showcasing enjoying her Nespresso coffee poured into the nomad tumbler on the go, displaying her enthusiasm for the product.

While UGC presents numerous opportunities for brands to connect with consumers authentically, it also poses challenges in content moderation and brand reputation management (Cassinger, 2017). Brands must balance encouraging user-generated content and ensuring it aligns with their brand values and guidelines.

In conclusion, UGC has emerged as a powerful marketing tool for brands looking to cultivate authenticity, engagement, and trust among consumers. By harnessing the creative energy of their audience, brands can co-create compelling narratives that resonate deeply with their target audience, driving brand awareness, loyalty, and advocacy in the process.

2.3   Key Takeaways

This section explored the literature surrounding consumer brand relationships and the role of social media platforms, particularly TikTok, in shaping these interactions. The concept of consumer engagement and its significance for building enduring connections between consumers and brands was examined, alongside the unique attributes of TikTok and its impact on brand strategies, highlighting the evolving landscape of social media branding.

Throughout the review, several key findings emerged. Firstly, the concept of consumer engagement was found to be multifaceted, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions that influence brand perceptions and loyalty. Secondly, TikTok's algorithm-driven content discovery model and interactive features were identified as key drivers of consumer engagement, offering brands opportunities to foster authentic connections with their audience. Thirdly, adopting personified brand strategies, such as brand ambassadors, spokespersons, and user-generated content, was found crucial in shaping consumer perceptions and interactions on social media platforms.

However, despite the insights gained from existing literature, several gaps still need to be addressed. On the one hand, there remains a need to investigate the effectiveness of branding strategies in building consumer-brand relationships, specifically on TikTok, considering its unique content discovery model and interactive features. On the other hand, further research is required to assess the overall effectiveness of applying traditional personified brand strategies in driving consumer engagement on TikTok. Here, a nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of different types of anthropomorphism, including brand ambassadors, spokespersons, and user-generated content, is essential for devising targeted branding strategies that resonate with TikTok's diverse user base and content ecosystem. These gaps in the literature

present opportunities for future research to advance our understanding of consumer-brand interactions in the context of emerging social media platforms like TikTok.

3 Theoretical Framework and Development of Hypotheses

Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive overview of the theoretical foundations guiding this research and the subsequent development of hypotheses. It begins by examining the underlying theoretical frameworks, namely Brand Personality Theory and Self-Congruity Theory, which serve as the conceptual underpinnings for understanding consumer-brand interactions. Building upon these theoretical perspectives, the chapter proceeds to elucidate the development of hypotheses. Specifically, it outlines the four direct effects studied in this research: brand anthropomorphism, brand spokesperson, brand ambassador, and user-generated content (UGC) on consumer engagement. By delineating these direct effects, the chapter sets the stage for the subsequent exploration of their impact on consumer engagement within the context of TikTok.

3.1 Underlying Theoretical Frameworks

The upcoming parts aim to elaborate on the two relevant theories to derive the hypotheses for the research in the following section. The conceptual models are broadly employed across several marketing domains. Moreover, they help explain and forecast specific phenomena. The Brand Personality Theory and Self-Congruity Theory provide the basis for formulating the hypotheses regarding the direct effect of personified brand strategies on consumer engagement.

3.1.1 Brand Personality Theory

Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Theory defines brand personality as the fusion of human traits associated with a brand. Yet, the process of forming human versus brand personalities differs. While human personality traits stem from observations of appearance, behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, and origin (Park, 1986), Plummer (1985) illustrates how direct or indirect consumer-brand interactions can shape brand personality traits. Direct interactions stand for individuals associated with the brand, such as the CEO, employees, or brand ambassadors, who impart their personality traits onto the brand (McCracken, 1989). Contrastingly, brand personalities shaped through indirect consumer-brand interactions are not directly connected to a person; they are influenced by brand names, symbols, logos, or advertising styles (Aaker, 1997).

Furthermore, brand personalities enhance consumer-brand interactions, fostering more profound levels of brand authenticity (Beverland, Farrelly & Quester, 2006), engagement (Aaker, 1997), and consumer loyalty and trust (Fournier, 1998; Sung & Kim, 2010). Spokespersons, brand ambassadors, and UGC creators play crucial roles in personifying and communicating this brand personality to consumers. As highlighted in the literature review, spokespersons serve as brand message advocates (Cohen, 2014), while brand ambassadors

enhance the brand's image, resonating authentically with their audience (Yu, Lin & Chen, 2013). Additionally, UGC creators foster deep connections with their audience through authentic, less overtly promotional content (Li et al., 2021).

According to Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2012), brand personalities, characterised by human-like traits, distinguish one brand from another and form emotional and symbolic connections with consumers, fostering lasting consumer-brand relationships. Therefore, managers must develop brand strategies that enhance consumers' perception of brand personality and image. Drawing from the "Big Five" human personality structure, Aaker's (1997) theory identifies Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness as core dimensions of brand personalities, as depicted in **Figure 1**.

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                          ┌─────────────────────┐
                          │  Brand Personality  │
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Sincerity	Excitement	Competence	Sophistication	Ruggedness
- Down-to-earth - Honest - Wholesome - Cheerful	- Daring - Spirited - Imaginative - Up-to-date	- Reliable - Intelligent - Successful	- Upper class - Charming	- Outdoorsy - Tough
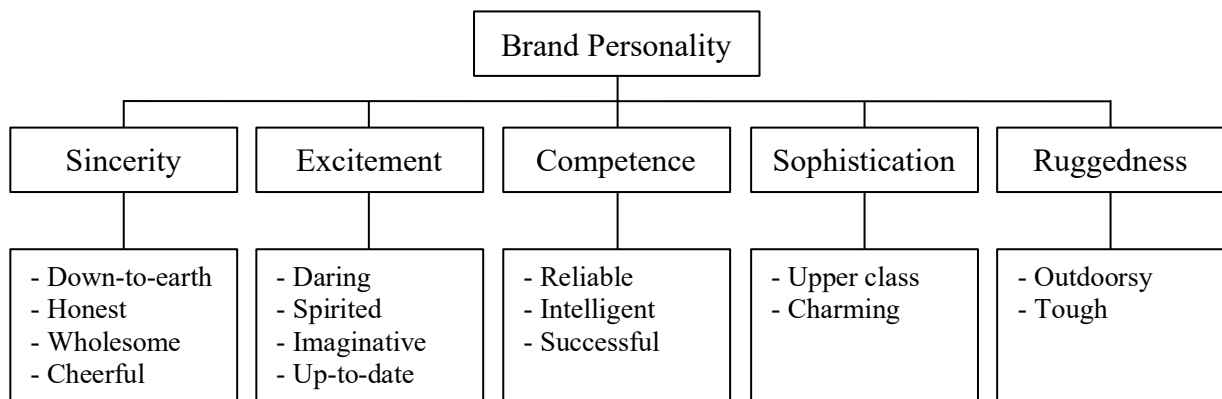
Figure 1 Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Framework

While this study does not directly explore brand personality dimensions, understanding the Brand Personality Framework serves as a comprehension of how personified brand strategies - such as spokespersons, brand ambassadors, and user-generated content creators - can impact consumer engagement.

3.1.2 Self-Congruity Theory

Fostering valuable consumer-brand relationships is a crucial topic in contemporary marketing and branding. This becomes evident in consumers' gravitation towards brands that mirror their self-perception, as the alignment between self-concept and brand image often engenders a strong brand connection (Sirgy, 1985). This phenomenon, termed self-congruity, has significantly impacted consumer behaviours before and after making a purchase (Sirgy, 1985). Originating from Sirgy's (1985) seminal work in consumer psychology, the Self-Congruity Theory serves as a foundational concept in understanding consumer-brand relationships (Bhattacharjee, Kuanr, Malhotra, Pradhan & Moharana, 2023; Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer & Nyffenegger, 2011; Rabbanee, Roy & Spence, 2020; Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg, 2000).

To delve deeper into the concept of self-congruity, it is imperative to elucidate the notion of self-concept. As defined by Sirgy (1982), self-concept encompasses "the totality of an individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object" (p. 287). Within the realm of self-concept, researchers often distinguish between the actual, ideal, and social selves, each playing a distinct role in shaping consumer behaviour (Bhattacharjee et al., 2023;

Rabbanee, Roy & Spence, 2020; Sirgy, 1985; Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg, 2000). On the one hand, the actual self embodies an individual's present self-perception, which may not always align perfectly with their ideal self but rather with their aspirations. On the other hand, the social self reflects how individuals perceive themselves in relation to others, influenced by the opinions of significant individuals in their lives, such as friends and family (Rabbanee, Roy & Spence, 2020). Notably, individuals may simultaneously activate multiple self-concepts, underscoring the fluid nature of self-concept (Malär et al., 2011).

Recent research has explored the intricate link between self-congruity and consumer engagement (Bhattacharjee et al., 2023; Rabbanee, Roy & Spence, 2020). These studies examine how the expression of self-concept across its dimensions (actual, ideal, and social) relates to self-congruity. Notably, Rabbanee, Roy, and Spence (2020) identified brand-specific activations of self-congruity orientations, with the actual and social selves exerting significant influence on brand attachment. This attachment, in turn, translates into heightened consumer engagement metrics such as shares, likes and comments, particularly on platforms like Facebook.

Moreover, just as individuals seek congruence between their self-perception and brand image, they are also drawn to brands that exhibit their personality traits. This dual alignment reflects consumers' desire for a holistic connection with brands that may not only resonate with their external image but also reflect their internal sense of identity. Research suggests that consumers are more likely to engage with brands possessing personalities congruent with their self-concept, as these brands resonate with their identity (Fournier, 1998; Sung & Kim, 2010). Furthermore, anthropomorphised brands, characterised by human-like qualities, evoke emotional responses and facilitate deeper consumer-brand relationships (Aaker, 1997). Therefore, the Self-Congruity Theory suggests that consumers are drawn to brands whose personality traits mirror their own, as this alignment fosters a more profound sense of connection and authenticity. It offers valuable insights into understanding how brand anthropomorphism and personality contribute to consumer engagement by promoting a sense of alignment between consumers' self-concept and brand attributes.

3.2　Development of Hypotheses

Brand Personality Theory suggests that personified brand strategies, such as anthropomorphism, can enhance consumer engagement by evoking emotional responses and fostering deeper connections with the brand (Aaker, 1997). Moreover, according to the Self-Congruity Theory, consumers aim to align their self-image with the perceived brand image when evaluating their options (Sirgy, 1982). This alignment creates a sense of resonance and congruence, fostering stronger brand attachment and identification (Rabbanee, Roy & Spence, 2020). Therefore, in this case, this research hypothesises the relationship between personified brand strategies, such as brand anthropomorphism, and consumer-brand relationships, assessed through consumer engagement.

Brand Personality Theory & Self-Congruency Theory & Consumer Engagement
Incorporating human-like characteristics through brand anthropomorphism is considered to significantly boost the value of brands and enhance their relatability to consumers (Golossenko, Pillai & Aroean, 2020; Portal & Bendixen, 2018). This integration of human-like characteristics with a brand was initially highlighted by Aaker (1997) with the Brand Personality Theory. Building upon the theory, McCracken (1989) elaborated on the direct consumer-brand interactions being the ones with a human directly associated with the company. Prior research indicates how brand personalities can strengthen consumer trust and engagement with the brand (Aaker, 1998; Fournier, 1998; Sung & Kim, 2010). Moreover, findings have suggested that brand anthropomorphism positively influences consumer engagement on social media (Tuškej & Podnar, 2018).

When brands embody personality traits that resonate with consumers' self-perception, it creates a sense of resonance and congruence (Rabbanee, Roy & Spence, 2020), thereby potentially increasing engagement (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2012). The emotional connection may lead to increased consumer engagement with content, as consumers are more likely to interact with brands they feel emotionally connected to (Fournier, 1998). Research by Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2012) showed that, for example, The North Face's brand personality traits, including uniqueness and commitment to responsibility, significantly increased its brand engagement. Consumers perceived The North Face as embodying traits aligned with their self-concepts, leading to a stronger connection with the brand. This underscores the relevance of aligning brand personality traits with consumers' self-perceptions to enhance engagement.

While brand personalities can enhance consumer engagement, there might be a risk of overemphasising personality traits at the expense of other important brand attributes, such as product quality or value proposition (Eisend & Langner, 2010). Additionally, not all consumers may seek alignment between their self-concepts and brand image, leading to variability in the effectiveness of self-congruity-based strategies across different consumer segments or alienation. Barta and Andalibi (2021) further illustrate how the engagement metrics of comments might also facilitate harassment and hate on the platform due to the anonymity and unrestrained communication of the users.

Yet, general self-congruity between consumers' self-concepts and brand image fosters stronger brand attachment and identification. In a study by Rabbanee, Roy, and Spence (2020), the researchers examined the relationship between self-congruity and consumer engagement on social media platforms. Their findings revealed that brands perceived as congruent with consumers' self-concepts experienced higher levels of engagement, including likes, shares, and

comments. This means that when consumers perceive a brand as reflecting their self-concept, they develop a heightened sense of attachment, leading to increased engagement with the brand's content. It highlights the importance of self-congruity in fostering stronger brand attachment and growing consumer engagement. Barta and Andalibi's (2021) findings shed light on the significance of comments in shaping the authenticity norms on TikTok, emphasising how comments cultivate the culture of authenticity and support authentic self-representation on the platform.

In consideration of these points, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a positive relationship between using anthropomorphism (vs. non-anthropomorphism) and the brand's consumer engagement on TikTok content.

Brand Anthropomorphism & Self-Congruency Theory & Consumer Engagement
Brand spokespersons, ambassadors, and user-generated content (UGC) creators are pivotal in personifying and conveying the brand's personality to consumers (Li et al., 2021; Yu, Lin & Chen, 2013). They serve as conduits, shaping perceptions and fostering connections between consumers and the brand. The effectiveness of these personification strategies, particularly in enhancing brand engagement, underscores the intersection of Self-Congruency Theory and Brand Personality Theory.

Specifically, brand ambassadors and spokespersons have been proven valuable instruments for conveying the brand's personality to consumers (Hu, 2022; Pebriyanti & Kusmayadi, 2022). Here, especially Aaker's (1997) personality dimensions Sincerity and Competence can be linked to brand spokespersons and brand ambassadors because of their characteristics, expertise, and resonance with the brand personality, which in turn could deepen consumer-brand interactions, facilitating better consumer loyalty, trust, and brand engagement (Fournier, 1998; Sung & Kim, 2010).

However, reliance on brand anthropomorphism may lower the development of consumer-brand relationships. Overdependence on individual personalities may detract from building a strong brand identity (Misra & Beatty, 1990), potentially impacting consumer engagement if the ambassador's or spokesperson's image tarnishes. Furthermore, consumers could become increasingly aware of the paid nature of brand spokespersons and ambassadors, which could diminish their authenticity and sincerity. However, while UGC offers authenticity, it may need more consistency and quality control of professionally curated content (Baltar & Brunet, 2012), posing a potential risk to the brand's image and consumer engagement.

Research indicates that the proficiency of brand spokespersons significantly shapes the brand's personality (Hu, 2022). This alignment between the spokesperson's characteristics and the brand's desired traits increases the likelihood of consumer engagement. Additionally, introducing a spokesperson allows the brand to embody specific traits, creating a more relatable and humanised image for consumers (Aaker, 1997). A well-chosen brand spokesperson can enhance the brand's credibility and trustworthiness by association (Atkin & Block, 1983), leading to increased engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments. Similarly, brand ambassadors often possess established credibility and authenticity within specific communities or niches, making them more relatable to target audiences (Yu, Lin & Chen, 2013). Moreover, they can leverage their social networks to extend the brand's reach and enhance its visibility (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Consumers may be more inclined to engage with content featuring a brand ambassador they admire or identify with, thereby increasing engagement. UGC,

perceived as more authentic and trustworthy by consumers compared to branded content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), fosters trust and credibility when consumers see real people interacting with the brand. Additionally, it encourages consumer participation and engagement, fostering a sense of community around the brand (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011). Seeing others like themselves engaging with the brand creates a sense of belonging and encourages further engagement.

Considering these factors, the following hypotheses have been formulated to investigate the effect of different types of anthropomorphism:

H2a: There is a positive relationship between using brand ambassadors (vs. no brand ambassadors) and the brand's consumer engagement on TikTok content.
H2b: There is a positive relationship between using brand spokespersons (vs. no brand spokespersons) and the brand's consumer engagement on TikTok content.
H2b: There is a positive relationship between using UGC (vs. no UGC) and the brand's consumer engagement on TikTok content.

3.3   Research Model

Figure 2 illustrates the research model, including all relevant variables and previously stated hypotheses. Brand anthropomorphism, manifested through brand spokespersons, brand ambassadors, and user-generated content (UGC), constitutes the independent variable, while consumer engagement is the dependent variable.
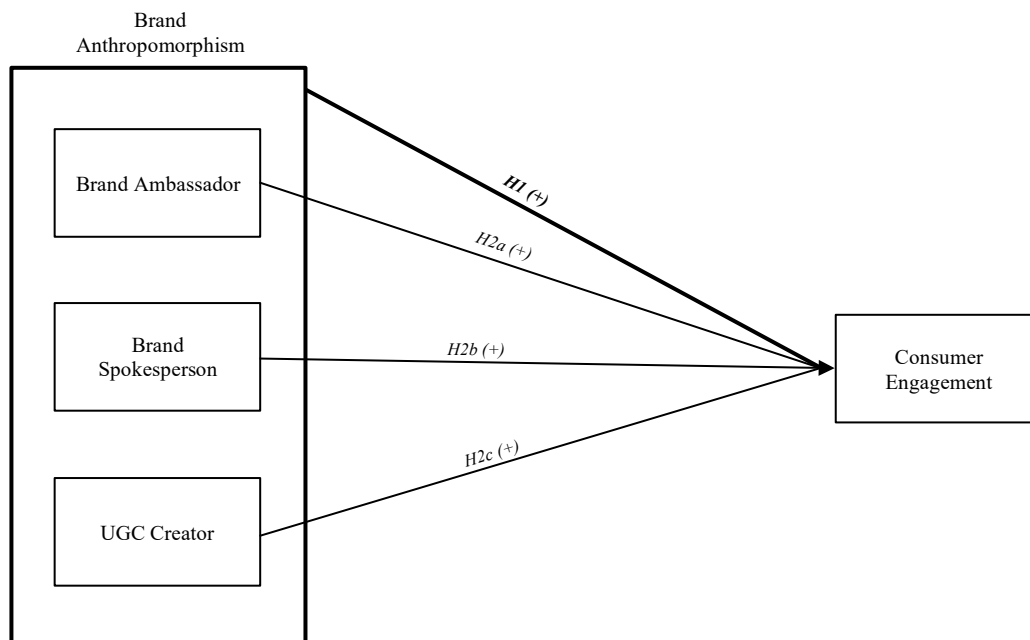
Figure 2 Research Model

This research assesses the specific forms of brand anthropomorphism, namely brand ambassador, brand spokesperson and UGC, to analyse the effect on consumer engagement. The hypotheses were formulated through the lens of the Brand Personality Theory and Self-

Congruency Theory. Brand Personality Theory suggests that consumers perceive brands as possessing human-like traits, influencing their attitudes and behaviours (Aaker, 1997). By imbuing brands with traits like sincerity or competence, companies can create unique identities that resonate emotionally with consumers (Aaker, 1997). Thus, strategically shaping and communicating brand personalities can enhance consumer engagement and foster long-term relationships. Self-Congruency Theory states that consumers prefer brands that are consistent with their self-concepts (Sirgy, 1982). When a brand aligns with an individual's identity, it fosters a sense of connection and loyalty (Sirgy, 1982). Companies can deepen connections and cultivate brand advocates by understanding and aligning with their target audience's self-concepts (Sirgy, 1982). Thus, the Self-Congruency Theory offers insights into effectively engaging consumers by aligning with their identities.

In line with previous research (Cohen, 2014; Chen et al., 2015; Kim, Sung & Moon, 2020; Han, Cui & Jin, 2021; Jeong, Kim & Chung, 2022; Trong et al., 2023; Wu, Dodoo & Choi, 2023) it is predicted that brand anthropomorphism will positively influence consumer engagement. Furthermore, it is anticipated that brand spokespersons, brand ambassadors, and UGC will generate higher consumer engagement than content without these elements (Han, Cui & Jin, 2021; Jeong, Kim & Chung, 2022; Trong et al., 2023; Wu, Dodoo & Choi, 2023).

While brand anthropomorphism has the potential to enhance consumer engagement, there are risks of negative impacts. Misaligned human-like traits, appearing insincere or overshadowing other brand aspects, could lead to scepticism or disengagement (Eisend & Langner, 2010; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Similarly, while Self-Congruency Theory aligns with consumers' self-concepts for engagement, misinterpretation or oversimplification may lead to perceived inauthenticity. Moreover, reliance on brand representatives could hinder relationships due to perceived paid endorsements, reducing authenticity (Misra & Beatty, 1990).

In summary, it is expected that brand anthropomorphism and its various strategies – ambassadors, spokespersons, and UGC – will positively impact consumer engagement, thereby nurturing consumer-brand relationships.

4 Methodology

The methodology chapter outlines the methodological framework employed in this study, offering insights into the research approach, design, and execution. It begins by elucidating the chosen research approach and clarifying the investigation's philosophical underpinnings. Subsequently, the chapter delves into the research design, detailing the operationalisation of variables and the sampling strategy adopted to ensure the study's rigour and representativeness. Additionally, it explores the research setting, shedding light on the empirical context within which data collection took place. The chapter further elucidates the data collection method employed, emphasising its alignment with the research objectives and the robustness of the data obtained. Attention is also given to considerations of validity and reliability, which are crucial for ensuring the findings' integrity and credibility. Through this comprehensive overview, this chapter sets the stage for the subsequent analysis and interpretation of findings in the ensuing chapters.

4.1 Research Approach

This study delves into the exploration of personified brand content and its impact on TikTok's consumer engagement. To accomplish this, the research adopts an internal realism ontology and a positivist epistemology. The internal realism ontology posits that reality exists independently of human perception but can only be understood through individuals' mental constructs or representations (Glasersfeld, 1989). In the context of this study, the researchers focus on understanding the subjective constructions of reality regarding personified brand content on TikTok. It is recognised that meanings and interpretations of such content are constructed by individuals (consumers) based on their subjective experiences and perspectives. Applying a positivist epistemology emphasises the importance of empirical evidence, observation, and scientific methods in acquiring knowledge about the world (Bryman, 2016). Accordingly, this study systematically collects and analyses empirical data to uncover generalisable findings about the influence of personified brand content on consumer engagement.

In line with the research philosophy, a deductive approach is employed wherein research hypotheses are tested by systematically coding data into variables (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The analysis is theory-driven, drawing on existing literature and theoretical frameworks to guide the coding process. As Bradley, Curry, and Devers (2007) and Thomas (2006) suggest, initial codes are derived from the extant literature and research aims, facilitating the identification of core concepts in the data.

Moreover, this research utilises a quantitative methodology, which employs numerical values derived from observations to explain and describe phenomena, as defined by Taherdoost (2022). Descriptive and correlational research approaches are applied, allowing for data collection without intervention and facilitating accessibility to larger sample size (Taherdoost,

2022). The decision to adopt a quantitative approach is grounded in several considerations. Firstly, a quantitative methodology enables data-based decision-making, allowing for rigorous analysis and interpretation of empirical evidence (Neuman, 2014). This approach aligns with the positivist epistemology embraced in this study, emphasising the importance of empirical observation and scientific methods in acquiring knowledge. Furthermore, a quantitative approach facilitates knowledge production by generating systematic and replicable findings about the influence of personified brand content on consumer engagement (Easterby-Smith, Jaspersen, Thorpe & Valizade, 2021). By quantifying variables and measuring relationships between them, this research aims to uncover patterns, regularities, and causal relationships that contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour on TikTok. Moreover, the quantitative approach is well-suited for investigating the relevance and impact of personified brand strategies on consumer engagement, focusing on objective measures rather than subjective motivations or motives (Neuman, 2014). This approach allows for exploring broad trends and generalisable findings, providing insights into the wider implications of brand-personification strategies in digital marketing contexts. Additionally, while this study employs a quantitative methodology, it acknowledges the potential for further qualitative investigation to complement and enrich the findings. In future research, qualitative methods could be used to delve deeper into the underlying motivations and emotions driving consumer engagement with personified brand content on TikTok.

The theoretical frameworks guiding this study include Brand Personality Theory (Aaker, 1997) and Self-Congruity Theory (Sirgy, 1985), as well as the concepts of consumer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998) and brand anthropomorphism (Cohen, 2014). These theories inform our understanding of how personified brand strategies influence consumer perceptions and engagement on TikTok.

To clarify the nature and direction of relationships between concepts such as brand anthropomorphism and consumer engagement, it is required to operationalise these concepts for empirical testing. This involves formulating propositions that will be tested empirically to reveal insights into the relationship dynamics between personified brand content and consumer engagement on TikTok (Burns & Burns, 2008).

4.2   Research Design

The research design is a crucial component of any study, providing a blueprint for how the research will be conducted within the chosen approach and outlining the methods and procedures for data collection and analysis (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). In this study, the researchers aim to examine how global consumer brands employ brand personification strategies and how this impacts consumer engagement on TikTok.

A quantitative content analysis is the primary method used for data analysis in this research. Content analysis is a valuable method in research to systematically analyse and categorise various forms of communication content (White & Marsh, 2006). "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from text (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use" (Krippendorff, 2018, p. 24). This aligns with the ontological internal realism perspective, which attempts to understand the user's subjective constructions of reality (Glasersfeld, 1989). Because visual content on TikTok is readily observable, the

content analysis allows for direct empirical investigation into consumer engagement and perceptions. Furthermore, it is a method grounded in empirical evidence, using a deductive approach aimed at testing hypotheses and deriving conclusions based on established theories (Krippendorff, 2018). Consequently, it is specifically suitable for a quantitative methodology to reveal patterns and causal connections to advance comprehension of consumer-brand relationships on TikTok. Aligned with the positivist epistemology, content analysis allows for the systematic collection of data, making it possible to derive generalisable conclusions concerning the impact of personified brand strategies.

According to Krippendorff (2018), modern content analysis strives to surpass traditional intentions by going beyond conventional concepts of symbols and content. This makes it well-suited for exploring brand anthropomorphism and its effect on consumer engagement on TikTok. A content analysis of the short-form video content posted by brands allows for a thorough study of the impact of different personified brand strategies and consumer engagement on video-sharing platforms such as TikTok. Moreover, other researchers exploring social media content on TikTok have used a deductive research approach, driven by theory and systematic data coding into variables, to investigate patterns and trends (Li et al., 2021; Su et al., 2020). The starting point and inspiration for the research design was Chen et al.'s (2015) content analysis, which investigated brand personification strategies on Facebook.

An alternative research design commonly observed among scholars, e.g., Trong et al. (2023) or Barta and Andalibi (2021), examines consumer engagement and brand anthropomorphism using primary survey research. Surveys are a way to gather quantitative data from consumers to understand their interactions and perceptions with brands (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Multiple methods for collecting primary survey data exist, such as face-to-face interviews, postal self-completion questionnaires and the prevalent web-based surveys, which, in today's context, present an economically efficient way to conduct surveys (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). While a well-structured primary survey can be informative and accurate in representing the general public (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021), the decision to employ content analysis instead was driven by challenges associated with the process of designing the sampling frame, which is frequently prone to errors (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Moreover, the choice was driven by the survey's lack of reliable data on the target population, as the responses typically come from friends and certain social circles on the university campus (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). These limitations make it more difficult for surveys to encompass a broader range of consumer opinions and capture actual consumer behaviour (Xiao, Li & Zhang, 2023). On the contrary, content analysis is unrestricted by these challenges as it examines readily available materials, underscoring the method's strength of being independent of the sampling frame and having the richness of data.

Since the data collection and analysis do not include the direct involvement of human subjects, there are fewer ethical considerations. The biggest concern is transparency and accountability of the research method, data collection process, and analysis (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021), which is eliminated through thorough documentation. Another ethical concern relevant to the content analysis is data usage and permission (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Nonetheless, this concern has also been eliminated as this research only uses public data and requires no special permission.

By employing a rigorous research design encompassing sampling, data collection methods, and operationalisation of variables, this study is designed to provide valuable insights into the relationship between brand personification strategies and consumer engagement on TikTok.

4.2.1 Research Setting

In today's digital age, social media has revolutionised how individuals communicate, share information, and interact with brands. Defined as online platforms and applications that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking, social media has become an integral part of daily life for billions of people worldwide (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). From connecting with friends and family to discovering new products and services, social media platforms offer functionalities that cater to user needs and preferences. Illustrating its significance, statistics project a considerable growth in its user base, estimated to reach 5.85 billion worldwide by 2027—double the number compared to 2017, which stood at 2.73 billion (Dixon, 2023). The evolution of social media can be traced back to the early days of the internet, with the emergence of platforms like Six Degrees and Friendster in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These platforms laid the groundwork for modern social networking, introducing concepts like user profiles, connections, and online communities. Over the years, social media has evolved significantly, introducing new features, functionalities, and platforms catering to evolving user preferences and technological advancements (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). It encompasses various platforms and applications, each serving different purposes and demographics.

From mainstream platforms like Facebook and Twitter to visual-centric platforms like Instagram and TikTok, social media provides users with channels for communication, content sharing, and community engagement. These platforms facilitate user-generated content, allowing individuals to express themselves, interact with others, and participate in online communities (Kietzmann et al., 2011). The rise of social media has profoundly impacted branding strategies, transforming how companies communicate with their target audiences and build brand awareness. It offers brands unlimited opportunities to engage with consumers in real time, fostering two-way communication and meaningful interactions (De Vries, Gensler & Leeflang, 2012). Moreover, social media platforms are powerful marketing channels, enabling brands to reach highly targeted audiences, create compelling content, and drive engagement and conversions (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011).

The decision to explore TikTok as a platform was not only driven by its vast global reach but also its significance in examining consumer engagement. Moreover, the platform's unique content format, characterised by short-format videos, influenced the choice. TikTok provides an interactive and highly engaging space for users and offers brands the flexibility to employ diverse branding tactics to elevate their consumer engagement (Schellewald, 2023). The platform's ever-changing and dynamic landscape serves as an ideal setting for studying consumer behaviour in digital marketing.

4.2.2 Operationalisation of Variables

In this chapter of the research design, the centre of attention is on the key constructs. To operationalise the variables in this study, the following key concepts have been defined and outlined:

Brand Anthropomorphism
Brand Anthropomorphism is characterised by ascribing human-like traits to brands, making brands more accessible to consumers and having better resonance with them (Golossenko, Pillai & Aroean, 2020). Given the broad nature of the concept of brand anthropomorphism explained

previously in the literature review, it is narrowed down for the sake of this research to allow a more focused investigation. The presence of brand anthropomorphism is defined by Cohen's (2014) theoretical foundation of the idea of a brand being portrayed by a prominent figure closely connected with the brand and its identity. Therefore, this variable indicates the presence of human representation in the brand content. This definition makes an explicit criterion for identifying cases of brand anthropomorphism, allowing for consistency in measurement and systematic data collection and analysis. Ultimately, it enables a compelling exploration of the hypotheses and research question, obtaining meaningful insights into consumer behaviour. Brand Anthropomorphism is coded within the coding scheme with dummy variables, "1" if brand anthropomorphism is present and "0" if not.

Brand Ambassador
Within the investigation of different types of brand anthropomorphism, the brand ambassador maintains importance, given its prevalent integration into contemporary digital marketing strategies and significance in existing literature (Lin & Nuangjamnong, 2022; Mishra, 2019; Rebecca et al., 2022; Yu, Lin & Chen, 2013). The variable of the brand ambassador denotes an official or authorised representative of the brand, often utilised for promotional purposes, which includes influencers or celebrities frequently used as brand ambassadors by the companies (Yu, Lin & Chen, 2013). Using this as the theoretical foundation underlines the importance of brand ambassadors as key agents for the company's brand communication. The definition of the variable should provide a clear guideline to ensure consistency in the measurement. Through analysing the presence of brand ambassadors in the context of TikTok and brand anthropomorphism, this study seeks to understand how the brand's human representatives shape consumer engagement and perceptions. If a brand ambassador is present in the content, it is coded within the coding scheme with "1" and if not ", 0".

Brand Spokesperson
For this research on brand anthropomorphism and consumer engagement, the presence of a brand spokesperson remains relevant. The variable of the brand spokesperson refers to an agent of the brand who verbally advocates for it and delivers brand messaging to persuade the audience. The brand spokesperson is different from the brand ambassador or UGC creators, as they are not known outside of the brand content, but they become the face of the brand through brand-specific content creation (Cohen, 2014). This distinction aligns with the research's objective of examining the different types of human-centred brand anthropomorphism on TikTok by adopting a clear definition to promote consistency in the data collection and analysis. Investigating the role of a brand spokesperson allows for more profound insight into the impact of brand anthropomorphism on consumer engagement. If a brand spokesperson is present in the content, it is coded as a "1"; if not, it is coded as a "0".

UGC
Especially evident on the platform of TikTok, where relatability and authenticity are of great importance, UGC serves as a foundational element of modern digital marketing strategies. The variable of UGC encompasses user-generated content (UGC) creators who are not well-known and usually have a limited reach. To be more precise, it encompasses content that feels less scripted and provides insights into day-to-day lives (Pramesti & Alversia, 2023). Furthermore, to ensure consistency in measurement, similar to other categories of brand anthropomorphism, the human in the video must be the focal point of the video. Examining UGC in the broader context of brand anthropomorphism provides insights into consumer-brand relationships and their influence on the perception of brand personality, thus affecting consumer engagement. If UGC is present in the video, it is coded as "1"; if not, it is coded as "0".

Consumer Engagement

Following the definition by Brodie et al. (2013), consumer engagement is measured by the level of involvement and connection, including active participation, emotional resonance, and cognitive investment. Consumer engagement must be specified by its type to clarify and ensure measurement consistency. Drawing on existing literature, the number of comments represents an active form of involvement and interaction on TikTok, providing an effective approach to determining the depth of engagement with a brand's content (Cheng & Li, 2024; Kim & Yang, 2017; Shahbaznezhad, Dolan & Rashidirad, 2021; Xiao, Li & Zhang, 2023). Moreover, Shahbaznezhad, Dolan and Rashidirad (2021) employ comments as a metric in their study, arguing in their paper that comments signify a more active form of interaction compared to likes. Hence, the number of comments under a post on TikTok is reliable for examining consumer engagement, as it echoes the user's involvement with the content and offers clarity and measurement consistency.

Furthermore, exploring consumer engagement through comments is both practicable and achievable, considering the availability of the data and widespread usage on TikTok. By examining the number of comments on each short-form video, this research delves into studying the consumer-brand relationships on TikTok, aiming to offer additional insights into the effect of brand anthropomorphism on engagement. In a separate column of the data collection sheet, the transformed number of comments was calculated to proceed with the analysis afterwards; it was done with the following formula: ln(number of comments +1) to include observations with 0 comments.

The following operationalisation coding scheme was utilised to assess the brand content on TikTok.

Table 1 Operationalisation of the Coding Scheme

Category	*Type of Anthropomorphism*	*Operationalisation*
Consumer engagement metrics	Number of comments	Number of comments collected.
	Transformed Number of comments	Transformed number of comments was calculated LN (number of comments + 1)
Brand anthropomorphism in content	Anthropomorphism	Presence of human representation in the brand content. It is coded as 1 if present and 0 if not present.
	Ambassador	Official or authorised representative of the brand, often utilised for promotional purposes. It includes influencers or celebrities and is coded as 1 if present and 0 if not present.

Spokesperson	Agent of the brand who verbally advocates for it and delivers brand messaging to persuade the audience. It is coded as 1 if present and 0 if not present.
UGC	User-generated content (UGC) creators who are not well-known and usually have a limited reach. It is coded as 1 if present and 0 if not present.

4.2.3   Sampling

The sample was drawn from Interbrand's "100 Best Global Brands 2023" (Interbrand, 2023), explicitly focusing on the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. The FMCG sector was chosen for its large consumer base and because marketers frequently use personified branding strategies using brand ambassadors, spokespersons, and UGC to boost the brand's marketing campaigns (Jeong, Kim & Chung, 2022; Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Li et al., 2021; Teo, Tee & Liew, 2023). Hence, brands are often active on TikTok (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Su et al., 2020), allowing sufficient content for the current analysis. Before the primary research, a pilot study was conducted to assess the potential variety of the short-form video content. In addition, the pilot study also helped identify the sector with the most suitable content for an effective analysis. Consequently, considering the insights of the pilot and comparing content across various sectors such as service, automotive, luxury, and FMCG, it was observed that the FMCG sector displayed the broadest range of types of brand anthropomorphism.

The sample encompasses thirteen brands, for example, Maybelline NY, Nespresso, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Pampers and KitKat, during the period of Q3 (July-September) of 2023. The spectrum of brands covering industries such as beauty, beverage, and food was chosen to represent the wide range of products in the FMCG sector, allowing for better generalisability of findings. Another factor influencing the selection of the brands was the diversity and variety of brand personification strategies within the different industries of the FMCG sector, as observed during the pilot study. Additionally, the vast availability of content that the FMCG brands upload was noted during the pilot study. These factors collectively led to the conclusion that choosing these brands would ensure a comprehensive analysis aligning with the research's aims.

Q1 is commonly referred to as the revenue downturn in digital marketing, but it is also known as a period after the new year when marketers tend to experiment with novel strategies (Lemonlight, 2023; Mediavine, 2020). Following Q1, the Q2 period typically experiences a rise in advertising spending (Mediavine, 2020). Furthermore, the warmer Q2 period allows marketers to promote products to draw people out of their homes outside after the colder winter months (Lemonlight, 2023). Q3, being positioned after the "summer slump", is a good time for marketers to benefit from enhanced consumer engagement (Mediavine, 2020). The heavily advertised Q4 includes the holiday season, not making it representative of the year. Additionally, the more extended timeframe enables capturing a wide range of content types, facilitating a comparative analysis within the same quarter. Consequently, data collection from

Q3 was chosen to leverage the increased consumer engagement and to ensure that the data is not influenced by the holiday season's unique advertising patterns.

As this research aims to investigate brand anthropomorphism on consumer engagement, purposive and convenience sampling was chosen to ensure a representative sample. According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2021, p. 445), purposive sampling is "a form of non-probability sampling design where the criteria for inclusion in a sample are defined, and entities are first screened to see whether they meet the criteria for inclusion, those entities that meet the criteria are included in the sample". The purposive sampling is evident in the selection of the brands from Interbrand's list, explicitly targeting the fast-moving consumer goods sector, allowing researchers to target brands with an active TikTok presence, offering more content for the analysis. Considering the seasonal advertising trends and diverse content types, the decision to use convenience sampling in selecting the Q3 period is based on practical considerations and to avoid a potential seasonality bias, such as intense Christmas advertising.

The sample size of 260 videos was determined based on the need to ensure the data was representative and generalisable. Furthermore, the sample, including the thirteen brands, was considered sufficient to achieve the research objectives of investigating brand personification strategies and consumer engagement during the limited research period. Considering the time and accessible human resource limitations, the researcher and supervisor resolved and considered the sample size to achieve a balance by collecting a dataset of significant size while efficiently managing resource constraints.

4.3   Data Collection Method

The data collection for this research is focused on the online social media platform TikTok. As elaborated previously, the content analysis was decided upon for the quantitative aspect of this research, focusing on TikTok videos featuring selected brands. This method employs an objective approach involving a two-step data collection process. The unit of analysis is the short-form video content, given its ideal suitability for examining the effect of brand anthropomorphism on consumer engagement. Furthermore, adaptations from the original framework suggested by Chen et al. (2015) were crucial to tailoring the analysis and coding scheme to the contemporary context and research objectives. Chen et al.'s (2015) content analysis examined the entirety of the Facebook page, considering graphical and textual elements alongside zoomorphism and teramorphism. However, not all the aspects of their coding scheme did align with the research objectives, as became evident during the pilot study, which used the coding scheme from Chen et al. (2015). The pilot study made the need to adjust the scheme relevant to TikTok evident, resulting in subsequent modifications. Given the research's emphasis on human-centred marketing strategies, zoomorphism and teramorphism were excluded. Instead, Cohen's (2014) idea of brand anthropomorphism being portrayed through a prominent person connected to the brand was integrated.

Additionally, to gain a deeper insight into the diverse forms of brand anthropomorphism, the variables of brand spokesperson, brand ambassador and UGC were included. Any unique themes present in the video, such as giveaways, were noted. To contribute to the validity of the research findings, the coding scheme adapts existing frameworks and incorporates relevant variables to capture brand anthropomorphism and consumer engagement.

The coding scheme encompasses brand personification classification and the number of comments. The data was collected and encoded in April 2024, specifically from 09.04.2024 to 27.04.2024. The complete data collection can be found in **Appendix B**. Before the commencement of sampling, 20 videos were independently assessed by both coders simultaneously. A brief alignment followed this to ensure consistency in the categorisation process. Throughout the whole process, the coders were next to each other to ensure alignment if insecurities regarding the categorisation occurred. Having two coders helps mitigate individual biases and enhance representativeness, as two coders can validate each other's work, consequently internally validating the process.

Subsequently, the results were quantified using statistical methods. By employing a rigorous research design encompassing sampling, data collection methods, and operationalisation of variables, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the relationship between brand personification strategies and consumer engagement on TikTok.

4.4   Data Analysis

The data analysis phase is critical to any research study, as it involves interpreting the collected data to derive meaningful insights and conclusions. This section outlines the approach taken to analyse the data generated from the content analysis conducted. The primary objective of the analysis is to evaluate the hypotheses formulated earlier in the research process.

To facilitate the data analysis, the statistical computer software JAMOVI was utilised. The data collected during the content analysis was initially stored in Excel and then imported directly into JAMOVI for analysis. Before proceeding with the analysis of descriptive data, it is imperative to conduct preliminary checks for input errors, outliers, and missing values (Burns & Burns, 2008). Fortunately, no further cleaning procedures were required, allowing the researchers to proceed with the analysis smoothly.

Before diving into the data analysis process, a crucial step involved transforming the dependent variable, consumer engagement (measured by comments), using a logarithmic transformation. Log transformation is a widely used method to address skewed data distributions by replacing each variable with its logarithm. This transformation enhances the normality of the data distribution and improves the linearity between dependent and independent variables, thereby enhancing the validity of statistical analyses (Htoon, 2020). This transformation was necessary to ensure the robustness and reliability of the analysis results.

Descriptive statistics
Drawing inferences by analysing the data is usually only feasible with explicit calculations; hence, summarising the data is a crucial analysis step (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Descriptive statistics is a tool for researchers to visualise and derive meaning from the data, aiding in the analysis development and data processing and preparation (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). In the first step, the descriptives of the data were analysed, first brand anthropomorphism and number of comments, then brand ambassador and number of comments, afterwards brand spokesperson and number of comments, then UGC and number of comments.

Linear regression

The linear regression analysis is suitable for estimating the relationship between the dependent, effect, and independent variable, the cause predictor. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). To achieve meaningful results with linear regression, it is necessary for the following assumptions to be met: linearity, homoskedasticity, normality, orthogonality, independence of residuals and independence of observations (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). The independent variables of this linear regression were the brand ambassador, brand spokesperson, UGC, and the dependent number of comments.

4.5   Validity and Reliability

Specific procedures utilised in content analysis, particularly in quantitative research, enable replication and quality of the findings. However, the findings can be subjected to independent methodologies and evaluations assessing validity and reliability (White & Marsh, 2006). According to Neuendorf (2002, p.112), validity is "the extent to which a measuring procedure represents the intended, and only the intended, concept". Various methods for evaluating validity exist. Further, it is a subjective assessment aiming to objectively evaluate the alignment between what is measured and how it is measured (White & Marsh, 2006). Other ways of assessing the validity are criterion validity, content validity and construct validity. Criterion validity involves evaluating the alignment between criteria and code. Whereas content validity examines the thoroughness of concept representation, construct validity pertains to the degree to which constructs align with hypotheses deducted from theory (White & Marsh, 2006). Notably, Chen et al.'s study (2015) serves as a solid foundation for establishing the validity and reliability of the operationalisation of the constructs. During the initial pilot study, the coding scheme was assessed to verify the relevance of the constructs. However, the pilot study prompted adaptations that were still in line with the original framework by Chen et al. (2015) to capture the variables of interest better.

Each variable in the coding scheme was clearly outlined to maintain consistency in the data collection. As the data collection section elaborated, ensuring consistency and internally validating the process, including intercoder reliability, was a pivotal step. To avoid the risk of the sampling bias threatening external validity, different types of FMCG brands were incorporated into the sample to increase its representativeness and diversity. Ensuring the reliability of the coding scheme holds significant importance in content analysis. This can be done by ensuring the coding scheme covers exhaustive categories, guaranteeing the inclusion of all pertinent aspects and making each category mutually exclusive. This enhances the reliability of the coding scheme since it also ensures consistency among different coders when coding the same item (White & Marsh, 2006). In this research, the participation of two coders allows the comparison of the coding outcomes, ensuring consistency and agreement, consequently guaranteeing inter-coder reliability. Discrepancies during the data collection process are resolved through the implementation of clear guidelines and discussion. The validity and reliability of the data collection on TikTok are ensured due to the platform's integrated engagement metrics, offering quantifiable data points to measure consumer engagement with the brand content.

5   Findings

Chapter 5 presents the empirical findings derived from a quantitative content analysis conducted on TikTok, focusing on the investigation of personified brand strategies and their influence on consumer engagement metrics. The study aims to elucidate the relevance of various anthropomorphism branding strategies, including ambassadors, spokespersons, and user-generated content (UGC), in shaping consumer engagement on the platform. Through a statistical analysis encompassing descriptive analysis and linear regression, this chapter offers valuable insights into the effectiveness of these strategies in eliciting user interactions through comments. By examining the statistical results in-depth, the chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between personified brand strategies and consumer engagement on TikTok. Through this empirical exploration, the study contributes to advancing knowledge in digital marketing. It sheds light on practical implications for brand management strategies in the contemporary digital landscape.

5.1.1   Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics were computed to characterise the variables included in the analysis. **Table 2** provides an overview of the descriptive statistics for the continuous variable 'Number of Comments'.

Table 2 *Descriptive Statistics 'Number of Comments'*

Descriptives

	Number of comments
N	260
Missing	0
Mean	318
Median	24.5
Mode	0.00
Sum	82790
Standard deviation	1753
Range	20600
Minimum	0
Maximum	20600

The total sample size for this analysis comprised N=260 instances, with 178 cases exhibiting anthropomorphism (1) and 82 cases without anthropomorphism (0). Among the content, including anthropomorphism, were 39 cases featuring spokespersons, 105 with ambassadors, and 26 with user-generated content (UGC). The frequencies and percentages for each category are presented in **Figure 3**.
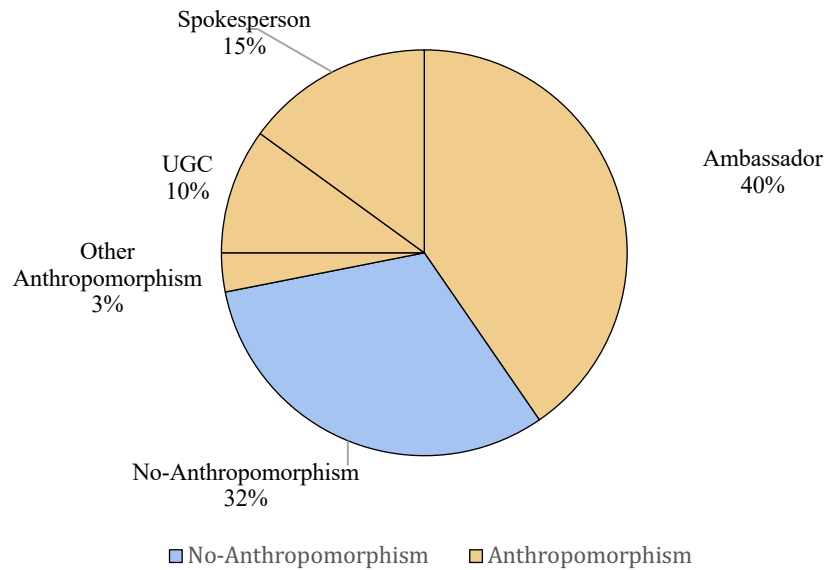
Figure 3 *Frequencies Types of Anthropomorphism*

In addition to the general descriptive statistics presented, further analysis focused on specific hypotheses related to the effect of personified brand strategies on consumer engagement.

Descriptives Hypothesis 1 (Anthropomorphism)

For Hypothesis 1, which examines the effect of anthropomorphism on user engagement, the number of comments was chosen as the key metric. After transforming the variable using the natural logarithm (LN), the following descriptive statistics were computed:

Table 3 *Descriptive Statistics H1*

Descriptives

	Anthropomorphism	Transformed Number of comments
N	0	82
	1	178
Missing	0	0
	1	0
Mean	0	3.91
	1	3.22
Median	0	3.90
	1	2.83
Mode	0	1.39
	1	0.00
Standard deviation	0	1.57
	1	2.08
IQR	0	1.83
	1	2.78
Range	0	7.87
	1	9.93
Minimum	0	0.00
	1	0.00
Maximum	0	7.87
	1	9.93

These values, presented without a unit due to the application of the logarithm, indicate that content without anthropomorphism received an average of 3.91, with a range spanning up to 7.87. Conversely, content with anthropomorphism received an average of 3.22, with a wider range of 9.93. These descriptive statistics suggest that there may be differences in consumer engagement based on the presence of anthropomorphism in TikTok content. The plots of the descriptives allow a first visual inspection of the data, implying that meaningful analysis can be done with this data set, as seen in **Figure 4**.
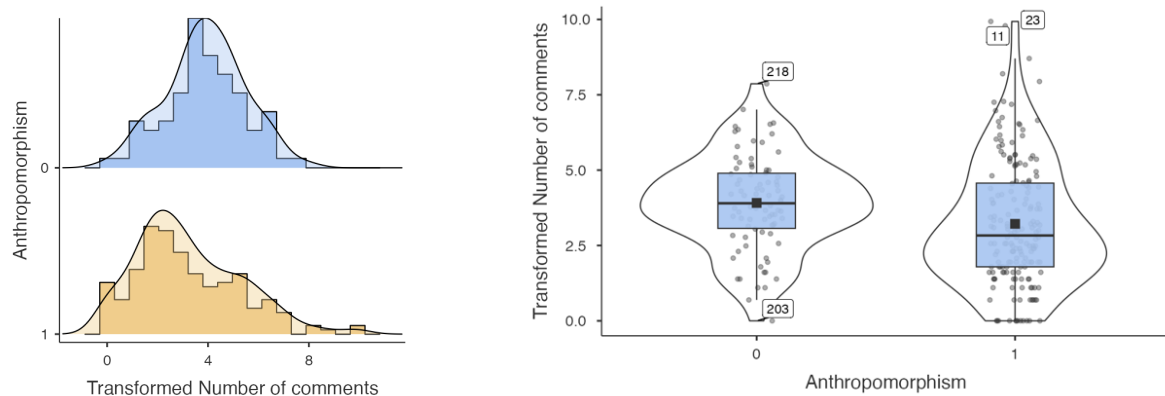
Figure 4 Histograms & Boxplots H1

Descriptives Hypotheses 2a-c (Ambassador, Spokesperson, UGC)
Similarly, descriptive statistics were computed for Hypotheses 2a-c, which examine the effects of ambassadors, spokespersons, and user-generated content (UGC) on consumer engagement. For Hypothesis 2a, which investigates the impact of ambassadors on consumer engagement, the analysis revealed that content without an ambassador (0) was observed in N = 155 videos, with a mean of 3.89 and a range of 9.93. Conversely, content featuring an ambassador (1) was observed in N = 105 videos, with a mean of 2.76 and a range of 8.20. Similarly, for Hypothesis 2b, examining the effect of a spokesperson on consumer engagement, content without a spokesperson (0) was counted in N = 221 videos, with a mean of 3.36 and a range of 9.79. In contrast, videos featuring a spokesperson (1) were observed in N = 39 videos, with a mean of 3.85 comments and a range of 9.93. Regarding Hypothesis 2c, which explores the influence of user-generated content (UGC) on consumer engagement, videos without UGC (0) were found N = 234, with a mean of 3.38 and a range of 9.93. Videos containing UGC (1) were identified in N = 26 videos, with a mean of 3.94 and a range of 9.09.

These descriptive statistics provide insights into the relationships between the presence of ambassadors, spokespersons, UGC, and consumer engagement on TikTok. The plots of the descriptives allow a first visual inspection of the data, implying that meaningful analysis can be done with this data set, as seen in **Appendix A.**

5.1.2   Linear Regression H1

A linear regression analysis was conducted to investigate the general effect of anthropomorphism on consumer engagement (H1). Before conducting the linear regression analysis for Hypothesis 1, several assumption checks were performed to ensure the validity of

the results. The chosen alpha level was set at α = 0.05. In this analysis, the normality of residuals was assessed using the Komolgorov-Smirnov test and Q-Q Plot, see **Figure 5**. The Komolgorov-Smirnov test yielded a non-significant result ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the residuals were normally distributed. This finding was further supported by visual inspection of the Q-Q Plot, which showed that the residuals closely followed the diagonal line. Therefore, it can be assumed that the assumption of normality was met for the data.

Normality Tests

	Statistic	p
Shapiro–Wilk	0.976	<.001
Kolmogorov–Smirnov	0.0631	0.252
Anderson–Darling	1.26	0.003

Note. Additional results provided by *moretests*
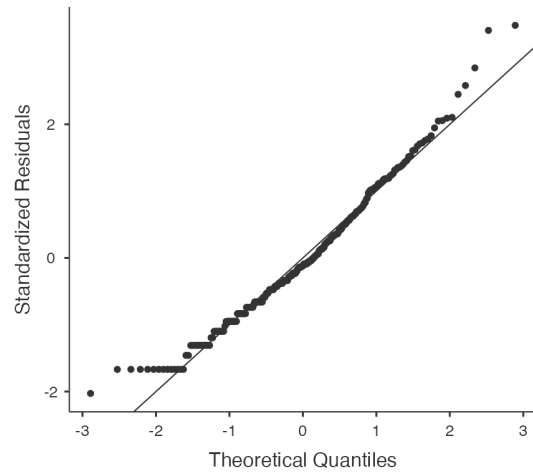
Figure 5 Normality Tests & Q-Q Plot H1

The results of the linear regression analysis provide insights into the relationships between the predictor (anthropomorphism) and consumer engagement on TikTok, as measured by the number of comments (see **Table 4**).

Table 4 Results Linear Regression H1

Model Fit Measures

				Overall Model Test			
Model	R	R²	Adjusted R²	F	df1	df2	p
1	0.165	0.0274	0.0236	7.26	1	258	0.007

Model Coefficients - Transformed Number of comments

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	Stand. Estimate
Intercept [a]	3.913	0.213	18.33	<.001	
Anthropomorphism: 1 − 0	−0.695	0.258	−2.70	0.007	−0.355

[a] Represents reference level

The R^2 value represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (number of comments) explained by the independent variable (anthropomorphism). In this analysis, the R^2 value was 0.165, indicating that approximately 16.5% of the variance in the number of comments can be attributed to the predictors. The Adjusted R^2 value adjusts the R^2 value for the number of predictors in the model. In this analysis, the Adjusted R^2 value was calculated to be 0.0236, indicating that approximately 2.36% of the variance in the number of comments can be attributed to the predictors after accounting for the number of predictors in the model. The df2 value represents the overall significance of the model. In this analysis, the Df2 value was

determined to be 258, indicating that the model as a whole is significant. Further, the Standard Estimate provides insights into the magnitude and direction of the relationship between each predictor and consumer engagement. Here, the presence of anthropomorphism (H1) was found to be significant (p=0.007) and negatively associated with consumer engagement (p < .001; Stand. Estimate = -0.355), indicating a decrease in engagement when anthropomorphism is utilised. This result leads to the rejection of H1.

- *H1 (Anthropomorphism)*: The relationship between the presence of anthropomorphism and consumer engagement was found to be significant and negative (p < .001, Stand. Estimate = -0.355), indicating that the presence of anthropomorphism is associated with a decrease in consumer engagement. Thus, H1 was rejected.

5.1.3 Linear Regression H2a-c

Another linear regression analysis investigated the effects of ambassadors, spokespersons, and UGC on consumer engagement (H2a-c). Prior to conducting the linear regression analysis for Hypotheses 2a-c, several assumption checks were performed to ensure the validity of the results. In this analysis, the VIF values were within an acceptable range, suggesting that correlated predictors did not pose a significant issue. The VIF measures the severity of multicollinearity in the regression model, in which a VIF close to 1 indicates no multicollinearity issues (Bhandari, 2024). The normality of the residuals was assessed using the Komolgorov-Smirnov test and Q-Q Plot. The non-significant result of the Komolgorov-Smirnov test indicates that the residuals are normally distributed, which was further supported by visual inspection of the Q-Q Plot, as seen in **Figure 6**.

Collinearity Statistics

	VIF	Tolerance
Ambassador	1.29	0.774
Spokesperson	1.22	0.821
UGC	1.16	0.862

Normality Tests

	Statistic	p
Shapiro-Wilk	0.982	0.003
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.0490	0.561
Anderson-Darling	0.814	0.035

Note. Additional results provided by *moretests*

Figure 6 Assumptions Check H2a-c

The results of the linear regression analysis provide insights into the relationships between the predictors (ambassador, spokesperson, UGC) and consumer engagement on TikTok, as measured by the number of comments (see **Table 5**).

Table 5 *Results Linear Regression H2a-c*

Model Fit Measures

				Overall Model Test			
Model	R	R²	Adjusted R²	F	df1	df2	p
1	0.284	0.0808	0.0700	7.50	3	256	<.001

Model Coefficients - Transformed Number of comments

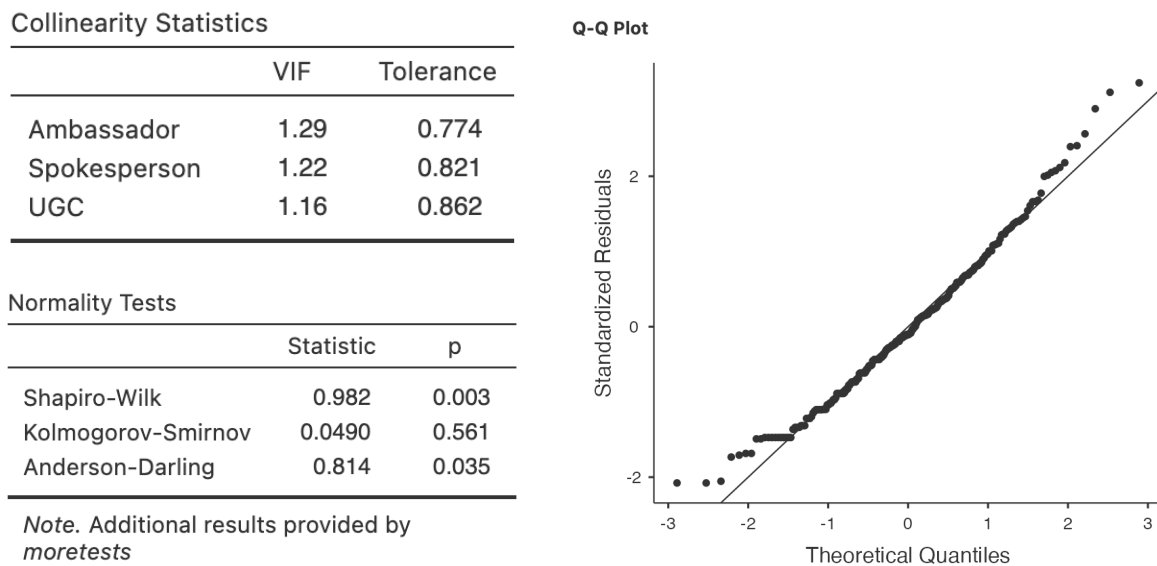| Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	Stand. Estimate
Intercept [a]	3.8958	0.199	19.592	<.001	
Ambassador:					
1 − 0	−1.1331	0.271	−4.181	<.001	−0.5792
Spokesperson:					
1 − 0	−0.0427	0.362	−0.118	0.906	−0.0218
UGC:					
1 − 0	0.0476	0.420	0.113	0.910	0.0243

[a] Represents reference level

The R^2 value represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (number of comments) explained by the independent variables (spokesperson, ambassador, UGC). In this analysis, the R^2 value was 0.0808, indicating that approximately 8.08% of the variance in the number of comments can be attributed to the predictors. The Adjusted R^2 value adjusts the R^2 value for the number of predictors in the model. In this analysis, the Adjusted R^2 value was calculated to be 0.070, indicating that approximately 7.0% of the variance in the number of comments can be attributed to the predictors after accounting for the number of predictors in the model. The df2 value represents the overall significance of the model. In this analysis, the Df2 value was determined to be 256, indicating that the model as a whole is significant. Further, the Standard Estimate provides insights into the magnitude and direction of the relationship between each predictor and consumer engagement. Specifically, while the presence of a spokesperson (H2a) was found to be non-significant (p = 0.906), the presence of an ambassador (H2b) was significantly and negatively associated with consumer engagement (p < .001; Stand. Estimate = -0.5792), indicating a decrease in engagement when ambassadors are involved.

Similarly, the relationship between UGC presence (H2c) and consumer engagement was not significant (p = 0.910). These results lead to rejecting H2b and H2c, while H2a is accepted.

- *H2a (Ambassador)*: The relationship between ambassador presence and consumer engagement was found to be significant and negative (p < .001, Stand. Estimate = -0.5792), indicating that the presence of an ambassador is associated with a decrease in consumer engagement. Thus, H2a was rejected.
- *H2b (Spokesperson)*: The relationship between spokesperson presence and consumer engagement was found to be not significant (p = 0.906, Stand. Estimate = -0.0218). Thus, H2b was not supported.
- *H2c (UGC)*: The relationship between UGC presence and consumer engagement was found to be not significant (p = 0.910, Stand. Estimate = 0.0243). Thus, H2c was not supported.

The statistical analysis conducted in this study aimed to investigate the relevance of personified brand strategies on TikTok and their impact on consumer engagement. Descriptive statistics provided insights into the characteristics of the variables under investigation, including the

number of comments and nominal variables such as anthropomorphism and the different types of anthropomorphism categorised as spokesperson, ambassador, and user-generated content (UGC). Hypothesis testing revealed several significant results. A significant difference in consumer engagement was found between anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic content, with non-anthropomorphic content showing higher engagement. Yet the presence of an ambassador was associated with a significant and negative impact on consumer engagement, indicating a decrease in engagement when ambassadors are involved. On the other hand, the presence of a spokesperson and user-generated content did not show a significant relationship with consumer engagement.

Having summarised the statistical findings, the subsequent section will delve into interpreting and analysing these results. The focus will be exploring the implications of the significant findings, identifying potential reasons for unexpected results, and discussing the broader implications for personified brand strategies on TikTok.

5.2   Summary of Findings

Table 6 summarises all findings from the conducted research:

<p align="center">***Table 6*** *Summary of Findings H1 & H2a-c*</p>

Hypotheses	Results
H1: There is a positive relationship between using anthropomorphism (vs. non-anthropomorphism) and the brand's consumer engagement on TikTok content.	Significant but negative, hence H1 was rejected
H2a: There is a positive relationship between using brand ambassadors (vs. no brand ambassadors) and the brand's consumer engagement on TikTok content.	Significant but negative, hence H2a was rejected
H2b: There is a positive relationship between using brand spokespersons (vs. no brand spokespersons) and the brand's consumer engagement on TikTok content.	Not significant, hence H2b was not supported
H2b: There is a positive relationship between using UGC (vs. no UGC) and the brand's consumer engagement on TikTok content.	Not significant, hence H2c was not supported

6 Discussion

The following chapter delves into a comprehensive discussion of the empirical findings regarding various personified brand strategies on TikTok and their implications for consumer engagement. Through an in-depth analysis, this chapter elucidates the effects of brand anthropomorphism on fostering interactions between brands and consumers in the digital realm, further specifying differences between brand ambassadors, brand spokespersons, and user-generated content (UGC). Each section explores these personified branding strategies' distinct dynamics and outcomes, providing critical insights into their effectiveness and potential challenges. By synthesising the empirical evidence with existing theoretical frameworks, this chapter offers valuable contributions to understanding consumer-brand relationships in the context of social media marketing. Through a nuanced examination of the empirical results, this chapter serves as a platform for meaningful dialogue and further exploration of the evolving digital brand communication and interaction landscape.

Investigating consumer-brand relationships and personified brand strategies on TikTok yielded insightful observations. Notably, the analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between anthropomorphism and consumer engagement, rejecting hypothesis H1. Furthermore, hypothesis H2a, proposing that the presence of a brand ambassador increases engagement, was found to be significant but negative. Conversely, the data did not support hypotheses H2b and H2c, suggesting that the presence of a brand spokesperson and user-generated content (UGC), respectively, would increase engagement.

6.1 Brand Anthropomorphism

In the following, the significant findings of Hypothesis 1 (H1) are explored, focusing on the impact of brand anthropomorphism on TikTok consumer engagement. The content analysis results challenge the initial hypothesis, revealing insights into the intricate dynamics of consumer-brand relationships within the digital landscape. By contextualising these findings with established theories and empirical evidence, this analysis critically evaluates existing frameworks while uncovering novel insights into the unique dynamics of TikTok. Through this examination, a deeper understanding of how brand anthropomorphism influences consumer engagement on this platform is sought, offering valuable implications for theory and practice.

Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Theory provides a lens through which to interpret the unexpected findings of this study, suggesting that brand anthropomorphism on TikTok may have a nuanced impact on consumer engagement. Contrary to the initial hypothesis, the results indicate that brands imbued with human-like qualities may not always resonate positively with consumers on the platform. This deviation from the expected pattern prompts a re-evaluation of the role of brand personification in digital marketing contexts. While Aaker's theory posits that aligning brand personalities with consumer identities fosters stronger connections, rejecting H1 suggests a more complex relationship between brand anthropomorphism and consumer

engagement. Rather than universally enhancing consumer-brand relationships, portraying brands as human entities on TikTok may evoke varied responses from audiences.

Drawing from Sirgy's (1982) Self-Congruity Theory, which underscores the significance of aligning brand image with consumer self-image, the unexpected findings prompt a reassessment of the mechanisms driving consumer engagement on TikTok. While brand anthropomorphism may resonate with audiences on other digital platforms, such as Facebook or Twitter (Chen et al., 2015; Wu, Dodoo, & Choi, 2023), it appears to generate less favourable responses on TikTok. This discrepancy suggests a potential divergence between brand image and consumer self-image, wherein the portrayed personality traits may lack alignment with consumers' perceptions, leading to perceptions of insincerity (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Eisend & Langner, 2010).

Furthermore, the misalignment and contrasting results compared to other platforms may be attributed to the distinct target demographics of each platform. With TikTok's user base predominantly including youthful individuals, with 70% under the age of 34 (Statista, 2024a), brands must recognise and adapt to the unique expectations of this demographic (Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2021; Ortiz et al., 2023). Moreover, TikTok's emergence in 2016 (D'Souza, 2024) signifies a pivotal shift in the media landscape, marked by evolving user preferences and expectations. The platform's rapid rise to prominence underscores the changing dynamics of digital consumption, wherein users gravitate towards platforms that offer authentic and relatable content (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Su et al., 2020). TikTok's success lies in its ability to cater to these evolving needs, providing a space for users to express themselves creatively and engage with content that resonates with their interests and identities. As such, brands navigating the TikTok landscape must recognise the shifting media consumption paradigms and adapt their strategies accordingly. This entails embracing seamless, creative, and spontaneous brand communications instead of traditional marketing approaches that may come across as interrupting or out of touch with the platform's dynamic ecosystem (Kim, 2018; Mailchimp, n.d.).

Rabbanee, Roy, and Spence's (2020) exploration of brand attachment further complicates the narrative, suggesting that the strength of consumer-brand relationships may not solely hinge on portraying brands as human-like entities. Instead, factors such as authenticity, relevance, and alignment with consumer values may play a more significant role in driving meaningful engagement. By aligning with TikTok's ethos of self-expression and community engagement (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Su et al., 2020), brands might still be able to utilise brand anthropomorphism in their content successfully.

The research findings of Jeong, Kim, and Chung (2022) offer additional insights into the impact of visual elements in shaping brand perceptions and driving interaction. While using personified brand visuals may enhance consumer engagement in specific contexts, the rejection of H1 suggests that their effectiveness may vary on platforms like TikTok. This variability underscores the importance of platform-specific strategies in digital brand communication, acknowledging each social media platform's unique characteristics and audience preferences. Moreover, the research by Wu, Dodoo, and Choi (2023) and Chen et al. (2015) highlights the widespread adoption of brand personification strategies in digital marketing practices. However, rejecting H1 prompts a critical examination of their applicability and effectiveness on TikTok. While these strategies may yield positive outcomes on other platforms, their impact on consumer engagement on TikTok appears to be more nuanced. This divergence from traditional branding paradigms challenges current academic assumptions and marketers to

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reassess their approaches to digital brand communication, recognising the heterogeneous nature of consumer preferences in online environments.

In light of the rejection of Hypothesis 1 (H1), it becomes evident that the influence of brand anthropomorphism on consumer engagement is more complex than initially hypothesised. While previous research has emphasised the positive impact of personified brand strategies, particularly in fostering emotional connections with consumers (Cohen, 2014; Chen et al., 2015; Kim, Sung & Moon, 2020; Han, Cui & Jin, 2021; Jeong, Kim & Chung, 2022; Trong et al., 2023; Wu, Dodoo & Choi, 2023), the findings of this study highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of their effects on TikTok. This nuanced understanding is crucial for marketers seeking to leverage brand personification strategies effectively in digital brand communication. It enables them to tailor their approaches to resonate with diverse audience segments and platform-specific dynamics.

6.2   Brand Ambassadors

Contrary to expectations, the previous chapter, discussing the rejection of H1, reveals that the mere presence of human-like qualities in brand representations on TikTok does not consistently enhance consumer-brand relationships, indicating a complex interplay between brand perceptions and audience responses. The significant yet unexpected negative findings of Hypothesis 2a (H2a), examining the impact of brand ambassadors on TikTok consumer engagement, further corroborate these insights. These outcomes prompt a nuanced exploration of the intricacies surrounding consumer-brand interactions in the digital landscape. While Aaker's Brand Personality Theory (1997) underscores the potential for resonance and connection, rejecting H1 and H2a necessitates critically reviewing digital marketing strategies. Drawing from Self-Congruity Theory (1982), the observed misalignment between brand image and consumer self-image on TikTok underscores the imperative for platform-specific approaches. TikTok's evolving user base and distinctive content ecosystem demand authenticity and relevance (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Su et al., 2020), compelling a departure from conventional branding paradigms. Through a critical analysis of the implications stemming from the adverse findings concerning brand ambassadors and their broader context in digital marketing, this discussion seeks to dive deeper into the underlying factors contributing to the observed decline in engagement. Ultimately, the objective is to glean valuable insights into the efficacy of brand ambassadorship on TikTok and its wider implications for theory and practice by contextualising these findings with established theories and empirical evidence.

While brand anthropomorphism, known for its ability to heighten consumer engagement by establishing resonance and congruence between consumers' self-perceptions and brand images (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2012; Rabbanee, Roy & Spence, 2020), represents a potent strategy for cultivating consumer-brand relationships on TikTok, the unexpected negative impact associated with the presence of brand ambassadors suggests potential drawbacks. This divergence from the anticipated positive outcomes underscores the nuanced nature of consumer perceptions and preferences in the digital realm. One plausible explanation for this discrepancy could be traced to a lack of alignment between the personality traits embodied by brand ambassadors and consumers' perceptions, leading to perceptions of insincerity (Eisend & Langner, 2010; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Additionally, the presence of brand ambassadors may inadvertently disrupt the self-congruency between users and brands, thereby diminishing

brand attachment and subsequent engagement on TikTok (Sirgy, 1982). Furthermore, the utilisation of brand ambassadors entails inherent risks, including the potential for inauthenticity and subsequent consumer backlash (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman, 2000; Tarnovskaya, 2017).

Since consumers may be increasingly aware of the commercial nature of brand endorsements, this could diminish the authenticity and sincerity of brand ambassador content. Moreover, the broad visibility of brand ambassadors may inadvertently expose brands to the "wrong" target audience (Rebecca et al., 2022), diminishing the effectiveness of engagement strategies. Here, TikTok's predominantly young audience, known for prioritising authenticity and meaningful connections with brands (Dahlen, Lange, & Smith, 2010; Statista, 2024a), may perceive brand ambassador content as disconnected from their values and lifestyles. This can lead to disengagement and a lack of interest in brand interactions. Additionally, the internet's empowerment of consumers to scrutinise and critique brand personalities further exacerbates the risk of disengagement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In addition, the shift towards interactive and dialogical brand experiences may be disrupted by the presence of brand ambassadors, as consumers may prefer authentic interactions with brands rather than mediated celebrity endorsements (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

An intriguing observation emerges from the data collected, particularly evident in cases such as those of the juice and smoothie producer Innocent, where content without anthropomorphism has been exceptionally successful. For instance, a competition prompt encouraged consumers to comment and share the content, resulting in heightened levels of engagement. This phenomenon underscores a noteworthy trend wherein content lacking obvious anthropomorphic elements appears to garner more significant consumer interaction, particularly in the form of comments. Several factors may contribute to this phenomenon. On the one hand, content featuring competitions or interactive prompts inherently encourages audience participation, as individuals are motivated to engage to reap rewards or potentially participate in the discourse. On the other hand, the absence of anthropomorphism may foster a sense of TikTok's inclusivity, as mentioned by Şot (2022), wherein consumers feel empowered to express their opinions and engage with the content without the perceived barrier of interacting with a brand ambassador. Moreover, content without anthropomorphism may possess a level of relatability and authenticity that resonates more deeply with audiences (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Su et al., 2020), as it aligns with their expectations of genuine interactions on social media platforms.

The complexity of consumer-brand relationships, as highlighted by Fournier (1998), underscores the need for a deeper exploration of consumer attitudes towards brand ambassadors and the underlying reasons for decreased engagement. The negative impact of brand ambassadors on consumer engagement underscores the significance of aligning brand strategies with consumer preferences and values. The results have implications for building consumer-brand relationships, highlighting the importance of authenticity and meaningful connections in brand interactions on TikTok. Consumers today prioritise genuine engagements with brands that reflect their values and lifestyles. Therefore, brands must maintain authenticity and consistency across all touchpoints, including interactions involving brand ambassadors. Failure to do so may result in diminished engagement and a weakened relationship between consumers and the brand, as seen in the findings of this research.

6.3 Brand Spokesperson and UGC

While hypothesis H2a revealed a significant and negative relationship between the presence of brand ambassadors and consumer engagement on TikTok, hypotheses H2b and H2c did not yield significant findings. Hypothesis H2b posited that the presence of a brand spokesperson would increase consumer engagement. In contrast, hypothesis H2c suggested that the presence of user-generated content (UGC) would lead to higher levels of engagement. The non-significant findings for hypotheses H2b and H2c prompt an examination of potential factors contributing to these results, including complexity, authenticity, and relevance.

One plausible explanation may be related to the complexity of consumer-brand relationships and individual preferences regarding brand interactions on TikTok (Fournier, 1998). While brand spokespersons and UGC are commonly utilised strategies in digital marketing, their effectiveness in driving consumer engagement may vary depending on various factors such as content relevance, authenticity, and perceived credibility (Brodie et al., 2013; Sung & Kim, 2010). Furthermore, brand spokespersons, as well as UGC creators, might lack the alignment of brand and self-image, thereby not succeeding in building stronger emotional connections (Pramesti & Alversia, 2023).

More specifically, for hypothesis H2b, the lack of significance may indicate that the presence of a brand spokesperson alone may not be sufficient to impact consumer engagement on TikTok significantly. Consumers on this platform may prioritise content authenticity and relevance over promotional messaging delivered by brand representatives (Dahlen, Lange, & Smith, 2010). Additionally, the effectiveness of brand spokespersons may be influenced by factors such as the spokesperson's credibility, relatability, and alignment with the brand image (Eisend & Langner, 2010; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Furthermore, the proficiency of brand spokespersons significantly shapes the brand's personality (Hu, 2022), further impacting consumer behaviour. A well-chosen brand spokesperson can enhance the brand's credibility and trustworthiness by association (Atkin & Block, 1983), but if these conditions are not met, it might not be advantageous for the brand.

Similarly, for hypothesis H2c, the non-significant findings suggest that the presence of user-generated content may not significantly impact TikTok's consumer engagement. This could be attributed to the diverse nature of UGC on the platform, ranging from highly engaging and authentic content to less impactful and promotional material (Pramesti & Alversia, 2023). Consumers may be selective in their engagement with UGC, preferring content that resonates with their interests, values, and preferences (Dahlen, Lange, & Smith, 2010). UGC is supposed to be more authentic and trustworthy by consumers than branded content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010); thereby, it should foster trust and credibility when consumers see real people interacting with the brand. It is supposed to encourage participation and engagement from consumers, fostering a sense of community around the brand (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011), yet this research could not find proof for this.

The study's focus on FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods) brands in its sampling method introduces unique challenges in effectively utilising brand spokespersons and user-generated content (UGC) on platforms like TikTok. FMCG brands typically prioritise functional attributes over emotional connections, posing difficulties in attracting suitable brand spokespersons or generating engaging UGC that resonates with consumers. Moreover, the dynamic nature of digital platforms means that trends, preferences, and consumer engagement patterns can

fluctuate rapidly over time. This dynamic environment presents additional complexities for FMCG brands seeking to establish and maintain a strong presence on TikTok, as they must continuously adapt their strategies to align with evolving consumer behaviours and platform dynamics.

While hypotheses H2b and H2c did not yield significant findings, the non-significant results offer valuable insights into the complexities of consumer-brand interactions on TikTok. These findings underscore the importance of considering various factors such as content relevance, authenticity, and perceived credibility in designing effective brand strategies for engaging consumers on digital platforms.

7 Conclusion

The final chapter marks the culmination of this study, presenting a comprehensive conclusion drawn from the empirical findings and theoretical insights explored throughout the research. This chapter highlights the theoretical and managerial contributions of the study, shedding light on the implications for both academia and industry. By synthesising the key findings with existing literature, the following chapter offers valuable insights into the dynamics of personified brand strategies on TikTok and their impact on consumer engagement. Additionally, the researchers acknowledge the limitations of their work and provide avenues for future investigation, thus paving the way for further scholarly inquiry in this domain. Through a structured analysis of the theoretical contributions, managerial implications, research limitations, and future research directions, this chapter encapsulates the essence of the study and its significance in advancing our understanding of consumer-brand relationships in the digital era.

Exploring personified brand strategies on TikTok emerged as profoundly relevant in the contemporary digital marketing landscape. With the ongoing evolution of social media platforms, TikTok has appeared as a disruptive force, fundamentally shaping consumer behaviour and interaction patterns. Consequently, understanding the efficacy of personified brand strategies becomes imperative for brands seeking authentic engagement and long-lasting relationships with their audience. The growing prominence of TikTok as a platform for brand-consumer interactions further accentuates the need to delve into how brands can harness personification to cultivate meaningful connections within this unique digital environment. This study contributes to the existing knowledge in marketing, branding, social media, and consumer behaviour. By uncovering insights into the nuanced dynamics of consumer-brand interactions on TikTok, the findings not only deepen the understanding of how personified brand strategies influence consumer behaviour but also underscore the complexities inherent in these interactions within the digital realm. The emergence of surprising results further enriches the comprehension, shedding light on unanticipated facets of consumer-brand relationships in the digital space.

This study delved into the realm of personified brand strategies on TikTok and their impact on consumer engagement in the digital age. Thereby, the researchers addressed several research objectives: first, to investigate the effectiveness of various personified brand strategies, including brand anthropomorphism and its subcategories, brand ambassadors, brand spokespersons, and user-generated content (UGC), in driving consumer engagement on TikTok. Second, to analyse the nuances of consumer-brand interactions within the unique context of TikTok, considering factors such as authenticity, relevance, and emotional resonance. Lastly, to provide actionable insights for marketers and businesses on leveraging personified brand strategies effectively to foster meaningful connections with consumers on TikTok as an increasingly popular and powerful platform.

A quantitative content analysis examined the impact of personified brand strategies on consumer engagement metrics, such as comments, on TikTok. Findings revealed valuable insights into the effectiveness of each brand strategy in influencing consumer engagement and

fostering brand-consumer relationships on the platform. The study addressed four hypotheses related to the impact of different personified brand strategies on consumer engagement. While the hypothesis (H1) regarding brand anthropomorphism was rejected, the hypothesis investigating brand ambassadors (H2a) showed significant but negative results, and the hypotheses (H2b, H2c) regarding brand spokespersons and user-generated content (UGC) were non-significant. The findings underscored the significance of brand anthropomorphism (H1) in influencing consumer engagement on TikTok. They underscored the nuanced dynamics of personified brand strategies and their impact on TikTok's consumer engagement metrics. While brand anthropomorphism (H1), according to previous research, appeared to drive consumer engagement positively, the study revealed a surprising negative correlation, challenging conventional assumptions. This unexpected outcome suggests a need for a deeper understanding of the intricacies surrounding brand-consumer relationships in the digital realm. Particularly noteworthy was the significant but negative relationship between brand ambassadors (H2a) and consumer engagement, highlighting potential complexities in consumer perceptions and preferences. Based on the literature review, factors such as perceived authenticity, relevance, and credibility emerged as crucial determinants of consumer engagement, emphasising the importance of aligning brand ambassador characteristics with consumer perceptions to drive meaningful interactions. Furthermore, the non-significant findings regarding the impact of brand spokespersons and user-generated content (UGC) (H2b, H2c) on consumer engagement underscore the need for further exploration into the effectiveness of these strategies on TikTok.

Overall, this research sought to explore the impact of various personified brand strategies on consumer engagement, mainly focusing on their effectiveness on TikTok. Specifically, the study aimed to address the following research question:

What is the effect of different personified brand strategies and consumer engagement on social media platforms, specifically TikTok?

In summary, while personified brand strategies, including brand anthropomorphism and brand ambassadors, were initially anticipated to drive meaningful connections with consumers on TikTok, the findings revealed a more nuanced understanding. Contrary to expectations, brand anthropomorphism and brand ambassadors' presence showed negative effects on consumer engagement, while brand spokespersons and UGC did not show significant results. These unexpected outcomes underscore the complexity of consumer-brand interactions in the digital realm and highlight the need for further investigation into the effectiveness of different personified brand strategies on TikTok. From a researcher's perspective, delving into the world of TikTok and exploring different branding approaches on this specific platform proved intriguing. Observing the dynamics of various FMCG brands was inspirational, offering valuable insights into the influences shaping consumer-brand relationships.

The forthcoming chapter will expound upon this study's theoretical and managerial contributions, offering actionable insights for marketers and businesses navigating the dynamic landscape of digital brand communication.

7.1   Contributions

After conducting a quantitative content analysis, analysing the data, and discussing the results, the findings of this study contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge across diverse fields. Theoretical contributions, as fundamental aspects of academic research, serve to expand existing knowledge and shape future research directions. Similarly, managerial contributions are essential outcomes of academic research that provide actionable insights for practitioners and businesses alike.

This chapter presents theoretical and managerial insights from this study on personified brand strategies on TikTok and their impact on consumer engagement. Through rigorous analysis and interpretation of the data, the researchers aim to contribute novel understandings to the academic literature while offering practical guidance for marketers and businesses navigating the dynamic landscape of digital brand communication.

7.1.1   Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical contributions of this study lie in its exploration of personified brand strategies on TikTok and their impact on consumer engagement within the contemporary digital marketing landscape. While this research builds upon established theories such as Sirgy's (1985) Self-Congruity Theory and Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Theory, it also provides novel insights beyond existing frameworks. Specifically, the study reveals the unexpected negative effects of brand anthropomorphism and brand ambassadors on TikTok consumer engagement, challenging traditional assumptions about the effectiveness of these strategies. The research offers an advanced perspective on consumer-brand relationships in the digital age by uncovering these surprising dynamics. Furthermore, it fills a critical gap in the literature by thoroughly examining how personified brand strategies operate on TikTok. This platform is rapidly shaping the future of digital marketing. These findings not only contribute new theoretical understandings but also have significant implications for practitioners seeking to optimise their branding strategies on social media.

One significant finding of this study is the negative impact of brand anthropomorphism on consumer engagement on TikTok. Contrary to Aaker's Brand Personality Theory (1997), which suggests that human-like brand characteristics foster deeper consumer connections, the findings indicate that this strategy may be less effective on TikTok. This unexpected result highlights the platform-specific dynamics of consumer engagement and the importance of tailoring branding strategies to fit the unique user behaviour on TikTok. Aligned with previous research, the importance of authenticity and relevance in digital marketing remains paramount to authentic relationships with their audience (Li et al., 2021; Teo, Tee & Liew, 2023). Studies on traditional social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have shown that authentic, relatable content tends to engage users effectively on Twitter (Chen et al., 2015; Wu, Dodoo, & Choi, 2023). However, TikTok's specific interactive and entertainment-driven nature questions these prior insights. TikTok's algorithm and content delivery system prioritises engaging, often short-form videos that captivate users quickly, which may lead to a different consumer response to anthropomorphised brand content.

Furthermore, the findings contribute to the current conversation in the literature by demonstrating that established branding strategies may not universally translate across all platforms. This research underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of how platform-specific characteristics influence consumer behaviour. By showing that brand anthropomorphism negatively impacts engagement on TikTok, this study suggests that consumers on this platform may prioritise different aspects of brand interaction, such as intimacy, entertainment value, and authentic content over personified brand elements. Additionally, this study adds a new layer to the theoretical framework by highlighting the limitations of Self-Congruity Theory (Sirgy, 1985) and Brand Personality Theory (Aaker, 1997) in the context of TikTok. While these theories have been extensively validated in other social media environments, this research indicates that TikTok's fast-paced, visually-driven nature requires a reassessment of these established principles.

Moreover, this study extends beyond the traditional dynamics of brand-person relationships by examining three distinct types of anthropomorphism: brand ambassadors, brand spokespersons, and UGC. The nuanced dynamics of consumer-brand interactions on TikTok showed that brand ambassadors have a negative effect on consumer engagement, whereas brand spokespersons and UGC have no significant effect. This highlights the higher complexity of branded content on TikTok, where factors such as authenticity, trust, and alignment of values between consumers, brands and their representatives play significant roles in influencing consumer engagement metrics (Brodie et al., 2013). Aligned with previous research, the importance of authenticity and credibility in digital marketing is reaffirmed (Li et al., 2021; Teo, Tee & Liew, 2023). Prior studies on platforms like Facebook and Twitter have emphasised that consumers respond positively to the content they perceive as genuine and trustworthy. However, with its unique algorithm and content delivery system, the TikTok environment questions these prior insights by showing that brand ambassadors – traditionally seen as credible and influential (Lin & Nuangjamnong, 2022; Mishra, 2019; Rebecca et al., 2022; Yu, Lin & Chen, 2013) – can detract from consumer engagement on this platform. The findings contribute to the current conversation in the literature by illustrating the distinct challenges and opportunities TikTok presents. Unlike other social media platforms, TikTok's fast-paced, entertainment-focused ecosystem demands a different approach to anthropomorphic branding strategies. The negative impact of brand ambassadors suggests that TikTok users might be more critical of overt promotional content and more attuned to the nuances of authenticity and relatability. This study enriches the understanding of contemporary brand communication strategies by demonstrating that traditional methods of employing brand ambassadors may not be effective across all digital platforms. The lack of significant impact from brand spokespersons and UGC on consumer engagement further underscores the need for brands to consider TikTok's unique user dynamics and content expectations carefully. These insights call for a reassessment of established branding strategies within the context of TikTok. By revealing the differential impact of various anthropomorphic strategies, this research suggests that brands must prioritise genuine, relatable content that aligns closely with TikTok's spontaneous, creative nature. This contributes to the broader academic discourse by highlighting the necessity for platform-specific strategies in digital marketing, thus paving the way for more effective consumer-brand relationships in the evolving digital landscape.

In conclusion, the findings of this study disrupt and extend existing theoretical frameworks in marketing, branding, and consumer behaviour. The study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence of these theoretical concepts within the context of TikTok, a relatively understudied platform in academic research with different user needs due to changing demographics (i.e., a younger audience). The novelty of this study lies in its detailed

examination of TikTok's unique environment, revealing the need for tailored branding strategies that differ from those used on other social media platforms. By highlighting the differential impacts of various anthropomorphic strategies, this research enriches the academic discourse on digital marketing and consumer-brand relationships in the evolving landscape of social media. It also underlines the need to consider the rapid evolution of digital technologies and changing consumer behaviours in shaping contemporary consumer-brand relationships.

7.1.2   Managerial Contributions

This study has uncovered several key managerial insights regarding effectively implementing personified brand strategies on TikTok. The findings offer practical implications for marketers and businesses seeking to optimise their brand strategies on this influential platform.

One significant finding highlights the potential challenges of aligning brand personalities with consumer identities to foster meaningful connections and drive consumer engagement on TikTok. The study revealed that leveraging human-like qualities and relatable characteristics might not always resonate positively with the target audience, potentially undermining brand-consumer relationships and influencing purchasing behaviour negatively. Understanding the impact of personified brand strategies on consumer engagement enables marketers to identify potential pitfalls and tailor their content and communication strategies more effectively. For example, while incorporating storytelling techniques and personified brand content can enhance brand authenticity, it is crucial to carefully evaluate and monitor these strategies to ensure they do not inadvertently detract from consumer engagement on TikTok.

Another key insight underscores the importance of authenticity and relatability in TikTok's brand communications. While previous research has emphasised these factors in consumer-brand interactions, the specific context of TikTok amplifies their relevance (Li et al., 2021; Teo, Tee & Liew, 2023). The platform's predominantly young audience (Statista, 2024a), characterised by a preference for authenticity and meaningful connections with brands, underscores the importance of aligning brand strategies with consumer values and lifestyles (Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2021). Thus, this study highlights the need for brands to adopt more nuanced and authentic approaches to engaging with consumers on TikTok, moving beyond traditional marketing paradigms. Additionally, the study emphasises the importance of continuously adapting brand strategies in response to evolving consumer preferences and platform dynamics.

Based on these insights, several recommendations emerge for marketers and businesses seeking to optimise their brand strategies on TikTok. Firstly, it is crucial to invest in understanding the target audience's demographics, interests, and preferences to create relevant and engaging content. This understanding enables brands to tailor their messaging to resonate effectively with their audience on TikTok. Additionally, it is essential to ensure alignment of the brand image with the personality traits embodied by brand ambassadors, spokespersons, or creators of user-generated content (UGC). This alignment helps to avoid a disconnect between the brand's perceived identity and consumers' perceptions, enhancing the authenticity of brand interactions. Furthermore, collaboration with influencers and content creators who align with brand values and resonate with the target audience can amplify the brand message and reach on TikTok. Leveraging the influence of these individuals may help brands connect with a broader audience and increase engagement on the platform. However, avoiding brand anthropomorphism entirely can be a strategic choice, as it prevents the risk of attributing characteristics to the brand, which

may not consistently connect with the customers. While connecting the characteristics of a brand ambassador, spokesperson, and UGC can cultivate relatability and a sense of connection with the brand may result in inconsistencies and misalignments with the brand's image. For example, if the brand ambassador does not reflect the brand's values, it can make consumers feel disconnected. By avoiding those brand personification strategies, marketers can eliminate the risk of wrong brand perception and maintain a clear and consistent brand image. Finally, prioritising authenticity, transparency, and consistency in brand interactions is paramount. Building trust and credibility with consumers through genuine and consistent brand communication fosters long-term brand loyalty and advocacy. By adhering to these recommendations, marketers and businesses can optimise their brand strategies on TikTok and effectively engage with their audience in the digital landscape.

In conclusion, this study offers critical managerial insights for the effective implementation of personified brand strategies on TikTok, highlighting both the potential benefits and disadvantages. While brand anthropomorphism and ambassadors may present challenges in resonating with the TikTok audience, prioritising authenticity and carefully aligning brand messages with consumer values remains essential. Marketers must remain vigilant and adaptable to the evolving landscape of consumer preferences on TikTok, ensuring their strategies are consistently relevant and engaging. By understanding and applying these insights, businesses can enhance their brand presence, foster deeper consumer connections, and drive engagement on this dynamic platform.

7.2   Research Limitations and Future Research

This chapter acknowledges and critically reflects upon the limitations of this study while also providing implications for future research. A primary constraint was the limitation of resources and time. Content analysis is known for being particularly demanding as it ideally necessitates a large sample size to ensure the reliability and generalisability of the findings. The current research features a modest sample size, affecting the generalisability of the analysis, which can be broadened in subsequent research efforts. Future research can improve the study's scope by expanding the sample size. This expansion can be facilitated by focusing on the FMCG sector and others, such as luxury products, services, and the automotive industry, ensuring a more extensive and diversified sample. Although Interbrand's "100 Best Global Brands 2023" list gives a structured aid for selecting brands, it may only capture part of the spectrum of brands on TikTok, potentially leading to a biased representation of brand anthropomorphism. The selection of the FMCG sector may need to pay more attention to the diversity of brand personification strategies and consumer engagement across different industries, influencing the generalisability of the findings beyond the FMCG sector.

Moreover, extending the sampling timeframe beyond the Q3 period to encompass a full year of content could further enhance the generalisability of the results. While Q3 presents opportunities for enhanced consumer engagement, capturing long-term trends may be challenging. A practical implication for upscaling the sample size and improving the data collection process would be employing more than two coders, each undergoing coding training to mitigate inconsistencies. The limited timespan of the research period presents a limitation as the sample size of 260 videos may challenge the generalisability of the results. It is worth noting

that other content analyses often involve the examination of over 100,000 videos, improving the findings' applicability (Chen et al., 2015; Cheng & Li, 2024).

The methodology employed in this study, including the timeframe of data collection and the sampling method, should also be considered in interpreting the non-significant findings of hypotheses H2a and H2c. FMCG brands, which constituted the focus of the study's sampling method, may present unique challenges in leveraging brand spokespersons and UGC on platforms like TikTok. These brands typically prioritise functional attributes over emotional connections, making it challenging to attract suitable brand spokespersons or generate engaging UGC that resonates with consumers. The data collection period, spanning Q3 of 2023, may have inadvertently influenced consumer behaviour and brand interactions on TikTok. Given the dynamic nature of digital platforms, trends, preferences, and consumer engagement patterns can fluctuate rapidly over time. Therefore, the specific timeframe for data collection may not have fully captured the nuances of consumer-brand interactions prevalent during other periods. Additionally, the sampling method employed, namely purposive and convenience sampling, may have introduced biases in the sample composition. While this approach aimed to ensure representation from leading global brands across various sectors, it may not fully encompass the diversity of brand strategies and consumer preferences on TikTok. Consequently, the findings on brand spokespersons and user-generated content may be influenced by the specific brands included in the sample, limiting the generalizability of the results to a broader brand landscape on the platform.

Furthermore, time and resource constraints may also restrict the depth of the analysis, which is why this study chose a relatively simple and specific framework to investigate the effects of brand anthropomorphism on consumer engagement, focusing on human-centred video content on TikTok. Extending the framework goes beyond applying it to other industries; it can also entail exploring additional causal relationships, moderation and mediation effects. Moreover, the non-significant results for hypotheses H2b and H2c highlight the need for further research to explore the underlying mechanisms driving consumer engagement on TikTok. A moderating effect that could be interesting to include in the framework is to investigate the role of the popularity of brand ambassadors or the recurrence of humans within the brand personification strategies. Particularly when considering the inclusion of multiple industries, another moderator worth investigating could be product categorisation, e.g. luxury and everyday products. Additionally, it would be interesting to examine the tone of voice (e.g. serious. vs. humorous) used in the video content to get a more nuanced insight. Enhancing a deeper understanding of the relationship between brand anthropomorphism and consumer engagement can involve investigating mediation variables of brand trust and brand authenticity as mediators.

Building upon that point, the limitations of operationalisation of the variables are noteworthy to elaborate upon. Although narrowing down the types of brand anthropomorphism to brand ambassadors, spokespersons, and UGC can help in a more in-depth exploration, it can also limit the research in capturing the complexity of brand anthropomorphism. Defining brand anthropomorphism by the sole presence of human representation could neglect other dimensions, e.g. examining the contemporary relevance of zoomorphism and teramorphism. In addition, exclusively focusing on the presence of a brand ambassador, brand spokesperson, and UGC creator might constrain the research in considering variations in their portrayal. For example, how some brand spokespersons convey different levels of competence, warmth, or sincerity, which in turn could influence consumer engagement differently. Also substantial to consider is the effect of a brand ambassador's advocacy, which can vary depending on the alignment between the brand and the ambassador's image. Another aspect worth considering

and further investigation is that UGC creators might produce videos where only their hands are visible.

While this research operationalised the consumer engagement variable based on the number of comments, this approach can present constraints in capturing the full spectrum of TikTok's consumer engagement. Disregarding, for example, likes or shares might limit the comprehension and insights into how brand anthropomorphism affects consumer engagement and consumer-brand relationships. Future research can explore likes as potentially more emotionally resonant indicators of consumer engagement. Moreover, incorporating a variety of engagement metrics may result in a richer indication of how the diverse forms of brand anthropomorphism affect consumer engagement. Furthermore, while this study quantified the number of comments, future research could focus on exploring the sentiments of the comments in a qualitative research approach, investigating how positive versus negative tones influence consumer engagement.

Given the focus on TikTok as a platform in this investigation, exploring a comparative analysis across platforms to evaluate the impact of brand anthropomorphism on consumer engagement is worth considering, as the current findings may restrict the generalisability to other digital marketing contexts. Such comparative analysis could aim to refine the comprehension of each platform's characteristics and aid in developing more effective marketing strategies.

As the current study uses content analysis, another method that can be used to get better insights into consumer behaviour is surveys, which could be considered for another quantitative approach. This research methodology follows the quantitative internal realist perspective; however, while exploring patterns and trends, the findings may not hold across varying cultural contexts. That is why integrating qualitative insights with quantitative findings can achieve a more comprehensive understanding, including consumer perceptions of personified brand strategies. Additionally, qualitative research methods such as interviews or focus groups could provide insights into consumer motivations and preferences regarding brand interactions on TikTok (Brodie et al., 2013).

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Appendix A

Descriptives

Descriptives

	Anthropomorphism	Transformed Number of comments
N	0	82
	1	178
Missing	0	0
	1	0
Mean	0	3.91
	1	3.22
Median	0	3.90
	1	2.83
Mode	0	1.39
	1	0.00
Standard deviation	0	1.57
	1	2.08
IQR	0	1.83
	1	2.78
Range	0	7.87
	1	9.93
Minimum	0	0.00
	1	0.00
Maximum	0	7.87
	1	9.93

Plots

Descriptives

Plots

Number of comments
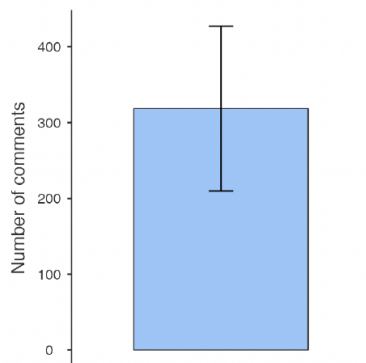
Descriptives

Descriptives

	Ambassador	Transformed Number of comments
N	0	155
	1	105
Missing	0	0
	1	0
Mean	0	3.89
	1	2.76
Median	0	3.78
	1	2.48
Mode	0	1.39
	1	0.00
Standard deviation	0	1.90
	1	1.85
Range	0	9.93
	1	8.20
Minimum	0	0.00
	1	0.00
Maximum	0	9.93
	1	8.20

Plots

Transformed Number of comments
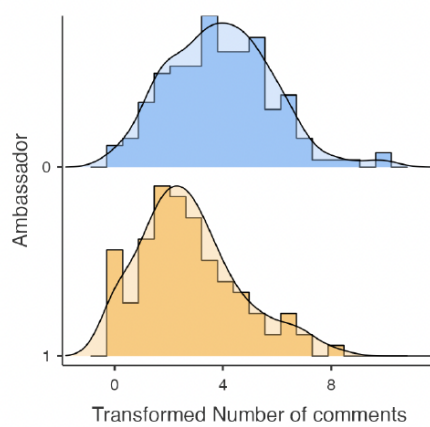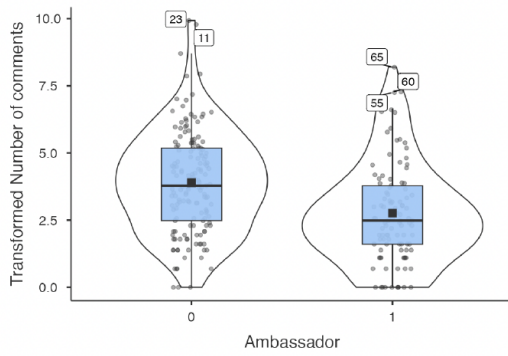
Descriptives

Descriptives

	Spokesperson	Transformed Number of comments
N	0	221
	1	39
Missing	0	0
	1	0
Mean	0	3.36
	1	3.85
Median	0	3.22
	1	3.26
Mode	0	0.00
	1	1.39 [a]
Standard deviation	0	1.87
	1	2.37
Range	0	9.79
	1	9.93
Minimum	0	0.00
	1	0.00
Maximum	0	9.79
	1	9.93

[a] More than one mode exists, only the first is reported

Plots

Transformed Number of comments
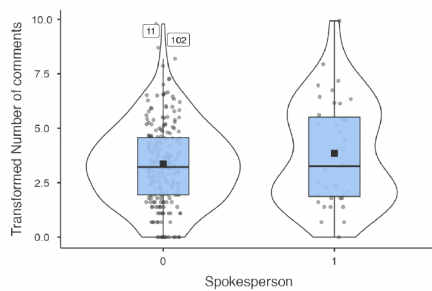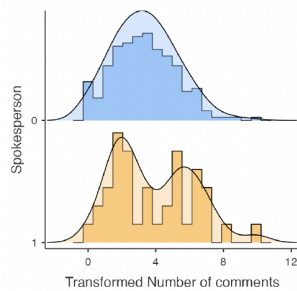
Descriptives

Descriptives

	UGC	Transformed Number of comments
N	0	234
	1	26
Missing	0	0
	1	0
Mean	0	3.38
	1	3.94
Median	0	3.22
	1	4.08
Mode	0	0.00
	1	0.693 [a]
Standard deviation	0	1.96
	1	1.90
Range	0	9.93
	1	9.09
Minimum	0	0.00
	1	0.693
Maximum	0	9.93
	1	9.79

[a] More than one mode exists, only the first is reported

Plots

Transformed Number of comments

Linear Regression

Model Fit Measures

Model	R	R²	Adjusted R²	Overall Model Test			
				F	df1	df2	p
1	0.165	0.0274	0.0236	7.26	1	258	0.007

Model Coefficients - Transformed Number of comments

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	Stand. Estimate
Intercept [a]	3.913	0.213	18.33	<.001	
Anthropomorphism:					
1 – 0	-0.695	0.258	-2.70	0.007	-0.355

[a] Represents reference level

Assumption Checks

Normality Tests

	Statistic	p
Shapiro-Wilk	0.976	<.001
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.0631	0.252
Anderson-Darling	1.26	0.003

Note. Additional results provided by *moretests*

Heteroskedasticity Tests

	Statistic	p
Breusch-Pagan	6.08	0.014
Goldfeld-Quandt	0.477	1.000
Harrison-McCabe	0.648	0.999

Note. Additional results provided by *moretests*

Q-Q Plot

Linear Regression

Model Fit Measures

Model	R	R²	Adjusted R²	Overall Model Test			
				F	df1	df2	p
1	0.284	0.0808	0.0700	7.50	3	256	<.001

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Model Coefficients - Transformed Number of comments

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	Stand. Estimate
Intercept [a]	3.8958	0.199	19.592	<.001	
Ambassador:					
1 − 0	-1.1331	0.271	-4.181	<.001	-0.5792
Spokesperson:					
1 − 0	-0.0427	0.362	-0.118	0.906	-0.0218
UGC:					
1 − 0	0.0476	0.420	0.113	0.910	0.0243

[a] Represents reference level

Assumption Checks

Normality Tests

	Statistic	p
Shapiro-Wilk	0.982	0.003
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.0490	0.561
Anderson-Darling	0.814	0.035

Note. Additional results provided by *moretests*

Heteroskedasticity Tests

	Statistic	p
Breusch-Pagan	7.26	0.064
Goldfeld-Quandt	0.457	1.000
Harrison-McCabe	0.642	0.999

Note. Additional results provided by *moretests*

Collinearity Statistics

	VIF	Tolerance
Ambassador	1.29	0.774
Spokesperson	1.22	0.821
UGC	1.16	0.862

[3]

Q-Q Plot

79
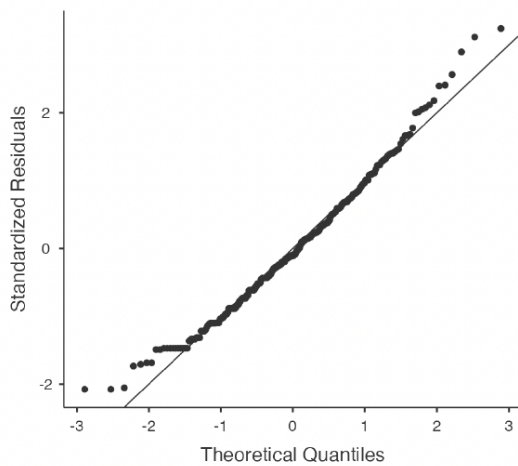
Appendix B

ID	Brand Group	Brand Name	Anthropomorphism	Ambassador	Spokesperson	UGC	Number of comments	Transformed Number of comments	Date watched	Link to TikTok	Date of TikTok
1	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	474	6.16	09.04.2024		03.07.2023
2	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	708	6.56	09.04.2024		06.07.2023
3	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	0	1	413	6.03	09.04.2024		07.07.2023
4	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	223	5.41	09.04.2024		10.07.2023
5	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	215	5.38	09.04.2024		11.07.2023
6	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	494	6.20	09.04.2024		12.07.2023
7	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	1	0	0	370	5.92	09.04.2024		14.07.2023
8	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	324	5.78	09.04.2024		15.07.2023
9	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	0	1	396	5.98	09.04.2024		15.07.2023
10	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	0	0	177	5.18	09.04.2024		17.07.2023
11	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	0	1	17800	9.79	09.04.2024		18.07.2023
12	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	566	6.34	09.04.2024		18.07.2023
13	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	1066	6.97	09.04.2024		19.07.2023
14	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	134	4.91	09.04.2024		24.07.2023
15	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	89	4.50	09.04.2024		25.07.2023
16	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	0	1	176	5.18	09.04.2024		25.07.2023
17	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	17	2.89	09.04.2024		27.07.2023
18	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	66	4.20	09.04.2024		28.07.2023
19	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	187	5.24	09.04.2024		29.07.2023
20	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	0	1	69	4.25	09.04.2024		30.07.2023
21	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	92	4.53	09.04.2024		30.07.2023
22	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	66	4.20	09.04.2024		31.07.2023
23	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	20600	9.93	09.04.2024		31.07.2023
24	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	270	5.60	09.04.2024		01.08.2023
25	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	464	6.14	09.04.2024		03.08.2023
26	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	217	5.38	09.04.2024		06.08.2023
27	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	372	5.92	09.04.2024		09.08.2023
28	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	156	5.06	09.04.2024		10.08.2023
29	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	147	5.00	09.04.2024		11.08.2023
30	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	127	4.85	09.04.2024		13.08.2023
31	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	0	1	197	5.29	09.04.2024		15.08.2023
32	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	120	4.80	09.04.2024		17.08.2023
33	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	569	6.35	09.04.2024		20.08.2023

34	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	63	4.16	09.04.2024		21.08.2023
35	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	628	6.44	09.04.2024		21.08.2023
36	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	680	6.52	09.04.2024		23.08.2023
37	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	274	5.62	09.04.2024		24.08.2023
38	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	850	6.75	09.04.2024		24.08.2023
39	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	1315	7.18	09.04.2024		24.08.2023
40	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	191	5.26	09.04.2024		27.08.2023
41	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	148	5.00	09.04.2024		28.08.2023
42	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	2810	7.94	09.04.2024		30.08.2023
43	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	63	4.16	09.04.2024		06.09.2023
44	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	25	3.26	09.04.2024		07.09.2023
45	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	1	0	0	63	4.16	09.04.2024		07.09.2023
46	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	31	3.47	09.04.2024		08.09.2023
47	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	1	0	0	56	4.04	09.04.2024		08.09.2023
48	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	1	0	0	47	3.87	09.04.2024		08.09.2023
49	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	1	0	0	47	3.87	09.04.2024		09.09.2023
50	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	1	0	0	43	3.78	09.04.2024		10.09.2023
51	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	106	4.67	09.04.2024		10.09.2023
52	Pepsi	Pepsi	0	0	0	0	98	4.60	09.04.2024		15.09.2023
53	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	55	4.03	09.04.2024		21.09.2023
54	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	0	1	99	4.61	09.04.2024		25.09.2023
55	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	1	0	0	1409	7.25	09.04.2024		27.09.2023
56	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	1	0	0	122	4.81	09.04.2024		28.09.2023
57	Pepsi	Pepsi	1	0	1	0	169	5.14	09.04.2024		30.09.2023
58	Coca Cola	Coca Cola	1	1	0	0	238	5.48	09.04.2024		13.07.2023
59	Coca Cola	Coca Cola	1	1	0	0	323	5.78	09.04.2024		14.07.2023
60	Coca Cola	Coca Cola	1	1	0	0	1444	7.28	09.04.2024		14.07.2023
61	Coca Cola	Coca Cola	1	1	0	0	217	5.38	09.04.2024		28.07.2023
62	Coca Cola	Coca Cola	1	1	0	0	773	6.65	09.04.2024		28.07.2023
63	Coca Cola	Coca Cola	1	1	0	0	692	6.54	09.04.2024		23.08.2023
64	Coca Cola	Coca Cola	1	1	0	0	741	6.61	09.04.2024		01.09.2023
65	Coca Cola	Coca Cola	1	1	0	0	3625	8.20	09.04.2024		20.09.2023
66	Coca Cola	Sprite	0	0	0	0	33	3.53	09.04.2024		05.07.2023
67	Coca Cola	Sprite	1	1	0	0	33	3.53	09.04.2024		07.07.2023

68	CocaCola	Sprite	1	1	0	0	31	3.47	09.04.2024		18.07.2023
69	CocaCola	Sprite	1	0	0	0	22	3.14	09.04.2024		24.07.2023
70	CocaCola	Sprite	0	0	0	0	41	3.74	09.04.2024		27.07.2023
71	CocaCola	Sprite	1	1	0	0	94	4.55	09.04.2024		28.07.2023
72	CocaCola	Sprite	1	1	0	0	84	4.44	09.04.2024		02.08.2023
73	CocaCola	Sprite	0	0	0	0	129	4.87	09.04.2024		05.08.2023
74	CocaCola	Sprite	1	1	0	0	96	4.57	09.04.2024		15.08.2023
75	CocaCola	Sprite	1	1	0	0	178	5.19	09.04.2024		18.08.2023
76	CocaCola	Sprite	1	0	1	0	212	5.36	09.04.2024		31.08.2023
77	CocaCola	Sprite	0	0	0	0	390	5.97	09.04.2024		05.09.2023
78	CocaCola	Sprite	1	0	0	0	244	5.50	09.04.2024		21.09.2023
79	CocaCola	Fanta	1	1	0	0	65	4.19	09.04.2024		11.07.2023
80	CocaCola	Fanta	1	1	0	0	38	3.66	09.04.2024		19.07.2023
81	CocaCola	Fanta	1	1	0	0	27	3.33	09.04.2024		26.07.2023
82	CocaCola	Fanta	0	0	0	0	100	4.62	09.04.2024		27.07.2023
83	CocaCola	Fanta	1	1	0	0	104	4.65	09.04.2024		02.08.2023
84	CocaCola	Fanta	0	0	0	0	1109	7.01	09.04.2024		25.09.2023
85	CocaCola	Fanta	0	0	0	0	54	4.01	09.04.2024		26.09.2023
86	CocaCola	Fanta	0	0	0	0	29	3.40	09.04.2024		27.09.2023
87	CocaCola	Fanta	0	0	0	0	28	3.37	09.04.2024		28.09.2023
88	CocaCola	Fanta	0	0	0	0	52	3.97	09.04.2024		29.09.2023
89	CocaCola	Innocent	1	0	0	0	40	3.71	09.04.2024		07.07.2023
90	CocaCola	Innocent	1	0	0	1	5	1.79	09.04.2024		11.07.2023
91	CocaCola	Innocent	0	0	0	0	631	6.45	09.04.2024		25.07.2023
92	CocaCola	Innocent	1	0	1	0	9	2.30	09.04.2024		27.07.2023
93	CocaCola	Innocent	1	0	1	0	5	1.79	09.04.2024		03.08.2023
94	CocaCola	Innocent	1	0	0	0	0	0.00	09.04.2024		04.08.2023
95	CocaCola	Innocent	1	0	1	0	87	4.48	09.04.2024		09.08.2023
96	CocaCola	Innocent	1	0	1	0	9	2.30	09.04.2024		11.08.2023
97	CocaCola	Innocent	0	0	0	0	1	0.69	09.04.2024		14.08.2023
98	CocaCola	Innocent	0	0	0	0	74	4.32	09.04.2024		16.08.2023
99	CocaCola	Innocent	0	0	0	0	7	2.08	09.04.2024		17.08.2023
100	CocaCola	Innocent	1	0	1	0	7	2.08	09.04.2024		18.08.2023
101	CocaCola	Innocent	1	0	1	0	10	2.40	09.04.2024		22.08.2023

102	CocaCola	Innocent	1	0	0	0	6026	8.70	09.04.2024		25.08.2023
103	CocaCola	Innocent	0	0	0	0	18	2.94	09.04.2024		30.08.2023
104	CocaCola	Innocent	1	0	1	0	24	3.22	09.04.2024		01.09.2023
105	Procter&Gamble	Always	1	0	1	0	27	3.33	17.04.2024		07.07.2023
106	Procter&Gamble	Always	1	0	0	1	9	2.30	17.04.2024		13.07.2023
107	Procter&Gamble	Always	0	0	0	0	16	2.83	17.04.2024		21.07.2023
108	Procter&Gamble	Always	0	0	0	0	9	2.30	17.04.2024		24.07.2023
109	Procter&Gamble	Always	1	0	0	1	21	3.09	17.04.2024		01.08.2023
110	Procter&Gamble	Always	0	0	0	0	2	1.10	17.04.2024		07.08.2023
111	Procter&Gamble	Always	1	1	0	0	4	1.61	17.04.2024		09.08.2023
112	Procter&Gamble	Always	0	0	0	0	38	3.66	17.04.2024		18.08.2023
113	Procter&Gamble	Always	1	0	0	1	13	2.64	17.04.2024		24.08.2023
114	Procter&Gamble	Always	1	0	1	0	3	1.39	17.04.2024		15.09.2023
115	Procter&Gamble	Always	1	0	1	0	1	0.69	17.04.2024		29.09.2023
116	Procter&Gamble	Tampax	1	1	0	0	9	2.30	17.04.2024		18.07.2023
117	Procter&Gamble	Tampax	0	0	0	0	11	2.48	17.04.2024		20.07.2023
118	Procter&Gamble	Tampax	1	1	0	0	10	2.40	17.04.2024		26.07.2023
119	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	0	0.00	17.04.2024		05.07.2023
120	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	3	1.39	17.04.2024		06.07.2023
121	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	3	1.39	17.04.2024		07.07.2023
122	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	0	0.00	17.04.2024		11.07.2023
123	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	2	1.10	17.04.2024		13.07.2023
124	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	5	1.79	17.04.2024		18.07.2023
125	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	1	0.69	17.04.2024		20.07.2023
126	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	0	0	0	0	3	1.39	17.04.2024		21.07.2023
127	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	1	0.69	17.04.2024		25.07.2023
128	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	4	1.61	17.04.2024		27.07.2023
129	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	0	0.00	17.04.2024		03.08.2023
130	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	2	1.10	17.04.2024		08.08.2023
131	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	0	0	1	3	1.39	17.04.2024		10.08.2023
132	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	0	0.00	17.04.2024		14.08.2023
133	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	0	0.00	17.04.2024		17.08.2023
134	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	2	1.10	17.04.2024		22.08.2023
135	Procter&Gamble	AussieUS	1	1	0	0	3	1.39	17.04.2024		25.08.2023

136	Procter & Gamble	Aussie US	1	1	0	0	2	1.10	17.04.2024		30.08.2023
137	Procter & Gamble	Aussie US	1	1	0	0	0	0.00	17.04.2024		01.09.2023
138	Procter & Gamble	Aussie US	0	0	0	0	117	4.77	17.04.2024		04.09.2023
139	Procter & Gamble	Aussie US	1	1	0	0	1	0.69	17.04.2024		08.09.2023
140	Procter & Gamble	Aussie US	1	1	0	0	0	0.00	27.04.2024		12.09.2023
141	Procter & Gamble	Aussie US	1	1	0	0	48	3.89	27.04.2024		15.09.2023
142	Procter & Gamble	Aussie US	1	1	0	0	1	0.69	27.04.2024		20.09.2023
143	Procter & Gamble	Aussie US	1	1	0	0	0	0.00	27.04.2024		25.09.2023
144	Procter & Gamble	Aussie US	1	1	0	0	4	1.61	27.04.2024		27.09.2023
145	Procter & Gamble	Pampers	1	0	0	1	102	4.63	27.04.2024		13.07.2023
146	Procter & Gamble	Pampers	1	0	0	1	40	3.71	27.04.2024		13.07.2023
147	Procter & Gamble	Pampers	1	0	0	1	49	3.91	27.04.2024		13.07.2023
148	Procter & Gamble	Pampers	1	0	0	1	80	4.39	27.04.2024		13.07.2023
149	Procter & Gamble	Pampers	0	0	0	0	164	5.11	27.04.2024		18.08.2023
150	Procter & Gamble	Pampers	1	0	0	1	341	5.83	27.04.2024		25.08.2023
151	Procter & Gamble	Pampers	1	0	0	1	248	5.52	27.04.2024		25.08.2023
152	Procter & Gamble	Pampers	1	0	0	1	82	4.42	27.04.2024		25.08.2023
153	Procter & Gamble	Pampers	1	0	0	1	1	0.69	27.04.2024		12.09.2023
154	Nestle	KitKat	0	0	0	0	79	4.38	18.04.2024		07.07.2023
155	Nestle	KitKat	0	0	0	0	41	3.74	18.04.2024		12.07.2023
156	Nestle	KitKat	0	0	0	0	33	3.53	18.04.2024		20.07.2023
157	Nestle	KitKat	0	0	0	0	22	3.14	18.04.2024		21.07.2023
158	Nestle	KitKat	0	0	0	0	45	3.83	18.04.2024		02.08.2023
159	Nestle	KitKat	0	0	0	0	60	4.11	18.04.2024		07.08.2023
160	Nestle	KitKat	0	0	0	0	91	4.52	18.04.2024		30.08.2023
161	Nestle	KitKat	0	0	0	0	31	3.47	18.04.2024		18.09.2023
162	Nestle	KitKat	0	0	0	0	36	3.61	18.04.2024		21.09.2023
163	Nestle	Nespresso	1	0	0	1	72	4.29	18.04.2024		03.07.2023
164	Nestle	Nespresso	1	0	0	1	7	2.08	18.04.2024		10.07.2023
165	Nestle	Nespresso	0	0	0	0	178	5.19	18.04.2024		10.07.2023
166	Nestle	Nespresso	1	0	0	1	17	2.89	18.04.2024		14.07.2023
167	Nestle	Nespresso	1	1	0	0	140	4.95	18.04.2024		18.07.2023
168	Nestle	Nespresso	0	0	0	0	20	3.04	18.04.2024		20.07.2023
169	Nestle	Nespresso	0	0	0	0	76	4.34	18.04.2024		25.07.2023

170	Nestle	Nespresso	0	0	0	0	29	3.40	18.04.2024		01.08.2023
171	Nestle	Nespresso	1	0	0	1	15	2.77	18.04.2024		09.08.2023
172	Nestle	Nespresso	0	0	0	0	23	3.18	18.04.2024		09.08.2023
173	Nestle	Nespresso	0	0	0	0	24	3.22	18.04.2024		16.08.2023
174	Nestle	Nespresso	0	0	0	0	28	3.37	18.04.2024		23.08.2023
175	Nestle	Nespresso	1	0	0	1	11	2.48	18.04.2024		23.08.2023
176	Nestle	Nespresso	0	0	0	0	43	3.78	18.04.2024		25.08.2023
177	Nestle	Nespresso	1	0	0	1	12	2.56	18.04.2024		30.08.2023
178	Nestle	Nespresso	0	0	0	0	73	4.30	18.04.2024		05.09.2023
179	Nestle	Nespresso	0	0	0	0	23	3.18	18.04.2024		08.09.2023
180	Nestle	Nespresso	0	0	0	0	12	2.56	18.04.2024		12.09.2023
181	Nestle	Nespresso	0	0	0	0	38	3.66	18.04.2024		15.09.2023
182	Nestle	Nespresso	1	1	0	0	15	2.77	18.04.2024		18.09.2023
183	Nestle	Nespresso	1	1	0	0	20	3.04	18.04.2024		21.09.2023
184	Nestle	Purina	1	0	0	0	6	1.95	27.04.2023		01.07.2023
185	Nestle	Purina	1	0	1	0	5	1.79	27.04.2023		03.07.2023
186	Nestle	Purina	1	1	0	0	5	1.79	27.04.2023		11.07.2023
187	Nestle	Purina	1	1	0	0	12	2.56	27.04.2023		13.07.2023
188	Nestle	Purina	0	0	0	0	4	1.61	27.04.2023		18.07.2023
189	Nestle	Purina	1	0	1	0	21	3.09	27.04.2023		20.07.2023
190	Nestle	Purina	0	0	0	0	15	2.77	27.04.2023		25.07.2023
191	Nestle	Purina	1	0	1	0	1	0.69	27.04.2023		27.07.2023
192	Nestle	Purina	0	0	0	0	6	1.95	27.04.2023		01.08.2023
193	Nestle	Purina	0	0	0	0	2	1.10	27.04.2023		02.08.2023
194	Nestle	Purina	1	1	0	0	1	0.69	27.04.2023		08.08.2023
195	Nestle	Purina	0	0	0	0	4	1.61	27.04.2023		10.08.2023
196	Nestle	Purina	0	0	0	0	5	1.79	27.04.2023		17.08.2023
197	Nestle	Purina	1	1	0	0	2	1.10	27.04.2023		18.08.2023
198	Nestle	Purina	1	1	0	0	0	0.00	27.04.2023		22.08.2023
199	Nestle	Purina	1	1	0	0	6	1.95	27.04.2023		24.08.2023
200	Nestle	Purina	1	1	0	0	18	2.94	27.04.2023		24.08.2023
201	Nestle	Purina	1	1	0	0	4	1.61	27.04.2023		30.08.2023
202	Nestle	Purina	1	1	0	0	30	3.43	27.04.2023		31.08.2023
203	Nestle	Purina	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	27.04.2023		06.09.2023

204	Nestle	Purina	1	0	1	0	0	0.00	27.04.2023		08.09.2023
205	Nestle	Purina	1	0	1	0	4	1.61	27.04.2023		12.09.2023
206	Nestle	Purina	1	1	0	0	4	1.61	27.04.2023		13.09.2023
207	Nestle	Purina	1	1	0	0	14	2.71	27.04.2023		15.09.2023
208	Nestle	Purina	1	0	1	0	3	1.39	27.04.2023		20.09.2023
209	Nestle	Purina	0	0	0	0	37	3.64	27.04.2023		26.09.2023
210	Nestle	Purina	0	0	0	0	3	1.39	27.04.2023		29.09.2023
211	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	0	0.00	18.04.2023		01.07.2023
212	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	8	2.20	18.04.2023		02.07.2023
213	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	2	1.10	18.04.2023		03.07.2023
214	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	9	2.30	18.04.2023		03.07.2023
215	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	11	2.48	18.04.2023		03.07.2023
216	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	5	1.79	18.04.2023		05.07.2023
217	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	6	1.95	27.04.2024		06.07.2023
218	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	0	0	0	0	2605	7.87	27.04.2024		06.07.2023
219	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	3	1.39	27.04.2024		07.07.2023
220	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	19	3.00	27.04.2024		07.07.2023
221	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	0	0	0	0	535	6.28	27.04.2024		08.07.2023
222	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	0	1	0	6	1.95	27.04.2024		08.07.2023
223	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	20	3.04	27.04.2024		08.07.2023
224	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	6	1.95	27.04.2024		10.07.2023
225	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	2	1.10	27.04.2024		10.07.2023
226	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	6	1.95	27.04.2024		10.07.2023
227	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	22	3.14	27.04.2024		10.07.2023
228	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	0	0	0	4	1.61	27.04.2024		11.07.2023
229	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	0	1	0	3	1.39	27.04.2024		11.07.2023
230	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	10	2.40	27.04.2024		11.07.2023
231	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	246	5.51	27.04.2024		12.07.2023
232	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	19	3.00	27.04.2024		12.07.2023
233	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	15	2.77	27.04.2024		14.07.2023
234	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	671	6.51	27.04.2024		14.07.2023
235	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	40	3.71	27.04.2024		15.07.2023
236	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	26	3.30	27.04.2024		15.07.2023
237	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	12	2.56	27.04.2024		17.07.2023

238	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	55	4.03	27.04.2024	....	18.07.2023
239	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	24	3.22	27.04.2024	....	19.07.2023
240	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	8	2.20	27.04.2024	....	19.07.2023
241	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	6	1.95	27.04.2024	....	20.07.2023
242	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	12	2.56	27.04.2024	....	21.07.2023
243	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	0	0	0	0	225	5.42	27.04.2024	....	22.07.2023
244	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	23	3.18	27.04.2024	....	22.07.2023
245	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	11	2.48	27.04.2024	....	23.07.2023
246	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	18	2.94	27.04.2024	....	24.07.2023
247	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	20	3.04	27.04.2024	....	25.07.2023
248	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	11	2.48	27.04.2024	....	27.07.2023
249	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	0	0	0	0	3	1.39	27.04.2024	....	27.07.2023
250	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	0	0	0	0	7	2.08	27.04.2024	....	27.07.2023
251	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	23	3.18	27.04.2024	....	28.07.2023
252	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	10	2.40	27.04.2024	....	29.07.2023
253	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	4	1.61	27.04.2024	....	30.07.2023
254	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	6	1.95	27.04.2024	....	01.08.2023
255	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	0	1	0	12	2.56	27.04.2024	....	01.08.2023
256	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	12	2.56	27.04.2024	....	01.08.2023
257	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	9	2.30	27.04.2024	....	02.08.2023
258	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	0	1	0	6	1.95	27.04.2024	....	04.08.2023
259	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	0	1	0	5	1.79	27.04.2024	....	04.08.2023
260	LOREAL	MaybellineNY	1	1	0	0	6	1.95	27.04.2024	....	05.08.2023