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# Impact of Native Advertising on Brand Awareness in the Era of Short Video Platforms

**Wen Wen**
Journalism & Communication Department,
Anhui News and Publishing Vocational College, Hefei,
China
wenwen6387@outlook.com

## Abstract
Short video platforms are frequently gaining popularity and, thus, hold more and more resources as potential advertising media. The purpose of our study is to complete an analysis of native advertising on short video platforms and its impact on brand awareness. During the week of our experimental study, participants consumed native advertising short videos of both big corporate brands and small independent brands of the interior design and decoration industry. The results show that native advertising does positively influence brand awareness, showing special dynamics for small independent brands. Such aspects as brand image and strategy, overall video design and content, sponsored influencers involved, and sponsorship disclosure are the deciding factors in native advertising success. While these features are different for various brands, the overall architecture of short video platforms allows us to extend the apparatus of native advertising. The findings of this study can be applied by both theoretical researchers in their analysis of short video platforms' advertising potential and the practicing marketing specialists who work on promoting their brands via short video platforms. The research can be extended in the future by adding the analysis of the platform algorithms and their impact on the effectiveness of native advertising and brand awareness in general.
**Keywords:** brand recall; brand recognition; influencer; sponsorship disclosure; TikTok

## Introduction
Cell phones have been a part of people's daily for routine a long time and an instrument without which many processes can no longer be performed. Therefore, mobile infrastructure has already entered numerous spheres of modern life, from wellbeing to education to business. Advertisement and marketing are no exception, as online platforms, mobile applications, and other technological advantages can be extremely useful in promoting products and services, gaining new clients, and raising overall brand awareness. In recent years, advertising has been walking hand in hand with the actualization of social media platforms (Voorveld et al., 2018). Therefore, short media platforms, such as TikTok, Douying, and others, also feature several opportunities for advertising development.
Native advertising, as a form of covet promotion, is being actively used on TikTok, and the positive results can already be seen through a business development perspective (Amrudhia & Nurfebiaraning, 2021; Duivenvoorde & Goanta, 2023). This paper aims to explore the particular characteristics of native advertisements made on short video platforms and their correlation with the improvement of the brand image. While the phenomenon of native


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advertising on such platforms as TikTok has already been present, few academic studies have been published to explore this particular connection. Thus, this research will be useful in both the theoretical and the practical dimensions. Firstly, the research authors working on the analysis of modern advertising patterns can use it to design the following studies focused on native advertising in the form of short videos. Secondly, the marketing specialists can rely on the findings presented in this study to shape their social media advertising strategy which would be the most efficient for their brand.

**Literature review**

The emergence and growing popularity of short video platforms have indeed changed social communication patterns. It is reasonable to talk about short video orientation being a signifying feature of certain websites and applications starting from the first decade of the twenty-first century. For example, according to Bragg et al. (2020), Vine was one of the online platforms active in shaping advertising on the Internet from 2007 to 2016. Anderson (2020), in turn, compares Vine to a more popular short video social platform TikTok. Xu and Zhao (2022) present the idea that producing videos, or vlogging, can be done in multiple ways and serve different purposes, making video content a miscellaneous topic for academic research. Li et al. (2023) focus on vloggers or streamers of video content in their advertising activity, discovering the impact these characters have on people's perceptions and, as a result, consumption behavior. The academic focus on various social media platforms shifts according to the patterns among the users, which means that while there are multiple studies on YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, the interest of researchers in different spheres is now tied to TikTok. For example, Yang (2022) speak of the beginning of the new short video era, as well as mention the possible addiction of modern audiences to short video content. Therefore, studies of TikTok and its application in advertising activities are appearing, as well. For example, Ma and Kim (2021), as well as Yuan et al. (2022), discover the popularity of short video platforms as a medium for advertising and promotion, as well as show the actual impact of such platforms on both the companies and their clients. As a result, it can be seen from the literature review that the studies on short video platforms are active and informative, and many points can be of potential interest to researchers.

With short video platforms overcoming the social media scene of today, native advertising is taking new shapes, as well. Multiple articles have been written on native advertising in general. For example, Wojdynski and Evans (2020), address native advertisements as a medium for coveting advertising or, in other words, masking ads. Kim and Kim (2021) also focus on the definition of native advertising as a form in which the format of the ad matches the overall content pattern of the platform it was posted on; the authors provide influencers and their involvement with native advertising as examples. In connection with this, different authors explore the role of persuasion as the key instrument of native advertising. Besides, native advertising, being one of the non-direct ways of advertising, is closely connected to sponsorship in general and sponsorship disclosure in particular. For example, Hawker and Carah (2021) explore the presence of sponsored content as a form of advertising on Snapchat.



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At the same time, Pfeuffer and Huh (2020) are extremely interested in ways of sponsorship disclosure in influencer content and native advertising. Nowadays, native advertising finds itself present in short video platforms, as well; for example, a study by Li et al. (2022) shows a wide variety of native advertising in a short video format in the Chinese social media platform Douyin.

Versatile purposes can be outlined when advertisement is mentioned and, according to Bergkvist and Taylor (2022), raising or supporting brand awareness is one of them. Minton et al. (2023), in turn, point out the direct connection between brand awareness and consumption rates. Khurram et al. (2018) explore how two key components of brand awareness, brand recall and brand recognition, influence purchases directly. The connection between native advertising and brand awareness was studied by Raimondo and Vernuccio (2019). According to the authors, for example, the form and type of native advertising content can bring different degrees of brand awareness.

Therefore, the literature review shows that numerous studies have already focused on native advertising, especially in the era of short video content. However, little experimental research was made to show the actual connections between brand awareness and native advertising on short video platforms. This vector of research, undeniably relevant in the modern social media and marketing context, is a perspective for comprehensive and useful research.

## Problem statement

This study can respond to the growing relevance of short video platform research in the context of advertising and, at the same time, offer new methods for improving brand awareness. On one hand, exploring the short video content creation strategies and forms and ideas for native advertising on such platforms as TikTok, for example, can expand the range of instruments modern advertisement experts hold. On the other hand, seeing the impact of native advertising in the form of short videos on brand recall and brand recognition can pave new ways to improve brand awareness. Therefore, the overall relevance of brand awareness as a factor of purchase rates and the wide coverage that short video platforms have, make research in this direction all the more useful and, at the same time, necessary.

The goal of this research is to explore the connection between native advertising on short video platforms and brand awareness of big corporations and small independent businesses.

To reach this goal, the following tasks are completed: (1) to explore samples of native advertising of big corporate brands and small independent businesses; (2) to evaluate brand recall and brand recognition after seeing the chosen short video content; (3) to analyze the correlation between the native advertising content and overall brand recognition.

## Methods and materials

- ***Research design***

The research originally contains three stages. The first stage includes a preliminary questionnaire to determine the participants' brand awareness before native advertising is included. The second stage includes a week of consuming the manually compiled and managed



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TikTok feed, with 10% of native advertisement daily. As a result, the participants ended up watching 420 short videos, among which 42 clips were native advertisements of 3 corporate brands and 3 independent brands, which operate in the industry of interior design and decoration. All short videos are unique and do not repeat the feed throughout the feed. The native advertisement strategies include Spark Ads videos by official brand pages and sponsored influencer content. After the week of controlled feed consumption was over, a second questionnaire was provided to the participants, measuring their brand awareness after the experiment.

- ***Sample***

The group consisted of 20 women aged between 25 and 45. They had different educational degrees and occupations but all share an interest in interior design and decoration. The participants also admitted to consuming at least an hour and a half worth of TikTok content daily. All participants agreed to the experiment and the further processing of their feedback in this study.

- ***Survey***

The preliminary and post-experiment questionnaires included the same questions evaluating brand awareness through two vectors: brand recall and brand recognition. The questionnaires were simple and short with questions that can vividly demonstrate the level of these two aspects. The questionnaire is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Questions, included in the preliminary and final survey to measure brand awareness

| Question | Aspect |
|---|---|
| 1. Which brand are you most likely to turn to when choosing an eco-friendly textile for your room? | Brand recall |
| 2. Which brand are you most likely to choose when in need of aromatic or scented decorations for your room? | Brand recall |
| 3. Which brand are you most likely to choose for kitchen utensils? | Brand recall |
| 4. Which brand is providing specific decorations for astrologists and tarot masters? | Brand recall |
| 5. Which brand are you most likely to choose when decorating your children's room? | Brand recall |
| 6. Which brand can you recommend to a colorblind person? | Brand recall |
| 7. Are you aware of Brand A's social responsibility projects? | Brand recognition |
| 8. Do you know any of Brand B's most popular product? | Brand recognition |
| 9. Which feature is the significant characteristic of Brand C? | Brand recognition |
| 10. What are Brand D's signature colors? | Brand recognition |
| 11. What are the signature materials Brand E uses for their products? | Brand recognition |
| 12. What are the special offers Brand F has at the moment? | Brand recognition |



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There were 12 questions in total, two questions were meant for each brand. The questions were directly related to the products and services each brand offers and the content they focus on in their native advertising.

- ***Statistical processing***

The information collected in this study covers two fundamental aspects: (1) the type of native advertising content – official TikTok account or sponsored influencer content; (2) big brand and small brand comparison. The comparison between the two questionnaires, before and after the experiment, showed the change in brand awareness, while the analysis of the aspects above can provide insight into the reasons for this change. Therefore, while the study relies on quantitative data drawn from the questionnaires, the qualitative features of research will be applied to determine the cause-effect connection. The information is processed manually and presented in the form of graphs.

- ***Research limitations***

There are only six brands of a specific industry, which means that the results of the study can vary when applied to other spheres of product or service making. Besides, the application chosen for research is TikTok, which means that the patterns revealed here will be most relevant for brands using this platform for their brand advertising. However, these limitations were put in place to narrow down the research focus and retrieve some reliable and efficient conclusions, which cannot be done effectively if there are two or many variables. In the following studies, by exterminating these limitations and extending the brand selection or changing the short video platform, the research can be continued.

- ***Ethical issues***

The article was written for research purposes only, which means that the names of the brands in question will not be revealed. All brand representatives agreed to their participation in the research, provided native advertising materials to include in the survey feed, and agreed to their anonymity.

**Results**

Corporate brands and independent brands, even though following the same purpose of advertising their products and services, as well as raising brand awareness, employ different tools in shaping the native advertising content. Firstly, corporate brands have more resources in terms of personnel and finances. At the same time, smaller independent brands frequently have a smaller number of employees and even less budget they can spend on promotion in social media. This difference in resources can be seen vividly in their native advertising content on TikTok. For example, in the short videos posted on their official pages, corporate brands have more people, and the characters of their videos change, as well as the scenery and equipment. Corporate brands also have better and more recognizable attributes, such as things with their logos in the picture. For example, brand A has an eagle as their symbol, and each of their short videos includes a new eagle-related attribute, such as a cup with an eagle on it; a stuffed toy; a huge picture of an eagle on the wall, and so on. In the short videos of brand B, at



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the same time, all employees and actors appearing in the video wear their corporate uniform with the company logo and name on it.

Independent brands, on the other hand, usually have one or two people who reappear in all short videos posted on their official TikTok account. Brand recognition in terms of the brand's specific features is rather made by including the same element in all videos, such as one logo that reappears every time, or the same style or imagery of their videos. For example, in the short videos of brand D, there is the same notebook with their logo in every video, on the background directly in the center of the frame. Brand F, at the same time, chose an interesting strategy to make all their TikTok videos similar and recognizable by focusing on shapes; in each of the short videos, all things or attributes or even the design of the shot or camera movement follow the shape of a circle.

Different brands also tend to have more accent on different aspects of their professional activity. Bigger brands tend to focus on accessibility, a wide variety of products, and affordable price policies. For corporate brands maintaining these fundamentals as the basis of their strategy is possible because of the better number of resources. For example, in some of their videos promoting a new product on the market, brand C shows the same model in various colors to show that they can meet the requests of a wide audience. Their native advertising content also features more mentions of special offers as bigger brands can afford to make more campaigns with decreasing prices.

Smaller brands, at the same time, tend to promote other aspects that make them unique, depicting themselves as niche manufacturers for consumers with very specific or unusual needs. For example, brand E dedicates a lot of attention in their videos to the ecological component of their activity, the eco-friendliness of their products, and the topic of environmental protection in general. This direction of their brand image is also reflected in the imagery used in their native advertising, which frequently features nature, flora, or fauna. Brand D, in turn, promotes itself as an inclusive brand and while its range of products might not be the widest on the market, it creates and provides things for people with special needs, such as colorblind clients, clients with low tolerance of bright light or loud noises, clients with allergies, and so on. This aspect is also highlighted in their videos to make the brand stand out and attract potential customers.

The difference between corporate brands and independent brands in using native advertising instruments on TikTok is different, as well. For the smaller number of resources, independent brands tend to have less presence of sponsored influencer content. The influencers who promote independent brands also tend to be bloggers who work with niche audiences and have a comparably homogeneous follower base. For example, brand D turned to a famous eco-activist who films educational TikToks about the latest news in the environmental protection sphere. This may offer less coverage of users but the pool of followers of the influencer and the consumers of brand D are almost identical, which makes this a perfectly targeted advertisement.

Bigger brands show a bigger number of influencers involved in their native advertising. Besides, the influencers they sponsor have a bigger fanbase and more views on their short



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videos. As not all the followers of their influencers are potential buyers of these corporate brands, it still raises awareness among the audience. At the same time, native advertisement allows to erase the limitation between the potential customers and uninterested followers. For example, brand C has sponsored an advertisement from an influencer with a huge number of followers and a regular stream of views. The reason this influencer is popular is their previous participation in a dating show. Now, this influencer is pregnant and they could incorporate the native advertisement of brand C into their short videos about their daily life and how they are redecorating the house for a family with a child. Therefore, from this example, it can be seen how native advertising as a form can shape any content into a promotional activity.

What is also interesting in this context is the sponsorship disclosure in the influencer videos. The influencers promoting smaller brands tend to make their disclosure more personal or highlight the fact that these products they received for free. For example, an influencer making a native advertisement of brand F shared a story of how they met the manufacturers at a local fair and, after discovering they have similar interests, decided to cooperate in the marketing sphere. An influencer in a short video about a product or brand E, in turn, openly stated that they received a product for free as a gift. At the same time, the influencers promoting the production of corporate brands show a higher percentage of not disclosing their sponsorship details or admitting they were paid to make a native advertisement of a certain product.

A more detailed depiction of native advertising through sponsored influencer content on TikTok, including the character of their sponsor disclosure, can be seen in Figure 1.

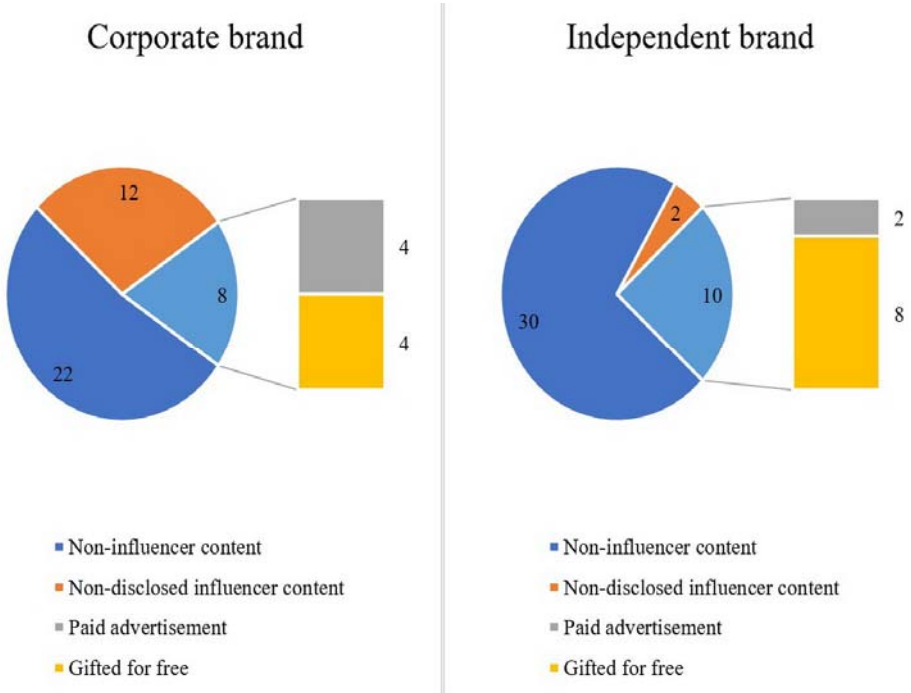


**Figure 1.** The usage of sponsored influencer content in the native advertising of corporate and independent brands on TikTok



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We collected the participants' feedback before and after an experiment, and based on their evaluation of brand recall (questions 1-6) and brand recognition (questions 7-12), formed an overall brand awareness assessment for corporate brands (brands A, B, and C) and independent brands (brands D, E, and F). The results, highlighting the number of times the brand was correctly recalled or recognized by the participants, are presented in Figure 2.

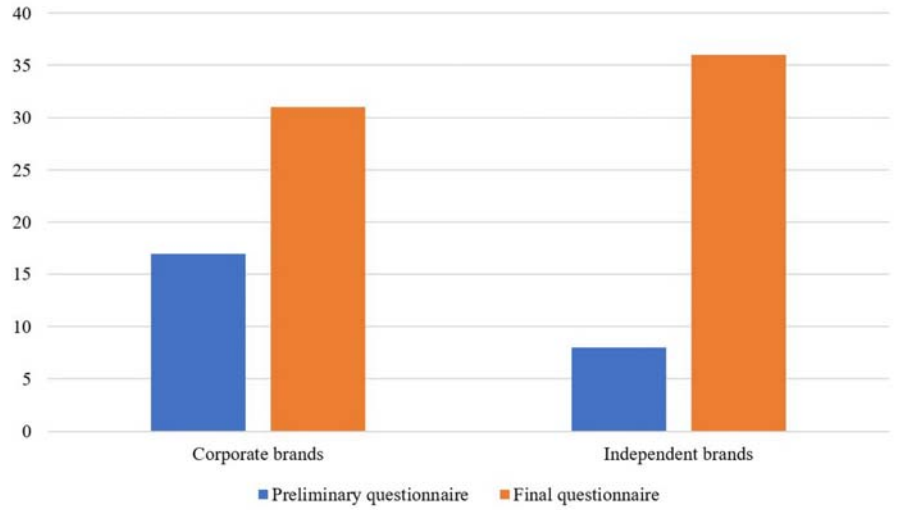


**Figure 2.** Brand awareness of corporate and independent brands before and after consuming their native advertising content on the short video platform TikTok

As can be seen from Figure 2, the use of native advertising was beneficial for both types of brands in terms of increasing their awareness. The preliminary results calculated from the feedback provided before the experiment show that more participants already had some awareness of corporate brands and knew less about their independent counterparts. The final questionnaire results, however, showed that the brand awareness assessment was better for smaller independent brands. Therefore, while native advertisement on TikTok was efficient for all six brands, the brand awareness improvement was more dynamic for smaller and independent brands.

**Discussion**

The materials and results of this research show how easy integrating native advertisements on video platforms is and how much instruments and space there is to explore its various applications. Similar findings were presented in a publication by Chen et al. (2020), however, with more focus on video format in general. The overall increase in brand awareness after the usage of native advertising in short videos, especially with the help of influencers, is in line with the research of Yang (2022), who conducted a similar study on the Chinese short video platform Douyin. As Mulier et al. (2021) highlight in their study of marketing strategies on short video platforms in general, native advertisement has better performance when compared to other forms or genres of ads; the results of our experiment do confirm that there is a positive outcome in applying this strategy. However, the present academia lacks articles on native



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advertising on TikTok specifically, which is why the results of our study can be presented amid the findings in similar research but cannot be compared to or contrasted against a study of the same nature. This shows a necessity to follow this direction of research, as well as allows us to determine the effectiveness of our experiment via cross-referencing and a partial comparison.
At the same time, some findings that are related to the usage of native advertising strategy mirror similar results in studies focusing on native advertising on other social media platforms. For example, Kim et al. (2021) also confirm that the social media content of a brand and their native advertising should be harmonious with their brand strategy and brand image. This conclusion is reflected in a publication by Altstiel et al. (2019), who view native advertising as a part of the PR strategy enforcement. As a result, from the observation of the native advertising content of the brands in our study, we can also state that their content, nature, and design should be related to their brand image, mission, and PR strategy for better brand awareness.
An interesting look into the use of influencers and the tendencies of sponsor disclosure was taken in our interpretation of the experiment results, which can be supported by other studies published on this topic, such as Campbell (2023). Cornwell (2019), for example, highlights the importance of influencer promotions in marketing activities to increase audience engagement and brand awareness. At the same time, Eisend et al. (2020) demonstrates the impact of the sponsor disclosure on the influencer content and the response of the audience. As shown in our study, as well, the more personal and positive the sponsor disclosure is, the better impact on the brand awareness this native advertising has. The brands in our experiment have also shown great concern in choosing the person to represent their brand in native advertising; the impact of such choice is also covered in Fikkers and Piotrowski (2020). As a result, the findings of our research are similar, in some aspects, to the publications of other authors but at the same time demonstrate some new contributions to the overall analysis of native advertising on short video platforms.

**Conclusions**

Native advertising on short video platforms is a useful and convenient way to increase brand awareness, as was shown in our experimental research. It offers more dynamic improvements for smaller independent brands that have fewer followers and smaller resources. However, big corporate brands can also rely on this form of advertisement to gain more brand awareness slower but, still, steadily. It is discovered that native advertising on short video platforms is successful when it reflects the overall strategy of a brand and contributes to the architecture of the brand image. Such ideas as making a single concept for all short video designs, focusing on the unique features of your products, creating a niche service, and relying on influencers whose followers are close to the brand's customer base are the most effective; they find their application in native advertising and also improve brand awareness. At the same time, bigger corporate brands can make use of their resources, promote accessibility and wider choice of goods, use more recognizable brand images and symbols in their short videos, and attract influencers with a bigger follower pool. Nevertheless, the application of native advertising in both cases proves to be efficient, according to the results of our study.



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Current research can be improved and extended by letting the focus off the content of the short videos itself but on the algorithms of a short video platform. The number of times certain native advertising enters the recommendations feed and what kind of people are considered its audience in TikTok or another short video application can also speak of the efficiency of native advertising and its potential consequences. Additionally, the brands of other industries can be observed and analyzed, as the change in products, brand mission and image, and target audience, could influence the effectiveness of native advertising, as well as the instruments with which such advertising can be made.

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