

TikTok as a digital marketing tool: Freshly Cosmetics brand case study

TikTok como herramienta de marketing digital: estudio de caso de la marca Freshly Cosmetics



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Abstract:

The beauty products market in Spain is one of the most important in the world. Its high consumption pushes brands to invest more in advertising to be present in all media. The digital communication strategy of the Spanish beauty brand Freshly Cosmetics on TikTok is analyzed, based on a hypothesis that supports a significant change of strategy between 2021 and 2022 in this social network. The reasons behind this possible movement are investigated using a mixed approach that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques

Resumen:

El mercado de productos de belleza en España es uno de los más importantes del mundo. Su elevado consumo empuja a las marcas a invertir más en publicidad para estar presentes en todos los medios de comunicación. Se analiza la estrategia de comunicación digital de la marca española de belleza Freshly Cosmetics en TikTok, a partir de una hipótesis que sostiene un significativo cambio de estrategia entre 2021 y 2022 en esta red social. Se investigan las razones que han motivado este posible movimiento mediante un enfoque mixto que aún técnicas cuantitativas

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applied to a time frame spanning from January 2021 to October 2022. Specifically, the impact and interaction of the brand's publications with its audience are evaluated and a content analysis of 121 publications is carried out by choosing 36 variables that are coded in the SPSS program to find out their frequencies and percentages. These findings, complemented by a semi-structured interview with its communication manager, underline the use of the digital platform as a showcase through which to enhance the brand values and focus on quality content, reducing the promotional component characteristic of the initiation stage.

Keywords

Beauty; Freshly Cosmetics; social media; TikTok; advertising.

y cualitativas aplicadas a un marco temporal que abarca de enero de 2021 a octubre de 2022. Específicamente, se evalúan los impactos e interacciones de las publicaciones de la marca con su audiencia y se realiza un análisis de contenido de 121 publicaciones mediante la elección de 36 variables que se codifican en el programa SPSS para averiguar sus frecuencias y porcentajes. Estos hallazgos, complementados con una entrevista semiestructurada a su responsable de comunicación, subrayan el uso de la plataforma digital como escaparate a través del cual potenciar los valores de la marca y apostar por contenido de calidad, reduciendo el componente promocional característico de la etapa iniciática.

Palabras clave:

Belleza; Freshly Cosmetics; redes sociales; TikTok; publicidad.

1. Introduction

The latest figures for advertising investment by advertisers that fall within the beauty sector place the “Beauty and Hygiene” category as the seventh sector by investment volume in 2022, within a ranking of a total of twenty-three sectors headed by “Distribution and Catering” as the leader in advertising investment (InfoAdex, 2023). According to the same study, the first advertiser is the division of the French multinational L’Oréal Spain and the third, the consumer goods giant Procter & Gamble Spain, two brands with a recognized business trajectory and high prestige within the sector. As a result, these brands account for almost all the investment in the cosmetics market in Spain, a market that recorded a growth of +7.8% in 2021 and that positions our country as one of the international leaders: Spain is in the Top 10 world exporters of beauty products and ranks second as an exporter of perfumes (Stanpa, 2022), behind only France. Therefore, these figures place the beauty sector ahead of others as emblematic in Spain as olive oil, wine, or footwear. An exhaustive analysis of the characteristics of this industry helps to understand the needs that Spaniards have about their personal care and appearance. According to the National Association of Perfumery and Cosmetics Stanpa, an average of 7 to 9 products per person per day are used in our country, with an income of 166 euros/year per capita and an outstanding growth of the subcategories of perfumes, color cosmetics and skin care. Moreover, this is a sector where some of the brands that have focused on building trust, credibility, and familiarity as preferred attributes (EAE Business School, 2018) have been rewarded by consumers. A circumstance that hints at their concern for other themes or values outside the product itself or the sector itself. Thus, a more conscious, supportive, and sustainable type of consumer is emerging (Stanpa, 2022), who is not exclusively guided by price, but needs to perceive quality in order to pay for it; a situation that is linked to the concepts of sustainability and well-being as discursive axes of marketing communication today. Specifically, sustainability is a determining factor, with a weight of 67.3% in determining the act of purchase (EAE Business School, 2022). Other notable trends are the appeal to the discourse of diversity and inclusion in beauty advertising communications (Figueiredo, 2016; Kantar, 2021), as well as the vindication of the empowerment of the mature woman or silver generation as the main consumer of cosmetics (El Publicista, 2022; Rodríguez, 2023). Today’s customer longs

to find in beauty brands an emotional bond, hence cosmetics have transcended the barriers of the mere product to become part of their identity (Aranda, 2018).

In this context, 84% of perfumery and cosmetics companies in Spain are SMEs (Stanpa, 2022). Among them, the case of Freshly Cosmetics stands out, a young emerging Catalan cosmetics company created in 2016 that focuses on cosmetics through the use of natural ingredients that, since its origins, has multiplied its business figures year after year. As distinctive strengths they highlight their own manufacturing and the loyalty of their customers, as 40% repeat (Plaza, 2021). SME of the Year Award 2022 in Tarragona as a generator of wealth and creator of employment, thanks to its successful business commitment aligned with a solid commitment to the health of the planet (Europa Press, 2022). As with other young companies that combine the physical point of sale and also market through the Internet, part of the secret of its success lies in its marketing strategy in social media.

2. Reference framework

2.1. Online communication of beauty brands

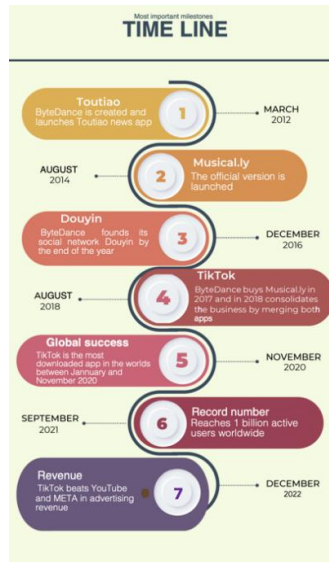
Nowadays, conventional beauty advertising on television, outdoor and high-end magazines coexists in the same scenario with the tools provided by Information and Communication Technologies. The presence of beauty brands in digital platforms becomes a key operation within their business strategy, due to the fact that conversations about beauty, makeup and cosmetics are breaking records in social networks (beautymarket.es, 2020). With the usual use of a prescriber as the axis of the discourse, “whose image and reputation are transferred to the brand” (Cerdá-Vilaplana *et al.*, 2022: 10), these virtual community platforms grant an amplifying dimension to this type of messages, while facilitating the participation of consumers in a conversational ecosystem where emerging narratives proliferate (Bonilla *et al.*, 2021). Thus, digital platforms are configured as ideal communication tools for brands and beauty products, as corporate and advertising content is diluted in these digital leisure spaces (Viñals, 2013) in which an atmosphere of entertainment and distraction prevails.

Social networks provide beauty brands with new spaces for communication and narrative innovation; they accommodate a convergence of languages, as well as the hybridization of genres and advertising formats (Méndiz and García, 2017), which provide brands with alternative ways of communicating with their audiences. One of the paths most used by advertisers is the use of prescribers 2.0 or influencers, with transcendence in the interest groups of brands through the production and distribution of content, interaction, and the strength of their opinion leadership (Enke & Borchers, 2019). Their presence supplements the direct advisory function that cosmetics users, demanding in terms of quality and personalization, are accustomed to require in physical stores. Attributes such as personalization and authenticity are particularly valued in influencer marketing campaigns (IPMARK, 2023), where these figures play a vital role as brand ambassadors and for showcasing product results. Thus, beauty brands face the challenge of presenting their consumers with a seductive communication strategy on social networks and an efficient practice on mobile devices, which are able to replace the in-store shopping experience. As one of the latest trends in beauty marketing, the term *phygital* experience is coined, which implies for brands the need to work on the union of ecommerce and physical stores in order to offer their customers a different and attractive experience (EAE Business School, 2023).

Based on the potential of digital advertising in the field of beauty and cosmetics, social networks become platforms that provide a large number of options for information: consult previous experiences, seek recommendations or share advice in an environment of complicity and reciprocity. All in all, it can be noted that social networks configure spaces that add “factors, such as activity, communication, technique, style and creativity” (Moldovan and Izquierdo, 2022: 329) and that their inclusion conditions the success of publications on these platforms. Among them, Instagram and TikTok are the favorite networks for beauty brands (Rebold, 2022), mainly due to the notoriety that visuals acquire and the dynamism that young audiences appreciate so much (Matellanes and Rodríguez, 2021). Specifically, the Beauty Sector Social Media Barometer 2022 points to TikTok as the emerging channel that brands will tend to focus on in the near future.

2.2. TikTok at the service of commercial interests

TikTok (Douyin in Asia) is the most successful social network for the creation and exchange of audiovisual content at the moment (Anderson, 2020), if one considers, mainly, the number of annual downloads (Sensor Tower, 2022) and its advertising revenue (Rua Agüete, 2022). In just a few years, and partly thanks to COVID (Dias and Duarte, 2022; Ng & Indran, 2022), the Asian company has managed to accumulate more than 1.3 billion new active users (TikTok Team, 2021; Mansoor, 2022). However, its greatest merit lies in: 1) the creation of a highly sophisticated algorithm that operates with AI and optimizes the reception, organization, and distribution of audiovisual pieces among users (Scanlon, 2020; Zhao, 2021). The improvement of the recommendations process with which they operate, which learns from the information that the user leaves on the platform, such as views, created material, interactions or profile information, has managed to increase the number of new users, but also the consumption time year by year (Wang, 2022); and 2) the tools that TikTok has been making available to the user for the creation of own UGC content (Patel & Binjola, 2020; Wang, 2020). Thus, the combination of these two factors and the constant improvements that TikTok continues to implement are making it the fastest growing company in recent years (Levine, 2022).

Timeline infographic 1. Milestones achieved by TikTok

Source: own elaboration

There are some important milestones that have occurred in its short life span, which are shown chronologically in the infographic timeline 1: the engineer and entrepreneur Zhang Yiming founded the technology company ByteDance in 2012 and launched the news and information content application Toutiao, driven by a highly sophisticated search engine that has been the basis of the current TikTok (Ma & Hu, 2021). Two years later, the social network Musical.ly was born, created by Alex Zhu and Luyu Yang and oriented to audiovisual content. In 2015 this platform had millions of active users worldwide (Fan & Hemans, 2022). ByteDance in 2016 founds its social network Douyin in China and the following year buys Musical.ly for \$900 million (Fannin, 2019). In 2018 it consolidates both platforms and TikTok is born although in the Chinese market it still maintains its original name (Douyin). In 2020, the social network TikTok reached one billion downloads worldwide (Tidy & Galer, 2020). Within a few months, it surpassed one billion active users (TikTok Team, 2021). In 2022, it achieved higher advertising revenues than Meta and YouTube (Rua Agnete, 2022).

Despite all these milestones achieved in such a short time, it can also be added that, as of today, TikTok is transforming, as it is also not the platform that was unveiled in 2018 in the West. While it started out as a social network where the duration of its content was limited to 15 seconds, mainly to streamline consumption (Shuai *et al.*, 2019), their new roadmap has led them to allow hosting longer and longer videos, which have gone from 60 to 180 seconds (July 2021), and up to 10 minutes in 2022 (Alley & Hanshew, 2022; Drapkin, 2022). These measures favoring longer content are starting to prove popular in many countries, as video views above 60 seconds have reached 5 billion (Cyca, 2022). TikTok has argued that these moves are due to a commitment to increasing creativity on the social network (Field, 2022). However, this creativity, as they define it, is more

focused on attracting greater diversity of content (Wang, 2020). A constant that has already been demonstrated in the last three years (Zhu, 2020; Miao *et al.*, 2021; García *et al.*, 2022) and that has a direct impact on the profile of the user that inhabits TikTok. Since the age group with the highest prominence on this platform in the West continues to be Generation Z (Li *et al.*, 2019), the visibility of *millennials* and other previous generations is increasing (Dellatto, 2019; Matsa, 2022; Ng & Indran, 2022). Consequently, this new scenario configures a more heterogeneous social network where new companies and institutions (IAB Spain, 2021; TikTok Team, 2022) have seen an opportunity to sell their products or position their brand with the creation of audiovisual content. Previous studies point to TikTok as the platform that is currently receiving the most attention due to its rapid growth, its creative possibilities and the opportunities it brings to the marketing territory (Rach, 2021). Through it, informative content elicits higher engagement rates than emotional content, with the singularity that non-verbal information has hardly any significant effect (Wahid *et al.*, 2022). Analyses of the communicative activity of European and North American companies on this social network show a correlation between the increase in followers and the increase in publications, with reach increasing as content production is encouraged; moreover, it is a platform that tends to “innovate narratively far from conventional advertising and marketing formulas” (Sidorenko *et al.*, 2021: 107).

3. Methodology

The main objective of this research is to analyze the use that the Spanish beauty company Freshly Cosmetics makes of the social network TikTok. Other specific objectives derive from this main objective: 1) to know the communication strategy of this company on TikTok; 2) to count and group its publications, but also the interactions of its audience; 3) to measure the level of engagement generated by its actions with the audience; 4) to analyze the content of its publications formally; 5) to find out whether its marketing strategy has remained stable or has changed during the study period; 6) to understand the importance that the creation and distribution of audiovisual content on this social network has for its business model; and 7) to assess whether its focus on this social network is being successful.

These specific objectives give rise to some research questions that will guide this study towards the established working hypotheses: Is TikTok the social network where they invest the most? Is their investment profitable? What is their priority target? Is their sustainable product strategy one of the keys to their success with young people? What do they prioritize when working with the influencers that represent their brand? What are the pillars of their communications? Do all their publications follow the same line? Will they continue to invest in this social network and operate in the same way in the short and long term?

In line with the research questions formulated, three working hypotheses have been established:

H.1. Freshly Cosmetics' presence in 2022 on TikTok has decreased compared to the previous year. To confirm this hypothesis, the number of publications of the brand, the visits to its content, as well as the interactions of the audience with it will be quantified.

H.2. If this hypothesis is confirmed, a derivative of it is formulated, which states that this fact is due to a change in the brand's strategy, mainly motivated by: 1) the experience achieved on this platform has led them to optimize the resources that TikTok provides to reach their target and convey the brand's values; 2) the reduction of the promotional hook in their publications to generate traffic.

H.3. Finally, it is estimated that its short and medium-term strategy will be similar. Everything suggests that this new positioning in TikTok, more linked to generating engagement with the audience than volume of interactions, is more in line with the brand's values.

In order to confirm or refute the working hypotheses put forward, this research is approached from a mixed approach that combines quantitative and qualitative procedures. In this way, numerical measurements and statistical analysis of the information obtained through sequential and evidential processes, common in the quantitative approach as applied in similar research on social networks (Mayoral and Edo, 2014; Pérez-Solà and Casas-Roma, 2016; Díaz-Lucena *et al.*, 2022a; Díaz-Lucena *et al.*, 2022b), are combined and complemented with inductive methods typical of the qualitative approach such as the semi-structured interview.

The first phase of the research focuses on quantitative data analysis. It begins by quantifying the publications of Freshly Cosmetics and the interactions of its audience on the social network TikTok from February 2021 to October 2022. The sum of the publications in these twenty-one months of study amounts to one thousand four hundred and thirty-two and, in turn, these impacts have generated more than one million three hundred thousand audience interactions. This start date of the study was chosen because it marks a turning point in Freshly Cosmetics' TikTok strategy, in that it begins publishing periodically on this platform in February 2021. While its beginnings (from May 2020 to January 2021) have also been analyzed, the results obtained from the eighty-seven impacts in this period are not transcendent for this study.

The majority of the data that have been worked on Freshly Cosmetics in TikTok have been provided in raw Excel format by the company Analisa.io. From all of them, the following variables were chosen for analysis and grouped and ordered chronologically: 1) number of posts; 2) number of audience visits to the content; 3) number of audience interactions: likes, shares and comments; 4) duration of the audiovisual content of the post; and 5) number of characters inserted in each post.

In addition, a content analysis of Freshly Cosmetics' posts on TikTok for two specific months (October 2021 and October 2022) was conducted to formulate reproducible and valid inferences, but also to observe their evolution over time after thirteen months. As a useful research technique "to dissect any product of media communication" (Igartua, 2012: 181), in the current ecosystem derived from Information and Communication Technologies content analysis is circumscribed to digital content analysis applied to the study of social network publications, characterized by factors such as "hypertextuality, multimodality, interactivity and frequency of updating of such content" (Chaves-Montero *et al.*, 2018: 9), among others. In this specific case, the total number of publications that are conceived in these thirteen months and that have been analyzed amount to one hundred and twenty-one. To this end, homogeneous coding units have been selected to cover all the publication content, which have been captured in a content analysis template developed *ad hoc* for the present research. These variables are grouped around a series of global categories that include the main items of analysis in accordance with the objectives pursued by the study, as shown in the following table:

Table 1. Template for content analysis

CLASSIFICATION OF THE PUBLICATION	Type of communication Communication objective Product Allusion to a specific communication campaign Type of campaign
MARKETING INCENTIVE	Presence of promotional marketing action Type of promotional marketing action
BRAND / PRODUCT PRESENCE	Mention of brand / product How it mentions Brand / product display presence Brand / product display mode
LOCATION	Space Place
CHARACTERS	Presence of characters No. of characters Role Gender Age Range Display of imperfections
NARRATIVE DISCOURSE	Presence of introductory text Type of introductory text Use of argumentation Type of discourse Language Demonstration of product use Narrative format
TECHNICAL RESOURCES	Types of camera shots Presence of effects Typology of effects Emoticons Music Dance Presence of support resources Typology of support resources
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE AUDIENCE	Presence of audience's marketing appeal Typology of marketing appeals

Source: own elaboration

Once the content analysis was completed, the data obtained were recorded using SPSS to find the frequencies and percentages that will be presented in this study.

The second phase of the research is approached with a qualitative approach through a semi-structured interview with the communication manager of the company Freshly Cosmetics, Salva Marsal. The interview was conducted on December 7, 2022, through the Microsoft Teams program. This interview was divided into three main blocks: 1) general questions about the company and his role in it; 2) questions about data and factual facts in TikTok where the findings found in this research could be taught and shared to contrast them and get his feedback; and 3) questions about the drift and future in TikTok of Freshly Cosmetics.

4. Results

4.1. Aggregation and computation of posts on TikTok

Freshly Cosmetics opened its account on TikTok in May 2020. Its first publications explain its learning process in this new narrative, as the number of impacts was low from May 2020 to January 2021, totaling 87 publications in 8 months. These impacts had little impact on the audience if we look at the visualizations to their content and user interactions. However, as of February 2021, its strategy in TikTok changes: 1) the number of publications increases considerably; 2) priority is given to increasing the volume of interactions through promotional campaigns or queries; and 3) the results of the new strategy, if the data obtained are quantified, indicate a great success. Table 2 shows the totality of the work carried out by Freshly Cosmetics from May 2020 to October 2022.

Table 2. Summary of Freshly Cosmetics' work on TikTok

TikTok account	Opening	Followers	Post	Likes	Views	Comments	Shares
freshlycosmetics_es	may-20	52.700	1.519	1.368.302	40.236.548	6.007	9.816

Source: own elaboration

The Catalan company has achieved more than 40 million visits to its content and more than one million likes. The average ratio of visits per impact (total visits divided by total impacts) is 26,489 and the number of interactions (sum of likes, comments and shares divided by total impacts) is 911. These are remarkable figures for a company of its size on this social network.

However, if the work carried out in 2021 and 2022 is quantified separately, large differences are observed. Table 3 lists these variables divided by date. From 2022 to 2021, the number of publications has dropped by 188.1%. In the rest of the metrics this difference is even greater, especially in the percentage of likes. However, it is striking that this large decline in metrics is less pronounced in audience comments.

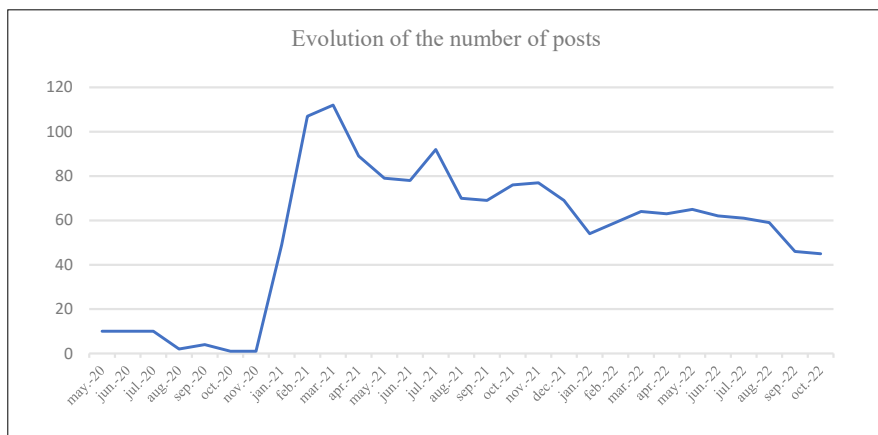
Table 3. Breakdown of Freshly Cosmetics' work on TikTok by year

Date	Posts	Views	Likes	Comments	Shares	Views per post	Interactions per post
2021	967	38.205.313	1.331.154	5.139	8.877	1.377	39.524
2022 (until Oct-2022)	514	1.991.014	35.708	825	870	69	3.877
%	188,1	1.918,9	3.727,9	622,9	1.020,3	1.981,5	1.019,5

Source: own elaboration

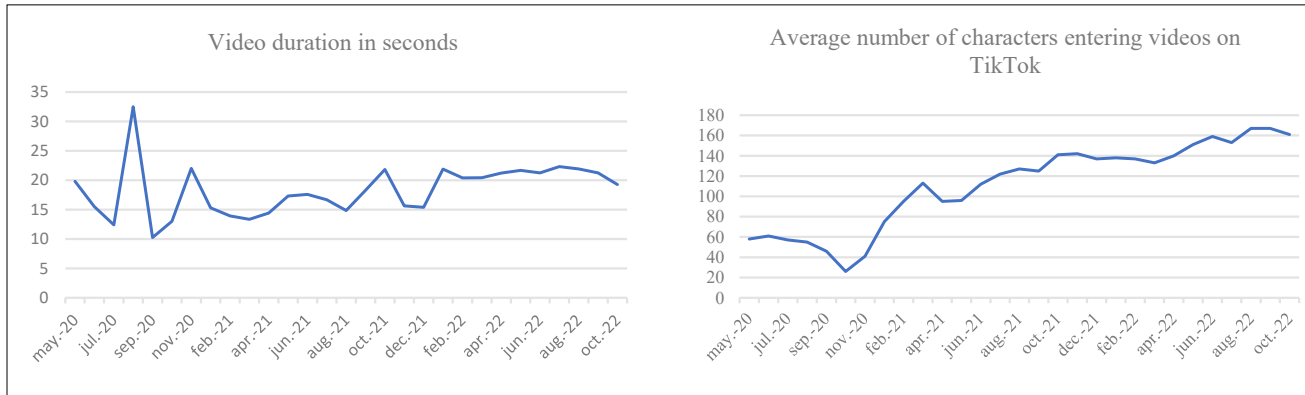
Likewise, Figure 1 shows in detail the evolution of the number of posts since Freshly Cosmetics started operating on TikTok until October 2022. The months of January, but especially February 2021, break the trend and indicate the change of direction of the cosmetics brand on this platform. However, the trend from March 2021 onwards is gradually decreasing from 112 publications in March 2021 (the month with the most impacts) to 45 publications in October 2022. Consequently, and as we have seen, the other metrics, such as visits to the content and audience interactions, have also been affected, showing reduced figures.

Figure 1. Evolution of the number of Freshly Cosmetics posts on TikTok



Source: own elaboration

Other variables that were quantified were the duration of the videos and the inclusion of text on the TikTok platform. The latter has been resolved by counting the number of characters of all the publications launched month by month.

Figures 2 & 3. Evolution of video duration and average number of characters of Freshly Cosmetics publications on TikTok

Source: own elaboration

Thus, Figure 2 shows that the duration of audiovisual content is very similar. Although there are some peaks that indicate changes, the numbers are uniform and show an average duration of 18 seconds per video. A variable, therefore, that has remained constant since the beginning. This is not the case, however, with the text added to each post (Figure 3). Freshly Cosmetics began by introducing its content on the platform with very brief writings that prioritized hashtags and mentions. As they have been learning the logic of this platform, the number of characters per post has increased, and with it the choice of a title that engages the audience. Similarly, it can be noted that the most used words have been: skin and Freshly.

Table 4 shows the five most repeated hashtags and mentions in their publications. It can be seen that hashtags, by the digit indicating their use, are the most common option in the text of the publication. Their frequency is 3 to 5 tags per impact. Furthermore, if this number is compared with that of mentions, it can be certified that the latter are marginal, and are almost exclusively aimed at naming some opinion leader with whom they have worked. Likewise, both in hashtags and mentions, the most repeated, i.e., the priority, is to name the brand. Similarly, it should also be noted the importance of choosing the hashtag *#fyp* in TikTok, but they do not seem to overuse it if you look at the number of times it has been repeated.

Table 4. Mentions and hashtags of Freshly Cosmetics on TikTok

Mentions	Times	Hashtags	Times
@freshlycosmetics	10	#freshlycosmetics	1276
@miss.cremitas	5	#cosmeticanatural	338
@martaponsbeauty	4	#skincare	294
@agatalluch	4	#fyp	189
@identitybeauty	4	#freshlymakeup	134

Source: own elaboration

4.2. The audience of Freshly Cosmetics

The data on the Freshly Cosmetics audience below is taken directly from TikTok and was donated by the brand for this research. The percentage of females is 80% versus 20% male. Likewise, the most relevant age group in its audience is 18 to 24 with 40%, followed by the groups: 25 to 34 with 31%; 35 to 44 with 17%; 45 to 54 with 10% and + 55 years with 3%. The percentages of the 35 to 44 group with 17% and the 45 to 54 group with 10% are striking, because these are remarkable amounts of users who have entered TikTok later than Generation Z and *millennials*, but who have gradually begun to incorporate TikTok into their daily habits.

Freshly Cosmetics has other accounts where the source languages of countries such as Portugal, France or the United Kingdom are used in its marketing strategy. In the Spanish account under analysis, the locations that make up the audience are Spain and Latin American countries with the following percentage: Spain (83%), Mexico (8%), Peru (3%), Argentina (3%) and Colombia (3%).

4.3. Content analysis

This content analysis has been applied to the total number of audiovisual pieces that Freshly Cosmetics has published on TikTok during the months of October 2021 and 2022, totaling 121 units. These videos have been segmented and grouped following the variables set out in the methodology section. The results obtained have been coded with the SPSS statistical program to find the frequencies and percentages of these variables. The following findings are shown below.

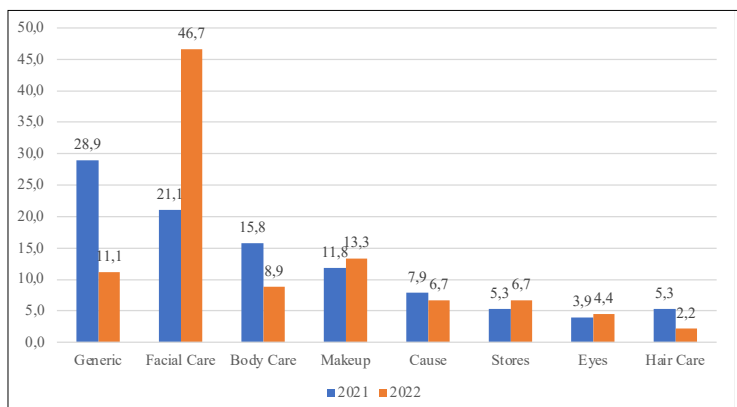
Firstly, it has been noticed that the type of communication that Freshly Cosmetics elaborates with its videos on TikTok obeys marketing objectives aimed at selling the product being advertised; thus, 73.7% of the videos in 2021 present a commercial character. Similarly, this initiative has increased by 9% the following year (82.2%). Lower percentages were found in videos whose communicative intention is purely educational or educational. This category has experienced a decrease in 2022, from 14.5% in 2021 to 8.9% in 2022. This is the case, for example, of pieces that are framed in themes such as breast cancer

prevention, mental health care or the relationship with digital devices. Completing this analysis of the type of communication are corporate videos in which the referent is the brand and its business philosophy. These communications present values strongly linked to the attributes of sustainability and environmental respect. Their presence is lower than the rest and they have also experienced a decrease from one year to the next (from 11.8% in 2021 to 8.9% in 2022).

Likewise, these communications have also been grouped depending on the type of marketing action, i.e., whether they announce the launch of a new product line, relaunch of existing products, awareness campaigns or exclusively promotional pieces. In this way, it has been found that the most repeated actions are relaunches, which reach 56.6% in 2021 and rise to 71.1% in 2022. These data suggest that the main objective lies in increasing sales of its existing product line, as well as consolidating the brand's image by stimulating traffic on TikTok. New product launches come in second place with a percentage of 17.1% in 2021; very similar to 2022 at 17.8%, while awareness communications have experienced a 7% decrease compared to the previous year. Finally, the low significance of promotional publications including incentives is confirmed, with the following figures: 9.2% in 2021 and none in 2022.

It can also be noted that Freshly Cosmetics uses a wide variety of product ranges in its publications (see figure 4), but the subcategories of facial care, branded generic, body care and makeup are most prominent, following the terminology used in the InfoAdex study. Although these four subsectors within the overall Beauty category lead the most repeated impacts, both in 2021 and 2022, the study of the evolution of the brand's strategy underlines its commitment to facial care with 46.7% of publications in 2022. This percentage hints at its significance, as it makes this range of products the brand's hallmark and thus the main focus of its communications.

If we examine the type of promotion that Freshly Cosmetics introduces in its communications, we have learned that campaigns associated with specific dates in the calendar, such as Black Month or Halloween during the month of October, are not abundant, as these even tend to be reduced from 2021 to 2022. For the most part, these are communications that are increasingly moving away from promotional hooks, in favor of communications that include recommendations, fun messages or information about the expansion of your business. These percentages are very similar in both years: 64.1% in 2021 and 64.4% in 2022. Thus, the use of marketing incentive in communications has dropped from 23.7% in 2021 to 4.4% in 2022. Within this type of strategy, in October 2021, discount was the most common offer with 13.2%, which can be added to others, such as Black Month (3.9%) or the combination of discount and gift (3.9%). On the other hand, in 2022, only 2.2% of publications where it is displayed were counted.

Figure 4. Evolution of the beauty subcategories in the profile of Freshly Cosmetics in TikTok

Source: own elaboration

In both 2021 and 2022, the mention of the brand has been an ever-present constant in Freshly Cosmetics' communications for TikTok. The most common choice is the graphic form overprinted on the image (@freshlycosmetics) with 77.6% in 2021 and rising in 2022 to 88.9%. This option can be combined with a verbal mention of the driver and the written brand.

The way in which you display the product in your audiovisual pieces is crucial for the creation of your content. Its evolution from one year to the next has been perceived due to the experience that the brand has been acquiring on this platform, as it has invested more resources and time in it and, as a result, it has gone from repeating the product presentation from 72.4% in 2021 to 86.7% in 2022. The way in which the product is shown varies, although the most common trend is the choice of a host or presenter who documents and/or tests what he or she is presenting. A modality that has been increasing from one year to the next (from 40.8% in 2021 to 48.9% in 2022). Other prominent options have been: packaging only (24.4%), combination of driver or presenter and product still life (6.7%) and, finally, in-store product display (6.7%).

If we look at the locations chosen for product display in communications, we can see that indoor spaces stand out: 96.1% in 2021 and 91.1% in 2022. Of these, the most repeated option has been "undetermined interior" with 38.2% in 2021. The difficulty in identifying it is related to the type of filming shots and the effects used in the editing, which are intended to give greater prominence to the figure of the presenter and his relationship with the product. In the cases where it has been possible to determine the place chosen for the recording, the most repeated in 2021 have been bathrooms (25%) and bedrooms (14.5%). However, in 2022, almost half of the publications chose bathrooms to document the product with 46.7% –a remarkable increase. Other significant spaces have been: living rooms, stores or company offices.

The choice of the drivers of the piece and supporting characters compute similar records in both periods: 76.3% in 2021 and 75.6% in 2022. The study of the number of people appearing in the videos has revealed that the choice of a single driver has been the most repeated with similar numbers: 64.5% in 2021 and 66.7% in 2022. Likewise, audiovisual pieces with two actors

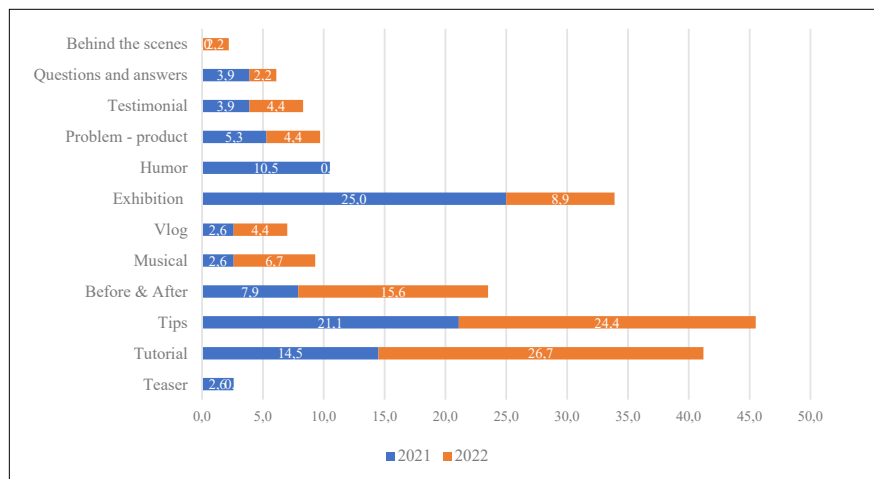
are marginal (3.9% and 4.4% respectively), and videos with more than two characters also lack weight in the total. Nevertheless, individual compositions prevail, where it has been possible to establish a closer relationship with the product that shows closeness and intimacy. In addition, on most occasions, the brand opts for hiring a prescriber to lead the communication (63.2% in 2021 and 68.9% in 2022). The almost non-existent presence of influencers tagged on Freshly Cosmetics' TikTok account (with 2.2% in 2022) is striking, compared to the role the brand gives to its team of employees (10.5% in 2021 and 2.2% in 2022) and its customers (2.6% in 2021 and 2.2% in 2022), although these also register very low figures.

In terms of gender, women predominate (68.4% in 2021 and 71.1% in 2022). However, it should be remembered that 80% of its TikTok audience is female. Moreover, in the territory of female beauty and cosmetics, the choice of a female prescriber is usually the most common. While in the case of Freshly Cosmetics the most repeated age group for its female prescribers is 25 to 34 years old (53.9% in 2021 and 40% in 2022), the brand has also chosen younger groups of female prescribers. This data, which has been extracted from the analysis, is evidence of a strategy that is increasing from one year to the next (17.1% in 2021 and 26.7% in 2022). With these choices, it can be affirmed that the brand is targeting a young female audience. Similarly, another piece of data also leads to this same thought: the gradual increase in the exhibition of imperfections carried out by the actors in the videos, which they seek to naturalize, because many of these imperfections are common in younger groups. Specifically, 11.8% in 2021 and 28.9% in 2022 show faces and bodies with marks, blemishes, pimples, cellulite, etc., which make up the beauty discourse of the Freshly Cosmetics universe on TikTok.

The analysis of the narrative discourse of the audiovisual pieces has led to determine the prominence of the introductory text in the structure of the message, with 78.9% in 2021 and 93.3% in 2022. This choice is manifested in different styles: enunciative (38.2% in 2021 and 28.9% in 2022), rhetorical interrogative (13.2% in 2021 and 24.4% in 2022) and an approach that generates expectation (7.9% in 2021 and 17.8% in 2022). All three are resources aimed at hooking the audience at the beginning of the video. Similarly, other options (exclamations or exhortations) are also introduced, but they are in the minority.

Continuing with the structure of the audiovisual piece, the prescriber frequently resorts to argumentation, a technique found in 55.3% of the videos in 2021 and rising to 66.7% in 2022. The use of argumentation is linked to the typology of the main discourse, persuasive discourse, which is defined as a discourse in which the sender aims to convince the receiver by using reasons. Thus, 34.2% of messages in 2021 and 48.9% in 2022 are persuasive. These are followed by demonstrative (23.7% in 2021 and 20% in 2022) and informative messages (15.8% and 22.2% respectively), as well as formative or educational and distractive messages, although in marginal percentages. Moreover, within the discursive strategy, the demonstration of product application has risen sharply from 27.6% in 2021 to 53.3% in 2022, coinciding with the peak of persuasive pieces of a commercial nature around facial care products.

Concluding, within the analysis of the narrative discourse, the results have pointed to an evolution of the format where higher doses of creativity have been perceived, as it has been possible to note that, during 2021, the brand has focused on the repetition of the simple product display (25%) together with tips or advice (21.1%). Having said that, the following year, the tutorial format (26.7%) and tips (24.4%) have led the strategy to connect with the public. Interestingly, its pieces contain a wide variety of narrative formats (see graph 5), which enrich its communication strategy with greater creativity, as well as providing more dynamism, freshness, and fun.

Figure 5. Evolution of the narrative formats of the videos in the Freshly Cosmetics profile on TikTok

Source: own elaboration

In the analysis of technical and stylistic resources, the study on the camera shot sizes concludes that the most used in 2021 is the short medium shot (32.9%), together with the medium shot (17.1%) and the close-up (15.8%). However, in 2022 some differences have been found, as the short medium shot has decreased (22.2%) to the detriment of the rise experienced by the detail shot, whose presence in 22.2% of publications is in line with the increase in the display of imperfections in face and body, mentioned above. Similarly, the number of effects in editing has undergone a downward trend in videos (from 77.6% in 2021 to 55.6% in 2022). In both periods, the most repeated effect has been the camera approaching the product (22.4% in 2021 and 15.6% in 2022). In addition, the use of the chroma key stands out, present in 15.8% of publications in 2021 and 11.1% of publications in the following year. Other notable effects in 2021 focused on the treatment of sound (13.2%), the handheld camera (10.5%) and the effect of putting a face to objects (9.2%). All of them have been maintained in 2022, but have registered lower percentages. The low use of filters has been striking (1.3% in 2021 and 2.2% in 2022), a quality that can also be linked to their strategy of supporting naturalness and reality without artifice. Emoticons are incorporated into these entries as a distinctive element in both 2021 (72.4%) and 2022 (75.6%), as is music, the percentage of which does not fall below 85% in both periods. Anecdotally, the insertion of dance in publications is recorded in only 6.6% of the units in the year 2021 and 8.9% in the year 2022. A 34.2% of the videos in 2021 and 35.6% in 2022 have included supporting resources; when this variable applies, still images have been highlighted as the predominant resource.

This analysis concludes with some data on Freshly Cosmetics' relationship with its audience. First, it was found that direct appeal to the audience does not represent the dominant trend, with only 31.6% in 2021 and 27.7% in 2022 opting for this approach. Specifically, in 2021, it has been noted that on those occasions when there is a call to action, it seems that the audience is encouraged to enjoy a certain promotion (10.5%) or to discover something related to the brand and its products

(11.8%), with incidence on price, or the generation of intrigue or expectation as axes of these speeches. These lines of appeal to the audience used have been reduced in the following year as they have managed changes in the way of relating to the audience, where the focus has been on strengthening its community on TikTok, as well as the visibility given to the physical points of sale with actions such as: giving opinions in the comments (6.7%), visiting stores (6.7%) and following the brand's account on TikTok (4.4%).

4.4. *Interview with Freshly Cosmetics*

The semi-structured interview with Salva Marsal, Communications and Corporate Press Manager of Freshly Cosmetics, begins with a block of general questions about the company and his role in it. A journalist by training, he has been working at Freshly Cosmetics since 2021 and is in charge of generalist and corporate media relations.

The brand was born in 2016 as a digital native company. In those years, buying natural cosmetics online was still a barrier to overcome. Since its beginnings, Freshly Cosmetics has always had very strong values that are irreducible for them: love for people, animals, and the planet.

Marsal stresses that as a company philosophy they are committed to trial and error, facing the possibility of failure without fear. "Taking risk is in our DNA" he says, always aiming for the top. After a period of upward growth for the brand, 2022 was the year to consolidate and professionalize teams and resources. As a determining factor, he points out that that 2022 has been key for the expansion of the business with the opening of more physical stores, which have gone from 2 to 8 stores in Spain. Although they were born as a digital brand, the opening of physical stores is due to the demands of their public and their motivation to "be where the Freshly Fan asks for it". Although the company is very structured, without the concept of gear and the convergence of synergies nothing would work. Furthermore, by not working with external suppliers, they understand that they are able to maintain and expose the brand values in a centralized way.

Within their organizational chart, the social team is dedicated to creating content on social networks, based on the marketing objectives and messages determined by the branding team. Native people from other countries who know the language and culture work the social networks as part of its internationalization policy. The customer service division is one of the largest teams and is known as customer love. From here, all doubts are answered through the different communication channels and digital platforms. In their vocation for their customers – "We are here to help the Freshly Fan", says Marsal– they have developed a loyalty and rewards platform with the support of a coach to resolve possible concerns about routine, products, etc. Although the products are unisex, the fan profile is mainly female: women who want to take care of themselves, feel represented by the values of Freshly Cosmetics and trust the brand for its differential value proposition that prioritizes health.

Marsal, when asked about an essential social network within the brand's communication strategy, answered that they are all essential and that the important thing is to adapt the message to each of them, without giving up any of them because they are used to generate community: "Without social networks we would not have been able to generate the community we have today". The percentage of the total communication budget allocated to digital platforms depends on the time of year and the campaigns, with Black Friday being a determining factor in their business strategy. The return on investment is relative and varies depending on the social network and the campaign in question. In this regard, social networks are not the channel that

converts the most nor the one that invoices the most, unlike the mailing channel. However, the turnover figures for 2021 leave no room for doubt, as they are split between 95% digital and 5% offline.

After this introduction, the interview addresses the specific role of TikTok at Freshly Cosmetics as the object of the research study. In the company, there is a person who is the content creator at TikTok. In this social network, they are not so much looking for ROI, because it is difficult to measure (unlike Instagram), but brand presence. Marsal highlights the reach and coverage of the platform, with the aim of reaching different potential audiences, unknown people: "It is important for us to reach those audiences who do not know you", says Marsal. The evolution of the brand in TikTok points to a reduction in the number of impacts and interactions in favor of less quantity of content, but of higher quality. The social network follows its trial-and-error philosophy, especially considering the novelty of the platform. They emphasize the importance of getting the user's attention in the first few seconds, as well as the creation of content that is consumed very quickly. In addition to the choice of promotional content –as is the case with sweepstakes, which mainly generate traffic– they consider it essential to choose and adapt the content that works best in order to draw a stable roadmap.

Related to the brand's strategy in social networks, the role of influencers stands out, with whom they have been working since their origins, especially in branding campaigns to seek notoriety and in specific campaigns in pursuit of conversion. It is crucial that this work is aligned with the brand's values. Most of them are women who become the loudspeaker of Freshly Cosmetics with their work, leaving for corporate channels another type of prescription since the brand is for all people, and that is why in their channels and social networks they look for different profiles. Marsal recognizes the work of these 2.0 prescribers, who are an unbeatable return strategy. Along with macroinfluencers, they are committed to more micro profiles that tend to have more differential content. Trust is a determining factor in their relationship with these opinion leaders and some of them act as brand ambassadors, through which they seek to position Freshly Cosmetics as the top of heart of their audience. In addition to this type of collaborations, one of the discursive axes of the brand is to show imperfections, in order to achieve identification with its consumers. They tend to talk about problem-solution while using the before and after format. All of the above generates a narrative that is very coherent with the brand's philosophy of transparency: "For us it is very natural to leave aside the image of perfection, we are a young brand and a young team that has internalized these concepts". The idea results in positive comments from their consumers, of whom they are proud to reach their hearts and change people's lives to the best of their ability.

In conclusion, the last block of the interview raises questions about the future of Freshly Cosmetics. Marsal enunciates that they are currently a brand that is not conceived as either digital or physical: they want to maximize every opportunity they have. Thus, the percentage of offline will continue to increase, as the physical store offers the possibility to connect sensorially with the brand and the products. With customer orientation as a hallmark, they try to reach the public in every possible way: "Our goal is to reach as many Freshly Fans as possible, to be where they ask for it". To keep growing, Marsal points out that everything they do stems from listening to their customers: "Our obligation is to continue offering the best to our public, to see how far we can go to make the brand's fans happy".

5. Conclusions

This study has analyzed the strategy of Freshly Cosmetics on the social network TikTok since its inception with the aim of responding to the research hypotheses formulated. In this way, it has been possible to confirm that the presence of Freshly Cosmetics on TikTok has decreased from 2022 to 2021 by 188.1% in the number of monthly posts. Consequently, user interactions have also been affected following the same downward trend. These data lead us to think about a change in the strategy of the Catalan company in this social network, which can be explained mainly by two arguments. Firstly, the experience acquired on this platform has led them to optimize the tools that TikTok provides them to reach their target and, in this way, convey the values of their brand. In addition, it can be noticed that they have reached a relative ceiling of new user affiliation, as it is thought that it does not grow at the same rate as the traffic they are able to generate with the existing ones, as seen in the 2021 results. Thus, in 2022 they have focused mainly on the care of the publications they launch and on the attention and response to comments or questions raised by users on TikTok. This metric, that of comments, has been the one that has decreased the least of all.

The content analysis has provided more information on the improvements in the publications that have been observed from one year to the next. One of the most significant data that gives validity to this hypothesis has been the inclusion of the brand's values in its commercial videos as part of its communication strategy; this, transcending the relevance of the product itself, incorporates allusions to sustainability and environmental respect as corporate principles, together with educational content on current health-related topics. Thus, we are witnessing a stage of maturity for the brand on this digital platform, as endorsed by the interview with its communications manager, who highlights 2022 as a year of consolidation with a trend towards higher quality content and a step beyond the promotional aspect. The evolution of Freshly Cosmetics in TikTok is oriented to give notoriety and consolidate the brand image of products already in its catalog, linking the potential of the social network to the work of brand presence, an idea that Marsal also emphasizes. The simple display of the product gives way to an anonymous prescriber who shows her relationship with the article in her space of use through the argumentation and demonstration of the application. This reflects the brand's strategy of resorting to profiles with which its target can identify through a beauty discourse where the naturalness and everyday life that Freshly Fans demand prevail. Creatively, a narrative scenario is built for this purpose without filters, using close-up shots and showing imperfections, which contribute to bring the brand closer to its audience thanks to an instruction that focuses on natural beauty. The brand already knows that it is crucial to capture attention in the first seconds, as Marsal points out, and this feature is achieved thanks to the presence of introductory texts, short videos and high doses of creativity that are embodied in different narrative formats beyond the typical tutorial of beauty publications. The preeminence of tips and advice is in line with the spirit of the brand as stated by its communication manager, in line with its idea of helping its consumers and promoting didactic content, which obeys its differential value of vocation and orientation towards its customers.

Likewise, the elimination of the promotional hook in communications has been the main cause of the reduction of interaction traffic in TikTok, since in 2022 its use has been marginal, in its clear intention to relate this social network with its corporate principles of recommendations without forgetting the entertainment and fun nature of the platform. However, it should also

be added that the operation of these strategies is guaranteed -as shown by the 2021 records-, if the aim is to generate volume of interactions on this platform.

Concluding, it is estimated that Freshly Cosmetics' strategy in TikTok in the short and medium term is going to be similar because, first of all and as has been described, they seem to have found a positioning more in line with the brand values, where quality is also measured in the details that make up each communication. A strategy that invites the achievement of greater closeness with the audience and therefore greater engagement. In addition, Freshly Cosmetics has validated its strategic approach to this social network from the perspective of offering content that prioritizes quality over quantity, attending to the desires and demands of its fans.

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7. Specific contributions of each author

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Methodology	Antonio Díaz-Lucena
Collection and analysis of data	Pilar Vicente-Fernández, Antonio Díaz-Lucena
Discussion and conclusions	Pilar Vicente-Fernández, Antonio Díaz-Lucena
Drafting, formatting, revision, and approval of versions	Pilar Vicente-Fernández

8. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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