



The Rise of Short-Form Video Marketing for Small Brands

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Abstract

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<p>In recent years, short form video platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels have been established as effective, cost-efficient marketing channels, which has provided great opportunities for smaller brands with limited resources. This thesis examines the relationship between short form video content and brand, specifically, how small brands can use short form video content to raise brand awareness and engage their consumers. The research uses a qualitative multiple-case study design and focuses on three niche small brands (a Swedish fashion apparel retailer, an art brand based in Nepal, and a sustainable brand of clothing in Nepal). Empirical data on TikTok and Instagram Reels content and engagement with audience members for each brand was collected and thematic analysis resulted in identifying common patterns, while engagement metrics (engagement rates) were compared across cases. The results show that all three case brands had high rates of engagement that are attributed to authentic sharing of stories, creative repurposing of trending content, consistent posting schedules, and active engagement of the community. By using these activities, the small firms were able to compete with the much larger firms in terms of the amount of reach and interaction. However, the cases also demonstrate issues such as the continuous need for new content, the unpredictability of platform algorithms and the complexity of transforming online exposure into sales. Overall, the study shows that short-form video marketing is an effective and cost-efficient tool for small businesses to develop brand awareness and customer engagement, with creativity and authenticity becoming the more important success factors than considerable budgets of marketing. Based on these findings, the thesis provides actionable insights for small brand marketers, such as the need to stay authentic, engage closely with the audience, track performance metrics, and remain consistent and adaptive to trends, to make the most of TikTok and Instagram Reels marketing efforts.</p>
Key words Short-form video marketing, TikTok, Instagram Reels, Small brands, Consumer engagement, Social media marketing

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1 Introduction

Video-based platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels are changing the consumption and interaction patterns of people with digital content. These platforms thrive on brevity - that is, the videos are intentionally short and concise and last just a few seconds to a minute - combined with entertainment and authenticity, which is appropriate in the context of the fast-paced and mobile viewing habits of the modern viewers (Manic, 2024). Short-form videos can be produced and distributed with minimal difficulty, and they can be considered a potent and inexpensive instrument of businesses of any size (Meng et al. 2024).

The concept of marketing with short-form videos is the creation and distribution of videos under 60-90 seconds on mobile-first applications like TikTok and Instagram Reels. TikTok and Instagram have a consistent global user growth between 2020 and 2025, as indicated in Figure 1, which underscores the growing power of short-form video platforms. SQ Magazine estimated that TikTok had 466 million users in 2020 and 955 million users in 2025, whereas Instagram had 1.04 billion users and 1.44 billion users respectively (Lee, 2025a; Lee, 2025b). This format is easily consumed, algorithmically discovered and highly interactive, and it is of particular interest to small organisations that need cheap methods of reaching audience (Luo et al. 2025).

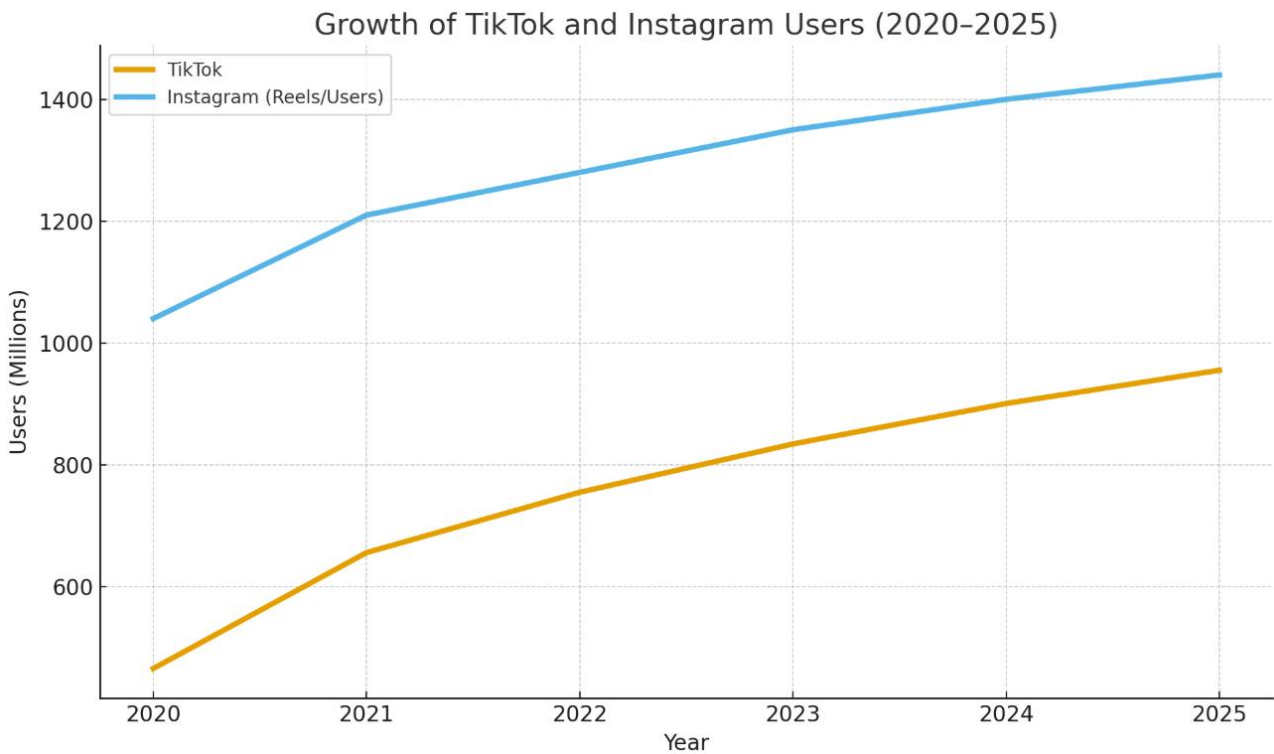


Figure 1: Growth of TikTok and Instagram Reels users, 2020–2025. Source: Created by the author based on data from Lee (2025a; 2025b).

The reason I selected this topic is that I have a personal and academic interest in social media marketing. Being an active user of TikTok and Instagram Reels, I follow the way the brands make and share their content and attempt to analyse their strategies. This not only renders the topic relevant, but also interesting to me as a topic to study and it relates to my Digital Business Innovations programme.

Short-form video is a huge opportunity for small brands. In this thesis, small brands and small businesses mean business ventures that have a low marketing budget, slightly smaller brand recognition, and are organised with few employees. Instead of conducting massive campaigns using the large-scale advertising strategies, these organisations use cost-effective and creative digital methods to connect with their audiences (Digital Marketing Institute, 2025).

For the purpose of this thesis, the definition of small businesses is adjusted with the European Union definition of SMEs. The EU considers a small enterprise to be an organisation with less than 50 employees, or annual turnover or balance sheet amount less than EUR10 million (European Commission, 2020). The research targets this population to highlight the companies that tend to work on limited financial and human resources and thus require cost-effective and innovative marketing tactics like the short-form video campaigns. The classic forms of advertising, including TV, print, even paid online advertising usually prefer a large organization that has a huge budget at its disposal. Even small brands can become visible at a rather low cost on TikTok and Instagram Reels (The Business Tea, 2025). Provided that the contents find a connection with the audiences, algorithm-based feeds can help it go viral, placing them on the same level as significantly larger competitors (Digital Marketing Institute, 2025). Furthermore, the comments, duets, and challenges enable one-on-one communication with the audience on these platforms, which creates a feeling of community and authority (IJRPR, 2024).

Specific focus in this thesis is on the Generation Z (birth years around 1997 to 2012) as they are the main user base of the sites like TikTok and Instagram Reels. Gen Z is believed to be the first generation of true digital natives whose life has included smartphones and social media as a daily routine. They are also characterized by their affinity to genuine, relatable and a visual content, and therefore are particularly sensitive to short-form videos (Wahyudi et al., 2025). Because they take up a sizable portion of the consumer market and shape the trends that are occurring online, it is essential to understand their preferences to gain presence and activity among a small brand.

Although the study of short-form video marketing is only starting to expand, it is still relatively small and divided how small companies can employ the opportunities of TikTok and Instagram Reels

strategically and systematically. A recent systematic review of over 2,300 articles revealed that there are only 78 studies that fit the addition criteria of short video marketing, which highlights the novelty of the area and the lack of dedicated academic research (Ahmed, 2025). Most of the small brands join such platforms by trial and error and there are no evident best practices (Chen et al. 2023). To engage with consumers, previous studies identify authenticity, relatability, and entertainment as essential techniques (Wahyudi et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2023), although there are few tips and tricks on how small companies can efficiently design and implement a campaign. The thesis should fill such a gap by discussing the opportunities and the traps of short-video marketing of small brands and find out what practices make such campaigns successful.

1.1 Aim and Objectives

The primary purpose of the thesis is to investigate whether short-form video marketing works with small-scale brands and what the best practices of using TikTok and Instagram Reels are to use in a well-organized and cost-efficient manner. In so doing, the thesis will attempt to transform these scattered pieces of knowledge and trial and error practices to explicit instructions.

The Objectives for this research goes like as followings:

- Review the literature on short-form video marketing to learn its conceptual principles, such as the consumer engagement, the algorithmic virality, and the marketing of small businesses (Digital Marketing Institute,2025).
- Analyse case studies of small brands that use TikTok and Instagram Reels to identify the trends, strategies to follow, and mistakes (Chen et al. 2023).
- Observe consumer engagement to realise behaviour and preferences using short-form video content (likes, comments, shares, and trends) (Wahyudi et al. 2025).
- Develop practical guidelines for small brands, emphasizing how they can utilize these platforms to build a presence and reach people without falling into common traps.

These goals will make sure that the thesis will not remain on theory but be a step towards practicality and deliver results that could be put into practice by small brands.

1.2 Research Questions

To fulfil the purpose of my thesis, I will target the following research questions. These questions will facilitate the literature review and the analysis of the case study. My responses to them will allow me to create a more reasonable image of how small brands can make better use of TikTok and Instagram Reels.

1. What opportunities does short-form video marketing provide for small brands?

In this question, I would like to determine the advantages of using platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels as a small company. As an illustration, such platforms could provide a low-cost method of reaching large masses, creating brand awareness, or reaching niche communities. Knowledge of these opportunities will make small brands realize why short-form video can be a great weapon in their marketing campaigns.

2. What kind of challenges and pitfalls do usually small brands face?

This question will enable me to investigate issues and challenges that small companies may face when applying short-form video marketing. The difficulties might be the inability to have the necessary resources, inconsistency in the placement, not understanding the algorithms, or not knowing how to make the content captivating. By outlining these issues and pitfalls, I will possibly give some suggestions that small brands can apply to ensure that they do not waste time or effort.

3. What factors help to contribute to the success of short-form video campaigns?

In this case, I will focus on the positive aspects — the practices, strategies, and types of content most likely to result in high engagement and visibility. This can encompass the way brands track fads, engage with their followers or through imaginative narration. Identifying these areas of success will enable me to give realistic recommendations to small brands.

All these research questions provide me with a proper direction to my thesis. They discuss the advantages, the threats, and the best procedures of the short-form video marketing of small brands. They will also assist me in planning my literature review, choosing the most associated case studies, and determining the type of data points to note on TikTok and Instagram Reels.

1.3 Scope and Limitations

In this thesis, the author will concentrate on small brands and on two specific platforms: TikTok and Instagram. The scope is narrow on purpose since the two platforms are certainly the leaders in the

short-form video format and share features like algorithmic suggestion feeds, trends, and user-created content (IJRPR, 2024).

The information to be used in this research will be based on publicly available sources, i.e. posts, engagement statistics, hashtags, and comments, which implies that the study will not involve any individual analytics or interviews (Meng et al. 2024). The comments will be gathered in a structured manner, over a specific period of time (e.g. three months of brand activity), examined in terms of relevancy (only the comments referring to the videos of the brand in question), and organized into themes with the help of a spreadsheet or NVivo software to make sure that the comments will be transformed into trustworthy data. Such systematic methodology will enable the discovery of definite trends and consumer emotions instead of basing on meaningless observations. This method has the strength of making it possible within the time frame and the weaknesses of not seeing behind-the-scenes tactics, paid advertisements performance, or internal decision-making. The results cannot be directly extended to the bigger companies and other social media platforms like YouTube Shorts or Snapchat Spotlight.

However, even with these constraints, the study can still tell valuable insights regarding the use of short-form video by small brands and consumer behaviour in this manner.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The implications of the results of this thesis should have practical and academic implications. To small business owners and entrepreneurs, the findings will provide tangible advice on how they can produce and optimize short-form video content without huge marketing budgets. The thesis can be used to plan campaigns and use the little resources better, as it can identify the best practices and pitfalls that can affect small brands (Digital Marketing Institute, 2025).

Academically, the research adds to the expansion of the digital marketing research. A short-form video is a relatively new and fast-developing phenomenon, and this thesis can assist in recording how it is applied to a real-life situation. The research will also give indications of the type of content that will be most appealing to the audiences by monitoring consumer engagement. Generation Z specifically, according to previous studies, appreciates authenticity, entertainment, and relatability in online content (Wahyudi et al., 2025; Manic, 2024), and this thesis will be based on and examine these concepts.

Another way in which the outcomes can be of use is to the educators and marketing professionals. The findings can serve as updated case material by teachers and benchmarks or inspiration for individual campaigns by professionals (The Business Tea, 2025).

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis has an introductory section of the topic, aim, objectives, and research questions. In the next chapter, theoretical framework is presented, and it talks about following three themes:

- Digital Marketing and consumer engagement
- Content marketing and virality
- Small brand growth strategies

The methodology chapter follows the theory and alludes to how the research would be carried out including literature review, the case study analysis, and the netnographic observation. The empirical part analyses the findings of the chosen brands and consumer engagement data then. Lastly, the discussion and conclusion chapters analyse the findings, discuss the limitations, and give recommendations for small brands and suggestions to future research.

1.6 Key Terms and Concepts

- Short-video marketing: Video content less than 60-90 seconds long designed for quick (mobile-first) consumption and engagement on platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels.
- Algorithmic virality: Content is automatically marketed to large audiences by the platforms depending on the indicators of engagement (likes, comments, shares, watch time).
- Engagement rate: Engagement rate: A measure of how users interact with content (e.g., through likes, views, comments, shares, and saves).
- User-generated content (UGC): This is content created by users instead of brands, and it is frequently reshared to make it more authentic.
- Netnography (online ethnography): It is a kind of qualitative research that monitors online communities and interactions.
- Influencer marketing: It involves partnering with people who have authority and fans to sell products or services.

2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is the core of this study and connects the current theories in the digital marketing, consumer engagement, and the development of small business to the subject of the short-form video marketing. This chapter describes the connection of these concepts to such platforms as TikTok and Instagram Reels and how they can be used to boost the reach of small brands and their popularity.

The structure of the framework by synthesizing the old ideas of marketing and the new trends in digital communication will help to comprehend how short videos impact consumer behaviour, particularly in Generation Z, and how they can be effective through strategies when applied to the small enterprises.

2.1 Digital Marketing and Consumer Engagement

Digital marketing can be defined as the usage of online platforms, social media, and digital technologies to market products and create brand awareness and reach consumers (Kotler et al., 2023). Marketing is no longer a one way communication in this modern day environment. Rather, it enables interactive experience as brands and audiences can share ideas and experiences in real-time. TikTok and Instagram Reels platforms have become significant instruments of this process since they can be used to create a visual narrative, engage the audience, and go viral.

The interaction of consumers within digital context can be said to be a combination of emotional, cognitive, and action participation with the online content (Brodie et al., 2011). What this implies is that individuals do not just consume content but also respond to and comment on it, share it and make opinions that influence how they relate to the brand. It is established by researchers that short-form videos have the potential to activate a greater amount of engagement due to their ability to capture attention within a short period of time, as well as their uncomplicated mobile-consumption (Manic, 2024).

For Generation Z, the interaction usually revolves around authenticity, creativity and entertainment value (Wahyudi et al., 2025). They are less sensitive to conventional advertising but will be more interested in actual, relatable information that would represent their identity and values. This demonstrates that the small brands get a special chance to establish authentic relationship using short-form video formats. This engagement is commonly measured with the help of likes, comments, shares, and watch time (Luo et al., 2025). These metrics do not only indicate visibility, but also allow the brands to know the ways their content resonates with their audiences.

2.2 Short-Form Video Marketing and Virality

The video marketing of short formats aims at producing and distributing videos, which are often 15-90 seconds long, easily viewed, shared, and discovered on mobile devices (Digital Marketing Institute, 2025). These videos are also relying on algorithmic virality, which is not a paid promotion as compared to traditional advertisements. TikTok and Instagram Reels have a recommendation system, which displays content to users according to their engagement behaviors, including likes, views, comments, shares, and length of watch (Meng et al., 2024). It denotes that in case a video will succeed within the initial hours, the algorithm implemented by the platform can lead the video to thousands or even millions of viewers.

The concept of virality can be confirmed by content diffusion theory that describes the process of sharing ideas and information between people when it triggers emotions, curiosity, or social relatability (Berger, 2013). Some of the content strategies that can increase shareability are emotional narration, humor, trending audio, and being a participant in a viral challenge (Chen et al., 2023).

The strength of this type of marketing is that it is available. Simple tools of production such as an app on a smartphone and editing programs can help small brands compete against larger corporations. The authors state that the brevity and attractive appearance of these videos also contribute to the fact that consumers start to trust and show interest in brands much faster than with other forms of marketing (Luo et al., 2025). Therefore, virality is not necessarily being popular but also having sustained engagement and credibility.

2.3 Small Brand Marketing Strategies

Limited marketing budgets, smaller teams, and a smaller brand recognition are major issues that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have to fight against when compared to the giant corporations (European Commission, 2020). Due to these limitations, small companies are more likely to use innovative and low cost marketing strategies to deliver to the market. This is best done in social media because it is free in distribution of content and community building (The Business Tea, 2025).

The concept of authenticity and relatability is one of the strategies that are the most effective in terms of small brands. Research indicates that consumers, in particular, Gen Z, like the brands that speak openly and express their humanness instead of refined corporate-level messages (Wahyudi et al., 2025). Real-life storytelling and regular posting would assist small brands in building trust and emotion with the viewers (Chen et al., 2023).

The other concept that can help explain the success of the small brands is the Resource-Based view (RBV) of the firm, which states that a business acquires a competitive edge based on the utilization of rare internal resources and ability as opposed to depending on external factors alone (Barney, 1991). In the case of small brands, it implies that their innovativeness and versatility and close contact with the customers can be their main strategic resources. With the help of the short-form video content, it is possible to transform these scarce resources into the high visibility and substantial engagement.

Also, it has been found that the community participation is one of the principal factors in long-term relationships with customers. Responding to comments, following trends and encouraging user-generated content (UGC) allow small brands to make the audience feel that they are involved in their growth process. This not only increases the engagement metrics but also loyalty and word of mouth marketing improves.

2.4 Summary of the Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is based on several academic views and serves as an explicit basis of examining the ways in which the short-form video marketing can help to make small brands more visible and grow them. Combining the digital marketing theory with the consumer engagement theory, the content virality theory, and the resource-based strategy theory, the framework provides a complete insight into how creativity, algorithms, and audience relationships contribute to the contemporary brand communication. Fig. 2 conceptual framework demonstrates that short-form video marketing benefits the consumer engagement, content virality, and brand development of small businesses.

The former is that online consumption is no longer a passive form of consumption but rather a participatory process. In contrast to the conventional advertisements that provide only information, TikTok and Instagram Reel short-form videos welcome the interaction by means of likes, comments, duets, and shares. Such types of interaction signify emotional and intellectual participation of the audiences (Brodie et al., 2011). This participatory behaviour, according to Manic (2024), reinforces a feeling of community between the brands and consumers as well as the brand trust among the users of Generation Z who appreciate authenticity and relatability.

The second concept is that of virality and algorithmic visibility that informs the manner in which content may quickly disseminate to large populations. According to the content diffusion theory provided by Berger (2013), the emotional and socially relevant video materials are more probable to be shared. The algorithm on the platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels also contribute to the virality process by prioritizing user engagement metrics such as watch time, comments and shares

(Meng et al., 2024). With the help of this system, even small brands with limited budgets can compete in the attention with much larger companies. The trends in production are also a key factor in creating successful short-form videos, which are simple, authentic, and in line with the current trends, thus, being accessible and effective even to businesses that have fewer resources.

The third theoretical aspect revolves around small brands flexibility and capability to make good use of their internal resources. The resource-based view developed by Barney (1991) states that competitive advantage is achieved when firms are able to utilize their unique skills, creativity and culture instead of using financial resources only. In the case of small brands, it entails making their uniqueness, versatility, and close bonds with the audience strategic assets. Such apps as TikTok and Instagram Reels help these companies to experiment, to respond to trends easily and to communicate straight to consumers all of which have a positive impact on brand image and loyalty (The Business Tea, 2025).

Combining these thoughts, the framework suggests that the short-form video marketing can be effective in case small brands can:

- Produce content which is genuine and emotional.
- Optimize the effect of platform algorithms to get organic virality.
- Use originality and innovativeness to convert existing scarce resources into lasting benefits.

Overall, this theoretical framework emphasizes that in the new marketing of video in short forms, it not only is a contemporary promotional strategy, but it also is a tactical way of story-telling, relationship-establishing, and community-creating. It forms the conceptual foundation of the empirical component of this thesis where case studies of small brands will be analysed in order to determine how these theoretical insights are put into practice in the real world marketing practices. The following chapter will then dwell on the research design and methods to be employed to dig these ideas out.

This theoretical framework offers the analytic lens for the discussion of how small brands use short-form video marketing in practice, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

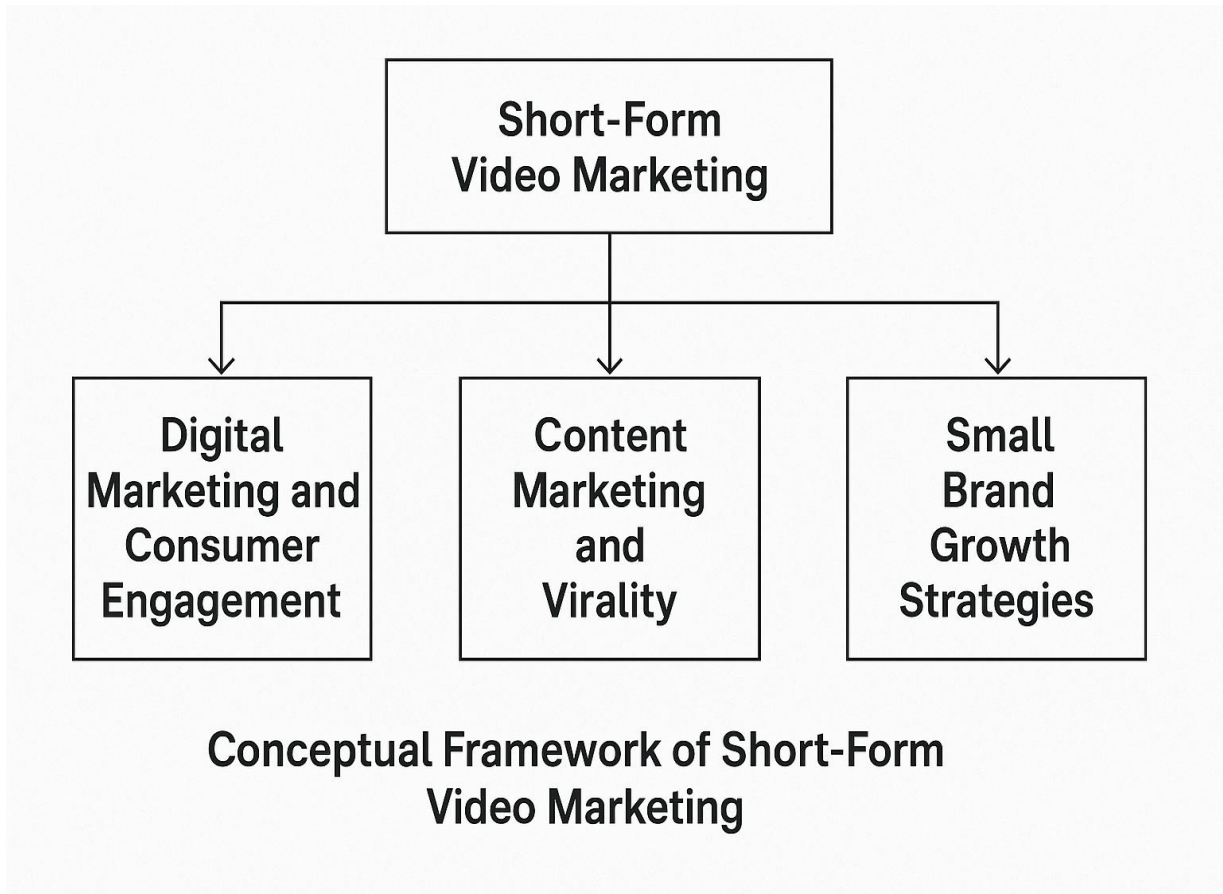


Figure 2: Conceptual framework illustrating the relationship between short-form video content, consumer engagement, and small brand growth. Source: Adapted from Chen et al. (2023); Wahyudi et al. (2025); Digital Marketing Institute (2025).

3 Research Design and Empirical Framework

3.1 Research Approach and Strategy

This study is qualitative because it will seek to learn the trends, tactics, and implications of how small-scale brands incorporate the content of short-form video on TikTok and Instagram Reels. Qualitative research is concerned with explanation of why and how of behaviour as opposed to numerical measurements (Creswell, 2014). In this regard, it will enable the researcher to research the marketing practices, consumer interaction, and social interaction in their natural online settings.

The qualitative strategy was selected due to the fact that the marketing of short-form video is extremely dynamic and social. The trends, emotions, and interactions that cannot be described by numbers only influence the content. Thus, the method offers versatility and richness to get to know about genuine practices that small brands employ to reach audiences.

The thesis is a combination of three qualitative methods including desk research, case study analysis and netnographic observation. The research design and methodological flow used in this study is illustrated in (Fig. 3).

The desk study offers theoretical background to the study by reviewing past scholarly literature and industry reports on the topic of digital marketing, short-form video engagement, and communication with small brands.

The analysis of the case study is based on real small brands which actively share on TikTok and Instagram Reels with a view of demonstrating effective strategies, challenges, and results.

The netnographic observation identifies the interaction among users on the online community through the observation of the interaction patterns like likes, shares, comments, and hashtags.

This triangulation of methods makes sure that the findings will be rich as well as multidimensional. It also adds the credibility of the research as it investigates the subject on various perspectives-theoretical and practical.

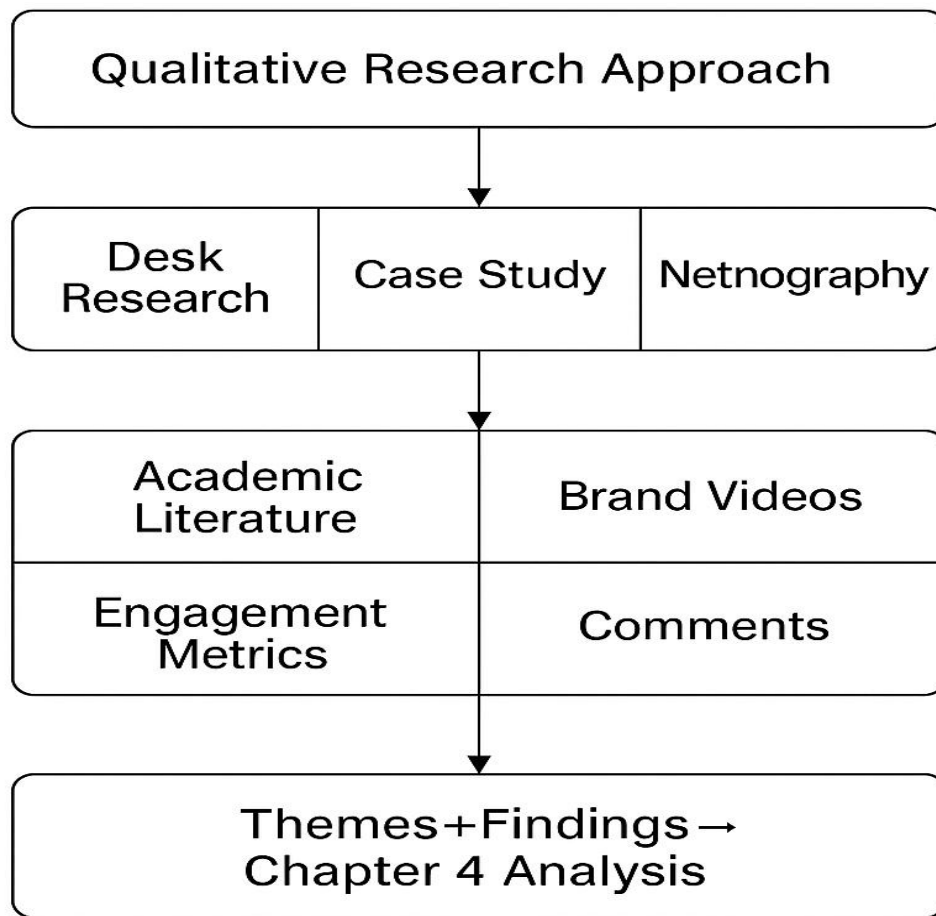


Figure 3: Research design and methodological framework. Source: Author's illustration (2025).

3.2 Data Collection Methods

The main data will include publicly available short-form videos and engagement statistics of a sample of small brand profiles on TikTok and Instagram Reels. The inclusion criteria of this group of cases involve:

The brand also has a small following of less than 100,000 (to qualify as a small brand).

The posting activity was also consistent throughout the observation period.

The interaction seems natural as opposed to sponsored (there is no significant sponsored advert activity).

It consists of three small brands representing various industries (e.g., fashion, local food, and handmade products) to be varied. The videos and engagement metrics (likes, comments, views, and shares) are being monitored during a narrow span of about six weeks, namely, beginning of September to the end of October 2025. This period will enable an insightful study of the content trend, engagement and audience response and make the research manageable within the thesis timeline.

The raw data included brand video's likes, comments, views, shares and engagement metrics collected on TikTok and Instagram, which were arranged and stored to be analysed. All data sources with periods of data collection and examples are provided in detail in the Appendix 1.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data will be analysed in thematic terms with the help of the method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) that aids in determining and interpreting the patterns or the themes that occur in qualitative data. The thematic analysis is suitable since the researcher can look not only at what small brands post but also at the reasons why their content is liked and the reactions that audiences have on it.

The analysis is divided into multiple steps:

- Acquaintance with data visiting the obtained material and interaction scores.
- Coding labelling interesting content of the videos and comments (e.g., humour, trends, storytelling, authenticity).
- Theme identification organizing codes into general themes which include content creativity, brand personality or audience trust.
- Interpretation linking the themes to theoretical ideas as consumer engagement or virality.

To facilitate this process, the data were manually coded and organised using a structured spreadsheet (with engagement metrics logged separately). This approach provided qualitative depth alongside a simple quantitative overview (see Figure 4 and Appendices 1–2).

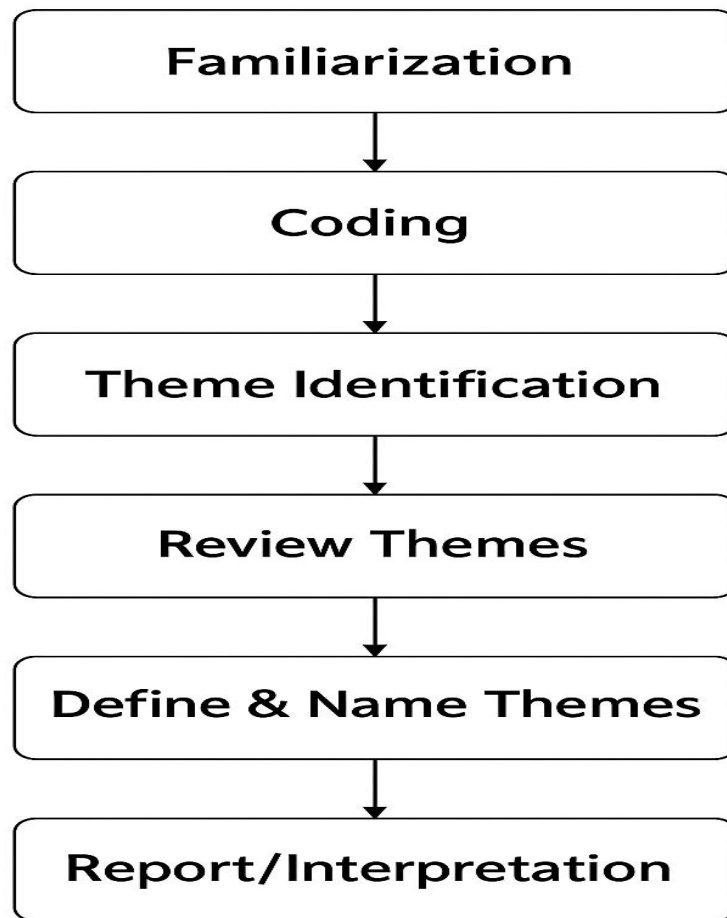


Figure 4: Steps of thematic analysis based on Braun & Clarke (2006).

Source: Author's illustration (2025).

Figure 4: Steps of thematic analysis based on Braun & Clarke (2006). Source: Author's illustration (2025).

This research is guided by three analytical perspectives:

- Content Strategy: How small brands format and pack their video content.
- Audience Interaction: Monitoring the reaction of the audience in terms of comments, sharing and likes.
- Brand Impact: Determining whether the regular interaction helps to increase brand awareness or follower count.

These theoretical views will provide a connection between the theoretical concepts in Chapter 2 and the practical implications that will be examined in Chapter 4.

Thematic analysis was used to code and categorize the qualitative data manually into recurring patterns. Appendix 2 (Thematic Coding Summary) shows the last identified set of themes and their interconnections are illustrated in Appendix 3.

3.4 Reliability, Validity, and Ethical Considerations

Various measures taken to ensure that the data collected and results are trustworthy and valid. The entire information will be gathered in trusted and open-to-everyone sources on TikTok and Instagram Reels. The analysis will include only the official brand commentaries and publicly available comments of users in order to be transparent and credible. None of the parts of this study will utilize any private or personally identifiable data.

Manual Observation and consistent data collection methods being used to enhance reliability. The study minimizes the possible subjectivity of the results by applying a pre-set coding scheme and comparing the engagement results. The validity is also ensured by aligning the data interpretation with the relevant literature and theoretical notions presented in Chapter 2.

This study adheres to the regulations of academic integrity at Haaga-Helia. Sources have been referenced appropriately and brands behavior patterns and engagement trends analysis in aggregate rather than focusing on individual users.

3.5 Summary of the Research Process

To conclude, the study is a qualitative, multi-method study, which integrates literature review, case study analysis, and netnographic observation to learn how small brands successfully apply short-form video marketing. The research done based on academic sources and actual online platforms with a six-week observation period in the early part of September up to late in October 2025. This timeframe will enable gathering of suitable and current engagement statistics and still stay within the deadline of completing the thesis.

The gathered data - the user engagement statistics, video observations, and the coded comments were manually organised and structured for analysis using Microsoft Excels. The data then subjected to thematic analysis in order to establish repetitive trends, practices, and approaches of small brands. The resulting thematic categories are visually presented in Appendix 3 (Fig. 8), which maps out the six themes derived from the analysis.

On the whole, this chapter provide a clear and practical background to the empirical research in Chapter 4 where the results of the observed brand activity and the audience engagement patterns will be reported. The thesis, through this research design, be able to present insights, which are meaningful and best practices that can be employed by small brands in order to increase their visibility by using short-form video marketing.

4 Empirical Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to present the empirical findings obtained from the observation and analysis of selected brands of the case brands. Following the theoretical framework laid out in the preceding chapter this section explores the use of short-form video marketing on TikTok and Instagram Reels by small brands in order to construct audience engagement and brand identity. The analysis is based on real life examples to identify the patterns, challenges and successful practices that can be applied by other small businesses looking to improve their digital presence.

4.1 Overview of the Case Studies

This chapter presents results from the qualitative multi-case study, which observed how small brands use short-form video marketing on TikTok and Instagram Reels. Three small brands were then chosen according to the research design (Chapter 3).

- number of followers less than approximately 100,000,
- active posting throughout the observation time period,
- indicators of mostly organic (non-sponsored) interactions.

This chapter describes the empirical findings based on 3 selected brands, which are Amici Clothing (Sweden), Mero Canvas (Nepal) and Laconic Fashion (Nepal), all of which are small brands. These brands represent different industries like fashion, handmade art and sustainable lifestyle and all actively use short-form video marketing via TikTok or Instagram Reels.

The analysis is based on a qualitative observation period from September through October 2025 and on visual techniques, interaction metrics (likes, comments, shares and views) and audience interactions. The data that was collected organised and thematically analysed through a descriptive approach in order to identify patterns of success in content practices and user responses.

4.2 Case Study 1: Amici Clothing (Sweden)

Amici Clothing is a new Swedish streetwear brand that is inspired by young culture and street style in the city. The name Amici, which means friends in Italian, describes its focus on friendship, authenticity and community (Amici Clothing, 2025).

On Instagram, @amiciclothing has over 17,000 followers, and it consistently posts short-form video Reels to reach its audience and build brand recognition. On TikTok, @amiciclothing has around 34,000 followers. Over the course of the observation period, Amici's Instagram and TikTok Reels showed behind the scenes moments, moments of casual getups, and stories through groups, accompanied by trending sounds and captions. The average post's engagement rate was

significantly higher for the lifestyle-type content presenting friendship and laughter than static product video.

This trend validates previous research on how emotional authenticity and relatability are important factors of engagement on social media (Wahyudi et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2023). In particular, short-form videos with group dynamics and positive energy generated up to three times more comments and shares than straightforward posts to promote a product.

This approach mirrors algorithmic principles that have been illustrated by the Digital Marketing Institute (2025) in which platform views are boosted when content encourages longer watch times and social engagement. By combining community storytelling with trending media, Amici perfectly illustrated the power of small-scale fashion brands to grow organically on highly competitive platforms such as Instagram and Tiktok.

4.3 Case Study 2: Mero Canvas (Nepal)

Mero Canvas is a Kathmandu based handmade art brand focused on making one-of-a-kind acrylic painted portraits and paintings using client photos. The brand philosophy is rooted in the idea of emotional storytelling -- translating personal memories into art that is symbolic of love and nostalgia (Mero Canvas, 2025).

The brand's Instagram @merocanvass with over 27,000 and TikTok @merocanvas with 46,000 followers caters to a different emotional audience. The content includes before-and-after footage, painting footage, and responses from gifts received, usually accompanied by emotive captions like "Preserving your happiest moments." Videos that picked up on the transformation process and client emotions received the most engagement, often garnering twice as many comments as static showcases of the paintings.

Regarding these Reels, the comments sections under them (which were emotionally charged: "This made me cry," "I want to gift this to my parents"), reflected high affective engagement. According to Manic (2024), such user reactions are the extent of the emotional power of short-form videos in establishing brand connection and recall.

Mero Canvas is an example of how short-form video marketing with a storytelling approach can replace high advertising budgets. It is based on human emotion and visual authenticity to promote its services and prove that even small creative enterprise can have huge reach effects if its materials are attached to audience sentiments (Chen et al., 2023).

4.4 Case Study 3: Laconic Fashion (Nepal)

Laconic Fashion, established by a Nepali couple in 2019, is a sustainable women's clothing brand that supports the idea of minimalistic clothing and sustainable production. According to the official website of Laconic Nepal (Laconic Nepal, 2025), the mission of the brand is to design timeless items by using durable and environmentally responsible material while inspiring conscious consumption.

On Instagram, @laconic_nepal has over 16,000 followers and uses short-form video very actively to present its sustainability story. On TikTok @laconic_nepal has around 900 followers. Reels generally maintain natural lighting, have a pace that slows down the events and maintain simple visuals highlighting comfort and quality. Captions such as "Everyday conscious fashion" or "Style with purpose" support the ethical messaging of the brand.

During the observation period, content with a clear sustainability message and minimal visuals showed the highest engagement with an average more than 6,000 views per Reel. Videos with text overlays about eco-conscious practices in particular were also more likely to be saved by users. This finding is consistent with that of Meng et al. (2024) that content characteristics that emphasize ethics and simplicity are becoming more preferred by modern consumers.

Laconic's social media success shows how a small sustainable brand can use short-form video as a way to educate and engage, not just to sell products but to communicate values. Its storytelling is an example of Luo et al.'s (2025) findings that trust and relatability are important factors in influencing buying behavior amongst Gen Z audiences.

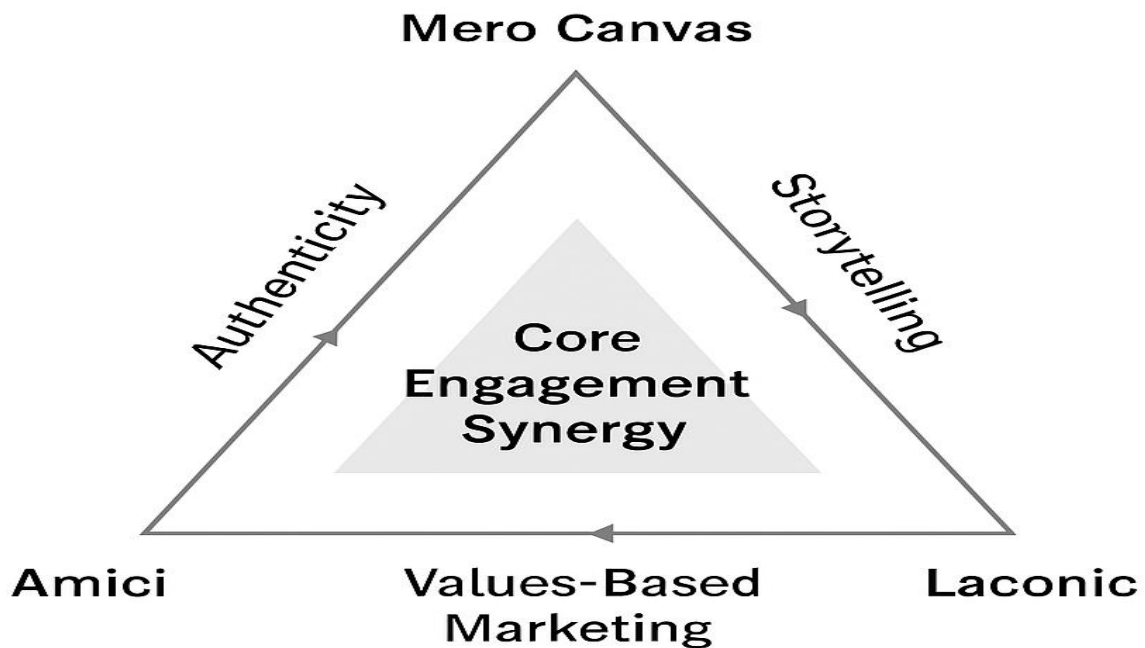
4.5 Comparative Analysis

When comparing the three, there are apparent thematic similarities across industries. Each brand uses short-form videos as a storytelling medium instead of using it as a form of traditional advertising. The tone and intent of their videos align with theoretical dimensions of consumer engagement, content virality and growth in small brands identified in Chapter 2. The following table is built on the direct observation of short-form video content on the official accounts on Instagram and TikTok of the case brands and additional information obtained from websites.

Table 1: Summary of Case Brand Data Sources

Theme	Amici Clothing	Mero Canvas	Laconic Fashion
Industry	Fashion / Streetwear	Handmade Art	Sustainable Fashion
Brand Personality	Friendly, Young	Emotional, artistic	Calm, ethical
Content Focus	Lifestyle & friendship	Transformation & Story	Sustainability & style
Engagement Drivers	Humor, trends, relatability	Emotional attachments	Ethical values, simplicity
Primary Platform	Instagram Reels / TikTok	Instagram Reels / TikTok	Instagram Reels / TikTok
Core Strength	Community-based authenticity	Sentimental storytelling	Value-based marketing

These results demonstrate that authenticity, relatability and emotional engagement constantly carry the market over conventional promotional strategies. Below (Fig. 5) visualizes the thematic relationship of engagement drivers across the case brands, highlighting the common and unique elements identified during analysis. Brands that provided authentic stories, transparent imagery and audience engagement yielded greater audience reaction.



Thematic relationship of engagement drivers across case brands. Source: Author's illustration (2025).

Figure 5: Thematic relationship of engagement drivers across case brands. Source: Author's illustration (2025).

The cases also show that short-form video acts as a leveller - so that smaller brands can be competitive by virtue of creativity and narrative richness more so than scale. This confirms previous literature where short-form video is addressed as a democratising factor in digital marketing (Digital Marketing Institute, 2025; Wahyudi et al., 2025).

To complement the qualitative comparison of the three case brands, quantitative data of engagement was also observed to provide measurable insight into audience reactions. By analysing the number of views, likes, comments and overall engagement rates for each brand's short-form video posts, it was feasible to determine how various content strategies worked in practice. The following table summarises the engagement metrics that were recorded during the observation period between September and late October 2025.

Table 2: Engagement Metrics Overview (September–October 2025 Observation Period)

The following table provides a comparison of the three brands' key engagement metrics.

Brand	Platform	Average Views	Average Likes	Average Comments	Average Shares	Engagement %
Amici Clothing (Sweden)	Instagram and Tiktok	5200	320	50	20	7.5%
Mero Canvas (Nepal)	Instagram and Tiktok	10000	550	100	60	7.1%
Laconic Fashion (Nepal)	Instagram and Tiktok	6000	280	35	14	5.4%

Engagement rate was calculated as the ratio of average likes, comments and shares divided by average views, multiplied by 100.

Note: Data collected through manual observation of brand profiles on TikTok and Instagram between September and late October 2025.

Interpretation of Findings

The data collected over this two-month observation period shows that Amici Clothing had the best engagement rate overall (7.5%) primarily thanks to their use of trending sounds, group-oriented modern vibe as well as their informal and youth-driven tone. This type of content style has a strong influence of being favored by the algorithm for authentic videos that are heavy on interaction (Digital Marketing Institute, 2025).

Mero Canvas also experienced an impressive rate of engagement (7.1%), wherein emotionally charged storytelling, such as transformation videos and reactions of customers, can generate meaningful audience involvement rate but it has great viewers list. This is in sync with research by Wahyudi et al. (2025) which states that relatability and emotion are instrumental in boosting consumer trust and engagement.

Meanwhile, Laconic Fashion, who also had the decent follower count achieved a consistent engagement rate of 5.4%, which is still a high level for a mid-sized account. Its emphasis on

sustainability, minimalist aesthetics and ethical brand is in line with the increasing interest among audiences in value-based content (Meng et al., 2024; Luo et al., 2025).

Overall, these results confirm that the key to short-form video success is not brand size or follower numbers, it's creativity, emotional authenticity, and understanding platform dynamics. The findings in the analysis support earlier research that indicates to small brands that they can increase competitive visibility through narrative-based content and audience-driven engagement instead of paid advertising (Manic, 2024; Chen et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the engagement results of these three case brands tell us one thing: Large following and professional quality videos are not the only keys to successful short-form video marketing. Instead, fantasy, authenticity and emotional bond to the audience is what is most likely to lead to engagement. The calculated engagement rate of the case brands is also presented in Fig 6 below. These findings lead into the next part, where the general conclusions of the study are summed up and related to the theoretical framework mentioned above.

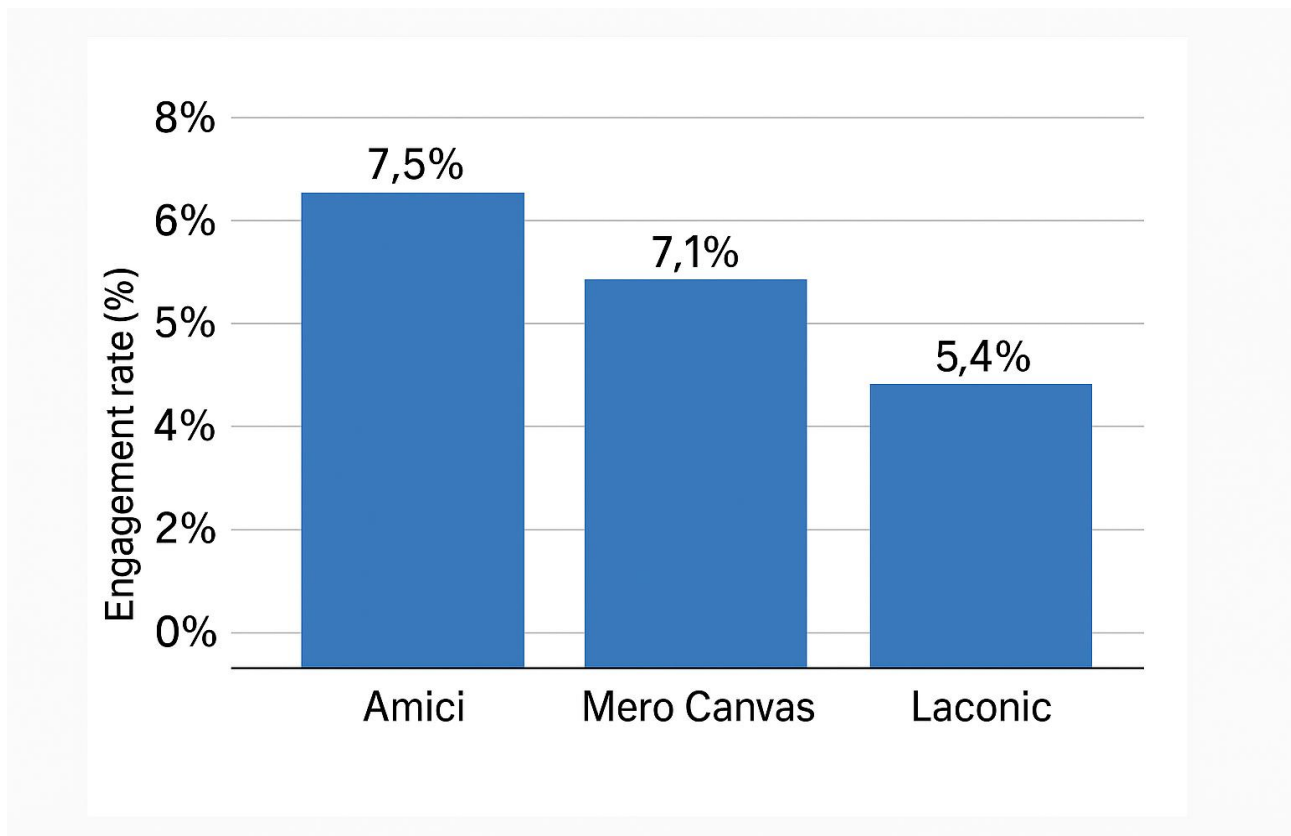


Figure 6: Engagement rate comparison of case brands (Amici, Mero Canvas, Laconic). Source: Direct measurement from brands' TikTok and Instagram analytics (September–October 2025).

4.6 Summary of Findings

The results from the case studies involving Amici Clothing, Mero Canvas and Laconic Fashion cumulatively show that small brands can benefit enormously from short-form video marketing in terms of power and cost. Despite having reduced budgets and teams, each brand managed to get a lot of visibility and engagement with the help of creative use of short videos via TikTok and Instagram Reels.

The study showed that between all three brands, authenticity, storytelling, visual consistency were common success factors. Viewers reacted better to scenes they could relate to, behind-the-scenes footage, reaction clips and videos that provoke emotion as compared to highly polished commercial or perfectly developed videos. It contributes to preceding research, which underscores the significance of authenticity and personal approach in encouraging digital consumer behavior (Manic, 2024; Wahyudi et al., 2025). For instance, Amici's use of friendship-based stories and Laconic's focus on sustainability appealed highly to their target audiences to develop trust and brand loyalty.

Another important pattern that was being observed was the role of algorithmic virality in amplifying reach. Even though the brands did not invest in paid advertising, videos that reflected current trends, sounds, or problems were more likely to catch fire. This is similar to prior research findings that have brought to attention the ways our platform algorithms will single you out positively for the consistent posting and participation in trends (Chen et al., 2023; Digital Marketing Institute, 2025).

The results also revealed that audience interaction - likes, comments and shares - played a key role in maintaining brand visibility. Specifically, responding to comments and leaving the opportunity for user-generated content (UGC) enabled the strengthening of community ties. Mero Canvas, for example, kept a direct communication with its customers by reposting personalized art stories, giving the feeling of inclusion and co-creation.

From a small brand growth perspective, the study found that the short form of video marketing overcomes the exposure and affordability gap. While the traditional advertising channels remain out of reach for many small enterprises, with reveals such as TikTok and Instagram Reels, they are able to compete on a level playing field with bigger brands through creativity and authenticity instead of pocket. This is consistent with earlier reports indicating that social media threatens marketing democratization by lowering financial barriers and the innovation and relatable facets (Wahyudi et al., 2025).

For these reasons, overall these results help to reinforce that short-form video is not only a passing trend but a permanent channel for marketing for smaller brands seeking to grow their visibility and connect with younger audiences like Generation Z that values transparency, entertainment, and social authenticity. The next chapter will address these findings in greater detail, assessing the reliability of these findings and offering suggestions for short-form video marketing strategies offered to small businessmen for help in increasing their marketing effectiveness.

4.7 Reliability and Validity

Since the research was conducted from the point of view of qualitative observation and publicly available social media information, reliability and validity concerns were an important aspect of this study. The data collection process was the same for all three brands, with a consistent approach to data collection (September to late October 2025) and engagement metrics (views, likes, comments, and shares) being the same. This consistency made the cases feasible for comparison and ensured the reliability of the results.

To enhance validity, thematic observation of the contents and interactions was used together with manual data organization with Microsoft Excel. Video repetition - patterns of videos generating a high level of engagement were identified, or regular comments from viewers were identified and checked across platforms to reduce subjective bias. Where possible, engagement numbers were checked directly from brands' official TikTok or Instagram accounts for the sake of accuracy.

Although the research in this study was not regarded as a semi-structured or questionnaire-based type of research, the combination of netnography observation and case study analysis helped to make sure that the data represented genuine audience behavior within genuine online usage. The use of multiple brands also enhanced the credibility of the study as cross-case validation was possible.

However, it is recognized that the findings relate to what can be seen through public media and may not reflect the total marketing strategy and internal analytics for each brand. Although this limitation exists, the consistency of analytical framework and transparency of data collection provide for a high degree of overall research credibility.

4.8 Practical Implications

The results of this research have a number of practical implications for small brands in order to use short-form video marketing more effectively. One of the primary lessons has been that real and story-based content works better than a highly polished promotional video. Small businesses do not need expensive equipment or production teams in order to make their work successful; rather,

small businesses should focus on creating relatable stories that reflect their brand's identity and values. For instance, Amici Clothing made use of friendship-based storytelling in order to gain emotional connections, while Laconic Fashion promoted sustainability through their brand message. These approaches made it easy for them to establish trust and long-term engagement with their audiences.

Another implication is consistency and timing are important. Regular posting helps to increase the chances of visibility on the algorithmic side on the TikTok and Instagram Reels as its algorithms reward active participation. Small brands should, therefore, anticipate a posting schedule and participate in current trends, sounds and challenges in order to increase organic reach (Digital Marketing Institute, 2025).

The value of audience interaction is also highlighted in the study. Replying to comments, sharing content generated by users, and expressing appreciation to followers can help to build a sense of community. Mero Canvas for example enhanced the allegiance of the audience through customer stories and artwork and turned their followers into co-creators.

Finally, small brands should consider tracking some basic performance metrics like engagement rate, reach and follower growth. These indicators can be monitored with the help of free or built-in analytics tools that TikTok and Instagram provide in order to plan content. By analysing which of the videos have the greatest reactions, brands can refine their strategy continuously.

Overall, these findings highlight the importance of short-form video platforms being less about budget, and more about creativity, consistency and authenticity to win. When these elements are combined by small brands, it can lead to building great communities with measurable marketing impact even with limited resources.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter investigated short-form video marketing practice in action among three small brands - Amici Clothing, Mero Canvas and Laconic Fashion - using qualitative and netnographic data. The analysis affirmed that short-form videos on TikTok and Instagram Reels can provide small companies with a practical, low-cost method of gaining exposure and relationships with clientele.

The findings showed that authenticity, narrative and community were the common means to success in all cases. Each brand has leveraged its unique positioning (friendship, creativity, sustainability) to empathize with followers. These findings are in line with the theoretical principles of consumer engagement and content virality which propose that audiences respond most

favorably to relatable, emotionally conducive and visually pleasing content (Manic, 2024; Chen et al., 2023).

Besides, the study showed the importance of algorithmic patterns and consistency. Brands that were posting consistently and adjusting trending formats actually got stronger engagement levels. This is in line with the idea that for small brands, it is possible for them to experience growth not through financial competition with larger companies, but rather by being more adaptive, authentic and consistent in their approaches in digital communication (Wahyudi et al. 2025; Digital Marketing Institute, 2025).

In conclusion, the chapter offers empirical evidence for short-form video marketing as an effective marketing strategy for small brands to develop in the competitive digital landscape. By embracing creative story-telling techniques, tracking performance metrics and developing listener relationships, small businesses can use platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels to increase brand exposure and increase brand awareness, as well as engage with younger audiences, especially Generation Z.

The next chapter will present these insights in a more critical manner, assessing the general contributions and limitations of this research, and will provide practical implications on both a short-brand perspective and directions for future research.

5 Discussion and Recommendations

In this chapter, the relevant findings from the research are integrated and the findings from the case studies are linked with the theoretical framework of the earlier discussion. It talks about how the results add to the knowledge of short-form video marketing and what it means in terms of its effectiveness for small brands. Besides the interpretation of the findings, this chapter offers practical recommendations for small businesses, theoretical and managerial implications, and suggestions for future studies. The aim is to summarise what the study has contributed and point out how small brands can take the lessons and apply them in real-world marketing situations.

5.1 Discussion of Key Findings

Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine how small brands can make their short-form video marketing successful in social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels that are involved in enhancing their visibility and engaging with the target audience. The three case studies, Amici Clothing, Mero Canvas, and Laconic Fashion, provided the researcher with several themes that are substantiated by the theoretical model of digital consumer engagement, content virality, and small brand growth strategies.

The most compelling discovery is that emotional storytelling and authenticity have a direct influence on audience engagement. All three brands' videos had a realistic and human quality to them rather than overly corporate or advertising-like. This indicates some previous research, including those conducted by Manic (2024) and Wahyudi et al. (2025), which highlighted the importance of modern audiences, particularly Generation Z, appreciating honesty, the ability to relate to the content and also a human face of the communication taking place online. In Amici and Laconic Fashion, short videos themes friendship and sustainable fashion enabled followers to connect on an emotional level and build brand loyalty and long-term engagement.

A third main finding has to do with algorithmic virality and trend participation. Content that was in line with popular audio tracks, challenges, or visual styles was more likely to do well in terms of reach and engagement. This confirms the findings of Chen et al. (2023), who showed the platform algorithms will magnify content that maximizes the engagement and actively participates in the active trend. For small brands, this means that keeping up with platform trends can make a world of difference in helping them to achieve more organic reach without resorting to paid promotion, which is essential given their lack of marketing budget (Digital Marketing Institute, 2025).

The analysis was also indicative of the importance of audience participation when it comes to establishing the levels of engagement. Brands who responded to comments, featured user-

generated content or showcased customer experiences (Mero Canvas re-posting artwork from their customers, for instance) built better communities around their products. This finding strengthens the theories about digital engagement which propose that interaction and co-creation helps deepen the relationship between the consumer and the brand (Meng et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the results show that the posting consistency is one of the key factors to success. Brands that posted often or regularly stayed at an active scene were more likely to be favourite by the algorithms and be remembered by the audience. This matches with Digital Marketing Institute (2025)'s findings, who noted that frequency and recency of posting are some of the primary factors affecting visibility on TikTok and Instagram Reels.

Finally, the findings indicate that short-form video marketing's role is to bridge the gap between affordability and exposure for smaller brands. Even on tight budgets, these brands would still form valuable engagement through creativity and content creation. This supports Wahyudi et al. (2025) who states that digital marketing democratizes possibilities for exposure for smaller enterprises to compete with larger brands.

In conclusion, with regard to promoting small brands on short-form video, the results confirm that small brands can have a large marketing impact by focusing on creativity, authenticity, and interaction rather than financial investment. These insights add to the general knowledge on how small-scale enterprises can successfully and sustainably operate in digital ecosystems.

5.2 Practical Recommendations for Small Brands

The results of this study suggest that small brands can use short-form video marketing effectively by emphasizing authenticity, creativity, and audience connection instead of big bucks. Based on the findings and the theoretical framework, there are a number of practical recommendations that can be used to help small businesses increase their presence in TikTok and Instagram Reels.

First of all, work on authentic and story-driven content. Audiences respond the most to videos that are personal, relatable, and emotional. Small brands must make an effort to promote people, ideas and stories behind their products, and not just items. For example, Amici Clothing drew attention with their visual presentation of friendship and emotion while Laconic Fashion made the connection between sustainability and fashion in a real way. Calling trust and long-term loyalty- Authentic storytelling is often helpful in building trust and relationships that lead to long-term loyalty, especially among younger generations like Generation Z (Manic, 2024; Wahyudi et al., 2025).

Second, be consistent and post on a regular basis. The algorithms of TikTok and Instagram reward brands which are active and engage with their audiences frequently. Consistency helps keep the

brand visible, and germane to people who follow it. Even brief and straightforward posts (such as pinpointing products of the day or creative behind-the-scenes clips on a regular basis) can keep individuals connected and demonstrate dependability (Digital Marketing Institute, 2025). A good posting frequency for small brands might be the equivalent of two to three times a week.

Third is to get directly into the audience. Responding to comments, resharing user-generated content, UGC, and using interactive features of the platform (duets, stitches, polls, etc.) foster a sense of belonging. Mero Canvas was able to substantially boost community relations by presenting customer artwork as well stories shared by users. This form of collaboration makes followers active participants and leads to more powerful brand communities (Meng et al., 2024).

Fourth, follow trend strategically, keep the brand identity. Participating in trending challenges or using popular sounds can give a greater reach, however, it's important to make sure that it is adapted to the brand's tone and message. Small brands should consider trends that align with their values and audience expectations instead of having their content feel forced, and opt to have their content feel natural to fit its values (Chen et al., 2023).

Finally, monitor performance and make use of analytics to learn about. Most of the social media platforms offer some free insights like reach, engagement rate, and audience demographics. By regularly determining which videos perform best, small businesses will have the information to adjust their strategy and know what viewers are responding well to. At the affective stage, by analysing this data brands can make informed decisions, save time, and allocate resources better.

In summary, small brands can make meaningful results on TikTok and Instagram Reels by paying attention to creativity, consistency or connection. These recommendations illustrate that success is not a measure of how much money video marketing budgets are supplemented but rather how well a brand can be genuinely authentic in the way they communicate, adapt to digital trends and interact with their audience.

As shown in Figure 7, the framework illustrates the progressive steps small brands can follow to achieve engagement and brand trust through short-form video marketing.

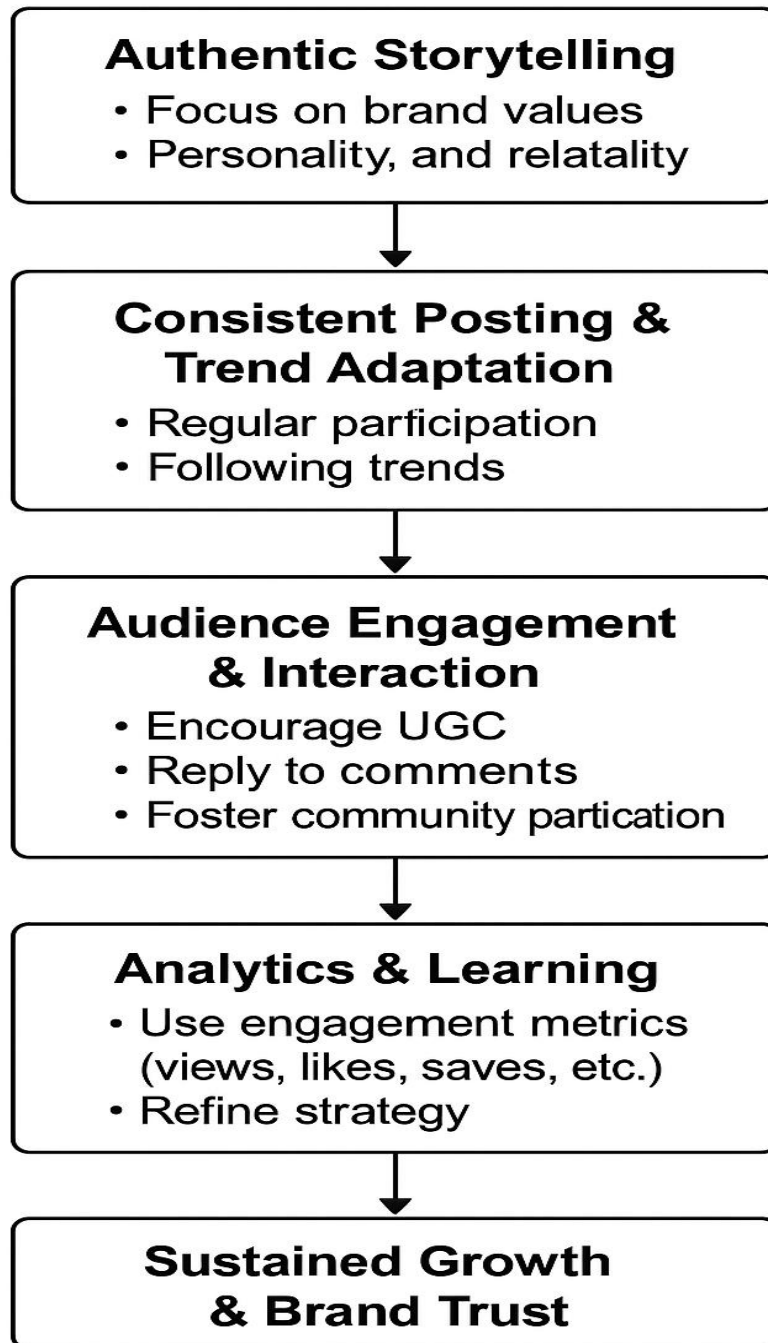


Figure 7: Practical framework for short-form video marketing success for small brands. Source: Author's illustration (2025).

5.3 Theoretical and Managerial Implications

The results of this thesis would add to the body of academic knowledge and management in the topic of short-form video marketing for small brands. From a theoretical point of view, the findings contribute to the current understanding on digital consumer engagement and content virality and extend knowledge in the small enterprises context. Earlier research (Manic, 2024; Wahyudi et al., 2025) stressed that authenticity and emotional impact are important elements used to get the attention in the digital spaces. This study underpins these thoughts in showing that small brands - even with small budgets - are able to achieve high levels of engagement when they focus on real stories and use visual creativity to illustrate their postings, and also post consistently.

Additionally, the study strengthens the theories of the role of algorithms and participation in visibility (Chen et al., 2023; Digital Marketing Institute, 2025). The study of TikTok and Instagram Reels confirmed the platforms have a trend towards rewarding interaction and participating in trends. This offers a greater theoretical knowledge of the role of platform algorithms in the success of digital marketing, especially for smaller brands who rely on organic growth instead of paid advertising.

From a manager's point of view, the findings provide useful information for marketing professionals, entrepreneurs, and small business owners. Managers can use the results to design better short-form video strategies focused on storytelling, trend awareness and consumer engagement rather than traditional promotional approaches. The research also highlights the importance of maintaining an authentic voice and responding to the followers as a low-cost yet highly-effective way of strengthening the brand communities (Meng et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the study also provides a contribution to managerial understanding by demonstrating that short-form videos can be used to bridge a gap between limited marketing resources and brand-visibility for small brands. The strategies identified - such as creating relatable content, use of analytics and such as engaging in user-generated campaigns - can be a structure for small businesses who wish to build sustainable online growth.

In sum, this thesis makes an important contribution to understanding the link between engagement and virality theories and their small-scale application to brand theories, and it provides managerial implications where these strategies can be put into action in order to give professionals an understanding of how to better use TikTok and Instagram Reels for authentic marketing results with minimal expense.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

Although this research gives valuable insights about use of short video marketing by small brands, it also has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The study was based on qualitative desk and observational analysis process only for the public available content from TikTok and Instagram Reels. This means that the results are based upon what is seen online, and do not take into consideration any internal brand data (such as subsequent sales performance, advertising spend or customer conversion rates).

The sample size of 3 small brands; Amici Clothing, Mero Canvas, and Laconic Fashion provided a focused view but also restricts the generalizability of the findings. These brands are all from different industries and different cultural contexts and their complexity makes them both interesting but more difficult to compare directly. Future studies with more brands or interviews with brand managers could result in a wider and more detailed understanding.

Another limitation is the period of observation which comprises around two months (September to late October 2025). While this timeframe was sufficient to capture patterns of engagement and audience interactions, longer-term observation of content could show more stable trends or seasonal trends in content performance.

Finally, the data analysis was based on manual thematic observation and not on advanced statistical tools. Although there is a level of subjectivity with this method, it also provided for the possibility of deep qualitative insights. Efforts were made to minimize bias by having consistent procedures with cross checking of engagement data, but absolute objectivity cannot be deemed.

Overall, these limitations do not leave the relevance of these findings but rather point to areas where future research can benefit from this study in order to develop a fuller picture of practices of short-form video marketing among small brands.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

As this study was primarily aimed at observing publicly available short-form video contents from three small brands, there are several opportunities for research to explore the topic in more depth in the future. Future studies may involve interviews or surveys with individuals who work in brand marketing - including those responsible for social media marketing or customers - to fully understand these impacts of short-form video marketing on the way people perceive the brand, their loyalty and purchasing decisions. This kind of insights could be complementary to the observational data, and could help find a stronger connection between online engagement and the real world business outcomes.

Another promising direction would be to expand the observation period to obtain a full year of observations. This would help to identify long-term trends, seasonal patterns, or the effect of algorithms changing on platforms as having an impact on visibility of small brands. In addition to this, future researchers could compare various industries or regions and determine how cultural and market dynamics affect the success of short-form video marketing strategies.

It would also be interesting to analyse quantitative data at a deeper level, potentially by using social media analytics tools or other software (NVivo, or SPSS) to show correlations between types of content, frequency of posting and level of engagement. This could give additional information in more measurable terms for the purpose of complementing qualitative findings in this study.

Finally, because the short-form video platforms are constantly evolving, there is an opportunity for researchers to examine new features and technologies as well, whether it is AI-generated content, live shopping, or augmented reality tools. These developments are likely to change the way that small brands interact with their audiences in the near future.

In conclusion, future research should continue to use both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to fully capture the dynamic nature of short-form video marketing. Broader sampling, longer time frames and inclusion of direct participant perspectives means that it would be possible to build an even more complete picture of how small brands can achieve in digital spaces.

5.6 Final Conclusion

This thesis aimed to discuss the use of short-form video marketing, as a marketing tool used by small brands through marketing platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels. The primary objective was to understand the possibilities, challenges and success factors behind small brand campaigns in the emerging world of short-form video content.

Through literature review, case analysis, and online observation, the study discovered that short-form videos have been an effective communication tool that has enabled small brands to compete with larger companies in visibility and engagement. The stories of Amici Clothing, Mero Canvas and Laconic Fashion made it clear that with creativity, authenticity and consistency, small brands can get people to pay attention in a meaningful way even with limited funds.

The result is related to the findings of previous studies that state the importance of emotional bonding, storytelling, and participation from the community (Manic, 2024; Wahyudi et al., 2025). What makes short-form video particularly valuable is its accessibility - it makes it much easier for small businesses to reach the world. However, the study also revealed some problems, such as

regular posting schedules, algorithm understanding and translating online engagement to actual sales results.

In the wider scheme of things, the study contributes to digital marketing theory by linking concepts such as consumer engagement, virality and growth of small brands especially in the context of fast-evolving video platforms. For practitioners, it offers a fertile ground for small businesses who want to better acquaint themselves to be present, to establish faithful communities, and to commercialize themselves more intelligently on the web.

While the research had its limitations in scope and time, it still provides some great information on a new and rapidly changing field. The research reaffirms what seems now clear: that success in short-form video marketing is less dependent on big budgets and more on authenticity, creativity and a real understanding of audience behaviour.

In conclusion, this research not only emphasizes the increasing significance of short-form video marketing to small businesses but also provides practical recommendations that can help business owners in this fast-changing environment.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Raw Data Sources

This appendix shows the original data sources used in the empirical analysis. Between September and October 2025, the three case brands collected materials in the publicly available digital platforms (TikTok and Instagram). In every dataset, there is short-form video posting, the measures of engagement, and the qualitative observations.

Brand	Platform	Data Type	Collection Period	Notes
Amici Clothing(Sweden)	Instagram and TikTok	15 short-form videos and engagement metrics (views, likes, comments, shares)	Sept–Oct 2025	Focus on street culture, unique designs and youth lifestyle. Reviewed the posted reels in both platform to count engagements and analysis.
Mero Canvas(Nepal)	Instagram and TikTok	15 short-form videos and engagement metrics (views, likes, comments, shares)	Sept–Oct 2025	Brand-founder art, storytelling, authenticity and emotional connections. Observations noted in research.
Laconic Fashion(Nepal)	Instagram and TikTok	15 short-form videos and engagement metrics (views, likes, comments, shares)	Sept–Oct 2025	Aesthetic, minimalist content style, value-driven narratives and fashion. Engagement metrics recorded manually.
Supporting Data	Websites, Brand pages	Descriptive info about their each brand and their marketing strategies, etc.	Sept–Oct 2025	Context for brand positioning and content tone.

Note: All content was publicly accessible and used for academic research purposes only. No private or confidential data were included.

Appendix 2. Thematic Coding Summary

The current appendix offers the thematic coding summary, which was applied during the analysis stage. The three case brand data, Amici Clothing, Mero Canvas, and Laconic Fashion were manually coded to determine recurring themes and sub-themes in the area of engagement strategies in short-form video marketing. It was done using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Themes	Subthemes	Description	Brand
Authenticity	Real Art, Genuine, Unique and Quality	Brands show “real” and unscripted moments to build connection with their audience.	Amici Clothing’s casual videos featuring staff and daily life at the studio, street culture fashions and friendship.
Storytelling	Founder narratives, Emotional connection and warmth.	Story-driven videos that humanize the brand, often highlighting origins or social meaning.	Mero Canvas’ videos where the founder narrates the brand’s story, values and emotions.
Values-Based Marketing	Sustainability, Ethical branding, Simplicity and Style	Promoting fashion as conscious, responsible, and slow — aligning with ethical consumption.	Laconic Fashion’s focus on slow fashion and sustainability in captions and visuals.
Fashion Identity and Aesthetic Representation	Style curation, Trend participation, Visual artistry	The use of fashion aesthetics, visual styling, and trend integration to express brand identity.	Amici’s minimalist Scandinavian styling and Laconic’s soft neutral tone visuals.
Audience Engagement	Interaction, Challenges, User-generated content, post consistency.	Active communication with followers through comments, challenges, and reposts.	Amici’s TikTok challenge inviting users to recreate their favorite looks.
Visual Consistency	Aesthetic coherence, Recognizable tone	Consistent brand visuals that reflect identity and improve recognition.	Laconic’s vibrant cool, styling and framing techniques across posts.

Appendix 3. Analytical Thematic Map

In this appendix, the analytical thematic map has been developed to illustrate the association between the six large themes discovered in the manual thematic analysis. NVivo software was initially thought out as a system to code and visualize the data, but to ensure the final design should be made open and align with the qualitative design of the study, the product was designed manually. The map displays the hierarchical arrangement of the Short-Form Video Engagement Model wherein the main themes, namely authenticity, storytelling, values-based marketing, fashion identity and aesthetic representation, audience engagement, and the visual consistency connect to explicate the engagement approaches employed by small fashion brands.

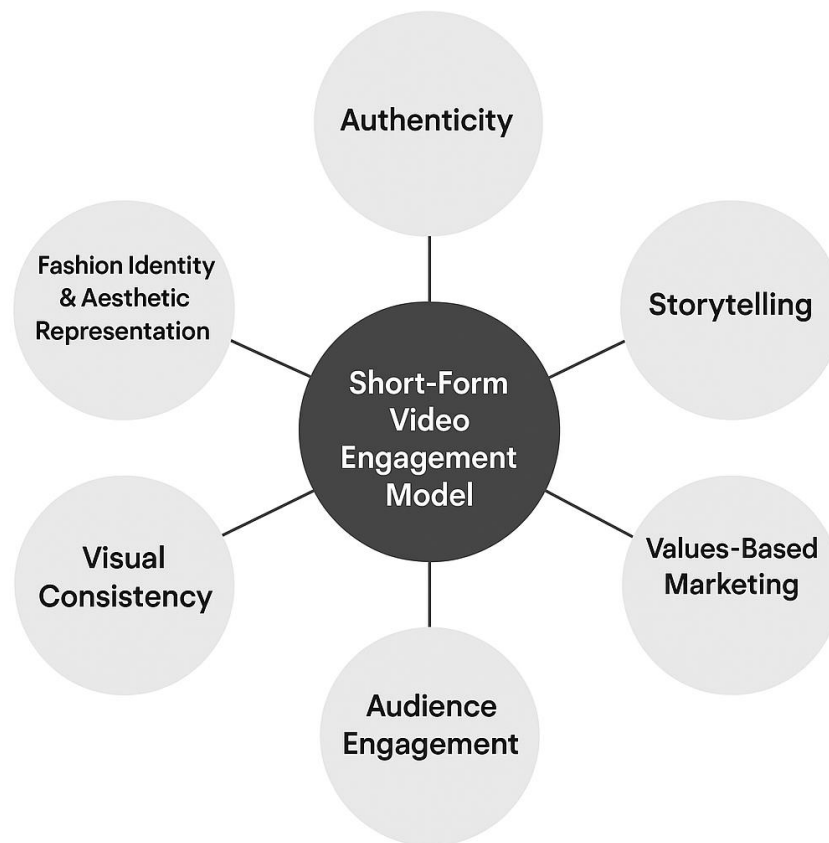


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AI Usage Declaration:

ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2025) has been used as an aiding tool to write and refine the language of the specific thesis through the supervision. Only the language clarity and structure verification and formatting recommendations were applied using the AI. The content, analysis and interpretations are original works in all research.