

THE TIKTOK BOOM

As one of the fastest growing social media platforms, there's never been a better time to jump on TikTok. Amanda Pauley finds out how salons and spas can use the app to promote their business and attract younger clientele



Although TikTok blew up during the Covid-19 lockdowns due to its addictive dance challenges and hilarious lip syncing videos (we've all done at least one, right?), the platform has grown in popularity and is now a key player in the social media market when it comes to attracting younger clientele into your salon or spa business.

It seems surprising, but the video-only platform's influence is not to be underestimated, with an incredible one billion people around the world using the app each month. "TikTok is the biggest innovation in marketing that I've seen in the past decade – a platform exclusively for video content that encourages authenticity and supports smaller creators," says Ben Lifton, founder of salon marketing consultancy Content Kweens.

"It has the most intelligent algorithm, which means that each consumer's 'for you page' (FYP) is scarily accurate, and the content you love creating can be found by people like you. This page also constantly shows new content from accounts people don't follow, so you have more opportunity to show up in the feed of prospective clients – far more chance than you do on Instagram."

The problem is, in the beauty industry, there's still a misconception that TikTok is mainly used by teenagers, but

that's just not the case. In the third quarter of 2020, 24% of the app's UK users were aged 15–25 (generation Z), while 9% were 26–35 (millennials) and another 9% in the 36–45 age group, according to stats collated by business data platform Statista.

"Salons and spas should be adopting the platform into their marketing strategy because they shouldn't get left behind," explains Cey Sesiguzel, co-founder and producer of video production and digital marketing agency Two Fresh.

What type of content works best on TikTok?

TikTok differs from other platforms in the social media realm because "fun" is such an important element in what should be created, but your messaging also needs to be consistent and authentic. For example, mixing up dancing videos and challenges, followed by another with a trending filter and then an educational piece won't work – it's just too chaotic.

"You need to create content that's aligned with your brand. There is nothing

that generation Z hate more than try-hard millennials and baby boomers,” explains social media strategist and digital content creator Akasha Reid. “I think a lot of people assume that TikTok equals dance challenges and lip syncing, and while there is a lot of this, that doesn’t have to be your trajectory.

“#LearnonTikTok is a campaign by the app (which celebrates the best of TikTok learning) that’s had huge traction because so many creators have seen their hacks go viral. So, is there a hack that your clients could be doing at home in between salon treatments? Or a common skincare misconception that you want to myth bust? These are the kinds of videos that are saved and shared, which encourages more views.”

Sesiguzel agrees, advising that salons and spas need to take time to study popular trends that are going viral on the app so that they can work out what fits into their brand story. He notes that the “transformation” trend is currently working really well on the platform in the fashion, make-up and property sectors, but could be an avenue for beauty businesses too.

“TikTok allows you to create ‘match cuts’ – (an edit that uses elements of one scene in the transition to the next) – which is a great way to show before-and-after results. So, you could have some fun and match cut images of stressed-out clients before treatment with happy clients post-treatment. This simple storytelling, combined with popular music, works well on the platform. Also, avoid traditional forms of

TikTok jargon busted:

- **For you page (FYP)** – this is the first page you land on when you open the TikTok app. It’s a curated feed of videos from creators you might not follow that the algorithm thinks you will like, based on your interests and past interactions.
- **IB (inspired by)** – if you see the letters IB in a TikTok caption then it means the video has been “inspired by” another viral video. The original user will usually be tagged alongside the letters.

marketing, especially anything that might come across like a sales pitch.”

Another idea is to hone in on what you love about your job or your expertise as the algorithm can see the type of content you’re posting – be it educational, entertaining or inspirational – and will target people interested in this on their FYP, which is crucial.

Lipton explains: “Beauty pros should treat Instagram as a portfolio of their best work, while TikTok is where they can educate clients on home care, talking about the gazillions of products that are out there. You can tell much better stories through this kind of video content.”

How long should my videos be and how often should I post?

The platform is still pretty young, so there’s not a definitive answer to how many times you should be posting, but TikTok does recommend sharing three videos per day to encourage more views and for the algorithm to share it to the FYP. “However, as this isn’t your actual job, it can be hard to dedicate the time,” says Reid.

“Luckily, unlike Instagram, no one cares if you have the same outfit on for five videos, it’s about the content you’re providing, so bulk filming on one day and posting spaced out will stop you needing to constantly carve out space in





the day to film.” Even if you can only post once a week, consistency and persistence are the most important things because you will need to test different strategies.

“Like any video content, there should always be a beginning, middle and end. Aim for videos to be 15–30 seconds (for therapists/salon owners) and up to one minute for educators, and always shoot in a vertical format using gorgeous lighting,” explains Lipton.

“Also, if you’re capturing content of a customer post-treatment, make sure the light source is behind you and keep your subject in the centre of the frame. I’d only ever add text if it adds value and, with the caption, only use three-to-five hashtags related to your niche.”

How can I measure my salon’s success on the platform?

Now, this is the tricky bit because as much as you can see how many people are viewing, liking, saving and sharing your content on the platform, you will still want it to translate into bookings. But, it’s not that simple – brand awareness is a big part of what TikTok can do for you.

“It’s understandable, and sometimes it does translate to sales, but creating content for this platform needs to be seen the way we see print adverts and billboards – it’s about visibility, but now with the added ability (of consumers) to buy or book directly via their phones,” says Reid.

“Before you start throwing money at promotion tools, build a bank of content so that when you do start promoting and viewers click on your profile there are lots of videos for them to watch and get a sense of your brand.”

To help build revenue from your content, you also need to upskill so your videos look the part, so get booked on to a good video-editing software course.

“There’s no need to pay someone else to do your videos for you. Since using my video editing techniques and transitions, my students now bang out videos every day and have seen their average client bill increase by £24 in the past three months,” explains Lipton.

However, if you do have the money to have someone external build your profile then Sesiguzel advises making sure that they understand your business and will protect your brand reputation. “Be involved in helping them to build your community – you need to follow and engage with other people’s content so that they also start to take notice of yours – and let your customers know you’re on TikTok and will be releasing exclusive deals for them on the platform.”

One spa has built its profile on the platform and, as a result, has had record website visits thanks to its TikTok videos going viral. Find out how The Spa at Carden has achieved this success...

18%
of UK spas are using
TikTok to market
their business to
younger clients

*Professional Beauty October 21 |
Insider Spa Survey*

CASE STUDY: PB'S LARGE SPA OF THE YEAR 2021 WINNER

The Spa at Carden, Chester

TikTok handle:
@cardenpark

Followers:
70.8K followers



With two viral TikTok videos under its belt, and many more with viewing figures in the hundreds of thousands, The Spa at Carden is succeeding in getting its name out on the platform. Its videos focus on the spa's expansive garden, using fast-paced images and videos to showcase the operation's luxury offering, alongside simple wording stating, "When we say our UK spa feels like you're abroad" and "Yes, this is really in the UK".

Carden Park's marketing manager Dan Rennie gives us the lowdown on how the spa has managed to master the platform: "After the first coronavirus lockdown, we saw a trend of consumers taking more videos of the spa and more of these appearing on TikTok. It's important for us to be customer-centric in the way that we communicate, so we look at what clients are doing and the platforms they are using and try to emulate it."

The team understood from research that "the potential for strong, organic reach is much better on TikTok than on

Facebook or LinkedIn," says Rennie, and taking the gamble has clearly worked. The spa started its account in March 2020 and now has 70.8K followers, 568,000 likes, and two viral videos, which each have more than a million views (when PB went to print), as well as a noted increase in customers booking in to see what the spa is all about.

"It's hard to pin down every sale to a TikTok view but the main metric we look at is website visits on the days we've had viral videos, and we've had record website visits on those days," explains Rennie.

TikTok releases trends every week, which the team use to help them create content. "If we can creatively think of content that matches a trend then that's what works best – you can't dictate to the audience what you think they want to see," he adds.

"Latching on to a popular hashtag or piece of music that matches your spa proposition will help a video do well too, but we've found it's also important to find your niche. We've tied ourselves into the luxury trend – if you search for things like #luxuryspa or #spastaycationsuk on the platform then our videos pop up – even though some were posted in April. People tend to use the platform like a search engine."

The spa also has a guest feedback system which is sent to customers after they've checked out to find out how clients heard about the business and "a lot of it now says from TikTok," explains spa manager Emma Pridding. "People are using TikTok as a travel guide so they can preview the experience before they come. We've even noticed a different type of guest arriving at the spa too – people come with selfie sticks and film themselves coming into the reception area and garden." **PB**

