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## Examining The Impact of Short-Form Video Content on Brand Perception for Higher Education Institutions Across Different Social Media Platforms: A Systematic Literature Review

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### Abstract

*This study investigates the profound influence of short-form video content, specifically clips under 60 seconds, on shaping brand perception and fostering engagement within the higher education sector. It encompasses a comprehensive systematic review of 22 studies, drawing insights from universities across nine diverse countries. The research meticulously analyzes platform-specific strategies employed on major social media channels, utilizing a range of methodologies including observational, qualitative, and mixed-methods designs. Key findings reveal distinct performance metrics across platforms: TikTok demonstrates exceptionally high engagement rates at 4.38%, while YouTube boasts impressive video completion rates, averaging 80%. A critical insight emphasizes the necessity for universities to adapt their content to the unique norms and audience behaviors of each platform to maximize impact. This study significantly contributes to the field by providing a robust framework for evaluating the effectiveness of short-form video in educational marketing. Furthermore, it advances theoretical understanding regarding platform-specific strategies in the dynamic landscape of higher education branding.*

**Keywords:** Short-Form Video Content, Higher Education Branding, Social Media Engagement, Platform-Specific Strategy, Educational Marketing

### INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of social media platforms has fundamentally reshaped how higher education institutions engage with their audiences, with short-form video formats—such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts—emerging as dominant tools for outreach and communication (Farhat et al., 2021). Institutions are increasingly turning to these formats to disseminate knowledge, foster community, and enhance visibility. These platforms offer unique affordances—brevity, visual appeal, and algorithmic amplification—that align with the content consumption habits of contemporary learners and stakeholders (Meffe-Baccarella & Rempel, 2024).

Despite the growing adoption of these platforms, the scholarly literature remains fragmented in its treatment of content strategy effectiveness. While studies have examined individual platforms such as TikTok (featured in 11 of 22 studies), YouTube, and Instagram (Ferreira et al., 2020), most focus on descriptive accounts or platform-specific dynamics without systematically comparing content formats. Specifically, there is limited empirical synthesis evaluating how narrative-based content—such as personal stories, testimonials, or storytelling videos—compares with traditional informational content—such as lecture-style videos or text-based announcements—across multiple

platforms. As a result, educators and institutional communicators lack clear, evidence-based guidance on which content types best promote engagement in educational contexts.

This systematic review aims to fill that gap by consolidating and analyzing empirical research on the comparative effectiveness of narrative and informational content in educational social media. By synthesizing findings from 16 peer-reviewed studies across diverse platforms, this review provides a cross-platform perspective on audience engagement, identifies effective content structures, and highlights platform-specific optimization strategies. In doing so, it offers both theoretical insights into digital engagement and practical recommendations for content creators in higher education seeking to enhance the reach and impact of their communication efforts.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Defining engagement metric**

Engagement metrics in social media environments for higher education institutions are conceptualized through a dual framework encompassing both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Quantitatively, direct platform engagement is measured through indicators such as views, comments, likes, profile views, and video views, accompanied by engagement rates—for example, a reported 4.38% engagement rate on TikTok (Dian Rustyawati & Sholikah, 2025) and video completion rates reaching 80% viewer retention (Candy, 2016). Further quantitative measures include extended metrics such as total watch time (e.g., 127 hours), the number of followers gained (e.g., 611), overall impressions (e.g., 312,400), and detailed audience breakdowns by user group (Li et al., 2023). In parallel, qualitative metrics capture the nuances of user satisfaction by evaluating content on dimensions of completeness, precision, accessibility, and general interest (Tomaszewski, 2023). Additionally, learning engagement is appraised through course engagement scores, student feedback regarding enjoyment, and the approachability of the learning process (Tseng, 2024).

### **Brand perception in the context of higher education institution**

Brand perception in higher education institutions is conceptualized as the multifaceted process by which stakeholders view and understand an institution's identity, incorporating elements such as institutional credibility, institutional image, stakeholder relationships, and content reception. Institutional credibility is reflected in the perceived authenticity and trustworthiness of the institution, which is fundamentally linked to the reputation for honesty and reliability that stakeholders attribute to the institution (Du Plessis, 2022; Pasanea & Winduwati, 2024).

## **METHOD**

This systematic literature review was conducted using the research question, “What is the impact of short-form video content (under 60 seconds) on brand perception and engagement metrics for higher education institutions across different social media platforms?” to guide the search and analysis process.

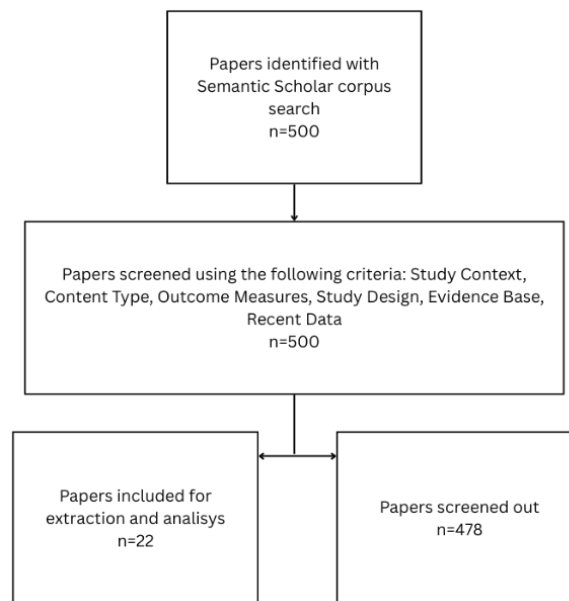


Figure 1. The Systematic Literature Review Workflow

The initial paper search was carried out across the Semantic Scholar corpus, which encompasses over 126 million academic papers, from which the 500 most relevant articles were retrieved based on their alignment with the research query. Subsequent to the initial search, a rigorous screening process was undertaken to determine the eligibility of the identified papers.

Screening criteria were established to ensure that each paper focused on a study context involving higher education institutions—such as universities, colleges, or professional schools—and examined short-form video content (60 seconds or less) across major social media platforms including TikTok, Instagram Reels, Facebook Reels, LinkedIn, and YouTube Shorts. Moreover, eligible studies were required to report at least one outcome measure, including brand perception metrics (e.g., awareness, sentiment, reputation), engagement metrics (e.g., views, likes, shares, comments, click-through rates), or conversion metrics (e.g., inquiries, applications, enrollments), and to employ an empirical research design—be it experimental, quasi-experimental, observational, case study with quantitative data, systematic review, or meta-analysis—while presenting empirical data rather than opinion-based discussions.

Additionally, studies were required to include data gathered within the last five years, ensuring the relevance and recency of the evidence. A holistic judgment was applied to simultaneously consider all screening questions. For the data extraction phase, a large language model was employed to systematically extract detailed information from each paper using predefined instructions. Specifically, data columns included the primary research design type (e.g., qualitative descriptive study, case study, experimental study, mixed methods study, action research, observational study), with any secondary design elements duly noted when present or otherwise described as “Design not clearly specified.”

Further, specific details regarding the social media platform and short-form video content were extracted—including the platform used, video duration, content type (e.g., educational, marketing, peer assessment), and the intended purpose of the video content. Detailed participant characteristics were compiled, noting educational level, academic discipline, age range, total sample size, and available demographic breakdown, while contextual information about the institutional setting—such as institution type, geographic location, and involved departments—was also recorded.

In addition, the extraction process captured engagement metrics, both quantitative and qualitative, including baseline and post-intervention measurements, statistical significance, and key changes observed, alongside direct quotes or statements related to brand perception, synthesizing both quantitative and qualitative assessments of institutional image and stakeholder views.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on our analysis of the included studies, a diverse array of study designs, platform focuses, institution types, and geographic regions was observed. Observational studies were the predominant design, employed in 7 out of the 22 studies, while qualitative descriptive studies were used in 3 studies, and both action research and case studies appeared in 2 studies each; additional designs such as mixed methods, experimental, and quantitative descriptive were incorporated in 1 to 2 studies each. In terms of platform focus, TikTok emerged as the most frequently studied platform, being the subject of investigation in 11 studies, whereas YouTube and Instagram were each the focus in 2 studies; 3 studies concurrently examined multiple platforms, and 3 studies did not report platform information in their abstracts. Regarding institution type, universities were the most common, featuring in 11 studies, with individual studies specifically focusing on college and university jointly, college alone, polytechnic, private university, and Islamic institute, as well as one study that examined various types of institutions; notably, institution type information was absent in the abstracts of 5 studies. Geographically, Indonesia was the most represented country with 6 studies, followed by China, which was the focus of 2 studies, while other countries—namely the United States, Ukraine, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Canada, Spain, and Australia—were each represented in 1 study; geographic information was missing from the abstracts of 7 studies. These findings underscore a methodological preference for observational approaches, a predominant interest in the TikTok platform, a significant focus on universities as the institutional context, and a notable geographical emphasis on Indonesia within the literature. The characteristic of included studies is listed in table :

Tabel 1. Characteristic of included studies

Study Design	Platform Focus	Institution Type	Geography Region
Qualitative descriptive study with supplementary quantitative data	TikTok	University	Indonesia
Qualitative descriptive study	TikTok	College and university	United States
Qualitative descriptive study	TikTok	University	Ukraine
Action research	TikTok	No mention found	No mention found
Observational study	YouTube	Polytechnic	Portugal
Observational study (inferred)	No mention found	University	United Kingdom
Observational study	Instagram	Universities	Indonesia
Observational study	Bilibili	University	China
Case study	No mention found	University	Canada
Case study	TikTok	Private university	Indonesia

Experimental study	Instagram	University	Indonesia
Qualitative descriptive study with mixed methods elements	TikTok	University	Spain
Quantitative descriptive study	TikTok	Islamic institute	Indonesia
Observational study	Facebook, Instagram, TikTok	No mention found	No mention found
Mixed methods study	YouTube	No mention found	No mention found
Action research	TikTok	University	Australia
Observational study	No mention found	University	No mention found

### Content Strategy Evolution

Our analysis identified key themes in the development of short-form video strategies in higher education, with TikTok and Instagram Reels most frequently cited as effective platforms, and YouTube used primarily for longer educational content. Across studies, short videos under 60 seconds and micro-story formats were seen as effective in boosting engagement. Platform-specific content trends emerged: TikTok favored entertaining, humanized content; Instagram Reels supported concise educational delivery; and YouTube was suited for more detailed explanations. Resource considerations were also prominent, including the need for specialized social media teams and student involvement in content creation. Successful implementation depended on balancing educational value with entertainment, adapting to platform-specific audiences, simplifying complex topics into short formats, and ensuring content clarity. These findings point to the need for platform-specific strategies, supported by proper resource allocation and training, to meet both institutional goals and audience expectations

Table 2. Content Strategy Evolution

Theme	Key Finding	Platform Variation	Implementation Considerations
Platform-Specific Content Adaptation	- Humanizing and fun videos achieve high engagement on TikTok - Instagram Reels are effective for educational content	- TikTok: favors entertaining content - Instagram Reels: suitable for educational material - YouTube: effective for longer-form videos	- Balance entertainment with educational value - Tailor content to platform-specific audience demographics
Short-Form Video Optimization	- Videos under 60 seconds perform well - Micro-stories enhance brand perception	- TikTok & Instagram Reels: optimized for very short content - YouTube: allows slightly longer “short” videos	- Condense complex information into engaging, brief formats - Ensure clarity and impact within limited video time
Resource Allocation and Management	- Need for specialized social media teams - Integration of student-generated content	- Platforms may require different levels of resource investment	- Balance resource allocation across platforms - Train staff and students in creating platform-specific content

The synthesis of these findings reveals a growing sophistication in how higher education institutions conceptualize and implement short-form video strategies. A central theme emerging from the data is the necessity for platform-specific adaptation, where each social media platform demands a distinct creative approach (Nagappa, 2023). TikTok’s emphasis on informal, humanizing, and entertaining content stands in contrast to Instagram Reels, which are better suited for concise educational delivery. This differentiation is not merely stylistic but strategic; it reflects the behavioral norms and content consumption patterns of users across platforms. The high engagement associated with TikTok, for instance, suggests that content creators must prioritize relatability and authenticity, whereas Instagram users may be more receptive to information-rich, structured formats.

The data support a model in which platform specificity, brevity, and resource planning are not isolated components but interdependent pillars of an effective short-form video strategy. Institutions that align these elements with their broader communication and educational objectives are likely to achieve not only higher engagement but also more meaningful connections with diverse audiences in a rapidly shifting digital landscape.

### Platform specific engagement pattern

Our analysis of social media use in higher education revealed clear patterns across platforms, content types, audiences, and strategies. TikTok stood out as the most frequently mentioned platform, especially for short-form, trend-driven content aimed at younger users aged 18–24. Instagram also supported short videos for similar age groups, while YouTube and LinkedIn were linked to longer-form content and older demographics. TikTok showed the highest engagement rate (4.38%), and YouTube had a strong video completion rate (80%). Content adaptation to platform norms was the most common implementation strategy, followed by tracking platform-specific metrics, using multiple platforms, and maintaining consistent branding. These findings suggest that higher education institutions need tailored strategies that align with each platform’s strengths, user base, and communication goals

Table 3. Pattern of Platform-Specific Engagement

Themes	Key Findings	Platform Variations	Implementation Considerations
Cross-Platform Comparison	- TikTok: high engagement (4.38%) - YouTube: strong video completion (80%)	- TikTok: short, entertaining videos - YouTube: allows longer, informative videos	- Tailor content length and style to each platform - Use platform-specific metrics for evaluating success
Demographic Response Patterns	- TikTok attracts younger users (18–24) - User behavior varies across platforms	- TikTok & Instagram: popular with younger users - LinkedIn & Twitter: better for older audiences	- Align content with audience demographics - Use multi-platform strategies to expand reach
Content Format Effectiveness	- Micro-stories perform well across platforms - Viral trends increase engagement on TikTok	- TikTok & Instagram: favor short-form content - YouTube & LinkedIn: suitable for longer-form content	- Match format to platform capabilities - Combine trend use with consistent branding

An analysis of platform-specific engagement patterns in higher education social media strategies reveals important distinctions in how content performs across different platforms (Bourguignon et al., 2025). TikTok emerges as the most dominant platform, appearing consistently across all analyzed themes, suggesting its central role in contemporary digital engagement among academic institutions. This prominence is supported by its high engagement rate of 4.38%, which significantly surpasses traditional benchmarks for social media performance. TikTok's affinity for short, entertaining videos and its alignment with viral content trends position it as an effective platform for reaching younger audiences (ages 18–24), who are both the primary users of the app and a key demographic for higher education marketing efforts. In contrast, YouTube—though less frequently mentioned—presents a different kind of engagement opportunity. Its longer-form content supports deeper viewer investment, evidenced by the reported 80% video completion rate. These data suggest that while TikTok may generate broader visibility and quick user interaction, YouTube may foster more sustained engagement and content absorption, making it a valuable tool for delivering complex or informative material.

### Brand Perception Impact

Our analysis of the studies reveals that short-form video content in higher education serves multiple strategic purposes, including enhancing students' perceptions of university spirit and library services, as well as contributing to institutional branding, civic engagement, and student identity development. TikTok emerged as the most frequently cited platform, underscoring its growing relevance in marketing and microlearning, while Instagram also played a notable role in promoting authenticity and engagement. Other platforms like LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter were mentioned more selectively, suggesting their use for specific functions such as professional networking, in-depth learning, and public discourse. Implementation strategies varied across studies, reflecting a diversity of institutional approaches. Key considerations included balancing authenticity with professionalism, aligning content with institutional values, adapting to student preferences, and monitoring feedback. These findings indicate that successful social media strategies in higher education must be platform-specific, student-centered, and responsive to the dynamic digital landscape.

Table 4. Impact on Institution's Brand-Perseption

Themes	Key Findings	Platform Variations	Implementation Considerations
Institutional Credibility	- Authentic content boosts brand perception - Short videos highlight university spirit	- TikTok & Instagram: prefer behind-the-scenes, authentic content - LinkedIn: favors formal, polished content	- Balance authenticity with professionalism - Align content with institutional values
Student Sentiment Analysis	- Students respond well to TikTok microlearning - Short library videos receive positive feedback	- TikTok & Instagram Reels: drive student engagement - YouTube: suited for deeper educational content	- Monitor student reactions across platforms - Adjust content to meet student interests and learning styles

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Community Engagement Effects	- Short videos influence civic engagement and identity - Micro-stories build stronger relationships	- TikTok: effective in shaping social views - Twitter: used for broader community conversations	- Use platform strengths for community messaging - Create content that sparks dialogue and reflects social identity
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The growing adoption of short-form video content in higher education communications reflects a strategic shift towards more engaging, authentic, and community-oriented digital outreach (Sameer Babu M et al., 2024). Our analysis of recent studies reveals that such content formats—particularly those hosted on platforms like TikTok and Instagram—are positively influencing institutional branding, student satisfaction, and civic engagement. Two studies noted the use of short videos in promoting university spirit and improving perceptions of academic services such as libraries, indicating the medium’s effectiveness in enhancing student affiliation and institutional visibility. Other singular findings point to the value of authenticity in content as a driver of brand credibility, the success of TikTok-based microlearning in generating student satisfaction, and the use of micro-stories to foster consumer relationships and influence social identities. Although individually reported, these findings collectively support the argument that short-form video formats are instrumental in redefining the ways higher education institutions connect with diverse stakeholders.

The platform-specific nature of these findings further emphasizes the need for differentiated strategies in content creation and dissemination. TikTok’s recurring presence across all thematic categories signals its emerging dominance in higher education’s digital strategy, particularly for engaging younger demographics through informal, trend-aligned content. Instagram, also mentioned in multiple categories, supports visually driven, authentic narratives that resonate with students and alumni alike. Meanwhile, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter—though less frequently cited—serve complementary functions: LinkedIn for professional academic representation, YouTube for long-form educational content, and Twitter for fostering wider public discourse. This distribution underscores the necessity of platform literacy, whereby institutions must tailor content not only to platform mechanics but also to audience expectations and behavioral norms. Strategic platform use ensures that content is not only visible but contextually appropriate and impactful.

Implementation considerations extracted from the reviewed studies suggest that effective social media engagement hinges on balancing institutional professionalism with a sense of authenticity. Each implementation strategy identified—ranging from monitoring student feedback to aligning content with institutional values—highlights the complex negotiation between maintaining brand integrity and responding to evolving student needs. Adapting content based on user preferences and social trends allows institutions to remain relevant while still upholding their educational mission. Moreover, fostering community engagement through platform-specific features—such as TikTok’s participatory trends or Twitter’s open dialogues—can enhance social connectedness and institutional identity. These findings point to the growing significance of not only crafting compelling content but also engaging with audiences in meaningful, socially responsive ways. As higher education institutions continue to navigate the digital landscape, these insights stress the importance of nuanced, platform-specific approaches that foreground authenticity, responsiveness, and strategic alignment with institutional goals.

## CONCLUSION

A comprehensive analysis of 22 studies from multiple countries reveals that short-form video content significantly impacts engagement and brand perception in higher education, with platform-specific strategies being crucial for success. TikTok excels in engagement (4.38%) with authentic content, while YouTube boasts high completion rates (80%) for educational material, and Instagram Reels proves effective when content is tailored to its unique characteristics. Videos under 60 seconds consistently demonstrate high engagement, with micro-stories particularly enhancing brand perception. Successful implementation requires dedicated social media teams, integration of student-generated content, and a balance between authenticity and professional messaging aligned with institutional values. The impact on brand perception and credibility is notable, as authentic and behind-the-scenes footage, along with well-executed microlearning, strengthens relationships with students. Ultimately, higher education institutions must develop comprehensive, platform-specific content strategies, invest in dedicated resources, adapt to evolving platform dynamics, and continually assess their performance using both quantitative and qualitative metrics.

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