



# Spring

## TikTok: More Than Memes

How the Gen Z platform came of age and what this means  
for luxury brands

London

New York

Los Angeles

Milan

## TIKTOK: MORE THAN MEMES - WHAT THIS MEANS FOR LUXURY BRANDS

Pre-pandemic, TikTok was known as the epitome of everything goofy on the internet. For brands, it was a way to reach young audiences, usually in partnership with creators — and not much else.

But the pandemic transformed our relationship with TikTok, as we en masse turned to our phones to look for something to do. Now at over 1 billion users, spending on average 1.5 hours/day on platform, this app is disrupting the furthest corners of the media & information industry.

Received wisdom says successful TikTok content is lo-fi and silly. But this patronising view of TikTok ignores both the overwhelming popularity of the platform, and the very real success some brands are finding through experimenting with their own original content.

We've worked with luxury brands who are nervous of TikTok, and helped them to develop a creative strategy for the platform, one that allows them to communicate their brand codes and products without compromising one iota of their exclusivity and desirability.

With 69% of Gen Z avoiding traditional ads, and the Gen Z luxury personal goods market expected to grow 130% in the next 2.5 years, it's high time that luxury brands embraced TikTok and evolved their marketing strategy to accommodate this most creative of apps.

Source: Bain & Company, 2020 ; Kantar Millward Brown AdReaction, 2017

### TIKTOK IS DISRUPTING...

#### SEARCH

40% Gen Z turn to TikTok and Instagram over Google Search & Maps ([Business Insider, 2022](#)).

#### SHOPPING

#TikTokMadeMeBuyIt has over 19 billion views ([AdAge, 2022](#)).

#### NEWS

25% US adults always use TikTok to get news ([The Guardian, 2022](#)).

#### ENTERTAINMENT

TikTok is a key competitor with Netflix ([Forbes, 2022](#))  
Average watch time has outstripped YouTube ([The Verge, 2021](#)).

#### EDUCATION

#LearnOnTikTok has over 7 billion views ([Fast Company, 2021](#)).  
TikTok is funding educational content ([TechCrunch, 2020](#)).

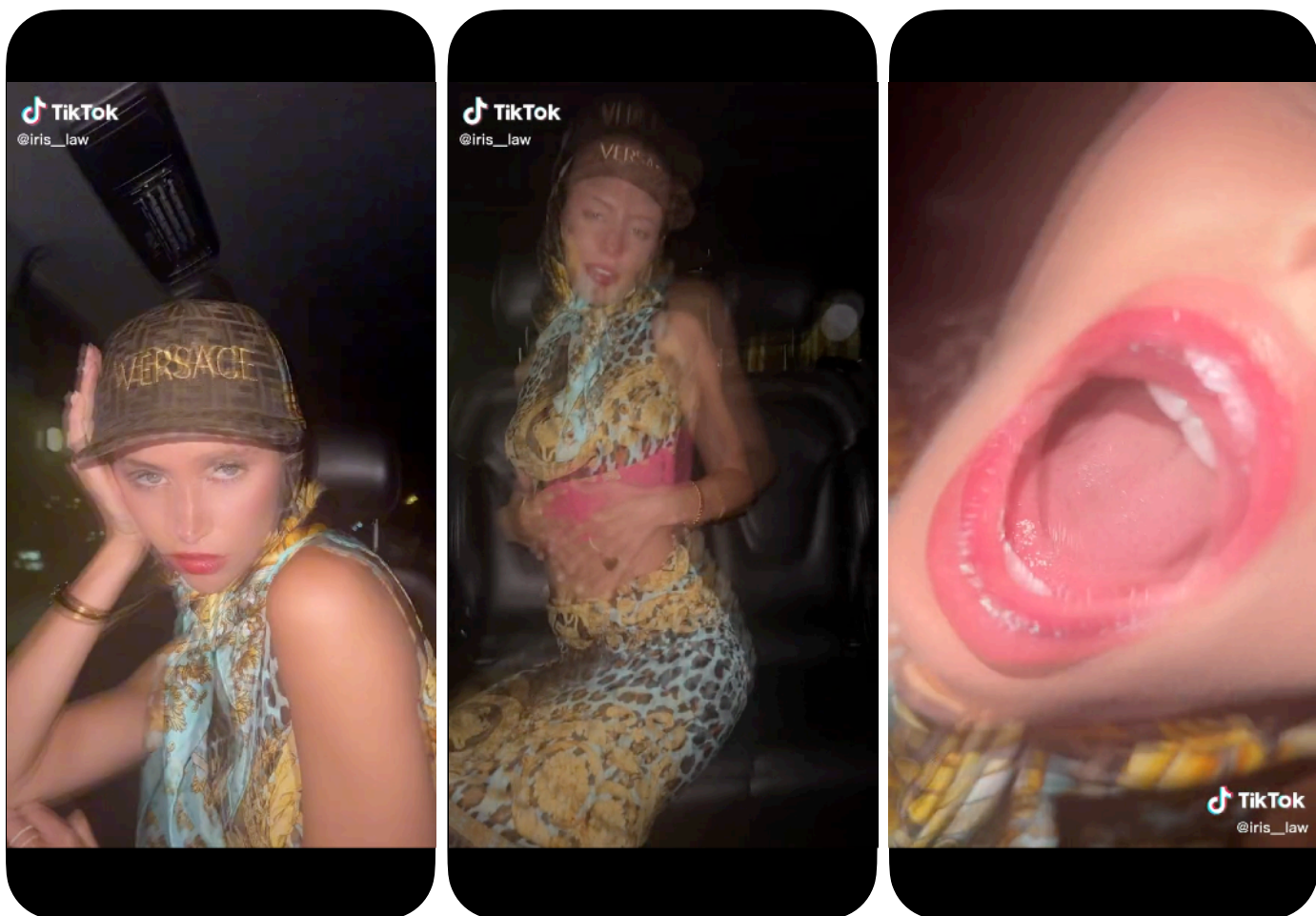


# 1. Make compelling brand-led content that's bespoke for TikTok

In the past, brands have felt most comfortable partnering with TikTok talent. In the Wild West of TikTok it was thought best to hand over the reins to native platform users.

At Spring we brief TikTok talent partners to do what they do best: make content that connects with their fanbase. However this represents only a small part of the TikTok strategy we build for our clients.

We advise our clients to put most of their energy into creating original content. And the pay-off for prioritising brand content over talent partnerships is immense: finding your own TikTok creative voice, achieving massive organic reach and building your own community among the next generation.



## ENCOURAGE TALENT TO CREATE BRANDED CONTENT IN THEIR OWN STYLE

Platform-native fashion, beauty, music, dance, art and food talents have honed their skills on TikTok. Best practice for working with these creators is to brief them on the task, and allow them to execute in their own inimitable style. Here you can see TikTok talent Iris Law advertising the Fendace show in a relaxed, intimate manner, with lo-fi, blurred camera work - an execution style that Fendace would be unlikely to create themselves.

## TAKE THE PLUNGE AND CREATE COMPELLING ORIGINAL CONTENT

Burberry has paved the way on TikTok with short form video whose viewing figures (13 million views for the balloon example, right) are proof-of concept that a luxury brand can create high-quality on-brand content and still go viral on platform. The trick is to be compelling: pick the right subject matter for your video and it will result in instantly-watchable, extremely distinctive content, designed for repeat viewing, and likes, comments and shares.





## 2. Stay true to yourself

For a brand with a distinct cultural identity, TikTok is a brilliant platform for bringing it to life. But there's also endless content on the #ForYouPage, so before jumping into the stream, it's important to translate your brand codes into a distinct creative framework that stands out in the fast-paced feed.

For some, it will be important to cut through with high quality video production. For others, it will work to play with the humour and eccentricities of the platform. By publishing distinctive videos, and optimising against results, luxury brands can craft a version of themselves that both resonates with TikTok users and stays true to their aspirational, distinctive identity.

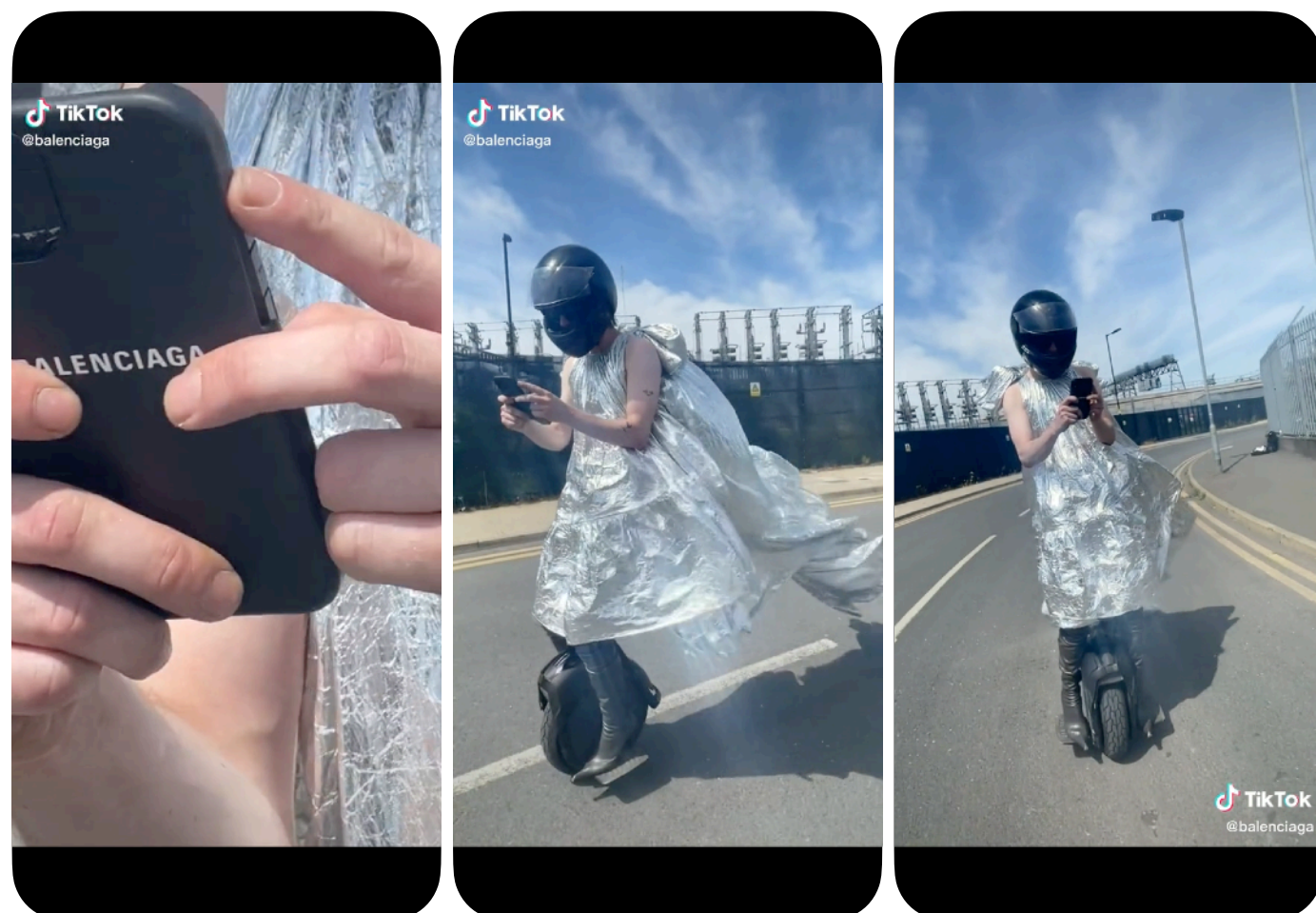


### BURBERRY HIGH-END ECCENTRICITY

Burberry have not conformed to the characteristically lo-fi flawed aesthetics common to TikTok and are regardless one of the most successful luxury brands on the platform. They create bespoke video that injects just the right amount of British eccentricity to stay in line with their brand codes. In this jelly video (left) they use a Burberry product mould and brand colours to create an intriguing jelly sculpture, executed in a high-quality studio setting.

### BALENCIAGA LO-FI WEIRDNESS

The lo-fi aesthetic of TikTok works well for Balenciaga as it's a direct reflection of their high/low, futuristic brand identity. In this video we see a model riding an electric unicycle in a Balenciaga gown, scrolling on her branded Balenciaga phone, fusing the brand with the lo-fi weirdness that's popular on platform. To make their reach even more effective, the brand logo features at the start of the clip.





## 3. Create a sonic identity

TikTok stands out from other platforms with the importance placed on sound. This stems from its origins as dance and lip-synch platform musical.ly, where users got used to watching videos with the sound on.

Today, a well-known sound can make a video clip instantly compelling. For example, hearing Snoop Dogg's "Sensual Seduction" will prompt the viewer to watch the video it soundtracks, as they know something will happen when the vocals kick in.

What's true for creators is also true for brands: choosing and using the right sound can influence people to watch your videos. So when planning out your content for TikTok, think about creating your own instantly recognisable, compelling and branded sonic identity for the platform.



### PRADA ORIGINAL SOUNDS

Much of Prada's TikTok content is produced with original sounds, created specifically for that video. For the Bucket Hat Challenge (left), the sound was timed to build to a payoff at the exact moment the creator transitioned into the Prada look. Using branded sound will also fill the TikTok sound library with branded clips. This allows other creators to use your sounds, and if that happens several times — as happened with the Prada Bucket Hat — your sound (and your brand) will be all over the platform.

### MONCLER BUBBLE SONG

Luxury brands can take advantage of their unique position in popular culture and license tracks that mention them by name. For example, Moncler used the excerpt "All up in a Moncler bubble" from Bubble by 24hrs ft. Ty Dolla \$ign to soundtrack their jacket transition challenge. Using a popular song gave their content an immediate awareness boost and lowered the barrier to UGC participation.





## 4. Educate the audience about your brand DNA

TikTok as a learning platform poses a challenge for luxury brands. Successful education content must teach brand stories that fits with the audience passion for revealing secrets, but does not damage the brand.

The solution is to create high-quality content on TikTok that tells a distinctive, ownable story, where both form and content feel embedded with your brand codes. That way viewers feel like they've learnt something, but the brand keeps tight control on the lesson.

Following these instructions, luxury brands can create popular on-brand educational content on TikTok with confidence, without ever compromising on desirability.

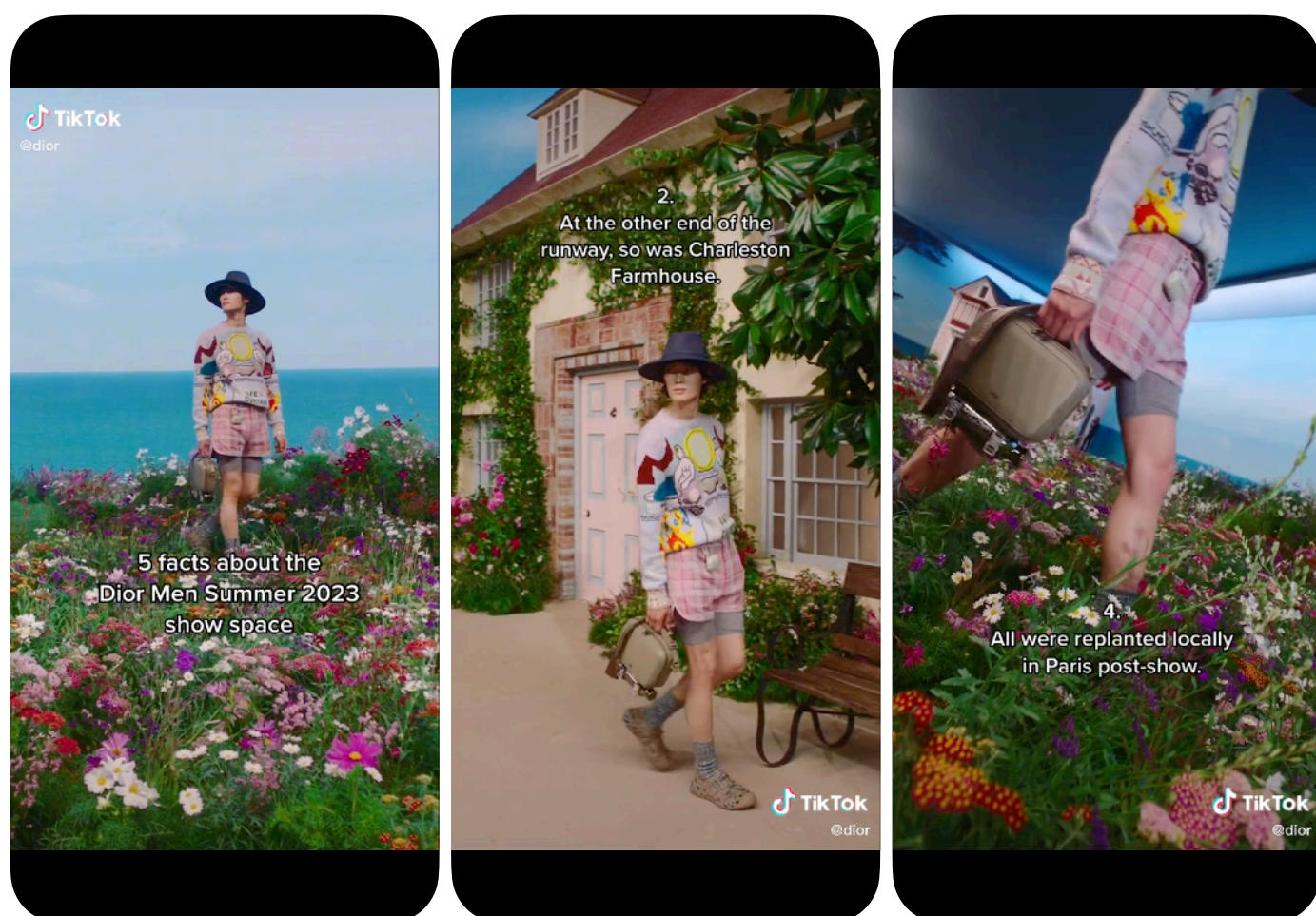
### LOEWE AT SALONE DEL MOBILE

Loewe took advantage of a downpour in Milan to create a short TikTok video (right) that demonstrated the use case of the traditional handwoven straw Galician raincoats on display for the Salone del Mobile 2022. The practical function of these fantastical garments was communicated playfully via this not-so-still life video of the coats in the pouring rain. The voice-over was also Spanish-accented, teaching viewers about the brand's Spanish heritage.



### DEEP DIVE ON DIOR

For the SS2023 menswear show, Dior educated their audience on the runway staging, sustainability, set design and the creative inspiration behind the collection. While the classic robot voiceover made the content feel at home on TikTok, a highly stylised aesthetic maintained the aspirational nature of the event, showing models wandering in the garden and picking flowers to classical music.





## 5. Develop a reciprocal relationship with your community

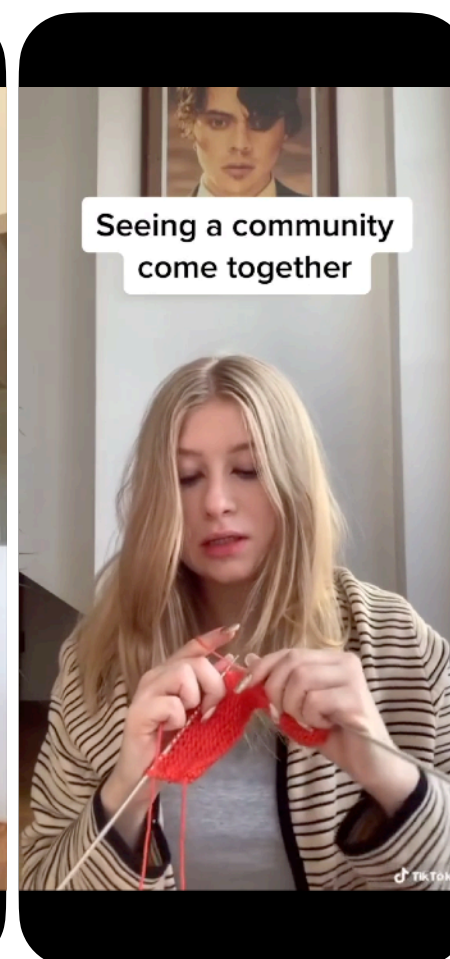
The TikTok algorithm takes a democratic approach to content, boosting engaging videos regardless of follower size. This means luxury brands are competing with creators for space on the #ForYouPage. And it's a crowded space: 83% TikTok users are known to upload their own content (AdWeek x StudentBeans, 2021).

Yet much creator content is community-based: joining a trending sound or activity, or stitching a video with a reaction. By monitoring conversations around your brand, you can spot opportunities for community growth.

Similarly, monitor the performance of your content to get feedback on what the community wants to see. If the audience has shown an appetite for a certain genre, then brands can respond and make more of the same.

### JW ANDERSON KNITTING COMMUNITY

JW Anderson scored a community coup by listening and responding to its TikTok audience. When Harry Styles wore their patchwork cardigan fans started knitting their own versions on TikTok. JW Anderson spotted this conversation and embraced the spirit of the trend by publishing the pattern online and posting a video on how best to recreate it. This response is a perfect example of using conversations to grow brand affinity in a progressive, reciprocal manner.



### MULBERRY UPCYCLING OPPORTUNITY

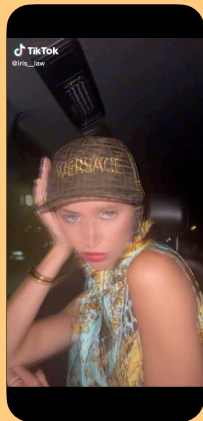
The success of Mulberry's TikTok content varies wildly, with views ranging from as high as 4m to as low as 1k. Yet their upcycling series that brings product back to life is consistently successful, averaging 1.4m views. Mulberry can acknowledge and respond to audience appetite for upcycling with more TikToks of this kind, confident in the knowledge that this method of communicating their brand heritage and sustainability values will be well-received by the community.





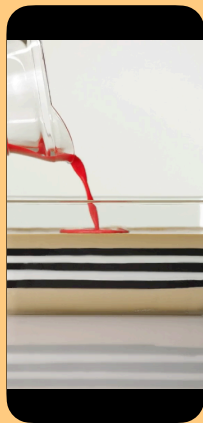
## IN SUMMARY

**The coming-of-age of TikTok means it's time for luxury brands to fully embrace the platform and its business and creative opportunities.**



### 1. MAKE COMPELLING BRAND-LED CONTENT THAT'S BESPOKE FOR TIKTOK

As well as working with TikTok talent, take the plunge and make your own content, where the brand awareness & affinity pay-off is greater.



### 2. STAY TRUE TO YOURSELF

Whether it's high-quality, lo-fi, serious, funny or weird, make sure your TikTok tone-of-voice both reflects audience appetite and is aligned to the rest of your brand.



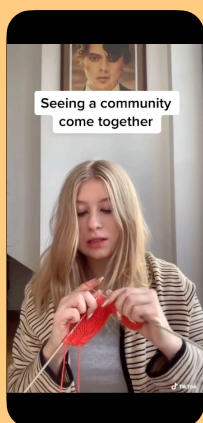
### 3. CREATE A SONIC IDENTITY

Plan audio and visuals together for every video, and work to create a recognisable library of branded, distinctive sounds.



### 4. EDUCATE THE AUDIENCE ABOUT YOUR BRAND DNA

Maintain control over your brand on the platform by creating videos whose content teaches about your brand, and whose form conveys a luxury aesthetic.



### 5. DEVELOP A RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Listen to what your audience is saying about your brand, observe how they interact with the content you make, and respond accordingly.



Is your brand ready for  
the TikTok era?

If you'd like to discuss how Spring can help you,  
please reach out to us at  
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