

Trend Following: How Content Prototypicality Drives Liking on TikTok

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Abstract

In the ever-changing social media world, trends are emerging on a daily basis making it easy for content creators to adopt an already successful type of content. However, it is not clear how closely content creators should follow the trend. In this research, we investigate how content prototypicality versus atypicality influences the success of trend-following videos. We argue that higher prototypicality increases liking. However, this effect occurs less strongly when users are less aware of the trend or when they can memorize the trend less. We investigate 57,060 TikTok dance videos using machine learning and regression analysis and demonstrate that prototypicality increases the number of likes. As expected, this effect is more pronounced the more users have been exposed to the trend and the more memorable the trend is. These findings are relevant for content creators and brands aiming at maximizing their contents' engagement.

Subject Areas: *Cognition, Information Processing*

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