

VISUAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES ON TIKTOK GO: TACTICS USED BY INDONESIAN INFLUENCERS TO PROMOTE TRAVEL, CULINARY, AND ACCOMMODATION EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

TikTok Go has emerged as an interactive, affiliate-based promotional feature utilizing location tags that transforms the visual communication landscape within the dining, attractions, and accommodation industries. This study aims to analyze the visual communication tactics of Indonesian nano-influencers in promoting travel, culinary, and accommodation experiences using the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory framework. Employing a qualitative approach with digital observation methods, purposive sampling was applied to select five Indonesian nano-influencer accounts with a minimum of 1,000 followers, consistent content production, and high engagement rates. The results indicate that visual creator strategies, such as Point of View (POV) angles, storytelling/cinematic formats, slide-to-slide carousels, engaging video hooks, arrow indicators, and information transparency (pricing and location), effectively fulfill audience gratifications. These span cognitive (information needs), affective (immersive experiences), social-integrative (peer-to-peer credibility), and escapist (entertainment) needs. Fulfilling these audience needs successfully builds trust and purchase intent through call-to-action features like location tags. Beyond its impact on the audience, this study finds that TikTok Go provides financial benefits for creators through sales commissions and increased brand collaboration opportunities. This research contributes to the development of visual communication studies in the digital era while offering practical implications for the tourism and hospitality industries in leveraging TikTok Go as an authentic, experience-oriented promotional medium.

Keywords: TikTok Go, Nano-Influencer, Visual Communication, Uses and Gratifications, Digital Economy

1. Introduction

Recent developments in social media have driven the creation of innovative features that integrate visual communication with direct monetization one of which is TikTok Go. Responding to the rise of the experience economy in the tourism, culinary, and accommodation sectors, this feature allows creators to promote destinations interactively through an affiliate system linked to location tags. Unlike traditional endorsement models, which tend to be exclusive, TikTok Go offers a decentralized and inclusive approach. Creators with a minimum of 1,000 followers can earn commissions from every user transaction without being bound by exclusive contracts. This flexibility is further supported by the availability of digital photo formats (carousels), giving it a comparative advantage over affiliate systems for physical goods, which are usually limited to short video formats.

This phenomenon aligns with the view of Suryani et al. (2025), who note the shift of social media into a marketing space where creative content has become a key economic asset capable of driving purchasing behavior. TikTok is no longer used solely for entertainment; it has evolved into a primary source of inspiration and information on travel destinations for Generation Z (Rajagukguk et al., 2026).

This transformation in the creator economy places credibility and effective visual communication as the main factors influencing audience decisions. In this context, an influencer is defined as someone who can shape others' opinions through the content they share a role open to anyone with a distinctive appeal that can capture followers' attention (Yumna et al., 2021). Visual strategies used by nano-influencers such as Point of View (POV) techniques, cinematic filming, strong video openings, and algorithm optimization through hashtags and trending audio are not merely

aesthetic choices. By presenting detailed information about prices, facilities, and atmosphere in an immersive way, such content fulfills both the audience's need for information and their emotional needs.

From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications (U&G) Theory (Katz et al., 1973), audiences consume media content actively to satisfy four types of needs: cognitive (information), affective (experience), social-integrative, and escapist (entertainment). Therefore, the effectiveness of promotion on TikTok depends heavily on a creator's ability to balance informational value with visual authenticity in order to build audience trust.

Although location-based monetization features are growing rapidly, there remains a significant research gap. Previous studies have generally focused on the effectiveness of macro-influencer marketing or traditional e-commerce affiliate models for physical products. There is very limited research evaluating the effectiveness of algorithmic, location-based affiliate systems like TikTok Go, especially when used by nano-influencers in the dining, attractions, and accommodation sectors. This is notable because the authentic visual presentation offered by local nano-influencers is believed to create a stronger psychological connection with their audiences.

To fill this gap, this study aims to analyze the visual communication strategies used by Indonesian nano-influencers within the TikTok Go ecosystem, and to evaluate how content quality satisfies audience gratification while also generating financial commissions for creators. Theoretically, this study seeks to expand the application of Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory within digital visual communication research. Practically, its findings will provide strategic guidance for tourism and hospitality industry stakeholders, as well as content creators, in designing authentic and competitive promotional content in the digital economy era.

2. Literature Review

Existing research shows that visual content shared by influencers can build positive consumer perceptions of travel destinations, increase the likelihood of visits, and support large-scale travel marketing efforts (Thirafi & Purbakusuma, 2025). In the realm of social commerce, content marketing on TikTok has been found to significantly influence purchasing decisions by up to 47% in certain sectors (Rahmatillah & Saefuloh, 2022). Such strategies play a key role in boosting customer engagement and building brand trust, particularly through varied content types such as product reviews, aesthetic videos, educational content, trend participation, and soft-selling techniques.

In the food and beverage sector, effective visual marketing on TikTok relies on combining soft-selling approaches with emotional storytelling, following the AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action), while adapting language style to match brand values and price segments (Natasha, 2025). This study is grounded in Uses and Gratifications (U&G) Theory, which views audiences as active participants who selectively choose media to satisfy their cognitive, affective, social-integrative, and escapist needs (Katz et al., 1973). The theory assumes that audiences are goal-oriented and proactive, connecting their needs to their media choices, and are aware of their own motivations for use. Within the TikTok Go feature, visual content produced by nano-influencers does not only present raw information it is designed to create deep affective experiences through techniques such as first-person Point of View (POV), cinematic storytelling, slide-to-slide carousels, text-overlay thumbnails, and transparent information display including screenshots of prices and locations.

These visually appealing and relatable elements, paired with trending background music, strengthen emotional engagement. The natural and authentic communication style of nano-influencers serves as the foundation for building credibility, which in turn converts audience motivations into the intention to make purchases or visit the promoted destinations. While research on TikTok marketing has expanded, there is still a significant research gap: no study has yet specifically examined the integration of visual communication, audience interaction, and direct transaction-based monetization within a unified platform feature such as TikTok Go. Most existing studies address these aspects separately or focus only on traditional retail products. This research therefore aims to fill this gap, specifically within the tourism and hospitality industry.

3. Methods

This is a qualitative study applying visual content analysis to examine communication strategies, audience satisfaction, and financial outcomes in TikTok Go content created by five Indonesian nano-influencers. Using purposive sampling, a total of 25 videos were selected for analysis based on the following criteria: accounts with at least 1,000 followers, high engagement rates, consistent use of location tags, and active posting over the past six months.

Data were collected through digital observation, including the recording of interaction metrics and documentation of visual elements such as storytelling style, cinematic quality, music selection, and thumbnail design. The analysis process involved coding these visual elements to identify patterns and relationships between creators' communication strategies, audience responses, and the economic impact within the digital ecosystem.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

Overview of Research Subjects

Influencers are categorized based on their reach and audience (Campbell & Farrell, 2020):

Table 1. Influencer Categories by Number of Followers

No.	Influencer Type	Number Followers
1.	Nano-Influencer	1.000 – 10.000
2.	Micro-Influencer	10.000 – 100.000
3.	Macro-Influencer	100.000 – 1.000.000
4.	Mega-Influencer	<1.000.000

This study focuses on five nano-influencer accounts actively using TikTok Go to promote travel, culinary, and accommodation services across Indonesia. Their profiles are summarized below:

Table 2. Profiles of Nano-Influencers in the Study

No	Username	Followers	Main Content Focus	Base Location
1.	@luluhida	2.982	Travel & Culinary	Surabaya
2.	@betasihombing_	2.794	Accommodation & Attractions	Medan
4.	@bellaeka_	5.598	Accommodation	Yogyakarta
5.	@si.kharis	4.765	Attractions	Jakarta
6.	@nenkningsie	5.750	Accommodation	Bali

The content characteristics of these creators show distinct approaches:

- @luluhida emphasizes detailed information such as operating hours and screenshots of ticket prices.
- @betasihombing_ uses Point of View (POV) room tours combined with trending audio to build emotional connection.
- @bellaeka_ focuses on informative storytelling regarding facilities and accessibility.
- @si.kharis uses artistic, cinematic personal storytelling to encourage audience engagement.
- @nenkningsie applies a structured visual strategy including POV openings, distance indicators, and arrow markers to direct attention to the location tag.

Overall, the 25 videos analyzed show the following patterns:

- Content Category Distribution: Dominated by accommodation reviews (50%), followed by attractions (30%) and culinary experiences (20%).
- Technical Format: Average video length ranges from 15 to 45 seconds, optimized for short-form, easily consumable content.
- Platform Integration: 100% of the sample used the TikTok Go location tag feature, which serves both as a direct transaction tool and a source of pricing information.

Visual Communication Strategies and Building Audience Trust

Analysis shows that visual communication strategies on TikTok Go have a significant positive relationship with audience trust, driven by visual authenticity and information transparency. Visual appeal such as aesthetics, color composition, and thematic relevance strongly influences audience interest in visiting a destination (Wahyuni & Merdiani, 2025). The use of raw, unedited footage creates a sense of honesty and accurately reflects actual conditions on-site.

Beyond authenticity, visual transparency also improves audience retention. Observational data indicates that videos including visual proof such as screenshots of prices or menus receive 30% more saves than content without such

details. Creative and informative short videos effectively attract potential travelers (Irawan et al., 2026) Displaying pricing through location tags provides clarity and reduces the audience's perception of risk regarding hidden costs.

Financial Impact and Monetization in the Digital Economy

TikTok Go offers tangible financial benefits to creators through performance-based monetization and stronger personal branding. The commission model earned from every voucher sale or booking made through the location tag transforms the act of sharing personal experiences into a sustainable source of passive income. This confirms a positive relationship between content production frequency, strategy consistency, and monthly earnings (Ambarwati et al., 2025). Task-based incentives such as rewards for meeting weekly posting targets also motivate creators to maintain consistent production to qualify for higher commission rates. Over time, proven sales conversion rates serve as a data-driven portfolio, increasing the creator's bargaining power and value for future collaborations with larger brands (Azhar & Erlangga, 2025)

Integration of Uses and Gratifications Theory in TikTok Go

The success of nano-influencers' visual strategies is built upon satisfying the audience's complex psychological needs. The relationship between visual tactics and U&G dimensions is outlined below:

Table 3. Coding Matrix: Visual Strategies and Audience Gratification

U&G Dimension	Core Need	Main Visual Tactics	Relevant Creators
Kognitif	Information Transparency	Text overlays for prices, facility details, promotion screenshots	@luluhida, @bellaeka_, @nenkningsie
Afektif	Immersive Experience	POV room tours, cinematic transitions, trending audio	@betasihombing_, @nenkningsie
Integratif-Sosial	Peer-to-Peer Credibility	Natural speaking style, authentic storytelling, Q&A sessions	@luluhida, @si.kharis
Eskapistik	Entertainment & Relaxation	Aesthetic visuals, scenic footage, virtual travel narratives	@si.kharis

4.2 Discussion

The visual communication strategies used by nano-influencers on TikTok Go act as a bridge to satisfy multiple dimensions of audience needs. Cognitive Dimension: Creators like @luluhida and @bellaeka_ transform content from mere entertainment into a visual information hub. Being open about prices and location details directly answers the audience's need for certainty. Unlike traditional marketing, which often withholds pricing to create curiosity, visual transparency on TikTok Go builds digital trust and speeds up consumer decision-making.

Affective Dimension: Audio-visual design is used to create deep emotional resonance. POV techniques used by @betasihombing_ and @nenkningsie do more than show physical spaces they stimulate a sense of virtual presence. Matching visual quality with dynamic audio transitions increases viewing time, and this affective satisfaction makes audiences more receptive to promotional messages, as they feel emotionally connected to the destination. Social-Integrative Dimension: Nano-influencers' accessibility positions them as peer advisors rather than corporate spokespeople. Content is viewed not as formal advertising, but as honest recommendations from someone similar to the audience. Natural, unpolished footage strengthens the parasocial relationship between creator and follower. Social interaction in comment sections further reinforces social proof and trust.

Escapist Dimension: The visually appealing travel narratives created by @si.kharis offer relaxation and an escape from daily routines. While this may not always lead to immediate sales, it is critical for building long-term brand awareness for destinations. Overall, the integration of these visual strategies creates a mutually beneficial relationship: audience psychological needs are satisfied, while creators gain financial rewards through affiliate-driven transactions.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the visual communication strategies used by Indonesian nano-influencers on TikTok Go are not merely aesthetic choices, but strategic tools that satisfy audience needs as outlined in Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory. Content effectiveness depends on the creator's ability to integrate four dimensions of audience needs

cognitive (information clarity), affective (immersive experience), social-integrative (peer credibility), and escapist (entertainment) into authentic visual tactics.

Specifically, the effectiveness of visual communication on TikTok Go has shifted from high-production value to visual honesty. Tactics such as clear pricing overlays and natural communication styles build strong parasocial relationships, converting audiences into customers through location tags. Therefore, economic conversion on TikTok Go is the direct result of successfully meeting audience psychological motivations, making transparency and authenticity the most valuable assets for nano-influencers. Theoretically, this study confirms the continued relevance of Uses and Gratifications theory in modern social commerce. Practically, the findings show that effective promotion on TikTok Go requires a personal and transparent approach avoiding rigid corporate advertising and aligning visual content with the real needs of the audience.

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