



Communication Strategies for Promoting Squid Game on TikTok

กลยุทธ์การสื่อสารเพื่อโปรโมต Squid Game บนช่องทาง TikTok

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้ มุ่งศึกษาถึงกลยุทธ์การสื่อสารของ Netflix US ที่ใช้โปรโมตซีรีส์ Squid Game บนช่องทาง TikTok โดยเน้นความสำคัญไปที่กลยุทธ์เฉพาะแพลตฟอร์มที่ใช้ในการสื่อสารผ่านสื่อดิจิทัล ด้วยการใช้วิธีการวิจัย แบบผสมผสาน (mixed method) โดยใช้การวิจัยเชิงปริมาณเพื่อศึกษาการมีส่วนร่วม ของผู้ใช้ TikTok ในการมีส่วนร่วมกับ Netflix US's TikTok และใช้การวิเคราะห์เนื้อหาโดยการศึกษาโพสต์ ที่ใช้โปรโมตซีรีส์ Squid Game ที่มีส่วนร่วมสูงสุด ผลการวิจัย พบว่า กลยุทธ์ด้านเนื้อหาที่ใช้โปรโมตซีรีส์ Squid Game ได้แก่ การสื่อสารโดยใช้จากอารมณ์ขัน ความตื่นเต้น และการเชื่อมโยงทางอารมณ์ โดยหลัก ๆ จะสื่อสารผ่านวิดีโอแบบสั้นและมีม (meme) นอกจากนั้น องค์ประกอบสำคัญที่ส่งเสริมการมีส่วนร่วม ของกลุ่มผู้ใช้ TikTok ได้แก่ การใช้เพลงประกอบซีรีส์ การใช้แฮชแท็ก (hashtag) และการใช้ไอโมจิ (emoji) อย่างไรก็ตาม ในการเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพการโปรโมตซีรีส์ Squid Game ผ่านช่องทาง Tiktok ควรใช้เนื้อหาที่หลากหลายใช้ประโยชน์จากเนื้อหาที่สร้างขึ้นโดยผู้ใช้งาน (user generated content) และการโพสต์อย่างต่อเนื่อง ในส่วนของข้อเสนอแนะในการวิจัยในอนาคต ควรศึกษาแพลตฟอร์มและซีรีส์อื่น ๆ ด้วย เพื่อให้เข้าใจภาพรวมการโปรโมตด้วยการใช้สื่อดิจิทัลมากขึ้น

คำสำคัญ: Netflix US, TikTok, Squid Game, Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing

Abstract

This study delves into the specific promotional strategies employed by Netflix US for Squid Game on TikTok, highlighting the importance of platform-specific tactics in the competitive realm of digital promotion. Utilizing a mixed-method approach, it merges quantitative scrutiny of engagement metrics with qualitative content analysis, specifically examining TikTok's top-engaging posts. Findings pinpoint a content strategy for Squid Game that leverages humor, excitement, and emotional connection, primarily through short-form videos and memes. Key elements enhancing engagement include original soundtracks, strategic hash tagging, and a diverse emotional palette. Recommendations for optimizing digital promotion encompass diversifying content, leveraging user-generated material, and maintaining a steady posting rhythm. The study suggests extending future research to various platforms and series for a holistic grasp of the digital promotion landscape.

Keywords: Netflix US, TikTok, Squid Game, Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing

Introduction

In the digital entertainment revolution, streaming services, led by Netflix, have transformed audience engagement. Since its 1997 launch, Netflix has evolved from a mail-order DVD service into a global powerhouse, boasting 232.5 million subscriptions in over 190 countries. Its success hinges on a rich content variety, advanced data analytics for personalized viewing, and content recommendations, epitomizing its evolution into a leading over-the-top (OTT) content powerhouse since 2013.

Netflix's industry dominance relies on deep insights into viewer preferences, blending analytics with creative content strategies. By analyzing audience data, it has pinpointed over 2,000 micro-genres, refining its recommendations and securing viewer loyalty through customized content and accessible subscriptions.

Even amidst rising competition, Netflix distinguishes itself through savvy social media strategies, deploying platform-specific approaches led by genre experts, fostering genuine audience interactions. Its robust social media presence underscores this extensive digital influence.

Among its diverse offerings, *Squid Game* shattered records, as outlined in Figure 1.1, registering 1.65 billion viewing hours in its initial 28 days and reigning as Netflix's most-watched non-English series, topping charts in 94 countries.



Figure 1.1 Shows The Top 10 most popular TV (Non-English)(as of May 9, 2023) Source: Netflix's official website

Squid Game captivated worldwide audiences, not just with its storyline and production but also through its relatable themes of financial struggles, creating substantial buzz, especially on social media platforms like TikTok.

In today's landscape, social media is crucial for marketing, with compelling storytelling enhancing brand engagement and market reach. Netflix's strategic TikTok use, engaging Gen Z on a platform home to 113 million active users in the US, underscores this trend, making its Squid Game campaign an intriguing marketing case study.

This research investigates Netflix US's innovative TikTok use in the Squid Game promotion, focusing on its short video marketing tactics and their role in mesmerizing audiences and redefining promotional norms.

Research Objectives

1. To identify which types of content were used in the most engaging content shared by Netflix US on TikTok to promote Squid Game.
2. To study which content strategy was used in the most engaging content shared by Netflix US on TikTok to promote Squid Game.

Literature Reviews

1. Examining the Multifaceted Approach of Social Media Marketing (SMM)

1.1 Concepts and Definitions of SMM

Social media marketing (SMM) utilizes social platforms to enhance traditional marketing, engaging consumers and building communities to strengthen relationships and influence decisions. This approach is reshaping brand interactions in the digital era, as detailed by Barefoot & Szabo (2010).

1.2 Variety of Social Networks in SMM

Effective social media marketing requires a tailored approach, utilizing Facebook's reach, Instagram's visual appeal, YouTube's video content, Twitter's real-time engagement, and TikTok's unique formats to captivate diverse demographics, as highlighted by Vaterlaus & Winter (2021).

1.3 SMM Tools and Strategies

Effective social media marketing combines content tools, strategic engagement, and analytics with clear goals and performance evaluations to optimize online presence and align with business objectives, as discussed by Hollebeek et al. (2019).

1.4 Advantages of SMM

Social media marketing enhances customer loyalty, sales, and connections through cost-effective, direct communication, exemplified by personalized interactions and its adoption by major firms like Dell and Amazon. This shift indicates a move towards interactive digital commerce, as explored by Nadaraja & Yazdanifard (2013).

2. Concepts of Content Marketing

2.1 Defining Content Marketing

Content marketing focuses on creating and distributing valuable, relevant content to engage customers and subtly influence their behavior, moving away from direct promotional tactics (Hammond, 2016).

2.2 Types of Content in Digital Marketing

The digital arena leverages diverse content forms such as TikTok videos, Instagram Reels, posts, memes, and influencer partnerships to engage younger audiences and enhance brand affinity through interactive storytelling, as described by Brenner (2022).

2.3 Strategizing Content Creation and Distribution

An effective content marketing strategy involves clear objectives, diverse content, strategic distribution, and precise metrics. It also includes the innovative use of the “3H” strategy—hygiene, hub, and hero content—to stand out and strengthen customer ties and brand credibility, as discussed by McGill (2019).

2.4 Emotional Engagement in Content Marketing

Content marketing’s effectiveness relies heavily on emotional engagement, where content that evokes positive emotions can extend reach and deepen audience connections, thus reinforcing engagement and brand loyalty, as noted by Wylie (2014).

3. Unraveling TikTok - From Origins to the Dynamics of Viral Trends

3.1 Historical Context and Evolution of TikTok

TikTok, originally a lip-syncing platform, has evolved under ByteDance into a diverse creative space, thriving through a variety of tools that enable unique and engaging content, as detailed by Cuesta-Valiño et al. (2022).

3.2 TikTok’s Algorithm and Community Culture

TikTok’s AI-driven personalized feeds, while raising concerns about content diversity and creator visibility, also foster community building in sectors like BeautyTok and RecipeTok, influencing both online trends and offline markets, as explored by Haenlein et al. (2020).

3.3 Personal Versus Business Accounts on TikTok

TikTok offers both personal and business accounts, tailoring features for casual or professional use, with business accounts leveraging high engagement rates to provide a significant entry into the digital market (West, 2022).

3.4 The Virality Paradigm on TikTok

TikTok thrives on viral trends that spotlight users and brands, merging entertainment with marketing. Strategic trend alignment is pivotal, as demonstrated by promotions like Squid Game, showcasing its power as a marketing medium, according to Bringé (2021).

4. The Evolution and Impact of Streaming Services

4.1 The Advent of the Streaming Era

The entertainment landscape has shifted from traditional TV to digital platforms like YouTube, with Netflix’s streaming model pioneering “cord-cutting.” This shift now sees competition from giants like Disney Plus, illustrating the disruptive global influence of streaming, as detailed by Strangelove (2015).

4.2 Netflix: Pioneering and Navigating the Streaming World

Originally a DVD rental service, Netflix has evolved into a streaming powerhouse through technological innovation and original content, employing viral marketing to engage a digital-savvy demographic. Global hits like *Squid Game* underscore its adaptive strategies and market leadership, as noted by Jenner (2023).

4.3 Streaming Subscriptions: Penetrating the US Market

The rise of streaming subscriptions surpassing individual users in the US signifies a shift from traditional TV to platforms like Netflix, indicating a broader digital transformation in entertainment consumption, as reported by Holleran (2021).

4.4 Global Reach and Subscriber Dynamics

Netflix's role as a global cultural conduit is highlighted by its widespread accessibility and deep market penetration in the US, UK, Australia, and Canada, along with a niche presence in other regions, showcasing its extensive reach and influence, as discussed by Lotz, Eklund, & Soroka (2022).

5. Analyzing the Phenomenon of *Squid Game*

5.1 Global Reception and Achievements

Squid Game became a global phenomenon, topping charts in 94 countries with over 1.65 billion viewing hours and earning a second season, significantly boosting Netflix's market standing, as noted by Pallotta (2021).

5.2 Socioeconomic Commentary and Cultural Reflection

Beyond entertainment, *Squid Game* critically examines socioeconomic disparities and societal competition, with its narrative on capitalism and survival mirroring universal struggles, enhancing its global appeal (Huang, 2022).

5.3 Production Value and Character Relatability

Squid Game's success stems from its high production values, including vivid set designs, captivating graphics, and an immersive soundtrack, coupled with deep, relatable characters that reflect societal fears, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This created a strong emotional connection with audiences, as detailed by Ahn, Jung, & Oh (2022).

5.4 Role of Social Media and Streaming Algorithms

The viral success of *Squid Game* is credited to social media platforms like TikTok, where viewer-generated content and trends such as the Dalgona candy challenge amplified its global reach. Netflix's AI-driven recommendation algorithms also played a crucial role in boosting its visibility and viewership, showcasing the impact of technology in content promotion, as noted by Goblot (2022).

5.5 Audience Engagement and Consumption Patterns

Squid Game aligns with modern viewership trends by offering an episodic structure that simplifies complex narratives into digestible units for "glance" culture. Its multilingual accessibility and portrayal of universal societal issues captivate a diverse global audience, as discussed by Hong & Yang (2022).

Research Methodology

This study thoroughly examined the promotional tactics Netflix US used on TikTok for Squid Game from September 17, 2021, to October 28, 2022. Using a methodical approach, 43 posts were analyzed through both manual review and automation, focusing on engagement metrics and content patterns. Quality control included cross-referencing and reaching out to official sources if needed. The research specifically targeted the ten most compelling posts related to Squid Game, facilitating a detailed evaluation of particular content and its engagement efficacy.

Data, including visuals and text, underwent comprehensive qualitative and quantitative scrutiny. The TikTok engagement rate formula aided the quantitative aspect, offering a uniform interaction metric, while Qualitative Content Analysis unveiled content themes, assessing narrative methods, emotional cues, and visual tactics to determine the most potent content types and strategies captivating the audience.

Research Findings and Analysis

1. Engagement Analysis

This study conducted a comprehensive analysis of the promotional content for Squid Game on Netflix US's TikTok profile, utilizing the TikTok Engagement Rate as a metric. Through the scrutiny of 43 distinct posts, a significant disparity in engagement levels was evident, demonstrating the fluctuating nature of social media interaction. Below is a representation of the engagement levels observed:

Table 1 Engagement Rankings of Top Ten TikTok Posts by Netflix US Promoting Squid Game (as of May 13, 2023) Source: Netflix TikTok (@netflix)

Rank	Date	Number of Likes	Number of Comments	Number of Shares	Engagement Rate (%)
1	2021-9-30	12.9M	86.5K	124.9K	38.41
2	2021-9-28	3.9M	144.3K	165.9K	12.36
3	2022-6-12	3.1M	89.6K	118.8K	9.70
4	2021-10-1	3.2M	24.8K	20.8K	9.51
5	2021-10-29	1.1M	6997	11.8K	3.28
6	2021-10-5	987.8K	11.9K	7486	2.95
7	2021-10-5	620.4K	3562	4277	1.84
8	2021-9-29	554K	5461	7202	1.66
9	2021-10-1	370.6K	5518	2727	1.11
10	2022-9-17	292K	5975	2101	0.88

K=Thousand, M=Million

The study showed large variations in social media engagement, with the top post achieving 38.41% and the lowest just 0.88%. This underscores the importance of timing content releases with global interest peaks, like with Squid Game. The decreasing engagement over time highlights the fleeting nature of social media trends and the necessity for continuous strategy updates.

The decline in later posts points to potential content saturation, emphasizing the need for content diversity and strategic timing to sustain audience interest. The study advocates for creating engaging content and adaptive strategies to navigate the dynamic online engagement landscape effectively.

2. Type of Content

Our analysis of the top ten TikTok promotional posts for Squid Game showed that 60% were short videos and 40% were memes, reflecting TikTok's preference for quick, engaging content. The use of memes, aligning with Richard Dawkins' concept of the 'meme,' effectively showcased the adaptability of ideas in digital spaces. To keep audiences engaged, brands need to stay agile, innovate strategically, and remain culturally relevant.

Table 2 Analysis of Post Type and Sub-categories in Top 10 Engaged Netflix US TikTok Posts Promoting Squid Game (as of May 13, 2023) Source:Netflix TikTok (@netflix)

Content Type	Sub-categories	Percentage of Top 10 Posts
Short-form videos	Series segments, Trailers, Interviews, Behind-the-scenes	60%
Memes	Compilation, Series segments	40%

3. Overall Emotion (Caption)

Our analysis of Netflix US's TikTok promotions for Squid Game shows a strategy rich in varied emotional appeals. Humor dominated, appearing in 40% of the top 10 posts, mixed with feelings of excitement, anticipation, positivity, and nostalgia to engage different audiences. See the table below for a detailed breakdown of emotions in these posts.

Table 3 Analysis of Overall Emotion in Top 10 Engaged Netflix US TikTok Posts Promoting Squid Game (as of May 13, 2023) Source: Netflix TikTok (@netflix)

Emotion	Percentage of Top 10 Posts
Humor	40%
Excitement	30%
Anticipation	10%
Positivity	10%
Nostalgia	10%

This strategy of emotional diversity serves to deepen viewer engagement by fostering multifaceted connections, as noted by Gogolan (2023). This deliberate emotional layering is a key aspect of brand communication, crucial for building lasting connections and community on platforms like TikTok.

4. Additional Elements

An analysis of Netflix US's top 10 TikTok posts for Squid Game highlights a strategic use of emojis and consistent hashtags such as #squidgame, #netflix, and "#SquidGameS2." These elements, alongside emotionally charged emojis, enhanced user engagement and brand visibility by engaging with current social conversations and tapping into audience emotions. See the table below for details on these promotional elements.

Table 4 Analysis of Additional Elements in Top 10 Engaged Netflix US TikTok Posts Promoting Squid Game (as of May 13, 2023) Source: Netflix TikTok (@netflix)

Additional Elements	Frequency in Top 10 Posts
Hashtag (e.g., #squidgame, #Netflix, #SquidGameS2)	100%
Emojis	10%

This content strategy uses effective captioning and ‘snackable’ content—brief, engaging segments that prevent fatigue—reflecting insights from Stephen, Sciandra, & Inman (2015). It prioritizes cultural and emotional nuances, enhancing audience connection and fostering sharing, in line with findings on how relatability boosts content virality in social media.

5. Original Sound

Netflix US’s promotional strategy for Squid Game on TikTok effectively utilizes the platform’s audio features, recognizing sound as crucial for storytelling and user engagement. Analysis of the top 10 posts reveals deliberate integration of original soundtracks—from eerie tunes like “Red Light, Green Light” to classics like “Fly Me to the Moon” and authentic voice interactions from the cast. These diverse auditory elements aren’t just background effects; they create an immersive, multi-sensory experience, resonating deeply with the audience’s emotions and expectations. See the table below for a summary of the strategic use of original sounds in the promotional content.

Table 5 Analysis of Original Sound in Top 10 Engaged Netflix US TikTok Posts Promoting Squid Game (as of May 13, 2023) Source: Netflix TikTok (@netflix)

Type of Original Sound	Instances in Top 10 Posts
"Red Light, Green Light"	40%
"Fly Me to the Moon"	10%
Authentic Cast Interactions	10%
Other Soundtracks/Effects	40%

This sophisticated use of sound in TikTok content extends beyond mere background for visuals, reflecting the platform’s focus on auditory experiences. Netflix’s strategy, as highlighted by Haenlein et al. (2020), leverages the emotional impact of sound to enhance narrative authenticity and thematic consistency. This approach deepens emotional engagement and viewer immersion, strengthening Netflix’s position in the competitive social media entertainment landscape.

Discussion and Analysis

Netflix’s Squid Game promotion on TikTok features a balanced digital marketing strategy with 60% short videos and 40% memes, perfectly suited to TikTok’s trend-driven environment. The diverse content mix, including series clips, trailers, interviews, and behind-the-scenes footage, successfully boosts engagement among various audience groups. This focus on short-form content is ideal for TikTok’s interactive platform and effectively targets audience interests,

enhancing campaign effectiveness. The campaign also demonstrates a profound understanding of digital marketing, engaging users emotionally and fostering community, key elements for viral success. Tailored hashtags, emojis, and original sounds further enhance content visibility and emotional connection, driving the campaign's widespread success.

Recommendations for Netflix US promoting Squid Game on TikTok

After the Squid Game success on TikTok, future campaigns should adopt flexible strategies. It's crucial to stay updated with user trends, incorporating TikTok's features like "Duets," "Stitch," and live streams to keep content vibrant and shareable. Using AI for deeper analysis could lead to more personalized content that resonates emotionally and encourages user contributions, boosting organic reach. Including multilingual options and cultural references will enhance content relatability and accessibility. Collaborating with TikTok influencers, by giving them early access to content, can create authentic engagement and pre-launch excitement. These partnerships could help build an integrated promotional network, leveraging Squid Game's momentum to emphasize TikTok's significance in viral content marketing and audience connection.

Conclusion

This study highlights Netflix US's effective promotional strategy for Squid Game on TikTok, demonstrating a successful blend of varied content and audience engagement. The analysis reveals a preference for short videos and memes, which account for 60% and 40% of engagement respectively, aligning with user preferences for brief, engaging content. With a diverse content mix ranging from series clips to behind-the-scenes footage, Netflix employs versatile strategies to capture digital viewers. The campaign's success is driven by emotional resonance, smart hashtag use, and effective emoji application. The consistent use of original sounds further underscores the importance of multisensory experiences in enhancing engagement. Overall, the Squid Game TikTok campaign serves as a benchmark for digital promotions, merging deep audience insights, varied content, and strategic platform use to set a high standard for future social media marketing efforts.

Limitation

This study's constraints are due to its narrow scope, focusing only on Squid Game's TikTok promotion, which hinders the findings' generalizability across different platforms and content. The reliance on public data, without Netflix's internal insights, may overlook crucial strategies. Additionally, the fleeting nature of social media trends could date the findings, emphasizing the need for continuous, flexible research. These limitations suggest a demand for broader, multi-platform studies and deeper data access to fully grasp entertainment marketing tactics.

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