

FROM SEA TO SCREEN

An analysis of shellfish and tinned fish videos on TikTok



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ABOUT

This project originated through discussions and collaborations initiated at the ASSG Early Career Researcher (ECR) Workshop in October 2024, where shared interests in the Challenges of the Shellfish Industry brought together early career researchers from across the UK and Europe. Building on these connections, the project team decided to focus on social media's role in the promotion of seafood. The project was further supported by the ASSG and Fishmongers' Company's Fisheries Charitable Trust.

THE TEAM

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Summary

In the UK, recent research by SeaFish shows that younger millennials are open to eating more seafood. Many of them use social media platforms like TikTok, where they create, share, and discover short videos. TikTok, which has over a billion users each month, constantly sees new trends emerge. In 2023, the hashtag #Tinnedfishdatenight went viral, with its top three videos reaching over 3 million views each. In 2024, a video of a woman eating 60 oysters in one sitting gained 2.1 million views. While in 2025, Sardine Girl Summer caused a surge in google searches for tinned sardines. Although TikTok trends on topics like climate change and food are well-researched, there hasn't been much focus on seafood-related content yet.

As these social media platforms have a young, engaged audience, researching seafood content could help the shellfish industry better connect with potential consumers. This project analysed TikTok videos about shellfish and tinned fish, identifying common themes and patterns. 100 TikTok videos with hashtags (#shellfish, #tinnedfish, #mussels, #oysters) were scraped and downloaded using an API and analysed using inductive thematic analysis.

Six primary themes emerged from the analysis. **Communal and participatory experiences** highlight how shellfish is presented in “eat with me” or “first try” videos that invite audiences to share in authentic, social moments. **Reviews and reactions** build peer-to-peer trust, with creators' unscripted impressions enhancing relatability and reducing intimidation. **Visual and sensory appeal** demonstrates how seafood's sounds and visuals can create highly engaging content, from ASMR mussel eating to the visual spectacle of oysters. **Lifestyle and provenance** connect seafood to local identity, sustainability, and authenticity, though Scottish oysters remain underrepresented in this space. **Food pairing and preparation** shows how even minimal recipes and simple accompaniments can elevate perception, while accessibility and practicality reinforce the importance of affordability and convenience, especially during cost-of-living pressures.

Across these themes, **humour** plays a cross-cutting role. Particularly within British TikTok content, humour is used to make shellfish approachable, disarm stereotypes, and inject fun into food culture. This style aligns well with the values of younger consumers, who prize authenticity, relatability, and community over polished advertising.

Taken together, the findings point to distinct consumer narratives: oysters are framed as adventurous and luxurious, mussels as communal and accessible, and tinned fish as trendy and packaging driven. For Scottish shellfish growers, these portrayals offer both opportunities and challenges. Mussels are well placed to align with communal, affordable, and versatile narratives, while oysters could benefit from greater visibility in provenance-led storytelling and “first try” experiences. Both products can leverage humour, sensory storytelling, selling of provenance (e.g., supermarkets, fish mongers) and global cuisine trends to increase cultural relevance. We also found that seafood

was portrayed more positively, with people showing their enjoyment of shellfish and willingness to inspire others.

The broader implication is clear: There is a lot of room for creativity and collaboration and to resonate with Gen Z and Millennials, Scottish shellfish must move beyond traditional education and embrace TikTok's cultural language of authenticity, humour, and participation. By aligning with microtrends, working with relatable creators, and positioning shellfish as both sustainable and personally rewarding, the sector can build stronger connections with current and future consumers.

From Sea to Screen is a collaborative project led by University of Aberdeen with Bangor University and University College Cork. Funded by the Fishmonger's Company's Fisheries Charitable Trust, the project ran through 2025.

TikTok, a new frontier for seafood consumers

TikTok has become one of the most influential social media platforms in the world, downloaded more than five billion times and used by over 1.6 billion people every month. It has overtaken many competitors as the most popular space for young adults to access both entertainment and information. Gen Z (aged 18 to 24) and Millennials (aged 25 to 43) dominate the platform, representing 30.2 percent and 23.3 percent of users respectively (Businessofapps.com, 2025). TikTok's design encourages instantaneous content creation and consumption, which fosters spontaneity and creativity. This format aligns closely with the way younger generations think and behave, making TikTok central to how culture, trends and consumer preferences are shaped.

Seafood is one of the categories thriving on TikTok, with more than 929 million posts by August 2025. The popularity of seafood online is strongly linked to viral trends such as *Tinned Fish Date Night*, *Sardine Girl Summer*, *Caviar Bumps*, *Seafood Boils* and *Seafood Mukbangs*. These movements highlight the creative and innovative ways Gen Z and Millennials are engaging with seafood content, demonstrating the platform's ability to advance seafood awareness and literacy. *Tinned Fish Date Night*, for example, began with a chef and TikTok influencer documenting a date night centred on a charcuterie board made with tinned fish products. This simple idea quickly became a viral sensation, leading to millions of views and inspiring other creators to post their own versions. Today, aesthetically curated "seacuterie boards" and unboxings of stylish tinned fish subscriptions are commonplace on the app (BBC, 2023).

An increasing number of seafood businesses are recognising this momentum and are turning to TikTok to reach younger audiences. Influencers such as James Sibley, Charlotte Langley, Emily De Sousa and Eating with Tod have partnered with the industry to showcase aquaculture farming, sustainability certifications, new seafood dishes and restaurants. Some trends have even evolved into commercial partnerships. Ali Hooke, who helped popularise *Tinned Fish Date Night*, worked with Patagonia Provisions on a branded guide, while Canadian brand Scout used the trend to reposition mussels, transforming a low performing item into a top seller (Seafood Source, 2023). Other

brands, such as Fish Wife in the United States, and Sea Sisters and Hevva in the United Kingdom, are investing heavily in marketing aesthetics, bold flavours and creative packaging to attract younger consumers. Patagonia Provisions has also leaned into health and nutrition trends with its “beans and dines” campaign, pairing tinned sardines with beans in high quality sauces to highlight protein and fibre.

This enthusiasm online does not fully match real world seafood consumption. In the United Kingdom, people still eat less than half the recommended two portions of seafood per week, and consumption has fallen 7.7 percent compared with the previous year (SeaFish, 2024). This long-term decline has been evident since the 1980s and is driven by barriers such as price, economic pressures, lack of knowledge, and limited cooking skills. At the same time, demand remains strong for convenient formats like fish fingers and pies, indicating that consumers are willing to eat seafood when it fits into their lifestyle. SeaFish has suggested that focusing on younger generations and cuisines could help stabilise consumption.

Together, Millennials and Gen Z represent 27 million people in the UK (Statista, 2025). Millennials, now the country’s most powerful spenders, prioritise health, wellbeing, convenience and ethics, but face financial constraints compared to older generations. Gen Z are just entering the workforce and have slightly lower spending power, but as digital natives they are highly skilled at navigating the online world. They use social media not just for entertainment but as a tool for discovery, actively seeking new products, especially in food, drink and beauty (STM Agency, 2025). Both generations are values driven, supporting local businesses and making decisions based on political, social and environmental considerations (Barclays UK Unlocked). However, they differ in emphasis. Gen Z are more likely to value shared experiences, fun and small feel good purchases, while Millennials tend to focus on convenience and longer-term wellbeing.

For seafood businesses, TikTok offers a way to reach these consumers where they spend their time and attention. Success depends on adapting to the platform’s content style. Traditional food marketing, with scripted, polished and glossy production, contrasts sharply with TikTok’s preference for fast, authentic, and low-cost videos. Consumers are also more likely to trust micro and nano influencers, who’s smaller but engaged audiences provide targeted and credible recommendations. In fact, while 47 percent of UK consumers say they purchase based on creator recommendations, only 28 percent trust traditional influencer advertisements.

Ultimately, the combination of TikTok’s cultural power and the values of younger generations presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the seafood sector. By embracing authentic, creator driven storytelling and connecting seafood to memorable experiences, the industry can begin to bridge the gap between online enthusiasm and real-world consumption.



Figure 1. Examples of new tinned fish companies. [Nice Cans from Canada](#); [Sea Sisters from UK](#); [Fish Wife from US](#).

As such, we were interested in the following questions:

1. How are tinned fish and shellfish portrayed on social media?
2. Who are the creators of tinned fish and shellfish popular content?
3. What are the communication functions of tinned fish and shellfish videos on TikTok?

Analysis of TikTok videos

To develop the dataset containing, videos from TikTok with hashtags ‘#tinnedfish’, ‘#shellfish’, ‘#mussels’ and ‘#oysters were scrapped and downloaded. The hashtags were identified through the discover feature of TikTok, as well as playing around with hashtag searches on APIFY.com. The hashtags were chosen to represent the shellfish industry (#shellfish, #mussels, #oysters) and a recent trend (#tinnedfish). Stories were not included in the search (as they disappear after 24hrs and are no longer visible or retrievable for data collection.

Data collection

The API platform Apify.com was used to identify and scrape videos from TikTok. Apify is a web scraping and automation platform that helps users extract, process, and use data from websites at scale. It offers ready-to-use tools (actors), for tasks such as scraping videos. TikTok has their own API, however, at the time of the research, this feature was not available in the researchers’ region, or for the data being collected. The TikTok API is also geared more towards research in computational methods.

Over 2500 videos across the four hashtags were scraped and their data downloaded by one researcher (CB) in April 2025. 100 videos (25 videos from each hashtag) were identified with the following criteria:

1. Uses the specific hashtag
2. Video content and text is in English

3. Ranked by highest to lowest number of views
4. Videos specifically from the United Kingdom

Coding framework and analysis

Textual, visual and auditory data were analysed using [inductive thematic analysis](#) and quantitative content analysis. The coding framework was developed in Microsoft Excel and used for data entry, organisation and analysis. Coding categories were adapted from [Basch et al \(2020\)](#), [Zeng & Abidin \(2021\)](#), and [Shipway et al \(2024\)](#). Metadata such as the number of views, comments and likes were recorded for each video. Each video was coded for existing content characteristics and adapted from prior studies related to seafood ([Shipway et al \(2024\)](#)). During a workshop in July 2025, all authors (EM, RP, DNW) coded 10 randomly selected videos (10% of the sample) to determine inter rater-reliability as per [Basch et al \(2022\)](#). All researchers (CB, EM, RP, DN) analysed 22 – 25 videos across the four hashtags to analyse independently.

For the analysis, we used a number of different variables, which are described as follows:

- **Play Count** – this measures the number of views per video and shows the performance of each video. High play counts shows the virality of the video.
- **Digg Count**– this measures the number of likes a video has received and shows active engagement. Higher digg count shows stronger resonance with the audience.
- **Share Count** – this measures the number of times a video was shared either through direct messages, or to other platforms (e.g., Whatsapp or Messenger). High share count shows the value of the content and its spread.
- **Fans Count** – this measures the number of fans per creator, also sometimes called followers. It measures of the audience base size, but not the per-video success. Shows potential reach but not engagement.
- **Engagement rate** – used to normalise engagement metrics and highlights the videos influence. It is calculated as $(diggCount + shareCount) / playCount$
- **Fan efficiency** – also used to normalise engagement metrics and highlights the video’s efficiency of views based on the number of fans/followers the content creator has. This is calculated as $average\ playCount / fans$.

While we split the videos by view counts to understand overarching themes, it is important to note that high view counts do not necessarily mean the content doesn’t engage with the intended audience. We set an arbitrary 10,000 view count, however, the ability for the content creator to authentically engage with their audiences (e.g., Mico-influencers) through community building are far more effective. This authenticity is also evident in the theme around creating community.

While consent was not directly obtained from the TikTok content creators, consent was implied as TikTok creators are aware that any public activities on the platform may be read, collected or used by third-party users, outlined in their privacy policy (Iyengar paper).

Table 1. Data analysis procedure

Thematic analysis step	Description
Step 1: Familiarisation	One author (CB) downloaded all 100 videos and viewed all 100 videos at least once.
Step 2: Generation of preliminary codes	At an in-person workshop, all authors independently viewed 10 videos (10%) at least once and coded. Interrater agreement was good, suggested content and description of the codes were agreed. Initial codebook was created.
Step 3: Revision of codes	One author (CB) used summary reports, workshop discussion and literature to inductively develop a codebook with descriptive and interpretative codes.
Step 4: Coding all videos	All authors independently viewed 22 or 23 (22%) of videos at least once and independently coded them using the codebook.
Step 5: Identifying themes	The authors met virtually to cross-reference each other's codes, reflect any differences in perspective and discuss discrepancies. In an online workshop, authors reviewed the codes, to identify larger patterns across the dataset.

A thematic analysis virtual workshop was held in August 2025, where all researchers cross-referenced each other's codes and identified larger patterns and themes across the dataset.

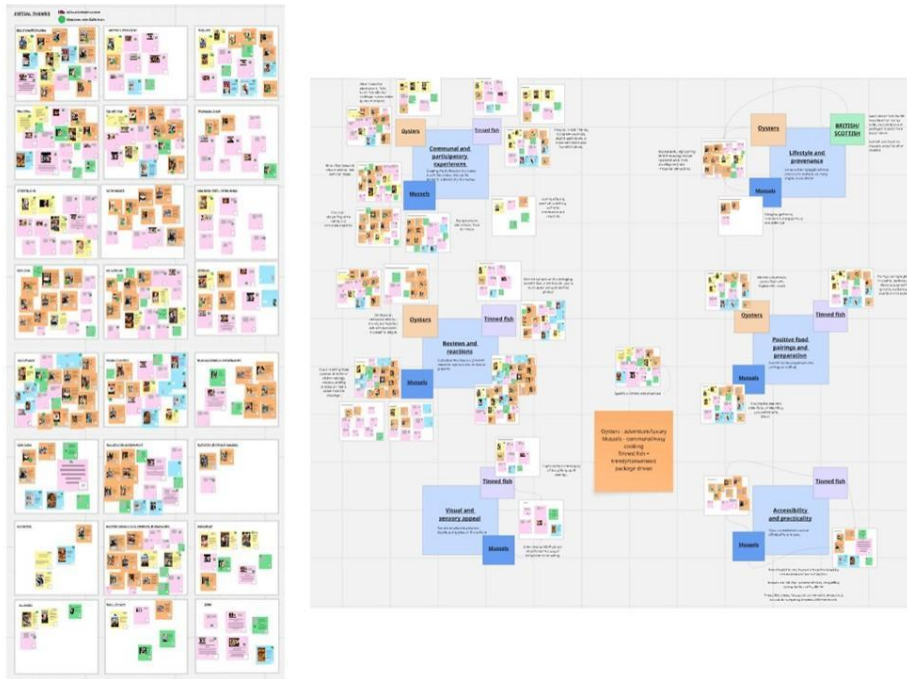


Figure 2. Overview of Miro board collection of themes. Left: initial themes with post its referencing videos, each researcher represented by a specific colour. Right: The final themes.

Main Findings

A total of 100 TikTok videos, generating 416.5 million views, 31.6 million likes and 1.45 million shares were the basis of this research. The overall engagement rate was 7.9%, meaning nearly 8 in every 100 viewers was actively interacting with the videos. The videos span 5 years (2021 – 2025), with ~80% of videos being posted in the last two years, driving the bulk of the views and likes captured in this data.

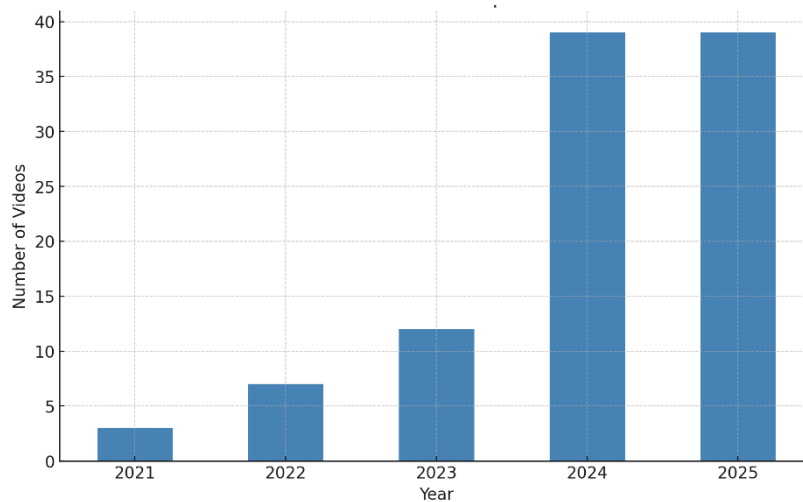


Figure 3. Total number of videos per year.

How are tinned fish and shellfish portrayed on social media?

This section addresses the first research question: *How are tinned fish, mussels, and oysters portrayed on social media, specifically TikTok?* TikTok has emerged as a dominant platform for food-related content, shaping perceptions of seafood through viral trends, creator-driven storytelling, and highly visual formats. The following thematic analysis identifies six overarching themes that capture how these three seafood categories are represented. Each theme is explored through species-specific sub-themes, with examples from TikTok content, followed by interpretation and implications for the seafood sector, including opportunities for Scottish shellfish growers.

Overarchingly, we find that the portrayal of the seafood categories has distinct identities. Oysters are adventurous and luxurious, associated with novelty and spectacle but an untapped potential to link provenance and accessibility. Mussels are positioned as communal, cozy, easy, and comforting, with strong at-home cooking and storytelling associations. Tinned fish is portrayed as trendy, convenient, and package-driven, showing how branding and presentation can elevate perception. Lastly, humour, especially in British content, acts as a cross-cutting style. It helps to enhance relatability in communal videos and adds entertainment to reactionary videos. Incorporating humour alongside provenance and sensory storytelling could help break down barriers and position shellfish as approachable and culturally relevant.

For Scottish shellfish, these insights highlight how different positioning strategies can align with citizen expectations and values of authenticity, provenance, and community. By tapping into TikTok's participatory and sensory storytelling styles, mussels and oysters communication can build visibility and cultural relevance in ways that resonate.

Theme 1: Communal and Participatory Experiences

Seafood content on TikTok thrives on its ability to create a sense of shared experience. A dominant feature of the content was its communal nature, with creators inviting viewers to 'join them' in eating, tasting, or experimenting with seafood, positioning the viewer as though they are participating in the meal, tasting alongside the creator, or being included in a social moment. The theme represents the younger generation's need to connect, share reactions, feel part of the moment, rather than being sold something that feels forced. Cultivating a sense of community and trust has been shown to drive higher engagement rates and enhance brand loyalty.

- **Oysters** were often framed in adventurous or novelty contexts, with first-time tastings or oversized "challenge" oysters becoming popular formats. These portrayals invite audiences to share in the creator's bravery or curiosity, and framing oysters as a spectacle, drawing engagement through curiosity and surprise.

- **Mussels** are commonly framed in conversational “eat with me” videos, where creators talk directly to the audience while enjoying a bowl of mussels from local supermarkets (e.g., Sainsburys or Tesco). Creators either engaged in conversational storytelling or chit chat, often weaving in personal anecdotes or light-hearted commentary, intended to mimic a sit-down dinner with a friend. They also blend relaxed style education with entertainment, as mussels are often prepared live on camera with explanations of cooking methods.
- **Tinned fish** content was more positioned as playful, exploratory participation and trend-driven. Videos tended to explore new products, highlighting quirky packaging, or feature humorous challenges. Trends such as Tinned Fish Date Night encourage audiences to replicate the idea at home, reinforcing communal belonging through trend replication.

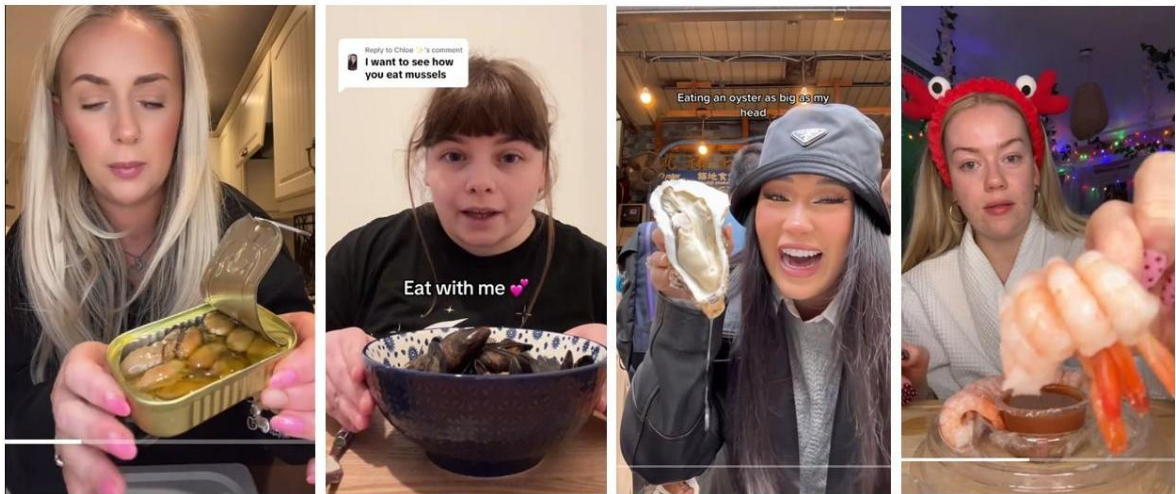


Figure 4. Collage of TikTok video screengrabs from multiple content creators, illustrating examples associated with Theme 1 (communal and participatory experiences)

Insights and implications:

- Authenticity and inclusion are incredibly important in online food culture.
- Focusing on authentic and relatable content and campaigns will help create a sense of community and trust. Joining in genuine and organic ways, brands can better connect with their audiences.
- Mussels, the strong association with cozy, social meals suggest marketing should highlight mussels as a comforting, sharable food.
- Oysters could benefit from campaigns that encourage “first try” moments at local markets, appealing to consumers’ sense of adventure.
- Tinned fish demonstrates how a communal narrative can transform even an unassuming product into a cultural trend, something that could be adapted for shellfish through creative, shareable formats.

Theme 2: Reviews and Reactions

Similarly to humour, entertainment and authenticity, reactions and reviews are a cornerstone of TikTok food content, with creators sharing genuine, real-time impressions of seafood products. For Gen Z and Millennial audiences, credibility is built through unscripted moments, where trust develops not from polished marketing but from authentic experiences shared by people they perceive as relatable, [especially as 1 in 10 Gen Z say they regularly buy products promoted by influencers](#).

- **Oysters** are commonly reviewed in restaurant settings, where creators capture their surprise, delight, or scepticism of the taste and texture in the moment. A number of videos also highlighted cheap places to have oysters (e.g., £1/oyster). This content balances novelty with reassurance, affordability and demystifying oysters for perhaps hesitant viewers, making oysters appear approachable even for first-time eaters.
- **Mussels** are typically reviewed in cooking or meal contexts in domestic kitchens, with reactions focused on the cooking process and flavour outcomes rather than spectacle. Creators narrate the cooking process, sometimes review flavours, helping to normalise mussels as part of everyday meals. This grounds mussels in everyday food experiences and less focused on the spectacle.
- **Tinned fish** reviews emphasise packaging, brand identity, taste and aesthetics. The “aesthetic unboxing” of tinned products is as important as the taste, reflecting consumer fascination with quality, visual identity, premium branding and convenience.



Figure 5. Collage of TikTok video screenshots from multiple content creators, illustrating examples associated with Theme 2 of reviews and reactions.

Insights and implications:

- Review and reaction content demonstrates how peer-to-peer trust operates on TikTok.
- Encourage influencer reviews, whether of fresh oysters at a market stall or packaged mussels in UK supermarkets, could demystify shellfish and build confidence among hesitant consumers, framed as “first tries” or “everyday cooking reviews.”
- Packaging and presentation are especially important; as seen with tinned fish, branding can drive as much excitement as flavour. Creative storytelling on labelling and presentation.

Theme 3: Positive food pairings and preparation

Preparation and pairing are central to how seafood is made appealing on TikTok, with content often highlighting products through creative or classic combinations or relatively simple foods into visually compelling dishes.

- **Oysters** are portrayed as fresh, minimal preparation, typically consumed raw with simple additions like lemon or mignonette sauces. This positions oysters as fresh, high-value items requiring little preparation.
- **Mussels** are portrayed through classic steaming methods, with garlic, white wine, and cream sauces dominating portrayals. These recipes reinforce mussels as indulgent yet easy to prepare, fitting into aspirational but achievable home cooking.
- **Tinned fish** is highlighted in aesthetically pleasing and creative pairings, often displayed on charcuterie-style boards with crackers, spreads, and accompaniments (“seacuterie boards”). The appeal lies in visual creativity, versatility of consumption and shareability.



Figure 6. Collage of TikTok video screenshots from multiple content creators, illustrating examples associated with Theme 3 of positive food pairings and preparations.

Insights and implications:

- Pairing content reflects how seafood can fit into consumer lifestyles through both simplicity and creativity.
- For Scottish mussels, emphasising their role in easy, classic recipes could further normalise them as a staple ingredient for younger cooks.
- For oysters, content that celebrates minimal yet striking pairings could align with luxury but maintain approachability.
- Learning from tinned fish, shellfish brands could align with TikTok trend toward minimal but striking food styling.

Theme 4: Lifestyle and provenance

TikTok videos highlight links to lifestyle values, sourcing origins, and local identity, going beyond the food itself.

- **Oysters** were associated with markets and sourcing stories, often presented as part of local food cultures. Content emphasises trust in sellers and the connection between consumer and producer, reinforcing authenticity.
- **Mussels** are connected to outdoor gatherings, with creators turning sourcing into a lifestyle experience. Videos show the journey from source to plate, framing mussels as both sustainable and adventurous. UK-based videos also frequently featured packaged mussels in supermarkets, reinforcing their everyday accessibility while still tying them to local provenance.
- Across both oysters and mussels, many videos from the UK highlight British market stalls or packaged mussels from supermarkets. Interestingly, Scottish-specific branding was most visible with mussels, leaving scope for oysters and other shellfish to build similar recognition.
- **Tinned fish** sometimes incorporates provenance by highlighting brands associated with products from other countries, though the emphasis is typically on lifestyle positioning – aesthetically pleasing, stylish, trendy, and global.

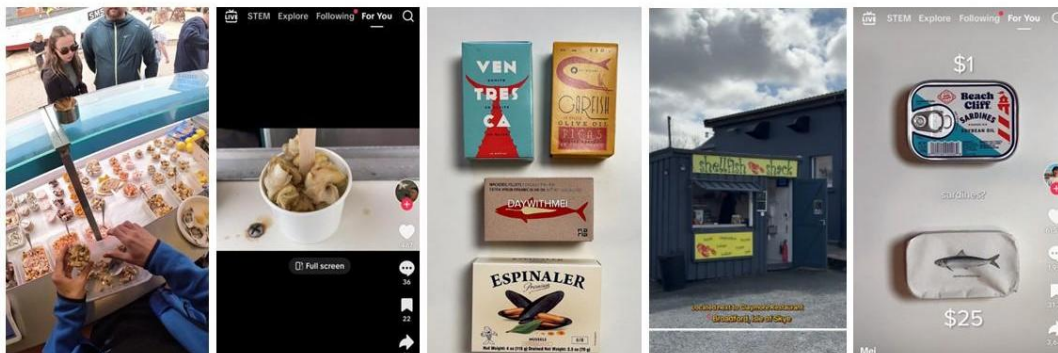


Figure 7. Collage of TikTok video screengrabs from multiple content creators, illustrating examples associated with Theme 4 of lifestyle and provenance.

Insights and implications:

- Lifestyle and provenance content demonstrates strong alignment with the values of Gen Z and Millennials, who prioritise transparency, authenticity, local identity and ethical sourcing.
- Scottish mussels already feature in this narrative, but there is an untapped opportunity to highlight other Scottish shellfish in everyday market contexts.
- Emphasising provenance could strengthen trust and add value, particularly when paired with the adventurous framing seen in other oyster content.

Theme 5: Visual and Sensory Appeal

TikTok’s short form video format naturally amplifies the visual and sensory dimensions of seafood.

- **Tinned fish** unwrapping rituals are highly stylised, transforming the simple act of opening a tin into an aesthetic performance. The tin is carefully peeled open, often accompanied by close-up shots of the product and meticulous plating on artisanal crackers or bread. Highlighting the novelty and premium appeal of tinned fish.
- **Mussels** lend themselves to ASMR-style content, where slurping, cracking shells, and the hiss of steaming pots are highlighted. This is frequently combined with cozy domestic settings, reinforcing warmth, comfort and sensory indulgence.
- **Oysters** usually pre-shucked, visually fresh, on ice, looking attractive.



Figure 8. Collage of TikTok video screengrabs from multiple content creators, illustrating examples associated with Theme 5 of visual and sensory appeal.

Insights and implications:

- Seafood is particularly well-suited to sensory storytelling, with each species lending itself to a distinct sensory identity.
- Mussels, could benefit from campaigns capitalising on ASMR and cozy dining, communal associations of steaming pots shared at home, connecting with younger audiences seeking comfort and indulgence.
- Tinned fish highlights how even low-cost foods can be visually transformed, a lesson in creative marketing presentation.

Theme 6: Accessibility and Practicality

Finally, TikTok content reflects the public concerns with affordability and convenience of food and are strong motivators for seafood portrayals on TikTok, particularly relevant in the current cost-of-living context.

- **Tinned fish** is consistently framed as both trendy and practical, with creators comparing brands not only on taste but also on cost and value. Positioning the narrative that tinned fish is trendy but can be accessible to all.
- **Mussels** are portrayed as a cozy, communal dinner option that is affordable and easy to prepare. TikTok “eat with me” styles reinforce the sense that mussels can be both every day and special, helping to make them feel indulgent without being expensive. Their versatility in sauces and recipes reinforce them as a practical option.
- **Oysters** are seen to be accessible through good restaurants and also from reliable local fishmongers. They can do the hard work, like shucking and ensure good quality, whilst also being able to recommend serving suggestions.



Figure 9. Collage of TikTok video screengrabs from multiple content creators, illustrating examples associated with Theme 6 of accessibility and practicality.

Insights and implications:

- Accessibility narratives matter deeply for younger consumers navigating cost-of-living pressures.
- Scottish mussels are well positioned as both affordable and high-quality, and growers could further highlight this balance through storytelling around everyday luxury.

Overall sentiment in seafood-related TikTok videos was strongly skewed towards the **positive**, with far fewer videos coded as mixed, neutral, or negative. This suggests that creators generally present seafood in an appealing or favourable light (Figure 10). The second graph, which breaks sentiment down by the top 10 seafood species, reinforces this pattern: **mussels and oysters** dominate with overwhelmingly positive portrayals, though oysters also attract some mixed and negative reactions. **Sardines and cockles** are consistently framed in positive or mixed ways, while **herring** stands out for a more balanced portrayal, with both positive and critical reactions. Although, the negative reactions were specific to fermented tinned fish (Surströmming), renowned for eliciting strong emotions. Together, these findings suggest that while seafood is usually celebrated on TikTok, some species, particularly oysters and herring (e.g., fermented), evoke more diverse or contested responses.

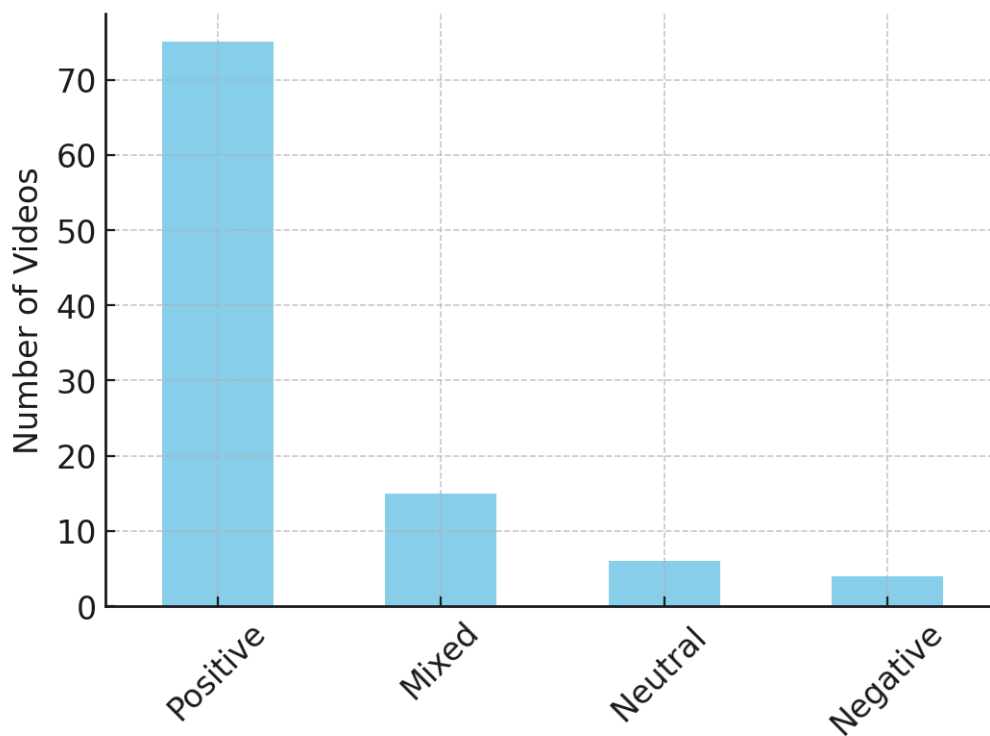


Figure 10. Distribution of sentiment across videos

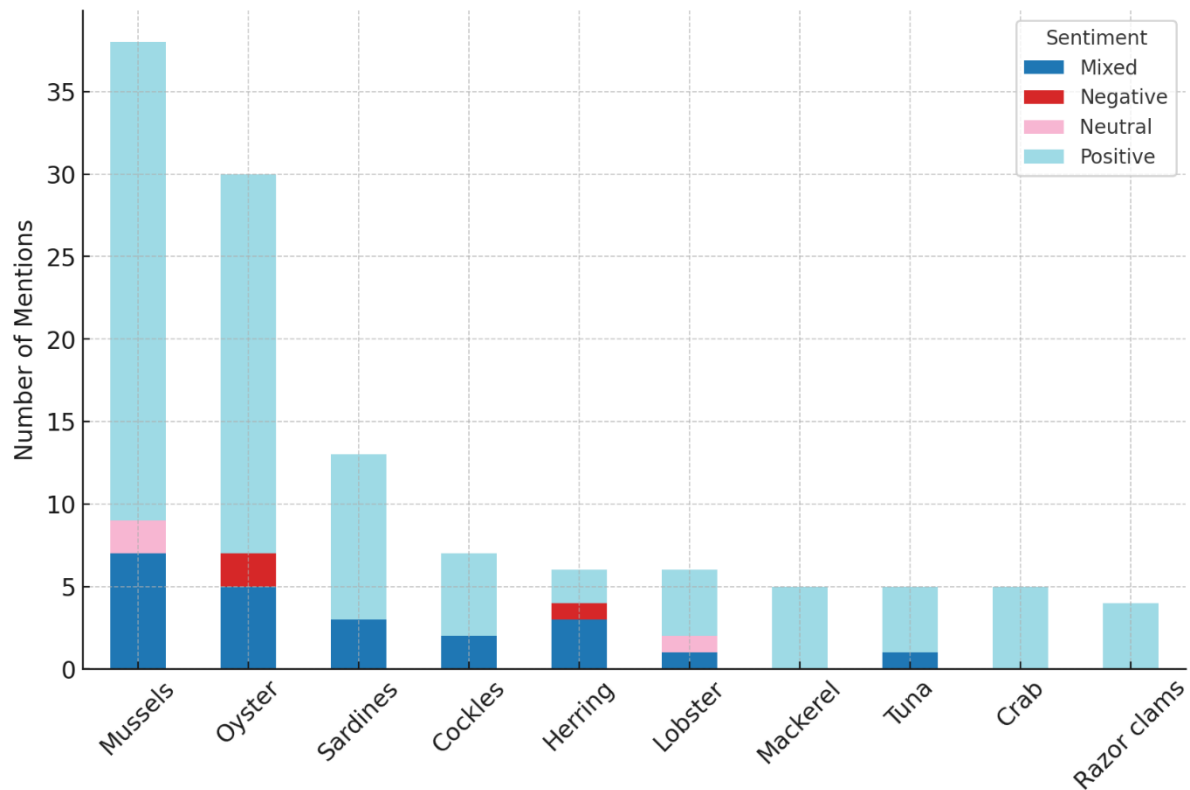


Figure 11. Sentiment by top 10 seafood species

We classified videos into ten different formats: Information, Educational, Interactive, Call to action, Demonstrating, Comedy, Storytime, ASMR, Reaction and other. The analysis of these formats reveals that ASMR, Reaction and Informative videos were most frequently posted. There were fewer Storytime and Interactive formats. However, these formats have slightly lower engagement efficiency, meaning while more people watch the videos, they have smaller proportions of active interaction.

In contrast, Storytime videos, though a lot less common and with lower average view counts, achieved higher engagement efficiency. Audiences who watched these videos are more likely to like or share, indicating a stronger resonance with the content. Informative and Interactive formats, both show consistent performance and demonstrate the potential to combine education with entertainment.

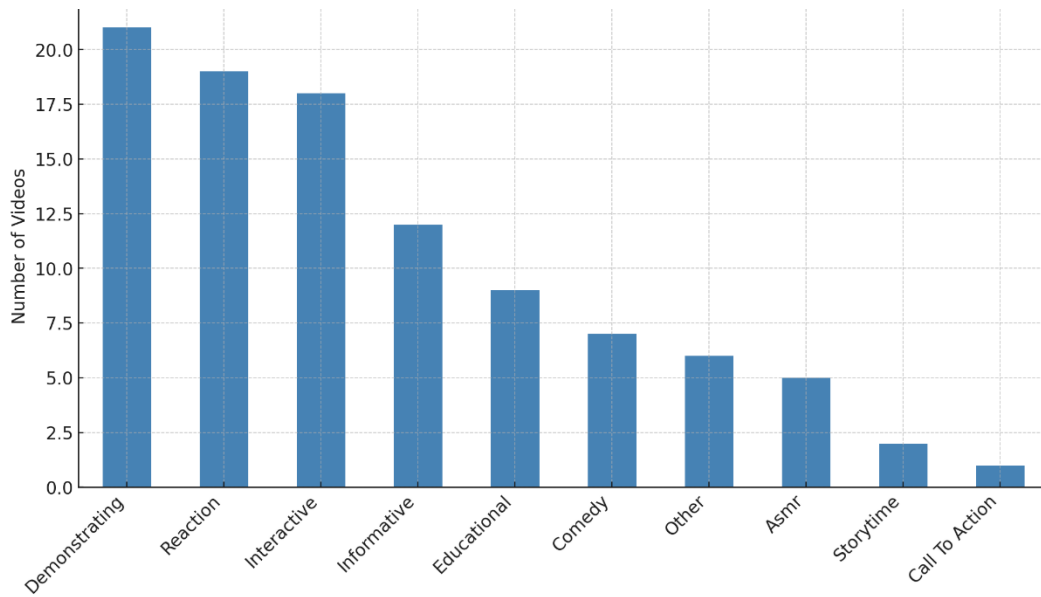


Figure 12. Distribution of videos across 10 format categories

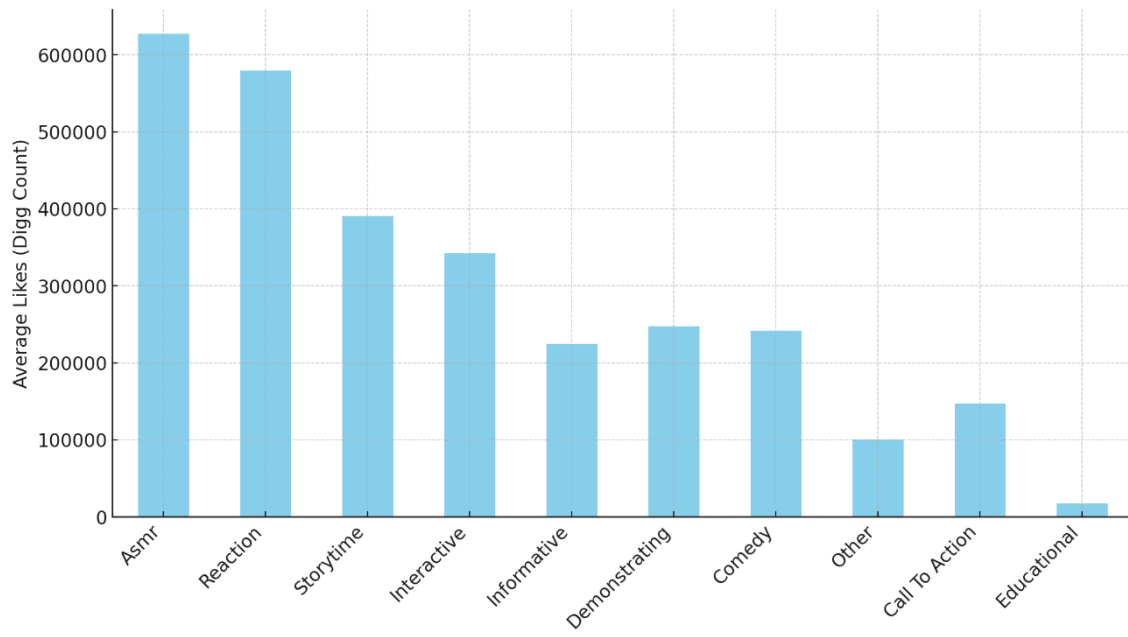


Figure 13. Average likes by format category

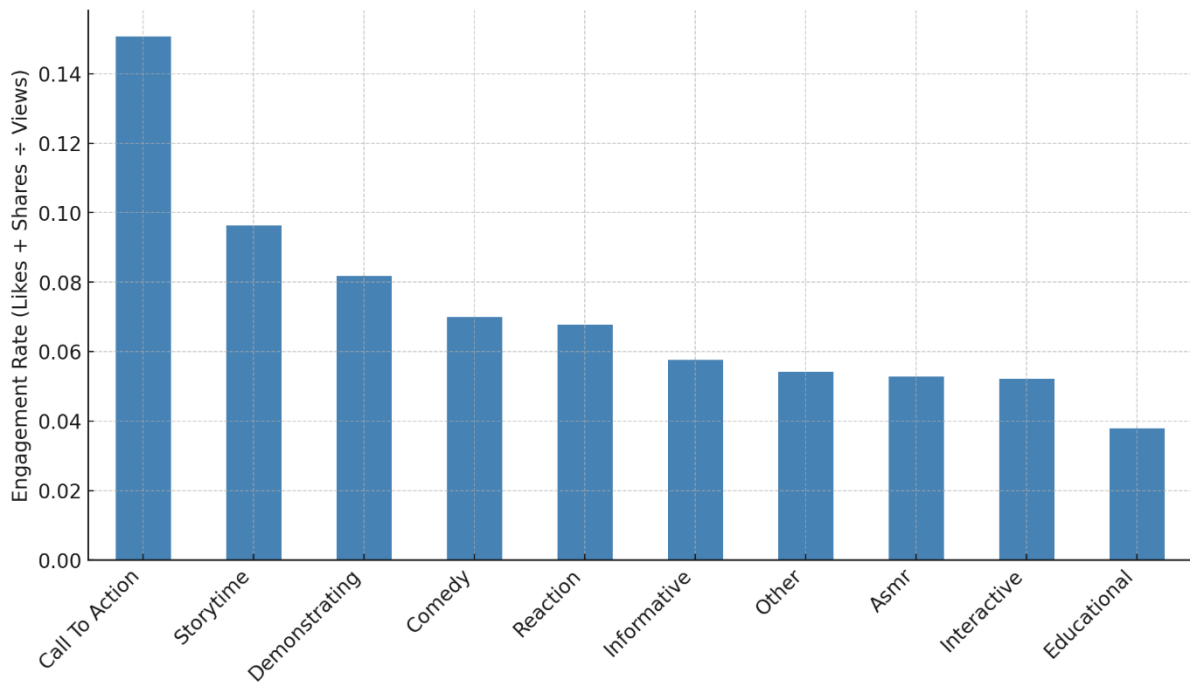


Figure 14. Engagement rate across format categories

These findings suggest:

- Leveraging entertainment driven formats such as ASMR and Reactionary content to increase visibility.
- Storytime and Informative content help to create stronger audience connections, for example working with creators who are able to relate to their own experiences eating/preparing the products, while going about their day. These may not achieve virality but build trust, credibility and engagement.
- Blending entertainment focused formats with deeper formats like storytelling could lead to stronger audience connections.

Who are the creators of tinned fish and shellfish content?

Understanding TikTok creators provides insight into the credibility and impact of their videos. Creators shape how topics, products, issues are presented, whether it's through their expert knowledge, their personal opinions, branding or entertainment. Their demographics and background may influence how audiences perceive this information. Understanding the creators helps to contextualise the content and identify which voices are influential in shaping audience attitudes and opinions.

The graphs highlight how video engagement varies by creator demographics. The first shows that a small number of individual creators dominate average view counts, with several consistently reaching millions of views per video. The second graph demonstrates that personal accounts outperform company or verified accounts, indicating that audiences engage more with authentic and relatable personalities than with overtly branded content. The third graph explores gender differences, showing that both male- and female-led accounts generate high engagement, though results vary across individuals. Top performing creators are not confined to one region; high-view seafood content comes from creators based in the UK, US, and other countries.

These findings suggest:

- Partnering with influential individuals rather than relying solely on brand accounts. Audiences prefer personal storytelling.
- Creators who achieve high engagement efficiency (play counts relative to follower base) and not just the largest followings should be prioritised.
- Drivers collaborations across creator profiles, those that focus on reaction content to food development content.

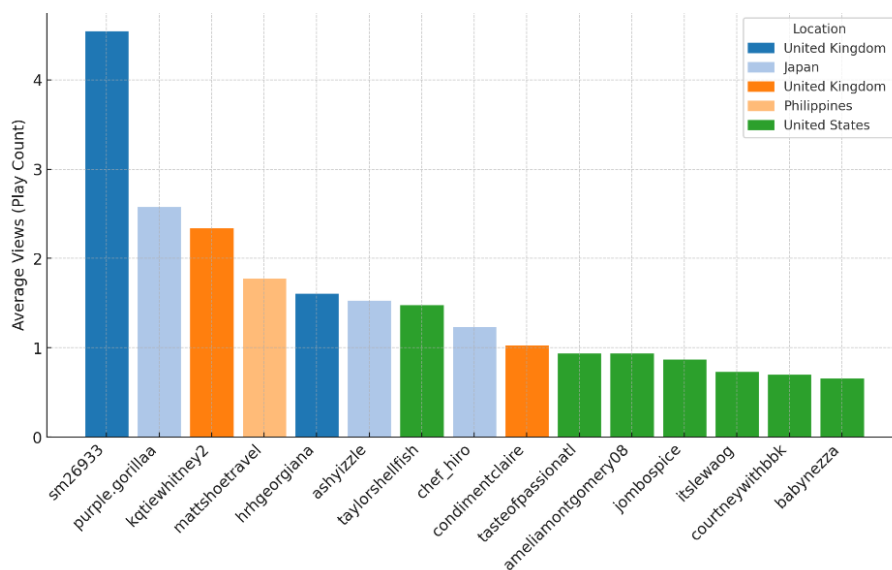


Figure 15. Top creators by average number of views across location.

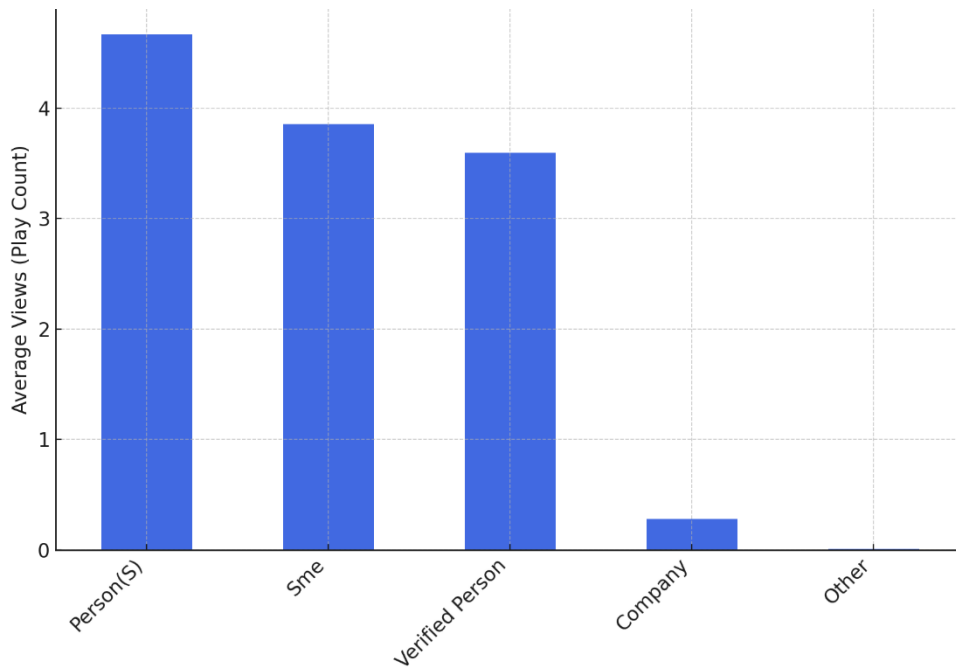


Figure 16. Average views across content creator type.

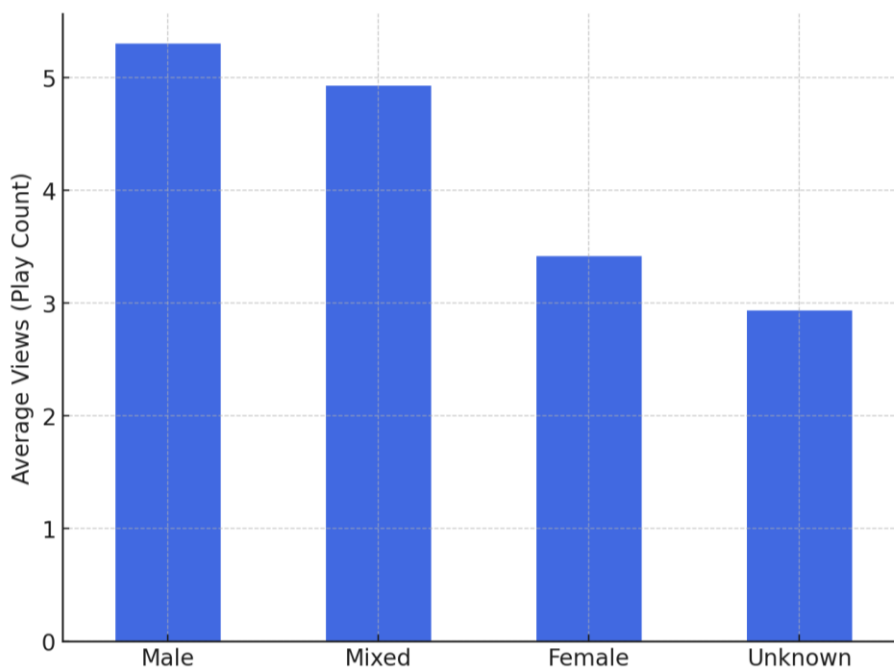


Figure 17. Average views across gender of content creator.

What communication functions are most popular on TikTok?

There are a number of ways that videos come about, we categorised them by whether they were happenstance (unplanned or spontaneous) or intentional (planned, polished) content. There were more intentional videos (80) compared to happenstance (20),

however, play count was higher (~4.7M) and gained many likes (~388K), which suggests good for visibility. Intentional content drove less reach but had slightly higher engagements rates, although not with a large difference.

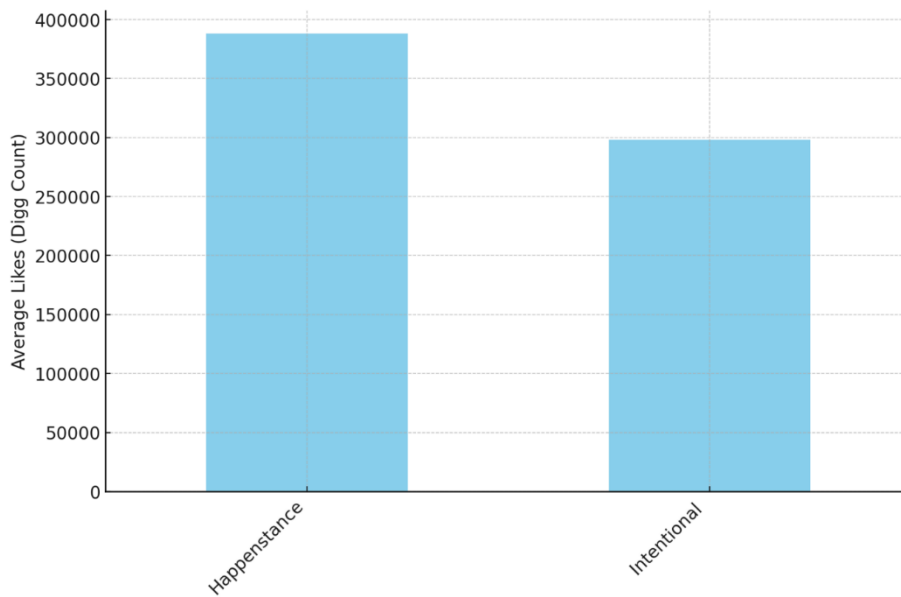


Figure 17. Average like by presentation style

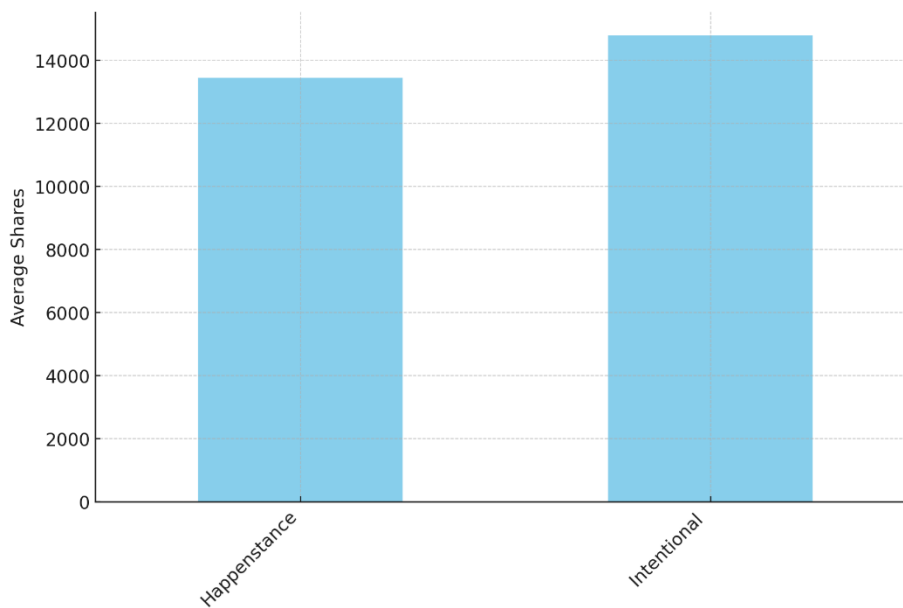


Figure 18. Average shares per presentation style

Analysis of audio shows that the most used approaches were Sound templates (average views ~4.36M views and ~302K likes) and talking to the camera (4.2M views, ~341K likes). Multiple audio types (e.g., sound template and voice over), averaged around 5.09M views. In contrast, voice over videos attracted fewer views on average (2.87M), however they had the highest engagement rate at around 11%, more than

double for the other categories. This suggests that while trending sounds and talking to the camera are popular, voice overs are more affected by driving audience interaction per view. It is important to note that audio could also be link with aesthetic visuals and can not be considered the only driving dimension of higher engagement.

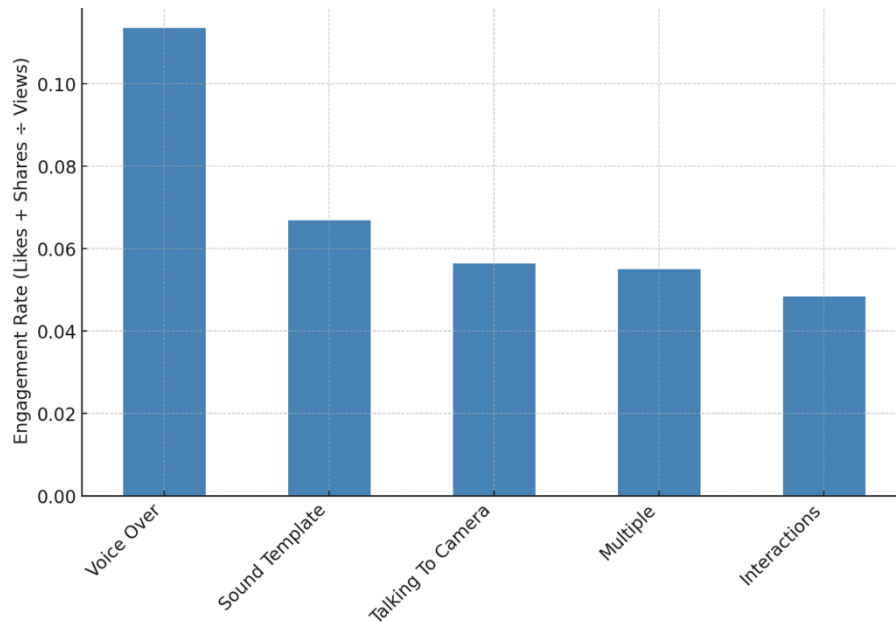


Figure 19. Engagement rate across audio categories

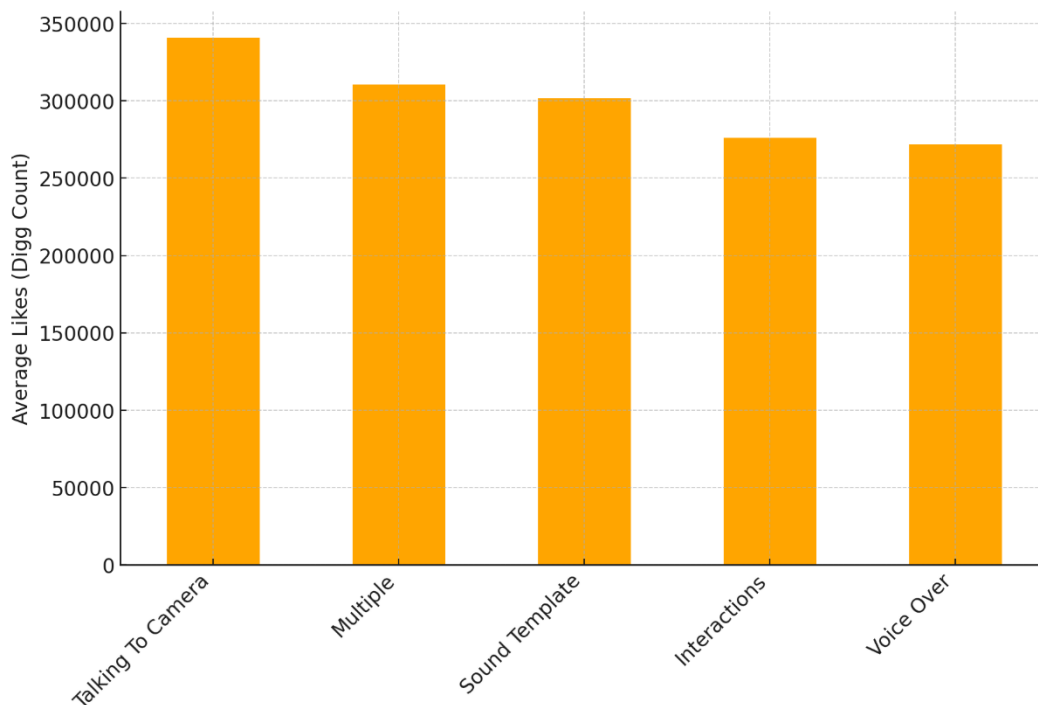


Figure 20. Average likes across audio categories

These findings suggest:

- Original sounds (talking to camera, voice overs, interactions) drive more reach.
- Talking to the camera is less viral but can create more meaningful connections, especially as audiences are looking for more relatable content.
- Sound templates can deliver engagement but to a smaller scale.
- Interactions (e.g., people talking to each other in the video) were less efficient and may not work as well.
- Voice over stands out, while fewer people watch these videos, they are more likely to share and interact with them, which is useful for storytelling related content.

The majority of videos were categorised as average (e.g., Phone Quality, typical smartphone video) and low quality (e.g., Pixelated, low resolution, poor lighting). Low quality had the highest reach (~5.1M average plays), followed by high definition (~4.1M average plays) and average quality (~3.8M average plays), however, engagement rate was highest for average quality videos (~6.6%), followed closely by low quality and high-definition videos. Cinematic quality lagged behind (~3.7%), however this may also be influenced by the very few videos in this category.

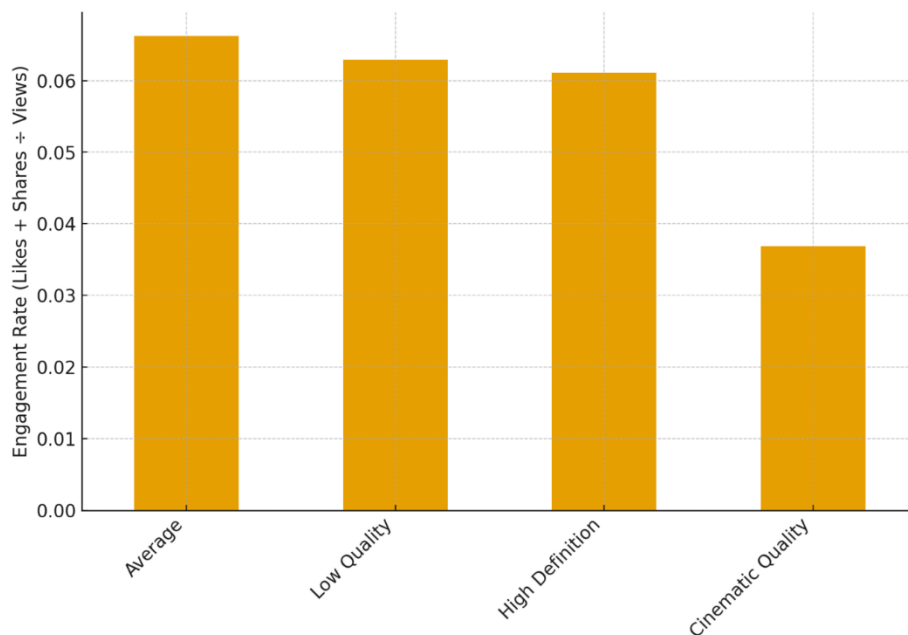


Figure 21. Engagement rate related to video quality

These findings suggest:

- High polished videos are not necessary – low or average quality videos performed well and allowed for authenticity to resonate better.

Hashtags are an important feature on social media platforms, providing discoverability through categorisation and linked content. A total number of 298 unique hashtags were used. General hashtags (seafood and fyp – “for you page”) were used most frequently, followed by specific species.

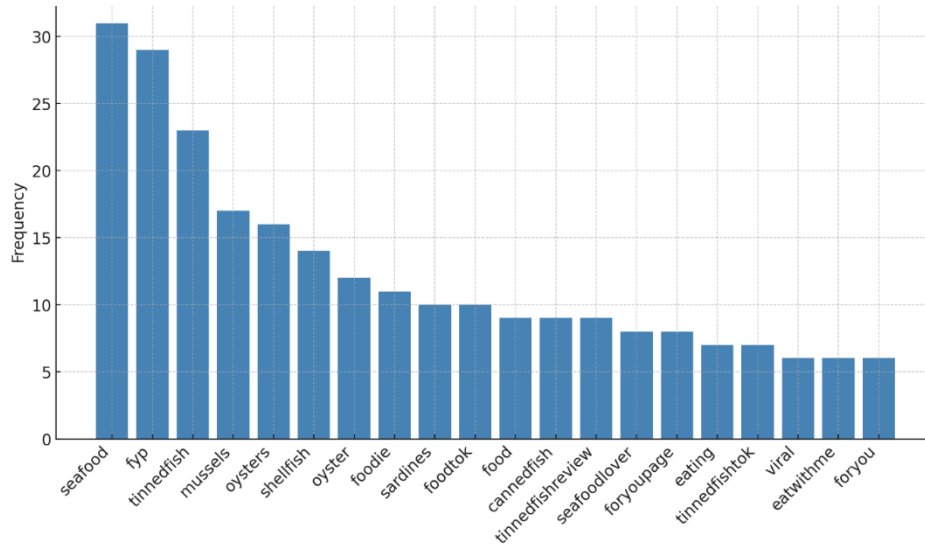


Figure 22. Frequency of hashtags across dataset

The engagement rate by number of hashtags used, showed that using a small to moderate number of hashtags drove the strongest audience interactions. Figure 23, shows that posts with 3 – 5 hashtags achieved engagement rates over 9 – 15%, while outliers with very low (0) or very high counts (10+), performed less effectively (6 – 8%). While this research wasn’t able to scrape geolocation, there are suggestions that [geolocation may be more effective in reaching localised and intended audiences.](#)

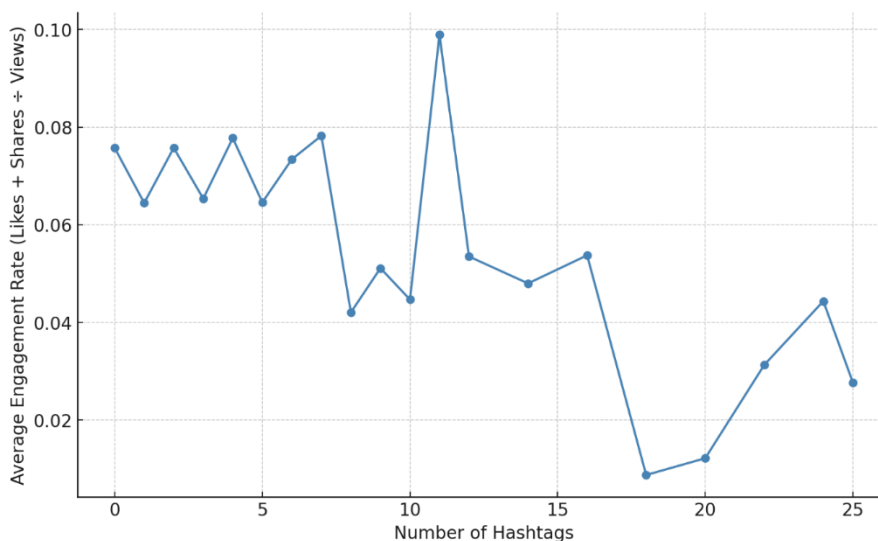


Figure 23. Engagement rate across number of hashtags used in videos.

These findings suggest:

- Using hashtags selectively, focusing on a handful of targeted hashtags, balancing broad terms like #seafood with niche ones like #scottishshellfish.
- Between 3 – 5 hashtags generate better engagement, limits diluting impact or appearing inauthentic to audiences.

The analysis shows that most TikTok videos in this dataset were short-form (e.g., under 60 seconds). Duration between 30 – 60 seconds generated the highest reach (~5.5M average views) and strong sharing activity. In contrast, 2 – 3 minute videos, while less common, achieved higher engagement rates (~8.4%). While fewer people watched them, those that did were more invested. Outliers such as clips with less than 15 seconds or longer than 3 minutes underperformed both in reach and engagement.

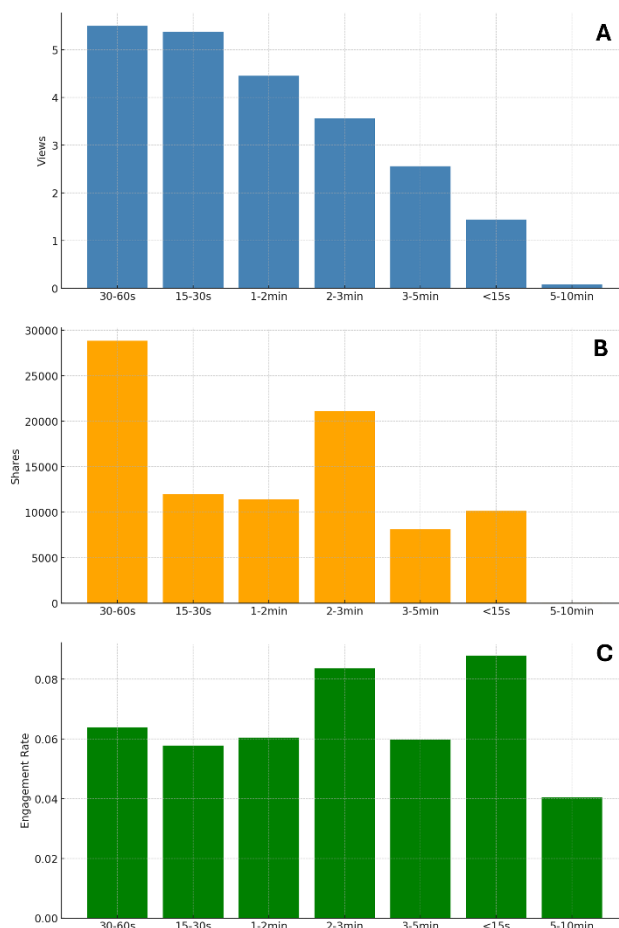


Figure 24. A: Average play count, B: Average share count, C: Average engagement rate by video duration

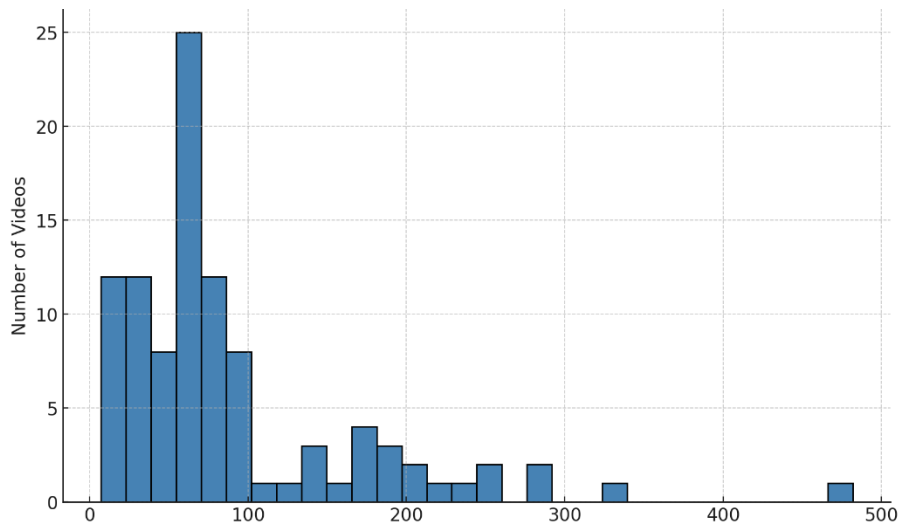
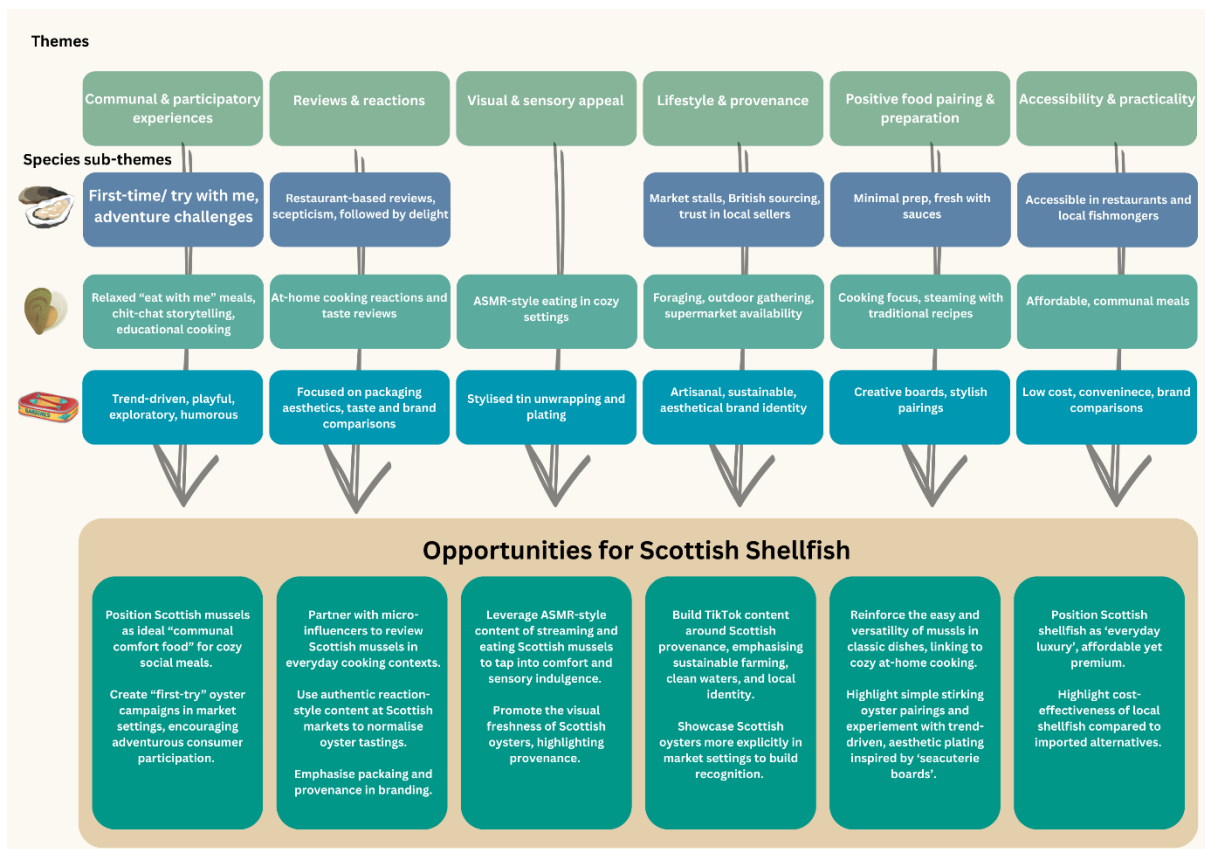


Figure 25. Number of videos and their duration (seconds)

These findings suggest:

- Using short, dynamic 30 – 60 second videos, while incorporating occasional 2 – 3minute videos for deeper story telling.



Recommendations

1. Work with the right content creators

- **Prioritise mid-sized and micro-influencers** - These creators typically have loyal, highly engaged audiences and offer strong value compared to larger influencers. Their authenticity resonates better with Gen Z and Millennials than polished, high-budget advertising.
- **Explore youth involvement** - Establishing a youth advisory group (under 25s) within the industry body could ensure campaigns stay relevant to younger audiences and reflect how they want to see shellfish represented online.

2. Stay nimble with TikTok culture and trends

- **Engage with both major trends and microtrends** - Examples include *Camping Core*, *Outdoor BBQ Aesthetics*, *Girl Dinner*, and *Tinned Fish Date Night*. These micro-movements evolve quickly but offer high visibility for food products when brands adapt in real time.
- **Experiment with meme culture and challenges** - Viral humour and memes are central to TikTok's culture. Creating light-hearted challenges around shellfish could normalise them and drive relatability, particularly for oysters.
- **Take inspiration from other categories** - Shellfish can borrow ideas from how vegetables, meat, and even plant-based products are promoted (e.g., versatility, family connections, or convenience).

3. Reframe storytelling approaches

- **Shift from purely educational to cultural storytelling** - Consumers engage more with videos that show people enjoying food in authentic, everyday settings than with technical "information-heavy" content.
- **Keep messaging positive but rooted in experiences** - Stories should highlight people eating together, cooking with shellfish, and having fun. As [one analogy suggested](#), "seafood needs its own *Hot Ones*", a cultural format that builds buzz and authenticity.
- **Balance sustainability with personal benefit** - While ecological sustainability matters to young consumers, health, wellness, and individual benefits increasingly drive decision-making. Position shellfish as both sustainable, easy, affordable, versatile *and* a healthy choice.
- **Emphasise provenance storytelling** - Scottish shellfish can differentiate itself by highlighting origin, sustainability, and the clean waters where it's grown. TikTok audiences value transparency and authenticity.

- **Promote shellfish as “everyday luxury”** - Mussels and oysters can be framed as affordable indulgences, especially powerful during cost-of-living pressures and the rise of [‘Little luxuries’ or ‘affordable treats’](#).
- **Use humour strategically** - Humour is a cross-cutting tool in British TikTok content and can make shellfish appear approachable, fun, and part of mainstream culture.

4. Highlight versatility and accessibility

- **Underscore versatility** - Shellfish can be framed as flexible, adaptable ingredients, similar to how tinned fish is positioned. Recipes and content should show mussels and oysters as fitting across cuisines and occasions.
- **Tap into global food/health trends** - Move beyond traditional messages such as “two portions per week” and “healthy protein” messaging to highlight specific dishes and cuisines (e.g., Korean seafood soups, Mediterranean mussel pasta, or oyster tacos), snackification culture, and health trends (e.g., skin care as shown by [Nice Cans](#), a Canadian brand focusing on the benefits to skin from tinned seafood branded in fun/sexy aesthetics).
- **Link to convenience culture** - TikTok celebrates [“can-venient”](#) food trends. Mussels and oysters should be positioned as quick, easy, and satisfying options that can compete with meal prep services or ready-to-cook meal kits. European tinned fish was very popular, highlighting room for bringing Scottish tinned shellfish included in these trends.

5. Build partnerships and collaborations

- **Collaborate with established brands** - Partnerships with meal kits (e.g., HelloFresh), lifestyle brands, or ethical food producers can help shellfish appear in new consumer contexts.
- **Learn from innovators** - Brands like Fish Wife, Fangst, and Sea Sisters have succeeded by connecting seafood to design, aesthetics, and sustainability. Scottish growers could adapt these strategies to highlight provenance and taste.

6. Look Ahead to Future Consumers

- **Engage Gen Z now, prepare for Gen Alpha** - Gen Z are today’s trendsetters, but Gen Alpha (currently teenagers) will be the next digitally native consumer group. Monitoring their preferences early will help the industry stay ahead of future demand.

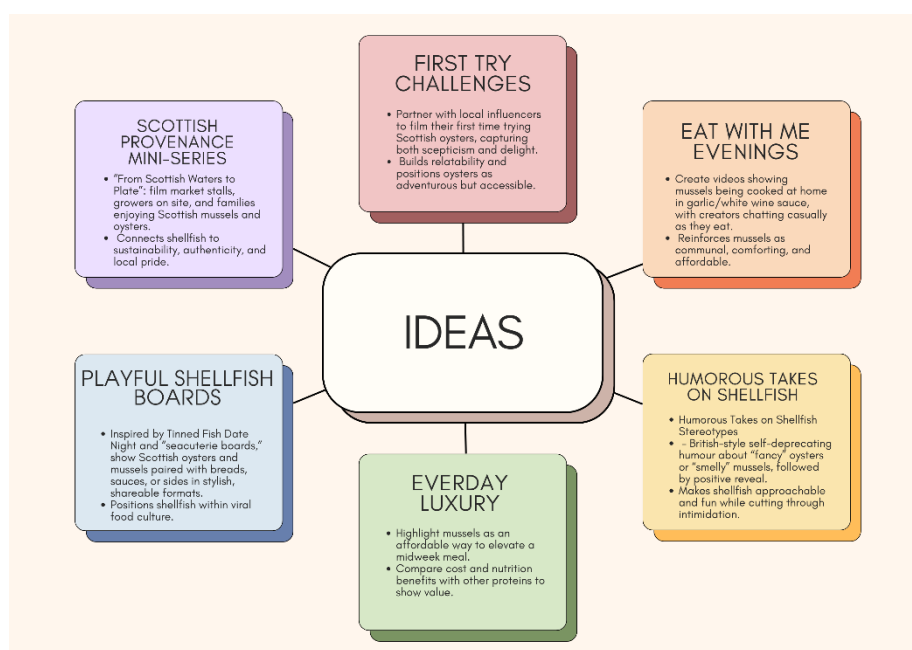
Limitations to the research

This research is subject to several limitations. First, user engagement with TikTok content is shaped by the platform's algorithm, making it difficult to disentangle how individuals encounter and interact with seafood-related videos. The analysis focused on four specific hashtags, yet many others are in circulation, meaning this dataset does not capture the full breadth of seafood and shellfish content. Moreover, memes and viral trends are embedded in historical and cultural contexts (Zeng & Abidin, 2021), and the content analysed here largely reflected Anglo-centric perspectives, often featuring white-presenting. The interpretation of videos was also informed by the researchers' own immersion as active users of TikTok and Instagram, which may introduce subjectivity. In addition, the study represents a snapshot in time based on a single sample per species, and does not account for seasonal, geographic, or production-system variability. As such, findings should not be generalised to entire species categories or to industry-wide patterns.

Ideas

While we didn't see content focused on nutrition, we do believe there are opportunities to use messaging based on how shellfish can be a part of wellbeing, especially as health and beauty remain current [trends in the UK](#). NiceCans website plays into the younger generation language, calling their blogs "Gossip", and hinting at 'treating yourself' and wellbeing. Additionally, upholding and highlighting traditional knowledge and science can also help to highlight healthful, traditional eating patterns (e.g., Mediterranean, Indigenous Native American, Nordic, Japanese and Blue Zone diets).

Other ideas for content:



Interesting profiles

That tell stories differently related to seafood

- [James Sibley](#)
- [@hrhgeorgiana](#)
- [@itspippa](#) – Scotland-based
- [@foodieholly](#) – Scotland-based

