

TikTok for Tourism: Making It Work for Your Business



Hi, I'm Sophie!

I'm the proud founder of The Social Foundry, a full-service creative agency where creativity, education, and collaboration intertwine in the social media world.

I am a:

Content creator

Social media manager

Digital strategist

And all-round creative storyteller

🔥 What lights me up?

Helping businesses and creators harness the power of social media through strategy, storytelling, and meaningful content and educating those on their own social media journey.

Over the years, I've worked with:

Tourism boards, airlines, and travel operators

Lifestyle brands and outdoor clothing companies

Product-based businesses and creators

With a deep passion for travel and documenting the outdoors, you'll often find me summiting mountains or tootling around in my camper van capturing every detail along the way - camera in one hand, Yorkshire Tea in the other.

Most would say I'm ambitious, determined, and always up for an adventure.
And I'm so happy you're here so we can chat all things TikTok

THE SOCIAL FOUNDRY.



Not on TikTok? You're Not Alone 🙌

- Quick show of hands - how many of you are on TikTok?"
- "And how many have opened it once and thought: 'Nope, not for me'?" 😄
- TikTok has changed. And so has how people plan their trips.
- Let's talk about how you can make it work for you - no dancing required.

What Exactly Is TikTok?

- A short-form video based social media platform (15 sec to 3 mins)
- Built around trends, storytelling, and authenticity
- Highly addictive, fast-paced, and completely visual
- Powered by one of the most intelligent interest-based algorithms in the world

 Think: YouTube + Instagram + Google in one app.

What Exactly Is TikTok?

Even if you've never used TikTok or find it a bit overwhelming you're in the right place. Today is about making TikTok feel doable, useful, and actually exciting for small businesses in tourism.

TikTok has become much more than dance videos and trends. It's now a powerful search engine, a discovery tool, and a space where authentic storytelling thrives — especially in the travel space.

TikTok is a short-form video platform where users create and consume videos ranging from 15 seconds to 15 minutes long. It's driven by a powerful algorithm that learns what users enjoy and serves them content accordingly. Unlike platforms where your followers see your posts, TikTok's For You Page (FYP) shows your content to anyone, based on interest and engagement. That means even small accounts have a big chance of being discovered.

TikTok provides users with bite-sized, highly addictive content that they can consume in seconds. It's the digital equivalent of a delicious, on-the-go treat.

While TikTok is renowned for its amusing short-form content, it's not just about entertainment; it offers many opportunities that extend far beyond this realm. Over the years, it has evolved into a versatile space where individuals, creators, businesses, and organisations can explore various opportunities.

As exciting as being on TikTok is, staying on top of your presence on the platform and managing your online brand can be challenging. Creating content, engaging with your audience, tracking trends, and maintaining a consistent online image requires time and effort BUT it can be done by you.



Why Is TikTok So Popular in 2025?

TikTok has solidified its place as one of the world's most influential social platforms, now surpassing 1.5 billion global users.

Its rise in popularity stems from a unique combination of powerful discovery tools, content accessibility, and cultural relevance making it not only an entertainment platform, but a search engine and storytelling hub for users across all demographics.

Short-form video remains king.

With the average attention span now around 7–8 seconds, users gravitate toward content that's quick, visually engaging, and easy to digest. TikTok's format is perfectly suited to this trend, delivering bite-sized videos that capture attention in seconds and keep users scrolling for hours.

Ease of creation = widespread participation.

TikTok's built-in video editing tools, templates, auto-captions, and seamless music integration make it incredibly user-friendly. Whether you're a 19-year-old backpacker or a 65-year-old tour operator, it's easier than ever to create content that looks good and feels authentic.



Smart, addictive algorithm.

The platform's For You Page (FYP) is driven by machine learning, showing users content based on behaviour and interest - not who they follow. This makes the playing field level, allowing small businesses and new creators to reach large audiences without needing a following to start.

Built for discovery, not just community.

TikTok functions as a discovery engine. Users open the app looking for ideas, inspiration, travel tips, and experiences, making it an ideal platform for tourism and service-based businesses.

Trend culture drives engagement.

TikTok is built on participation. Trends, challenges, and memes are constantly evolving, encouraging users to create their own spin on popular content. This participatory nature helps brands humanise themselves, stay relevant, and connect with their audience on a personal level.

A global stage, local voice.

TikTok transcends borders. It's used by people in nearly every country, and its algorithm doesn't rely on language. That means New Zealand content, from glacier tours to stargazing in Tākapo (Tekapo) can be discovered and loved by users across the world.

The new search engine.

In 2025, TikTok is being used like Google. Users type in "best places to visit in NZ," "where to stay in Lake Tekapo," or "South Island road trip itinerary" and watch short videos to help them decide what to do, where to go, and who to book with.

Why TikTok Matters in 2025?

In short: TikTok in 2025 is a platform where authenticity, creativity, and visibility converge. It's where your ideal customer is already searching and where your story deserves to be told.




How TikTok compares?




TikTok vs Instagram vs Facebook


Facebook is still powerful for community updates and local engagement, especially among older demographics. Instagram works well for polished, curated content and strong brand presence. But TikTok is different. It thrives on personality, realness, and story-driven content. You don't need a big following — you just need to show up in a way that feels real and helpful. TikTok's strength lies in discovery. People find you because of the content you create not because they already follow you.

 Facebook


 Audience: 30–65+

 Content Style: Community posts, events, updates

 Reach: Friends & followers

 Purpose: Local engagement, updates, and groups

 Instagram


 Audience: 25–45

 Content Style: Polished, curated, aesthetic-driven

 Reach: Hashtags + Explore page

 Purpose: Building brand trust & visual storytelling

 TikTok

 Audience: 18–45+ (and growing fast)

 Content Style: Raw, real, fast-paced, trend-driven

 Reach: Anyone via the For You Page (FYP)

 Purpose: Discovery, storytelling, and personality-led content

 Key Takeaway:

TikTok isn't just another social app - it's a discovery engine.

It helps new people find you, fast.



What makes TikTok different?



It's All About Short-Form Video — and It Works

TikTok thrives on short, snappy, highly engaging videos that are usually 15 to 60 seconds long. This format aligns perfectly with how people consume content today. Fast, visual, and mobile-first. Unlike Instagram which still leans into polished visuals, TikTok encourages authentic, in-the-moment creativity that doesn't require a big production budget. You can shoot, edit, and post, all from your phone.

👉 For tourism: Think “Top 3 places to stay in Tekapo,” “Hidden gems on a South Island road trip,” or “One-minute sunrise hike in Aoraki.”

TikTok isn't just another social platform - it's a discovery tool, a creative playground, and a storytelling machine. Here's what sets it apart from Instagram, Facebook, and everything else:

The 'For You Page' Is a Game-Changer

TikTok's magic lies in its algorithm. The For You Page (FYP) shows users content based on their behaviour, not who they follow. That means any business or creator can go viral with the right piece of content, regardless of how many followers they have. This creates incredible opportunities for local businesses and tourism operators to be discovered — globally or locally.

👉 You don't need a huge following to make a big impact on TikTok — just the right piece of content.



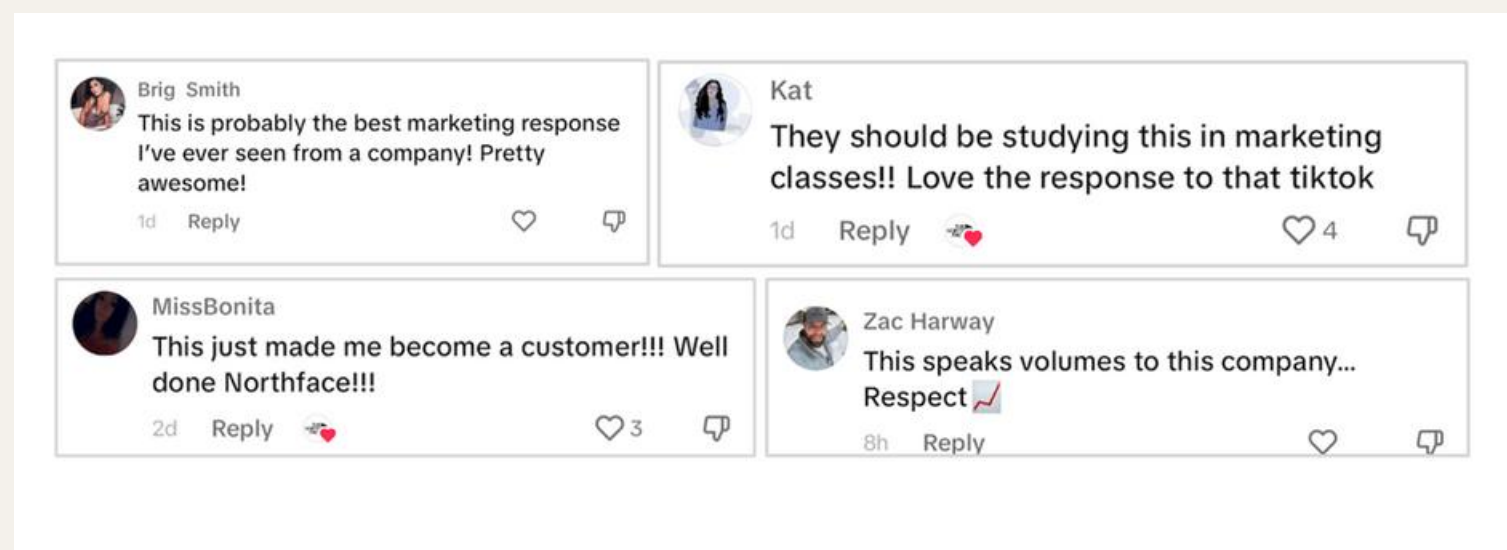
The North Face stands by our products, so when [Jenn Jenson's TikTok](#) went viral and she unexpectedly asked us to meet her at the top of Hooker Valley Lake in New Zealand, we sprung into action.

We're a consumer-centric brand, so our social media team spends a lot of time on TikTok listening to and engaging with our community. We see our community managers as the digital version of our store guides; helping our customers have a great experience in the outdoors is always our priority.

We value community management as a way to connect authentically with our consumers and build brand love.

JEN TIKTOK - 14.8 Million Views

North Face Response - 5.6M views



It's Trend-Driven and Community-Led

TikTok runs on trends. That could be a dance, a voiceover, a visual format, or a style of storytelling. But unlike other platforms, trends on TikTok invite participation people join in, remix, and adapt them. This creates a real sense of community and gives creators a framework to build content.

👉 For tourism: Imagine a trend like “Things in New Zealand that just make sense” You can show off your lodge, coffee, or local view in a fun and relatable way.

Music + Audio Culture Is Built In

TikTok integrates music and sound into its DNA. Whether it's a trending audio clip, a viral soundtrack, or a voiceover, sound plays a massive role in what makes content engaging. Many songs now go viral because of TikTok, not radio or Spotify. Users build content around sound, making it incredibly easy to tap into trends.

👉 Example: A timelapse of a scenic lookout paired with trending audio can go 10x further than a still photo.

It Speaks to Everyone

TikTok started with Gen Z, but in 2025 it now has massive reach across all age groups. From 18-year-olds planning road trips to 60+ travellers looking for campervan guides. TikTok has become a go-to resource for discovery. It's also a truly global platform ,people from the US, Europe, and Asia are using it to research travel, not just scroll aimlessly.

👉 Your future customers are already searching “NZ South Island itinerary” or “Lake Tekapo must-do's” on TikTok.

TikTok is no longer just for teens or creators — it's a cultural platform, a search engine, and a content discovery tool. If you want your business to stay visible and relevant, this is where attention is going.



Who is using TikTok?

TikTok is for more than just Gen Z. It's for the family planning a South Island road trip, the honeymooners looking for unique stays, the adventure-seeker searching for stargazing tours in Tekapo, or the foodie looking for the best pie between Christchurch and Queenstown. If your ideal customer has a smartphone and is curious about travel, they are likely searching for that experience on TikTok.



Why you shouldn't be scared

A lot of business owners worry that TikTok is too hard, too silly, or too much effort. But the beauty of TikTok is that it rewards real people telling real stories. You don't need to dance. You don't need fancy cameras. Just show what you do, speak honestly, and think of your content as a way of helping your future customers feel more confident in booking with you

- ✗ You don't need to dance
- ✗ You don't need fancy gear
- ✗ You don't need to "go viral"

✓ You just need to be:

Real

Consistent

Relatable

Tourism performs well because it's visual, emotional, and authentic.

TikTok for business

TikTok gives small businesses the opportunity to build awareness and community without spending a dollar on advertising.

It's one of the last platforms where you can go from zero to visibility purely through quality content.

For tourism operators, it means you can show off the magic of your region, build trust through storytelling, and drive people to your booking page, all by posting consistently and with intention.

- Huge organic reach — no ad spend needed to start
- Builds awareness fast
- Shows your personality and passion
- Builds trust and drives bookings
- Levels the playing field, small businesses can thrive

Your content matters (But don't sweat it)

You don't need to post the same style of video every time. In fact, variety is key, for example;

A time-lapse of sunrise over Lake Pukaki

A behind-the-scenes look at prepping for a busy tour day

A guide on "What to wear for a glacier hike"

Your favourite local cafe for guests

A guest review turned into a storytelling clip

Tips for first-time visitors to the Mackenzie region

Behind the scenes (how you prep for guests)

Day-in-the-life of a tour operator

Voice-over storytelling

Answering FAQs (what to wear, how long, etc.)

Meet the team

Guest reactions & testimonials

Travel tips for the Mackenzie region

This diversity keeps your feed engaging, and it helps you appeal to different customer types.

Using your TikTok page the smart way.

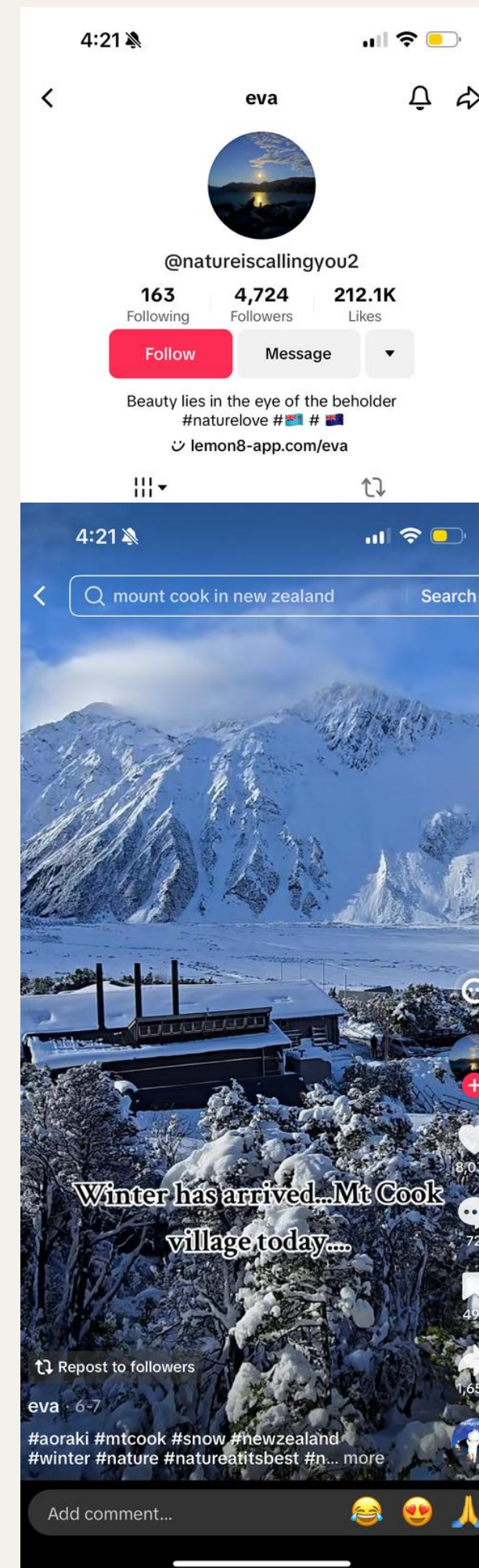
Start simple. Batch-create a few clips each month. Use your phone to capture vertical video.

Add voiceover using TikTok's in-app editor or tools like CapCut.

Use captions, sound, and hooks in the first 3 seconds

Focus on being clear, warm, and helpful. Aim to post 2-3 times per week.

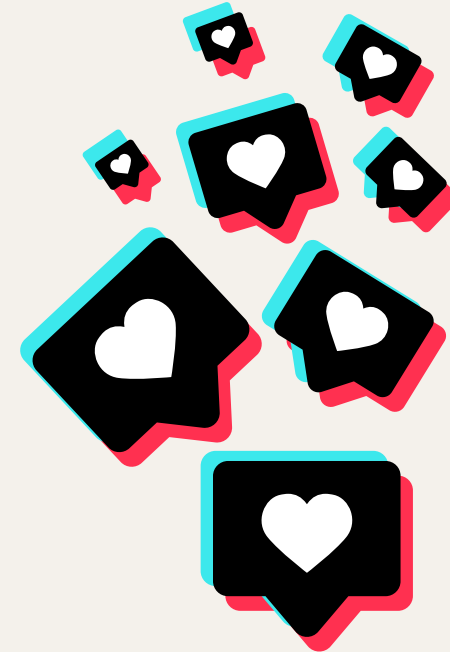
You can even repurpose your Instagram Reels here — just make sure the formatting is vertical and includes text on screen.



Follow back

- Always hook viewers in the first 3 seconds:
Ask a question, make a bold statement, or show a compelling visual.
- Use on-screen text for accessibility and clarity.
- Don't worry about perfection — done is better than perfect.
- Show your face where you can. People connect with people.
- Use trending sounds when relevant, but don't force it.
- Include your region name in captions or on-screen text to make your content more searchable.
- Use on-screen text
- Speak or subtitle clearly
- Add location tags
- Show your face if possible
- Jump on relevant trends only if they make sense for your biz
- Tell a story (even a small one)

TikTok
Best
Practices



Great TikToks often fall into one of three categories: educational, inspirational, or relatable. Think:

“Hidden gems near Mount Cook you need to visit”

“3 things to know before your stargazing tour”

“What \$300 a night gets you at this tiny house”

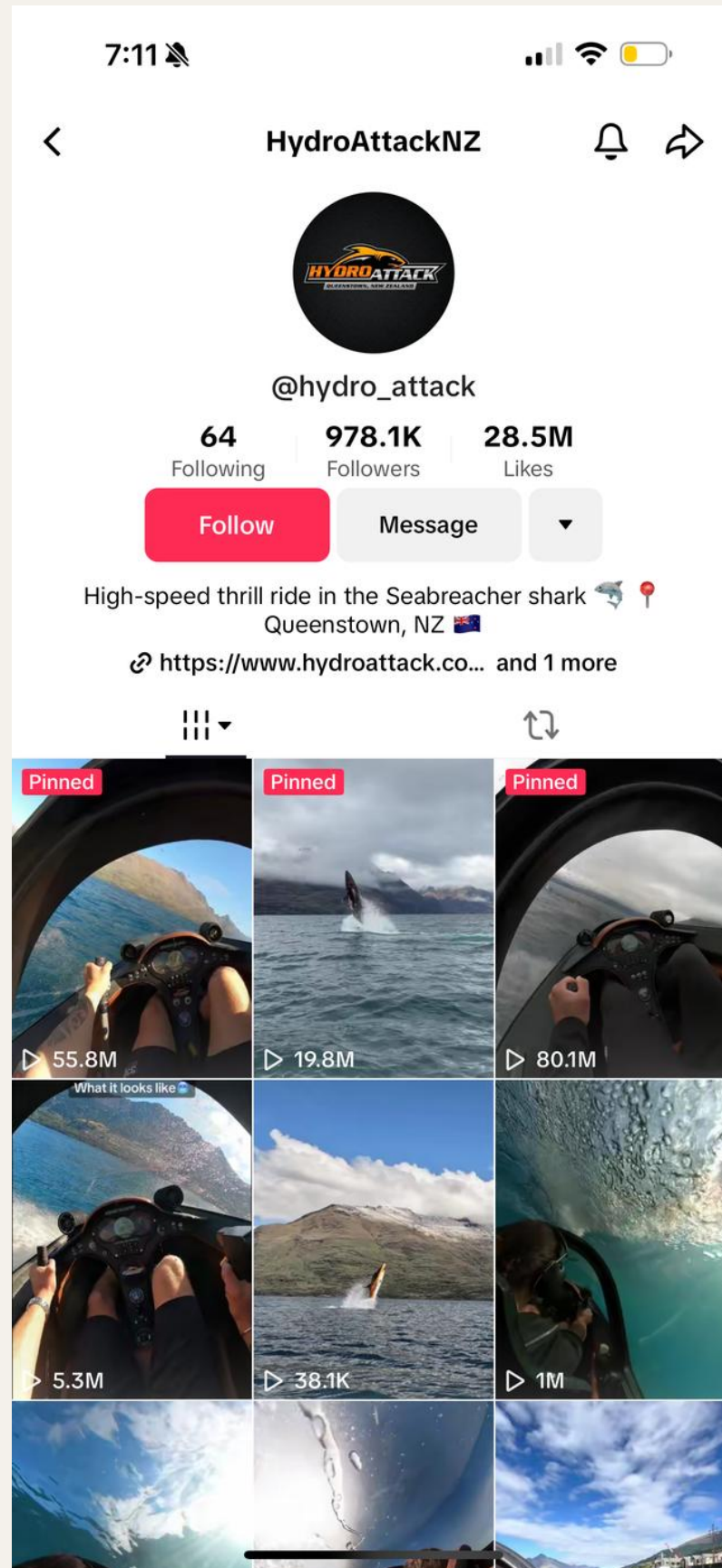
“Day in the life running a family lodge in Tekapo”

People love short, valuable content that either informs them or gives them a little escape from their day.



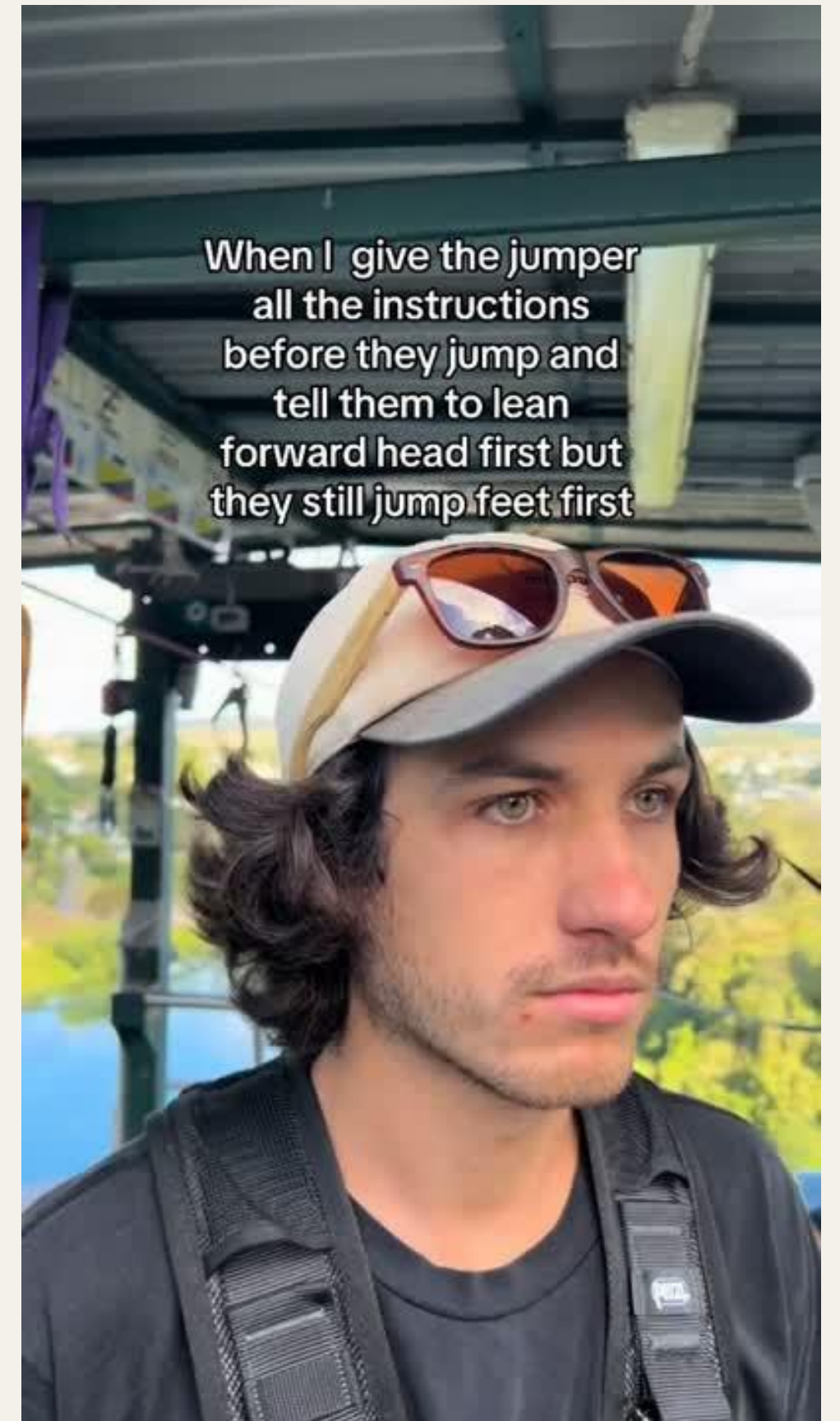


@cheapcarsnz



@hydro_attac

k



@AJHackettBungyNZ

How to Make TikTok Work for You

Start where you are.

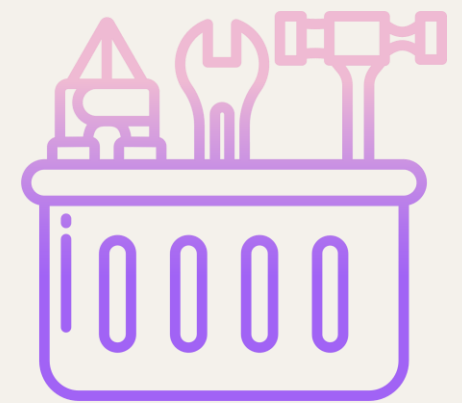
Use your phone. Pick 2 content ideas and film 2-3 short clips this week.

Think like your customer: "If I were planning a trip, what would I search?" Then create a video that answers that question.

Don't aim for perfection, aim for helpful.

That's how you stay consistent and reduce overwhelm.

Remember, people are not on social media to be sold to, they are there for inspiration and information.



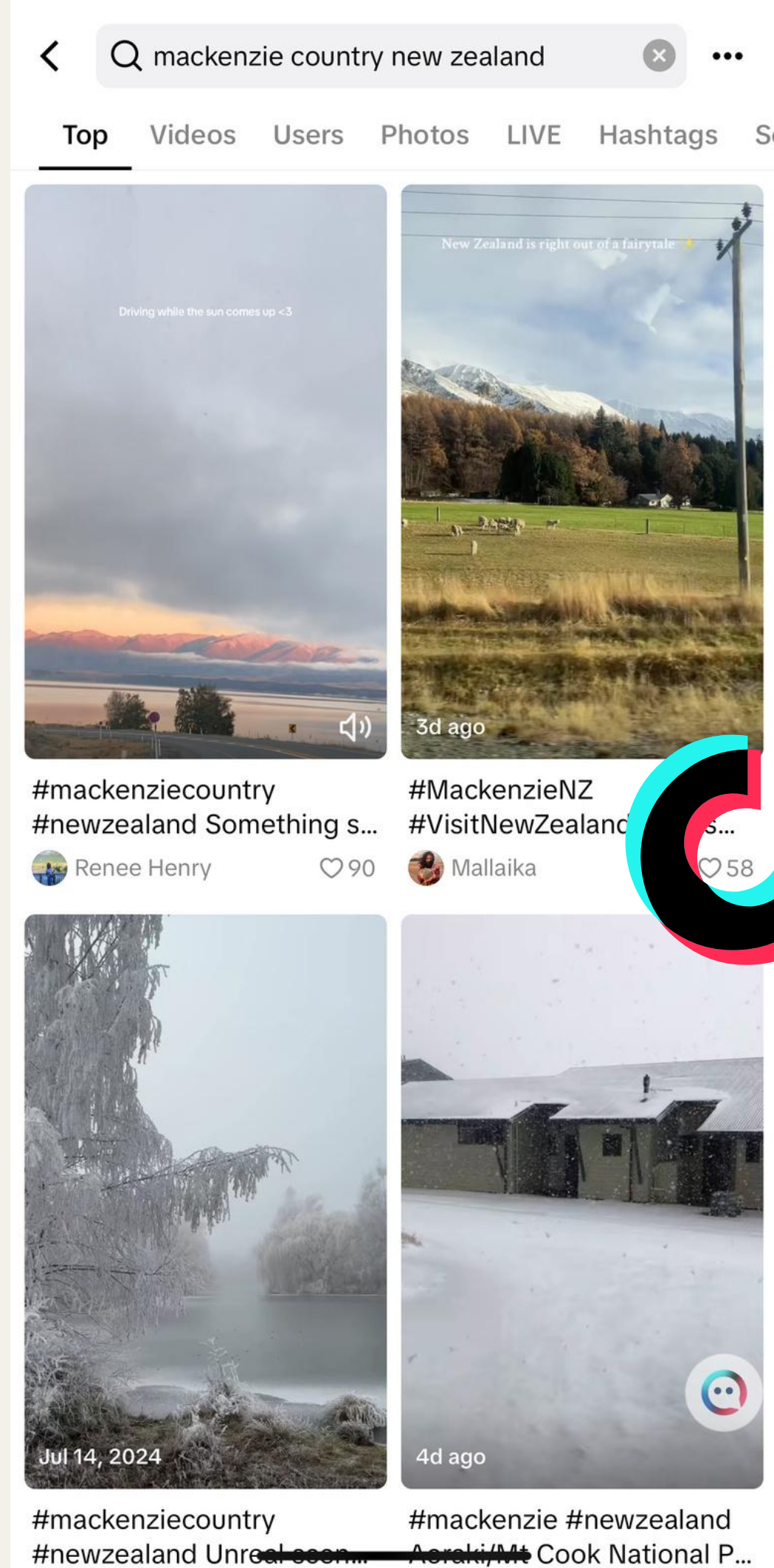
✂ **Tool kit:**

CapCut or InShot for editing

TikTok's native editor

Tripod + phone + light (optional)

📅 Tip: Film once a week. Post 2-3x a week. Repeat.



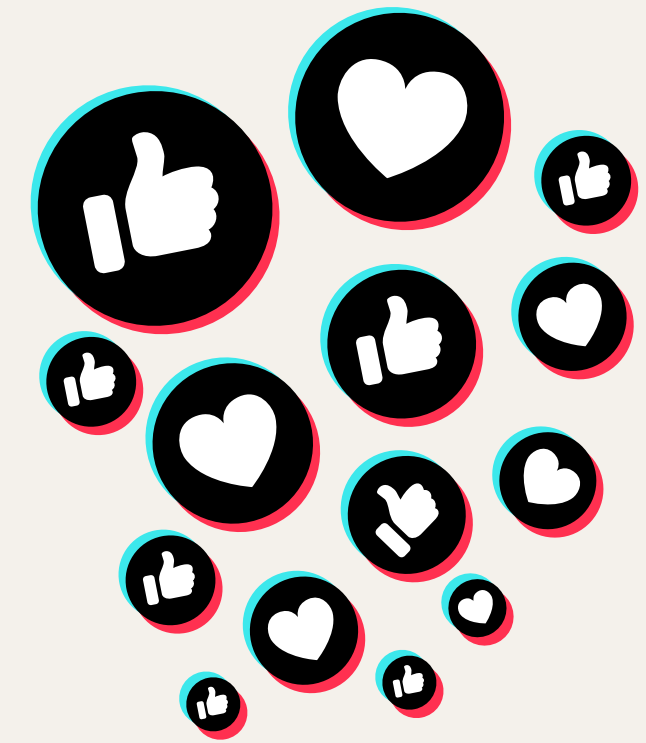
TikTok = Travel Search Engine

People are actively searching:

"Things to do in Lake Tekapo"
 "Where to stay in Mount Cook"
 "Best time to visit the South Island"
 "Hot pools NZ"
 "Unique NZ accommodation"
 South Island road trip itinerary"
 "Things to do in Lake Tekapo"
 "Mount Cook walks"
 "Best cafes in Twizel"
 "Dark Sky Project review"
 "Hot pools South Island"
 "Unique stays NZ"

If your business isn't creating this content, someone else is and they're getting the attention. Answer those questions through video and you become their trusted local guide before they even arrive.

TikTok Ideas for Your Region



"How to spend 24 hours in Lake Tekapo"

"24 hours in Twizel"

"Best sunrise spots in the Mackenzie Region"

"Why Mount Cook is worth the drive"

"Dark Sky Project: what to expect"

"Most peaceful spot in NZ?"

"5 local places you've probably never heard of"

"What to pack for hiking in the Mackenzie"

"Where to eat after hiking in Mount Cook"

"Stargazing tour — what to expect"

"What to pack for winter in the Mackenzie"

"Best pies between Christchurch and Queenstown"

"Guest reaction to our stargazing tour"

"Behind the scenes at [your lodge/tour]"


These are the types of videos people engage with and share while planning travel and if your customers are sharing their experiences repurpose that UGC content

Your Biggest Takeaway



TikTok is not a trend. It's a platform that is actively changing how people plan their travel. From finding unique stays to deciding what town to stop in on a road trip. TikTok influences real decisions. And it's not too late to start. You don't need to be viral. You just need to be visible.

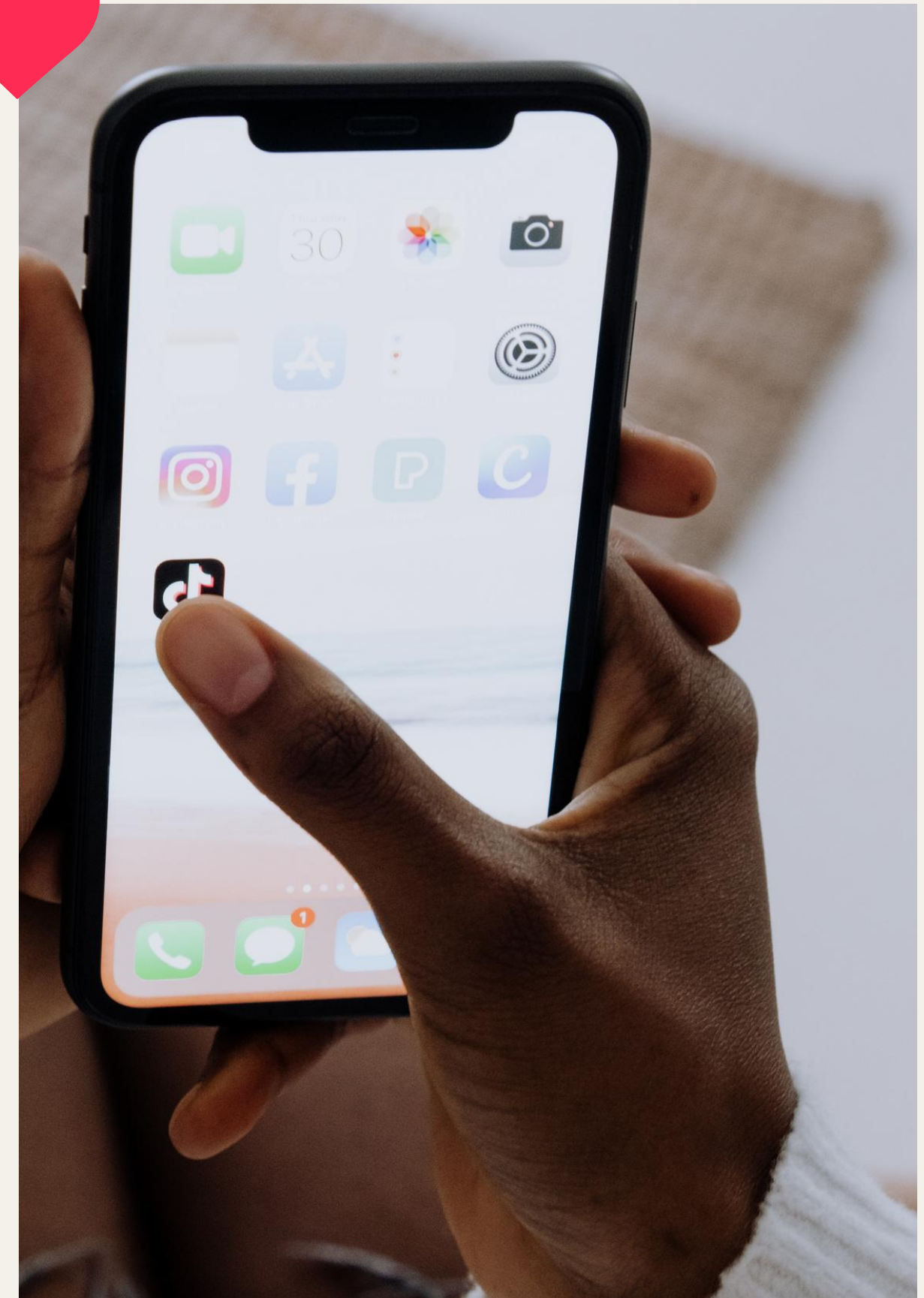
Ready to try?

- 
- 👉 Post one short video this week
 - 👉 Use real footage from your business
 - 👉 Introduce yourself, your place, or a quick tip
 - 👉 Talk like you're helping a future guest plan their trip
 - 👉 Show your view. Share a guest story.
 - 👉 Show them why the Mackenzie is unforgettable

You're already creating amazing experiences — TikTok just helps more people find them.

🎯 **Be helpful. Be consistent. Be real.**

You're already creating unforgettable experiences. Let TikTok help people find them.



TikTok Starter Checklist



Set Up Your Profile

- Clear profile picture (logo or face)
- Bio with your location & offer (e.g. "Guided tours in Tekapo 🌿")
 - Link to website or booking platform
 - Business account enabled



Plan Your First 5 Videos

- Introduce your business – who you are and what you offer
- Share a behind-the-scenes look (staff, views, vehicle, prep)
- Show a highlight experience (e.g. sunrise, animal encounter, local food)
 - Film a "Did you know?" tip about your region
 - Jump on a current trend or sound, but make it local



Content Tips

- Shoot in vertical format (9:16)
- Use trending or relevant sounds
 - Keep it short (15–30 seconds)
 - Add text on screen to give context
- End with a hook or call to action ("Come see it for yourself!")



Make It Discoverable

- Use 3–5 hashtags: location + niche + trending (e.g. #NZMustDo #TekapoStargazing)
 - Add a strong caption that includes keywords (what someone might search for)
 - Engage in comments - reply, say thanks, build community



Consistency > Perfection

- Aim for 2–3 posts per week
- Don't overthink it, just post and learn
- Repurpose existing content (reels, stories, YouTube clips)
 - Save videos that inspire you to recreate



Bonus Tip:



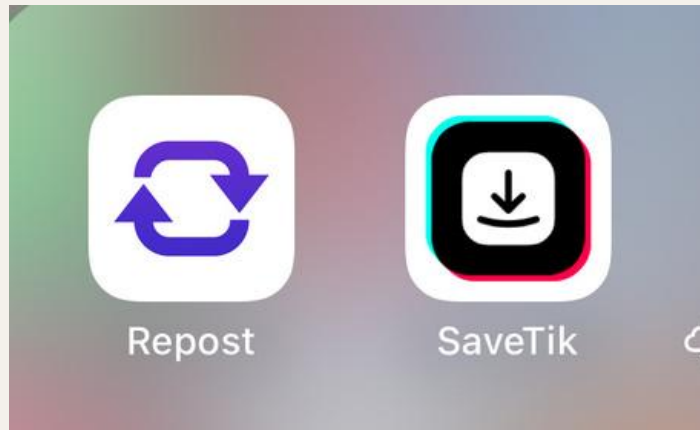
TikTok is a place for real people and real moments. Show your personality, your region's quirks, and the beauty that makes your area special. That's what people fall in love with.



Additional notes from the Q&A

What should you do if there is already content on TikTok about your business?

This is called UGC content. You can either simply repost it (using the TikTok repost feature) This will aggregate all content to a separate 'repost feed' NOT appear on your main grid / feed - 'this is so fine to do' Just know that every piece of content cant be like this, as when people visit your page, your page will look empty.



I want to download and repost a piece of content - how do I do that?

These two apps are a great start. You can copy and paste the URL of the content and it will save to your phone - you can toggle usernames on and off and it also removes the logo associated with the platform you are pulling it from. Anything with a TikTok logo posted to IG / FB will unfortunately be automatically suppressed and visa versa. If you can, post the original content to each channel OR download using these apps and post. IF you are pulling UGC, always best to drop a wee message to the creator / original poster for permission.

If you need any help, reassurance you are doing a great thing or you need a cheerleader, you can find me on Instagram - @sophiepearcey - reach out to your RTO, or drop me an email sophie@thesocialfoundry.co.nz

**I LOVE, love, love social media so no question is too big or too small or not worthy of asking.
Thank you for your time, you are all brilliant and I cant wait to see your social journeys flourish!**

Thank you

SOPHIE PEARCEY

TIKTOK FAN, SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER & STRATEGIST