

Between Entertainment and Expertise: How a Filipino Pharmacist Builds Health Literacy on TikTok

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ABSTRACT

Despite TikTok's growing role as a primary health information source in the Philippines, little scholarly attention has examined how Filipino health professionals construct credibility and communicate with mass digital audiences. This study analyzed the communication strategies, credibility construction, and audience reception of Arshie Larga (@arshielarga), the Philippines' most prominent pharmacist-content creator on TikTok. Using qualitative content analysis grounded in Source Credibility Theory, 33 videos and 212 audience comments were examined for expertise cues, trustworthiness signals, communication strategies, health topics, and audience response patterns. Findings reveal that Larga constructs credibility through two complementary mechanisms: professional expertise markers and interpersonal trustworthiness behaviors. Communication strategies ranged from educational explainers and myth-busting to storytelling and question-and-answer formats. Health topics spanned medication safety, gastrointestinal health, respiratory illness, women's health, and emerging pharmacological treatments. Audience responses clustered into five themes, trust, confusion, gratitude, questions, and behavior change, indicating active rather than passive engagement with pharmacist-generated content. The prevalence of gratitude and behavior change responses exposes a structural gap in point-of-care patient education within the Philippine health system. These findings affirm that short-form pharmacist-generated video on TikTok can function as a meaningful public health education tool, bridging scientific authority with communicative accessibility for broad Filipino audiences.

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Introduction

The rapid proliferation of short-video social media platforms has fundamentally reshaped how health information is created, shared, and consumed across the globe. TikTok, in particular, has emerged as one of the most consequential

spaces for public health communication in the digital age, attracting over one billion monthly active users and increasingly serving as a first port of call for health-seeking audiences (Merga, 2025). The platform's algorithm-driven content delivery, participatory culture, and brief video format have made health information simultaneously more accessible and more susceptible to distortion, placing renewed urgency on understanding who creates health content, how it is communicated, and how audiences receive it. In the Philippines, where over 80% of the population are active social media users, making it one of the most digitally engaged nations in Southeast Asia, TikTok has become a critical arena for health information exchange (Quijote et al., 2023). The emergence of professional health content creators who harness the platform's communicative affordances to simplify complex medical knowledge for ordinary citizens thus represents a phenomenon of significant public health and communication research interest.

The broader context in which this phenomenon arises is one of persistent health misinformation and uneven health literacy. Kirkpatrick and Lawrie (2024), in a large-scale survey study involving over 1,000 young women in the United States, found that TikTok has become a major source of health information among its users, but that perceived credibility varied considerably based on the professional identity and communication approach of the content creator. Paralleling these concerns in Southeast Asia, Sathianathan et al. (2025) conducted qualitative interviews with the Malaysian general public and found that individuals navigate health misinformation on social media largely by relying on informal cues related to the creator's apparent expertise, confident presentation, and consistency of messaging. These findings reveal that audiences in both Western and Southeast Asian contexts engage in active interpretive work when evaluating digital health content, and that the qualities of the communicator matter deeply to how audiences assess message credibility and act upon health information. Understanding how health educators on TikTok construct this credibility is therefore a critical scholarly imperative.

Source credibility theory has long anchored communication research examining how audiences evaluate informational sources, with expertise, trustworthiness, and social attractiveness identified as its core dimensions (Han & Balabanis, 2023). On social media platforms, credibility construction is further mediated by parasocial dynamics, whereby repeated exposure to a creator fosters feelings of personal familiarity that can strengthen or undermine trust beyond what credentials alone might confer (Vu et al., 2025). Kaňková et al. (2024), in a comprehensive scoping review of health-related communication by social media

influencers, found that audience engagement, source expertise, and perceived authenticity are the most consistently reported determinants of communication effectiveness across the existing literature, while also noting that research has disproportionately focused on Western and commercial health content, leaving professional health educators in lower-middle-income and Southeast Asian contexts understudied. This gap is significant, as the communicative norms, linguistic practices, and trust frameworks that shape health communication effectiveness differ substantially across cultural contexts, underscoring the value of regionally grounded investigations.

Research specifically examining TikTok as a health communication platform has grown substantially in recent years, though it remains concentrated on content quality assessment and largely absent from the Filipino or broader Southeast Asian context. Irfan et al. (2024), analyzing asthma-related content on TikTok, found that physician-generated videos achieved higher quality scores on established health information credibility instruments, but also observed that engagement metrics, including views, likes, and comments, did not straightforwardly correlate with content accuracy, indicating that factors other than informational quality drive viral health communication. Liu et al. (2022), using fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis to examine Chinese health science communication accounts, identified that no single factor independently produces account influence; rather, configurations of interactive responsiveness, topic relevance, and platform presence collectively determine communicative reach and authority. Zhu et al. (2020), in an earlier foundational content analysis of TikTok accounts operated by Chinese provincial health committees, demonstrated that video tone, format variety, and the use of accessible language significantly affected public engagement, establishing a framework that subsequent platform-specific health communication studies have built upon. In this regard, these studies underscore the complexity of what makes health communication on TikTok effective and the need for case-based studies that examine individual creators in their specific socio-cultural and linguistic contexts.

In the Philippines, health communication research has increasingly grappled with structural challenges including fragmented healthcare infrastructure, persistent misinformation ecosystems, and low formal health literacy rates, conditions that created the backdrop against which a new generation of social media health educators has emerged (Quijote et al., 2023). Arshie Larga, a Doctor of Pharmacy and licensed community pharmacist from Marinduque, has become the most prominent example of this phenomenon. Having amassed over four million followers on TikTok

and earning the platform's Creator of the Year award in 2023, Larga is known for his distinctive signature phrase "Let me explain" and for a communication style that weaves together pharmacological expertise. Michel et al. (2025) have noted that social media influencers who operate as health educators occupy a structurally unique position, blending the credibility of professional expertise with the relatability of peer communication, a dynamic that is particularly powerful in health promotion contexts. Despite the scale of Larga's influence, his communication strategies, credibility construction, and audience reception have not been examined in any peer-reviewed study, a gap this research directly addresses.

The scientific novelty of this study lies in its integration of source credibility theory within a qualitative case study of a Filipino health communicator on TikTok, an approach that has not previously been applied in the Philippine or Southeast Asian context. Existing TikTok health communication research, as illustrated by Irfan et al. (2024), Liu et al. (2022), and Merga (2025), has prioritized quantitative content analysis and platform-wide assessments, leaving the communicative micro-practices and audience dynamics of individual creators largely unexamined. By focusing on Arshie Larga's TikTok presence, this study addresses that methodological and geographic gap, contributing to communication scholarship that is both theoretically grounded and contextually sensitive. The study is guided by four objectives: to understand how Arshie Larga establishes credibility as a health educator on TikTok; to identify the communication strategies he employs to simplify complex health information; to explore how his audience responds to and interprets his health messages through comments and engagement; and to identify the health-related topics communicated across his videos. Its findings are expected to inform evidence-based recommendations for health communication practitioners, digital health policymakers, and communication scholars working in the Philippine and Southeast Asian context.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design to examine how pharmacy-related health information is communicated through TikTok content and received by Filipino audiences. Qualitative inquiry was deemed appropriate given the study's aim to interpret meaning, context, and communicative patterns within digital media texts, consistent with the interpretivist tradition in communication research that prioritizes depth of understanding over statistical generalization (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The sampling unit consisted of publicly available TikTok videos and audience comments drawn from the official account of Arshie Larga (@arshielarga), a Filipino pharmacist-content creator. Videos were eligible for inclusion if they were publicly accessible, explicitly addressed health, pharmacy, medication, or wellness topics, including prescription use, over-the-counter drugs, vaccine information, or common health myths, and were primarily delivered in Tagalog, English, or Taglish (code-switched language), with a duration ranging from 15 seconds to 5 minutes; only videos posted within a one-year window from May 15, 2025, to May 15, 2026, were considered. Videos were excluded if they centered on non-health comedy skits, personal lifestyle content, promotional material unrelated to pharmacy practice, or if they were duplicate uploads, deleted or private at the time of data collection, live streams, text-only videos without spoken or on-screen health information, or collaborations in which Larga was not the primary health communicator. For audience comments, only those posted under qualifying videos, written in Tagalog, English, or Taglish, and containing interpretable meaning beyond emojis or gibberish were included; specifically, the most-liked comments per video were selected to capture the most visible audience responses, while replies to other comments, comments posted by the creator himself, and spam or off-topic promotional content were excluded. Applying these criteria, the researchers identified a final corpus of 33 videos and 212 comments, all of which were downloaded for analysis.

Data were collected through systematic archival retrieval of TikTok content, wherein qualifying videos were downloaded for offline analysis and corresponding top comments were documented, alongside relevant metadata such as like counts and video duration. This approach aligns with digital ethnographic and netnographic methods that treat publicly available online content as a legitimate and ethically accessible data source (Kozinets, 2020), and it ensured that the data corpus remained stable and reproducible regardless of subsequent platform changes.

The collected videos and comments were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, a systematic method for identifying, coding, and interpreting patterns of meaning within communication texts (Krippendorff, 2018). The analysis proceeded inductively, allowing categories and themes to emerge from the data rather than being imposed a priori, which is consistent with the exploratory nature of the research questions; both the verbal and visual dimensions of the videos were examined, including spoken language, on-screen text, and creator presentation style, while the comments were analyzed to surface recurring audience interpretations, affective responses, and patterns of health information engagement.

This study is grounded in Source Credibility Theory (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953), which posits that a communicator's persuasiveness depends on two dimensions: expertise (perceived knowledge and qualifications) and trustworthiness (perceived honesty and sincerity). When both dimensions are strong, audiences are more likely to accept and act upon the message. This theory is particularly suited to TikTok health education, where creators cannot rely on institutional authority and must visually embed credibility cues within short videos. In this study, Source Credibility Theory will guide the analysis of 33 videos by Arshie Larga. Each video will be coded for the presence of expertise cues (e.g., pharmacy attire, accurate terminology, professional setting) and trustworthiness cues (e.g., admitting mistakes, refusing unsafe advice, showing empathy). The analysis will examine which credibility dimension dominates, whether both appear together, and how credibility strategies vary across video types. This theoretical framework allows the study to explain, not merely describe, how a Filipino pharmacist-creator establishes credibility on TikTok.

Result and Discussion

Professional Cues and Interpersonal Trust in Health Communication

This study examined how Arshie Larga, a Filipino pharmacist-turned-TikTok health educator, establishes credibility as a source of health information through his video content. The analysis of 33 video samples revealed two dominant patterns of credibility construction: the deployment of expertise cues and the expression of trustworthiness cues. These findings are examined through the lens of Source Credibility Theory (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953), which posits that a communicator's persuasive impact is mediated by the audience's perception of the source's expertise and trustworthiness.

Across the majority of the videos analyzed, Larga consistently employed visual and verbal markers of professional expertise. He appeared wearing pharmacy attire and filmed primarily within a pharmacy setting, creating an immediate visual association with his professional identity. In several videos, he explained the pharmacological mechanisms of drugs, articulated side effects honestly, provided scientific rationale behind medical warnings, and employed precise clinical terminology such as "antibiotic resistance," "contraindication," and "dosage." He also corrected circulating health misinformation and suggested alternative medications in cases of drug unavailability. These patterns align with Hovland et al.'s (1953) conceptualization of expertise as the perceived competence and knowledge a source

is understood to possess. Research conducted by Heiss et al. (2024) on credibility cues in short-form social media videos similarly demonstrated that sources identified as experts, particularly those adopting professional attire and settings, were rated as more authoritative in their domain than ordinary users. Their experimental study, which manipulated source type and visual credibility cues in TikTok videos, reinforces the finding that professional signifiers function as heuristic shortcuts that audiences use to gauge a source's competence in a low-effort viewing environment such as TikTok.

Notably, a video departed from these conventions: in it, Larga was filmed in a bus, showing no professional markers, and simply demonstrating his own medication intake. This outlier suggests that Larga occasionally prioritizes relatability over professional signaling. Ferrell and Campos-Castillo (2022), in their online experimental study examining physicians' credibility on Twitter, found that formal appearance alone did not consistently predict credibility; instead, the social context of the viewer moderated how professional visual cues were interpreted. This nuanced finding supports the interpretation that Larga's non-professional video may have served a different communicative function, personal modelling, without undermining his overarching expert identity established across the broader content corpus.

The trustworthiness dimension of Larga's credibility was equally evident and multi-layered. Across the videos, he consistently refused to dispense medication to individuals without a valid prescription, showed patience with difficult customers, acknowledged the primacy of physicians' instructions, and explicitly avoided product promotion. He supplemented his videos with in-text "FYI" annotations providing additional safety information, and he personally used the medications he previously recommended, thereby demonstrating behavioral consistency. He communicated in conversational Taglish, a code-switching blend of Tagalog and English, and frequently drew on personal experiences, family stories, and community-based examples. His affective range was visible, as he displayed genuine emotional responses, smiling, expressing concern or surprise, while being filmed in various informal settings including his home and outdoor locations. Kaňková et al. (2024), in a comprehensive scoping review of health-related communication by social media influencers, identified honesty, transparency, and authenticity as the most recurrent trustworthiness-signaling strategies employed by health communicators on digital platforms. Their review documented that influencers who avoided

commercial entanglements and disclosed personal motivations were consistently rated as more trustworthy by their audiences.

The interplay between Larga's expertise and trustworthiness signals is theoretically significant. Hovland et al. (1953) argued that these two dimensions operate in complementary, sometimes compensatory, ways. Lou and Yuan (2019), drawing from the source credibility framework in their study of influencer marketing, empirically confirmed that trustworthiness and expertise independently and positively predict audience trust in content, though their relative weight may vary by context. In Larga's case, the data suggest that he has constructed a credibility architecture in which professional expertise cues (attire, setting, clinical terminology) establish the floor of authority, while interpersonal trustworthiness cues (code-switching, personal narrative, emotional expression, ethical behavior) sustain and deepen audience engagement.

This finding resonates with Kirkpatrick and Lawrie's (2024) survey study of young women's perceptions of health information on TikTok, which found that health professionals on the platform were perceived as significantly more credible than non-professionals and exerted stronger behavioral influence. Importantly, however, the study also warned that audiences may be susceptible to individuals who merely project the impression of professional qualifications. Larga's case differs in that his credentials appear grounded and consistently referenced, though the study recognizes this as a limitation of content-based analysis without audience perception data. The broader landscape of health communication on TikTok, as mapped by Kaňková et al. (2024), confirms that the most effective health influencers are those who balance scientific authority with communicative accessibility, a balance that Arshie Larga demonstrably achieves through the dual activation of expertise and trustworthiness signals across his content.

The results indicate that Larga's credibility on TikTok is not incidental but systematically constructed through the strategic interplay of professional expertise markers and interpersonal trustworthiness behaviors, both of which operate as complementary mechanisms within the Source Credibility Theory framework.

Mapping Communicative Strategies in Health Information on Tiktok

The analysis of 33 content units revealed a diverse yet patterned deployment of communication strategies aimed at simplifying complex health information for a general audience. Rather than relying on a single approach, the communicator consistently alternated and combined multiple strategies across content, suggesting a deliberate and adaptive communicative repertoire. The dominant patterns

identified were: conversational or peer communication, educational explainer content, myth-busting, visual aids and infographics, question-and-answer formats, storytelling, and testimonial communication. These patterns, when examined collectively, point to an overarching communicative orientation that prioritizes accessibility, relatability, and audience engagement over technical precision, a hallmark of effective public health communication in digital contexts.

Conversational and peer communication stood as a dominant pattern throughout the data. This approach positions the communicator not as a distant clinical authority but as a peer, using informal register and direct address to create a sense of relational closeness with the audience. This finding resonates with the work of Ngai et al. (2020), whose study of medical social influencers on Sina Weibo found that interactive dialogue and affective communication practices significantly drove public engagement with health content. The use of a peer communicative tone reduces psychological barriers that audiences may associate with formal medical discourse, rendering complex health information more approachable and easier to internalize.

Educational explainer content emerged as another dominant and consistent pattern, appearing either in isolation or in combination with other forms. This format functions as a structured presentation of health concepts in plain, accessible language, typically organized to walk an audience through the logic of a health issue step by step. Kite et al. (2023), in their systematic review of social media health communication campaigns, observed that information dissemination strategies anchored in clarity and relevance were among the strongest predictors of audience engagement across platforms. The prevalence of educational explainer content in this study's data reflects an intentional strategy to build health literacy progressively, rather than overwhelming audiences with dense clinical language.

Myth-busting was one of the most striking patterns in the dataset, frequently co-occurring with visual aids. This strategy directly addresses and refutes prevalent health misconceptions, replacing them with evidence-based corrections. Kessler and Bachmann (2022), in their experimental study published in the *Journal of Public Health*, demonstrated that online debunking texts addressing widespread health myths produced measurable shifts in recipients' beliefs, particularly when the corrective message was perceived as credible. Their findings affirm that myth-busting, when executed with clarity and source credibility, functions as a powerful corrective tool in health communication. The persistence of this pattern in the data

suggests that the communicator was acutely aware of the misinformation landscape and positioned content as a counter-narrative to it.

Visual aids and infographics appeared consistently paired with myth-busting or explainer formats rather than standing alone. This co-occurrence pattern is analytically significant: it indicates that visual content served an amplifying rather than substitutive function, reinforcing and concretizing what the verbal or textual elements communicated. Gesser-Edelsburg (2021), emphasized that narrative and visually grounded messages are particularly effective in rendering complex health information comprehensible, especially for audiences with limited prior knowledge. The pairing of infographics with myth-busting content is consistent with this logic, visual representations help anchor corrective information in memorable, easily processable formats, reducing cognitive load for the audience.

The question-and-answer format represents a notable dialogic pattern that simulates the interactive dynamic of a clinical consultation or peer discussion. Pan et al. (2021), in a study of Q&A social media platforms published in *Frontiers in Psychology*, found that message features structured around direct questions and responsive answers significantly enhanced user engagement around sensitive health topics such as depression. This format invites audiences into an imagined conversational exchange, making health content feel personalized and directly relevant to individual concerns. Storytelling and testimonial communication, while surfacing as a less dominant pattern, appeared in a concentrated cluster and reinforced the emotional dimension of health communication, providing relatable human narratives through which audiences could contextualize abstract health information. McCall et al. (2021), in their systematic narrative review published in *Frontiers in Public Health*, concluded that storytelling interventions demonstrably improved public knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intentions across diverse health contexts.

Taken together, the identified patterns reveal a sophisticated communicative ecology in which no single strategy dominates exclusively. Instead, the communicator deployed a layered and combinatory approach, strategically pairing educational content with visual aids, myth-busting with infographics, and conversational tone with structured Q&A formats. This layering is consistent with what health communication scholars describe as multimodal and dialogic health messaging, an approach that accommodates varying levels of health literacy, sustains audience attention, and builds communicative trust across repeated exposures. The convergence of these strategies reflects a communicative orientation that is

simultaneously informative, corrective, relational, and emotionally resonant, characteristics that the literature consistently associates with effective health communication in digital and social media environments.

Audience Responses and Interpretations of Health Messages

The analysis of audience comments on Arshie Larga's health-related TikTok content reveals five dominant thematic categories that illuminate how Filipino viewers respond to and interpret pharmacist-generated health messages in digital spaces: trust, confusion, gratitude, questions, and behavior change. These themes collectively demonstrate the complex interplay between health communication, parasocial relationships, and public health literacy in the context of social media.

The most prominent theme emerging from the data is trust, with a substantial number of commenters affirming the credibility of the content creator as a health information source. Comments expressing that his explanations were clear and comparable to a doctor's, and observations that he does not appear to be sponsored unlike other health influencers, reflect a high degree of perceived source credibility. Shah and Wei (2022) demonstrated through an elaboration likelihood model framework that source credibility and information quality are positively associated with perceived benefit and public engagement on social networking platforms, a dynamic clearly evident in how audiences respond to pharmacist-generated content. The perception of authenticity functions as a form of informal credibility endorsement that amplifies the reach and impact of health messages. This is consistent with Wellman et al. (2020), who established that social media influencers operate according to an ethics of authenticity premised on being true to one's self, one's brand, and one's audience, an ethical orientation that followers appear to recognize and reward with sustained engagement. Audience members also described sharing his videos with family members when verbal explanations failed to persuade them, underscoring how trusted content creators can serve as mediating agents of health information within social networks, a role further supported by Lou and Yuan (2019), who found that influencer trustworthiness and informational value significantly predict consumer trust in social media content.

The theme of confusion, while less dominant, carries significant implications for health literacy. Several comments reveal fundamental misunderstandings about common medications, including questions about the pharmacological rationale behind certain drug formulations and uncertainty about differences between similar pharmaceutical products. This pattern aligns with Nutbeam's (2000) foundational framework of functional, communicative, and critical health literacy, wherein many

users appear to be at the functional literacy stage, capable of following basic health instructions but lacking the communicative and critical skills to evaluate or question health information independently. In the Philippine context, Loreche et al. (2023) documented through a scoping review that self-care practices for common acute conditions across the Philippines remain largely unguided by formal health education, contributing to patterns of uninformed medication use. The confusion expressed by commenters, while potentially problematic, also demonstrates the productive role of digital health content in surfacing knowledge gaps that formal healthcare consultations do not consistently address.

Gratitude constituted one of the most voluminous themes in the dataset, with numerous commenters explicitly thanking the content creator for information they reported never receiving from their own healthcare providers. These responses reveal a structural deficit in the capacity of Philippine health systems to deliver adequate patient education at the point of care. Commenters who wished that all pharmacists communicated in the same manner, and those who noted that pharmacists at other drugstores were dismissive, indicate a gap between ideal and actual pharmacist-patient communication at the community level. This finding resonates with broader evidence on the democratization of health information through social media, where platforms like TikTok have been found to serve compensatory informational functions for populations with limited access to health professionals (Basch et al., 2020). The emotional tenor of gratitude comments, many of which included expressions of relief and personal relevance, suggests that audiences are not passive consumers of health content but active participants whose lived health experiences shape their interpretive responses. Hoffner and Bond (2022) similarly observed that parasocial relationships with media figures on social media can promote healthy attitudes and behaviors and foster feelings of connection and community, effects that are clearly reflected in the gratitude and personal identification expressed by Larga's audience.

The theme of questions reflects significant audience engagement and is analytically important for understanding how health messages are processed. The volume and specificity of questions posed in the comments, ranging from antibiotic dosing intervals to medication safety during breastfeeding, indicates that audiences view the content creator not merely as an entertainer but as an accessible health consultant. This phenomenon is theorized through the concept of parasocial interaction, wherein audiences develop one-sided relational ties with media personalities that replicate interpersonal consultation dynamics (Hoffner & Bond,

2022). The diversity and clinical specificity of these questions underscores the extent to which social media health content has become a primary point of first contact for health inquiries among Filipino digital audiences. Lou and Yuan (2019) similarly observed that the informative value of influencer-generated content, combined with perceived trustworthiness, positively affects followers' engagement behaviors, a pattern fully borne out in the present comment data.

The behavior change theme, though represented by fewer comments, captures the most clinically significant audience responses. Commenters described stopping or reconsidering medication behaviors directly as a result of watching the content, including ceasing the use of certain over-the-counter drugs they previously considered safe and reconsidering self-medication habits around antibiotics. These responses align with Skinner et al. (2015), who describe the health belief model's construct of cues to action, wherein exposure to credible health information triggers reassessment of personal health behaviors. Wellman et al. (2020) and Shah and Wei (2022) both affirm that the combination of authentic communication and perceived source credibility constitutes a powerful driver of attitude and behavior change in digital environments. With evidence from Basch et al. (2020) on TikTok's capacity to convey important public health messages to large audiences, the behavior change responses documented in this study suggest that pharmacist-led short-form video content can function as an effective, if informal, vehicle for health behavior modification among Filipino audiences.

Collectively, these five themes demonstrate that digital health communication through social media generates multidimensional audience responses that extend well beyond passive viewership. The findings indicate that credibility, accessibility, emotional resonance, and the capacity to address unmet informational needs are the central mechanisms through which health messages achieve impact in online environments, and that pharmacists who leverage digital platforms thoughtfully can fill critical gaps in public health education.

Health-Related Topics Communicated Across the Videos

An analysis of 33 videos produced by Arshie Larga on TikTok reveals a broad and clinically relevant range of health-related topics that reflect both common public health concerns and everyday medication needs among Filipino viewers. As presented in Table 1, the topics span medication safety, gastrointestinal health, respiratory illness, women's health, preventive care, and emerging pharmacological treatments. This diversity is consistent with findings by Sattora et al. (2024), who in a systematic review of 101 studies confirmed that health communication on TikTok

spans non-surgical specialties, infectious disease, and preventive health, underscoring the platform's expansive reach across medical domains.

Table 1 *Health-Related Topics Communicated Across the Videos*

Video	Health-Related Topics
VID-001	Antibiotic Misuse in Wound Care
VID-002	Suppository Paracetamol Administration
VID-003	Rabies Vaccine Explainer
VID-004	Pharmacist-Patient Medication Counseling
VID-005	Over-the-Counter Cough and Cold Remedies
VID-006	Travel-Related Gastrointestinal Discomfort
VID-007	Seasonal Over-the-Counter Medicine Preparedness
VID-008	Dysmenorrhea Management
VID-009	Comparative Over-the-Counter Drug Information
VID-010	Probiotic Product Differentiation
VID-011	Community Pharmacist Counseling Practice
VID-012	Topical Medication Application and Indications
VID-013	Bleaching and Lightening Cream Safety Awareness
VID-014	Decongestant Medication Precautions
VID-015	Essential Home and Travel Medicine Kit
VID-016	Pediatric Travel Medicine Essentials
VID-017	Hyperacidity Treatment Options
VID-018	Oral Rehydration and Hydration Awareness
VID-019	Cold Medication Misconceptions and Comparative Use
VID-020	Bioflu and Alaxan FR Misuse
VID-021	Diarrhea Management Misconceptions
VID-022	Cold Medication Safety for Hypertensive Patients
VID-023	Safe Paracetamol Dosing and Administration
VID-024	Emergency Health Preparedness Kit
VID-025	Antiseptic Mouthwash Use and Indications
VID-026	Influenza Season Preparedness and Prevention
VID-027	Community Pharmacist Counseling Practice
VID-028	Tirzepatide Mechanism and Clinical Use
VID-029	GLP-1 Receptor Agonist Drug Comparison
VID-030	Diarrhea Causes, Management, and Prevention
VID-031	Nasal Decongestant Use and Indications
VID-032	Sore Throat Prevention and Management
VID-033	Probiotic Mechanisms and Benefits

The most frequently recurring topics involved medication safety and misuse. Several videos addressed the misuse of antibiotics in wounds, the proper usage of

paracetamol, misconceptions surrounding commonly used cold preparations such as Bioflu, Neozep, Decolgen, and Symdex, and precautions for medications containing decongestants. The misuse of Bioflu and Alaxan FR was also specifically discussed. Evans et al. (2022) emphasized that pharmacists are uniquely positioned to deliver accurate medication information on TikTok, particularly regarding antibiotic stewardship, as health misinformation about antimicrobials remains a growing public health concern. This is especially relevant in the Philippine context where Loreche et al. (2023) documented widespread self-medication practices for common acute conditions with limited formal health guidance. Additional videos guided viewers in over-the-counter drug selection, covering must-have medicines at home or while traveling, must-have medicines while traveling specifically for children, OTC drugs for the rainy season, a rally health kit, and the similarities among OTC drugs, reflecting what Willis et al. (2023) describe as the growing role of health-knowledgeable social media communicators in helping audiences navigate pharmaceutical decisions.

Gastrointestinal health was another prominent area, addressed through videos on diarrhea, misconceptions in diarrhea management, tummyache while traveling, probiotics and Erceflora variants, a general probiotics explainer, different medicines for hyperacidity, and hydration, addressing conditions that Loreche et al. (2023) identify as among the most commonly self-managed acute health concerns among Filipinos. Respiratory and seasonal illness content included topics on meds for cough and colds, nasal decongestants, sore throat protection, flu season awareness, and cold medications for people with hypertension, responding to high-prevalence community health needs. Individual topics also addressed dysmenorrhea, the usage of topical ointments, BL cream awareness, Bactidol, the rabies vaccine, and the importance of explaining medication instructions to customers, demonstrating the range of pharmacist-patient communication covered across the content. Notably, there are videos that addressed emerging pharmacological topics, specifically Tirzepatide awareness and a comparison of Ozempic and Mounjaro as blood sugar medications, consistent with Sattora et al.'s (2024) observation that health topics on TikTok have diversified substantially since 2021. With this, the breadth of topics across these 33 videos demonstrates that pharmacist-generated TikTok content functions not merely as product promotion but as a substantive public health education tool, systematically addressing knowledge gaps across multiple categories of common illness and medication use.

Conclusion

The findings reveal that credibility on this platform is not incidentally achieved but deliberately and systematically constructed through two complementary mechanisms: the deployment of professional expertise markers and the expression of interpersonal trustworthiness behaviors, both of which operate in a mutually reinforcing architecture wherein professional signals establish the foundation of authority while relational and communicative behaviors sustain audience trust and deepen engagement over time. Communication strategies were diverse and combinatorial, spanning educational explainers, myth-busting, visual aids, question-and-answer formats, storytelling, and testimonial communication, reflecting a multimodal and dialogic orientation that accommodates varying levels of health literacy and sustains audience attention across repeated exposures. The health topics communicated across the 33 analyzed videos were remarkably broad and clinically relevant, reflecting a content strategy that is systematically responsive to the everyday health concerns and knowledge gaps of Filipino communities. Audience responses clustered into five dominant themes, trust, confusion, gratitude, questions, and behavior change, each revealing a distinct dimension of how Filipino digital audiences process and act upon health information received through social media. The prevalence of gratitude and behavior change responses, in particular, points to a critical structural gap in the Philippine healthcare system's capacity to deliver sufficient patient education at the point of care, a gap that pharmacist-led digital content is demonstrably beginning to fill. Collectively, these findings affirm that pharmacist-generated short-form video content on TikTok constitutes a meaningful mode of public health communication that bridges scientific authority with communicative accessibility, making health information more reachable, relatable, and actionable for a broad Filipino audience. This study is limited by its exclusive reliance on content and comment analysis, of only one content creator, without direct empirical measurement of audience perceptions. Future research should therefore adopt mixed-methods designs integrating audience surveys, in-depth interviews, and experimental approaches to directly measure how Filipino viewers perceive and are behaviorally influenced by pharmacist-generated health content on TikTok, while longitudinal studies should investigate whether sustained exposure produces durable improvements in health literacy and meaningful reductions in harmful self-medication practices.

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