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Exploring
**the 2
sides of
tiktok**

Bridging Cultures or
Homogenizing Society?



POLITECNICO
MILANO 1863

Communication Design

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Tiktok:**
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Academic year: 2021/2022

Abstract

English

TikTok's unique ability to promote cross-cultural exchange through its short-form video content was a game-changer. Users could easily create videos showcasing their traditions, music, dance, food, and fashion, making it a platform for sharing cultures and fostering global understanding. From another hand, while TikTok's popularity skyrocketed, some critics feared that it was leading to a globalized culture, where users worldwide shared similar content and trends. They worried that this could result in the loss of cultural diversity as users adopted similar behaviors and practices.

Despite these concerns, TikTok remained a powerful tool for promoting cross-cultural exchange, especially among Gen Z. Young people were and still interested in learning about different cultures and traditions, something the platform is providing them with an easy access to content from all over the world.

This thesis aims to explore the impact of TikTok on cross-cultural exchange, delving into its potential benefits and drawbacks. By examining how TikTok represents and shares different cultures, we can better understand how the platform shapes our global community and what it means for cultural diversity in the future.

Italiano

La capacità unica di TikTok di proporre lo scambio interculturale attraverso contenuti video di breve durata ha cambiato le carte in tavola. Gli utenti possono facilmente creare video che mostrano le loro tradizioni, la musica, la danza, il cibo e la moda, rendendo Tik Tok una piattaforma interessante per la condivisione delle culture. D'altro canto, mentre la popolarità di TikTok stava salendo alle stelle, alcuni critici hanno temuto che stesse portando a una cultura globalizzata, in cui gli utenti di tutto il mondo condividono contenuti e tendenze simili. Hanno temuto che questo potesse portare alla perdita della diversità culturale, dato che gli utenti stavano adottando comportamenti e pratiche simili.

Nonostante queste preoccupazioni, TikTok è rimasto un potente strumento per promuovere lo scambio interculturale, soprattutto tra la generazione Z. I giovani erano e sono tuttora interessati a conoscere culture e tradizioni diverse, e la piattaforma fornisce loro un facile accesso a contenuti provenienti da tutto il mondo. Questa tesi si propone di esplorare l'impatto di TikTok sullo scambio interculturale, approfondendo i suoi potenziali benefici e svantaggi. Esaminando il modo in cui TikTok rappresenta e condivide le diverse culture, possiamo capire meglio come la piattaforma modella la nostra comunità globale e cosa potrà significare per la diversità culturale in futuro.

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Introduction

TikTok is a social media platform that has rapidly gained immense popularity among Gen Z users. TikTok stands out from other social media platforms because of its unique ability to break down cultural barriers through its short-form video content. With just a few clicks, users can create videos showcasing their traditions, music, dance, food, and fashion, opening up a world of possibilities for cross-cultural exchange. This unique feature has turned TikTok into a melting pot of cultures, where users from different corners of the globe can share their experiences and connect with each other. It's like taking a trip around the world without leaving your home. From learning about traditional Japanese tea ceremonies to discovering the latest fashion trends in Brazil, the platform has created a sense of global community.

One of the key reasons why TikTok has become so popular is because of its user-friendly interface. Creating content on TikTok is extremely easy and accessible to all users. This has allowed users from all walks of life to showcase their culture and traditions on the platform. This ease of use has also made TikTok a platform for creative expression, allowing users to experiment with different styles and formats of video content.

Another reason why TikTok has become so popular is its algorithm. TikTok's algorithm is designed to show users content that they will enjoy based on their interests and past interactions on the app. This means that users are constantly exposed to new and exciting content from all over the world. This algorithm has helped to create a

community of users who are passionate about exploring and sharing different cultures.

Nevertheless, TikTok has taken the world by storm, with millions of users from every corner of the globe jumping on the bandwagon. While some applaud the platform for bringing people together and fostering a sense of community, others worry that its popularity is leading to the emergence of a monolithic, globalized culture. The concern is that with so many users sharing similar content and trends, cultural practices and traditions could become homogenized, losing their unique flavor and diversity. This is a valid fear, as we've already seen how quickly trends can spread and how easily they can be adopted by people from different backgrounds.

However, it's important to also acknowledge the positive aspects of TikTok's global reach. By exposing people to new ideas and perspectives from around the world, the platform has the potential to foster greater understanding and appreciation for different cultures. It's up to us as users to strike a balance between celebrating our individuality and embracing the diversity that makes us all unique.

Furthermore, TikTok is remaining a powerful platform for sharing cultures and promoting cross-cultural exchange. Its popularity among Gen Z users suggested that young people were interested in learning about different cultures and traditions. As such, TikTok had the potential to be a force for positive change, promoting intercultural understanding and appreciation.

TikTok has also been able to create a sense of community among its users. The platform allows users to collaborate with each other and create content together. This has helped to foster a sense of teamwork and camaraderie among users, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. In conclusion, TikTok has taken the world by storm because of its ability to break down cultural barriers through its short-form video content. Its user-friendly interface, algorithm, and sense of community have all contributed to its popularity. TikTok has opened up a world of possibilities for cross-cultural exchange, allowing users to explore and appreciate different cultures from all over the world.

Part I

The first part explores the concepts of culture, cross-culture, and globalized culture, and their evolution with the internet. Culture is defined as a set of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that shape individuals' identities and interactions with others. Cross-cultural studies explore the interactions, comparisons, and influences between different cultures, while globalized culture refers to the interconnectedness and similarity of different cultures around the world. The internet has had a significant impact on cross-cultural communication and interaction, enabling people to access and share cultural artifacts, such as music, films, and literature, from different parts of the world. Search engines, online video platforms, and social media have become popular channels for sharing and consuming cultural content, creating new opportunities for cultural production and expression, and promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding.

Part II

This part discusses TikTok, a social media platform that has become popular among younger generations. It covers the history of the platform, its rapid rise, and its user base, as well as an analysis of its algorithm and modularity. The algorithm is designed to personalize content for each user by analyzing their behavior, preferences, and interactions with the platform, and it has been successful in keeping users engaged and hooked on the app.

Part III

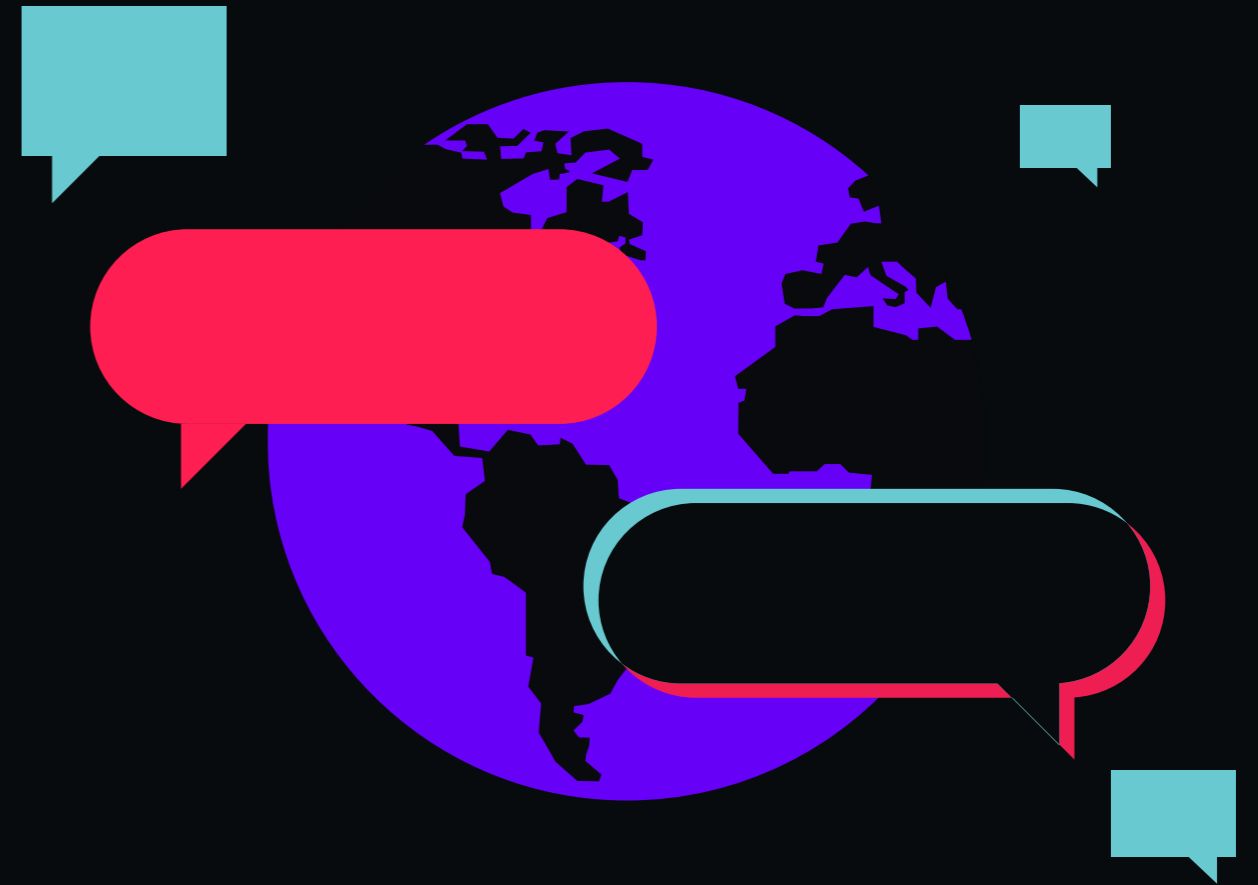
This part explores how TikTok is used as an educational platform, including its role as a search engine alternative, its use of microlearning, and its abundance of educational content. The document also discusses how TikTok provides a fun and engaging way for users to learn about a variety of subjects, including health, career advice, and more.

Part IV

This part discusses the impact of TikTok on cultural appropriation, the influence of TikTok on music, dance, and aesthetics, and the emergence of subcultures on the platform. It highlights the positive and negative aspects of TikTok's influence on culture, including the potential for cultural homogenization and the importance of preserving diversity. The document also emphasizes the significance of TikTok subcultures in creating a sense of belonging and identity for users who might not feel represented in mainstream culture.

Part I

What is **cross-culture** & how it evolved through the years:



This part examines culture, cross-culture, and globalized culture through the lens of the internet. Culture is the shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that shape personal identity and interactions. Cross-cultural studies explore connections, comparisons, and influences between cultures. Globalized culture refers to the interconnectedness and similarity of cultures around the world. The internet has had a significant impact on cross-cultural communication, as it allows people to access and share cultural artifacts, such as music, films, and literature, from different parts of the world. Online video platforms, search engines, and social media have become popular channels for sharing and consuming cultural content, creating new opportunities for cultural production and expression, and promoting cross-cultural understanding.

1- Theoretical framework

a- Definition of culture

1. Jenkins, R. . Social identity. International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, 2005

Culture is a broad and complex term that is defined and understood in various ways. According to Robbins (2005), culture can be defined as a set of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that characterize a group or society¹. Culture is also an ongoing process of meaning-making and interpretation that shapes individuals and communities' identity and worldview.

Furthermore, culture is not static but rather dynamic and constantly changing as a result of internal and external interactions and influences. Robbins¹ explains that culture operates at different levels, including the individual, group, and societal levels, and is expressed through various forms, such as language, art, music, and religion.

Understanding culture is crucial in social science research and practice as it provides insights into human behavior, social norms, and power dynamics. Culture also shapes individuals' experiences and interactions with others, institutions, and the larger society. Thus, it is important to recognize and respect cultural diversity and differences in order to promote social inclusion and equity.

We can also approach culture as an identity. In fact, cultural identity is a . Cultural identity is a multifaceted concept shaped by several elements, including language, religion, customs, and beliefs. According to Weaver and

Heartz², the environment in which individuals grow up has a significant impact on their cultural identity. For instance, people who grew up in a multicultural environment, where different cultures are celebrated, are likely to embrace diversity and feel comfortable interacting with people from different backgrounds.

Another important factor is language is another critical component of cultural identity. It is through language that individuals are able to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with others. Religion also plays a significant role in shaping cultural identity. It provides individuals with a set of beliefs, values, and practices that guide their behavior and worldview. Customs, such as food, music, and art, are also powerful tools for shaping cultural identity. They provide individuals with a sense of belonging and help them connect with their roots. In conclusion, cultural identity is a complex and dynamic construct that is shaped by various elements, including the environment, language, religion, and customs.

In a globalized world, understanding culture has become increasingly important. According to Hopper³ “the ability to understand and interact with people from different cultures is a key factor in the success of international business and diplomacy” (p. 3). Globalization has increased the interconnectedness of people and businesses around

2. H. N. Weaver & M. Y. H. B. Heartz International business: Competing in the global marketplace. McGraw-Hill,

3. P. Hopper, Understanding cultural globalization, Polity press, 2007



the world, making it necessary for individuals to be able to navigate different cultural norms and customs. Without an understanding of cultural differences, miscommunication and misunderstanding can occur, leading to failed business deals and damaged relationships. Additionally, cultural understanding can also lead to a greater appreciation and respect for diverse perspectives, ultimately promoting a more peaceful and tolerant global community. As Hopper (2007) notes, “Cultural competence is not only a matter of business success; it is also a moral and ethical imperative” (p. 3). In today's world, where diversity is celebrated and globalization is a reality, it is essential to recognize the importance of cultural understanding.

In conclusion, culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that characterize a group or society. It is a complex and multifaceted concept that shapes individuals' identities and their interactions with others. Culture can be transmitted through various means such as language, education, religion, and art. Understanding culture is crucial for effective communication and building relationships between individuals and groups from different backgrounds. By recognizing and respecting cultural differences, we can foster mutual understanding, appreciation, and tolerance, which are essential for a harmonious and diverse society.

b- Definition of cross-culture

Cross-cultural studies or as defined: The acknowledgment of different groups and cultures followed by a willingness to bridge them together⁴ refer to the exploration of the interactions, comparisons, and influences between different cultures.

These studies are connected to various fields, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, linguistics, and communication studies.

In a cross-cultural context, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds interact and communicate with each other, bringing their own perspectives, customs, and traditions to the table which led to a greater need for understanding and appreciating cultural differences.

This exchange of ideas and knowledge, helped increasing understanding, tolerance, and appreciation of diversity , it also have significant implications in today's globalized world,

For instance, the global marketplace has necessitated the need for effective communication and collaboration across different cultures as it generates the success of the business venture. cross-cultural studies provide a platform for exploring the similarities and differences between cultures, and how they impact interactions and

4. Harris, N. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. IGI Global, 2020

communication. With the increasing globalization of the world, understanding cultural differences is essential for effective communication, sharing, collaboration, and mutual respect.

The growth of social media and the internet has significantly changed the nature of cross-cultural interactions. In the past, cross-cultural interactions were defined by physical proximity, and goods. As a result of a data shifted world the cultures traveled through data as well the widespread availability of information and communication technologies has made it possible for people from different cultures to connect and engage with each other instantly from a worldwide perspective. Cultural practices, heritage, languages, behaviour, clothing, food, .were all traded through online platforms, in a very compact format shorter than 15.s.sometimes.

Furthermore, the rise of online communities and forums has provided a space for people from different cultural backgrounds to engage in cross-cultural discussions and exchanges. These online spaces have allowed people to connect with others who share similar interests and values, and have facilitated the sharing of diverse perspectives and cultural experiences. This has helped to break down cultural barriers and promote a greater sense of understanding and tolerance across cultural divides.

The most significant impact of social media and the internet on cross-culture was the ability to form and maintain

relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds. This fostered greater empathy and understanding of different cultures, and has promoted a sense of global community.

However, receiving and generating cultural information in a globalised world may add a non coherent layer to the subject.

Moreover individualism has given rise to a form of “fake cross-culture” that focuses on surface-level diversity and cultural appropriation, rather than genuine understanding and appreciation of different cultures. This approach ignores the complex historical and cultural contexts that shape different societies, and reduce cultural differences to more commodities.

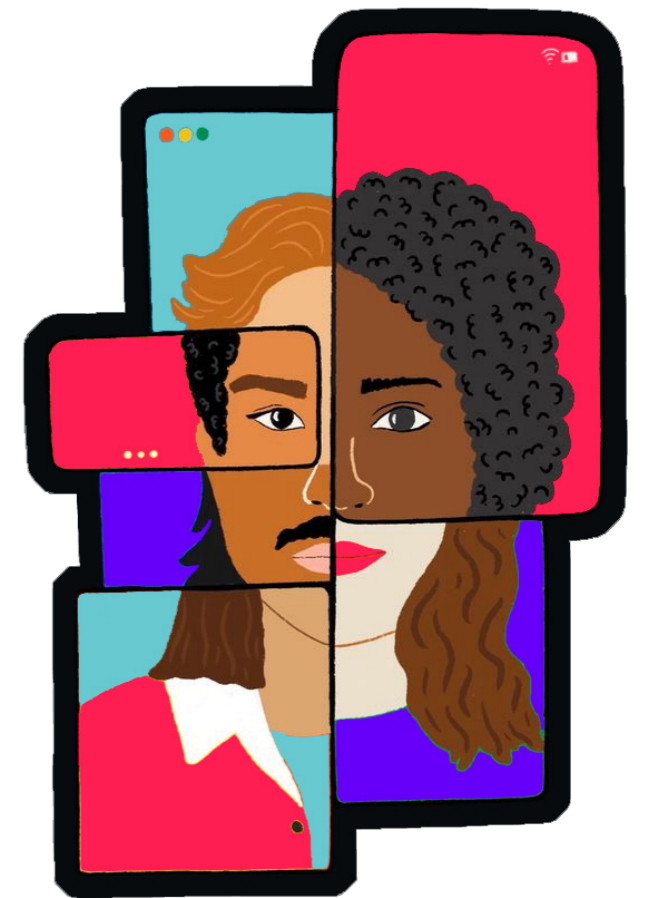


Illustration by Sol Cotti

c- Definition of globalized culture

5. CGlobalization. (n.d.). In Oxford Advanced American Dictionary., 2021

Globalisation\globus\global\globe, according to the Oxford dictionary, globalization is “the fact that different cultures and economic systems around the world are becoming connected and similar to each other because of the influence of large multinational companies and improved communication.”⁵

Globalization is a defining term in contemporary society, representing the oneness of the world and the consumption of similar goods and responses to the same impulses. It is a phenomenon linking economic, technical, and environmental changes, encompassing global communications, finance, health problems, markets, migration, and justice. However, the definition of this term depends on the power/status of its definer, particularly in terms of data power. Some accuse globalization of destroying traditional cultures through the increase of trade technology and data from multinational corporations of developed countries, leading to the exposure and influence of a powerful culture.

This mass consumption of one pole products and entertainments is causing the loss and disappearance of cultural identity. For example, the Instagram algorithm favors the United States location in terms of visibility, not just for global marketing but also for cultural impact. Despite these negative aspects, globalization also increases ethnic diversity and allows for a better understanding of

different cultures. It can bring people closer together, reduce the risk of wars, and promote democracy.

Opposers of globalization view it as a process of standardization and homogenization of the world by culture, economic, legal, and political convergence. This view leads to the loss of one's identity and culture, and the influence of globalization is responsible for miseducation and wrong cultural perceptions.

Social media has greatly influenced globalization by facilitating the spread of ideas, images, and cultural practices across borders. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok have enabled cross-cultural interactions, the sharing of

experiences and perspectives, and connections with like-minded individuals. However, this increased connectivity has also raised concerns about cultural appropriation and the commodification of cultural practices and identities.

As a result, while social media has played a role in shaping a more globalized culture, it has also highlighted the need for understanding and respect for diverse cultural practices and identities.

In conclusion, while globalization has both positive and negative impacts on culture, it is important to acknowledge and address its negative consequences to preserve cultural diversity and promote understanding between different cultures.



Illustration by Francesco Ciccolella

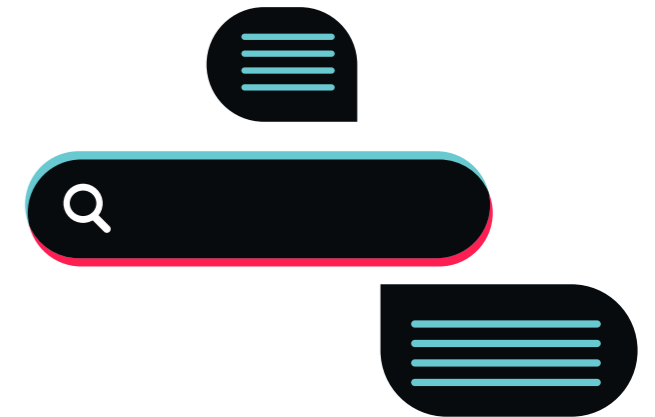
2- The Internet's Impact on Culture: Unveiling the Main Channels of Change

Even if now internet is our daily and inseparable companion, it was definitely a revolutionary invention that changed people's life 30 years ago. It's not an unknown fact that for our parents & grandparents at that time, talking about the world we live in now, would have looked like an imaginary science fiction movie. We can definitely say that our life is way easier nowadays. What we can do now in couple of clicks would have been hours of research in the library with limited number of resources comparing to what we have today.

In fact, internet also had a huge impact on cross-cultural communication and interaction since becoming publicly available in the 1990s. It has made it easier for people to access a vast amount of information and knowledge, helping the spread of culture across borders and boundaries.

One of the significant ways the internet has influenced this cross-cultural expansion is by allowing people to access and share cultural artifacts, such as music, films, and literature, from different parts of the world. This has enabled people to learn about different cultures through the consumption of cultural products, leading to the creation of new cultural experiences and perspectives.

α- Search engines, an easy access to education



In recent years, search engines have become an integral part of our daily lives, providing us with instant access to information on a global scale. The impact of search engines on education has been significant, transforming the way students learn and access information. With just a few clicks, students can now find answers to complex topics and access a vast array of resources that were once inaccessible. Additionally, they have played a crucial role in cross-cultural learning, breaking down barriers and promoting cultural exchange.

Search engines have revolutionized the way we access information and transformed education in many ways. In recent years, these research tools have become the primary tool for finding information, with Google being the most popular search engine globally. The rise of search engines has had a significant impact on education, particularly on how students and teachers access and use information. According to a study by Grewenig in 2022⁶, search engines have made it easier for students to access a wide range of information on various subjects. Furthermore,

6. Grewenig, E., Lorgetporer, P., Werner, K., Woessmann, L. The impact of search engines on education: Evidence from Germany's first national broadband program. *Journal of Public Economic*, 2022



7. K Goodrich., M De Mooij. "How 'social' are social media? A cross-cultural comparison of online and offline purchase decision influences. 2013

they have enabled students to find information that is not available in their textbooks, which has broadened their knowledge and understanding of various topics, but also providing educators with easy access to research and teaching materials, allowing them to prepare better for their classes. The study also highlights that search engines have enabled students to learn at their own pace and in their own time, reducing the pressure to complete tasks within a set timeframe.

However, the rise of search engines has also raised concerns about the credibility and accuracy of information found on the internet. Therefore, it is essential to teach students how to evaluate the reliability of sources, especially those found on the internet. In conclusion, the impact of search engines on education has been significant, and it is crucial to continue exploring the potential of this technology in education while addressing the challenges that come with it.

Another important factor is that search engines had a significant influence on **cross-cultural learning**, as they allow individuals to access information from various cultures with ease. According to Goodrich and De Mooij⁷, search engines provide a gateway to a vast range of information, including cultural practices, beliefs, and customs. This access to diverse cultural information can enhance cross-cultural learning by providing individuals with the opportunity to learn about different cultures, their values, and ways of life. However, it is important to note that search engines do not necessarily provide accurate information, and biases may exist within the search results.

Therefore, it is crucial to evaluate the credibility of the sources and information obtained through search engines. Additionally, language barriers can limit the effectiveness of search engines in cross-cultural learning, as not all content is available in every language. Despite these limitations, search engines remain a valuable tool for cross-cultural learning, as they provide access to a wide range of information that may not have been accessible otherwise.

The rapid advancement of technology has had a significant impact on the education sector, providing new opportunities for cross-cultural exchange. The traditional model of education, in which students attend physical classrooms, is being transformed by digital technologies that allow for more flexible, personalized learning experiences⁸. With the rise of online learning platforms and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), students from all over the world can access high-quality educa-

8. S Zarrabi-Zadeh. *Sufism East and West: mystical Islam and cross-cultural exchange in the modern world*. Brill, 2019

tional resources and interact with one another in virtual classrooms, breaking down barriers to cross-cultural exchange.

Additionally, digital tools such as video conferencing and online collaboration platforms enable students to work on projects with peers from different countries and cultural backgrounds, promoting intercultural communication and understanding⁸.

However, it is important to note that while technology has the potential to enhance cross-cultural exchange in education, it is not a cure-all solution. Effective cross-cultural exchange requires intentional effort and a willingness to engage in intercultural dialogue.

All in all, search engines have had a significant impact on education and cross-cultural communication. They have made it easier for students to access information from different parts of the world and have facilitated cross-cultural exchange. As search engines continue to evolve, they will continue to play an essential role in education and cross-cultural communication. With the right approach and a willingness to learn, search engines can be a valuable tool for students looking to expand their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

b- Online video platforms & the rise of content creators

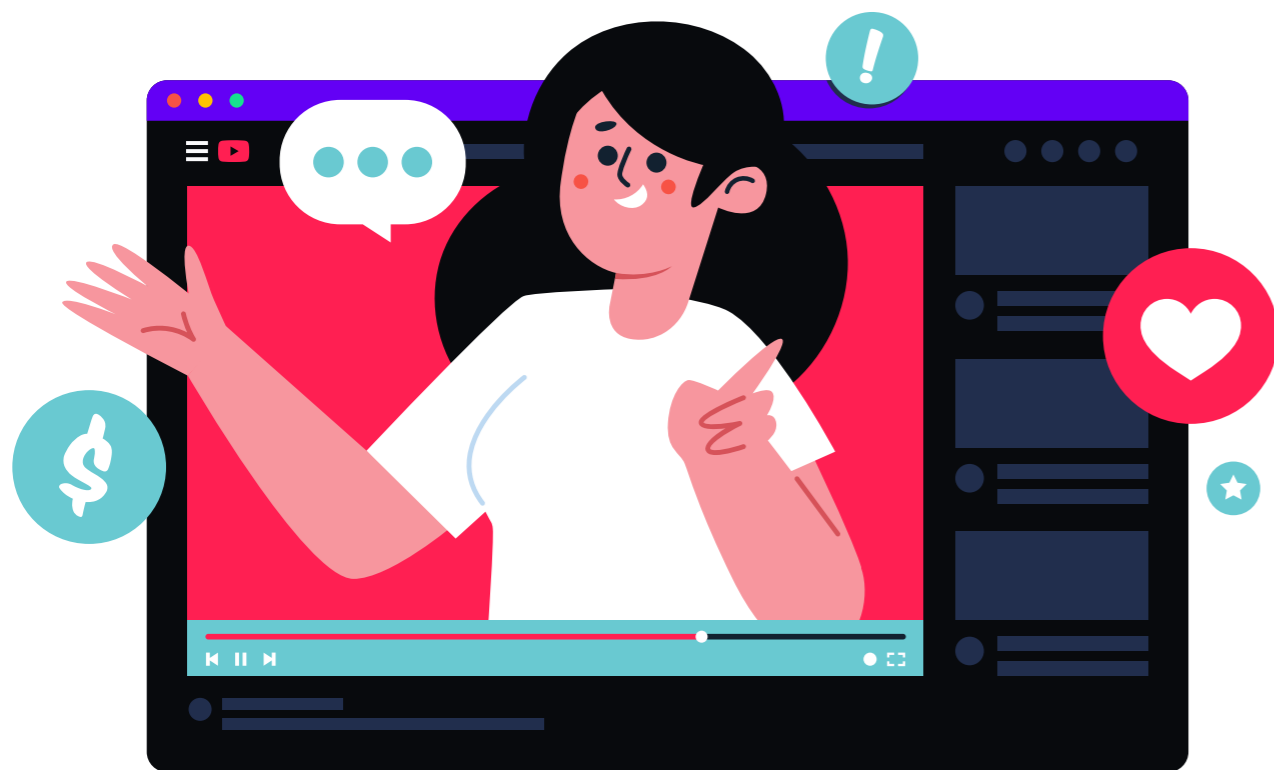
While on the other hand, people started to become creator and started distributing their own cultural content, such as blogs, podcasts, and videos, which can reach a global audience. Online video platforms, such as YouTube, Vimeo, and Dailymotion, have become popular channels for sharing and consuming cultural content, such as music videos, films, and TV shows. These platforms have not only allowed users to access cultural products from different parts of the world, but also created new forms of cultural production. User-generated content (UGC) and web series are two examples of this new cultural production.

UGC is content created by users rather than by professional content creators. It can be anything from vlogs, tutorials, and reviews to short films, music videos, and comedy sketches. UGC has become increasingly popular on online video platforms, as it allows users to share their creativity and express themselves culturally.

In addition, web series are episodic videos that tell a story or explore a theme. They can be created by professional producers or by UGC creators. Web series have become a popular form of cultural production on online video platforms because they allow creators to tell stories and explore themes that are not often seen on traditional TV or film.

Moreover, web series have given a platform to creators from different parts of the world, enabling them to reach a global audience and share their culture with others.

Overall, online video platforms have not only enabled users to access cultural content from different parts of the world, but also created new opportunities for cultural production and expression.



c- Social media & the expression of identity

Social media platforms have had a profound impact on the way people express themselves and connect with others from different parts of the world. These platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, have enabled users to share their experiences, ideas, and perspectives with a global audience, making it easier for them to express their cultural identity and connect with others who share similar interests and values.

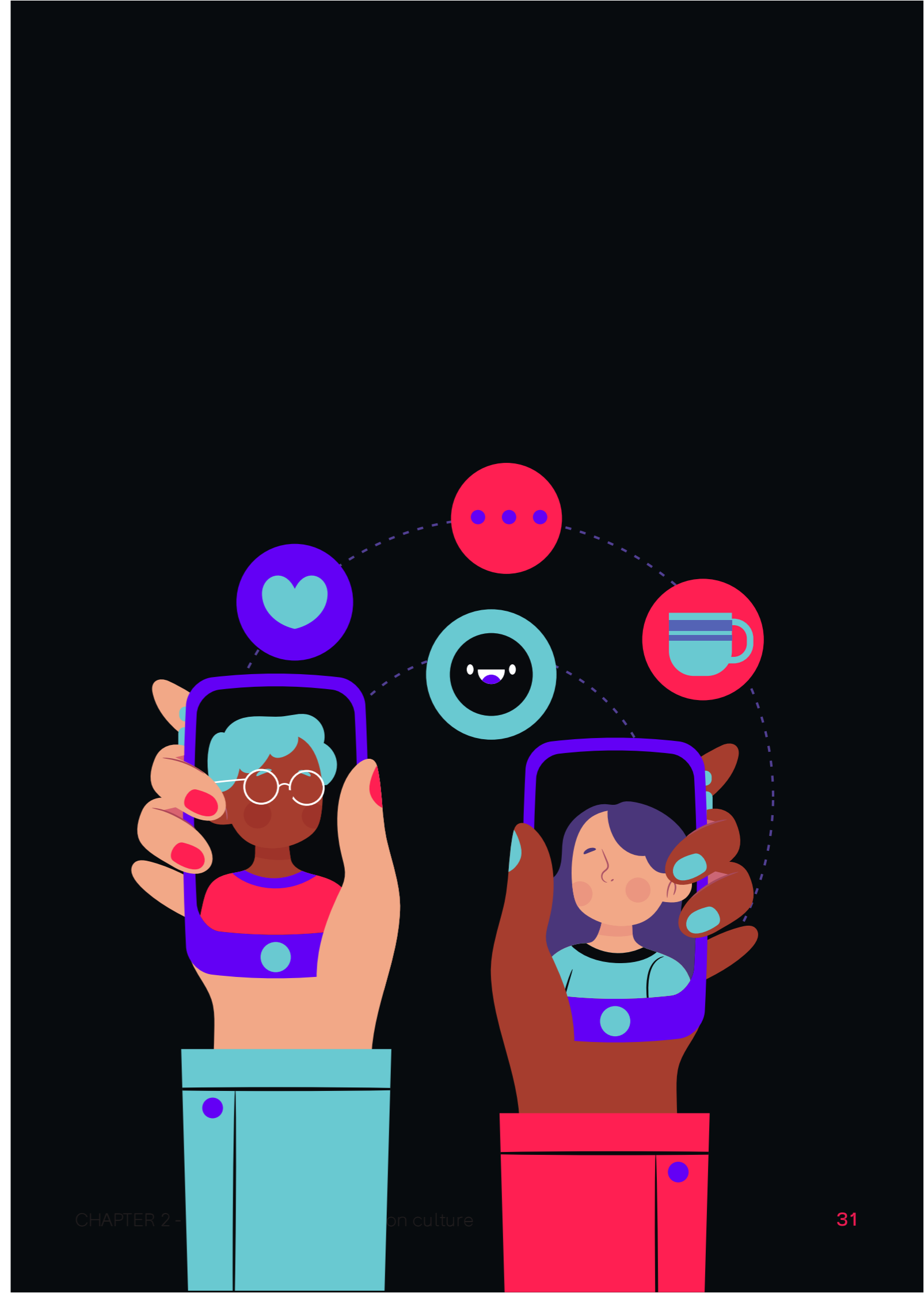
One of the most significant ways that social media platforms have enabled the expression of cultural identity is through the use of images and videos. Users can post pictures or videos of themselves wearing traditional dress or participating in cultural events, allowing them to showcase their cultural heritage and express their identity. They can also use social media to share their cultural experiences, such as food, music, and dance, with others, providing a window into their cultural world.

For example, Instagram has become a popular platform for cultural expression, with users creating themed accounts that showcase their cultural heritage. For instance, users can create accounts that focus on a particular cultural practice, such as cooking or dance, and share their experiences with others who are interested in learning more about that culture. They can also use Instagram to follow accounts that align with their interests and learn about different cultures through the content they share.

Similarly, TikTok has become a popular platform for cultural expression and exchange, particularly among younger generations. Users can create and share short videos that showcase their cultural heritage, including dances, music, and traditional dress. They can also use the platform to collaborate with others from different parts of the world, creating new opportunities for cross-cultural communication and understanding.

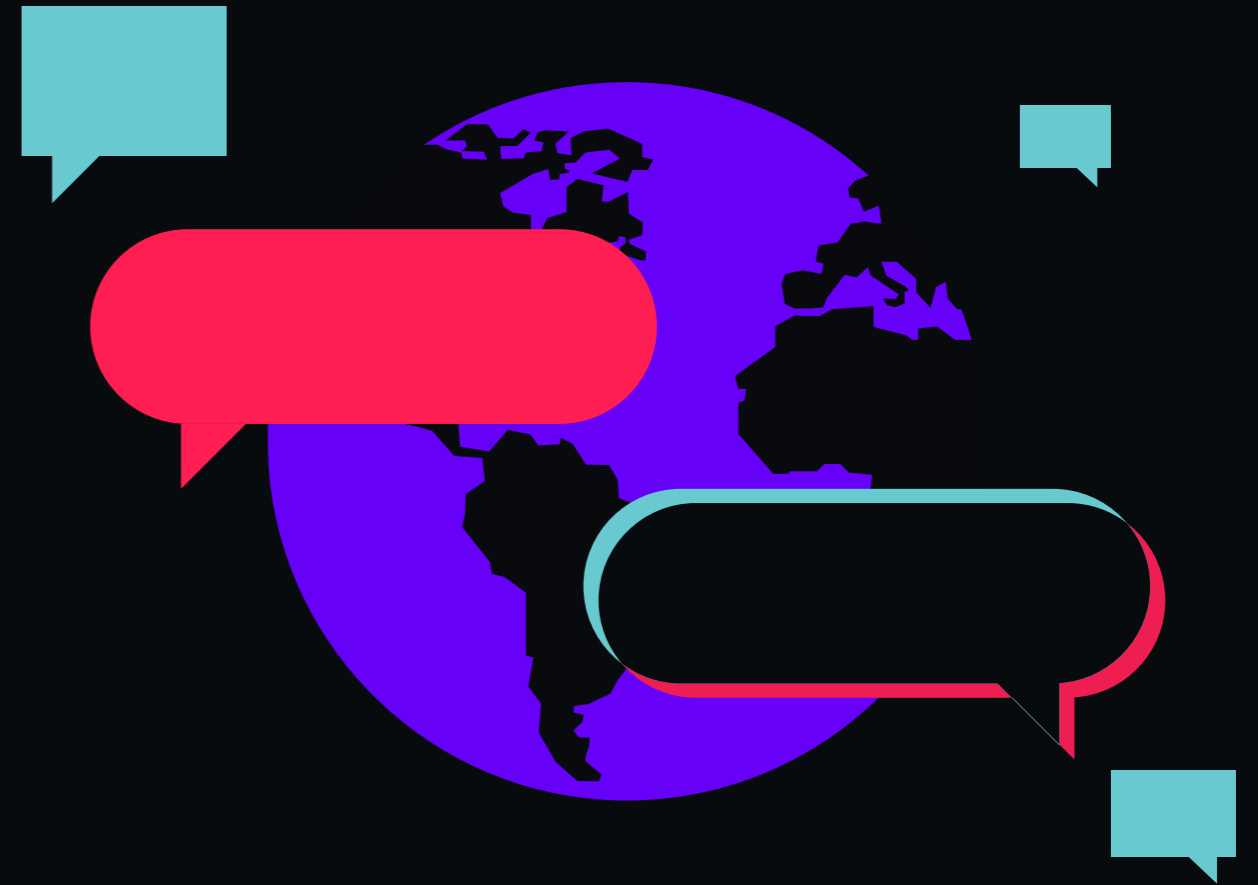
In addition to enabling the expression of cultural identity, social media platforms have also created new opportunities for cultural exchange and learning. Users can connect with others from different parts of the world and learn about their cultures through the content they share. They can also participate in online conversations and debates, allowing them to gain insights into different cultural perspectives and experiences.

Overall, social media platforms have empowered users to express their cultural identity and connect with others from different parts of the world, creating new opportunities for cross-cultural communication and understanding. By enabling the sharing of cultural experiences, social media has helped to break down cultural barriers and promote greater appreciation and understanding of different cultures.



Part II

TikTok, the successful social-media



In this part, we will discuss TikTok, the social media platform that has become popular among younger generations. It covers the history of the platform, its rapid rise, and its user base, as well as an analysis of its algorithm and modularity. The algorithm is designed to personalize content for each user by analyzing their behavior, preferences, and interactions with the platform, and it has been successful in keeping users engaged and hooked on the app.

1- Presentation of tiktok, the new social media platform for GenZ

a- ByteDance and the birth of tiktok

9. Lulu Yilun Chen, Coco Liu, and Zheping Huang. ByteDance valued at US\$250 billion in private trades, Bloomberg, 2020.

10. Zhao Zhang. Toutiao app provides users with tailor-made news. China Daily, 2015

11. Toutiao change its name to bytedance.Sohu, 2018

In March 2012, Yiming Zhang founded ByteDance, over the past decade, it has become the most valuable tech startup globally, valued at over US\$250 billion as of March 2021⁹. ByteDance's mission is to inspire creativity and enrich lives, and it has launched digital content products in more than 150 markets, including Xigua video, Helo, Lark, Faceu, and Ulike Cam.

Toutiao was the first and core product of ByteDance, founded in August 2012 as a content discovery platform focused on news recommendations in the Chinese market. Toutiao's unique algorithm uses AI technology to optimize recommendations, offering personalized and complex content experiences. It has since evolved into a platform with various kinds of information, including microblogs and videos, amassing 350 million active users as of December 2015¹⁰.

ByteDance's success led to Toutiao being known as the brand in the early years. However, as the business system grew larger, Toutiao no longer represented the overall brand. Therefore, ByteDance replaced Toutiao as the overall brand name in April 2018¹¹.

ByteDance's corporate strategy led to the launch of TikTok, known as Douyin in China, in May 2017¹². Yiming Zhang emphasized the importance of globalization, and products with global allocation of resources and pursuing scale effects can be competitive. Douyin initially focused on the Asian market, but it was unable to conquer Musical.ly, which had gained absolute market share in a short period of time. Musical.ly was launched in July 2014 and became popular among teenagers around 14 years old in the US and Europe. In December 2016, it announced that it reached 40 million daily active users and claimed over 200 million¹³ registered users in May 2017.

However, it could not copy its success in China, where Douyin and Kuaishou had already occupied a large market share. On June 6, 2017, Musical.ly returned to the Chinese market under the name of Muse.

12. Shuang Qin. ByteDance reveals its globalization strategy for the first time: technology goes overseas, localized operation. Ce.cn, 2018

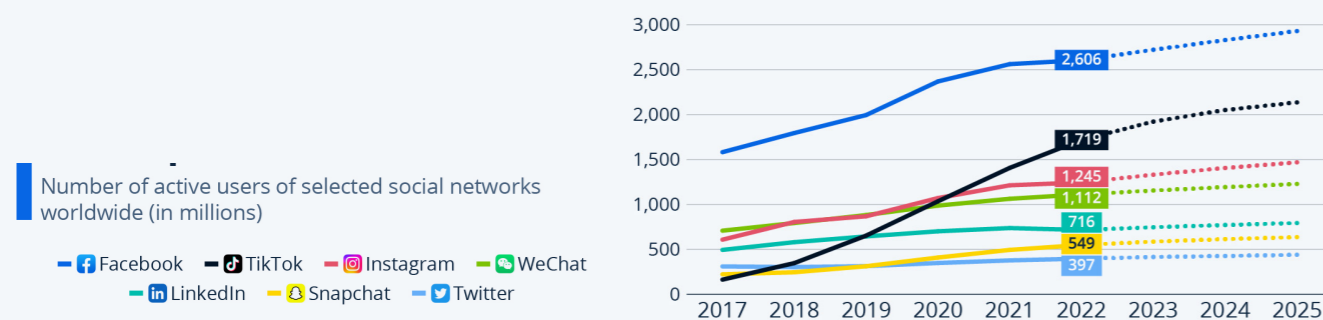
13. Andy Plesser. First video sharing site paved the way for youtube .shareyourworld.com was there first to launch ten years back, Beet, 2007



b- The Development & the rapid rise of tiktok

TikTok faced tough competition and an unfamiliar foreign culture while expanding its market, but it quickly became the fastest-growing app. To grow in the US market, TikTok acquired competitors like Musical.ly, which paved the way for the app to open up overseas markets. TikTok also localized its operations by introducing simple and humorous content like the “seaweed dance” challenge, exploring local cultural characteristics, and collaborating with local celebrities. The app also leveraged other platforms by investing heavily in advertising on platforms like Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook, and working with bloggers and influencers to increase exposure and enrich content.

TikTok has experienced an exceptional rate of growth, attracting an average of 340 million new active users annually between 2018 and 2022¹⁴. The platform surpassed Instagram in user count in 2021 after reaching one billion users during the Covid-19 pandemic. While growth is expected to slow, TikTok's user base is projected to reach two billion by 2024. Although Facebook's growth has slowed in recent years, it is still the largest social network with over 2.6 billion active accounts in 2022, and is projected to grow to almost 3 billion by 2025¹⁵.



Graph 1 - The Rapid Rise of tiktok

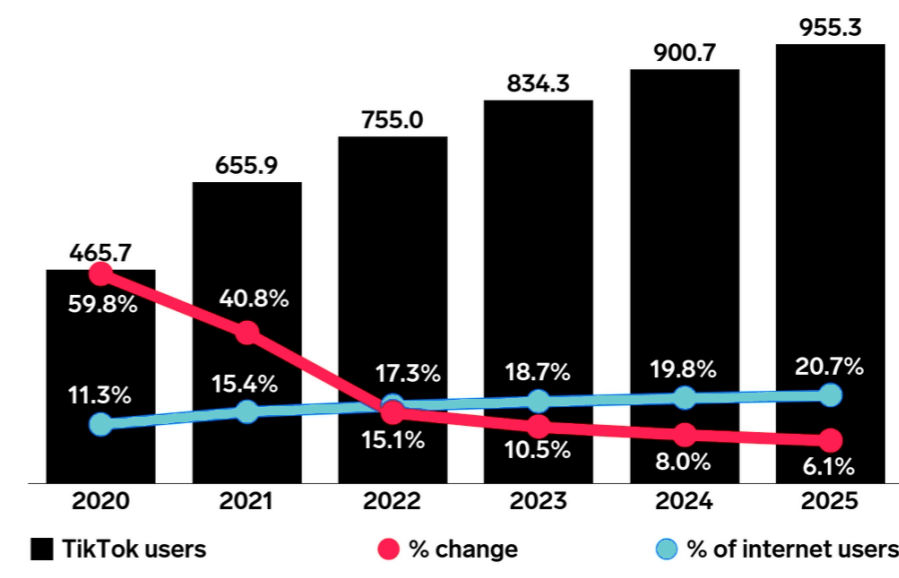
b- Tiktok users

TikTok's user base is diverse, but it's especially popular among younger generations. A 2021 report by Hootsuite found that 62% of TikTok's users are between 10 and 29 years old, with the largest age group being 18 to 24-year-olds. The app has an almost even split of gender, with 60% of users being female and 40% male. TikTok is unique because it's not just a social media app but also a powerful search engine and recommendation system for Gen Z. The algorithm analyzes users' behavior, such as the videos they watch, like, and share, to recommend personalized and relevant content. TikTok's recommendation system is crucial to its virality, as a highly engaged video can be recommended to a wider audience, potentially leading to exponential growth in views and followers.

14. Alex Sherman. Tiktok reveals detailed user numbers for the first time, Cnbc, 2020.

15. Katharina Buchholz, The Rapid Rise of TikTok, Statista advertising & media outlook, 2022

Tiktok users worldwide, 2020-2025

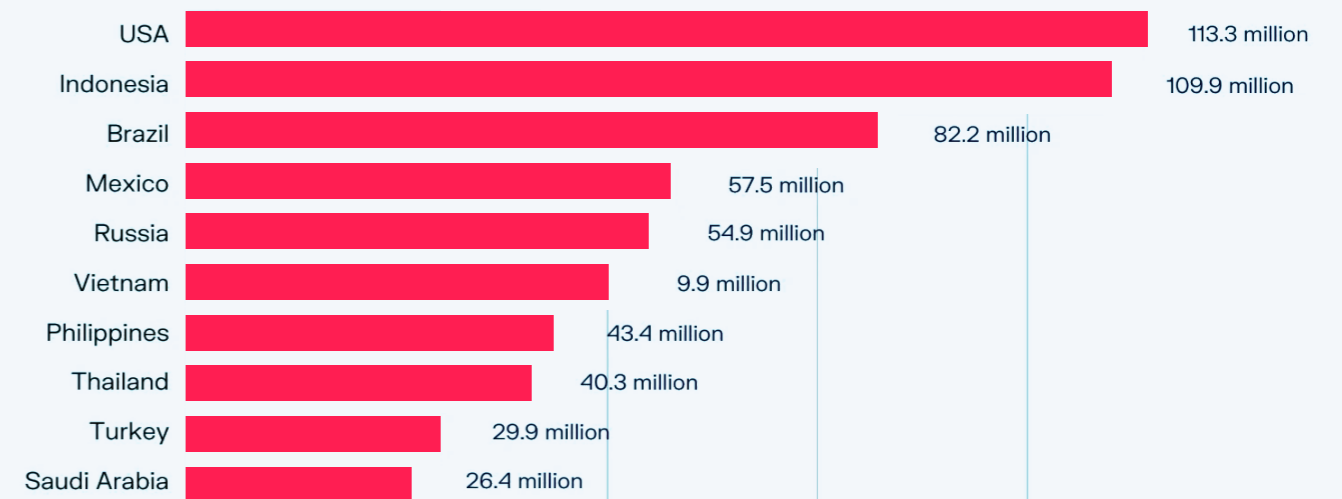


Graph 2 - TikTok users worldwide (2020-2025), EMarketer, November 2021

As of 2019, TikTok is available in 155 countries and 75 languages, covering a large part of the population. What's even more interesting is how TikTok managed to gather such a huge audience in such a short span of time while growing into new markets. According to the latest data on TikTok's advertising reach, the United States is home to the majority of TikTok users worldwide, with 113.3 million TikTokers residing there. TikTok's popularity in the US skyrocketed following its merger with Musical.ly in 2018. Prior to the merger, there were fewer than 10 million monthly active users on the platform. In the months following the merger, the number of TikTok users grew exponentially, surpassing Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube in the number of downloads. Incidentally, four of the five most-followed people on TikTok are also located in the US.

The country with the second-highest number of TikTok users is Indonesia, with 109.9 million users. Despite a temporary ban in 2018 by the government, the social media app is extremely popular among Indonesians. Brazil ranks third on the list, with over 82 million TikTokers located there. It is also one of TikTok's fastest-growing markets, as the app invests heavily in marketing campaigns there. Mexico follows with around 57.5 million TikTok users. Russia rounds out the top five countries where TikTok users are located, with 54.9 million users. TikTok is the fifth-most-popular social media app in Russia, behind VK, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Odnoklassniki¹⁶.

Number of TikTok users by country



Graph 3 - TikTok users by country

TikTok has successfully engaged with younger generations, with 62% of its users in the US aged between 10 and 29 according to Statista in 2020. In contrast, only 7.1% of users are over the age of 50. While TikTok may be confusing to older generations, its popularity among the younger demographic is undeniable. The app's ability to create and promote engaging content that resonates with younger audiences has contributed to its success as a social media platform. As TikTok continues to grow and evolve, it will be interesting to see how it maintains its appeal to younger generations while also attracting a wider range of age groups.

2- Analysing the platform

a- Tiktok's system & modularity

17.The Software Guild. (n.d.). How Does Tik Tok Work? The Software Guild, 2021

According to Arthur (2009), technologies are built from a hierarchy of main and supporting assemblies or sub-systems. Similarly, the functions of TikTok are composed of several small modules. For instance, the video shooting function comprises a video module and an audio module. Once users input videos and choose music, TikTok decodes and combines them to output the complete video on the platform. The video editing technology is further broken down into various modules such as face recognition, real-time capture, and beauty algorithm. These modules work together to provide filters and effects used on the video. By breaking down the technology into smaller, manageable components, TikTok is able to provide a seamless user experience with diverse and engaging features¹⁷.

TikTok's video recommendation technology is also a result of modularity. The algorithm that decides what video to show you next is composed of different modules, such as the content of videos you've liked, the number of comments on a video, and the number of times it has been shared. As Bateson (2000) noted, what can be studied is always a relationship or an infinite regress of relationships, never a static "thing." Similarly, TikTok is not an isolated product, but rather the result of various interdependent subsystems of modules working together. This modularity allows for greater flexibility and adaptability, enabling TikTok to continuously improve and evolve its video recommendation system based on user behavior and feedback.



Graph 4 - Structure of TikTok App

b- Tiktok's successful algorithm

18.TM Mitchell. Machine learning and data mining. Communisation of the ACM, 1999

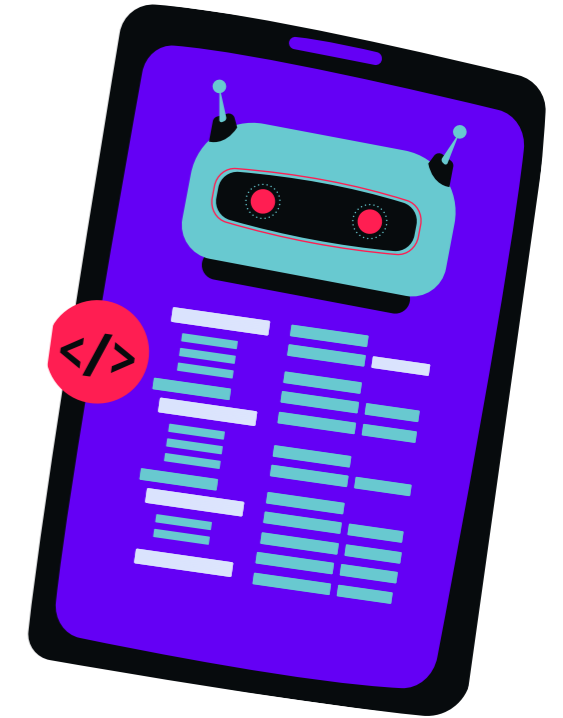
19.Ting-Peng Liang, Hung-Jen Lai & Yi-Cheng Ku, Personalized content recommendation and user satisfaction: Theoretical synthesis and empirical findings. Journal of Management Information Systems 2006

TikTok has become one of the most popular social media platforms in recent years, with millions of users worldwide. One of the key reasons for its success is its algorithm, which has been specifically designed to cater to individual user preferences. There are several factors that make TikTok's algorithm successful, including machine learning and data analysis, personalized content recommendations, and user engagement and retention. In this section, we will explore each of these supporting points in more detail to understand how TikTok's algorithm has revolutionized the world of social media.

A very important factor we need to understand is that machine learning and data analysis are two closely related fields in computer science that have gained significant attention in recent years. **Machine learning is a subset of artificial intelligence that focuses on the development of algorithms** that can learn from data to make predictions or decisions without being explicitly programmed. Data analysis, on the other hand, involves the process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of discovering useful information and insights. According to a 1999 article by TM Mitchell in the Communications of the ACM¹⁸, machine learning and data analysis are complementary fields that can be used together to extract valuable knowledge from data. Mitchell argues that machine learning algorithms can be used to identify patterns and relationships in large datasets, while data analysis techniques can be used to interpret and visualize the results.

Additionally, Mitchell notes that machine learning can be used to automate many aspects of data analysis, such as feature selection and model tuning. Overall, the combination of machine learning and data analysis has the potential to revolutionize the way we extract insights from data and make decisions based on those insights.

In recent years, **personalized content recommendations have become increasingly popular in various online platforms, such as e-commerce websites, news portals, and social media networks. Personalized content recommendations are designed to provide users with more relevant and personalized content based on their preferences, interests, and behaviors.** The use of personalized content recommendations has been shown to increase user engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty¹⁹. However, the effectiveness of personalized content recommendations depends on the accuracy and relevance of the recommended items. Liang¹⁹ argued that **personalized content recommendations should take into account both explicit and implicit user feedback to improve the accuracy and relevance of the recommendations.** Explicit feedback refers to the feedback that users provide explicitly, such as ratings, reviews, and comments. Implicit feedback, on the other



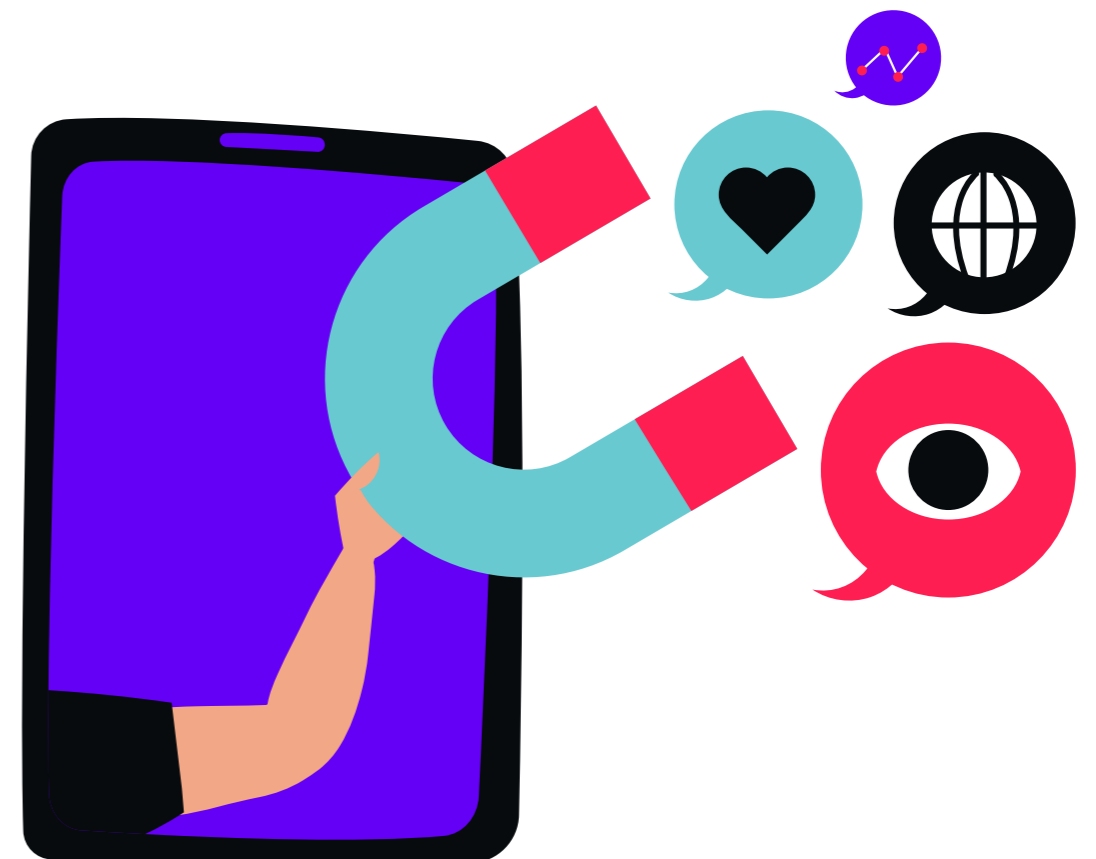
20. Z Gu., R Bapna., J Chan., A Gupta. Measuring the impact of crowdsourcing features on mobile app user engagement and retention: A randomized field experiment. Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences, 2021

hand, refers to the feedback that can be inferred from users' behaviors, such as clicks, views, and purchases. By combining both explicit and implicit feedback, personalized content recommendations can provide **more accurate and relevant recommendations that better serve the users' needs and preferences**. Therefore, online platforms should consider using both explicit and implicit feedback to improve the effectiveness of personalized content recommendations.

In today's digital era, user engagement and retention are critical factors in the success of a business. According to Gu²⁰, user engagement refers to the extent to which users interact with a product or service, while retention refers to the ability of a business to retain its existing customers. Engaged users tend to be more loyal and likely to continue using a product or service, leading to increased retention rates. Gu argue that user engagement and retention are closely related to each other, as high engagement levels can lead to increased retention rates. To achieve **high levels of user engagement and retention**, businesses must focus on providing a seamless and personalized user experience. This can be **achieved through various strategies, such as implementing gamification techniques**, offering personalized recommendations, and providing exceptional customer service.

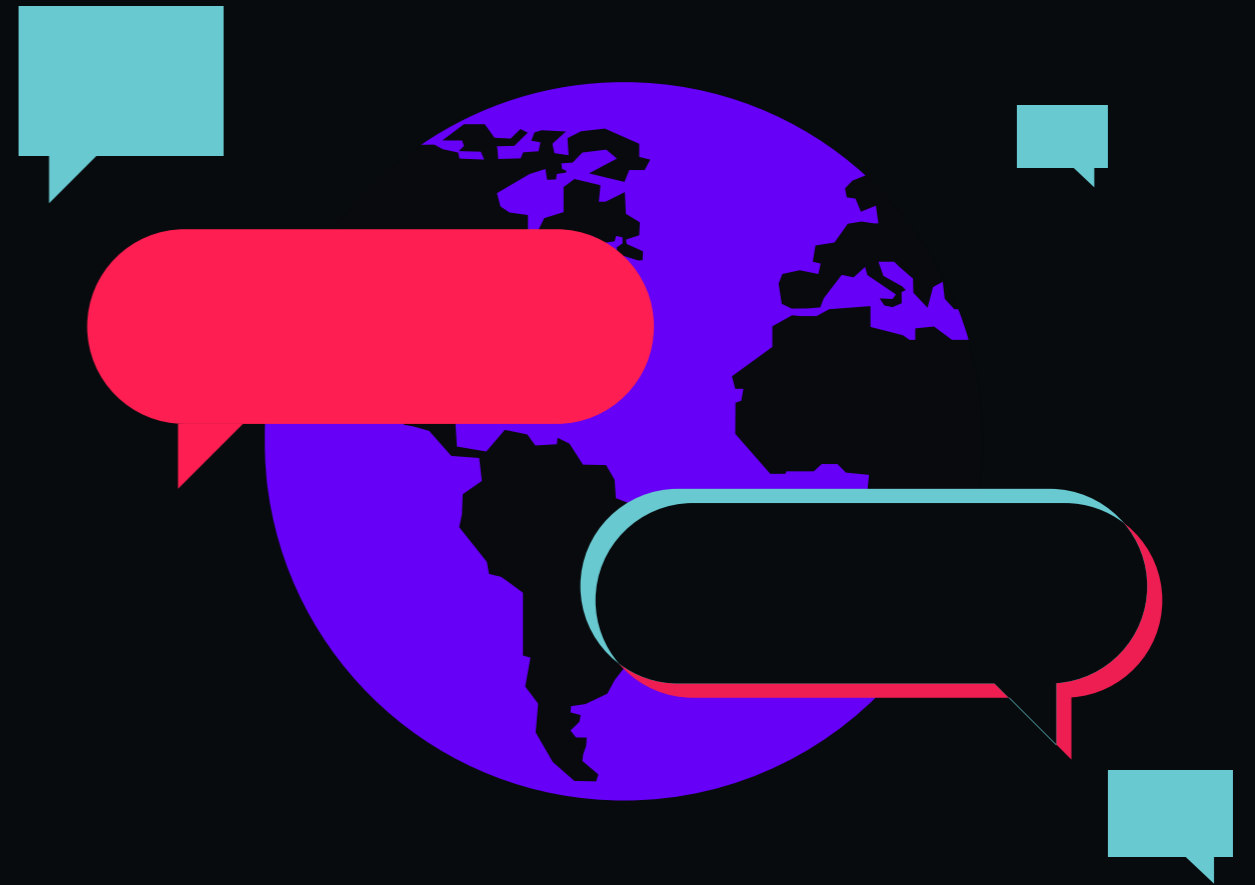
Additionally, regular communication with users through email marketing or in-app messaging can also help to maintain engagement and retention levels. In conclusion, user engagement and retention are essential factors for businesses to succeed in the digital age. By implementing effective strategies to increase engagement levels and retain existing customers, businesses can ensure long-term success and growth.

To sum up, **TikTok's algorithm's success lies in its ability to personalize content for each user by analyzing their behavior, preferences, and interactions with the platform**. This algorithmic approach **enables TikTok to provide its users with a tailored and engaging experience that keeps them hooked on the app**. The use of machine learning and artificial intelligence allows the app to adapt to the ever-changing preferences and trends of its users, ensuring that it remains relevant and exciting. As TikTok continues to grow in popularity, its algorithm will undoubtedly continue to evolve, providing its users with an even more personalized and enjoyable experience.



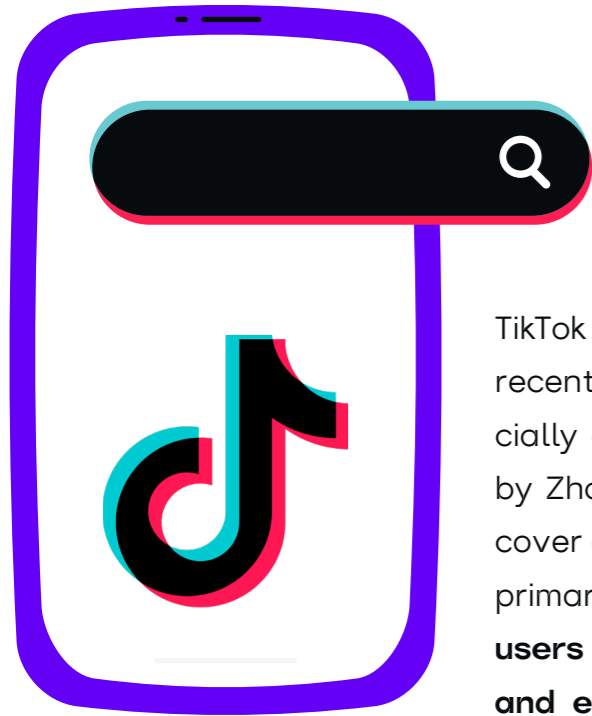
Part III

Tiktok, used as an educational platform



This part explores how TikTok is used as an educational platform, including its role as a search engine alternative, its use of microlearning, and its abundance of educational content. The document also discusses how TikTok provides a fun and engaging way for users to learn about a variety of subjects, including health, career advice, and more.

1- Tiktok, the new search engine



TikTok is not only a popular social media platform but has recently emerged as a search engine alternative, especially among younger generations. According to a study by Zhang²¹, TikTok's search function allows users to discover and explore a wide range of topics beyond the app's primary purpose of short-form video sharing. As a result, **users are turning to TikTok as a source of information and entertainment.** Additionally, Zhang notes that TikTok's algorithm is designed to promote content that is engaging and relevant, which means that users are more likely to encounter information that is tailored to their interests. This feature of TikTok's algorithm has proven to be particularly effective in capturing and retaining the attention of younger audiences who are accustomed to receiving personalized content. **Furthermore, TikTok's popularity as a search engine alternative can be attributed to its visual and interactive nature.** Unlike traditional search engines that rely on text-based search results, **TikTok presents information in a visually appealing and engaging format that is highly shareable.** The rise of TikTok as a search engine alternative is a testament to the platform's unique features and ability to capture and retain the attention of younger audiences.

Generation Z, has been known for their preference for short-form video content. According to a study conducted by CJ Araujo et al.²², Gen Z has a shorter attention span compared to previous generations. This may be due to the constant exposure to various forms of media and the fast-paced nature of the digital world. As a result, short-form videos that are less than 10 minutes in length have become increasingly popular among Gen Z audiences. These videos are usually found on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, where they are easily shareable and can quickly go viral. In addition, short-form videos allow for easy consumption and are more engaging due to their visual and interactive nature. As stated by Araujo, "short-form video content allows for quick engagement and can effectively convey information in a concise and entertaining manner" . This preference for short-form video content has also influenced the marketing strategies of businesses, as they have started to incorporate short-form videos in their social media marketing campaigns to effectively reach Gen Z audiences. Overall, the popularity of short-form videos among Gen Z is undeniable, and it is important for marketers and content creators to recognize and adapt to this trend in order to effectively engage with this demographic.

Furthermore, TikTok's sophisticated algorithm deliver personalized search results to its users. According to Simpson and Semaan²³, the algorithm uses a combination of

21. Zhang, "Infrastructuralization of Tik Tok: Transformation, power relationships, and platformization of video entertainment in China." *Media, Culture & Society*, 43(2), 219-236. 2021

22. CJ Araujo, Influence of tiktok video advertisements on generation z's behavior and purchase intention. *International Journal of Social and Management Studies*, 2022

23. E Simpson., B Semaan. For You, or For" You"? Everyday LGBTQ+ Encounters with TikTok. *Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact*, 2020

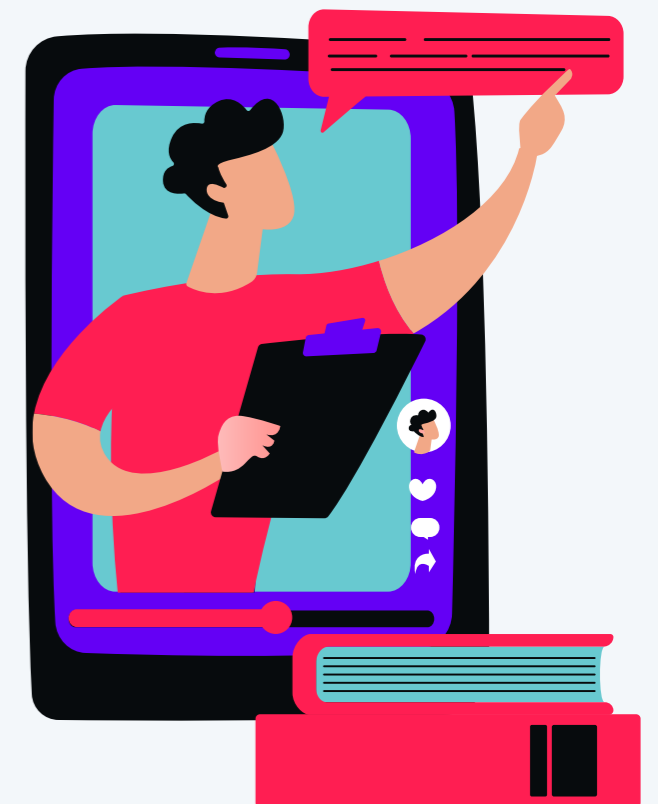
user interactions, such as likes, comments, and shares, as well as machine learning techniques to analyze user behavior and preferences. The algorithm then generates a personalized “For You” page that showcases videos that the user is likely to find interesting and engaging based on their past interactions. The algorithm also uses data such as location, language, and device type to further refine its recommendations. The personalized search results are continuously updated based on the user’s interactions with the app, ensuring that the content remains relevant and engaging over time. The effectiveness of TikTok’s algorithm is evident in the platform’s widespread popularity, with over a billion active users worldwide. However, the algorithm has also raised concerns about privacy and data security, as it collects a significant amount of user data to deliver personalized content. Despite these concerns, TikTok’s algorithm remains a powerful tool for delivering engaging and personalized content to its users.

In conclusion, **TikTok has become the new search engine for Generation Z due to its unique algorithm and user-generated content. In fact, TikTok differentiates itself from Instagram with its search feature.** With its personalized “For You” page and the ability to discover new content easily, TikTok has become a popular source for entertainment, information, and inspiration. TikTok’s success has not gone unnoticed by businesses and organizations, who have recognized the platform’s potential for marketing and advertising. As TikTok continues to grow and evolve, it will undoubtedly play an even bigger role in shaping the way Generation Z interacts with and consumes information on the internet.

2- Promoting a successful Learning format: Microlearning

Microlearning has become a popular teaching method that has gained traction in recent years. It refers to the process of breaking down lessons into small, easily digestible pieces of information, which are referred to as learning bites²⁴. This method is designed to address the challenge of **short attention spans** in today’s learners, who struggle to pay attention to lengthy lessons. Even if the content is interesting, due to a short attention span, learners will have trouble focusing if the lessons are more than a few hours long, which is only about **8 seconds for Gen Z**. In fact, TikTok’s short video format of 15-60 seconds is perfect for microlearning.

24. e-Learning Partners. What is Microlearning? e-Learning Partners, 2021



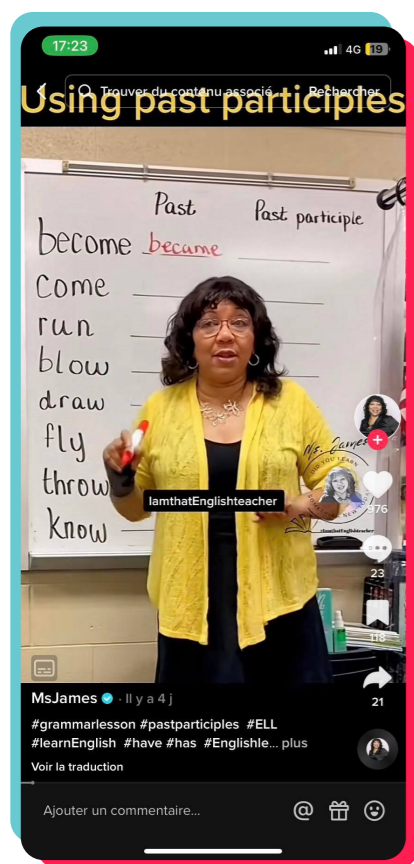


Figure 1: Screenshot of a tiktok video from @MsJames

Professors and educators have started using this format to keep their students engaged²⁵, and according to studies, **microlearning is 17% more engaging than traditional longer duration courses. As we can see in the figure 1, @MsJames, an english professor teaching english on tiktok.**

TikTok, in particular, has become a popular platform for continuing education, especially for Gen Z. The platform has embraced education and launched the **#LearnOnTikTok** initiative, which has over 450 billion views. The initiative brought together 800 famous names²⁶, media publishers, educational institutions, experts, and professionals to create educational material to be shared on TikTok. In parallel, the platform created a .50 million 'Creative Learning Fund' for educational content.

According to a recent study, just **over half of Gen Z feels that their education adequately prepared them for future success**²⁷. They express a desire to expand their knowledge about the world beyond traditional education methods. Additionally, **75%..of students hope to maintain some level of virtual learning after the pandemic, with TikTok serving as a popular platform for continuing their education. Increasing**

student engagement is always the goal, and in this, TikTok is a valuable tool. Teachers are able to access resources in class using the hashtag **#TeachersOfTikTok**. There are many TikTok lesson plans and instructional videos for teachers on the platform.

The fact that TikTok is getting serious about education marks the app as different from other social networks.

This direction notably contrasts with Meta.s aggressive social commerce direction for Instagram, which has gone so far as to put an entire shopping tab in-app. **A recent research looking at TikTok users in the US found that 1 in 4 use the platform for educational purposes**²⁸. Of those who use TikTok for educational purposes, 69% said that the content helped them complete their homework²⁸. When asked why they use TikTok for educational purposes, 60% of respondents said that the app is easy to access, 57% that it is easy to understand, 51% that there is a lot of content, and 47% that it is free²⁸.

To sum up, microlearning is an effective teaching method that addresses the challenges of short attention spans in today's learners. Its ability to keep learners engaged, improve retention, and make learning more accessible has made it a popular choice for educators and learners alike. With the rise of TikTok, microlearning has become more accessible than ever, offering learners an easy and engaging way to expand their knowledge and skills.

25. Oxford Learning. Is TikTok the Future of Learning? Oxford Learning, 2021

26. DynDevice. TikTok can be useful for training. DynDevice, 2021

27. Jem Leslie, TikTok and Education: How Teachers Can Use TikTok in the Classroom, Fanbytes, 2021

28. Study.com. (n.d.). Teaching with TikTok. Study.com.



3- Educating users about everything

29. Gordon, D. 33% Of Gen Z'ers Trust TikTok More Than Doctors, New Survey Shows. Forbes, 2022

30. TikTok Newsroom. (n.d.). TikTok Creator Fund: Your Questions Answered. Tiktok, 2023

TikTok has become a wildly popular platform for educational content creators due to its user-friendly interface and the abundance of quality content it provides. With hashtags like **#DidYouKnow**, **#LearnWithMe**, **#Science101**, and **#CareerAdvice**, users have easy access to a variety of academic subjects, life skills, cooking, and more. This has made TikTok an ideal tool for those seeking to broaden their horizons and learn something new.

But TikTok isn't just about education; the platform is also a valuable resource for health information²⁹. Medical professionals, including doctors, scientists, mental health professionals, dermatologists, and plastic surgeons, share their knowledge on the platform, fighting against the spread of misinformation. In fact, one in five Americans consult TikTok for health information, with many trusting health influencers more than medical professionals in their community.

One such medical professional is Dr. Aamna Adel, a registered dermatologist in London. Dr. Adel uses TikTok to educate people about proper skincare methods with her humorous series called "Dermatologist POV". She aims to correct common misconceptions about skincare and de-

bunk several skincare myths, such as the belief that using more skincare products is always better.

But TikTok isn't limited to just health and wellness. The platform also provides a wealth of career advice from professionals. Successful Etsy sellers, for example, create series on how to create a side hustle that will help you quit your job while creating a better income. Not only does this provide valuable insight into the world of entrepreneurship, but it also offers a glimpse into the lives of people who have achieved their career goals.

Furthermore, with its creators fund³⁰, TikTok encourages creators to share their content on the platform while also allowing them to have a passive income. This makes it easier for content creators to focus on creating high-quality content and keeping their audience engaged, without having to worry about financial stability.

Overall, TikTok provides users with a fun and engaging way to learn about a variety of subjects and improve their lives. Whether you are looking to improve your knowledge in a particular field, find expert health advice, or even start a new career, TikTok is the perfect platform for you!

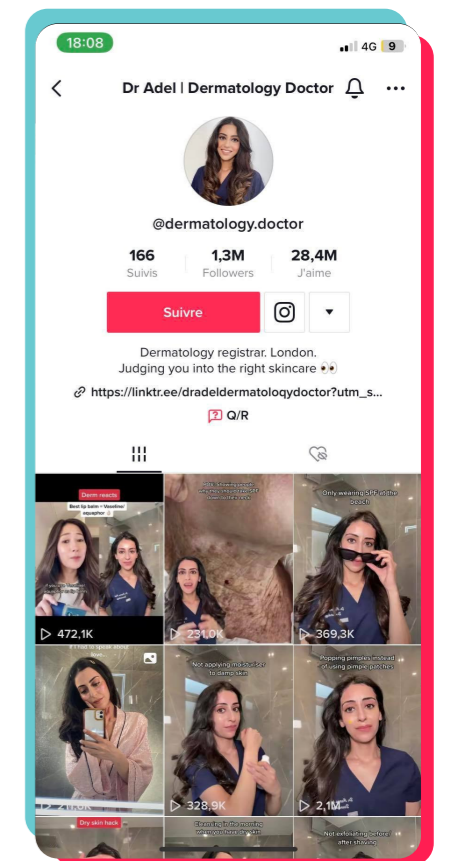


Figure2: Screenshot of Dr Adel tiktok account

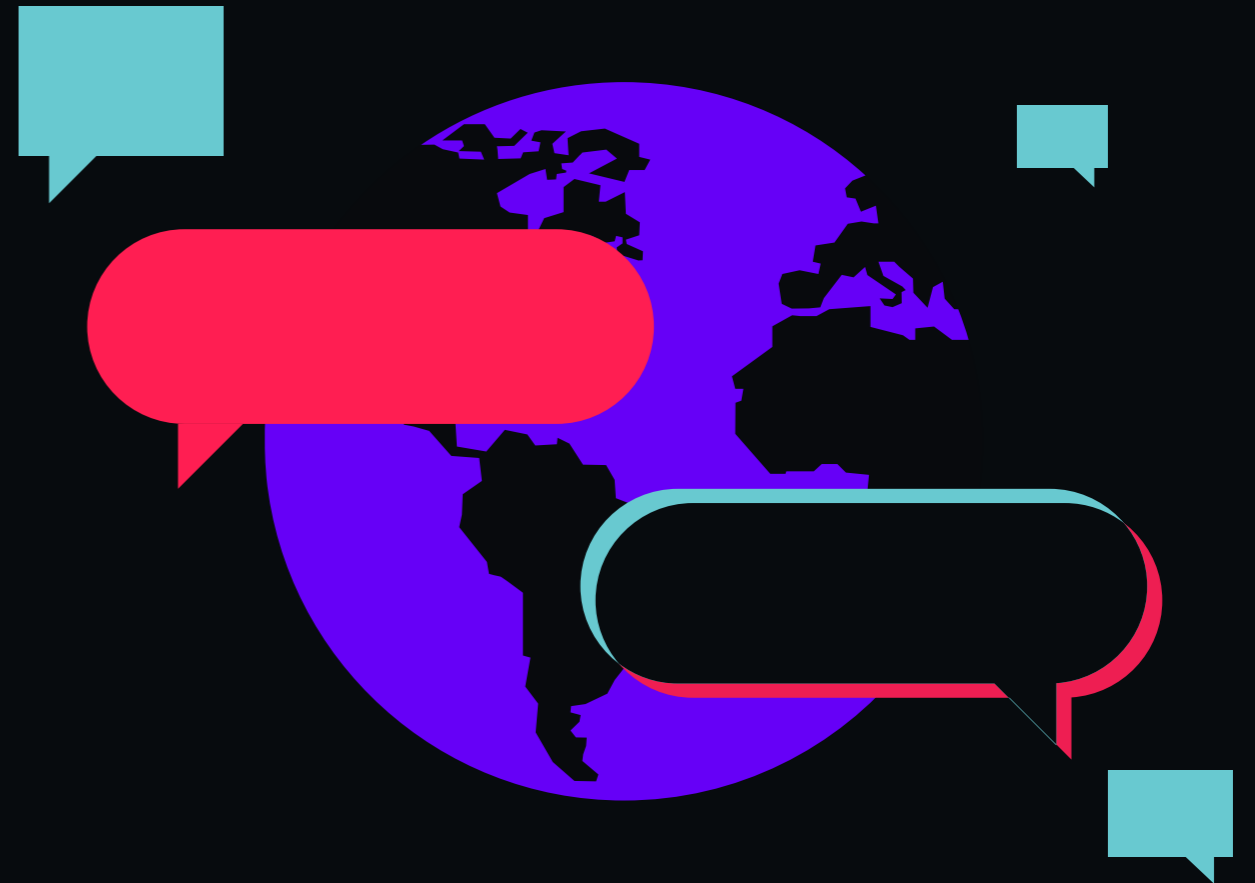
Cross-culture in tiktok:

Sharing,

exchanging &
shaping a

globalized

culture



This part discusses the impact of TikTok on cultural appropriation, the influence of TikTok on music, dance, and aesthetics, and the emergence of subcultures on the platform. It highlights the positive and negative aspects of TikTok's influence on culture, including the potential for cultural homogenization and the importance of preserving diversity. The document also emphasizes the significance of TikTok subcultures in creating a sense of belonging and identity for users who might not feel represented in mainstream culture.

1- Cultural exchange in the age of tiktok

a- Promoting cultural identity through cultural heritage

31. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (n.d.). Cultural Heritage. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2009

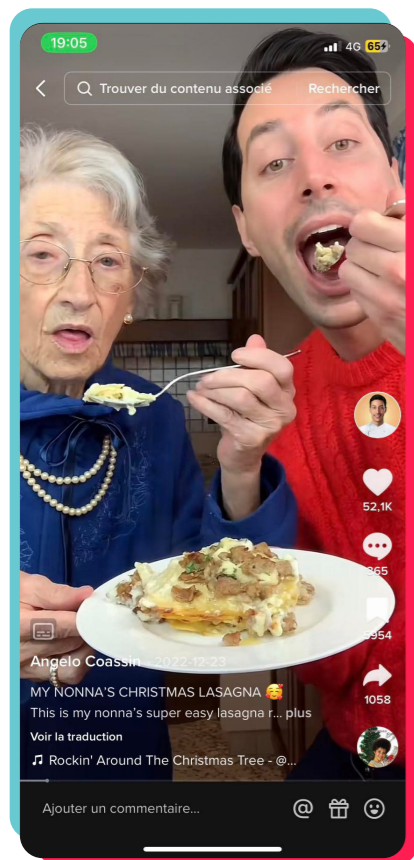


Figure3: Screenshot of a video from .@cookingwithbello

Cultural heritage can be defined by tangible and intangible assets that are passed from one generation to another³¹. With globalization, we became more familiar to different cultural heritages. In fact, tiktok is a platform that is available for all people around the globe, some of these users feel the need to **embrace and share their differences**, educating other users in the app about their culture and beliefs. The app gives them the ability to showcase different aspects of their heritage, by creating **short videos highlighting their traditional clothes, music, dances, typical food, or even talking about behavior and stereotypes**.

Sharing cultures has become more **accessible** and easier than ever before with the rise of social media platforms like TikTok. With its algorithm, the platform offers a unique opportunity for people from different parts of the world to express and share their cultural heritage with a global audience. **TikTok trends** are a popular feature on the app, and users participate in these trends using specific sounds, hashtags, or by getting inspired by other creators. Certain users use the popularity of these

trends to **share their values and cultural identity** in order to get noticed on social media, and potentially make their videos go viral.

Cultural heritage is an essential part of our identity and history as people, including customs, traditions, beliefs, and artifacts. With globalization, people have become more aware of it and interested in different cultural heritages from around the world.

Food being one of the most important aspects in our life, and a big part of what people share on social media, often plays a crucial role in people's heritage. In fact, countless influencers share food recipes, and a part of them use this opportunity to pass on their typical plates into this international tiktok community. **@cookingwithbello** is one of the users who doesn't hesitate to share with his eccentric and funny personality typical Italian recipes that people can recreate at home. **@thekoreanvegan** is another food influencer who shares vegan Korean recipes, while taking the opportunity to discuss about various subjects like issues like love, racism, familial trauma and heartbreak.

On the other hand, we can find some trends that showcase people's traditional clothes. We can take the example of this video where **@biyuan3** is dancing on Shakira's "Hips Don't Lie" with traditional clothes from different

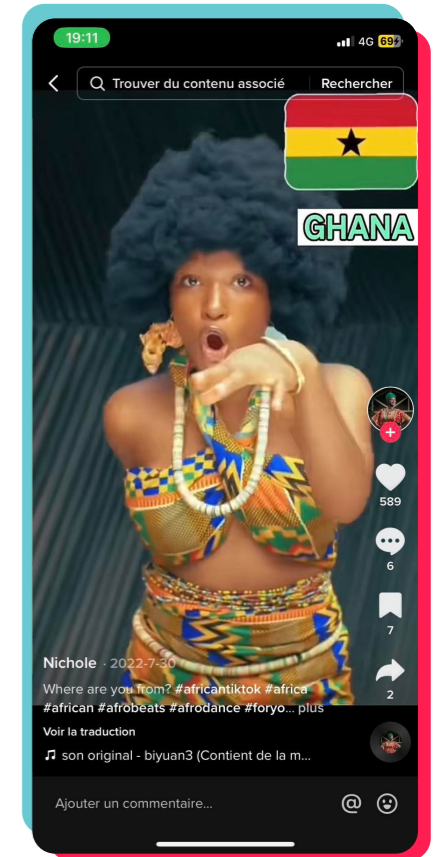


Figure 4: Screenshot of a video from @biyuan3 doing the trend showing traditional clothes from Africa

b- American Indigenous as a case study

ent countries of the African continent, using the hashtag **#africantiktok**.

Dancing is no doubt another huge part of people's identity, this video (figure 5) of people dancing in an Arab wedding had made 1.8M views.

But these examples are not the only aspects people share about their cultures. Other users share **personal stories** about their **experiences, behaviors and beliefs**. We can find various funny TikTok accounts making fun of their differences and **sarcastically making fun of stereotypes**. Some videos feature couples from different cultures showcasing their differences in a comedic way.

In summary, TikTok has provided a unique opportunity for people to **share and celebrate their cultural heritage**, while also promoting greater cultural understanding and education. By allowing users to showcase their customs and traditions, the platform has made it possible for people from different parts of the world to connect and learn from each other in a way that was not possible before. As such, **TikTok has become a powerful tool for promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity on a global scale.**

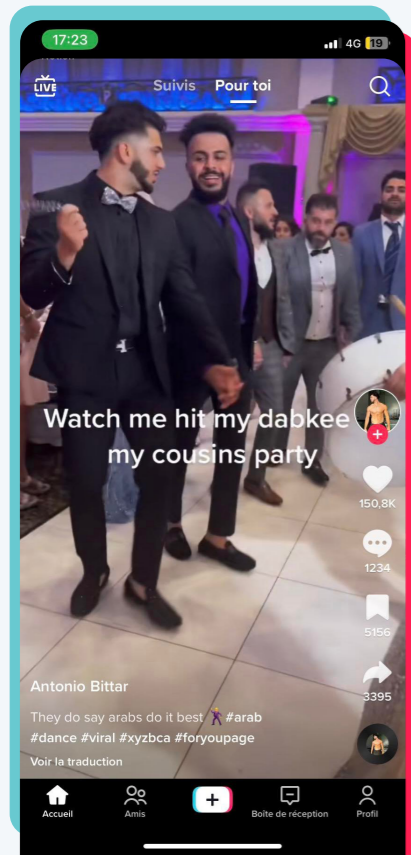


Figure 5: Screenshot of a video of people dancing in an Arab wedding

TikTok has become a powerful platform for indigenous people to share their culture and raise awareness about the importance of cultural preservation, making more than **5.3 Billion views** using the hashtag **#nativetiktok**. With the ability to reach millions of viewers, TikTok has become an effective tool for educating the public about indigenous cultures and traditions.

Indigenous creators on TikTok have used the platform to showcase a **wide range of cultural practices**, from traditional dances and songs to language lessons and cooking tutorials. By sharing their culture in this way, they are helping to **preserve important aspects of their heritage that might otherwise be lost to future generations**.

Moreover, TikTok has provided an opportunity for indigenous creators to **challenge harmful stereotypes and misconceptions** about their cultures that have been perpetuated by mainstream media. Through their videos, these creators are able to present a **more accurate and nuanced portrayal of their cultures**, which can help to break down barriers and promote greater **understanding between people of different backgrounds**.

The use of hashtags such as **#IndigenousTikTok**, **#NativeTikTok**, and **#FirstNationsTikTok** has also helped to create a community of indigenous creators and viewers who **share a common interest in celebrating and preserving indigenous cultures**. This sense of community

has helped to foster a greater sense of pride and connection among indigenous people, who may feel isolated or marginalized in mainstream society.

Overall, the **cultural awareness** that is being raised through TikTok is an important step towards promoting greater **understanding and respect** for indigenous cultures. By sharing their traditions and stories with a wider audience, indigenous creators on TikTok are helping to **break down barriers and build bridges between different cultures**, which is essential for creating a more inclusive and harmonious society.

Each user on the platform has their own way of communicating their message, whether through dancing, sounds, adding text to the video, using trends, and many other ways. To better understand how the indigenous community portrays their culture, I conducted a semiotic analysis, which is the study of signs and symbols that explains meaning through our social and cultural background, revealing how we instinctively interpret messages.

In addition, I focused on which aspects each of these creators chose to share and highlight the most. This includes comparing what these accounts decided to include in their communication, and interpreting it in a graph (view Graph 5 p.72). Some of these traditional aspects include native dancing, indigenous clothing, traditional food, ancestral beliefs, historical facts, native music, throat singing, native items, and native language.

These are introductions of the 5 indigenous influencers I chose to analyze.



@notoriouscree
3.8M



@lakotalightning
1.1M



@shinanova
4.1M



@tiamiscihk
2.3M

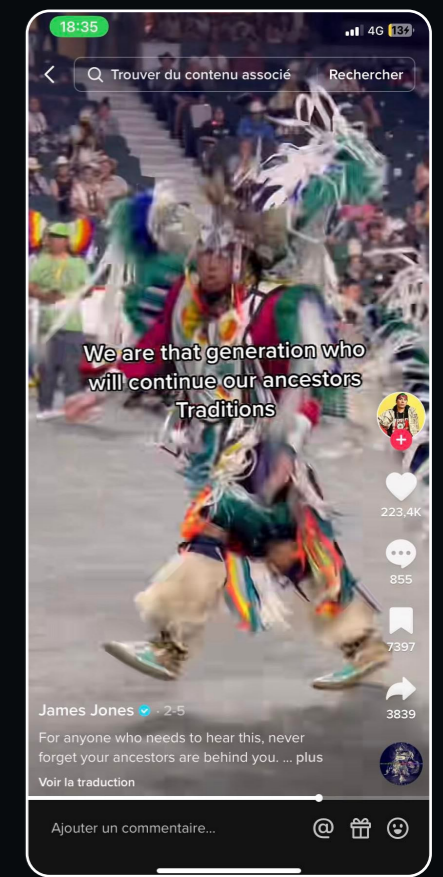
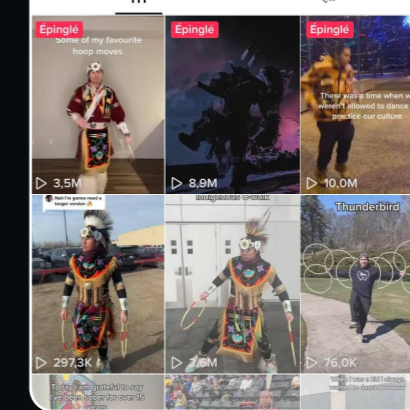
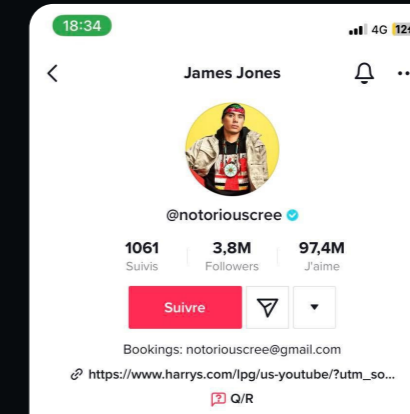
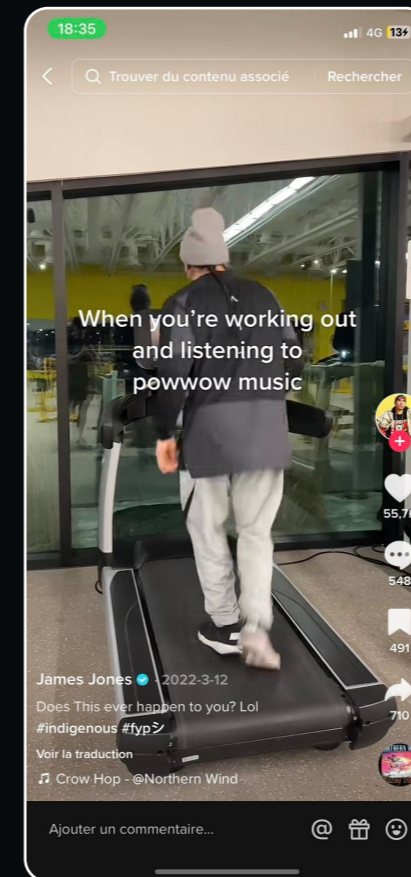


@che.jim
2.1M

@notoriouscree



James Jones, known as @notoriouscree in tiktok, is a proud indigenous man who uses social media to share his culture with the world. Through his videos, he showcases the beauty of his heritage by wearing traditional indigenous clothes and dancing to choreographies from native Americans. James is passionate about preserving the values of his ancestors and spreads positivity by discussing the importance of gratitude. He is also savvy with the latest trends and often incorporates popular music and transitions into his videos while still highlighting traditional clothing. Additionally, he showcases his talents in throat singing and powwow dancing. By sharing daily content with his 3.8 million followers, he provides a glimpse into his life and the rich culture that he now proudly identifies with.



@shinanova



@shinanova is a young woman who is proud of her indigenous roots as a member of the Inuk tribe. She has taken to TikTok to share her culture with the world, using her platform to showcase traditional Inuk clothing, share information about indigenous cuisine, and spread awareness about the ongoing impact of colonization on indigenous communities. In addition to these topics, she also features videos of herself and her mother performing throat singing, a traditional form of Inuit music. One of the unique things about Shina's content is that she films all of her videos in portrait frame, giving her followers a more intimate and personal look into her world. Overall, Shina's TikTok account serves as a powerful tool for promoting cultural awareness and educating others about the rich traditions of the Inuk people.

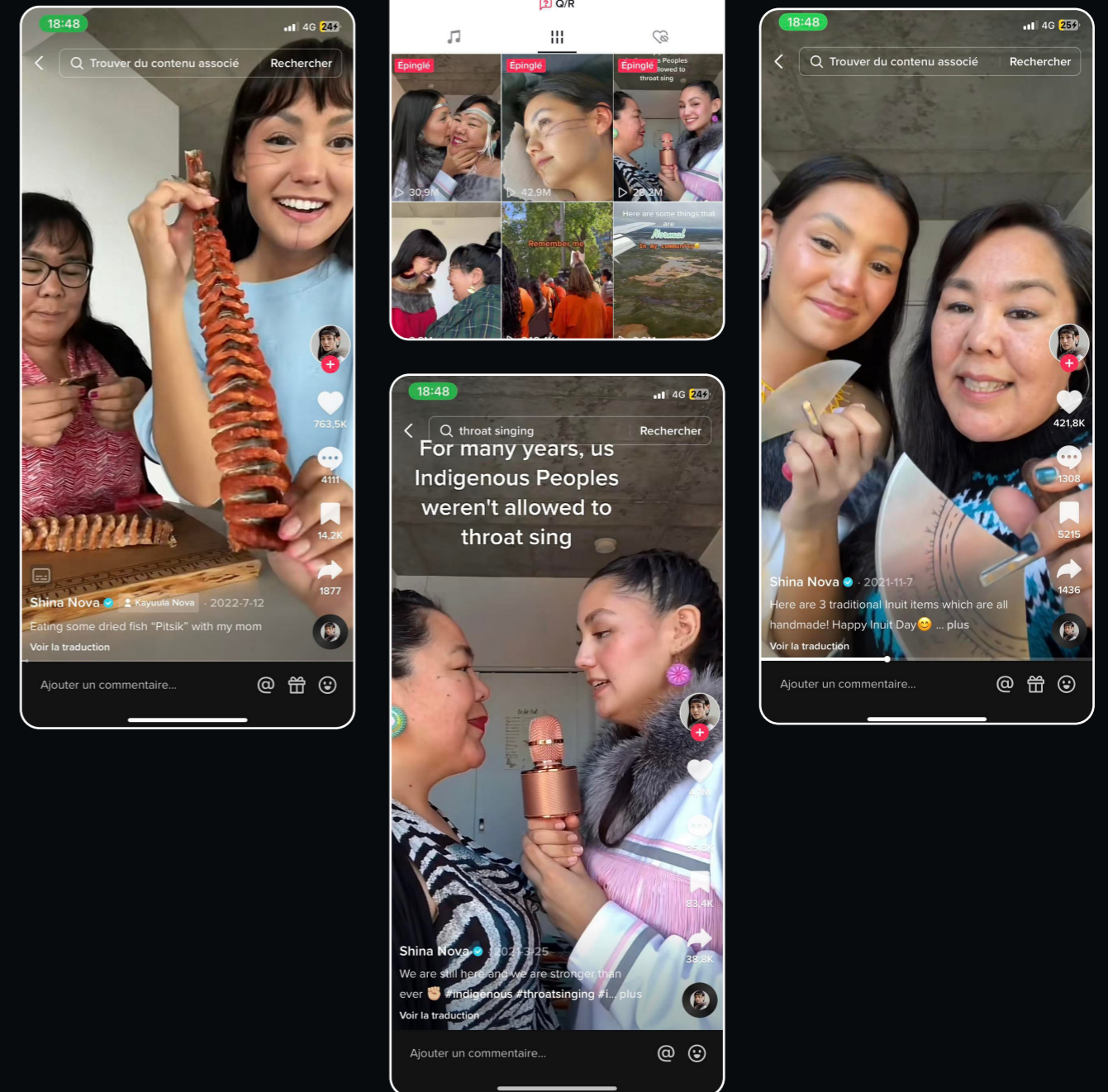
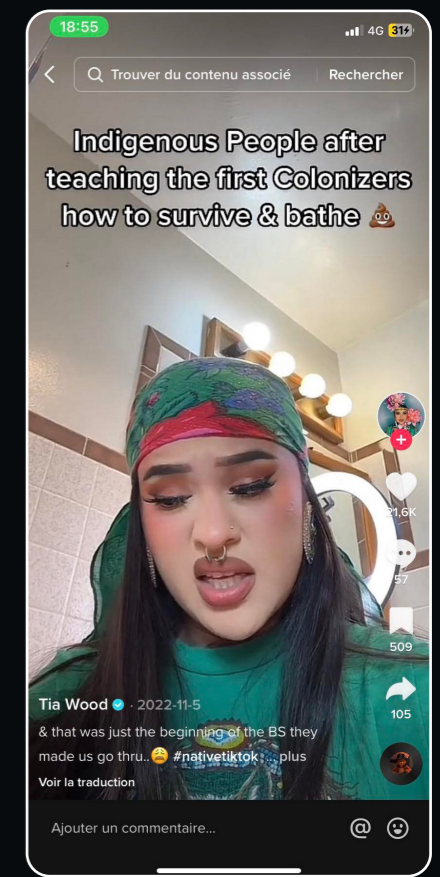
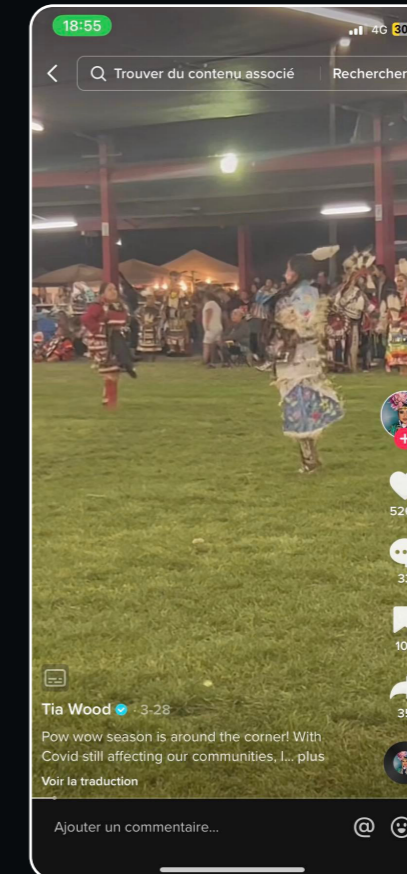
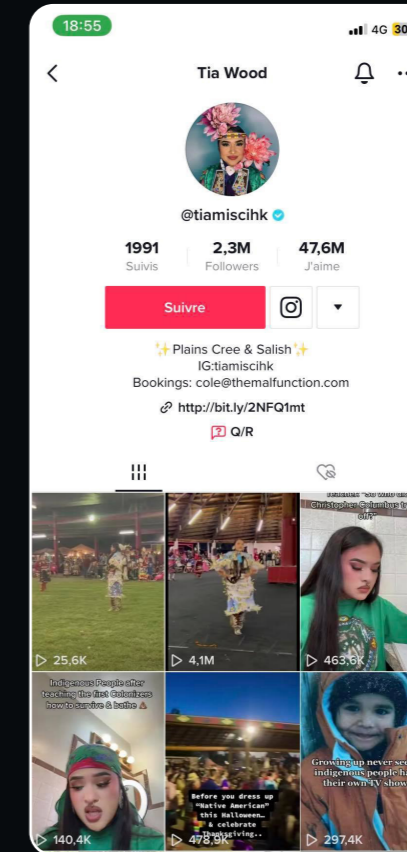


Figure 7: Screenshots from @shinanova tiktok account & videos

@tiamiscihk



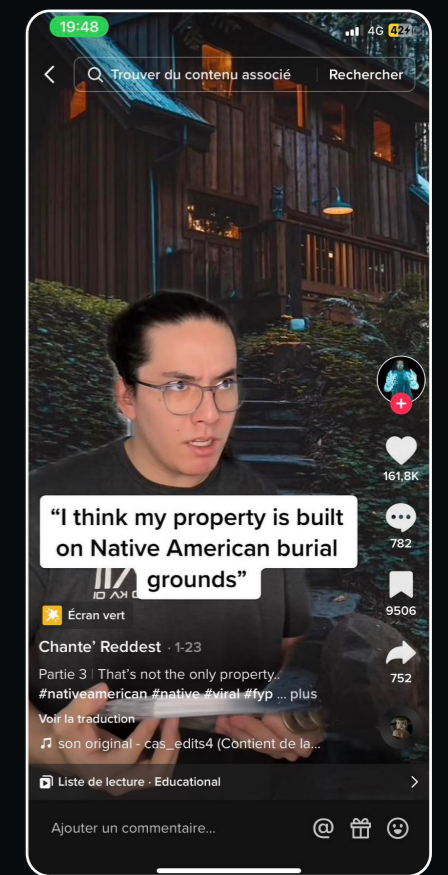
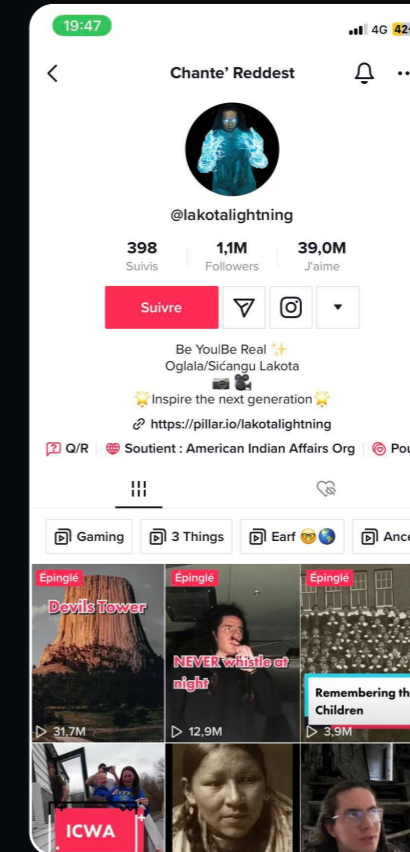
@tiamiscihk has made a name for herself on TikTok with her content that raises awareness about indigenous issues. With over 2.3 million followers and 47.6 million likes on her content, she has used her platform to showcase indigenous Powwow dance events, share her personal journey of practicing dancing, and talk about beauty standards. She has also used her videos to raise awareness about serious issues such as colonialism, genocide, and the lack of access to clean water for the Navajo Nation. In addition, she has used her platform to educate others about cultural appropriation, particularly with her videos about dressing up as indigenous people for Halloween. She has even started a TikTok trend about colonization with the viral sound “Quechua 101 Land Back Please.” Overall, @tiamiscihk has created a community for herself and other indigenous creators on TikTok who are working to promote cultural awareness and understanding.



@lakotalightning



@lakotalightning is a TikTok creator who shares content that educates viewers about indigenous cultures and traditions. His videos often focus on historic facts, indigenous beliefs and superstitions, old indigenous sayings, and legends and monsters. He also raises awareness about colonization and encourages viewers to vote in order to make change. In addition, he shares his personal connection to his ancestors and their relationship with spirits. With over 1.1 million followers on TikTok, he showcases the beauty of his heritage by singing while providing a voiceover of wise words, and by presenting a nostalgic view of the culture which he is passionate about preserving.



@che.jim



@che.jim is a TikTok creator with over 2.1 million followers, who uses his platform to share and celebrate his Din.-Anishinaabe culture. His content includes exploring the origins of indigenous people, sharing funny facts about indigenous culture, calling out cultural appropriation and discussing the history and facts behind it. He also creates sarcastic videos, promotes other native creators, and turns indigenous superstitions into memes.

One of his unique contributions to the platform is his willingness to use humor to educate people about his culture, while also calling attention to serious issues such as cultural appropriation. He uses his platform to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about indigenous cultures, while also promoting a sense of pride and connection among indigenous people.

Moreover, his content highlights the diversity of indigenous cultures and traditions, while also educating viewers about the importance of cultural preservation. Che Jim's TikTok account is an excellent example of how social media platforms can be used to celebrate and promote cultural diversity, while also creating a community of like-minded individuals who share a common interest in preserving and sharing their heritage.

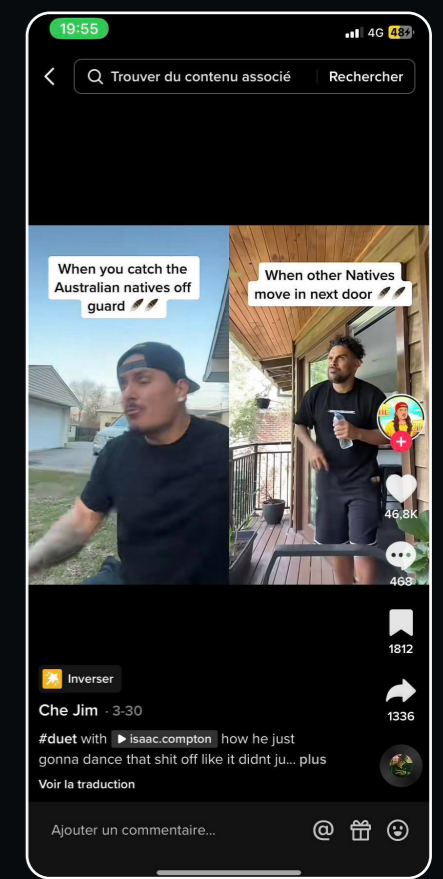
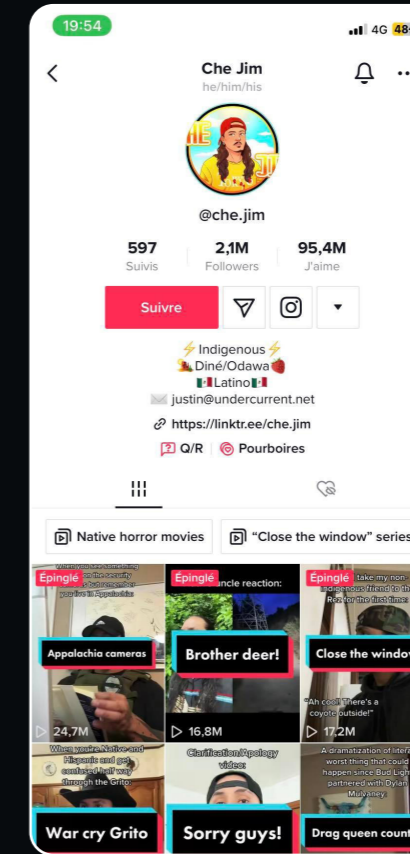
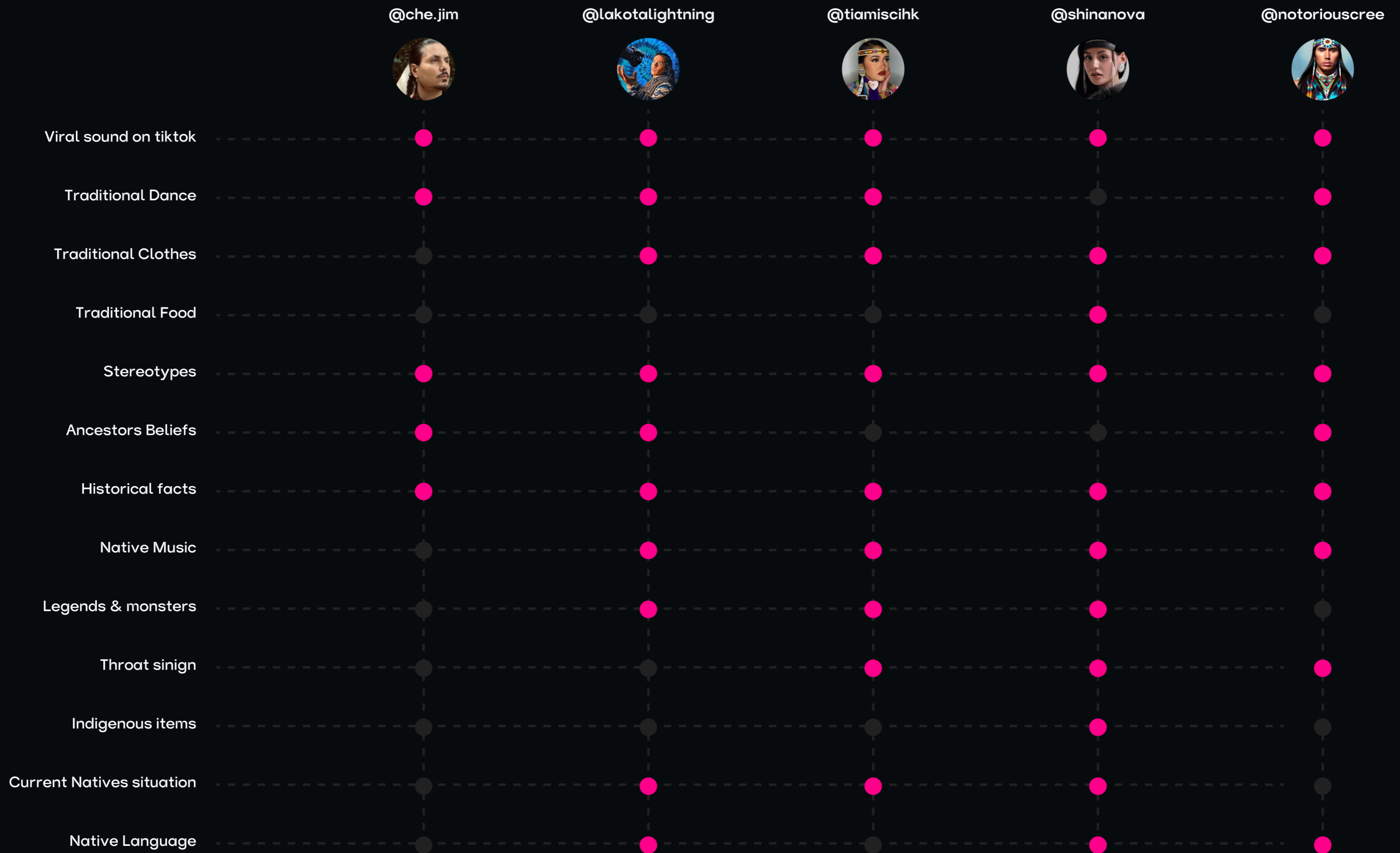


Figure 10: Screenshots from @Che.jim tiktok account & videos





Analysis results

As a result of the research, I first found out that **all of the selected users used a viral tiktok sound** in their viral video. Even though the accounts don't have the same way of communicating, for example **@che.jim** has more sarcastic and funny content, while **@lakotalightning** shares more about history of his ancestors & focus on old native legends. We can actually find similar aspects shared by these 5 users.

As **Powwow dance** is one component of their traditions, allowing them to express their spirituality, history and culture. **80% of them have shared videos of themselves powwow dancing or in powwow events.** They even highlighted the fact that their ancestors were not allowed to practice it after colonization.

@notoriouscree expressed himself on one of his videos:

"I dance for those who can't"

Moreover **80% of them shared videos with indigenous music. 60% filmed themselves throat singing.**

Moreover, we all recognize indigenous clothes by its bright colors, with feathers and accessories. **4 out of 5 of them taped themselves proudly wearing these outfits.**

On some of these videos they are calling out the fact that people are wearing it as a hallowing costume.

In fact, **all of them have discussed about stereotypes** in their videos. What I noticed is that these types of videos are usually more **sarcastic and making fun of these typecasting facts.**

In other videos they are also **raising awareness about racist behaviors**, and one of them had several videos where she shared some racist situation she experienced.

Furthermore, **60% of them used their voice to let their large audience know about the current situation some villages where native people still live**, stressing the difficulty to find water, and how expensive groceries are comparing to normal.

Indigenous **preserve their culture orally from one generation to another.** This tradition keeps going with the native tiktok community, **100% of the accounts I analyzed have talked about some historical facts and stories. 60% of them shared their ancestors beliefs and mindful advices.** Moreover, **60% of them don't hesitate to talk about old native legends,** telling stories about spiritual monsters and gods.

Language is the main communication way for us humans and plays a strong role in cultures. As written in racismnoway.com "As a means of communicating values, beliefs and customs, it has an important social function and fosters feelings of group identity and solidarity". In fact, **3/5 of them have videos talking American native languages. 2/5 actually made educational videos teaching the meaning of some words and their right pronunciation.**

On the other hand, only **1/5 shared videos about traditional food.** Shina showed in several videos her followers the traditional dried fish, how to cut and eat it. She was also the only one that made videos where she showed some **tools and objects from her tribe.**

2- Is TikTok Leading the Way to a Globalized Culture?

a- Cultural appropriation, black community as an example

To conclude, this analysis aims to see **how some TikTok users from a certain community promote their culture and what aspects they highlight.**

As a case study, the analysis focuses on the indigenous community and I selected five of the most followed users. All the influencers expressed the importance of preserving their ancestors' heritage, making their history known, and condemning colonization and the genocide that happened to their ancestors. **Each creator has their own unique way to share the values of their ancestors, including funny videos calling out stereotypes, storytelling and historical content, and dancing and singing.**

What is remarkable is that despite their different approaches, all of the creators share a **common goal: Making their voices heard, share their culture and beliefs, and battle stereotypes and cultural appropriation.** They want to show the world that their community is still here and, in some cases, living in harsh conditions.

Through their TikTok videos, these creators have found a platform to showcase their culture and share their stories with the world. They have used the app to highlight the rich history and traditions of their community and inspire others to learn more about their culture. Additionally, they have also used their platform to advocate for social justice and raise awareness about issues affecting their community.

In recent years, cultural appropriation has become a topic of frequent discussion, especially in the realm of social media. As societies become more diverse, it is important to be conscious of the cultural significance of various practices, symbols, and traditions. Defined as **“the act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect the culture”** ³². The popular social media platform TikTok has not been immune to this phenomenon, with numerous examples of users engaging in cultural appropriation and facing consequences as a result.

Cultural appropriation is an issue that has been prevalent in society for years but has gained more attention in recent years. This concept has been criticized for being disrespectful to the culture being appropriated and for perpetuating harmful stereotypes. H Winschiers-Theophilus argues that cultural appropriation can have a negative impact on society by **creating a power dynamic where the dominant culture takes elements from marginalized cultures without giving credit or recognition to the origin culture**³³. This can lead to the erasure of the marginalized culture's identity and history, as well as the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes.

32. School of the Art Institute of Chicago, n.d. Culture Competence: Cultural Appropriation.” School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2020

33. H Winschiers-Theophilus. Cultural appropriation of software design and evaluation. 2009

34. Wesley E. Stevens, Blackfishing on Instagram: Influencing and the Commodification of Black Urban Aesthetics, Social Media + Society, 2021

Additionally, **cultural appropriation can lead to the commodification of culture, where elements of a culture are used for profit without any benefit to the origin culture.** This can further perpetuate inequality and reinforce power imbalances. It is important for individuals to educate themselves on the impact of cultural appropriation and to respect and honor the cultures they are borrowing from. As Winschiers-Theophilus states, “cultural appropriation can be seen as an unethical practice that reinforces power imbalances and perpetuates harmful stereotypes”³³. Ultimately, cultural appropriation is a complex issue that requires sensitivity and understanding in order to promote cultural exchange and appreciation without causing harm.

TikTok has become a platform where cultural appropriation is prevalent. One of the most significant examples of cultural appropriation on TikTok is the use of traditional Native American headdresses. These headdresses have significant cultural and spiritual significance to Native American communities and are not meant to be worn as a fashion statement. However, TikTok users have been seen wearing them in videos, which has led to backlash from the Native American community. Additionally, **African American culture has also been appropriated on TikTok in many ways**, firstly some trends originating from black creators such as viral dances that have gone viral and performed by non-black creators without acknowledging the originators, leading to further erasure of Black creators.

Additionally, black face features and styles that black people have always been criticized for, have become trendy in the tiktok community. In fact, this is called **Blackfishing, a phenomenon in which non-Black people, especially White women, alter their physical appearance to resemble Black women through the use of makeup, hairstyles, and tanning.** This trend has gained significant attention on social media platforms, and its impact on Black culture and identity is not negligible.

According to Stevens³⁴, the Blackfishing trend is problematic because it **reinforces the stereotype that Black women's features are only desirable when appropriated by non-Black people.** This phenomenon also perpetuates colorism, which is the preference for lighter skin tones over darker ones, and it undermines the experiences of Black women who have faced discrimination and marginalization based on their skin color and other physical features. Moreover, Blackfishing can lead to further erasure of Black women's contributions to beauty and fashion industries, as non-Black people are credited for trends and styles that have been originated or popularized by Black women. The impact of Blackfishing on Black culture and identity is significant, and it highlights the need for more diverse representation and inclusion in media and beauty industries. We can take the example of Hailey Bieber (figure 12), who was

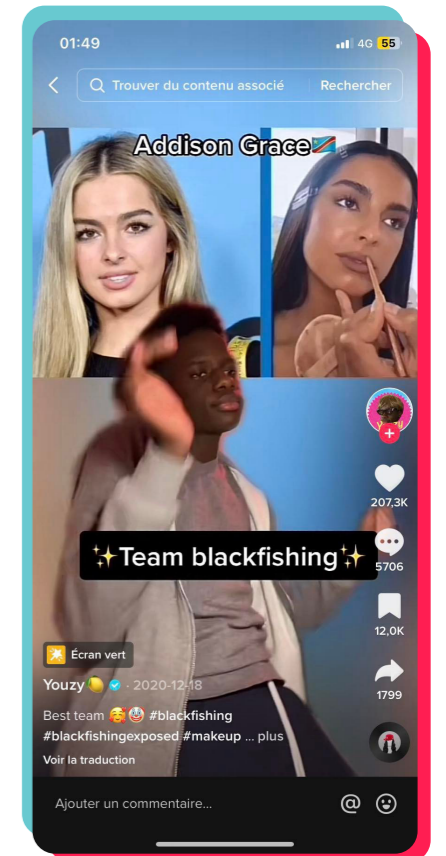


Figure 11: Screenshot of a video from a user calling out blackfishing

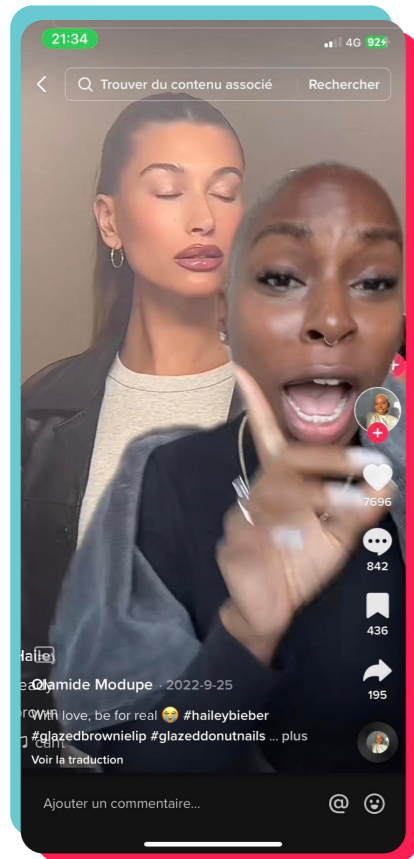


Figure 12: Screenshot of a user calling out Hailey Bieber for Blackfishing

accused of cultural appropriation after sharing makeup tutorial for “brownie glazed lips” as critics accuse her of trying to take over trend that 'black and Latina women have been doing for years' As Stevens³⁴ suggests, “It is important for beauty brands and companies to recognize the value in authentic representation and work towards creating spaces that uplift Black women and other marginalized communities”.

The rise of social media has significantly impacted the way cultural appropriation is perceived and experienced. As social media platforms continue to evolve, so too does the way in which cultural appropriation manifests itself. Storey³⁵ explain that cultural appropriation can be defined as the “**unauthorized use of one culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture.**” Social media has made it easier for individuals to share and promote cultural practices, but it has also led to instances of cultural appropriation. In some cases, individuals may not understand the significance of certain cultural symbols or practices and may appropriate them without realizing the harm it can cause.

However, the future implications of cultural appropriation on social media may be positive. As **society becomes more aware of the issue**, there may be a greater focus on education and understanding, leading to a decrease in instances of cultural appropriation.

Additionally, as we saw in previous chapters, social media has the potential to **bring together individuals from diverse cultures** and promote a greater appreciation for cultural differences.

In conclusion, while cultural appropriation on social media can have negative consequences, it also has the potential to bring about positive change through education and increased cultural awareness.

35. MA Storey., L Singer., B Cleary., F Figueira Filho. The (r) evolution of social media in software engineering , Future of Software Engineering Proceedings, 2014



b- The influence of tiktok on some cultural aspects

36. Muhumuza, F. The Role of Education in Economic Development: Theory, History, and Current Returns. In P. Blessinger & J. M. Carfora (Eds.), Contemporary Issues in Education. IntechOpen, 2012

There is no doubt that globalization and access to learning about other cultures have made people more aware, cultured, and sensitive to others. However, as we saw in the previous chapter, sometimes **one culture can dominate and influence others**. For example, social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook tend to encourage more content from the United States.

TikTok, on the other hand, is different from these traditional social media platforms because its algorithm gives anyone the opportunity to become viral. This means that even **minorities have the chance to make their voice heard and express their creativity** across the platform, as we saw with the indigenous tiktokers case study. The **cultural exchange** happening between users, such as sharing cultural practices, ideas, and artifacts, can lead to increased **cultural understanding and appreciation**. However, it can also result in **cultural homogenization, where cultural differences between groups are reduced or eliminated**. Cultural homogenization occurs when two or more different cultures interact and gradually start to share common cultural traits, sometimes due to the influence of a dominant culture.³⁶

It's difficult to pinpoint a single dominating culture on TikTok, as the platform has certain trends, content niches, and popular creators that influence the overall culture.

However, this exchange can lead to the blending of various cultural elements, creating a diverse, inclusive, and constantly evolving culture on the platform.

In this chapter, we will be focusing on how tiktok has influenced music, dance and people's style around the world.

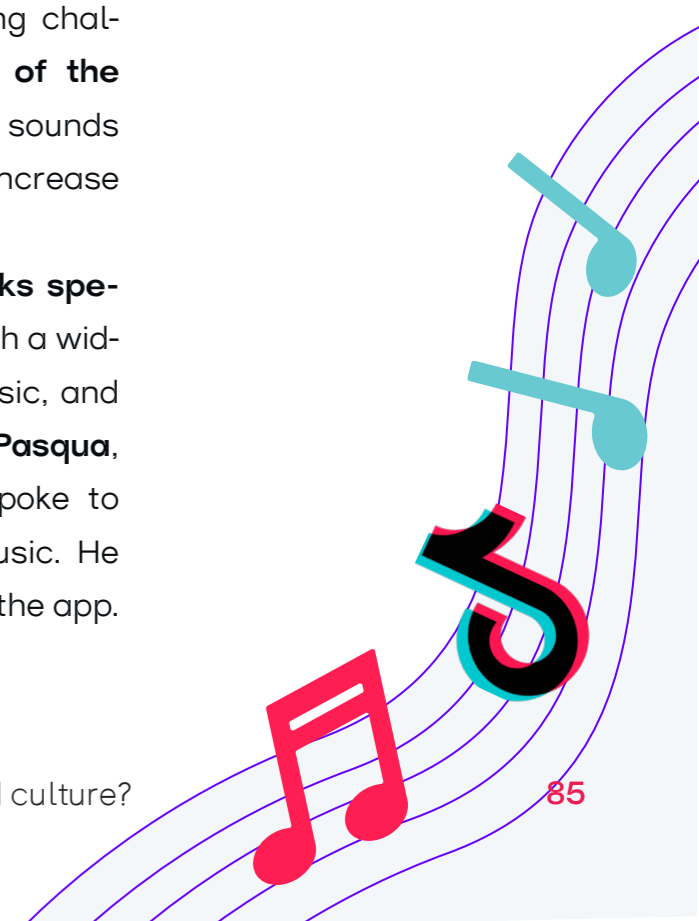
1- How did tiktok shaped the music industry?

While some communities use TikTok to embrace their differences, others **jump on trends in order to become more popular on the platform**. The app has a vast majority of users from all around the world, making it easier to create daily content and get inspired by others.

The music industry is one of the most affected by TikTok. As a result of its predecessor, Musical.ly, the app's foundation is based on music, dance, and lip-synching challenges. Consequently, **TikTok has become one of the main places people discover new songs**. Viral sounds are frequently repeated in trendy videos to increase views.

Some artists are even creating sounds and **tracks specifically designed for challenges** in order to reach a wider audience. The app is changing how we see music, and what artists aim for when creating tracks. **Dylan Pasqua**, the Music Partnership Manager at Fanbytes, spoke to TechRadar³⁷ about the 'TikTok effect' on pop music. He said, "There are some elements that just 'work' on the app.

37. Hanson, M. TikTok is changing the rules of the music industry. TechRadar, 2021



We look for a 15-second vocal hook, often with clear, actionable words – a call to action, of sorts. Something the user can riff on, or apply to their own life.” **These guidelines are undoubtedly influencing new music releases, or are at least in the background of artists' intentions.** Tiktokers use these sounds in viral challenges and trending dances, which often spread rapidly across the platform. Users from different backgrounds participate, creating a shared culture around specific memes or challenge formats. For example dance challenges users copy and perform a choreographed dance routines. Popular TikTok creators can have a significant influence on the platform, and their dance challenges can quickly go viral and be imitated by millions of users.

2- how tiktok changed the dance culture?

TikTok had a significant impact on dance culture worldwide. The app has created a space for individuals from all over the world to connect and share their dance moves with one another. Through the app, **users can access a wide variety of dance styles and techniques, from traditional cultural dances to contemporary styles.** By creating a more globalized dance culture, TikTok is promoting the exchange of dance styles and creating a more diverse and inclusive dance community.

However, there is also a concern that TikTok is leading to the **homogenization of dance culture.** As viral dance trends spread across the platform, many users are

adopting similar **styles and moves**, leading to a more uniform dance culture. This can be seen as a downside, as it may lead to **the loss of unique cultural dance styles and traditions.** It is important to recognize the potential downsides and work to preserve diversity in the dance culture.

The dominance of some genres is also an issue in the dance culture. Lucas Marie, a breakdancer and hip hop researcher at Melbourne University, said the **informal nature of hip hop music and dance was more likely to go viral on TikTok than more rigid dance styles such as ballet and Irish dancing**³⁸. Most of the global dance trends originate from the US and are heavily **influenced by Afro-American and Latino dance traditions.**

TikTok's influence has also made its mark on dance culture offline. Street breakdancers are incorporating TikTok routines, and clients are asking dance teachers to teach the routines they have seen on the app. TikTok is promoting the spread of popular dance trends across borders, with users from different countries and cultures putting their own spin on the choreography. Viral dance challenges like the “Renegade” and “Savage” dances have gained popularity globally.

However, there have been **strikes on the platform by black creators who say the TikTok algorithm prioritizes videos featuring white dancers over the people of color who often create the choreography in the first place**³⁹. It is important to recognize the potential downsides of TikTok's influence and work to preserve diversity in the dance culture.

38. Quinn, K. Dance dance revolution: How TikTok got the world tripping the light fantastic. The Sydney Morning Herald. 2021

39. Cache McClay, Why Black TikTok Creators Have Gone on Strike, BBC News, 2021,

40. Polanco, N., Salazar Mayorga, B. V., Prince, J., & Benel, A. Tik Tok and the Possible Perseverance of Cultural Imperialism. Global Media Journal, 2021



This short study⁴⁰ by Nicolle Polanco, “Tik Tok and the possible perseverance of Cultural Imperialism” discusses how **TikTok is shaping and influencing cultural aspects**. One of the main reasons for TikTok’s popularity is its algorithm, which personalizes content to each individual user, leading to a more homogeneous global culture. However, TikTok has also become a platform for cultural exchange, where users share their cultural traditions, music, and food, breaking down cultural barriers. Aspiring creators can showcase their talents to a global audience, leading to the emergence of new trends, dances, and music that have transcended borders and become part of a global culture.

The article also mentions some potential negative aspects, such as **algorithmic content curation leading to users being exposed to a limited range of content, viral challenges and trends contributing to a culture of conformity and homogeneity, and limited diversity in popular content**. The article concludes that while cultural exchange on TikTok can lead to increased cultural understanding and appreciation, **it can also result in cultural homogenization, where cultural differences between groups are reduced or eliminated**.

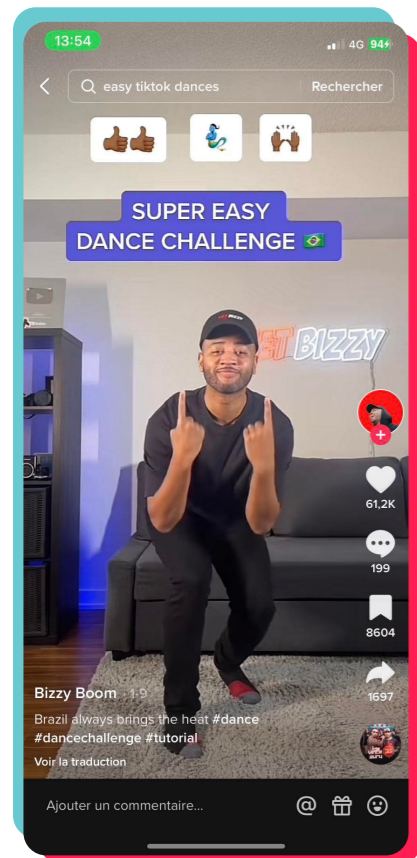


Figure 13: Screenshot of a video of user doing a dance challenge

3- The influence of aesthetic trends on tiktok

One of the most influential trends in tiktok are **aesthetic trends**. These trends are popular visual styles or themes that are commonly shared and recreated on the TikTok platform. **These trends often involve a specific set of visual elements , such as clothing, makeup, and accessories, as well as a particular type of video editing, music choices and even home decoration and even food habits.**

The “**vanilla Girl**” is one of the viral trends of 2022. This trend has gained significant popularity on the platform. This aesthetic trend is characterized by a simple and minimalist style, with a focus on neutral colors, comfortable clothing, and natural makeup.

The “vanilla girl” aesthetic often features pieces like oversized sweaters, baggy jeans, and sneakers, with a preference for brands like Brandy Melville and Urban Outfitters. Hair is often styled in a loose, effortless manner, and makeup is kept minimal and natural.

The term “vanilla girl” is often used to describe the perceived lack of uniqueness or individuality in this aesthetic trend, with some users criticizing it for being too mainstream and conformist. However, others argue that the trend is simply a reflection of a desire for comfort and simplicity in fashion and style.

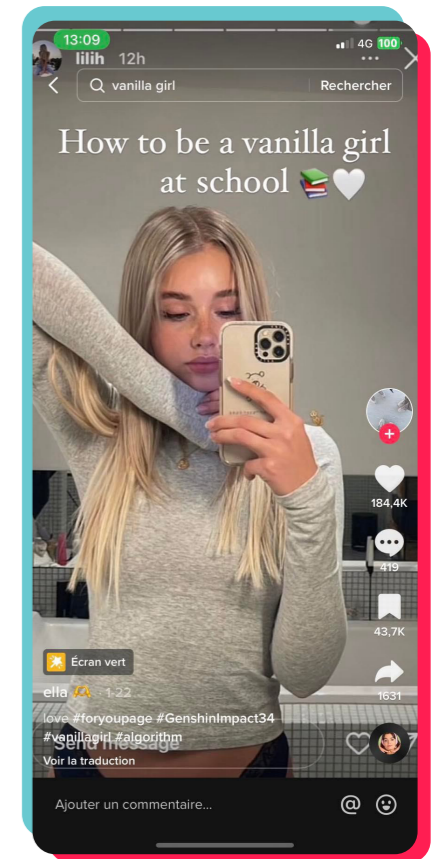


Figure 14: Screenshot of a video about “vanilla girl” aesthetics

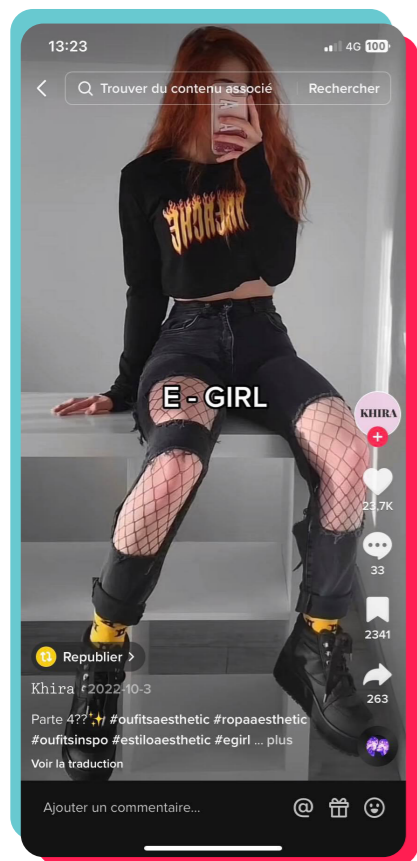


Figure 15: Screenshot of a video showing an E-girl style

Another tiktok aesthetic that was viral in the app is **E-Girl and E-Boy** . This style feature a punk and edgy style. E-Girls are typically identified by their dark makeup, bold hair colors, and graphic tees or sweatshirts with edgy prints like skulls or chains. They often wear chokers, chains, and other accessories that add to their punk aesthetic. E-Boys, on the other hand, typically wear baggy or oversized clothing, chains, and beanies. They often have an androgynous appearance, with makeup that accentuates their features.

The E-Girl and E-Boy trends have gained significant popularity on TikTok, with many users adopting this style as **a way to express their individuality and rebellion against traditional fashion norms**. The trend is heavily influenced by alternative fashion and subcultures like punk and emo. In addition to fashion, the E-Girl and E-Boy trends also have **their own unique music and art styles**. **The music often features genres like emo rap or alternative rock, while the art style features dark and edgy visuals such as skulls, black and white photos, and anime-style illustrations.**

While the E-Girl and E-Boy trends have gained significant popularity on TikTok, they have also been criticized for promoting a certain type of aesthetic that can be seen as conformist and exclusionary. However, many users argue that this trend is simply a form of self-expression and a way to break free from traditional fashion norms.

To sum up this chapter, TikTok has had a significant impact on shaping and influencing cultural aspects, from music and dance to fashion and aesthetics. Its algorithmic content curation and viral challenges and trends have contributed to a more homogeneous global culture, while also providing a platform for cultural exchange and showcasing diverse talents. However, there are concerns about the potential downsides of cultural homogenization and loss of unique cultural traditions and perspectives. It is important to recognize these issues and work to preserve diversity in the dance culture and beyond. Overall, TikTok is a reflection of the constantly evolving and diverse cultural landscape of our world today.

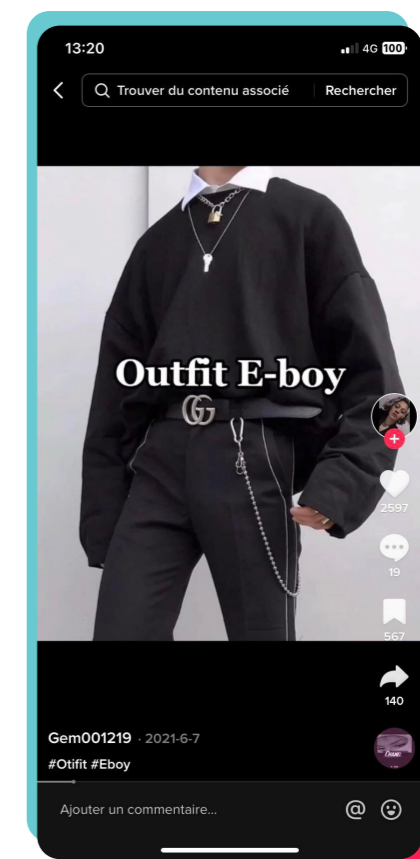


Figure 16: Screenshot of a video showing an E-boy style

c- Subcultures, the creation of new culture on Tiktok

41. T Boffone. TikTok cultures in the United States. Routledge focus, 2022

With its vast audience interacting with each others, TikTok has given birth to a myriad of subcultures. **These subcultures represent different groups of people that share common interests, aesthetics, and values.**

The platform has been home to a growing number of subcultures, **each with its own unique style, language, and community.** According to Boffone⁴¹, TikTok subcultures are “**self-referential, self-reinforcing, and self-contained groups that exist within the larger TikTok community**”. These subcultures range from the popular dance trends and challenges to niche groups like **cottagecore**, **alt TikTok**, and **witchtok**. They often have their **own specific hashtags, sounds, and visual aesthetics that set them apart from the rest of the platform.** They also have their own set of **rules and norms that guide their behavior**, interactions, and content creation. For example, **cottagecore** TikTok is known for its wholesome, nature-inspired content that celebrates simple living and sustainability. In contrast, **alt TikTok** is characterized by its nonconformity, ironic humor, and rejection of mainstream culture. **These subcultures allow users to find like-minded individuals, express their creativity, and cultivate a sense of belonging on the app.**



Figure 16: Screenshot of a video from a user part the witch community

Furthermore, they also **provide a space for marginalized communities to share their experiences and perspectives, challenge dominant narratives, and build solidarity with each other.**

TikTok subcultures have become an integral part of the app's culture and offer a glimpse into the diverse range of identities and interests that exist within the larger TikTok community.

These subcultures are often referred to as “**TikTok communities,**” and **they have been a significant source of entertainment and inspiration for many users.** One of the most popular TikTok subcultures is Cottagecore, which is characterized by a romanticized view of rural life, nature, and a vintage aesthetic. Cottagecore has become a trendy subculture on TikTok, with over **6.5 billion views on the platform.**

Similarly, **Dark Academia** has also gained popularity on TikTok, which is a subculture that is inspired by classic literature, art, and philosophy. This subculture is characterized by a dark, intellectual aesthetic, and it has over **4.4 billion views on TikTok.**

42. R Bhoj, R Thapa, AR Chowdhury Effects of recreation of subcultures on social media on the subculture, intersubculture community and intra-subculture community individuals. Fashion, Style & Popular Culture,2022



Figure 16: Screenshot of a video from a user part the Dark Academia community

These subcultures have become a significant part of the TikTok community, and they have created a sense of belonging and identity for many users. As noted by Bhoj⁴² **“TikTok subcultures have become a way for users to express themselves creatively and to connect with like-minded individuals who share similar interests and values.”** They have also become a way for users to explore their interests and to learn about new cultures and ideas. In conclusion, these new communities have become a significant part of the platform's culture, and they have **created a sense of community and belonging for many users.**

In conclusion, subcultures in TikTok are a fascinating phenomenon that has taken the platform by storm. With millions of users worldwide, TikTok has become a hub for a plethora of subcultures that cater to different interests and lifestyles. From cottagecore and alt TikTok to witchtok and booktok, there is a subculture for everyone. These subcultures have created a sense of community and belonging for their members, who can connect and share their passions through the platform. TikTok's ability to create and nurture these subcultures is a testament to its power to bring people together and foster creativity and self-expression.

Conclusion to part IV

In this final part, we have delved into the relationship between TikTok and cultural exchange. The first segment highlights TikTok's significance as a platform for individuals to showcase and disseminate their cultural heritage, with a focus on the indigenous community. The second section, on the other hand, discusses the undesirable aspects of cultural appropriation and homogenization that occur on the platform. The analysis underscores TikTok's impact on the music industry and its potential to create subcultures and foster a sense of community among its users.

Overall, TikTok has the potential to promote cultural diversity and inclusivity on a global scale by providing a platform for people to share and celebrate their cultural heritage. However, it also raises concerns about cultural appropriation and the commercialization of culture, which can result in the erasure of the identities and histories of marginalized cultures, as well as the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. To avoid these negative consequences, it is vital for individuals to educate themselves on the impact of cultural appropriation and to respect and honor the cultures they are drawing from.

Conclusion & Discussion

“Culture grows on the vine of tradition” as said Jonah Goldberg. It suggests that culture is not something that can be created from scratch or invented out of thin air, but rather it develops over time through the accumulation of traditions, customs, and practices that are passed down from generation to generation.

Therefore, as we saw in the first chapter, culture is not static, it accelerated through the years. Through a large history of colonization, human traveling, spreading their traditions and beliefs, we saw so many cultures merging, creating new ones, with new dialects and traditions. Technology has played a huge role in this globalization and has, in fact, accelerated the process by giving people the opportunity to have larger access to information that is shared with the whole globe.

One of the most significant ways that the internet has influenced cross-cultural expansion is by allowing people to access and share cultural artifacts such as music, films, and literature from different parts of the world. The internet has created new opportunities for cross-cultural learning, expression, and connection. It has transformed culture in many ways, making it more accessible and inclusive. The internet has had a profound impact on cross-cultural communication and interaction, transforming the way people learn, express themselves, and connect with others from different parts of the world.

Social media has for sure changed the way we interact with other people. It became easy to open a discussion with anybody, anywhere, and therefore knowing more about them and their culture. TikTok is a powerful platform, not only is it a social media that has an incredible algorithm that could make any user go viral, but it also has big potential understanding user's behaviors and interests. Moreover, the search feature in TikTok is very well developed that now Generation Z prefers to use it as a search engine to look for information. These young people have a preference when the information comes from other users sharing their experience and opinions, trusting this more than written articles found on Google.

The content in TikTok is very diverse, and the user base is spread worldwide. Users have taken the opportunity to use TikTok as an educational tool to teach people their knowledge and skills. Other users found it as an opportunity to share their culture, as we saw with the indigenous community. TikTok has pushed some of the same content to be recreated by users either through trends or challenges. People from different nationalities have participated in these viral movements. In fact, some of these trends not only include dances and music, but also trendy lifestyle, makeup, cooking, mindfulness tips and the list goes on. People started to adopt some of these trends in their everyday life.

Moreover, social media platforms have enabled the expression of cultural identity, but it is also important to acknowledge the potential for cultural appropriation and commodification of cultural practices and identities. As we saw at the beginning of our research, Culture can be defined as a set of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that characterize a group or society. While TikTok gives the opportunity for people to exchange their knowledge and allows them to use them in trends and adding some aspects in their daily life, by doing so, people are now starting to adopt the same behaviors. They have the opportunity to get information on other practices from different cultures that might include food, fashion, skincare, science, beliefs, and more, that they can choose to adopt in their lifestyle. In fact, we saw the rise of subcultures in TikTok, or as we may say cultures based on some communities, having their own rules, beliefs, social constructs, style... For this reason, we can ask the question: will future generations have the same culture and traditions all over the world depending on the community they choose to be part of? Or will it be some culture that will dominate others as we saw in the last decades with globalization?

We know the importance of culture plays in our life, as it provides important social and economic benefits. We all saw the impact of globalization of the American culture that the world adopted, being influenced through their

movies, TV shows, influencers... Since COVID-19, TikTok plays a crucial role influencing people's lives around the world. Some people are concerned that China would impose the influence of their culture through TikTok. With the polemic going on with the USA trying to ban TikTok from the country, does it show a cultural war going on?

The emergence of subcultures on social media platforms, particularly TikTok, highlights the diverse range of identities and interests that exist within the larger community. These subcultures have created a sense of community and belonging for their members, allowing them to express themselves and connect with others who share their passions through the platform. However, it is essential to promote cultural exchange and appreciation without causing harm to marginalized communities, acknowledging the potential for cultural appropriation and commodification of cultural practices and identities.

By acknowledging and addressing the challenges and opportunities that come with the digital age, we can foster a more diverse, inclusive, and tolerant society. The internet has created new opportunities for cross-cultural learning, expression, and connection. It has transformed culture in many ways, making it more accessible and inclusive. However, it is important to recognize the potential for harm and the need to promote cultural exchange and appreciation in a respectful and equitable manner.

In conclusion, It's no secret that TikTok is taking the world by storm. This cultural phenomenon has revolutionized the way we consume content with its short-form videos that transcend borders and bring people together. The app's user-friendly interface and innovative algorithm have made it easier than ever to connect with others and share unique perspectives from all corners of the globe.

But TikTok isn't just about entertainment. It's about fostering a sense of community and breaking down the barriers that once separated us. Through this app, we can explore and appreciate different cultures in ways we never thought possible. It's a journey of cross-cultural exchange that has opened doors we never knew existed.

In short, TikTok is more than just a social media platform. It's a cultural movement that is changing the way we interact with each other and see the world.

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Figure 1: Screenshot of a tiktok video from @MsJamesstudent

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMYGD7dbJ/>

Figure 2: Screenshot of Dr Adel tiktok account

https://www.tiktok.com/@dermatology.doctor?_t=8bPIPPmWMR4&_r=1

Figure 3: Screenshot of a video from @cookingwithbellotrends

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMYGDquxQ/>

Figure 4: Screenshot of a video from @biyuan3 doing the trend showing traditional clothes from Africa

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMYWdfuBb/>

Figure 5: Screenshot of a video of people dancing in an arab wedding

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMYGUrVp9/>

Figure 6: Collection of screenshots from @notoriouscree tiktok account & videos

Figure 7: Collection of screenshots from @shinanova tiktok account & videos

Figure 8: Collection of screenshots from @tiamiscihek tiktok account & videos

Figure 9: Collection of screenshots from @lakotalightning tiktok account & videos

Figure 10: Collection of screenshots from @Che.jim tiktok account & videos

Figure 11: Screenshot of a video from a user calling out blackfishing

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMYGUSEM2/>

Figure 12: Screenshot of a user calling out Hailey Bieber for Blackfishing

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMYGUrTWv/>

Figure 13: Screenshot of a video of user doing a dance challenge

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMYGUUvQ5/>

Figure 14: Screenshot of a video about “vanilla girl” aesthetics

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMYGU4LmD/>

Figure 15: Screenshot of a video showing an E-girl style

Figure 16: Screenshot of a video showing an E-boy style

Figure 17: Screenshot of a video from a user part the witch community

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMYGU59v8/>

Figure 18: Screenshot of a video from a user part the Dark Academia community

Graphs

Graph 1: The Rapid Rise of tiktok

<https://www.statista.com/chart/28412/social-media-users-by-network-am/#:~:text=Between%202018%20and%202022%2C%20the,number%20of%20users%20in%202021.>

Graph 2: TikTok users worldwide (2020-2025)

<https://www.insiderintelligence.com/charts/global-tiktok-user-stats/>

Graph 3: Number tiktok user by country

<https://www.oberlo.com/statistics/tiktok-users-by-country>

Graph 4: Structure of TikTok App

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Graph 5: Tiktok Indigenous users analysis

**Thank you
for reading !**