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Abstract

With TikTok taking more place in firms' marketing efforts, many businesses launch their debut on the platform. Regardless of knowledge and experience, firms post content and buy ads hopeful to reach their initial goals. However, even on TikTok, some guidelines and a strategic plan is necessary before challenging the market. Target group, strategies, type of content, engagement and algorithm are, among others, factors that need to be considered to succeed as a brand on the platform. This paper aims towards identifying segments in terms of adolescents' use of TikTok. A cluster analysis was conducted, resulting in three segments of interest; The Social Producers, The Entertainment Lurkers, and The Curious and Inspired. Further on, the segments were described in depth regarding their behavior and gratifications on the platform. This analysis led to strategic recommendations on how firms can reach potential customers with their goal for social media marketing in mind. Whether it be conversion or brand awareness, we describe in depth what type of content and behavior could be effective for a brand on TikTok.

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1.0 Introduction

Since the introduction of smartphones, social media have become increasingly more implemented in our daily routine. With billions of users globally, it is safe to say that brand touchpoints across social media stands as an important criteria for successfully creating awareness and building brand equity (Montag et al., 2019). Users of social media have evolved synchronously in correlation with the usage rate, thus gathered insights on user behavior is not a static phenomenon. Furthermore, attention should be paid in regards to the popular and growing platform - TikTok. Consumer attitudes towards advertising have challenged brands into thinking new. We observe firms using innovative and creative content marketing strategies in order to connect with their target market.

As of 2020, TikTok has generated an estimated revenue of $4.6 billion, with a predicted reach of 1.8 billion users by the end of 2022 (Iqbal, 2020). Brands have become familiar with the use of social media marketing on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat. Over time these platforms have generated great revenue and facilitated brand building with an enormous reach and accuracy. However, consumers have become more apprehensive in regard to marketing efforts on social media. Nowadays consumers are familiar with the aspects of social media marketing and acknowledge persuasion attempts. In accordance with the persuasion knowledge model by Friestad and Wright (1994), consumers will change and adapt their behavioral response when they sense brand efforts that do not align with their intentions.

Studies have focused on several main motives for using social media. Heinonen (2011) enlights that consumers are motivated to use social media due to either entertainment, social connection or to gather information. These three gratifications encapsulates the common motives amongst consumers (Heinonen, 2011). For our master thesis we will further explore if these

gratifications are apparent on TikTok amongst adolescents. The focal research question of our study can thus be succinctly summarized as follows:

"How can adolescents be segmented in terms of their gratifications towards TikTok use, and what measures can brands employ to strategically reach these segments on the platform?

The thesis is divided into four chapters; literature review, methodology, analysis, and results and discussion. In the following chapter we will introduce themes deemed as important to explore our research questions. Subsequently; social media marketing, TikTok mechanisms, social media gratifications, and usage behavior. In the second chapter we will discuss appropriate methodology concerning our cluster-analysis. In the third chapter we will further discuss our approach for gathering our primary data. Lastly, we will present the three cluster solutions based on the different gratifications where the strategic decisions are thoroughly discussed.

2.0 Literature Review

In the following chapter we will go in depth of the existing research on consumer behavior on social media and apply this to build a foundation for understanding the psychological processes that underlies our research question. To grasp the complexity of gratifications we have looked into the different perspectives that are subject for influencing an individual. Further we will also provide an overview of important factors concerning brands on TikTok in regards to social media marketing.

2.1 Content Marketing On Social Media

We identify social media marketing in the realms of content marketing. Content marketing concerns the storytelling of what the brand is trying to convey rather than showcasing and informing about the products or services the brand has to offer (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015). Consumers are increasingly

expecting their personal needs to be reflected through personalized experiences, however, it has to be balanced so they do not feel excluded from a community. The term inclusive individuality captures this perspective (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015). In terms of TikTok, brands have the opportunity to use trending formats and sounds to cater to inclusivity, while the individual user has the opportunity to engage with the brands' marketing efforts. This further reflects how a standard advertisement might not cut through the level of inclusive individuality that makes for an effective advertisement. In terms of content marketing, a common limitation is creativity, whereas the brand has to constantly come up with clever ways to communicate with its target audience (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015). An advantage of TikTok as opposed to other social media is that brands can easily participate in the same trends as the normal creator, which lightens the pressure to be creative in terms of content creation. However, even if the platform facilitates easy participation, brands also need to consider if the content is effective in conveying brand messages and converting consumers to customers.

Due to the quick expansion of social media, digital marketing has undergone a significant transformation. This has impacted business processes in a way that forces managers to think differently regarding their marketing communication and strategy. Traditional marketing can be thought of as a bowling game, where a firm uses its marketing instruments to reach and influence consumers in a one-way communication. However, social media changes this process to look like a pinball game. It is chaotic and interactive, replacing the linear and one-way communication of traditional marketing. The pinball way sheds light on how value creation processes and structures have to adapt to the new marketing environment if firms want to be perceived as beneficial by active and highly networked consumers (Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2013).

The main differences between the modern and the traditional processes of social media are increased active participation and a strong level of networked interconnectedness (Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2013). This makes the consumers in the pinball process more powerful which further shapes their behavior in the market. Consumers actively participate in the community of social media by

sharing, commenting, and liking. This facilitates several touchpoints where consumers directly or indirectly get in contact with the brand. Indirectly, this can appear as earned media in terms of e-WOM between previous and potential customers, as well as paid platforms in terms of content from influencers or other types of digital ads. The touchpoints at owned, earned and paid media are crucial to what brand image and attitude consumers establish towards the brand (Lovett & Stealin, 2016). Not only are the tangible touchpoints important, but the variety of intangible touchpoints also influence the feelings and attitudes consumers develop towards the brand (Duncan & Hollenberg, 2019). In the pinball process it is challenging for a firm to control all potential touchpoints, as the earned media is only controllable to some degree (Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2013). Utilizing trending challenges and sounds can help increase consumer involvement, dissemination, and co-creation; nevertheless, users have an impact on the algorithm that determines how far the message reaches.

Social media relies on personal connection and social entertainment, thus, it is effective for brands to engage on a personal level, connecting with consumers in a non-hierarchical way. Due to the typical material on TikTok being authentic and genuine, it allows businesses to reveal their informal and unfiltered side. The credibility of the content is emphasized, in accordance with the argument that personal content is more compelling and persuasive in a discriminant way. (Lee, et al., 2018). When trying to reach this target market it is important to include entertaining and relatable content in brand promotions to ensure attention and create a personal customer relationship. In addition, TikTok places a lot of power for the consumer since they have the opportunity to immediately avoid content that is not aligned with their initial goals (Araujo et al., 2022).

User engagement on social media sites is not considered costly, meaning users do not invest a lot of effort when liking something. Although it may not alter subsequent behavior, it can turn into a first touchpoint (John et al., 2017). Thus, engagement might not directly infer positive brand attitudes and purchase intentions, but it can act as a stepping stone in the customer journey.

Users of social media act as active co-producers and active participants of content through interactions and their usage behaviors (Shahbaznehad et al., 2021). Brands have an incredible opportunity to facilitate their own touchpoints as well as earned touchpoints on the platform with a huge scale amongst adolescents.

2.3 Co-creation vs. Commercialization - Instagrams Tradeoff

As mentioned, social media has become an important tool for firms' marketing efforts. Among others, Instagram has for many years been a powerful platform in terms of marketing activities. According to Forsey (2023), Instagram leveraged the highest return on investment to marketers with 25%. Following, TikTok has a ROI at 12% constantly increasing at a fast pace as firms discover its effectiveness. In addition to the growing monetary concerns, users have also noticed changes in the once leading platform.

Instagram started out as a platform where you could share photos and engage with friends. As content quality and effective content distribution increased, brands saw a way to monetize on the platform. With the rise of a commercialized agenda from brands, Instagram saw the possibilities for monetizing on the platform and its creators by adapting the technology. Originally, Instagram's feed used to present content from the people you were following. However, in 2016, they introduced a new algorithm which led to a feed that prioritized content from people based on users' interests and engagement history (Constine, 2016). The change in question was intended to improve the user experience and increase the amount of time a user would spend on the platform. However, a lot of complaints emerged concerning the change. With the removal of the chronological feed and the increased amount of content from unsolicited accounts further led to a cognitive dissonance between the platform's origins and the user-goals (Hutchinson, 2022). What used to be a fun and inspiring way to connect with friends and content creators, developed against consumer wishes.

Social media platforms use a triadic business model approach where the users are co-creators of value (Andreassen et al., 2018). When Instagram made changes at the expense of the user experience it led to a more challenging relationship between brands and consumers on social media. The new algorithm bases the potential reach on several factors such as engagement, relevance, timeliness, and usage of Instagram's features (Later, 2022). In addition, the content needs to be high-quality, visually appealing, and relevant to the users interest (Socialbakers, 2021). Users were therefore subject to an increasing amount of polished content from influencers and brands. This had a rippling effect, where the average user also became triggered into improving their own content. Therefore, the ceiling for co-creation is increasingly becoming higher.

Several studies have linked social-media usage with declining relationships with a person's self-image. Posting, viewing and commenting on image-based content is linked to mental health issues (Faelens, et al., 2021). Psychological factors like upward social comparison come into play. Users are constantly exposed to “picture-perfect” lives which can potentially trigger both depression and anxiety (Faelens, et al., 2021). With lower self-esteem the threshold for posting casual content increases. With less engagement, the triadic business model suffers and the implications lead to an excess of influencers and brand touchpoints, and a decreased amount of engagement from the target audience and overall reach. Instagram therefore loses their original value.

2.3 The Emergence of TikTok

With the decrease in contained attractiveness for Instagram - there was room for innovation and users began to switch their preference over to the Chinese platform - TikTok, which had an extreme growth following the pandemic (Sherman, 2020). TikTok is first and foremost a video platform where users can share videos for up to 10 minutes. The videos, also referred to as TikToks, are shown vertically, and users have to physically scroll to continue to the next video. Interactions include likes, comments, saving, sharing, and

stitching/duetting. Stitching is the procedure where a user takes a TikTok and 'builds' on top of it; stitching two TikToks together. On the platform, the user has two feed options: followed creators and the *For You-page.*
There are many ways to get discovered and go viral on TikTok. For instance, the platform facilitates sound clips or songs that creators can use in productions. Some sounds become viral and creators interpret the sound to create content, resulting in a shared momentum that keeps the app entertaining and facilitates creativity. Keeping up with trends also helps to build a shared sense of community. In addition, the trending sounds facilitate the possibility of creators to easily become discovered by others, since viral sounds come with an extensive reach. When it comes to virality, it is proven that content which triggers psychological responses in terms of emotions, and social motivations have a bigger chance to go viral (Rees-Jones et al., 2015). Different interpretations of sounds lead to entertaining content triggering positive emotions and leading to bigger chances of virality (Harvard Business Review, 2020). Discoverability is also facilitated through TikTok's most attractive feature - the unique algorithm technology. The For You-page is never the same for two different users, and the highly personalized algorithm captures even niche interests (Geyser, 2022). Quickly determining interest on a personal level keeps the audience's engagement, which encourages more frequent use (Montag et al., 2019). We will further describe the features of the algorithm.

2.4 How does TikTok's algorithm work?

To receive a personalized and accurate For-You Page, which is the general feed on the platform, TikTok collects a massive amount of data to train the algorithm. Looking at their privacy policy (TikTok, 2023), we can further get a picture of the extensive amounts of data they have access to. First of all they collect basic profile information provided by the user, such as name, date of birth, email address etc. Further they collect all the content that you generate with associated metadata, such as when, where and who; even if you do not save or publish said content. They also have access to all messages, and even

the device's clipboard if you choose to share content with a third-party platform. All of these data points are provided by the user themselves, further we will look at automatically collected data.
TikTok collects usage information, meaning how you engage with the platform. Everything you like, comment, save, and share are collected to train the algorithm. "Hover-time" and replays are also collected. They further infer attributes to you, like interests, gender and age range, to personalize your experience on a deeper level. Continuing, they have the technology to recognize surroundings in produced content, such as items, landscape and facial recognition. In addition, key-stroke patterns and rhythms are collected, meaning they gather information every time you touch and type on your phone. They also have access to track you across third-party platforms to get a more thorough picture of who you are. And lastly, they keep track of your geographical position using your IP-address. That way, they can track tourist attractions, shops or other "points of interest" you have been visiting.

Why are these data points useful to TikTok? For instance, they use it to personalize content, where the algorithm gets more intelligent every time you use the application. They also use it for advertising and monetary concerns, where they have the ability to recommend products and advertisements to the immediate target group. The implications of this is that the users get a personalized experience, and there are also benefits regarding marketing efforts when it comes to reaching the target group. With extensive data points on consumer psychographics and demographics, sponsored content on TikTok has the possibility for extensive reach and accurate targeting. However, brands should not repeat the same patterns as of Instagram if they want to engage with consumers through social media. With the changing trends of content creation, brands should also consider how they best can adapt. By exploiting the algorithm brands have the ability to reach consumers organically. Based on this we further need to explore the underlying motivations from a consumer standpoint. Since the tides have changed, and consumers are harder to persuade.

2.5 Gratifications That Explains Social Media Usage

We will further dive into literature that explains where different motives for social media usage emerges.

2.5.1 Entertainment Gratification

According to a study based on social media habits, Whiting & Williams (2013) reported that 64% of the respondents used social media as a source of entertainment, and 76% used it as a pastime to kill boredom.

TikTok is deemed as a social entertainment platform, thus, there is no doubt that one of the pivotal gratifications consumers seek when using the app is entertainment. Since the video platform distinguishes itself from traditional entertainment media, for instance television, we will further investigate what exactly makes it so entertaining. For clarification we will use the term ‘social media entertainment’ (SME), which is defined as amateur creators who “...engages in content innovation and media entrepreneurship across multiple social media platforms to aggregate global fan communities and incubate their own media brands” (Cunningham & Craig, 2017, p. 72). The norm for SME is to put a high emphasis on authenticity and community, which a person cannot find through entertainment platforms such as streaming services. Being exposed to content on social media entertainment platforms also seem more authentic, due to the production properties. Although the productions in many ways are done professionally, with a good quality camera, equipment and talented creators - SME is categorized by their “breakthrough authenticity” where there is a connection between the audience and content creator (Cunningham & Craig, 2017). Viewers have the ability to interact directly with creators. Feedback and communication is characterized by a high level of real-time intensity, which increases the platform's value in regards to co-creation. A viewer can give direct feedback and get a response from the creator within seconds (Cunningham & Craig, 2017).

Facilitating Immersion

Short videos create more app traffic in shorter intervals of time, a viewer can in that sense consume a hundred TikToks as opposed to one YouTube-video (Wang, 2020). This in turn creates a convenience for the user in regards to quick stimulation and entertainment, the convenience utility stands that TikTok is accessible anytime and anywhere. The format also facilitates the ability to quickly move on if the current video is not of interest. With the characteristics of constant stimulation and entertainment, it is easy for consumers to get immersed in the experience. Compared with other SME-platforms like YouTube, TikTok´s features provide greater entertainment value. When scrolling on TikTok the experience is seamless, whereas on YouTube there is a natural finish line when the video ends. You can scroll on TikTok for hours and be entertained by a plethora of different topics and interests modified continuously by the adaptable algorithm. Being immersed by TikTok also sense that the user processes the content through the peripheral route in terms of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). This model states that an individual can process information through both the central route or the peripheral route. Through the central route, the individual uses more energy and effort in the process, whereas in the peripheral route they are not as engaged and mostly act on autopilot (Kitchen et al., 2014).

In addition, research suggests that camera angles may also be a determinant in influencing the degree of engagement (Wang, 2020). 'First-person' perspectives have shown to be more immersive in certain situations. The creator's perspective is used to present the content, giving the perspective a more personal touch. When the immersive approach is put in context with TikTok's characteristics it's likely to be amplified. Since the videos are short, the content is often straight to the point, and there is no break from the stimulation. TikToks are presented in a loop, and whether you scroll up, down, right or left, you will be confronted with content; which makes it difficult for users to exit the platform. The intention behind the endless scrolling is for the user to experience a sense of flow, which can give them a feeling of time distortion (Montag et al., 2019).

In that sense, SME have the similar mechanisms of a slot machine. When an individual is looking for entertainment, they will subconsciously resort to convenient resources of quick stimulation - for instance TikTok (Wang, 2020). With the mechanisms of the platform, viewers do not know what comes next. Users are constantly repeating the same motoric motion, with the scrolling using their thumb, which facilitates a state of flow (Montag et al., 2019). Not all content will be perceived as amusing. However, the endless scrolling is sometimes rewarded with something interesting or entertaining. This leads to addiction-like behavior as viewers have difficulties leaving the app when they do not know when “rewards” will appear (Harrigan & Dixon, 2009). This makes users immersed in the experience, where all they seek is gratification for their entertainment needs. When the use increases, rewards will eventually appear more frequently - keeping the user entertained and addicted.

Furthermore, the ‘mere exposure effect’ is a psychological phenomenon that also explains the immersion. The more you use an application, your liking for it increases. Overall, this leads to usage of the application more rewarding (Zajonc, 2001). Furthermore, elaborating on the 'addictive like-behavior,' individuals who are considered to perform high involvement tasks will react with emotional strain if they are interrupted, and with the feeling of emotional strain only lifting once the task is completed (Montag et al., 2019). When users enter the state of immersion, interruption will lead to discomfort. Assuming users will try to avoid discomfort - they will either increase usage or discontinue. However, according to the endowment effect, users can attach a sentimental value to the platform. For instance, a user has spent many hours on TikTok interacting with different content that gets saved into a folder. This results in a library of memories they can attach value to (Kahneman et al., 1991). Discontinuing use of the platform all together is therefore a difficult task.

2.5.2 Social Gratification

Studies have shown that the gratification of 'social connection' is especially relevant (Bossen & Kottasz, 2020). Whiting and Williams (2013) reported that 88% of the respondents used social media for social connection.

As mentioned, TikTok operates with a triadic business model, and the users have an active role in determining the value of the platform. Di Gangi (2016) presents a framework that predicts usage behavior based on the characteristics of the user experience in social media, where the two dimensions are social interaction and technical features. As previously stated, TikTok is a platform that facilitates social interaction with a tailored algorithm and technology that allows connection. According to Di Gangi (2016), when users view the social interactions they meet on the platform to be tailored to their individual interests, it results in a more positive user attitude. This leads to a sense of personal relevance and overall satisfaction. The continuously increased personalization enables higher user engagement, and engaged users have a more fulfilling experience (DI Gangi, 2016).

Amongst Norwegian adolescents, Ipsos (2023) reported that 58% used TikTok on a daily basis in the 4th quarter of 2022. Worldwide, the average time spent on the platform daily is 52 minutes, while the app has the longest average session time of all social media with 10 minutes and 52 seconds. As social media is an increasingly time invasive activity in adolescents' life, some users might find they receive a lot of social benefits from using TikTok due to the decreased leisure time (Antheunis, 2016). In terms of TikTok being a popular platform amongst adolescents, users have a perception that most people that are of importance are also participating on the same platform. This is referred to as social accessibility, which in turn leads to higher usage frequency as well (Di Gangi, 2016)

Social identity

Relationships with peers among adolescents is defined in terms of self-identity and well-being (Bukowski, 1993). Self-identity can be defined as

"...personality attributes that are not shared with other people" (Barker, 2009, p.209). Adolescents are in a state where they are continuously developing to become more autonomous and independent from their parents (Helve & Bynner, 2007). When peer relationships become increasingly important, social networking sites allow users to immediately feel close to meaningful relationships (Antheunis, 2016). However, connecting with people on social networking sites has been argued to be an illusion of friendship and can be seen as a way of connecting, rather than communicating (Antheunis, 2016). Meaningful relationships are important in a sense that it gives a feeling of "…entertainment, feedback, a sense of belonging, and a foundation of identity" (Antheunis, 2016, p. 350).

Social identity can be defined as "...that part of the individual which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of that membership" (Barker, 2009, p. 209). Users can find gratification of usage in terms of expressing their social- and self-identity. With TikTok, users have an opportunity to find a peer group that they can relate to and feel a membership towards, even if the relationship is strictly connected through the platform. Relating to this, a person's social identity can be tied to ingroups and outgroups, where the ingroup are the peers that share similar values in terms of looks and actions, and the latter concerns whom the ingroup compares themselves to (Brewer, 1999).

More than ever, social identity has taken a fluid state, where people have several different adjustments of their social role which they apply to different settings; which is further amplified with the use of social media. (Davis, 2011). A person's online personas can have very little connection to who they present themselves to be in "real-life". Common amongst young people is the lack of confidence and sometimes strict social norms within their social circle (Bukowski, 1993). Being online can foster a sense of anonymity, which gives a sense of liberation from social constraints (Di Gangi, 2016). Thus, online environments can lead to users forming a self-identity and finding meaningful relationships with peers. This is found to be especially relevant for low

self-esteem adolescents who find themselves situated in group membership with negative connotations, they will then use social networking sites to develop more rewarding relationships (Barker, 2009).

Social Comparison

As of the study by Whiting & Williams (2013), 32 percent of the respondents reported that they have social monitoring as a motivation for using social media. Further, problematic phone usage, such as addictive-like behavior has been linked to mediators such as social comparison and fear of missing out (FoMo) (Servidio et al., 2021). Social comparison describes how individuals learn more about themselves by comparing themselves to others, which is especially typical for adolescents who have not developed a secure sense of self. FoMo involves comparing experiences, it implies a lack of rewarding and fulfillment with an individuals own life, and leads to an unsettling feeling of wanting to be included (Servidio et al., 2021). This in turn can lead to an increased engagement on social networking sites, performing acts of ubiquitous social media monitoring within your offline social perimeter to reaffirm social power hierarchies (Duffy & Chan, 2018). At the same time, an individual can find participation gratification in the sense of portraying themselves as interesting and up to date on recent trends to avoid FoMo (Servidio et al., 2021) .

Unmet Social Needs

Based on the assumption that TikTok is a platform used to explore different relationships and niche peer groups, much of the social gratification can be found from parasocial relationships with content creators. Parasocial relationships can be defined as "...nonreciprocal socio-emotional connections with media figures such as celebrities or influencers." (Hoffner & Bind, 2022, p. 1.). This imagined relationship develops through observing and imagining interactions, which also is amplified through the technical features of TikTok such as the first-person perspective and social accessibility (Wang, 2020). As mentioned earlier, content creators on TikTok are deemed to be more raw and

authentic, compared to other platforms. In addition there is no clear distinction between your friends and influencers/celebrities, especially since the norm is to publish content according to trends. Psychologically this makes it easy for users to develop one-sided bonds with content creators which mimics the gratification that an individual gets from offline relationships (Hoffner & Bind, 2022). This bond is often strongly felt since it offers security and predictability. An individual knows that if they decide to open TikTok, they will encounter communities or content creators that can be used as a supplement for social connections.

Social gratification can also be especially salient for people who experience a lack of an offline social circle, and have limited access to friends (Iannone et al., 2017). Humans have an inherent need to belong and are motivated to socially connect with others, while these needs have a varying level of intensity amongst individuals, social connections for adolescents is as mentioned a defining property. Upper secondary school is for some the only social circle they have to rely on. Socially excluded individuals are motivated to seek social belonging as a means to regain acceptance and establish new social connections (Iannone et al., 2017). The study by Iannone et al. (2017), further found that individuals with unmet needs of belonging tend to rely more on social networking sites. They use these platforms to replace offline relationships with parasocial relationships, thereby fulfilling their social needs.

Furthermore, poor interpersonal competence can lead to negative well-being outcomes such as depression, social anxiety, fewer friends, and lower grade point average (Dredge & Schreurs, 2020). Interpersonal competence can be defined as “the ability to effectively interact with others” (Dredge & Schreurs, 2020, p. 886). How social media affects adolescents' interpersonal competence can further be explained by the time displacement hypothesis. The hypothesis elaborates on how extensive media use distracts from social activities which help build up communication skills in an age that it’s important to practice (Putnam, 1995). Common amongst literature findings regarding social media use and interpersonal challenges is that frequent use can lead to alienation from peers, family and school (Dredge & Schreurs, 2020).

Moving on, research has discovered differences between males and females regarding the needs of social connection and communication on social media. The study by Leonhardt & Overå (2021) revealed that males did not see social media as significant in their lives compared to females. Males saw gaming as something that fulfills their social needs in terms of connection and communication, rather than social media. Whereas, females used social media for the same reason.

2.5.3 Information Gratification

According to Whiting & Williams (2013), 80 percent of respondents reported using social media to seek out information.

Microtargeting

Social media have the ability to accurately target consumers, which creates an environment for consumers to get accurate recommendations which can lead to influence or gratification (Barbu, 2014). TikTok's algorithm, which manages to target on an explicitly accurate level could be deemed as microtargeting. What is interesting about TikTok is that the microtargeting happens at a non commercial level too - for instance by showing specific interests and life events and such from other creators. The environment creates a gratification loop which can turn addictive (Karahanna, 2015). Psychological ownership theory supports that microtargeting enables a feeling of possession. Derived by having a territory or space to dwell (Karahanna, 2015). When individuals can relate to the content they encounter and the algorithm provides a predictable and safe environment, psychology can cause individuals to attribute homely feelings to an inanimate space (Karahanna, 2015)

Even though a digital space is inanimate, humans from evolution have the psychological need to gather possessions, which can lead to an uplifting effect. Through this, the user can develop the feeling of ownership towards virtual belongings, for instance in regards to being part of a community and gathered content (Karahanna, 2015). With TikTok, we believe this is especially apparent

due to the effects of microtargeting. Not only is microtargeting efficiently used for product recommendations, it is also facilitating communities within the platform, where each user has a different personally targeted For You-page.

The algorithm facilitates the use of microtargeting, which can be exploited by brands as well. Brands have the ability to reach their target audience on an accurate level with brand owned touchpoints through electronic word of mouth. As mentioned, one of TikTok's greatest attributes is the highly personalized and adaptable For You-page. An important digital decision aid that is prominent on this platform is digital word-of-mouth. Online consumer reviews have become a crucial part of the marketing communication mix, and in an online world where consumers are resisting persuasion attempts (Friestad and Wright, 1994), authentic consumer reviews play an important role in consumers' purchase decisions (Chen & Xie, 2008). TikToks about product reviews often appear genuine since they usually examine products from the perspective of their own usage situation, thus being able to match consumers' goals and intentions (Chen & Xie, 2008). Consumer-created product information moreover focuses on usage-relevant product attributes and performance from a consumer's point of view. Further empirical findings suggest that these types of reviews are helpful for less sophisticated consumers in regard to finding products that best match their interests and intentions (Chen & Xie, 2008). Again, the algorithm of TikTok is trained to learn about your personality and preferences, hence when users are faced with consumer-created product information it is likely that the products match.

When information is a prominent gratification for social media usage it can be moderated by the features that shape the user experience (Di Gangi, 2016). The value of the platform will be increased if the user has a perception of their ability to engage within the desired specificity level. Users have different specificity levels, where someone might emphasize content gratification through entertainment or social aspects, while another might want to emerge in specific content surrounding a topic of interest. If a user feels that they have the ability to impact what they are subjected to, it will lead to higher engagement (Di Gangi, 2016). The design features of TikTok can therefore

help explain the gratification needs surrounding the informative aspects, since the platform provides specificity levels through the search bar, hashtags, algorithm personalization etc. While using the For You-page, it will also help remix the source of information, which is referred to as integration. The dynamic environment helps generate meaning and depth by always providing a great mix of different sources and opinions, and users can easily access information from different entry points. This in turn can increase user engagement (Di Gangi, 2016).

2.6 User behavior

Each member of a social media platform has a different experience and can perceive their role differently. Some might be passive users, and others are more often than not an active participant in content creation and engaging with other user generated content. How a user perceives their role within the platform is referred to as individual involvement, which dictates whether or not a user believes their role is important according to meeting their needs (Di Gangi, 2016). When a user has high individual involvement, it has been found to increase arousal and motivation to participate. Based on the business model of co-creation of value, the value of the platform has a positive correlation with the amount of user generated content and engagement of different levels. Gratifications like personal meaning are further fulfilled based on the platform that caters an experience that is relevant to a person's interests (Di Gangi, 2016).

When discussing TikTok in general, the format of content is found to have a significant positive effect of different engagement behavior as opposed to pictures (Shahbaznezhad, 2021). Users alter, share, and reuse information via social media, regardless of the original intent or meaning of the original content. Remixing content, according to Lessig (2008), represents a generational shift in how users communicate. Users can now offer distinctive viewpoints on what they find personally significant. As a platform, TikTok has made it very accessible to remix content and participate with the use of, for

instance, trending sounds. According to Wixom and Todd (2005), evolvability is the extent to which a social media platform changes to accommodate a user's current needs and aspirations. As of TikTok, the platform constantly provides new features for users to engage with, for instance filters. Users may have preconceived notions about how they would be led through the early steps of interacting with other users when they first visit the platform. The requirements of users alter as they become more accustomed to the app. As usage patterns get more sophisticated, more functionalities become necessary. According to research, people are more likely to become highly interested and participatory when platforms give them the means for developing content that corresponds to their present demands (Di Gangi, 2016).

2.7 Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing has gained significant traction in the era of social media marketing. It involves leveraging individuals with large followings to influence others. These influencers are considered significant figures with persuasive power over their followers. They may have built a substantial following based on their fame outside of social media or their exceptional content on the platform itself (Haenlein et al., 2020). Influencer marketing proves to be effective because influencers with large followings can reach a wide range of users beyond what the brand can achieve on its own. Their followers often view them as role models and aspire to own the products they endorse. By engaging with an influencer’s content and personal life, followers develop a personal connection, allowing brands to indirectly establish personal relationships through the influencer’s reviews and content. Research has shown that a combination of personal and informational content is the most effective in engaging and persuading consumers (Lee et al., 2018).

Influencer marketing is particularly effective in reaching Generation Z, who have shifted their attention from traditional marketing channels to social platforms (Haenlein et al., 2020). With social media integrated into their reality, Generation Z easily gains insights into influencers’ and celebrities’

lives, fostering a sense of personal connection. Instagram and TikTok are the primary platforms for influencer marketing due to their rich content formats, which enable a variety of persuasive content.

Influencer marketing serves not only to build awareness among potential consumers but also to drive conversion. Many brands provide influencers with exclusive discount codes to share with their followers, creating a sense of community, bonding and exclusivity. Collaborations can occur both in the short term or long term. Booking a single post with an influencer may generate short-term conversion, but it may not establish strong brand attitude and awareness in the long run. To foster long-term brand loyalty, it is more effective to book an influencer for an extended period, including multiple posts (Haenlein et al., 2020).

3.0 Research Question

After reviewing relevant literature we have explored the three most common gratifications when it comes to TikTok use. We are further interested in researching the distribution and characteristics of TikTok users in realms of the different gratification categories. In terms of this we propose the following research question to be investigated:

"How can adolescents be segmented in terms of their gratifications towards TikTok use, and what measures can brands employ to strategically reach these segments on the platform?

4.0 Methodology

The following section describes how data was collected for the purpose of the analyses. Initially, we go into details of our sample and research design. Secondly, the procedure, segmentation variables, questionnaire design, and

data collection will be described. Lastly, we will explain how we prepared the data for the analyses.

4.1 Research Design

The primary objective for this research is to explore different segments in regard to gratifications from TikTok usage. After reviewing previous literature on the field, we have discovered that little emphasis has been given on how adolescents approach TikTok and what gratifications they seek on the platform. Hence, we chose to conduct a cross-sectional study, using a quantitative method to investigate this in detail (Malhotra, 2019). A quantitative method was chosen to increase the quality of the study and it enabled us to produce segments through statistical cluster analysis in a numerical sense. The study has an explorative approach to gain comprehensive insight into the target population. Using a quantitative method gives better control to grasp out detailed and standardized information regarding abstract contexts. Beforehand, we gathered necessary secondary data on social media, TikTok, social media gratifications, and marketing in social media to get a comprehensive foundation we could use to operationalize the abstract contexts.

Data will be gathered from a sample using a digital questionnaire made in the survey software program Qualtrics. A digital questionnaire is appropriate because it gives the possibility to reach the target group in different places in Norway, as well as being effective for the purpose of digital analyses.

The analysis to be conducted is a cluster analysis in regards to the psychographic segmentation variables: “Information Gratification”, “Social Gratification” and “Entertainment Gratification”. The results will further be analyzed in Microsoft Excel, where demographic and behavioral segmentation variables also will be included to get a deeper understanding of the segments. We believe this will provide us with a wide range of information that can further be used as strategic implications for brands to reach this group of customers.

4.2 Sample and Target Population

The target population for our research is further defined by several criteria (Malhotra, 2019). We wish to target Norwegian adolescents in the age group of 16-19. This group falls under the category of generation Z, which also stands as one of the most prominent demographics of TikTok (Howarth, 2023). The most important criteria for the target population is that they use TikTok regularly. We were interested to learn more about their motivation to use TikTok given their transition into independent young adults, their increased spending power and their frequent use of the platform.

To reach our target group we further decided on a sampling frame containing students at Norwegian upper secondary school. Students at this level are between the age of 16-19 which sufficiently captures the lower level of generation Z. Due to minimal monetary- and time resources we chose a convenience sample (Malhotra, 2019). Utilizing schools is the most effective way to reach our target population. Although a random representative sample would be a better fit for our purpose, we made our sample as random as possible to get results with a high level of validity and reliability.

As we will conduct a cluster analysis to classify objects into relatively homogeneous segments based on their gratifications on TikTok, we need a rich and varied sample (Malhotra, 2019). The sample size for cluster analysis does not have any typical sizing, as it depends on the purpose of the analyses and number of variables in which the clusters are based on (Dolnicar, 2002). However, in a later study by Dolnicar (2013), it is revealed that a sample size 70 times the number of variables included in the cluster analysis is adequate. In our cluster analysis we include 21 variables describing 3 gratification aspects. Thus, one could argue that sample size = 3x70 = 210 or sample size = 21x70 = 1470, is adequate for our research. Because we use 21 variables measuring 3 different aspects, and due to minimal time and monetary resources, our goal is to reach a minimum of 210 respondents after data cleaning.

4.3 Segmentation Variables

As mentioned, we have operationalized the segmentation variables for our analysis into 21 questions to make sure we cover a broad aspect for our three gratification aspects. The questions are shown in table 1 below. The gratifications to be measured are “Information Gratification”, “Social Gratification” and “Entertainment Gratification”.

For each of the gratifications we have questions inspired from the research by Hoffman & Novak (2012). In their research they “identify how and why people use social media in the context of their basic needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness, intrinsic and external motivations, and well-being perceptions.” (Hoffman & Novak, 2012). Our segmentation variables were chosen first and foremost because they embrace the main reasons why people use the TikTok. The questions used to explore them in a broad way, are inspired from the same research from Hoffman & Stovak, but manipulated to become related to TikTok and our research topic. Lastly, relying on variables that have been established in secondary data, we hope to achieve results with a high level of validity and reliability (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Segmentation variables	
Information Gratification	
	"I use TikTok to gain new knowledge about a spesific area."
	"I use TikTok to gain knowledge I can use in my everyday life."
	"I use TikTok to find trustworthy information."
	"I use TikTok to learn new skills."
	"I use TikTok to learn about new products in the market."
	"I use TikTok to explore popular products."
	"I use TikTok to get inspired by things that interest me."
	"I use TikTok as a news chnnel, instead of magazines, news on the TV, etc."
Social Gratification	
	"I use TikTok to be social."
	"I use TikTok to feel included in conversations."
	"I use TikTok to see content by people who are similar to me."
	"I use TikTok to find videos I can send to my friends as a part of our communication."
	"It is important to me to feel like I am a part of a community on TikTok."
	"It is important to me to relate to other people on TikTok."
Entertainment Gratification	
	"I use TikTok to entertain myself."
	"I use TikTok to escape from reality."
	"I use TikTok because it helps me to relax."
	"I use TikTok as pastime."
	"I use TikTok to change my mood."
	"I use TikTok to develop a sense of identity."
	"I use TikTok to express my personality by creating content."

Table 1: Statements used to explore the gratifications: “Information”, “Social” and “Entertainment”.

4.4 Descriptive variables

To get a more detailed description of the segments from the cluster analysis, we have included descriptive segmentation variables. We have included the basic descriptives like age, grade and gender and also descriptives regarding TikTok usage. These have the intention to explore their behavior on the app, if they engage with the content and how. Questions about social life in their spare time and working hours are other descriptive segmentation variables we have included.

4.6 Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 36 questions in total. As the target group was Norwegian adolescents, we chose to conduct the questionnaire in Norwegian to avoid translation errors. The respondents were initially asked to consent to taking part in the study.

In the first section our goal was to map out the respondents' relationship with TikTok. We asked the initial question “do you use TikTok?” to disregard responses from non-users. If the respondent answered “no” they were sent to the end of the survey by default. Questions capturing their relationship further concerns: how frequently they use it, how big following they have, how many they follow, if they publish anything on the platform, and what “feed” they use the most. They also got asked to rank TikTok compared to other social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube.

The questionnaire's primary section is divided into three blocks related to the three gratifications described previously: “Information Gratification”, “Social Gratification” and “Entertainment Gratification”. The respondents were initially questioned regarding usage in relation to information. These questions were presented in a matrix table (Appendix 1). The respondents were asked to rate 8 statements on a likert scale from 1-7, where 1 is “completely disagree”, and 7 is “completely agree”. The likert scale was chosen as the numerically equal distances on the scale represent equal values in the variables that are

being measured (Malhotra, 2019). This makes it easier for the respondents to rate the statements, which will reduce potential error in the analysis and results. Furthermore, it makes it less complicated to conduct a cluster analysis. A 7-point scale was chosen before a 5 point scale to get more variation and precise measurements from the respondents.

The second block of questions is about “Social Gratification” (Appendix 1). The respondents were asked to rate their agreement to 6 different statements on a likert-scale from 1-7. The third block in the questionnaire included statements to cover “Entertainment Gratification”. In this part, they were presented to 10 different statements to rate whether they completely disagree or completely agree on the same likert scale from 1-7.

Continuing to the next block, we presented questions regarding user behavior. . The respondents were asked to what extent they agree with statements (from 1-7) about how they engage with others on TikTok and how often. The different engagement types were: like, share to other platforms, comment, duet, save and follow. They were also asked whether they ever bought a product after being exposed to it on the platform, as well as other questions to indicate if content influences them in their everyday life.

To get a deeper understanding to what content the respondent prefer, we further asked them to select which categories they are most interested in between: humor, informative, inspirational, motivational, fashion, beauty, cooking, fitness, gaming, storytelling, sponsored content (this categories are directly translated from the Norwegian questionnaire, thus misinterpretation might appear). Furthermore, we asked them to rate their likelihood of using the platform while engaging in another activity on a scale from 1 to 7, in order to better understand how crucial it is for them to receive the ongoing stimulation from TikTok.

The last block included demographic questions about age, gender, school, study direction, year in upper secondary school and average grades. These questions are included to make sure they meet the requirements to be a part of

our sample, and also to get a more precise description of the clusters in the results.

4.7 Data Collection

In order to collect data for our analyses, we reached out to administration leaders of different study directions at several upper secondary schools in Norway. This increased the likelihood to reach our target group as the leaders can get in direct contact with the sample. The schools we reached out to were Halden, Jessheim, Ringerike, Buskerud, Eiker, Lier. We kindly asked if there was any chance that their students would participate in the research for the purpose of our master thesis. After permission was given, they were sent a link to the digital questionnaire on Qualtrics, which teachers could distribute through internal teaching platforms. The completion of the questionnaire was either done in class or in the students' leisure time. Additionally, to gather an appropriate number of respondents, we reached out directly to upper secondary school students from our network. Many of these students live elsewhere in Norway, resulting in a more diverse sample.

4.8 Validity

To ensure validity of our study, we aimed for a high number of participants in order to accomplish variety in our data. Factors that can affect the validity for our research are for instance that the respondents might interpret the questions and statements in a different way than their original meaning. In addition, the respondents might also be at risk of different interpretations of the questions. This is called systematic errors (Ringdal, 2018). The target group for this study is young and it is reason to believe they have little experience doing a project that requires a questionnaire for research purposes. Thus, there is a risk that they do not take the questionnaire seriously, and that the answers might be inaccurate.

4.9 Reliability

A risk with surveys is the occurrence of participant bias (Frijters et al., 2015). This can appear when the participants act the way they think the researchers want them to behave (Ringdal, 2018). As we are targeting adolescents in the age between 16-19 about TikTok, which is a big part of their lives, they might answer in a pattern they think we wish them to. On the other hand, they might not take the questionnaire seriously and give us non-valid answers.

Utilizing an already tested and defined scale reduces the potential for researcher error and -bias. Thus, we have used several studies that have explored somewhat the same area that we wish to do. Except we have customized the statements for the factors in question, to match the purpose of our research. However, for the purpose of a cluster analysis, we wish to see as much variety and sides of the aspects as possible, to get a better foundation of clustering and a better description of each segment.

4.10 Ethical considerations

As we aimed to target a young age group, we had to take the legal age into consideration. However, based on the The Norwegian Data Protection Authority' guidelines, it was appropriate to target age 16 because they are counted to be mature enough to take a consent decision by themselves for this type of questionnaire (Datatilsynet, 2022). The questionnaire is made anonymous through settings in Qualtrics, by not collecting the respondents' IP-address. It does not contain any questions that require the respondents to give any sensitive personal information. This is also in respect to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Initially the respondents were made aware about the purpose of the questionnaire and that no sensitive personal information and identifying data would be collected. They were also informed about the data saving period, and that it would be deleted after the research for the master thesis was finished.

Furthermore, they got the option to choose whether they consent to complete the questionnaire.

5.0 Analysis

This part contains the analyses done in the light of our research question. We conducted a cluster analysis in order to identify segments among the respondents in terms of their gratifications towards TikTok. Following that, the cluster data was analyzed in Microsoft Excel to achieve a more detailed view of the segments.

5.1 Data Preparation

The data collection lasted for two weeks, resulting in an initial sample consisting of 213 respondents. After reviewing the data we had to remove (N=34) respondents, due to them answering “No” to the question: “Do you use TikTok?”. Further we removed (N=1) participants who did not consent to the questionnaire. Moreover (N=2) participants did not complete the survey, we therefore made the choice of removing them. Lastly, (N=1) was removed due to not meeting the criteria of being an upper secondary school student. We were then left with a sample consisting of 175 participants.

5.2 Sample description

Our sample contains an evenly split between boys (N=81) and girls (N=91). As of our sample criteria, we were interested in studying upper secondary school students in all three levels. As such, our sample consists of (N=58) “first-graders”, (N=78) “second-graders”, and (N=39) “third-graders”. Looking at different schools, we have gathered responses from a variety of different upper secondary schools (table 2).

School	N
Akademiet	4
Bodø Videregående Skole	1
Buskerud Videregående Skole	14
Edvard Munch	1
Elvebakken Videregående skole	1
Fræna Videregående Skole	1
Hadeland Videregående Skole	1
Hartvig Nissen Videregående Skole	3
Hønefoss Videregående Skole	1
Jessheim Videregående Skole	53
Kuben Videregående Skole	1
Lier Videregående Skole	1
Molde Videregående Skole	36
Nes Videregående Skole	1
Nydalen Videregående Skole	2
Ringerike Videregående Skole	43
Romsdal Videregående Skole	10
Wang Toppidrett	1
Total	175

Table 2: Schools and contained respondents

We also have a representation of different study programmes were the largest clusters are “Studiespesialiserende utdanningsprogram” (N=87), “Salg, service og reiseliv” (N=70), and “Idrett” (N=12). We also have respondents who are a part of “Musikk, dans og drama” (N=2), and “Elektro” (N=1).

From our sample, we can see that the average student is doing well when it comes to school. By looking at the grade point average, (N=76) have a GPA between 4.1-5, and the GPA-categories between 3.1-4 and 5.1-6 both have approximately 21% each. When it comes to leisure activities, our sample is evenly divided where approximately half (N=90) are occupied with “Individual sport” (N=43), “Team sports” (N=41), and “Music” (N=8), and the other (N=83) who are not a part of any leisure activities. Continuing, most of the respondents (N=126) have a part-time job besides school.

Besides school we also have tried to map out the sample’s social life with the question: “In an average week, how many days do you hang out with your friends besides school”. The sample are pretty normally distributed with (0 days, N=15), (1 day, N=21), (2 days, N=35), (3 days, N=36), (4 days, N=34),

(5 days, N=16), (6 days, N=4), (7 days, N=13). The mentioned descriptives have given us a good overview of the participants' leisure time and whether they are generally occupied. This data gives a good description about the respondents' engagement in school, work, leisure activities and social life.

When it comes to TikTok usage, our sample is pretty familiar with the platform. According to the question: "How long have you been on TikTok?", (N=56) have been on TikTok for more than four years, (N=53) have been on TikTok between 3-4 years, and respectively (N=37) have been on TikTok between 2-3 years, and (N=25) 1-2 years, with only (N=4) have been less than a year. As we can see from table 3, the sample are familiar with social features on the platform where they show a generous mean for both the amount of followers and following. However, the mean for followers is substantially influenced by an extreme outlier, one respondent reported having 310,000 followers. If we were to remove the outlier it would have given a more representative mean for the amount of followers, which is 429 as shown in table 3:

Descriptives for Followers/Following on TikTok			
	Following	Followers	Followers (without outlier)
Mean	563.70	2,221.01	429.10
Median	180	94	92
Std.dev.	1,106.99	23,559.21	1,044.92

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics amount of followers/following

As for time spent on the app, we can see that the majority (N=152) use TikTok on a daily basis. On the same note, we found that our sample spends an average of 129 minutes on the days they are using TikTok.

In regards to social media usage in general, we asked the respondents to rank the most popular platforms according to importance. Looking at the data, the findings are summarized from most to least important in the illustration below.

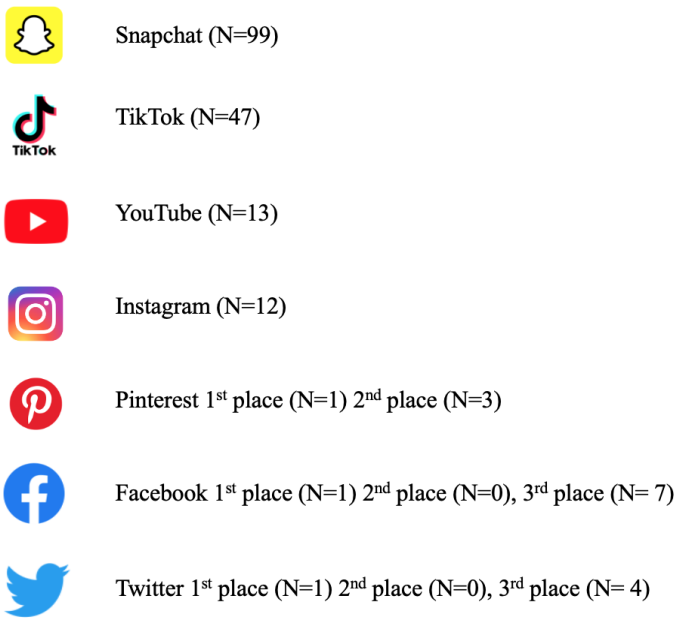

Figure 1: Social Media Platform Ranking

Moving on to usage behavior, (N=167) reported they prefer using the For You-page. When it comes to whether or not they feel the For You-page is personalized for them, the reported findings suggest a diverse opinion. Where only (N=35) report that they totally agree, and the highest count (N=46) report that they somewhat disagree. Overall, the majority are situated over the middle threshold, meaning most find their For You-page at least somewhat personalized more so than not.

When it comes to content creation, the majority never post (N=95), or once a month or less (N=50). As for interaction on the platform, we can see some polarized results, where (N=42) interact with 1-5 TikToks in each session, and (N=41) interact with more than 20 videos. Most respondents (N=58) interact with TikToks by liking them, and we show the different categories of interactions with the distribution in table 4 below.

	Like	Comment	Share	Save	Duet	Follow
Totally disagree	12	**64**	16	27	**102**	27
2	10	22	15	20	11	20
3	17	26	24	27	16	**29**
4	28	15	26	29	12	28
5	30	17	37	19	10	26
6	20	11	12	12	9	16
Totally agree	**58**	19	**45**	**41**	15	28

Table 4: Frequencies: Interactions

We have also gathered some data on what type of content our sample find interesting as shown in the table below:

	Humor	Informative	Inspiring	Motivating	Fashion	Beauty	Food	Fitness	Gaming	Storytime
Totally uninteresting	4	11	10	10	27	**61**	18	20	**69**	**39**
2	6	22	13	19	24	11	21	15	17	25
3	12	30	23	22	15	11	24	23	17	26
4	15	33	32	**40**	**29**	20	**34**	**33**	28	29
5	31	**35**	**45**	32	27	23	32	30	16	25
6	34	22	24	28	27	22	22	22	12	14
Totally interesting	**73**	22	28	24	26	27	24	32	16	17

Table 5: Frequencies: content preference

From a consumer and brand perspective, (N=44) reported buying something due to a recommendation on TikTok, whereas (N=41) totally disagree that they have. Using TikTok as a means for learning about new products on the market is pretty evenly distributed across the level of “agreement”. However when it comes to using TikTok as a means to discover popular products, the sample are more agreeable with (N=115) have answered from “somewhat agree” up to “totally agree”. It is also apparent that our sample is not interested in seeing sponsored content, with (N=69) reported that it is “totally uninteresting”.

Meaning that they are interested in finding products and brands, however they are more apprehensive when it comes to persuasion attempts regarding sponsored posts.

5.3 Cluster analysis

Initially, we conducted a hierarchical cluster analysis where different clustering methods were used to explore the number of clusters we should aim for. Additionally, trying different methods to achieve the most appropriate solution, contributes to a higher degree of reliability of the results. Firstly, we used agglomerative clustering as this was most appropriate for our data set. We further tried different linkage methods such as single and complete linkage (Malhotra, 2019). As all the variables were measured at the same scale (1-7), we did not need to standardize the values. However, the hierarchical clustering gave us only two clusters by looking at the numbers, whereas the dendrogram was challenging to interpret. Thus, we conducted K-Means Clustering with a fixed number of clusters (3 and 4). Furthermore, we saved the cluster membership for each respondent and exported the data to Microsoft Excel, for both the 3- and 4-cluster solution, separately.

Exporting the data to Excel gave us a better visualization of the data, and also simplified the comparison of numbers, mean and frequencies. Initially, we compared the mean for each gratification variable. By looking at these values we can see that a 3-cluster solution resulted in better homogeneity within the cluster and heterogeneity between the clusters. Thus, 3 clusters was the most appropriate solution to move forward with. The size of the clusters were approximately the same, N=54 (Cluster 1), N=58 (Cluster 2) and N=56 (Cluster 3).

6.0 Results and Discussion

In this part we will discuss the results of the cluster analysis. The segments will be described in depth using the average values derived from each segmentation variable used for clustering (Table 6). In addition, we will use other variables to describe the segments, which will be shown and discussed for each segment. We have named our clusters based on the variables with high values: The Social Producers (Cluster 1), The Entertainment Lurkers (Cluster 2) and The Curious and Inspired (Cluster 3). As we can tell from the division, the segments have been somewhat divided into each of the three segmentation variables we used for clustering.

The Social Producers		**The Entertainment Lurkers**		**The Curious and Inspired**	
Variable	Avg. Value	Variable	Avg. Value	Variable	Avg. Value
Entertainment	**6,02**	Entertainment	**5,59**	Entertainment	**6,17**
Pastime	**6,00**	Pastime	4,67	Inspired by Interests	**5,67**
Relax	**5,87**	Relax	3,93	Discover Popular Products	**5,17**
Change mood	**5,65**	Change mood	3,71	Discover New Products	**5,09**
Escapism	**5,59**	Feeling of community	3,64	Knowledge about new topics	4,85
Feeling of Community	**5,48**	Part of Communication	3,55	Everyday Knowledge	4,78
Relatable Content	**5,39**	Inspired by interests	3,43	Part of Communication	4,61
Relate to Others	**5,24**	Escapism	3,17	Learn New Skills	4,57
Part of Communication	**5,15**	Relatable Content	3,12	Pastime	4,46
Inclusion in Offline Conversations	**5,15**	Discover Popular Products	3,05	Feeling of Community	4,31
Part of a community	4,91	Everyday Knowledge	2,72	Relax	4,20
Develop an Identity	4,89	Knowledge about new topics	2,62	Change My Mood	4,11
Inspired By Interests	4,78	Discover New Products	2,53	Relatable Content	3,98
To Be Social	4,76	Relate to Others	2,50	Catch up on News	3,89
Discover Popular Products	4,52	Learn New Skills	2,45	Reliable Information	3,59
Learn New Skills	4,35	Catch up on News	2,45	To Be Social	3,43
Everyday Knowledge	4,20	To Be Social	2,43	Escapism	3,20
Discover New Products	4,09	Develop an Identity	2,14	Relate to Others	3,17
Knowledge About New Topic	3,91	Part of a community	2,0	Develop an Identity	2,87
Catch up on News	3,70	Inclusion in Offline Conversations	1,93	Inclusion in Offline Conversations	2,80
Reliable Information	3,35	Reliable Information	1,76	Part of Community	2,41

Table 6: Average Values - Gratifications Between Clusters

Table 7 provides an overview of three behavioral segmentation variables. These are additionally used to describe the segments, for a more comprehensive understanding.

The Social Producers		**The Entertainment Lurkers**		**The Curious and Inspired**	
Variable	Avg. Value	Variable	Avg. Value	Variable	Avg. Value
Bought a Recommended Product	5.41	Bought a Recommended Product	2.69	Bought a Recommended Product	4.26
Everyday Speech	4.07	Everyday Speech	2.28	Everyday Speech	3.07
Express Personality	4.02	Express Personality	1.66	Express Personality	2.59

Table 7: Average Values - Behavioral Descriptive Segmentation Variables

Table 8 shows an overview of frequencies in percentage across variables that were not used in the cluster analysis. However, these are used to explore the dimensionality in the segments to a deeper level. These can help us explain to some degree if differences in their lifestyle potentially have an impact on the gratifications for each cluster. In table 8 we have only included the variables that had differences across the segments. The variables that did not show any differences are seen as irrelevant for the further description of the segments.

Variable Frequencies in %				
Variable	**Description**	**The Social Producers**	**The Entertainment Lurkers**	**The Curios and Inspired**
Work hours				
	I do not have a job	34 %	30 %	20 %
	1-5 hours a week	10 %	17 %	16 %
	6-10 hours a week	24 %	35 %	32 %
	11-15 hours a week	19 %	11 %	14 %
	16-20 hours a week	5 %	4 %	13 %
	21 hours or more a week	7 %	4 %	5 %
Leisure Activities				
	Team Sports	22 %	22 %	29 %
	Individual Sports	22 %	19 %	30 %
	Music	2 %	7 %	4 %
	No activities	53 %	52 %	38 %
Social Life hanging with friends				
	< 1-3 times a month	24 %	17 %	14 %
	1-3 times a month	22 %	19 %	27 %
	1-2 times a week	34 %	35 %	36 %
	3-4 times a week	17 %	22 %	20 %
	5 times a week	2 %	7 %	4 %
	> 5 times a week	0 %	0 %	0 %
Social during the week				
	0 days	9 %	9 %	7 %
	1 day	10 %	22 %	7 %
	2 days	19 %	24 %	20 %
	3 days	26 %	20 %	18 %
	4 days	21 %	11 %	27 %
	5 days	9 %	7 %	25 %
	6 days	2 %	2 %	13 %
	7 days	5 %	4 %	11 %
Grade				
	1st	33 %	37 %	34 %
	2nd	53 %	30 %	46 %
	3rd	14 %	33 %	20 %
GPA				
	1-2	0 %	0 %	0 %
	2.1-3	12 %	9 %	2 %
	3.1-4	22 %	28 %	18 %
	4.1-5	45 %	44 %	18 %
	5.1-6	19 %	15 %	29 %
	> 6	2 %	4 %	5 %

Table 8: Variable Frequencies in %

In table 9 below, we provide an overview of the percentage frequencies of usage descriptive statistics across the segments. This will further be used to

describe the segments in depth, in addition to the other variables. Opposed to table 8, this table shows data representing behavioral segmentation variables.

Usage frequency in %				
Variables	**Description**	**Social Producers**	**Entertainment Lurkers**	**Curious and Inspired**
How long using TikTok				
	< 1 year	1.9%	5.2%	-
	1-2 years	13.0%	13.8%	17.9%
	2-3 years	16.7%	27.6%	17.9%
	3-4 years	22.2%	29.3%	37.5%
	> 4 years	46.3%	24.1%	26.8%
Frequency of TikTok usage				
	Never	3.7%	0.0%	-
	< Once a week	-	3.4%	-
	1-3 times a week	5.6%	6.9%	5.4%
	4-6 times a week	5.6%	3.4%	5.4%
	Daily	85.2%	86.2%	89.3%
Feed preference				
	For you-page	94.4%	96.6%	96.4%
	Following-page	3.7%	3.4%	1.8%
	Search	1.9%	-	1.8%
Publishing frequency				
	Never	35.2%	67.2%%	62.5%
	Once a month or less	33.3%	31.0%	25.0%
	2-3 times a month	13.0%	1.7%	8.9%
	Once a week	9.3%	-	1.8%
	Several times a week	9.3%	-	1.8%

Table 9: Usage Frequencies in %

Table 10 gives an overview of the mean values of followers, and how many the segments follow. Additionally, the table provides the segments' mean value of minutes in an average session on TikTok.

Descriptives on TikTok Usage - Mean			
	Social Producers	**Entertainment Lurkers**	**Curious and Inspired**
Followers	7373.28	414.34	286.57
Following	545.57	386.34	661.69
Minutes in an average session	137.13	106.78	131.19

Table 10: Mean value of followers, following and duration of an average session on TikTok in minutes.

6.1 Social Producers

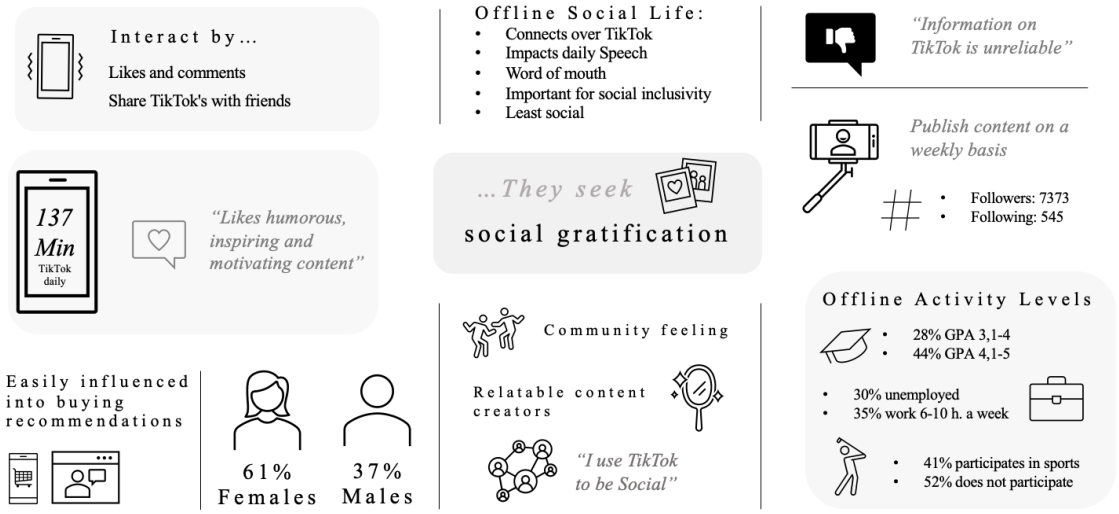

Figure 2: Illustration of the Social Producers

This cluster contains 54 individuals, with a distribution of 20 males, 33 females, plus one individual who does not identify as neither. The cluster is rather equal when it comes to age distribution and their respective grade, and they are normally distributed when it comes to their grade point average with the majority having a GPA between 4.1 and 5. Looking at their activity level besides school, 30% does not have a job, while the majority works about 6-10 hours a week. Furthermore, there is a pretty evenly distributed split between those who engage in leisure activities and those who do not. When it comes to their social life, they are the least social cluster compared to the remainder of the sample, 75% hang out with their friends 3 times or less during an average week.

Moving on, they are the cluster that has been the longest on the platform with an average of 3-4 years. They also use the application on a daily basis with an average of 137 minutes a day. Per session they report interacting with an average of 3,76 which leans towards 11-15 TikToks. Furthermore, this group contains the highest average value of producer activity, where they report an average of 2,15 when it comes to “how often do you publish” - which is between “one time a week or less” and “1-3 times a week”. This cluster also has the highest average number of followers, counting 7373 (including the

outlier). However, by removing the outlier, the average number of followers remains the highest at 708.

6.1.2 Entertainment Gratification

The Social Producers value the entertainment aspect that TikTok provides. By being the cluster that interacts the most with content, they are subject to receiving the most personalized For You-page as well. As mentioned they often use TikTok in addition to other activities, which suggest some level of addiction. The mere exposure effect also suggests that this cluster is more salient towards the application since they have the highest usage habits. Being that this is the cluster that contains the producers could also explain why they find the application so entertaining. By posting content, they will also continually receive rewards in form of interactions and confirmations that their content is entertaining (Harrigan & Dixon, 2009). Due to their high usage and interaction rates, they are also the group who places the most sentimental value on the platform. They built up libraries of both their own original works and saved content from other creators.

Continuing, this segment scores high on all variables that measure entertainment. Noteworthy is that they “agree” to using TikTok to pass time. The habit of receiving quick entertainment on the spot can act as a moderator of addictive behavior. Since they also report that they use TikTok as a pastime, one can assume that they sometimes endeavor emotional strain if they cannot be constantly entertained or if interruption occurs (Montag et al., 2019). Looking at the segment's interest and content preference, there is no category that falls under the middle threshold. Being exposed to more “rewards” further amplifies the immersion aspect (Harrigan & Dixon, 2009). The positive attitude is further supported by the fact that they are the segment with the longest experience with the platform.

6.1.1 Social Gratification

The cluster of the social producers were identified on the basis of high scores concerning the social gratifications. Firstly, we look at some of the psychographic variables. Out of all the cluster solutions, the Social Producers are those who spend the most time on TikTok in addition to being the least social in terms of hanging out with friends. Moreover, they are the group that works the least, and is the least engaged in leisure activities. This can ultimately mean that they seek social gratification as compensation for unmet social needs. As discussed, individuals with a limited social circle are more inclined to seek acceptance on social networking sites to establish new social connections (Iannone et al., 2017). The segment also reports that they find it easy to follow creators if they find their content of interest, and on average the segment follows a substantial amount of creators. As mentioned by Hoffner & Bind (2022), parasocial relationships can instigate the same type of social bonds as a "real" relationship gives. They probably find this type of social gratification especially salient, due to the lowest reported social life out of our sample.

However, it is important to note that this segment may not necessarily have a limited social circle, their behavior can alternatively be attributed to a prioritization trade-off. The segment reports agreeing to "I use TikTok to be social", and with the highest average TikTok use, the platform could act as an alienation device from peers, family and school (Dredge & Schreurs, 2020). We know from the time displacement hypothesis that extensive media use can distract from social activities (Putnam, 1995). TikTok can therefore consume parts of this segment's offline activity levels, which makes it challenging to distinguish between TikTok and real life. It could easily be the case that this segment prioritizes TikTok over activities. This is further supported by the seemingly little distinction between offline and online groups, and we can see a noticeable crossover effect from online to offline socialization within the segment. They have high values when it comes to "using TikTok to be included in offline conversation" in addition to "TikTok affects my daily speech". We can further assume that individuals who belong in this segment

are more so immersed in TikTok culture which influences their offline relationships. If the benefits of social accessibility are apparent, the individual does not inherently have to prioritize offline over online socialization.

As mentioned, TikTok has access to a plethora of data points, which is synchronized to contacts and third party applications. The algorithm can therefore track and suggest content based on shared interests, providing social accessibility (Di Gangi, 2016). When individuals find that people who are important to them are also using the same platform, they can perceive social benefits, which in turn leads to a more positive user attitude towards TikTok. This attitude is reflected by the segment reporting the most favorable results (Di Gangi 2016). In addition, this cluster also seems to value the communication utility that TikTok provides, where they report that their main form of interaction is sending videos to their friends through third-party platforms (Davis, 2011). Therefore, the herd mentality seems to be in place here, and the gratification of "fitting in" with the "in-group" could be explanatory. Thus, they are more likely to talk about and discuss certain trends, which can enable brands and content creators to have a greater reach.

Continuing, this segment stands out as having the highest number of followers. Additionally, 64% of the segment actively produce content on TikTok and perceive the platform as instrumental in shaping their identity. According to Barker (2009), online environments can play a vital role in identity formation and fostering meaningful relationships, particularly for individuals with low self-esteem. The phenomenon of social comparison, commonly observed among adolescents with low self-esteem, has been identified as a mediator of addictive-like behavior (Servidio et al., 2021). Furthermore, this cluster exhibits the highest levels of platform usage, including "minutes spent on the platform", "TikTok use during other activities", and average interaction rates. Considering their possible low self-esteem and desire for social gratification, it is understandable that they may be more inclined to seek recommendations from TikTok content creators. Their quest for identity development leads them to look to their peer group or "idols", and they express a preference for content from creators who share similar characteristics or experiences.

6.1.3 Informative Gratification

As for individual involvement, we look at this cluster as being active participants when it comes to content creation and engagement, hence they might perceive their role on the platform as important. Their involvement also affects the level of relevance the algorithm provides (Di Gangi, 2016). When it comes to informative gratifications, it seems to be the least favorable. They are not subject to opening TikTok to learn about new topics, however they might not shy away from it if it appears. The challenge is to maintain their interest if the content is strictly informative - considering their high preference for entertainment. At the bottom of the ranked gratifications the segment states they do not necessarily agree to believing the information on TikTok is reliable. Hence, they are more apprehensive to trusting the information they come across.

When it comes to information about products, they are more than average interested in discovering popular products. In addition they agree to have made a purchase from a recommendation they have seen on TikTok. In line with the down-favored “new information”, they also prefer learning about popular products, rather than “new”. From a consumerism standpoint they can therefore be considered more risk averse and a part of the late majority when it comes to trending products. This can be an additional affirmation that this cluster follows the herd mentality and the interest is mostly peaked if a product can help them reach their desired self-image.

6.1.4 Strategic Guidelines

All together, the individuals that connect with this cluster are a fairly easy group to target with marketing activities, both in regards of brand building and conversions. From a brands standpoint, we can further discuss the best strategies for reaching the social producers.

Firstly, we have learned that social connection plays a big part of their gratification, brands playing on “social touchpoints” can create content that

aligns with their goals which then has a higher chance of being accepted (Araujo et al., 2022). As discussed, this cluster is susceptible to developing parasocial relationships, which brands can leverage. Given the blurred boundaries between friends and influencers, it makes it easier to create brand content that resonates with this audience (Hoffner & Bind, 2022).

Users can develop a personal connection with influencers through their content on social media. This can result in an indirect relationship between the user and the brand, as attributes and feelings towards the influencers results in a crossover-effect to the brand as well. To foster long-term loyalty, it is more effective for a brand to book an influencer for an extended period of time, including the influencer posting multiple content about the brand.
Thus, brands should focus on longer collaborations with a handful of popular and relatable content creators, opposed to one sponsored video containing an influencer (Haenlein et al., 2020).

From our primary data, we know that “sponsored videos” is not something they are immediately interested in - leaving a higher chance of scrolling away from it. The algorithm will also pick up on usage behavior and further register the avoidant behavior. This might in turn affect further brand touchpoints - where the algorithm primarily decides what users see. Handpicking a selected few influencers, who are known to be relatable might result in greater return on investment. Long-term collaborations gives time and allowance for the viewer to develop a relationship and infer more trust into their recommendation (Haenlein et al., 2020) With the crossover effect from online to offline communication and peer influence, a brand only needs to influence “one” individual in a respective social circle to potentially receive earned touchpoints through word of mouth. Word of mouth is a crucial factor in developing positive brand attitudes (Chen & Xie, 2008). Given that this cluster utilizes TikTok for identity formation, they are highly susceptible to peer influence.

Moving on, the individuals within this segment are active content creators themselves, presenting an opportunity for brands to cultivate positive brand attitudes. Our insights reveal that they further prefer entertainment over

information, with a particular preference for humorous content. To leverage this, brands should establish a strong presence on TikTok and focus on creating content that aligns with trends while minimizing overt advertising. By doing so, brands can convey relatable personality traits and foster positive attitudes, even if immediate brand recognition is not achieved. Participating in popular trends alongside the target audience can also enhance psychological persuasion and increase the likelihood of interaction (Matz et al., 2017). Interacting with brand content can lead to exposure to various brand-related touchpoints, such as product reviews or hauls, thanks to the algorithm. The more authentic and relatable the content from the creators, the more positive attitudes can be associated with the brand, ultimately influencing conversions.

Brands can also leverage the value this segment places on inspirational and motivating content. A strategy that aligns with this is to create aesthetically pleasing TikToks featuring natural product placements. This popular format, often presented as “mini-vlogs”, involves influencers sharing snippets of their day and showcasing various products they use, providing inspiration to viewers. Despite the lack of explicit promotion or mention of brand origins, such content is perceived as authentic. While this approach may seem counterintuitive to brands, it encourages interactive viewers who are inspired, to explore and engage further. Authentic product placement can further be effective for viewers who socially compare and seek to develop identities. Therefore, the inspirational approach could work just as effective as the humorous one. All together, it will depend on the brand and the message they want to convey.

6.2 The Entertainment Lurkers

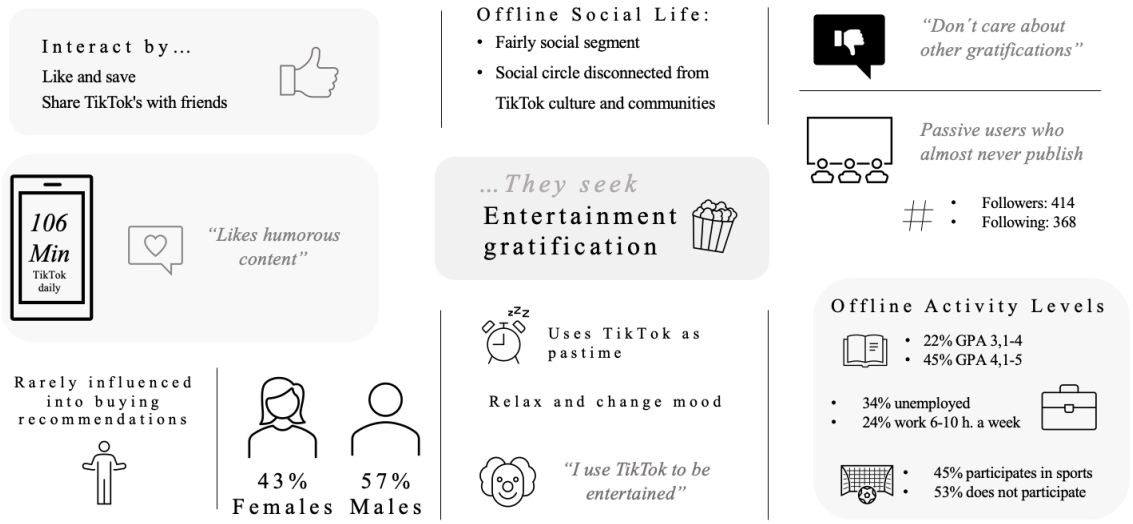

Figure 3: Illustration of the Entertainment Lurkers

The Entertainment Lurkers contains 58 individuals, consisting of 33 males and 25 females, and they are mostly 2nd graders (N=31). Analyzing their psychographic profile we can further outline their average daily activity level. Firstly, they are the cluster with the highest count of unemployment, where 34% reports not having a job and 43% reports working between 6-15 hours a week. Furthermore, they are the segment that participates the least in leisure activities where 53% does not have any ties to sports or music. Their grade point average is normally distributed with 44% having a GPA between 4,1-5. Looking further at their social life, it is also normally distributed when it comes to hanging out with their friends.

When it comes to TikTok usage behavior, they have an average use of 107 minutes daily, which is the least of the three. They have an average of 414 followers where 60% have less than 100, and they follow an average of 368 content creators. They rarely never post content with an average of 1,34 which lies between the categories “never post” to “less often than weekly”. In an average session they interact with 6-10 TikToks, mainly by sharing videos with friends and with likes.

6.2.1 Entertainment Gratifications

"The Entertainment Lurkers" was identified based on their high scores on the entertainment variables. Looking at the average for each clustering variable, they score above 4 on agreement for two variables only: "I use TikTok to be entertained" (5.59) and "I use TikTok as pastime" (4.67). Based on the study by Whiting & Williams (2013), this is a common attitude towards social media. As mentioned, they reported that 64% use social media as a source of entertainment, and 76% use it as a pastime to kill boredom. However, "The Social Producers" and "The Curious and Inspired" also have a high score for "I use TikTok to be entertained", which can be expected as the platform is a social entertainment media. What is distinctive with this segment is that they have low scores on almost all the other variables (3.5 or lower), leading them in the direction of being the segment that uses TikTok only to be entertained, as a pastime or to relax.

Further, we can see that the only content-category they find interesting is "humor" with the other categories having a mean below 3.98. This gives us insight into what their For You-page contains. Since the algorithm adapts to users' desired specificity levels, their For You-page is most likely filled with humorous content. Personal meaning can thus be fulfilled through the platform (Di Gangi 2016). However, it is reasonable to believe that they do not experience intense immersion when using the application. This is also supported by the lower value of escapism and lowest mean of daily minutes. In addition they are the segment that reports that their For You-page is the least personalized, with a mean of 4.5.

Moving on, it is reasonable to assume that this cluster uses TikTok when they are bored or feel unstimulated. Their usage may be conscious or subconscious, with content processing primarily occurring through the peripheral route (Kitchen et al., 2014). While they may not invest significant effort or energy into engaging, they value its convenience and immediate entertainment (Wang, 2020). They are likely to turn to TikTok in idle moments such as waiting, commuting, or when they desire additional stimulation while engaging in other

activities. In regards to their rated agreement to using TikTok while doing other activities, they scored above the middle threshold, but lower compared to the other clusters.

6.2.2 Social Gratification

"The Entertainment Lurkers" have a variety of scores when it comes to the social aspects. However, most of the statements describing this factor are rated below average. This appears logical as the segment consists of more males than females. The study by Leonhardt & Overå (2021), reported a difference in social media use among genders. The males did not see social media as significant in their lives compared to females. Especially when it comes to social connection and communication. The study revealed that males prioritize gaming as a way of connecting with others, rather than using social media. The below average values concerning social gratification could be explained by this logic, which impacts social accessibility as well (Di Gangi, 2016).

Further, the segment rated the statement "It is important to me to feel like I am a part of a community on TikTok" slightly above average. However, first and foremost the platform is considered to be a social entertainment platform. This means that authenticity and community is in focus. Therefore, it does not necessarily mean that this segment values the social aspect at a high degree, as being a part of a community occurs involuntarily. As mentioned, this segment is also the one who has the least engagement with co-users. However, they receive some communication utility from TikTok since their main form of interaction is "sharing videos with friends" (Davis 2011). Despite that, they do not consider TikTok to be a part of the communication with their peers. This further confirms the argument that TikToks are mostly processed through the peripheral route, and they value the application mostly based on the convenience utility when they are bored.

6.2.3 Information Gratification

When it comes to the informative aspects for this segment, they have rated the variables mostly between 2 and 3. However, the statement “I see TikTok as a credible platform” is given an average value of 1.76, which corresponds to “disagree” or “completely disagree”. This is logical as they are looking at TikTok as an entertainment platform only, meaning that information they may come across might appear as noise. With that logic, it is reasonable to assume that they will resist persuasion attempts since they believe the information is unreliable and not correlated to their specific interests (Friestad & Wright, 1994)**.** Additionally, personal relevance acts as a moderator that amplifies arousal and engagement. Conversly, low personal involvement diminishes the overall motivation to participate (Di Gangi, 2016). Low degree of interest specificity could be the reason this cluster is less immersed in TikTok culture. However, it can be considered a double-edged sword, where the For You-page adapts the more you interact. Thus, with lack of interactions, the algorithm does not have the ability to micro-target on interests. Drawing on psychological ownership theory, lack of personal involvement decreases the feeling of attachment to the platform and overall attitude (Karahanna, 2015). This is further partly confirmed through the below average values regarding most gratifications and interests.

6.2.4 Strategic Guidelines

According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, we can say that this segment processes the content through their peripheral route. Meaning they are at a passive stage, and will not use energy to engage with content or fall for persuasion attempts (Kitchen et al., 2014). From a branding point of view, we therefore believe that aiming for conversions would be a challenging task. By that logic, we would further recommend a strategy best suited for creating brand awareness. From our insights we are now aware that the entertainment lurkers are mostly interested in one thing, mainly being entertained by humorous content. Brands could therefore take advantage of said insight and

develop a producer and interactive role on TikTok and rely on capturing the inclusive individuality through content marketing (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015).

To enhance this strategy, we further recommend brands take on interactive roles. Commenting on popular and humorous content can help the brand in receiving exposure. When engaging with unrelated content, they take on a non-hierarchical role. Usually brands can appear detached from consumers, only manifesting marketing activities based on monetary agendas. Interacting is a strategic way of diminishing this perception and viewers can transfer relatable feelings towards the brand due to the shared sense of momentum (Lee et al., 2018). In sight, this can build brand awareness and possibly result in inclusion in the consumer's consideration set.

Interacting will also adapt the algorithm, brands can therefore apply a proactive role to gain first-mover advantage both when it comes to interactions and production. The goal of brand related touchpoints is to have the individual perceive little to no difference from a content creator and brand. By doing so, the brand diminishes the perceived commercialized agenda and they can reap the benefits of authenticity. Produced content should align with the main gratification of this cluster, which they can realize with the use of trending content and sounds.

6.3 The Curious and Inspired

Figure 4: Illustration of the Curious and Inspired

The curious and inspired segment contains 56 individuals, where there are 30 females and 26 males. By looking at the demographics we can get an outline of their activity level on a regular day. First and foremost they are the individuals that have the lowest percentage of unemployment (19,6%), in addition to most work hours. Secondly, they are the most active in leisure activities, where 62,5% are either involved in sports or music. Moving along, they also have the highest GPA, where 80% have above 4.1. Furthermore, looking at their social life, they seem to be the ones who engage most socially. Lastly, they appear to be hard working, always striving to reach the next accomplishment.

When it comes to TikTok usage behavior they have an average use of 131 minutes daily. They rarely contribute with content themselves, with an average of 1,57 they lie in between “Never post” and “Less than once a month”. The mean value for number of interactions is 3.69, which is approximately 8 to 10 posts a session. They have an imbalanced follower ratio as well, where they have an average of 286 followers and they follow 661 creators. This also points towards them being more on the interactive side rather than the producer side.

6.3.2 The entertainment Aspects

The curious and inspired, like the other clusters, value being entertained. However, it does not act as the main gratification. Whereas the other clusters have pastime and relaxation as the highest rated forms of gratification, other aspects are outranking the “meaningless entertainment” scrolling. In that sense, they like to be entertained, however they value different forms of entertainment which are more in the informative and inspiring direction. Due to their busy nature, school, work and leisure activities naturally act as an anchor and keep them grounded in terms of time distortion (Montag et al., 2019). Consequently it is safe to assume that the level of addiction is somewhat under control and it is more challenging for them to get immersed in the experience. However, they have an average of 4,39 when it comes to using TikTok while doing other activities, which further argues for some addictive-like behavior (Servidio et al., 2021).

6.2.1 Social Gratification

This particular segment exhibits strong sociability through their offline activity level and various social circles. Consequently, it can be inferred that their social needs are predominantly fulfilled, thereby diminishing the significance of TikTok as a social platform. Further, their perception of TikTok as a platform for social connection and offline inclusion is notably low, which reflects their lack of immersion in TikTok culture beyond the time spent consuming content. This can be attributed to their inclination to establish and maintain social identities primarily through offline activities and interpersonal relationships. Without the element of social connection, the platform is not deemed as valuable and it is also a discouraging factor when it comes to engagement (Di Gangi, 2016). With the diminished need for developing and maintaining their online social identity there are also smaller opportunities for strategies involving direct influencing through generic advertisement and building of parasocial relationships (Hoffner & Bind, 2022).

When it comes to interactions, their main form of engagement is sharing videos with friends through third-party platforms in addition to liking. Thus, they gain some social value out of the platform, and it is a valued gratification for this segment where they “somewhat agree” to “agree” using TikTok to find content they can send to their friends. While not being totally immersed in the culture, this can act as a supplement for maintaining social connections, in addition to electronic word of mouth. This engagement is key for marketers for mapping out consumer segments through the algorithm, and it can also lead to a more personalized and micro-targeted For you-page.

6.3.3 Information Gratification

The segment is named based on their high values of averages regarding the informative aspect. They express agreement in utilizing TikTok as a source of inspiration related to their specific interests, indicating high personal relevance (Di Gangi, 2016). The inclination to seek inspiration, coupled with a continuously affirming For You-page, suggest a potential engagement in an addictive gratification loop (Barbu, 2014). Consequently, the psychological ownership theory likely comes into play, influencing their perceived value of the platform and evoking a sense of territory (Karahanna, 2015). This value attribution towards the informative aspects may extend to the concept of “virtual belongings”, with users curating a library of saved content, potentially encompassing products of interest (Karahanna, 2015).

Notably, the threshold at which virtual belongings translate into physical ownership is intriguing, and some conversion for virtual to tangible possessions may occur. Additionally, their agreement on using TikTok to discover both new and popular products signifies a transfer of trust into the platform's algorithm, possibly intertwined with aspects of their self-identity (Barker, 2009). The deep-rooted involvement in the informative aspects, suggests potential opportunities for brands to leverage this cluster´s interests and preferences for personalized and inspiring content to foster positive brand associations (Di Gangi, 2016; Karahanna, 2015).

With high values on the informative variables regarding “popular products (5,17)”, “new products” (5,09), “knowledge on new subjects” (4,85) and “Knowledge for everyday use” (4,78) in addition to “learning new skills” (4,57) it is apparent that they want to enrich themselves with content stimulating inspiration and motivation, and are curious to learn. With this information we can further assume they also come across product reviews. Accompanied by the personalized For You-page, products that are exposed to this segment are likely to be of high relevance (Chen & Xie, 2008).

This segment values informed decision-making and shows a moderate inclination towards purchasing products based on recommendations. Given the algorithm's continuous blend of depths and sources, it suggests that this segment is discerning and values being well-informed before making a purchase (Di Gangi, 2016). Furthermore, they display limited interest in sponsored content, indicating a strong sense of self and a critical attitude towards product-related information that does not align with their initial goals (Araujo et al., 2022). Conversely, they show a preference for inspired content that showcase products, which serves as a means of self-development exploration.

6.3.4 Strategic Guidelines

When it comes to this segment, we would suggest brands to produce content on their own account within two different categories that can overlap as well. The content categories we suggest are informative and inspiring TikTok-videos. In that way, brands have the ability and freedom to display their products however they like, in addition to shy away from the sponsored trademark which is not of interest and might seem inauthentic at first glance. Drawing to the persuasion knowledge model, this segment can be characterized as having a distinct focus on their own interests and a strong sense of self-identity. They seem to know what they are interested in but are still curious to learn about new opportunities. However, due to them stating that they are not interested in “sponsored content” they might seem to resist

persuasion attempts and immediately recognize sponsored posts as means of persuasion rather than informative and inspiring (Friestad and Wright, 1994).

To effectively showcase new products, brands need to focus on creating brand-owned touchpoints, particularly for products that may not be easily discovered organically through reviews due to the abundance of content surrounding popular products. By aligning the brand with the individual's interests, it increases the likelihood of brand-owned touchpoints reaching the target market. Additionally, if the brand successfully captures the viewers attention, they are more likely to come across earned touchpoints from content creators, such as reviews or inspiring product placements. Interestingly, this segment shows a greater interest in seeing products weather than relatable individuals, suggesting that influencer-based strategies may not yield a positive return of investment. Consequently, a recommended approach is for brands to focus on creating and distributing their own content through brand-owned channels,

Inspiring content can further be categorized as a diffuse description, and be hard to realize without any clear direction. One effective suggestion is to strategically showcase product placements in creative settings where the brand may not be top-of-mind for the audience. By doing so, the brand can capture the viewer's attention and generate interest in a unique and memorable way. This approach allows the brand to stand out from competitors and increase the likelihood of brand recall and consideration among consumers.

This cluster has also revealed that they are interested in learning about new skills they can use in everyday-life. Product-hacks are a great way to inspire consumers to think differently and create connotations to usage situations even outside their original category which can also be inspiring to others. Also, tying the branding specifically to an interest can help develop category membership and motivate consumers to engage in said interest, in such a way the brand attaches positive and inspiring factors towards their product and content.

6.4 Summary of Strategic Recommendations

Utilizing the insights gained from our primary data analysis, we have successfully identified and categorized three distinct segments of TikTok users. These segments are characterized by their primary gratification factors and subsequent behaviors on the platform. Leveraging this understanding, we have devised tailored strategies to effectively target each segment. We have further summarized our main findings in the illustration below.

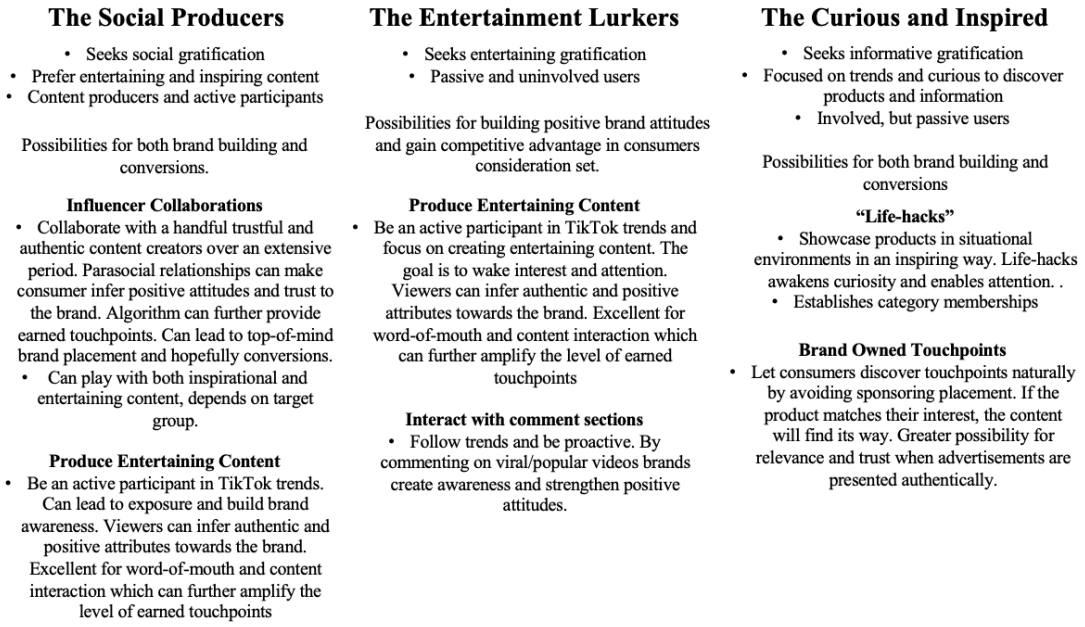

Figure 5: Summary of Strategic Recommendations

To better grasp the strategic recommendations we have visualized the potential pathways as shown in the figure below:

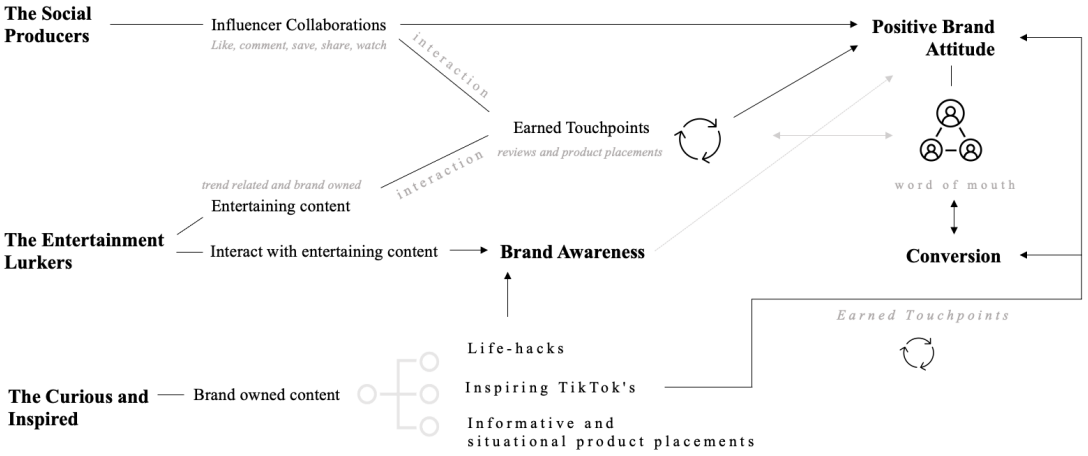

Figure 6: TikTok Strategic Guidelines Map

As seen, each cluster differentiates in the initial stages. When moving further along in the process, the different strategies get interconnected and share similar pathways through earned touchpoints which plays a crucial role in the branding process on TikTok. Just like a pinball game, this process is chaotic and interactive, and brands have to be proactive and adapt to changing consumers (Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2013).

6.5 Implications

Navigating TikTok with branding intentions presents a formidable challenge, particularly given the heightened awareness of the younger generation regarding persuasion tactics, attributed to the pervasive marketing efforts and their innate familiarity with social media. Drawing upon our insight, we have discerned the existence of three distinct segments exhibiting varying gratifications and behaviors, accompanied by strategic recommendations for each segment.

Primarily, it is evident that many brands interested in joining TikTok lack familiarity with the intricate workings of its algorithm and the advantageous employment thereof. Our primary focus has thus centered on prioritizing incentives for user engagement by aligning content with individual interests and gratifications. While brands possess the capability to forcibly insert themselves into users' For You-Pages through advertisements, the return on investment in such cases may be unfavorable - in terms of both brand equity and profit. This is due to users generally exhibiting a dislike for sponsored content, prompting them to swiftly scroll past it. Consequently, we have emphasized providing insight on how brands can achieve success through organic reach, the process of attaining conversions, and enhancing awareness.

Moreover, we acknowledge the inherent difficulty in identifying distinct segments based on psychographic characteristics. Nevertheless, certain similarities and overlaps among the segments are apparent. However, the segments can be perceived as rough outlines delineating the most prevalent gratifications observed with TikTok users. Hence, it is plausible that the population at large shares a similar distribution. Consequently, brands may adopt two approaches. Firstly, they can meticulously map out their target demographic and infer cluster membership to ascertain the most suitable strategy. Alternatively, brands may opt to select one of the presented strategies without a precise target segment. In that way brands have some understanding of the potential implications of their content.

Furthermore, it is important to note that TikTok's quick-evolving landscape necessitates continuous adaptation and monitoring by brands seeking to establish a strong presence on the platform. The dynamics of user preferences, trends, and viral content are subject to rapid shifts, requiring brands to remain agile and responsive in their approach. Engaging with the TikTok community demands a comprehensive understanding of the platform's nuances, such as the utilization of creative storytelling, leveraging popular challenges, and fostering user-generated content. By actively participating in these organic interactions and aligning with the cultural momentum, brands can cultivate authenticity and resonance with their target audience, thereby fostering long-term loyalty and

brand advocacy. Effectively navigating TikTok's ecosystem requires a delicate balance between promotional messaging and native content that seamlessly integrates into users' feeds, resulting in a mutually beneficial relationship between brands and the TikTok community.

6.6 Limitations

In this part we will discuss the limitations of our research. These are different things that could have been done differently to improve our results. Firstly, we aimed for a bigger sample than what we ended up with. Our goal was to have 210 respondents after data cleaning, however we ended up with a sample size of N=175 after removing non-relevant respondents. A bigger sample would give more variety and a possibility to get a better description of the dimensions in the three segments. However, we met challenges with collecting respondents during late April and May. The students had their exam period during this time, thus, they were not present at school while some also may have less motivation to deal with things concerning school. This resulted in us ending the study as we saw it manageable with the number of respondents already collected. As an addition to the bigger sample, having a random sample rather than a convenience sample would also lead to better validity and reliability in the sense of variety and data distribution.

In order to achieve a higher degree of validity and reliability in our study, in-depth interviews would be an appropriate addition to the quantitative cluster analysis. This would reveal more information about how and why the respondents use TikTok. This information could contribute to a great extent in our strategic recommendations for TikTok marketing. However, our approach with a quantitative analysis will give a general framework mapping out the overall gratifications towards TikTok use.

Before the data collection we knew that studying the younger part of Gen Z could potentially lead to some challenges in regard to data collection and the questionnaire. Firstly, it was decided to conduct the questionnaire in

Norwegian, due to possible language difficulties. Furthermore, it was distributed to teachers in the upper secondary schools that we had in our network. The goal was that the students would complete the questionnaire under supervision, however this was not controllable. Respondents might have done it in their leisure time, as the link was posted on their digital learning platform. There might have been a lack of motivation to complete the questionnaire if done during their leisure time. This is also supported by Malhotra (2019), stating that questionnaires with Likert scales take longer to complete because the respondent has to read every statement. This could lead to respondents not completing the questionnaire as well as not taking it seriously. Some of the answers in the data aroused suspicion that some of the students did not respond seriously. The reason for this could be because of a combination of their age and lack of experience with serious surveys. However, this is hard to identify and confirm with confidence, thus, we proceeded with our data as it gave us homogeneous segments with approximately the same size.

6.7 Further research

Our explorative approach indicated support of three distinctive segments. However, behavior can be a challenging concept to grasp through a quantitative method. In addition, tying behavior and attitudes without capturing the complete picture makes for assumptions based on secondary data from previous research. Due to every user experiencing a heterogeneous For You-page, even more challenges appear in terms of grasping the complexity. To better capture the circumstances of behavior and content we propose a longitudinal observational study to be suitable. Research could include participants from each respective cluster. Monitoring their TikTok use through a diary method could reveal consumer deeper insights that we were not able to reach.

Furthermore, insights regarding upper levels of Generation Z would also be interesting. Our chosen sample has limited buying power as demonstrated

through low income. Whether this affects their relationship with different gratifications and brands is yet to be discovered. Investigating a sample with higher purchasing power could therefore reveal such contexts. In turn it could reveal important implications for marketing priorities.

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8.0Appendix

10.1 Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

Takk for at du ønsker å delta i spørreundersøkelsen vår!

Denne spørreundersøkelsen er utformet som en del av vår masteroppgave ved Handelshøyskolen BI under programmet "Strategic Marketing Management". Du vil bli presentert en rekke spørsmål som omhandler bruk av den sosiale underholdningsplattformen TikTok. Vi ber deg om å svare så nøyaktig som mulig. Selve undersøkelsen tar ca. 7 minutter å gjennomføre.

Undersøkelsen er fullstendig anonym og all data vil bli slettet etter at arbeidet med masteroppgaven er fullført.

Dersom du ønsker å delta i spørreundersøkelsen ber vi deg vennligst om å samtykke under på at du har innforstått deg med formålet og datahåndteringen.

Tusen takk på forhånd!

Jeg samtykker.

- ○ Ja
- ○ Nei

Bruker du TikTok?

- ○ Ja
- ○ Nei

Hvor lenge har du vært på TikTok?

- ◯ Mindre enn 1 år
- ◯ 1-2 år
- ◯ 2-3 år
- ◯ 3-4 år
- ◯ Mer enn 4 år

Hvor mange følgere har du på TikTok? (Skriv med tall)

Hvor mange følger du på TikTok? (Skriv med tall)

Hvor ofte bruker du TikTok?

- ◯ Aldri
- ◯ Mindre enn 1 gang i uken
- ◯ 1-3 ganger i uken
- ◯ 4-6 ganger i uken
- ◯ Daglig

På en gjennomsnittlig dag der du bruker TikTok, hvor mange minutter er på plattformen til sammen?? (Skriv med tall)

Hvilken feed foretrekker du å bruke på TikTok?

- ◯ "For You"-page
- ◯ Following-page
- ◯ Søkefunksjonen

Hvor ofte publiserer du videoer på TikTok?

- ○ Aldri
- ○ 1 gang i måneden eller sjeldnere
- ○ 2-3 ganger i måneden
- ○ 1 gang i uken
- ○ Flere ganger i uken

Ranger de ulike sosiale underholdningsplattformene under etter hvor viktig de er for deg i hverdagen.

- TikTok
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Pinterest

I de neste delene vil du få ulike utsagn du skal ta stilling til. Du skal rangere disse på en skal fra 1-7 basert på hvor enig du er.

I hvilken grad er du enig i utsagnet: "Jeg bruker TikTok ...

	1 - Helt uenig	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Helt enig
for å tilegne meg **ny** kunnskap om et spesifikt tema.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
for å tilegne meg kunnskap som jeg kan få bruk for i hverdagen.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
for å finne troverdig informasjon	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
for å lære meg **nye** ferdigheter	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
for å lære om **nye** produkter på markedet	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
for å oppdage populære produkter	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
for å bli inspirert av ting som interesserer meg	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
som en nyhetskanal istedenfor nettaviser, nyhetssending osv.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I hvilken grad er du enig i utsagnet: "Jeg bruker TikTok ...

	1 - Helt uenig	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Helt enig
for å være sosial	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
for å føle meg inkludert i samtaler	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
for å se innhold fra folk som er lik meg	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
for å finne videoer jeg kan sende til venner som en del av vår kommunikasjon	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I hvilken grad er du enig i utsagnet: "Det er viktig for meg å føle at jeg er en del av et community på TikTok"?

- ○ 1 - Helt uenig
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7 - Helt enig

I hvilken grad er du enig i utsagnet: "Det er viktig for meg å kunne relatere til andre mennesker på TikTok"?

- ○ 1 - Helt uenig
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7 - Helt enig

I hvilken grad er du enig i utsagnet: "Jeg bruker TikTok ...

	1 - Helt uenig	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Helt enig
for å bli underholdt	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
som en måte å komme meg bort fra virkeligheten	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
fordi det hjelper meg å slappe av	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
for å få tiden til å gå	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
for å endre humøret mitt	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
for å utvikle en form for identitet	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
for å uttrykke personligheten min gjennom å lage innhold	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I hvilken grad er du enig i utsagnet:

	1 - Helt uenig	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Helt enig
Jeg kjøpte noe fordi noen anbefalte det på TikTok	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
TikTok påvirker måten jeg snakker på i hverdagen	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jeg deler TikTok-videoer med vennene mine	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I hvilken grad er du enig i utsagnet: "Jeg samhandler på TikTok ved å ...

	1 - Helt uenig	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Helt enig
like videoer	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
dele videoer til andre plattformer (f.eks. Instagram, Snapchat)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
kommentere videoer	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
lagre videoer	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
"duette" videoer	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
følge "TikTokere"	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

På en gjennomsnittlig økt på TikTok, hvor mange videoer samhandler du med? (Like, kommentere, dele, lagre, "duette")

- ◯ Ingen
- ◯ 1-5
- ◯ 6-10
- ◯ 11-15
- ◯ 16-20
- ◯ Mer enn 20

Hvordan er TikTok, sammenlignet med andre sosiale medier, når det gjelder å fremme en følelse av fellesskap?

- ◯ 1 - Veldig dårlig
- ◯ 2
- ◯ 3
- ◯ 4
- ◯ 5
- ◯ 6
- ◯ 7 - Veldig bra

Under får du listet opp ulike typer innhold på TikTok. Ranger disse etter hvor stor grad de interesserer deg.

	1 - Helt uinteressant	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Veldig interessant
Humor	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Lærerikt/Informativt	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Inspirerende	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Motiverende	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Mote	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sminke	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Matlaging	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Trening	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Gaming	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Historiefortelling	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sponset innhold	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Bruker du TikTok samtidig som du gjør andre aktiviteter? (F.eks. samtidig som du ser på serie, lager mat etc.)

- 1 - Aldri
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 - Alltid

I hvilken grad er du enig i utsagnet: "Jeg har lett for å følge en "TikToker" dersom deres innhold interesserer meg"?

- 1 - Helt uenig
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 - Helt enig

I hvilket grad er du enig i utsagnet: "Min "for you"-page er personlig rettet mot meg"?

- 1 - Helt uenig
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 - Helt enig

Hvor gammel er du? (Skriv med tall)

Kjønn?

- ◯ Gutt
- ◯ Jente
- ◯ Annet

Hvor mange tilhører husholdningen din? (Inkludert deg selv)

- ◯ 1
- ◯ 2
- ◯ 3
- ◯ 4
- ◯ 5 eller flere

Hvilken VGS tilhører du? (Skriv under)

Hvilket utdanningsprogram tilhører du? (Skriv under)

Hvilket trinn tilhører du?

- ◯ 1
- ◯ 2
- ◯ 3

Hvilket karaktersnitt har du på VGS?

- ◯ 1-2
- ◯ 2,1-3
- ◯ 3,1-4
- ◯ 4,1-5
- ◯ 5,1-6
- ◯ Over 6