Nicoline Meisl

Lowkey boundary work

TikTok's role in Norwegian students' everyday life

Graduate thesis in Science and Technology Studies
Supervisor: Kristine Ask and Vivian Anette Lagesen
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Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
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NTNU
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

Studier av kunnskap, teknologi og samfunn (STS)

Læringsutbytte
En student som har fullført programmet, forventes å ha oppnådd følgende læringsutbytte, definert i kunnskap, ferdigheter og generell kompetanse:

Kunnskap
Kandidaten har
- avansert kunnskap om hvordan vitenskap og teknologi utvikles, brukes og implementeres i samfunnet med spesielt fokus på RRI (Responsible Research and Innovation), dvs. samfunnsetisk tenking omkring dette
- kunnskap på et høyt nivå om så vel historiske som samtidige endringsprosesser knyttet til vitenskap, ekspertise, demokrati og teknologi
- inngående kunnskap om hvordan vitenskap og teknologi samproduseres med sosiale, politiske og økonomiske aktiviteter på ulike samfunnsområder

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Kandidaten kan
- sette seg inn i og analysere omfattende faglige problemkompleks innenfor en relevant etisk ramme
- anvende sine kunnskaper og ferdigheter på nye områder gjennom tverrfaglige dialoger med eksperter fra andre fagområder
- selvstendig vurdere og bruke ulike framgangsmåter for å bidra til innovasjon og nyskaping på en bevisst og samfunnsetisk måte
- formidle resultater av eget faglig arbeid på en selvstendig måte, både til allmennhet og andre eksperter, muntlig og skriftlig

Ferdigheter
Kandidaten kan
- analysere og forholde seg kritisk til problemstillinger knyttet til teknologiutvikling og -bruk, og derigjennom se flere tilnærmingsmåter og mulige utfall
- identifisere og arbeide selvstendig med praktiske og teoretiske problemer knyttet til effekter av vitenskap og teknologi i konkrete samfunnsmessige sammenhenger
- utføre avansert kunnskapsmekling i forbindelse med tverrfaglige prosjekter og prosesser

Abstract

As one of the newest additions to social media platforms, TikTok means to inspire joy and creativity in their users. The platform wants users to engage with its short-form mobile videos by viewing, liking, commenting, and publishing content. With its unique feed customized to the individual user TikTok attracts and entertains all kinds of users. Between 2019 and 2020 TikTok has grown tremendously and become one of the most popular social media platforms in Norway, especially amongst young adults. In this master thesis I examine how Norwegian students understand and use the platform. My focus lies on investigating how TikTok becomes a part of students' everyday lives. The thesis approaches the topic of technology use from a user perspective and is based on 11 qualitative interviews with Norwegian students. The theoretical framework consists of domestication theory from the field of STS, in addition to concepts about digital detox and algorithms.

To understand how students domesticated TikTok, I investigate how student identity played into the technology use and found that student identity is not relevant in their use of the platform. To better understand technology use, I look at how the different understandings and interpretations of TikTok lead to various user patterns and habits. Here I identified five user types that highlight the versatility of technology use. Throughout this process I observed that the aspect of time and the platforms algorithm shaped the participants use of TikTok. Therefore, I describe strategies the participants make use of in their negotiations of time spent on the platform and how societal norms connected to this shape their use. Lastly, I illustrate strategies the participants made use of to influence and make sense of the TikTok algorithm and personalize their feed.

Sammendrag

Som nyeste tillegg til sosiale medieplattformer, sikter TikTok mot å inspirere glede og kreativitet i brukerne. Plattformen er basert på kortformede mobilvideoer og ønsker at brukere skal delta ved å se, like, kommentere og publisere innhold. Med sin unike feed tilpasset den individuelle brukeren tiltrekker og underholder TikTok alle typer brukere. Mellom 2019 og 2020 har TikTok vokst enormt og blitt en av de mest populære sosiale medieplattformene i Norge, spesielt blant unge voksne. I denne masteroppgaven undersøker jeg hvordan norske studenter forstår og bruker plattformen. Mitt fokus ligger på undersøkelsen av hvordan TikTok blir en del av studentenes hverdag. Oppgaven belyser teknologibruk fra et brukerperspektiv og er basert på 11 kvalitative intervjuer med norske studenter. Det teoretiske rammeverket består av domestiseringsteori fra STS-feltet, i tillegg til begreper om digital detox og algoritmer.

For å forstå hvordan studenter domestiserte TikTok, undersøker jeg hvordan student identitet spiller inn i teknologibruken og fant ut at dette ikke er en relevant del av deres bruk av plattformen. For å bedre forstå teknologibruk ser jeg på hvordan de ulike forståelser og fortolkninger av TikTok fører til ulike brukermønstre og vaner. Her identifiserte jeg fem brukertyper som fremhever allsidigheten ved teknologibruk. Gjennom denne prosessen oppdaget jeg at tidsaspektet og plattformens algoritme formet deltakernes bruk av TikTok. Derfor beskriver jeg strategier deltakerne benytter seg av i sine forhandlinger om tids brukt på plattformen og hvordan samfunnsnormer knyttet til dette former deres bruk. Til slutt illustrerer jeg strategier deltakerne brukte for å påvirke og forstå TikTok algortimen og å tilpasse feeden deres.

Forword

In March 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, I became one of many who downloaded TikTok. In the weeks prior I had seen many videos on Instagram that were actually TikToks, just shared on Instagram. As I pretty much liked all those videos, I made the decision to give TikTok a chance and try it out. Ever since I have been on TikTok almost every day. While I rarely spend more than an hour a day on TikTok, I still mention TikToks I have seen or things I have heard on TikTok all the time. Three years later I have spent almost a year researching the platform and am writing my final thesis about it. At this point I would like to thank all those who have supported and motivated me during the preparation of this master thesis.

First, I would like to thank my two supervisors, Kristine Ask and Vivian Anette Lagesen. Thank you for your helpful suggestions, constructive criticism, and feedback during the past year. Thank you for all the time and effort you have put into helping me write this thesis and for sharing my enthusiasm for TikTok. You are two academic weapons!

A special thanks goes to all those who took part in my interviews, both friends and strangers. Without you this thesis would not have been possible. Thank you for the interesting conversations about TikTok, and your willingness to share your experiences and thoughts about the platform.

I would also like to thank lesesalen, especially the one reading this sentence while I write it, for our morning chats, coffee-breaks, TikTok talks and mutual distractions. Thank you for helping make sense of difficult theories, journal articles, our theses and life in general. You slay!

Last but definitely not least, I would like to thank mamma. Not only have you supported me while writing this thesis, but throughout all five years of my studies. Without you I would not have made it this far. You are, and always have been, the real MVP!

Nicoline Meisl
Trondheim, May 2023

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1. TikTok's glow up

Depending on how much time you spent on the internet, specifically social media platforms, you might not know what a glow up is or refers to. To understand what the term means, think about Cinderella the night she attended the prince's ball. Her fairy godmother got her a beautiful dress, got her a carriage, and made her not only look presentable, but turned her into a "princess". She transformed Cinderella from a "normal" girl into a "princess". A glow up is kind of a makeover or transformation. On TikTok you can find many videos with the hashtag "glow-up". The videos all show some kind of transformation where users improve how they look, lose weight and/or improve their lifestyle in some way. Here, I refer to the platform's transformation, to TikTok's glow up.

In the world of social media platforms, TikTok is a relatively new platform. Launched in 2017, TikTok became the most popular app in 2019 and 2020 and remains at the top of the fastest growing apps in the world. You could say that TikToks glow-up happened during these two years. Both globally and in Norway, TikTok is now the fifth biggest social media platform (Iqbal, 2023; Warembourg, 2023). The number of users is growing, however, the main user demographic has stayed the same with the platform being most popular amongst women aged 18-24 globally (Iqbal, 2023), and amongst women aged 18-29 in Norway (Warembourg, 2023).

The platform is mainly used by younger users, but it intends to attract and cater to everyone. The design aims to be intuitive and easy to use (Apple, 2023). Aided by sound effects, its color and atmosphere, TikTok invites users to be playful and creative. Users are prompted to be themselves and are rewarded with a customized feed, thanks to TikTok's algorithm. In addition to spreading joy amongst its users, the platform encourages users to be creative and create their own videos. Not only are the various design features supposed to make watching an exciting activity, but they are also supposed to invite users to get creative themselves and engage with the platform in more than one way. The music features are especially highlighted by TikTok, underlining the importance of musical support in videos, but also flaunting and promoting the currency of music on the platform (Apple, 2023).

With TikTok clearly highlighting its focus on creativity and happiness, I am interested to see what attracts young adults like me to the platform. Does TikTok really create joy in its younger users? Are users interested in becoming creative on TikTok? Do users want to make their own TikToks (meaning their own videos)? Do users want to participate and become a part of the various communities on TikTok? Or are users motivated by something else when turning to TikTok?

When compared to other social media platforms, we see that TikTok's popularity has increased tremendously over the past years (Warembourg, 2023). With only around 10% of users 18–29 years old stating they used TikTok daily in 2019, the amount has gone up to 58% by the end of 2022. Comparatively, the daily use of two of the bigger social media platforms - Snapchat and Instagram - has decreased by a small amount in the same period (around 10%), and the daily use of both Messenger and Facebook has decreased by a lot. For Facebook the daily use of this user group has halved, resulting in 18–29 year olds being the smallest user group. In 2019 they were the biggest user group. On the other platforms - Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok - they are still the biggest user group. However, on TikTok the reports show that 18-29 year olds spend

more than twice as much time on the platform than the second biggest group, 30-39 year olds (Warembourg, 2023). We see that TikTok manages to attract young adults to the platform. Compared to other social media platforms, a shift in what kind of platform young users are interested in becomes visible. While Facebook used to attract younger users more than three years ago, the platform does not reach this group anymore. At the same time, TikTok's popularity has quickly increased, being able to reach young adults and cater to their interests.

1.1 On media panics and thirst-traps

Looking at TikTok's intentions and aims regarding user engagement and participation creates a rather positive picture of the platform. The increase in the platform's popularity shows that TikTok is doing something right to attract young adults to its platform. However, not only has TikTok's daily use increased in the past three years, also the public's interest in the platform has gone up and with it the media coverage of it.

At the moment (April 2023) the biggest controversy surrounding TikTok in Norway is Norway's National Cyber Security Centre's (NSM) advice to public institutions of deleting the application from all work-related entities (Noonan, 2023; Sandven et al., 2023). At the end of march, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) asked all employees to delete TikTok from phones, computers or other digital media paid by the employer. It was not only NTNU that asked their employees to delete the application, but all university and college employees were asked to do so as well as the Norwegian Parliament, the courts, and several municipalities across the country (Oksholen, 2023). Employees who need to have access to the application due to their positions were asked to use equipment not part of NTNUs internal systems. While employees were asked to separate their work and private lives on digital media, university TikTok profiles are still up and running (Ditlefsen & Tørressen, 2023). Moreover, current Norwegian students were not asked to delete TikTok from their phones, but instead they were encouraged to go through the security settings of installed applications (Noonan, 2023; Sandven et al., 2023). This suggest that universities still see it as an important arena to reach potential future students.

The debate on TikTok's privacy issues is a necessary discussion to have, but it is also interesting to note that this controversy is a recurring topic around TikTok. In the fall of 2022, there was a lot of media attention on Norway's minister of Justice Emilie Enger Mehl and her use of TikTok on her work phone (Skårdalsmo et al., 2023). In the spring the focus had shifted back to the platform itself, and the recurring topic of implications of its Chinese ownership (Khorami et al., 2023). However, controversies surrounding new technology or digital platforms are not unique to TikTok, but add to a long recurring debate which resurges with the introduction of new digital technologies (Marwick & Boyd, 2014). For example, research on Facebook shows how young adults change their user practices based on the platform's functions to bypass privacy issues (Marwick & Boyd, 2014). What these debates highlight are the one-sided focus on the platforms' risks, they highlight that the public fears the influence social and digital media platforms have on young adults. The issue is not data protection or ownership, the interest lies in trying to regulate a new, unknown technology.

This media coverage seems like a media panic focusing on TikTok's risks. This media panic is not only happening in Norway, but globally. While TikTok's CEO Shou Zi Chew is at a hearing in the US Congress (Khorami et al., 2023), thirst-traps of Chew and memes

about users not minding China collecting their data are going viral on the platform. Thirst-traps are social media posts that try to entice sexual attention and appreciation or other forms of positive feedback. Other TikToks address and make fun of US politicians who either have never been on TikTok or do not understand TikTok at all. These videos show US politicians stating that TikTok is insignificant because all they receive on their feed are videos of little girls dancing. However, this is either a reiteration of TikTok stereotypes, or maybe something these politicians might not want to say out loud if they understood how TikTok's algorithm works (see "Algorithmic Crystal" Lee et al., 2022).

Looking at the debates about privacy issues both in the US and in Norway, we see that they are taking place on a macro-level; they include politicians, CEOs, some researchers, and are distributed by media outlets. Young adults, TikTok's biggest user group, are excluded and not represented in this discussion. Instead, they turn to TikTok to be heard and share their thoughts on the debate.

1.2   Research question

The debate on TikTok is not only one-sided regarding its focus on possible influences on young adult users, but also because it does not involve all parties. TikTok's biggest user group - young adults - are absent from the public debates happening in legacy media and in political venues. To add more nuance to the controversy surrounding TikTok, this master thesis will look at TikTok from a user perspective. Exploring TikTok from a user perspective will help understand and map how users relate to and use the platform.

The guiding research question is: what role does TikTok play in Norwegian students' everyday life? Through conversations with 11 Norwegian TikTok users enrolled at NTNU, I have been introduced to different ways to approach and use the technology. I will investigate the meanings and understandings students attach to the platform, and the aim is to try to understand how users make sense of TikTok and to identify user patterns. Because they are students, participants are part of the biggest user group of TikTok. I want to explore how their student identity influences their use of TikTok. The TikTok algorithm and time were frequently mentioned by the interviewees throughout our conversations. Hence, I will take a deeper look at them. By working with the data material, I have defined three sub-themes that support my investigation of the research question and are the basis of the analysis chapters. In chapter four I look at (1) how student identity becomes visible in the use of TikTok. In chapters five and six I explore (2) how users negotiate their use of TikTok and in chapter seven I investigate (3) how ideas about algorithms shape user practices.

1.3   Introduction to TikTok

1.3.1 My relationship to TikTok

In the fall of 2019, I heard about TikTok for the first time. At the time it was a platform I would have described as something only kids use. Half a year later I became one of many who downloaded TikTok at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. Ever since I have been on TikTok almost every day. Over the years I have met people who enjoy TikTok as much as I am, but also people who do not want to use it at all. Friends tell me they do not want to be on TikTok because it is too addictive, because it is a silly app with silly dances meant for kids. Others have claimed that TikTok is bad for users' mental health and that it does not add much value to users' lives, besides being an easy way to waste time. Many times, I had to explain that not all these claims are

true, and that the platform varies depending on who uses it. But it has also made me curious to understand the platform better and see if other users feel the same as I do.

1.3.2 TikTok walkthrough

Before I look at how TikTok is used by students in Norway, I will explain different features of the platform. There are various ways to look at and introduce the platform. I will focus on features employed and mentioned by the participants of this study. The aim is to clarify what TikTok is and how it can be used. At the same time I want to make it easier to understand the user practices I have identified amongst the interviewees.

As with all social media platforms, you can make a profile on TikTok and connect with friends and share content in various formats. While Instagram is based on pictures and
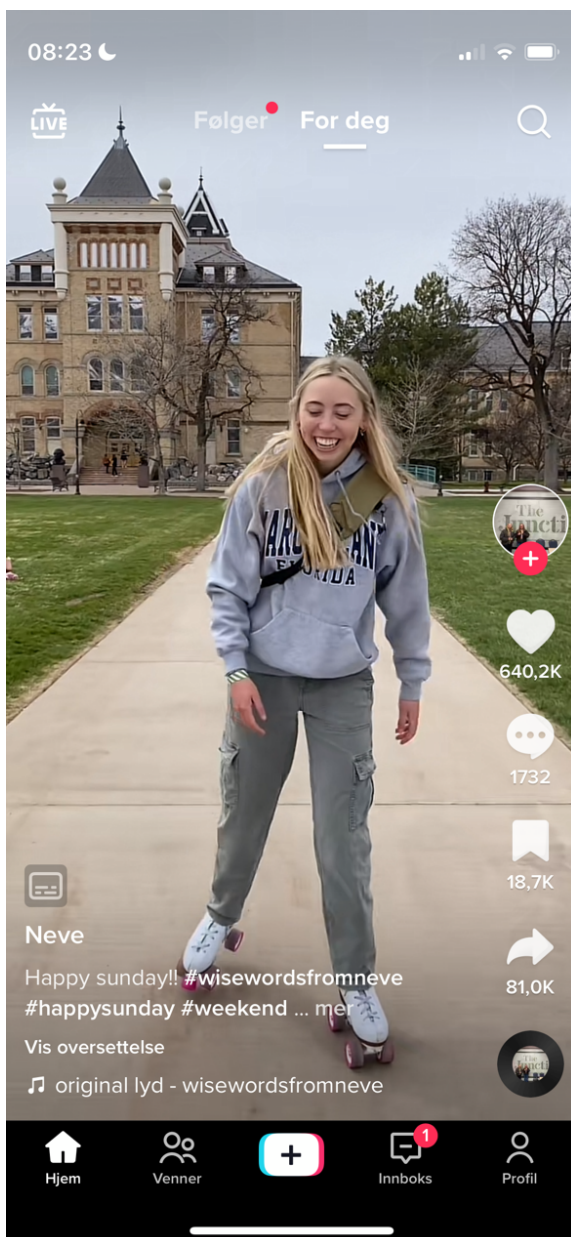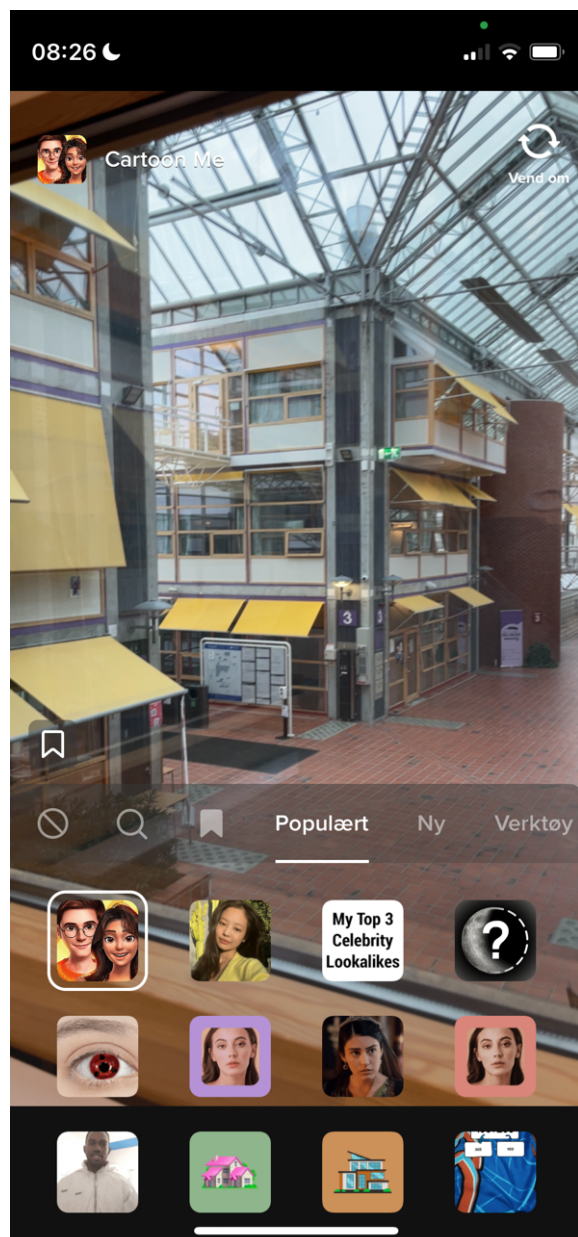

Figure 1
A screenshot of the ForYouPage

Figure 2
The editing features of TikTok

YouTube on videos, TikTok describes itself as "the leading destination for short-form mobile video" (TikTok, 2023). On Facebook and Instagram users have to follow and connect with other users to get content on their feed, but they do not have to do so on TikTok. Whether one follows others or not, users will have content to watch and engage with on their feed. What kind of content appears on the feed depends on the individual user, but can be anything from memes, funny animal videos, and dances to videos from concerts, commentary on global events, or educational videos. Most videos are short and under one minute, but videos can be longer and last several minutes.

TikTok states that the aim is to bring joy and inspire their users to be creative on the platform as main motivations (TikTok, 2023). Creativity means enabling users to make their own TikToks, and joy in both creating and watching TikToks. Both aim at user engagement which can be scrolling through the feed, liking, saving, and sharing videos, as well as commenting or skipping them. Users can also follow other users and/or content creators. The main form of engagement is scrolling through the feed which is done by swiping upwards on the screen. While this is necessary to view different videos, users do not have to create and share their own content and can choose to simply view others TikToks.

Upon opening the TikTok application, users arrive on the ForYouPage, one of two main feeds on TikTok. Figure 1 shows a screenshot of what the screen looks like when opening the TikTok app. The main screen is divided into two feeds: the ForYouPage (Norwegian: For deg) and the FollowingPage (Norwegian: Følger) which you can see at the top on Figure 1. The ForYouPage is an endless feed of videos customized to the individual user. Here, users find TikToks from various creators and profiles customized to their own interests by the TikTok algorithm. By engaging with content, the feed will become more and more personalized (Zulli & Zulli, 2022). The second feed, the FollowingPage can be accessed through clicking on it at the top of the main screen or swiping to the right. On this feed users have access to content from those profiles they are following.

On the right side of the screen as seen in Figure 1, there are different icons users can apply to engage with the content. At the top is the following icon, a red + sign, users can make use of to follow a user profile. Underneath it is the heart-shaped like icon; once a video has been liked, it is saved and can be accessed in the liked folder under one's own profile. Next is the comment section icon. Here, users can access the comment section of the video they are currently watching. Users can read through the various comments, like comments and/or write their own comments. Underneath is the saved icon which is like the liked icon, allowing users to go back to TikToks they have saved. Lastly, there is the share icon. Videos can be shared through the TikTok application, other social media platforms such as Instagram or Snapchat, and messenger applications, for example Facebook Messenger or Whatsapp.

Located centrally at the bottom of the screen in Figure 1 is a big plus symbol. The centrality of the + icon highlights TikToks aim of facilitating users to create content. The icon allows users to access the content creating and sharing features depicted in Figure 2. Here, users can find different filters, sounds and effects to use for their own videos. A selection of the different filters and effects can be seen at the bottom of Figure 2. For example, the chosen filter called "cartoon me" turns users face into a cartoon version of their face while they record a video.

In their AppStore description, TikTok highlights how easy it is to create your own videos stating: "we make it easy for you to discover and create your own original videos by providing easy-to-use tools to view and capture your daily moments. Take your videos to the next level with special effects, filters, music and more" (Apple, 2023). TikTok wants their users to have fun and be creative on the platform. The different filters, effects and sounds encourage users to be playful and testing. Whether users actually use these different features and experience the platform as a creative outlet is something I will look at in this thesis. In addition, I am interested to see if TikTok not only animates users to be creative, but if they also experience TikTok as a positive part of their life that brings them happiness.

1.4   Literature on TikTok

Alongside TikTok's popularity, research on the platform itself has grown. This research not only showcases how TikTok stands out compared to other social media platforms, but it also adds to the growing literature on digital and social media. First, I take a look at research conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic which coincides with the growth in the platform's popularity. Then, I look at research articles discussing community building on TikTok and how this differs to other social media platforms.

1.4.1 TikTok during the Covid-19 pandemic

Lu and Lu (2019) explore Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, from a user perspective. This is one of the earliest studies published on the platform and identified user motivations. The main drivers they found are entertainment and sociality. Considering that TikTok is a social media platform that aims at bringing joy and encouraging users to engage with others, these findings are not surprising. However, another motivation is staying up to date on what is happening on the platform and what kind of content is trending. While these two motivations seem obvious to users of a social media platform, they become more interesting when put into the context of Chinese culture.

Being able to participate in conversations and discussions of Douyin content have become important factors of Chinese social life. People feel that they need to be on Douyin to be able to participate in social settings. Especially amongst younger users has this phenomenon become a social norm. Knowledge of platform-jargon and a user profile are expected if one wishes to not be excluded socially (Lu & Lu, 2019). Looking at Douyin from a user perspective not only gives an overview of the main motivations behind using this new platform, but it also points to the importance of Chinese culture and its influence on why Chinese people are on the platform.

Adding to a cultural approach of TikTok, Petrovic's (2023) research looks at TikTok's popularity in Japan. While the platform had already been popular amongst younger users, its popularity grew during the Covid-pandemic. The analysis shows that TikTok allowed the popular Japanese karaoke culture to continue during the pandemic. It became a temporary solution to continue this traditional activity when karaoke practices were disrupted by the pandemic. Through TikTok, people were able to sing and dance together, and share their experience on the platform. This helped create a feeling of togetherness at a time people had to be very isolated (Petrovic, 2023). The study focuses on TikTok in the context of Japanese culture, at the same time as it highlights its abilities of creating communities and sociality.

Kennedy (2020) also explores TikTok during the early years of the Covid-19 pandemic. Her investigation focuses more on the platform's biggest user group: young users. The study illustrates the celebration of girlhood which had been given media attention in this period. Through TikTok, girls' bedroom culture has been transformed from a private, safe space to a public space now visible and open to judgment. With TikTok's rise in popularity coinciding with the pandemic, many users shared videos filmed in their homes. Many of TikTok's early celebrities were young girls who shared videos of themselves dancing to popular songs on TikTok. With the example of TikTok celebrity Charli D'Amelio, Kennedy (2020) shows how TikTok continues young female celebrity culture, but highlights how it blurs impacts faced by girls outside of the ideal she embodies on TikTok (Kennedy, 2020).

All three articles look at user experiences on TikTok during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. The beginning of the pandemic coinciding with a massive increase of app downloads marks TikTok as a noteworthy new social media platform (Iqbal, 2023). These early studies stress the necessity of understanding not only the technology that is TikTok, but how users engage with and negotiate their use of TikTok. The studies further show how culture plays into the way users engage with TikTok, further highlighting the importance of looking at the platform from the user's perspective.

1.4.2 Community building on TikTok

The Covid-19 pandemic and the cultural setting are interesting and vital markers of the previous articles. In the following part the users' experiences and meanings attached to TikTok are of relevance as well as features unique to the platform. Le Compte and Klug's (2021) qualitative approach to social activism on TikTok maps motivations and user practices. While users draw inspiration from personal connections to the topic and the possibility for creating practices, a main motivation behind using TikTok is its ability to easily create communities and connect with other, like-minded users. Engagement and interaction with others is a vital factor, and TikTok has become the preferred platform for social activism due to its ability to spread messages widely, as users do not have to follow others to receive content (Le Compte & Klug, 2021).

Adding to the topic of community building and sociality on TikTok, Zulli and Zulli (2022) argue that on TikTok networks are established through the acts of imitation and replication. Instead of connecting with other users through personal connections or shared, lived experiences, the platform's design encourages these practices. The sound feature is designed to draw users' attention to it. The name of the sound appears twice on the screen: at the top behind a record icon and at the bottom of the screen. Both icons are moving, and thereby stand out from other icons on the screen. Clicking on the sound leads users to a page that includes all videos with the same sound. They can see how others interpreted and identified with the sound, creating a network of users who have used the sound in their videos. Using the sound will make your video appear on the page as well (Zulli & Zulli, 2022). The example of the sound feature shows how design features influence user behavior. Users are animated to imitate and replicate the sound in their own video which makes them part of a specific group on the platform.

Also, Zhao and Abidin (2023) discuss TikTok features in their study. They identified the important role TikTok's features play in acts of civic engagement. To support the main messages of videos, attention is given to audio and sound effects, filters, and maintaining "a lighthearted and playful tone" (Zhao & Abidin, 2023). These design

features allow users to be creative and entertaining when promoting social movements and addressing racism. The features are also used to not only support but underline certain parts of the message and create a specific atmosphere. Thus, users are able to reach a wider audience when engaging in social activism on the platform (Zhao & Abidin, 2023).

The first article highlights that individuals are drawn to TikTok due to the platform being unique in its community and network building. The last two articles show how TikTok's design features support this. Without having to follow user profiles, users can still connect with like-minded users due to the platform's various features. This highlights TikTok's difference in community building compared to other social media platforms.

1.5   Summary and thesis overview

In this introductory chapter I have presented current controversies surrounding TikTok, previous research on TikTok and given a short introduction to the platform. This short introduction is meant to show the relevance of the topic, and motivate the research question: what role does TikTok play in Norwegian students' everyday life? As already indicated, I will approach this topic from an STS-perspective which I will explain in the following chapter. I will employ the STS concept of domestication theory as well as concepts from other digital media technologies. Next, I will present the methodological approach and data used to answer the research question.

In the following four chapters I share my analyses of my collected data material to show my findings. In chapter four I discuss the role student identity plays in the participants' user patterns. Chapter five introduces five user types I have identified amongst the participants. With the help of domestication theory, I present the practical, symbolic, and cognitive dimensions that distinguish the various user types. Chapter six looks at motivations behind users wanting to reduce their time spent on social media platforms and the role time plays. Here, I will make use of the term digital detox which will be introduced in chapter two. In chapter seven I will introduce strategies participants demonstrate to influence their TikTok feed and the importance of algorithms for social media platforms. Lastly, I will share my final thoughts about the research topic in chapter seven.

2. Spilling the tea – the theoretical framework

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, interest in and attention of TikTok has grown with the platform's popularity. The media panic surrounding TikTok insinuates that other perspectives are needed to better understand the platform. I have shown that with the introduction of new technologies, research is needed to critically understand the workings and influences technologies have on its users.

Spilling the tea describes the act of gossiping or telling the truth. It is a popular term on TikTok used in videos in which users share gossip on, for example, celebrities. In this chapter I will spill the tea on the theoretical framework I use throughout my analysis of TikTok. First, I will explain what it means to look at technologies from an STS-perspective. Next, I will introduce the main concept – domestication theory – that I use in the analysis chapters. As an extension of domestication theory and an introduction to the idea of minimizing the use of or completely stopping the use of technologies, the terms re-domestication and dis-domestication as well as the concept of digital detox will be explained. Lastly, I will introduce central terms regarding social media algorithms.

2.1 Introduction to STS

In this thesis I will explore TikTok from an STS-perspective. STS stands for Science and Technology Studies and is interested in the intersections between technology and society. Furthermore, this research field is interested in the interactions and relations between scientific knowledge production, technology, culture, and society (Skjølsvold, 2017). Especially controversies and ongoing debates in society are of interest in the field of STS. When investigating controversies, STS looks at who is part of the discussion and represented, and which groups are excluded. As presented in the previous chapter, in the current debate about TikTok the main user group of the platform is absent from the discussion. Approaching the platform from an STS-perspective aims to include this user group and explore their experiences on TikTok.

The way STS understands technology is in opposition to technological determinism. Technological determinism describes the relationship between technology and society as a one-way street, with technologies influencing and impacting society leading to change and extensive consequences (Skjølsvold, 2017). Instead of considering technology as something that cannot be influenced and that forms us as society, STS is interested in how technologies are produced by their cultural, historical, and social surroundings and social actors (Skjølsvold, 2017).

When understanding technology as something that is made to fix a problem, the processes behind are hidden and put into so-called black boxes (Skjølsvold, 2017, p. 21). A technology is developed, and the consumer receives the result. What happens in-between is not of interest and not transparent. STS looks at technology differently: the black boxes are opened and approached with a sociotechnical perspective. In this thesis I will conceptualize TikTok as a black box, and try to make sense of how both technological and social factors mutually shape and influence the platform (Skjølsvold, 2017, p. 21).

A sociotechnical perspective on technologies recognizes that technological processes have the potential to be affected by various factors (Ask & Søraa, 2021, p. 46) and can be understood as a social construct (Bijker et al., 2012). However, not only social entities are of interest, but all parties connected to the technologies are thought of, including

non-human actors such as technologies themselves. Not only users' thoughts on TikTok are important, but the interactions between users (society) and the platform (technology) (Ask & Søraa, 2021, p. 49).

Technologies are interpreted by their users, and open for various understandings, something described as interpretative flexibility (Bijker et al., 2012). While developers and designers might have certain user patterns of TikTok in mind when designing the application, it is not a given that users follow these patterns. Some users might use TikTok the way designers had in mind, but others might understand and use the platform differently. Users interpret and use TikTok in various ways, highlighting that technologies are not just tools with set functions and set user patterns. Users attach different meanings and values to technologies which influence how they are used (Ask & Søraa, 2021, p. 48).

When exploring technologies, a user perspective is a critical entry point. The user perspective assists us in understanding how technologies are actually used and how they are integrated into users' everyday lives. With the main user group being excluded from the public discussions on TikTok, exploring the platform from a user perspective can help make sense of user practices of an otherwise excluded group. While there are various ways to conceptualize user perspectives, the concept of domestication theory can help make sense of users' experiences and meanings attached to technologies (Ask & Søraa, 2021, p. 62).

2.2   Domestication theory

Domestication theory originated in media studies and was introduced by Roger Silverstone and his colleagues in the early 1990s. The group was interested in new media technologies and how these were accepted, rejected, used, and integrated into households. The term is based on the metaphor describing the taming process of wild animals; technologies are explored in the same way. When technologies are domesticated, they become part of new networks. While the technologies may change during the process, technologies also influence their users during the process (Silverstone & Hirsch, 1992; Skjølsvold, 2017, p. 27).

Sørensen, Aune and Hatling (2000) introduce the so-called dimension model for domestication, a sociotechnological approach to the theory. Their understanding of the concept focuses on the interaction between users and technologies, investigating the everyday life context. In this context, users are understood as being active; taming technologies and shaping their meanings makes both the user and the technology active parts of the relationship (Sørensen, 2006).

Furthermore, Sørensen, Aune and Hatling introduce three dimensions as part of the domestication process that help identify and understand the relationship between user and technology (Skjølsvold, 2017):

(1) **The practice dimension** focuses on how technologies are used, what kind of routines and user patterns can be identified and if norms or rules are attached to the use.
(2) **The symbolic dimension** identifies what kind of meanings are attached to the technology and how it is understood. This dimension can be important when it comes to users' identity and self-representation.

(3) The cognitive dimension highlights how users learn how to use the technology and how they learn from each other.

The three dimensions facilitate an analysis from the user perspective. By mapping these three dimensions in the exploration of TikTok, various user patterns and negotiations with the platform become visible. This approach allows us to understand how TikTok is used, and what influences the relationship between technology and user. It helps to identify the individual dimensions, but it is also important to note that the dimensions overlap and influence each other (Ask & Søraa, 2021).

This overlap between the different dimensions is a process happening continuously over time and is part of a network (Skjølsvold, 2017). There is not only one person using TikTok, but many. Users and technologies alike are part of bigger networks. TikTok's sharing feature, for example, connects the platform with other platforms and applications, as well as other users. Within STS, these networks are explained through the actor-network-theory (ANT). This theory understands networks as entities that need to be made, produced, and maintained continuously for them to exist (Skjølsvold, 2017).

2.2.1 Re-domestication and dis-domestication
As an extension to Sørensen, Aune and Hatling's domestication theory two other terms have been introduced: re-domestication and dis-domestication (Næss & Henriksen, 2022; Sørensen, 1994). While the potential for an endpoint exists, domesticating technologies is a dynamic and nonlinear process which often must be repeated or changed. How technologies are understood and interpreted shifts throughout the process, leading to new user practices (Næss, 2021).

Re-domestication describes the process of still using the same technology, but in a different manner (Næss, 2021). A user's needs may have changed, or the technology's meaning has changed, but it is still in use (Sørensen, 1994). A user might have spent months only watching TikTok, but then re-domesticating the platform's meaning and using it as a creative outlet to share videos.

These changes in use are not always successful. Sometimes technologies are phased out instead, something termed dis-domestication (Næss & Henriksen, 2022). A user might decide to stop using TikTok, and in that way a former user becomes non-user (Ask & Søraa, 2021). Non-users are a group who, when analyzed, can say much about technologies. With various drivers behind non-use, looking at this group can also make visible meanings about and relations to a technology (Ask & Søraa, 2021, p. 71).

2.3   Digital detox
As the terms re-domestication and dis-domestication show, technology use does not necessarily mean using a technology more. User practices come in various forms, and can also mean a change, reduction in or end of use. The term digital detox continues the idea of reducing the use of or not using digital technologies anymore. It is a concept that has become prominent in the field of digital technology and will be used to help better understand users' relationship and meaning formation with TikTok. In addition to re-domestication and dis-domestication, I will use this concept to explore the participants' thoughts on reducing their use of TikTok in chapter six "When TikTok lives rent-free in your head – strategies to cut down use".

Rather than permanently disconnecting from digital media formats, the idea behind digital detoxes is to raise awareness and advocate for a balanced use. In their study, Syvertsen and Enli (2020) investigate various sources recommending digital detoxes and discuss the difficulty of living at a time of "constant connectivity", while also trying to live authentically (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020, p. 1269). Drawing on the idea of media resistance, users of (new) formats of digital media are illustrated as losing their sense of time, place, and self. The self-help texts come with various strategies to combat these, for example reflecting over one's time use, and aligning it with one's individual needs, instead of meeting societal expectations, or focusing on authenticity in one's life and living in "real" life instead of online, in a "virtual" life. As an answer to these implications, digital detoxes are portrayed as a means to balance the use of digital media with a more genuine and authentic lifestyle. While the idea lies in self-improvement, the analysis also highlights that users are seen as the problem in the user – technology relationship, and are, therefore, the ones who are given the responsibility of changing (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020, p. 1279).

2.4   Digital technologies and their algorithms

After having presented concepts concerning reducing the use of digital technologies, I will now introduce terms connected to making sense of algorithms. Like other social media platforms, for example Facebook (Bucher, 2017) and YouTube (Bishop, 2019), TikTok's main feed is steered by an algorithm. The algorithm is what governs the main feed on TikTok and what makes the ForYouPage individual and unique to each user. TikTok gives hints as to how the algorithm works (see:TikTok, 2020), but it is not exactly clear how it matches users interests. In the same way as STS is interested in opening black boxes and trying to understand the processes behind technology, the interest in trying to understand the process behind TikTok's algorithm has grown. In the following paragraphs I will hence introduce various terms about how algorithms work, some of which will be used later in chapter seven "Opening black boxes – strategies for curating the ForYouPage".

2.4.1 Making sense of algorithms

On social media platforms users constantly interact with various algorithms. The following three research articles introduce terms used to try to explain users' methods of trying to make sense of algorithms. In her investigation of the Facebook algorithm, Bucher (2017) identifies algorithmic imaginaries, a concept defined as "the way in which people imagine, perceive and experience algorithms and what these imaginations make possible" (Bucher, 2017, p. 31). Bucher (2017) highlights users' attempts to try to understand these processes and how to navigate them. Through their experience and engagement with the algorithm, the user's perception and relationship to it changes, as well as they change the algorithm itself (Bucher, 2017).

Bishop (2019) presents a related term, namely algorithmic gossip. Through exploring how content creators on YouTube make sense of the platform, she identifies informal communication between creators, helping each other navigate the platform and its algorithm. Her research highlights the importance of looking at conversations about algorithms no matter how trivial they may seem, to recognize and make sense of current and past algorithmic processes. While similar to algorithmic imaginaries, algorithmic gossip is a communal and social way of understanding the technology behind algorithms (Bishop, 2019).

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Through their exploration of how TikTok users believe the algorithm interacts with their identities, Karizat et al. (2021) bring forward the term algorithmic folk theories. They define these as "unofficial theories a user holds to explain how a technological system operates and generates various output" (p.2). Algorithmic folk theories are based on users' personal experiences and observations. In addition, algorithmic folk theories influence how users behave on platforms and encourage them to curate their feed and train their algorithm to become more personalized (Karizat et al., 2021).

All three terms discuss social media algorithms based on users' experiences. Furthermore, the terms highlight how approaching technology from a user perspective helps make sense of user practices, meanings attached to technology and the knowledge users develop to make use of them. Not only research is interested in opening black boxes, but users themselves are interested in understanding the processes behind technology, too. Bucher's algorithmic imaginaries describe users' ideas about what algorithms are and how they work, Bishop's algorithmic gossip highlights how users within a community try to make sense of algorithms together and Karizat et al.'s algorithmic folk theories underline how users try to understand algorithmic processes through its interactions with user identities (Bishop, 2019; Bucher, 2017; Karizat et al., 2021).

2.4.2 Algorithmic sociality and user identity

The previous three research articles focus on how users make sense of social media algorithms. The following two articles explore sociality and user identity influenced by algorithms. Bhandari and Bimo (2020) investigate how TikTok encourages its users to create content, and interact with a feed customized to their own interests, and sociality on the platform. They highlight how being social on TikTok differs from being social on other social media platforms. Sociality on other social media platforms comes in the form of users' self-representation on the platform and interactions with their social network. On TikTok sociality is a user's interaction between themselves and their algorithmized version of themselves. The authors call this the algorithmized self (Bhandari & Bimo, 2020).

Lee et al. (2022) presents the idea of the algorithmic crystal. The concept also explores how users understand their identity in interaction with TikTok's personalized algorithm. The metaphor of the crystal is used to support the idea of user's identities being reflected by their feeds on TikTok, while also showing that these are versatile and dynamic. Furthermore, in the same way as a crystal refracts light, TikTok's algorithm shows users parts of their identity through suggested videos on the feed. In this way the algorithm creates a sense of connection between the users on the platform as they can relate to each other (Lee et al., 2022).

In these two research articles the authors are interested in the user – technology relationship. They want to understand in what ways users interact and engage with the platform and with other users on the platform. Both articles highlight how sociality differs on TikTok compared to other social media platforms. Although users are social and interact with TikToks posted by other users, they interact with the videos suggested by the algorithm. Approaching TikTok from the user perspective assists in making sense of how the algorithm influences users experiences on the platform when it comes to engaging with content from other users.

2.5   Summary

Through the presented theoretical perspectives, the use of TikTok and the relationship between the platform and its users will be examined in the analysis chapters. As outlined, domestication theory is a well-suited concept for investigating user practices and understandings. By mapping the user patterns and meanings attached to TikTok, the interviewees' various interpretations and how they differ will be explored. The concepts of re-domestication, dis-domestication, and digital detox will help illustrate users' negotiations with TikTok and their attempts to reduce their use. Algorithms are a central aspect when it comes to social media research, and amongst the participants of this study. The introduced terms will help explain different understandings and thoughts concerning algorithms.

With the help of this theoretical framework, four research questions connected to the thesis will be explored: (1) how does student identity become visible in the use of TikTok?, (2) how do users integrate TikTok into their daily lives ?, (3) how are domestication and ideas around digital detox included in the users everyday practices and interpretation of TikTok?, and (4) how do ideas about algorithms affect user practices? The four research questions are the starting point to the four analysis chapters, and related to the overarching research questions of what role TikTok plays in Norwegian students' everyday life.

3.   Slaying methodology

"Slaaay" and "another day, another slay" are thrown around a lot on TikTok. People are not talking about having killed a person or an animal. On TikTok "slay" means something totally different. Someone "slays" when they accomplish something very well or when they do something with self-confidence. In this chapter I will outline how I slayed the methodological approach to my thesis.

This thesis investigates how full-time students at NTNU in Trondheim use TikTok with a focus on why they choose to be on the platform and what meaning they ascribe to it. To do so, I have chosen a qualitative approach of data collection in the form of semi-structured in-depth interviews. This approach was chosen to allow insight into how the participants experience and understand the TikTok platform (Thagaard, 2021, p. 89). By talking with students, I was introduced to small differences in the user patterns amongst the participants.

In this chapter I will describe and evaluate my data set. First, I describe how I collected data, who I interviewed and how I conducted the interviews. Next, I will elaborate on how I analyzed the collected data, and how these have been treated within the ethical research framework. Lastly, I will reflect over my own data regarding reliability, validity, and transferability.

3.1   Recruiting participants

Like most qualitative studies this project is based on a small sample, in this case 11 students. The recruitment of participants followed the ideas of convenience sampling (Thagaard, 2021, p. 56). As TikTok is the second most used platform among 18-29 year olds when looking at daily use (Warembourg, 2023), students were a relevant user group to focus on. In the selection of participants, I did not limit the selection to certain user practices, for example only watching TikToks or creating content.

Interviewing students facilitated the recruitment of participants for the study since I am a student at NTNU in Trondheim myself. At first, I interviewed friends who I knew use TikTok regularly. Then, I used both my own network and the snowball method to find more interviewees (Thagaard, 2021, p. 56). I asked friends, both those who I had already interviewed and those who do not use TikTok, to ask their friends if they were interested in being part of the study. The snowball method allowed me to easily get in touch with potential participants. A problem with this method is the possibility of participants all belonging to the same network or environment (Thagaard, 2021, p. 56). I tried to avoid this by only interviewing one friend of a friend to increase the chances of diversity.

Initially the idea was to conduct five to six interviews that were supposed to last for about an hour. However, the first interviews only lasted around half an hour, so I decided to double the number of interviews to ensure enough data for my project. The reason for the short interviews might be that (1) the first interviewees were friends of mine who I talk about TikTok with, and (2) some of the first interviewees seemed embarrassed about talking about TikTok. By conducting more interviews, I was presented with more stories about TikTok and different perspectives of the platform.

After I had conducted four interviews and got in contact with potential future interviewees, I realized that I had so far interviewed three women and one man. Both to ensure the participants anonymity and to avoid making conclusions based on gender I asked friends more specifically about whether they had male friends who fit the criteria for the research project. In the end, I interviewed three students who identified as men, and nine who identified as women.

Name	Gender	Age	Study level
Emma	Woman	24 years old	5. year
Noah	Man	21 years old	3. year
Sofie	Woman	24 years old	Bachelor
Olivia	Woman	24 years old	5. year
Ella	Woman	22 years old	3. year
Oskar	Man	24 years old	4. year
Oliver	Man	25 years old	Master
Maja	Woman	24 years old	5. year
Astrid	Woman	24 years old	5. year
Frida	Woman	21 years old	Bachelor
Ingrid	Woman	25 years old	4. year

Table 1. gives an overview of the participants of the research study.

3.2   Interview process and interview guide

I conducted 11 interviews that lasted 20 to 40 minutes. Ten were done in person on different campuses at NTNU in Trondheim, and the last interview was done through a video call. The main reason to conduct the interviews in person was to be able to ask the participants to show me TikToks. One interview was conducted through a video call as the interviewee was not in Trondheim at the time and preferred this method.

The interviews were semi-structured with an interview guide (see Appendix) that steered the conversation. The interview guide was divided into three main parts: questions about the general use of TikTok, the social element of using TikTok and questions related to student identity on TikTok. Questions about the general use of TikTok focused on when and where the participants use the application, as well as the meaning they attach to TikTok and using the platform. Furthermore, I asked questions aimed at understanding what the platform means to the interviewees and how they use it on an everyday basis. The second category focused on the social aspect of using the platform; whether the platform is something only for themselves or an experience they share and talk about with others – both on the platform and outside of it. Lastly, the questions examined whether the interviewees' student identity played a significant role in their use of TikTok. All participants were asked the same ten main questions throughout the interview, however, the order of the questions depended on the individual interview. Each of the main questions had several sub-questions that I asked if I felt that I did not get a full answer to the main questions.

Twice during the interview, I asked the participants to show me TikToks: videos they like or represent the type of video they watch a lot of and videos they share with others. I did so to give the interviewees something to talk about more in detail. This made the interview feel more like a conversation where the participant and I shared thoughts about different TikToks we had seen. The participants began talking more freely about TikTok, and shared answers to other questions without me having to ask them. It also
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gave the participants the possibility to share thoughts and experiences of TikTok without me steering them in certain directions.

As the interviews did not last as long as I initially had hoped for, I added more sub-questions in the middle of the interview process. These questions were more provocative and asked about their opinion related to how TikTok is portrayed by society. Although the interviewees reacted well to these questions and had something to say, the length of the interviews did not improve. Interviews where the participants seemed uncomfortable and embarrassed about using TikTok lasted less time compared to those where the participants were open about their use of TikTok and seemed as if they enjoyed talking about the platform. While I tried to show that I use TikTok in similar ways, it seemed like the quieter participants felt judged. Maybe not because of me, but in general for using TikTok. This has let me to investigate how the feeling of shame and being judged for using digital technologies influences user practices in chapter six.

During the transcription process I focused on including the content of what the participants said. I included every pause, filler word and unrelated anecdote in the first transcriptions, but I decided against it after a while. Including all details was too time consuming and did not improve my collected data material.

The interviews were all conducted in Norwegian. As this paper is written in English all quotes have been translated by me. I have removed filler words such as "eh" or "hm", deleted words that were repeated and corrected grammatical errors. However, I have tried to stay as true to the initial sentences and statements as possible.

In the first analysis chapter I supplemented my data set with research and newspaper articles on student identity. In my search for research on the topic, I looked for articles on google scholar that had the words "student" and "TikTok" in them. The results were journal articles published in 2020 and 2023 and mostly from the field of pedagogy and psychology. Many of the articles focused on English language acquisition. In my search for newspaper articles, I first looked at Norway's largest media organization as I knew they had published articles about the topic. I also looked at several Norwegian student newspapers and found articles about students on TikTok in Universitas, Norway's largest student newspaper, and UnderDusken, a student newspaper from Trondheim. I included these two outlets as the newspapers are run by and for students.

3.3 Coding and analysis of the data material

After interviewing 11 participants and transcribing all interviews I had many pages of data material. With so much data material it is important to get an overview and a good understanding of it. To make the analysis and coding process trustworthy and systematic, I followed different analytical approaches. I identified different themes and codes, and also let my findings guide my analysis.

As the first step I decided to code my data and followed an inductive approach (Thagaard, 2021, p. 153). I looked at all interviews individually to familiarize myself with them and marked any statement that seemed interesting to explore later in the process with a code. I ended up with 30 codes. Some of the codes followed the interview guide closely, such as codes called "ForYouPage" or "sharing TikToks" which state if participants mostly watch videos on the main feed and if they share TikToks with others or not. Other statements turned into codes because they stood out to me and I wanted

to explore them for, for example "TikTok words" and "concerns" which show if interviewees use words/phrases from TikTok and if they are concerned about TikTok's influence on other users. Most participants shared thoughts on most of the codes. The codes that did stand out where those related to student identity. Here, the participants did not have much to say which was surprising to me. When starting this thesis, one of my expectations was that student identity would influence the participants' user habits.

To get a better understanding of the data material as an entity, I followed the concept of cross-sectional analysis (Thagaard, 2021, p. 152). Here, I investigated and identified themes by comparing data on the same theme from all interviewees. I was not critical about how many themes I identified, instead I compared all participants' answers as well as codes that seemed interesting and/or surprising to me. The detected themes were: different user patterns, positive and negative relations to the platform, ways to minimize the use of TikTok, norms around the use of TikTok, ways to influence the feed and the importance of the algorithm. While I did not know which themes I would go more into detail on in the analysis, this step helped me get a detailed understanding of my data material and more concrete, possible directions to follow.

At the last stage I made decisions as to how to continue with and look at the material. The theme of different user patterns merged with positive and negative relations to the platform and became the second analysis chapter: "Storytime – the Karens and Heathers of TikTok". Here I map user patterns amongst the interviewees and identify five user types. Ways to minimize the use of TikTok has been merged with norms around the use of TikTok and has become the chapter: "When TikTok lives rent-free in your head – strategies to cut down use" where I look at the motivations behind wanting to reduce time spent on TikTok. Ways to influence the feed and the importance of the algorithm have become the last chapter: "Opening black boxes – strategies fur curating the ForYouPage". Here I look at strategies the interviewees make use of to influence their feed as well as thoughts about the TikTok algorithm.

3.4   Ethical reflections and anonymization

This research project processes personal data, therefore, it is subject to notification in line with the Personal Data Act from 2001 (Thagaard, 2021, p. 22). Projects need to follow and be designed within the ethical framework. Because of that I asked for permission from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) to conduct my research before starting to recruit participants for the project.

The (Norwegian) National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH) stresses that consent to be part of a research project has to be «free, informed and expressed" (Thagaard, 2021, p. 23). Through an information letter about the research project (see Appendix), I shared information about the research topic and purpose as well as I explained what it would mean to participate in the study. All participants gave their consent at the beginning of the interview stating that they had read the information letter and consented to what this entailed. Two interviewees had forgotten to read the information letter beforehand, so the interview and recording was stopped. They were then given time to read through it and ask questions about the project before deciding whether they wanted to participate or not.

It is important to note that I am a TikTok user myself, which comes with advantages and disadvantages. Using TikTok myself has helped me recruit participants for the research

project since I already knew about friends who were on the platform. Another advantage was that using TikTok myself had a positive influence on the conversation flow. I could share my own experience of TikTok and tell the participants what kind of videos I liked to watch, or which trends had popped up on my feed. This helped make the interview feel more like a conversation or discussion about the platform rather than an interview. Some of the participants seemed uncomfortable talking about TikTok in the beginning, so sharing my own experiences was a useful tool to ease the situation. Disadvantages about my role as a TikTok user leading the project are described in the following part: "3.5 Evaluation of the data set".

Together with informed consent, consequences of participation, confidentiality is a central part of the ethical framework within research (Thagaard, 2021, p. 22). I have taken several measures to ensure the participants' confidentiality. The audio recordings were stored on an external drive without internet access and deleted after the interviews had been transcribed. The transcriptions were encrypted and saved on OneDrive. The participants' contact data has been saved separately from other data material, and their names and other identifiable information have been anonymized with codes and pseudonyms.

3.5   Evaluation of the data set

To help assess the quality of my data and reflect on the decisions made throughout the process, I will look at the three terms reliability, validity and transferability (Thagaard, 2021, p. 19).

Reliability refers to trustworthiness in the sense that the researcher explains and illustrates how the data has been treated and how the findings have been reached (Thagaard, 2021, p. 187). Here, it is important to note that I have been a regular user of TikTok for the past three years and am in a way an expert user. I am familiar with characteristics of the platform, and have knowledge about past and current trends, as well as I know about changes on TikTok. This has made it easier to understand what the participants were talking about, and it has facilitated looking at their statements within a bigger context. However, I have not analyzed my own experiences. Instead, I refer to participants' statements to support my arguments. Furthermore, in this chapter I explained my thought process on how codes became categories and then analysis chapters.

When it comes to validity, we try to assess whether the tools used, and theory followed during the research study were appropriate for shedding light on the research question (Thagaard, 2021, p. 189). In this thesis I have explored TikTok by conducting qualitative interviews. Doing so has allowed me to look at TikTok from a user perspective, focusing on thoughts about and meanings attached to TikTok. However, this means that I was not able to include other interesting aspects of TikTok, such as the various features or content of videos.

The last term, transferability, highlights the importance of investigating whether the research findings can be relevant in other contexts (Thagaard, 2021, p. 193). Qualitative studies generally do not aim to be generalizable, but it has become more prominent for research findings to have some general relevance. TikTok is a platform and a technology that is rather new and constantly changing. Therefore, I have tried to support my arguments and findings with similar research from the field of social media, as well as

other digital technologies. With most of my findings supporting the results of other studies. While the research on TikTok is growing, a majority of it has been conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. My research project was conducted afterwards and can give an updated understanding of the platform as well as it can be used for comparison. Choosing students as my focus group makes the study of interests to other studies investigating student's media and technology use.

3.6   Summary

In this chapter I described how I have used the data material throughout the research project. I have explained how I have recruited participants and how I have prepared and conducted the interviews. In addition, I have shown how I have coded and analyzed my empirical data based on the concept of grounded theory. The aim of this chapter has been to give an insight about the process and be open about challenges connected to the research, especially my own influence on the findings. In the next chapters I will present the analysis of my data material. I start with discussing the role student identity plays in students' use of TikTok.

4. POV: student identity on TikTok

As presented in the introductory chapter, TikTok is the fifth biggest social media platform in Norway with continued growth (Warembourg, 2023). Looking at daily use, TikTok is the second most used social media platform in Norway amongst 18–29-year-olds with 58% stating that they use TikTok daily. When it comes to daily use, TikTok has surpassed platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube and is only behind Snapchat (Warembourg, 2023). With students being amongst the age group with the most frequent use of TikTok, my expectation was that identify student identity was an important part of their domestication of TikTok. However, throughout the interviews and analysis it has become clear that there is no strong connection between the use of TikTok and student identity.

To get a deeper understanding of why this is the case, I will explore student identity on TikTok from the point of view (POV) of research, media, and students. First, I will look at research on TikTok related to students, followed by how the media portrays the relationship students have with TikTok. Lastly, I will show how the interviewees of this study feel their student identity fits into their TikTok use.

4.1 POV: Research

Not much research has been conducted examining the user experience of students on TikTok. In this paragraph I will therefore present various studies related to students on TikTok or examining students as a group on TikTok to get a better grasp of how research views this connection. The studies explore research topics such as mental health, different teaching methods or using social media to reach out to students. The aim is to give an overview of how the student user group and the student experience on TikTok is depicted in research.

Gajo et al. (2023) discuss Philippine students' mental health on TikTok. Their study finds that TikTok is mostly used as inspiration for well-being and overall motivation in life. Furthermore, the study suggests that TikTok can help raise awareness and prevent negative symptoms of mental health when it comes to academic stress, family crisis or peer pressure (Gajo et al., 2023). While the study investigates students' mental health, student identity is not something that emerges as the most important factor. It does not become clear whether only student users experience TikTok in this way, or whether the same results are visible in other user groups. A study examining how Indonesian students use TikTok throughout their day shows that the main motivation is as a form of entertainment (Syam & Meldawati, 2022). Instead of looking at the student experience or student identity, students as a group in society are investigated. Again, the study presents insights not necessarily specific for students as a separate group.

An investigation of TikTok as a teaching tool regarding English listening skills shows that students prefer new digital technologies as part of the teaching compared to traditional methods (Adnan et al., 2021). The study findings illustrate students having a better learning experience and, therefore, suggest further integration of social media in language education (Adnan et al., 2021). The study identifies TikTok as a potential teaching method in English language acquisition and manages to present the benefits of including social and digital media platforms into teaching. However, the findings do not represent the student group on TikTok either. The focus lies on TikTok as a means of

teaching, and not on how students experience TikTok and what big of a role their student identity plays on TikTok.

Zhai and Razali (2021) present study findings showcasing social media as a positive contributor in English language education among EFL college students. During the pandemic social media platforms were implemented more in English language education teaching methods, with TikTok having the potential to be integrated as a potential digital learning platform as well (Zhai & Razali, 2021, p. 1441). The study presents how TikTok can be implemented into the classroom and facilitate teaching when it comes to English language acquisition. Again, the study does not elaborate on the student's experience and whether TikTok as an educational tool plays a relevant role in their use of TikTok. Instead, TikTok as a potential teaching method is explored with students being the relevant study group to examine.

Jerasa and Boffone (2021) show that BookTok, a digital literacy community on TikTok, can be integrated into the classroom to "bridge the gap between formal and informal reading practices" (p. 225). Here, the study not only focuses on teaching practices, but also investigates students' TikTok practices outside of school. The study highlights that this kind of community exists mostly because it is not connected to schools and traditional teaching methods. Instead, it allows the community to choose books themselves – giving space to underrepresented identities and books deemed academically unappropriated (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021). The findings stress the importance of separating TikTok as part of everyday life and TikTok as a teaching tool. Students turn to TikTok to continue their reading practices from school, but do it freely without set rules and guidelines. Wheras Jerasa and Boffone (2021) present ways to include BookTok into classrooms, the findings showcase that the separation of the two is what makes BookTok work for students. TikTok is a place where users can explore their interests and identity, a place students not only use as entertainment, but also to find and connect with others and to discuss their interests in an environment of their choosing. The study does not necessarily investigate the student's experience of TikTok, however, the findings show different motivations for student's TikTok use.

Lastly, Pavlik (2020) demonstrates how American universities present themselves on TikTok targeting future students. TikTok profiles affiliated with various American universities were investigated in the study presenting strategies on how to reach prospective students (Pavlik, 2020). While the study addresses students on TikTok, the focus does not lie on the student perspective of TikTok use. Instead, the findings show how to reach students on a platform whose main user group is the age group of potential students. The study assumes that student identity is something they can appeal to and that students as a user group exist on TikTok to attract future students.

In this exploration of research on students' use of TikTok I show that student identity has not been explicitly investigated. The common denominator across all studies was the student group as a research object and not how students experience TikTok themselves. The focus was examining TikTok as a teaching tool and how this medium can be implemented in schooling. The aim was to bridge the separation between school and outside of school practices. Here, the study on BookTok identified some motivations for why students use TikTok. This study illustrates that students use TikTok as a place of exploration, and to pursue interests freely without a set framework.

4.2 POV: Media

After looking at research on students and TikTok, I will now look at the point of view of media. To do so, I will introduce articles from three media outlets. Two of the media outlets are university newspapers: Universitas, Norway's largest student newspaper supported by the student association in Oslo and Akershus, and UnderDusken, a student newspaper supported by the student association in Trondheim. Both newspapers are for and made by students. This means that the articles are aimed at and written by students. This allows me to understand students own reflections on the relationship between TikTok and student identity. The last media outlet is NRK, a government-owned radio and television broadcasting company and Norway's largest media organization.

The first article discusses the decline in skills students acquire due to the impact from social and digital media (Hansen, 2023). Students get input from many different sources and prefer this over qualitative reading. Espen Ytreberg, professor at the Department of media and Communications at the University of Oslo, further explained and blamed "a media and societal development that makes slow and concentrated readings of demanding texts very difficult" (Hansen, 2023). He believes that students not only lack the willpower and skill to read long, demanding texts, but also basic skills necessary to discuss, present and understand these kinds of texts. TikTok is portrayed as an entity students use to relax rather than doing schoolwork, negatively affecting their skill set necessary for their studies. Both him and philosophy professor Arne Johan Vetlesen demand that schools reduce or quit the use of digital tools as a teaching tool to reverse the trend. They believe students do not have the ability themselves to acquire these skills throughout their studies and adult lives (Hansen, 2023). Instead of implementing social and digital media platforms differently in teaching, the professors believe that a separation between social and digital media from school is necessary to improve student's learning abilities.

Krøvel and Moen (2022) discuss screen time and its effect on students. Two students were interviewed and asked about their use of TikTok, with one of them explaining: "You wake up with your phone, you fall asleep with your phone" (Krøvel & Moen, 2022). The students themselves reflect over how much time they spend in front of screens throughout the day and what kind of relationship they have to their phones. The article portrays students as not being able to control their time and their use of TikTok themselves. Instead, TikTok is in control and steals their time. At the end of the article postdoctoral fellow Ståle Wig comes with different suggestions on how students can cut down their screen time, for example, printing texts to read, instead of reading them on a computer (Krøvel & Moen, 2022). The article tells the story of students struggling to minimize the time they spent in front of screens and how to manage time in general. While the article mentions that social media can be a social space, it emphasizes the negative implications of digital and social media.

Nyeggen (2023) compares TikTok regulations in Norway to those in China, for the Chinese version of TikTok Douyin. Whereas China limits access to Douyin for users under the age of 14, in Norway younger users have to deal with the negative impacts on their own. China also controls the content younger users have access to, only allowing for content on "science, culture, nature and cooking" (Nyeggen, 2023). Here, the author stresses the negative implications Norwegian regulations can have on users. Instead of guiding how digital technologies are employed, users are left on their own with, struggling to manage time or use TikTok productively. Nyeggen (2023) highlights the

negative effects of a self-governed use of TikTok, but he forgets that he himself is a user of TikTok who manages to evaluate TikTok and look at both negative and positive sides of the platform. He demonstrates having the skill set he fears other users might not develop after using TikTok.

Løtveit (2023) shares her journey of being a TikTok user and trying out one of the trends that has gone viral on TikTok. For a week she followed the "That girl" trend: waking up early every day, following a morning routine found on TikTok, and trying to improve her lifestyle. In this article TikTok is portrayed as a channel for the American lifestyle. TikTok makes American trends available on a global level, influencing users on a global level. The American trend of focusing on and improving oneself becomes a worldwide trend. Users everywhere try to be more productive and efficient with their time. It is a story about users who are influenced by and follow trends easily because they are on TikTok (Løtveit, 2023). However, it is also important to consider that the author herself is a student using TikTok. She follows the TikTok trend herself out of curiosity and after a trial phase makes up her own opinion on its efficiency, sharing that she will not continue this kind of lifestyle. The article highlights the negative effects the platform has on users, but the author presents a different picture of student users on TikTok. She demonstrates curiosity and excitement about trying something new, while also showing the ability to evaluate the content of the platform and its effect on herself.

The last two articles present two students who create content on TikTok themselves and have acquired a following on the platform (Opsal, 2023; Killingsbergtrø, 2021). The first student shares his saving tips on TikTok after the increasing prices on food and electricity. He jokes with his advice and comes up with nonsense tips as a reaction to the advice of saving more when there is nothing more students can save. He uses TikTok as a form for entertainment, messing with student struggles in their everyday lives (Opsal, 2023). Similar but different, the other student shares her tips and tricks about student life and studying on TikTok. The article portrays study technique tips and student day-in-the-life videos as something students are interested in and find useful. It tells the story of students struggling with their studies and finding a balance between social and university life. TikTok is illustrated as a tool for managing their daily student lives (Killingbergtrø, 2021). The articles illustrate the student group on TikTok as both in search of entertainment, but also motivation and assistance with both their studies and student lives. Also, the content creating students show that students on TikTok are interested in sharing their experience of student life with others, as well as being creative on a digital platform.

Looking at these news articles shows that social and digital media such as TikTok are presented rather negatively by public media outlets. The articles focus on the negative implications TikTok has on students, highlighting their decrease in skills necessary for higher education, their inability to manage and control how and what they spend time on and how easily students are influenced by online trends. The articles present the student group as users in need of help and guidance to be better at not only dealing with digital media but also how they live their lives. Interviews conducted with student content creators further shows how TikTok is used as entertainment and to share their own experiences and struggles as students with other students. While the contents of the articles mainly focus on the negative aspects of TikTok, it is important to consider who the authors are: students. They either wrote the articles themselves or were interviewed

for them. This shows that students are in fact able to reflect over their use of TikTok, and aware of possible problems connected to the use.

4.3   POV: students

Examining how research and media illustrate students on TikTok shows that the students' user experience has not been included. Research has focused on various ways TikToks can be used to connect to students, for example, in English language acquisition or to reach out to potential future students. Media articles highlight the negative effects TikTok has on its student users. Research and media both look at the TikTok – student relationship from TikTok's side, illustrating what TikTok does or does not do and how it affects students. In this next part I will present the point of view of students. I will look at how the interviewees' student identity shapes their TikTok experience. I asked all interviewees about whether they watch TikToks related to student life or their studies, and if TikTok is something that is talked about on campus. The following categorization is based on their answers and focuses on the content related to student life the interviewees watch.

4.3.1 Day-in-the-life

The first category thematizes "a-day-in-the-life-of-a-student" TikToks. These TikToks are short vlogs in which students share what a normal university day looks like for them and how they prepare for it. Students film themselves from when they wake up in the morning until they go to bed at night, showing what they eat for breakfast, their walk to school, lectures, after school activities and so on. Sometimes the student adds a song to the video or explains what they are doing in the video.

When asked about whether TikToks related to her studies or being a student pop up on her feed, Emma explained that she sometimes has "a-day-in-the-life-of-a-student" TikToks on her feed. Emma shared that she did not like these kinds of videos. She described them as: "it's supposed to be like aesthetically pleasing, like very proper all the time. It's supposed to be very nice, and it should be like, the outfit is good, you have a coffee that you bought, you have like a delicious, packed lunch and then you kind of sit and look absolutely perfect". Watching these TikToks made her feel unmotivated to go to campus herself. Noah had seen similar TikToks, too. He explained that "they feel fake. I think they are more about the aesthetics. They are not real". Both interviewees felt that these kinds of videos did not represent their own student reality and did not match their experience of university life. Furthermore, Emma and Noah stressed that they believed the focus of the TikToks to lie more on the aesthetics, and trying to make a video that looks good rather than showing the reality.

4.3.2 Study technique tips

The second category of student related content the interviewees discussed are TikToks with study technique tips. Here, other students or former students share tips on how to become a better student, how to manage life on a student budget, how to make the best out of the university experience and so on. Some TikToks are aimed at specific study programs, while others focus on general student life hacks.

Noah shared that he received TikToks containing study tips, for example, a TikTok with "five study tips top students do not want you to know". He jokingly asked: "why have they kept them secret?" and stated that the TikTok "saved me". Maja added that the tips she found on TikTok connected to studies and student life were tips she had heard

before. Their responses to the TikToks show that they do not perceive these types of TikToks as useful and relevant. Noah further explained that he felt TikTok as trying to "push that lifestyle agenda on me" and to avoid receiving more study and student life related TikToks he often chose to press the "not interested" button.

Contrasting Noah's experience of study tips on TikTok, Ella shared that she had come across one TikTok on an NTNU profiles that she found useful. She did not specify which one of the university profiles she found the video on but underlined that she rarely likes or finds this profile's TikToks useful. She needed some technical help with her mac and a TikTok explaining how to fix her problem showed up on her feed. "It was a coincidence that it fit very well" is how she described the TikTok. She further stressed that in her opinion TikToks from NTNU's main profiles are focusing more on being informative, compared to NTNU teknologi og realfag who she believed try to match trending videos and connect to student life. Ingrid also said that she found some study related TikToks helpful. However, she stated that she saved these kinds of videos and then forgot about them later. Ella and Ingrid's answers show that on rare occasions tips and tricks on student life or studies can be useful, however, these are not what they were looking for on TikTok.

4.3.3 NTNU on TikTok

This last category discusses TikToks from NTNU's official university profiles and student organizations part of NTNU. These profiles contain all kinds of TikToks: from presenting the various campuses to following viral TikTok trends. The TikTok profile from the student organization Abakus, for students studying Computer Technology and Communication Technology and Digital security, and the NTNU profile NTNU teknologi og realfag are the two profiles that were mentioned frequently by the interviewees.

Noah shared that TikToks from NTNU's official university profiles tended to find their way into his feed. However, he did not find their content entertaining and described the profile NTNU teknologi og realfag as "the worst TikTok profile ever". He pointed to the profile from the student organization Abakus who made similar content connected to student life. He described their profile as the "anti-thesis" to NTNU teknologi of realfag, stating that they both made similar types of memes, but Abakus' TikToks being the funny ones. In his comparison of the two profiles, it becomes clear that his use of TikTok is intended as a form of entertainment. He does not mislike NTNU teknologi og realfag because it makes student life related content, but because their humor does not match his. Similar but different, Ella highlighted that she liked both profiles because she found them entertaining. She enjoyed that they "are updated on memes that are trending". Oskar added to this, saying that he enjoyed those TikToks where different universities in Norway or different campuses in Trondheim have "beef" with each other. The participant's descriptions and explanations highlight that TikTok is something they use as a form of entertainment. The content does not need to be about student life, but if done the right way it can be. However, content related to students has to be for entertainment reasons as well.

Frida explained that she likes that NTNU has chosen to be on TikTok and makes TikToks targeting younger audiences. She shared: "I think that's how I applied to NTNU too, because I saw a TikTok on social media". She believed that NTNU managed to target younger audiences by making content based on the target audiences' humor. Her description and experience of the TikToks shows that NTNU's profiles are targeting

audiences that not necessarily are university students. Instead, the target audience are students still in high school trying to decide on what to do after graduation. The content of the official profiles focuses on recruiting new students to the university, and not on reaching enrolled students.

4.4   Discussion

When looking at the point-of-view of research, media coverage and the interviewees' statements together some overlaps become visible. However, it also becomes visible that student identity is depicted differently depending on who is looking at it. The research articles focus mostly on TikTok as a digital platform used as a teaching tool, whereas media has covered negative sides of TikTok. Responses from the participants themselves show that the algorithm believes all of them to be students and gives them student related content, however, the reaction to these videos differ.

Previous research on students on TikTok has mostly focused on social and digital media platforms as an educational tool. In the case of TikTok it has been used for language learning. The articles who have discussed the user perspective also underline that TikTok is mainly used as a form of entertainment. Students can be themselves and follow their own interests, instead of having to follow school rules. The presented research focuses on general experiences of students on TikTok, and not necessarily on their student identity.

In the first media articles, students are depicted as easily influenced users in need of learning skills to manage TikTok. The articles have a rather negative view of TikTok and describe TikTok as the controlling part in the student-TikTok relationship. The students described in these articles are seemed to be easily influenced by how society and media present TikTok users, especially in their age group.

However, the article about following TikTok trends aims at telling the story of all the negative side effects following these trends can have, but it also does the opposite. The author herself is a student and shows that she can evaluate and shows reflections of TikTok and TikTok use. She shows that she knows how to see both the positive and negative sides of TikTok.

The two interviewed students who also are content creators show that students use TikTok as entertainment, as a creative outlet, as a pastime, as well as maybe a form of income considering their following. Making TikToks is both to make fun of the struggles they experience as students, but also to share their life with others and help other students with struggles they had themselves.

However, the participants shared that they are only interested in the humorous contents about student life. Lifestyle TikToks about student life were not videos they were looking for on TikTok. To them it felt as if the videos focused more on the aesthetics, rather than sharing something valuable with others. Tips and tricks on how to be a (better) student were also not videos that appealed to the interviewees. Maybe this is because they are too far along in their studies, or the tips are too general? Ella shared that one tip was helpful to her, but it was related to a very specific problem.

Looking at all three point of views also helps us understand the relationship between TikTok and student identity better. We see that the participants are not very interested in

being students on TikTok and that my expectation of student identity shaping the TikTok experience was not fulfilled. Instead, it becomes clear that the participants want to be entertained by the platform. Entertainment is an important factor when it comes to student related content as well as content related to student struggles. Here it is important that the content matches the students' humor and keeps up with current trends and what is happening on different campuses and universities.

4.5   Summary

In this chapter I have explored the relationship between student identity and the use of TikTok. With the help of research articles and media depictions of this relationship as well as my data material I have outlined three different illustrations of how students and student identity influence the use of TikTok. As student identity does not shape the user experience as much as I expected, in the next chapter I will look at how the participants use TikTok and present five user types of TikTok.

5. Storytime – the Karens and Heathers of TikTok

You might have guessed it, but on TikTok storytime is used to make clear that you are going to tell a story, or you are asking someone to tell a story. You indicate that the video might be longer than usual because you are going to go into detail. Karens and Heathers are two personality types users refer to online. A Karen is usually a middle-aged white woman who is very demanding and entitled. And always wants to speak to the manager. You don't want to be a Karen; you want to be a Heather. Heathers are the popular girls. The ones everyone is in love with and desires. Karens and Heathers are personality types you can find on TikTok; in this chapter I am going to introduce the different types of users of TikTok.

To start off the analysis of my data material I will look at how TikTok users have integrated the platform into their daily lives and what meanings they have attached to it. Looking at technology use from the user-perspective helps identify various understandings of technology and the different ways it is used. To better understand the relationships and attitudes users have towards TikTok, I will explore the collected data from an STS perspective. In addition to getting a better grasp of how the platform is used, this chapter's aim is to give the reader an introduction and overview of the participants and data material.

I will use the concept of domestication theory to show the practical, symbolic and cognitive domestications of the TikTok platform (Sørensen, 2006). By looking at the central dimensions of this theory I will present when and where TikTok is used, how users understand TikTok and what meanings they attach to it, and lastly, the necessary skill set for the use of TikTok. The analysis has helped me to identify five user types with each category having its own user characteristics. In addition to the concept of domestication theory, I explore the idea of active and passive use of technology. While some studies argue for differentiating user groups into the two categories (Gong et al., 2015), others contest such a split (Sørensen, 1994). To better understand the differences between the five user types, I will first look at the main similarities the interviewees share. Then, I will present each of the user types, followed by a discussion and summary of the findings.

5.1 Similarities of daily use

TikTok is a platform that can be used anywhere and at any time by its users. The mobile phone application presents its users with short-form videos or picture reels combined with various songs, background noises or someone talking. The feed is steered by an algorithm and personalized to each user. Although TikTok delivers personalized content to all its users the participants demonstrate some similar user patterns.

By looking at the practical dimension and exploring when and where TikTok is used by the interviewees, it becomes clear that the platform has become a part of their daily lives. When asked about when they use TikTok, several interviewees shared that they use the platform at a set time throughout the day. "Before going to sleep" was the most shared answer. The participants showed that TikTok has been allocated a certain space and time in their daily lives. Although the application is used in different ways and various meanings are attached to the platform, the interviewees made space for the platform to occupy. The platform has become a part of their routine. Exploring where the

interviewees use TikTok, the participants shared that they mostly use TikTok in private. Although the platform is a mobile application and can therefore be used anywhere, the participants choose to use it in private. The combination of a very personalized feed and the sound that comes with all videos can make it difficult to use in public. Ella explained this by saying "I don't use it at school or in a setting where I cannot have the sound on. But if I can relax at home then the threshold is very low to use it. But also when I am in the living room with my roommate watching TV I feel that it is bad to start using the sound on". Her reasoning implies that there are certain rules attached to using TikTok which she followed, for example to not use it in social settings because of the sound. Her description shows that the norm has become to use TikTok in private, at home and alone.

The participants both make space for TikTok through allocating a specific time slot to it as well as using it for shorter time intervals throughout the day. Although TikTok exists as a public space that anyone can access, it is used in private and alone. It is not surprising that TikTok has become a private place for the interviewees considering the personalized feed and the fact that videos come with sounds. While TikTok first and foremost is a mobile application that can be accessed anywhere, the participants have turned it into a mobile home application. A platform that can be used anywhere at any time, but that is used in the comfort of the home at set times. The similarities in how TikTok is used also calls to mind the metaphor of "taming" technology for it to become a part of the domestic sphere (Sørensen, 2006). The established routines display how the interviewees have integrated the platform into their home. They have tamed the platform for their own use and given it a certain place in their lives.

I have presented the similarities of the user's daily use first, to help highlight the differences in user practices. The similarities show us the place, location, and time, TikTok occupies in the participants' lives. However, this does not say anything about what users do on the platform and what the platform means to them. Hence, I will introduce the different user types of TikTok to show how the interviewees use the platform.

5.2   Five user types of TikTok
Based on their main motivation for using TikTok I have identified five user types amongst the 11 participants. The user types are: the creating user, the hesitant user, the socially conscious user, the social and the enthusiastic user. Technologies can be used in various ways and for different purposes which is why some of the participants are present in two categories.

5.2.1 The creating user
On TikTok, similar to other social media platforms, users can participate in various ways. Users can like, comment, share, create and publish content. They can follow their friends and/or content creators they are interested in. Unlike other social media platforms, on TikTok users can also consume content without following other users. The ForYouPage will always deliver content to its users. Moreover, users do not have to contribute with their own content to be able to use the platform. They can simply consume content by watching videos or reading the comment section. However, all social media platforms depend on users who contribute with content for users to consume. The creating user belongs to this kind of user group. This user group does not only use TikTok by watching

videos, reading the comment section, and liking their favorite videos. Instead, they engage with the TikTok platform by also making and posting their own videos.

All interviewees were asked about whether they make and publish their own TikToks and three of them answered that they do. Sofie shared and showed some of the TikToks she had posted online. Her TikToks showed Sofie and a friend chugging beer. The videos included burping, talking and tended to be quite long; lasting up to two and a half minutes. Usually, Sofie was the one who finishes chugging her beer last. The friends she made TikToks with change, but the concept always stayed the same. Although the TikToks did not have many views, Sofie liked to make these kinds of videos because to her it was just for fun. More of the same, Frida highlighted that the TikToks she had made and published "have been for fun". When she saw a TikTok or heard a sound she thought was fun, she sometimes made a video. On the video she showed during the interview, she and her friends were at a party and stopped to dance to a popular TikTok song. She also highlighted that her aim was not to go viral and instead to have fun and make something fun. Frida's and Sofie's symbolic and practical understanding of TikTok highlights that the reasoning behind creating their own content on TikTok is a form of entertainment that they share with friends. The practical aspect of making a video overlaps with the symbolic aspect of sharing the experience with a friend. They watch TikTok on their own but make TikToks together. It becomes a social activity. The aim is not to generate views or to become popular on the platform. Like in Vaterlaus and Winter's study (2021), the interviewees want to have fun, and usually this includes their friends (p. 14). Making TikTok videos is not an activity users do on their own; instead, it is a collaborative activity with friends.

Oskar also stressed that "it is just fun. I usually delete them. I just wanted to test it". Exploring the cognitive aspect of using TikTok, Oskar demonstrated that creating TikToks to him was about testing out the different filters that could be employed to make videos. He clearly wants to experiment with the various features, get to know the technology better and have fun. His intentions were not to earn likes or go viral on the platform. He published the videos on his profile when he first started using TikTok and explained that he believed to remember that it was easier to press the publish icon instead of deleting the videos. The different filters and features on TikTok led to Oskar wanting to experiment and create content. His curiosity about the technology and how it works, leads him to being creative. The content creating features of TikTok further encourage him to be creative. He said that he could go back to delete the TikToks now, but also thinks it would be funny if people who knew him and found his profile watched the videos he has made.

Later, Oskar did not publish TikToks anymore when he tried out new filters. Instead, he deleted them after he had tested out the filter. Again, a main motivation behind creating his own TikToks is entertainment. He demonstrates a playful approach to the platform, showing that he does not take his TikToks seriously. In addition, Oskar illustrated an interest in the technology and wanting to understand the different functions the platform offers. He wants to play around with the different functions TikTok has to offer and understand how they can be used and what they might be useful for. Whereas Şot (2022) identifies "intentions to build intimacy" (p. 1503) both with the platform and other users as a main motivation for creating content on TikTok, Oskar, Frida and Sofie are mainly motivated by the creation process and the need for entertainment. Furthermore,

for Oskar experimenting with the different features the platform has to offer and learning how the technology works is another motivation for making TikTok videos.

All three participants highlight their interest in using TikTok as a form of entertainment as well as exploring the different technological features offered to those users who create content. Through creating videos on TikTok a different part of the platform becomes available to creating users. This part of the platform is only available to users who create their own content. Users who only consume TikToks do not have access to this part. In the same way as other social media platforms, TikTok depends on users who contribute with content to the platform who are often referred to as active users (Gong et al., 2015). The term active user implies that there is a contrasting user group who passively uses TikTok. However, if active users are those users who create and share their own content, are users who simply scroll through their TikTok feed passive users? Is someone who spends 10 minutes filming and posting their own TikTok once a month more active than someone who spend two hours daily scrolling through their feed? This leads to the question of if there is such a thing as passive use on social media.

Rather than not participating, users who do not create or produce their own content on TikTok simply use the platform in a different way; they demonstrate a different form of engagement with the TikTok platform. Sørensen (1994) supports this argument underlining the need to move away from a divide between production being the active part, and consumption the passive part in technology use (p. 6). He stresses that consumption is also a form of production; just a different way of doing so. "The production acts of consumers in relation to technology are relational" (Sørensen, 1994, p. 6), meaning that production depends on the relation users have with the given technology. So, instead of using the term active users to characterize those users who contribute with content, the users are described as creating users. However, compared to users who might be described as content creators or influencers, the creating users also show a different level of activity. Both use the same functions of TikTok and have access to a different part of the platform compared to other user groups, yet they cannot be treated as equal users. Therefore, this user group is termed creating users focusing on the fact that these users contribute with their own content to the platform, on whatever level of activity they like.

5.2.2 The hesitant users
Continuing the idea of various forms of activity, the hesitant users are those users whose activities are barely visible on the platform. These users do not create their own content, or comment on TikToks. They mostly engage with TikTok by scrolling through their feed and watching TikToks on their own and anonymously. This group is particularly interesting because TikTok's set up allows for this user group to thrive on the platform more than on other platforms. As users are always given content to scroll through on their ForYouPage, even without following other users, the hesitant users are not obliged to engage with TikTok's contents on a higher level of activity than they wish to do. Gong et al. (2015) identify a similar user group called lurkers who are a common user group on social media platforms (p. 140). Lurkers show little interested in contributing content, and instead favor consuming content. Reasons are "no need to post, personal privacy and safety concerns, shyness over public posting, and poor system usability" (Gong et al., 2015). Although the lurkers and hesitant user share similar traits, there are some differences in their reasoning for not contributing to TikTok which necessitate the different names.

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Right at the start of the interview, when asked about how they usually use TikTok, Olivia highlighted that compared to others she did not use TikTok the most and Astrid said that she was "good" and did not use TikTok that much. Both answers imply the idea of a "right" and "wrong" amount of time users should spend on TikTok. The interviewees compared their own use to how they perceive others to use the platform. They show an awareness of norms attached to using social media. Moreover, the answers show that the participants feel pressure to follow these norms and reduce their time spent on TikTok.

When asked about what kind of TikToks they enjoy watching, both interviewees again compared themselves to how they think other users behave on TikTok. Olivia and Astrid shared that they enjoyed watching TikToks about beauty products or hair care tips. Both have bought some of the products recommended on TikTok, as well as they have tried different hair styles. Olivia said: "we have all slept with a sock in our hair or used a bathrobe belt", while Astrid explained: "I can fall for it, but it takes a bit. I don't fall for everything". Exploring the symbolic dimension of TikTok, their answers show that talking about this topic makes them feel judged and they feel the need to justify their behavior. They do not wish to stand out with their behavior and the type of content they watch, and instead try to use TikTok the way they perceive as "normal", the way "others" use it.

Olivia and Astrid also seemed uncomfortable talking about TikTok and what they liked about it during the interview. Several times during the interviews they mentioned that the situation was awkward or embarrassing, for example when showing the TikToks they have liked. Both also tended to give shorter answers and more sub questions had to be asked to get sufficient answers to all the main questions. The two interviews were the shortest ones out of the 11 interviews. They feel judged and demonstrate that being influenced by TikToks to buy or do something they might otherwise not have done, is something they do not wish to want others to know as they feel it is outside the norm. When it comes to the practical dimension, Olivia and Astrid show that they do not want other actors to be a part of how they use TikTok. Ask (2011) explores negotiations users demonstrate in her study on play practices of World of Warcraft. The players have to negotiate different understandings of the game amongst themselves, and those around them to find out how to use the game in what is the right way for themselves, and how to give the game a place in their lives that can be understood by family and friends (Ask, 2011). Not only the actual user of a technology influences its meaning and use, also friends and family, or on a higher-level media, politics, and society. With different portrayals of technology come different sets of norms and rules that users must work out. In the way Olivia and Astrid talked about and used TikTok shows that in their negotiations of TikTok, they are very influenced by societal norms about time spent on social media platforms.

Although only the creating users make and publish their own TikToks, the hesitant user stands apart because of their reasoning for not doing so. Looking at the practical dimension, Olivia explained that she enjoyed filming and editing TikToks. However, her symbolic understanding of TikTok has created a barrier that stops her from posting the videos online. She felt doing so is "cringe". Astrid also used the word "cringe" to describe her feelings about making her own videos. Especially TikToks in which creators are dancing or doing a trend were videos the interviewees depicted as "cringy" or "awkward". Words such as cringy and awkward show that they would feel judged and embarrassed if they published their own content. They do not feel as if they are the type of users who should be publishing content on TikTok, especially videos that depict trends such as viral

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dances. The hesitant user express that these are videos other users can do and post, whereas they should only be watching the videos. They consider that there are unspoken rules about how to use and what to do on the platform. This user group's reasoning for not publishing their own content shows that they feel that certain norms and rules have been established on the platform that they try to follow and that only certain types of people and users publish content.

Astrid further explained that she did not want to be the focus of things she put online. She also used Instagram and did not like to post pictures that focus on her on this platform. So, filming a TikTok, where the focus is generally on one person, was not something she would do. Olivia compared her use of TikTok to her use of Instagram, too. On the latter platform she participated and engaged more with others. She commented and liked posts from her friends quite frequently. However, on TikTok she wanted to stay anonymous. She wanted to watch videos and not have to engage with them. Even though she also followed friends on TikTok who published their own content, most of the TikToks she watched were from users she did not know. As most of her time is spent watching TikToks from strangers, she did not have any interest in commenting on these videos and engaging more with the videos.

Gong et al.'s (2015) lurker shares many of the traits of the hesitant user. Both enjoy simply consuming content and being silent users without contributing to the platform. However, the hesitant user differs from the lurker when it comes to the reasoning for not contributing with their own content. Here, the barrier is created by the norms and rules attached to how they feel one should use and behave on TikTok. The interviewees might not be judged directly for how TikTok shapes their lives outside of the platform, but they have internalized norms attached to the use of TikTok. They discipline themselves, feel the need to compare themselves to others to justify this behavior and are critical towards their own use of TikTok. The way Gong et al. (2015) describes lurking coincide with common user practices of TikTok where users interact with each other indirectly, through the contents they watch. So, their description of lurking matches common user practices on TikTok. In addition, lurking implies that users kind of exist in the shadows, and consume content without being seen, however, the term hesitant tries to highlight the cautious and hesitant behavior users demonstrate while consuming TikTok videos.

5.2.3 The socially conscious user

The socially conscious user looks at the TikTok platform in a bigger context. Instead of focusing on their own relationship to and feelings towards TikTok as the hesitant user does, the socially conscious user questions the platform's usefulness and role in society, as well as on the consequences other users might experience. During the interviews these participants talk more about other users and how others use the platform. They focus on the role TikTok has in society and how it affects society. Moreover, this user group is interested in the technology behind the platform and wants to understand the different features of TikTok.

Frida shared that TikTok is interesting regarding information, and how TikTok influenced society. She stated that TikTok could be a very informative platform but stressed the importance of being critical about information found on TikTok. As an example, she discussed the information about the Covid vaccine that was going around at the time on TikTok. There was a lot of incorrect information which she thought could have been dangerous if it would have spread. Frida found politics and how platforms like TikTok play

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into those interesting. She underlined that in Norway politics did not play as big of a role on TikTok as in the US. There, social media was used to promote political agendas and some of the videos had found their way into her feed. Frida liked that TikTok had become a platform where users could talk about their problems and connect with people who had similar experiences in life. When Black Lives Matters first started going viral it was prominent on TikTok and Frida felt that she learned a lot about people's experiences through their narratives shared on TikTok. She highlighted: "because I can never put myself in that situation, so it is something I learn from: how other people experience life". The practical dimension of Frida's use shows that other actors play a vital part in her experience of TikTok. She uses the platform to better understand and learn about other people's lives.

Oskar shared that he found TikTok useful as it allowed him to stay updated on what was happening across generations. As soon as something was trending or going viral, he knew about it which helped him feel connected to the generations younger than him. In addition, he liked to stay updated on technology. Looking at the cognitive dimension of Oskar's use of TikTok, highlights his interest in knowing how TikTok works and how to use it as something he sees as a useful skill. Oskar was one of the users who made and posted his own TikToks. Mostly because he was interested in how the process worked and the different functions one can make use of. The downside of TikTok to him was how good the platform was to keep users on the platform, how addictive it was. He was concerned about users who spend too much time on the platform, especially those who were less active, had small social networks or maybe were lonely. He feared that with TikTok's addictiveness it was easy for those people to spent too much time on the platform. Moreover, he underlined his concern about users who did not have a conscious relationship to the platform. Users who did not know how much time they spent on it and how passive they became while using it. He said: "There is no one who goes out and comes up with creative things and does something. (Everyone) just spends their time on it. You are inside, alone and passivated".

Contrasting public discourse on young adults' vulnerability and dependency on social media and the popular recommendation of limiting social media use, Boulianne and Theocharis (2020) stress "that digital media have a generally positive role to play in civic life, although much depends on how young people use digital tools" (p. 123). When looking at the symbolic understanding the socially conscious user has of TikTok, it becomes visible that this is a user who uses social media formats for their entertainment, at the same time as also being conscious of the effects platforms can have on its users. When discussing TikTok, Oskar and Frida illustrate that they evaluate the platforms in its entirety and are conscious of both negative and positive effects of using TikTok. They enjoy the positive aspects of TikTok: the fact that the platform can bring both different generations together and put various social groups in focus. However, they are also aware of the negative effects of TikTok: the fact that the platform excels at being addictive and information spreads fast, without anyone checking the information first. When they come across information on TikTok, they demonstrate that they are conscious and aware users: questioning the information and how it might affect other users. Boulianne and Theocharis (2020) come with the recommendation of adults supporting and guiding social media use of young adults, intending for youths to become conscious and attentive users. The socially conscious user shows that this is a possible result, users can enjoy TikTok for its entertainment, while also being interested in the technology behind it and evaluating its usefulness for the individual and society.

5.2.4 The social user

TikTok itself presents the platform as a way to connect with other users, to "create and share authentically" (TikTok, 2020). This implies the intention of the platform being used as a social entity. TikTok wants its users not only to be creative and contribute with content, but also to share and connect with other users. However, being social does not only mean interacting with other users directly. On TikTok sociality is also shaped by the algorithm. Users can feel a connection to others by relating to videos without necessarily having been in touch with the other person (Lee et al., 2022). As outlined at the beginning of the chapter, TikTok is a platform that is mostly used in private and alone. Whereas some of the interviewees prefer to watch TikTok alone on the toilet, for the social users TikTok has become a part of their social lives. TikTok is something they not only talk about with their friends, but it is also something they reference. In addition to sending TikToks videos to each other, they also show TikToks to each other in person and watch videos together. TikTok has become a natural part of their lives and conversations.

Noah highlighted that he curated the videos he sent to his friends and put time and effort into finding the best TikToks to share. He explained: "like this (a TikTok) I know they think is funny". He also underlined that TikTok to him is a form of "sharing culture". He enjoyed being able to send videos he liked to friends as well as receive the TikToks they thought he might enjoy watching or think are funny. Maja described TikTok in a similar way. When reflecting on her daily use of TikTok she explained that although she opened the TikTok application many times throughout the day, she believed that it was nice because "then I also send a lot of TikToks to friends and maybe especially some to my boyfriend. So it is a nice way to keep in touch during the day". Sharing TikToks becomes a way to keep in touch with friends, and, in a way, to experience the day together while being apart. When it comes to the practical aspect of TikTok use, Noah and Maja both demonstrate that friends and family outside of the platform are part of their experience of TikTok. TikTok is not only something that is experienced online on their phones, but something shared with others, in person. Looking at the practical dimension shows that it helps to understand the symbolic aspect Noah and Maja described. Sharing videos becomes something social that happens outside of the platform and becomes a positive part of their relationship with friends.

As part of the "sharing culture", TikTok was also something Noah and his friends talked about. Mostly it was about trends, viral videos or simply asking the other person if they had seen the video he had sent them. Also, for Emma, Sofie and Ingrid TikTok had become a natural part of conversations where they talked about things they had seen on TikTok. Ingrid shared that she found herself starting many conversations with "oh my god, do you know what I saw on TikTok?". The participants show that they are comfortable with talking about the platform, and videos they watch. They also show that they understand the platform and know that when a video has gone viral it is easy to discuss with others as they will have seen it, too.

With friends he hung out with a lot, Noah also sometimes referenced TikTok videos or phrases. He said: "often when we have a break, we from the study associations, we play, we have a switch, and then we kind of often just start referencing this TikTok sound while we play". Ingrid shared that instead of sending each other TikToks, she and her friends often referenced TikToks or TikTok sounds when they were together "and then we

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just kind of know". Also, Emma experienced that TikTok had become a shared experience with those friends that also were on TikTok. When they were together, they talked a lot about TikTok and videos they had seen, as well as they referenced TikTok sounds. She highlighted: "if you have the same types of videos, you get some expressions and sounds and songs and such that become shared". TikTok has become a shared experience for the social user. TikTok phrases and references are in a way a code that only users of TikTok can understand. It creates a kind of insider group with certain words and phrases symbolizing who is part of the group and who is not. Emma highlighted this saying: "you can just say something and then the other laughs because you realize it's from TikTok and both have seen it".

The social user also watches TikToks together with other TikTok users. "If (a friend) and I, we can for example watch something on TV and then we finish and watch a bit on TikTok and then we can watch each other's" explained Sofie. Ingrid shared a similar experience from when she was on vacation with friends who also use TikTok. At the end of the day, they liked to relax together in their hotel room and then they spent time watching videos on each other's TikTok feeds, to see what the other's feeds looked like. She experienced the same when she was together with her sisters who she is close with. When they were together, they often scrolled together on TikTok before going to bed. TikTok is not only a part of their conversations, but also something this user group likes to do together with friends. Looking at the practical dimension of their TikTok use shows that where they use the platform can change in certain social settings. Together with friends and family that also enjoy TikTok, they do not watch TikTok alone and at home anymore; they watch it together.

TikTok's expectations to its users is to use the platform in a social way: not necessarily through direct interaction with other users, but through relating to videos suggested by the algorithm. The social user fulfills this expectation of using TikTok as a social entity, however, social connections are made outside of the digital platform. TikTok is an experience the social user shares with close friends and family directly and in person. Sharing their experiences is a way to include friends in their lives and share their interests online. In their descriptions of how TikTok is used around and with others, it becomes clear that there is an outsider and insider group. The social user only shares their TikTok experience and their TikTok knowledge with those who understand it and value it in the same way, the insider group. Referencing and talking about TikToks is only possible around other users, and users who watch similar videos. Compared to other social platforms such as Twitch.tv which also has the expectation of its users being social and community being a central aspect of the platform, it is shown that this expectation is not necessarily fulfilled by users (Ask et al., 2019, p. 6). Sociality on the platform is reject by many users. Users have a more "detached and non-engaged" way of relating to the platform and make use of social features during important moments (Ask et al., 2019, p. 6). Reaching users and getting them to engage with the platform socially, and in social settings is not always what ends up happening. The social users distinguish themselves as the users for whom the platform is part of their social lives, but also demonstrate a different way of being social on TikTok than the platform expects from its users.

5.2.5 The enthusiastic user
The enthusiastic users are those users who view TikTok as a positive part of their daily lives. They enjoy the time they spend on the platform and sometimes even set aside

time for it. To them TikTok is a form of entertainment, rather than a tool for procrastination. TikTok is something they talk about with their friends and something they are open about using; they do not feel embarrassed about it. They are aware of how social media platforms are seen and portrayed in society, but rather focus on their positive experience on it. They are comfortable with using TikTok and the role the platform has in their lives. The enthusiastic users are quite like the social users. However, for the social users the focus lies on the social aspect of the platform and the shared experience. The enthusiastic users highlight more how much joy they experience when being on TikTok. TikTok is something that delivers enjoyment and comfort. Noah is grouped with both user groups, as he highlighted how much he enjoys both the social aspect of the platforms, as well as how he came across as being equally enthusiastic about the platform when using it on his own.

Ella highlighted right at the start of the interview that she enjoyed using TikTok and that she had realized that to her it was entertaining to be on the platform. When she had free time or wanted to relax, she chose to spend that time on TikTok; it was her go-to app. Noah also scheduled time for TikTok. He said: "sometimes I have set an alarm so that I can lie in bed and wake up slowly and then I watch some TikTok". Setting off time for TikTok and giving the platform more time and space in their daily lives, is a central part of this user's domestication of TikTok. The platform is not something that they feel is stealing time from them, instead it is something they choose to give time to. Furthermore, Ella underlined that her use of TikTok was very passive and that it was a form for pastime. Even though it was a passive activity for her it was not something she felt guilty about. She stated: "I don't feel like I'm wasting time by just sitting and scrolling on TikTok. (…) it is somehow still a positive thing in my everyday life". Looking at the symbolic dimension, it becomes visible that Ella is aware that others have different, sometimes negative understandings of TikTok. However, she highlighted that she did not share these sentiments, and that TikTok was something positive to her.

When Ella talked about TikToks with friends, it was mostly videos that have gone viral that come up in conversation. However, she also talked about videos that she felt a friend must watch or fit to the conversation. When she then showed the TikTok "its suddenly one more and maybe one more and then you sit there and look through many. But it is mostly videos I have already liked". She is comfortable with sharing videos with friends and seeing their reaction to them. In addition, this shows that she enjoys spending time with friends and sharing her TikTok experiences with them. She wants to share the joy she feels on TikTok with others. Later in the interview she explained that she tried to find the best videos to share with friends and that she rarely send the same videos to multiple people. She is very intentional with the videos she shares and tries to make them as personalized as possible to ensure that the receive enjoys the video.

Ella and Noah were also the most energetic interviewees during the interview process. They seemed to enjoy the conversation about TikTok and showing videos they liked watching. The conversation had a natural flow to it, and few of the sub questions had to be asked. They were willing to give examples and explain how they use TikTok and what they like about it. During the conversation their enthusiasm and their general positive attitude towards the platform came across, making these two participants stand out from the rest.

As enthusiastic users, both interviewees liked to set off time for TikTok and do so happily. They choose to spend time on it and enjoy doing so. They are open about being on TikTok and liking it when talking with friends about it. The platform has not only become a part of their daily lives, but also a part of their conversations. TikTok easily comes up in conversations, especially when there is a trending topic or a video that is going viral. What sets this user type apart from the other categories, especially the social user, is the way they talked about TikTok. The enthusiasm they have for the app, and the joy they feel when watching videos came across during the interviews. TikTok's mission statement is: "TikTok is the leading destination for short-form mobile video. Our mission is to inspire creativity and bring joy" (TikTok, 2023). In the enthusiastic users, they have managed to fulfill their mission.

5.3   Discussion

Through the analysis of user patterns I have identified and told the story of five user types: (1) the creating user, who films and publishes their own TikToks, (2) the hesitant user, who wants to be less visible on the platform, (3) the conscious user, who questions TikTok and the use of the platform, (4) the social user, who uses TikTok in a social manner, and lastly, (5) the enthusiastic user who sees the platform as a form of entertainment that brings them joy.

The concept of domestication theory helps outline the similarities and differences between the various user patterns and meanings attached to TikTok that shape the daily use of the platform. Through identifying the various user types I was able to highlight how all interviewees use the same digital platform, but with different motivations, interpretations, and practices.

The main similarity amongst the user patterns is when and where the participants use TikTok. It becomes clear that although TikTok allows for its users to be on the platform whenever and wherever they want, the interviewees choose to primarily use it in private and mostly alone.

Mapping the practical domestication of TikTok highlights that TikTok becoming a part of one's social lives is not the standard way of using the platform. While this is the case for other social media platforms, it is not for TikTok. My exploration of user practices shows that for several user types being on TikTok is not about being social which is surprising considering TikTok is a social media platform. For the creating user the motivation to be on TikTok is rather understanding the technology behind it better, and to use it as a form of entertainment. The same goes for the hesitant user who prefers to simply consume content than to engage with the videos more. The socially conscious user has others in mind in their evaluation of the platform, and their reflections about TikTok take place internally. Only for the social user and the enthusiastic user TikTok does it become a part of their social lives. These two user groups demonstrate that TikTok is a shared experience: shared with family and friends who also value TikTok.

Through the categorization of different user groups, activity levels when engaging with TikTok have become visible. Instead of dividing technology users into the two categories of active and passive users, this text discusses the idea of defining all forms of engagement as active practices and highlights the various activity levels displayed. Moving away from defining producing and contributing as active use and consuming and

viewing practices as passive forms of engagement, activity is seen as depending on the relationships users have to the platform.

The creating users' engagement separates them from the other user groups, as they have access to additional parts and features of the platform. They are not only active consumers, but also contributors on TikTok. Still, their level of activity is not as high as that of, for example, influencers. Compared to the creating users, the hesitant user might appear less active: they do not contribute with content and when looking at TikTok content they might not be visible at all. However, their activity level can be higher than that of user groups on the platform. By scrolling through content and consuming it, the hesitant user invests a lot of time into the platform and engages with it actively. Although not visible to others, their time investment and engagement with TikTok might take more of their time than that of the creating users when they make a TikTok video themselves. The socially conscious user's form of activity might also not be visible to others. Showing awareness and being conscious of how TikTok affects users is not necessarily a form of engagement others can see. Yet, they engage actively with the platform by consuming and evaluating content and the platform. The social user demonstrates an active engagement with TikTok by including friends and family. Their form of engagements is not only limited to their individual experience, but it includes the shared experiences. Again, the enthusiastic user's activity levels might not be as visible as for other user groups. Their enthusiasm does not necessarily need to be shared with others to be valid.

5.4   Summary

While they are no Karens or Heathers, in this chapter I have told the story of and identified five user types amongst the participants. By applying the concept of domestication theory and looking at the practical, symbolic, and cognitive domestication of TikTok I was able to describe daily user patterns. Investigating the different user categories has helped me illustrate the various meanings and understandings attached to TikTok. In the chapter I presented the main motivations behind using TikTok and what the platform means to the various user groups. The idea of activity levels has been identified and discussed, showing that all forms of technology use are active forms of engagement. In the next chapter I will discuss how the interviewees negotiate time while using TikTok.

6. When TikTok lives rent-free in your head - strategies to cut down use

Have you ever had a song stuck in your head? Or maybe a quote from that one TV-show pops into your head all the time? Maybe you cannot stop thinking about that ice cream you ate two summers ago in Italy? On TikTok we would say that this song, this quote and this ice cream lives rent-free in your head. It is stuck in your head, and you cannot stop thinking about it. In this chapter I will discuss the participants thoughts on TikTok living rent-free in their heads, and strategies they make use of to get rid of this tenant.

With a more digitized lifestyle more hours are spent in front of screens and online and platforms like TikTok get the chance to live rent-free in our heads. The Norwegian media barometer shows that 93% of the Norwegian population use the internet every day, and 51% watch tv-shows, movies and video daily – including streaming platforms (SSB, 2023). Life is no longer only lived offline and in person, but also online in front of screens. Through social media platforms people can follow and stay in touch with friends and family anywhere at any time. However, with this changing lifestyle, screen time has become a much disputed topic when it comes to social media platforms (Karlsen & Syvertsen, 2016).

Efforts to reduce or stop the use of digital and social media technologies has become increasingly common. Throughout the interviews, considerations regarding time became an important aspect that influenced student's user practices. Hence, I will present five strategies identified in the data related to negotiations of time with the help of domestication theory. In addition, I will use the terms re-domestication and dis-domestication and the concept of digital detox to discuss the participants user practices. By looking at the practical, symbolic, and cognitive aspects of domestication I will show the changes in user habits and meanings students attach to TikTok.

6.1 TikTok's alarm feature

Smartphones allow for all kinds of notifications and alarms: one can be notified about a new message, current news, if a friend posted a new picture on Instagram, a new email, a missed phone call and so on; the list is long. The notifications can appear on the locked screen where they are grouped with notifications from the same application, but one can also receive notifications while on an app from the same or different apps. Then, the notification usually appears at the top screen and one can open it and switch apps, or ignore it and stay on the current app. The notifications in this case differ. Here, users set an alarm in their phone settings for how long they want to be able to use an app, TikTok, throughout the day. Once the limit has been reached, a notification covering the whole screen appears, and users can choose between closing TikTok or ignoring the alert and continuing to be on the platform.

Oliver is one of the interviewees who decided to use the alarm feature. After 10 minutes of continuously being on TikTok, he got a notice. He highlighted that the way TikTok was set up, one could continue to be on the platform forever. To him this made it difficult to estimate how much time he had spent on the app. Looking at the cognitive domestication of using TikTok, we see that Oliver is missing information necessary for his use of TikTok. When he is on TikTok, it is difficult for Oliver to know how much time has passed. With the alarm feature he adds the notion of time. This influences Oliver's practical domestication of TikTok: the knowledge he now has of his time spent on TikTok changes

his user practices. With the alarm feature, he feels that he has a better overview of his time spent on the application. The cognitive and practical domestication of TikTok further influence Oliver's symbolic domestication of the platform: yes, TikTok is something he enjoys using, but also something he wants to be in control of and not controlled by. Knowing what he uses his time for is important to him. His reasoning shows that being in control over time and how time is spent is a motivation for using the alarm feature.

Sofie followed a similar strategy in her quest to manage time. Whenever she had spent 30 minutes on TikTok, she got notified about it and asked to close the application. Although she chose to use the feature herself, Sofie usually continued to stay on TikTok. When asked about why she chose to use the feature even though she did not close TikTok, she stated: "It's just to let me know how much time I'm spending on it. I would like to spend a little less, or at least let me know how much time I actually spend (on it). Just so I'm not that stupid with time". Sofie not wanting to be "stupid with time" shows that she feels that there are other things she should rather spend her time on. We see that the focus is not necessarily on spending less time on TikTok, but to use time better or more efficiently in general. Maybe this is not about the amount of time Sofie spends on TikTok, but rather when she is on TikTok?

Like Oliver, Sofie wanted to get an overview of how much time she spent on TikTok. Being aware of the amount of time she spent on TikTok is her main motivation. Sofie claimed that she wants to minimize her use of TikTok, but she also shared that she usually continues scrolling on TikTok after the 30 minutes have passed. While Sofie highlighted wanting to minimize her use of TikTok, she did not state why or what she wants to save the time for. Wajcman's (2019) study on how digital calendars influence people's understanding of time highlights norms and morals connected to time use. Being efficient with how time is spent, especially not wasting time, has been morally imbued in such a way that not complying with those norms leads to feelings of guilt and shame (Wajcman, 2019).

Using timers in various ways was a common theme. Ingrid explained: "Sometimes I have set a countdown on my phone, like 15 minutes. Then it stops playing and the app closes itself. Then it becomes a bit more like an active choice; should I go back in or do I remember the reason why I set the alarm?". Like Oliver and Sofie, she uses the alarm feature to keep track of how much time she spends on TikTok. However, the way she has set up the alarm, the TikTok app closes itself and she has to open it again if she wants to continue. Ingrid highlighted that the threshold to continue scrolling on the platform is much higher after it closes itself. The focus is again on time spent on TikTok, but Ingrid's explanation also shows that she found it hard to stick with her decision of spending less time on TikTok. She struggled to follow through with her goal of using TikTok less. This shows that in the relationship between Ingrid and TikTok, the platform is the entity shaping the relationship. Being reminded of the time she had spent on TikTok was not enough to close the application, she needed the application to close itself in order to stop using it. Also, the symbolic aspect differs compared to Oliver and Sofie. For Ingrid, time is more important.

While Ingrid was more determined in her attempt to use less time on TikTok, Oliver, Sofie and Ingrid all demonstrate that the aim of using the alarm feature is not necessarily to stop using TikTok, but rather to gain an overview of the time spend on the platform and to cut down their usage. Using alarm features to both help manage time

and to break with established social media routines is a common strategy to reduce one's time on social media platforms (Karlsen & Syvertsen, 2016). Most social media platforms make use of timestamps or let users know when they have seen all that is new on the platform, but TikTok's setup differs. What distinguishes TikTok from other social media platforms is its never-ending feed: users can scroll the ForYouPage endlessly. With the alarm turned on the three interviewees create their own time feature on the application. The alarm feature becomes an important tool in gaining back a sense of time.

Focusing on gaining an overview of how they spend their time, and being in control of their time shows that how they spend their time is important to them. By investigating the changes in the practical aspect of the domestication process, the importance time plays in the understanding of TikTok becomes clear. If we take into consideration that there are 24 hours in a day, 30 minutes spend on a platform all three interviewees enjoy should be ok. 15 minutes of entertainment should be fine. 10 minutes of relaxing on TikTok should be acceptable, right? All the attention given to how the participants use their time shows that there is the underlying idea that time spent on TikTok is "wrong", something they should avoid. If we apply the idea of re-domestication, we see that while the participants still use and want to use TikTok their needs have changed. Using TikTok must both fulfill their idea of time use and how "others" believe time should be spent. Gaining control over how they spend their time and having an overview of what they spend their time on is both because the interviewees feel being on TikTok is too tempting, and hard to stop doing, but also something others make them feel like they should not be doing. It seems like the interviewees feel that they should spend their time more efficiently, or in other ways, ways that are accepted by "others".

6.2   Deleting TikTok

While some participants choose to reduce the time they spent on TikTok, others choose to delete the application from their phones. This is also a strategy about negotiation time used on TikTok.

Ingrid was one of the interviewees who had previously deleted TikTok. She shared: "So even though I like the app very much and I use it, I have deleted it in periods like during the exam period for example". Like her reasoning for using the alarm feature, she demonstrated not being able to control how much time she spent on TikTok. Although TikTok was a platform Ingrid chose to include in her life, identifying the symbolic dimension shows that other entities such as school are more important. Her negotiation of what TikTok means to her, has changed how she uses the platform. When asked about the reasoning behind going so far as to delete TikTok, she explained that a short study break on TikTok is not problematic, but that TikTok negatively affected her sleep. When she was at school and had other things to do, she could stay focused and stick to how she wanted to use time. However, she was not able to stop herself from scrolling on the platform at the end of the day, and in times when sleep was important, for example during exam periods, the alarm feature was not enough to keep her of the app, instead she felt the need to delete it.

Maja had had many cycles of deleting and redownloading the TikTok application over the years. She explained that she was "trying to balance it. So in periods where I feel that I have little time or don't have time at all to spend a lot of time on such things I tend to delete it". Whenever she did not have much time or no time at all to use TikTok, she deleted the app. Her portrayal of TikTok underlines that continuing to use TikTok in these

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time periods can have negative consequences for her daily life. She continued her explanation saying: "like yesterday when I was lying down and should get up; I have to wash my hair, I need that time in the morning. And then I lie there scrolling. And it's fine that it takes me five minutes to get out of bed, but then I suddenly need fifteen minutes instead. So I experience it very much as a time thief". Here, she illustrated that TikToks never-ending feed kept her on the platform scrolling. Instead of starting her day the way she intended to do, she stayed on the app. Her description of TikTok as a "time thief" further illustrates the importance of a sense of time when being on the platform. In addition, the depiction of TikTok as a "time thief" highlights that the platform is the active part in the relationship between the user and the platform. TikTok is stealing from her, instead of her being the one in charge, deciding what to spent time on.

Oskar had also deleted TikTok before. During a summer break he decided to delete it because he felt that he spent too much time on the platform. He said: "for example, during the holidays I noticed that it became a lot of TikTok. A lot. At times I could spend up to two hours a day (on it), and then finally in the last weeks before the summer holidays (ended) I deleted TikTok because I noticed that I was never bored anymore". Using the platform as much as he did that summer made him realize that he filled all the time he was not busy with TikTok. Whenever he was waiting for something or did not have something to do, he went straight to TikTok. After deleting the application, he quickly found it much easier to come up with other ways to spend his time. He explained that it helped him to be bored and to be alone with his thoughts to come up with ways to fill his free time. By changing his use of TikTok, we see changes in his symbolic domestication of the platform. Being on TikTok as much as he was during the summer stopped him from being bored and using his brain to think of other ways to spent time. TikTok does not become a time thief but a time filler. Instead of being on his own, being bored, coming up with things to do, Oskar turned to TikTok to fill his empty time slots. His explanation shows that spending free time on TikTok is something he did not want to do, that it was something negative. Moreover, we see that not only those who spent many hours on TikTok are interested in reducing the time they spent on the platform. Maybe the amount of time is not the problem, but what users miss out on otherwise?

In all three portrayals of TikTok the platform is described as something with power to control and govern their way of spending time. Again, it also becomes visible that spending much time on TikTok is perceived as something negative and something that should be avoided or at least reduced. This goes in line with Karlsen & Syvertsen's (2016) findings. Social media formats are placed lower on the "cultural hierarchy" and users are advised to substitute them with other activities (pp. 32-34). Rather than spending time online, users are recommended to stay offline and to focus on living a more authentic life. In both Karlsen and Syvertsen's (2016) study and in the way the interviewees express their feelings towards TikTok it is visible that staying offline is understood as a positive thing. TikTok is portrayed as stealing the interviewees time, as the entity that is steering them, instead of the other way around.

While Syvertsen and Enli (2020) discuss digital detoxes and highlight the "notion of authenticity" as a main motivation, the interviewees demonstrate that for them societal norms connected to social media use are a main motivation for deleting TikTok. Consuming TikTok over short periods of time is acceptable, but once a certain amount of time has passed and the usage affects the consumer's daily life it is seen as something that should be avoided. In their domestication of TikTok, the participants have come to

the point where dis-domestication is seen as the solution to their problem. Stopping the use of TikTok is the only way they can be in control of their time use again and use time in a way they feel is meaningful.

6.3   Hiding TikTok

As described in the previous part, TikTok is a mobile application users choose to download themselves. In addition, they are the ones deciding where the app is located on their phones. They can choose themselves whether TikTok gets the prime location on the home screen, or to put it in a folder with other social media platforms. The following strategy to cut down the use of TikTok is to hide the application on the phone.

In addition to the first two strategies described, Ingrid made use of a third one. She explained: "actually I just removed it (from the home screen), so you have to search for it. (…) When I check my notifications, if it had been there, then I think I would have used it a little more often". To use TikTok, she had to search for the app on her phone. Whenever she checked other notifications, she did not see TikTok and felt that this has minimized her use of TikTok. Hiding the TikTok application on her home screen goes in line with the concept of digital detoxes: a change in location and "physically removing digital media out of side" (Karlsen & Ytre-Arne, 2022, p. 2186). By hiding TikTok on her phone, Ingrid creates a distance between herself and the application. Changing her practical domestication of TikTok disrupts her user patterns of TikTok. It allows her to use it less frequently. This strategy of reducing the usage of TikTok again underlines that TikTok is perceived as the active part of the relationship. The platform is in control and influences Ingrid's behavior. Seeing the symbol of the app on her home screen was reason enough to open it and to start watching TikToks. Furthermore, the way Ingrid described her desired way of using TikTok, reminds of candy or junk food that is too tempting to be around. Needing to hide TikTok on her phone shows that TikTok is a temptation. We can see her struggles about the symbolic aspect of TikTok. TikTok is something positive, something she enjoys, but it is also something Ingrid wants to limit access to.

While the idea was to minimize the temptation of opening TikTok, hiding the app and then searching for it whenever she wants to be on TikTok has led to the app being Ingrid's number one searched for application. The platform is no longer as hidden as she wanted it to be and is much more accessible than she intended for it to be. Although she felt that she still opened TikTok less by hiding the app, this also shows that not all strategies work out as planned.

6.4   Spending time differently

Whereas the three strategies presented so far have focused on cutting down the time invested in TikTok, this strategy was different. Instead of focusing on minimizing the time spend on TikTok, this strategy was to be on TikTok for the right reasons.

Rather than trying to cut down the time he spends on TikTok, Noah tried to not use TikTok as a form of procrastination. Several of the other interviewees noted procrastination as one of the motivations for being on the platform, but Noah stated: "if I'm at home I say like that I'm not going to use TikTok if I'm going to procrastinate something. Then it has to be something sensible. If I'm bored I can clean my room or something like that". Unlike the interviewees following the first three strategies, Noah tried to be conscious about what he used his time for.

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In addition, he was clear about what TikTok meant to him and what he did not want to use TikTok for: procrastination. Ask (2011) discusses how players negotiated time and fitting the computer game World of Warcraft into their lives. The study shows the difficulty and importance of negotiating how much time to spend on the game in order to match both the players' understanding of the right way to play and that of their families and friends. This negotiation becomes a decisive factor for fitting the game into the players daily lives. Whereas some interviewees mostly struggle with explaining the importance of the game and thus the time spent on it to significant others in their lives, other interviewees set themselves clear rules and routines to fit the game into their lives (Ask, 2011, p. 153). In the same manner as the players of World of Warcraft, Noah has negotiated himself what TikTok means to him and how it fits into his life. He has set himself boundaries for when it is ok to be on TikTok, and when he should be doing other things. Changes in the practical domestication were important in the first three strategies. Here the focus lies on the symbolic dimension. Instead of changing his routine or learning different ways to domesticate TikTok, he negotiates what TikTok means to him.

6.5   No strategies

While most interviewees follow strategies to minimize their time spend on TikTok and discuss the negative consequence TikTok has had on their daily lives, Emma and Ella do not follow any strategies. Neither of them talked about ways to reduce their usage of TikTok and instead they highlighted that TikTok is a positive aspect of their life that they enjoy.

Emma outlined that she at some point in time used to get time notices on her phone to track the time spent on TikTok, too. She also stated that the reasoning behind it was to gain an overview of how much time she spends on the platform. However, she had turned off the alarm feature and did not use it anymore. Throughout the interview she came across as having a rather positive relationship towards using the platform. When asked about her ordinary use of TikTok she said: "yesterday when I found out it[1] happened then I was like I can't wait to get home to watch TikTok to hear what they say. So if something happens it's fun". Being on the platform and watching TikToks is something she enjoys and looks forward to. Ella expressed similar feelings towards the platform. Although she was not asked about it, in her description of how she normally uses TikTok she stated: "I'm actually enjoying myself quite well. I haven't had an off and on thing trying to delete it. I just realized that this is fun; at least to me". In this statement she shows that she knows that other users might struggle with their relationship with the platform and highlights that she is not one of them. Instead, TikTok is something positive for her that she enjoys spending time on.

Towards the end of the interview, Ella again mentioned her feelings towards the platform when she said: "I don't have a bad conscience about using it. I don't feel like I'm wasting time by just sitting and watching TikTok. I think I use it in such an amount that it's still a positive thing in my everyday life". She again stressed that TikTok plays a positive role in her life, but she also highlighted that this was connected to the amount of time she spent on the platform. She did not mention how much time exactly she spent on the platform, but from her description of how she used TikTok it did not seem that she spends much more or less time on the platform than the other interviewees. On the contrary it seemed

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[1] Queen Elizabeth II's death

that all interviewees spend almost the same amount of time on the platform. However, she views this amount as a positive addition to her life.

Here, their practical and symbolic domestication of TikTok differ. While the interviewees seemed to spend the same amount of time on TikTok, they attached different meanings to the amount of time spent on TikTok. Norms attached to time spent online influences others' understanding of the "right" way to use TikTok, but Ella showed that her focus is on her own perception of the "right" way to use TikTok. She highlighted her own enjoyment and focused on spending as much time on TikTok as she wanted at the same time as it still felt like something positive. Her description also underlined that she was aware of negative connotations about TikTok as well as the ways using TikTok has been normalized. Following her explanation, spending time on TikTok is something the society perceives as a waste of time. It is something that should be avoided, or at least minimized. On two occasions Ella mentioned society's perception of being TikTok, demonstrating that she feels the need to show that she is aware of this. Furthermore, commenting on society's understanding of the "right" way to use TikTok, shows that she wanted to explain why TikTok was something positive to her and why she enjoyed it.

6.6   Discussion

On TikTok, users can scroll on the feed endlessly and watch unlimited amounts of videos. Without any time stamps or ending to the feed, TikTok manages to draw in users and keep them not only on the platform, but to be stuck in their heads, to live rent-free in their heads. However, the interviewees demonstrated that this has led to various negotiations about spending time on TikTok. Time was used as a measurement by the interviewees to identify for themselves what the "right" and "wrong" amount of time is when it comes to being on TikTok. Through employing domestication theory, we understand the interconnection between the three dimensions (practical, cognitive, and symbolic) better and see how they influence each other.

In this chapter I identify three strategies the participants used to cut down the amount of time spend on TikTok: using the alarm feature, deleting the application, and hiding the applicating. In these strategies negotiations about spending time on TikTok are influenced by norms associated with time spend online. Users negotiate what is the right and wrong amount of time and way to fill their time. In addition, the interviewees do not only negotiate with themselves about what TikTok means to them but are also influenced by what society thinks about social media platforms. They are not directly discussing and debating TikTok with others, but they feel judged by "others", or rather judged by what they think "others" think about the way they spend their time.

It becomes clear that while they explained their strategies as ways to cut down time spend on the platform, the actual idea is to find out for themselves how much time they feel is acceptable to spend on TikTok. Furthermore, morals about spending time on activities online versus offline influence their negotiations. Spending time online is not as acceptable as spending time on similar activities offline. Being online is associated with wasting time and being less efficient. The interviewees show that they too want to be efficient with their time and spend it the "right" way. However, only Oskar explained that he would rather spend his time being creative and feel present in his life, whereas the other interviewees did not share what they wanted to save time for.

The last two strategies, spending time differently and no strategy at all, are more positively connoted. Here, the users negotiate how to fit TikTok into their lives and what the platform means to them. The focus is on maintaining TikTok as a positive entity in their lives. The interviewees show that they are aware of society's understanding of TikTok, but they highlighted that they perceive TikTok differently symbolically.

6.7 Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the participants negotiations with time, specifically their time used on TikTok. I have identified various strategies the interviewees employed to reduce their time on the platform. By applying domestication theory, the concept of digital detox and the terms re- and dis-domestication I have investigated their arguments and motivations for wanting to spend less time on TikTok. In addition, I show how societal norms influence their negotiations of time use. In the next chapter I will look at the participants ideas and understandings of the TikTok algorithm.

7. Opening black boxes – strategies for curating the ForYouPage

Have you ever felt like your mobile phone is keeping a very close eye on you? Like it is monitoring you very closely? Or maybe you have noticed an advertisement for running shoes on Facebook shortly after you spend some time looking at different shoes online. Or Spotify has introduced you to an artist you have not heard before who matches your music taste perfectly? When browsing the internet and being online, you engage with algorithms (Lee et al., 2022). Not everyone is aware of this, but algorithms are influential in our user-experiences online. They collect user data and track our behaviors to personalize the contents we see and are confronted with. While social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook are also based on algorithms, especially TikTok's algorithm has gained researchers' interest for its uniqueness (Lee et al., 2022; Schellewald, 2022; Siles et al., 2022). The way it matches users' personal interests and keeps up with changes differs to other platforms. TikTok itself gives hints at how to influence one's feed, but gives no clear answer on how the algorithm works (TikTok, 2020). This has led to various ideas and theories about it (Bhandari & Bimo, 2020; Karizat et al., 2021; Siles et al., 2022).

As we see, algorithms play a vital part in our online experiences. However, the processes behind how they work are not transparent and open to users. The information has been put into black boxes. As introduced in chapter two, black boxes are a central idea of STS-studies and describe the idea of processes behind technologies being non-transparent. Users only see the result of technologies, and do not receive information about how the processes work.

To get a better understanding of how TikTok's algorithm is perceived by the interviewees I will explore the phenomenon with the help of domestication theory and algorithmic imaginaries, two terms presented in chapter two. By mapping the practical, symbolic, and cognitive dimension of use I aim to better understand how the participants make sense of the algorithm. The term algorithmic imaginaries refers to the ideas participants have regarding the workings of algorithms and what they are (Bucher, 2017). In addition, I will outline different strategies aiming at removing certain types of content as well as strategies trying to keep content on the feed. Then, I will present the idea of not trying to influence the ForYouPage followed by a discussion of the findings.

Throughout this chapter I will use the term to curate. This term has become popular amongst TikTok users to describe the notion of influencing one's feed to cater to one's interests in the best possible way and I will use the term to describe this phenomenon in the following chapter.

7.1 Removing content

When you want to watch a movie or series at night, you first must decide which streaming platform you go for, or if you want to watch linear tv, or maybe you go for a DVD? In the same manner TikTok users scroll through their feed. Not every video that is shown on their feed is something they like, so they develop methods to not receive certain content on their feed. The interviewees use two strategies to curate their feed attempting to remove content from it for the future. The first strategy is scrolling past a video without watching it to the end, and the second is clicking on the "Not Interested" button.

Scrolling through their feed is something users need to do to watch videos on TikTok; it is the intended way of using the platform. Without scrolling to the next video, users do not have any content to watch. However, not all videos are interesting to users, so scrolling quickly past videos has become a strategy used to influence the feed. Emma explained that she must: "scroll fast, fast, fast, so you replace the algorithm again". Whenever she felt that the content she was watching was becoming boring she either refreshed her ForYouPage or scrolled quickly past those videos she did not enjoy until videos appeared that interested her.

Sofie used the same strategy. For a period of time, she watched many videos of a TikToker who was a single mother and shared her experience of having twins. In the beginning Sofie enjoyed this TikToker's content, but later she found it annoying. So, whenever this TikToker's videos showed up later, Sofie scrolled past them until she got different content. The algorithm gives her the content she has enjoyed in the past, by scrolling quickly past the content now she tries to let the algorithm know that her interests have changed and that she no longer wishes to receive this kind of content on her feed.

Looking at the symbolic dimension, it becomes clear that TikTok is something both use as entertainment. The entertainment must match their interests and stay updated on changes. Even when Emma and Sofie's interests changed, the algorithm assumed both were still interested in content they enjoyed before. Trying to update their algorithm on their interests shows that while the algorithm believes users stay interested in the same content, users themselves change and get tired of it, and want the feed to change with them. To achieve this Emma and Sofie demonstrate that they have guessed their way to a strategy that influences their algorithm. By identifying their own interests and exploring how to get a feed that matches their changing interests, the interviewees have come up with a strategy on how to achieve this.

Olivia also scrolled past TikTok's fast when she was not interested in the content. After having watched and saved several TikTok's about health issues her entire feed was only about this topic. To change her feed, she said: "then I just had to skip fast to remove this from the algorithm". Again, the strategy is employed to influence the users feed to avoid receiving certain types of content. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram also have a feed that users can scroll through. Facebook, Instagram and TikTok all want users to spend time on their feed and to scroll through their platforms to engage with content; by scrolling through the feed users stay on the platform. Although scrolling is an intended action, this strategy differs from the standard scrolling and watching content and aims at something else.

The cognitive dimension, finding a way to train the algorithm, influences the practical dimension: the strategy becomes a part of how TikTok is used. Users demonstrate their awareness of the algorithm steering the feed and try to manipulate it. Being aware of the algorithm that steers TikTok helps users have a better user experience (Siles et al., 2022). The interviewees explanation for scrolling past TikToks fast shows that they are aware that they can influence their feed and the algorithm behind it. Whereas skipping content that is not interesting is a common way of navigating digital technologies, the participants explanations show that in these cases their intention is to make their feed more personalized.

The second strategy employed by users to remove certain types of content from their future feed was to click the "not interested" button. This button can be found by clicking on the arrow icon at the side of the screen which allows users to do several things, for example share the video with friends on TikTok or other social media apps, report the video or indicate that they are not interested in the video. Noah explained that although he found that the algorithm knew what kind of videos he liked to watch, he sometimes scrolled past videos, or he clicked the "not Interested" button when he did not like a video. He followed both the previous strategy and the "not interested" strategy to influence his algorithm to cater to his interests better. In general, he highlighted that "you end up with a very catered ForYouPage specifically for you". This shows that Noah values a personalized feed. He has acquired the knowledge to maintain a curated ForYouPage that matches his interests.

When it comes to the cognitive and practical domestication of his ForYouPage, we see that actively working on and training his feed has become a normal way of experiencing TikTok. He had identified two strategies that helped him maintain his personalized feed. Furthermore, Noah said: "so I sort of try to brainwash myself in the best possible way". This shows that he understood that by only watching videos catered to his preferences and trying to lessen videos he was not interested in, he missed out on much other content. This resembles Bhandari and Bimo's (2020) idea of the algorithmized self. Instead of interacting with other users on the platform, Noah interacts with the version of himself he has created on TikTok. The content on his feed reflects a very curated depiction of himself. A picture curated together with the algorithm by engaging with it and being intentional when reacting to videos.

Scrolling quickly past a TikTok and clicking the "not interested" button does not require much effort from the user's side and are easy to employ. While finding and clicking the "not interested" button requires more investment that swiping fast to the next TikTok, it is still easily accessible and does not take much time. These strategies are two imaginaries the participants have identified to make sense of the algorithm (Bucher, 2017). In their attempt to try to understand the processes behind the algorithm, users have seen that skipping videos or clearly stating that they are not interested in a video influences their algorithm. To maintain a customized feed, the participants continue employing the strategies as they believe them to work and affect their algorithm.

Curating their feed and trying to train it to better cater to their interests has since become a part of their practical domestication of TikTok. Users believe these strategies to work due their user experiences and continue employing them. Through this we also see the symbolic dimension of TikTok: the interviewees show that the platform is something they want to be as personalized as possible. Their interest and investment in removing content from their feed shows the users investment in the platform and its curated feed. It is important to the users to have a personalized feed that is updated on what kind of content they do not wish to have on their feed. The focus on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook is the networked experience and keeping up with friends on the platforms. On TikTok the content is important. The more personalized it is, the more it matches the users' interests, the better the experience.

7.2 Keeping content

The previous part highlighted strategies to remove content from the feed. In this part I will discuss strategies to keep or receive more of certain types of content on the

ForYouPage. Instead of avoiding content or clicking buttons to receive less of something, users spend time showing the algorithm what they like and want more of. The first strategy is to follow content creators of videos they enjoyed watching, and the second strategy is to look through TikTok profiles of those creators that they like.

Following content creators or friends is a central part of social media platforms. On platforms such as Facebook and Instagram as well as TikTok users follow other profiles to stay updated on what those people post online. For Facebook and Instagram it is essential to follow or befriend other users in order to have a feed to scroll through. However, on TikTok users receive content on their feed whether they follow other users or not. With the division of the feed into the ForYouPage and the FollowingPage users always have content they can watch. To have content on the FollowingPage users need to follow different profiles, but on the ForYouPage they always have an endless stream of content. Noah said that even though he only watches TikTok's on his ForYouPage he still followed certain creators. He explained this by saying: "I never check the following tab because when you follow them they come up naturally". He believes that the TikToker's content will show up in his feed more often if he follows them.

Sofie used the same strategy. She followed creators without checking the FollowingPage at all. She preferred watching TikToks on her ForYouPage as there were many she liked because she had spent most of her time on this feed. Also, Ella and Oskar followed TikTokers in the hopes of receiving more of their content. Through investigating the cognitive dimension and understanding the skills and knowledge needed as a user of TikTok, we see that the interviewees have explored ways to make their algorithm understand what kind of content they want to have more of. To improve their user experience, they believe following content creators helps. Ella explained this the following way: "It's like sometimes I follow someone because she was fun. I hope I get more of her so I'll follow her just in case". When she liked a TikTok she followed the creator hoping she would get more of that person's content. She did not know for sure if following a creator would make them appear more often in her feed, but she did it to be sure.

Maja started following TikTokers when she liked their videos she watched on her ForYouPage, too. She stated: "I feel that some of those videos appear on the ForYouPage after you follow them. But I don't know if it's because I follow them". Although none of the interviewees know whether following a profile or not helps receive more of this kind of content, they all described it as a strategy they followed and assumed that it worked. From their experience on TikTok, the interviewees believe that following content creators influences their algorithm to get more of the same content. While this is not confirmed, they feel that this strategy works which is why they continue doing so. The interviewees expect that their user patterns of following profiles help train the algorithm to give them more of the same and similar content. Going back to the concept of black boxes, we see that the users are unsure about whether their strategies work. We see their input, the strategies they follow, and the output, a feed that seem to be more personalized, but we do not know for certain if it was the user's strategy that led to the result.

Both the ForYouPage and the FollowingPage are central headers of the TikTok application. Although both feeds are given similar space in the design of the application, the described strategy highlights that the interviewees do not use the FollowingPage. Instead, they believe that following a creator influences their algorithm in a way that

those kinds of TikToks appear more often on the users ForYouPage. Astrid underlined this phenomenon by saying: "I am not on TikTok for a hundred years either, so it's not like I want to jump onto it (FollowingPage)." The time she spent on TikTok she wanted to spend on the ForYouPage. Looking at the practical domestication of TikTok, we see that switching to the FollowingPage was too much effort for her and became unnecessary as the curated ForYouPage delivered the content she was after. Astrid stated effort as the motivation, but this is also about the symbolic aspect, about how she understands TikTok. What makes the platform stand out is the ForYouPage and its algorithm. This feed is meant to be personal and deliver interesting and relevant content for each user.

Olivia made use of another strategy to receive more of the content she liked on her ForYouPage. Her algorithmic imaginary was going to the profiles of TikTokers whose content she liked and viewing many of that TikToker's videos (Bucher, 2017). Olivia believed that this way more of the same or similar videos would appear in her feed afterwards. She said: "if I think someone has lots of funny videos I can sit and scroll their profile. And then they appear all the time on the ForYouPage after that". The practical aspect of using TikTok influences her knowledge of how the algorithm works. From previous experiences, she believed that browsing user profiles helped customize her feed to get more of the same contents. Being on TikTok is a form of entertainment, but thoughts on how to improve her experience are in the back of her head, influencing her behavior. When she finds interesting content on her feed, she not only wants to enjoy it, but wants to ensure that her algorithm knows that she enjoys it and wants more of it.

Neither one of the presented strategies is something users must do; the ForYouPage will always deliver content. Following user profiles is easy to do and does not interrupt the viewing flow. Users simply click the following icon on the main screen and continue watching. However, following profiles on TikTok is more disruptive to the viewing process. Users leave the main feed to access a user profile and will only get content from them until they return to the main feed, so this strategy is more of an effort. We see again that while these strategies do not require much from the users, it is the intentionality behind which is important. They perceive these strategies to work and to improve their experience which is why they continue using them. The reward of a more personalized ForYouPage is worth the effort of disrupting the viewing flow. Their experiences of making use of these strategies have been successful. The participants believe that the ForYouPage becomes more curated to their interests if they engage with the feed and other user profiles in this manner.

7.3   No influencing

In the first two parts we see that users make use of various strategies to influence their ForYouPage. While users are unsure about how the algorithm works as it is black boxed, they have come up with different imaginaries about how it works and how they can influence their user experiences. However, Frida described a different experience. When asked about following these kinds of strategies she explained that she does not do so.

Frida was the only interviewee who said that she followed neither one of these strategies. Instead, she stated: "I think I'll let the algorithm manage my ForYouPage. And it has curated my ForYouPage for many years now, so I trust it will be able to do it". Like the other interviewees she shows that she is aware of the algorithm trying to deliver a feed

that meets her taste and interests. She trusts the algorithm to deliver the content she is interested in without actively curating it herself.

Looking at the cognitive domestication of her use of TikTok, we see that she is not interested in understanding the black boxed TikTok feed. She is not intrigued to further her knowledge of how TikTok works, and how the algorithm curates her ForYouPage. When we look at the symbolic domestication of TikTok, we see that Frida trusts the technology. She is confident that the platform will meet her interests and deliver content she enjoys. Her identified algorithmic imaginary is a technology worth trusting (Bucher, 2017). She perceives the algorithm as something that works fine without her intentionally training it.

In addition, Frida believed that by not following any of the strategies the other interviewees described, she did not actively curate her own feed. However, throughout the interview she shared that she saved and liked videos she wanted to watch again, and she also liked to send videos to her friends. These activities also give information to the algorithm that help improve it, to better meet Frida's interests. Her statement illustrates that she does not believe that actions such as liking and sharing TikToks are strategies that curate the feed. Following the symbolic aspect of using TikTok, we see that to Frida there is a difference between liking and saving TikToks and skipping TikToks or following content creators. The intention and motivation behind it are different. Engaging with the platform by sharing and liking videos are part of her common TikTok experience and user practices. Saving and skipping TikToks or following users to influence her feed is not.

Frida did not intend to influence the feed, but we see that it is not possible to use TikTok without influencing the algorithm. Any form of engagement gives information to the algorithm. Whether it is intentional or not, any activity on the platform is tracked and influences the ForYouPage and its content.

7.4 Discussion

In this chapter I have presented various strategies the interviewees make use of to help curate their ForYouPage. The participants show that they either aim at removing content or keeping content on their feed. The strategies include skipping videos, clicking on the not interested button, following content creators, and scrolling through user profiles. One interviewee also stated that she did not follow any strategy to influence her feed. To help make sense of these strategies and how they influence the participants user patterns and their understanding of the algorithm I have used the concept of domestication theory and algorithmic imaginaries.

When comparing the three dimensions of domestication theory, we see that in the same way as the algorithmic imaginaries are based on user experiences, the cognitive dimension for all strategies is based on experiences as well. It is not TikTok who tells or teaches its users how to curate their feed and how to engage with the algorithm. The users acquire this knowledge through experiences with the TikTok algorithm, and perhaps other algorithms they have come across. None of the interviewees knew for sure if their strategy worked. The practical aspect of domestication is also the same for the first three strategies. Skipping TikToks, clicking the "Not interested" icon and following users does not require much investment from the users and does not interrupt the flow of scrolling through the feed, all three have become part of the participants user habits. The last strategy scrolling through profiles stands out as it interrupts the user practice of

scrolling through the main feed. Here, the symbolic aspect of domestication is more important and makes participants disrupt their user patterns. The symbolic dimension being the importance of a personalized ForYouPage. The same goes for the strategies of following users and clicking the "not interested" icon. The strategy of skipping videos also emphasizes the importance of a feed that is up to date. For users employing this strategy a dynamic feed is important as well.

Comparing the different imaginaries, we see that users who follow strategies to curate their feed actively understand the algorithm as something worth investing time and effort in. The strategies require many small acts from the participants but have high rewards. Through their experience of TikTok they feel that skipping videos, or following creators are useful tools to improve their user experience, to curate their feed, to have a more personalized feed.

On the other side we have Frida who did not follow any strategy. Her understanding of the algorithm, and her imaginary of it highlights her trust in the technology. She believes the algorithm to work on its own, without her intentional input. In her experience the TikTok algorithm delivered the content she was interested in without her following any strategy to influence it.

The algorithmic imaginaries (Bucher, 2017) the interviewees identify can be understood as an attempt to make sense of the black box that is the TikTok algorithm. They bring forward different ideas to make sense of the technology behind TikTok. The participants treat this technology as black boxes themselves. While they only see the input and output, they come up with various imaginaries trying to understand the processes in between. Their perception and experiences of the algorithm make them continue using the strategies they have come up with to navigate the platform.

7.5 Summary

In this chapter I have presented different strategies the interviewees made use of to curate their TikTok feed. With the help of domestication theory and mapping the practical, symbolic, and cognitive dimensions of the use of TikTok's algorithm, I was able to better understand the different strategies. Furthermore, I conceptualized their attempts to understand the algorithm with the help of algorithmic imaginaries. In the next chapter I will summarize the findings of my analysis and look at them as a whole.

8. Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have looked at what role TikTok plays in Norwegian students' everyday life. I have conducted 11 qualitative interviews with students enrolled at NTNU in Trondheim to explore how they use TikTok and mapped their user patterns. With the help of theoretical perspectives from the STS-field I have analyzed the data material to better understand how they use TikTok and what meanings they ascribe to it.

This has resulted in four analysis chapters. In the first one I discussed and found out that student identity was not a dominant influence on the participants domestication of TikTok. When talking with the participants about TikTok, it became clear that they were not looking for student or study related contents. However, student or study related content was welcome when it was entertaining and matched the user's humor. In chapter five I presented five user types of TikTok. These highlight the various ways users can engage with and relate to a digital platform, at the same time as the similarities amongst user patterns further show the applicability of domestication theory. TikTok is a platform that exists in a public space, but the participants show that using it in private and on their own has become a norm. In chapter six I explored the relevance of time, and how perceptions and norms regarding time use plays into the students' use of TikTok. We saw that reducing the amount of time spent on TikTok was not necessarily the focus, but rather to negotiate what feels like the right amount of time for each individual user. Lastly, chapter seven explored thoughts on the algorithm behind the platform and discussed different strategies the participants used to understand these algorithms. Here, it became clear that intentionality and motivation behind the various strategies were important. While all forms of engagement with videos or the platform influence the algorithm, only some forms of engagement, those with the intention to influence, are understood as actual strategies.

In this last chapter I will discuss the findings in context to each other. In addition, I will discuss the idea of boundary work and explore how students establish and manage to draw lines between the various aspects of their lives.

8.1   Main findings seen in context

According to their official website TikTok wants to inspire joy and creativity in its users (TikTok, 2023). The platform aims to be a positive aspect of users' lives, an outlet to deliver entertainment and to allow users to try out new features, effects, and filters on the app. The goal is to be a platform users have fun on and are enthusiastic about. However, throughout the analysis of the data an overall theme was how some users negotiated their own use, and how they were hesitant to their own use, and wanted to use it less. Through the conversations with the participants, it became clear that societal norms about technology use were being negotiated and became an important part of their domestication of the platform. These norms sometimes overshadowed the user's positive relationship to TikTok and influenced how TikTok was used and influenced what it meant to some of the users.

One of the norms most central in this negotiation was about the use of time. I did not ask all interviewees directly about it, but all of them nevertheless addressed the topic of time. Some felt they needed to make clear that they did not spend a large amount of time on the platform, while some highlighted their aim of reducing the amount of time they were on TikTok. For some users it was more difficult than for others to appreciate

the positive aspects of TikTok and to simply enjoy being on the platform. Instead of the practical aspect of it, time was used more symbolically to explain other motivations behind their use of the platform. What becomes clear is that it was a notion of what it means to spend time wisely, on things and activities approved and accepted by society. The users tried to set off time for TikTok and limit their use to these time frames, but how may we understand their negotiations of norms related to time use?

8.2   Lowkey boundary work

We have seen that the participants have negotiated their use of TikTok in many ways. One way was to set boundaries to when and how much they use TikTok. However, there are also boundaries between users' different identities. I expected that student identity played into and influenced the use of TikTok, but it became clear that this was not the case. Instead, the students showed that they were trying to set boundaries between TikTok and their student life.

What they did may be conceptualized as doing boundary work. This is a concept introduced by Gieryn to illustrate how the differentiation between science and non-science is (re-)negotiated (Gieryn, 1983). The idea is that boundaries are established and continuously reinforced to clearly distinguish between knowledge fields. Following this idea Mørk (2019) investigates how healthcare workers negotiate changes in the healthcare system. In these negotiations healthcare workers try to set boundaries and draw lines both individually and in groups.

A similar approach may be used to understand students' negotiations of the use of TikTok regarding boundary work. In my data I observe attempts to set and manage boundaries between different domains. Instead of integrating TikTok into every aspect of their life, the users gave the technology certain spaces in their daily lives. The participants used TikTok mostly before going to sleep and at home. They had the option to use TikTok anywhere at any time but did not do so. They cannot watch TikToks without the sound. This is, however, an easy fix. They could have used headphones and then used TikTok wherever they were. Maybe this can be seen as a response to everything being woven together? Maybe it was a wish to separate between being on campus, at university, and be someone else, "just" themselves at home, on TikTok?

We have seen that TikTok users have been described as addicted to the technology and in need of help. But perhaps students are not as addicted to technology as societal media often presumes them to be? The socially conscious user shows the ability to evaluate technology use and reflect over its effects on users. The social user integrates TikTok into social life outside of the platform and shares the experience of TikTok with family and friends. The enthusiastic user has a positive relationship to and outlook on the platform and manages to not let societal norms influence this relationship. Maybe students are more capable of managing the balance between online and offline worlds, negotiating their technology use in this balancing act?

Doing something lowkey means not being or not wanting to be obvious about it. You may be doing something in secret. Perhaps we may view the way students manage their technology use and set boundaries between the various aspects of their lives as a lowkey management? The boundaries the participants set between different aspects of their lives were not very clear at the start. Only after looking at the findings as a whole does the division become visible.

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Appendix

1. Information letter (Norwegian)

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet "brukerperspektiv på TikTok"?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å få innsikt i bruken av TikTok plattformen blant norske studenter. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Forskningsprosjektet er en masteroppgave på master i studier av kunnskap, teknologi og samfunn (STS). Prosjektet skal undersøke hvordan TikTok plattformen brukes av norske studenter. Sentrale spørsmål i prosjektet er hvorfor norske studenter velger å bruke TikTok plattformen, på hvilken måter TikTok plattformen brukes og hvordan TikTok inngår i studenters hverdag.

Prosjektet er en kvalitativ studie basert av kvalitative intervjuer med norske studenter ved NTNU i Trondheim. Transkripsjonene etter intervjuene kan bli brukt senere av et større prosjekt ved Institutt for tverrfaglig kulturstudier innenfor samme tematikk.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet (NTNU) er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du er spurt om å delta fordi du bruker TikTok plattformen og studerer ved NTNU i Trondheim.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at du stiller til et dybdeintervjue på ca 45-60 minutter. Intervjuet inneholder spørsmål rundt din bruk og dine erfaringer med TikTok plattformen. Det vil bli tatt lydopptak og notater fra intervjuet. Dine svar fra intervjuet blir transkribert manuelt og vil dermed være anonyme.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Kun jeg og veilederne vil ha tilgang til dine opplysninger. Lydopptak og transkripsjoner vil bli kryptert i OneDrive og lagret på en ekstern disk uten internettilgang. Deltakerne vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjonen av forskningsprosjektet.

Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?

Alle opplysninger som på et eller annet vis kan bidra til å identifisere deg vil fjernes når intervjuet transkriberes. Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes juni 2023.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet (NTNU) har Personverntjenester vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet ved Kristine Ask, kristine.ask@ntnu.no eller +47 97563531

- Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet ved Vivian Anette Lagesen, vivian.lagesen@ntnu.no eller +47 91172760

- Vårt personvernombud: Thomas Helgesen, thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no eller +4793079038

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til Personverntjenester sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

· Personverntjenester på epost (personverntjenester@sikt.no) eller på telefon: 53 21 15 00.

Med vennlig hilsen

Prosjektansvarlig   Nicoline Meisl
(Forsker/veileder)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet [sett inn tittel], og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

☐ å delta i intervju
☐ at lydopptak av intervjuet gjennomføres og lagres til prosjektets sluttdato
Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

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2. Interview guide (Norwegian)

-Har du lest informasjonsskrivet? Samtykker du til lydopptak og til å bli med på intervjuet?

-Kan du kort nevne alder og kjønn?

Bakgrunn

1.Kan du fortelle litt om studiehverdagen din ved NTNU; hva studerer du, hva gjør du utenom studiet?

Spørsmål rundt bruken

2. Kan du fortelle om når du startet å bruke TikTok?

3. Hva vil du si er din "vanlige bruk" av TikTok?

3. Kan du beskrive dagen din i går og fortelle om når du brukte TikTok?

→ Hvor mye tid bruker du på plattformen?

→ Har du noen tanker rundt tallet?

→ Hvor ofte sjekker du appen?

→ Hvor bruker du appen? f.eks hjemme, på skolen, på bussen

→ Når er det du pleier å se på TikTok videoer?

→ Hvorfor velger du å gjøre det akkurat der og da?

→ Har du et bestemt tidspunkt der du ser på TikTok videoer?

→ Ser du på videoer alene eller med venner, familie, kjæreste…?

4. Hva slags TikTok videoer liker du å se på? Kan du vise meg noen?

→ Hva liker du med disse videoene?

→ Hvorfor synes du denne videoen er morsomt?

5. Føler du at du har lært noe av å bruke TikTok?

→ Eksempel?

→ Føler du at TikTok har påvirket livet ditt på noen måter?

→ Finnes det noe som du har oppdaget/blitt kjent med gjennom TikTok som du nå fortsatt gjør/bruker? → eg. musikk!

→ I mediene nevnes det ofte at feilinformasjon spres på TikTok. Har du noen tanker om det?

6. Hva betyr bruken av TikTok for deg (f.eks avslappning, prokrastinering, osv.)?

Sosial bruk av TikTok

7. Kan du vise meg den siste videoen du delte med noen?

→ Hvorfor delte du akkurat denne videoen?

→ På hvilken måte delte du videoen?

→ Hvem delte du videoen med?

→ Deler du ofte videoer med andre?

-Hvis personen ikke deler videoer: hvorfor ikke?

8. Ser du bare på videoer eller lager og legger du også ut egne videoer?

-Ja: hvorfor? Kan du vise meg en video?

-Nei: hvorfor ikke?

-Kommenterer du på videoer?

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→ Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke?
-Leser du kommentarene?
→ Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke?

Spørsmål knyttet til studenter
9. Ser du på student- eller studierelaterte videoer?
→ Har du sett noen videoer som du har opplevd hjelper deg i studiehverdagen?
→ Følger du profiler knyttet til studenthverdagen din? F.eks linjeforeningen, idrett

→ Har du noen ganger sett på kontoen til NTNU?
→ Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke?
→ Tanker om at NTNU har en egen konto?

10. Er TikTok noe du snakker om med venner/andre studenter når du er på campus, f.eks under lunsj eller på vei til forelesninger eller i gruppearbeid?
-Ja: på hvilke måter?
-Nei: hvorfor ikke?

→ TikTok beskriver seg selv som en underholdningsplattform, og i mediene beskrives TikTok ofte som del av sosiale medier. Hva synes du om beskrivelsene?

Avsluttende
11. Finnes det noe annet om TikTok du vil snakke om som jeg ikke har spurt om?