VIS 205 Futures For All: Final Project Hitesha Ukey

Can You Be TikTok Famous?

This project takes the form of a website and a quiz that tries to predict participants' likelihood to become TikTok famous if they wanted to become a creator. The quiz consists of 20 yes-or-no questions that get progressively more problematic to demonstrate the bias hidden within the recommendation algorithm of TikTok.

Because of the unique infinite scroll on Tiktok, the For You Page algorithm is the main factor that determines a creator's success. Bias in the recommendation system can have a discriminatory effect: limiting the presence of creators that gain less recognition and boosting viral content that appeals to social norms and provides instant gratification. Tiktok's FYP algorithm is biased by its authors who were interested in the commercial success of the app and by societal standards that are injected by the reactions of the majority. This project aims to educate TikTok users about the flaws hidden in their feeds and inform creators about how their content is being classified.

The quiz questions progress from more reasonable to more discriminatory and problematic. Halfway through, the questions switch to asking about a creator's identity rather than about their content, and the responses switch from positive feedback to specifically discerning what traits are not desired. All the responses end with the phrase "worth recommending to new users" to reflect Tiktok's own language in their alleged moderation practices and emphasize the evaluation of worthiness inherent in the algorithm.

The website interface is meant to suggest the legitimacy of the quiz, through the authoritative black background, angular font and minimalism, at least at first. The logo on the feedback screen between questions gets more and more glitched and warped as a visual indication of the progressively more inaccurate and destructive questions. The results on the last page flicker between "ANYONE CAN BE TIKTOK FAMOUS." and "You are [some percentage] likely to be TikTok famous". This uncertainty mirrors participants' dissonance in their experience of reading logical yet wildly inaccurate rationalizations from the "algorithm" for discriminatory scores.