TikTok Research Findings

May 2023 | Nate Workneh

Introduction

- Topic
  - The topic I researched was habits of daily TikTok users
- Topic Importance
  - This topic is important because TikTok is one of the most popular platforms and in a day in age of mass communication, anything can be spread around.
- Present research goals and scope
  - While researching for misinformation articles, I came to only find a handful of research on the topic. My hopes in accomplishing this research is to add more valuable information about spreading and trusting misinformation. I believe that with this research, more people can understand how easily misinformation can spread without control. Furthermore, I want to test some hypothesis I have with the correlation on environment and how misinformation spreads.
- Research questions
  - What effect does the environment have on the sharing of misinformation?

Literature Review

Related research on/around your topic

- Anspach, N. M., & Carlson, T. N. (2022). Not who you think? Exposure and vulnerability to misinformation. New Media & Society, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221130422
- Shalini Talwar, Amandeep Dhir, Puneet Kaur, Nida Zafar, Melfi Alrasheedy, Why do people share fake news? Associations between the dark side of social media use and fake news sharing behavior, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, Volume 51, 2019, Pages 72-82, ISSN 0969-6989, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.05.026
- Y. Linlin Huang, Kate Starbird, Mania Orand, Stephanie A. Stanek, and Heather T. Pedersen. 2015. Connected Through Crisis: Emotional Proximity and the Spread of Misinformation Online. In Proceedings of the 18th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing (CSCW '15). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 969–980. https://doi.org/10.1145/2675133.2675202

Literature Review

- Make an argument for the need for your research
  - I believe since TikTok is a one of the most use platforms for teens and young adults, it is important to understand sharing habits across the app. Since teens and young adults may have poor judgment on checking or believing information they are presented, it is imperative that we research and understand those behaviors to make improvements to help TikTok users share information.

Methods & Approach

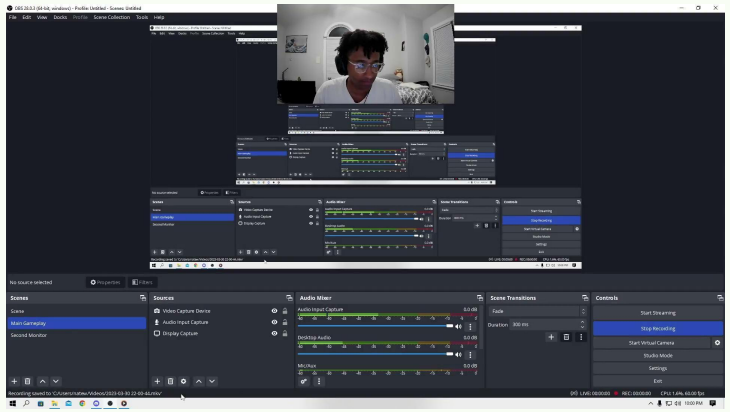
- Data collection procedure
  - In-person Interviews and observations – I believed that these were the best methods in collecting data since I can interview the candidate first with questions then continue with an observation to see how they use TikTok.

- Sampling procedure and Screening Survey
  - With the use of a screening survey, I would use a simple random sampling of JMU students around campus.

The screening survey:
https://jmu.questionpro.com/a/TakeSurvey?tt=HoItQMqdDkIECHrPeIW9eQ%3D%3D

Methods & Approach

2 Think aloud & observation



Phase 1

Phase 2

Methods & Approach

Semi-structured Interview Transcripts

Phase 1

Stage 4: Semi-structured interview based on think-aloud observation:

Interviewer: "All right, now I am going to show you the recording I took and go through it and ask you questions."

Interviewee: "okay"

Interviewer: "Okay we are going to start at this part"

OBSERVING THE VIDEO

News Video #1

Question 1
Interviewer: "Okay, with the first video, why did you watch it and just scroll away?"

Interviewee: "I already saw information that he was going to trial. And he just said he is being indicted officially so I thought it was interesting. It does not really pertain to me that much right now so I was like okay, good luck Trump then next you know."

Question 2
Interviewer: "Did the video attract your attention? If so, how did it attract your attention?"

Interviewee: "The fact it is the bikini bottom news and it is interesting and funny and nostalgic and it is actual news. I also saw content on that news specifically earlier, so it was a continuation and let me see more about it. And the more I listened to it and watched it I was like okay I kinda got the jist and I realized I really do not care that much about that piece of news."

Question 3
Interviewer: "Did you find this news video interesting to you? If so, why did it? If not, why?"

Phase 2

Stage 4: Semi-structured interview based on think-aloud observation:

Interviewer: "Okay, so right now we're just gonna go through the video and I'm going to stop during some of the videos and ask you some questions about it."

OBSERVING THE VIDEO

News Video #1 (2:34 into Think Aloud)

Question 1
Interviewer: "So the first question is, looking at the news video you just watched Why did you watch it?"

Interviewee: "Because there were people screaming and I wanted to know what was going on."

Question 2
Interviewer: "Did the video attract your attention? If so, how did it attract your attention? If not, why?"

Interviewee: "It did attract my attention because there were people screaming, specifically women, and one of them was being held by an officer and I wanted to know why that was happening."

Research Findings

- The sample was a Discord with JMU students and Alumni with 2 respondents I interviews and Observed
- The interview took about an hour or so. The think aloud's took around 5-7 minutes while setting up the interview and the follow up questions took the rest of the hour. The first interview was through Discord and the second was In-person. I first introduced myself and what the interview was all about for both. I soon started the recording and asked my participants to go on their screen time and then asked to browse TikTok for 5-7 minutes. I told the participants to act like they normally do while browsing like sharing, commenting, liking, or watching the videos. I then asked around 11 questions regarding all the news TikTok's they saw while browsing for the 5-7 minutes. I then asked 8 questions regarding their news habits which they answered with good information. Then lastly, I closed the interview with 5 more questions that they answered as well.

Research Findings

Finding (1)

Both interviewees did not engage much with the news videos during the interview's talk aloud portion, which may be due to their discomfort with being recorded or not fully understanding the instructions. However, they explained that they usually reserve their likes for videos that are interesting or funny to them, indicating that some TikTok users prioritize liking videos that capture their attention.

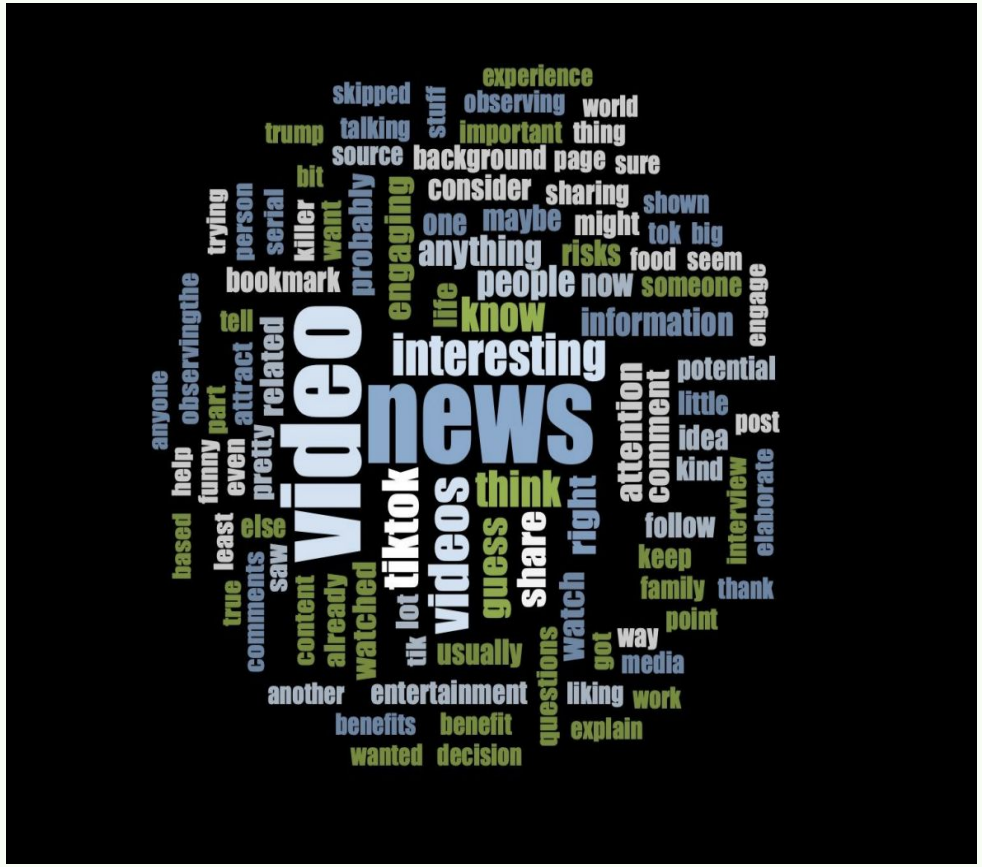
Research Findings

Finding (2)

Both interviewees mentioned that a catchy thumbnail, an intense scene, or a recent event can grab their attention at the beginning of a news video. This can vary from person to person depending on their sensitivities and exposure to the topic. Additionally, previous exposure or an official source may influence a viewer's interaction with the video. For instance, interviewee one stated that they watched a video because someone else recommended it, suggesting that viewers may continue watching a video for more information or skip it entirely.

Research Findings

Word Cloud:



Discussion

- I wanted to address the fact that, while conducting interviews and analyzing the data, I couldn't quite get an answer to my hypothesis about whether the environment influences how people interact with TikTok news. However, the exposure was different for both interviewees. News videos are either presented by a big algorithm, like interviewee two said, or just follow current events, like interviewee one mentioned. But both interviewees defined news as events that are happening in the current world or information that is recent. This was the deciding factor in determining what was news to the participants. Furthermore, the trustworthiness of the information was either up to the viewer or based on a certified news source with context. These didn't really help my hypothesis, but they let me wonder if, if addressed in a different environment, they would have said the same thing.

Discussion

- Limitations
  - While I did the best of my ability to research this topic, there could be some outliers or variables that may skew the data. I only conducted two interviews, which is a low sample size for research purposes. Also, I am new to interviewing people, so my inexperience may also manipulate my data. However, with the data I collected, I believe I got an adequate amount of data to finish my research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I conducted two interviews to analyze how TikTok users engage with news videos. I found that both interviewees did not engage much with the news videos, primarily keeping their likes reserved for videos that caught their attention. The interviewees seldom comment or share news videos unless they think someone else would find them interesting. Catchy thumbnails or recent events could catch a viewer's attention, but exposure to the topic or an official source could also alter a viewer's interaction. I did not find a conclusive answer to my hypothesis about the environment's effect on TikTok news interaction.

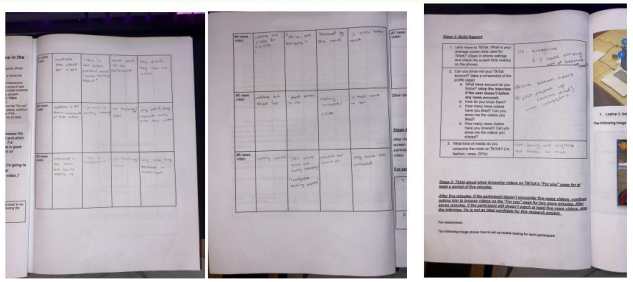
Conclusion

- Design recommendations
  - Should Interview daily TikTok users
  - Should have news pop-up on their FYP frequently
  - Should consume the content (Like, Share, Comment)
- Directions for future research
  - I believe the the future of this research would require more interviews and observations to be done with TikTok users that consume news on TikTok.

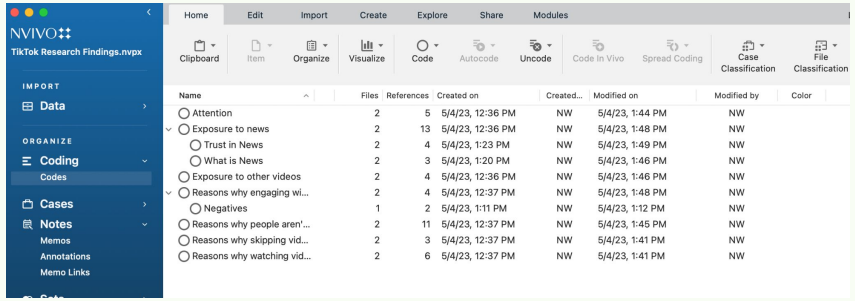
References

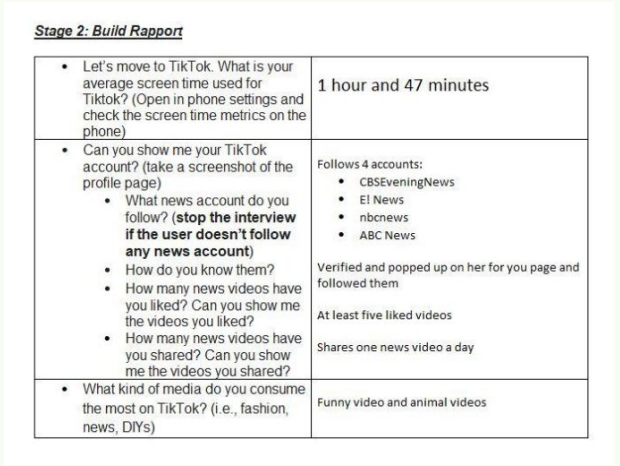
The screening survey:
https://jmu.questionpro.com/a/TakeSurvey?tt=HoItQMqdDkIECHrPeIW9eQ%3D%3D

- Interview protocol
  - https://canvas.jmu.edu/courses/1922874/files/148301538?wrap=1
- User interview & observation notes



- Code Book:



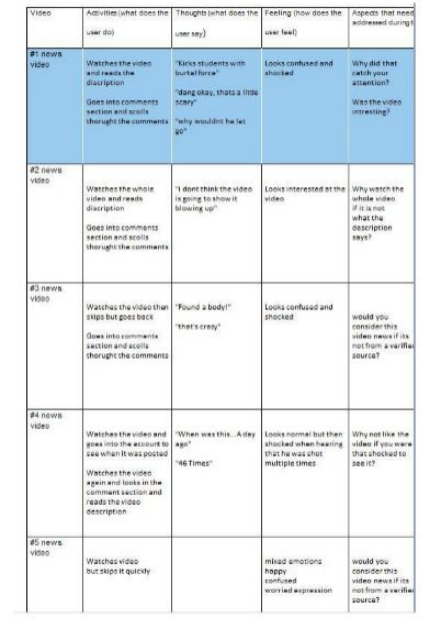


Stage 2: Build Rapport

• Let's move to TikTok. What is your average screen time used for Tiktok? (Open in phone settings and check the screen time metrics on the phone)	1 hour and 47 minutes

• Can you show me your TikTok account? (take a screenshot of the profile page)
  • What news account do you follow? (**stop the interview if the user doesn't follow any news account**)
  • How do you know them?
  • How many news videos have you liked? Can you show me the videos you liked?
  • How many news videos have you shared? Can you show me the videos you shared?
	Follows 4 accounts:
	• CBSEveningNews
	• E! News
	• nbcnews
	• ABC News
	
	Verified and popped up on her for you page and followed them
	
	At least five liked videos
	
	Shares one news video a day

• What kind of media do you consume the most on TikTok? (i.e., fashion, news, DIYs)	Funny video and animal videos



Video	Activities (what does the user do)	Thoughts (what does the user say)	Feeling (how does the user feel)	Aspects that need addressed during t
#1 news video	Watches the video and reads the discription Goes into comments section and scolls thorught the comments	"Kicks students with burtal force" "dang okay, thats a little scary" "why wouldnt he let go"	Looks confused and shocked	Why did that catch your assention? Was the video intressting?
#2 news video	Watches the whole video and reads discription Goes into comments section and scolls thorught the comments	"I dont think the video is going to show it blowing up"	Looks interessed at the video	Why watch the whole video if it is not what the description says?
#3 news video	Watches the video then skips but goes back Goes into comments section and scolls thorught the comments	"Found a body!" "that's crazy"	Looks confused and shocked	would you consider this video news if its not from a verifie source?
#4 news video	Watches the video and goes into the account to see when it was posted Watches the video again and looks in the comment section and reads the video description	"When was this.. A day ago" "46 Times"	Looks normal but then shocked when hearing that he was shot multiple times	Why not like the video if you were that shocked to see it?
#5 news video	Watches video but skips it quickly		mixed emotions happy confused worried expression	would you consider this video news if its not from a verifie source?