



# Module 2: Deliverable

## *Gathering Context*

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# Overview

In this report, I will provide a summary of the findings of an investigation I conducted on the users of socio-technical platforms and what processes currently exist for users to report algorithmic bias. The images display some examples of how companies currently ask for and offer opportunities for user feedback and criticism. The report will also highlights findings from peer-conducted research on the success rates of these methods.



# *Experiential* Research

Learning about and reporting sources  
of bias from the perspective of a user



<https://www.stickpng.com/>

## **TikTok:**

- Ad Reporting
- User feedback and survey questions



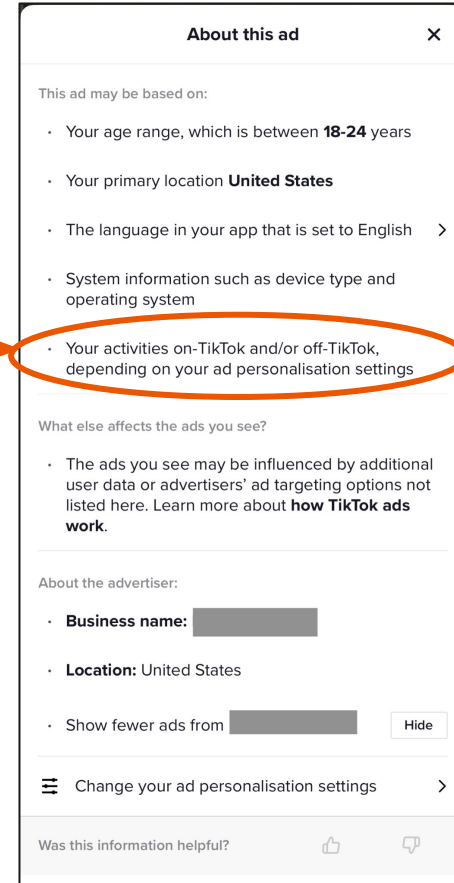
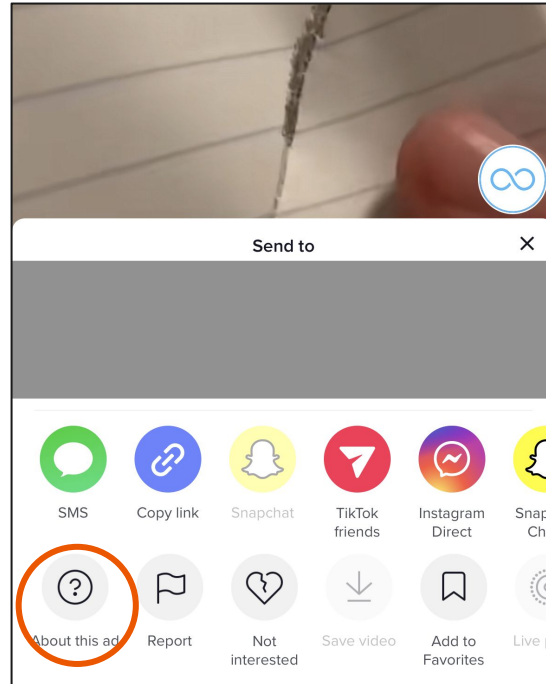
<https://www.dreamstime.com/>

## **Instagram:**

- Ad and post filtering and ordering
- Reporting and blocking

To conduct the experiential research component of this report, I scrolled through TikTok and Instagram, two of the most widely used social media platforms currently. The screenshots in the following slides demonstrate some of my findings and analysis

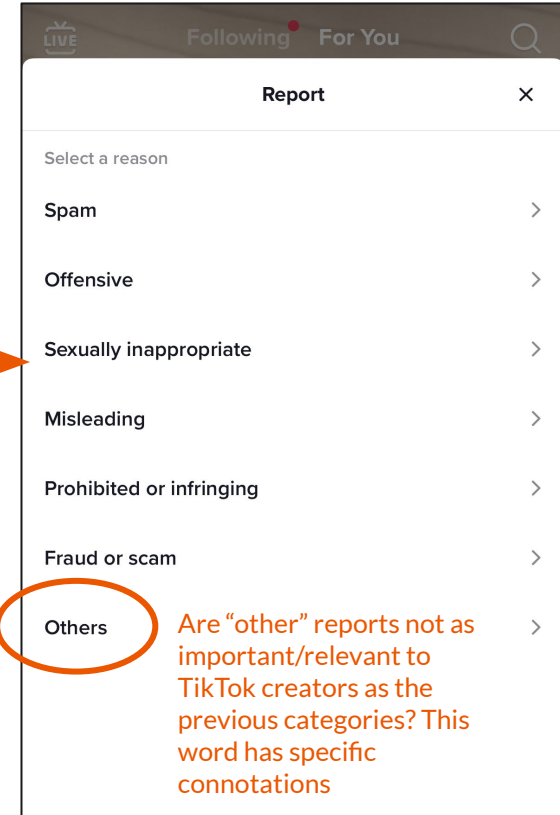
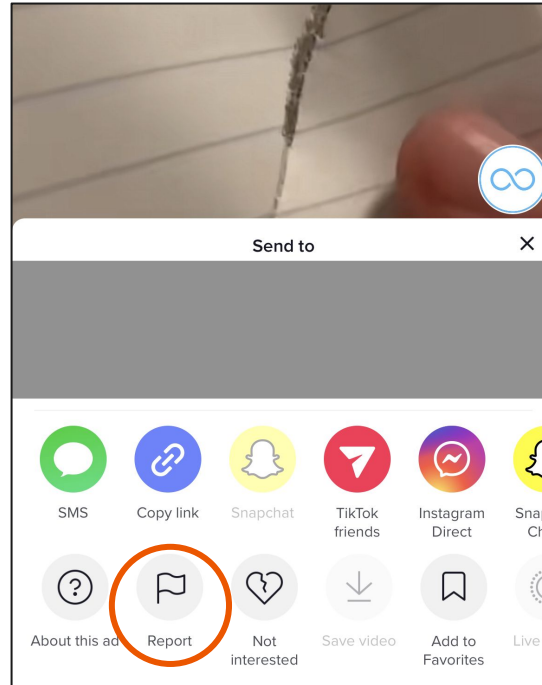
## TikTok



This bullet point is listed *last*, however it is most likely the most important data source for TikTok algorithms

Before reporting an ad or providing feedback, a user can select the “About this ad” button, found in the menu of any video. They can then see the demographics used by TikTok to provide the data necessary to display the ad on their account.

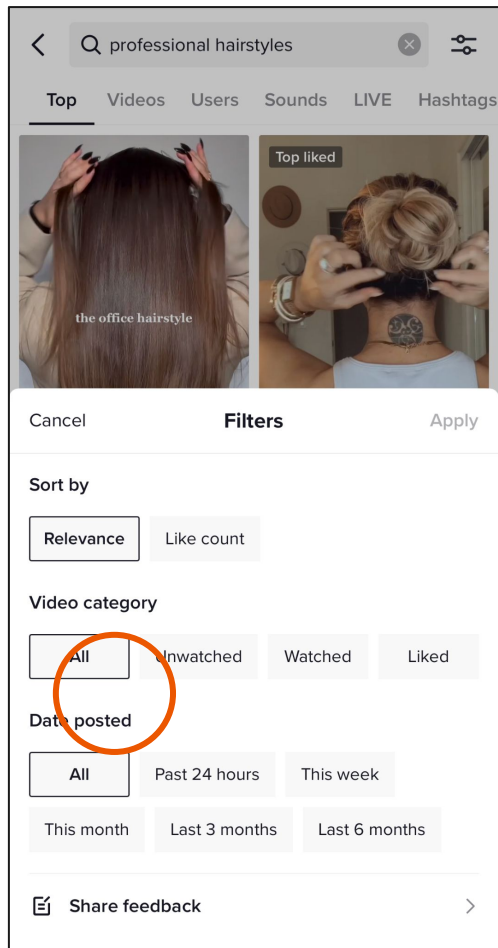
# TikTok



After selecting “Report” on any video, a user is prompted to select a “reason”. While the choices listed on this page may seem encompassing, oftentimes, inappropriate content can be many of the terms listed. Specific feedback is necessary to truly bring about algorithmic change, and this categorization may steer users away from providing it.

# TikTok

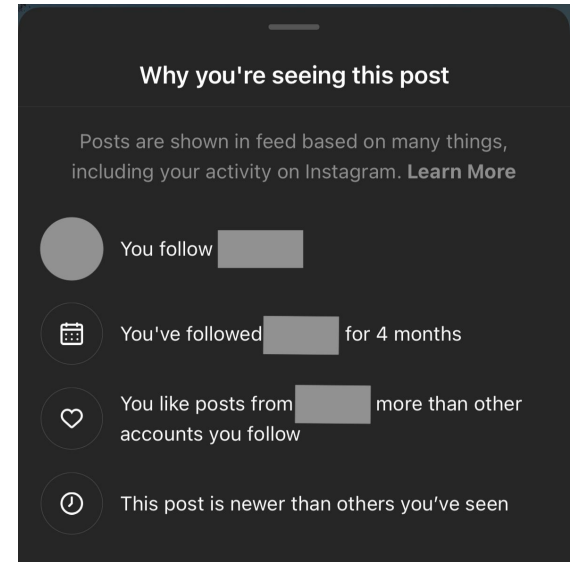
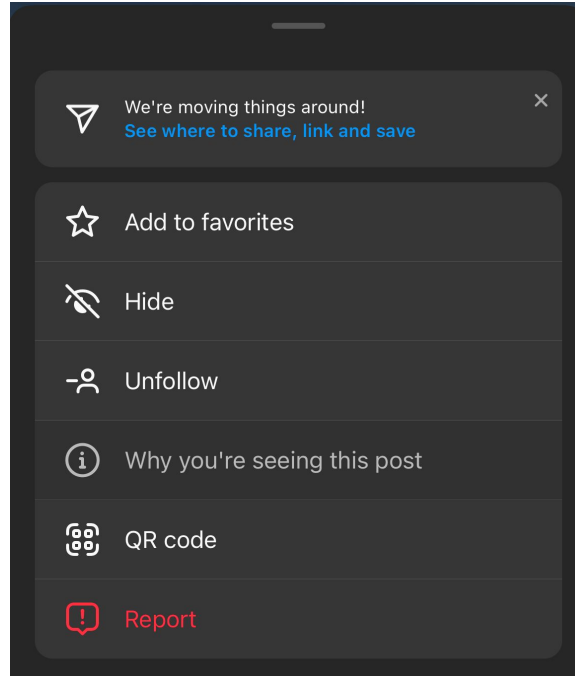
These images highlight the process for a user to provide feedback to a search results page. I found it interesting that the word “bias” isn’t explicitly in any option under “Tell us about your search experience.” While bias can come about through almost any of the listed phenomena, users are forced to categorize biased results themselves, and could incorrectly do so.

A screenshot of the TikTok feedback form. At the top is a "Feedback" header with a back arrow. Below it is the section "Tell us about your search experience" with several checkboxes: "Couldn't find what I was looking for", "Repetitive results", "I couldn't find trending content", "Outdated results", "Unrelated results", "Inappropriate results", and "Results violate Community Guidelines". Below this is the section "What were you searching for?" with radio button options: "A creator", "A creator's video", "A friend's account", "A friend's video", "A video I watched, liked, or commented on", "A specific video", "A hashtag", and "A sound". At the bottom of the form is a text input field with the placeholder "How else can we improve?" and a character count "0/200". Below the input field is a "Submit" button. An orange arrow points from the "Filters" menu in the previous image to the "A creator's video" option.



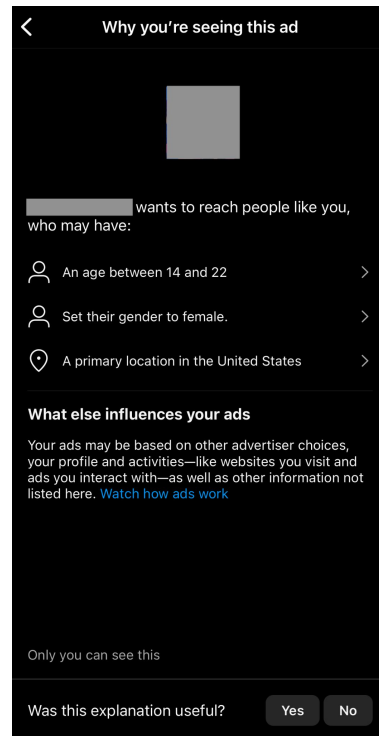
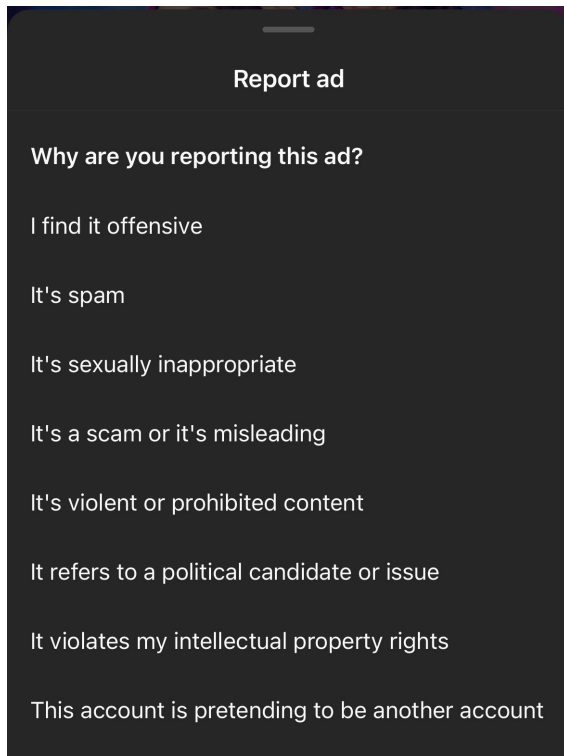
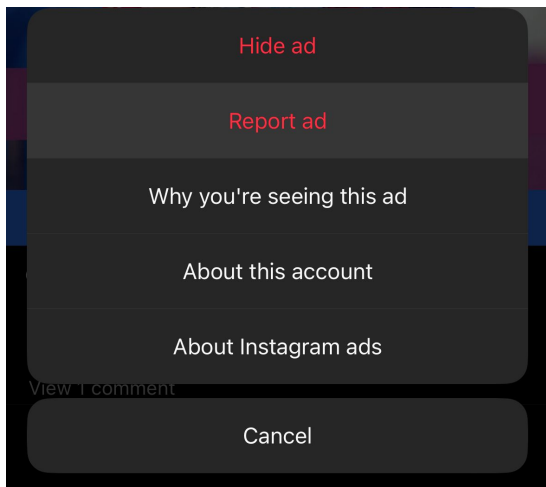
# Instagram

Onto Instagram! Every post's interface includes a "menu," where a user can report the post as well as learn about how the app's home page algorithm ordered the display of content.



# Instagram

Similar information as previous slide, but in the context of ads and ad reporting. Where's the word "bias"? It's subliminally written everywhere!







# *Informational* Research

Sources Found in this section:

[Misleading Information in Social Media News: How Bias Affects Perceptions](#)

[De-Biasing the Reporting Bias in Social Media Analytics](#)

[Your Social Media Feed is Biased](#)

[Why You Should Embrace Customer Feedback On Social Channels](#)

[How to Identify and Report Hate Speech on Social Media](#)

# Types of Informational Sources:

## Professional Paper

Pros:

- Most reliable study results and data
- Usually an acclaimed team of authors

Cons:

- Can be redundant when searching for various sources
- Authors do not always acknowledge their inherent biases

## News Article/ Opinion Piece

Pros:

- Clear perspective from one or more point-of-views
- Often concise

Cons:

- Can be extremely biased without preface
- Can lack explicitness compared to academic-style papers

## Student Thesis

Pros:

- Usually a large number of varying references/ data sources
- Often more up front about biases than other published papers

Cons:

- Analysis may be inconsistent
- If experimental studies, can have small sample size



## Takeaways (pt. 1)

- Confirmation bias plays a large role in correcting misinformation on social media (Jackson, 2017).
  - In the context of viewing politicized news on social media, confirmation bias takes precedence over personal bias (Jackson, 2017)
- There exists the perspective that reporting instances of bias on social media should only be for “extreme” of “obvious” instances of *hate crime* (Fishbein, 2019).
- There is often a significant difference in the probability a user will provide feedback depending on their opinions on a service (Chen et al., 2015)
  - Feedback  $\neq$  “average” user opinion



## Takeaways (pt. 2)

- “Perception bias,” often caused by social media, creates a perception that behaviors/traits are more prevalent than they actually are (Baker, 2020).
  - The effects celebrities’ online appearances had on the COVID-19 pandemic were significant in terms of tracking perception bias (Baker, 2020).
- It is important to not only collect proper feedback from users, but to know, as developers, how to interpret, respond to, and enact change as a result of this feedback (Baker, 2020)
  - Manually or automatically responding to messages from users has shown increased retention rate (Baker, 2020)

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# Worksheet

From the *Handbook of People Research*

# Context & Change

To get started with your project, take a look at the context you're working in. Do what you can to understand what major experiences, influences and changes affect the success or failure of your business offerings. Use this sheet to make some notes and guide your first web searches. At the end, make an initial statement about the context that will begin to inform your hypothesis. (You'll find a completed example of this worksheet on the following spread.)

User feedback processes on social media  
 · User willingness  
 · Websites' "bias" conditioning

## 1) Business Offerings

Your business offerings are the only factor you can really control in the marketplace. All other factors are dynamic forces that will impact the success or failure of your offerings. Circle the type(s) of business offerings your organization creates.

PRODUCT INFORMATION  
SERVICE TOOL  
 PLACE TOY

## 2) Global Systems

Circle the three of these global systems with the biggest impact on your work. Take a deeper look to understand how these systems affect people's experiences of your offerings.

all... to some extent  
 LAWS POLICY  
 ECONOMICS TIME  
TECHNOLOGY ENVIRONMENT  
SOCIETY RELIGION

## 3) Patterns of Change

Consider opposing forces, such as these examples, to gauge patterns of change in your industry or domain. Mark the trend direction on these or your own spectrums.

MORE creativity! ——— LESS  
 CONSISTENCY ———> TURMOIL  
 COHESION ———> DIVISION  
 users vs. developer  
 indifference vs. caring



## WORKSHEET: CONTEXT & CHANGE

## 4) Human Experiences

How are people experiencing your offerings today, and what gaps have you left unaddressed?



### RATIONAL

Users often think to themselves  
 "I don't need to provide feedback;  
 someone else will do it."



### EMOTIONAL

The nature of social media enables  
 people to use highly personalized  
 language impulsively, acting on more  
 emotion than in-person.



### TANGIBLE

Not much, but one can  
 argue that tangibility can be defined  
 as the "relevance" of a topic or  
 point on social media



### ASPIRATIONAL

People may want an unbiased  
 social media feed, but often  
 don't actually think there's anything  
 they can individually do about it.

## 5) Context Statement

Now craft a brief statement about the context you're working in. Formulate it to describe what you think might be happening today, or open it up to describe your opportunity (where you think you can innovate).

Social media feedback  
 processes exist in a virtual  
 environment where users feel  
 like a tiny component of a  
 massive network.

There is a feeling of invisibility  
 on social media; users who  
 experience tangible / real bias tend  
 to find some of the "virtual voice"  
 they had all along

All in all, users aren't motivated to  
 provide feedback.

# References

Baker, Alex. "Your Social Media Feed Is Biased - USC Viterbi: School of Engineering." *USC Viterbi | School of Engineering*, USC Viterbi, 15 Apr. 2020, <https://viterbischool.usc.edu/news/2020/04/your-social-media-feed-is-biased/>.

Chen, Hongyu, et al. "De-Biasing the Reporting Bias in Social Media Analytics." *Production and Operations Management*, vol. 25, no. 5, 2015, pp. 849–865., <https://doi.org/10.1111/poms.12509>.

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Flanagan, Jennifer. "Why You Should Embrace Customer Feedback on Social Channels." *Adtaxi*, 15 Dec. 2021, <https://www.adtaxi.com/blog/why-you-should-embrace-customer-feedback-on-social-channels/>.

Jackson, Amber. "Misleading Information in Social Media News: How Bias Affects Perceptions." 2017, <https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2017.honors.st.18>.

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