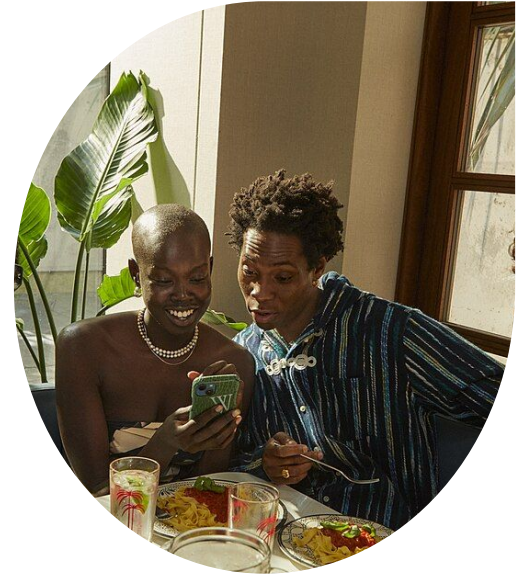

Feb 2024

Future Audiences F23/24 Social Creators Research [Tik Tok]



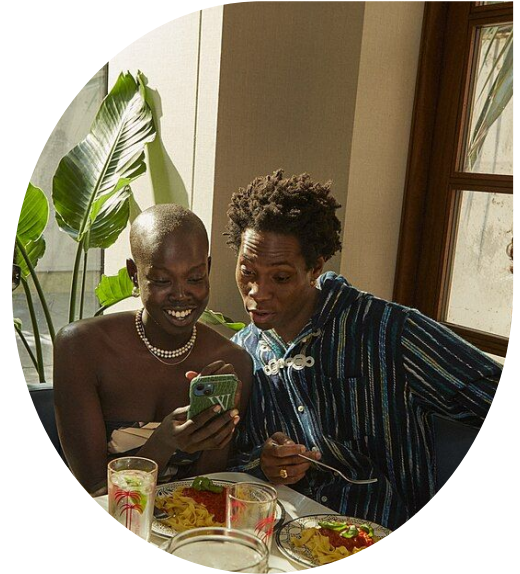
Report by: Mathoto Matsetela & Maryana Pinchuk

Project Team: Mathoto Matsetela, Zack McCune, Nicholas Perry, Maryana Pinchuk, Robin Schoenbaechler, Lena Traer

WMF: Communications Department: Brand Studio and Product & Technology: Future Audiences teams

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2. Executive Summary
3. Research Findings
4. Opportunities



FUTURE AUDIENCES F23/24: SOCIAL CREATORS

1. Background & Hypothesis

Background

The purpose of the Futures bucket is to explore strategies for expanding beyond our existing audiences of consumers and contributors, in an effort to truly reach everyone in the world as the essential infrastructure of the ecosystem of free knowledge.

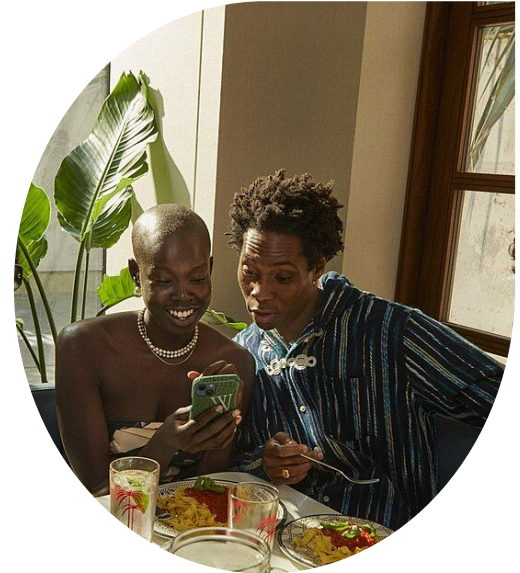
With evolving information consumption trends such as voice assistants and AI, we recognize the need to adapt. The focus includes proposing and testing hypotheses for the long-term future of the free knowledge ecosystem through product and technology efforts, research, partnerships, and marketing. Learnings will shape future strategies to serve knowledge-seekers, emphasizing experimentation and exploration in envisioning the future of free knowledge.

WMF Annual Plan 2023-2024 Objective: Validate or invalidate potential strategies for the future, starting with a focus on third party content platforms

Key Result: Test a hypothesis aimed at reaching global youth audiences where they are on leading third-party content platforms, to generate ideas for products we can build on or off our sites, which can help increase their engagement with Wikimedia content as consumers and contributors.” - [Wikimedia Foundation Annual Plan 2023-2024](#)

FA hypothesis FA2.1.2: *If we engage a small number of content creators on TikTok in an experiment to creatively credit Wikipedia, we can test how/whether this impacts other creators and their audiences, and learn what types of tools/incentives could help motivate creators to do this in an ongoing way.*

Deadline: February 7 2024 - (for Feb 13 F24/25 Annual Planning Convenings)



FUTURE AUDIENCES F23/24: SOCIAL CREATORS

2. Executive Summary

What we did

Part 1: Qual

Methods: Expert Interview 5 knowledge amplifiers from 3 markets

Note: Creators were not PAID for their participation.

Part 2: Trends

Methods - Literature Review: Analysing academic research on social media information dissemination, with a focus on TikTok. Aiming to understand user behaviour and identify gaps, particularly in disseminating and referencing Wikipedia content.

Methods - Trends Scanning: Uncovering trends in Wikipedia content usage and references, especially among popular TikTok creators, and assessing trends surrounding Gen Z and trust.



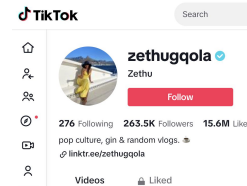
[University of Cambridge ThinkLab](#) incubates entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation by connecting academia and business to solve real-life challenges through practical, research-based collaborations.

Link to full presentation [HERE](#)

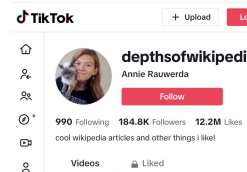
Who we spoke to



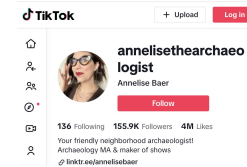
Handle: [Etymologynerd](#)
Region: North America
Topics: Etymology, linguistics
Often references/shows Wikipedia & Wiktionary



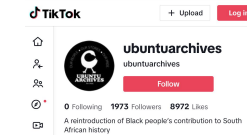
Handle: [Zethu Gqola](#)
Region: Africa
Topics: Pop culture, politics, fashion



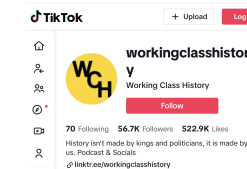
Handle: [depthsofwikipedia](#)
Region: North America
Topics: highlighting weird facts from Wikipedia



Handle: [annelisethearchaeologist](#)
Region: North America
Topics: Archeology news, myths debunked
#archeologyTikTok
#archeology #greenscreen
#ancienthistory
#historyTikTok



Handle: [Ubuntu Archives](#)
Region: Africa
Topics: Southern African arts and culture history



Handle: [@WorkingClassHistory](#)
Region: EU
Topics: Telling the story of everyday people doing heroic things #learnonTikTok
#peopleshistory
Europe, but with international sister projects in other languages.

Executive Summary

1.

GEN Z x MIS/DIS INFO

Gen Z is MORE discerning about online information & facts.

Contrary to popular belief, [Gen Z is MORE discerning about online information/facts](#) than older generations – but that extends to skepticism of traditional "authoritative knowledge" sources like Wikipedia. They won't trust information just because it's associated with a brand - they will verify.

2.

CREATOR MOTIVATIONS

Knowledge Creators on TikTok echo our mission in sharing knowledge.

[Creators are motivated to make knowledge and information free](#) - both in terms of money and availability. They aim to make niche or emerging areas of knowledge more accessible and legitimate and stay engaged in the long term because sharing their passion is rewarding.

3.

WP PERCEPTION

They trust Wikipedia for verification but not contentious or controversial topics.

Creators often turn to Wikipedia for historical research, particularly for verifying dates and facts. They do not use Wikipedia for contentious or controversial topics. They hope that Wikipedia can make [technical enhancements](#) and work to change [negative perceptions](#).

4.

TIKTOK PERCEPTION

TikTok opens up new possibilities in knowledge sharing but comes with restrictions.

Creators value Tik Tok open access for sharing knowledge but face [challenges with its unpredictable algorithm](#), hindering visibility and trust. They find Tik Tok overly censorious, prioritizing feel-good content over critical news.

5.

TRUST SIGNALS ON TIKTOK

Casual credibility and authenticity = trust. Creators employ diverse strategies to build trust.

They prioritize transparency, accessibility, and a relaxed tone, aiming for [casual credibility to humanize knowledge](#) and originality. For audiences, authenticity = trust and anything that reads like marketing/spon-con is avoided.

6.

CREATOR PROCESS

Creators use Wikipedia for fact-checking during their research but rarely cite it in their final videos.

Driven by the desire to reach a wide audience and gain visibility, content creators stay up-to-date on news, events, and trends to fuel their creativity. [While they use Wikipedia for verification, it is rarely cited in videos](#). Prioritizing credibility through substantive content, they primarily use the green screen effect among Tik Tok's built-in features.

FUTURE AUDIENCES F23/24: SOCIAL CREATORS

3. Research Findings

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

What motivates creators?

What are knowledge creators on Tik Tok motivated by?

Liberating proprietary knowledge & information

The primary driver is to get this information out to the public for free, because so much of it, you know, again, even in my own experience, is paywalls. Or is something that you would learn in school, maybe something at a university, which is fantastic. But if you're not currently enrolled, as a student in a degree programme for history, archaeology, anthropology, whatever, you're not going to be getting this information.

*Full time professors, they're very busy....they're at the point where, if they're not being compensated financially, for their academic labour, they're not going to do it. **@AnneliseTheArchaeologist***

Mainstreaming or legitimising niche or emerging knowledge & information

*Being able to show people content that they otherwise would never see? Yeah, the apartheid government definitely recorded a lot more than our current government. **@UbuntuArchives***

*I did a video two days ago on the phrase “No, because” and how it's serving as a new interjection in English and I was really excited about that video, because I had done kind of original research on it. I was looking at historical tweets of how people were saying no, because I found out that before 2019 the only people saying it, we're using African American Vernacular English. **@EtymologyNerd***

*We hope to ...promote our collective history of people organising together for a better world highlighting lessons from those and how we can apply them today **@WorkingClassHistory***

Passion over profit: creators prioritize self-expression

*If the job I love so much was like “Okay, we've implemented a policy, no one can be on Tik Tok anymore” I would immediately never make another video again. **@ZethuGqola***

*And the my original motivation back in high school, which I still think applies today is like, I genuinely would love to see this content on the internet. So I hope that I'm contribute, like, contributing in some way to that. **@EtymologyNerd***

And it really is just dependent on how much joy it sparks and how much there is to talk about.

*I don't see myself as an influencer, I'm not using social media as my primary source for financial income. It's this thing that I do on the side, it's this thing that I do, ideally, for fun. **@AnneliseTheArchaeologist***

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

What creators say about Wikipedia

Creators rely on Wikipedia as primary knowledge verification and research tool

*I'm pretty well versed in everything I'm talking about. I haven't really talked about anything that I don't know. But it is like, **I want to make sure that I'm talking about correct things.** So I basically use Wikipedia to confirm my own knowledge.*

@EtymologyNerd

*Is this something? **What is this thing?** and then we will end up going on an adventure on Wikipedia, follow the links, see where things go.*

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

***We do use Wikipedia** as a research tool.*

*There might not be anything available on the internet in English other than Wikipedia. Sometimes **we look at foreign language Wikipedias, Spanish, Russian,** etc., and then investigate those. If we use them, we'll check the cited sources from Wikipedia because, although I think Wikipedia is generally highly accurate, any online source will have errors. There are errors in our content as well, no doubt.*

@WorkingClassHistory

*But I look at Wikipedia when I'm trying to mostly have a **historic view on a topic, a person or a time period.***

@ZethuGqola

They see it as a valuable encyclopedia that's accurate. They stress that they only use it as a starting point.

*I think the general public has a pretty good idea. Or at least maybe, I don't know, **my followers have a pretty good idea that Wikipedia is a generally useful resource.***

*So legitimately, whenever I'm making my videos, I'll have the various tabs open for, you know, wherever I'm getting my information from, and I will have Wikipedia up there because Wikipedia gives me the concise summary of things if it's just **something that I need to jog my memory on.***

@EtymologyNerd

*A great jumping off point. In my professional research, **I always start at Wikipedia as a jumping off point. And that's how I tell people to use it.** It's a wonderful source for the basic upfront information. And it's a great jumping off point, to, you know, propel your reading and your research forward.*

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

*Wikipedia is a great resource. And we know that various studies on it have been done that show it has a very high level of accuracy, better than things like Encyclopaedia Britannica or similar sources. **There's a very high level of accuracy to the content on Wikipedia, and we obviously understand how the editing process works.***

We wouldn't have a problem with citing Wikipedia on a purely factual basis.

@WorkingClassHistory

*I have no problems with it. And again... I use Wikipedia all the time, in my own work. And, you know, **I remind people how to essentially, engage with it properly.** If you're using it for a professional reason, or like a paper or something, obviously, you can't use it as a source. But you can use it as the foundation for whatever you're doing.*

It's a wonderful starting point.

@ZethuGqola

Verifying historical dates is where Wikipedia shines.

I primarily trust Wikipedia with dates, and some of the origin story, I probably trust the first section before you have to open subsections. But I will read the subsections as well.

*For biographies, then I will go on to Wikipedia, or **if it was a specific historical event, or time period, I definitely do head to Wikipedia.***
@ZethuGqola

*So I love and adore Wikipedia, because **it has things like dates.** It has a concise summary of dates and time periods, which are the things that I always forget...like, you know, the Middle Bronze Age or whatever.*
@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

*When I do a lot of true crime, or like really crazy eras of violence in history, I'll go to Wikipedia. **It's a real encyclopaedia.** It's just like your own one stop shop for everything. Then I go, click the citations to then go Google. So I do see it as a more reliable source of historical data.*
@ZethuGqola

But, they don't trust Wikipedia for contested or controversial topics

Take the Soviet Union, for example. There are a good number of people today who claim it did 'nothing wrong'. So if we say anything about what the Soviet Union did which even these people would consider 'wrong', we try to use sources, which are official Soviet sources, and say 'you know, they didn't deny this happened. They literally wrote about it in their own way. The same thing goes for Israel-Palestine. Wherever possible, if we document things like Israeli massacres or war crimes, we try to cite Israeli military sources and similar sources. So that people can't just say, 'Oh, this is biased Palestinian,' or 'anti-Semitic,' or whatever, and be like, 'No, the whole thing with is sourced from the Israeli government, Israeli military.

@WorkingClassHistory

*It's a pretty strong and reliable source for much of ancient history, with the exception of certain aspects and corners that people like to tamper with or **areas that are more popular, which means people like to tamper with the information a bit more.***

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

*But the issue that we face is a kind of public relations issue around a question, **which is controversial, like a historical event where there's very different interpretations of it. If we just cite Wikipedia as a source, then anyone who kind of questions the narrative can easily just say, Oh, you've cited Wikipedia, so therefore your point is irrelevant. Whereas, you know, if you cite an academic paper, for example, they cannot dismiss it so offhandedly.***

@WorkingClassHistory

Creators want Wikipedia to improve its link decay and reference quality issues

*At this point, **one of the biggest issues I've come across lately with Wikipedia... is Link decay.***

...The links are dead, the sites are gone.... So you can't follow that source. And so then, you know, suddenly, this thing is not actually sourced properly.

...I had to dig through Internet Archive and other back channels to find alternatives, resulting in a lot of extra work on my part.

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

*I was looking for something up the other day, I can't remember what the story was...when I followed the **source link, the information did not align.** I'm sure the information is probably correct. But the source didn't confirm that element of the information. So in the end, I couldn't use it.*

@WorkingClassHistory

*And that's another big thing, like when they're citations to some of the facts, it makes it a lot easier, obviously, because you can click on the reference and then go see it. **But when a paragraph is like endless, with no citation, it's like no.***

@ZethuGqola

Creators believe that more can be done to actively counter negative perceptions of Wikipedia

Because I'm such a huge Wikipedia fan. I'm kind of intentionally doing that (citing wikipedia in videos), to also battle the stigma against Wikipedia. Hopefully, that helps a little bit.
@EtymologyNerd

Wikipedia needs to do like a full-on campaign where you reinforce all of this content that is here, yes, it is free. But this is why it's free. Tell them what your intention is, and tell people the information is cited. And here's why it is factual, here's how you can check.
@UbuntuArchives

Some show love for Wikimedia Commons

We do use Wikimedia Commons for sourcing, public domain, Creative Commons, historical imagery and that sort of thing, which we're very grateful for. I mean, I think Wikimedia Commons is just one of the best things on the internet and in the world, really. It's really important.
@WorkingClassHistory

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

What creators say about TikTok

Creators see Tik Tok as a place where knowledge is truly free from paywalls

And so they're (academic experts) at the point where, if they're not being compensated financially, for their academic labour, they're not going to do it. Obviously, that's the correct way to do things. But also, that means that unfortunately, that is another way that a lot of this information is being kind of gate-kept and paywalled from the average person who is legitimately just curious and wanting to know more about a lot of these topics from a knowledgeable source.
@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

The people that we're targeting, don't really have libraries to go to, or have access to the kinds of bookstores that we have. Also we show the kind of content that was not given to black people previously. Like you could not own that kind of book because certain people were the gatekeepers of that.

For a person like myself, as I mentioned, from the township, university is already intimidating. These spaces where information is freely accessible to the average person, for them, it's a no-brainer, hence the high content consumption. So we aim to be part of those pioneering within the edutainment space.
@UbuntuArchives

*My original motivation back in high school, which I still think applies today is like, I genuinely would love to see **this content on the internet**. So I hope that I'm contributing in some way to that.*
@EtymologyNerd

The mysterious ever-changing algorithm drives mistrust, leaving Creators confused & guessing their way to virality

*I think a lot of creators don't trust the app. I'm actively using it because it's how I make money, **but I don't like the app at all.***

*Tik Tok is not transparent with it's users. **Tik Toks has very little transparency with creators.***

*For example, I know that talking fast helps retention like people rewatch parts of the video to come back or there's like a little uptick, Sorry to ruin the magic.
@EtymologyNerd*

How people discover my videos, is a bit of a mystery to me.

*I can imagine that there are people who start browsing Tik Tok, see a video, click on it, maybe click to the creator, or the click on one of the hashtags and sort of go on basically the Tik Tok version of a wiki walk ... maybe that's one of mine. **I genuinely don't know.** But I can assume that that's the thing that must be happening just based on the scope of this platform, the hashtags, the searchability.
@AnneliseTheArchaeologist*

The algorithm is that, the more comments that you can garner, the more visible your content will be come in the FYP page section.

@ZethuGqola

*So I wanted to point out that **knowing when to post** requires trying different times initially so that you can understand what works well. Similarly, with your tone or language in writing, you need to give a few different tries and see what works best. Thankfully, social media is such a busy space that there's plenty of room for experimentation. You need to try because there's ample space for you to do so, unlike print media where you had limitations
@UbuntuArchives*

*So **Tik Tok, rewards, like every metric.** So you want comments you want shares etc*

*Retention, I think is a very important one, how long people stay watching your video.
@EtymologyNerd*

They describe TikTok as a highly censorious space where algorithmic censorship is undiscerning and successful appeals rare

*Of all the platforms **Tik Tok is most censorious** we have had very little content removed from Facebook or Instagram. We've never had anything removed from Twitter. And even content which has been removed from Facebook or Instagram has mostly been reinstated on appeal. **But Tik Toktheir rules are kind of a lot stricter and they're also quite unclear.***

@WorkingClassHistory

***I can see that, especially if it's an algorithm identifying stuff,** it would be hard to tell the difference between, say, a Nazi posting overtly Nazi photographs or imagery, or a plain historical or anti-Nazi account posting the same images.*

@WorkingClassHistory

*I don't like that **weird censorship.***

***I think if I was CEO, I would be a little less strict with censorship.** I mean, I guess there's a reason for it. But I found that I often can't do educational videos on topics about anything vaguely sexual, I'm doing a video about Incel terms. I'm gonna have to censor all my words. Because otherwise it'll get taken down which it's happened quite a few times.*

@EtymologyNerd

Some say, community guidelines incentivise revisionist accounts of real events and facts, driving creators to prioritise feel good stories.

Because of the nature of our content...it's about historical things, it's tricky to remove any kind of images of weapons or racists or, you know, violence. It's tricky when a lot of your content is about wars, and, you know, police violence and racist and fascist violence.

@WorkingClassHistory

So we are evolving with the algorithm kind of both actively and passively getting conditioned into making content the viewer wants to see more it's a little dystopian, but that's where we are.

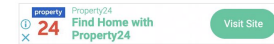
@EtymologyNerd

We specifically chose good news stories, we specifically chose positive, fun stories, because we thought they would be more likely to go viral.

@WorkingClassHistory

Creativity programme BETA continues to confound and confuse me...how does the monetization work? How does TikTok determine the monetary value of a video? Is it based on views? Is it the length of views it likes? Is it you know, reach or whatever? Nobody knows. I don't even know if Tik Tok knows.

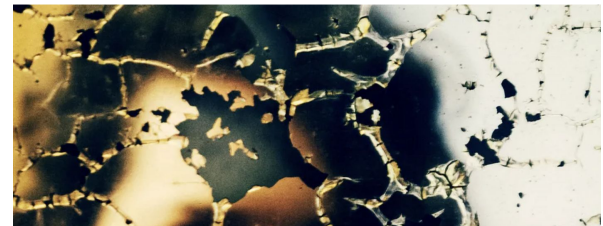
@AnneliseTheArchaeologist



AMELIA TAIT CULTURE 27.05.2022 12:00 PM

Are TikTok Algorithms Changing How People Talk About Suicide?

Social media users have adopted terms like *unalive* to avoid platform censorship. But not using the word *suicide* can stigmatize it.



<https://www.wired.co.uk/article/algorithms-suicide-unalive>

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

How do creators signal “trust this/me” on TikTok?

Creators preempt & announce...

Fallibility

*If I'm not reading from the green screen behind me and I'm just recalling the story, some of the names, timeline, or statistics might be slightly wrong, and people will correct me, saying, 'Actually, it's this,' or 'Actually, it's that.... It happens quite a lot because people think you're trying to be knowledgeable, **but I'm just a regular citizen sharing information I found interesting.***

@ZethuGqola

Insider credentials within first 7 seconds

***I may not have a PhD, I do have two degrees, I have two out of three degrees in archaeology.** And I have over a decade of experience now being an archaeologist being connected to the archaeological world, and then also working in TV production.*

And I can say that with authority, because if you go to my website, if you look at my resume, I have worked on Ancient Aliens. So I know how it works. I know exactly how those things are made, because I was one of the people making them.

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

Caveats and disclaimers if opinion or commentary

I could use some kind of hedging language saying that, like, "this is probably it"

@EtymologyNerd

*My general followers are incredibly supportive... they trust me quite a lot. **I do have a background in journalism.** And they're also aware that I give opinionated versions of the story.*

*And a big misconception people have about me and my page is that I'm a news site or an official news place. And **I always try to tell people I'm NOT the news, I just happen to be interested in news-ey the topics** that I would generally tell my friends, but my friends aren't always particularly interested in that stuff. So I talk to an imaginary friend through a screen on my phone.*

@ZethuGqola

Creators green screen or show ...

A big name masthead

I try to keep the masthead as part of the screenshot so that you can see that the information is coming from a reliable journalistic source and not a random website, I try to find the original publications for any of these discoveries or studies.

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

Who broke the news first?

I use the BBC one as my main source and my backdrop because that was the first one that people sent me and the BBC is a good source.

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

Evidence from traditional /Academic sources

*If somebody wants to pause and go to the paper that I cited, and then read it, then they can get more information. But I also think **it serves the main function of...I'm not just making this up. There's somewhere where this idea came from. So I think the citation does add a lot.***

@EtymologyNerd

*Last year, we launched a web presence, which is an interactive web app, containing **the full archive of all of our historical stories (and references)**, in a timeline that people can navigate through different topics and maps.*

@WorkingClassHistory

Multiple sources not just one

*But I remain quite factual, sticking to the fundamentals of what that story is about. And I think the fact that I tend to green screen my content, with **snippets from different media articles, also shows that I'm not making this stuff up.***

@ZethuGqola

*So yeah, **a quick little citation to show that you at least googled it.** I think that adds a little bit for me. Yeah, that's like one of the most frustrating things when, like you put in a bunch of work making these educational linguistics videos, and then some random guy makes this linguistics video, and is just complete BS on and doesn't say anything, and then doesn't address any comments saying this is wrong.*

@EtymologyNerd

A mix of hi and lo sources.

*And then it got really interesting because I was able to find **additional articles** with some more information and more names and then links to the **original publication** a couple of days later.*

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

Creators green screen or show...

Open / freely accessible sources to read more

Even better if it's an open source publication, and you know, I can just link right to it because Tik Tok doesn't let you embed links.

*I try to show **where you can go to read all of the information**. So it's the same information that I have, I'm not hiding anything, no one's hiding these things from you... you too, can go to this website and read all this stuff.*

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

A photo or gallery to corroborate claims

We don't share anything without visuals, such as photos or videos, because we believe people need visual proof these days. Unlike Wikipedia, which often consists of just text with an occasional picture on the right-hand side. We aim to provide that added reassurance audiences are looking for.

@UbuntuArchives

*I check for photos. **Because the more photos you can show people, the better people want to see photos of things.***

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

Scholarly locations in the background

It was literally just like me sitting on the floor in front of my bookcase, because that indicates an academic background. Talking about random History and Archaeology using books and things I had in my own home.

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

Creators use tone and style cues

Create intimacy my mimicking 1-2-1 Facetime call

If I'm not green screening it, I'm obviously doing it from my phone lying down most of the time, so I'm quite in your face. And considering that's how people consume a lot of media these days, it does feel like a very personal one-on-one interaction. That's the way that I consume other people's content on Tik Tok [and] I don't feel like they're being performative in the way that they're giving this information. It makes me put my guard down, and really filter what they're saying to me a lot less.

@ZethuGqola

Instagram is known for its aesthetic appeal... On the other hand, TikTok offers more freedom and authenticity. It's okay to be raw and unfiltered, like just speaking while holding your phone. That's totally fine on TikTok.

@UbuntuArchives

Because most of Tik Tok is a person and a camera in a person's face in their house or in their car talking to you, people seem to default, believe them. No matter what absolute nonsense, they spout.

@WorkingClassHistory

Always authentic, maybe a little weird

I feel like not enough people are like, weird when they're educating....I like to be a little silly with it and I think it's somewhat unique. People have done similar things but at least the way I've talked about linguistics is somewhat unique.

@EtymologyNerd

I think a lot of the trust with the community I bought comes from the way I talk. Maybe it's really friendly, and approachable. And I think the mixture of vlogs, random rambles about things that have nothing to do with what people follow me for, gives people some kind of comfort that they know me, in a way, so it creates a a level of trust.

@ZethuGqola

Balance Credible & super-casual

I just talk the way I would normally talk to a friend or a random stranger, you know, my dentist, you know, a tattoo artist, anybody that I would normally be talking to and say... I actually know something about this.

@ZethuGqola

I also have this goofy side, which I'm happy to let out But I gotta have credibility to kind of hit a balance between more and more serious videos and goofy videos.

@EtymologyNerd

But most of the time, I just try to talk about things from a casual but knowledgeable kind of point of view and hope that people believe it.

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

Creators know to be additive

New breakthroughs, continuous learning / sharing, edifying

I sprinkle in some information that they might not get elsewhere, try to explain things that I'm able to that don't get explained.

Continued scholarship for Cleopatra for instance, we were thinking XY and Z, about Cleopatra, and you know, what she did during this time period of her life? It turns out based on recent research that it was actually ABC, and so you can sort of bring it back in and help expand on those evergreen topics.

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

And our (brand of) journalism now is not of taking but that of giving back...Take this (new knowledge) and use this as your light so that you can move forward.

@UbuntuArchives

Through dialogue - Responding to comments is vital for trust and engagement

*What to do with those comments? Once you've seen them, you have to respond... You need to reply. It doesn't matter if you couldn't do it immediately. The fact is, if you were able to come back and thank the person, that's valuable. **The fact that the person took the time to type something shows they could have spent their time elsewhere.** So you have to say thank you and then figure out where to take the conversation from there.*

@UbuntuArchives

Things that could erode trust

Overt brand presence & promotion

Brands traditionally fuss about the placement of their branding. For me, it's such a problem because **on TikTok, audiences are trying to run away from brands**. I believe **brands need to rethink how they present their branding on platforms like TikTok**. Audiences there are trying to avoid overly branded content. It's crucial for brands to focus on their **messaging and content packaging to be easily recognizable without relying solely on logos**.
@UbuntuArchives

Content creators start becoming unreliable when they start promoting everything. Especially we live in a world where people are supposed to put the paid partnership tag, but sometimes they don't.
@ZethuGqola

Suspicious liking

Sometimes people will question my integrity, if I really love something. For example, a marketing campaign that I enjoyed, I do a video about it. People will often ask, is this a promotion? ... Over time, I've learned where to draw the line between expressing **my deep dislike for something and my extreme liking of something**, especially when it's an important piece of information.
@ZethuGqola

Gossip & politics

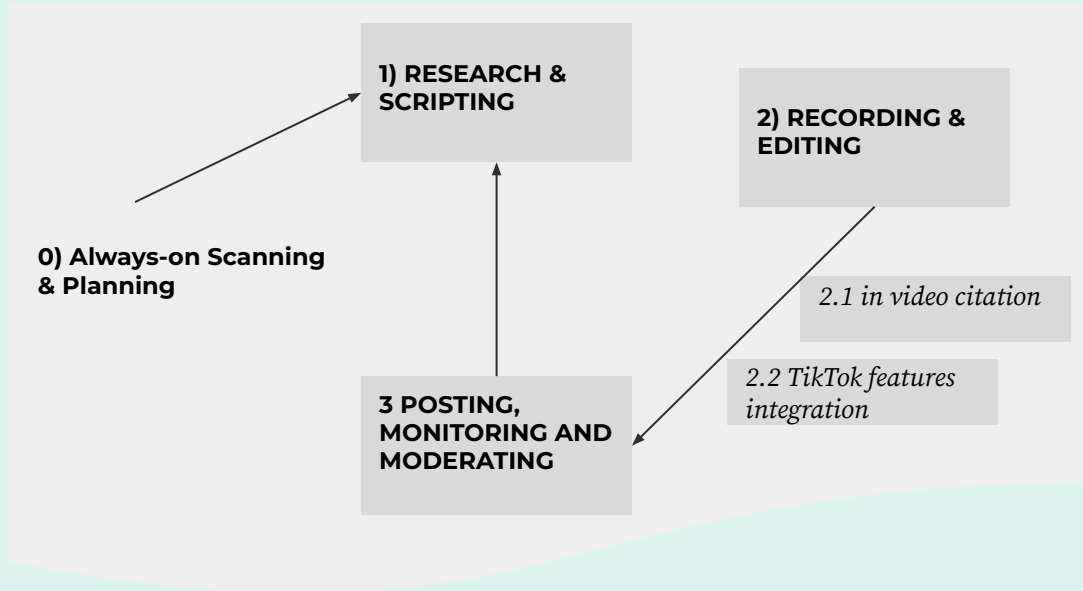
I rarely talk about gossip as well, and speculation and about other people's lives, unless it has to do with like a crime like sexual harassment as an example. So **I think that's also created a lot of trustworthiness is that I just don't really have time for gossip**.

When it has anything to do with politics or politicians. Depending on who I'm talking about. It can become quite a negative place.

If I speak on specific politicians, for example, Jacob Zuma, and I criticise anything about him or report a story about him that's negative in the media, I found that a lot of people who don't generally follow me can be quite hateful in their comments.
@ZethuGqola

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Citations and the Tik Tok Content creation process



Creators rely on a variety of sources and methods for content inspiration and research

The news, academic breakthroughs, TikTok, Wikipedia, and other external apps

I use VOLV, which provides headlines of stories and a glimpse... I never have the mind of creating content, when I go on this app (VOLV), it's more that it understands what I'm interested in so I don't have to hop around like 10 sites...It just knows what I'm interested in reading about and then from there, I can go like Google the story to get other sources.
@ZethuGqola

TikTok has some good videos about, just random events, like almost the stuff you'd go on Wikipedia for. I usually like to go down the TikTok rabbit hole, and then I end up on Wikipedia, to research even more.
@EtymologyNerd

*Say it's a new discovery like the last city in Ecuador. I saw it going around. I was like, Okay, that seems interesting, and not really my you know, not necessarily my genre, but it's like, you know, that's pretty cool. I saw even more people talking about it. And **then people start emailing me the articles** like, oh, did you see this? And it's like, okay, I guess I need to talk about this.*
@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

You do need to see what's actually happening in your space... but also outside of your space; what's happening in the world that we live in, so that you can be like, okay, here's where I can align things.
@UbuntuArchives

Relevance for the FYP is a top priority so topical events, audience suggestions drive their content creation

I have this massive document of just ideas and at any moment, I'm just ready to go with one of them. They're like, half baked kind-of thoughts. I just write that down and then it stays a little bit up in the noggin for a few months, or maybe just a few weeks. And then, while I'm like passively thinking about it, I'm making the other content and then come back to it like, oh, yeah, this idea I wrote down is great.

@EtymologyNerd

I look around to see if there's anything cool worth talking about. See if there's anything that just kind of sparks an idea.
@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

Suggestions are always welcome. That's what I tell everybody. It's just like, you know, suggest away because even if I don't get to something right away...Having stuff that I can come back to on those sort of in between days, or even in between weeks, where there's nothing really exciting happening, both in the world and in my own life. So it's like, what you're talking about today, I can come back to these lists and be like, huh, I'll talk about that.

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

What's nice about Tik Tok is that people don't even have to follow you to come across your content, you know, so that's the best thing so far.

We keep track of events and occasions, like Disability Awareness Month in October/November, for instance. We work off a calendar to ensure that our content is timely and topical. This way, we know that people are already searching for what we're putting out.

@UbuntuArchives

I will read something that sparks my interest, and not always, but if it's an international topic, I'll go look up what other people are saying about it, just so I can have more information around. It's the same way I would go find an article that's interesting online, and then read a few other sources on it, to see how much that information is consistent before I actually make a video.

@ZethuGqola

Creators start on Wikipedia to jog their memory and shortcut to top tier primary sources

I like to do deep dive in Wikipedia to find, the sources.

Outside of that, then I often try to find studies or articles backing it up. But, Wikipedia is usually the first line of defence.

@EtymologyNerd

*Yes, Wikipedia plays a major role. **But there's also that stigma that Wikipedia is not reliable.** So as much as I use Wikipedia, I have to also cross reference.*

@UbuntuArchives

I do use TikTok as a search engine as well.

@ZethuGqola

So legitimately, whenever I'm making my videos, I'll have the various tabs open for wherever I'm getting my information from, and I will have Wikipedia up there because Wikipedia gives me the concise summary of things if it's just something that I need to, like read jog my memory on.

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

Creators use TikTok as a search engine and keep Wikipedia open as they build out concepts, cross-referencing its content with a wide range of other quality sources.

Creators spend a minimum of 3 hours doing online and offline research for a ~1 min video

I put **three hours** of research into a video
@EtymologyNerd

So it's **very hard to find extra time to do this, essentially unpaid labour**, and put this stuff out on the internet so that people can get it for free.
@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

Even though I do have the ability to record 10 minute videos on Tik Tok, those are a nightmare to edit and they take forever to post because it's 10 minutes of video. So I try to keep things between one and three minutes.
@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

It's taxing work, really time-consuming, because sometimes you spend a lot of time on tasks like **watching an entire documentary, only to extract 30 seconds of the two hours you just watched.** You're listening for what resonates with you or with people like you. So yeah, it involves a lot of reading too.

We regularly drive to museums, we go to the (South African) National Archives quite often, it's time consuming! We like antique bookstores, we have a lot of good friends in those sort of places... we'll take pictures if they give us consent to do so, whether it's at museums and exhibitions. Book launches are also good places to find very cool stories and people. people are finding us, we are also finding them.
@UbuntuArchives

Basically different people do work on different things. So I worked on the Tik Tok videos in the past. There were four of us who were doing them. I think moving forwards it will probably just be two of us.

We do spend a lot of time researching stuff and try to be accurate, but obviously, a lot of people just make stuff up.
@WorkingClassHistory

We were doing videos of less than one minute long, but with the relaunched version now Tik Tok has changed its monetisation strategy and algorithm to prioritise content over one minute long, our aim will be to make them over a minute long.
@WorkingClassHistory

They almost always use Cap Cut as it's native and has powerful automated features

*So just using Cap Cut, which is an app/tool made by Tik Tok. **It's a fantastic tool, it makes video editing easy for** for people with no technical ability.*

@WorkingClassHistory

*I will record the video directly in the Tik Tok app... But **on a rare moment that I get to go outside. I will record the video clips separately,** and then import them into Tik Tok and edit things within the app there. So that way the original video clip is preserved should anything happen, because things do happen.*

@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

*It **automates subtitling and things like that.***

I know different creators have different methods, but I think for me, like they (Tik Tok) have everything that I need. Even like when I'm posting to reels I just edit in Tik Tok, downloading and posting.

@EtymologyNerd

Creators view sound, GIFs, built-in filters and reactions as distractions in their videos.

I don't do transitions or filters or that kind of stuff because I feel like that distracts from the video.

*I do use like the on screen effects of just like **sticker that's when I have like the photo show** up of something I use that like almost every video*
@EtymologyNerd

We don't use that much stuff in the Tik Tok app itself. Although obviously, as you notice, we did try making one silly little video as a duet just as silly as a silly joke, which wasn't what we'd done before, but we thought we would give it a go. It didn't go particularly viral but we might try things like that again.
@WorkingClassHistory

Again, I don't really do reactions. I don't like to spread negativity on the app.
@EtymologyNerd

I don't really do a lot of you know, stickers or GIFs or anything in my videos. Mostly because it's such an afterthought. I'm just trying to get this thing done before I lose interest. Because again, it's like the number one thing I want to do is to be able to include links to sources or you know, further reading and stuff like that.
@AnneliseTheArchaeologist

Greenscreen is the most used feature

I tend to green screen my content, with snippets from different media articles to show that I'm not making this stuff up.
@ZethuGqola

*I kind of keep it down to like five effects. **I feel like you don't need to get too fancy to do a good job.** I watch Annie from Depths a lot and she kind of does similar effects like she has, you know, the sticker on screen **or she does green screen background a lot.***
@EtymologyNerd

Editing citations poses a challenge

There are theories that green screen citing can drive engagement.

Creators aim for precise timing, often down to the 10th of a second, to align with their speech.

Creators say that Audiences rarely click to leave the app

*Now there's like little hooks you have to throw in to keep the viewer watching and one is if you have like on screen texts, such as like little Wikipedia chunks, **people might pause the video to read that or go back to read that which is one reason I liked citing that way.** I also I do think Wikipedia is an amazing resource...**I want to make it more normal to throw in a Wikipedia citation every once in a while** like it's a good thing.
@EtymologyNerd*

***Say I want to have a citation appear on screen by my head or something, I want it to appear exactly when I say that word.** So I have to edit it down to the 10th of a second. Like the transitions so it like it appears like you want it to appear just when you start saying what you're talking about.
@EtymologyNerd*

*If I watch a video that has information that is very intriguing, which will maybe be two or three times a week, I'll actually go out of the app, and go and google the story and read about it.
@ZethuGqola*

Creators attribute primary & secondary sources over Wikipedia to bolster their credibility & showcase originality

I stopped green screening Wikipedia when my community reached above 50,000 followers. Many comments questioned Wikipedia's reliability as a source. Instead, I might green screen something from a news site, but the information I provide, a slightly deeper dive, often comes from Wikipedia. While some viewers immediately not like a Wikipedia green screen, they might not realize that the information cited is from Wikipedia. It's not about i'm being dishonest but about obtaining factual information from Wikipedia first and then verifying it with additional sources.

@ZethuGqola

I've gotten a few comments saying, try citing something other than Wikipedia next time?

So I've been doing like the kind of the bigger Wikipedia like chunks, where like, broader topics like linguistic relativism.

@EtymologyNerd

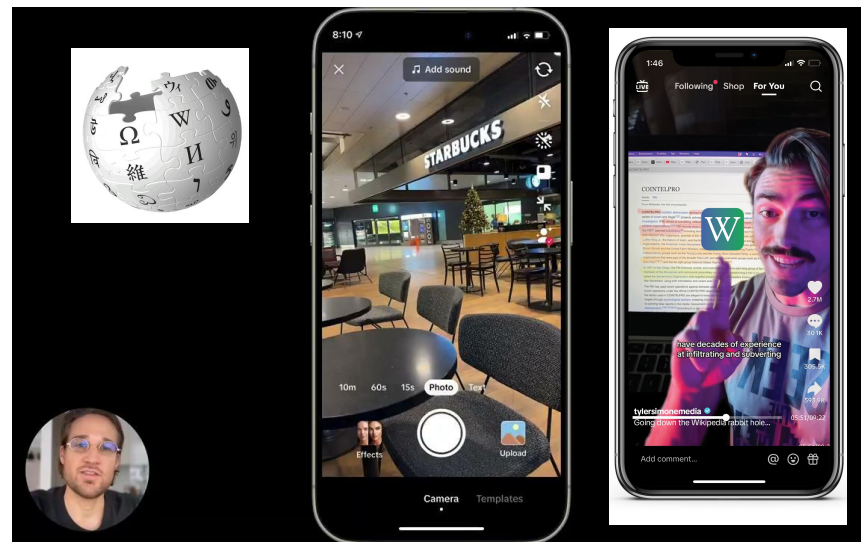
If we just cite Wikipedia as a source, then anyone who kind of questions the narrative can easily just say, Oh, you've you've cited Wikipedia. So therefore, you know, your, your point is irrelevant. Whereas, you know, if you cite an academic paper.

@WorkingClassHistory

Creators kindly shared their feedback on our prototypes and branded attribution assets, although they chose not to use them.

I don't think I'd be using like any gifs in my videos. I feel like Millennials tend to use more gifs than Gen Z... You can almost be too distracting when you throw stuff like that. I like having like a little text on screen. It can be something to latch on to but I don't know how I would how I used a lot of like the gifs particularly.
@EtymologyNerd

- ✘ Unique formats like WMF speed runs and randomized content have trend potential (with paid boosting)
- ✘ Hashtags increase content searchability so narrow ones like #Wikipedia are no use.
- ✘ Sounds (including the Wikimedia sound logo) and GIFs are distracting and not relevant to GenZ users
- ✘ Mentioning wikipedia by tagging us in-app @wikipedia while currently not available is preferred
- ✘ WMF Places prototype has potential especially for location specific live broadcasts
- ✘ In-app Wikipedia outlinks useful but negative perceptions need to be addressed to drive creator usage



4. Recommendations & opportunities

Recommendations & opportunities

These creators use Wikipedia as an encyclopedia, considering it a starting point. Their enthusiasm for integrating Wikipedia into their content is lower than anticipated. This observation must be noted.

We must very clearly define our desired end state: Do we want Wikipedia content to visibly flow through the TikTok ecosystem? If so

1. What will we build?
2. How can we be part of the conversation?

Executive Summary

1.

GEN Z x MIS/DIS INFO

Gen Z is MORE discerning about online information & facts.

Contrary to popular belief, [Gen Z is MORE discerning about online information/facts](#) than older generations – but that extends to skepticism of traditional "authoritative knowledge" sources like Wikipedia. They won't trust information just because it's associated with a brand - they will verify.

2.

CREATOR MOTIVATIONS

Knowledge Creators on TikTok echo our mission in sharing knowledge.

[Creators are motivated to make knowledge and information free](#) - both in terms of money and availability. They aim to make niche or emerging areas of knowledge more accessible and legitimate and stay engaged in the long term because sharing their passion is rewarding.

3.

WP PERCEPTION

They trust Wikipedia for verification but not contentious or controversial topics.

Creators often turn to Wikipedia for historical research, particularly for verifying dates and facts. They do not use Wikipedia for contentious or controversial topics. They hope that Wikipedia can make [technical enhancements](#) and work to change [negative perceptions](#).

4.

TIKTOK PERCEPTION

TikTok opens up new possibilities in knowledge sharing but comes with restrictions.

Creators value Tik Tok's open access for sharing knowledge but face challenges with its unpredictable algorithm, hindering visibility and trust. They find Tik Tok overly censorious, prioritizing feel-good content over critical news.

5.

TRUST SIGNALS ON TIKTOK

Casual credibility and authenticity = trust. Creators employ diverse strategies to build trust.

They prioritize transparency, accessibility, and a relaxed tone, aiming for casual credibility to humanize knowledge and originality. For audiences, authenticity = trust and anything that reads like marketing/spon-con is avoided.

6.

CREATOR PROCESS

Creators use Wikipedia for fact-checking during their research but rarely cite it in their final videos.

Driven by the desire to reach a wide audience and gain visibility, content creators stay up-to-date on news, events, and trends to fuel their creativity. While they use Wikipedia for verification, it is rarely cited in videos. Prioritizing credibility through substantive content, they primarily use the green screen effect among TikTok's built-in features. 41

Opportunities

PRODUCT

BUILD tools for creators to use in their content research workflow. This will give them speedy access to high quality Wikipedia references and fact-checking. Emphasis should be on working as a “TikTokker’s encyclopedia.”

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS & BRAND

SHOW UP authentically on platform by showcasing knowledge creator & volunteer content and enabling with creator native mentions. This will celebrate the most human aspect of our brand to build trust on a 121 basis.

THANK YOU

Future Audiences F23/24 Social Creators Research [Tik Tok]



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