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Decolonizing the Music Industry:
A Case Study of Independent Music Artists
on TikTok

MA Thesis

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Abstract

This study explored how TikTok contributes to the decolonization of the music industry, examining how independent music artists playfully utilize the platform and its affordances. With its wide reach and diverse user base, TikTok provides a platform for emerging music artists who are traditionally marginalized by the Western music structures to engage global audiences. The study employed a framework that operationalizes decolonization into cultural empowerment, decentralized music promotion, and audience participation. A content analysis was conducted on three case studies: @claudiaoverhere, @vaticanjail, and @natashafisher_. Findings from the analysis revealed that artists utilize TikTok to advocate for and showcase their heritage, contributing to cross-cultural appreciation, cultural inclusivity and empowerment. Additionally, decentralized promotion strategies were identified, showing how artists increase visibility through TikTok's emergent affordances, playfully expressing their identities and appropriating sounds and formats. Furthermore, the study highlighted TikTok's role in democratizing the artist-fan relationship by facilitating direct interactions between artists and international audiences, allowing communities to be fostered. While acknowledging the limitations from case study selection and language bias, the study nonetheless offers valuable insights into TikTok's democratizing potential for the music landscape. Future research could explore long-term impacts and conduct comparative analyses with other social media platforms.

Keywords: decolonization of the music industry, TikTok, independent music artists, affordances

Contents

1. Introduction

The music industry, historically molded by colonial influences, is undergoing a process of decolonization as it encounters challenges from new digital environments (Vizcaíno-Verdú, 2024). This process is defined as the uncovering and amplifying of emerging voices, while reclaiming platforms that were previously monopolized (Tan, 2021). Decolonization in the music industry is critical to study how to foster a more inclusive and representative cultural landscape. A significant player in this movement is TikTok, a social media platform that has provided space for musicians to decentralize the music industry. With its global reach and diverse user base, new music artists, who are often excluded from traditional music structures, are able to gain visibility.

New music artists face exclusion due to gatekeepers from the industry who control access to opportunities and investments. Gatekeepers' decisions are frequently based on past successes and connections within their networks, creating a closed system that reinforces itself and makes it difficult for newcomers to break in (Thorkildsen & Rykkja, 2022). "By mutually strengthening each other and one's own network, an identity community is created with a strong front against "intruders", who must prove their competence and location to get access." (Thorkildsen & Rykkja, 2022, p. 50). TikTok serves as an appropriate research object to analyze the decolonization process, due to its ability to amplify marginalized communities and promote musical cultural exchanges, reaching audiences beyond traditional industry channels (Vizcaíno-Verdú & Aguaded, 2022; Vizcaíno-Verdú, 2024). Vizcaíno-Verdú's (2024) study on TikTok's duet feature reveals a cross-cultural process where musicians reinterpret and reshape music. They found that the platform facilitates non-Western content creation and co-creation, empowering the decentralization of the music industry. Raessens (2006) noted the increase of playfulness in various parts of contemporary culture and media. Through the promotion of challenges and playful content formats (e.g. voice filters and duets), TikTok facilitates the recontextualization of music sharing, breaking away from traditional structures (Vizaíno-Verdú, 2024). TikTok's playful digital environment opens up the opportunity for artists to challenge colonial power structures in the new digital age. This paper seeks to answer the research question: 'How does the playful use of TikTok's affordances by independent music artists contribute to the decolonization of the music industry?'

Decolonization on TikTok can be subdivided into three components: 1) **cultural empowerment**, 2) **decentralized music promotion**, and 3) **audience participation** (see 1. Theoretical framework). They each represent a distinct way in which decolonization is enacted or expressed through the content of users on the platform. Through examining hashtags and the

platform's interface these patterns become evident, leading to the identification of three case studies. The case studies, @claudiaoverhere, @vaticanjail and @natashafisher_, exemplify the key elements of decolonization and were studied through a content analysis (see 2. Methodology). Based on the components, three sub-questions are introduced in the theoretical framework. To answer each question, a content analysis was conducted in combination with a coding scheme (table 1).

This research contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding the decolonization of the music industry, especially in light of the growing influence of digital platforms such as TikTok. Building upon works by Vizcaíno-Verdú (2024) and Tan (2021), this study offers fresh insights on TikTok's playful potential to change power dynamics in the industry. While Vizcaíno-Verdú (2024) examined TikTok's duet feature for cross-cultural musical reinterpretation, this study extends the analysis to include other affordances and the power of their playful usage. By exploring how artists use these affordances to control their narratives and connect with audiences, this research provides a deeper understanding of TikTok's democratizing potential. This study also considers TikTok's significance on a global scale, drawing on insights from Tintiangko et al. (2023). They emphasize how Filipino artists perceive TikTok as a platform that levels the playing field due to its worldwide influence, giving artists more autonomy to share their music. Understanding the transformative role of platforms like TikTok is important to foster inclusivity and equitable representation in the music industry, making this research relevant for scholars, industry professionals, policymakers and the public.

2. Theoretical framework: Decolonizing the music industry

Drawing from the fields of media studies and game studies, the study focuses on three key elements of decolonization in the context of TikTok: 2.1 Cultural empowerment, 2.2 Decentralized music promotion, and 2.3 Audience participation. They serve as theoretical and analytical frameworks, guiding the categorization of ways in which TikTok fosters music industry decolonization. Each component is elaborated upon through the exploration of relevant literature, providing insights into how TikTok serves as a catalyst for a more inclusive and diverse musical landscape.

2.1 Cultural empowerment

The first component of the framework, **cultural empowerment**, focuses on content amplifying the voices and experiences of indigenous and marginalized communities. Indigenous music artists leverage their platform to share educational content, music, and cultural practices with a broader audience, contributing to the decolonization of knowledge and representation. This is supported by the insights of Vizcaíno-Verdú (2024) and Tintiangko et al. (2023), who highlight the role of TikTok in expanding diverse cultural narratives and challenging colonial hegemony.

Colonization is defined as the ongoing process of Western societies exercising governance and cultural-economic influence over other societies, with Western societies being considered "flourishing" (Carr, 2015). People who once were colonized often have to hold onto certain privileges, like governance systems and language, that were introduced by the colonizers (Tan, 2021). The international music industry reflects this through the historical and ongoing dominance of Western societies in shaping global music trends, distribution channels and economic structures. Access to resources and opportunities in the music industry were traditionally restricted by a closed system of gatekeepers (Thorkildsen & Rykkja, 2022).

Decolonization is defined as the ongoing process that involves the discovery and molding of emerging voices while reclaiming platforms that were taken away unjustly (Tan, 2021). TikTok is such a platform that allows newer voices to be visible, regardless of their background and not being tied to hierarchical music structures. Autodidact learning and subsequently performing have been shown to challenge these structures (Vizcaíno-Verdú, 2024). By learning and creating music by themselves online, musicians gained a sense of freedom and started to decentralize the music industry. The music democratization practices are now made visible through TikTok, where participatory culture shines (see section 2.3 Audience Participation). The democratization of content is defined as the "production, editing, personalization, and distribution of digital media content by ordinary users, rather than by the

traditional content providers in the established media industries." (D. Chandler & Munday, 2020). Decolonization on TikTok involves amplifying diverse voices, which challenges traditional hierarchies, while online democratization occurs through fostering participation and inclusive features, allowing independent users to create and distribute content, thus reshaping the music industry landscape. Together, these processes intersect to empower marginalized voices and democratize cultural expression. The platform has quickly become an integral part of the decentralization of the music industry.

Vizcaíno-Verdú (2024) conducted a study where she analyzed how the platform helps to decolonize the music industry through the duet feature. Music duets on TikTok are described as a cross-cultural process, where the content creators are changing and reinterpreting music for their own creative expression. This thesis expands beyond duets to explore the broader range of playful affordances provided by TikTok for independent musicians. The definition of 'affordances' is the possible uses of an object, actualized in the relationship with its user (Hopkins, 2016), detailed further in section 2.2. By examining various affordances beyond duets, this thesis offers a more comprehensive understanding of how musicians engage with the platform for decolonization. Specifically the role of independently published artists is emphasized, instead of including all musical users. These artists strive to professionally navigate TikTok's interactive and playful environment to challenge hegemonic structures, providing valuable insights on the understanding of decolonizing music production, distribution and consumption. Through creative reinterpretations of music on TikTok, independent artists engage in cultural empowerment by infusing diverse cultural elements into their content, challenging norms, and fostering cultural appreciation among their audience.

Tintiangko et al. (2023) explored TikTok's impact on Filipino musicians, analyzing its affordances and the resulting tensions. Filipino musicians are an example of cultural empowerment on TikTok, asserting their cultural identity, challenging dominant narratives, and promoting cultural diversity within the platform's global community. The interviewed musicians spoke about making content that aligned with their unique identity to push their music to a large audience. They mentioned seeing TikTok as a level playing field in comparison to the music industry, but struggled with some of the algorithmic theories and pressure to maintain a presence. In this research, the insights from the experiences of these musicians were taken into consideration to accurately identify patterns in how independent music artists utilize playfulness through TikTok's affordances. The answer to whether TikTok allows creators to have better autonomy over sharing their music, or whether it replicates the pressures of the music corporations, remains ambivalent. I consider it necessary to stress the significance of the autonomy that TikTok gives global music artists over their content. This stands in contrast to

the barriers and restrictions imposed by exclusive groups that control the music industry. TikTok provides an international platform that decentralizes the sharing of music and content. It is noted, though, that independent musicians don't have access to the same amount of resources as signed musicians, which can make it harder for them to equally compete for the audience's attention (Tintiangko et al, 2023). Tintiangko et al. (2023) call for more research in other countries on the interactions of musicians with the affordances of TikTok. The affordances were studied to ascertain how this contributes to the decolonization of music.

To study the broader concept of decolonization, it is important to see how artists use platforms like TikTok to express their cultural identity and make the industry more inclusive. Through their diverse TikTok content, non-Western artists challenge mainstream views and make diverse audiences feel welcome. Based on the key component of cultural empowerment, the first sub-question was formulated:

RQ1. How do independent music artists foster inclusivity in the music industry, through content concerning their cultural heritage?

2.2 Decentralized music promotion

The second component of decolonizing the music industry, **decentralized music promotion**, concerns content of Non-Western artists who utilize TikTok's affordances in a playful manner to resonate with international audiences. Vizcaíno-Verdú & Aguaded (2022) and Tan (2021) emphasize the importance of uncovering emerging voices and reclaiming platforms monopolized by Western influences. TikTok challenges colonial hierarchies by providing a space for non-Western artists to share their music and culture with an international audience, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and representative musical landscape.

Playfulness plays a central role to the artists' decentralized music promotion on TikTok. Sicart (2017) defines playfulness as a psychological, physical, and emotional perspective towards an activity, allowing players to infuse their personal expression into the functional world. TikTok serves as a playground for artists to experiment with playful expressions and engage with audiences in innovative ways, thereby reshaping traditional notions of music promotion. In the era of postfunctional design, user interface designs are developed to appeal to the senses and emotions (Sicart, 2017). Game and play studies provide a new and useful interpretative framework in the study of media (Raessens, 2006). Sicart (2017) acknowledges that games are the strongest manifestation of play, but urges others to look at play beyond this form. Playful features on TikTok could be understood as functionalities that users can appropriate to create creative and often lighthearted interactions. "Appropriation implies a shift in the way a particular technology or situation is interpreted. The most usual transformation is

from functional or goal oriented to pleasurable or emotionally engaging." (Sicart, 2017, p. 27). For example, TikTok creators frequently repurpose existing audio clips to simulate new and relatable scenarios, infusing their content with humor. Playful behavior towards technology is able to redefine the context in which the content is situated (Sicart, 2017). The appropriation of TikTok's affordances allow music artists to define who they are, what kind of content they wish to create, and who they want to reach. Instead of finding listeners through a traditional music career, playfulness can help break down the barrier to the audience. This study helps to understand how playfulness contributes to the decentralization of the music industry.

Playful communication and the construction of identities are essential to social media platforms and decentralized music promotion (Raessens, 2006). These core two elements allow for communities to come into existence, which are at the center of social media platforms. Communities create a space in which users can express their identities however they might like. Marginalized communities can find each other on TikTok by expressing their identities, opening up the possibilities for co-creation or finding a like-minded audience. The freedom to construct one's identity is bound to the limited choices within the app, which aligns with how Tekinbas and Zimmerman (2003) define play: freedom within rigid structures. However, most often, this expression is influenced by how users might be positively perceived by other users. This is further expanded upon in section 2.3 Audience Participation. Raessens (2006) finds that new digital communication technologies have created opportunities for new forms of play. According to him, the conceptual framework of play within contemporary media culture needs to be studied. The lens of play was used to study how content creators use TikTok's affordances, which contributes to the decentralization of the music industry.

At the center of TikTok are playful affordances, which provide possibilities for creative and spontaneous approaches to decentralized music promotion which are not tied to traditional marketing constraints. In digital media, affordances are interactions facilitated by socio-technological systems (Hopkins, 2016). It is important to distinguish the difference between 'features' and 'affordances', because features are solely the encoded elements. In this study, the basic and emergent affordances were analyzed. Basic affordances are inherent in the platform's core structure, while emergent affordances arise through user interactions. Basic and emergent affordances open up different lenses for analyzing content, which can help in recognizing and understanding the patterns of how artists employ playfulness on TikTok.

In different fields, such as the arts and social activism niches (Compte & Klug, 2021; Anggraeni & Koesoemadinata, 2023), there seems to be a high expectation of TikTok's efficiency in reaching audiences. Based on this reputation, decentralized approaches are more appealing to artists, empowering them to connect directly with audiences worldwide. A large

portion of music artists seem to focus on creating strategies specifically for TikTok, according to Toscher (2021). Toscher examined how music providers on TikTok create value propositions. Value propositions are defined as invitations for mutual service to attain economic, financial, or social value (Chandler & Lusch, 2014, p. 6). On TikTok, the proposed value is music, which users can use for their own videos. The value proposition extends beyond music consumption for the user; the user who utilizes music in their content also provides entertainment value to others. This dynamic benefits music providers in many ways, such as a possible increase in music streams, more audience exposure, and royalty payments. Different types of industries share the same sentiment on TikTok's efficiency, which can influence the content creator's expectancy. The expectancy-value theory assumes that someone's beliefs about what specific media can give, affect the gratifications they seek (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). The discourse around TikTok helps to paint a decolonized picture of the platform, so the positive expectations can lower the barrier to entry to TikTok for music artists to start posting. Given the playful environment of TikTok and its important role in the (key component of) decentralized music promotion, it's necessary to delve deeper into how independent music artists leverage TikTok's unique features. Decentralized music promotion was studied through the second sub-question:

RQ2. How do independent music artists leverage TikTok's affordances in a playful way to increase visibility for their music?

2.3 Audience participation

The third component of the theoretical framework, **audience participation**, highlights how audience engagement shifts power dynamics away from traditional gatekeepers. By giving artists direct access to their audience, TikTok provides artists great autonomy over narrative and image. This perspective is supported by Vizcaíno-Verdú & Aguaded (2022), who discuss the democratizing potential of digital platforms like TikTok and emphasize the importance of audience empowerment in reshaping cultural landscapes. The platform empowers artists and audiences to co-create content. Roth et al. (2021) found that the concept of participation is central to TikTok. Users are said to "record their actions and circulate content on social media platforms, where they encourage or dare others to repeat the same behavior" (Roth et al., 2021, p. 1-2). They studied the motivation of teenage TikTok users to participate in TikTok challenges. Motivated by affirmation and peer pressure, the participants not only replicated the challenges, but also altered them in their own way. The users would experience gratification from doing so. Online challenges are said to attract users to spend a high amount of time on

TikTok, so the participatory culture is another important aspect of the platform that should be considered in this research.

One of the ways in which relevant content can reach and engage the right audiences is through hashtags. When users are about to publish a video, TikTok suggests popular hashtags to help improve the visibility of their content (Zeng & Kaye, 2022). Content creators often make use of trending hashtags, as they perceive these as essential for increasing their chance to be shown on the For You-page. Although maximizing exposure through popular hashtags is important for non-Western music artists, the selection of relevant hashtags holds more significance in fostering audience participation. Independent artists are reliant on an actively engaged community for the growth of their careers. Thus, employing hashtags that resonate with the audience's interests and preferences can serve as a catalyst for deeper engagement and interaction. A study by Kaye (2023) found that descriptive hashtags and community hashtags such as #JazzTok helped participants to connect with fellow musicians, which led to more engagement with their content. To reclaim visibility as an independent artist in the music industry, communities and their associated hashtags are a powerful tool.

The uses and gratifications theory helps to understand why individuals engage with decentralized platforms like TikTok to discover and share music. Within the socio-psychological tradition, the uses and gratifications theory is central to studying mass communication. This theory assumes that audiences actively engage with media content to fulfill their personal goals (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). The idea of the passive consumer is rejected; instead, Littlejohn and Foss (2011) describe audiences as having considerable agency. When artists are posting their music or music persona online, this theory assumes that the content is purposefully created to achieve the artists' goals. The agency that TikTok gives the music artist allows the artist to attract audiences without having to go through a music industry giant, creating an opportunity for music democratization.

When performing the content analysis, both explicit and implicit participation were analyzed to fully grasp the affordances that the platform offers. Explicit participation is focused on production and co-creation (Villi & Matikainen, 2016). Video-replying to a comment serves as a clear example of explicit participation on TikTok. Implicit participation is made possible through the automation of user activity processes and interfaces (Villi & Matikainen, 2016). From the users' perspective there is no conscious productive effort, such as scrolling through the For You-page. Villi and Matikainen (2016) argue that liking and even sharing content lie closer to implicit participation than explicit participation. They find that when analyzing explicit participatory content, implicit participation should also be taken into account. The third component of decolonization, audience participation, was studied through the following

sub-question:

RQ3. What role does audience engagement play on the artists' accounts, to reshape power dynamics within the music industry?

3. Methodology

3.1 Exploratory study of non-Western content

An exploratory study was conducted to define the three components of decolonization and the relevant music artists. The platform has a search system that makes it difficult to follow a systematic approach. Bandy & Diakopoulos (2020) found that an exploratory study was necessary to map the relevant content, making use of a snowball approach. The analysis was done by noting the most relevant hashtags in relation to the research question, using the search system, finding hashtags beneath videos and by going through the associated sounds. Among others, the keywords 'independent music artist', 'indigenous', 'native' and specific countries were searched for. By exploring hashtags and TikTok's interface, relevant accounts were found. After identifying the pioneering news companies on TikTok, Vázquez-Herrero et al. (2020) went through the suggested feature to find more relevant accounts. The suggested feature was also used for this thesis, to pinpoint the exact case studies that were usable.

The platform permits visitors to see content without having to log in (Moreno et al., 2013). One of the main benefits of social media websites is that worldwide user activity as it naturally occurs can easily be observed online. This aspect of TikTok facilitates the collection of non-Western content from a diverse group, as opposed to Western content that is already represented in traditional media. The term 'content' refers to not only TikTok's videos but also its likes, comments, duets, and many more features (Miltsov, 2022). The focus was not only on video or textual content, since TikTok offers many more possibilities for users to interact. Audience participation in this study solely concerned the content on the music artists' profile, where they actively engage with other users. For example, (video-)replying to a comment, or dueting another user, both seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Screenshot of @vaticanjail dueting @richmusicrich
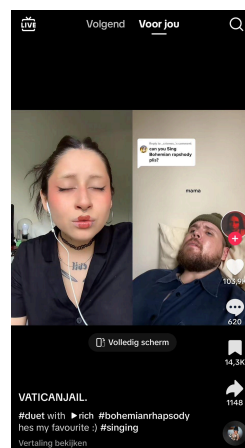
3.2 Case selection and data collection

The following criteria were set up to ensure the relevance of the accounts: the music artists have to be a) independently published, b) non-Western, c) English-speakers and d) actively engaging with TikTok's affordances.

First, to ensure that the content is challenging traditional music structures, the artists' independence is key. They had to have published their music independently from a label, to be able to distinguish them from industry artists and users who solely make musical content. To contrast, industry artists are published and under a label and promoted through that organization. Second, a requirement for the chosen artist was that the artist is natively non-Western, residing in their home country. This criteria is essential for analyzing decolonization efforts, focusing exclusively on artists from previously colonized communities. Consequently, this encompasses indigenous artists living in their home country, which, post-colonization may be considered Western. For instance, a Native American artist residing in the United States would meet the study's criteria. One of the limitations of this is that certain artists might promote their music in their native language, which makes it more complicated to discover and analyze them. Third, to be able to conduct an accurate analysis, the study was limited to artists who reach international audiences by promoting their content in English.

Finally, Another important factor to consider was that certain music accounts post extremely rarely, whilst others only repost professional content without engaging with the platform otherwise. The artists had to be actively involved with TikTok and its affordances for this study to be successful. Active involvement is defined as artists that publish at least one video a week, where they utilize any of TikTok's affordances. This was verified until the start of the year, 01/01/2024. Due to the nature of the platform of co-creation and musical fusion, the genres remained open. From commercial pop music to indigenous music, the way the artists approach their strategies could and should range to provide ample data for the study.

Based on the theoretical framework presented in Section 2 and the case-selecting criteria, three independent music artists emerged as case studies. These case studies provide distinct examples of the three elements of decolonization and by using this design the abundance of content on TikTok was limited. Claudia Tan (@claudiaoverhere) is an independent Malaysian pop artist, promoting music globally by actively making use of TikTok's affordances. Her content ties closely into the key elements of decentralized music promotion and audience participation. Natasha Fisher (@natashafisher_) is a mixed indigenous Ojibwe-Finnish artist from Canada, who uses her platform to spread content related to her indigenous identity and music. This content is relevant to all three components, with the strongest ties to cultural empowerment. Vaticanjail (@vaticanjail) is the third case study, a

songwriter and producer from Chile. She posts content concerning her identity as an emerging Chilean producer, as well as singing performance videos. Her content relates to all three elements of the theoretical framework. The three accounts post consistently, engaging with the platform to promote their music projects.

Certain ethical concerns arise when collecting data from these platforms, due to minimal regulations on privacy risks. The debate on ethics, particularly informed consent, is significant (Moreno et al., 2013; Al-Zaman et al., 2023). While privacy settings allow users to control data visibility, the notion of informed consent remains debated, especially with large public datasets. In this study, all three artists are posting their content publicly, frequently showing their face and making content around their artist identity. Due to the promotional nature of the content, the artists can be considered public figures, which is why the videos can be analyzed without logging into an account. Several screenshots have been added as figures for visual support, taking into consideration that the case studies are available to the public as of 13-04-2024.

For the analysis, recent TikTok videos from the selected case studies were collected in chronological order, starting on the 16th of March and going backwards. Due to TikTok's fast-paced and dynamic nature, the chronological order helped to identify recent developments for the platform, the artists and the industry. Miltsov (2022, p. 7) noted the following about the zoomed-in approach that case studies provide: "... this method allows for a detailed analysis of the ways TikTok is rapidly changing artistic, communicative, social, political, and business practices". A sequential analysis of 10 posts was performed to study recent content and engagement strategies, aiming to understand how these artists utilize TikTok for music promotion. On top of this, the pinned videos were collected, since they were chosen deliberately by the artists to be at the top of their profile page. The pinned videos are a conscious part of the artists' strategies of self representation, so they were also analyzed.

3.3 Content analysis

Miltsov (2022) notes that the content analysis allows researchers to study TikTok's different features and their cultural ramifications. This is possible through various forms of engagement such as utilizing the Duet feature, replying to comments, and reposting fans' original content. Through the content analysis, Vázquez-Herrero et al. (2020) were able to analyze the used features and posted content by mass media channels (Miltsov, 2022). By making use of all of TikTok's features, the news organizations fully adapted their message style and structure to the logic of the platform. This study aimed to identify TikTok's affordances, how musicians employ playfulness for their content and how these aspects contribute to the decolonization of

the music industry. To understand the strategy of the music artists' profiles, the following elements were considered: the content, embedded text, caption (which includes the use of mentions and hashtags), engagement, audio, theme and affordances (see Appendices A, B, and C). Coding was employed to identify recurring patterns in the documentation, and their relevance to each sub-question. These codes were subsequently grouped into broader themes and aligned with specific sub-questions, as shown in Table 1. In the analysis, each code was revisited, dissected across various elements (content, embedded text, caption, etc.) and considered within the context of the theoretical framework. By addressing each sub-question, this research contributes to discussions on cultural equity, representation, and digital empowerment within the music landscape.

To explore the inclusivity efforts made by artists (RQ1), the content analysis dissected two relevant themes: promoting cultural identity and cultural advocacy. The first theme, promoting cultural identity, also consisted of the code of non-musical identities. The second theme of cultural advocacy consisted of the codes lyrical accessibility and educational content.

For examining the playful affordances utilized by music artists to produce content and promote their account (RQ2), two themes emerged. The first theme, building artist image, comprised codes such as process transparency, famous artists alignment, singing performance and providing song context. The second theme, playful expression, is the combination of trend appropriation, playful formats and playful tone. These two themes collectively addressed the second research question.

To investigate audience participation (RQ3), three themes were analyzed: strategic audience reach (including the codes directly addressing the audience, descriptive hashtags, and engagement prompts), community engagement and representation (including the codes relate to community and interact with audience), and fostering community (including garnering sympathy, video-reply, timely content, and relate to audience). Each theme and its corresponding codes underwent thorough content analysis of the videos, to be able to answer each sub-question comprehensively.

Table 1

Themes and codes identified through the content analysis

RQ	Topic	Themes	Codes
1	**4.1 Cultural inclusivity**	4.1.1 Promoting cultural identity	Promoting cultural identity
			Non-musical identities
		4.1.2 Cultural advocacy	Lyrical accessibility
			Educational content
2	**4.2 Increasing visibility**	4.2.1 Building artist image	Process transparency
			Famous artists alignment
			Singing performance
			Providing song context
		4.2.2 Playful expression	Trend appropriation
			Playful formats
			Playful tone
3	**4.3 Audience engagement**	4.3.1 Strategic audience reach	Directly addressing new audience
			Descriptive hashtags
			Engagement prompts
		4.3.2 Community engagement and representation	Relate to community
			Interact with audience
		4.3.3 Fostering community	Garner sympathy
			Video-reply
			Timely content
			Relate to audience

4. Analysis

In order to address each research question and the corresponding content analysis effectively, the analysis is subdivided into thematic categories. Observations from the case studies are examined within each theme, which culminates in answering the main research question: *'How does the playful use of TikTok's affordances by independent music artists contribute to the decolonization of the music industry?'.*

4.1 RQ1_Cultural inclusivity

The content analysis unveiled two themes to answer the first sub-question *'How do independent music artists foster inclusivity in the music industry, through content concerning their cultural heritage?'* The themes are 4.1.1 Promoting cultural identity and 4.1.2 Cultural advocacy. Through a lens focused on cultural heritage and identity, this analysis delves into the innovative strategies employed by artists to challenge traditional representations and promote cross-cultural understanding.

4.1.1 Promoting cultural identity

Artists bring attention to their cultural identity in various ways. One notable example is that of @natashafisher_, who presents her heritage through singing covers of Native songs, as shown in Figure 1. This deliberate choice of content has two sides to it. On one hand, the covers showcase her musical talent and her bound cultural identity as an artist. The performances affirm Natasha's connection to her heritage, which also might foster a sense of pride within the indigenous community. On the other hand, Natasha chooses to celebrate and honor indigenous artists and their contributions to the music industry. Through these covers, she amplifies indigenous voices and brings awareness to their music, which contributes to inclusivity and representation in the music scene. Through these performances, she imparts indigenous music to new audiences, which contributes to its greater appreciation and preservation. This ties into the concept of decolonization as proclaimed by Tan (2021), the process that involves the discovery of emerging voices and the reclaiming of platforms monopolized by Western influences. Natasha proclaimed her goal in a separate post: "I wanted to highlight songs by Indigenous artists on my page" (see Appendix D, 10). This further solidifies the intentionality behind her content creation on TikTok. By vocalizing her goal in this way, Natasha makes the audience conscious of supporting the uplifting of indigenous voices in the music industry. Emphasizing the importance of representation is key to this type of content.

Figure 1

Screenshots of @natashafisher_ covering Native songs
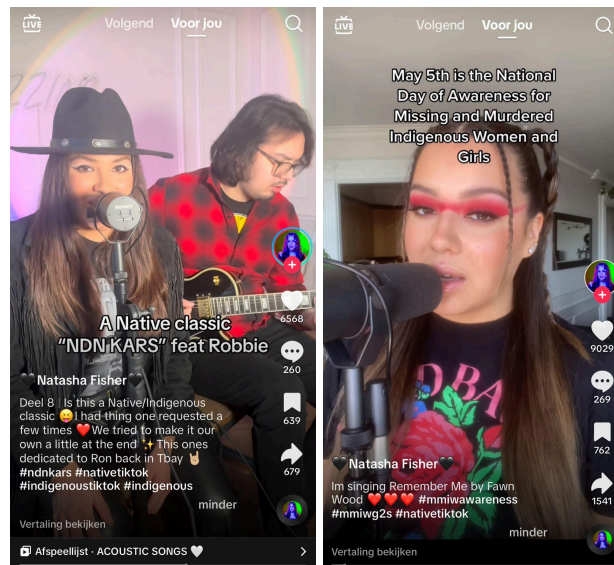
From the three case studies, @natashafisher_ is the only artist that actively uses her platform to spread awareness on social issues. Through both the exploratory study and examination of the case studies, it became evident that many music artists do not solely post about their own music on TikTok. Instead, they embrace a broader spectrum of topics, posting current trends, personal interests, or talking about recent news events. Although the pages of independent music artists are primarily promoting their music, they are simultaneously engaged with TikTok on a personal level. Specifically, Natasha's content stands out for its frequent focus on Indigenous experiences and advocating for social justice, without mentions of her music project (see Appendix C, 2). She integrates her identity as an Indigenous person into her content seamlessly, demonstrating a multifaceted approach to engaging with her audience. This underscores the platform's capacity to showcase different facets of an individual. The intertwining of different parts of artists' identities is an interesting byproduct of the platform. Her content strategy shows the potential of TikTok as a tool for spreading awareness and social discourse, going beyond self-promotion.

@Claudiaoverhere employs a different approach to promote her Malaysian identity. Rather than through musical choices, she highlights her heritage through text: "I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS SONG IS BY A MALAYSIAN. Yes! Hi I'm claudiaoverhere :) I make indie & pop music! … Help me blow my album up so it can go global!" (see Appendix A, 4). This sentence draws attention to the rarity of non-Western artists in the music industry. Claudia ties this sentiment to the promotion of her music, celebrating her heritage, as well as challenging the representation of non-Western artists in mainstream media. Claudia's mention of her

nationality serves as a bridge to foster a sense of connection with other Malaysians. By proudly identifying herself as Malaysian, she invites others to join her in celebrating their shared cultural identity. The text frames Claudia's nationality as unique in the global music industry. The tone of disbelief sheds light on the systemic barriers faced by non-Western musicians in gaining visibility, encouraging individual users to explicit participation, in helping her music reach a global scale. Through this type of playful commentary, greater inclusivity is advocated for in the global music scene. By leveraging TikTok's platform to promote her cultural identity, Claudia contributes to the ongoing dialogue surrounding diversity in the music industry.

4.1.2 Cultural advocacy

When users interact with the platform's inherent features to create content, new affordances arise (Hopkins, 2016). The platform allows users to embed text in videos, for a specified length of time. The artists utilize this basic affordance to embed lyrics in tandem with the corresponding segments of the song. This creates a seamless and engaging viewing experience. This lyrical emergent affordance is at the forefront of decentralized music promotion on TikTok, allowing users to try creative approaches and formats. To enrich and diversify the music industry, cross-cultural appreciation must first be fostered among audiences. @Vaticanjail has leveraged the lyrical affordance to provide synchronized English translations (see Figure 2), which offers invaluable context for audiences who may not speak the same language as the artist. This ensures accessibility for a broader audience, inviting individuals from different cultural backgrounds to connect more deeply with her music. By providing song context through translations, cross-cultural appreciation can take place and contribute to the diversification of the music industry.

Figure 2

Screenshot of @vaticanjail with translated lyrics
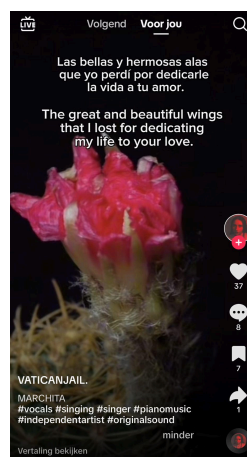
@Natashafisher_ has two videos pinned to the top of her page which provide education about indigenous people. One of which was previously shown in Figure 1, where Natasha sings a cover of Remember Me by Fawn Wood. This video serves as a powerful education tool for audiences, as Natasha provides information through embedded text at the top of her video about the significance of the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. She educates her audience about this important issue, raising awareness about the ongoing crisis faced by indigenous communities. Through her advocacy efforts, Natasha engages her audience in addressing systemic injustices. She encourages audiences to move from implicit to explicit participation, by wearing red for support. Through the use of hashtags such as #mmiawareness, Natasha also encourages collective action and solidarity. This call to action transcends music promotion, mobilizing viewers to actively support Indigenous causes. The video becomes a space for dialogue, empathy and inclusivity. Furthermore, Natasha wears Indigenous makeup in the video. This showcasing of heritage helps to affirm Natasha's connection to her roots, but also invites viewers to appreciate Indigenous traditions. Consciously, Natasha is utilizing her platform for Indigenous voices to be heard and recognized. Through her platform, Natasha challenges the Western-centered hierarchical structures, showcasing the interconnectedness of her music, cultural identity, and values.

In conclusion, the playful use of TikTok's affordances allows artists to amplify their cultural identities and promote meaningful engagement with their audiences. Artists showcase their heritage through singing covers of native songs, or proudly displaying their nationality through text. By reaffirming their cultural identities, they challenge the representation of non-Western artists in the mainstream music landscape. Furthermore, providing the song translations through timed embedded text enhances accessibility and promotes cross-cultural appreciation. To enrich the music industry, it is imperative for audiences to connect more deeply with the artists' non-Western music. Engaging the audience is also at the center of educational content, to be able to spread awareness about systemic injustices. These efforts underscore the significance of emergent affordances on TikTok, which allow artists to intertwine various aspects of their identity. The creative approaches of non-Western artists to TikTok's basic affordances contribute to the promotion of inclusivity in the music industry, fostering a more diverse music sector and engaging audiences in meaningful ways.

4.2 RQ2_Increasing visibility

In exploring the second sub-question '*How do independent music artists leverage TikTok's affordances in a playful way to increase visibility for their music?*' two prominent themes emerged. The content analysis uncovered the themes 4.2.1 Building artist image and 4.2.2 Playful expression. To amplify their visibility, the artists need to distinguish themselves from the masses, which is done through the strategic use of TikTok's affordances. By building their artist image online and creating playful content, artists hope to introduce new audiences to their music journey.

4.2.1 Building artist image

@Claudiaoverhere has a playful approach to crafting her identity as a Malaysian independent music artist, effectively leveraging TikTok's affordances as a decentralized promotional tool to engage potential new audiences. Tintiangko et al. (2023) found that musicians used TikTok to promote their music, through making content that aligned with their identity. In one video she shows the behind-the-scenes process of making her album cover art (see Figure 3). The embedded text "Come make my album cover with me" engages her followers in a collaborative tone. This playful interaction strengthens her connection with her audience as well as allows her to shape her identity as a DIY artist within the TikTok community. The authentic and transparent portrayal of music-making humanizes the artist, increasing Claudia's visibility and appeal with audiences. The caption reads "U gotta do what u gotta do as an independent musician 🙂 should i do a part 2?? #loveagainclaudia #songwriter #diyproject #albumcover #popmusic". Claudia acknowledges the challenges faced by independent artists, highlighting the need to take initiative and find creative solutions. This sentiment aligns with Tintiangko et al (2023), who found that the resource constraints of independent artists make it harder for them to compete for the audience's attention, compared to signed musicians. However, Claudia reframes these challenges as opportunities, documenting her journey and sharing insights on her creative process. Basic affordances such as the voice-over, embedded text, captions and short edited clips, are used to give the audience insights in the creative process, embracing TikTok's as a tool for self-expression. Claudia connects directly with audiences and fellow independent musicians through these affordances, challenging the gatekeeping mechanisms prevalent in the music industry. The narrative of music production is reshaped, humanizing the music-making process and empowering the identities of independent artists.

Figure 3

*Screenshots of @claudiaoverhere promoting her artist project*
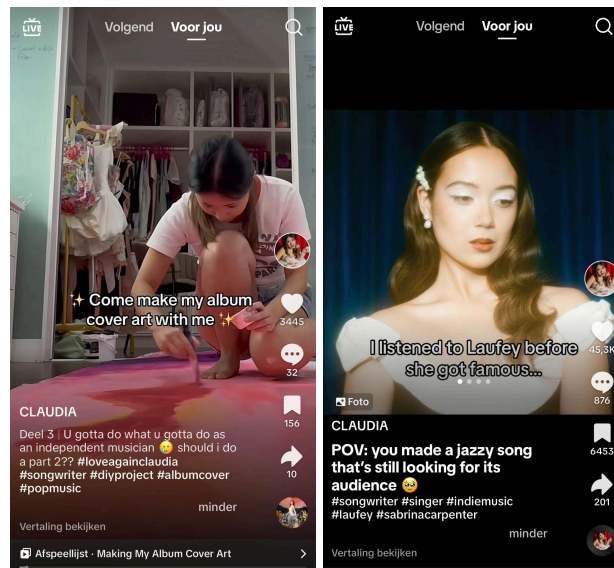
Besides her authentic portrayal, Claudia strategically utilizes hashtags and embedded text to align herself with popular Western artists. This is a common tactic among independent artists to increase visibility and credibility on TikTok. Through a series of photo slides, Claudia juxtaposes herself with well-known artists, such as Laufey and Sabrina: "I listened to Laufey before she got famous… I was there when Sabrina was a small artist… Now's your chance to say you knew me before I got famous :)" (see Figure 3). This tactic relies on social proof, exclusivity and anticipation, utilizing the established artists to strengthen Claudia's own image. The findings from interviews conducted by Tintiangko et al. (2023) correspond with this, where artists expressed feelings of pressure to create and maintain a strong presence on TikTok. The comparative content with established artists reveals the competitive nature of the platform and the importance of strategic positioning for independent artists.

Vizcaíno-Verdú (2024) argued that music duets allow content creators to reimagine music for their creative expression, creating a more diverse musical landscape. This affordance extends to when artists sing solo covers, such as @natashafisher_'s "Cute girl version of "Come And Get Your Love" by Redbone" (see Appendix C, 11). The playful embedded text iterates her unique version of the Redbone song, appealing to audiences that might know the original. Moreover, @vaticanjail takes the singing performance-content a step further, showing the recording process and consecutive results of one of her songs (see Appendix B, 6). This comparative format takes the audience behind-the-scenes, further engaging them in the artist's creative journey. To increase visibility for their music, both artists create unique frames to show their vocal skills and promote their artist project.

As discussed earlier, providing song context can help the audience to connect with music on a deeper level. Many music artists use the playful format of promoting their songs seated in a car. @Claudiaoverhere uses this common format, to provide song context with the embedded text: "I had a guy took advantage of my innocence so I wrote a song about it", as shown in Figure 4. Then she elaborates upon this situation through her song and timed lyrics. By Chandler & Lusch's (2014) definition, Claudia partakes in a value proposition. Taking it a step further than the entertaining value, she offers the viewer insights into how the song came to be. The embedded text offers a glimpse into the meaning that might resonate with viewers, so they can engage with it in a more meaningful way. The strategic use of storytelling fosters a sense of intimacy and can lead to a greater appreciation of the music.

Figure 4

Screenshot of @claudiaoverhere lip-syncing to her song in the car
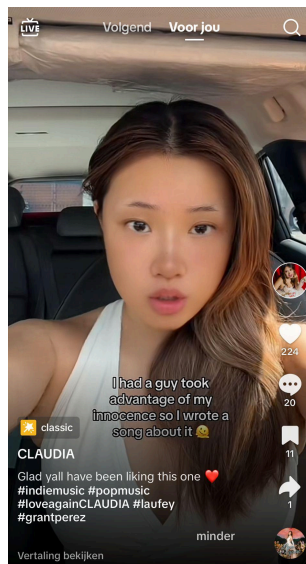
Within the theme of 'building artist image' diverse strategies are employed to address the second sub-question: '*How do independent music artists leverage TikTok's affordances in a playful way to increase visibility for their music?*' Through showing the behind-the-scenes process, artists show their identities as DIY musicians, engaging audiences and humanizing their artist journey. Singing performances serve a similar purpose, allowing artists to exhibit their vocal skills and creating an intimate atmosphere for the audience. Letting the audience into the creative process is a recurring strategy, such as by providing insights into the meaning behind the songs, to tap into the relatability of the audience. The artists are in full control over their image, attempting to increase visibility in a highly competitive music industry. By aligning with famous artists through hashtags and embedded texts, artists can strategically

position themselves to increase visibility and credibility. These findings demonstrate how independent music artists utilize the playful affordances to engage new audiences, diverging from traditional marketing techniques employed by the music industry.

4.2.2 Playful expression

In the context of independent music artists seeking to enhance visibility for their work, the appropriation of audio clips, as an emergent affordance, offers unique opportunities for engagement. When sounds are trending oftentimes users adapt it to make their own versions, changing the interpretation or frame of the initial sound (Roth et al., 2021). The unique variations help to inspire and feed the cycle of content creation, encouraging others to contribute and engage creatively. In Figure 5, Natasha is shown using the sound 'it's not your fault' as a framing device to touch on the topic of generational trauma. Sicart's (2017) research suggests that the appropriation of technology helps to shift its interpretation from functional to emotionally engaging. Natasha makes use of this to draw attention to Indigenous experiences, altering the psychological and emotional perspective towards the original trending sound. By utilizing TikTok's playful affordances, independent music artists can effectively harness TikTok's dynamic For You-page to increase their visibility. Through strategic engagement with trending sounds, artists like Natasha can reach new audiences and cultivate deeper connections with her identity. Even if the content is not actively promoting her music, the connection with her audience ultimately contributes to the success of her music.

Figure 5

Screenshot of @natashafisher_ lip-syncing to simulate a difficult conversation
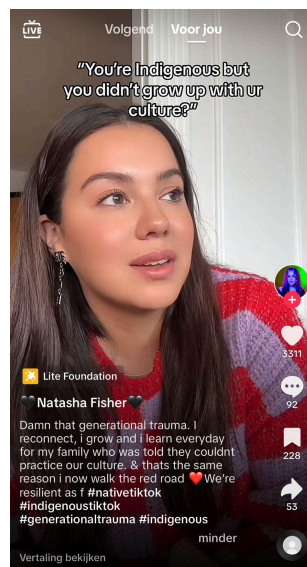
The three case studies each applied different formats to their videos to attract audience interest. Natasha's video made use of a playful conversational format. For instance in Figure 6, @vaticanjail created a gif of a sad looking dog in a music studio, to combine with a trending sound.

Figure 6

Screenshots of a meme format created by @vaticanjail
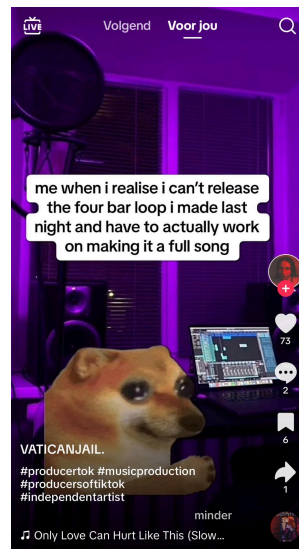
This meme format aims to resonate with fellow musicians by comically depicting relatable struggles: "me when i realise i can't release the four bar loop i made last night and have to actually work on making it a full song". Sicart (2017) found that quirky designs can stimulate users to tap into their feelings and creativity. The POV format mirrors this playful approach to relaying information: "POV: you wrote a cute pop song that was supposed to go to FIFTY FIFTY... & it's based off how you feel about ur bf of 7 years. Oh My God! By CLAUDIA (Out now on all music platforms)" (see Appendix A, 10). Instead of directly announcing the release of a new song, Claudia makes use of the POV format to redefine the context in which the information is situated. The user is drawn into the photo slides, initially taken into Claudia's perspective as a songwriter, then as a partner, and finally as an artist. By appropriating the common TikTok formats, the artists can appeal to new audiences quicker, as they already have this frame of reference from similar content. The unique adaptation is then what creates the connection for the user to remain engaged.

The playful tone comes through in all of the codes within this theme, but the voice-over feature stands out in particular. In a vlog filmed by Natasha, she takes viewers along to a music show at the Indigenous Fashion Arts (Appendix C, 12). The voice-over narration allows the artists' personality to come forward. In combination with the self-taped clips from the event,

Natasha is able to showcase a lively personality: "if you're not supporting your musician friends by going to their deadly shows at deadly locations, then what are you even doing?" By utilizing the basic affordances, Natasha is able to approach her vlog in a playful manner, showcasing the platform's role in providing a space for authentic expression. As noted by Tintiangko et al (2023), the platform decentralizes the sharing of music and content, empowering artists to control their own narrative. For the artist, there are no restrictions imposed by the music industry. The basic affordances of the app give the artist the freedom to promote her artist identity however she decides to, which falls under the concept of play (Tekinbas and Zimmerman, 2003). The three music artists utilize playfulness to engage users, which can lead the content to be increasingly recommended to unknown users. To broaden their current target audience, music artists are consistently appropriating a variety of frames and basic affordances.

Appropriation is a pivotal concept in the theme of playful expression, effectively addressing the second sub-question: '*How do independent music artists leverage TikTok's affordances in a playful way to increase visibility for their music?*' The appropriation of sounds and playful formats helps to establish a direct connection with new audiences, whereafter the relatability is hoped to lead to engagement. The infusion of a playful tone serves to amplify the artists' personalities and narratives. TikTok gives independent music artists the autonomy to utilize the emergent affordances how they see fit, to expand their target audience. Given that a higher usage benefits TikTok, effectively engaging new users through the emergent affordances is key. Thus, it also becomes important to the artists' strategy. Artists have shown to adapt themselves to the fast paced-nature of TikTok, contributing to the ongoing evolution of the music industry landscape and its expectations.

4.3 RQ3. Audience engagement

Two key themes emerged from the content analysis, regarding the third sub-question '*What role does audience engagement play on the artists' accounts, to reshape power dynamics within the music industry?*' The two themes are named 4.3.1 Strategic audience reach and 4.3.2 Fostering community. Independent music artists utilize different strategies to connect with their audience, cultivate genuine connections and create a shared participatory experience.

4.3.1 Strategic audience reach

In examining the role of audience participation in reshaping power dynamics within the music

industry (RQ3), it becomes evident that direct engagement with viewers plays an important role in the artists' strategies. One way in which the artists try to gain a new audience across borders is by addressing them directly. @Natashafisher_for example invites users to 'come with me on this journey' (Appendix C, 5) after a short introduction, creating a sense of inclusivity. This simple request engages audiences to be there from the outset of the artists' career.

@Vaticanjail takes this one step further, garnering sympathy from the users through embedded text: 'you're a Chilean independent artist posting her music everyday because you're hopeful someday you'll reach your audience and you'll be able to make them smile with your music and it'll all the worth it in the end' (Appendix, B, 10). By sharing her personal experience, she invites audiences to empathize with her journey and help to contribute towards her success. @Vaticanjail simultaneously partakes in a value proposition to the audience, as described by Chandler & Lusch (2014). There is a chance that the audience will smile because of @vaticanjail's music, enticing the audience further to have a listen. Both of the videos exemplify TikTok's perceived efficiency in audience outreach. In light of these high expectations, musicians have increasingly developed strategies specifically tailored for TikTok (Toscher, 2021). This aligns with the broader observed trends across various fields (Compte & Klug, 2021; Anggraeni & Koesoemadinata, 2023). Through this strategy, @natashafisher_ and @vaticanjail try to benefit from TikTok's potential to increase their reach beyond geographical boundaries. The direct engagement with audiences not only serves to garner support, but it also challenges gatekeeping mechanisms in the music industry. Thorkildsen and Rykkja (2022) found that the opportunities to reach audiences were traditionally closed off by an exclusive community in the music industry. Instead of going through traditional intermediaries, the music industry shifts towards decentralized approaches: where independent artists are able to directly address their viewers and contribute to cultivating a more democratic musical landscape. The direct engagement helps to reshape the way music is appreciated, particularly focusing on the difficult journey behind the artist.

The strategic use of hashtags by the artists serves a multifaceted purpose within the framework of audience participation. While the hashtags are commonly utilized to describe music styles or the artists' identities, such as '#dreampop #independentartist #femaleartist' (Appendix B, 11), their function goes beyond the form of categorization. Besides tapping into the existing audience affinities, independent artists leverage hashtags to trigger the algorithmic mechanisms of TikTok, to broaden their own reach and visibility. Specifically, hashtags might incorporate the names of renowned Western artists. As described in the section '4.2.1 Building artist image', the alignment with Western artists is a tactic used for social proof, credibility and visibility. However, delving deeper into the role of hashtags through the lens of audience

participation reveals a more nuanced dynamic. Beyond serving as tools for image-building, these hashtags engage audiences who have previously interacted with their familiar Western artists. As described by Zeng and Kaye (2022), increasing visibility is crucial for content creators, and they perceive hashtags as essential for this goal. The recommendation algorithm, fueled by user interactions, increases the likelihood of their content being shown to new users who share interests with fans of these established figures. By providing users with a familiar Western artist as a reference, users can understand why this novel content is suggested to them. These hashtags are a tool of visibility that bridge the gap between established industry artists and non-Western independent artists. Instead of the music industry functioning as a gatekeeper, the hashtags of industry artists become a strategic device for the decentralization of music discovery.

The strategic use of audience engagement tactics, such as direct addressing of the audience and use of familiar hashtags, allow artists to increase their reach beyond geographical boundaries. Through the direct engagement with the audiences, they not only garner support but they also cultivate a more democratic musical sphere. TikTok provides independent artists the opportunity to directly address their viewers, shifting the music industry towards decentralized approaches in audience engagement.

4.3.2 Fostering community

One way in which artists foster genuine connections is by creating content related to a community that they are also a part of. While mainstream Western hashtags might engage new fans, community-specific hashtags are an opportunity for artists to foster connections on a more personal level. As described by Kaye (2022), being a part of a community contributes to the music artists' overall involvement and visibility within their respective spheres. The frequent use of community-related hashtags by artists like @vaticanjail and @natashafisher_ on TikTok demonstrate that they are actively engaging with and contributing to these communities. For instance, @vaticanjail often refers to her identity as a producer and autodidact learner, utilizing niche hashtags from the music production community (Appendix B, 13). By leveraging TikTok's affordances in this manner, she establishes meaningful connections with fellow producers and enthusiasts. This deliberate engagement allows @vaticanjail to amplify her voice within the community, where others may feel more involved and inclined to engage through the comment section. To outsiders, @vaticanjail not only builds upon her personal and artist identity but also contributes to raising awareness of this online community and its potential for independent learning. This approach challenges traditional music industry structures by

democratizing access to music-making resources and knowledge (Vizcaíno-Verdú, 2024). Although basic affordances such as the hashtags and location tags are inherent in the structure of TikTok (Hopkins, 2016), the strategic use of these is critical to the decentralized promotion of music. Raessens (2006) finds that identity expression on social media platforms open up the possibilities for marginalized communities to find each other. Among other hashtags, @natashafisher_ follows this approach through #nativetiktok and #indigenoustiktok (Appendix C, 9). The close connection to her community contributes to the diversification of representation in the musical landscape.

Audience participation on the artists' accounts is often utilized to foster a deeper connection between the music artist and the audience. @Natashafisher_'s prompt for engagement in Figure 7 exemplifies this dynamic: 'Someone plz make a video in their NDN car to this'. By inviting her audience to participate in content related to her music, Natasha empowers her followers to become active contributors to her artistic journey. She engages with other users' comments such as 'omg I was thinking of making a video to ndn Kar but never got around to it. DOING IT TOMORROW!'', demonstrating the impact of audience participation in fostering a sense of community. The collaborative atmosphere and appreciative comments encourage continued involvement. Vizcaíno-Verdu & Aguaded (2022) also found that audience empowerment through the co-creation of content has the possibility of reshaping cultural landscapes. TikTok provides direct access between artists and audiences, giving artists the autonomy over their own project and contributing to the democratization of the musical landscape. The democratization of music in this case is when ordinary users, rather than established content providers, produce content online (D. Chandler & Munday, 2020).

Figure 7

*Screenshot of an engagement prompt by @natashafisher_*
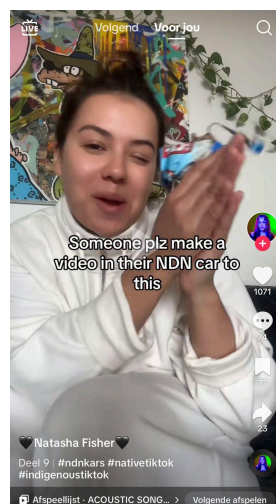
@Vaticanjail shows a proactive approach to fostering interactions with her audience, inviting them to become active participants and use her sound. She embedded the following text in a photo slide post: 'All the goodness in the world is coming your way, all the love you deserve is going to find you. Use this sound, leave in private if you wish. You will see a change by friday' (Appendix B, 1). She consciously offers value to the user, which aligns with the theory that audiences are actively iterating with media to fulfill their personal goals (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). The post becomes a space for the audience to participate in a shared experience. In the context of RQ3, the independently published artists contribute to a more inclusive and collaborative space in the music scene. Unlike industry artists, who may have a team orchestrating their social media presence, independent artists manage their own accounts to have a more direct and personal relationship with their audience. The industry artists may prompt their fans to interact, primarily to boost metrics often backed by labels or management teams. While this interaction can foster a sense of connection between the artist and the audience, the strategic marketing objectives may be more transactional in nature. The difference lies in the power dynamics and motivation behind the interaction. Independent music artists may lack the resources available to industry artists, but this makes the building of a community and involvement of their audience that much more crucial to their journey. The back-and-forth dynamic in the comments are meant to create direct and personal relationships.

The act of video-replying to a comment is a powerful basic affordance for artists to foster genuine connection with their audience. @claudiaoverhere received the following comment in Figure 8: 'I SAW YOUR PERFORMANCE AT TRX COUNTDOWN PARTYY U'RE SOO GOODDD'. By video-replying with the related performance and expressing appreciation for the comment, Claudia not only acknowledges the fan's support but also creates a personal and memorable interaction. As mentioned by Roth et al (2021), users experience gratification from participation, which the platform revolves around. This type of audience participation plays a crucial role in reshaping power dynamics in the music industry. Platforms like TikTok democratize the artist-fan relationship, consistently creating a space for emergent affordances to facilitate authentic exchanges, not solely limited to industry artists. The fans are directly heard by the artist, even partaking in the creation of new content. Littlejohn and Foss (2011) describe this as audiences having considerable agency, not passively consuming content but becoming engaged with the music artist and/or their content.

Figure 8

Screenshot of a video-reply by @claudiaoverhere
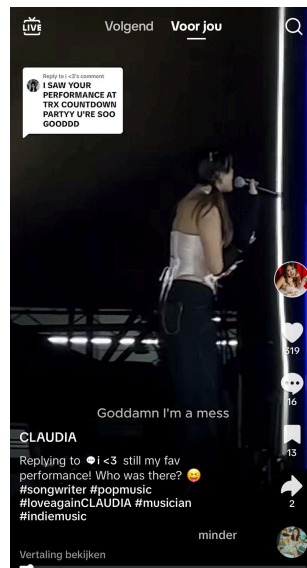
In one of her videos, @claudiaoverhere references the potential ban of TikTok in the United States: 'Trying to catch myself an American audience before they ban tiktok over there' (Appendix A, 8). She highlights the news event in a playful and relatable tone, showcasing an awareness of and engagement with current events. This aligns with how Sicart (2017) describes playful behavior. Through her playful content, Claudia redefines the context surrounding the bad news. She also ties it back into her music project, breaking down the barrier of formality and letting users find her music through a different context. This remark also adds a relatable and timely element to her music content, making it algorithmically relevant to those interested in the news event. Furthermore, Claudia's inclusive approach to international audiences is shown in her response to a comment from a Singporean user who remarked 'but im singaporean'. Claudia encouragingly replied 'Spread the word neighbor'. Her page is not tied down to her location and Claudia encourages engagement across borders. Due to TikTok's recommendation algorithm, independent artists are able to connect with audiences on a global scale, regardless of geographical boundaries. The ability to create relevant content and have it recommended to the right audience is a unique feature that allows non-Western artists to enter the musical landscape.

Audience participation plays a fundamental role in reshaping power dynamics in the music industry. Through interactive prompts, personal replies and inclusive language, they empower their followers to actively contribute to their online creative journey. The sense of community is at the center of how artists democratize the artist-fan relationship, fostered through content

embracing the international audiences and directly engaging with them. Unlike industry artists who may prompt fan interactions primarily to boost metrics, independent artists manage their own accounts to establish direct and meaningful connections with individual users. The recommendation algorithm allows artists to remain up-to-date on global trends and create relevant content to engage with diverse audiences. By engaging audiences efficiently, non-Western artists are able to permeate the online music scene and industry.

5. Conclusion

This study set out to answer the following research question: '*How does the playful use of TikTok's affordances by independent music artists contribute to the decolonization of the music industry?*' Focusing on the cases of three independent artists, the study has identified a variety of ways in which non-Western independent music artists leverage TikTok's affordances to contribute to the decolonization of the music industry. The study follows a framework that operationalizes the concept of decolonization into three conceptual elements: cultural empowerment, decentralized music promotion and audience participation. Through a content analysis of the case studies, various strategies emerged.

RQ1: *'How do independent music artists foster inclusivity in the music industry, through content concerning their cultural heritage?'* was centered around the conceptual element of cultural empowerment. Through covers of native songs and educational content, the music artists are able to highlight the richness of their heritage on TikTok. Song translations provided in embedded texts enhance accessibility, breaking down barriers and inviting diverse audiences into their world. @Natashafisher_ utilizes her platform for cultural advocacy of her indigenous community, transcending her content from pure entertainment to a tool for cultural empowerment. @Vaticanjail, @claudiaoverhere and @natashafisher_ are able to challenge mainstream representations by expressing different facets of their artist identities. Through these creative endeavors, they contribute to the diversification of the music industry.

The key element of decentralized music promotion was analyzed through RQ2. *'How do independent music artists leverage TikTok's affordances in a playful way to increase visibility for their music?'* This was further dissected through the themes of building artist image and playful expression. Artists are able to employ various strategies to playfully express their identities, such as being transparent about the behind-the-scenes process, engaging audiences with unique singing performances and referencing Western artists for familiarity. By providing audiences with more context around the songs and the artist, a sense of intimacy can be fostered and can lead to a greater appreciation of the music. These decentralized promotional strategies aid in increasing the artists' reach, engaging users through different playful contexts. Moreover, the artists engage with the platform through emergent affordances such as playful voice-overs and the appropriation of sounds and formats. The exploration of these playful affordances sheds light on the current climate of decentralized music promotion on TikTok, demonstrating its role in expanding the artist's visibility to global audiences.

Audience participation was analyzed through RQ3. *'What role does audience engagement play on the artists' accounts, to reshape power dynamics within the music*

industry?' The interactions that TikTok facilitates were analyzed through the themes of strategic audience reach and fostering community. The artist-fan relationship becomes democratized through TikTok's basic affordances, letting the artists and their international audience directly interact, transcending their geographical boundaries. TikTok's For You-page and its recommendation algorithm amplifies the artists' reach, cultivating a more democratic musical landscape. As cross-cultural appreciation grows within the TikTok sphere, the music industry is bound to shift towards a more inclusive and decolonized future. This study highlights the importance of emergent digital platforms in fostering a close and interactive connection with the audience.

One of the limitations of the study is that the case studies were selected due to their English content. This limitation was set to target artists who are looking into promoting globally, but this might exclude artists who share this ambition through their native language. The artists who are promoting in English also might feel pressure to replicate Western content and follow trends. However, their contribution to the music industry landscape still plays a role in shifting power away from traditional gatekeepers. By choosing to focus on only three case studies, the analysis is inherently limited. Nonetheless, this design allows for a more in-depth analysis of the three artists, providing detailed insights into how they navigate TikTok and the decolonization of the music industry.

As we navigate the evolving landscape of music distribution and consumption, it is clear that TikTok emerges as a catalyst for democratizing access to new music and amplifying diverse voices. Future research could investigate the long-term impact of TikTok's affordances on the diversification of the music industry. A comprehensive structural analysis of the music industry could help to understand how TikTok facilitates the decolonization of traditional gatekeeping mechanisms. Additionally, a comparative study between TikTok and other social media platforms, such as Instagram and YouTube, could explore how each platform's unique affordances and algorithms shape the promotion of independent music artists. Furthermore, delving into the audience's perceptions and responses to music artists' content would provide insights into how TikTok shapes music consumption habits and preferences. This can guide the independent artists' future strategies for building meaningful connections with their audience. Through the continued exploration of the emergent affordances, TikTok has opened the gates to the successful promotion of independent music. The platform has quickly become a home for decentralized artistic empowerment, offering unprecedented opportunities for the recognition and promotion of new artists worldwide.

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Appendix A

Content from @claudiaoverhere

				User: *@claudiaoverhere (Claudia Tan)*		
Video	**URL**	**Content**	**Embedded text in video**	**Caption**	**Affordances**	**Thematic code**
				Pinned videos		
1	https://www.tiktok.com/@claudiaoverhere/video/7244745137966828827	@Claudiaoverhere is dancing to her own song on the street	POV: you found the song of the summer & it's made by an underrated Malaysian artist	Toast comes out tonight, midnight! 🍞❤️ ARE YALL READY!! 👀 #toastclaudiaoverhere #88rising #sabrinacarpenter #popmusic #songwriter #malaysiasongwriter #musicontrend	- Interacting with comments - Hashtag of similar popular Western artist - Local Malaysian hashtag - Timed lyrics - Named audio as unreleased	- Famous artists alignment - Promoting cultural identity - Garner sympathy - Directly addressing new audience
2	https://www.tiktok.com/@claudiaoverhere/video/7206372726406171910	@Claudiaoverhere looks at screenrecording of a comment and Jungkook's livestream	So this just happened...	Thank yoi jungkook for vibing to my song. As an independent pop artist from Malaysia, this means so much to me 😭❤️ #fyp #bts #army #jungkook #jungkookbts #shouldbeme	- Greenscreen - Hashtags of famous artists	- Video reaction - Building artist image - Famous artists alignment
3	https://www.tiktok.com/@claudiaoverhere/video/7348756560383839520	@Claudiaoverhere makes her album cover	Come make my album cover art with me	U gotta do what u gotta do as an independent musician 🥲 should i do a part 2?? #loveagainclaudia #songwriter #diyproject #albumcover	- Short edited clips - Voice over	- Building artist image - Garner sympathy - Process transparency

			#popmusic		
			Recent videos		
4	https://www.tiktok.com/@claudiaoverhere/photo/7348397144027532577	Photos slides of a famous artist, @claudiaoverhere and her Spotify	Slide 1: I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS SONG IS BY A MALAYSIAN Slide 2: Yes! Hi I'm claudiaoverhere :) I make indie & pop music! Slide 3: The song you're listening to is part of my first baby album Slide 4: If you like Laufey, Sabrina Carpenter or FIFTY FIFTY, you'd like me! Slide 5: Help me blow my album up so it can go global!	Help me be overrated & not underrated pls 🥹 #songwriter #singer #malaysiatiktok #popmusic #trendingmusic	- Sped up audio - Photo slides - Local tags	- Promoting cultural identity - Famous artists alignment - Directly addressing new audience - Garner sympathy - Local tags

5	https://www.tiktok.com/@claudiaoverhere/photo/7348041255261146400	Picture slides of Western artists and own album cover	1: I listened to Laufey before she got famous... 2: I was there when Sabrina was a small artist... 3: Now's your chance to say you knew me before I got famous :) 4: Song title and lyrics	POV: you made a jazzy song that's still looking for its audience. #songwriter #singer #indiemusic #laufey #sabrinacarpenter	- Sped up audio - Photo slides - Hashtags of similar popular Western artists - Interact with comments	- Famous artists alignment - Playful format (POV) - Directly addressing new audience - Garner sympathy - Interact with comments
6	https://www.tiktok.com/@claudiaoverhere/video/7347292644877274400	@Claudiaoverhere lip-syncs to own song with her boyfriend	Get you a bf who produces all your songs for you so you never ever have to pay for your music	He even produced the song you're hearing rn😝 #songwriter #producertok #indiemusic #popmusic #musician	- Sped up audio - Hashtags	- Playful tone - Relate to community
7	https://www.tiktok.com/@claudiaoverhere/video/7347188095508385057	@Claudiaoverhere lip-syncs to her own song in a Vietnamese street	Nobody here knows I wrote this cute little song that went a little viral on tiktok last year	PS: clothing here is so cute?! How do u like my dress? 😝 #songwriter #tiktokvietnam #popmusic #indiemusic #sabrinacarpenter	- Sped up audio - Location tag (Ho Chi Minh City) - Local hashtag - Hashtag of similar popular Western artist	- Famous artists alignment - Local tag - Engagement prompts - Descriptive hashtags

8	https://www.tiktok.com/@claudiaoverhere/video/7346940242500324641	@Claudiaoverhere lip-syncs to her own song	Trying to catch myself an American audience before they ban tiktok over there	Lemme know if i've reached u pls 🥹#tiktokban #usa #congress	- Timed lyrics - Interacting with comments: 'but im singaporean' 'Spread the word neighbor' - Trending hashtags	- Timely content - Directly addressing new audience - Garner sympathy
9	https://www.tiktok.com/@claudiaoverhere/video/7346913690089803040	High quality video of @claudiaoverhere lip-syncing to her song out of a car	Song lyrics	Who rmbs when jungkook played this song on his weverse live? 💁‍♀️ #YourGentlemanclaudiaoverhere #popmusic #indiemusic #musician #songwriter	- Timed lyrics	- Engagement prompts
10	https://www.tiktok.com/@claudiaoverhere/photo/7346181897686502689	Picture slide of @claudiaoverhere and her boyfriend at Taylor Swift's concert	1: POV: you wrote a cute pop song that was supposed to go to FIFTY FIFTY... 2: & it's based off how you feel about ur bf of 7 years 3: Oh My God! By CLAUDIA (Out now on all music platforms) and song lyrics	Could've been a cute FIFTY FIFTY track, no? 😖 #songwriter #indiemusic #popmusic #fiftyfifty #sabrinacarpenter	- Photo slides - Hashtag of similar popular Western artist	- Timely content - Famous artists alignment - Providing song context - Engagement prompts

| 11 | https://www.tiktok.com/@claudiaoverhere/video/7345445148173651232 | Video reply to a comment: claudiaoverhere's performance | Original comment: I SAW YOUR PERFORMANCE AT TRX COUNTDOWN PARTYY U'RE SOO GOODDD Song lyrics | Replying to @i <3 still my fav performance! Who was there? 😝#songwriter #popmusic #loveagainclaudiaoverhere #musician #indiemusic | - Timed lyrics - Interacting with comments | - Singing performance - Video-reply - Engagement prompts |
| 12 | https://www.tiktok.com/@claudiaoverhere/video/7345064910662962464 | @Claudiaoverhere lip-syncing from her car | I had a guy took advantage of my innocence so I wrote a song about it Song lyrics | Glad yall have been liking this one ❤️ #indiemusic #popmusic #loveagainclaudiaoverhere #laufey #grantperez | - Timed lyrics - Hashtag of similar popular Western artist - Interacting with comments | - Providing song context |

Appendix B

Content from @vaticanjail

User: @vaticanjail (Vaticanjail)						
Video	**URL**	**Content**	**Embedded text in video**	**Caption**	**Affordances**	**Thematic code**
Pinned videos						
1	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnQM9NR/	Photo slides of text on a red rose background	1: If you haven't been doing okay lately... Don't worry. 2: This had to find you before Wednesday. You will be okay and all pain left behind. I understand what you've been going through and why you've been so upset recently. You will no longer have sleepless nights and want to hide from the ones you love. All the goodness in the world is coming your way, all the love you deserve is going to find	n/a	- Photo slides	- Engagement prompts - Relate to audience

			you. Use this sound, leave in private if you wish. You will see a change by friday			
2	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnQRsUb/	Video duet of @vaticanjail singing with another singer	Song lyrics	#duet with @rich #bohemianrhapsody hes my favourite :) #singing	- Duet feature - Interact with comments	- Singing performance - Cover
3	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnQJR4r/	Video duet of @vaticanjail singing with a guitarist	N/A	#duet with @aupinard así mismo #slay	- Duet feature - Interact with comments	- Singing performance
Recent videos						
4	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnQBDPt/	@Vaticanjail filming herself in her studio	Pov: you're just a girl from Chile producing your own music so it sounds exactly like you imagined it in your head, posting here everyday because you're hopeful one of these days you'll reach	#independentartist #originalsound #chilena #producersoftiktok #musicproduction #dreampop	- Interact with comments - Local hashtags - Descriptive hashtags of music style - Community hashtags	- Building artist image - Relate to community - Local hashtags - Directly addressing new audience - Garner sympathy - Playful format (POV) - Descriptive hashtags

		your audience and you'll be able to make them happy with your music.				
5	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnQDpK9/	Growing flower with text over it	Song lyrics and translated text	MARCHITA #vocals #singing #singer #pianomusic #independentartist #originalsound	- Timed lyrics	- Lyrical accessibility
6	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnQ8hv4/	@Vaticanjail singing, whereafter the final production is shown	Recording the lines vs the lines together	🐥🤍#vocals #singing #singer #producertok #producersoftiktok #musicproduction #independentartist	- Community hashtags	- Process transparency - Singing performance - Playful format (comparative)
7	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnQFeuQ/	@Vaticanjail singing a cover	Fly Me To The Moon Frank Sinatra	#pianocover #franksinatra #singer #singing #pianomusic #chillmusic #voiceeffects	- Hashtag of famous artist - Descriptive hashtags of music style	- Singing performance - Cover - Descriptive hashtags
8	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnQ1CQW/	Photoslides of @vaticanjail producing and a Spotify screenshot of her latest release	1: producing my own music so it sounds exactly the way i imagined it in my head 2: song lyrics	#originalsound #independentartist #dreampop #femaleartist #producersoftiktok	- Photoslides - Descriptive hashtags of music style - Community hashtag	- Building artist image - Relate to community - Descriptive hashtags
9	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnxo6GA/	@Vaticanjail singing a cover	At Last - Etta James	#cover #pianocover #pianomusic #chillmusic	- Hashtag of famous artist - Descriptive hashtags of music	- Singing performance - Cover - Descriptive

				#ettajames #singer #singing	style - Interact with comments	hashtags
10	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnQdFdu/	@Vaticanjail moving to her own song	you're a Chilean independent artist posting her music everyday because you're hopeful someday you'll reach your audience and you'll be able to make them smile with your music and it'll all the worth it in the end	#originalsound #independentartist #dreampop #fyp #femaleartist #producersoftiktok	- Interact with comments - Descriptive hashtags of music style	- Building artist image - Directly addressing new audience - Garner sympathy - Descriptive hashtags
11	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnQUVB1/	Photoslides of screenshots of a text and Spotify	1 = text from neighbor: LOUDER!!!!!!! 2 = volume going up 3 = screenshot of NEXT2U on Spotify	#fyp #originalsound #independentartist #dreampop #femaleartist	- Descriptive hashtags of artist image - Photo slides - Interact with comments	- Playful format (meme) - Playful tone - Descriptive hashtags
12	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnQ1ePK/	@Vaticanjail singing a cover	n/a	My Way - Frank Sinatra #singer #pianocover #chillmusic #franksinatra #singing #pianomusic	- Hashtag of famous artist - Descriptive hashtags of music style - Interact with comments	- Singing performance - Cover - Descriptive hashtags

| 13 | https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnQUyGh/ | A gif of a sad-looking dog in a music studio | me when i realise i can't release the four bar loop i made last night and have to actually work on making it a full song | #producertok #musicproduction #producersoftiktok #independentartist | - Trend appropriation - Community hashtags | - Playful tone - Relate to community - Playful format (meme) - Trend appropriation |

Appendix C

Content from @natashafisher_

				User: @natashafisher_ (Natasha Fisher)		
Video	**URL**	**Content**	**Embedded text in video**	**Caption**	**Affordances**	**Thematic code**
				Pinned videos		
1	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnxG3wN/	@Natashafisher_ singing a cover	Sad girl version of "If I wanted you girl" Ernest Monias	Had to cover the king of the north 🤣 #earnestmonias #indigenousartist #nativeartist #nativetiktok	- Artist descriptive hashtags - Description of music style	- Relate to community - Singing performance - Promote cultural identity
2	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnxwmmL/	@Natashafisher_ explains about how indigenous people were affected by residential schools, while doing her make-up	I'm the first generation in my family to not attend residential school ... so Miigwetch for listening	In light on Indigenous Peoples Day approaching this is a reminder to be kind, stay learning, and lead with empathy ❤️ #residentialschool #indigenoustiktok #nativetiktok	- Captions - Community hashtags - Recent news events hashtags	- Relate to community - Educational content - Building artist image - Timely content

3	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnxqg3X/	@Natashafisher_ singing a cover with text explaining the importance of may 5th. she wears traditional makeup	May 5th is the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls ... Please wear red today to show your support for the MMIWG2S movement	Im singing Remember Me by Fawn Wood ❤️❤️❤️ #mmiwawareness #mmiwg2s #nativetiktok	- Recent news events hashtags - Community hashtags - Interact with comments: 'I did not know about this until like 11 at night but, it's a good day to always be wearing red. I hope it gets better for you and your people' 'Thank you for the kindness ❤️'	- Educational content - Non-musical identities - Relate to community - Promoting cultural identity - Building artist image - Timely content
			Recent videos			
4	https://www.tiktok.com/@natashafisher_/photo/7348518401226050821	photoslides of at home photoshoot	1: Fun photoshoot I did at home: swipe for details 2: With 2 mirrors 3: And 2 lights with coloured clear paper	At home photoshoot ideas ❤️ What do we think 🥰 #photoshoot #photoshootideas #athomephotoshootideas #indigenousmodel #nativemodel	- Photo slides - Original song	- Asking for engagement - Process transparency
5	https://www.tiktok.com/@natashafisher_/video/7348220951118646533	high quality video of @natashafisher_ lip-syncing to her song	Song lyrics	Hi im an Indigenous artist from Thunder Bay, ON ❤️i use music as a tool for healing & love making covers and writing and perfoming originals 😍 come with me on this journey xo #indigenoustiktok	- Timed lyrics - Community hashtags	- Singing performance - Building artist image - Directly addressing new audience - Relate to community

				#indigenousartist #nativetiktok #nativeartist		
6	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnxwgcf/	@Natashafisher_ casually eating a snack	Someone plz make a video in their NDN car to this	#ndnkars #nativetiktok #indigenoustiktok	- Community hashtags - Interact with comments: 'done! cruising on Indian School road.. phx az' 'Ayyyyyy hello from Tkaronto ❤️'	- Playful tone - Asking for engagement - Building artist image - Promoting cultural identity - Relate to community
7	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnxb8yG/	@Natashafisher_ singing a cover with a guitarist	A Native classic "NDN KARS" feat Robbie	Is this a Native/Indigenous classic 😝I had thing one requested a few times ❤️We tried to make it our own a little at the end ✨This ones dedicated to Ron back in Tbay 🤘🏽 #ndnkars #nativetiktok #indigenoustiktok #indigenous	- Community hashtags - Interact with comments: 'Beautiful! Love ur style & ur voice! Sing a Navajo song by Sharon Burch the Cradle Song. ✨☺️🙏💯🧡✊🏾✨' 'Ok I'll check it out 🥰 and thank u so much!!'	- Relate to community - Singing performance - Promoting cultural identity
8	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnxx6Xc/	photoslides of @natashafisher_ in a car and her instagram page	1: Since TikToks getting banned.... 2: Follow me on IG ❤️	Since tiktoks getting banned… I wanna still be friends with all youssss💚 #nativetiktok #indigenous #tiktokbanned	- Relevant hashtags - Photoslides - Interact with comments - Community hashtags	- Timely content - Asking for engagement - Relate to community

9	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnxH54G/	@Natashafisher_ lip-syncing to the sound 'it's not your fault'	"You're Indigenous but you didn't grow up with ur culture?"	Damn that generational trauma. I reconnect, i grow and i learn everyday for my family who was told they couldnt practice our culture. & thats the same reason i now walk the red road ❤️We're resilient as f #nativetiktok #indigenoustiktok #generationaltrauma #indigenous	- Trend appropriation - Community hashtags - Interact with comments	- Promoting cultural identity - Trend appropriation - Relate to community - Playful format (conversational)
10	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnxxFpG/	photoslides of photoshoot and screenshots of the song	1: I released a cover of iconic legend Ernest Monias "If I Wanted You Girl" 2: I wanted to highlight songs by Indingneous artists on my page 3: I love singing and creating songs and covers of music I love 4: I made it onto the Indigenous Music Countdown!!! ❤️	Celebrate the milestones 🥹❤️ Thank you to everyone who has supported me! Thru my last year of sobriety, school, and music❤️ i love you all and hope to continue to release more music this year!!!! Miigzzzz #nativetiktok #indigenousartist #nativeartist #indigenous #ifiwantedyouboy	- Photo slides - Community hashtags	- Interact with audience - Garner sympathy - Building artist image - Promoting cultural identity - Relate to community

			5: & it now has over 10k on Spotify. Thank you guys			
11	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnx4RJw/	@Natashafisher_ singing a cover	Cute girl version of "Come And Get Your Love" by Redbone	PLAYING A SHOW IN TORONTO MARCH 7th AT THE CAMERON HOUSE ❤️❤️❤️ #indigenousartist #nativeartist #coversong #nativetiktok #comeandgetyourlove	- Interact with comments - Community hashtags	- Singing performance - Playful tone
12	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnxsrF9/	vlog of @natashafisher_ visiting a music show at the indigenous fashion arts	COME WITH ME TO AN EVENT AT THE ROM	This was sooo fun ❤️❤️❤️ have u guys ever been to the rom??#indigenous #nativetiktoks #torontovlog #nativevlog #indigenousvlog #comewithme	- Short edited clips - Voice over	- Playful tone - Local hashtags
13	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZIJnx7jon/	@Natashafisher_ singing with her guitar	song lyrics	Original song about a break up 💔 the tone is sarcasm lol #nativeartist #indigenousartist #originalsong #breakupsong #breakupsongs	- Descriptive hashtags of music style - Timed lyrics	- Descriptive hashtags - Song context