A content analysis of TikTok videos and its role in propagating (mis)information about COVID-19 and the ongoing distribution of vaccines.

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DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the *Bachelor of Arts Honours in Strategic Brand Communication (HSB431)* degree to The Independent Institute of Education, is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Signed: Courtnee Francis Date: 29 November 2021

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ABSTRACT

The popularity of social media amongst the youth has resulted in an influx of misinformation spread regarding important topics. With the onset of COVID-19, the misinformation was quick to circulate, and as it grew into a global concern with initiating lockdowns, many actively sought after easily digestible sources, most often social media. However, wrought with ill-informed content creators, the youth were most vulnerable to the inaccurate information, which has created many critics for the virus and vaccines. Through content analysis, the most common topics and the narrative connected to them were identified to discover patterns in the COVID-19 TikTok content consumed by the youth and whether this is pro or anti contexts. The most discussed themes were mask related, indicating that most people's frustrations lie with the mandatory mask-wearing which ignites feelings of restriction. This implies that the youth are consuming content that is placing the demographic at risk as masks have been found to be one of the most popular ways to prevent contracting COVID-19 – especially when the positive numbers amongst the youth are increasing. Through the study, it was identified that the most popular content was factual, informative and accurate – leaving a positive impression on the viewer of their responsibility to make their community safer.

Key words: COVID-19, social media, TikTok, vaccinations, misinformation, youth audience

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper sought to examine how TikTok video content plays a role in propagating misinformation regarding the COVID-19 virus and the associated vaccines, as well as how this information perpetuates a specific narrative, as suggested by Ostrovsky and Chen (2020).

1.1. Background

COVID-19, also known as Corona Virus, is an infectious disease spread through small liquid particles from infected persons, when they cough, sneeze or even breathe on another individual (World Health Organisation, 2021). Though initially presenting as a harsher flu, COVID-19 has quickly shown the severity of symptoms and resulted in many permanent long-term effects and deaths around the world (World Health Organisation, 2021). With the onset of COVID-19 on a global scale from March 2020, information regarding the virus began to circulate amongst social media platforms, a common communication tool amongst the youth population (Groshek and Bronda, 2021). The concept of social media refers to a platform based on web technologies that allow for users to make use of interactive tools to communicate with a digital community for social and educational purposes (Baruah, 2012).

The United Nations (UN) (2013), defines youth as individuals aged between 15 to 24 years of age, as this age bracket refers to those in a transition period from childhood to adult independence. Due to the youth forming as part of the 'digital native' generation, social media has become increasingly popular for this population for its social interaction benefits, which allows for far distance communication (Baruah, 2012). Social media also acts as a catalyst to propagate narratives regarding various topics of discussion, as well as those that are of global concern (Baruah, 2012). Often propagated narratives from online sources are misinformed, which is information that is inaccurate, and then shared amongst individuals who may not be educated on the topic of discussion (Basch et al., 2020). With the dominance of social media increasing, the dissemination of this misinformation has become much easier to spread, and not just amongst peers, but globally too (Basch et al., 2020).

Therefore, the use of the platform as a first reserve to express opinions regarding the COVID-19 virus and the best course of action on how to manage to the situation, was of natural behaviour amongst the youth (Anderson and Jiang, 2018). TikTok's gaining fast popularity amongst the young demographic makes it an ideal platform to analyse the consumption of video content and their interpretation of the COVID-19 (mis)information. The spread of this misinformation can be potentially harmful to the youth who are consuming it, as the spread of inaccurate discourse could result in hindering the eradication of COVID-19.

The research study examined the role that TikTok content plays in conveying misinformation regarding COVID-19 amongst this youth audience, and how these videos propagate narratives amongst the young communities (Ostrovsky and Chen, 2020). As the focus of the study is on social media, particularly TikTok, narrowing down the topic of discussion to COVID -19, and how misinformation is spread acts as the core concepts that was analysed for the context of the study. Ostrovsky and Chen (2020) further makes note of an increasing problem regarding the spread of misinformation about COVID-19 potentially causing harm to a wider population.

1.2. Rationale

Quite recently, considerable attention has been paid to TikTok and its ability to generate a more diverse audience than most social media models (Ostrovsky and Chen, 2020). Baruah (2012) mentions that online platforms have not only transformed the way we communicate but the way we think and talk about it, with social media portraying communicative tools as a means to fundamentally alter our perceptions of reality and the topics we discuss an interpersonal and a community level. This demonstrates social media's capability to propagate factually inaccurate information at a high scale (Ostrovsky and Chen, 2020). Allen (2019) suggests that understanding how social media influences individuals is crucial in identifying delays in cognitive development. Allen (2019) continues to mention how different types of digital communication can lead to different developmental issues. This is especially prominent amongst adolescents who have been found to demonstrate obstacles in forming intimate relationships due to social media teaching individuals' new values (Allen, 2019). Ostrovsky and Chen (2020) make note of how social media, particularly TikTok, has played a part in resocialising[1], the younger generations during the global pandemic era.

Concerns are progressing as an increasing number of youths are contracting COVID-19 (Ostrovsky and Chen, 2020), therefore an investigation of TikTok's portrayal of COVID-19 is essential in comprehending the youth's interpretation of the content regarding the virus and the vaccine. Lastly, the study will examine the young adult perspective on the gravity of the COVID-19 circumstances and how the messages conveyed on TikTok, may contort these ideologies to undermine the efforts to administer vaccines (Basch et. al.). As minimal research is available due to the brief timeline of the virus (between January 2020 and April 2021, the date in which the study was initiated) investigation into this topic is beneficial to the existing research of the brand communication field. This benefits the Strategic Brand Communication field due to the investigation into how social media is used as a catalyst to spread information

[1] Resolcialisation refers to the process of drastically changing one's values and moral code after encountering a new culture, by matching the beliefs of that given society (Sociology Group, 2021).

amongst the youth, the up and coming consumer market, and how this tool can be used by businesses and organisation in communication management.

1.3. Problem Statement

The problem identified for the research is the rapid spreading of misinformation regarding COVID-19 on social media, particularly TikTok, due to the application's viral nature leading to harmful situations (Baruah, 2012). Content shared on the platform, if misinformed, has the ability to transform a social media rumour into a highly endorsed falsehood, that could potentially cause harm to the greater society. This is due to the impressionable young adult audience that makes use of TikTok, and how they could interpret this as fact and hypothetically endanger someone vulnerable. TikTok, the foundation for the study, while not the only social media platform spreading misinformation, is the most popular platform amongst youth during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a source of knowledge that is easily digestible (Orlando, 2020).

Ostrovsky and Chen (2020) elaborate on the problem of the spreading of misinformation about COVID-19 potentially causing harm to the greater society, as the impressionable young adult audience that makes use of TikTok, could interpret this as factual. Furthermore, an increasing number of this segment are contracting COVD-19 (Ostrovsky and Chen, 2020), when, according to World Health Organisation (WHO) (2021), the individuals who should hypothetically be safest is the young healthy segmentation. Therefore research into TikTok and the youth audience is necessary to better understand this specified demographic's behaviour.

1.4. Research Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the youth's interpretation of video content consumed on TikTok regarding COVID-19 during the first year of the global pandemic. Including how this messaging potentially contributes towards a hesitancy in support of COVID -19 vaccinations, and the influence misinformation has on their cognisance's when portraying this narrative to those in their external environment (Basch et al., 2020).

Research Question

What role does TikTok content play in conveying misinformation concerning COVID-19, and the vaccines, to a young adult audience, that may result in the propagation of narratives consumed?

Research Objectives

- To identify whether the most viewed COVID-19 TikTok video content has played a role in propagating misinformation to a young adult audience between March 2020 and April 2021.
- To investigate what type of account, pro-vaxx or anti-vaxx specifically, receive more youth support in terms of positive comments between March 2020 and April 2021.

- To identify how the narratives learnt on TikTok are being used in real life by the young adult audience to determine one's actions in responding to COVID-19.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Conceptualisation

The following conceptualised definitions act as a framework that will help give context to the reader regarding key terms and research concepts engaged within the study. These terms will also be substantiated through past and current literature, discussed in the literature review aspect of this document.

Social Media

The concept of social media refers to a platform based on web technologies that allow for users to make use of interactive tools to communicate with a digital community (Baruah, 2012). Social media is predominantly used for its social interaction benefits, which allows for far distance communication, globally, accessed by anyone and particularly popular amongst the digital native generation (Baruah, 2012). Social media has drastically changed the way the world communicates, with individuals, movements and businesses alike utilising the platforms to make connections and share content at a rapid pace (Baruah, 2012).

TikTok the application selected for the study, originated from the merging of 3 separate entities: Musicaly.ly, Douyin and TikTok in 2018, and has found its audience in the youngest generations (Tidy and Galer, 2020). The social media application's basis is videos, but its success lies in the algorithm, that adapts faster to the user's behaviours than any other social media app, to provide content specific to their interests (Tidy and Galer, 2020).

This pertains to the study as TikTok, the case study for this research, is a subset of social media, and understanding the concept of social media will assist in creating a foundation of comprehending the use of TikTok. It will be useful in interpreting the research problem by identifying the role that social media, particularly TikTok plays, and the impact it has on the young adult audience.

COVID-19

COVID-19, also known as Coronavirus, is a widespread pandemic that resulted in a global lockdown to help prevent the further spread of the highly contiguous and potentially harmful disease to vulnerable individuals (Ostrovsky and Chen, 2020). Although COVID-19 itself will not be studied in this research, it acts as a core element of the case study and thus

background of the virus is essential to conceptualise in order to comprehend how the young adult audience responds to video content pertaining to this topic. It will also assist in contextualising the emerging misleading information and conspiracy theories concerning the virus's origins, severity, and techniques of elimination, all of which are widely discussed by not only educated health care professionals but independent individuals with online access (Ostrovsky and Chen, 2020). Examples of this misinformation include the ineffectiveness of the vaccine due to its short development time, with many speculating that if over 50 years of research has not created a vaccine for cancer, the COVID-19 shot cannot possibly be safe (Zadrozny, 2021).

Misinformation

Considering the basis of this study, misinformation forms as the focal point of this study and the core research concept. Misinformation is information that is inaccurate or misunderstood and shared amongst individuals who may not be educated on the topic of discussion (Basch et al., 2020). With the dominance of social media increasing, the dissemination of this misinformation has become much easier to spread, and not just amongst peers, but globally too (Basch et al., 2020). This sudden influx of information has resulted in an infodemic, which not only consists of information and misinformation but disinformation, which is the distribution of purposely misleading and harmful content so as to influence the audience (Starbird, 2020). The relation to the study is indicated by the connection to the COVID-19 pandemic ad how this mis/disinformation regarding the virus and associated vaccinations may contribute to vaccine hesitancy, as indicated by the research problem.

These three concepts are the foundation of the study, and all linked to the core research problem. Given that the youths most frequented line of communication and source of knowledge is social media, selecting a specific platform, TikTok, assisted in narrowing down a common pattern of behaviour (Baruah, 2012). COVID-19 information was quickly sought at the beginning of lockdown, with the youth reaching for their favourite social platforms, including TikTok (Starbird, 2020). However, as social media is not a regulated platform, and users can share any thoughts on any topics, whether true or not, this resulted in an influx of misinformation amongst individuals ill-informed on COVID-19 (Starbird, 2020). In turn, the popularity of spreading misinformation has developed a distrust in authority figures and in the government-approved vaccinations required.

2.2. Theoretical Foundation

In order to achieve the research objectives and conclude the research question, and assist in highlighting the framework of the study, Social Action and Cultivation will be used throughout.

Social Action Theory

Social Action Theory, as defined by seminal author Weber (1978), is the actions by which an individual will associate a personal interpretation to their behaviour, whether it be intended or subconscious. Although originally developed by Weber, modern sociologists have adopted this theory to work in the context of current events and phenomena, and at its core is an action taken with present or future behaviour and attitudes of the individual's environment (Flamand, 2017). Social action theory aims to understand how a person will inevitably make a decision to respond to their external environment based on their internal negotiation process between their desires and influence from society (Thompson, 2017). Social Action focuses on the "meaningful comprehension" of the social behaviours of those around them, and thus only represent the theory once individuals participate in the conversation and their behaviour is significantly related to the actions of others (Flamand, 2017).

Making use of this theory will assist in understanding the young adult behaviour by uncovering their motives, through discovering the relationship of their social environment consisting of friends, other TikTok users and family, and the produced actions as a result. This will also help in answering the research question, as the researcher will be able to identify the role in which TikTok, an external influence in the individual's sphere, has in propagating a specific narrative about the COVID-19 pandemic to the young adult audience. The theory is linked directly and appropriately to the study as individuals consuming his video content will interpret this media in a manner that has a meaning, whether positive or negative and will be in relation to the environment in which they engage.

Cultivation Theory

As defined by seminal author George Gerbner (1998), Cultivation Theory focuses on the way in which individuals are influenced by messages they consume as a result of high exposure to media, particularly television. As the basis of this study is the use of TikTok, Gerbner's theory will be viewed from the perspective of the audience's exposure to social media. Gerbner (1998) continues to make note of how individuals who watch this media for long periods of time, reach the point whereby their understanding and perceptions of the world are expressive of what they are exposed to online. Furthermore, how Gerbner (1998) suggests television contributes to how the audience perceives their social realities, social media can be assumed to have the same effect on individuals who consume mass amounts of this media. Stacks, Li and Spaulding (2015) discusses Gerber's theory, in how media overall does not accurately reflect the world realistically, and the content individuals consume is an exaggeration of what is reality. As a result, the audience starts to view this perception, over a continuous period, as

what reality should be, and develop a distorted view through the lens of the media they consume (Stacks et al., 2015).

Cultivation Theory will aid in understanding how the young adult audiences' exposure to COVID-19 TikTok content affects their attitudes and behaviours to social realities. This theory can also assist in answering the research question, as interpreting how the young adult audience's exposure to a specific narrative may result in their acceptance of this portrayal as reality. As well as achieving the objective of how the consumption of misinformed content could result in a dangerous situation in where the individuals believe a fictitious piece of information that places someone vulnerable in harm's way.

2.3. Literature Review

The literature review of this research considered the following themes: social media as a communication tool, medical information shared on social media, and lastly how COVID-19 misinformation is shared on social media, in order to identify a gap for the research study. As the field remains limited in existing information, there is a need for further research and a review of current sources related to the topic follows.

Literature Concerning Social Media as a Communication Tool

To understand the basis of this research, it is first of all important to be aware of how social media is utilised as a tool for communication amongst the audience and the circumstances in which they resort to this channel and benefit from its use. Groshek and Bronda (2016) highlight how in major current events, many individuals reach for the internet and social media for news updates as it is distinctly different from traditional media outlets. This is as digital platforms, specifically social media, allows for two-way communication, which Baruah (2012), a key author on this theme, makes a vital note. Baruah (2012) notes that these interactive online tools not only facilitate communication but influence the way in which individuals think and react to it due to its potential to fundamentally alter the nature of one's social life. Zeitzoff (2017:3) suggests, however, that the individual's experience on social media is greatly impacted by the "elite messaging" they receive from higher authorities or public figures who set the narrative regarding the topic.

The Young Adult Audience using Social Media as a Communication Tool

Baruah (2012) mentions how the younger generation is the demographic most involved with social media and make use of several platforms to keep in contact with their friends and family. Research conducted by Anderson and Jiang (2018) shows that approximately 40% of young adults answered that social media positively influenced their life, as it allows for them to

communicate easily with others. This suggests that the primary use of social media for this demographic is its communicative benefits which helps them connect with those in their circle. However, also mentioned by the audience studied, is 31% find social media as a source of information and a platform to connect with others of similar interests (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). This then suggests information seeking to be the secondary use of social media to this young adult audience.

Baruah's (2012) study on social media usage shows largely similar results as 26%, the largest portion, showed that the audience makes use of social media for its interactive functionality to connect with peers, and 19% chose social media as their source of information. However, Baruah (2012) touches on how, through these primary and secondary uses, social media can act as a platform to organise activities and thus create social authority where individuals or even organisations can establish themselves as key voices on a topic and consequently begin to influence listeners.

Alternatively, Zeitzoff (2017) explores how social media plays a large part in influencing conflict and as an increasing portion of the population becomes digital natives, higher authorities seek to communicate with this demographic in a manner that suits them. Zeitzoff (2017:3) refers to messages from higher authorities or influential parties as "elite messaging"[2], and through the use of social media, the audience can now actively participate in discourse and contribute to the conversation. Zeitzoff (2017) identifies this as a form of mass communication, leaders and people of influence use social media as a way to organise mass behaviour by setting the rhetoric. This results in the connection between like-minded people who start to receive content, and engage with it, that shares the same ideologies and narratives (Zeitzoff, 2017). Additionally, with the acceleration of social media, individuals can now create content and show support or disagreement of these topics, which may further result in a conflict of opinions (Zeitzoff, 2017).

Fundamentally, as mentioned by Baruah (2012) and Anderson and Jiang (2018), the young adult audience uses social media as a platform to interact with their peers and to receive information on current events, but also be utilised as a tool to respond to elite messaging and signify their stance on popular topics as suggested by Zeitzoff (2017).

TikTok's Role in Sharing Information

TikTok has formed a fundamental part of the young adult's social landscape, as the platform brings together individuals with similar interests or experiences, and creates a sense of belonging (Orlando, 2020). Advanced algorithms allow for individuals to get highly

[2] Elite messaging refers to communication that come from sources authorised, either through credentials or government approval, to provide information on a given topic (Zeitzoff, 2017).

personalised content based on who they follow and what they like, due to the behaviour learning abilities of these applications (Zeitzoff, 2017). As a result, the individuals become subject to targeted content, which in turn, increases the opportunity to persuade the audience based on the narratives that these messages have (Zeitzoff, 2017).

The applications unique, highly personalised algorithm allows for individuals to find content that directly connects with them and their beliefs, which in turn, will either alter or enforce their opinion (Orlando, 2020). What makes the application different from other social media platforms is the viral nature of the platform, which makes almost any individual's content noticed by a large population (Baruah, 2012). Authoritative figures, such as World Health Organisation have also made their presence more prominent with young-adult audience targeted videos to educate the audience with reliable public health advice about COVID-19 due to a surge in misinformation as surfaced on the platform (Orlando, 2020). Demonstrating how a platform like TikTok has the ability to disseminate information to a large population, quickly, about any topic amongst the young adult audience, with influential individuals setting the narrative for what is accurate within a misinformed dense space.

The literature consulted was useful in aiding the researcher to understand how social media is used by the young adult audience and TikTok's part in sharing information, however, very few studies contextualise the research on as great of a scale as the current global pandemic crisis. Sources that exist on how social media is used as a communication tool, are not written recently and precede the five-year mark, thereby indicating a gap in the literature and relevancy of the study to conduct new research pertaining to modern times and uses of social media.

Literature Concerning Medical Information Shared on Social Media

The social media landscape has transformed the way in which individuals across the globe communicate and brought many benefits, however, the digital platform comes with several downfalls (Groshek & Bronda, 2016). Misinformation is a severe problem that many authoritative figures are struggling to control in a social media-driven world during the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, an infodemic has emerged (Starbird, 2020). While some authors suggest that in order to solve this problem - an increase of reliable sources need to emerge. Others argue that trust is a major contributing factor to consuming content, and an influx of authoritative figures will result in an even bigger resistance from the audience as they view these messages as manipulative.

Medical Misinformation

Past literature suggests that social media, in general, is fraught with disinformation, a subset of misinformation, which is intentionally misleading content, such as government propaganda (Cushion, Kyriakidou, Morani & Soo, 2020). The escalation of COVID-19 proved no different as a plethora of misinformation and disinformation flooded all social media platforms, in an attempt to influence the audience. Groshek and Bronda (2016), mentions that influential individuals have the potential to not only contort the understanding of their followers and the greater public regarding important topics but impact government efforts to educate and regulate the population. Groshek and Bronda (2016) also highlight that this misinformed content allows for qualified scientists and authorised personnel to correct this conversation and redirect the narrative to a factual interpretation based on their findings.

Hussain (2020) largely agrees with Groshek and Bronda and expands by explaining that in circumstances of crisis, much like COVID-19, the public have many burning questions, and if the government and other verified authorities fail to answer efficiently, individuals begin to seek solutions elsewhere. Hussain (2020) continues by warning against the possible downfall of misinterpreted information and the creation of an information vacuum as it allows for the opportunity for rumours to fill the space. To finish off, Hussain (2020) discusses the importance of public health figures, political leaders and other authoritative individuals speaking out on COVID-19 so as to act as a reliable source of information.

However, from Cushion's et al. (2020) findings, the public identified the least reliable or misleading information regarding COVID-19 as those from government and high political leaders. This works alongside Llewellyn (2020) suggestion that medical professionals on social media can create a confusing, and possibly distressing, atmosphere, as often it happens that researchers' and doctors' opinions do not align, and results in a disoriented audience. An indication that trust is a major factor for the audience when consuming health and current event-related information and not much trust is placed in the figures with authority as individuals do not consider their messages reliable.

Trust and Ethics

Distinguishing what information is factual from what is misleading or inaccurate has become increasingly difficult for the average individual, and many social media platforms have taken action in trying to combat this problem through technology (Baker, Wade & Walsh, 2020).

Baker, Wade and Walsh (2020) mention that many platforms are using similar methods to curb the infodemic, which includes promoting government and authoritative groups content and generating systems that remove potentially harmful information through fact-checking sources. However, as Baker et al. (2020) indicates, this method may be counterproductive as

there is no common ground between what information is harmful and inaccurate and what is a matter of freedom of speech and voicing one's opinion. As a result, this undermines the public's trust in the platform to manage the content, which is constituting harm, especially considering the way in which these social media firms conduct their removals, the general audience feels there is a lack of transparency (Baker et al., 2020).

The ethics surrounding how social media platforms manage and control the content that creates the narrative largely lacks research, specifically in regard to the current COVID-19 pandemic. However, Ghosh (2021) touches on this topic in relation to former United States of America President, Donald Trump, and his ban from multiple social media platforms due to misleading disinformation. Ghosh (2021) mentions how, although these social media followed their own policies and government guidelines, the audience found this to be an infringement of free speech and that private platforms like social media removing content and accounts is not entirely ethical as it begins to control a specific narrative. Furthermore, Ghosh (2021) highlights how individuals who do not share the mainstream opinions feel targeted as their content is often retracted for inaccurate content, thus a segment of the population begins to feel censored. These individuals would rather trust their peers as their opinions are removed from major platforms and start to question the mainstream narrative as forceful and overpowering and begin to label this as propaganda. All authors, Baker et al. (2020) and Ghosh (2021) suggest that the bottom line of this problem is social media regulation, as the lack of transparency can result in an unsupportive audience, while the lack of limitations may cause an out-of-control infodemic that could harm others.

Although past and current research has illuminated the problem of medical misinformation and whether the distribution of this content is the solution to avoiding misleading information, the study did not touch on the ethics and transparency from these platforms and how they can influence the way in which individuals trust the verified content they receive.

Literature Concerning how COVID-19 Misinformation is Shared on Social Media

As mentioned in the previous section ' Literature Concerning Medical Information Shared on Social Media', misinformation spreading on social media concerning COVID-19 is rampant and has resulted in an infodemic that is undermining the rollout of vaccines as inaccurate content is misleading the general audience. Van der Linden and Roozenbeek (2021) identified that a stronger belief in misinformed content regarding the COVID-19 virus has a consistent link to a decline in willingness to get vaccinated.

Everett, Colombatto, Chituc, Brady and Crockett (2021) make note of how morals play a large part in individuals consuming content and sharing it, especially amongst the younger audience. Everett et al. (2021) identifies three forms of moral messaging, namely deontological (duty), virtue (goodness) and utilitarian (consequences), and from research conducted, the authors noticed that deontological messaging had a greater effect on the young adult audience as they feel obliged to help others through sharing governments content and wearing masks. Chan (2020) also researches the individuals' behaviours and call to actions regarding COVID-19, how morals contribute to their decision-making factors, and whether they regard what they are doing as ‘good’. Many of the younger respondents had opposing views to Everett et al. (2021) and chose to ignore government guidelines as it goes against their “nature foundation”, as Chan (2020) refers to it. Whereas the older opted to listen to government messages as a responsibility to their vulnerable peers, including themselves and valued public safety over personal preference.

In order to understand what constitutes morality, public health officials need to understand the audience and the behaviours behind their actions for acting morally and thus comprehend why individuals share a specific narrative’s content (Chan, 2020). As officials continue to struggle to communicate their message in a way that is not perceived as propaganda or confusing by the social media audience, as mentioned in 'Literature Concerning Social Media as a Communication Tool', further analysis on TikTok was required to comprehend the context.

COVID-19 Misinformation is Shared on TikTok

A study done by Unni and Weinstein (2020) about content on TikTok during the COVID-19 pandemic, shows that videos making use of the most popular hashtags contain mostly day to day pandemic life activities. Although the authors intended to explore the possibility of misleading content dominating the platform, their findings indicate that the young individuals on the platform seek to make content that connects them at fundamentally a human experience level (Unni & Weinstein, 2020). Unni and Weinstein (2020) continue to mention that video content related to the promotion of health far outweighed the inaccurate or misinformed, however, behaviour linked to health information is directly connected to the individual's perception of the video. As these individuals' content is user-generated and the content they engage with most exceeds the trending hashtags of that period, suggesting that this content still shapes the young adults' emotions and opinions, especially the misinformation, although the minority, still hinders the individual's cognisance.

In support of Everett et al. (2021) and opposing Chan (2020), Basch, Meleo-Erwin, Fera, Jaime, and Basch (2020) mentions that the young adult audience are the least likely to hold negative perceptions regarding COVID-19 and the associated vaccines, however, this

segments dependency on social media for understanding health information leaves them vulnerable to inaccurate or disinformation spreading on the platform. This is also a concern with facetious or humorous content, as repeated exposure to this disinformation may reinforce falsehoods, as mentioned by Basch et al. (2020). Additional studies to understand the impact TikTok has on the young adult audience is still required as it is necessary in interpreting the reasons for their actions concerning COVID-19 content. Due to the recent popularity of the platform and the short period of the COVID-19 virus, limited research is available, which indicates a gap in the research and relevance of the study topic.

In conclusion, social media used as a communication tool can provide users with a platform to connect and learn, however, spreading COVID-19 misinformation can result in a misinterpretation of medical information. This leaves viewers vulnerable to inaccurate opinions, alongside the rise in popularity of alternative thinkers, many elite messaging and government sources, are ignored in favour of popular content creators without any credentials on a basis of trust.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study followed the interpretivist paradigm, with the research making use of qualitative methods and analysis to derive results, as interpretivism has rooted the ideology that each individual is different and thus in a constant state of change and evolution due to their environment (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

3.1. Paradigm

The theories used in the study, social action, and cultivation, involve the voluntary expression of an individual's interpretations and expressions of social realities. This, therefore, works in conjunction with the interpretivist paradigm, which takes into consideration individual human differences to explain the study's topic of social action and cultivation (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

As the study involved a person's expressions of social realities and their interpretation of such, which not only aligns with the paradigm and design of the research but the tradition of epistemology. Stroll (2017) explains that epistemology focuses on the nature and limits of human knowledge and understanding, and when working alongside interpretivism, addresses that reality and knowledge are not objective, but rather influenced by others within the same environment. The perspective of epistemology in the position of interpretivism reasons that knowledge is subjective and therefore is determined by each individuals understanding (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Hermeneutics is a philosophical grounding to interpretivism and analysis of the human understanding in data as a whole and the breakdown into smaller sections to further comprehend its parts (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). While the study will not use textual data, which is the foundational component of hermeneutics, the core aim to unpack a deeper meaning within the data collected to grasp the bigger picture is still applicable to the visual data that will be analysed (Nieuwenhuis, 2019).

The use of epistemology interpretivism supported the research as the focus of the study, the youth's understanding of COVID-19 TikTok videos, was directly concerned with the interpretation of one's context of a topic. The use of this paradigm also aligned with the use of Social Action and Cultivation theories to uncover the intentions of the youth in the content they consume on social media.

3.2. Conceptual Approach

The research was based on qualitative methods to both, collect and analyse, the data, therefore the use of the selected paradigm worked in conjunction with the foundation of the study as well as in the context of the young adult's differing interpretations of TikTok videos (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Qualitative research best suited the study as it allowed for the researcher to delve deeper into the phenomena of TikTok, through understanding the human behaviour and reasoning for actions (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Qualitative research's nature as mentioned is subjective, and therefore made use of the data collected to understand the topic of COVID-19 content on TikTok through the lens of the viewers, the youth, to interpret their behaviour (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

- Deductive – The research made use of deductive approaches as it followed a path from general to specific due to the topic beginning with communication behaviours on social media, and then narrowed to COVID-19 content on TikTok – a specific platform and topic (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014). This is due to the content analysis basis, whereby the researcher used a framework from theories Social Action and Cultivation, to identify themes within the collected data (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014).
- Exploratory – The purpose of this type of research is to, as the name mentions, explore the phenomena being discussed so as to provide insight into the situation and behaviours of those involved (Davis, 2014). As the data analysis method was a content analysis, the use of exploratory methods aligned with the study and the research question to further understand the youth's interpretation of video content.

This design tied together all elements of the study to produce qualitative results and answer the research question of how the young adults interpret TikTok COVID-19 video content as a result of their environment. This is as the study was aiming to understand human knowledge, by analysing how young adults interpret the videos on TikTok about COVID-19, the researcher therefore identified the way the social media platforms environment influences this audience.

3.3. Population

The target population for the study consisted of social media videos, particularly TikTok focusing on those which discuss COVID-19 related content, pro and anti-narratives. As the study aimed to gain an understanding of the youth's interpretation of video content consumed on TikTok regarding COVID-19, the population has been refined. As the overall population covers a large scope of content, the specifications have therefore been filtered to get more

specified results to the study's objectives. The accessible population yielded the following characteristics:

The accessible population yielded the characteristics:

- TikTok original generated content;
- Created between March 2020 and July 2021;
- Related to the COVID-19 virus and associated vaccine;
- Falls part of three (3) trending hashtags - #covidvaccine, #coronavirus (Unni and Weinstein, 2020) and #unvaccinated (Ankel, 2021);
- Are the highest viewed videos under the hashtags.

The unit of analysis measured are the TikTok videos along with the content within, so as to understand the youth's interpretation of this content and how this misinformation has had an impact on their cognisance. The TikTok videos were the prime focus of the study and the content of these videos, as it offers the opinions and views exposed to youth and therefore the reason for selection as the unit of analysis. As the COVID-19 pandemic is an ongoing event, the dates chosen reflect the beginning of the global lockdown until the point of the data collection for this study, as this was what was available to the researcher.

3.4. Sampling

This sample size consisted of eight (8) videos, all of which met the required characteristics to be selected for the study. As the research implemented qualitative elements, the study made use of non-probability sampling in the form of purposive methods (Trochim, 2020). Non-probability involves a selection that has an intention, such as a list of characteristics to qualify, which allowed the researcher to refine the already large population of videos within the selected hashtags (Trochim, 2020). The hashtags selected for the characteristics were chosen for its popularity during the course of the pandemic, indicated by the number of views on TikTok, and offers a wide scope of perspectives to avoid a one-sided view (Unni and Weinstein, 2020).

The small sample size was due to the inability to make use of the entire population, concerning the size of the study, and also the qualitative nature of the research to gain each individual’s interpretation of the COVID-19 content exposed to on TikTok, and therefore, needs to be accessible and affordable. A sample of the population was selected as making use of the entire population is not a feasible option due to the size of the study.

Purposive sampling involves meeting a list of criteria important to the research and then sampling this portion from the overall population (Pascoe, 2014). The purpose of having used this sampling method was the intention of studying a specified group of population and its qualitative nature, the researcher was also able to ensure that each component of the sample added value to the research (Pascoe, 2014). The researcher was also able to ensure that each component of the sample added value to the research by watching each video fully first (Pascoe, 2014). Moreover, as purposive makes use of a list of criteria to qualify, it assisted the researcher in refining the population (Pascoe, 2014). As stipulated in the population, to qualify to be selected for the study, the video needed to meet the characteristics and requirements so as to add value to the research. Therefore, when selecting the sample, the researcher ensured that the videos are amongst the highest viewed videos of the three (3) trending hashtags during the period of March 2020 to July 2021, alongside the other characteristics.

3.5. Data Collection Methods

The research made use of the primary data collection method, virtual ethnography, so as to collect sufficient data regarding the narratives portrayed on TikTok about COVID-19 and what content the youth audience is consuming. The method implemented was virtual ethnography, a subset of ethnography, involving field research describing the distinct culture of TikTok video consumption attitudes, which allowed for a clearer understanding of the behavioural patterns of the young adult's cultural group in this study (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

This method is qualitative in nature and aligned with the research's aim to understand the individual's interpretation of content based on their experience and contextualisation of the situation. The data collection was conducted by the researcher, who first searched for the videos under the corresponding three (3) hashtags selected and chose between two (2) and three (3) after watching and identifying which best aligned with the characteristics. The data was collected over the span of a week, which allowed approximately 1 day for thorough collection. The researcher then wrote down what was happening every two seconds in detail on all aspects of the content, visual, sound and textual for further analysis, as well as viewing comments to see what the youth audience consuming these videos interpret. This data will form the foundation of the analysis to answer the research question. While not a data collection method, the secondary research collected via the literature review will act as substantiation to the data found through the virtual ethnography and add credibility to the study.

This method was selected for the purpose of answering the research question by collecting data related to the youth's experience on TikTok and the trending COVID-19 content in which

they consume. The use of virtual ethnography allows for the researcher to place themself in the position of the viewer to experience the platform as they might if they were the individuals being studied (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). This way, the researcher was able to immerse themself into the situation so as to see what the individuals are exposed to, which offers better context and insight into how the content consumed propagates misinformation and create harmful narratives, as suggested by the objectives. The negative aspect of this method is the anonymisation of users online, as all accounts could lack vital information needed to identify characteristics needed to qualify for the sample group (Amuomo and Odoyo, 2020). To ensure that the sample was an accurate reflection of the determined requirements, for instance, age, the researcher used accounts the explicitly stated these factors.

Secondary research was done prior to the virtual ethnography in the form of a literature review – this assisted in informing the researcher on the necessary background knowledge to select the videos that best reflect the diverse opinions on COVID-19. The researcher followed to following steps to collect the data for the study:

a. The intention of using the virtual ethnographic method was to immerse oneself into the environment of the sample being studied. For this reason, the researcher created a TikTok account, with the purpose of searching for videos under the relevant hashtags.

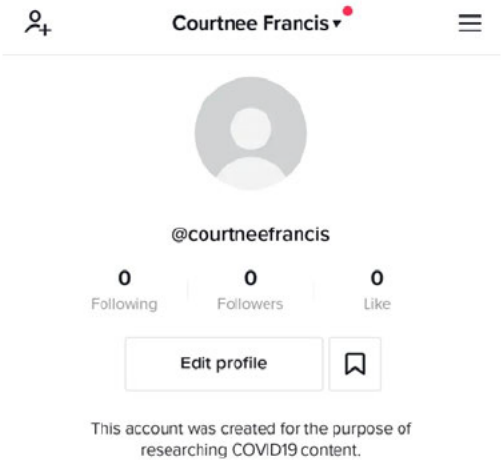
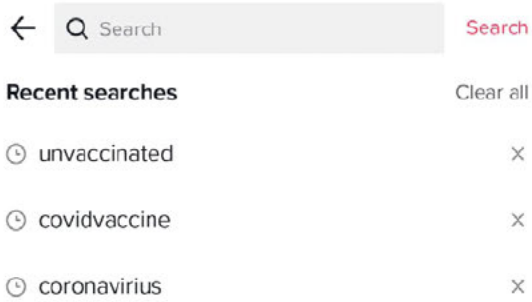


Figure 1: TikTok Account

b. The researcher then searched for the three (3) hashtags, so as to view the content and search for the most relevant videos, that matched the criteria, of the sampled population for collection and analysis.



c. After the top 10 videos under each hashtag were watched, the researcher selected two (2) to three (3) videos of each hashtag, this is due to the fact that hashtag and audio trends are often directly linked and there may be multiple videos with the exact same premise and therefore a need for the researcher to be selective. The researcher then saved them to the profile, so as to not lose them amongst the ever-changing content/trends under the hashtags.

Figure 2: Hashtag Search

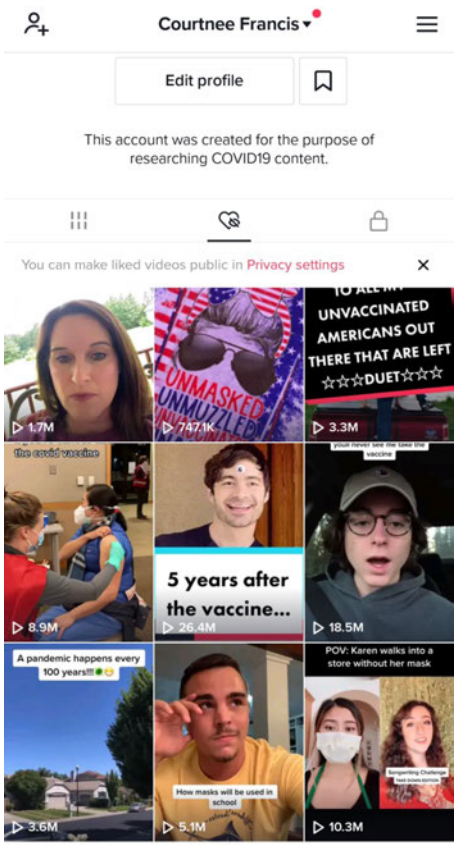


Figure 3: Saved Videos

d. First, the research took note of the various viewer statistics, which included the number of views, comments, likes, shares to justify the selection of each video for its wide audience scope. As well as the link for others to view, the nature for quick context and the sound used. This just allows for some background for readers.

- https://vm.tiktok.com/ZSJGr9xH6/
- Subject – Female 21
- Dated Posted – 14 July 2020
- Views – 10,2 million
- Likes – 2,4 million
- Comments – 12,8 thousand
- Shares – 36,4 thousand
- Nature of the video – Duet alongside another creator, musical, POV (point of view) customer service interaction, mask wearing
- Sound – Original music/composition

Figure 4: Video Statistics Example

e. The researcher then collected data from each video, individually, a detailed second-by-second explanation of what happens regarding sound, visual, text etc. in a table that was used for the data analysis.

Time	Explanation
00:00	Captioning – POV: Karen walks into a store without a mask (on video) Left (creator) – A girl in a mask wearing a Starbucks apron Right (dueted video) – A woman with the caption that says "Songwriting Challenge Take Down Edition". Individual says, "Here's a challenge, write in your own lyrics and I'll post my favourite one."

Figure 5: Detailed Explanation Example

3.6. Data Analysis Methods

The study made use of content analysis to interpret the information collected in the data collection phase of the research. The ethnographic content analysis focuses on understanding the meaning of communication, therefore, plays a key role in interpreting the data collected from the TikTok content and young adult audience, as it allows for an identification of themes and patterns to answer the research question (Maree, 2019).

This analysis method aims to uncover the underlying meaning, value and emotions within the text and visual, as TikTok is a video-based application, ethnographic content analysis allows for the researcher to interpret the connotation of the video (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014). For this reason, content analysis aligns with the study's qualitative nature and interpretivist paradigm, which values the human experience and individual value that comes with collecting, interpreting and understanding the research collected for this study.

Video content was frequently made use of during the COVID-19 pandemic, which would be found in the form of TikTok videos, many of which were used so as to communicate particular messages, many with deeper meanings. Thus, making use of data analysis methods that identify and analyse ethnographic content, such as the content analysis, will relate to the content of social media being studied and the purpose for the selection.

Appendix C – Step by Step Analysis

Implementation of the Data Analysis Method

Time	Explanation
00:00	Captioning – POV: Karen walks into a store without a mask (on video) Left (creator) – A girl in a mask wearing a Starbucks apron × Right (dueted video) – A woman with the caption that says "Songwriting Challenge Take Down Edition". Individual says, "Here's a challenge, write in your own lyrics and I'll post my favourite one."
00:02	Captioning – You know I can take you down, I've just gotta break you down Left (creator) – Facial expression of unpleasantness Right (dueted video) – Starts singing and playing the piano Individual sings, "You know I can take…"
00:04	Captioning – You know I can take you down, I've just gotta break you down Left (creator) – Reaches for her mask → major symbolism to the message Right (dueted video) – Facial expression of conviction Individual sings, "…I just gotta break…"
00:06	Captioning – You know I can take you down, I've just gotta break you down Left (creator) – Takes off her mask Right (dueted video) – Staring at the camera Continues singing Individual sings, "…you down." Captioning – Ma'am just please go wear your mask. It's not that difficult a task. Left (creator) – Starts singing Individual sings, "Ma'am…"
00:08	Captioning – Ma'am just please go wear your mask. It's not that difficult a task. Left (creator) – Continues singing Individual sings, "…just please go wear your mask. It's not that difficult …" Right (dueted video) – Looks away
00:10	Captioning – Ma'am just please go wear your mask. It's not that difficult a task. Left (creator) – Continues singing Individual sings, "…a task." Right (dueted video) – Looks back at camera and continues to play piano.

Karen - not the individual's name but a common term used

× indication of food industry / customer service workers challenges

woman seems not directly connected to covid content → creator uses it as a way to express her message creatively

negative experience = Karen associated with negative things

! the same scene

seems to have expressed this before
↳ repeated behaviour

"difficult" indicates that the "Karens" make a big fuss

00:12	Captioning – You think I'm scared Left (creator) – Looking at camera Right (dueted video) – Starts singing Individual sings, "You think I'm scared." Captioning – You think I'm scared No Left (creator) – Starts singing Individual sings, "No."	element of fear (lacked) ↳ for covid ↳ authority / rules
00:14	Captioning – You think I'm scared No But I think you're dumb Left (creator) – Scratching her head with facial expressions of attitude * Individual sings, "But I think you're dumb." Captioning – Well I hope that you're prepared Left (creator) – Looking at camera with facial expression of attitude * Right (dueted video) – Starts singing Individual sings, "Well I...."	the use of "dumb" signifies the creators perception of these "Karens" actions * visibly annoyed by the interaction
00:16	Captioning – Well I hope that you're prepared Left (creator) – Looking at camera with facial expression of attitude * Right (dueted video) – Continues singing Individual sings, "...hope that you're prepared." Captioning – I am. You're not the first Karen on the run. Left (creator) – Starts singing Individual sings, "I am."	repetition of the phrase and ∴ ↳ negative experience ↳ "dumb perception" ↳ "difficult" interaction
00:18	Captioning – I am. You're not the first Karen on the run. Left (creator) – Continues singing Individual sings, " You're not the first Karen on the run." Right (dueted video) – Looks at camera and continues to play piano.	experienced this before ↳ common encounter
00:20	Captioning – Have you heard of herd immunity? And wearing masks to protect the community? ↳ repeated symbolism Left (creator) – Starts singing Individual sings, "Have you heard of herd immunity? And..." Right (dueted video) – Looks at camera and continues to play piano.	"mask" is repeated but given context on how it is important and why it needs to be worn ("protect the community") another important phrase used in conversations about covid-19 ↳ educational phrase? (maybe people don't know about it)
00:22	Captioning – Have you heard of herd immunity? And wearing masks to protect	

00:22	Captioning – Have you heard of herd immunity? And wearing masks to protect the community? Left (creator) – Continues singing Individual sings, "... wearing masks to protect the community?" Right (dueted video) – Looks at camera and continues to play piano.	continuation of the same scene as 00:20
00:24	Captioning – Keep ourselves clean while preventing the spread of COVID 19 Left (creator) – Continues singing Individual sings, "Keep ourselves clean while…" Right (dueted video) – Looks at camera and continues to play piano.	"the spread" is another covid related phrase and links to the creators message of wearing a mask o "keeping clean" – although not solely linked to covid can be considered another education aspect
00:26	Captioning – Keep ourselves clean while preventing the spread of COVID 19 Left (creator) – Continues singing Individual sings, "… preventing the spread of COVID 19" Right (dueted video) – Looks at camera and continues to play piano.	
00:28	Captioning – You don't know what you're saying Left (creator) – Looks at camera Right (dueted video) – Starts singing Individual sings, "You don't know what you're saying." Captioning – A dangerous game you're playing Left (creator) – Angry facial expressions Right (dueted video) – Continues singing Individual sings, "A dangerous game..."	this part although part of the dueted video's challenge can show the opposing sides of who's "RIGHT" regarding COVID-19
00:30	Captioning – A dangerous game you're playing. If I were I'd go Cover your mouth Left (creator) – ~~Angy~~ facial expressions Angry Right (dueted video) – Continues singing Individual sings, "... game you're playing." Left (creator) – Sings at the same time Individual sings, "Cover your mouth." Right (dueted video) – Continues singing Individual sings, "... If I were I'd go."	once again showing unpleasant emotions towards the situation Symbolic of putting on the mask and potentially keeping quiet as the creator has continually shown distaste to the person
00:32	Left (creator) – Continues singing note	

00:34	Captioning – No really go So, what do you know? Left (creator) – Continues singing Individual sings, "No really go." Right (dueted video) – Looks at camera and continues to play piano.
00:36	Captioning – No really go So, what do you know? Left (creator) – Pointing at the camera Right (dueted video) – Starts singing at the same time Individual sings, "So what do you know."
00:38	Captioning – The manager and she wants you out! Left (creator) – Individual sings, "The manager." Right (dueted video) – Looks at camera and continues to play piano.
00:40	Captioning – The manager and she wants you out! Left (creator) – Pointing behind her Individual sings, "…and she wants you out!" Right (dueted video) – Looks at camera and continues to play piano.
00:42	Captioning – It's not that hard to breathe. Inhale, exhale or see you later [waving emoji]. Left (creator) – Covering her face with her own mask Individual sings, " It's not that hard to…" Right (dueted video) – Looks away from camera and continues to play piano.
00:44	Captioning – It's not that hard to breathe. Inhale, exhale or see you later [waving emoji]. Left (creator) – Dropping mask Individual sings, "…breathe. Inhale, exhale or…" Right (dueted video) – Looks away from camera and continues to play piano.
00:46	Captioning – It's not that hard to breathe. Inhale, exhale or see you later [waving emoji]. Left (creator) – Waving goodbye Individual sings, "… see you later." Right (dueted video) –

Showing opposing sides again of who's "RIGHT" or "WRONG"

"no really go" can mean the creator is tired of talking to the "Karen" and that they need to leave for not following rules

An authority figure and connection to the "Karen" phrase
↳ ask for manager
· belittling industry workers

link back to the "no really go" used in 00:34 + 00:36
– lack of following rules

a link to the debate of whether masks are good or not → antimasters, antivax

once again demonstrating the importantance of the mask to her message

follow the rules and wear your mask or leave

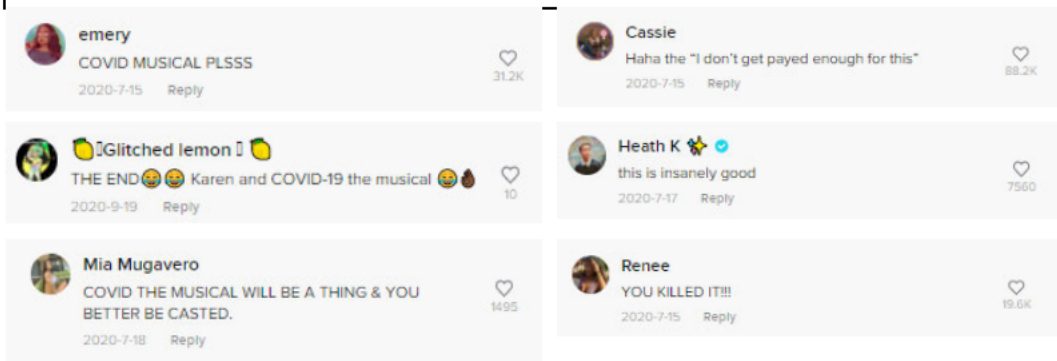
visual symbolism

See above
↳ "I win" type of action & saying "you should've just followed the rules"

00:46	Captioning – It's not that hard to breathe. Inhale, exhale or see you later [waving emoji]. Left (creator) – Waving goodbye Individual sings, "… see you later." Right (dueted video) – Looks away from camera and continues to play piano. Captioning – You can't vent to me on a ventilator [nail painting emoji]. Left (creator) – Individual sings, "You can't vent to me…" Right (dueted video) – Looks away from camera and continues to play piano	escalating the severity of the matter ↳ if they don't start taking COVID seriously this could happen
00:48	Captioning – You can't vent to me on a ventilator [nail painting emoji]. Left (creator) – Individual sings, "…on a ventilator" Right (dueted video) – Looks away from camera and continues to play piano	visual symbolism of an "I told you so" moment
00:50	Captioning – Please Karen, just wear your mask [mask wearing emoji]. Left (creator) – Scrunching her face Individual sings, "Please Karen…" Right (dueted video) – Looks away from camera and continues to play piano	reuse of "Karen" reiterates all associated emotions and connotations
00:52	Captioning – Please Karen, just wear your mask [mask wearing emoji]. Left (creator) – Scrunching her face Individual sings, "…just wear your mask." Right (dueted video) – Looks away from camera and continues to play piano	visual symbolism of the message "just" indicates frustration ↳ had to repeat the mask multiple times throughout
00:54	Captioning – No [angry emoji] [clown emoji]. Left (creator) – Looking away from camera Right (dueted video) – Individual sings, "No."	visual symbolism from the creators perspective of response · angry – annoyed · clown – view as a fool
00:56	Captioning – I don't get paid enough for this Left (creator) – While putting mask back on and walking away Individuals says "I don't get paid enough for this." Right (dueted video) – Plays final note on piano	creators position as a service industry worker and dealing with customer complaints frustration over situation
00:58	END OF VIDEO	

Viewer comments:

- All comments were positive to the creator's performance
- Found the content very creative and engaging
- Many comments found the idea of a covid-19/2020 themed musical enticing



Video 2 – Appendix E

Time	Explanation
00:00	Captioning – How masks will be used in school (on video) Creator – Laughing while looking away from the camera Audio – "5, 4, 3…"
00:02	Captioning – How masks will be used in school (on video) Creator – Laughing while looking away from the camera Audio – "…2, 1, watch me." Captioning – Elementary school (on video) Creator – Holding a face mask and shaking it around Audio – "Level up."
00:04	Captioning – Elementary school (on video) Creator – Holding a face mask and shaking it around Audio – "Level up." Creator – Chewing on a face mask while looking away from the camera Audio – "Level up, level up."
00:06	Captioning – Elementary school (on video) Creator – Chewing on a face mask while looking away from the camera Audio – "Level up, level up." Captioning – Middle school (on video) Creator – Wearing a face mask over his eyes Audio – "Level up, level up."
00:08	Captioning – Middle school (on video) Creator – Wearing a face mask over his eyes Audio – "Level up, level up." Creator – Holding two face masks over his chest so as to imitate a bra, while laughing Audio – "Level up, level up."
00:10	Captioning – Middle school (on video) Creator – Holding two face masks over his chest so as to imitate a bra, while laughing Audio – "Oh this song..." Captioning – High school (on video) Creator – Wearing a mask and then taking the mask off in an annoyed manner while shaking his head, letting it dangle from one ear Audio – "… is so yummy."
00:12	Captioning – High school (on video) Creator – Wearing a mask and then taking the mask off in an annoyed manner while shaking his head, letting it dangle from one ear Audio – "Oh this song is so yummy." Captioning – College (on video) Creator – Using a face mask to hold a cold beer as the individual cheers to the camera before taking a sip Audio – "You know you want..."
00:14	Captioning – College (on video) Creator – Drinks from beer can that is being held with a face mask Audio – "...this yummy."
00:16	END OF VIDEO

video created for entertainment purposes in relatable circumstances

song choice appears to be related to trending sounds at that moment and not to covid

context for action

demonstrating how elementy kids will behave with the use of masks (5-10 yrs old)

not going to understand the need to wear a mask and will most likely play with it

demonstrating how middle school kids will behave with the use of masks (11-13 yrs old)

this age group often means a level of immuturity + joking such as the "mask bra"

demonstrating how high school kids will behave with the use of masks (14-18 yrs old)

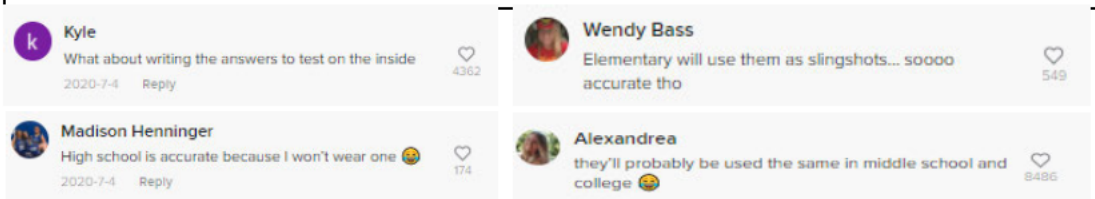
as this age group is older they have their own beliefs + thoughts on wearing a mask

a common behaviour of individuals during the pandemic

the eldest age group who may show the most disdain to wearing a mask, especially as college/uni is the party years

Viewer comments:

- Majority of comments contributed to the conversation
- Shared experience that many could relate to and laugh at
- All comments agreed though that no matter the age, most school kids would not wear their mask but use it for other things in their life



Video 3 – Appendix F

Time	Explanation
00:00	Captioning – A pandemic happens every 100 years!!! [virus emoji] [mask wearing emoji] (on video) Creator – [not in video] zooms into the sky over a suburban neighbourhood street Audio - instrumental
00:02	Captioning – A pandemic happens every 100 years!!! [virus emoji] [mask wearing emoji] (on video) Creator – Screen filled with blue sky Audio – instrumental Captioning – The Plague 1720 (on video) Creator – Static image of a plague doctor from the 1720's with writing around the image Audio – "Someone…"
00:04	Captioning – The Plague 1720 (on video) Creator – Static image of a plague doctor from the 1720's with writing around the image Audio – "…wrote this song…" Captioning – Cholera Outbreak 1820 (on video) Creator – Static artwork of a scene during the cholera outbreak where a patient is laying in a bed dying with individuals surrounding the person Audio – "…before…"
00:06	Captioning – Spanish Flu 1920 (on video) Creator – Static image of a room full of hospital beds and doctors/nurses wearing masks attending to patients Audio – "…and I could tell you…"
00:08	Captioning – Coronavirus 2020 (on video) Creator – Static image of a the COVID-19 virus spore Audio – "…where it's from…"
00:10	Captioning – What's next in 2120 (on video) Creator – [not in video] zooms into the sky over a road while in a car Audio – "…4, 7 ,3, 6, 2."
00:12	END OF VIDEO

visual symbolism on the topic of the video

the topic of the video appears to present as a conspiracy theory (get people thinking)

song does not relate to covid but sounds very spooky → adding to the conspiracy theory atmosphere

the use of the exact 1?20 aids further to the conspiracy that the virus is "planned"

↳ even though spanish flu started 1918

↳ cholera - 1817

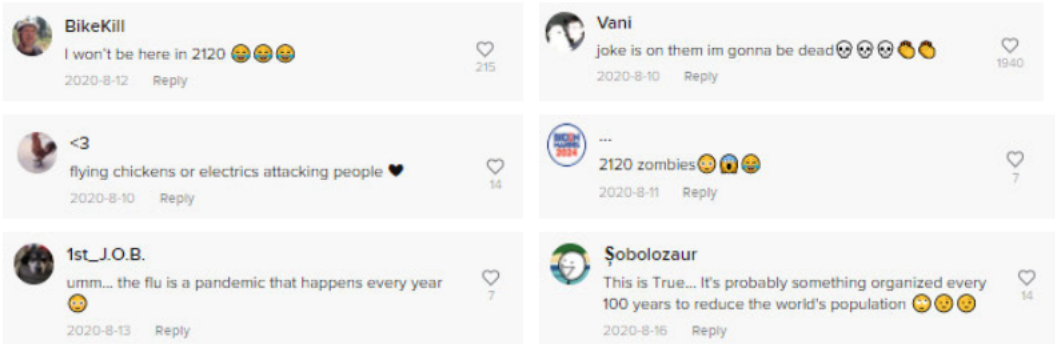
the creator chose to use images of despair/illness for the other outbreaks but just + the virus spore for covid → could be downplaying covid?

anticipating a future outbreak

↳ adding to the conspiracy theory

Viewer comments:

- Comments were mixed, but all contributed to the conversation
- Most did not care as they said it would too far in the future for them to know
- Some made guesses on what would happen
- Some started questioning the conspiracy theory



#covidvaccine

Video 1 – Appendix G

Time	Explanation
00:00	Captioning – I have covid right now but youll never see me take the vaccine (on video) Creator – Individual sitting in the car wearing a cap and glasses talking the camera Audio – "I have covid right now but you'll…"
00:02	Captioning – I have covid right now but youll never see me take the vaccine (on video) Creator – Individual sitting in the car wearing a cap and glasses talking the camera Audio – "…never see me taking the covid vaccine."
00:04	Captioning – If you really trust the c0vid vaccine listen to this and I'll change your mind (on video) Creator – Individual sitting in the car wearing a cap and glasses talking the camera Audio – "If you really trust the COVID vaccine…"
00:06	Captioning – If you really trust the c0vid vaccine listen to this and I'll change your mind (on video) Creator – Individual sitting in the car wearing a cap and glasses talking the camera Audio – "… listen to this and I'll…"
00:08	Captioning – If you really trust the c0vid vaccine listen to this and I'll change your mind (on video) Creator – Individual sitting in the car wearing a cap and glasses talking the camera Audio – "… change your mind." Captioning – Every single person that originally took the smallpox vaccine in 1796 (on video) Creator – Individual sitting in the car wearing a cap and glasses talking the camera, hand shaking to the side Audio – "Every single…"
00:10	Captioning – Every single person that originally took the small pox vaccine in 1796 (on video) Creator – Individual sitting in the car wearing a cap and glasses talking the camera, angrily scrunches face Audio – "…person that originally took the small…"
00:12	Captioning – Every single person that originally took the small pox vaccine in 1796 (on video) Creator – Individual sitting in the car wearing a cap and glasses talking the camera, angrily scrunches face Audio – "…pox vaccine in 1796…"
00:14	Captioning – Is dead now (on video) Creator – Individual sitting in the car wearing a cap and glasses talking the camera, punctuates words with head Audio – "…Is dead now."
00:16	Creator – Individual sitting in the car wearing a cap and glasses talking the camera, pulls mouth into thin line and cocks head Audio – Nothing
00:18	Captioning – Good luck sheep (on video) Creator – Individual sitting in the car wearing a cap and glasses talking the camera, punctuates words with head Audio – "Goodluck sheep."
00:19	END OF VIDEO

individual is aware of the effects of covid but still won't take the vaccine
→ indication they view side effects worse than the virus itself

While the video is intended to be satirical, it does not show any obvious visual indicators → presents as other videos

sparks curiosity + makes people think + reconsider

common on tiktok to use other symbols to spell words
→ tiktok is possibly flagging content that uses words such as covid

"I can convince you not to get it" kind of mentality

refferal to another pandemic which suggests "this has happened before" to use as an example despite it occurring in 1796

visibly angry just speaking about people taking vaccine

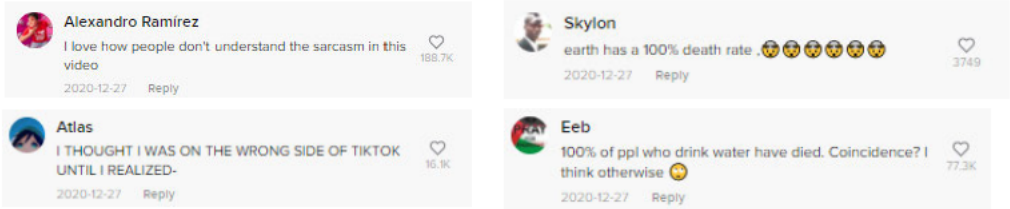
first indication of satire but those who do not realise 1796 was 225 years ago may not catch on as the use of "dead" ignites a fear that may already be there regarding side effects of the vaccines

"mic drop" moment, the pause is implied to give the listener time to reconsider this new information

phrase commonly used by anti vax to indicate those who follow what they are told to do are sheep
→ prompt to make their own decisions and have their own thoughts

Viewer comments:

- Comment were majority playing along with the creator's sarcasm
- Some pointed out how they almost fought with the creator's logic and then realised



Video 2 – Appendix H

Time	Explanation	
00:00	Captioning – 5 years from now (on video) Creator – Individual walks up to house front door carrying a storage box	a look into the future - predictions
	Captioning – Hey, welcome to the neighbourhood (on video) Creator – Individual in a different outfit as the neighbour Audio – "Hey..."	life is seemingly normal
00:02	Captioning – Hey, welcome to the neighbourhood (on video) Creator – Individual in a different outfit as the neighbour holding a beer Audio – "…welcome to the neighbourhood."	
00:04	Captioning – Hey! How's it going? (on video) Creator – Individual (carrying the storage box) moves his hair out the way to reveal a third eye on his forehead. Which is then zoomed into a portrait shot of the subject. Audio – "Hey! How's it going?"	first negative prediction ↳ side effect gone bad
00:06	Captioning – Moderna? (on video) Creator – Individual (as the neighbour) lifts his beer and points to his forehead Audio – "Moderna?"	brand of COVID vaccine the question indicates that the additional eye is a result of the vaccine and the name of the brand indicate it is a common thing
	Captioning – Yeah… (on video) Creator – Individual (carrying the storage box) laughs shyly Audio – "Yeah."	
00:08	Captioning – Astra Zenenca! (on video) Creator – Individual (as the neighbour) with his opposite hand reaches behind him and grabs a tail that's attached to him laughing and shaking it Audio – " Astra Zenenca."	brand of COVID vaccine same as above, creator indicates the Astra Zenenca brand of vaccine is the cause of his tail ↳ another negative prediction
00:10	Captioning – Nice (on video) Creator – Individual (carrying the storage box) laughs nodding his head Audio – "Nice."	a sense of common understanding and lightness to the acceptance of the situation
	Creator – Individual (as the neighbour) continues to shake his tail and laugh while making funny noises	making a joke out of the situation
00:12	Captioning – At least it's not Pfizer (on video) Creator – Individual (carrying the storage box) scrunching his face and starts making mocking sounds and facial expressions Audio – " At least it's not Pfizer, you know."	brand of COVID vaccine an indication that there was a "better" vaccine to take
00:14	Creator – Individual (carrying the storage box) continues to scrunch his face and starts making mocking sounds and facial expressions	demonstrating the negative side effects of the 3rd vaccine mentioned
00:16	Captioning – Totally! (on video) Creator – Individual (as the neighbour) facial expressions of complete agreement and joins in to make fun with face scrunching, making mocking sounds and facial expressions Audio – " Totally."	relief?
00:18	Switching interaction between Individual (carrying the storage box) and Individual (as the neighbour) as they mock and make sounds while laughing	the mockery suggests a Moderna + Astra Zenenca supremacy as the individuals mock Pfizer side effects
00:20	Switching interaction between Individual (carrying the storage box) and Individual (as the neighbour) as they mock and make sounds while laughing	
00:22	Creator – Individual (carrying the storage box) laughs to the side Audio – "Yeah."	
00:24	Creator – Individual (carrying the storage box) laughs loudly and then gasps looking to the side in panic	fearful situation
	Captioning – What is it? (on video) Creator – Individual (carrying the storage box) goes serious and jumps to look at the direction the neighbour is Audio – "What is it?"	
	Captioning – It's J&J! (on video) Creator – Individual (as the neighbour) shouts in panic Audio – " It's J&J."	brand of COVID vaccine
00:26	Captioning – It's J&J! (on video) Creator – Individual (as the neighbour) runs away off camera	fear linked to this brand indicates the most negative side effects
	Creator – Individual as a third person, who is not wearing a shirt and is walking like he imitating a monkey/someone deranged	side effects that cannot be accepted and individuals fear their presence ↳ while this video is also intended to be comedy, the themes tap into fears that many have regarding the vaccines
00:28	END OF VIDEO	

4 secs of mocking

Viewer comments:

f. Video with the most mixed comments, but all contributed to the conversation
g. Most contributed to the satirical content with funny answers
h. Some added their views on vaccines and whether they'd get it
i. Others commented what vaccine they've gotten
j. There were also comments from anti-vaccine individuals

Lori tha great
Not me I'll wait to see what side effects those that took it shows up. No thank you I'll just keep doing what I been doing, mask distance etc.
4-28 Reply
1146

Anna Bizyayeva
😂😂😂 and then there's going to be the absolute normal group of us who refused all of the above
4-28 Reply
1339

1mikeyg1
Yah I think I'll be fine without one. 👍
4-28 Reply
477

Lynn
This is the best vaccine vid I've seen yet!! And here I thought I would grow a third arm 😂 Extra eye will do! 😊
4-26 Reply
39.9K

pinupdollashleymarie
I eat McDonald's. These vaccines don't scare me LOL
4-28 Reply
20.8K

kyleb517
I'm still waiting for my microchip to be activated😉
4-26 Reply
1329

Mary Hargreaves
I got Pfizer. We're not supposed to talk about it, but we're now one giant group mind.
4-26 Reply
12.2K

APPLE HAPPY x-files
nooo i got the Pzeir one 😂😂 and unfortunately my husband got JJ 😂😂😂
4-28 Reply
1295

#unvaccinated

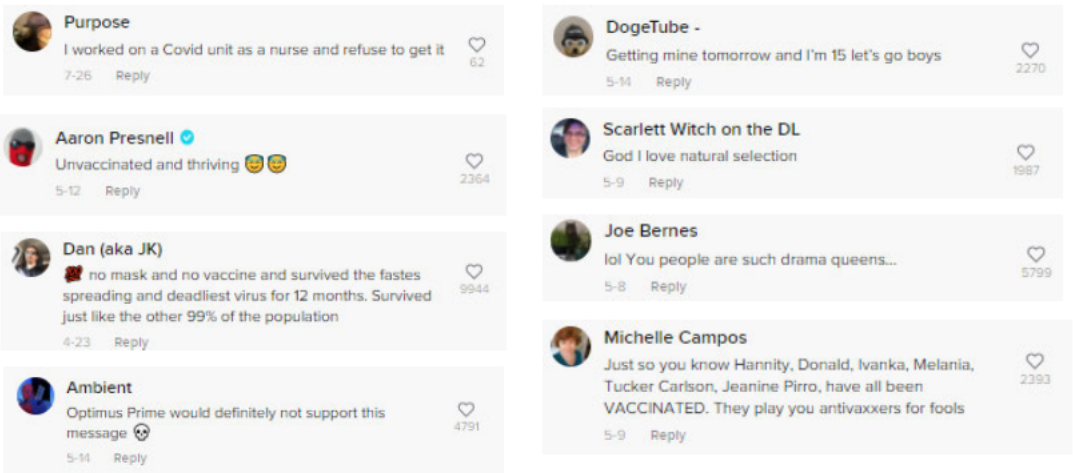
Video 1 – Appendix I

Time	Explanation
00:00	Captioning – To all my unvaccinated Americans out there that are left (on video) Creator – Individual climbs onto the back of a van and stands with his arms crossed, back faced to camera Audio – "I am Optimus Prime…"
00:02	Captioning – To all my unvaccinated Americans out there that are left (on video) Creator – Individual stands on van with his arms crossed, back faced to camera Audio – "…and I send this…"
00:04	Captioning – To all my unvaccinated Americans out there that are left (on video) Creator – Continued pose. Audio – "…message to any surviving autoboots…"
00:06	Captioning – To all my unvaccinated Americans out there that are left (on video) Creator – Continued pose. Audio – "…taking refuge among…"
00:08	Captioning – To all my unvaccinated Americans out there that are left (on video) Creator – Continued pose. Audio – "…the stars."
00:10	Captioning – To all my unvaccinated Americans out there that are left (on video) Creator – Continued pose. Audio – "We are here."
00:12	Captioning – To all my unvaccinated Americans out there that are left (on video) Creator – Continued pose. Audio – " We are waiting."
00:14	END OF VIDEO

- unvaccinated → those who CHOOSE not to be vaccinated
- Americans → American unity (pride)
- Individual stands on van with his arms crossed, back faced to camera → an act of defiance and boldness
- that are left → almost implying people are being coherced into getting the vaccine and there are those remaining who haven't been fooled yet → surviving
- surviving autoboots → almost implying people are being coherced into getting the vaccine and there are those remaining who haven't been fooled yet → surviving
- refuge → refuge is often used in cases of war or when an individual has no country to call their own → the use of this sound suggests the creator implies a war on their right, especially the use of "America" which as always represented unity → there is now a divide in the country
- "We are here." → connected to the theme of war that there are those who are still fighting "we" and that the unvaccinated are still exist → "we are here"
- waiting. → connected to above, linked to war and there mission to fight and welcome those who unvaccinated to dwell in a community on tiktok of individuals who are all unvaccinated

Viewer comments:

- Despite TikTok displaying content relevant to each individual, majority of the comments stood against the message of the video
- While there was fair share of people who agreed with being unvaccinated, it was still within the minority
- There were health care workers who shared they don't want to get the vaccine – standing against much of the secondary research where doctors/nurses promoted the vaccine and the science behind it



Video 2 – Appendix J

Time	Explanation
00:00	Visual – A print press that opens to reveal a shirt with a sticker contact paper covering the final design Audio – "Bom bom bom"
00:02	Visual – Creator begins to pull off the contact paper from the shirt Audio – "Bom bom bom"
00:04	Visual – Creator continues to pull off the contact paper from the shirt to reveal the final design Audio – "Nah nah nah nah"
00:06	Visual – Creator zooms in and out of the blue and red design which says "unmasked, unmuzzled, unvaccinated, unafraid" which the American flag in the background and an outline of a person wearing sunglasses and an American bandana. Audio – "Nah nah nah nah"
00:08	Visual – Creator holds the shirt in a ball in their first outside before throwing it up into the air where it transitions to it perfectly laying on the ground in the sun Audio – "Nah nah nah hey"
00:10	Visual – Creator zooms in and out of the blue and red design, on the floor, which says "unmasked, unmuzzled, unvaccinated, unafraid" which the American flag in the background and an outline of a person wearing sunglasses and an American bandana. Audio – "Nah nah nah nah"
00:12	Visual – Creator zooms in and out of the blue and red design which now has white accents and says "unmasked, unmuzzled, unvaccinated, unafraid" which the American flag in the background and an outline of a person wearing sunglasses and an American bandana. Audio – "Nah nah nah nah"
00:14	END OF VIDEO

use of sound appears to be for trending audio purposes rather than because of a connection to covid-19

the selection of these words are extremely impactful to those who read it → can't help but agree impact

unmasked/unmuzzled - indicates that they have been restricted by the mask wearing requirement

unvaccinated/unafraid - they are not scared of covid even as unvaccinated individuals → they are stronger

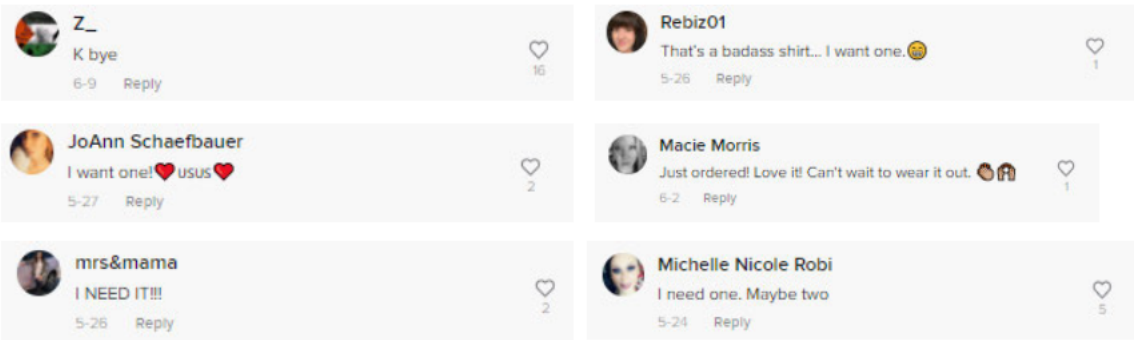
the creation of shirts indicate that people who are unvaccinated want to proudly wear their status in the form of merchandise

the repetition of American visual demonstrates the significance of the American freedom and unity

once again repeating the usa flag colours to symbolise the freewill individuals have as Americans to do what they want

Viewer comments:

- Almost all comments show massive support for this business and want to purchase the shirt
- Only one comment does not seem to agree with the content of the video
- Comments were positive towards anti-vaccinated and anti-mask wearing



Video 3 – Appendix K

Time	Explanation
00:00	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera Audio – " Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go!"
00:02	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera Audio – "Just got a call from my child's school…"
00:04	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera Audio – "…they're gonna be giving COVID vaccines…"
00:06	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera, and mock smiles and pauses for dramatic effect Audio – "…for our convenience…"
00:08	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera Audio – "…at the school starting next week."
00:10	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera, shaking her head Audio – "Yeah, um…"
00:12	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera Audio – "… my child will not be doing that…"
00:14	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera Audio – "…and never will. Of course they stated it's…"
00:16	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera Audio – "…not mandatory and I'll tell you…"
00:18	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera Audio – "…the second it is, my child…"
00:20	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera Audio – "…will be home schooled. An I'll tell you another thing…"
00:22	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera Audio – "…they better make sure that permission slips…"
00:24	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera Audio – "…are being signed by parents and not by the child…"
00:26	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera Audio – "…or by someone else because these kids are 12…"
00:28	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera Audio – "…years and older and they're fully capable…"
00:30	Captioning – Ok parents! Here we [expletive] go! (on video) Creator – Individual is sitting outside while talking to the camera Audio – "…of signing it."
00:32	END OF VIDEO

wants to talk about something scandolous

alerting parents

easy administration
↳ reach more people

does not believe the suggested phrasing of "convience" and displays veiled anger towards this

Americans are now vaccinating the younger demographic - kids

visibly upset by this news

already decided for their child whether they will recieve the vaccine or not

"never will" implies that her as a mother will continue to ensure her children do not get vaccinated even if they have the legal ability to decide for themselves

the creator will go to any length to ensure that her children do not get the vaccine even if it means they are taken out of school
no vaccine > education

ensure parental consent

the parent has the final say even if the child wants the vaccine
↳ under age

the creator refers to an older segment of children many of which are developing their own opinions and being influenced outside of their parents views

this fraud of the child signing slips can go either:
↳ parents who want their child to get it but the child doesn't want to and vice versa

Viewer comments:

- Majority of comments show support for the creator's message and agree they will not let their children get the vaccine
- Of these comments, many suggest that schools will purposely inject children without parental consent
- Other comments, very few, speak against her message by explaining they have the vaccine and are healthy

DogInABeanie
cov vaccines r literally one of the safest in history 🤦‍♀️
7-17 Reply 127

Kristina Mccloske188
There is nothing wrong with getting the vaccine. I got mine and I'm very healthy.
7-14 Reply 266

Claudia Cabral
My kid got it and she made her own decision proud mom living in Massachusetts our kids learn at a yougage it's not about them it's about saving lives
7-14 Reply 185

Angela Meck
They are going to force your child without your permission. Do not be deceived!
7-12 Reply 487

CJ1985
I completely agree! My daughter will NOT be getting the vaccine! We'll remain UNVAXXED thanks!
7-31 Reply 1615

Regina Bright
Take them out now you know they're not gonna ask permission
7-12 Reply 1162

malyndarichardson
School is for Education not for Medical
7-13 Reply 889

Candice Weese-Owens
Until we conclude the long term human studies (more than 5 years) it's still unsafe as far as I'm concerned.
7-26 Reply 240

user2034007767458
DO NOT let your kid go to school that week. They HAVE and WILL claim it was a "mixup" and give it to them anyway.
7-14 Reply 132

Coded Table of Findings Summary Table

	Key phrases	Symbolism	Facial/body language
		#coronavirus	
Video 1:	• Karen • Karen • Herd immunity • Preventing the spread of COVID 19 • The manager • It's not that hard to breathe • Ventilator • Karen	• Starbucks apron • Mask • Mask • Mask • Mask • Wearing masks to protect the community • Cover your mouth • Covering her face with her own mask • [waving emoji] • Waving goodbye • [nail painting emoji] • [mask wearing emoji] • [angry emoji] [clown emoji]	• Facial expression of unpleasantness • Facial expressions of attitude • Angry facial expressions • While putting mask back on and walking away
Video 2:	-	• Face mask and shaking it around • Chewing on a face mask • Wearing a face mask over his eyes • Holding two face masks over his chest so as to imitate a bra • Wearing a mask and then taking the mask off in an annoyed manner • Using a face mask to hold a cold beer • Drinks from beer can that is being held with a face mask	• Letting it dangle from one ear
Video 3:	-	• [virus emoji] [mask wearing emoji] • Static image of a plague doctor from the 1720's • Static artwork of a scene during the cholera outbreak • Static image of a room full of hospital beds and doctors/nurses • Static image of a the COVID-19 virus spore	-
		#covidvaccine	
Video 1:	• Never see me taking the covid vaccine • Dead • Sheep	• c0vid • I'll change your mind	• Angrily scrunches face • Pulls mouth into thin line and cocks head • Punctuates words with head
Video 2:	• Moderna?	• 5 years from now	• Continues to shake his tail

	• Astra Zenenca! • It's J&J • Pfizer	• Third eye on his forehead • Moderna? • Astra Zenenca! • Grabs a tail that's attached to him • Panic • It's J&J • Deranged	• Continues to scrunch his face and starts making mocking sounds and facial expressions • Facial expressions of complete agreement
#unvaccinated			
Video 1:	• Unvaccinated	• Americans • That are left • Surviving • Refuge • We are here • Waiting	• Individual stands on van with his arms crossed, back faced to camera
Video 2:	• unmasked, unmuzzled, unvaccinated, unafraid	• Shirt • American flag • American bandana • Blue and red design • White accents	-
Video 3:	• Child's school • Home schooled • Permission slips	• Never will • Signed by parents and not by the child • 12 years and older	• Mock smiles • Pauses for dramatic effect • Shaking her head

Table 1: Coded Table of Findings

4. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Presented in the above table are the coded findings from the eight (8) TikTok, which have been categorised into three (3) themes.

- The first theme is key phrases (colour coded yellow), which consists of wording, text visuals and audio choices by the content's creator that aids in the narrative they are aiming to convey. These phrases are either a word or expression that is directly linked to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the individual's interpretation of the matter. The findings are a collection of both negative and positive connotations, leaning towards more of an undesirable favour.
- The second theme revolves around the symbolism of different elements appearing in the video, this could be anything shown or said that had a deeper meaning than just being connected to COVID-19. This concerns aspects that could be linked to the value system of the individual or another social cause. While most of these were still linked to COVID-19, such as the use of "mask several times", it was not just mentioning the mask but the freedom of expression to not wear one or concerns over public health encouraging others to use the face covering.
- The last theme is facial expression or body language, the physical movement of the individual that can speak when words aren't being used. Much of the movements portrayed in these videos demonstrated imitation of others, whether through mockery or demonstration. Facial expressions played a large role in much of the content, as it was a key indicator to which side of the argument the individual stood – pro-mask/pro-vaccine or anti-mask/antivaxx.

4.1. Summary of Presented Findings

Figure 6: Word Cloud

The above image demonstrates a summarised version of the Coded Table of Findings, which highlights the most frequented words mentioned from the findings. The top five (five) most

frequented words:

1. Mask/s – 17 times
2. Face/d – 10 times
3. Emoji – 7 times
4. Facial-expression/s – 6 times
5. Covid – 5 times

This assists the researcher in identifying the core conversation topics and how this content leads to misinformation regarding COVID-19 on TikTok, amongst the youth (18 – 30).

4.2. Interpretation of Findings in Context

Two (2) of the five (5) most frequented words relate directly to the action of wearing masks, an indication of a key topic discussion amongst COVID-19 content on TikTok. The other two (2) relate to visual aspects that contribute to the conversation that may lack words or express the individual's standpoint regarding the topic on a video-based platform. Of the groupings identified from the overall top 50 most frequented words, the top three (3) categories:

1. Attitudes towards Masks
2. Attitudes towards Vaccinations
3. Attitudes towards COVID-19 in general

Masks

The 'Masks' section will elaborate on the discussion regarding mask-wearing during the COVID-19 pandemic, by further expanding on sub-topics Attitudes and Behaviours linked to masks. Of the eight (8) videos, four (4) within the sample mention masks as part of the dialogue or through visual representation.

Attitudes towards Masks

These videos were from two of the selected hashtags and had a mixed response towards the attitude of masks, however, the overall emotion can be interpreted as anger from a 2-way divided side. On one side, is a pro-mask stance, where individuals see masks as a moral decision to protect the community, a responsibility that is expected of them (Chan, 2020). Whereas, on the other side, anti-mask narrative focuses on freedom of bodily autonomy, and how wearing masks infringes on rights (Chan, 2020). This perspective is particularly popular amongst Americans (United States of America), another frequented word in the Summary Word Cloud.

Of the videos from the sample, Video 1 showed explicit anger towards individuals who do not wear masks or wear it incorrectly. This individual used words such as "dramatic" and "Karen" when addressing the anti-masker, their choice of words was not only critical but informative, while reflecting on the consequences of not wearing a mask. This was the only video amongst the eight (8) that offered informative content that was accurate, to what government-approved sites such as World Health Organisation (WHO). WHO discusses 'herd immunity' as the protection from a virus or disease that occurs when the overall population is immune indirectly – which the individual describes in the video as "protecting the community". This could be due to the fact, that many service workers are expected to wear masks for the entirety of their shift, for the comfort of the customers (Cauterucci, 2021). However, when many of these customers choose not to wear one themselves, despite mask mandates, service industry employees often find themselves in the line of fire when asking employees to follow the rules, hence the use of Karen, a popular term on TikTok. Karen is used as a way to describe a woman, usually Caucasian, who behaves in a manner that stems from privilege and is often associated with speaking to managers so as to belittle service employees (Nagesh, 2020).

Video 3 has visual content related to mask-wearing and remains neutral regarding the standpoint. The first has the use of an emoji wearing a mask, a way to express the topic of the video without using words, as well as images of various plagues throughout the years, with individuals wearing a mask. The use of these images assists in demonstrating to the audience a common pattern through history, which brought much panic amongst the comments. WHO mentioned (in Veljanovski, 2021), that these videos claiming a planned viral pandemic every 100 years creates more uncertainty around the issue and lack of trust from government-endorsed sources, which provide valuable information. This could be from the interpretation that in an information-dense space, a vacuum of data is created which allows for rumours to fill the space, such as conspiracy theories like the one mentioned (Hussain, 2020). Hussain (2020) continues to emphasise the importance of public health figures, political leaders and other authoritative individuals speaking out on COVID-19 so as to act as a reliable source of information.

Much like a third video, Video 7 does not make use of any verbal dialogue but makes their standpoint clear through artwork the creator makes in the form of t-shirts. The shirt reads "unmasked, unmuzzled, unvaccinated, unafraid", this strong phrase indicates an anti-mask perception, with underlying feelings towards the masks as a 'muzzled', indicating emotions of restrictions and frustration, portrayed proudly on their chest. The American flag is an indication of "America, Land of the Free", and the will to express what anyone believes, which from a study shows that the majority of individuals found early messaging from the government

confusing regarding what was required when it came to mask-wearing (Stewart, 2020). These participants outwardly expressed they are not conspiracy theorists but showed doubt in the scientific knowledge used to explain the COVID-19 virus and found social media content or unverified sources as more digestible and therefore reliable (Stewart, 2020). Hussain (2020) continues to mention that in circumstances of crisis, much like COVID-19, the public have many burning questions, and if the government and other verified authorities fail to answer efficiently, individuals begin to seek solutions elsewhere.

Behaviours when Wearing a Mask

The last of the four (4) mask related videos, Video 2, demonstrates the behaviour individuals associate with wearing the face covering. The video depicts several ways how the youth, from pre-school to university neglect the use of their masks from either ignorance or annoyance. This is linked to the low levels of action from the youth in actively wearing masks and social distancing from peers (Haischer, Beilfuss, Hart, Opielinski, Wrucke, Zirgaitis, Uhrich, Hunter, 2020). Early communication from the government suggested that the youth were the least susceptible to the virus and therefore will not be negatively impacted by the effects (Ries, 2020). As a result, this demographic found the need for strict regulations unnecessary, and there has been a steady decrease in the percentage of individuals who continue to regularly, wear their masks in public spaces and social distance (Haischer et al., 2020). The relativity of this video indicates a large portion of the TikTok viewing population, within the age group mentioned in the content, who identify with this behaviour or have experienced it first-hand, as well as relating to the frustration of the situation.

Prior research done on existing literature did not touch on masks as a core element of discussion on social media and was rather uncovered during data collection of the videos on TikTok. It is now shown how content created on TikTok regarding COVID-19 is predominantly focused on masks and the emotions and behaviours linked to this aspect of the pandemic.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

The 'COVID-19 Vaccinations' section will elaborate on the discussion regarding vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic, by further expanding on sub-topics Attitudes and Perceptions linked to vaccines. Of the eight (8) videos, four (4) make a direct correlation to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Attitudes towards Vaccinations

Much like the attitudes towards masks, the feelings related to vaccines is also a two-way split, with opinions categorised into pro-vaccine and 'anti-vaxx', and also similarly to masks, relates

The first vaccine-related video, Video 4, is one created from satire, as a way to make fu of anti-vaxxer logic. This video, much like Video 3 makes a connection to a previous pandemic, which results in negative connotations to an era of pre-modern medicine and creates panic amongst a naïve or anxious audience. While humorous, satirical content is not uncommon on the TikTok platform, the audience that receives it may not always be perceptive to the intentions or undertones, as shown in the comments of the videos, where many admitted to almost missing the joke completely. Basch, Meleo-Erwin, Fera, Jaime, and Basch (2020) mentions that the young adult audience are the least likely to hold negative perceptions regarding COVID-19 and the associated vaccines, however, this segments dependency on social media for understanding health information leaves them vulnerable to inaccurate or disinformation spreading on the platform. This is also a concern with facetious or humorous content, as demonstrated in Video 4, as repeated exposure to this disinformation may reinforce falsehoods, as mentioned by Basch et al. (2020). The use of 'dead' in the dialogue also creates anti-vaxxer undercurrents, which may be absorbed into the youth's conscience, as a potential consequence of taking the vaccine.

Videos 6 and 8 take a strong anti-vaxx stance. Video 6 does not have the creator speaking but makes use of audio from the movie Transformers, where the main character sends out a signal to remaining companions 'taking refuge' that they are alive and waiting. This narrative indicates that the creator sees themselves as a fighter against the vaccination movement and looks to help 'the refugees' who are also unvaccinated by creating a community. Germani and Biller-Andorno (2021) make note of how anti-vaxxers are more likely to share conspiracy theories with peers and use emotional language to garner a response in their favour, in comparison to pro-vaccinators. Germani and Biller-Andorno (2021) continue to show in their study that anti-vaxxers are more active in discussion on social media and share content from prominent influencers who propagate their perceptions, this leads to a community formed through mutual beliefs which drives the movement's success.

Much like Video 8, the creators aim to target a community of individuals, parents who seek to protect their children through what they understand. The creator claims that schools are going to use the opportunity to vaccinate their children without their consent, proposed as an agenda against the anti-vaxx community. The use of slips is a symbolism to what the creator describes as a way to go against parental consent, by vaccinating the children without permission or allowing children to sign for themselves. Szilagyi, Shah, Delgado, Thomas, Vizueta, Cui, Vangala, Shetgiri and Kapteyn (2021), found that more than half of individuals that they are least likely to have their child receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Szilagyi et al. (2021) also make note that visiting a Paediatric professional play a key role in promoting the administration of

the COVID-19 vaccination to children. However, Llewellyn (2020) suggests that medical professionals on social media can create a confusing, and possibly distressing, atmosphere, as often it happens that researchers and doctors' opinions do not align, and results in a disoriented audience. It now becomes apparent that many anti-vaxxers become deterred from even considering visiting a paediatric professional regarding COVID-19 vaccines after interacting with influential anti-vaxxer discussion blogs and influencers. While this does not relate directly to the research's goal of identifying the impact of this content on the youth, the media that the parents consume has a direct power on the child's life and in turn the perception the youth takes on.

From the creators of Video 6 and 8, it is apparent that the individuals identify as Republican, viewing former USA President Donald Trump as an idol and leader. Germani and Biller-Andorno (2021) demonstrates that Trump, before his profile was removed by Twitter, was a key driver of vaccine misinformation.

Perceptions towards Different Brands of COVID-19 vaccines

The last video within this section, Video 5, is different from the others as it portrays the creator's interpretation years after the general population get the COVID-19 vaccine, paying attention to the different brands that are currently available and the potential side effect of each. This video also shows elements of satire, playing on the most extreme conspiracy theories that exist about the possible side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines, most likely to mock those who have these perceptions. Islam, Kamal, Kabir, Southern, Khan, Hasan, Sarkar, Sharmin, Das, Roy, Harun, Chughtai, Homaira, Seale (2021) found from a study of misinformed COVID-19 vaccine online content that 9% were conspiracy theories, and 91% were rumours as a result of these circulating conspiracy theories. The majority of this content was related to the development of the vaccine, such as how long it took, what is in it etc. the core driving factor in many anti-vaxxers hesitancy and arguments towards getting the COVID-19 vaccine (Islam et al., 2021). The use of these conspiracy theories to create a plot for TikTok content may only fuel these misconceptions and be used as further substantiation of beliefs. This user however also creates doubt amongst the pro-vaccine community by instilling a belief of a 'better' vaccine brand, or one that has the worst side effects. McCarthy (2021) shows that the most popular vaccines in the world are currently, in order, Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca. J&J followed a while after the first round of confirmed brands and remains the only single-dose vaccine to date (McCarthy, 2021). Many speculations started to circulate regarding the efficacy of a single dose, especially after the surge of the Delta Variant, many pro-vaccinators specifically sought-after Pfizer under the assumption that others were not 'as good' (McCarthy, 2021).

Attitudes towards COVID-19 in general

The 'COVID-19 Vaccinations' section will elaborate on the discussion regarding vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic, by further expanding on sub-topics Attitudes and Perceptions linked to vaccines.

Viewer Comments

Despite there being a two way mix between anti-vaxx and pro-vaccinator content, comments in response to these videos leaned more towards pro-vaccination, with many people in the anti-vaxxers videos commenting on the irrationality of their point. For instance Video 8, where the creator expresses concern about the vaccine and not getting it, there were comments that described how them and their family have received the vaccine and are completely healthy. As well as Video 6 where someone commented "…you people are such drama queen." in response to the anti-vaxxers video about being unvaccinated and proud.

However, there was no lack of anti-vaxx commentary on pro-vaccine content, such as Video 5, that described the dramatised side effects of the vaccines. Individuals comments on how they "will be fine without one" or how they will "wait to see what side effects those that took it shows up".

As these were some of the highest liked videos on TikTok under the selected hashtags, it is expected that these comments are a combination of individuals with differing opinions.

Amongst the commentary on who is 'correct' in this ongoing debate, many found relatability through the content of the video, whether anti or pro, for instance, Video 2 which all could connect through the frustrations of mask-wearing. These videos connect individuals together based on a shared understanding and level of commonality, as mentioned by Anderson and Jiang's (2018) study that found a third of their audience used social media as a source of information and a platform to connect with others of similar interests.

4.3. Trustworthiness

Trust needs to be established when reviewing the findings and results of the research study for life situations or as substantiation for future studies, which can be measured through the validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the research (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Qualitative research makes use of trustworthiness as a measurement, as it aims to deal with gaining a deeper understanding rather than to identify relationships to generalise a larger population (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

Credibility

This refers to the accuracy of data interpretation (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The researcher will implement more than a singular qualitative data collection method, namely virtual ethnography, but make use of secondary research to support the data, as this ensures a high probability for accuracy and minimal error. This is due to the process of evaluating, comparing, and verifying the research question and objective through every data collection method that is conducted (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The use of both methods allows for the interpretation of the results can be understood from more than just one perspective.

Transferability

This refers to if the findings are applied in a similar context (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The selection of the 8 TikTok videos relating to COVID-19 as a sample ensures to accurately represent the larger population of COVID-19 TikTok videos and the content the youth consume on the platform. This is so the results reflect the opinions and experience of the broader population accurately, as the COVID-19 pandemic is a global event, there is wide array of opinions and having these diverse views is integral for achieving trustworthiness. Thus, if the test had to be conducted on the same characteristics as the sample group in a future study, it would yield the same results, making the study transferable (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

Dependability

This refers to the process of integration quality (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The study question aims to see how the spread of misinformation regarding COVID-19 on TikTok affects the perceptions of the youth on the platform. This specified question, regarding misinformation, in relation to a broad topic, COVID-19, will result in the high probability of generating the same results if used again in a differing situation, such as HIV/AIDS. The selection of data collection methods ensures that the questions asked, and the supervision process would yield consistent results across any situation, making this study dependable (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

Confirmability

This refers to how well the collected data aids the findings (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The use of virtual ethnography in conjunction with secondary research allows for the comparison of results from the separate methods and authentication of data against one another. From the data collection methods, it is possible and achievable to yield results that answer the research question and meet all the objective needs, thus proving the data collection methods effective

in providing insights, making this study confirmable (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Relation to Research Question

The research question of the study, "What role does TikTok content play in conveying misinformation concerning COVID-19, and the vaccines, to a young adult audience, that may result in the propagation of narratives consumed?" was addressed through understanding, firstly, the role social media plays in the youth lives. As mentioned in the literature researched, social media plays a large role in the lives of the youth audience and identifies social media as a primary communicative tool in their lives, followed by a space to connect with individuals with shared images, followed by an informative platform (Anderson and Jiang, 2018). This was then further addressed through viewing the comments on the videos and how the audiences respond to the content and whether it had succeeded in perpetuating its narrative.

The problem for this research involved the rapid spreading of misinformation regarding COVID-19 on social media, particularly TikTok, due to the application's viral nature (Baruah, 2012). Ostrovsky and Chen (2020) elaborate on the problem of the spreading of misinformation about COVID-19 potentially causing harm to the greater society, as the impressionable young adult audience that makes use of TikTok, could interpret this as factual. The study was able to identify the content categories that are most frequented on the platforms, as well as the perceptions of these videos as a result of the comments. The strongest presence within these spaces consists mostly of pro-vaccinators, with anti-vaxxers appearing through highly influential content that utilises emotional language in order to persuade an audience. This spread of misinformation is presented mostly through conspiracy theories that are propagated as factual and satirical content that is misinterpreted as true.

These findings assist in understanding what content is contributing towards the vacuum of misinterpretation on TikTok related to COVID-19 and the vaccines, as well as how the audience respond to the regulation from verified and medical professionals. Researching this topic contributed to understanding how social media platforms are used by the young adult audience to comprehend important health messages which are then advocated or critiqued and relayed by this population to the greater society. Baruah (2012) mentions that online platforms have not only transformed the way we communicate but the way we think and talk about it, with social media portraying communicative tools as a means to fundamentally alter our perceptions of reality and the topics we discuss an interpersonal and a community level.

In relation to the Cultivation theory, Basch et al. (2020) mentions that repeated exposure to this disinformation may reinforce falsehoods while Social Action theory is evident in the

morality of messaging suggested by Everett et al. (2021). This is evidently apparent from the findings, as repeated exposure to anti-vaccine content or satirical conspiracy theories that may be misinterpreted.

Research Objectives:

- To identify the role TikTok video content plays in propagating misinformation to a young adult audience – this was investigated through viewing comments from the youth audience and identifying what the individuals had to say in response to the narrative standpoint of the content.
- To investigate how this misinformation could create potentially harmful narratives outside the realm of TikTok – this was identified by understanding the role TikTok content plays in the life of the individuals, especially when considering medical information. The use of social media when creating a community was addressed in how information is spread amongst like-minded individuals after consuming content on TikTok.
- To identify how these messages are creating critics for the COVID19 vaccines – the circulation of conspiracies and rumours lead to mistrust contributing to vaccine hesitancy as identified through Islam et al. (2021), and as a result of highly influential anti-vaxxers who form a community amongst naïve or impressionable individuals.

5.2. Implications of Findings

Researching the topic of COVID-19 TikTok videos, will potentially contribute to understanding how social media platforms are used by the audience to consume narratives regarding important subjects. The research aims to provide insight into how these messages, particularly misinformed content, concerning COVID-19 are interpreted by the youth during the first year of the global pandemic. As well as offering an understanding into how misinformed content can potentially create critics surrounding the virus and for the vaccine, which are then further perpetuated by the viewers to their external circles. Through conducting the study, businesses, brands and governments may find opportunity in seeking how to manage the spread of misinformation and regulate content on social media to set a desired narrative to efficiently foster positive consumption intentions towards brands among consumers. As well as the added contribution of adding knowledge regarding the minimally explored topic of TikTok and the platforms uses. This contributes to the field of strategic brand communications as it allows for businesses to adapt their communication strategies accordingly to the consumption patterns of the youth audience regarding important information on social media.

5.3. Ethical Implications

Distinguishing what information is factual from what is misleading or inaccurate has become increasingly difficult for the average individual, and many social media platforms have taken action in trying to combat this problem through technology (Baker, Wade & Walsh, 2020).

Baker, Wade and Walsh (2020) mention that many platforms are using similar methods to curb the infodemic, which includes promoting government and authoritative groups content and generating systems that remove potentially harmful information through fact-checking sources. However, as Baker et al. (2020) indicates, this method may be counterproductive as there is no common ground between what information is harmful and inaccurate and what is a matter of freedom of speech and voicing one's opinion. As a result, this undermines the public's trust in the platform to manage the content, which is constituting harm, especially considering the way in which these social media firms conduct their removals, the general audience feels there is a lack of transparency (Baker et al., 2020).

The ethics surrounding how social media platforms manage and control the content that creates the narrative largely lacks research, specifically in regard to the current COVID-19 pandemic. However, Ghosh (2021) touches on this topic in relation to former United States of America President, Donald Trump, and his ban from multiple social media platforms due to misleading disinformation. Ghosh (2021) mentions how, although these social media followed their own policies and government guidelines, the audience found this to be an infringement of free speech and that private platforms like social media removing content and accounts is not entirely ethical as it begins to control a specific narrative. Furthermore, Ghosh (2021) highlights how individuals who do not share the mainstream opinions feel targeted as their content is often retracted for inaccurate content, thus a segment of the population begins to feel censored. These individuals would rather trust their peers as their opinions are removed from major platforms and start to question the mainstream narrative as forceful and overpowering and begin to label this as propaganda. All authors, Baker et al. (2020) and Ghosh (2021) suggest that the bottom line of this problem is social media regulation, as the lack of transparency can result in an unsupportive audience, while the lack of limitations may cause an out-of-control infodemic that could harm others.

Although past and current research has illuminated the problem of medical misinformation and whether the distribution of this content is the solution to avoiding misleading information, the study did not touch on the ethics and transparency from these platforms and how they can influence the way in which individuals trust the verified content they receive.

5.4. Limitations of Study

The study has a few limitations that were presented to the researcher, these include:

The date in which the study was conducted - As the COVID-19 pandemic was an ongoing event at the time of the study, the researcher was restricted to the content available up until the point of data collection. In future studies, researchers will be able to analyse new trends that form after the July 2021 limit.

The use of hashtags – The researcher made use of the most appropriate hashtags that will yield the most popular results, and in turn, the most viewers as the amount of content would not have been able to be covered in time. However, there are thousands of other hashtags to be explored, and videos that would pertain to the study but did not make use of hashtags.

The study timeframe: The study needed to be completed within a one year span, and therefore needed to be restricted in detail to collection and analysis. Future studies, given more time, would be able to delve deeper into the analysis of each video and what this represents, or yield a wider scope of videos to analyse.

5.5. Success of the Research and Future Actions

Drawing on final conclusions, the study illuminated the role does TikTok content play in conveying misinformation concerning COVID-19, as from the research done it was determined that TikTok is a social platform, where youth also learn about current events. This platform allows for users to get easily digestible content related to complex problems in a fun and educational way.

Further analysis identified that one of the easiest ways to preventing spreading COVID-19, mask wearing, is being promoted as "restricting" and goes against the freedom of rights that individuals have, given the masks are mandatory. This narrative has resulted in more critics amongst the younger generations, especially when interacting socially with peers, and has created in higher COVID-19 cases. This assists in identifying where the youth are receiving their information from, and the views they are pertaining from different aspects of the virus. Which further helps brands, governments and other communicative entities know what and how to communicate with the youth.

As mentioned previously in the limitations, there are ways in which future research similar to this study, can better the existing findings. This also includes making use of other platforms and how these social media spaces, and the age groups most frequented on them, respond to COVID-19 misinformation.

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ANNEXURE A – Summary Document Table

Research Purpose/ Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Anticipated Findings	References
The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the youth's interpretation of video content consumed on TikTok regarding COVID-19 during the first year of the global pandemic. Including how this messaging potentially contributes towards a hesitancy in support of COVID-19 vaccinations, and the influence misinformation has on their cognisance's when portraying this narrative to those in their external environment (Basch et al., 2020).	What role does TikTok content play in conveying misinformation concerning COVID-19, and the vaccines, to a young adult audience, that may result in the propagation of narratives consumed? **Secondary Questions and/or Objectives** To identify whether the most viewed COVID-19 TikTok video content has played a role in propagating misinformation to a young adult audience between March 2020 and April 2021. To investigate what type of account, pro-vaxx or anti-vaxx specifically, receive more youth support in terms of positive comments between March 2020 and April 2021. To identify how the narratives learnt on TikTok are being used in real life by the young adult audience to determines one's actions in responding to COVID-19.	TikTok plays a role in empowering individuals to have access to knowledge and information in digestible sizes and understandabl e language. further research must be conducted to better grasp the powerplay of social media in the audience of social media users and their goal of retaining information. **Key Concepts** Social media COID-19 Misinformation	Max Weber George Gerbner Adam M. Ostrovsky Joshua R. Chen Llwewllyn, S Hussain, W Baruah, T Basch, C., Meleo-Erwin, Z., Fera, J., Jaime, C., and Basch, C **Key Theories** Social action theory Cultivation theory	**Theme 1:** Literature concerning the use of social media as a communication tool **Theme 2:** 4.2. Literature Concerning Medical Information Shared on Social Media **Theme 3:** 4.3. Literature Concerning how COVID-19 Misinformation is Shared on Social Media	**Paradigm** Epistemology Interpretivism **Research Problem** The problem identified for the research is the rapid spreading of misinformation regarding COVID-19 on social media, particularly TikTok, due to the application's viral nature (Baruah, 2012). Content shared on the platform, if misinformed, has the ability to transform a social media rumour into a highly endorsed falsehood, that could potentially cause harm to the greater society.	Qualitative **Population** TikTok COVID - 8 videos **Sampling** Non-probability Purposive sampling method Size – 8 videos total 3 Hashtags, 3-2 videos each	Literature review Virtual ethnography **Data Analysis Method(s)** Unit of Analysis – TikTok content and the interpretation of these videos Data Analysis Method- Content analysis	Appropriate research methods Allowing bias Falsifying information **Limitations** Shift in conditions Time Sample size	The anticipated findings will focus on the videos, and the nature of this content in impacting the youth audience perceptions regarding COVID-19. **Anticipated Contribution** Researching the topic of COVID-19 TikTok videos, will potentially contribute to understanding how social media platforms are used by the audience to consume narratives regarding important subjects.	Bagozzi, R. and Dholakia, U. 2002. Intentional social action in virtual communities. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 16(2): 2-21. [Online]. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/dir.10006 [Accessed 11 April 2021]. Mosharafa, E. 2015. All you Need to Know About: The Cultivation Theory. Global Journal of Human-Social Science: Arts & Humanities, 15(8): 1. [Online]. Available at: http://95.179.161.193/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/558/All_you_Need_to_Know_About_The_Cultivati.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y [Accessed 11 April 2021]. Ostrovsky, A and Chen, J. 2020. TikTok and Its Role in COVID-19 Information Propagation. Journal of Adolescent Health, 67:1. [Online]. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.07.039 [Accessed 10 April 2021].

ANNEXURE B – Ethics Approval Letter

THE INDEPENDENT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

Date: 07 July 2021

Student name: Courtnee Francis
Student number: [redacted]
Campus: IIE Vega Pretoria Campus

Re: Approval of RESE8419 Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.
3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.

4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

Supervisor name: Dr SC Engelbrecht

Signature: [redacted]

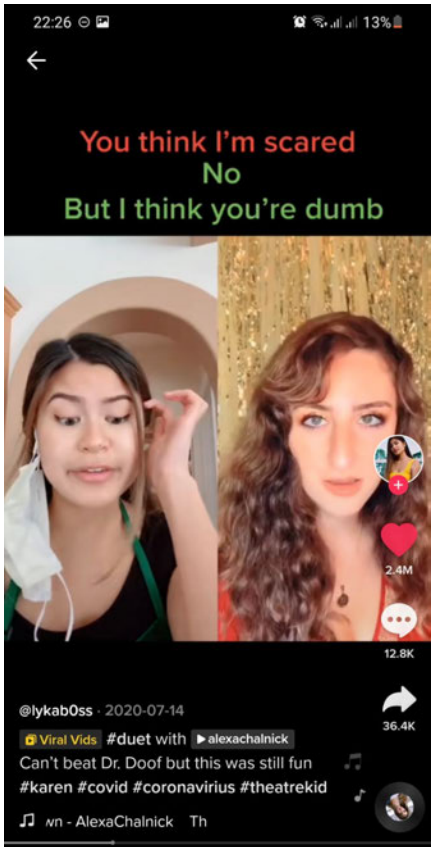
Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC) name: Dr Ria (HM) van Zyl

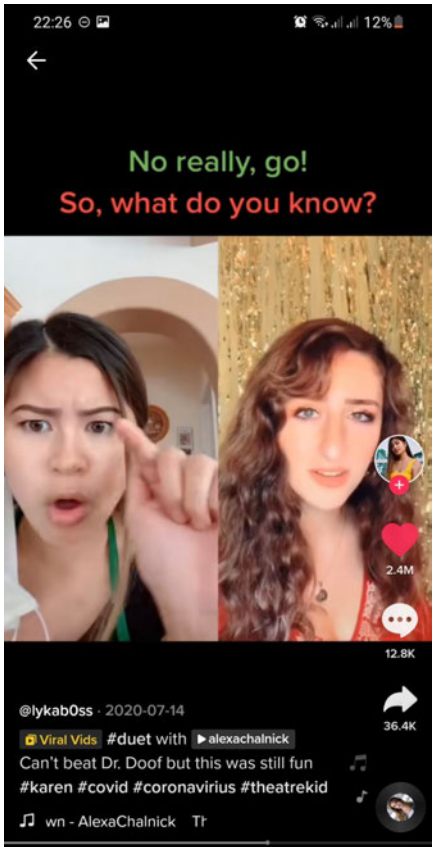
Signature: [redacted]

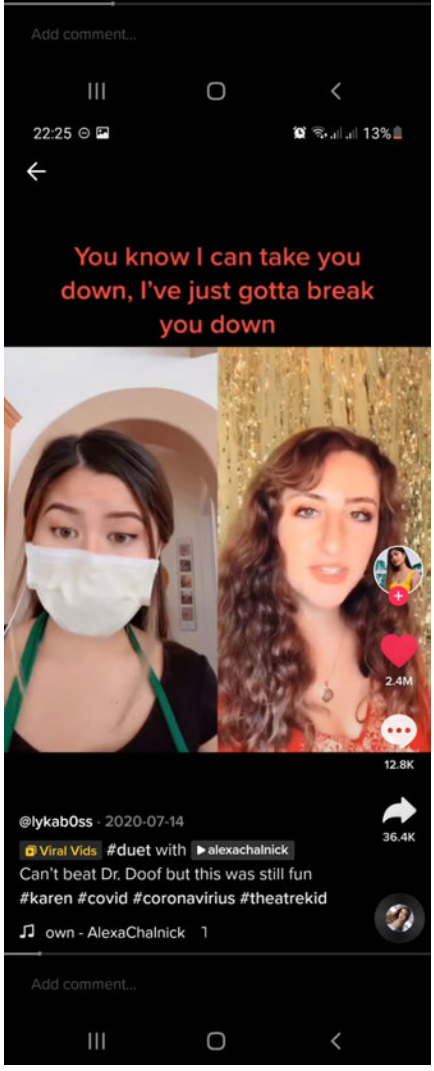
ANNEXURE C – Step by Step Analysis

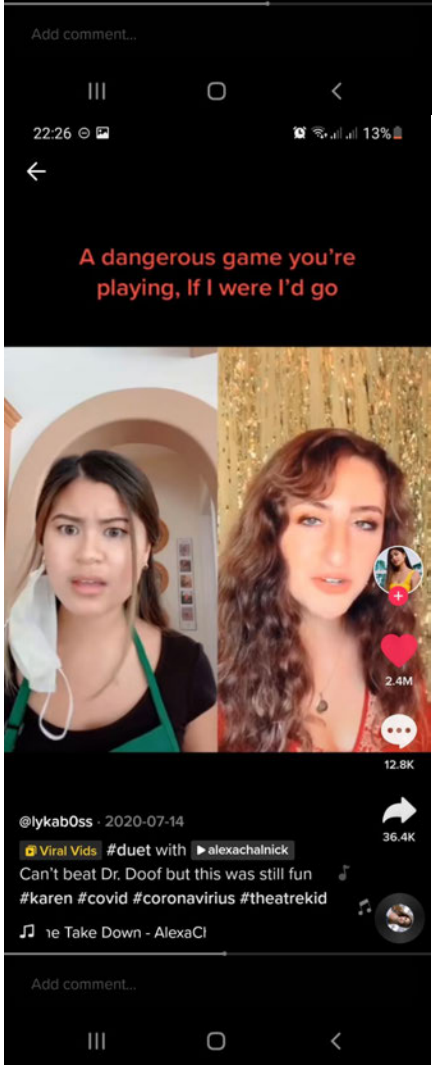
1. From the collected raw data, the researcher makes notes on the tables by referencing their own thought process, highlighting common phrases, body language and symbolism. This was so that for the content analysis the data is grouped together in common themes.
2. The content analysis was then conducted by taking screenshots of each videos to demonstrate the facial expressions, layout and other visuals noted by the researcher.
3. The researcher then read through the comments of each video to find a general overview of the responses from the young audience and how they interpret this content whether positive or negative.
4. Screenshots were taken of the video's comments, showing which stood out most and were most impactful, engaging or reactive to the conversation of the content.
5. From the themed aspects found in the raw data, they were grouped together in a table under corresponding headings for display of analysed data.

ANNEXURE D


22:26
13%
You think I'm scared
No
But I think you're dumb
2.4M
12.8K
@lykab0ss · 2020-07-14
36.4K
Viral Vids #duet with alexachalnick
Can't beat Dr. Doof but this was still fun
#karen #covid #coronavirius #theatrekid
wn - AlexaChalnick Th
Add comment...


22:26
12%
No really, go!
So, what do you know?
2.4M
12.8K
@lykab0ss · 2020-07-14
36.4K
Viral Vids #duet with alexachalnick
Can't beat Dr. Doof but this was still fun
#karen #covid #coronavirius #theatrekid
wn - AlexaChalnick Th
Add comment...


22:25
13%
You know I can take you down, I've just gotta break you down
2.4M
12.8K
@lykab0ss · 2020-07-14
36.4K
Viral Vids #duet with alexachalnick
Can't beat Dr. Doof but this was still fun
#karen #covid #coronavirius #theatrekid
own - AlexaChalnick
Add comment...


22:26
13%
A dangerous game you're playing, If I were I'd go
2.4M
12.8K
@lykab0ss · 2020-07-14
36.4K
Viral Vids #duet with alexachalnick
Can't beat Dr. Doof but this was still fun
#karen #covid #coronavirius #theatrekid
ne Take Down - AlexaCl
Add comment...

ANNEXURE E

How masks will be used in school
@kyle_jenkins03 · 2020-07-04
100% accurate #WearAMask
#coronavirus #foryou #school #beer
Level Up - Ciara
Add comment...

Elementary School
@kyle_jenkins03 · 2020-07-04
100% accurate #WearAMask
#coronavirus #foryou #school #beer
Up - Ciara
Add comment...

Middle School
@kyle_jenkins03 · 2020-07-04
100% accurate #WearAMask
#coronavirus #foryou #school #beer
Level Up - Ciara
Add comment...

Middle School
@kyle_jenkins03 · 2020-07-04
100% accurate #WearAMask
#coronavirus #foryou #school #beer
Level Up - Ciara
Add comment...

High School
@kyle_jenkins03 · 2020-07-04
100% accurate #WearAMask
#coronavirus #foryou #school #beer
Add comment...

College
@kyle_jenkins03 · 2020-07-04
100% accurate #WearAMask
#coronavirus #foryou #school #beer
Level Up - Ciara
Add comment...

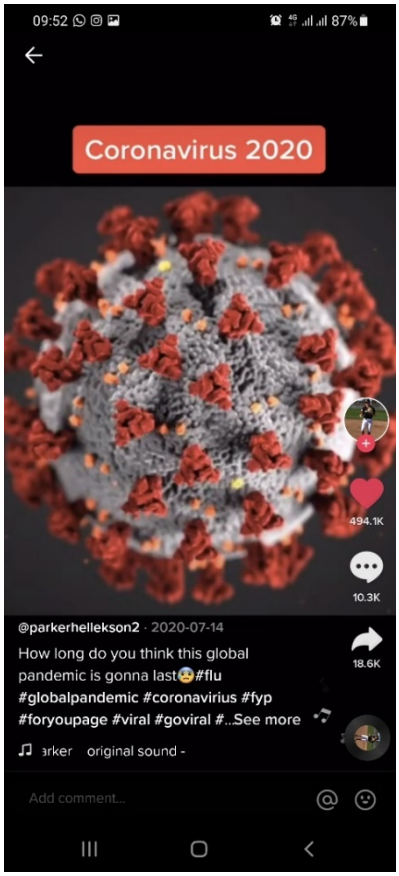
ANNEXURE F

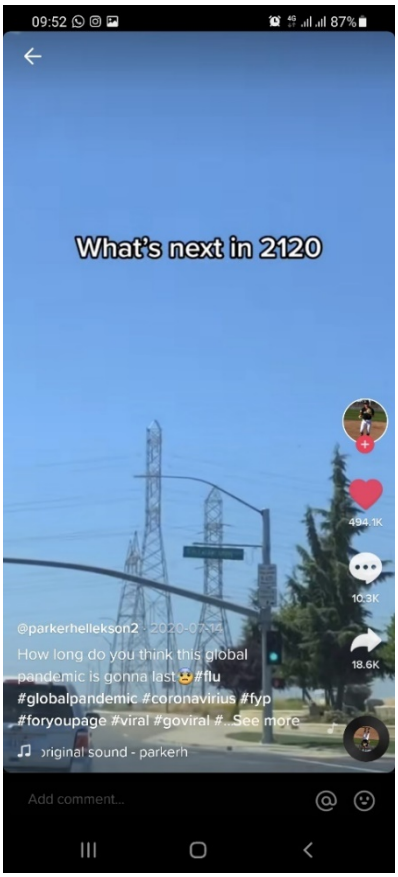
09:52
87%
A pandemic happens every 100 years!!!
494.1K
10.3K
18.6K
@parkerhellekson2 · 2020-07-14
How long do you think this global pandemic is gonna last😩#flu #globalpandemic #coronavirius #fyp #foryoupage #viral #goviral #...See more
inal sound - parkerhelle
Add comment...

09:52
87%
The Plague 1720
494.1K
10.3K
18.6K
@parkerhellekson2 · 2020-07-14
How long do you think this global pandemic is gonna last😩#flu #globalpandemic #coronavirius #fyp #foryoupage #viral #goviral #...See more
Add comment...

09:52
87%
Cholera outbreak 1820
494.1K
10.3K
18.6K
@parkerhellekson2 · 2020-07-14
How long do you think this global pandemic is gonna last😩#flu #globalpandemic #coronavirius #fyp #foryoupage #viral #goviral #...See more
rhellekson2 - Parker
Add comment...

09:52
87%
Spanish Flu 1920
494.1K
10.3K
18.6K
@parkerhellekson2 · 2020-07-14
How long do you think this global pandemic is gonna last😩#flu #globalpandemic #coronavirius #fyp #foryoupage #viral #goviral #...See more
son2 - Parker original
Add comment...


09:52
87%
Coronavirus 2020
494.1K
10.3K
18.6K
@parkerhellekson2 · 2020-07-14
How long do you think this global pandemic is gonna last😩#flu #globalpandemic #coronavirius #fyp #foryoupage #viral #goviral #...See more
arker original sound -
Add comment...


09:52
87%
What's next in 2120
494.1K
10.3K
18.6K
@parkerhellekson2 · 2020-07-14
How long do you think this global pandemic is gonna last😩#flu #globalpandemic #coronavirius #fyp #foryoupage #viral #goviral #...See more
original sound - parkerh
Add comment...

ANNEXURE G

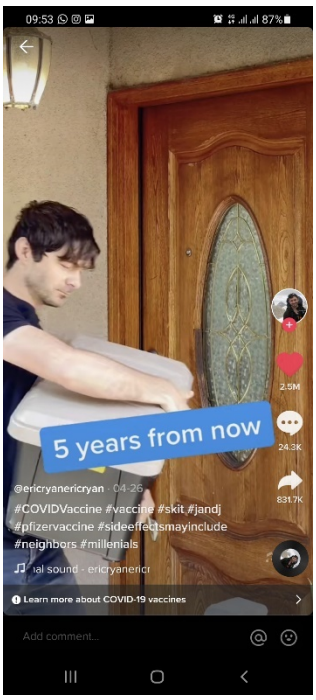
09:52
87%
I have covid right now but youll never see me take the vaccine
2.8M
62.2K
112.9K
@brandongrogan61 · 2020-12-25
Fax #vaccine #COVIDVaccine #comedy #satire
notional Piano Instrume
Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines
Add comment...

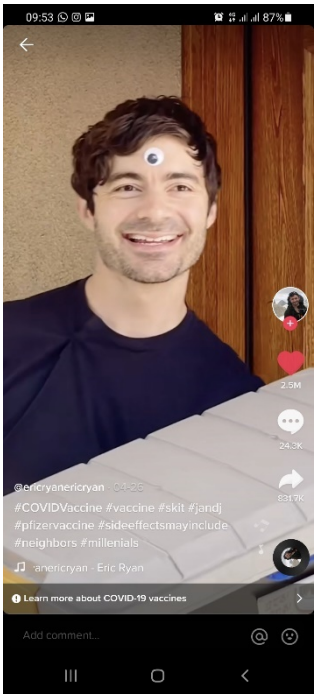
09:52
87%
Every single person that originally took the small pox vaccine in 1796
2.8M
62.2K
112.9K
@brandongrogan61 · 2020-12-25
Fax #vaccine #COVIDVaccine #comedy #satire
- Tom Bailey Backing
Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines
Add comment...

09:52
87%
Is dead now
2.8M
62.2K
112.9K
@brandongrogan61 · 2020-12-25
Fax #vaccine #COVIDVaccine #comedy #satire
ıg Tracks Emotional P
Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines
Add comment...

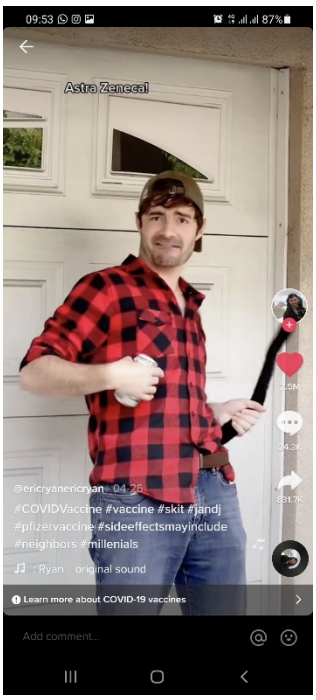
09:52
87%
2.8M
62.2K
112.9K
@brandongrogan61 · 2020-12-25
Fax #vaccine #COVIDVaccine #comedy #satire
acks Emotional Piano
Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines
Add comment...

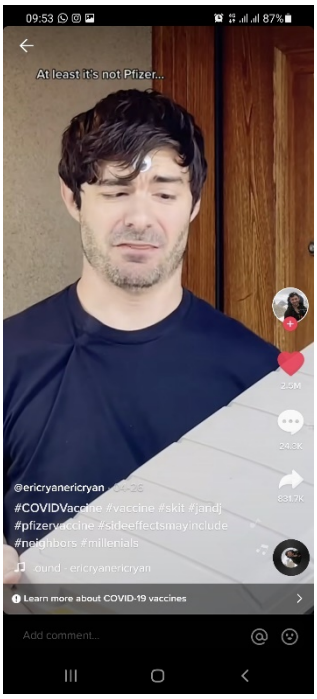
ANNEXURE H

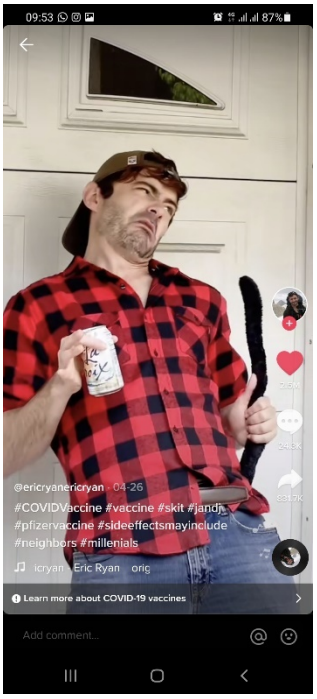

5 years from now
@ericryanericryan · 04-26
#COVIDVaccine #vaccine #skit #jandj
#pfizervaccine #sideeffectsmayinclude
#neighbors #millenials
Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines
Add comment...


@ericryanericryan · 04-26
#COVIDVaccine #vaccine #skit #jandj
#pfizervaccine #sideeffectsmayinclude
#neighbors #millenials
Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines
Add comment...

Moderna?
@ericryanericryan · 04-26
#COVIDVaccine #vaccine #skit #jandj
#pfizervaccine #sideeffectsmayinclude
#neighbors #millenials
Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines
Add comment...


Astra Zeneca!
@ericryanericryan · 04-26
#COVIDVaccine #vaccine #skit #jandj
#pfizervaccine #sideeffectsmayinclude
#neighbors #millenials
Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines
Add comment...

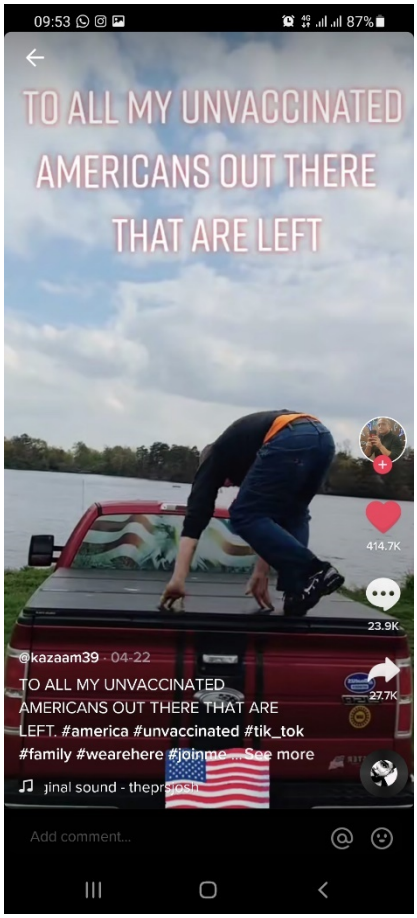

At least it's not Pfizer...
Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines
Add comment...

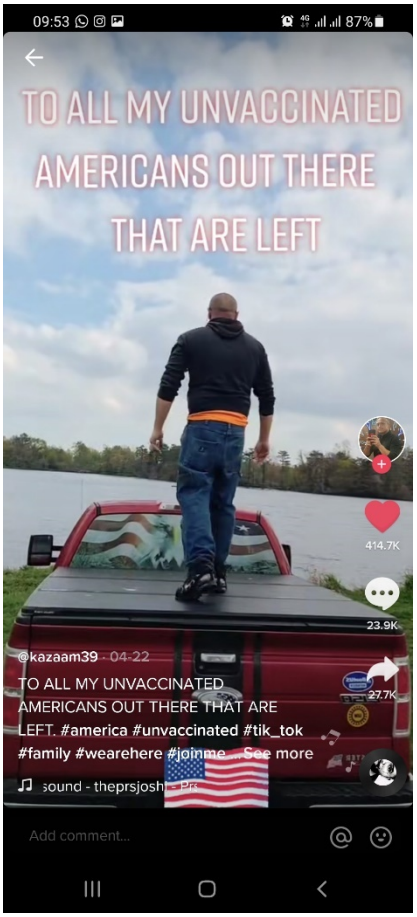

@ericryanericryan · 04-26
#COVIDVaccine #vaccine #skit #jandj
#pfizervaccine #sideeffectsmayinclude
#neighbors #millenials
Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines
Add comment...

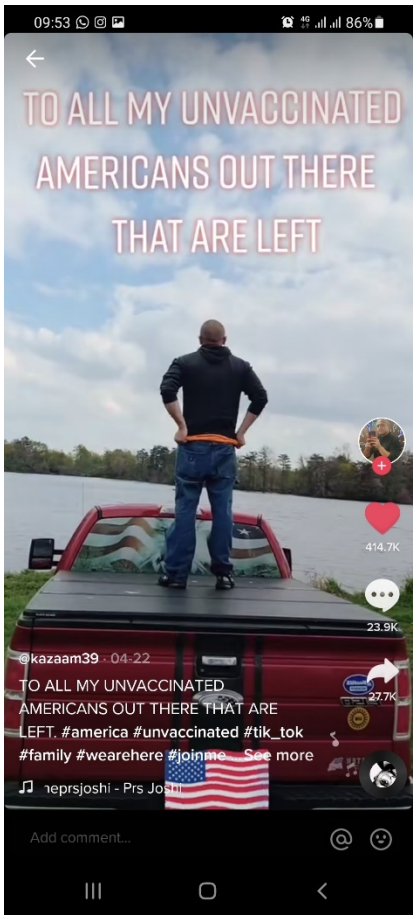
What is it?
It's J&J!
@ericryanericryan · 04-26
#COVIDVaccine #vaccine #skit #jandj
#pfizervaccine #sideeffectsmayinclude
#neighbors #millenials
Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines
Add comment...

It's J&J!
@ericryanericryan · 04-26
#COVIDVaccine #vaccine #skit #jandj
#pfizervaccine #sideeffectsmayinclude
#neighbors #millenials
Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines
Add comment...

ANNEXURE I


09:53
87%
TO ALL MY UNVACCINATED
AMERICANS OUT THERE
THAT ARE LEFT
414.7K
23.9K
@kazaam39 · 04-22
TO ALL MY UNVACCINATED
AMERICANS OUT THERE THAT ARE
LEFT. #america #unvaccinated #tik_tok
#family #wearehere #joinme ... See more
27.7K
Add comment...


09:53
87%
TO ALL MY UNVACCINATED
AMERICANS OUT THERE
THAT ARE LEFT
414.7K
23.9K
@kazaam39 · 04-22
TO ALL MY UNVACCINATED
AMERICANS OUT THERE THAT ARE
LEFT. #america #unvaccinated #tik_tok
#family #wearehere #joinme ... See more
27.7K
Add comment...


09:53
86%
TO ALL MY UNVACCINATED
AMERICANS OUT THERE
THAT ARE LEFT
414.7K
23.9K
@kazaam39 · 04-22
TO ALL MY UNVACCINATED
AMERICANS OUT THERE THAT ARE
LEFT. #america #unvaccinated #tik_tok
#family #wearehere #joinme ... See more
27.7K
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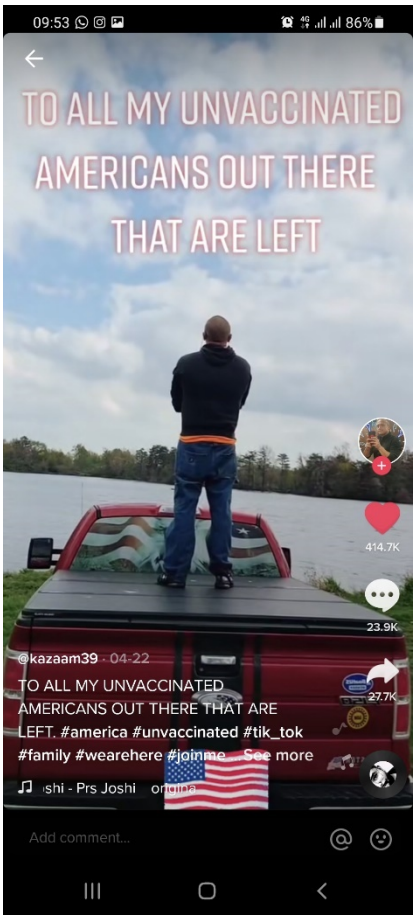
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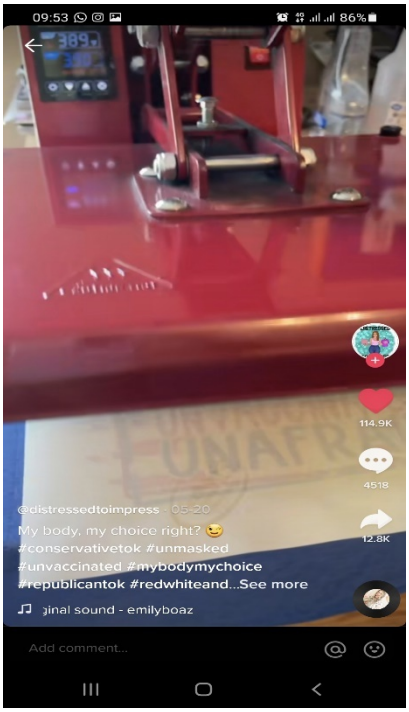
ANNEXURE J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My body, my choice right? 😉
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#unvaccinated #mybodymychoice
#republicantok #redwhiteand...See more
ginal sound - emilyboaz
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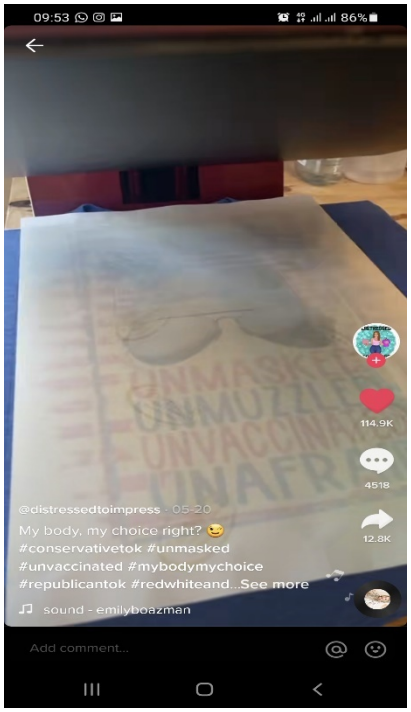
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#republicantok #redwhiteand...See more
sound - emilyboazman
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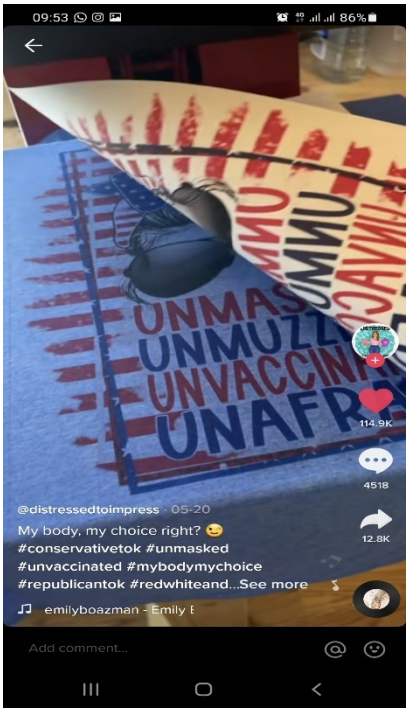
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#republicantok #redwhiteand...See more
emilyboazman - Emily E
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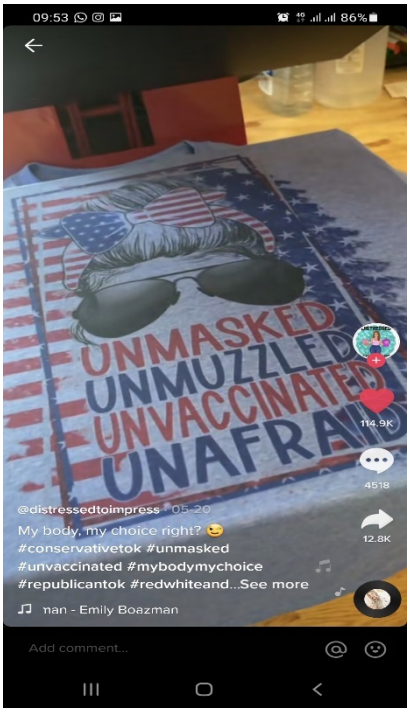
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#republicantok #redwhiteand...See more
nan - Emily Boazman
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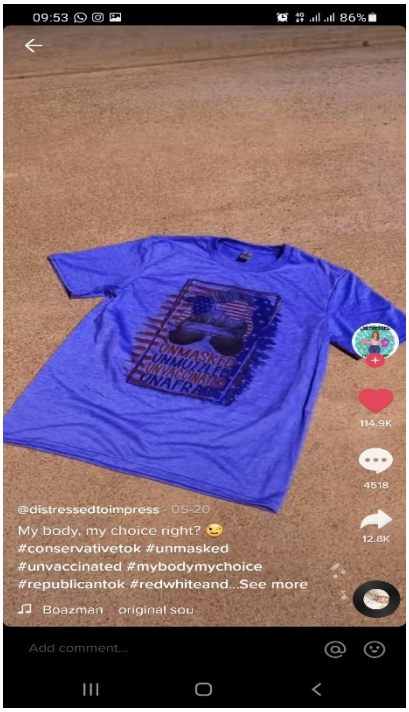
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original sound - emilyb
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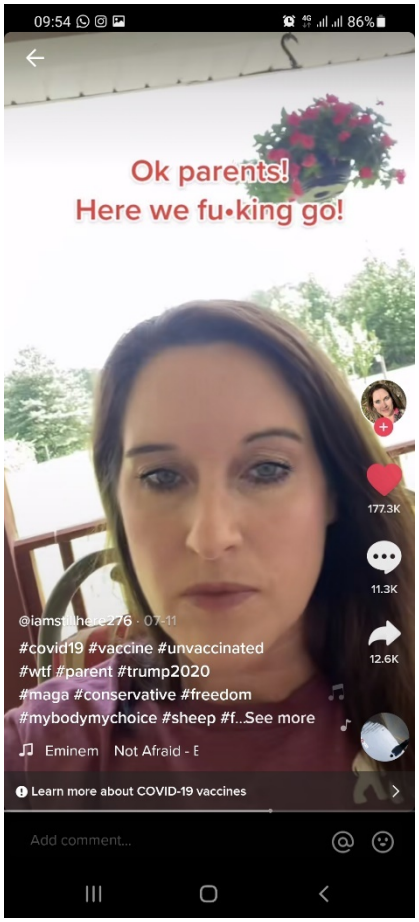
ANNEXURE K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Ok parents!
Here we fu•king go!
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@iamstillhere276 · 07-11
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#wtf #parent #trump2020
#maga #conservative #freedom
#mybodymychoice #sheep #f...See more
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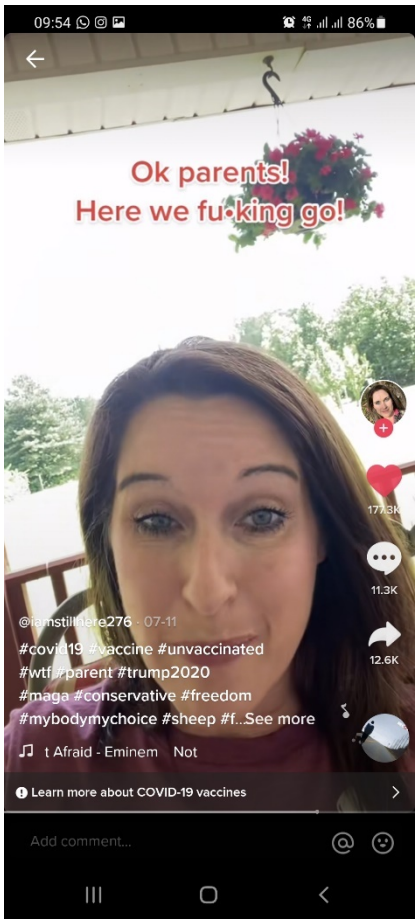
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