The TikTok Effect

How TikTok is shaping the way we consume music

by

Loui Degener

Greta Ranff

May 2023

Bachelor's Programme in International Business

Supervisor: Hossain Shahriar

Abstract

Digitalization has in recent years transformed the music industry and how people consume music. Simultaneously, the social media app TikTok has emerged as a major player in marketing, using its unique algorithmic structure and user-generated content to become a powerful marketing tool for musicians and record labels alike. Therefore, this paper investigates the effect of TikTok on music consumption. An in-depth overview of existing literature on music consumption, social media, and social media's effect on music consumption is provided. Additional insights are delivered through semi-structured interviews with Swedish TikTok users in the age range 18-30 years, where the collected data was analyzed thematically to distinguish patterns and themes.

The findings of the study are centered around two main themes: (Re)discovery and Reconfiguration of musical taste. Our findings suggest that TikTok shapes music consumption by acting as an information channel via which consumers discover new music they otherwise would not have heard. This is done by facilitating and increasing rediscovery, and by forming consumers' perception of songs according to the attached visual imagery. Moreover, TikTok broadens its users' musical taste, induces nostalgic consumption, and fosters a music consumption pattern that resembles that of fast fashion consumption. Our findings have both theoretical and practical contributions. Regarding the former, we have contributed to both the literature stream on music consumption and social media within the field of marketing. The practical implications will help artists develop targeted strategies and improve their fan engagement through insights into consumer behavior and preferences. Insights from the study can also enhance content curation and recommendation algorithms on social media platforms, improving user satisfaction and participation. Furthermore, for future research we recommend using a larger and more diverse sample size, further exploring the relationship between artists and consumers, as well as to investigate which music characteristics make a song go viral.

Keywords: consumer behavior, music consumption, social media, TikTok, recommendation algorithms, marketing platforms

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1 Introduction

This introductory chapter initially provides some background information leading to the research problem we intend to investigate in this study. Furthermore, background information on TikTok is provided in order to give the reader a fundamental understanding of the context of this study, which will be necessary to comprehend the results and analysis of the study. Subsequently, the research aims and objectives, the purpose and potential delimitations are introduced. Finally, the outline of the thesis is presented.

1.1 Background

In recent years, digitalization has transformed the music industry and how people consume music. This can be seen in the fact that streaming now provides a lion's share of corporate revenue for recorded music (IFPI, 2018). The music industry also continues to evolve as new digital technologies and practices are introduced and adopted (Hracs et al.. 2016). TikTok, a short-form video social media app, has emerged as a major player with over one billion active users worldwide (We Are Social, 2021). TikTok's unique algorithmic structure and user-generated content have allowed it to become a powerful marketing tool for artists and record labels alike. This study aims to investigate the role of TikTok in music consumption.

TikTok's impact on the music industry can be seen in its ability to take previously unknown or overlooked songs and turn them into chart-topping hits (Caramanica, 2019). For example, Lil Nas X's "Old Town Road" gained widespread popularity through TikTok, ultimately leading it to spend a record-breaking 19 weeks at the top of the U.S Billboard Hot 100 chart. Similarly, Fleetwood Mac's "Dreams", originally released in 1977, experienced a resurgence in popularity in 2020 after a TikTok video of a user skateboarding while drinking cranberry juice and lip-syncing to the song went viral (Unterberger, 2020). TikTok's impact on music consumption hence appears to not be limited to promoting new music, but also rediscovering older songs. The observation of this phenomena in media (Unterberger, 2020; Whateley, 2023; Capoot, 2022) and society along with the rapid advancement of TikTok as a social media platform indicates the increased importance of studying how TikTok shapes today's music consumption.

1.1.1 The fundamentals of TikTok

TikTok allows users to create and share 3- second to 10-minute videos to a wide variety of music tracks. Users can choose from an extensive library of songs, sound bites, and effects, which they can lip-sync, dance to, or use as a backdrop for their own creative content. The platform also offers a range of editing tools and filters to enhance videos, making it accessible and user-friendly for creators of all skill levels.

What sets TikTok apart is its emphasis on viral content and the power of its recommendation algorithm (D'souza, 2023). The For You page, the platform's main feed, showcases a curated selection of videos tailored to each user's interests and viewing history. There is also another feed available to users titled "following", which showcases the videos posted by accounts followed. One of the key factors in the algorithm is user behavior. TikTok tracks a wide range of data points, including likes, comments, shares, and video completion rates, to determine what types of videos a user is most interested in. This personalized approach, driven by machine learning algorithms, helps users discover content that aligns with their preferences and keeps them engaged on the platform (D'souza, 2023).

TikTok is known for its viral trends and challenges, where users participate in shared activities, dances, or creative concepts (D'souza, 2023). These trends often involve specific songs, sounds, or hashtags. Viral trends and challenges are characterized by their rapid spread and widespread participation. They can be initiated by individual users, influencers, or even brands looking to engage with the TikTok community. When a trend gains traction, it starts to appear on the For You page, gaining exposure to a broader audience and encouraging more users to join in and create their own versions of the trend. The music used in these trends often becomes closely associated with the challenge and experiences a surge in popularity both within the TikTok community and beyond. Songs that resonate with users and complement the trend's theme or choreography tend to go viral, leading to increased streams, downloads, and sometimes chart success (D'souza, 2023). TikTok's algorithm plays a crucial role in amplifying the reach of viral trends and challenges. As users engage with and create content related to a specific trend, the algorithm recognizes the pattern and starts recommending the trend to more users, even those who may not follow the original trendsetter. This drives further participation, leading to a viral snowball effect.

1.1.2 Problematization

This research is positioned within and contributes to the literature both on social media and music consumption, within the field of consumer research in marketing. Prior music consumption research has examined the role of digitalization (Aguiar & Martens, 2016; Wlömert and Papies, 2016; Danaher, 2014) where researchers find that streaming services and alike can serve as an information channel for discovery of new music, while conclusions regarding the effect of streaming services on music consumption differ. The literature stream has also examined music discovery (Nowak, 2016; Hamilton, 2019; Datta et al., 2018), in which researchers frame music discovery as an emotional response and find that consumers can rediscover music again. Moreover, it has investigated social music consumption (Hagen & Lüders, 2017; Larsen et al., 2010; Leong and Wright, 2013), where the research concludes that music consumption is symbolic and that social sharing features of music streaming allows consumers to be influenced by others.

Social media research has examined the role consumers play in marketing online (McKee, 2010; Li and Bernoff, 2008; Rajagopal, 2013). The research finds that consumers play a big part in online marketing by co-creating content and participating in the online conversation on products. While these two literature streams separately make interesting findings, neither stream has thoroughly investigated the role *social media* plays in *music consumption*. This area remains vastly unexplored as these two literature streams have not interacted with each other enough yet. The intersection of these two literature streams is hence where our research is positioned.

Some research has been done in this area. The effect of YouTube on music consumption has been investigated (Cayari, 2011; Liikkanen & Salovaara, 2015; Hiller, 2016), where the researchers find that YouTube affects the sale of both albums and individual songs, its user-generated content increases the spread of music, and it increases the availability of music. However, because YouTube and TikTok differ in design, usage, and user base, the results of these studies are not directly applicable to TikTok. TikTok offers platform affordances and capabilities that differ from other social media platforms, hence indicating there is room for further research on how TikTok influences music consumption.

We aim to fill this gap by examining the role TikTok plays in music consumption performing semi-structured interviews with TikTok users and answer the research question:

How does TikTok shape music consumption?

1.3 Research Aim and objectives

The aim of this study is to examine how TikTok shapes the way young adults consume. This was carried out through conducting semi-structured interviews and then analyzing the data to identify themes and subthemes. This study will contribute to the nexus of social media and music consumption within the domains of consumer research/marketing by expanding our understanding of what role social media like TikTok plays in users' music consumption. Stakeholders such as record labels, producers, and artists that aim to understand their customer's behavior and uncover new market potentials could benefit from gaining insight into the underlying reasons behind consumers' music consumption on TikTok.

1.4 Delimitations

This study is limited to customers' experiences and perspectives of TikTok in regards to music consumption; a sample of 15 users were interviewed using a semi-structured format. The empirical context set for this study were as follows: young adults who reside in Sweden and use TikTok on a regular basis. This is because young adults are most inclined to utilize TikTok, roughly 50 percent of young adults use TikTok (Auxier & Anderson, 2021) and Sweden has a high TikTok user per capita rate and high engagement with the platform (Statista, 2022). Having a small sample size makes it difficult to achieve data saturation, which is the point where new information or themes stop emerging from the data. Moreover, the limited number of participants and the limited geographical scope may not adequately represent the diversity of perspectives, experiences, or characteristics within the larger population, as well as it may increase the risk of bias. Without sufficient variation in perspectives and depth of information, researchers may not fully explore the research questions or gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. Furthermore, the reliability and validity of the study are compromised with a small sample size. Reliability refers to the consistency and replicability of findings, while validity relates to the accuracy and truthfulness of the conclusions. Nonetheless, it was decided that a sample of

15 semi-structured interviews were sufficient to give a nuanced perspective and to find themes to answer the research question with. Finally this study is delimited in terms of understanding the consumption of music, hence we do not consider other aspects of music such as music literature.

1.5 Thesis Outline

The thesis comprises five separate sections, each with its own distinct structure and purpose. In Chapter 1, the overall subject of the thesis, including background information, problematization, research question, research aim, and delimitations is presented. Chapter 2 provides a literature review on the literature streams relevant to our research question. Chapter 3 concerns the methodology of the study, which presents the chosen research design and approach, data collection methods, sampling strategy, interview structure, data analysis, validity and reliability as well as limitations. Chapter 4 focuses on presenting the findings from the interviews and discussion of key themes in relation to previous research. Finally, Chapter 5 addresses the research question and offers a conclusion of key findings, as well as contributions and suggestions for future research.

1.6 Chapter summary

The introduction has provided background information on the research problem and TikTok to establish the context for the paper. It highlighted how digitalization has transformed the music industry and introduced TikTok as a major player with its unique platform affordances.. Moreover, the research is positioned within the literature on social media and music consumption within the field of customer research/marketing, aiming to fill a gap in understanding TikTok's role in music consumption. The aim of the study is to examine how TikTok shapes music consumption.

2 Literature review

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the existing research on the topics relevant to our study. Chapter 2.1 will contain existing literature on music consumption with focus on digital music consumption, music discovery and the social aspects of music consumption. Moreover, chapter 2.2 will introduce prior research on social media in the marketing context. Further on, it will specifically address TikTok and its platform affordances and algorithm. These two streams of literature have been chosen for review as our research question investigates their intersection. In chapter 2.3, existing literature on social media platforms, other than TikTok, and their effect on music consumption will be presented.

2.1 Music consumption

In this section, we review previous literature on music consumption. We have chosen to specifically look into literature on digital music consumption, music discovery and social music consumption. Research on the digital transformations in the music industry provides an understanding about how TikTok fits into the broader landscape of digital music consumption. Understanding how people consume and discover music in the digital era hence becomes crucial in the analysis of TikTok's role in music consumption. Literature on music discovery sheds light on how individuals find and engage with new music. As it concerns factors that influence music discovery, it provides a foundation for analyzing how TikTok aligns with or deviates from traditional discovery processes. Also, as it examines other digital platforms that facilitate music discovery, such as streaming platforms and their recommendation algorithms, providing necessary knowledge to understand this study. It further helps highlight the unique features, mechanisms, and user experiences specific to music discovery on TikTok. As TikTok is a social media platform that enables social interaction amongst its users, we think it is relevant to review literature on social music consumption. This will help us understand the dynamics and effects of social interactions in music consumption.

2.1.1 Digital music consumption

Aguiar and Martens (2016) explore digital music consumption on the internet based on clickstream data. The effect of unlicensed downloading and licensed streaming on licensed digital music purchasing behavior is examined and no evidence of online digital sales displacement due to unlicensed streaming is found, but rather a connection indicating that the

amount of clicks on licensed purchase websites would have in fact been lower, had it not been for the existence of unlicensed downloading websites. Aguiar and Martens (2016) state that consumers with a larger musical interest tend to, at a higher rate, use licensed and unlicensed streaming sites and websites and licensed music streaming and licensed digital purchases complementary to each other. The results of the study also point towards a positive trend on the effect of online music streaming on licensed purchases of digital music. Similarly, McBride (2014) examines the effect of Pandora on sales of songs where he finds that Pandora increases music sales by around 2%, hence providing evidence that non-interactive music streaming services can stimulate sales. Wlömert and Papies (2016) however disagree with this notion supported by Aguiar and Martens (2016) and McBride (2014) as they find that consumers who adopt on-demand streaming services purchase significantly less recorded music.

Aguiar (2017) adds to the discussion on the effect of streaming services on digital music consumption, by taking the functioning factor of the streaming services into consideration in the research. Specifically, Aguiar (2017) analyzes the case of the streaming platform Deezzer and the effect of its cap on purchasing and piracy behavior. The results from the study point towards a decrease of both licensed and unlicensed music downloading website visits as a result of the free streaming cap, limit, on Deezer and hence indicate that free streaming stimulates other sources of digital music consumption, such as both licensed and unlicensed downloading. Similarly, Datta et al. (2018) find in their study on the effects of Spotify adoption on individual music consumption and discovery that Spotify usage increases overall music consumption.

The findings made by Aguiar (2017) suggest that online music streaming serves as an information channel for consumers to discover and learn about new products they would otherwise not have been aware of. This is consistent with the finding of Datta et al. (2018) stating that the adoption of Spotify leads to an increased variety of music consumed among listeners as well as wider discovery of music. Danaher (2014) similarly claims that non-interactive services, like Pandora for example, can act as a complement to purchased digital downloads by exposing listeners to music they would otherwise not have heard.

2.1.2 Music discovery

Music consumption and music discovery are interconnected processes. Music consumption enables individuals to engage with and experience the music they have discovered, while music discovery fuels individuals' curiosity and prompts them to seek out new music for consumption. It therefore becomes relevant to our research to understand the music discovery process.

Nowak (2016) frames music discovery as an affective response as he explains that a discovery has to be memorable. He goes on to state that music discoveries relate to different types of interactions by exemplifying it with the experiences of epiphanies and rediscoveries. Musical epiphanies leave an affective mark that makes individuals remember the conditions of discovery over time, incorporating into one's taste content what was present in their social environment (Nowak 2016). Rediscoveries concern the technologically mediated exploration of music, the interpretation of already known content to the consumer in a new fashion (Nowak 2016). Rediscoveries can hence refer to either content that individuals develop a liking for over time or the rediscovery of content that they already know. As music libraries today, in the digital age, are likely to be extensive, consumers naturally are limited in the time they have to listen to all of their possessed content (Nowak 2016). While consumers can listen to a broad range of music, it is also possible to leave some content aside and rediscover it later, or they can forget about music they once heard and then rediscover it later. The research conducted by Nowak (2016) hence highlights the affective responses to music in music discovery and states that discoveries occur through both the arousing of individuals' sensibilities by the sounds of music and the gathering of information required to remember them and listen to them again.

In line with what Nowak (2016) states about the affective element of music discovery, Hamilton's (2019) research about the incorporation of streaming services and automated recommendation systems, using the example of Spotify, into music consumption concludes that it is often recommendations from media outlets, users' own social groups and individuals' memories that feature more prominently in respondent descriptions. The affective element of discovery and recommendation hence appears to be rooted in those existing practices, rather than the rhetorical framing of music platforms. The notion that users' own social groups are prominent in users' music discovery is further supported by

Mesnage et al. (2011). Their findings suggest that users experience social recommendations to be better than non-social recommendations, which in turn are better than random recommendations, indicating that people tend to share music taste with their friends on social network services at a higher rate than with people who are not their friends.

Datta et al. (2018) similarly to Hamilton (2019) investigates the impact of adopting a streaming technology, specifically Spotify in this case, on how consumers explore and discover new music. The results of the study find that Spotify adoption accelerates the rate of new variety consumption, that is if Spotify lowers the search cost for new music, it would be expected that users discover more varieties, i.e., songs they have not consumed previously. Datta et al (2018) also claim with its study that Spotify increases consumer welfare by reducing search frictions (e.g., enhancing discovery) and helping users discover new high-value content. Datta et al. (2018) hence show that streaming increases total consumption, leads to more variety, and facilitates discovery of more highly valued music among consumers. While previous studies have primarily looked into how music streaming services lead to music discovery, the understanding of how social media can do that is limited.

2.1.3 Social music consumption

Music discovery and social music consumption are closely intertwined, as social interactions and platforms play a significant role in how people discover, share, and engage with music.
As music discovery to some extent is described as a social process, the social aspect of music consumption becomes interesting to consider.

Laplante (2011) and Mesnage et al. (2011) both frame music consumption and discovery as a social activity, highlighting how people tend to rely on friends for discovery of new music. Although close friends continue to be important factors in the exploration of music (Komulainen et al., 2010; Laplante, 2011; Tepper and Hargittai, 2009), Leong and Wright (2013) explain that digitalization has made music meaningful shareable objects, that in turn instigate social interactions among friends *and* acquaintances in social network sites.

The social sharing features of music streaming are examined by Hagen and Lüders (2017) who find that these enable consumers to connect with and be influenced by others and hence

use music as social objects. The features are twofold as users can either share music and hence give recommendations, or follow others pages and find recommendations. Hagen and Lüders (2017) also explore the factors that affect sharing and exploration of music. They conclude that strong, weak and absent ties to the followed account seem to be equally significant in music discovery. Meanwhile, the act of sharing music is rather more dependent on strong ties as the social awareness of sharers and the connection of music with identity makes trust and confidence important factors.

Larsen et al. (2010) have further explored the concept of identity in relation to music consumption as they consider the symbolic consumption of music. The research finds that the concept of self image congruence is an important factor in the consumption of music, meaning that consumers listen to music that aligns with the self image they wish to present to the world. This conclusion is coherent with the finding about self awareness in music sharing by Hagen and Lüders (2017), both indicating that music consumption is symbolic as consumers seem to be mindful and aware of what signals their consumption of music sends out.

2.2. Social media

Having explored the social aspect of music consumption and its impact on individuals and communities, we now turn our attention to literature on social media and its role in marketing. Social media platforms have revolutionized the way we discover and share information about products with peers by facilitating social interactions and conversations online. The interactive nature of social media platforms allows individuals to engage in discussions, ask questions, and seek advice from their peers. This fosters a sense of trust and reliance on the opinions and experiences of others, influencing the decision-making process when it comes to product choices, which can be applied to music consumption choices as well.

Raman (2009) states that social media is turning the internet into a two way conversation as he explains how in the world of social media, consumers are influenced by one and others' preferences for products and services. Customers can collaborate with each other to define and purchase the next generation of products or services, as well as improve their online experience by sharing ideas, images, and thoughts and creating profiles. Meanwhile, Raman

(2009) also explains that brands are actively engaging in social media. This is done through conversational marketing, sponsorship, and online communities, offering consumers more personalized information and targeting influencers such as group or community leaders. This trend described by Raman (2009) is reshaping the identity system of social media and transforming the way companies manage their brand, as well as how individuals manage their own online persona.

McKee (2010) presents "The Social Media Trinity Model", a model consisting of dividing social platforms into three dimensions by a particular purpose; networking, conversation and community. The model is a business making and brand awareness-raising one, where the brand is at the center, encircled by the community, networking and conversation (McKee, 2010). The Social media Trinity model aims to give power to the brand by ensuring its relevance in conversation blogs like Twitter, community technologies like Facebook or YouTube, as well as networking websites such as LinkedIn.

Similarly, in the research conducted by Raman (2009), it is stated that the brand image is no longer dependent on what message is being mediated through advertising inputs, but rather what is being said about the brand in online conversations. The authors hence consider the social movements of a person sharing with others, instead of relying on companies directly, to get their information on a certain brand. The implication of this notion is that companies no longer have absolute control over the brand communication. Li and Bernoff (2008) go on to further confirm the common understanding of Raman (2009) and McKee (2010) by noting that it is of great importance to understand the come about of relationships in social media, as technologies may have changed, but it is the impact on personal relationships that is more profound.

According to Rajagopal (2013), there is a growing trend of consumers actively co-creating marketing content with companies and brands. This phenomenon is also acknowledged by Hanna et al. (2011) and Berthon et al. (2007), who suggest that consumers are no longer passive in the marketing exchange process. The number of consumers who actively participate in co-creating everything from product design to promotional messages is on the rise.

Li and Bernoff (2008) suggest five different types of social behaviors in their Groundswell Model: Creators; Critics; Collectors; Joiners and Spectators. The creators publish and curate information and messages, while critics provide their opinions and comments on them. Collectors share the messages, joiners help connect people to the information, and spectators read about it. The authors suggest that it is crucial for marketers to understand the different types of consumers presented and their behavior since not all of them engage with social media in the same way.

Christodoulides (2009) acknowledges that brand strategies have undergone considerable transformations because of the Internet phenomenon. In order to succeed in this day and age of rapidly increasing internet usage, brands must establish relationships, foster interactivity, and customize their offerings to better connect with their audiences online.

2.2.1 TikTok

Now, we delve into the existing literature on TikTok, as it is the social media platform we are studying in this research. Existing literature on TikTok provides valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of the platform and its impact on users' behaviors and experiences. By reviewing this body of work, we gain a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, and technological aspects of TikTok.

Zuo & Wang (2019) divide TikTok users into three different categories: Producers, disseminators, and consumers. Producers create content on the app by posting TikToks and disseminators share TikToks either through its one-click forwarding function or through simply interacting with the TikTok by commenting or liking which disseminates the video through the app's unique video recommendation algorithm. Finally, consumers simply watch the TikToks posted on the app. Zuo & Wang (2019) also address the different motivations for user behavior on TikTok. They find that the main motivation for TikTok usage is entertainment but they also find that there is a consumption motivation and social motivation amongst users. Zuo & Wang (2019) explain the consumption motivation by the advertisement on TikTok that provides users with unlimited and personalized consumption suggestions. Moreover, it is explained that people use TikTok to follow their friends or opinion leaders and alike in order to keep up with trends and keep in line with their social groups. Schellewald (2023) also highlights the social aspect of TikTok as the research shows how scrolling

through TikTok and its algorithm not only enables a personalized entertainment experience, but also an opportunity to engage with peers through sharing TikToks.

Barta and Andalibi (2021) agree that entertainment is a strong user motivation as they demonstrate that TikTok, in comparison to other social media, is commonly regarded as a platform intended for entertainment. They discuss this by highlighting the aspect of relatability and authenticity of TikTok content, which they claim can be a result of the fact that TikTok gives a feeling of privacy through the allowance of pseudonymous usernames leading to users posting more 'raw' content. Schellewald (2023) also points out how TikTok's relatable content differentiates the app from other social media platforms as a site of escapist consumption. The author also states that users actively engage with TikTok and its algorithm for personal relaxation and entertainment purposes. The description of TikTok as an entertainment focussed platform has been made by more researchers. Jang (2021) for example supports this notion with his research on the different motivations of TikTok users who create content or the app, and those who merely consume the content on the app. He found that active content creators on TikTok exhibited heightened yearnings for social interaction and a sense of community compared to the passive consumers on TikTok, but that they shared a common ground in their motivation for TikTok usage; entertainment and escapism. This is further supported by the findings of Omar and Dequan (2020) and Scherr and Wang (2021).

2.2.1.1 Algorithm and affordances

To comprehend the escapism and entertainment provided by TikTok usage, it is essential to consider the app's much discussed algorithm behind the For you page.

The research provided by Bhandari and Bimo (2022) contrasts TikTok to other social media platforms which have been prominently theorized as social network sites. The study explains how on social network sites, for example Facebook, users engage with content from people of their social communities, but on TikTok users are rather continuously presented with content based on their interaction with the algorithm, hence an algorithmic representation of themselves. The argument made by Lee et al. (2022) is in the same line of thought with Bhandari and Bimo (2022). They claim that through the interaction with TikTok, and specifically its algorithm, users are faced by a versatile, but also partial, portrayal of themselves. Lee et al. (2022) hence argue that TikTok facilitates self-expression, not only

through reflection, but also by helping users identify themselves within the diverse TikTok communities and aesthetic styles presented on the For you page.

Simpson and Semaan (2021) and Karizat et al. (2021) explain that TikTok's algorithm collects a sample of videos addressing parts of people's interests, tastes and identity and highlight how this can lead to the TikTok algorithm silencing certain parts of some users' identities. Additionally, Siles and Melendez-Moran (2021) clarify that the relationship people hold to algorithms, like that of TikTok's For You page, is dynamic and changes over time. The authors therefore claim that the relationship should be viewed as conditional. Finally, Siles et al. (2020) stresses the proactive role users play in the relationship with algorithms as like with other affordances, the impact of algorithms differ depending on how individuals perceive and interact with them.

2.3 Social media's effect on music consumption

This is the intersection of the two above-mentioned bodies of literature, where this study is positioned and contributes to. In this section, we review literature that has been written on the effect of social media platforms other than TikTok, namely YouTube and Facebook, on music consumption. The literature on YouTube will be relevant to our study as it is the social media that most resembles TikTok with its video-based affordance and user generated content. It is therefore beneficial to understand the impact YouTube has had on music consumption when researching the same matter for TikTok, although not directly applicable.

Hiller (2016) exploits the removal of Warner Music content from YouTube between January and October of 2009 to examine the effect of YouTube on music consumption, specifically album sales. The research finds that top-selling albums are economically negatively affected by YouTube, but less popular albums on the other hand benefit from the promotional effect provided by YouTube. Research conducted by Kretschmer and Peukert (2014) also analyzes the effect of YouTube usage on digital music sales by exploiting a royalty dispute between YouTube and the German collecting society and performance rights organization GEMA. Their results suggest that online music videos on YouTube trigger album sales, but have no effect on the sales performance of individual songs.

Cayari (2011) examines what he refers to as the "YouTube effect" on music consumption, creation and sharing. He finds that YouTube has increased the availability of music as it allows users to listen to music for free. The findings of Cayari (2011) also highlight the visibility of music YouTube has enabled, as it is explained that the video feature of YouTube has reintroduced the visual aspect to music that was lost with the emergence of audio only recordings. Finally, Cayari (2011) points out that YouTube allows for the manipulability of music, that is it lets users create mash-ups of songs and engage in sampling of music. This highlights the fact that YouTube does not only allow users to consume music, but also to create. The user generated (or user-appropriated) content on YouTube is also discussed in Liikkanen & Salovaara (2015) where they stress the importance of it as they claim it supports music listening. They explain how user generated content on YouTube creates the most user engagement, meaning likes, comments and shares.The user generated/appropriated content on YouTube hence increases the spread of music. Even though the professionally produced content from major record labels is the attention focal point of users on YouTube, Liikkanen & Salovaara (2015) believe that that type of content gets overshadowed by user generated content, making the latter collectively more popular than the original content created.

Krause et al. (2014) investigate motivations for using music listening applications on Facebook. The research identified three different types of motivations; entertainment, communication, and habitual diversion gratification. The findings suggest that although some listeners use the listening application for enjoyment, some listeners have more of a communicative and personal motivation for their usage, like using the application to promote music they like or as an expression of their identity.

2.4 Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed the two literature streams relevant to our research question as well as literature written on the topic of social media's effect on music consumption. The reviewed literature in this chapter on music consumption and social media is our theoretical point of departure for the analysis and discussion of this study.

The literature on digital music consumption found that streaming services and non-interactive services can serve as an information channel for discovery of new music by exposing listeners to music they otherwise would not have heard. However, conclusions regarding the

effect of streaming services on music consumption differed amongst researchers. Research on music discovery framed it as an emotional response and found that consumers can rediscover music again. It also found that Spotify adoption accelerates the rate of new variety in music consumption. Social music consumption literature concluded that music consumption is symbolic and that social sharing features of music streaming allows consumers to be influenced by others.

Moreover, the literature on social media finds that consumers play a big part in online marketing by co-creating content and participating in the online conversation on products. Previous research on TikTok investigated the users' motivation for using the app where it was found that social interaction and entertainment are the main purposes. The literature specifically concerned with TikTok's algorithm and platform affordances concluded that the impact of algorithms differ depending on how individuals perceive and interact with them.

Finally, previous research on social media's effect on music consumption found that YouTube affects the sale of both albums and individual songs, its user-generated content increases the spread of music, and it increases the availability of music.

3 Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to present a thorough understanding of the research methodology employed in this study. Initially, we start by discussing the methodological steps that guided our research approach and design. Next, we provide an insight into the data collection process, which includes the interviewee selection and interview design used to gather the data. Furthermore, we introduce the thematic analysis approach, including flexible pattern matching that was used to analyze the collected data. Lastly, we will discuss the methodological limitations, along with the validity and reliability of the collected data. This will provide readers with an understanding of the potential challenges and caveats of our research methodology and how they may impact the study's findings.

3.1 Research Approach

Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019) explain how deductive research and inductive research are two different approaches to conducting research, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. They continue stating that deductive research starts with a theory or hypothesis and tests it with empirical data. This approach typically involves collecting quantitative data through structured methods such as surveys, experiments or structured observations. Deductive research is often used to test existing theories or to confirm or refute a hypothesis. The advantage of this approach is that it allows for a clear and systematic testing of theories, and can produce results that are generalizable to a larger population. However, it can be limited by the rigidity of the initial theory or hypothesis, which may not be flexible enough to accommodate unexpected or alternative findings (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). Inductive research, on the other hand, as Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019) state, starts with observations and data and builds theories or concepts based on these findings. This approach often involves collecting qualitative data through methods such as interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic observations. Inductive research is often used to explore new areas or phenomena, generate theories, or develop new concepts (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). The advantage of this approach is that it allows for a more flexible and open-ended exploration of the research topic, which can lead to unexpected or novel findings. However, it can be limited by the subjectivity of the researcher and the lack of generalizability of the findings (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Conclusively, an inductive approach has been chosen for this study, as it aims to investigate the phenomenon of how TikTok shapes the consumption of music.

3.2 Research Design

To gain a better understanding of TikTok's influence on music consumption, a qualitative study will be conducted by interviewing users of the platform. As Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019) point out, there are two types of research approaches: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research involves the quantification of data collection and analysis, whereas qualitative research prioritizes the interpretation of words and how individuals perceive the world. In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research allows for a comprehensive research of topics, enabling researchers to gain a thorough understanding of the subject matter. Qualitative research methods typically involve data collection through methods such as interviews, observations, and focus groups. The data collected in qualitative research is typically non-numerical and may be analyzed using techniques such as content analysis, narrative analysis, and thematic analysis (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). In this study, the researchers will use thematic analysis, which is further explained in chapter 3.4.

One of the advantages of qualitative research is its ability to provide rich, detailed descriptions of complex phenomena. Qualitative research can also be useful in exploring new or understudied topics, as it allows for flexibility in data collection and analysis (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). In the realm of business research, there exist two primary methods: qualitative and quantitative. Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019) suggest that qualitative research concentrates on social phenomena descriptions and textual data collection, while quantitative research is based on numerically measurable variables. Qualitative research is frequently employed in generating new theories, rather than testing existing ones, as it is grounded in an inductive research approach. In contrast, deductive research is more commonly used in quantitative research methods. Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019) emphasize the importance of choosing the appropriate research approach based on the research question and the type of data being analyzed. Hence, as this is a social phenomena where we aim to understand the consumers' underlying motivations and experiences in-depth, this study will use a qualitative research approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of TikTok's influence on music consumption. Qualitative research, with an inductive approach utilizing semi-structured interviews to collect data, and furthermore a thematic analysis to distinguish patterns. While there are challenges in ensuring the validity and reliability of qualitative research findings, the richness and detail of the data collected make this approach suitable for exploring complex phenomena.

3.3 Data Collection

To collect our data for this study, interviews were conducted. In qualitative research, interviews are the most used method as it provides great flexibility and allows for in-depth exploration. Nonetheless, it also comes with limitations as there is the risk of bias as well as it requires a lot of time and resources (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019).

3.3.1 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method used in research where the researcher selects a sample of individuals or cases based on specific characteristics that are deemed important to the research question. This method is often used when a researcher wants to study a particular group or population that has certain characteristics or traits that are relevant to their research (Bell, Bryman, & Harley 2019). According to Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019), purposive sampling is a useful method for research in business and management because it allows the researcher to select participants based on their expertise, knowledge, and experience in a specific area of interest. For example, in this research as we are researching TikToks' effect on music consumption we chose to select a sample of young adults who all are using TikTok on a daily basis.

Purposive sampling can be conducted using various techniques such as expert sampling, maximum variation sampling, and homogeneous sampling (Bell, Bryman, & Harley 2019). Expert sampling involves selecting individuals who are considered experts in a particular field or area of interest. Maximum variation sampling involves selecting individuals that are diverse and represent a range of experiences or perspectives. Homogeneous sampling involves selecting individuals that have similar characteristics or traits (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019), which is the case in this research. One potential limitation of purposive sampling is that the sample may not be representative of the population, which can limit the generalizability of the findings (Bell, Bryman, & Harley 2019). However, this limitation can be mitigated by ensuring that the sample is diverse and includes a range of perspectives and experiences.

Overall, Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019) suggest that purposive sampling can be a valuable method for research in business and management, particularly when the researcher wants to study a specific group or population with relevant characteristics or traits. By carefully

selecting participants or cases, researchers can gather in-depth and meaningful data that can inform their research question and contribute to the broader field of knowledge (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). Additionally, purpose sampling was combined with snowball sampling within this research; according to Parket, Scott and Geddes (2019) purpose sampling is often combined with snowball sampling as a matter of convenience. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are recruited through referrals from other participants. In other words, one participant refers the researcher to another potential participant who meets the study's criteria (Parket, Scott, & Geddes, 2019). This process continued until the required sample size was reached.

3.3.2 Interviewee Selection

The selection of interviewees is a critical component of any research study, and the same holds true for this study about how TikToks' shapes music consumption. The objective is to gain insight into the motivations, preferences, and behaviors of the demographic, in this case the users of TikTok, as it relates to music consumption on the platform. To achieve this, we carefully considered our interviewee selection criteria. Firstly, we targeted individuals between the ages of 18 and 30. This age range represents the demographic most likely to use TikTok and engage with music on the platform. We will also ensure that our sample is evenly distributed across this age range to account for any differences in music consumption habits between younger and older young adults. Secondly, we selected individuals who reside in Sweden, since Sweden has one of the highest TikTok users per capita rate. Thirdly, we chose individuals who regularly use TikTok and engage with music-related content on the platform. We defined "regular use" as individuals who spend a minimum of 30 minutes per day on the platform and regularly engage with music-related content. This criterion ensured that our interviewees have a significant level of experience and engagement with TikTok's music-related features. With this in mind we therefore chose a purposive sampling method with the homogeneous variety as we wanted to interview users sharing these same traits.

To recruit our interviewees, we used a combination of convenience and snowball sampling methods. We began by reaching out to our personal networks and utilizing social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook and Instagram to disseminate recruitment messages. If they accepted to be interviewed, we asked them to refer us to other potential interviewees that filled the criterias set. In summary, our interviewee selection criteria prioritized individuals

between the ages of 18 and 30 who reside in Sweden and who regularly engage with music-related content on TikTok. As mentioned, our recruitment strategy will utilize a combination of convenience and snowball sampling methods to ensure diversity in our sample and capture a range of experiences and perspectives related to music consumption among young adults who use TikTok. In **Table 1** we list our respondents, the participants have been given a name, as well as their age, daily average TikTok usage and favorite music genre is present to easier familiarize them.

Table 1

Informant profiles

Name (Pseudonymised)	Age	Daily avg. TikTok usage	Favorite music genre
Oscar	18	90 min	Pop
Sam	25	60 min	Phonk
Mattias	21	45 min	J-pop
Lukas	23	90 min	Techno/Phonk
Layla	21	150 min	Hip Hop
Felicia	19	120 min	EDM
Karl	21	30 min	Techno
Daniel	25	120 min	Metal
Adam	27	60 min	Hip Hop
Sonja	23	20 min	House
Ebba	25	120 min	Pop
Madeleine	23	120 min	Pop
Dennis	27	40 min	Hip Hop
Johanna	24	100 min	Indie pop

Clara	23	130 min	R&B

3.3.3 Interview Design

Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019) explain that while structured interviews are typically used in quantitative research, qualitative interviews have a different strategy, as researchers are interested in gathering interviewees' opinions and perspectives on the chosen topic. They recommend the use of semi-structured interviews in qualitative research, as this approach provides guidelines for the interviewer to stay within the relevant topic and effectively gather data. Interviews are a method of eliciting detailed responses from participants through open-ended questions. Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019) states that there are two main types of interviews: structured and unstructured. Structured interviews involve predetermined questions, while unstructured interviews are more flexible, allowing researchers to follow up on interesting points. Semi-structured interviews combine elements of both structured and unstructured interviews, providing researchers with a general idea of topics to cover, while allowing for flexibility to explore topics in more detail, as they allow for follow-up questions and clarification of responses (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). This allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the topic being studied and to uncover unexpected insights. Furthermore, it is useful for exploring complex phenomena and understanding the perspectives and experiences of participants (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). Hence, semi-structured interviews have been chosen for this study.

Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019) suggest that when conducting semi-structured interviews, researchers should start with broad, open-ended questions, and then gradually move towards more specific questions as the interview progresses. The use of prompts and probes can also help to elicit more detailed and nuanced responses from participants. Additionally, researchers should be prepared to adapt their questioning based on the responses provided by participants, and should be flexible in their approach to allow for unexpected insights. However, the use of semi-structured interviews also has some limitations. For example, the data collected may be influenced by the researcher's interpretation of the responses and the questions asked. Additionally, the data collected may be difficult to analyze and generalize, as the responses may be unique to the individual participant (Bell,. Bryman, & Harley, 2019).

15 individuals were interviewed for an average of 30 minutes. 15 semi-structured interviews of 30 minutes can be presumed to be large enough of a sample, and long enough to give nuanced answers which could be used to identify patterns and draw conclusions. See Appendix A for interview questions. The interviews were both conducted online using Zoom, but also in person. The interviews started off by greeting the interviewee and engaging in some small talk to make the participant more comfortable. Then the interview procedure was explained before the interview started; during the interview the interviewer wrote down the answers and thoughts given. The interview question came to vary slightly from interview to interview, e.g., if the interviewee did not upload content on TikTok, no further questions about their content creation were asked. Moreover, follow up questions were asked based on their responses to dig deeper and to further uncover interesting perspectives. 12 of the 15 interviews were conducted in Swedish, while the other three were conducted in english in accordance to the interviewee's preference. All the quotes from Swedish speaking participants that are presented in our findings have been translated to english. We therefore acknowledge that meanings behind certain quotes may have been lost in translation.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study will be based on a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis involves identifying patterns and themes in qualitative data (Lacey and Luff, 2009). This method will allow for a comprehensive exploration of the data and identification of the themes that emerge from the participant's responses. The analysis process will involve several stages, including familiarization with the data, identifying themes, and flexible pattern matching (Belotto, 2018).

3.4.1 Flexible Pattern Matching

According to Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019), the value of incorporating flexibility into research and advocate for the enhancement of qualitative research through adaptability to the unforeseen variables that impact studies in practical contexts. Sinkovics' (2018) expands on the concept of flexibility in qualitative research that was presented above by Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019). The core principle of the 'flexible pattern matching' method is that a researcher should not adhere to a rigid and preconceived research design, as this can limit the qualitative input obtained from interviews. To maximize the value of qualitative research, Sinkovics (2018) suggests that the initial design of the study should be based on a literature

review, but the questions should not be constrained to only addressing issues from the literature. Instead, researchers should use open-ended and general questions and be adaptable during conversations with study participants to elicit more valuable insights. Sinkovics argues that this approach allows for alterations to the initial research questions, as unexpected results may emerge from the data that was not initially apparent.

Sinkovics (2018) further discusses the concept of flexible pattern matching in qualitative research. Pattern matching is a qualitative analysis technique that involves comparing data to pre-existing patterns or categories to identify similarities or differences. Sinkovics (2018) notes that traditional pattern matching methods rely on a fixed set of categories or patterns, which can be limiting in terms of their ability to capture the complexity and nuance of qualitative data. Flexible pattern matching, on the other hand, allows for a more open-ended and iterative approach to analysis. It involves generating initial patterns or categories based on the data, and then refining and modifying them as the analysis progresses. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the data, as it is not limited by preconceived notions or rigid categories (Sinkovics, 2019). She further emphasizes that flexible pattern matching requires a high level of reflexivity and openness to the data. Researchers must be willing to adapt their patterns and categories based on the data, rather than imposing their own preconceptions onto the analysis. Additionally, she notes that flexible pattern matching is a time-consuming process that requires careful attention to detail.

When we adapted flexible pattern matching to our data analysis we looked for similarities in our respondents answers, e..g., we found that all of our participants discovered new music through TikTok. After this pattern was observed we compared it to pre-existing literature to distinguish similarities or differences in their results.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are important concepts in business research methods, as outlined by Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019). Validity refers to the accuracy of a study in measuring or examining what it intends to. It involves ensuring the research design and data collection methods effectively capture the intended constructs or phenomena. Reliability, on the other hand, concerns the consistency and stability of research findings over time and different conditions (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019).

The data collected for this study will be from young adults in Sweden who regularly use TikTok. While this targeted approach may provide accurate data within this specific group, it is important to acknowledge potential biased perspectives. The perspectives gathered might not fully represent the broader population, and the findings may not validate all the theories within the scientific framework to the highest extent possible. It is crucial to consider these factors when interpreting the results and drawing conclusions. Furthermore, one of the challenges of qualitative research, as mentioned by Bell, Brymman and Harley (2019), is ensuring the validity and reliability of findings, as the data collected is often subjective and can be influenced by the researcher's interpretation. Triangulation has been adapted to the research through the convergence of different researcher perspectives and data sources to establish a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Additionally, regarding other research quality parameters such as generalizability, to the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied to a larger population or different settings. This is supported through our representative sampling (to select samples that represent the population of interest), but it could be further improved through a larger and more diverse sample size to have a higher likelihood of ensuring generalisability.

3.6 Limitation

The study employed a single-method approach, relying solely on interviews to collect data. While interviews are efficient for gathering a wide range of information, they may not capture the full complexity of the research topic. Incorporating multiple methods, such as surveys, digital ethnography or observations, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Initially it was planned to also conduct a digital ethnography study of users on the platform and their interaction with the content posted, but due to the time constraint, it was decided to solely conduct interviews for our data collection. The amount of interviews as well as its diversity could be increased and optimized further for a more thorough exploration if there had been more time.

3.7 Chapter summary

This chapter explains the different methods used for the research. The research approach, design, data collection, data analysis, as well as reliability and validity along with limitations has been gone through and explained. This research is a qualitative study with an inductive approach, which adopts a thematic analysis through pattern matching. The data has been obtained through semi structured interviews. To acquire respondents a combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling were implemented. The respondents had to fit the following criterias: young adults located in Sweden who use TikTok on a regular basis.

4 Analysis and discussion

The analysis examines the data collected from the interviews in order to understand how TikTok has shaped the consumption of music. Two themes emerged from our data, indicating that TikTok shapes music consumption in the following ways; (Re)discovery and Reconfiguration of musical taste. Within each theme, a number of sub themes will be presented as well. We believe that these themes together may contribute to creating a comprehensive picture that could contribute to our understanding of how TikTok shapes music consumption.

Findings are analyzed taking into account the previous research conducted on social media and music consumption presented in the literature review. During the analysis, previous research is referred to whenever we consider it to potentially contribute to understanding the effect on music consumption.

4.1 (Re)discovery of music

When analyzing the answers from our interviews, a clear pattern began to form suggesting that the respondents' music discovery processes were impacted by their usage of TikTok. Within this theme we present three sub-themes; Information channel, Visual imagery, and Rediscoveries, which were prominent in the interviewees' descriptions of their music discovery.

4.1.1 Information channel

An information channel allows consumers to discover and learn about new products they otherwise would not have been aware of (Aguiar, 2017). All participants in our study express how they have discovered songs through TikTok. They all describe how they, after discovering a song on TikTok, move over to Spotify or some other streaming service to search for and listen to the song. Sonja says that even though music discovery is not her main purpose with TikTok, she still discovers songs through the app. She then states that she has found many songs through TikTok that she has added to her Spotify playlist. Madeleine also describes how she has discovered songs through TikTok which she then has listened to on Spotify. She exemplifies this by saying how some of the songs she has found through TikTok have ended up on her *Spotify wrapped* that year, meaning it was one of her most played songs.

I think I have discovered new music from TikTok, I don't have anyone on the top of my head but I know I have looked up songs from TikTok on spotify and they have ended up on my spotify wrapped that year. **(Madeleine)**

It's pretty much scattered bursts of music I discover on TikTok, but you definitely get your ears open to new music. It's not like I'm actively looking for music on TikTok but sometimes you find yourself going "Oh this was really good" when hearing a song.... There are many songs I have searched up from TikTok and added to my list on Spotify. I check what the song is called on TikTok and then I go in and search for it on Spotify.... I use TikTok as a complement to Spotify. **(Sonja)**

TikTok is actually where I find most of the new music I listen to. I used to only use Spotify, for both listening and discovery, but it has changed because now I discover new music on TikTok and then go over to Spotify to listen to it. ... TikTok is definitely my main source of music exploration or what to say. **(Oscar)**

The respondents describe how they find music on TikTok that they then listen to on streaming sites. Users turn to streaming platforms like Spotify to listen to the complete songs they discovered on TikTok. They see TikTok as a starting point, a channel through which they find music they like. The platform serves as a catalyst for music exploration, pushing users to seek out and engage with the songs they encounter. Sonja describes how TikTok opens up her ears to new music, indicating that she is discovering and learning about new music through TikTok that she otherwise would not have been aware of. TikTok hence acts as an information channel via which consumers discover new music. It creates a symbiotic relationship where users discover music on TikTok, then actively seek out and consume those songs on streaming sites. This dynamic showcases the influential role of TikTok in shaping music discovery patterns and influencing the consumption habits of its user base.

4.1.2 Visual imagery

A prominent theme that arose in the interviewees' description of their discoveries via TikTok is the connection to the visual imagery. Dennis describes how many of the songs he has found on TikTok, he probably would not have noticed on Spotify. But because the music on TikTok

often is attached to some funny video, he notices and discovers them. Sonja similarly states that her music consumption has been broadened through TikTok and she attributes that to the fact that she associates songs with the videos that she sees and therefore starts liking and listening to them. Again like Dennis, she says she would not have noticed many songs had it not been for TikTok.

> *Many of these songs that you might not notice on spotify, you can find on TikTok in combination with some funny clip. I'm thinking of this Fleetwood Mac song that was released many years ago, it got a boost on TikTok for sure with the skateboarding video.* **(Dennis)**

> *My music consumption has broadened, I have to say, it has. And I think TikTok does that because you associate songs with videos you see and therefore start to like the song. If it wasn't for TikTok, I might not have discovered it.* **(Sonja)**

Ebba highlights the dances that tend to go viral on TikTok. She says that even she might not love a song the first time she hears it, but if there is a visually stimulating dance connected to the song she will watch the entire clip with the song playing in the background. Ebba explains that the algorithm then will show you the dance again but performed by another account with the same music playing in the background because it senses that she looks at the clip for a long time and has interacted with the video. She further explains that as she hears the song in connection to these dance videos that she sees on her for you page more frequently, she eventually starts liking the song as well even though it did not really stick the first time she heard it.

> *You may not love a song at first, but if you look at the whole dance to it, the algorithm thinks it's something you like, so you get the song more times on your For you page. And then the more you hear it, the more you like it.* **(Ebba)**

The participants describe how when they discover a song through TikTok, it is partly due to the video the song is attached to. The short video format of TikTok allows its users to create engaging and creative content that often features popular music. This connection between the music and the video content is significant because it enhances the overall impact of the music discovery experience. The visual imagery acts as a stimulant for users' interest and

engagement, making the song more memorable and emotionally resonant. It creates a lasting impression that goes beyond just the audio component of the song, as users begin to associate specific visuals or themes with the music they discovered on TikTok. The visual imagery hence becomes essential in users' discovery of music through TikTok as it is able to form users' perception of songs and thus shape their music consumption.

4.1.3 Rediscovery

When conducting the interviews, the participants frequently described how they discover music through TikTok that they have listened to previously but forgotten about and also songs from the past that they never had heard before. This is what Nowak (2016) describes as *rediscovery*. Adam explains that there are many songs he has known about previously but picked up on again through TikTok and started listening to. He also states that he has begun listening to more old music since he started using TikTok but also new remixes of old songs. In a similar fashion, Madeleine shares that she has rediscovered songs she used to listen to through TikTok, but also music she had not heard before that was released several years ago. Ebba also described how she has discovered and started listening to old songs she never would have found had it not been for TikTok.

> *I discovered yung lean again through TikTok. There are many songs that you may have known from before that you pick up on again on the app. I've started listening to more old music but also new remixes of old songs, like this remix of Taylor Swifts' "Love Story" at Coachella, for example.* **(Adam)**

> *Pretty recently when the netflix series Wednesday came out, an old Lady Gaga song [Bloody mary] became popular on TikTok and that song is not even in the series but it went viral with the dance from the series. I hadn't heard that song in a while but I started listening to it again after [it became popular on TikTok]. ... I don't discover old music as frequently as I discover new music but I feel like TikTok has the power to bring back old music. For example the Kate Bush song ["Running up that hill", released 1985]. I love that song, it makes me feel nostalgic and I found it through TikTok.* **(Madeleine)**

There has been a time when I sang a song at home and my dad said "that was released in my time" and I had no idea. Because you think they are new since they are on TikTok. They have had some kind of revival through TikTok. I would never have listened to them if it wasn't for TikTok. **(Ebba)**

The participants were unanimous in their responses stating that they have rediscovered old songs that they both had and had not listened to previously, through TikTok that they would not have found otherwise. The findings suggest that TikTok plays a crucial role in amplifying the visibility and popularity of old music. Songs that might have faded into obscurity or remained within niche circles can experience a resurgence through TikTok's platform and become popular again years after its initial release date. TikTok thus facilitates and increases users' rediscovery of old music.

The viral nature of TikTok's trends and challenges further amplifies the reach and impact of these old songs. As users create captivating and creative content around these songs, they spark curiosity and intrigue among their followers and beyond. The videos become a vessel for introducing old music to a new generation and rekindling memories for those who are already familiar with the songs. The ability of TikTok to reignite interest in old music and propel it to newfound popularity is a testament to the platform's influence in shaping music consumption.

4.2 Reconfiguration of musical taste

Musical taste refers to an individual's preferences, inclinations, and subjective judgments when it comes to music. It encompasses the genres, styles, artists, and specific songs that resonate with a person on a personal and emotional level. Musical taste is often shaped and influenced by exposure to different types of music, such as through family, friends, media, and cultural surroundings. Consistently with the notion that media can shape individuals' musical taste, we found a pattern among our interviewees suggesting that TikTok is shaping their musical taste. We found three ways through which TikTok shapes its users' musical taste which will be presented as subthemes in this section; The broadening of musical taste, Old songs and nostalgic hits, and The fast fashion of music consumption.

4.2.1 The broadening of musical taste

It was found in the interviews that respondents experienced that their musical taste had become more broadened as a result of their TikTok usage. They express how both their taste in music has become more extensive and how they have discovered and started listening to more new artists they had not listened to prior to finding them on TikTok. Madeleine says that TikTok has broadened her listening habits which she attributes to TikTok's algorithm as she explains that it, contrary to Spotify, does not show you songs based on your musical taste. Sonja and Ebba also see a connection in their broadened musical taste with TikTok. Sonja describes how the association of a song with a video on TikTok can make her like the song.

I think TikTok has broadened my listening habits a little bit. I find music on TikTok that I probably would not find on spotify otherwise. Spotify puts out recommendations for you but it is based on the type of music you are already listening to so it's like the same category. Whereas for TikTok, you get all types of music on your for you page. **(Madeleine)**

TikTok has allowed me to find more songs and start listening to new music. It has broadened my range of music. One of my favorite songs now is "Another love", which I found on TikTok. I've also started listening to Lizzo a lot, I had never listened to her before, I definitely discovered her through TikTok. **(Ebba)**

My music consumption has broadened, I have to say, it has. And I think TikTok does that because you associate songs with videos you see and therefore start to like the song. If it wasn't for TikTok, I might not have discovered it. (**Sonja)**

Through how the participants describe their usage of TikTok, we make the interpretation that they almost exclusively use the For You page. Since TikTok's For You page is based on the user's interaction with other videos, visual content that they like, the music attached to the videos that users see on their For You page is hence not solely based on their own musical taste. This allows for users to discover music without nudging and thus not what they typically would listen to. Rather than solely relying on traditional music streaming algorithms or curated playlists, TikTok offers a more dynamic and interactive discovery experience.

It presents music in the context of user-generated videos, providing an unique avenue for users to stumble upon tracks they may not have encountered through traditional music consumption channels. The result is a broadening of the range of users' musical taste.

4.2.2 Old Songs and Nostalgic Hits

The respondents who have rediscovered old music through TikTok all subsequently state that they have started to listen to it as well and incorporated it in their Spotify playlist. Moreover, the interviewees also describe how their discovery and consumption of old music has induced their further exploration and consumption of old music on Spotify. Johanna explains how she has started to listen to old songs she has found through TikTok and as a result of that started to look for more nostalgic hits to listen to on Spotify. Dennis describes a close to identical process to that of Johanna. He has also found old music through TikTok and then further explored the artist's discography on Spotify, leading to him listening to more old music. Dennis has further gone beyond this artist and explored more hits from the same decade by browsing through playlists on Spotify. Clara has also begun to listen to more old hits as a result of her initial finding of old songs on TikTok, but highlights the recommendation system of Spotify as a factor rather than her own active search.

The song "You're so vain" (originally released in 1972) started to go viral on TikTok a couple of months ago on TikTok. I started listening to it on Spotify and added it to one of my playlists…. There have been more old songs I have found though TikTok, like "Love grows (where my rosemary goes)" (originally released in 1971). I really like the vibe of that type of older music so I started looking for other playlists on spotty that had "You're so vain in them" and I found more old songs that I liked and added to my playlist. … Like "Different drum" (originally released in 1967) and "Make your own kind of music" (originally released in 1969). I know there are more but I can't name any right now. **(Johanna)**

I found Fleetwood Mac's "Dreams" (originally released in 1977) on TikTok. I had never listened to the band before or even music from that age or what you say. I started listening to more Fleetwood Mac on Spotify, like the songs "Silver springs" (originally released in 1977) and "Little lies" (originally released in 1987). I really like them, I feel like I have begun to explore that era of music a lot

more. ... I search for playlists [on Spotify] titled like "Best of 70's" and look for more songs I might like. **(Dennis)**

There are a lot of old songs coming back on TikTok. There is a dance trend right now to "Can't take my eyes off you" (originally released in 1982) on TikTok and I remember one [trend] a while ago to "These boots are made for walking" (originally released in 1965).... I have added both these songs and others I have found through TikTok to my [Spotify] playlists. Spotify gives you recommendations based on what you are listening to so I have actually started to listen to some more like older songs besides the ones I added from TikTok. **(Clara)**

As users start to rediscover more classic tracks from the past on TikTok, they simultaneously start to consume these songs as well. The rediscovery and consumption of older music also induces further exploration and consumption of music from the same age. As users actively consume these older songs, they dive deeper into the musical landscape of that particular era. This exploration becomes a natural progression, driven by the desire to further connect with the emotions, cultural context, and artistic expressions of the past. Old songs and nostalgic hits have hence been integrated into users musical taste as result of their TikTok usage.

The initial rediscovery of classic tracks on TikTok sparks users' curiosity and interest. When users come across an older song attached to a TikTok video, they often find themselves captivated by the nostalgic charm and the emotions evoked by the visual content. This association between the song and the engaging video content creates a powerful connection, making users more inclined to seek out and consume the full version of the song. TikTok thus shapes musical taste in the sense that it induces nostalgic consumption.

4.2.3 The fast fashion of music consumption

Through the interviews, a social phenomenon of fast fashion like consumption of music became apparent. This refers to the rapid and transient nature of music trends. TikTok has become a major platform for discovering and promoting as mentioned earlier, which has led to the emergence of viral music trends that quickly gain popularity and then fade away just as swiftly. The interviewees explained how when a song first starts to trend on TikTok and appear on their For You page frequently, it can grab their attention and make them enjoy it. However, there appears to be a fine line between when a song becomes worn out rather than

catchy. Ebba and Layla describe how they will initially like a song, but due to the repetitiveness of it on their For You page, they get tired of the song in a short amount of time. Madeleine points out the fine line between hearing a song enough times for it to stick and too many times for it to become annoying.

Sometimes you get a song so many times on your For You page that you feel…, it could be that you like the song a lot at first and add it to your list, but then you hear it several times a day on your For You page and therefore get tired of it after a week. It's like starting to consume music "fast fashion wise". **(Ebba)**

I think if I hear a song a lot I will start liking it more, so like if a song pops up frequently on my for you page then I will start liking it more. But there is a fine line between it popping up frequently and it becoming annoying, like when you hear it all the time. For example like Doja cat's "Say so", in the beginning I was like this is a bop and I would listen to it all the time and it would come up on my for you page all the time and then after a while I was like this is kind of annoying now. **(Madeleine)**

I feel like even though I discover a lot of songs I like on TikTok, I don't listen to them for a long time. Because even though I genuinely like the song, you eventually get sick of it after hearing it so many times on your For you page. … But I guess it makes sense, because the music I discover on TikTok, I discover because it has gone viral in some sense, otherwise I would not see it on my For you page, right? So then it is kind of obvious that I will continue to hear the song over and over again on TikTok, until I can't stand it [the song] anymore. (**Layla)**

Similar to fast fashion in the clothing industry, where trends come and go rapidly, the fast fashion of music consumption on TikTok involves the rapid rise and fall of songs and artists. A song can become immensely popular on TikTok, resulting in a surge of streams and downloads, only to lose its appeal within a short period of time as new trends emerge. This fast-paced cycle of music consumption is driven by the platform's algorithm, which promotes trending songs and encourages users to create content using the latest musical trends.

The fast fashion nature of music consumption on TikTok has both positive and negative implications. On one hand, it provides a platform for emerging artists to gain exposure and reach a wide audience quickly. TikTok has the power to turn relatively unknown songs into overnight sensations. However, this trend-driven environment can also contribute to a disposable and surface-level approach to music, where songs are consumed and discarded rapidly, leading to a lack of long-term engagement and deeper appreciation for the artistry behind the music. TikTok thus shapes its users musical taste in the sense that it speeds up the rate at which it changes.

4.3 Discussion

This study contributes to literature on music discovery (Aguiar, 2017; Nowak 2016) by expanding our understanding of how social media platforms like TikTok can help consumers (re)discover music. It further adds to the literature on digital music consumption (Danaher ,2014; Datta et al., 2018) by elaborating on the effect social media, TikTok in this case, can have on the rate of new variety in music consumption. Moreover, it contributes to social music consumption literature (Hagen and Lüders, 2017) by elaborating on how social sharing features on social media can impact other users' musical consumption habits. Finally, it contributes to the literature on social media (Hanna et al. ,2011; Berthon et al.,2007) by gaining a wider insight into the role consumers play in the marketing of music on social media platforms like TikTok.

Our results indicate that TikTok acts as an information channel via which consumers discover new music. This finding is along the lines of what Aguiar (2017) states about how online music streaming serves as an information channel for consumers to discover and learn about new products they would otherwise not have been aware of. However, we add to Aguiar (2017) with our finding by stating that social media, TikTok in this case, also can act as an information channel.

Moreover, we found a connection between the visual imagery on TikTok and our participants' discovery of music. Our results indicate that visual imagery is essential in users' discovery of music through TikTok. Nowak (2016) frames music discovery as an affective, emotional, response as he explains that a discovery has to be memorable. He goes on to state that music discoveries relate to different types of interactions by exemplifying it with the experiences of epiphanies and rediscoveries. Our result adds to Nowak (2016) by expanding on and

questioning what makes a discovery. While Nowak (2016) highlights the emotional response to a song in music discovery, our finding highlights the visual aspect. What is similar between these two however is the memorable element. The event that our respondents describe when they discover a song connected to a video on TikTok is in all aspects to be considered memorable. They continue watching a clip because the content catches their eye which they then connect with the song, hence indicating that the discovery is memorable.

Related to our finding on the role the visual imagery plays in users music discovery on TikTok, we found that TikTok broadens its users' musical taste as the algorithm gives recommendations based on the videos the user interacts with rather than their already existing music preferences, allowing users to discover music without nudging and thus not what they typically would listen to. Consumers hence start to listen to a wider range of music as an effect of their TikTok usage. Danaher (2014) makes a similar finding in their study. They suggest that non-interactive services expose consumers to music they otherwise would not have been aware of. We however add that with our finding that social media, namely TikTok, also exposes consumers to music they otherwise would not have been introduced to.

Furthermore, our results suggest that TikTok facilitates and increases users' rediscovery of old music. What our respondents state about their discovery of old music through TikTok is in line with Nowak's (2016) narrative that consumers can leave some content aside and rediscover it later, or they can forget about music they once heard and then rediscover it later. While Nowak (2016) states that this occurrence is likely due to the extensiveness of digital music libraries today and consumers' limited time to listen to everything, we would like to add with our results that social media, TikTok in this case, increases the rediscovery of old music. TikTok's format allows users to create videos using snippets of songs, and often, these videos incorporate nostalgic or older tracks. When a user creates a compelling video using an older song, it can create a ripple effect, sparking a trend where other users begin using the same song in their videos. This newfound exposure brings these older songs back into the spotlight and introduces them to a younger audience who may not have been familiar with them before. The user generated content on TikTok hence becomes an enabling factor in the spread of old music that leads to rediscovery among users. Like Hanna et al. (2011) and Berthon et al. (2007) suggest, consumers are no longer passive in the marketing exchange process. They actively create content which affects their peers. This becomes apparent in the case of TikTok as we see the impact of user generated content on consumers preferences in

music. Moreover, related to our finding about how TikTok facilitates and increases its users' rediscovery of music, we found that TikTok induces nostalgic consumption. The facilitation of rediscovery TikTok offers, simultaneously leads to consumers listening to these old songs. TikTok thus shapes music consumption by enabling rediscovery of old music and reconfiguration users' musical taste to include old songs and nostalgic hits.

Continuing on this line of thought, we make more findings on TikTok's effect on music consumption that can be related to the social aspect of the app. We find that TikTok speeds up the rate at which its users' musical taste changes, ultimately creating a pattern of consuming music fast fashion wise. When a particular song or sound starts gaining attraction through user-generated content, it quickly becomes a trend. These trends spread rapidly across the platform, with users creating their own videos using the same song or sound. The platform thrives on a culture of sharing and imitation, where users are influenced by the music choices and preferences of others. This phenomena can hence be linked to the findings of Hagen and Lüders (2017) who find that the social sharing features of music streaming sites enable consumers to connect with and be influenced by others. Similarly, the creation of TikTok videos using songs, which then are posted on the app, is also a type of social sharing feature. The music users share in the TikTok videos they post then influences the music consumption of other users on the app. We hence add to the finding of Hagen and Lüders (2017) by concluding that social media, TikTok in this case, enables consumers to be influenced by others musical taste. Moreover, this finding on the fast fashion like consumption of music on TikTok is also similar to the finding of Datta et al. (2018) which suggests that Spotify adoption accelerates the rate of new variety consumption. Likewise, our finding suggests that TikTok accelerates the rate of new variety consumption. We hence expand on the conclusion made by Datta et al. (2018) by adding that TikTok usage among consumers, similarly to Spotify adoption, also accelerates the rate at which new variety of music is consumed.

4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter firstly presented the findings from our pattern-matching analysis based on the interviews we conducted. Moreover, the results were analyzed and discussed in relation to each other as well as to previous research on music consumption and social media.

The results indicated that TikTok shapes music consumption through its facilitation of (re)discovery and reconfiguration of musical taste. Some of the findings corresponded with

previous research on digital music consumption, music discovery and social music consumption as those findings were similar to ours but applied to streaming sites and non-interactive services rather than social media sites. While other findings could be explained and related to previous social media research. Moreover, our findings expanded on the findings of previous research and thus contributed to the literature streams on both music consumption and social media.

5 Conclusion

This final chapter starts by outlining the aims and objectives of this paper. Then it highlights the research question in order to ensure that the paper's objectives have been accomplished. Further, the key findings are presented, followed by limitations and suggestions for future research.

5.1 Addressing the research question

 The aim of this study was to examine how TikTok has influenced the way young adults consume and discover music. In order to achieve this, the following research question was constructed:

How does TikTok shape music consumption?

To answer this question, a comprehensive literature review was first conducted to emphasize key research of the two literature streams we are looking to make interact with each other. Additionally, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 people who are users of TikTok. Through these interviews, we gained deeper insights into consumers' habits and behavior. Lastly, through a thematic analysis of the data, we identified relevant themes within the interviews which allowed us to answer the research questions about the effect of TikTok on its users' music consumption. The themes were contrasted with the findings of previous research from both streams of literature we examined in order to make them interact with each other and gain valuable insights on social media's effect on music consumption. Therefore, the objectives of this report have been fulfilled.

5.2 Summary of findings

Through our analysis, the main themes we identified through the interviews which helped us understand how TikTok shapes music consumption were (Re)discovery and Reconfiguration of musical taste. Within these themes, we presented three sub themes which correlate with the findings we made. Firstly within the (re)discovery theme, we found that Tik Tok acts as an information channel via which consumers discover new music they otherwise would not have heard. This finding showcases the influential role of TikTok in shaping music discovery patterns and influencing the consumption habits of its user base. Moreover on (re)discovery,

we found that the visual imagery on TikTok is an essential part in users' discovery of music through the app. The visual connection to the music consumers hear can form the consumer's perception of the song and thus shape their music consumption. Finally, we found that TikTok facilitates and increases users' rediscovery of old music.

Moving on to the theme of reconfiguration of musical taste, we firstly found that TikTok broadens its users' musical taste since it allows its users to discover music without nudging based on their already existing musical taste. Furthermore, we found that old songs and nostalgic hits have been integrated into users musical taste as result of their TikTok usage, hence indicating that the app induces nostalgic consumption. Lastly, our results formed a pattern suggesting that TikTok and its trend driven environment fosters a music consumption pattern that resembles that of fast fashion consumption. TikTok thus shapes its users musical taste in the sense that it speeds up the rate at which it changes.

5.3 Practical implications

This study has practical implications for those working in marketing in the music industry. A detailed understanding concerning how TikTok shapes music consumption and music discovery benefits marketers who are working with launches and marketing of music.

Understanding the preferences, behaviors, and demographics of music consumers can help artists and music producers develop targeted marketing strategies. The study findings can guide the selection of appropriate channels and promotional activities to reach specific audience segments effectively. Moreover, the findings may help artists and their management teams in improving fan engagement by understanding how their fans consume music and interact with artists on social media. Furthermore, insights from the study can help social media platforms that engage with content and music to enhance their content curation and recommendation algorithm. By understanding the music consumption patterns and preferences of users, platforms can improve user satisfaction and engagement.

5.4 Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study has a couple of limitations, with the main one being the leaving of a researcher half way through the study, leaving only 2 of the original 3 researchers. This increased the workload on the remaining researchers as well as it reduced the perspectives when analyzing our collected data. The limited sample size could result in bias and decrease the reliability

and validity of the study, hence for future research a larger and more diverse sample size should be conducted to enhance the representativeness of the results, reduce bias as well as strive to achieve data saturation. Furthermore, the study relied on a mix of purpose sampling and snowball sampling, which may introduce selection bias if not incorporated properly. Future research could consider employing random sampling methods to reduce selection bias and enhance the external validity of the study.

Interviewing an artist or music producer could have made the study more complex and given an interesting insight into the marketing strategy side of social media, but this was difficult to achieve with the resources and within the limited time. Hence, future research could analyze artists' marketing strategies, such as the effectiveness of influencer marketing for promoting music on TikTok. Moreover, it could explore how collaborations between musicians and TikTok influencers contribute to music reach, engagement, and audience expansion. Furthermore, we have explored the effect TikTok has on digital music consumption, but future research could also explore the effect TikTok has on live music consumption, such as concerts. Additionally, the impact of TikTok on the success of songs and artists could be explored by investigating how songs that go viral on TikTok experience increased streaming, chart success, or overall music industry recognition. In addition, the characteristics of music that resonate with TikTok users could be studied, for example preferences for specific genres, beats, or hooks that make songs more suitable for TikTok content creation and viral potential. Finally, from our findings we discovered that TikTok induces nostalgic consumption, which could be an interesting topic to research further.

Appendix A

Interview question

Music discovery
Q: How do you discover music?

Q: What happens when you discover a new song?

Q: What kind of music do you discover through TikTok?

Q: Have you discovered any new music artists or songs through TikTok? If so, can you share an example?

Q: What do you do after you have discovered a song on tiktok?

Q: Do you share music yourself? through creating videos with said music in it

Q: What is your main purpose for using TikTok?

Q: Before you used TikTok, how did you discover music then?

Q: What means other than TikTok do you use to discover music?

Q: How many hours a day on average do you use TikTok?

Social music consumption
Q: Do you often post TikToks' with sounds that you think represent you?

Q: What accounts do you discover music through, is it through friends or people you know that uploads videos with music, or is it through the For you page?

Q: What makes you post a tik tok tok using a certain sound?

Music consumption
Q: How has TikTok influenced your music consumption habits?

Q: What platforms do you use for music consumption?

Rediscoveries
Q: Do you feel like you rediscovered a song you have listened to before, that you otherwise would not have listened to at present? (Provide example)

Q: Does TikTok help you rediscover more songs that you would have if you didn't use TikTok?

Q: Have you also discovered old music you never listened to before through TikTok? (Provide example)

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