

TikTok? I guess I could be a celebrity too?

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TikTok is one of a kind. It's different, personalized and engaging. I for one can't get enough of the app. However, it's more than just an app to people, it's a path to fame. This essay will explore how the social network TikTok has changed the perceptions of celebrities and undertake the exploration of how TikTok has changed the view of a musical artist. This essay will explore how TikTok's platform enables everyday people to become famous for just being their authentic self and creating content that can directly communicate with their audience. This essay will argue that TikTok has shaped the new up-and-coming celebrities by giving them freedom of creativity. This essay will discuss how the formatting of the TikTok platform can be compared to micro-celebrities. TikTok is fundamentally changing the way contemporary pop-culture consumers view celebrities and who can be a celebrity, specifically within the music industry.

TikTok has promptly taken over the social networking domain, therefore, has gained a following of aspiring internet celebrities. Along with the increase of internet celebrities, TikTok's platform has become commercialised and professionalised, with the top celebrities on the platform earning millions of dollars annually (Abidin, 2021). However, what is so interesting about TikTok's platform is how their current models of celebrities are distinctly different from other social networking platforms such as Instagram or YouTube. A central difference between these platforms is that TikTok has given artists a platform to showcase their music, in a way that is captivating and different from pre-existing platforms (Abidin, 2021). TikTok has drastically changed the music industry and the way musical consumers view artist's identities. You do not have to have a record label; you could simply be in your mum's basement making music on garage band and blow-up on TikTok. TikTok has allowed anyone to be a content creator or artist and with TikTok's continuous growth, it looks like it will continue to do so. This shows that TikTok is fundamentally changing the way contemporary pop-culture consumers view celebrities and who can be a celebrity, performantly within the music industry.

TikTok is undoubtedly the fastest and most powerful social media celebrity manufacturing machine. This social network is constantly creating international stars on its platform from everyday teenagers to aspiring artists (Jennings, 2020). Within TikTok's quick rising to fame in the last 18 months, it is clear that the music industry is being affected by the TikTok community. It can be argued that for TikTok to permanently change the music industry, the app needs to deliver more than exposure to the rising musical artist. In order for TikTok to 'change the game', the social network needs to give the up-and-coming artists opportunities to make money off their work. This may be in instances such as; signing to a major record label, making brand deals and having sponsored content, or continuing with mass streaming (Anderson, 2021b). However, TikTok was not made to be the next step for musical artists and consumers do not expect it to be. The TikTok community has a love for the way TikTok is different from other platforms and how its algorithm works for individual consumers. The platform is not a site where music is sought out, like Spotify or YouTube. Music is part of the app's structure. This highlights the way TikTok is changing the way contemporary pop-culture consumers may view the musical industry.

Musical and Celebrity Identity

Music plays a huge part in a lot of people's lives. With the rapid increase in technology, the importance of music has grown (Pödera, 2015). This growth in technology has also given more diversity in how people experience music, such as the listener, performer, composer, arranger, and consumer. Music is a channel of communication, it communicates and gives opportunities to share one's thoughts, emotions, and meaning (Pödera, 2015). TikTok is an app that allows music to be widely shared, inviting individual or collaborative responses.

It is fundamental to acknowledge how musicians identify themselves within the music industry, especially with TikTok having such a huge impact on the industry. A musician's identity is dependent on their social and cultural surrounding as an individual

(Pödera, 2015), however, TikTok's platform does not necessarily regard the musical identities of their celebrities. With TikTok not being the mainstream or original area to gain credibility or identity as a musician, the concept of how to be a celebrity or musician is a credible question. Social networking sites are still rapidly increasing in use and a person's brand is built from the perception of their social media. This makes social media sites a perfect platform to build a celebrity's brand. TikTok's place in social media is so unusual compared to other sites due to TikTok creating celebrities and not just promoting their brand (Johns, 2016). There is minimal academic literature on how celebrities are represented in social media, regardless of the increased use in social media and with the majority of celebrities using social media as a tool to brand their image (Johns, 2016). This is unusual since Tiktok has risen to fame within the last 18 months and undoubtedly changed how people view 'traditional' celebrities and 'online' celebrities. This shows that Tiktok is fundamentally changing the way contemporary pop-culture consumers view celebrities within the music industry.

The development of celebrity identity highlighted through micro-celebrities

The devolvement of TikTok celebrities is creating a blurred line between the type of celebrity identity. TikTok's celebrities can be compared to micro-celebrities. However, there is nothing 'micro' about Tiktok. In order to be a miro-celebrity, a person is required to create a persona, producing and publishing content, and showcasing an authentic feel to online fans. Micro-celebrities have an authenticity with their content due to the direct interaction that they can have with their fans online and public discussion with their supporters about personal information (Marwick, 2013). Micro-celebrities embody all the characteristics and principles of celebrity culture, they apply these principles to online interactions (Marwick, 2013). 'Online' celebrities are commonly not viewed the same as 'traditional' celebrities. This is due to the lack of money, agents, and managers they have behind the scenes. Furthermore, traditional celebrities have a different working environment compared to those who only produce content through the internet. Due to these different environments, traditional celebrities have a goal of transparency and they expect more exhibitionism than those who are online celebrities (Marwick, 2013).

Nevertheless, micro-celebrities receive the same amount of criticism and can be viewed the same as traditional celebrities in the eyes of bloggers, their audience, and critics. However, they are expected to still uphold their authentic and natural selves. The rise to become a micro-celebrity does seem more achievable, nevertheless, there is still a high cost of being a celebrity (Marwick, 2013). TikTok celebrities can have a similar experience to micro-celebrities as they are classed as online celebrities and portray their authentic self, however, they overlap with the sense of traditional celebrities. This shows that Tiktok is fundamentally changing the way contemporary pop-culture consumers view celebrities.

TikTok has shaped the new up-and-coming celebrities by giving them freedom of creativity

TikTok is making headlines for the new generation of celebrities. The 25-year-old Los Angeles resident Tai Verdes had been trying to enter the musical business, but his career was not picking up (Anderson, 2021b). He had multiple auditions for The Voice and American Idol that were not successful. Still, from May 2020 to August 2020 everything changing for the aspiring singer. Verdes “Stuck in the Middle” single received over 4.5 million streams, reaching Spotify Viral 50 chart number 1 spot along with his song being used in thousands of videos on TikTok. The now well-known singer has record deals from multiple different major record labels. He is currently signed to Arista Records, a label that allows him a large amount of creative control. Verdes gives all his musical accomplishments to TikTok. Verdes stated that TikTok made people listen to his music (Anderson, 2021b). Verdes is just one of the new artists that has engaged with his online audience and popularity in order to make his dreams come true. TikTok gave him the platform to grow as a content creator, however, he is now classed as a musician who is very well known and has a big following. This is an example of how TikTok has shaped new up-and-coming celebrities by giving them freedom of creativity and online community. This shows how Tiktok is fundamentally changing the way contemporary pop-culture consumers view who can be a celebrity within the music industry.

TikTok's platform enables everyday people to become famous for being their authentic self

Major and indie record labels are recognising the importance of an online presence. With this newfound importance, TikTok's rise within the music industry is so notable due to the industry's precarious time (Anderson, 2021a). TikTok's platform has advanced rapidly as a short-form video platform. Paul Sinclair, the vice president of Atlantic Records, believes that the platform is fascinating and "has longevity" (Anderson, 2021a). He believes that it is not only going to last as an important social network due to the loyalty of its users, but also that if music fans are continually going to TikTok to explore music and trends, Tiktok will always have reverence to the music industry (Anderson, 2021a). If people like a content creator, they are going to excel. Tiktok is an online social capital, it connects people and creates communities. The platform not only allows consumers to actively engage with the artists and content creators, but it gives people a more personal platform where consumers can relate to one another in regard to their popularity. For example, Peach PRC is a popular TikTok content creator that has slowly developed her musical identity on TikTok. Since joining the social network in 2019, Peach has grown a large and devoted audience of 1.2 million followers on the app (Dorrington, 2021), not from music but from posting random but likable content that the everyday consumer could relate to (Chels, 2021). A reoccurring pattern that is promoting artists on TikTok are viral snippets that, through TikTok, lead to viral singles. Peach's first single 'Blondes' went viral on TikTok as a clip, shortly after the full song was released, and gained over 4 million streams on Spotify (Chels, 2021). Peach's next single shortly followed and reached 10 million streams. Recently, Peach released 'Josh' which has furthered her career as a musician (Dorrington, 2021). Peach is just one of the many new music artists that have risen to fame due to TikTok. 5 years ago, this strategy of gaining fame would be unthinkable. TikTok's platform enables everyday people to become famous for just being their authentic selves and creating content that can directly communicate with their audience. This is due to the setup of the social networking site and the strength that the TikTok community holds. This shows that Tiktok is

fundamentally changing the way contemporary pop-culture consumers view celebrities and who can be a celebrity, specifically within the music industry.

TikTok has grown a lot over the past 18 months. It has developed as a platform that has created a space for aspiring celebrities in the music industry, artist like Tai Verdes and Peach have shown this. This essay has explored how the social network TikTok has changed the perceptions of celebrities and has undertaken the exploration of how Tiktok has changed the view of a musical artist. It has explored how TikTok's platform enables everyday people to become famous for just being their authentic self and creating content that can directly communicate with their audience. It has shown that TikTok has shaped new up-and-coming celebrities by giving them freedom of creativity and has discussed how celebrity identities are becoming blurred through the comparison of new TikTok celebrities and traditional micro-celebrities. This has shown that Tiktok is fundamentally changing the way contemporary pop-culture consumers view celebrities and who can be a celebrity, specifically within the music industry.

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