

every day and made so much content and spent a lot of time on it," and that her joy at her first successes was all the greater. Sam Ambers asserts that he invested a considerable amount of effort into the platform, particularly during its nascent stages. Concurrently, he acknowledges his initial lack of familiarity with the intricacies of TikTok, which contributed to his initial sense of uncertainty:

I remember at that time it was such a crossroads because it was such a leap of faith because TikTok was so unproven. But it was so strange even from the first video that I posted, ever since that video for a good three or four months, I was posting every single day, and I mean every day. And I remember I was on holiday with my girlfriend at the time and I had, like, no followers and there was no reason for me to do these videos. But I was, like, I just need to do this. It's hard to explain, but I need to do these videos. (Sam Ambers, interview)

The fact that he felt compelled to produce videos for reasons that are difficult to explain or rationalize is related to certain statements made by other interviewees. It would appear that when content creators achieve a degree of success, they feel an urgent need to repeat that success and continue to produce content accordingly. In this context, Brooklyn Stafford describes the strong urge to remain successful with her videos, or to become successful again when her popularity waned:

You can't stop. You can't stop because the biggest thing is consistency. If you want to be successful in life, it's always about consistency, right? Putting it out there, putting your best out there, because the more you put out, the more you're going to receive. And you can't get discouraged if your numbers are low. You try something different the next time, a different approach on the TikTok medium, and then you see what comes back at you. (Brooklyn Stafford, interview)

6.3 Success on TikTok

As evidenced by the preceding paragraphs, the construction of a prosperous TikTok channel necessitates a considerable investment of time and effort. It appears that in order to achieve success on this platform, it is essential to develop tailored strategies for self-presentation and self-positioning, while con-

sistently providing novel content. The interviews indicate that achieving success on TikTok is seldom an immediate process. The interviewees discuss initial periods of low engagement and acknowledge that success was not immediate. What are the specific mechanisms behind this phenomenon? Additionally, how do musicians navigate the fluctuations in their popularity on the platform, which can be significant?

6.3.1 Before and During the Early Days of Success

First and foremost, it is of paramount importance for the interviewees that their content is actually noticed on TikTok. Videos are uploaded with the express intention of being seen by as many people as possible, a fact that is explicitly stated in several interviews. Kellin Hanas, for example, emphasizes that “the goal of a TikTok is to get it out and get it seen,” and Brooklyn Stafford states: “TikTok is all about trying to go for getting likes, getting lots of views, because views mean more followers and more followers means a bigger audience, which means that people are going to listen to your content.”

Nevertheless, it is not uncommon for musicians to require a considerable period of time before they are able to garner the attention of a broader audience. Stella Cole, for example, remembers that her first video “got, like, zero views and then maybe, like, four views after a few days. Nobody cared at first,” and Rachel Chiu reports that she started out with only “42 followers” on the platform. Initially, some of the interviewees attempted to incorporate nonmusical videos into their presentations, though these were ultimately not successful. Sam Ambers offers the following insight on this issue: “In the past I had tried with TikTok, but it was mainly, like, terrible comedy videos, like, absolutely shocking sketches. I remember I used to spend hours on these sketches, like, recording them and then editing them and they would get, like, 100 views and it was just pointless.” Stacey Ryan expressed satisfaction with the number of views she achieved early on, which now appear insignificant:

I started posting a couple of things here and there, but just for fun. [...] And then I remember posting that video and I think it got, like, 1,000 views, and that's the most I've ever got. And I had, like, eleven comments and I woke up to that and I was, like, oh my God, I went viral. I got 1,000 views. (Stacey Ryan, interview by the author, 20 July 2022)

Caity Gyorgy makes a similar comment about some of her videos that “did pretty well in the beginning stages, [...] getting 40,000 views,” which she considers a noteworthy achievement at the time.

As was the case with the first videos posted by the interviewees, the reactions to their first successful uploads were, at times, enthusiastic. Erny Nunez recalls his first viral moment on TikTok:

It was around my birthday. [...] I think it was one of the songs, “My Way” or something. [...] I went to sleep overnight, and I was just, like, man, what if these videos blow up? I woke up in the morning and I just started getting notification, notification, notification. I was, like, what’s going on? Did my thing get hacked or something? [...] I started scrolling and scrolling through comments and comments, saying, wow, you have a beautiful voice. Wow, wow, wow. And I honestly couldn’t believe it. I was in shock because I’ve never really received outside feedback from people. (Erny Nunez, interview)

Erny’s descriptions are in reference to one of his videos, which achieved a considerable number of views within a relatively short period of time. It is noteworthy that he was able to attain this initial success with a song (“My Way”) that was made popular in particular by a version sung by Frank Sinatra, a fact that appears to be consistent with the findings of the corpus analysis. Other interview passages illustrate that the selection of appropriate repertoires can be a pivotal factor for achieving success on TikTok. This is exemplified by Stella Cole’s account of her initial achievements and the subsequent creation of her first viral videos on the platform:

The first video that went a little bit viral was me singing musical theater. A Stephen Sondheim song, “Everybody Says Don’t.” That got, like, 30,000 views, which seemed so much at the time after getting, like, ten views on everything. And then I just kept singing. I kept posting more stuff and my first video that really blew up had, like, 800,000 views. [...] And at that point, I had maybe, like, 50,000 followers or something. But when I got into the 200,000s, that was because I started to sing more jazz standards. [...] People really love that. That’s when it got really big. (Stella Cole, interview)

This quote shows that the most successful jazz musicians on the platform did not necessarily prioritize jazz as their initial focus. While Stella emphasizes elsewhere that she “wouldn’t have called [herself] a jazz singer before the pandemic” (see chapter 6.1.3), her focus on specific jazz repertoires can be

attributed to the observation that performing jazz standards appears to have a significant impact in the context of TikTok. That is to say, a specific repertoire, which, according to the corpus analysis, is representative of jazz on TikTok, can be a crucial factor for success.

6.3.2 Going Viral on TikTok

The musicians interviewed have a similar amount of experience with viral videos, as indicated by the fact that they have already uploaded several videos with view numbers comparable to those referenced by Stella in the preceding paragraph. While there is no universal criterion for determining when a video can be described as viral, the 800,000 views mentioned by Stella in the context of jazz – at least as suggested by the interviews – appears to be a sufficient magnitude for the video to be considered a major success. However, all of the interviewees were also able to achieve views in the seven-figure range with individual videos, some of them even in the eight-figure range.

This raises the question of how a video gains such a large number of views. All interviewees emphasized that the process is extremely rapid and that the number of views increases markedly within a short period of time. “When things start to go viral, [...] it starts off with a good number of views and then it just kept growing and growing and growing,” explains Caity Gyorgy, while Kellin Hanas observes that after a specific threshold is reached, there is a five-figure increase in views every ten minutes. In recalling the circumstances surrounding the virality of her most successful TikTok video to date (Hanas 2021b), Kellin offers the following account:

I posted it, I went to rehearsal and then I looked at my phone during rehearsal and within ten minutes it got 10,000 views. And I was, like, that's weird. And then I looked at my phone again when I came back and I didn't think it was going anywhere. I was, like, oh, it'll probably get 20,000 or 30,000, this is great. Yay! Then I came back from rehearsal. I was sitting in my bed and I forgot that I posted it. So I opened TikTok and then I saw that I had 99 plus notifications and the video was at a million views. (Kellin Hanas, interview)

These descriptions align with the observations of Sam Ambers, who was the sole interviewee to achieve notable success with the first video he posted un-

der his current account, a rendition of the Michael Bublé song “Feeling Good” (Ambers 2021a). Sam recollects the process of achieving virality:

I remember I woke up the next morning and I saw a couple of notifications on my phone, you know, saying that a couple of people commented. I then went on the video and I think it had 550 views and about 85 likes and a few comments. [...] And I thought nothing of it. I mean, I saw that it had, like, 550 views and it was quite a good like to view ratio, and I was quite obsessed with that. So I was, like, okay, that’s quite cool. [...] However, throughout the day I was kind of with my family and we were on holiday at the time and I was just checking my phone every so often and there was, like, an extra 1,000 views and the next 1,000 views and then 10,000 views. And I was, like, wow, we’re on 50,000 views now. This is crazy. This is actually crazy. And then I remember it was the evening time of the next day [...], at that point, it was going up. Crazy amounts. Like, every refresh was, like, another 1,000 views. (Sam Ambers, interview)

Statements such as these show that achieving virality is an unpredictable process, which is particularly surprising for musicians who are just beginning their careers on the platform. The process does not always end when a certain number of views has been reached. In some instances, it continues beyond the boundaries of the TikTok platform. For example, Brooklyn Stafford notes that one of her most successful videos rapidly gained popularity on other platforms, which she believes contributed to the rise in views on TikTok:

Views kept going, like, by 10k, 20k, 50k, it went pretty fast. And I realized that it got even more viral when I started to get tagged on Instagram, on different musicians’ pages that had a lot of followers. [...] That’s when I knew it kind of went off. [...] It was during that time that I realized that it hit the 1 million views mark. (Brooklyn Stafford, interview)

While such bursts of popularity typically occur within a few days, Caity Gyorgy has observed that some videos appear on the For You pages of numerous users even months later. This phenomenon has the potential to result in a significant increase in views. In conclusion, it appears that the interviewees were not prepared for the viral distribution of their content, particularly at the outset of their TikTok careers. It also seems that there is little that can be done to substantially influence the process of going viral.

The impact of the sometimes considerable number of views on the number of followers remains unclear. Videos uploaded by content creators on the platform are not automatically visible to all followers of the corresponding profile. Consequently, a high number of followers is not necessarily indicative of a substantial reach (Zeng and Kaye 2022, 80). However, the musicians interviewed indicated that their number of followers had increased, albeit to varying degrees, as a result of the virality of some of their videos. Consequently, particularly successful videos can, at the very least, ensure that they are seen by as many people as possible in the long term, provided that the users decide to follow the respective profile. Kellin Hanas reports that the expansion of one's social media following can occur with remarkable swiftness: "I remember every day it was increasing, I'd just get 20,000 followers in a day. And I was literally, this is insane." Kellin's assertion indicates that this expansion is not a linear phenomenon, but rather a gradual process. Between April and September of 2022, the interval during which the interviews for this study were conducted, the two musicians with the highest number of followers and video likes were Rachel Chiu and Stacey Ryan. Both recall the surge in followers attributed to the proliferation of viral videos, citing the remarkable growth in the number of TikTok users who initiated following their profiles as a consequence of specific videos. Rachel Chiu states: "In the course of one year, I grew about 400,000, probably. It's very sudden, it's not constant, where all these people keep following you. It's every video, if it does really, really well, a lot of people follow me." Stacey Ryan cites her most popular video at the time of the interview as an illustrative example. This is a performance of her original composition, "Don't Text Me When You're Drunk," (Ryan 2021b) in which she invited other users to duet with her, resulting in the generation of tens of millions of views. The video ultimately facilitated her transition from the TikTok platform to a broader audience. Stacey delineates the process as follows:

When you're just posting, it grows pretty steadily. Most of the time it's slower. But when you have a viral moment, it spikes so quickly and then it'll go back down and kind of just keeps growing. I feel, like, every viral moment I had gained me a lump sum of followers. Like, obviously the biggest being "Don't Text Me When You're Drunk," I think I gained 600,000 followers from that one moment. Because I was at 450,000 before I posted that and I reached, like, 1.2 million followers after that whole two-week long, three-week long process. And that blew my mind because, I mean, it's crazy. I was going up 100,000 followers in, like, a day. That's unheard of. (Stacey Ryan, interview)

In this context, Zeng and Kaye's reflections on a "virality-centric platform logic" (Zeng and Kaye 2022, 80) are validated. As evidenced by the statements of the interviewees, the sometimes considerable increase in the number of followers is primarily contingent upon discrete instances of viral dissemination. It would appear that TikTok users do not typically search for specific profiles and then like them. Rather, the objective for musicians is to have their videos appear on the For You pages of as many users as possible in order to achieve virality. Consequently, success on the platform is initially contingent upon algorithmic selection processes.

6.3.3 Surprised by Success

All of the interviewees emphasize that viral processes cannot be predicted with any amount of certainty. However, Rachel Chiu posits that, within the first hour of uploading, it is at least possible to estimate whether a video will generate a high number of views: "I can estimate that it will do well in the first hour. So if in the first hour I get 5,000 likes, then I know it's gonna do really well." These findings are based on a prolonged period of observation of the activities on the platform. The musicians who were interviewed expressed feelings of being overwhelmed by their initial success. They stated that they never anticipated reaching such a vast audience with their content. Sam Ambers, for example, notes that he "didn't really understand what TikTok was back in the day," so he "didn't expect for one second that it would get any amount of views or popularity or anything." In a similar account, Erny Nunez indicates that he initially did not take his activities on the platform very seriously at all and only began to do so after experiencing his first success:

Honestly, I wasn't really thinking of it very seriously, I sort of thought of it as, like, a joke channel where I just, like, made random content. But then after I started getting views and I started seeing how people actually enjoyed jazz, I was just, like, you know what? Let me just take it more seriously and let's see where it goes. (Erny Nunez, interview)

The fact that success on TikTok can only be planned to a certain extent becomes clear, for example, when the interviewees recall viral moments that were completely unexpected. In some instances, their most successful uploads were videos that, from the interviewees' perspective, did not align with their actual focus on the platform. These interviewees also stated that they uploaded videos

such as these without any ulterior motives. Rachel Chiu describes this situation with reference to her most successful video at the time of the interview (Chiu 2021b) as an example: “Another video I posted, I think got around maybe 15 million views. And that one was also very accidental, like, it was my friends at karaoke one night and my friend just decided to film it. I just posted it for fun because it was fun. And then it’s the best video I’ve had, like, in terms of views.”

Moreover, several interviews indicate that the most successful videos are often those that the musicians initially did not intend to post. The subsequent resounding success of these videos often takes the musicians themselves by surprise. This illustrates that the occurrence of viral moments can be contingent upon a series of fortuitous circumstances. “It wasn’t planned,” says Caity Gyorgy about her most popular video at the time of the interview (Gyorgy 2021b), “I didn’t mean to put it on TikTok.” Sam Ambers says that in one of his videos, in which he performs the song “Fly Me to the Moon,” (Ambers 2021b) he was just “trying to gauge the levels with the music and the voice and how I’d look on the screen,” and had no intention of actually posting the video. Interestingly, this is also true for one of the most successful jazz clips on the platform: Rachel Chiu’s version of Duke Ellington’s “It Don’t Mean a Thing (If It Ain’t Got that Swing)” (Chiu 2021a), which had more than eight million views at the time of the interview. Rachel recalls the circumstances under which the video was created. She positioned her smartphone on a stack of books and encountered difficulties in initiating the recording process. Her account of the phone’s low battery level also provides an explanation for the video’s description, “My phone was at 1% 😊,” which initially appears to have no correlation with the content of the video.

I remember that day, I just finished class and I stacked up a bunch of books and then it was about to fall, so I was, like, I need to record it and had 1% left. My cam charged my phone because it’s at the bottom, right, but I need to prop it up. So, I was like: I have one percent. I need to get this one, right? And I did it. And actually, I wasn’t even gonna post that. I was filming that for my friends on Snapchat. That’s why the quality is not the best, but I find that funnier because it did well. (Rachel Chiu, interview)

That is to say, the production of the video was, in fact, an accidental occurrence. However, the selection of the song was also influenced by chance: “I had my real book for jazz standards. I had it pulled out and I was just, you know, playing

around and then I was, like, oh, I forgot about the song 'It Don't Mean a Thing.' And then I was, like, maybe I should record it for fun."

6.3.4 What Does Success on TikTok Feel Like?

In what ways is this – at times remarkable – success experienced by the musicians interviewed? As the preceding sections demonstrate, TikTok's viral-centric platform logic means that young people can sometimes be seen by a large number of users on the platform within a very short time – sometimes reaching several million video views within a few days. At the outset of their TikTok careers, these were extraordinary circumstances that none of the interviewees had previously encountered to a comparable extent. Consequently, some of the interviewees continue to regard these occurrences as being somewhat surreal. Erny Nunez states: "I can't believe that there are exactly 100,000 plus people that are watching one person. I find that really crazy." It is evident that the ability to manage such sudden popularity and the considerable, albeit transient, visibility that successful content creators experience is a learning process.

A flourishing career on TikTok is often accompanied by a certain degree of visibility that extends beyond the confines of the platform. In this regard, numerous interviewees recounted instances where they were identified and approached in a public setting. This phenomenon is regarded as a source of inconvenience by many, as evidenced by Kellin Hanas' assertion: "People were coming up to me at school being, like, I keep seeing your TikToks, you're famous now and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. [...] It was just very strange." Sam Ambers recalls analogous scenarios and reports that he now regards quotidian interactions with individuals he does not know differently, given that he constantly expects to be recognized:

The first time that I was ever noticed in public, I had 50,000 followers at the time. And I remember I was just in a car park of a supermarket and a kid put his window down and he was, like, oh, are you the guy that has videos on TikTok? And this was the first time that it happened. And I was, like, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I guess. I guess. [...] And then things started growing so quickly. I remember I'd go on nights out with my friends and, you know, there'd be points where I'd go into a club and, you know, I'd be basically having people with the phones out all the time or coming up to me. It's extremely flattering. But now if I walk down the street and someone stares at me for a particularly long time, I can't help but assume that they might know me, but they prob-

ably don't because they're just looking at me. So it is weird. (Sam Ambers, interview)

The success of TikTok has had a ripple effect extending beyond the platform itself. The interviewees' initial surprise at becoming "short-video celebrities" (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 97) may be attributed to their lack of awareness of the platform's potential reach and its impact on their daily lives. Despite the initial surprise, it is also crucial to exercise caution and refrain from allowing the sudden success to precipitate an inflated sense of self-importance, as Rachel Chiu puts it. Although popularity may have been an unexpected outcome, certain habitual effects set in over time. For example, as a successful TikTok creator, Rachel received words of appreciation and even declarations of love in digital spaces. The challenge is to differentiate between authentic and virtual existence. When queried about her emotional response to success on TikTok, Rachel responds:

It definitely changes. The feelings change because you start to become a part of this small group of people who live a weird life, where online, a lot of people know who they are. And in real life, they're not as well-known. Because people recognize me when I start singing or when I start doing the mouth trumpet. But outside of that, I'm just a regular person. And it's definitely a strange feeling to deal with, and not many people that you can talk to about. I remember when I had 5,000 followers and I told myself if I ever have more than 10,000 to not be carried away with it, that is just a number. There's a weird contradiction and almost like a paradox that I have to deal with where I have to remind myself that, you know, all these people that keep complimenting me and stuff. It's just motivation to keep doing better. It's hard not to let it get to you. You know what I mean? If 10,000 people are telling you online, "Oh, I love you. You're amazing. You're the best," it gets to you, you know, and then it really builds your self-confidence. Then it makes you feel, like, you're better than some people. So it's really important not to let that get to you. But also, the other side is that you have to be appreciative of the comments. You have to be thankful and grateful for these people who spend time writing these comments to you, right? So it's that weird space that I'm in. It's definitely strange. (Rachel Chiu, interview)

This quote illustrates the potential for sudden success to elicit feelings of anxiety. These concerns extend to the possibility of repercussions for users' professional lives. Some of the interviewees express apprehension that a particu-

lar appearance on TikTok could have a detrimental effect on their professional trajectory, particularly in contexts outside the music industry. Sam Ambers expresses these concerns about his first viral video, which he acknowledges was recorded and uploaded somewhat hastily. This video shows Sam Ambers in a hotel room, where he suddenly emerges from a closet and starts singing Michael Bublé's version of the song "Feeling Good," only to disappear back into the closet shortly thereafter (Ambers 2021a). The video is notable for the intensity of his gaze, the brilliant lighting, and the singer's exaggerated facial expressions. In retrospect, Sam indicates that he initially considered removing the video when its viewership began to increase exponentially:

My phone was going crazy. I had people messaging me that knew me saying: "Is this Sam person you? What's going on here?" And at that point, some people were commenting on the jaw and being, like, oh, this guy is on drugs. And at that time, I was really, really, really anxious about coming across, because at that time, I was, like, I'm going to university. I don't want a video of me looking like I'm doing drugs out there. So I remember I went for a shower and I was just, like, staring at nothing in the shower, like, contemplating my life, being, like, do I delete it? I don't want there to be anything about drugs, so I was really, really anxious about that. But yeah, the whole process of it getting views was really crazy. And all of a sudden, you feel very exposed. You know, what was your private video is now a public video and people are commenting on it and it's out there and I can't take it back because other people started reposting it, like, they're downloaded it and reposted it on their account. (Sam Ambers, interview)

The interviewees' presence in digital spaces is subjected to critical reflection for a number of reasons. This reflection also encompasses a critical examination of the mechanisms through which social media platforms, and in particular TikTok, have become popular and the underlying logic of their visibility. This is particularly evident in a statement by Stella Cole, in which she articulates her thoughts about her visibility on the platform:

I think there's something weird about going viral all the time. I don't know if the human beings are really built to deal with the way that social media feels and how it feels to, like, one day be getting, like, 5,000 comments on something and then maybe a week later ten comments and nobody cares about what you're posting. It's just an interesting rollercoaster that in the past I've definitely struggled with. When you're getting less interactions with

your videos, it makes you feel, like, you're less valid or important as an artist somehow, which isn't true. It's just an algorithm on an app, most of the time. Funnily enough, when I was blowing up, I kept checking on the video a little bit, but I tried to kind of stay away from it for a couple of days because it was very exciting, but it was sort of unbelievable. Very shocking. The first time a million people see your face, you're, like, that doesn't seem real at all, because I'm just sort of living my normal life and there are a bunch of people on the internet seeing me. Weird. (Stella Cole, interview)

6.3.5 When the Audience Cannot Be Reached

Stella's above statement suggests that one of the main difficulties for some content creators in using TikTok is their temporary lack of visibility on the platform. The algorithmic logic that governs the visibility of content on the For You page inherently places content creators in a position of relative dependency with respect to automated content moderation, while simultaneously constraining their ability to exert direct control over the extent of their own popularity. As previously indicated, the primary motivation for many of the interviewees to create new videos is the desire for greater visibility on the platform (see chapter 6.3.1). As Kellin Hanas notes, lack of success leads to a decline in motivation: "It's a very addictive cycle on TikTok. [...] And obviously when you're not getting as much interaction from an audience, you're not as compelled to make TikToks."

A number of interviewees expressed regret at the temporary absence of viral moments. One common source of frustration is the inability to reach all of their followers. It is not uncommon for new videos to receive only a few thousand views, despite having seven-figure follower counts. Consequently, the significance of follower numbers is occasionally called into question. Caity Gyorgy, who had amassed approximately 90,000 followers on TikTok at the time of the interview, states: "It seems very grandiose when you look at it, but some of my videos only get, like, 6,000 views on them sometimes. So how influential are those 90,000 followers?" The musicians are fully cognizant of the fact that this has to do with the underlying logic of the TikTok platform: "Unless it breaks through to the For You page sometimes, followers don't mean a thing on TikTok," says Brooklyn Stafford, and Stacey Ryan emphasizes that TikTok is "very touch and go with views and stuff" because of these mechanisms.

The interviewees appear to have accepted this reality to a certain degree. However, feelings of frustration arise when musicians perceive a possible un-

derlying agenda behind TikTok's content moderation practices. Kellin Hanas, for instance, hypothesizes that TikTok may, on occasion, deliberately impede the success of specific content creators. Despite having generated multiple viral videos over an extended period, she suddenly found herself unable to replicate this success and failed to maintain her usual level of engagement with her followers:

For a while I was getting millions of views over and over. I was, like, this is great. And it really gives you that high. It's amazing. And then all of a sudden, one day, TikTok just ends it. They're, like, no more for you, which doesn't make any sense. I have 155,000 followers right now or something. They do this thing where they kind of cut you off from the views and so you go, oh, well, I got 5 million views on my last video, but this one only got 30,000. What happened? [...] I mean, pretty much unless you're one of those very few TikTok creators that just blows up and keeps going and going and going and going, TikTok is just, like, alright, you had your month of fame, now we're done with you. So it kind of stinks. (Kellin Hanas, interview)

Stella Cole articulates a comparable perspective, yet she also delineates the specific circumstances of relying on platform algorithms to disseminate her musical compositions:

It can be frustrating when you have, like, 100,000 followers, but because of the algorithm, only 10,000 people are seeing your stuff and you're, like, I know that all 100,000 of these people or all now 275,000 of these people chose to follow me and want to know when I have music coming out. But I can't reach them. I can't reach out to every person because this is an algorithm and this is an app. Only, you know, 10, 20% of my followers are going to see this video. (Stella Cole, interview)

6.4 Professionalizing on TikTok

The pursuit of success delineated in the preceding section also signifies that the interviewees began professionalizing their work on the platform at an early stage of their TikTok careers. This may involve purchasing specialized equipment and software for audio and video recording and editing, formulating customized staging techniques on the platform, and developing a meticulous approach to the creation of new videos. Some of the interviewees derive income