

platform Kuaishou) was developed for the Brazilian market (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 26).

4.2 TikTok: Rise and Target Group

On a global scale, TikTok is one of the most successful and fastest-growing digital platforms of last few years. By 2020, two years after its official launch and merger with Musical.ly, the platform had already amassed 700 million active users outside of China. The number of monthly downloads reached its highest point during the initial global lockdowns that were implemented in response to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus. Over 100 million monthly downloads were recorded, and the TikTok app was downloaded over 300 million times in the first quarter of 2020. By February 2021, the total number of downloads since its launch had already exceeded 2.5 billion (Bhandari and Bimo 2022, 1; Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 8).

As asserted by prominent developers and staff at ByteDance, TikTok and Musical.ly were designed with a predominantly youthful demographic in mind (Zeng, Abidin, and Schäfer 2021, 3162). In a public announcement, Alex Zhu, the founder of Musical.ly, stated that he had observed the online activities of younger consumers and discerned that their virtual pursuits were largely centered around music, dance, and online gaming. Social interaction with their peers was also of paramount importance. In order to address these interests and the need for social interaction, platform features were developed that allowed for low-threshold exchange while focusing on music-related content (Savic 2021, 3184). At the time of its inception, TikTok was predominantly utilized by a younger demographic. In 2020, for instance, 40% of TikTok users were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four, while in the U.S. over 30% of the nearly fifty million daily users were fourteen or younger. One year later, the platform was being utilized on a daily basis by approximately 60% of the U.S. population between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. However, the target group became significantly more diverse during the global lockdowns (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 171; Zeng and Kaye 2022, 80). The growth in the number of users demonstrates that TikTok experienced a notable surge in popularity, particularly during the first global lockdowns. During this period, the platform positioned itself as a source of entertainment and learning during challenging times of social isolation (Zeng, Abidin, and Schäfer 2021, 3163). Additionally, research findings indicate that the platform was utilized by

numerous young individuals to process their experiences of the pandemic and share their perspectives with others (Klug, Kaufman, and Evans 2023, 153). TikTok served as a crucial coping tool for individuals grappling with mental health challenges stemming from social isolation. Additionally, the platform's array of entertaining content, despite its occasional frivolity, provided a much-needed source of distraction and enjoyment during a challenging period (Klug, Kaufman, and Evans 2023, 164).

4.3 Mimetic Practices

TikTok offers a plethora of features that are, at least in part, constitutive of various other short-video platforms. The “social media platform features” (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 72) typically offered by TikTok include functions such as liking, commenting, sharing content, and mentioning other users. Mentioning occurs via an @-symbol in the comment sections or video descriptions, which are linked to the user's profile. The use of hashtags is also prevalent; videos are typically tagged with multiple hashtags. Selecting a hashtag generates a list of all videos that utilize that hashtag, arranged in descending order of popularity (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 73–74). Additionally, TikTok provides a live streaming feature and an assortment of video effects and filters, which are accessible to the user via a categorized list in the control panel of the in-app video production tools (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 71).

Although all of these features are integral to common TikTok usage practices, it is the various interaction-enhancing features that distinguish TikTok from other short-form video platforms. Interaction with other users is a fundamental aspect of media platforms, including TikTok. On TikTok, however, the focus is not necessarily on interacting with one's own followers or friends. Rather, the focus is on the creative editing of videos by users who are not necessarily connected on the platform (in contrast to, for example, Facebook, where users are required to establish a connection). TikTok employs specific “platform features” (Kaye 2022, 60) to encourage editing of existing videos, thereby facilitating the creation of new content. In this sense, the platform offers a clear affordance aimed at the co-creation of audiovisual content.

The *duet* feature represents a fundamental aspect of this process. An existing video is integrated into a newly recorded video, resulting in a synchronous presentation of both videos in a split-screen format. A similar feature was al-