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"My Account is All About My Nic Addiction": Novel approaches and findings from an investigation of e-cigarettes, identity, and other themes in user-generated videos on QueerTok

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Aims

- Train a FYP to promote organic e-cigarette content
- Describe e-cigarette content that is promoted to queer TikTok users.

Background

- LGBTQIA+ individuals disproportionately use e-cigarettes compared to heterosexual and cisgender groups
- Exposure to online tobacco content can affect attitudes, perceptions, and intentions to use
- LGBTQIA+ adolescents and young adults (AYA) often use social media to form digital communities
- Positive user-generated nicotine and tobacco content might:
  - further normalize use within LGBTQIA+ AYA culture
  - exacerbate existing tobacco-related disparities

Methods

- **Data collection**
  - 'Trained' TikTok's For You Page (FYP) algorithm by systematically engaging with content to derive LGBTQIA+ and e-cigarette content
  - Saved e-cigarette content pushed to FYP and from keyword searches
- **Analysis**
  - *FYP training:* Identified changes in FYP content over time
  - *Video analysis* (n=303): a priori and emergent coding; thematic analysis of LGBTQIA+ videos; contrast to non-SGM comparison videos
- Inclusive, level, and collaborative approach **led by young adults**

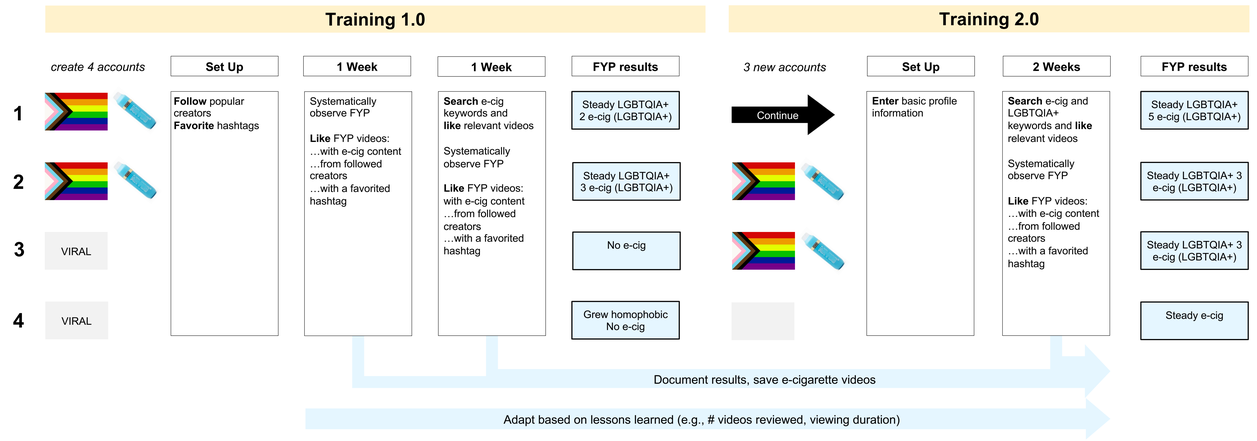


Figure 1. ***For You Page (FYP) Algorithm Training Methods. Young adult expertise was essential to development, refinement, and implementation.***

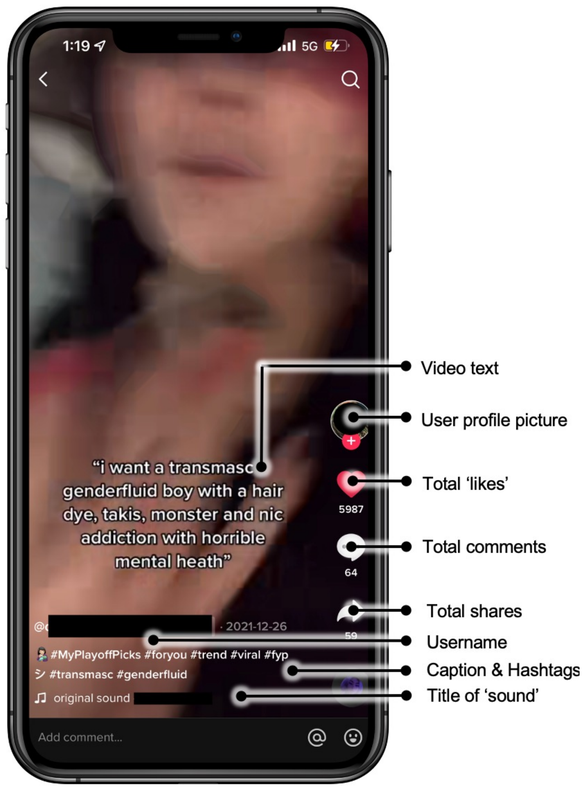


Figure 2. ***TikTok is a short-form video-based application. Users can interact with a video by liking, commenting, or sharing to friends. The For You Page (FYP) is a continuous feed of videos customized by an algorithmic perception of a user.***

Algorithm training is a viable and rich data collection method

Collaboration with young adults is imperative to success

LGBTQIA+ AYA creators often described their nicotine addiction as a salient aspect of their identity

"being gay sad and a nic addict is what I like to call a triple threat"

Results

- ***FYP Training***
  - Algorithm training is viable
  - Subtle interactions can influence FYP content
  - Videos on the FYP also featured discussion of alcohol, mental health, and other substances

Figure 3. % FYP videos containing e-cigarette content, comparison e-cigarette account (training 2.0)



- ***Video analysis***
  - Nicotine addiction featured in many e-cigarette videos by LGBTQIA+ AYA
    - Several users seemed apathetic towards their addiction
  - Videos contained contradictions – negative health implications of nicotine use and simultaneous dismissal of severity
  - E-cigarette use status acted as a consideration for romantic partnership

Conclusion

- Investigation into *how* algorithms influence health perceptions/behaviors is imperative
- There is a need for continued, focused, and contextualized intervention for LGBTQIA+ young people
- Qualitative, young-adult-engaged, co-learning approach enhances knowledge of AYA culture and inspires the next generation of researchers

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