

# Latin American Cultures on TikTok



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**A TikTok Cultures Research Network Report**

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# About

This is the first TikTok Cultures Research Network satellite event report. It collects and expands on some of the main takeaways from the Latin American Cultures on TikTok event, which took place on November 8, 2023. The report highlights the insights and experiences of diverse actors, including scholars, creators, and industry professionals. The report also features diverse experiences from within the region and contrasts them with Latin American diasporas in the United States and the United Kingdom. The online event was bilingual in English and Spanish through live interpretation and open to the public, following TCRN and the organizing team's ethos of inclusion, diversity, and visibility of diverse voices and perspectives.

This report is designed to be used by scholars, students, creators and/or industry professionals interested in understanding the opportunities and challenges faced by Latin American influencers and creator industries, considering cultural, regional, regulatory, and commercial aspects.

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# Organizers



**Daniela Jaramillo-Dent** is Senior Research and Teaching Associate at the [Media Change and Innovation Division, University of Zurich](#). She is an internet scholar exploring algorithmic (in)visibility and minority representation on digital platforms. Daniela has received awards for her work on minority creators on Instagram and TikTok. She is a Key Regional Leader of the TCRN in Europe.



**Tom Divon** is a [digital culture researcher](#) based in the Middle East pursuing his PhD in the Department of Communication and Journalism at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research focuses on TikTok's social-political playful cultures within Palestinian, Jewish, and Israeli communities. He is a key regional leader of the TCRN in the Middle East Region.



**Natalia Orrego** is [PhD Candidate in Anthropology](#) at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. She is founding member of the Latin American Network of Digital Anthropology.

# TikTok Cultures Research Network

The TikTok Cultures Research Network is a research community founded in October 2020 by Professor Crystal Abidin and a group of Asia Pacific-based interdisciplinary scholars who are studying TikTok cultures from a variety of qualitative research methodologies. We provide and facilitate the production of scholarly resources, research projects, and events that connect networks of qualitative scholars of various disciplines from around the world. Our ethos is rooted in providing opportunities to junior, underrepresented, and under-privileged scholars; in committing to a decolonizing approach that prioritizes research from and by the margins/marginalized in the Asia Pacific and Global South; and in fostering meaningful and impactful collaboration and networking opportunities that will result in innovative research perspectives.

The TikTok Cultures Research Network is housed under the Social Media Pop Cultures Programme at the Centre for Culture and Technology (CCAT), Curtin University. This Programme is dedicated to critically assessing the history, function, and design of popular culture in social media spaces and pop culture vernacular native to social media and to scrutinize academic approaches to the phenomenon, paying special attention to digital media in the Asia Pacific region. Find out more at <https://ccat.curtin.edu.au/>.

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# Participants

The Latin American Cultures on TikTok event highlighted the diverse voices of the influencer industry in the region and its diasporic communities abroad. Eight participants were invited to participate in two roundtables to illustrate the importance of visibility and voice on the platform, as well as the limitations of cultural promotion and activism for minoritized creators. These participants came from diverse geographic locations, providing an overview of location-dependent monetization possibilities for Latin American creators.

Their content strategies and experiences help us understand the key challenges and opportunities of TikTok. It was important to include participants in their native languages and voices, which is why the organizers ensured that live interpretation was available to generate a bilingual conversation between industry professionals, academics, and creators across linguistic barriers.

# Roundtable 1: Indigenous Cultures and Environmental Justice

**Moderated by**  
Daniela Jaramillo-Dent



**Sisa Tixicuro** is a Kichwa researcher working on digital technologies, indigenous communities and entrepreneurship. Sisa earned a Master's degree in Latin American Studies at Tulane University and currently resides in New Orleans, USA. Sisa led the project "Indigenous Digital Voices", a study about the relationship between Tik Tok and indigenous youth in Latin America.



**Sofia Huaiquil** is a Mapuche TikToker, activist and publicist. Through TikTok she delivers content that relates to her history and origins, the Mapuche culture, and aboriginal peoples living in the region that is currently known as Chile. In her videos she depicts the traditions, language and history of her people in a novel and attractive way for her audience, bringing traditional knowledge closer to a young audience in search for their identity.





**Camila Figueroa** is a social communicator with ten years of experience in Marketing and Communications in different sectors in Chile and England. In 2021, she completed her Master's degree in Media and Communication at the London School of Economics (LSE), where she studied the use of TikTok for the self-representation of indigenous identities in Latin America. During the pandemic, she started her personal TikTok account to share her daily life as a migrant in the United Kingdom, which has already reached 70 thousand followers.



**Nicolás Isaza** is a digital activist and a human rights and environmental lawyer. He has worked with Amnesty International, the Truth Commission, and several NGOs that promote climate and environmental justice at national and regional levels. He collaborates with indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, farmers and victims of the Colombian armed conflict to contribute to their full reparation and the visibility of their struggles. His platform gathers more than 1 million people across all his social networks and he uses it to demand and defend human rights, nature, climate and environmental justice.

# Roundtable 2: The (in)visibility of Latin American Cultures and Diasporas

**Moderated by**  
Tom Divon



**Alexandria Arrieta** is a doctoral candidate at USC Annenberg who studies issues related to popular music, the internet, and race. Her research on TikTok focuses on the sounds of LatinoTikTok and the platform's impact on musical labor and creativity. Arrieta has held fellowships with Warner Music Group, where she worked on initiatives for emerging pop artists signed to Warner Records. Her research has been published in the *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, the *International Journal of Communication*, and *Global Hip Hop Studies*.



**Julián Racca** is a TikToker from Buenos Aires, Argentina. Julián is a marketing student with more than 300K followers on TikTok.



**Jhon Klinton** is a Peruvian TikToker living in the United States and providing information for Latin American immigrants. He describes his goal as a creator “my videos are your eyes to know the United States and the world” ⚡. He started in January 2023 and he has reached a significant community of followers. He values the power of social media and the opportunities it offers. Many of his videos on TikTok have reached more than 2 million views, and he has 37k on his Facebook page.



**Hernán Lafalce** is the CEO of the marketing agency “Influencer.” In 2009, he created JBAO, the most important Justin Bieber fandom in Latin America, organizing successful events in the Buenos Aires Obelisk and nightclubs, which helped launch the careers of many current influencers. Currently, his marketing agency offers consulting services in digital media and has the largest number of influencers in the country.

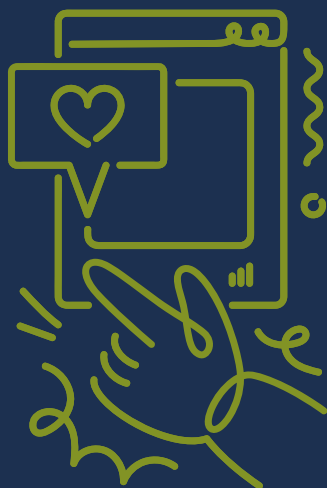
# TikTok and Latin American Cultures

A recent study by Aleph covering seven Latin American countries, including Mexico, Chile, Peru, Colombia, Panama, and Ecuador, surveyed 6,200 media users in the region and found that TikTok consumption is higher than expected, with 62% of those surveyed reported using the short-video platform (Aleph, 2024). Some projections predict that TikTok will have more than 173 million users by 2027 (Bianchi, 2022). This reflects the growth and relevance of the platform in the region and its central role in the consumption habits of Latin American users.

When discussing the relationship between TikTok and the Latin American community, it is important to emphasize the difference between their presence in the Latin American region and their initiatives targeted at Latino communities within the United States market. Along these lines, the Latin American region boasts offices in Mexico City, San José (Costa Rica), Bogotá (Colombia), and Sao Paulo, reflecting some of the biggest markets for the platform. TikTok's teams in the region are expanding (TikTok for Business, 2022), mirroring the surge in user (and creator) numbers across Latin America. They host special events for creators, such as the TikTok Creative Fest in Mexico City, which brings together brands, agencies, and content creators (TikTok for Business, 2023).

Moreover, during Latino Heritage Month in the United States, TikTok actively promotes Latin American cultures through targeted campaigns, engaging directly with creators from this community to celebrate and highlight their contributions. The #CasaTikTok initiative is one of the main campaigns in this space, which in 2023 launched the Adelante! programming aimed at elevating Latino creators and community leaders through their Latin Visionary Voices list, a dedicated content hub (TikTok, 2023), and in-person events in selected locations with special significance to US-based Latino communities such as Miami (Quin, 2023).

However, it is crucial to note that TikTok's initiatives in the United States and major Latin American cities primarily focus on urban areas, with offices and major events centered in hub cities like Mexico City and Sao Paulo. While TikTok offers a range of programs aimed at Latin American creators in the US, the strategies differ between the United States and the Latin American region. This approach risks overlooking the region's rich diversity of languages, ethnicities, and cultures, including rural communities and reflects a divide in the opportunities available to creators based on their geographic location.



# Platform Governance, Visibility, and Monetization on TikTok

The Latin American Cultures on TikTok event provided a space for conversation among creators, industry actors, and academics. Many of the conversations engaged with the opportunities and challenges of achieving visibility and monetization in the region. These challenges are often linked to local platform governance frameworks, which limit the visibility and monetization potential for Latin American creators. In this section, we explore the relationship between platform governance, visibility, and monetization, framing our conversations with the panelists and their experiences with TikTok in Latin America and as members of the Latin American diaspora.

# Governance

Platform governance refers to the regulation of behaviors within a specific platform (Just & Latzer, 2017). These rules are encapsulated in public-facing documents, such as platform guidelines, which outline the agreements users must adhere to when interacting on the platform (Fenwick et al., 2019). Platforms enforce their rules through —human and algorithmic— platform moderation and reporting systems, defining which users and contents are prioritized (Gillespie, 2018), thereby impacting their visibility. In the context of platforms, visibility refers to the practice of sharing content online and opening aspects of life that were previously hidden (Thompson, 2005). For creators, visibility is crucial as it directly affects the popularity of their profiles, and in the case of TikTok, video-based visibility dominates (Abidin, 2021). Visibility significantly impacts creators' monetization potential through platform-specific schemes (Kopf, 2020) and external sources like brand collaborations, affecting overall income opportunities.

Platform governance adheres to state regulations and adapts to local market dynamics, influencing the visibility and monetization potential of creators across different regions. There are many areas of regulation that can affect platforms and creators, such as data privacy, consumer, advertising, and communication regulations. Since 1999, data regulations have been established across Latin America, beginning with Chile and Argentina, and now most countries in the region have implemented some form of data protection laws (Collado Sanz & Fayed, 2022).

In terms of legislation targeting the influencer industry, Latin America has a fragmented regulatory landscape targeting different aspects of influencer work and its impact on taxation, audiences, and consumers. Mexico, for example, has revised its tax legislation specifically for influencers (Sputnik, 2021), while Argentina has made unsuccessful attempts to regulate the advertising activities of influencers (Torres López, 2024). Chile includes tax regulations (Sputnik, 2021) and recommendations in their existing consumer laws to regulate influencer activity (SERNAC, 2024).

A significant challenge in the region is the lack of uniformity in legislation, as each country independently focuses on different aspects of platform and creator regulations without a transnational strategy to implement cohesive regulations across borders (Collado Sanz & Fayed, 2022). The lack of agreement between countries in the region and the difficulty in establishing enforcement mechanisms are two of the main challenges in state regulation of digital activities in the region (Antequera, 2023).





# Visibility

Platform governance is closely related to the visibility of content creators. Zeng and Kaye (2022) have highlighted the specific challenges associated with content moderation on TikTok, particularly how the platform's algorithmic curation and recommendation systems impact creator visibility (Zeng & Kaye, 2022). Unlike other platforms where content popularity is tied to individual personas, TikTok's algorithm operates on video-based virality (Abidin, 2021), customizing users' feeds and governing video distribution by promoting and prioritizing content using a success matrix. TikTok's recommendation systems create a hierarchical amplification of certain creators' voices, prioritizing certain content and profiles. Creators from marginalized groups have reported feeling especially targeted by TikTok's moderation policies and politics (Contreras & Martinez, 2021; Jaramillo-Dent et al., 2022; Jaramillo-Dent, 2022).

In this hostile environment, creators frequently express uncertainty regarding the management of their content, including experiences of shadowbanning and mass reporting concerns that lead to biased moderation practices (Are, 2023; Meisner, 2023). Thus, they invest time and resources to find loopholes in the platforms regulating documents and employ strategies such as using trending hashtags or self-censoring to improve their content's visibility (Duffy & Meisner, 2023) and manage to amplify their commercial and personal needs (Are, 2024).

The visibility challenges for Latin American creators are unique due to several regional factors, including complex socio-political landscapes intertwined with gender inequality and economic disparities (Gutiérrez, 2021; Suing et al., 2019). They represent a rich diversity of languages, ethnicities, and cultures and must adapt to platform-specific visibility regimes on spaces like Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. These visibility regimes prioritize content based on commercial and follower-based metrics, often sidelining communities that don't easily fit the dominant voices and formats. Sued et al. (2021) found that to overcome these challenges, creators from countries like Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico employ two main visibility strategies: (1) Platform vernacular adaptation, where users adopt platform-specific genres, aesthetics, and communication styles to increase visibility, blending personal branding with activism to enhance their exposure; (2) Algorithmic resistance, where users employ coordinated efforts to counteract the commercial and algorithmic biases of platforms, utilizing tactics like hashtag campaigns, platform features usage, and algorithmic knowledge leverage to amplify their messages.

However, the pursuit of visibility can also lead to hypervisibility, where creators risk attracting the wrong attention and exposing themselves to harm online (Stegeman et al., 2024). For many female Latin American creators, hypervisibility reinforced stereotypes and attracted undue scrutiny. They were harassed and pressured to conform to cultural norms via user-generated memes, ultimately limiting their creative freedom and damaging their mental health (Cepeda, 2018).

# Monetization

When creators can effectively monetize their content, they are incentivized to produce high-quality, engaging material that attracts more views and followers, creating a positive feedback loop. On TikTok, creators have several options to monetize their content. Brand partnerships and sponsored content involve collaborating with brands to promote products and earn money for endorsements (Zmarzlińska, 2022). The TikTok Creator Fund pays creators based on the performance and engagement of their content. Live Gifts allows fans to send virtual gifts during live streams, which can be converted into real money (TikTok Support, 2024). Merchandise sales enable creators to design and sell branded merchandise to their followers. TikTok Shops allow creators to sell products directly through the platform, integrating e-commerce with their content (TikTok Shop, 2024).

Affiliate marketing involves promoting products and earning commissions on sales made through affiliate links (TikTok Creator Academy, 2024). Crowdfunding and donations provide direct financial support from the audience through platforms like Patreon or GoFundMe. TikTok also provides some options to offer exclusive content, such as the TikTok Series, and creators often use them to drive their audience to other platforms where they can offer premium content or early access through subscription models.

More research is necessary to understand the specific challenges of TikTok creators and influencers in the Latin American region with regard to platform governance, visibility, and monetization. However, existing research by academics, marketing companies, and the media provides insights into the experience of some groups of creators in the region.

Research on influencer industries in Chile\* has provided important theoretical and empirical insights about brands, labor, audiences, and advertising. It has identified influencer imaginaries and their components (Arriagada & Bishop, 2021), highlighted the need for influencers to constantly upload content to maintain their popularity (Arriagada & Ibáñez, 2020), and examined the cultural context of technological frames and affordances from the perspective of influencers in Chile (Arriagada & Siles, 2024). In Brazil, research on the fashion industry and the professionalization of influencers has expanded our understanding of creators in this region (Karhawi, 2017; 2021).

Indigenous TikTok users and their experiences have also been explored by researchers, marketing professionals, and the media (Acuña & Tixicuro, 2021; Ojeda & Peredo, 2022; Páez, 2023), and findings suggest that TikTok has become an important space to promote Indigenous cultures and environmental concerns, as well as an opportunity for young creators to reconnect with their own traditional Indigenous cultures through content creation.

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\*The research cited by Arturo Arriagada and his colleagues focuses on the influencer industry in general and not specifically on TikTok but it provides relevant insights.

# Latin American creators' visibility and monetization divides

While the strategies used by creators to penetrate the algorithmic "smoke screen" might be similar across social media platforms, each platform employs its own distinct logic for virality and visibility (Abidin, 2016; Cotter, 2019). Based on the experiences of our participants from and within the Latin American region, their content creation work is influenced by several factors that reflect the intersectionalities that characterize the experiences of creators in the region. In the next sections, we untangle these from the perspectives of content creator contexts, their identities, and the characteristics of their content as shapers of their experiences on TikTok.

# Latin American creators' visibility and monetization divides

## Contexts

Geographic location

Digital Location  
Vernaculars and  
Languages

## Identities

Gender Diversity

Indigeneity

## Content

Controversy and  
Resistance

Content  
Quality

# Contexts

Contexts shaped the experience of content creation for our participants. Their discussion of context included both geographic locations as well as digital contexts, as illustrated in their use of platform vernaculars on TikTok. In this section, we examine the contextual aspects that generate divides in terms of visibility and monetization for Latin American creators.



# Geographic location



Nicolás Isaza  
Digital Activist on  
TikTok and Human  
Rights Lawyer  
Colombia

“The class bias in social media algorithms such as TikTok’s algorithm means that it is not the same to create content being a person born in the Global North than being a person born here in the Global South, while recognizing that in the North there are Souths.”

Nicolás touches on the deeply ingrained biases of social media algorithms, reflected in the place of birth and geographic location, as two aspects that are key in achieving visibility on platforms like TikTok. Nicolás reflects on the diverse biases and divides that derive from geographic location, such as class, nationality, and other divides that exist even within more privileged “Northern” locations. His reflection aligns with studies examining how geographic context influences visibility, such as research indicating regional viewing patterns affecting YouTube videos (Huguenin et al., 2012) or Twitter posts (Graells-Garrido et al., 2016) that tend to cluster around specific countries.



Notably, the United States, European nations such as the UK, Germany, and France, and East Asian countries including South Korea and Japan, demonstrate high visibility for content creators (Sued et al., 2021). This enhanced visibility is attributed to the countries' large populations, high internet penetration, the widespread use of English, and vibrant local content industries - such as K-pop and anime in East Asia - which enjoy substantial global appeal (Kim et al., 2021).

To combat this bias, platforms use algorithmic interventions to decentralize content visibility and ensure equitable distribution while also tailoring their interface designs towards geographic diversity to enhance visibility and influence user perceptions across different regions (Graham, 2014). However, the visibility divide based on geographic location remains significant.

Platform-specific monetization possibilities are also affected by geographic location. For instance, TikTok's Creator Rewards Program is only available in the United States, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, and the UK (Oladipo, 2024). Thus, as our participant Jhon Klinton explains, creators in many Latin American countries are unable to take advantage of this program. Jhon reflects on his unique experience of geographic mobility, having moved from his native Peru to the United States.

“When I tried to apply to TikTok Creators’ program I realized that my account was set up for Latin America so my only option was to create a new account and start from scratch. It was a very tough decision, I had to talk to other content creators and I decided to start again with more professional videos.”



Jhon Klinton  
Peruvian TikToker  
and Engineer  
United States

Jhon’s experience illustrates how geographic mobility can expand creators’ monetization opportunities on the platform, but in Jhon’s case, accessing these opportunities required him to create a new account in the United States.

Paradoxically, with the TikTok ban legislation looming in the U.S. (Maheshwari & McCabe, 2024), Jhon may once again lose his account due to his geographic location, underscoring the persistent uncertainties that creators must navigate amidst evolving state and platform governance policies.

In some countries, the absence of platform-specific monetization opportunities in the region compels Latin American creators to be strategic in maintaining high engagement with local audiences to attract brand collaborations.

Julián Racca, an Argentinean TikToker explains his experiences with local brands:



Julián Racca  
TikToker  
Argentina

“In Argentina, we create content that we know Argentines will like because TikTok does not monetize here, and we have to respond to the preferences of Argentinean brands. Brands in Argentina are not interested in having an audience from Brazil or the United States because they cannot profit from them. Therefore, we need a local audience because of the metrics, and we need to prove that we have Argentinean followers.”

The geographic constraints described by these creators underscore the tensions between local and global reach on platforms and market demands, requiring strategic choices. These decisions often impact the languages they use, their public personas, and the strategies they employ to engage their audiences. It also reflects the difficulty for Latin American creators to reach global visibility when compared with creators located in the Global North who fit the dominant or “preferred” profile and who have more sources of monetization from the platform and global brands.

# Digital Location: Languages and Platform Vernaculars

Latin American creators face layered challenges to fit within the dominant voices of TikTok as a platform and its digital cultures. The first layer is their content in non-Anglo-Saxon languages. Many Latin American creators in the region and abroad opt to create content in their native languages, such as Spanish, Portuguese, Kichwa, or Mapuche, and this means that they often experience the platform and their audiences differently.

Camila reflects on her experience as a Chilean TikToker living in London:

“Most of my content is in Spanish (...) when I make content in English, if I don’t have the English accent they expect me to have (...) or if an English word slips in my Spanish content they comment and criticise. This has shaped my content and what I do.”



Camila Figueroa  
Chilean TikToker and  
Marketing Expert  
United Kingdom

As a Latin American creator located in an English-speaking country, Camila illustrates the difficulties of pleasing her Spanish-speaking audience expectations and the self-censorship that follows such exchanges. For Camila and other Latin American creators abroad, this context collapse exemplifies the impact of cultural and linguistic sensitivities among audience members (Marwick & boyd, 2011).

Another layer of adaptation for Latin American creators is reflected by TikTok's platform vernaculars, which refer to the languages, grammar, and logic that characterize a specific platform and are enabled by its affordances and functionalities (Gibbs et al., 2015; McVeigh-Schultz & Baym, 2015). TikTok's vernaculars encompass a variety of genres, trends, and performative challenges, which in turn influence creators' content and practices. Studies argue that these features are designed to promote imitation (Abidin, 2021; Zulli & Zulli, 2020). Each sub-community of creators generates its own vernaculars, which may be adaptations of existing mainstream TikTok genres or unique to specific groups.

When exploring the uses of TikTok by Latin American creators, recent studies of Latin American migrant content creators illuminate the ways in which Latin American cultures emerge within dominant TikTok vernaculars. Latin American migrant communities on TikTok are very effective in using TikTok's connective audio in their videos by deploying culturally relevant music genres such as migration-themed Mexican corridos or Colombian vallenatos (Jaramillo-Dent et al., 2022), and Latin American immigrant influencers deploy a range of strategies to negotiate their (in)visibility in the platform (Jaramillo-Dent, et al., 2022; Jaramillo-Dent, 2022).

During our conversation, Sofía reflected on her understanding of TikTok's vernaculars, such as dancing as part of popular trends. She discussed the tension between maintaining her authentic Mapuche voice and identity and navigating her content to align with what she perceives as the "platform preference":



Sofía Huaiquil  
Mapuche  
TikToker and  
Publicist  
Chile

“For example the trends, the dances in TikTok do not suit me, although I dance well, I have talent but I do not show it in social networks (...) I realize these differences, I see that it is a problem to be Mapuche. I have nothing to do but just keep raising my voice.”

The decision to brand one's minority identity can generate conflicts with creators' possibilities for visibility and monetization. For instance, Sofía opts to promote her Indigenous identity and culture rather than follow the platform's templates related to dances and challenges.

Although some creators with marginalized identities have been successful (Abidin, 2019; Cervi & Divon, 2023; Jaramillo-Dent, et al., 2022), these creators often face discrimination from the platform and audiences (Duffy & Meisner, 2023; Divon & Ebbrecht-Hartmann, 2022; Glatt, 2023). This tension between authenticity and personal branding is one that many creators face (Arriagada & Bishop, 2021; Marwick & boyd, 2011), but one that becomes complicated when geographic, linguistic, and cultural limitations intersect with deep social and cultural inequalities, further marginalizing certain creators.



# Identities

When discussing content creation in their region, participants often mentioned aspects related to their identity, such as their gender and indigenous background. In this section, we discuss these identity-related aspects and their impact on the visibility and monetization of content creators.





# Gender Diversity

Gender significantly influences the visibility and experiences of content creators on social media, impacting their visibility, engagement, and success. On Instagram, women content creators often face harassment and criticism based on their gender and content type. This results in what is known as the “authenticity bind,” where women must carefully balance between being perceived as genuine and not overly curated, avoiding being too “real,” as this could result in negative feedback or lower follower engagement (Duffy & Hund, 2019). On YouTube, women creators are frequently limited to specific content types, such as beauty or domestic topics, and are less often portrayed in professional roles compared to men, who dominate a wider array of categories (Wegener et al., 2020).



Nicolás Isaza  
Digital activist and  
Human Rights  
Lawyer  
Colombia

“It is not the same to create content as a woman or as a person of diverse gender identities (...) than to be a man. I am very aware of my privileges. I know that as a man it is more likely that my content will be visible, I don’t face the level of harrassment that these groups face.”

As Nicolás explains, gender diversity can have a significant impact on the ability of creators to become visible and be successful online. Consequently, this leads to disparities between male, female, and gender-diverse creators, which are further reflected in economic differences (Nawaz, 2020). This tendency not only limits female and gender-diverse creators' opportunities for entrepreneurship in content creation but also confines them to specific roles or types of content perceived as more commercially viable.



# Indigeneity

Latin America stands out as a region of remarkable cultural history enriched by its vast and varied geographies, multitude of languages, and diverse peoples. The region also has a painful colonial past and a complicated political present shaped by corrupt governments and profound social inequalities. TikTok's ecosystem of creators and audiences in Latin America mirrors the region's rich diversity. However, it also highlights the challenges of adapting to a platform predominantly designed for a Western audience. This becomes particularly clear when engaging with creators dedicated to promoting culture, safeguarding human rights, and protecting the environment, among other issues.

“I see that other influencers are paid to work with brands, there are people who have less followers and less visibility than me (...) and I wonder why they and I don't. (...) brands don't want to tarnish their brand with what we are. I've had projects come to me and then they retract them. I have thought about what content I should make, or if I should continue to inform about these judgements, and these stigmas, or should I change my content to make it more family-oriented to get more opportunities with brands? “



Sofía Huaiquil  
Mapuche TikToker  
and Publicist  
Chile

Indigenous creators face multiple layers of marginalization. Sofia's experience highlights the tension between catering to a broader audience for brand collaborations and continuing her work in promoting indigeneity within her Mapuche culture. This underscores the ongoing struggle between maintaining authenticity and navigating commercialism (Arriagada & Bishop, 2021). These tensions have been identified among marginalized groups on TikTok, such as Latin American immigrants (Jaramillo-Dent, et al., 2022), Black creators (Harris et al., 2023), and other creators belonging to marginalized identities (Duffy & Meisner, 2023).

TikTok can also emerge as an opportunity for Indigenous creators, as Sisa explains:



Sisa Tixicuro Duque  
Kichwa Researcher  
and Digital  
Marketing Expert  
Co-Author of the  
Report 'Indigenous  
Digital Voices'  
United States

“For influencers from native communities, creating content is an opportunity to get closer to their elders and re-learn about their community. For instance, a Kichwa Otavalo influencer I spoke to wanted to create content to explain why the men in the community have long hair and he realized that he didn't know why but he had always had long hair and so did everyone around him but he had to go back to his grandparents and ask them.”

Sisa reflects on the role of TikTok content creation as a source of inter-generational and cultural connection for young Indigenous creators who aim to promote their culture.

Conversely, the public portrayal of Indigenous identities means that many Indigenous creators face different levels of censorship and questioning. Sofía explains the challenges she has faced while promoting her Mapuche culture on TikTok:

### LAYERED CHALLENGES OF INDIGENOUS TIKTOK

#### APPROPRIATION OF INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES

“I had contact with a person who pretended to be Mapuche and he was the son of a politician and it was a conflict that affected me personally because I understand the depth and confusion that it generates and I realized the responsibility that I have.”

#### GATEKEEPING OF INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES

“I thought that they would be proud about inspiring young people to get closer to our cultures (...) but many of them (...) thought that not everyone should know about us or that the knowledge would be distorted ”

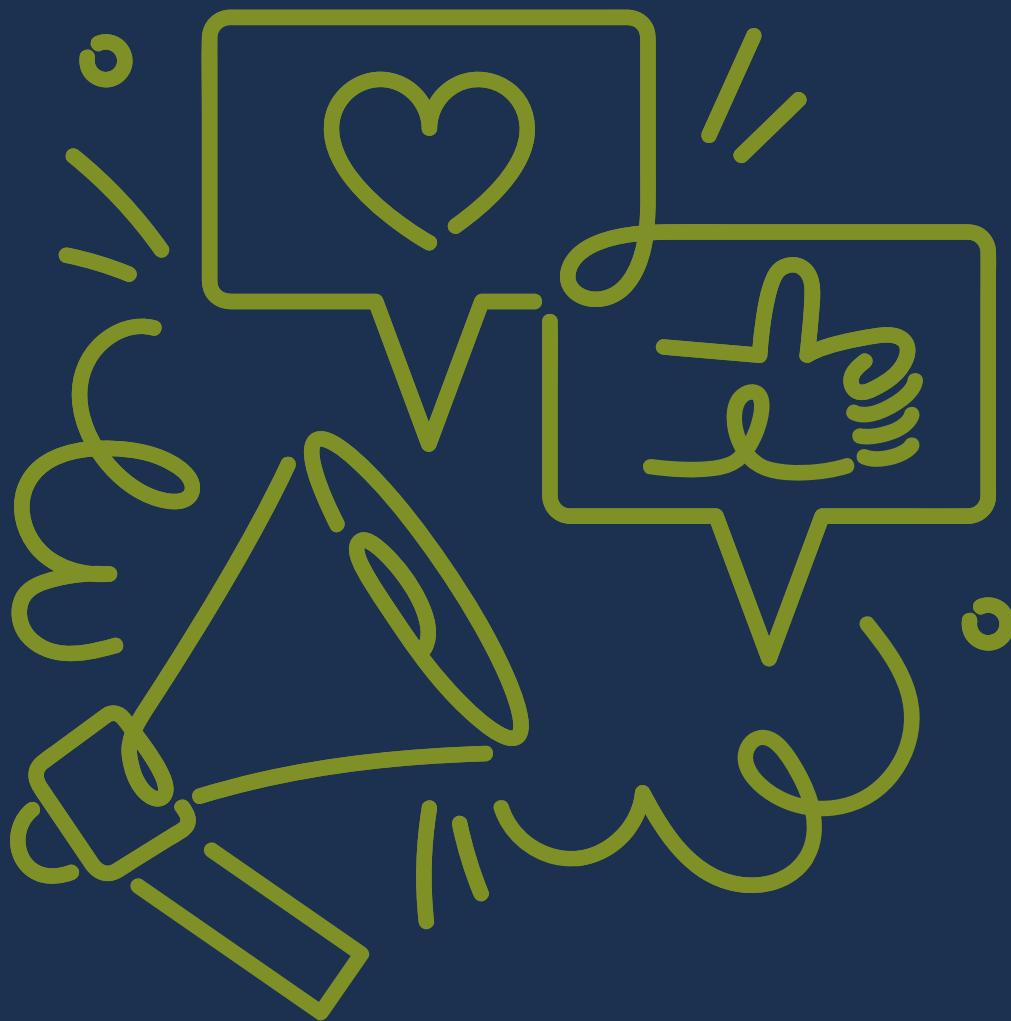
#### PROMOTION OF INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES

“I began to realize that there are also other challenges outside, not only within my indigenous community but also outside. People need to see us. To respect us they need to know us.”

**Sofía Huaiquil**  
Mapuche TikToker and Publicist  
Chile



Sofía's experience reflects how her position as a visible member of the Mapuche community in Chile has strengthened her mission to promote Mapuche culture in the face of pervasive discrimination from non-indigenous Chilean populations. She considers the promotion of her culture as a strong strategy to achieve respect and acceptance. However she faces challenges from her own community and people who aim to appropriate Mapuche culture for their own means.



# Content

Content characteristics are key in content creators' activities. Accordingly, our participants report three main aspects related to their content that shape their visibility and monetization possibilities: quantity, quality, and controversy. We discuss these aspects in the next sections.

# Content Quality and Quantity

Global accessibility and visibility for content creators from diverse regions are profoundly influenced by content quality and consistency. These factors are directly impacted by geographical internet challenges, including varying penetration rates, economic conditions, and infrastructural disparities across countries. Our participant, Nicolás Isaza, explains his perspectives related to content quality and visibility on TikTok.

“It is not the same to create content from a privileged position where you have the resources to buy the best technology and it is proven that the algorithms benefit a better image, a crisp audio and if you do not have the resources to buy a microphone, a good quality camera, as in most content will be invisible (...) if you stop uploading content for a certain period of time they lower your visibility, they lower your interactions (...) I wish I could do the content that comes from my heart and that it doesn't imply risks and that it doesn't affect my economic subsistence.”



Nicolás Isaza  
Digital activist and  
Human Rights Lawyer  
Colombia



Studies on content virality highlight how search engines and algorithms prioritize content with anticipated engagement, which is closely tied to its quality. In the case of Fliker, it was found that the videos' quality resonates with audiences, increasing the chances of engagement and subsequent infrastructural promotion (Aiello et al., 2017).

Crafting high-quality content can indeed be perceived as a privilege, often associated with regions boasting robust internet cultures, support systems, and literacies, such as the United States (Lerman & Hogg, 2013). Creators from these regions often cultivate trust and loyalty among their audience, leading to increased engagement and retention.

As a result, organic interactions flourish in well-connected geographic locations, while delivering top-tier content enhances creators' brand reputation as authoritative voices in their respective fields. Moreover, the need to upload content constantly has also been explored by Arriagada and Ibáñez (2020).

According to our participants, this process adds additional dimensions to content visibility, favoring creators with access to content creation resources, time, and reliable connectivity from specific global locales.

# Content Controversy and Resistance

From the perspective of agencies in the region, Hernán Lafalce from Argentina provides valuable context on the challenges influencers face in gaining popularity and securing brand collaborations, as discussed by the panel members. He describes the challenge agencies face in mediating between influencers who produce potentially controversial content and securing meaningful brand collaborations for them:



Hernán Lafalce  
CEO Influencer  
Agencyt  
Argentina

“Brands are looking for influencers who are non-confrontational. But it is important to see what they consider confrontational because, for example, today we were talking to two panelists who defend rights and so on, which is important. But there are brands that feel that they do not want to support that and that generates a conflict between that type of influencer and brands. As an agency we have to mediate in making brands understand that this type of content is not wrong, it is another type of content that helps society.”

When considering the experiences of Hernán, Nicolás, and Sofía, it is evident that there are preferred types of content and profiles that have more opportunities to engage with brands, which in turn affect the possibility of monetizing and growing in the platform and in the influencer market. Certain identities, ideologies, and activist initiatives are often less appealing to brands. In Latin America, this issue is further intensified due to the region's vast heterogeneity and the numerous social, political, and environmental challenges it faces. Two of the panelists reflected on the dangers of content creation.

The issue of controversy in content creation is complicated by the political and social unrest that exists in some Latin American countries. In this case, Sofía and Nicolás report having to make a decision to continue creating content in the face of continuous obscuring by the platform, online attacks, and threats to their lives due to the topics they discuss and the content they create. In their cases, creating content on TikTok becomes an act of resistance.

“I felt intimidated, frightened, persecuted (...) because people's lives are in danger. I have also suffered threats so it has been a challenge, a lot of courage but a path that I feel is necessary because the new generations also have to value what we are living, (...) if we sit still we may disappear.”.



Sofía Huaiquil  
Mapuche TikToker  
and Publicist  
Chile



Nicolás Isaza,  
Digital activist and  
Human Rights Lawyer  
Colombia

“I have received threats, very serious threats, unfortunately. One should not have one’s life in danger for informing, for making it visible. I consider that my content is not hurting anyone, but unfortunately, these threats occur (...) this ends up affecting my mental health.”



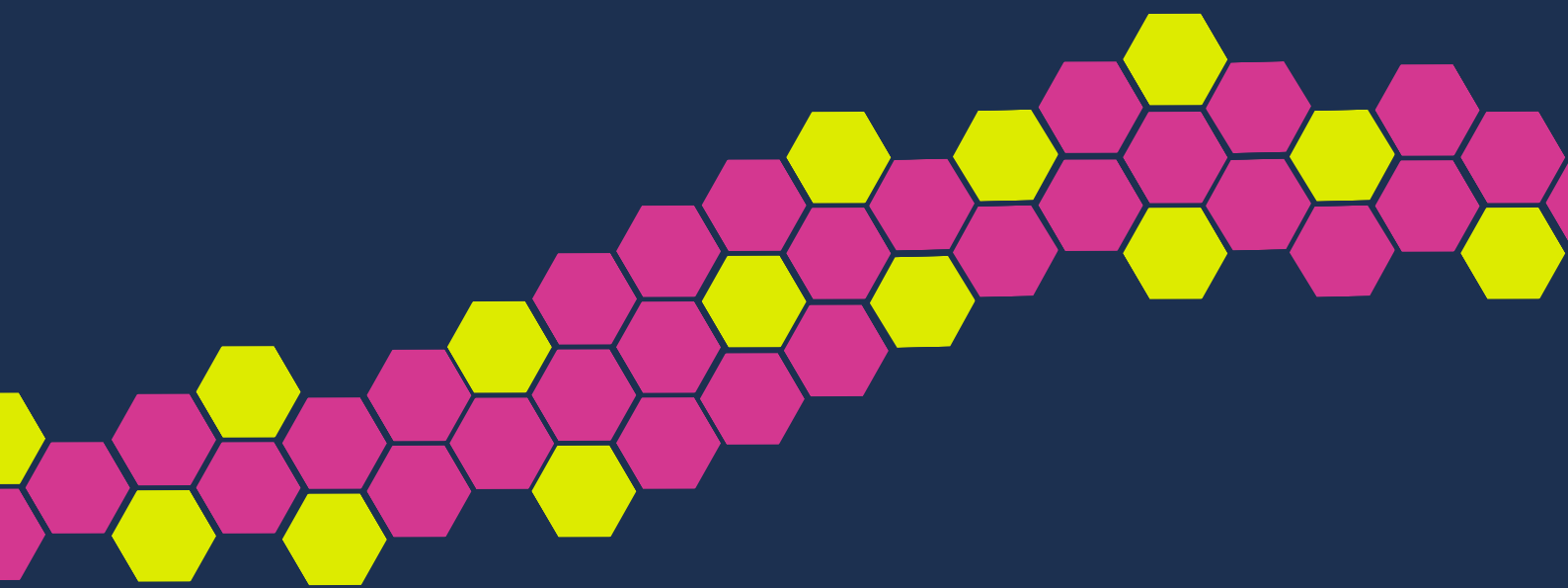
# Concluding Thoughts

The Latin American space on TikTok is underprivileged. This impacts creators' and influencers' visibility, monetization opportunities, and their capacity to be culturally and politically vocal within the region and beyond. Amid intersecting complexities of platform, content, and identity—such as geographic location, platform vernaculars, gender, indigeneity, content quality, controversy, and acts of resistance—users must continuously negotiate how they express and carry their voices.

They internalize the algorithmic pressures of global market demands and the creator economy, often feeling compelled to adjust their authentic voice to gain greater exposure and recognition. Their precarity is twofold and should be a critical concern for us as scholars: firstly, because it highlights a flawed platform ecosystem that overlooks discriminatory policies impacting creators and their lived realities; secondly, because this precarity is shaped not only by unequal platform restrictions but also by regional limitations and the absence of regulatory bodies to support the rapidly growing creator industry across the region—unlike regulatory initiatives seen elsewhere in the world.

Building on the work of Latin American scholars studying the platform economy in the region, there is a need for greater scholarly nuance to de-homogenize 'Latin America,' as each country has distinct regulatory frameworks and infrastructural privileges. In this report, we provided a platform for diverse voices from within and beyond Latin America, offering nuanced insights into the visibility and monetization disparities faced by creators in the region—yet further inquiry is needed. This initiative, within the TikTok Cultures Research Network, unites researchers interested in critically exploring this platform beyond Western perspectives.

We hope that this report, along with the living voices of creators, scholars, and industry actors, will be invaluable for those seeking to understand TikTok from various regional and diverse perspectives.



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