



Tik Tok and the possible perseverance of Cultural Imperialism

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Abstract

Tik Tok is one of the most used apps around the world, with all kinds of videos by users. This app has the largest number of users than any other app. Its success is due to the impact of the trending videos and songs used as well as the various kinds of topics covered in the content that interest several demographics. One of the greatest qualities of this social media platform is the diversity that exists and the freedom they offer you, creating a safe space for expression which lead us to the question that started our research: does Tik Tok allow for cultural imperialism to continue because of the magnitude of the app? Or has globalization been stronger and created a much more pleasant exchange of cultures between users?

Keywords: Social Media; Culture; Imperialism; Tik Tok; Trends

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Research Background (tik tok growth)

Tik Tok started in the industry in 2014 under the name of Musical.ly and from there it became one of the most popular apps in China and later ranked as the number one App in the App Store.

The growth of the application is also due to the fact that in the United States in 2016 the Vine application closed so many content creators in that application switched to Musical.ly and a year later it was bought by Byte Dance [1].

Byte Dance is a Chinese company very similar to Facebook that launched Douyin (TikTok) that was very similar to Musical.ly and that was also creating popularity in the country, having more than 100 million users in a year, for which TikTok decided absorb Musical.ly in 2018, passing the Musical.ly accounts to Tiktok and in 2019 extending to Eastern Europe and Latin America, having a growth of 44% in that year alone and thus having more than 1,600 million users for the 2020.

The platform began to have great growth, especially when the pandemic began, since many people began to register due to the lockdown that occurred in the different countries.

In the world one billion people will use TikTok in 2021. This means that of every 10 people of the 4,800 million who use the internet use Tik Tok.

In 2021 Tik Tok was considered the platform with the highest engagement rate, which greatly benefited companies[2].

It should also be considered that it is a platform used by users all over the world, which allows creating intercultural connections that can benefit companies that use it to promote themselves.

These are some of the countries where the platform has the most users:

- India 119.3 million users
- United States 39.6 million users
- Turkey 28.4 million users
- Russia 24.3 million users
- Mexico 19.7 million users
- Brazil 18.4 million users
- Pakistan 11.8 million users
- Saudi Arabia 9.7 million users
- France 9.1 million users
- Germany 8.8 million users

Intercultural connections through networks

The impact of this social network has made it grow in countries like Indonesia, which has its highest growth with 331%, followed by Russia with 211% and

then Mexico with 139% and this has made it the social network with the most user activity, replacing Facebook in countries such as Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Thanks to the great popularity that the application has gained, brands began to use marketing and advertising strategies through the application around the world, giving growth in user data and thus opening the doors to large investments. It has become the perfect showcase for the community's favorite products and brands. TikTok has even encouraged companies to use its platform for their ads, and the numbers are compelling: more than 61% of users say that TikTok videos are more original than those on any other platform, and 7 out of 10 says he likes TikTok ads.

The great impact and growth of Tik Tok has been thanks to the ease of content creation and the ease of communication between countries, thanks to an algorithm that allows the preferences of videos from countries or activities of your choice and shows you the type of content of the country that more attraction and preference [3]

Music as an instrument of interculturality

Interculturality can be worked with music through all its elements, such as song, dance, rhythm, and instruments. The platform serves as an instrument of interculturality by sharing content from around the world and music from different countries. For example, trends have been uploaded that were shared throughout the world with the music of Stromae "Alors on danse" which is a French artist. Same case with many Latin songs that are being used in trends made by Europeans or Americans.

General objective of the research

The main objective of our research is to analyze the content that is provided on the Tik Tok social network through its trending or most viral sounds and videos to identify if cultural imperialism continues to persist or if Tik Tok rather accelerates its fall [4]

Research questions

How is a cultural exchange carried out through Tik Tok sounds?

How does TikTok facilitate globalization and cultural exchange?

Hypothesis

Cultural imperialism is still visible, even now on the Tik Tok social network.

Delimitations

Our study titled, "TikTok and the Possible Perseverance of Cultural Imperialism" centers around a content analysis of videos posted on TikTok, the China-based social network. To do this, an analysis of 20 trends was carried out, of which a reading of the most viral videos of the trends to quantify where content is coming from, who is making it, and what topics it is about.

Limitations

To carry out our study, it was necessary to consult content published on the social network "Tik Tok". Something to take into account as a limitation in our investigation is the algorithm

of the application. Because we are doing the research in Mexico, the algorithm is presenting us with more videos from Mexican creators, so the research could be biased in that direction [5]

Justification of the topic

The topic was chosen based on the topics we have seen in the Communication and Globalization class. Through social networks, the ease of a sender to transmit a message has never been greater. This opportunity to quickly and millions of times a day exchange messages around the world allows globalization to take off even further. Social networks, being an essential part of our daily routine, have become key players in this process. Tik Tok has become the social network of the moment, so we have decided that an analysis of the sounds of Tik Tok as messengers of world cultures should be done [6]

Theoretical Framework

Cultural Imperialism

To begin with our research, we base ourselves on a topic that we saw in class, which is cultural imperialism. We discovered that it is the imbalance of communication and it serves to show the domination of the countries since today military domination is no longer enough. To return to the words of Beltran and Fox, cultural imperialism is "when the culture of a central and dominant country is unilaterally imposed on the peripheral countries that it dominates at the expense of their cultural integrity"

In our theoretical framework we found articles that served as the basis for our research. One of them is an article from "Inked Truth" titled

Indigenous TikTokers: cultural empowerment from social networks. And it is about, as the title says, about a study that was done when the pandemic began on the empowerment that is taking place in the indigenous communities that are being represented and that in an exponential way through tik tok. They talk about the fact that this platform is giving a lot of visibility to those cultures that at other times did not have so much visibility and that it has become an effective platform for activism where the globalized world is represented and where knowledge, traditions and cultural customs are spread. They show in the article the example of a Bolivian TikToker with more than 584 thousand followers and who represents Bolivian culture through her activism on networks [7]

Another article that helped us was from "dpl news" and its title is: "I saw it on TikTok": how is the Chinese social network changing the culture? This article is about how Tik Tok is changing the culture, making it multicultural and slightly fading the imperialism that we were already used to. They explain how what one sees or

Listening on Tik Tok directly becomes a trend, if you listen to a song on Tik Tok it will become top 10 in the next few days. Also how one is influenced by it when seeing places to visit, travel, eat, dance, recommendations that are made to you, most of the people who watch tik tok are going to follow that advice.

Methodology

Research method

Quantitative content analysis, 20 "trends" or trends in Tik Tok. Look for nationalist messages, intercultural messages. We are trying to find something of a cultural imperialism nature within the clips, in order to reach some conclusion in our hypotheses. See if cultural imperialism still exists, or if there is symmetrical interdependence. The size of the sample is not necessarily representative, because there are many videos, however the most viral clips of each trend that is also viral are analyzed. We also analyze the origin of the trend, the most viral users of each video and where both the background music and the users originate from in order to provide an answer to our hypothesis[8]

Trend no. 1

What is this trend about?

This trend is about a dance challenge on a music from Nigeria. The rhythm of the music and the dance that is not quite easy is what has made this trend one of the most viewed and done on Tik Tok.

Song: Love Nwantiti

Artist: Ckay (real name Chukwuka Ekwuani)

Genre: Afrobeats

Origin: Nigeria

Tiktokers who did it:

-@sergiovargott → Colombia

@guskov_vladimir → Russia

@milabcard → Brazil

@mckenziebrookie → United States

Topics covered: Dance, Lip Syncing, Choreography.

Trend no. 2:

What is this trend about?

This trend, like the first, is a dance to a song in Spanish that came out in 2011. It's an easy dance to do that describes the song with the steps.

Song: Gift

Artist: Miranda

Pop genre

Origin: Argentina

Tiktokers who did it:

@karenbarreraofficial → Mexico

@jorgeanzaldo → Mexico

@lossiblings → Peru

Topics covered: Dance, Choreography.

Trend no. 3

What is this trend about?

Like many TikTok trends, this trend is another simple, easy dance to a reggaeton song in Spanish.

Song: Virtual Sex

Artist: Rauw Alejandro

Genre: Reggaeton

Origin: Puerto Rico

Tiktokers who did it:

-@Domelipa → Mexico

-@Nicollegarcia → Venezuela

-@Kimberlyloiza → Mexico

-Topics covered: Dance, Reggaeton.

Trend no 4:

What is this trend about?

This trend is taken up from a meme that went viral on Facebook where a boy appears dancing and a man applauding him. The trend was later taken up for topics that had nothing to do with the original idea.

Title: The cumbia of the tilin

Artist: There is no information about the artist

Genre: Meme/ Cumbia

Origin: Mexico

Tiktokers who did it:

@CarolinaDiaz → Mexico

@Carlotamadrigal → Mexico

@Lelepons → Venezuela

Topics covered: Dance, comedy, memes.

Trend no. 5:

What is this trend about?

This trend is a simple mimicry in symphony with the song "Dollar" that became very famous a few months ago, likewise it was recreated and changing the words to make it more fun and viral.

-Song: Dollar

-Artist: Becky G

Genre: Latin Urban

Origin: United States / Mexico

Tiktokers who did it:

@BeckyG → United States

@RoContreras → Mexico

Topics covered: Dance, Lip syncing, Comedy.

Trend no. 6:

What is this trend about?

This trend references the song of an American show, creating a simple and fun dance to do with your best friend.

Song: Pink Pink Pink Glitter Glitter Glitter

Artist: Liv and Maddie

Pop genre

Origin: United States

Tiktokers who did it:

@CharliDamelio → United States

@KourtneyKardashian → United States

@Madi → United States

Topics covered: Dance, Friendship

Trend no. 7:

What is this trend about?

It is a simple dance that mostly uses the hands more to make gestures than the lyrics of the song.

-Song: Touch Down to Cause Hell

Artist: HD4President

Genre: Rap

Origin: United States

Tiktokers who did it:

@CamilaMendes → United States

@CharliDamelio → United States.

Topics covered: Dance, Rap, Lip syncing.

Trend no. 8:

What is this trend about?

It is a very trending dance although it has spread to Spanish-speaking countries on this reggaeton song.

Song: You make me tense

Artist: Zion and Lenox

Genre: Reggaeton

Origin: Mexico/Puerto Rico

Tiktokers who did it:

@JimenaJimenez → Mexico

@Its.Michhh → Mexico

Trend no. 9:

What is this trend about?

It is an imitation of lips of the song to remember a situation with a person from your past and sometimes to make it fun.

Song: Careless Whisper

Artist: George Michaels

Genre: Pop and Soul

Origin: Mexico and the United States

Tiktokers who did it:

@Jimena Jimenez → Mexico

@Bailey Spin → United States.

Trend no. 10:

What is this trend about?

Mexican trend about a trap song that is like to "intimidate" a little by simulating "rough" situations.

Song: Culon culito

Artist: Santa Poster

Genre: Mexican Trap

Origin: Mexico

Tiktokers who did it:

@Kunno → Mexico

@Mario → Mexico

Topics covered: Storytelling, acting, lip syncing.

Trend no. 11:

Try to appear dancing in different positions every time the lyrics of the song change.

-Song: He could be the one

Artist: Hannah Montana

Pop genre

Origin: USA

Tiktokers who did it:

@dailyfirefightersnl → Netherlands

-@darahsamone → USA

@Odalysanddafne → Mexico

Topics covered: Storytelling, dance, lip syncing.

Trend no. 12:

What is this trend about?

This trend consists of the content creators dancing sensually to the rhythm of the song, in turn singing the lyrics of it.

Song: I'm a Gargoyle

Artist: Archangel, Randy Nota Loca, Rauw Alejandro

Genre: Reggaeton

Origin: Latin

Tiktokers who did it:

@clodett.mp → Spain

@catalinaveiga06 → Argentina

@jordy.elchido → Mexico

Topics covered: Choreography, lip syncing.

Trend no. 13:

It is a trend based on a certain simple dance. Different content creators record themselves doing a similar dance to the beat of the song.

Song: The Wiggle Contest

Artist: DJ Johnson

Genre: Latin Urban

Origin: Mexico

Tiktokers who did it:

@augustogimenez → Argentina

@charliedamelio → United States

@carlotamadrigal → Mexico

Topics covered: Dance, urban dance, "Perreo", Reggaeton.

Trend no. 14:

What is this trend about?

It is a trend based on a certain simple dance. Different content creators record themselves doing a similar dance to the beat of the song.

Song: Pineapple

Artist: Karol G

Genre: Latin Urban

Origin: Colombia

Tiktokers who did it:

@lelepons → Venezuela

@domelipa → Mexico

@kimberly.loaiza → Mexico

Topics covered: Dance, Urban Dance.

Trend no. 15:

What is this trend about?

The creators record themselves looking at the horizon or at someone else with the text "My mind when I see it" or "My mind when I see her". It implies that the creator wants to kiss someone and the song is the internal monologue of his person. Some content creators on the app used the song in a different way to create dance content.

Song: Kiss him

Artist: The Alpha and Rauw Alejandro

Genre: Latin Trap

Origin: Dominican Republic

Tiktokers who did it:

@kevlxd → Ecuador

@melipandda → Mexico

@domelipa → Mexico

Topics covered: Comedy, Storytelling, Dance.

Trend no. 16:

What is this trend about?

It is a trend in which all the videos have the same song in the background accompanied by text saying how they are going to enter family gatherings in which they are asked "and the boyfriend?" or "and the bride?". Also, after reading the text, they do a simple dance to the rhythm of the song.

Song: High

Artist: The Chima In The House

Genre: Latin Trap

Origin: Colombia

Tiktokers who did it:

@dayker6 → Venezuela

@montpantoja → Mexico

@domelipa → Mexico

Topics covered: Comedy, Dance.

Trend no. 17:

What is this trend about?

Content creators record themselves singing the lyrics of the song. They use a filter created in the TikTok app that is in turn used for this trend that takes a photo of them and puts it in black and white in full screen behind the users while they sing the song.

Song: GPS

Artist: Maluma

Genre: Latin Urban

Origin: Colombia

Tiktokers who did it:

@marderegil_ → Mexico

@montpantoja → Mexico

@domelipa → Mexico

Topics covered: Selfie, Lip syncing, Photo and Video.

Trend no. 18:

What is this trend about?

It is a trend based on a certain simple dance. Different content creators record themselves doing a similar dance to the beat of the song.

Song: Have Mercy

Artist: Chloe Bailey

Genre: R&B/Soul

Origin: USA

Tiktokers who did it:

@iamfervrh → Mexico

@kqtei → Vietnam

@aanitaslibrary → USA

Topics covered: Dance, Lip syncing.

Trend no. 20:

What is this trend about?

It is a trend based on a certain simple dance. Different content creators record themselves doing a similar dance to the beat of the song.

Song: Linda

Artist: Rosalia and Tokischa

Genre: Latin Urban

Origin Spain

Tiktokers who did it:

@caelike → Mexico

@azulguaita → Mexico

@fedevigevani → Argentina

Topics covered: Dance, Lip syncing

Results

(Table 1)

Table of the trends we analyze and quantify from TikTok and where they come from:

Table 1. Table of the trends we analyze and quantify from TikTok.

Tendencias	Países
Love Nwantiti	Nigeria
Don, Miranda	Argentina
Sexo virtual	Puerto Rico
Eso tilín, vaya tilín	México
Dollar	Estados Unidos/ México
Pink Pink Pink Glitter Glitter Glitter	Estados Unidos
Touch Down to Cause Hell	Estados Unidos
Careless Whisper	Inglaterra
Culon Culito	México
He could be the one	Estados Unidos
Soy una Gargola	Latino
El Concurso De La Meneadera	México
Pineapple	Colombia
Bésalo	República Dominicana
GPS	Colombia
Linda	España

With the first table the results we obtained were the following:

18.75% of the trends come from Mexico

25% of the trends come from the United States

56.25% of the trends come from Latin America (Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Puerto Rico, etc...)

18.75% of the trends come from other countries as we had the example in these tables (Nigeria, England and Spain)

Visual summary of the data

(Figure 1 & Table 2)

With the second table the results we obtained were the following:

47% of the TikTokers in the table that made the trends are Mexican

15% of the TikTokers in the table that made the trends are from the United States

71% of the TikTokers in the table that made the trends are Latino (Colombia, Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, etc...)

12% of the TikTokers in the table that made the trends are from other countries such as Russia, Holland, Italy or Korea

Visual summary of the data

(Figure 2)

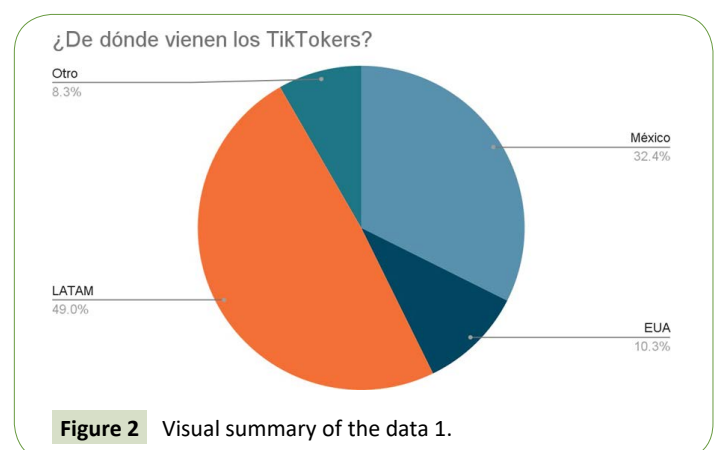
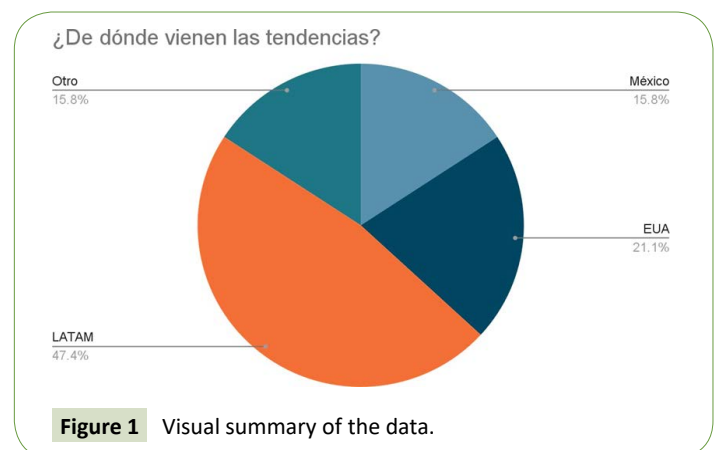


Table 2. The TikTokers we analyzed and quantified who created content for the analyzed trends and where they came.

TikTokers	Países
Sergioivargott	Colombia
guskov_vladimir	Rusia
milabcard	Brasil
Mckenzibrookie	Estados Unidos
Charli D'amelio	Estados Unidos
Kourtney Kardashian	Estados Unidos
Camila Mendes	México
Thekapelariz	Estados Unidos
ely.giglio	Italia
jihoneysweet	Corea
Kunno	México
pan_con_palya178	Chile
karenbarreraofficial	México
jorgeanzaldo	México
lossiblings	Perú
Domelipa	México
Nicolegarcia	Venezuela
Kimberlyloiza	México
Carolinadiaz	México
Carlotamadrigal	México
Lelepons	Venezuela
Its.Michhh	México
Jimena Jimenez	México
dailyfirefightersnl	Holanda
darahsamone	Estados Unidos
Odalysanddafne	México
augustogimenez	Argentina
kevlxd	Ecuador
melipandda	México
marderegil	México
montpantoja	México
caelike	México
azulguaita	México
fedevigevani	Argentina

Conclusions

Despite having the limitation that the algorithm presents Mexican videos first, in terms of trends, more come from the United States than from Mexico. This can help us reach the conclusion that in terms of the trends we analyzed, which according to the application were the most viral in 2021, cultural imperialism is still present in this form. Even though the algorithm favours Mexican or Hispanic content, much of the viral content comes from the United States.

Regarding the results of the extraordinary number of trends and content creators from Latin American countries such as Colombia, Venezuela, Uruguay, and Argentina, we can conclude that the social network has made it easier for cultures to move between Latin American countries from faster way. Promoting the cultural exchange of the diasporas of each

Country between them. You can see this exemplified in the analyzed trends. In trend 19, the three most viral and popular videos of this trend are from creators of Mexican origin, although the trend itself is of Colombian origin. The same can also be seen in trend 16, 15, and 14.

We have already seen that, in part, our hypothesis is correct. Tik Tok allows cultural imperialism to persevere through high recommendation and high view numbers (leading to trending and viralization) of content and creators from the United States. However, in the analysis of our trends, we also notice that Tik Tok grants a cultural exchange and globalization between Latin American countries. Regarding the research questions, how is a cultural exchange carried out through Tik Tok sounds? And how does TikTok facilitate globalization and cultural exchange? We can conclude that the way in which a cultural exchange is carried out through the sounds of Tik Tok and facilitates globalization is typical of the application. By uploading a video on the social network under an audio, all users will see the video when they click on the sound in question, allowing a particular sound or popular video to be even more popular, until it goes viral.

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