SHOAH COMMEMORATION AND EDUCATION ON TIKTOK

REPORT

Report on Shoah Commemoration and Education on TikTok
commissioned by the American Jewish Committee Berlin Ramer Institute.

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD

By Dr. Remko Leemhuis,
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Commemoration of the Shoah means communicating that which can never be adequately communicated. Like all historical remembrance, Shoah commemoration must always be understood within the contemporary context, and is thus subject to constant change, especially in the land of the perpetrators. Currently, remembrance culture faces two major unprecedented changes.

On the one hand, within a few years, there will be no living witnesses or survivors who can speak from direct experience about their own stories and about the Holocaust. Soon, this form of direct and unmediated conversation will no longer be possible for schoolchildren and other young people. Anyone who has had the opportunity to hear and speak with survivors will understand that there is no way to fill this impending void. Survivors have given a face to the practically unfathomable numbers, allowing the concrete stories of individuals to emerge. It is difficult to predict exactly what this development will mean for remembrance culture.

On the other hand, Shoah commemoration is confronted with the emergence of various digital platforms and social media, and with the fact that young people obtain a significant portion of their information from these sources. This poses a serious problem, as denial and trivialization of the Holocaust are increasing in the digital space. Under the cover of anonymity, content is shared countless times that would potentially constitute a criminal offense, at least in Germany. Until now, however, efforts to halt this development have failed, for political and juridical reasons, but also at times due to the unwillingness of platform operators.

The events and aftermath of October 7th, 2023, have made shockingly clear how quickly problematic content can spread on social media platforms, thus influencing the ideas and attitudes of users. The previously unimaginable barbaric crimes committed by Hamas against Israeli civilians on that day were amplified using the reach of social media platforms, spreading degrading and dehumanizing images of atrocities. Hatred and antisemitism, which had already increased, has especially intensified during Israel's self-defense against the genocidal violence of October 7th.

It is clear, however, that repression and prosecution alone cannot solve the problem. The platforms themselves must therefore become spaces where historical facts are documented and shared. Of course, this poses an enormous challenge, which varies from platform to platform.

On the one side, it is up to the platforms themselves to provide guidelines and moderation which create a safe space for discussion of the Holocaust and of contemporary Jewish life. On the other side, this requires the expertise of institutions that have extensive experience in communication concerning the history of the Holocaust.

When the creators of the "TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative", which is the basis for this report, first approached me, I was extremely skeptical. How could the Shoah be commemorated on a platform that is primarily known for dance videos and other light entertainment? How should it be possible to create formats, in this case short video clips, that are appropriate for their target group, yet do not trivialize the Shoah and the remembrance of its crimes? How would memorial sites be protected from the hostile responses of some users?

Despite this skepticism, we at AJC Berlin decided to cooperate on this project, because digital platforms are now a part of today's reality, not only for young people, and therefore cannot be ignored. The memorial sites that participated in this project succeeded in finding the sought-after balance, shedding light on the history of each location, while also showing the daily work at a memorial site within the familiar Tiktok short clip format. This achievement should not be underestimated. They have thus produced insightful, informative, and educational content that stands in opposition to the trivialization or even denial of the Shoah.

The empirical data collected in the course of the project offers useful insight into which content and formats were well received and which were not. This brings us back to the beginning, since the data clearly shows that the formats involving survivors or showing individual narratives had the widest reach. Individual stories thus remain indispensable for the communication of historical facts on these platforms and networks in the future.

Despite these positive results, however, it should be clear that TikTok and other platforms can only be one, albeit increasingly important, part of Shoah commemoration. In-depth traditional education in this field will remain vital in the future. The events following October 7th, 2023, have once again made it clear that there are still shocking gaps in knowledge about the Holocaust, even in the field of history education.

I would like to thank the people involved in this project, especially the two authors of this report, Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Tom Divon.

I would also like to thank TikTok Germany for its financial support of the project and study.

FOREWORD

By H. E. Ron Prosor,
Ambassador of the State of Israel

Let's be honest: When you think of TikTok, all sorts of things come to mind, but not necessarily the serious and sensible topic of Holocaust remembrance and education. Therefore, I was pleasantly surprised when I heard about the "TikTok Shoah Commemoration and Education Initiative".

Using TikTok as an educational tool opens up younger and completely new target groups. For passing on the memory of the Shoah this is enormously important, especially in a world where we, survey after survey, continue to witness a decline in Holocaust knowledge and awareness as well as a trend towards Holocaust denial and distortion. A study by the Jewish Claims Conference shows that a quarter of the young people in the Netherlands believe that the Holocaust was an invention. If we do not find a way to address this trend, denial will soon prevail over knowledge.

The full force of the fact that this is a general problem became apparent after the massacre carried out by the terrorist organization Hamas on 7 October 2023 in Israel. It was the largest mass execution of Jews since the Shoah. Children, women and men were tortured and slaughtered in a systematic way, they were burnt in their houses, babies were beheaded, girls and women were violated and raped. This is all well documented. Nevertheless, there are still people who deny that the massacre on 7 October actually took place.

We have to make sure that the young generation knows the facts. It was their way of life and their values that were being attacked when over 360 young, peacefully celebrating people were brutally slaughtered at a music festival on 7 October. Those who do not unequivocally condemn the deadly Islamist ideologies such as those of Hamas and other radical Palestinian organizations and the horrific crimes committed by them, are more than bystanders, they become accomplices. Today the difference is that Israel, the nation state of the Jewish people, fights back.

During the Shoah, it took time for people to understand what was happening. Our responsibility today is to make sure that people know what happened and understand that they cannot stay silent. Especially in times like these, when we are confronted with a terrifying level of fake news, distortion, hate and incitement. There must be no room for this in our societies - nowhere, including on social media. Platforms like TikTok have to ensure that this content is monitored even better and make it a priority to develop more effective mechanisms to counteract it.

I am glad that TikTok has been committed to putting great focus on Holocaust education. For today's young people, the Nazi time represents an extreme contrast to the reality of their own lives. On the other hand, they experience that democracies can be jeopardized. The crucial task is to link history with today's developments. In this respect, platforms like TikTok have an outstanding responsibility and can play a key role by offering access to the younger generation and to speak to them in their own language. The users of TikTok are the future leaders. When we enable them to derive concrete action plans for the future from the lessons of the past, it will contribute to building a better and more peaceful future for us all.

FOREWORD

By H. E. Steffen Seibert,
Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany

Some 85 years after the November pogroms in Germany in 1938 there was October 7, 2023. Over 1,200 men, women and children were brutally killed by Hamas terrorists entering Israel. Since that day the lives of millions of Israelis and Palestinians have been upended.

Many observers have referred to the massacre of Israelis by Hamas on October 7th 2023 as the deadliest attack against the Jewish people in a single day since the Holocaust.

Over the past 75 years the collective memory of the Shoah has assumed a central place in Israeli national identity. Yet today we must realize that antisemitism and hatred online are on the rise. We painfully witness this even more after the Hamas atrocities of October 7th. What is to be done? The answer must always be manifold, but one element of it, I am convinced, has to be: Let's make more and better use of social media for educational purposes.

TikTok, a platform known for very short videos and creative content that ranges from serious to harmless to potentially highly problematic, may not be the first place one thinks of when it comes to Holocaust education. However the TikTok Commemoration & Education Initiative has shown that this platform, and others like it, have the potential to be powerful educational tools. Creators on TikTok have found ingenious ways to deliver historically accurate, emotionally impactful, and thought-provoking content about the Shoah. They have been able to convey the stories of survivors, showcase historical documents and engage in meaningful conversations about the Holocaust's significance, all in a format that resonates with the younger generation.

The Holocaust – taking the lives of six million Jewish human beings simply because they were Jews - has a singular place in history. It is our solemn duty to ensure that the memory of those who suffered and perished is preserved and passed on to future generations. We must ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten and that they are learnt.

Our aim must be to preserve the remembrance – not just the remembrance of historical facts and figures, but the memory of individual men, women and children. In this endeavor the power of storytelling, personal narratives and visual content for educative purposes cannot be overestimated. Today social media plays an increasingly important role in active engagement with history.

That is why the digital realm takes also an important place in Germany's National Strategy against Antisemitism and for Jewish Life, adopted in 2022.

By educating young people about the Holocaust through social media, we not only equip them with the knowledge to recognize and combat antisemitism but also inspire them to be active advocates for tolerance, diversity and inclusivity in the digital sphere.

By confronting hate with education, we can strive to create a virtual world that reflects the values of empathy, understanding and respect. We can thus help ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust remain relevant and impactful in our increasingly interconnected global society.

Remembering the Shoah and making sure that it can never happen again is our shared global responsibility.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a quest to delve into Holocaust-related commemorative and educational endeavors on TikTok, the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative was launched in October 2021. Spearheaded by the American Jewish Committee Berlin, in partnership with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's European Forum and Department of Communication & Journalism, the Israel-based technology and innovation consultancy PARTNERS PARTNERS & COMPANY from Jerusalem and the Berlin-based Werk21 agency, the initiative sought to uncover TikTok's potential for Holocaust remembrance and education. Through a training seminar spanning from October 2021 to January 2022, concentration camp memorials and museums were equipped to employ Tik-Tok as an educational tool, generating impactful content that shapes Shoah remembrance in the TikTok medium. The outcome was the establishment of active accounts by several memorials and museums in Germany and Austria, unveiling them to the public on International Holocaust Remembrance Day in January 2022.

> *"TikTok represents a diverse, authentic, and intergenerational community, which stands for mutual understanding, inclusiveness, and doing away with stereotypes. There is no place for antisemitism on our platform, and we do not tolerate any content that denies or relativizes the Shoah. Therefore, we are grateful to the institutions involved in the 'TikTok - Shoah Education and Commemoration Initiative'. With their content on TikTok, they make a very important and inspiring contribution to awareness building and remembrance. Education is one of the most important means to face and combat hate and misinformation."*
>
> **Tobias Henning**, General Manager of TikTok Germany[1]

Objectives and Research Questions

As part of TikTok's commitment to combat antisemitism, Holocaust denial, and distortion, the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative has been meticulously crafted with several overarching goals in mind: (1) empowering esteemed institutions specializing in Holocaust commemoration and education by enabling them to effectively harness TikTok's unique trends, aesthetics, and features for their content creation (2) establishing best practice standards for Holocaust commemoration and education on TikTok, serving as a model for various stakeholders contemplating the inclusion of TikTok in their social media activities (3) preserving Holocaust memory, ensuring the accurate representation of Holocaust history and the prevention of distortion or denial on TikTok while facilitating the dissemination of factual information through engaging content (4) engaging younger audiences with the aim of bridging generational gaps, and captivating TikTok's youthful user base while making Holocaust education more appealing to this demographic.

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1. See: https://ajcgermany.org/en/comment/press-release-presentation-tiktok-shoah-education-and-commemoration-initiative (last accessed: 28.9.2023).

This report evaluates the effects and outcomes of the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative. Several research questions provided guidance and provoked our thinking about new endeavors to improve and intensify Holocaust commemoration and education on TikTok:

- What innovative approaches can institutions employ to leverage TikTok for Holocaust commemoration and education?

- In what ways can TikTok expand, influence, and provide institutions with a broader range of target audiences?

- How can TikTok's unique features, such as short-form videos and trends, be harnessed to make Holocaust education more accessible and engaging to younger generations?

- What strategies can institutions use to maintain a respectful and sensitive tone when addressing the Holocaust on TikTok, considering the platform's playful nature?

- What challenges and ethical considerations arise when using TikTok for Holocaust commemoration and education, and how can they be addressed effectively?

Results and Conclusions

The initiative resulted in the creation of a total of nine accounts created in proximity to and following International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27, 2022, amassing a total of 335 videos created and uploaded by participating institutions by the end of December 2022. These videos garnered an impressive number of over 11 million views within that year and accumulated more than 800,000 likes. Furthermore, the memorial institutions managed to cultivate a dedicated following of over 50,000 individuals through their TikTok accounts, highlighting the profound impact of their efforts.

The "TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative" 2021/22 at a glance:

Total number of participants: 11

Total number of accounts: 9

Total number of videos: 335

Total number of views: 11,436,022

Total number of likes: 833,579

Total number of followers: 52,407

(Numbers based on content uploaded until December 2022)

A closer look at the distribution of videos resulting from the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative in the months before the launch and six months after successfully presenting the memorials' accounts to the public showed two notable peaks (Fig. 1): the first occurred in January 2022, coinciding with the official launch of the initiative, and the second took place in May. This month is of particular significance for Holocaust commemoration in Germany, as it marks Victory in Europe Day on May 8th. Additionally, in Austria, May 5th holds historical importance as it commemorates the liberation of the Mauthausen Concentration Camp in 1945. In general, the dissemination graph demonstrates the increasing production of content that responsibly deals with questions related to the history and memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust.
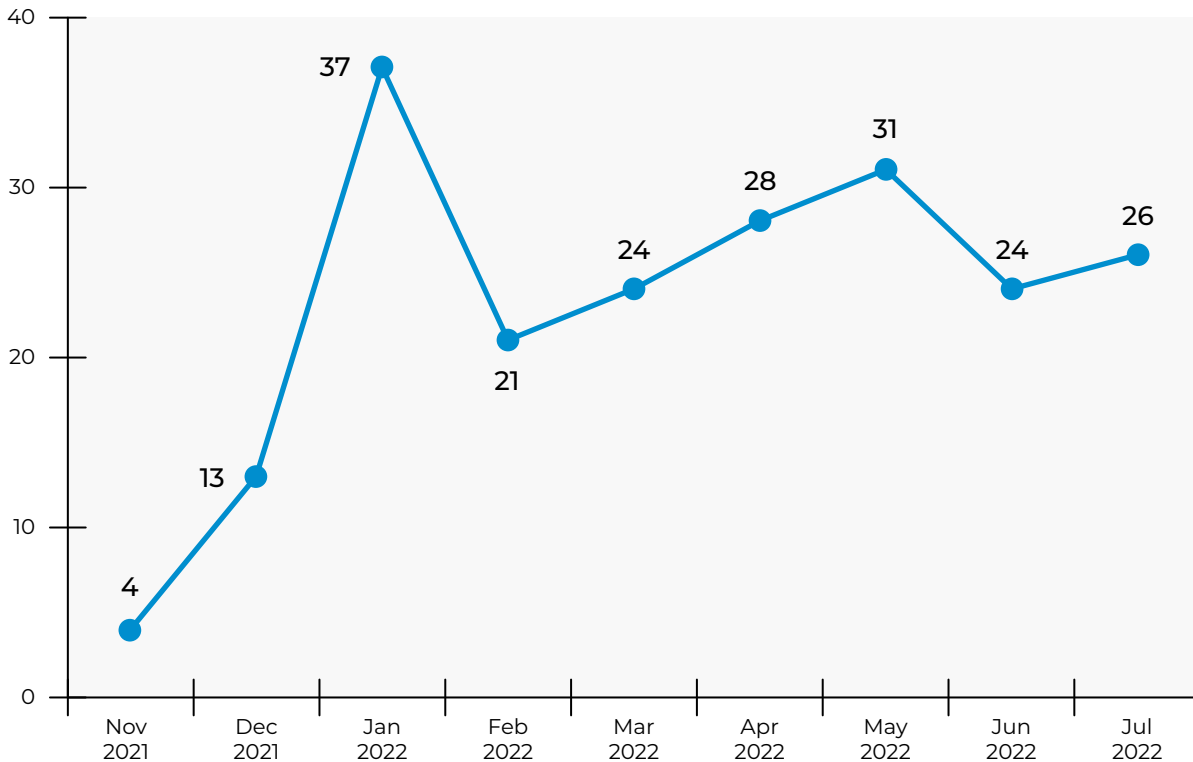
Video uploads (Nov 2021 - Jul 2022)

Fig. 1. Distribution of videos uploaded during and after the training seminar.

Our examination of the videos produced by the five most active participants in the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative exemplifies a personalized and nuanced approach commonly used to convey the histories of National Socialism and the Holocaust, made possible by leveraging the platform's unique vernacular. Many of these videos access the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust through the inclusion of individual narratives and tangible artifacts. These elements are brought to life through various features, such as the green screen effect, which allows for interaction with sources like letters and photographs, as well as the use of overlay text to provide further contextualization and enhance content accessibility. Furthermore, the videos created by the institutions place a strong emphasis on peer-to-peer engagement, fostering empathy and relatability among viewers. This approach provides an effective platform for sharing information and creates a dynamic space that serves the dual purpose of commemoration and education.

Key Indicators

This report demonstrates the platform's ability to engage younger audiences and capture the interest of potential visitors, whether in the digital or physical realm, by effectively communicating the historical significance of the respective institutions' sites. We specifically identified the following key indicators for the success of the initiative:

Engaging Diverse Audiences

Memorials and museums have succeeded in connecting with younger audiences on TikTok, and significantly broadened their outreach.

Personalizing History

The personalized approach adopted by museums and memorials based on their existing educational expertise, underscores TikTok's role as a platform for both disseminating information and fostering empathy.

Exploring History with Nuances

Memorials and museums have harnessed TikTok's unique ability to focus on videos that emphasize specific details, objects, locations, dates, or any other particularities, which facilitates a more nuanced exploration of historical narratives and places.

Fostering Dialogue

Memorials and museums have skillfully cultivated a dialogic space for both commemoration and education on TikTok, fostering peer-to-peer communication in their videos.

Composing Multilayered History

TikTok's layered aesthetic structure, including the frequent use of overlay text in instructional videos, has proven especially effective in conveying the intricate history of the Holocaust and National Socialism.

Condensing, Yet Enriching Historytelling

Memorials and museums predominantly employ the 'anecdotal' structure commonly seen in various explanatory and educational TikTok videos. This highlights the platform's potential for delivering concise yet rich and intricate historical narratives within a 60-second timeframe.

Showcasing Historical Sites

Memorials and museums frequently emphasize the historical significance of memorial sites and other Holocaust-related locations, effectively granting virtual access to places that may be restricted for offline visitors.

Takeaways

Based on these findings, this report offers the following takeaways for future improvement of Holocaust commemoration and education on TikTok and the empowerment of institutional and individual creators:

Innovative Approaches

Encourage the development of innovative methods for commemorating the Holocaust on TikTok that depart from conventional visual presentations and online practices, making the content more appealing to younger audiences.

Diverse Content Modalities

Explore and effectively utilize TikTok's unique digital vernacular to provide ample opportunities for innovation, imitation, and creative content creation that appeal to and engage younger generations.

Educational Context

Provide educational context to videos related to history, enabling the initiation of conversations, interpretations, and reflections among young users interested in generating user-generated content related to the Holocaust.

Cultivate Creative Communal Engagements

Foster a creative communal environment on TikTok where users, memorials, museums, and other curious individuals can generate responsive content templates that make the memory of the Holocaust more tangible and relatable to younger generations.

Support Memorials and Museums

Empower memorials and museums to develop innovative content that effectively navigates the intricate facets of history while establishing a benchmark for responsible discourse on TikTok, all while championing best practices that prioritize the accurate dissemination of information.

Stakeholders and Target Audience

This report is intended for various stakeholders who have the capacity to take further actions to enhance Holocaust commemoration and education on TikTok. These actions include countering hate, distortion, and denial, establishing best practice models that can serve as inspiration for other users and creators, fostering dialogue and engagement, and empowering both institutional and individual users and creators:

1. **Institutions Specializing in Holocaust Commemoration and Education:** with the goal of equipping them with the necessary tools, literacy, and the innovation to experiment with a variety of Holocaust education and commemoration methods while simultaneously broadening their outreach to new audiences.

2. **Policy Makers and Advocacy Organizations:** with the goal of including influential organizations devoted to combating antisemitism and advancing Holocaust education, which shape policies and support initiatives related to the Holocaust on TikTok.

3. **Educators and Historians:** with the goal of incorporating Holocaust education into their curricula within academic institutions and schools, as they may discover the resources provided by the initiative to be valuable assets.

4. **Students and Researchers:** with the goal of delving into studies related to history and social media, they hold the potential to find the educational content generated by this initiative particularly valuable for their academic pursuits.

5. **Holocaust Survivors and Their Families:** with the goal of preserving the memory of the Holocaust and educating younger generations.

6. **Prospective Visitors to Holocaust Memorials and Museums:** with the goal of encouraging future visits to Holocaust memorials and museums, for those who are seeking to enhance their understanding of these sites through TikTok.

7. **Existing TikTok Users:** with the aim of involving both regular TikTok users and the broader public who come across the content generated by this initiative, motivating them to share this content within their networks and become advocates for its mission.

INTRODUCTION

Social media offers an important participatory environment for Shoah commemoration. On various levels, social media users, as well as commemorative institutions, use existing platforms to share content related to the memory of the victims and information about historical events. A recent study on the use of social media by Holocaust museums and memorials has shown that a majority of institutions think that social media is an important instrument for outreach and that they should use such platforms to counter Holocaust distortion (Manca 2021: 13). In particular Holocaust denial and distortion on social media is a significant cause of concern as a recent study by UNESCO emphasized. This study demonstrated that such misinformation is present on all social media platforms, including TikTok. According to the study, 17% of public TikTok content related to the the Holocaust denies or distorts the history of the mass persecution and murder of European Jews during World War II (UNESCO 2022a: 12).

In January 2022, TikTok joined forces with UNESCO and the World Jewish Congress (WJC) to combat denial and distortion online. In order to counter false information about the Holocaust, TikTok automatically redirects users interested in Holocaust-related content to an official online resource with "Facts about the Holocaust" (UNESCO 2022b). Between January and March 2022, TikTok deleted around 100 million videos due to violation of community guidelines. This is roughly 1% of videos uploaded to the platform. 1.6% of these videos were deleted due to hateful behavior. 49.7% of the content was antisemitism or other hateful ideology. 68.9% of this content was deleted proactively, the majority within 24h. 60.6% of the videos did not receive any views. The other 50.3% contained hate speech.[1] This demonstrates an ongoing moderation effort.

The Hamas assault on October 7, 2023, in which terrorists murdered 1,200 civilians, including Israelis, Arabs, Bedouins, Americans, Thais, and Nepalese, as well as military personnel, abducted hundreds, and committed numerous atrocities, presented additional challenges for platforms like TikTok. Not only did gruesome videos of the October 7 crimes circulate on social media, but these platforms were also used subsequently to spread hate and incitement.

As a relatively young platform, TikTok, with its focus on user-generated audiovisual content, was not yet fully acknowledged as an appropriate commemorative environment by memorials, educators and other actors in the field of Shoah commemoration before 2022. Yet guidelines and recommendations for memorials and museums based on a study funded by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance assert that TikTok actually can provide a "valuable opportunity for Holocaust museums" to "combat misperceptions, misinformation and distortion" (Manca et al. 2022: 45). Here, too, the attacks of October 7 introduced unique challenges, particularly concerning the occasionally problematic references linking Nazi history to the contemporary content.

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1. https://www.tiktok.com/transparency/en/community-guidelines-enforcement-2022-1/ (last accessed: 10.1.2024)

TikTok is one of the youngest and fastest-growing social media platforms. Since its merger with Musical.ly in November 2017, the platform has experienced exponential growth, culminating in a milestone of 3.5 billion all-time downloads by 2022 (Briskman 2020). The app has a consolidated global user base with 49.3% of users under the age of 24 and 28.2% aged 25-34 (Iqbal 2023). TikTok allows its users to produce videos up to 10 minutes in length (increased from 3 min. in March 2022), facilitates in-app video editing, furnishes an array of sounds and effects for creative enhancement, and prompts users to engage with content instead of primarily following creators and friends. While TikTok does allow users certain elements found in conventional and widely used social media platforms, such as establishing profiles, connecting with friends, and exchanging direct messages, interpersonal connections are downplayed on the platform. Therefore, its emphasis on video creation uniquely affects how sociality unfolds and networks develop on the platform.

In the Summer of 2020, a #HolocaustPOVchallenge trended on TikTok. TikTokers posing as dead Holocaust victims, some wearing the Star of David on top of ragged clothes and covered with makeup mimicking cuts and bruises, filmed themselves while telling the viewer how they were murdered. TikTokers explained that their motivation was to "educate people" and "share these stories" because of their importance. This mode of expression might be viewed as a genuine engagement with and care for contemporary political matters on the part of young teenagers from Generation Z, a demographic cohort often criticized for narcissism and a thirst for attention. Yet, instead of considering a potentially different perception of the young generation and their use of digital media, "adult" and "institutional" voices in the public debate immediately tagged these artistic/political efforts as "offensive" and harshly criticized the trend as a disrespectful trivialization of the Holocaust (Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Divon 2020). In relation to traditional practices of Holocaust commemoration, these videos, however, indicated a new form of mediated Holocaust-related testimony: an intense, abstract, and surreal narrative that swiftly circulated through TikTok feeds, prompting digital interaction and engagement.

As a response to the #HolocaustPOVchallenge, the American Jewish Committee Berlin with the support of TikTok Germany in Summer 2021 launched the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative. Together with researchers, educators, communication experts and creators, they approached Holocaust and concentration camp memorials as well as museums in Germany and Austria with the opportunity to participate in a training seminar assisting them to create best-practice content for TikTok, educate about the history of the Holocaust and National Socialism, and introduce their museums and memorial sites.

In January 2022, on the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, several participating institutions launched their accounts and uploaded videos created during the seminar. As an important contribution to creating Holocaust awareness on TikTok among German and Israeli youth, the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative, in collaboration with AJC, TikTok Germany, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, PARTNERS PARTNERS & COMPANY (PP&C), and Werk21, was honored with the esteemed Shimon-Peres-Prize for fostering Holocaust awareness on TikTok in Autumn 2022. Supported by TikTok Germany, the initiative continues to train educators and representatives from Holocaust memorials and museums in Europe and Israel since its 2021 launch.

This report presents findings from a comprehensive study conducted by researchers from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's European Forum and Department of Communication & Journalism. The study, based on both quantitative and qualitative methods, explores the content and influence of content produced by Holocaust memorials and museums on TikTok during the inaugural training seminar of the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative in 2021/2022. The authors wish to thank Samson Wollenberger-Schevitz (PP&C), Henning Flaskamp, Felix Schulz (Werk21), Tobias Hennig, Friedrich Enders, Sophie Münzberg (TikTok Germany), Julie Gray (@thetrueadventures), Remko Leemhuis (AJC Berlin) and the participants of the first TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative for their support.

The report encompasses documentation, qualitative analysis of existing Shoah commemoration and education forms on TikTok, as well as surveys and interviews with various stakeholders (institutions, creators, users) to delve into TikTok's role as a platform for combining digital storytelling and Shoah narratives. Additionally, the report assesses the content and impact of TikTok content from memorials and museums dedicated to Shoah commemoration and education.

The report contains the following information:

- Analysis of content related to Shoah memory and education on TikTok (global)

- Evaluation of the TikTok Shoah Education & Commemoration Initiative

- Analysis of Shoah commemoration and education on TikTok in Germany and Austria

These findings will serve as a powerful cornerstone for the ongoing advancement and transformation of Shoah commemoration and education on TikTok, extending their impact far beyond the confines of the German-speaking community.

IN FOCUS:
THE HOLOCAUST ON TIKTOK

TikTok, launched as a global short video platform in 2017 by its parent company ByteDance, quickly took off globally, gaining recognition for its bite-sized video content. "ByteDance acquired Musical.ly in November 2017 and subsequently merged it with TikTok. Today, the TikTok platform, which is only available outside of China, has become the leading destination for short-form mobile videos worldwide."[1] TikTok's rapid ascent worldwide can be attributed to its user-friendly interface, enabling creators to easily craft, edit, and share videos ranging from 15 seconds to 10 minutes in length. TikTok garnered popularity as a platform for imaginative and creative expression, frequently showcasing dance challenges, lip-syncing, and comedic skits. However, in line with the tendency of digital spaces to become politicized by users, TikTok transitioned from being purely entertainment-focused to a platform that encourages interest-based and meaningful engagement with socio-political issues (Ebbrecht-Hartmann & Divon 2022). TikTok infuses its seriousness with inherent playfulness as users adeptly leverage the platform's experimental audiovisual playground (Klug 2020) to tackle important subjects and raise awareness about present-day challenges, encompassing both personal and collective struggles. For that, TikTok provides users with tools to craft a performative environment defined as "serious TikTok" where users creatively unpack and educate on socio-political issues using the platform's language and trends (Ebbrecht-Hartmann & Divon 2022). This whimsical ambiance pushes individuals and organizations to act on the platform to drive social change and increase awareness of significant issues in young audiences. Hence, TikTok has evolved into a platform where a wide range of serious topics have found a suitable space for exploration, education, and contextualization, encompassing areas such as activism (Cervi & Divon 2023), mental health (Basch et al. 2023), COVID-19 information (Li et al. 2021), and numerous other subjects.

A new report from the Pew Research Center shows that social media play a "crucial role" in news consumption. Approximately half of American adults regularly obtain their information from social media sources. TikTok ranks fourth among the most frequently used platforms for obtaining information, after Facebook, YouTube and Instagram and ahead of X formerly Twitter. 14% use the short video platform for that purpose. The number of users who regularly get on the app for obtaining information had doubled in the last two years (Pew Research Center 2023).

The interest-based short video app TikTok is the 7th most popular social media platform in the world with 1.5 billion monthly active users and more than 1 billion daily viewed videos (Iqbal 2023). With its built-in video editor and a For You Page with algorithmically generated content from distant and often unknown creators that is supposed to match individual interests based on usage behavior, TikTok provides a creative canvas of self-made, short-looping videos. The platform fosters an engaging and interactive environment through the use of social media challenges that encourage creators to partake in collaborative online endeavors, along with hashtags that connect various interest topics and communities.

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1. www.bytedance.com/en/ (last accessed: 10.2.2024)

Although occasionally contentious, the dialogic nature of TikTok's atmosphere facilitates diverse forms of digital storytelling that engage with serious topics. With the help of TikTok features, creators can explain complex subjects and deal with relevant social, political, historical, and scientific questions.

> *"As a teaching tool, TikTok really forces you to drill down to that essential message. And how are you going to explain that message in a way that is engaging and educational within that 60 seconds?"*
>
> **Gigi Osler**, University of Manitoba, Canada[1]

As a result, TikTok also emerged as a widely adopted educational tool. Its conversational format lends itself to explanatory methods, transforming it into an accessible learning environment. However, it requires the adaptation of specific platform language and unique logic, including the memetic nature of short videos and the need to distill complex topics into essential messages. TikTok's plural and memetic nature also illustrates the platform's potential for Holocaust education and commemoration, and sets a new standard for complex digital discourse about the Holocaust.

A recent study about commemoration practices and interest in the history of National Socialism among German teenagers and young adults showed that 58.8% watch videos or read texts online in order to learn about the topic (Foundation EVZ 2023: 16). Although 'classical' audiovisual media such as documentary and fiction films are still the most important sources for historical learning among a majority of 73.3% of the German population (Foundation EVZ 2021: 11), they only rank second place among young people (50.9%). Most important resources for historical learning online are YouTube (36.2%) and Instagram (30.8%). 3.3% named TikTok as a significant online space for engaging with the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust (MEMO Jugendstudie, 2023: 18). This is even more important as recent poll data from the US shows disturbing ignorance about the Holocaust among young Americans. 20% of respondents in the 18-29 age group believe that the Holocaust is a myth, while further 30% are not sure. Just over 20% believe that the Holocaust has been exaggerated. The figure is significantly lower for participants over 30 years old. Social media seem to play a decisive role here (The Economist 2023). Holocaust memory on social media often "undermines traditional 'top-down' models of collective memory", according to Novis-Deutsch et al (2023: 14). However, next to hate speech, antisemitism and distortion, they also "allow for more active and personal engagement with the subject." In this section, we focus on how the topic of Holocaust commemoration became prevalent on TikTok, and analyze different forms of "doing memory" on the platform. For that purpose, we identified various ways in which Holocaust commemoration and education manifest on TikTok. These approaches illustrate how both individual creators and institutions adapt traditional memorial practices to TikTok's unique language and, in doing so, make distant historical events more relatable to the platform's younger user base.

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1. See: https://www.universityaffairs.ca/news/news-article/how-producing-videos-on-tiktok-is-impacting-teaching/ (last accessed: 10.1.2024)

#POVHolocaustChallenge

Our study commences with a pivotal TikTok trend that emerged in August 2020, known as the #POVHolocaustChallenge. Thousands of videos circulated across the app's landing page ("For You") under this hashtag, accumulating 895.1 million views. Each 15-30 second video invited TikTok users to participate in a point-of-view (POV) social media challenge. POV embodies a unique self-documentation approach where users adeptly assume a first-person perspective, immersing themselves in specific situations. The challenge's performative guidelines required users to partake as reenactors, skillfully transitioning themselves from the present into the character of a Holocaust victim from the past. In order to sustain an experience of re-enactment, users meticulously immersed their surroundings, often utilizing their private bedrooms to ensure a genuine atmosphere. To achieve this, they skillfully utilized the platform's features, employing convincing aesthetics in their videos that evoked Holocaust memories (Fig. 2). This was accomplished through the incorporation of Holocaust- related symbols, such as artifacts, customs, makeup, and historical images, creating a poignant and powerful portrayal. In a series of 15 interviews conducted with users who took part in this challenge, a multitude of motivations were expressed. These insights collectively highlighted the profound importance of discussing the Holocaust and the legitimacy of utilizing a youth-oriented platform like TikTok for such discussions.

> *"As a content creator, my focus is often on viewership and exposure, and I'm not ashamed of that. However, I still hold my values dear with good intentions when choosing my content production."*
>
> **Interviewee_10**

> *"I never meant to disrespect anyone, but we are easily judged because it's TikTok, and many question our 'qualifications' to discuss the Holocaust, regardless of the platform we choose."*
>
> **Interviewee_2**

> *"While I don't have personal connections to the Holocaust, I believe that its remembrance should extend beyond those with direct ancestral ties, and TikTok allows that with its powerful exposure abilities."*
>
> **Interviewee_9**

The transformation of imagined Holocaust memories into a meme-trend sparked a significant public outcry. In response to these videos, Holocaust memorials chose to distance themselves, while social media users vehemently criticized the creators, branding them as "disgusting human beings" and "woefully ignorant" (Staff, 2020). This outcry prompted demanding calls for the teenagers to swiftly remove the videos and issue apologies, leading to many of them deleting the videos and expressing regret for their "huge mistake" (Nesvig, 2020).
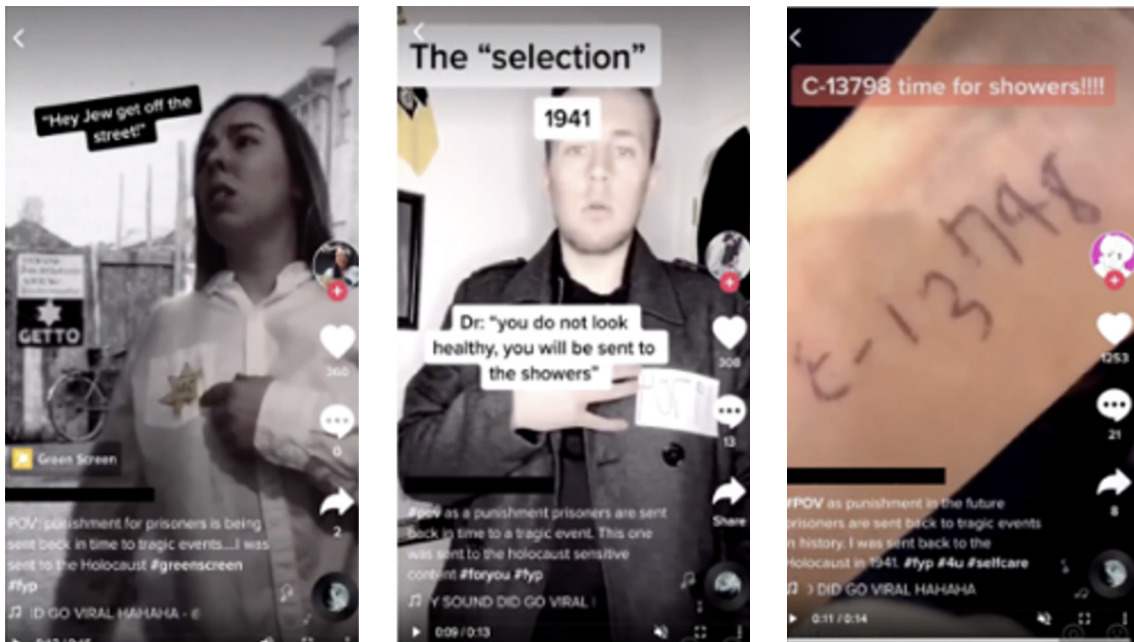
Fig. 2. Screenshots from the #POVHolocaustChallenge.

As the majority of the original videos vanished, the #POVHolocaustChallenge served as a contentious reminder, underscoring the significance of Holocaust education worldwide and the responsibility of practitioners in navigating the digital realm. During that period, a disconcerting study commissioned by the Claims Conference brought to light a significant deficiency in historical knowledge about the Holocaust among American youth. In response to these findings, the organization's president, Gideon Taylor, expressed deep concern, stating, "We need to understand why we aren't doing better in educating a younger generation about the Holocaust and the lessons of the past" (Claims Conference, 2020).

Survivors on TikTok

The #POVHolocaustChallenge trend served as a reminder of the hazards associated with engaging in subjects like the history of the Holocaust that can easily be deemed as trivialization while also highlighting the absence of institutional agents with expertise in Holocaust history on TikTok to effectively communicate the memory of these events. Conversely, TikTok's diverse, pluralistic, and meme-based nature presents immense potential for Holocaust education and commemoration, especially for younger generations. At the very heart of this intricate dual-platform environment, three prominent Holocaust survivors boldly embraced TikTok's virality-driven setting: Lily Ebert (99), Gidon Lev (87), and Tova Friedman (84). Through their ingenious approach, they skillfully captured both algorithmic and human attention, dedicating their digital labor to Holocaust education with profound commitment. With personalized style and attitude, these individuals adeptly utilize TikTok's popular fragmented audio-visual aesthetics, dividing traumatic memories into segments within their videos. By tailoring their testimonies to the attention span of TikTok users, they transform their profiles into living archives of poignant memories.

Lily Ebert, a 99-year-old Holocaust survivor from Bonyhád, Hungary, was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau at the age of 20, where she lost her mother, brother and sister in the gas chambers. Lily and her two remaining sisters endured forced labor until liberation. After the war, she married and had three children before moving to London in 1967, where she is currently living. Having 10 grandchildren and 36 great-grandchildren, she co-authored a book titled "Lily's Promise: How I Survived Auschwitz and Found the Strength to Live" alongside her great-grandson, Dov Forman. Dov played a pivotal role in introducing her to TikTok, leading them to create a joint profile that rapidly gained momentum, amassing an astonishing following of over two million users. Through her captivating videos, Lily fearlessly engages with users' questions, candidly addressing their inquiries about her experiences during the Holocaust and thereby deepening the profound impact of her survival story.

In the initial stages of their account, Forman introduced Lily through a video featuring an excerpt from one of Lily Ebert's public speeches. Utilising TikTok's typical text augmentation, the video urged viewers to engage by commenting, "I am your witness," as a call to others to learn about the Holocaust and embrace the role of becoming her #Witness.

With this promise, Forman and Ebert took an active approach, urging TikTok users to engage with them by asking questions, thereby redefining the conventional concept of a public dialogue with Holocaust witnesses to align with the distinct media environment of TikTok. Through the questions & answers function, questions are displayed alongside Lily's responses, presenting information and memories in a condensed format. This popular dynamic setup encourages users to actively engage with the survivor's answers, fostering an interlocutory structure that facilitates further interaction. Users inquire about various aspects, such as Lily's emotions during liberation, her experiences in the ghetto, her diet in the camp, and women's menstruation in Auschwitz (Fig. 3). By that, Lily provides users with an opportunity to ask questions that might not receive authoritative approval within a more rigid commemoration culture and to bear witness to the survivor's experiences, effectively transforming them into witnesses of the witness. In addition, Lily allows complex forms of digital witnessing to emerge when users harness the duet function to show themselves listening to her testimonies (Fig. 4).

Fig. 3. Ebert Answers Users' Questions.

Fig. 4. Users' Duet with Ebert's Testimony.

Gidon Lev (@thetrueadventures)

Gidon Lev, an 87-year-old Holocaust survivor from Israel, endured the horrors of the Theresienstadt concentration camp, where he was one of only 92 children among approximately 15,000 to survive. Lev lost 26 family members, including his father, during transportation from Auschwitz to Buchenwald. After World War II, Gidon and his mother immigrated first to the United States and then to Canada in 1949. Eventually, in 1959, he settled in Israel, where he built a family with two marriages, six children, 15 grandchildren, and two great-granddaughters. In July 2021, Lev, along with his partner, Julie Gray, embarked on a TikTok journey dedicated to promoting Holocaust education and combating antisemitism. Their account has since amassed a meaningful following of over 410,000 and garnered over 8 million likes. Gray is also the author behind Gidon's biography, titled "The True Adventures of Gidon Lev: Rascal. Holocaust Survivor. Optimist", published in 2020.

Lev and Grey are driven by a commitment to political action and combating Holocaust distortions, particularly instances where COVID restrictions are inappropriately compared to the historical memory of the Holocaust. They maintain a keen focus on trending challenges, audio memes, filters, and other content elements known to amplify visibility on TikTok. They produce TikTok content on a daily basis, strategically engaging in a dialogue about current affairs related to Holocaust trivialization or distortion. With an embracing attitude, they utilize features like questions & answers and the duet function to address Holocaust ignorance and seize the opportunity to educate their community about its history with multi-layered storytelling techniques (Fig. 5). They try to counter hate speech by adopting a cynical and humorous approach in their videos, skillfully exposing hate trolls and deconstructing various dog-whistle visual, aural, and audial codes.

Fig. 5. Gidon Lev in Educational Videos about Holocaust Distortion and History.

TESTIMONY MODE:

Survivors effectively leverage TikTok's popular fragmented audiovisual aesthetics to divide and present traumatic memories in segments, giving rise to an innovative form of testimony. They skillfully create an intimate and educational space, utilizing features such as questions & answers and the duet function, and fostering complex forms of digital witnessing.

Tova Friedman (@tovafriedman)

Tova Friedman, an 84-year-old Holocaust survivor residing in the United States, was born in Gdynia, Poland, just before World War II. She escaped the mass executions in her hometown ghetto and, at six years old, was taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau with her mother while her father was sent to Dachau. Despite the odds, Tova survived the camp, making her one of the youngest Auschwitz survivors. After the war, Tova and her parents lived in Poland before immigrating to the United States in 1950. She became a therapist and served as a social services agency director for 25 years. In 2021, Tova and her 18-year-old grandson Aron collaborated to create a TikTok profile that has gained over 500,000 followers and nearly 9 million likes. In her profile, Tova shares her Holocaust memories with a primary focus on her time in Auschwitz and engages with her followers through interactive features like questions & answers. Tova and Aron created a prominent audiovisual language consisting of a series of powerful mini-stories from the Holocaust, crafted with layers of videos, text, and images. In 2022, Tova published her memoir, "The Daughter of Auschwitz: My Story of Resilience, Survival, and Hope," co-authored by war correspondent and friend Malcolm Brabant.

Non-Institutional Creators

The presence of Holocaust survivors on TikTok heralded the emergence of a user-generated culture of Holocaust commemoration and education on the platform. For the regular users, it was TikTok's noninstitutional and mimetic nature that offered significant potential for Holocaust-related content craft while encouraging dialogue and inviting the inscription of Holocaust memory into the (social media) lives of younger generations. Users adeptly transitioned from passive spectators and witnesses of events to actively engaging in complex storytelling, exploring various Holocaust-related historical angles and narratives by employing multiple layers of address. Empowered by their algorithmic methods for promoting engagement, users utilize TikTok not only as a platform accessible to a global audience but also as a means to combat those who (mis)use the platform to spread hate and historical misinformation (Fig. 6). TikTok's features and techniques serve as valuable tools for non-institutional creators, enabling them to confront Holocaust distortion and combat antisemitic harassment.
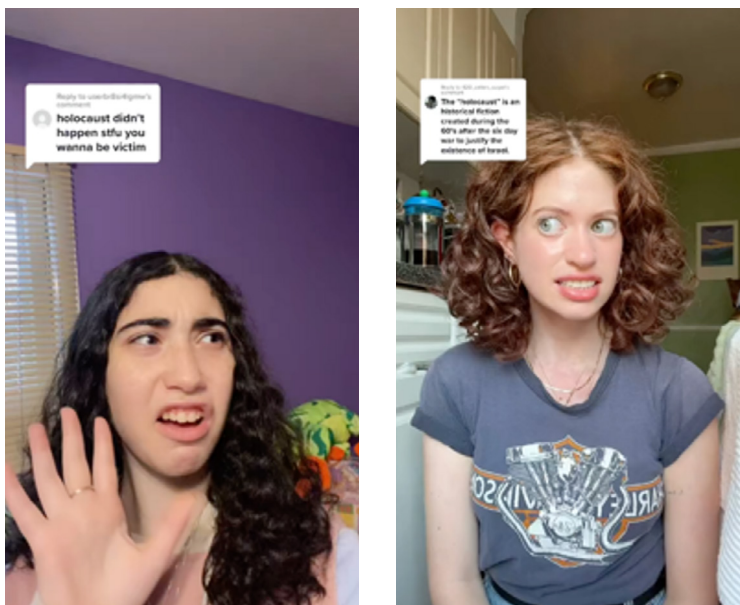
Fig. 6. Users react to Holocaust Denial with the Responding to Comments Feature.

RESPONSIVE MODE:

Non-institutional creators attack and criticize users' inappropriate comparisons of the Holocaust to other topics. They make the history of the Holocaust relevant to the present as a meta-reference to the continuity of hate, discrimination, antisemitism and racism and fight against problematic and distorting comparisons between past and present that circulate on TikTok.

Fig. 7. Users unpack Holocaust history and react to myths with the Green Screen Feature.

In their creative endeavors, non-institutional creators effectively utilized the green screen function to focus on specific historical objects and documents presented in the background of their videos, such as commemoration stones or diary testimonies. This feature allowed creators to interact with these elements by po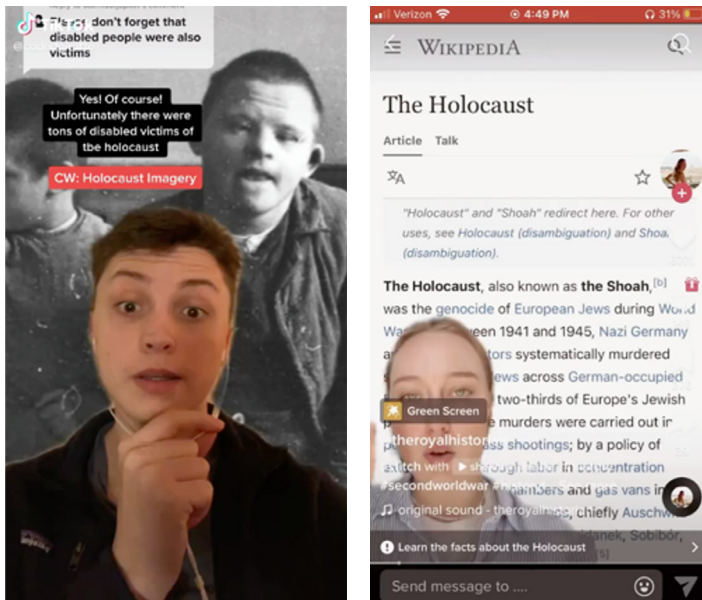inting to and highlighting particular parts, enhancing the storytelling experience (Fig. 7). Furthermore, by employing overlay text, users provide additional information and effectively emphasize historical facts, fostering a deeper understanding of the events and contexts they are conveying in their videos. Typically, TikTok videos incorporate music, and when it comes to Holocaust-related content, creators often make deliberate choices to cater to different audiences. Some opt for soft-tone musical excerpts that seamlessly blend as a subtle layer in their videos, while others co-opt trending music challenges, utilizing existing popular audio-memes to enhance the impact of their storytelling. By incorporating these elements into their TikTok videos, users create a memetic structure that condenses historical information while simultaneously communicating on multiple levels and adopting diverse multimodal forms of address.

EXPLANATORY MODE:

Non-institutional creators offer background information about disputed topics, emphasizing historically marginalized stories. They tend to focus on the presentation of historical information as facts and evidence and perform historical storytelling by often emphasizing individual biographies, exploring historical objects, or including historical documents or photographs.

The level of engagement is determined not only by the specific content of the videos but, more importantly, by the presence of a captivating 'hook'. Since users typically come across informative content through their "For You" pages, which curate diverse content based on their interests as identified by the platform's algorithm rather than interpersonal connections, it becomes crucial to capture their attention within the first few seconds of the video. Moreover, successful videos entice viewers to repeatedly engage with and watch the content multiple times. Creators can encourage multiple viewings by implementing a seamless 'loop' that connects the ending of a video with its beginning. Loops prove especially valuable for videos exploring complex topics like Holocaust history and memory. With each new 'run' of the video, users can concentrate on different aspects that they might have missed during their initial viewing, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding and engagement. Therefore, both despite and due to their short length, TikTok videos can deal with quite complex issues and engage users. This innovative use of visual elements not only captivates the audience but also serves as a powerful educational tool, contributing to a more comprehensive and engaging portrayal of Holocaust-related content on TikTok.

Institutional Awakening and Restraints

In 2021, the emergence of institutional Holocaust presence on TikTok was evident when various British educational organizations stepped forward to fill this void. Those organizations collaborated with TikTok to launch an educational hub, coinciding with the International Holocaust Memorial Day in the same year. As part of TikTok's efforts to enhance the visibility and safeguard the organizations - the Holocaust Educational Trust (@holocaustuk), the Antisemitism Policy Trust (@antisempolicy), and the Community Security Trust (@cst_uk) - they adjusted the algorithmic search and redirected users searching for Holocaust-related keywords, hashtags, or phrases to these organizations' profiles. In doing so, TikTok redirects users' attention, exposing them to authoritative content. Following the British educational organizations, in 2022, TikTok's community relations department teamed up with international organizations like The Jewish Agency (@the_jewish_agency) and the World Jewish Congress (@worldsjewishcongress) to creatively combat Holocaust myths and misconceptions through various initiatives. For example, @holocaustuk used TikTok's audiovisual elements to expose unknown facts about the Holocaust, while @worldjewishcongres raised intriguing questions to fight misconceptions. @the_jewish_agency utilized a challenge campaign, encouraging users to share their post-memory experiences using features like the green screen to convey authenticity (Fig. 8).

COMMEMORATIVE MODE:

Non-institutional creators raise awareness of the Holocaust and its present implications as a historical event. They use this mode often in the context of memorial days while integrating their videos in the vernacular of TikTok's trends, allowing performative and artistic acts of commemoration.
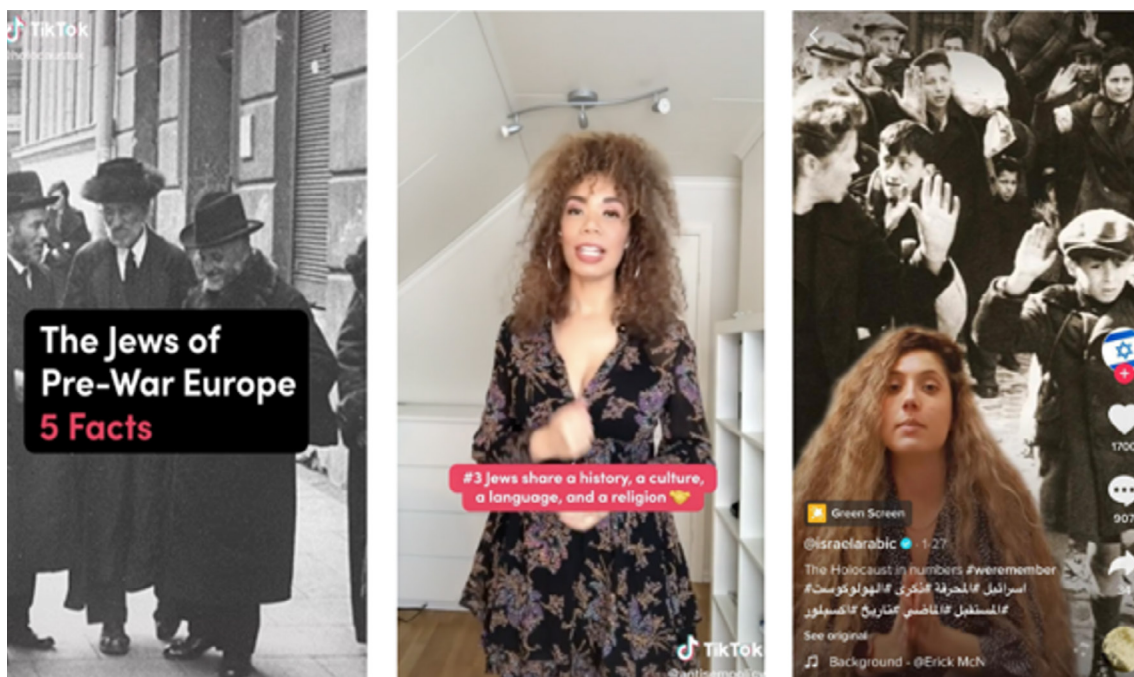
Fig. 8. Holocaust myths combat campaign @holocaustuk (left side), and @antisempolicy + International Holocaust Remembrance Day Influencers challenge #WeRemember campaign led by @the_jewish_ agency.

The establishment of an institutional presence on TikTok was crucial in response to the platform's efforts to combat the toxic influx of hate speech registered in 2020 with the burst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase of unique users on the platform. In 2021, research described a "seismic increase" (Weimann & Masri, 2021) in antisemitic tropes, images and rhetoric on TikTok, with a 912% increase in antisemitic comments registered on various videos (from 41 comments in 2020 to 415 in 2021). However, despite the rampant spread of hate speech, the institutional efforts to join TikTok gradually curbed its proliferation on the platform in 2021, as more research revealed a comparative deceleration in antisemitic postings (from 43 posts in 2020 to 61 in 2021). This deceleration can also be attributed to a series of significant steps taken by the platform in 2021-2022, such as changing the policy to teach the algorithm to block offensive Holocaust-related content in search results, encouraging users to report vio-lators, suspending offending profiles, and labeling verified Holocaust-related videos.

The years 2020 and 2021 served as harbingers of institutional presence on TikTok. Insti-tutions were still intimidated by potential denial, distortion, misuse, and superficial representations, fearing the loss of control over the digitally distributed memory of the Holocaust. This might explain why most of the organizations' campaigns utilized only a fraction of the creative features TikTok has to offer. TikTok is an environment where understanding and utilizing the digital vernacular are crucial to maximizing content success. Consequently, the accumulated engagement in these initiatives was relatively low when assessed by TikTok's standards of virality. However, aligned with the institutional efforts to preserve, transfer, and perpetuate the memory of the Holo-caust among younger generations, practitioners recognized the need to devise inno-vative ways of commemorating the Holocaust that break away from traditional visual styles and online cultures of commemoration and education.

Therefore, experimenting with the multimodality of content on TikTok offered institutions abundant opportunities for transformation, imitation and the creation of content in ways that were reaching new and younger crowds. When institutions on TikTok provided the educational context, they recognized the potential to spark conversations, interpretations and reflections among young users who react to and actively engage in creating user-generated content related to the Holocaust. As a result, institutions' translation of traditional memorialization practices into TikTok vernacular can foster creative communal engagements, wherein users generate responsive content templates that make the memory of the Holocaust more tangible and relatable to younger generations. This has paved the way for a substantial onboarding of Holocaust-related memorials and museum initiatives from Europe by the end of 2021, as manifested in The TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative.

THE TIKTOK SHOAH COMMEMORATION & EDUCATION INITIATIVE

In 2020, TikTok had not yet gained significant traction within Holocaust memorials and museums (Manca 2021: 15). This changed in response to the #POVHolocaust-Challenge and the presence of survivors on the platform. In January 2022, as a result of the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative, several concentration camp memorials in Germany and Austria joined the platform and started regularly uploading content. The Neuengamme Memorial, which posts videos created by young volunteers since November 2021 on TikTok, received 10,000 followers, 90,000 likes and 1 million views within the first two months (History Communication Institute 2022: 23).

The TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative aimed to enable institutions such as memorials and museums to integrate TikTok into their commemorative and educational activities, producing best-practice models for commemorating the Shoah on TikTok and using the application as a tool for participatory educational approaches. From the total number of eleven participating institutions, nine created accounts on TikTok with more than 50,000 followers as of the end of 2022 and published content shortly before and after the International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27, 2022. 335 videos with more than 11 million views were uploaded until December 2022. Those videos were liked more than 800,000 times.

The following memorial sites and museums participated in the pilot project:

- Bergen-Belsen Memorial

- Ravensbrück Memorial Museum

- Sachsenhausen Memorial and Museum

- Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference

- Jewish Museum Berlin

- Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site

- Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial

- Mauthausen Memorial

- Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial

- Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future (EVZ)

- Villa ten Hompel, Münster

The initiative, which involved educators, scholars, communication experts and social media creators, was an attempt to educate, enable and generate high-quality TikTok content that influences and sets standards for the discourse on Shoah remembrance in the TikTok media format. Due to the specific responsibility for preserving and commemorating the Shoah, combating antisemitism, and preventing new forms of xenophobia and discrimination, Shoah commemoration and education are crucial pillars of contemporary German and Austrian memory politics and commemorative culture.

> *"And the internet is sadly also a place where things are not only loud but often get ugly. Where hatred and hostility spread and, indeed, unbearable antisemitism, too. And that is why it is quite right to go where young people are. To take a stand and confront hatred and hate speech. You are confronting this hatred with the strongest response: facts and empathy."*
>
> **Annalena Baerbock**, Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the laudatory speech for the Shimon-Peres-Prize on 11.10.2022.[1]

At the center of the initiative's activities was a training seminar for representatives of memorials and museums with the aim of onboarding crucial institutions for configuring Shoah commemoration and education on TikTok. Based on questionnaires filled by institutional representatives before and during the training seminar, we evaluated their existing social media strategies, their motivation and potential use cases of TikTok for their work, expectations and outcomes, as well as concerns using the platform for the purpose of Holocaust commemoration and education. From 11 participating institutions, 10 filled the initial questionnaire, which contained open questions regarding the topics mentioned before. Four more questionnaires were distributed during the four months training seminar asking for additional information about social media use, existing perceptions of the platform, its format and features, concerns regarding safety and data security, and expectations regarding the seminar as well as opinions regarding data safety and misinformation and the potential of specific platform features for educational purposes. Thirteen participants responded to the questionnaires during the seminar.

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1. See: https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/shimon-peres-prize/2557854 (last accessed: 28.9.2023).

Participants and Institutions

The majority of institutions participating in the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative in 2021/22 were memorials located at former concentration camp sites, two from Eastern Germany, two from Northern Germany, and two from Southern Germany. One memorial site is located in Austria (Fig. 9).

Participating Institutions

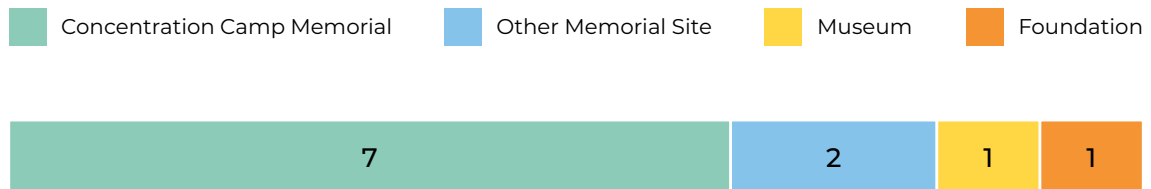|			
■ Concentration Camp Memorial	■ Other Memorial Site	■ Museum	■ Foundation

7	2	1	1

Fig. 9. Specification of the participating institutions (n=11).

The two other memorials that participated in the training seminar are also located at historical sites. They however focus on historical events and institutions related to the "perpetrator perspective". One museum joined the initiative, with a specific focus on Jewish history and culture. In addition, representatives from the EVZ (Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future) took part in the training seminar.

Age

■ 20 years and younger	■ 21-30 years	■ 31-40 years	■ 41-50 years	■ 51-60 years

8%	15%	46%	22%	8%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
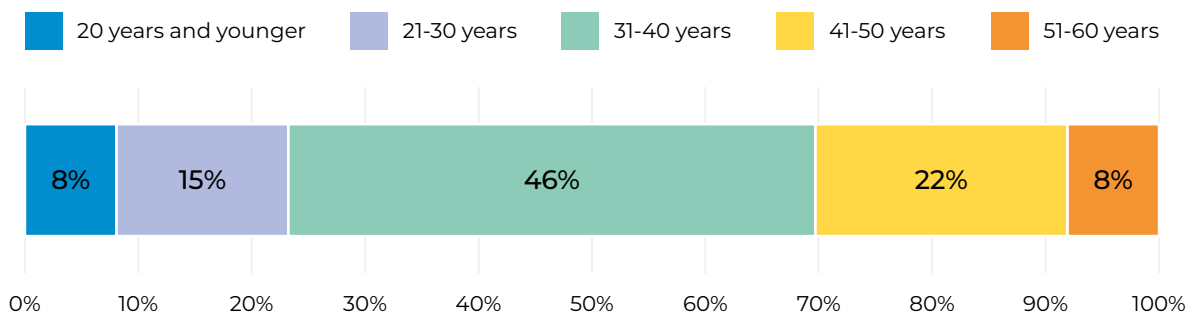
Fig. 10. Age distribution of the individual participants of the training seminar (n=13).

A clear majority of slightly more than two thirds of the individual participants were older than 30 years (Fig. 10). They predominantly represent the Generations X and Y (Millennials). However, it is remarkable that 23% of the participants were younger than 30 years of age. Hence, a strong minority of participants actually represented Gen-Z, the most active age group on TikTok.

Position

- Public Relations Officer
- Educator
- Trainee
- Guide
- Student Assistant
- Volunteer

Fig. 11. Professional positions held by participants at the memorials and museums (n=13).

Accordingly, 31% of the participants were volunteers, student assistants, trainees and guides working in the memorial institutions. Most participants work in the PR sector, 31% are educators (Fig. 11). Hence, the training seminar represented a broad variety of generational and professional perspectives regarding commemorating and educating about the National Socialist past and the Holocaust.
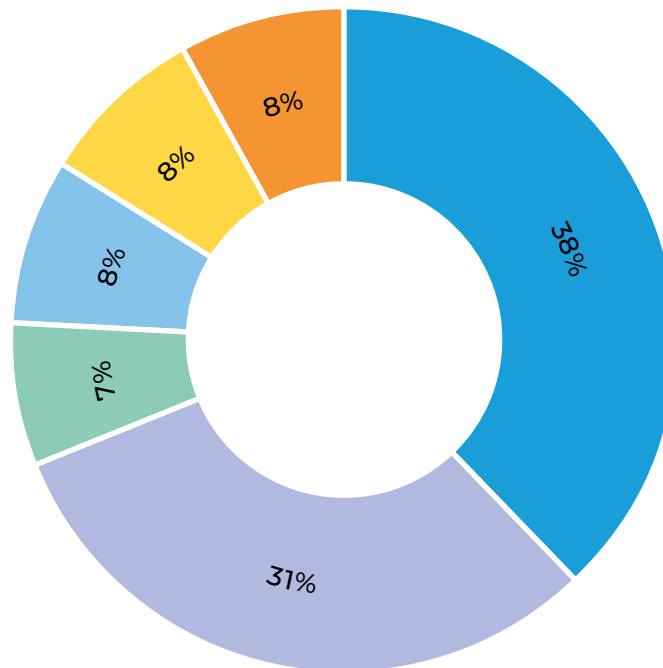
Social Media Use

All participating institutions were active on different social media platforms (Fig. 12). They had previously used social media mainly for the purpose of communicating directly with their visitors and community of followers. Raising public awareness of the history of National Socialist persecution and the Holocaust is the main focus of the institutional use of social media platforms. Participants also mentioned communication about online and on-site activities, exhibitions, educational activities and publications, as well as communication with stakeholders and survivors and their families as important purposes for being active on social media. Several institutions also emphasized the importance of collaboration with other memorials, initiatives and stakeholders, for instance, by initiating or participating in Hashtag campaigns (#75liberation, #LichterGegenDunkelheit).

Social Media
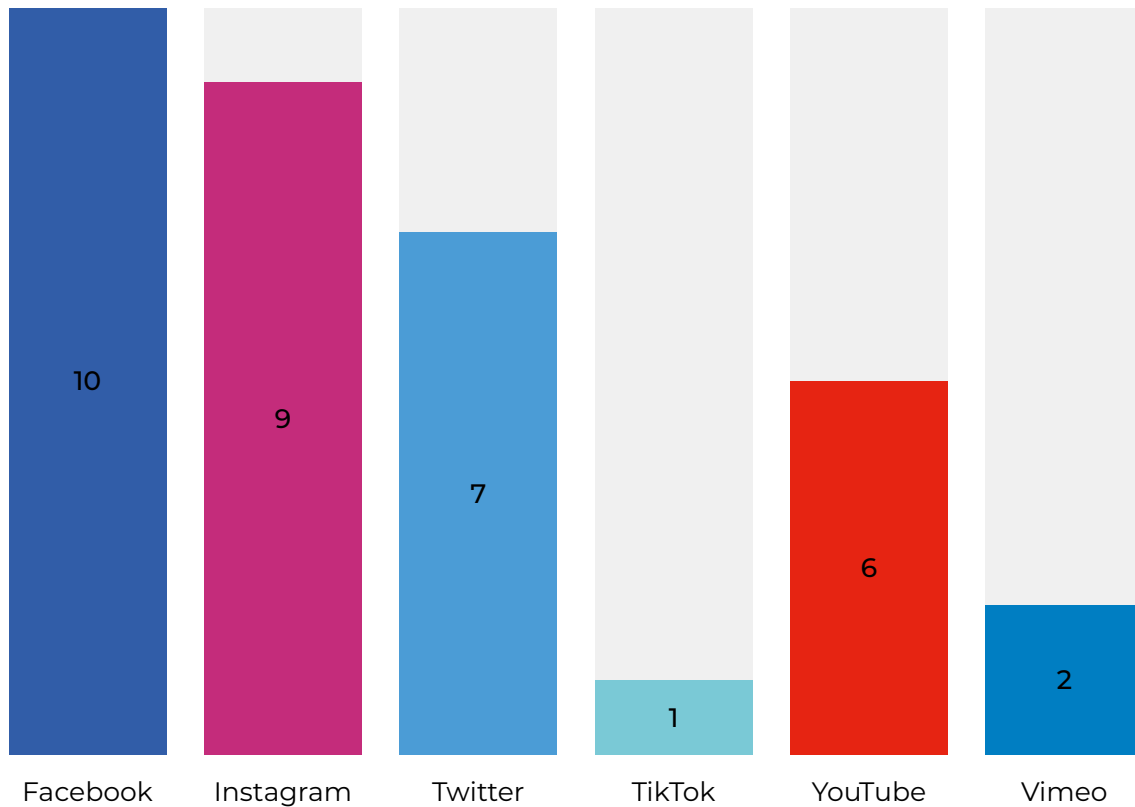
Fig. 12. Participants' active social media platforms based on an initial questionnaire (n=11).

Nearly all participating institutions previously used Facebook for disseminating Holocaust-related content on social media. The majority of participants post content on a weekly basis (Fig. 13). Most of the memorials and museums were also active on Twitter (now "X") and used the platform on a daily or weekly basis, while a significant number of individual participants had no experience with the short messaging service. The most popular platform for disseminating visual content among the participating institutions was Instagram, while they use YouTube primarily for archiving purposes. Instagram is used on a daily or weekly basis, and YouTube only rarely. Some memorials and museums also use Vimeo for the purpose of storing and displaying audiovisual content. Several participants, however, emphasized having "little experience creating video content."

Use of Facebook

Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	N/A
4	7	2			

Use of Instagram

Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	N/A
4	6	1			1

Use of Twitter

Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	N/A
4	3			5	1

Use of YouTube

Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	N/A
	2	5	6		

Use of TikTok

Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	N/A
1	1			10	1
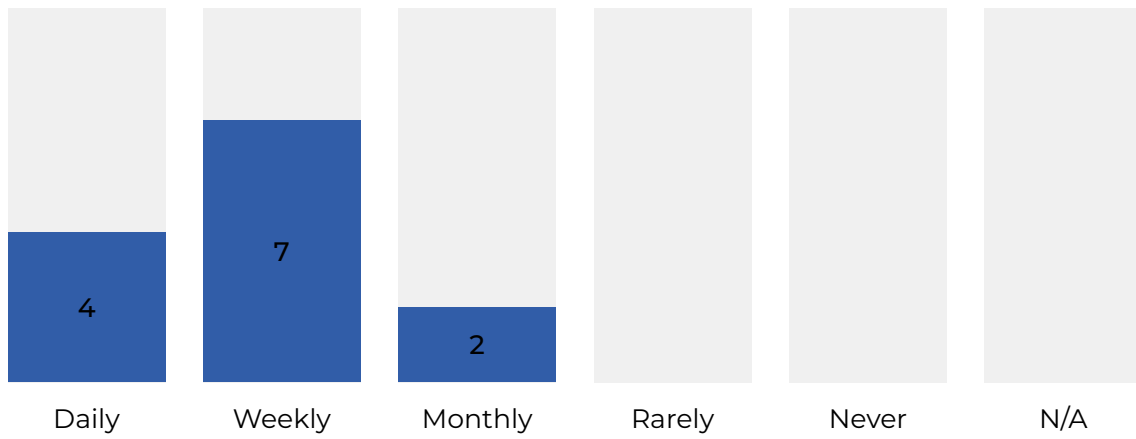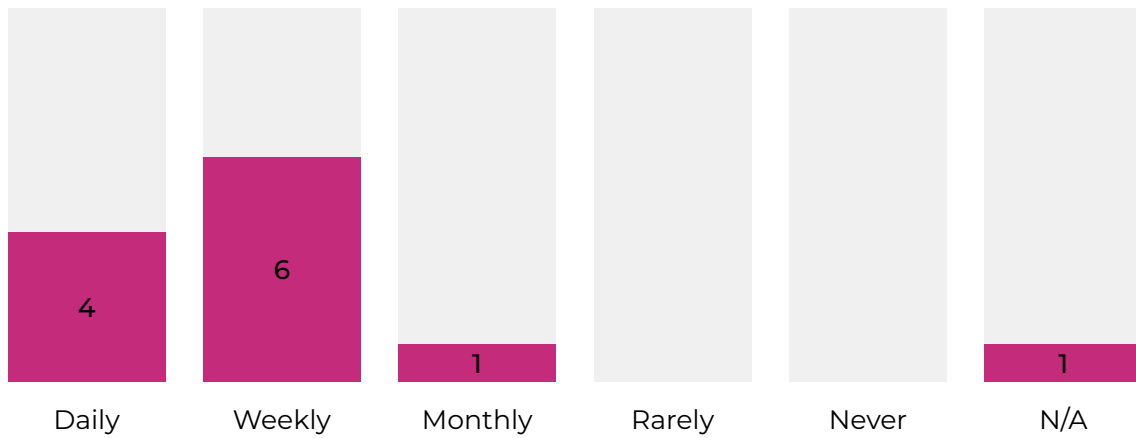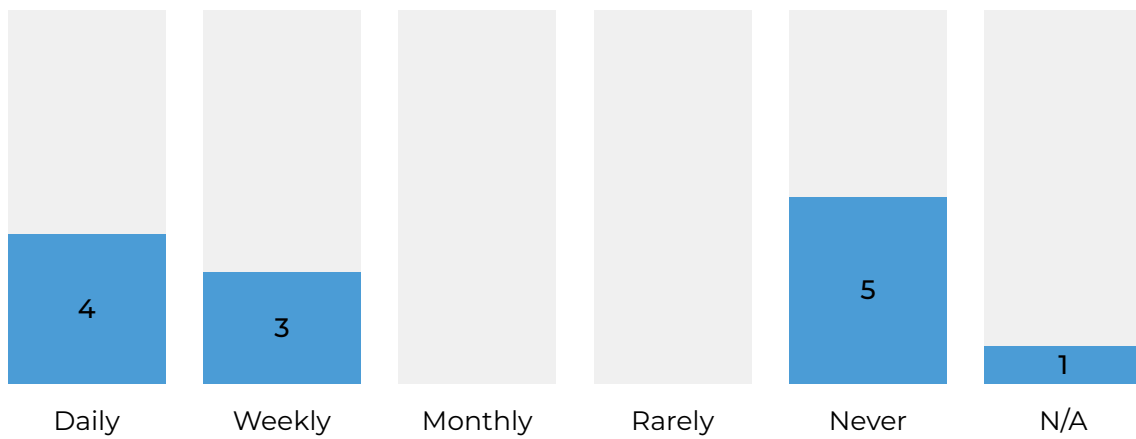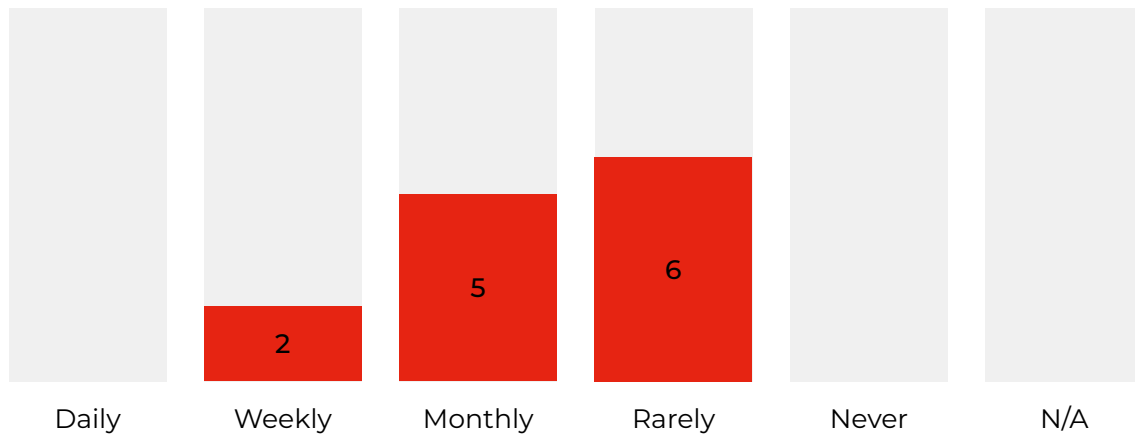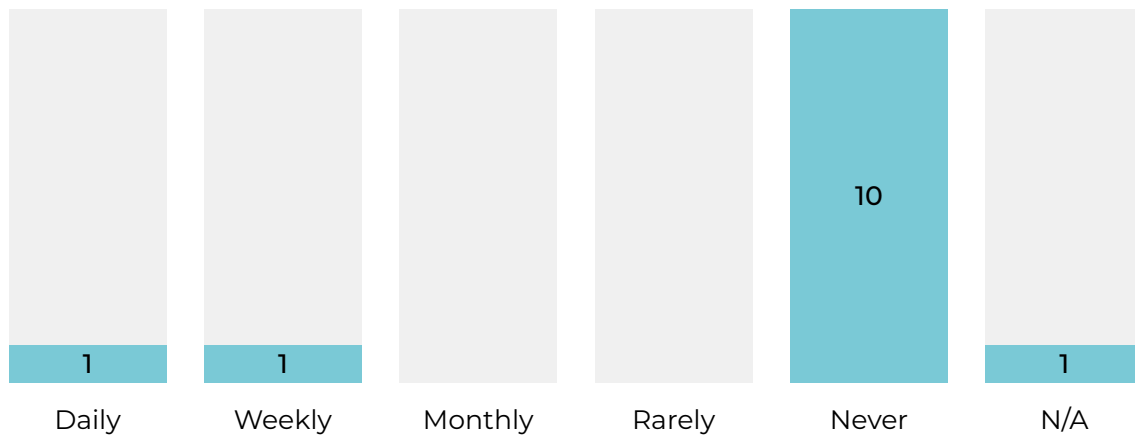
Fig. 13. Professional use of Social Media platforms by individual participants (n=13).

Just one institution had an active TikTok account before applying for the initiative's training seminar. Only two individual participants shared that they use the app on a daily or weekly basis. One of the memorials stated that they had already planned to become active on TikTok before they heard about the initiative, and that participating in the training seminar would help them adopt the short-video sharing app for their needs. The majority of participants had no professional experience with TikTok. "We are not very fluent in the developing 'language' of TikTok," expressed one participant the need to learn more about the app's dominant trends, formats and features. The main motivation for participating in the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative was to increase visibility among a younger audience and reach out to the generation of 16-24, or as one participant framed it in the questionnaire: looking "for new ways of creatively multiplying content and programs."

Motivation and Use Cases

In their applications for the training seminar, most participants expressed interest in exploring the educational potential for easily accessible serious historical storytelling. The main aim was "raising awareness of topics such as the Shoah [and] Jewish life in Germany among the young target group." Potential use cases shared by the participants before the seminar primarily focused on education and information, while explicit interest in using TikTok for commemorative purposes was rather low (Fig. 14). In their answers, however, most of the participants also reflected on the specific characteristics of TikTok videos and proposed the idea to specifically explore the potential of "micro storytelling". This approach combines bite-sized digital storytelling with a focus on personal stories, biographies and stories that can be told through objects, which are seminal approaches in current Holocaust education.

Use Cases

Legend:
- Micro stories
- User generated content
- Information
- Education
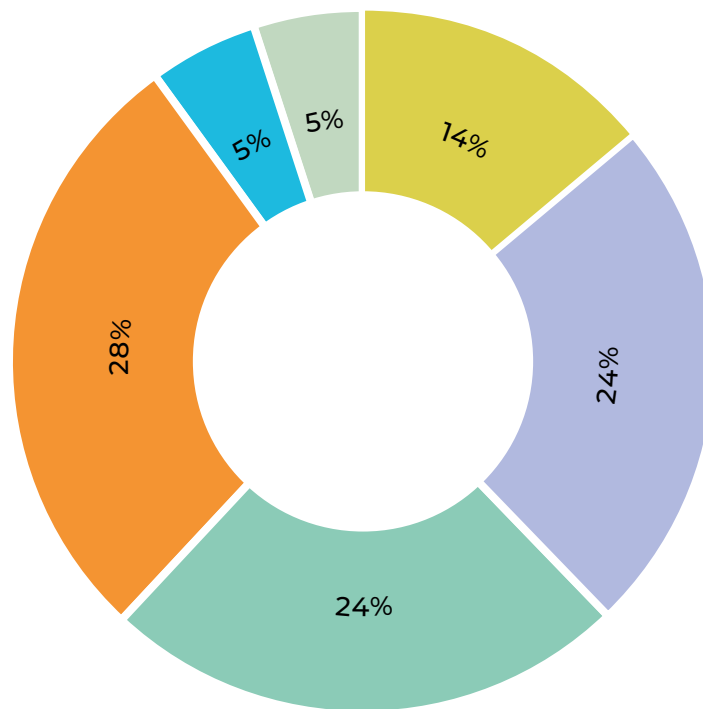- Site
- Commemoration
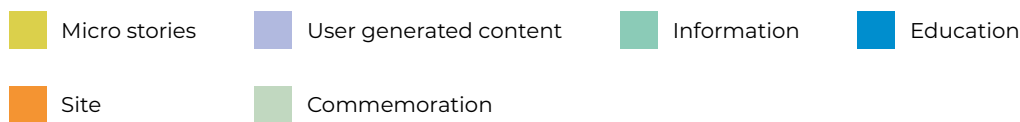
Fig. 14. Classification of use cases addressed by memorials and museum before the seminar (n=10).

Correspondingly, a majority of participants were especially interested in learning more about new digital storytelling methods, specifically related to content dealing with Jewish life and the Holocaust (Fig. 15). Basic steps to reach this goal were also addressed as expectations at the beginning of the training seminar, in particular, accessing the app for the first time and learning about specific tools and features.

Taking into account the increasing public interest in TikTok and specifically its recommendation algorithm that helps curate the individual "For You" pages of users, it was not surprising that many participants also wanted to learn more about the algorithm and how it works. Connecting with other memorials and with TikTok creators was also an important motivation for joining the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative. While practical insights in video production were still important, building campaigns or collaborating with others were less in focus. Those goals slightly changed during the seminar. While new methods of digital storytelling still were the main focus of interest, practical skills in video production became more important over the course of the seminar (Fig. 16). Furthermore, there was a notable increase in the significance of networking and forming partnerships with other memorials and museums.

Expectations for the TikTok Commemoration & Education seminar

Rebuilding a social media concept
1

Learning and understanding TikTok's algorithm
11

Learning about TikTok research
7

Getting in touch with creators and social media experts
9

Learning about funding opportunities
2

Developing collaborative TikTok projects with other institutions
7

Connecting with other museums and memorials
8

Creating a TikTok campaign for my institution
6

Practicing video production for TikTok
8

Learning about new digital story telling methods
12

Getting to know how to use specific features and tools on TikTok
11

Discussing the danger of Holocaust distortion, antisemitism and trivialization on TikTok
10

Learning about content related to Shoah memory and Jewish life on TikTok
12

Accessing the TikTok App
11

Fig. 15. Expectations formulated by participants at the beginning of the training seminar (n=12).

What did the TikTok Shoa commemoration & Education Initiative's training seminar achieve?

Learning about content related to Shoa memory and Jewish life on TikTok

9

Discussing the danger of Holocaust distortion, antisemitism and trivialization on TikTok

8

Learning about new digital storytelling methods

13

Practicing video production for TikTok

10

Developing collarborative TikTok projects with other institutions

8

Connecting with other museums and memorials

8

Fig. 16. Feedback of participants about the achievements of the training seminar (n=15).

A crucial aspect of the training seminar involved the evaluation and discussion of pre-existing videos addressing Holocaust-related subjects. Those "models" should serve as a starting point for developing standards as well as practical modes for communicating the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust on TikTok. This accounts for the feedback on improved understanding of Holocaust-related content, which was not initially covered in the questionnaires at the beginning of the seminar, as well as discussions regarding Holocaust distortion, antisemitism, and trivialization. These topics were introduced by numerous participants at the start of the seminar and remained subjects of continuous discussion, particularly involving the creators Julie Gray and Gidon Lev from @thetrueadventures.

Most interestingly, a large group of participants at the beginning of the initiative expressed interest in further exploring TikTok's potential as an educational tool that can be used during a memorial or museum visit in workshops or seminars. This poten-tial of TikTok as a suitable tool for visitors to document and reflect on visits to museums and memorials was also emphasized by a majority of respondents in the first ques-tionnaire. "Let participants reflect on their visit," stated one participant as a principal motivation to implement TikTok in their work. In contrast to the interest expressed in "user-generated content" before the training seminar, such approaches were less in focus during the seminar, and memorials and museums becoming active on Tik-Tok later predominantly abstained from using the app for user- generated creative storytelling. One reason for that could be the concern that misinformation and hate speech are a huge challenge, institutions have to deal with when utilizing the app for educational purposes. Accordingly, 13% of the responses expressed concern about mis- and disinformation on the platform.

Data Safety and Misinformation

The main pre-existing concern regarding TikTok as a platform for commemorating and educating about the Holocaust, however, was the question of whether TikTok actually is an appropriate platform for that purpose, and if it provides a safe environment for such a sensitive topic (Fig. 17). "TikTok normally is rather entertaining and funny," said one participant.

Concerns
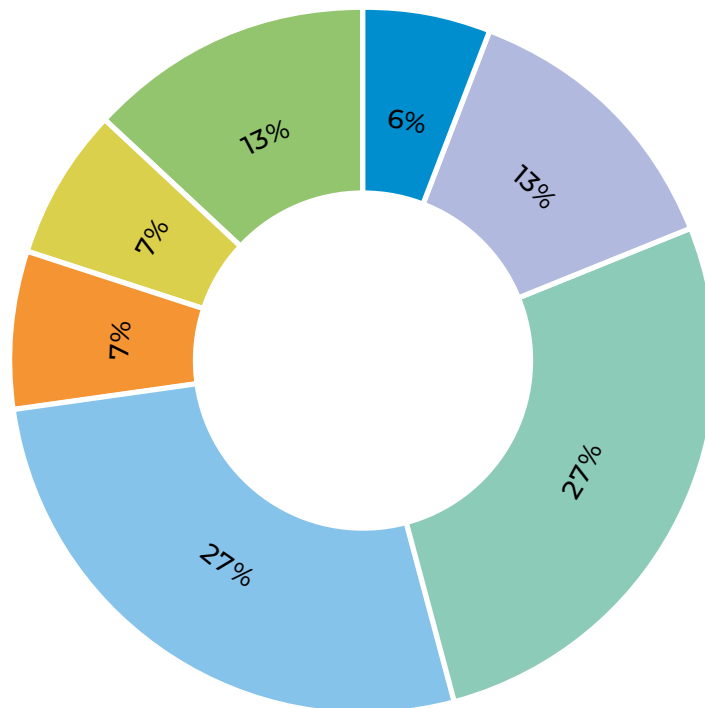
Fig. 17. Concerns expressed by participants before the training seminar (n=10).

Participants, mostly new to the app, specifically considered the short video format to be a challenge for dealing with the complexity of history. "Do the very short formats on TikTok even allow topics such as the Holocaust, etc., to be adequately captured and presented," a respondent to the initial questionnaire asked. As we will demonstrate in this section, it turned out that both concerns were sufficiently addressed, and TikTok later was seen by most participants as a predominately appropriate platform for teaching about the Holocaust and Holocaust memory. Nevertheless, during the seminar, a majority of participants had the impression that hate speech is or might be spreading on TikTok, though this slightly changed during the seminar (Fig. 18).

Do you believe that TikTok is subjected to spreading hate speech?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

During the seminar, n=13
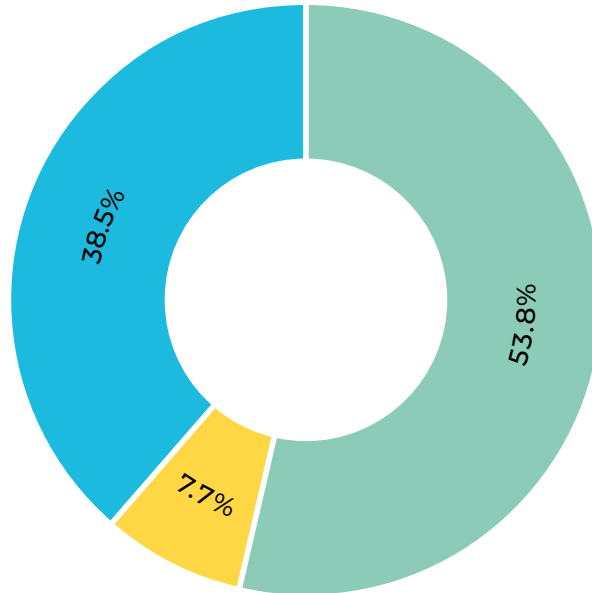
After the seminar, n=15
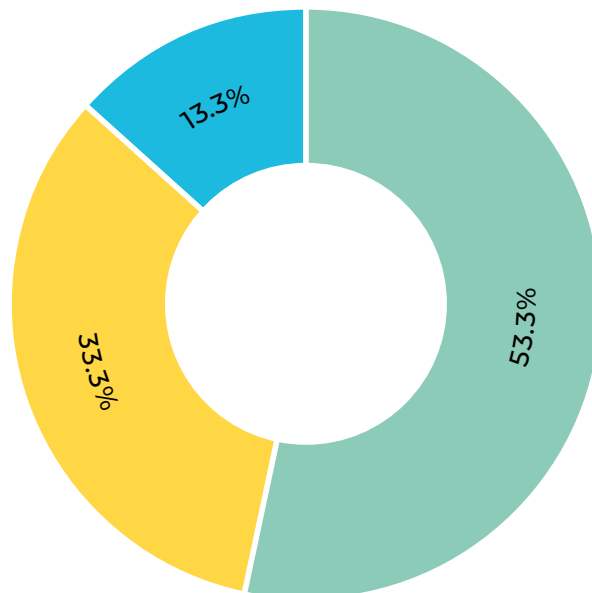
Fig. 18. Perception of hate speech on TikTok before (n=13) and after (n=15) the seminar.

Nearly half of the participants were convinced that the platform does not successfully moderate such content.[1] (Fig. 19) Correspondingly, concerns about data safety (27%) and potential censorship of sensitive content (13%) have to be further addressed in the future, especially because studies published shortly after the training seminar expressed concern that content referring to the Holocaust was likely to be filtered or shadow banned by the automated moderation system. Research by the public German news broadcast Tagesschau suggested that comments using terms such as "Auschwitz" or "National Socialism" were blocked. Other related keywords, such as "Never Forget", however, were displayed normally (Eckert et al 2022). Although TikTok immediately responded with improvements to the automated moderation system, the perception that certain content might be automatically censored, and specifically, as one participant framed it, concerns related "to privacy and intransparency regarding the algorithm'' explain why several institutions might be still hesitant to use TikTok for the purpose of historical information and education about sensitive topics.

Does TikTok successfully moderate hate speech, racism, antisemitism and sexism?

Fig. 19. Does TikTok successfully moderate hate speech, racism, antisemitism and sexism? Perception of moderating hate speech on TikTok before and after the seminar.

1. For more information about TikTok's moderation efforts concerning violations of community guidelines, see: https://www.tiktok.com/transparency/de-de/community-guidelines-enforcement-2023-1/ (last access: 27.9.2023).

This cautious perception is further exemplified by the observation that several participants expressed concerns about the adequacy of TikTok's algorithm in ensuring the platform's safety from hate speech. Regarding the question of whether the algorithm actually promotes hate speech, however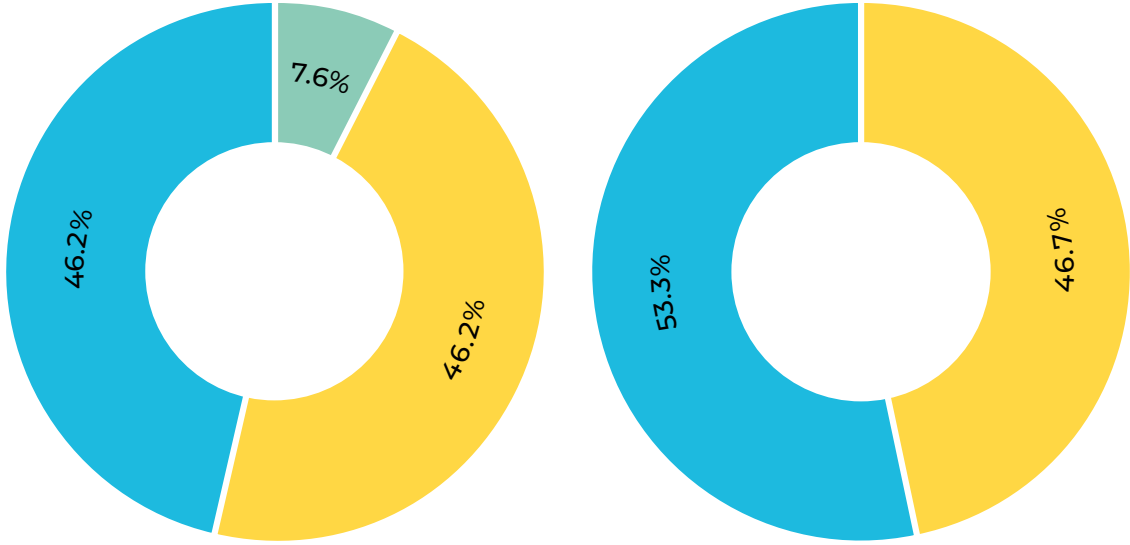, the respondents were split. A slight majority of participants also did not have the impression that Holocaust denial, antisemitism and hate speech were particularly popular on TikTok, and most of them did not think that the platform provides space for Holocaust denial (Fig. 20). However, one institution raised a concern regarding the time required for moderation efforts, highlighting it as a significant challenge in consistently producing and uploading content related to the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust.

Concerns regarding TikTok

■ Strongly agree   ■ Somewhat agree   ■ Neither agree or disagree

■ Somewhat disagree   ■ Strongly disagree   ■ Not sure

Holocaust denial, antisemitism and hate Speech are popular on TikTok.

| 1 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 4 |

TikTok's algorithm promotes hate speech through the ForYou page.

| 5 | 1 | 3 | 4 |

TikTok provides space for Holocaust denial.

| 5 | 3 | 1 | 4 |

TikTok's algorithm is not strong enough in making the platform safe from hate speech

| 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 6 |

0   5   10   15

Fig. 20. Concerns regarding TikTok that were expressed by participants of the training seminar (n=13).

Though participants were skeptical about the possibility of actually facilitating a dialogue with users lacking knowledge about the Holocaust, they still were optimistic about the potential of TikTok's "For You" page to increase curiosity in Holocaust-related topics and emphasized the possibility that its algorithm could increase the visibility of marginalized topics and perspectives (Fig. 21).

Potential of TikTok for Holocaust commemoration and education

- 🟩 Strongly agree
- 🟦 Somewhat agree
- 🟨 Neither agree or disagree
- 🟧 Somewhat disagree
- 🟥 Strongly disagree
- ⬜ Not sure

TikTok can be useful in facilitating a dialog with users who lack Holocaust knowledge.

6	7

TikTok's algorithm can create positive exposure to marginalized topics and/or groups

8	4	1

TikTok's ForYou page can increase curiosity in Holocaust-related topics.

6	7
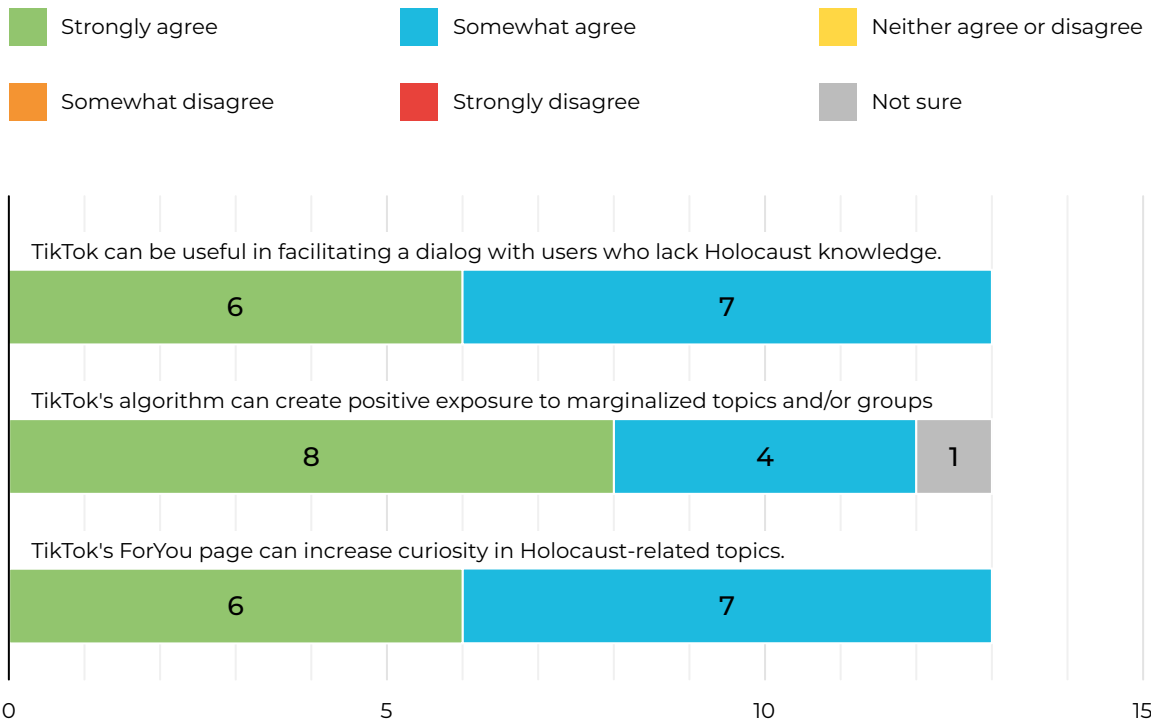
Fig. 21. Potential of TikTok for Holocaust commemoration and education emphasized by the participants of the initiative (n=13).

The possibility of reaching potential visitors and users interested in the topics of National Socialism and the Holocaust beyond existing stakeholders and target audiences outweighed the concerns of most participants. After onboarding the platform, active institutional creators were indeed confronted with negative comments and hate speech and had to invest much energy in moderation efforts. As a creator from the Bergen Belsen Memorial states: "The algorithm is rewarding, among other things, content that triggers controversy. In our case, that means content that attracts trolls and Nazis. Comment moderation is a challenge." However, participants also experienced intensified exposure to their content. The platform's algorithm indeed increased curiosity in content related to National Socialism and the Holocaust. A creator from the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial stated that "the biggest surprise was the interest - also internationally - in the content shared through our TikTok account. Compared to other social media platforms, but also compared to other digital or analogue projects offered by the memorial, TikTok has by far the biggest outreach." This outreach is not limited to the platform itself. The memorial experienced that being present on TikTok also resulted in physical visits and analogue encounters with the memorial site, something that was originally not intended when they launched their account on TikTok.

Perception of TikTok and Effects of the Training Seminar

Indeed, the final results of the evaluation showed that despite concerns, the overall positive perception of TikTok as an effective tool for Holocaust commemoration and education increased during the training seminar. Initially, 61.5% of the participants held the belief that TikToks created by memorials and museums could effectively serve as tools for Holocaust commemoration and education. However, following the seminar, this percentage increased significantly to 92.3%, indicating a strengthened consensus on this assumption (Fig. 22).

Do you believe TikTok's can serve as an effective tool for communicating Holocaust commemoration and education?

Yes   Maybe

Before the seminar, n=13

After the seminar, n=15
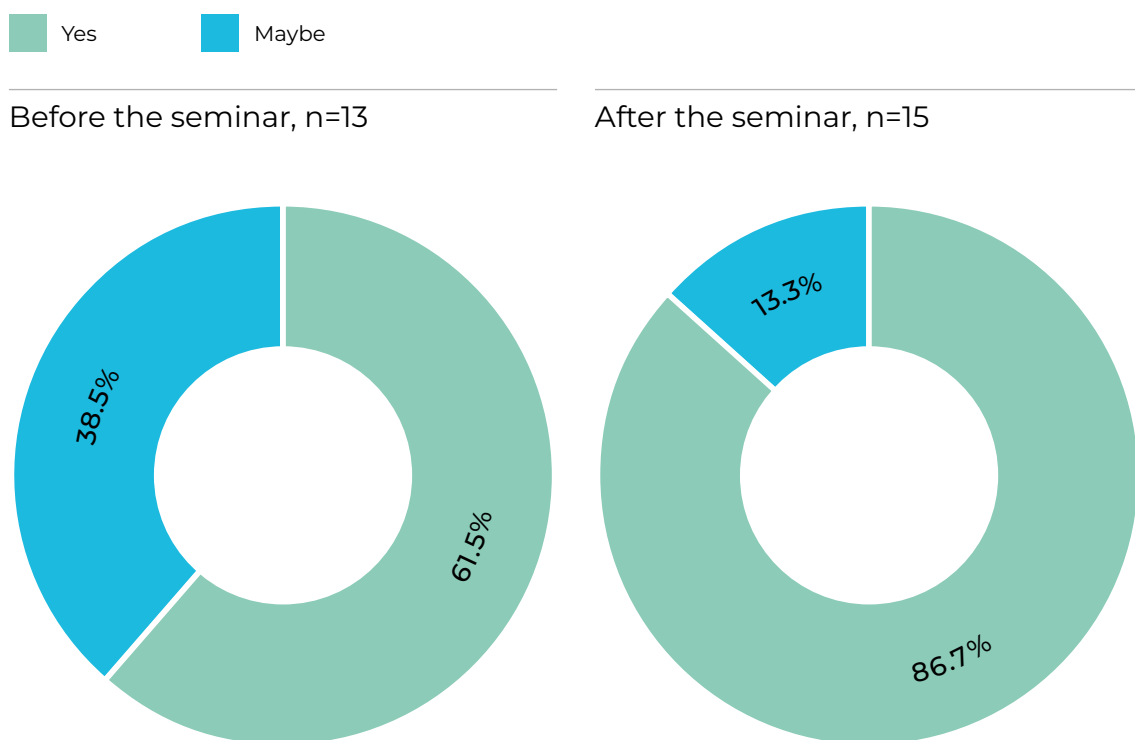
38.5%

61.5%

13.3%

86.7%

Fig. 22. Compliance with the assumption that TikTok videos can serve as an effective tool for Holocaust commemoration and education before (n=13) and after (n=15) the training seminar.

This demonstrates the overall positive perception of the platform's potential among the participating memorials although nearly all, 10 out of 13, perceive TikTok primarily as a place for entertainment and not as a place for socio-political communication (Fig. 23). However, a majority of participants endorsed TikTok's great potential to educate about the history of the Shoah. An even larger proportion, 12 out of 13 respondents, agreed that the platform offers new opportunities to reach out with Shoah-related content to the general public.

> *"Every day, we see people trivializing or even denying the Shoah. It is unacceptable that such content can apparently still be spread without consequences. Unfortunately, the platform operators frequently do not fulfill their responsibilities. With the campaign, 'TikTok - Shoah Education and Commemoration Initiative', TikTok is moving in the right direction. I hope that this step will serve as an example for other companies."*
>
> **Daniel Botmann**, Managing Director of the Central Council of Jews in Germany[1]

A slightly smaller proportion expects that memorials and museums can specifically connect with a younger audience, though the percentage of responses that strongly agreed with this statement was higher. This shows that a majority of participants believe in the potential of TikTok's algorithm to reach beyond existing communities of followers and that teenagers and young adults constitute a large group of TikTok's users. Those expectations might also have been a result of public debates about the relatively new platform at that time and the interest in sudden success stories of young creators on TikTok. Accordingly, the critical perception of the algorithm's promotion of hate speech, Holocaust denial, and antisemitic content was rather low at the beginning of the training seminar. 8 out of 13 participants disagreed with this perception. As stated in the previous section, skepticism grew when the participants got more involved with the app and learned more about problematic content and the other creators' experiences.

The respondents did not reach a consensus on whether Holocaust distortion and trivialization are more prevalent on TikTok compared to other platforms. However, they exhibited a divided opinion regarding whether users of the app are more inclined to trivialize and show disrespect to the memory of the Shoah. In any case, the majority of participants expressed a strong desire for Holocaust memory, Jewish life, and history to gain increased visibility on TikTok. This intention can be viewed as a deliberate response to the risks associated with misinformation, trivialization, and distortion.

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1. See: https://ajcgermany.org/en/comment/press-release-presentation-tiktok-shoah-education-and-commemoration-initiative (last accessed: 28.9.2023).

Perception of TikTok at the beginning of the training seminar

Legend:
- ■ Strongly agree
- ■ Somewhat agree
- ■ Neither agree or disagree
- ■ Somewhat disagree
- ■ Strongly disagree
- ■ Not sure

Through TikTok, memorials and museums can offer remote access to their sites and collections
Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Not sure
6	4	2	1

TikTok offers great potential to educate about the history of the Shoah
Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree	Not sure
4	7	1	1

TikTok is a suitable tool for visitors to document and reflect visits to museums and memorials
Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree
4	5	4

Jewish life and history should be more visible on TikTok
Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Not sure
4	5	1	3

Shoa memory should be more visible on TikTok
Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree	Not sure
4	4	2	3

TikTok's algorithm promotes the visibility of hate speech, holocaust denial, and antisemitic content
Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
2	3	1	7

Distortion and trivialization of the Shoah is more vibrant on TikTok than on other platforms
Strongly agree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
1	4	4	2	2

TikTok users tend to trivialize and disrespect the memory of the Shoah
Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat disagree	Not sure
4	4	4	1

TikTok's moderation and censorship practices make it difficult to post on sensitive and serious topics
Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat disagree	Not sure
6	3	1	3

Through TikTok, it is possible for museums and memorials to connect with a youngaer audience.
Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree	Not sure
8	3	1	1

TikTok offers new opportunities to reach out with Shoah-related content to the general public.
Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree
2	10	1

TikTok is primarily a place for political communication
Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
2	5	5	1

TikTok is primarily a place for entertainment
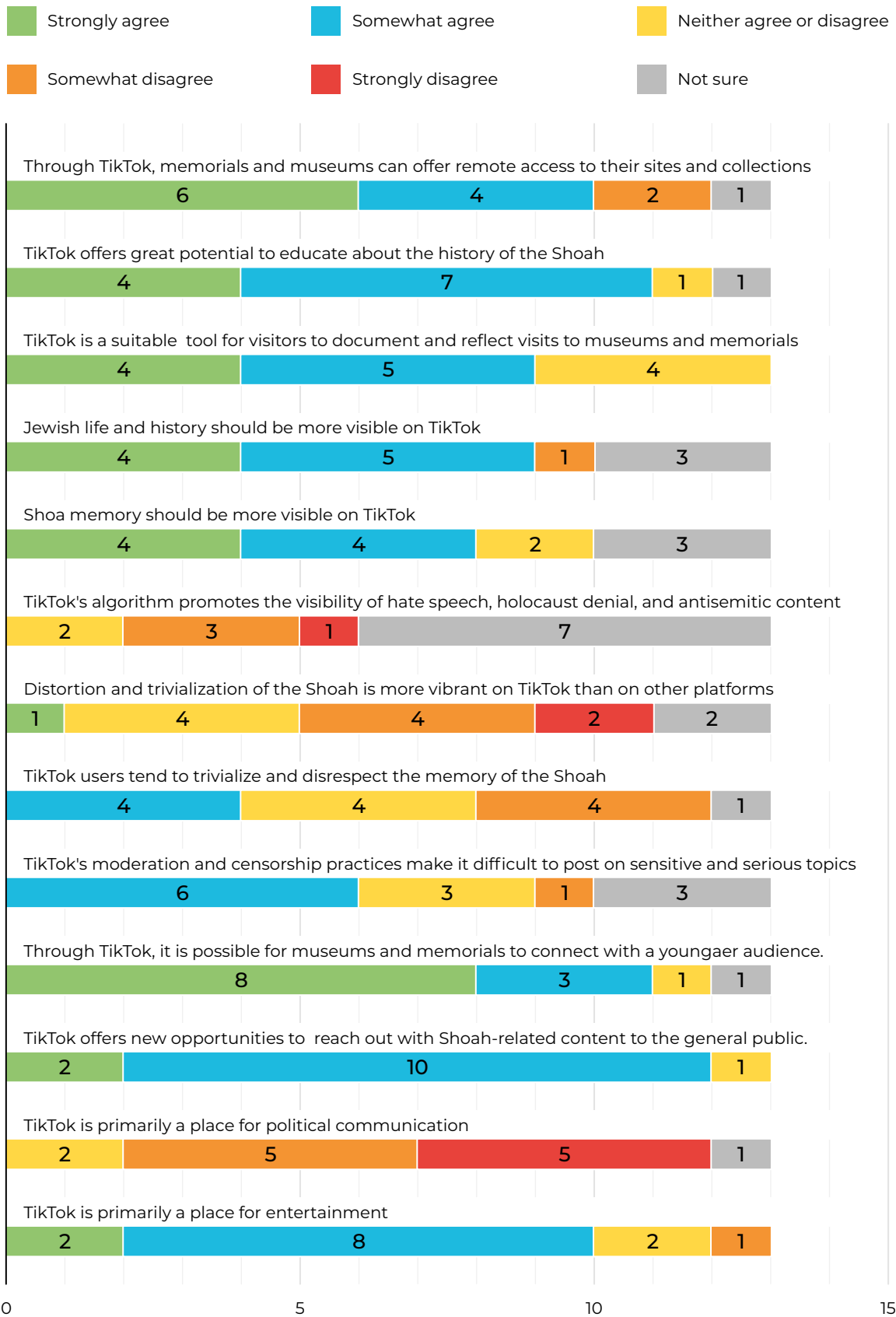| Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat disagree
2	8	2	1

Fig. 23. Perception of TikTok at the beginning of the training seminar (n=13).

The comparison of perceptions from the beginning and at the end of the training seminar demonstrates the generally positive perception of TikTok's potential for communicating historical information and educating about the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust. A clear, and slightly increasing, majority of respondents did not perceive the short video format as an obstacle to complex storytelling at the end, although skepticism also slightly increased during the training seminar (Fig. 24).

The length of TikTok videos makes it impossible to deal with the complexity of Holocaust memory and/or Jewish life

- 🟩 Strongly agree
- 🟦 Somewhat agree
- 🟨 Neither agree or disagree
- 🟧 Somewhat disagree
- 🟥 Strongly disagree
- ⬜ Not sure

Before the seminar, n=13

Strongly agree	0
Somewhat agree	2
Somewhat disagree	5
Strongly disagree	5
Not sure	1

After the seminar, n=15

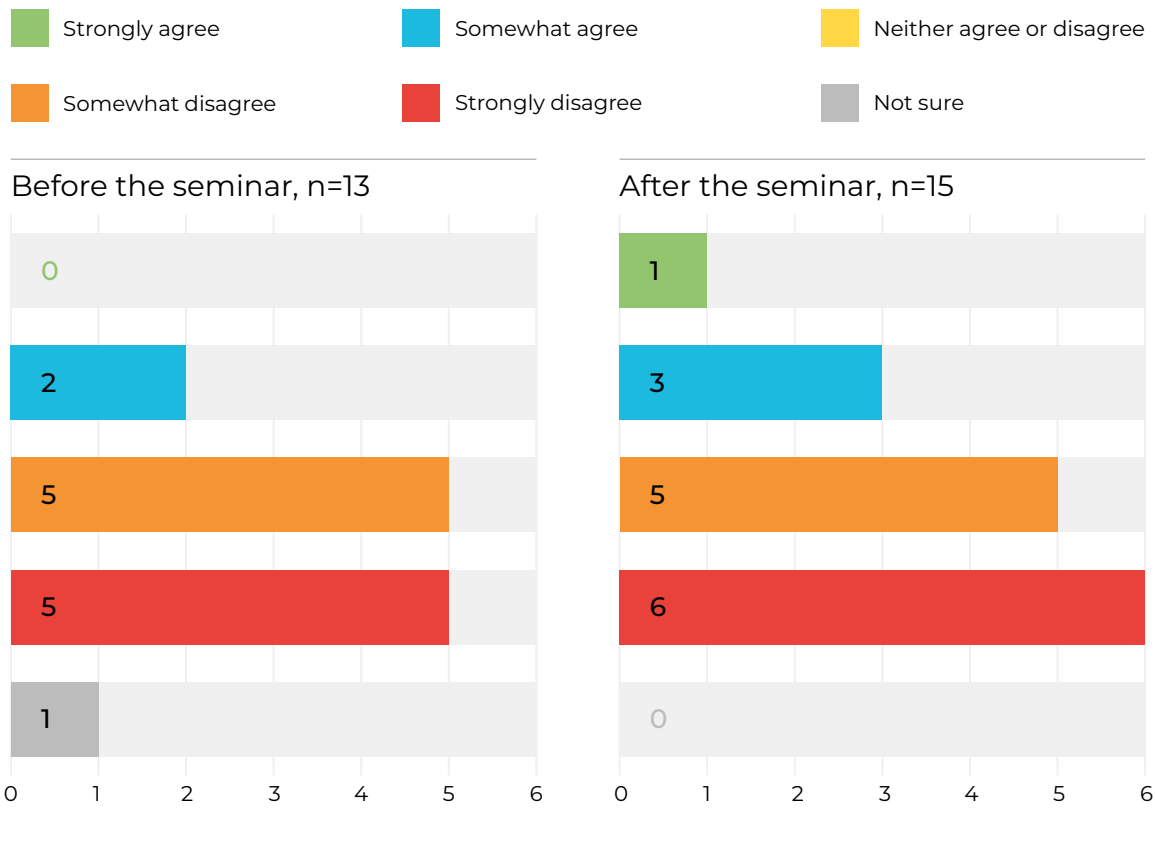|	
Strongly agree	1
Somewhat agree	3
Somewhat disagree	5
Strongly disagree	6
Not sure	0

Fig. 24. Perception of the length of TikTok videos before and after the training seminar.

Correlated with the participants' perception of the potential of the time limitations posed by the short video format, we see the importance of new forms of historical digital storytelling. A significant majority of participants, by the end of the seminar, expressed strong agreement with the notion that, conversely, the constraints posed by TikTok's video format can open up novel avenues for historical storytelling (Fig. 25). This is attributed to the concise nature of short videos, which inherently contain multiple layers that can be effectively harnessed to disseminate extensive information. This is particularly advantageous for users who frequently watch videos in a loop, a common practice on TikTok, ultimately leading to increased video circulation through the platform's algorithm.

The limitation of TikTok offers new possibilities for historical digital storytelling
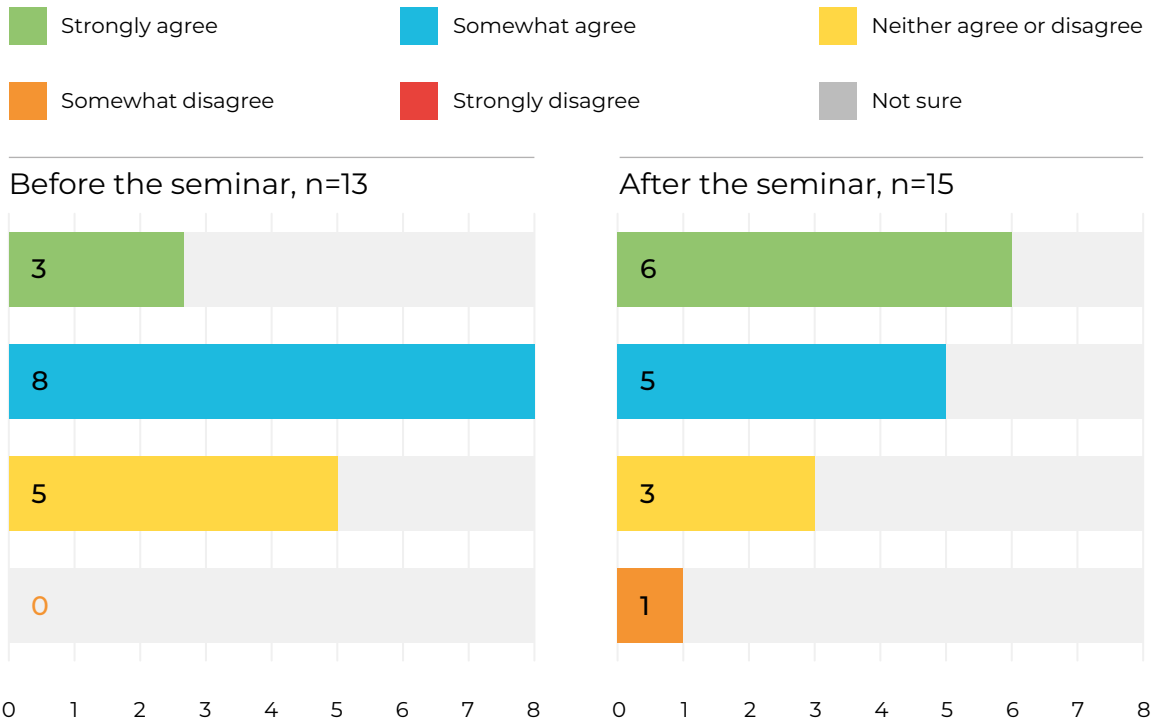
Legend:
- 🟩 Strongly agree
- 🟦 Somewhat agree
- 🟨 Neither agree or disagree
- 🟧 Somewhat disagree
- 🟥 Strongly disagree
- ⬜ Not sure

Before the seminar, n=13

Response	Count
Strongly agree	3
Somewhat agree	8
Neither agree or disagree	5
Somewhat disagree	0

After the seminar, n=15

Response	Count
Strongly agree	6
Somewhat agree	5
Neither agree or disagree	3
Somewhat disagree	1

Fig. 25. Perception of the potential of short videos for historical digital storytelling before and after the training seminar.

This multilayered structure of TikTok, which is a result of the condensed and memetic structure of the videos, attracted the attention of the participants from the beginning (Fig. 26). However, the full potential of multilayered forms of addressing viewers with historical topics and introducing them to the past and present of museums and memorial sites was particularly emphasized at the end of the seminar. Eight participants agreed that the multilayered aesthetic structure of TikTok videos is well suited for historical topics, compared to four disagreeing with that statement. At the outset of the seminar, only a mere three participants expressed a strong consensus with this assumption.

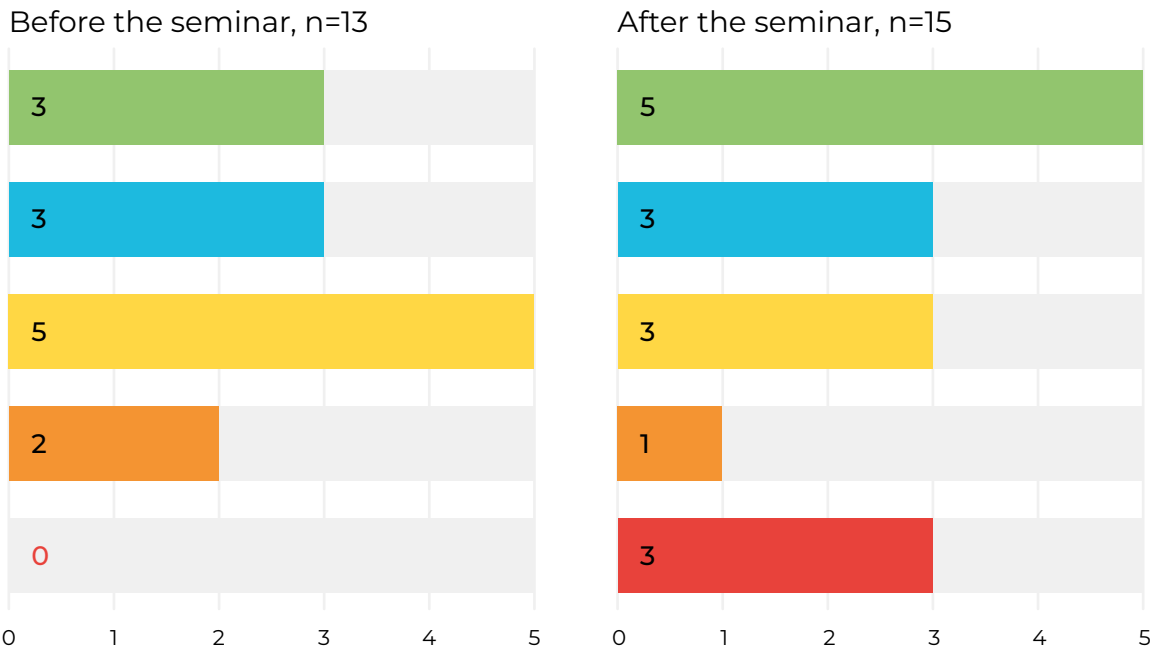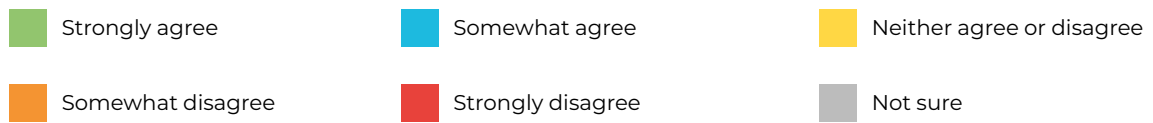## The multilayered aesthetic structure of TikTok is well suited to adress historical events

- 🟩 Strongly agree
- 🟦 Somewhat agree
- 🟨 Neither agree or disagree
- 🟧 Somewhat disagree
- 🟥 Strongly disagree
- ⬜ Not sure

Before the seminar, n=13

🟩 Strongly agree	3
🟦 Somewhat agree	3
🟨 Neither agree or disagree	5
🟧 Somewhat disagree	2
🟥 Strongly disagree	0

After the seminar, n=15

🟩 Strongly agree	5
🟦 Somewhat agree	3
🟨 Neither agree or disagree	3
🟧 Somewhat disagree	1
🟥 Strongly disagree	3

Fig. 26. Perception of TikTok's multilayered aesthetic structure before and after the training seminar.

Based on an analysis of educational concepts developed by seminal institutions in the field of Holocaust commemoration and education, namely Yad Vashem, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the International Holocaust Research Alliance, we extracted principles that constitute best practices of Holocaust education. We then asked the participants which educational principles were most important for creating content informing and educating about National Socialism and the Holocaust on TikTok.

What educational principles are most important for creating Holocaust related content for TikTok?

Before (n=13)　　　After (n=15)

Principle	Before	After
Personalization	6	10
Contextualization	11	12
Critical Source Analysis	3	10
Mediation	4	2
Narration	5	8
Complexity	3	5
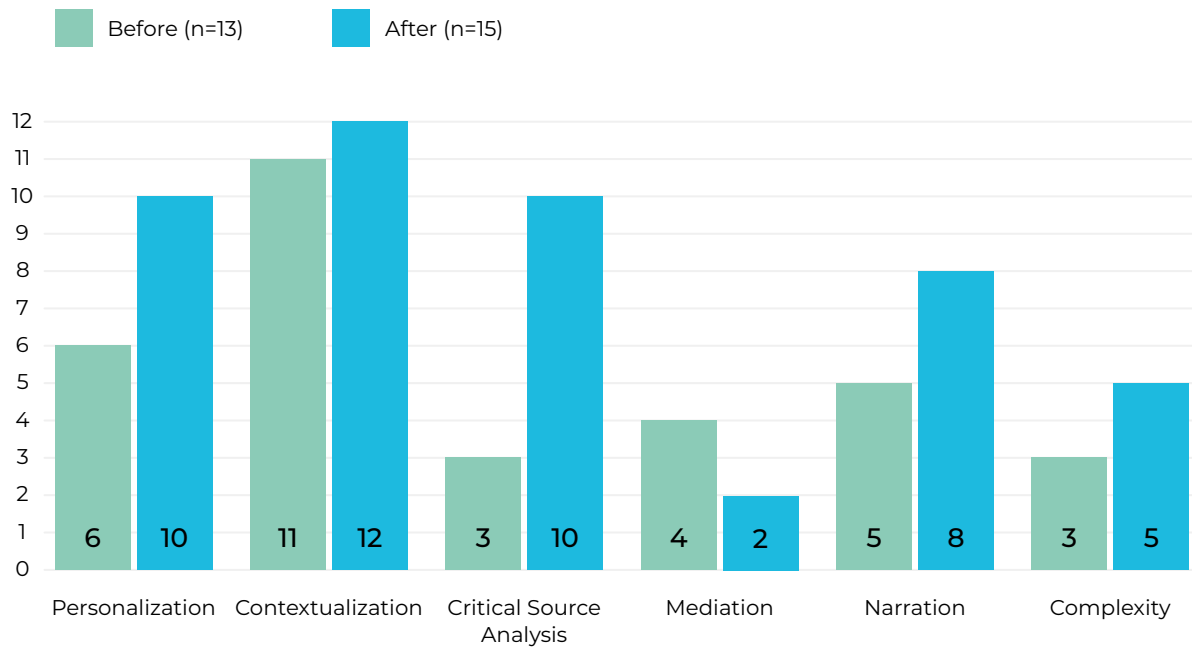
Fig. 27. Educational principles relevant for creating content about National Socialism and the Holocaust on TikTok.

While at the beginning of the training seminar, participants emphasized "contextualization" as the most important principle, which clearly corresponds to the perception of TikTok as a primarily entertaining platform, after the seminar "complexity" also became an increasingly important element (Fig. 27). This demonstrates the increased awareness of the multilayered structure of communication on TikTok and a better understanding of the importance of addressing audiences with short and condensed but nevertheless complex forms of historical storytelling. This finding is also proven by the continuing importance of "narration", while "mediation" was perceived as less important at the end of the seminar. The importance of "source criticism", however, increased after the seminar. This correlates with the increased importance of "personalization", both on the level of stories told about history and on the level of addressing viewers. Indeed, personalization marks the most important affinity between best practices of Holocaust education and the language of TikTok. This manifests in a focus on specific biographies in many videos as well as in the personalization of accounts, in most cases by peer-to-peer communication practices by volunteers and young guides.

We were also interested in findings that could indicate which TikTok features and practices best correspond to commemorating and educating about the Holocaust and the history of National Socialism on the platform (Fig. 28). Many participants emphasized dialogue features and practices as the most important. Commenting and responding, specifically responding through new videos, were indicated as most important before, as well as after, the seminar. The popularity of survivor accounts on TikTok and the extensive use made of the respond-with-video feature by these "TikTok testimonies'' might explain why respondents to our surveys particularly emphasized the importance of it.

What are useful features and practices for Holocaust communication and education on TikTok?
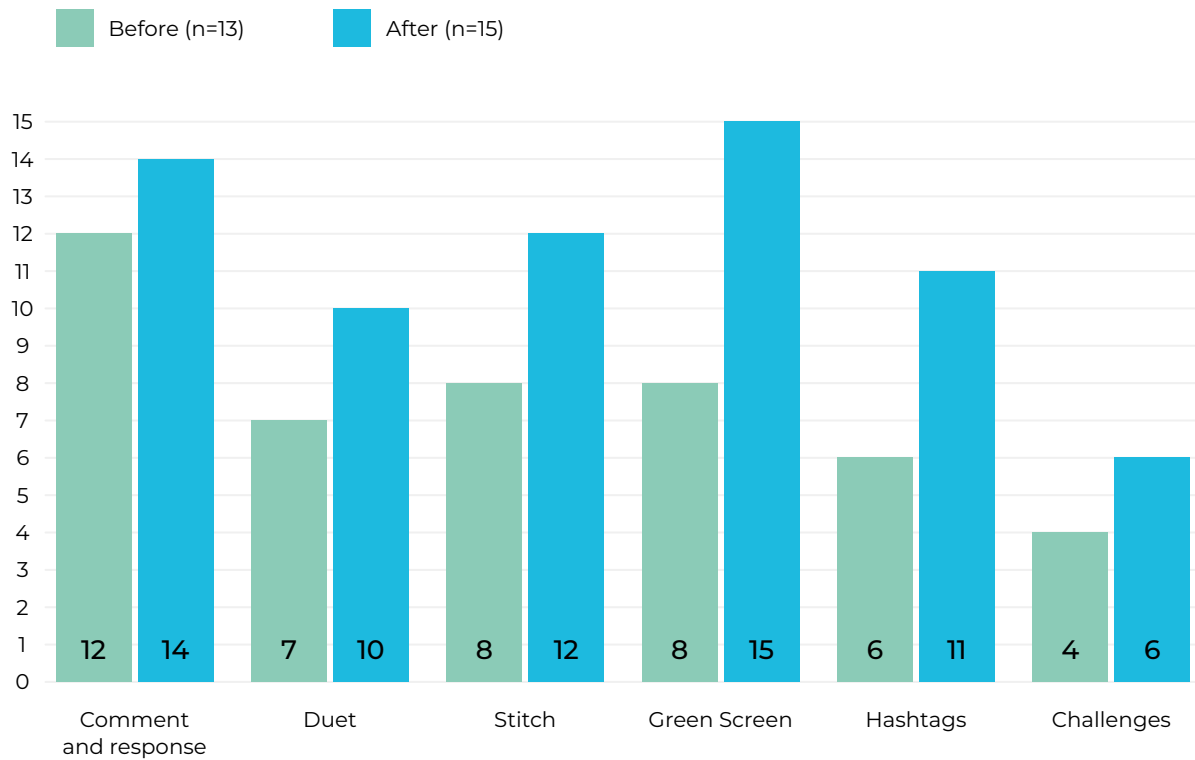

Fig. 28. Popularity of TikTok features and practices before and after the training seminar.

Another dialogic TikTok feature that also received increased attention during the seminar is the duet function. This function allows responsive as well as collaborative endeavors and can be used for mutual support and increasing the visibility of content by other creators. Though some participating memorials launched a stitch campaign during the International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27, 2022, interest did not grow much during the training seminar. It is nevertheless seen as an important and useful feature by a majority of respondents. Also, the green screen effect remained a popular feature among participants. The increased interest in this feature was also reflected in its frequent use in multiple videos. The possibility to project a speaker in front of or next to an additional visual layer and interact with films, photographs, maps or documents is, for instance, often used in many explanatory and educational videos. This explains why it is also seen as specifically useful for historical storytelling and educating about the Holocaust and National Socialism.

Of particular interest is the observation that interest in the format of TikTok challenges increased during the seminar. This is particularly interesting concerning the controversy about the #POVHolocaustChallenge on TikTok in Summer 2020, which was an important turning point in the perception of the platform and demonstrated the necessity of an increased visibility of content related to the history and memory of the Holocaust.

TikTok's culture of challenges can be helpful in communicating with visitors as an on-site and/or post-visit activity
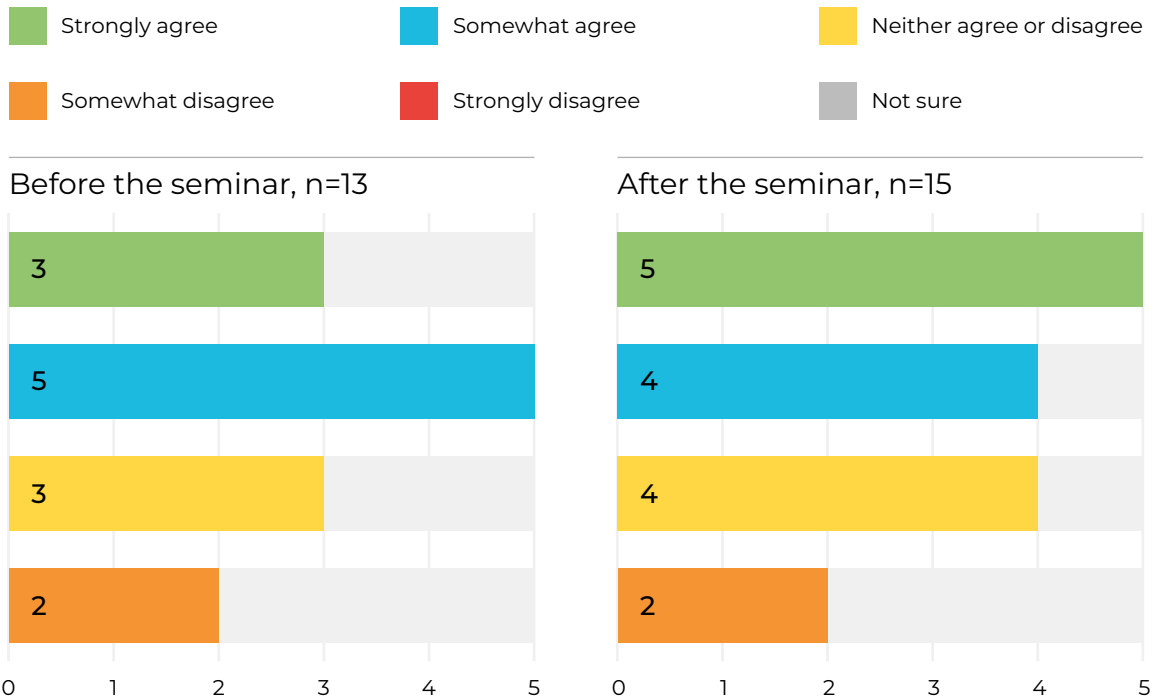
Legend:
- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not sure

Before the seminar, n=13
- Strongly agree: 3
- Somewhat agree: 5
- Neither agree or disagree: 3
- Somewhat disagree: 2

After the seminar, n=15
- Strongly agree: 5
- Somewhat agree: 4
- Neither agree or disagree: 4
- Somewhat disagree: 2

Fig. 29. Increased interest in the format of challenges after the seminar.

A closer look at that particular phenomenon reveals that compared to the beginning of the seminar, when 7 participants somewhat or strongly agreed that TikTok's culture of challenges can be specifically useful for on-site or post-visit engagement and 2 participants somewhat disagreeing, we see a different picture in January 2022 (Fig. 29). Obviously, the dialogic and collaborative elements of the TikTok language attracted the most interest among the participants after getting acquainted with the platform.

Uplift in users' engagement since using TikTok to distribute Holocaust-related content

Yes ■   No ■   Only on TikTok ■

7.1%

14.3%

78.6%
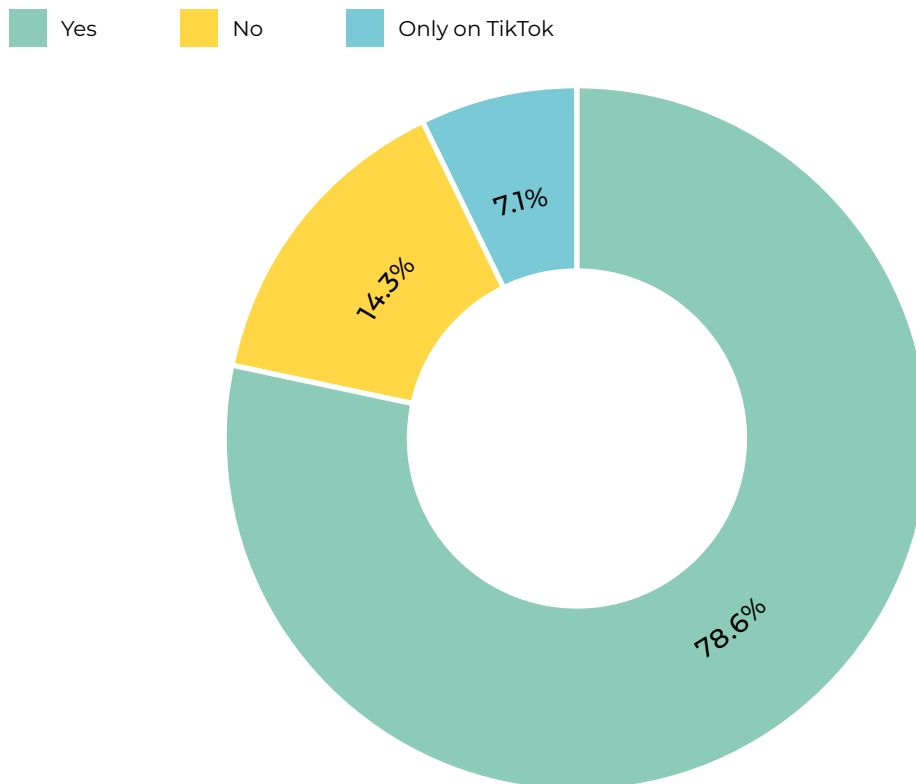
Fig. 30. Uplift in users' engagement since using TikTok to distribute Holocaust-related content.

In conclusion, the evaluation of the training seminar shows general satisfaction and a positive perception of TikTok's potential for Holocaust commemoration and education. In particular, dialogic and educational tools created increased interest. Nearly 80% of the participants experienced increased user engagement with their respective institutions after posting Holocaust-related content (Fig. 30). In the following section, we will review the videos posted by participating institutions on TikTok and specifically analyze which aesthetics and features they use and which topics they address.

CREATING HOLOCAUST AWARENESS ON TIKTOK

This section provides insight into the quantification of content creation trends among five institutions: Bergen Belsen Memorial, Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial, Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial, Mauthausen Memorial and the Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference. The period under examination spans from November 21, 2021 - one month into the seminar and aligned with the institutions' starting point of content creation - to July 27, 2022 - encompassing six months after the seminar, during which the institutions were individually operating their profiles. A comprehensive collection of 161 videos was compiled and organized within a data spreadsheet. The distribution of videos across each profile is not uniform, as the consistency in content creation varies due to factors such as human labor, event planning and hosting, and the need for board approval in accordance with social media strategies. The selected videos were subjected to coding based on a set of criteria, including profile identity, date, duration, video topic, type, layer count, technical attributes, aesthetic elements, music, hashtags and metadata such as likes, shares, bookmarks and comments. As part of the analysis, we developed an index of audiovisual cues to map out prevalent utilization patterns of features like overlay text, responses to questions, green screen effects, as well as aesthetic elements like presenter presence, camp walkthroughs and the incorporation of historical imagery.

Video Duration

TikTok provides users with the capability to craft videos of up to 10 minutes in length, aligning with the broader platforms' logic of affording longer video creation, as exemplified via YouTube and Facebook. Still, TikTok's core appeal lies in its commitment to short-form videos, making it renowned for its distinctive style that fosters users' stickiness via nuggetable audiovisual content and by maintaining video durations at an average of approximately 90 seconds. An examination of our video repository underscores how institutions have embraced the video duration norms of TikTok, with a substantial 41.1% of videos spanning 60 seconds (Fig. 31).

Notably, these videos also boast the highest engagement rates, with an average of approximately 4,500 views. Generally, videos of shorter durations, such as 15 seconds, tend to achieve higher success on TikTok, as they require users to engage in multiple viewing cycles to fully absorb and encode their message, thereby amplifying their engagement levels. However, only 20.2% of the videos in our collection adhered to this succinct 15-second format. The prevalence of 60-second videos potentially reflects the establishment of a norm where topics requiring more contextual depth - such as education and commemoration - merit a longer duration than conventionally brief videos. This exploration of video durations represents an ongoing learning curve for Holocaust-related institutions as they continue to discover the most suitable format. Notably, some of the institutions' 15-second videos achieved remarkable success due to their inherent ambiguity, prompting users to revisit them and capturing algorithmic attention. Furthermore, in the case of 30-second videos, which constitute 32.6%, while being less frequent than 60-second videos, they still demonstrate relatively successful engagement indicators, averaging approximately 2,500 views.

Video Duration

Legend: ● 15 Seconds ● 30 Seconds ● 45 Seconds ● 60 Seconds
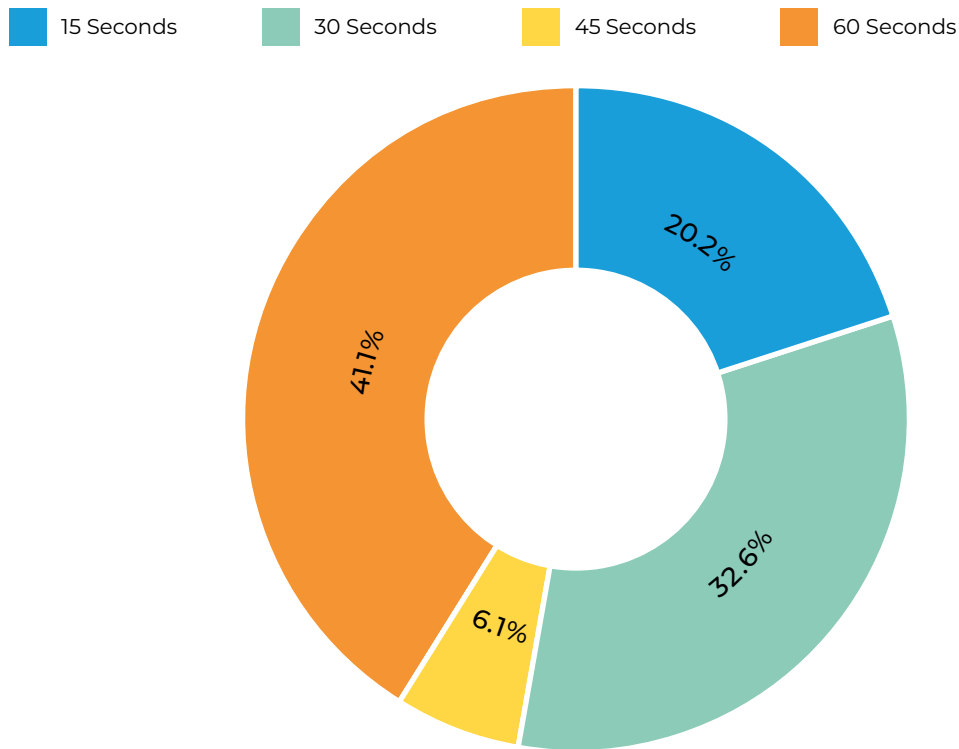
20.2%

41.1%

32.6%

6.1%

Fig. 31. Length of videos created and uploaded by participating institutions (n=161).

Layers of Content

TikTok videos are crafted through a complex interplay of diverse content layers. These layers consist of multimodal components that collectively create an immersive experience on the platform. The number of layers within a video can significantly influence its algorithmic visibility, making them attention-capturing techniques for creators to ignite curiosity. These layers encompass various elements, ranging from distinctive features such as sound, to visual aesthetics—including the presenter mode—as well as additional digital elements like photographs or documents seamlessly integrated into the video's composition. However, incorporating an excessive number of layers can potentially lead to user distraction, impacting the clarity of the conveyed message and prompting users to scroll through content more quickly. Moreover, TikTok serves as a virtual playground for creativity, allowing the seamless fusion of numerous audiovisual elements, rendering content creation an enjoyable and accessible endeavor. Yet, the values of playfulness, creativity and enjoyment might not immediately align with the perceived gravity that educational content, particularly Holocaust- related material, should carry. Consequently, within the context of Holocaust-related content, institutions have embarked on a gradual journey of experimenting with TikTok's diverse audiovisual dialects, which stands as an integral component of their enduring legacy within educational initiatives.

Among the videos, a notable majority (42.1%) exhibited a utilization of six layers in their content creation. Within this framework, certain patterns emerged that emphasized the integration of specific elements for enhanced effectiveness (Fig. 32). For instance, there was a consistent employment of the presenter aesthetics, contributing to a heightened sense of seriousness and authority. Additionally, the strategic incorporation of sound elements enhanced relatability and engagement. Hashtags were deftly employed to facilitate content discoverability, while the inclusion of the site walk-throughs served to foster greater interactivity, making the viewing experience richer and more immersive. Videos containing nine layers (8.2%) did not necessarily translate into higher engagement, yet they did foster increased interaction by often incorporating distinctive features such as duets or loops. TikTok's layers exhibit a discernible hierarchy of engagement and traction as videos encompassing distinct elements like direct responses to comments, stitches, or the strategic utilization of loops tend to capture greater user and algorithmic attention. This insight has led us to comprehend that the success of TikTok videos, in terms of engagement parameters, hinges not solely on the number of layers employed but rather on the strategic selection and purpose of these layers. A video enriched with a green screen and trending music can potentially achieve greater success than one laden with nine layers of creation.
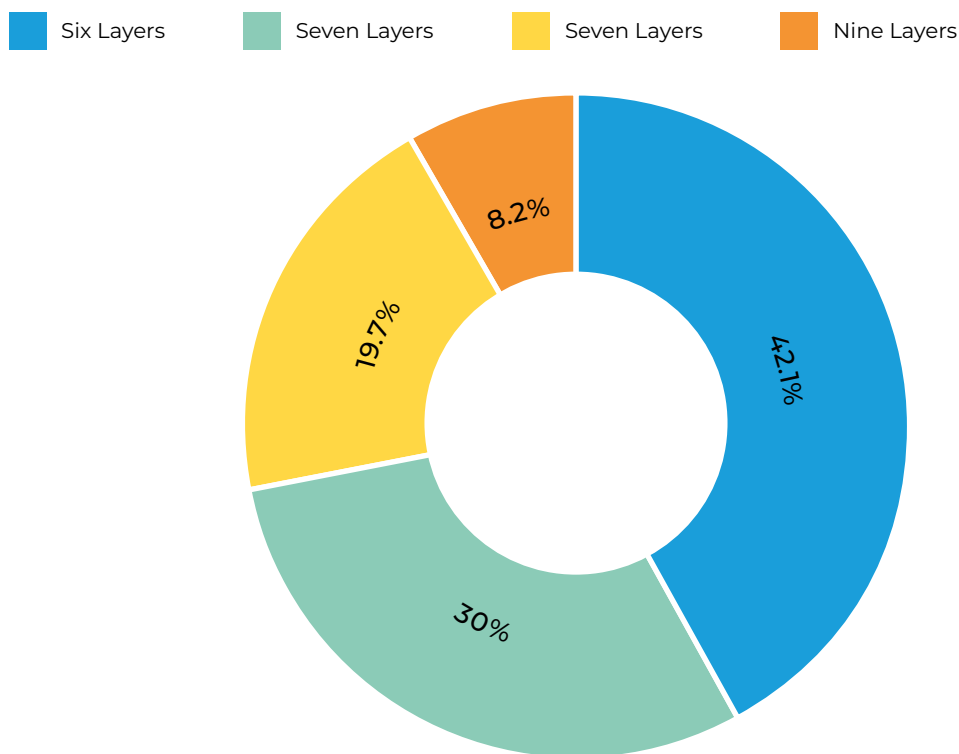
Layers of Content

Fig. 32. Content layers in videos created and uploaded by participating institutions (n=161).

Focus of Content

The content focus exhibited a range of diversity, with the majority of videos (89%) centering on prisoners' lives (Fig. 33). This encompassed a comprehensive exploration of the histories of individuals who had been incarcerated in the camps during the Holocaust. The identities of some prisoners, such as Anne Frank, who was deported to and murdered in Bergen Belsen, were widely recognized, while others remained anonymous until dedicated videos breathed life into their stories. The depiction of prisoners' life narratives embraced a diverse array of creative methods, with the most prevalent being the utilization of the green screen feature to provide a visual representation of the prisoners. Additionally, the inclusion of image inserts served to furnish supplementary pieces of information about the incarcerated individuals, while overlay text was integrated to enhance the overall narrative.

Another substantial emphasis lies in the category of structures (83%). This pertains to the focus on various architectural elements within the camp, encompassing buildings, towers, segregated spaces for non-visitors, exhibition rooms and a wide array of other camp and memorial structural areas. These videos predominantly utilize the walkthrough aesthetic, leading viewers on a guided tour through the site. They effectively unveil the enormity of spaces such as prisoners' sleeping quarters, all the while interspersing historical images that vividly illustrate the actual presence of those prisoners within those very rooms. This fusion of historical documentation with the present spaces is a widely embraced approach in TikTok videos centered around history. It emerges as an accessible means to convey both the tangible existence of the structure and the intangible presence of the past.

Another notable emphasis was on testimonies (74%). These videos skillfully harness TikTok's features, particularly utilizing tools like the green screen, to illuminate the diverse narratives of individual victims and survivors. This involves the adept presentation of a variety of materials, such as diaries of those who tragically perished in the camps, as well as interviews with survivors who endured the harrowing experience, offering a comprehensive and profound understanding of their stories. Great emphasis was also placed on objects / exhibitions (69%). These videos highlight various aspects, including objects that hold significance within the memorial or camp collections, as well as spotlighting both permanent and temporary exhibitions. Enriched by the presence of a presenter, these videos offer a dynamic walkthrough through the exhibition items, pausing to delve into the histories behind distinctive objects. Some videos incorporated additional images, while others employed background through the use of the green screen, all contributing to a multi-dimensional and immersive exploration of the showcased items.

Furthermore, an additional 64% of the videos spotlighted documents, which encompassed historical records and protocols from the camps. This was achieved through the clever utilization of TikTok's green screen feature, wherein the background was transformed into the document in question. Accompanied by a presenter, these videos intricately navigated through the document's contents, providing viewers with an immersive and insightful exploration into the bureaucratic aspects of that era. A notable 17% of the videos delved into the lives of volunteers at the memorial sites.

These videos offered a unique perspective by focusing on both international and local individuals who dedicated a portion of their lives to Holocaust education and commemoration efforts. Some of these videos were enhanced with features like questions & answers as viewers displayed curiosity about the motivations behind choosing to work in concentration camp memorials. This allowed users to gain insights into the roles and responsibilities of volunteers, fostering a deeper understanding of their impactful contributions.

Finally, 7% of the videos were dedicated to memorial days, such as International Holocaust Memorial Day as well as local anniversaries tied to specific instances, such as the establishment or the liberation of a camp. An additional 7% of the content delved into the exploration of commemorative rituals, highlighting practices like the symbolic placement of stones on graves as a form of remembrance and allowing further context into those practices.

Focus of Content
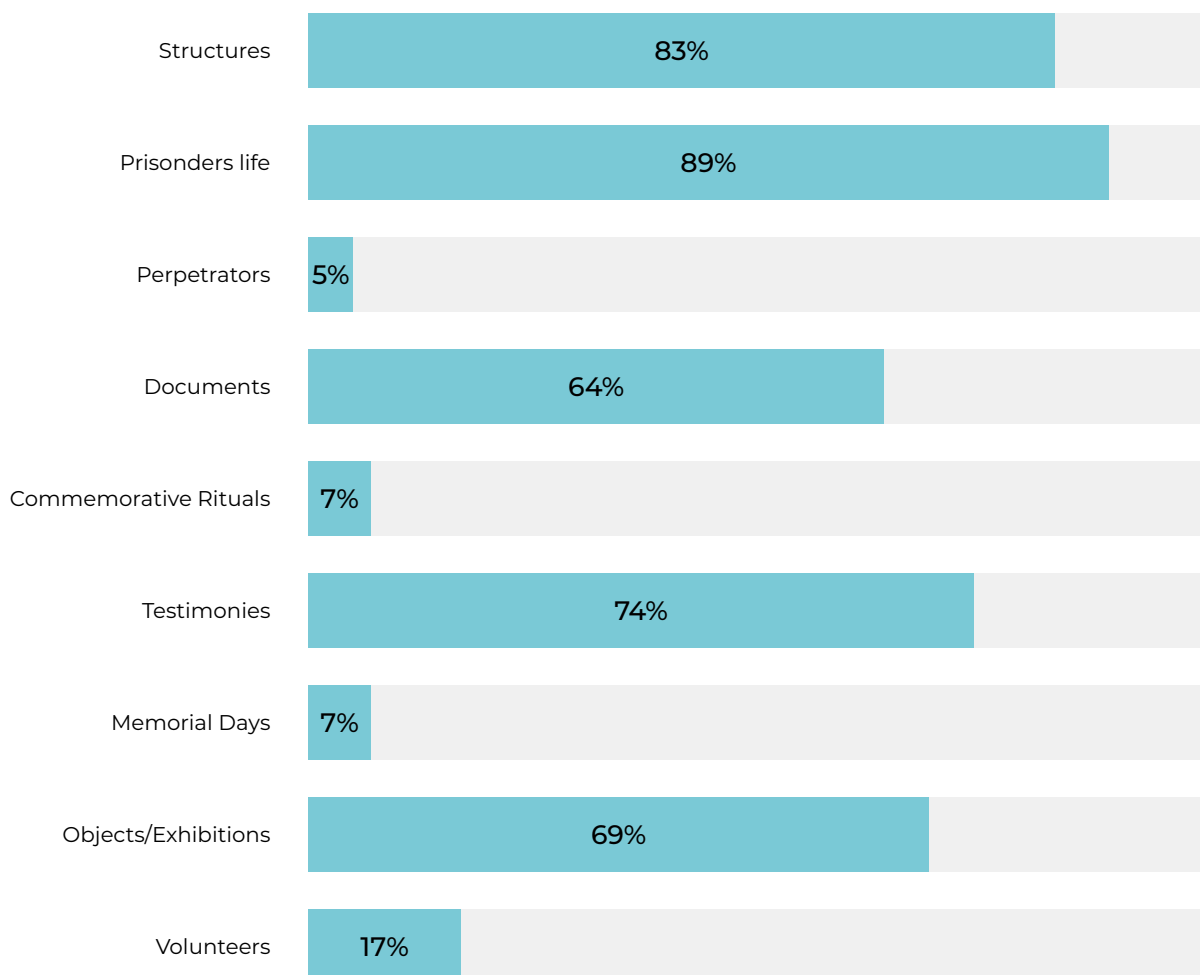
Fig. 33. Thematic focus of videos created and uploaded by participating institutions (n=161).

Use of Aesthetics

Consistent with TikTok's prevalent performance style, an overwhelming majority of the videos (97%) featured a presenter guiding the content (Fig. 34). This often involves a recurring character who becomes a recognizable figure representing the institution on TikTok, reinforcing the importance of establishing online visibility. These presenters, who are volunteers at the memorials, willingly make themselves a part of the TikTok content, effectively exposing themselves to a broader crowd and enhancing user engagement, as could be seen in the comments section, where direct questions were addressed to the presenter. Still, this approach might also increase the potential downside of being exposed to hate speech and associated risks from a wide-ranging audience.

Another prominent aesthetic was the immersive walkthrough of the former camp/memorial sites (88%). In employing this technique, videos followed a consistent path, guiding viewers through various locations within the former camp/memorial. This often utilized a point-of-view (POV) angle, providing a perspective as if the viewer were looking through the filmmaker's eyes. The walkthroughs typically traversed areas accessible to visitors, but their true significance emerged when applied to spaces with restricted access, granting virtual entry to viewers in areas where safety considerations and the preservation of sensitive spaces prohibited physical access. 72% of videos specifically centered on exhibitions as their primary content focus, providing viewers understanding of the collections. These videos often zoomed in on specific objects, unravelling their stories and contextual significance.

Among the videos, 67% embraced the popular hook aesthetic, commencing with a thought- provoking element aimed at captivating human and algorithmic eyeballs (such as the question "Why would a concentration camp memorial be on TikTok?"). This technique often entails the strategic integration of attention-grabbing elements, whether in the form of textual, auditory, or visual cues, effectively disrupting the viewers' experience for the first few seconds and engaging them with the content on screen. A significant presence of affective aesthetics is observed in 82% of the videos, characterized by the incorporation of historical images. This involves a deliberate utilization of TikTok's features, such as the green screen, to interlace historical visuals with the narrative discourse, effectively enriching the contextual layers and intensifying the viewers' emotional engagement with the content at hand. These history-related images encompass a wide range of elements, including depictions of prisoners, testimonies, camp protocols, specific objects, and more.

Use of Aesthetics

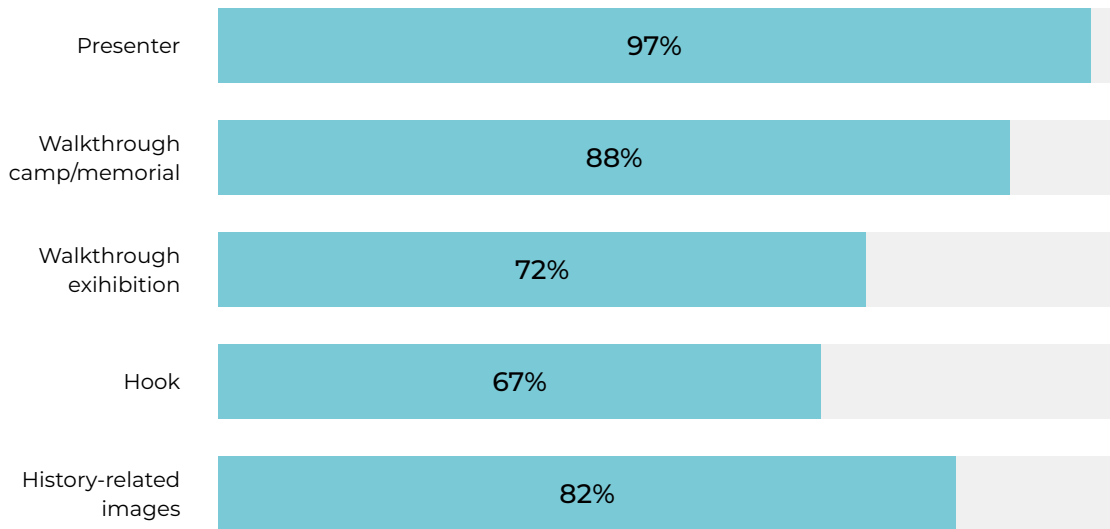|	
Presenter	97%
Walkthrough camp/memorial	88%
Walkthrough exihibition	72%
Hook	67%
History-related images	82%

Fig. 34. Aesthetics used in videos created and uploaded by participating institutions.

Exhibitions

When analyzing the composition of videos associated with exhibitions, a notable majority of 79% displayed an intriguing interplay between on-site presence and the presentation of collections through video creation layers (Fig. 35). This combination allowed institutions to initiate their videos by focusing on the physical exhibition space, subsequently transitioning to a detailed exploration of specific elements using TikTok's multilayered features. For instance, commencing a video by showcasing the various triangles worn by the prisoners on display and then delving deeper into each triangle's significance through the green screen functionality, contributing to both educational and intimate triangular moments between the creator, the content and the viewers. Among the videos examined, 27% exclusively centered on the on-site display of exhibitions, while 20% solely communicated the exhibitions through video layers. Utilizing the green screen feature, 37% of the videos showcased exhibition artefacts, with a specific emphasis of 39% dealing with on-site documents, while the majority of 49% focused on on-site objects, leveraging TikTok's immersive capabilities to enhance understanding of historical context and object significance.
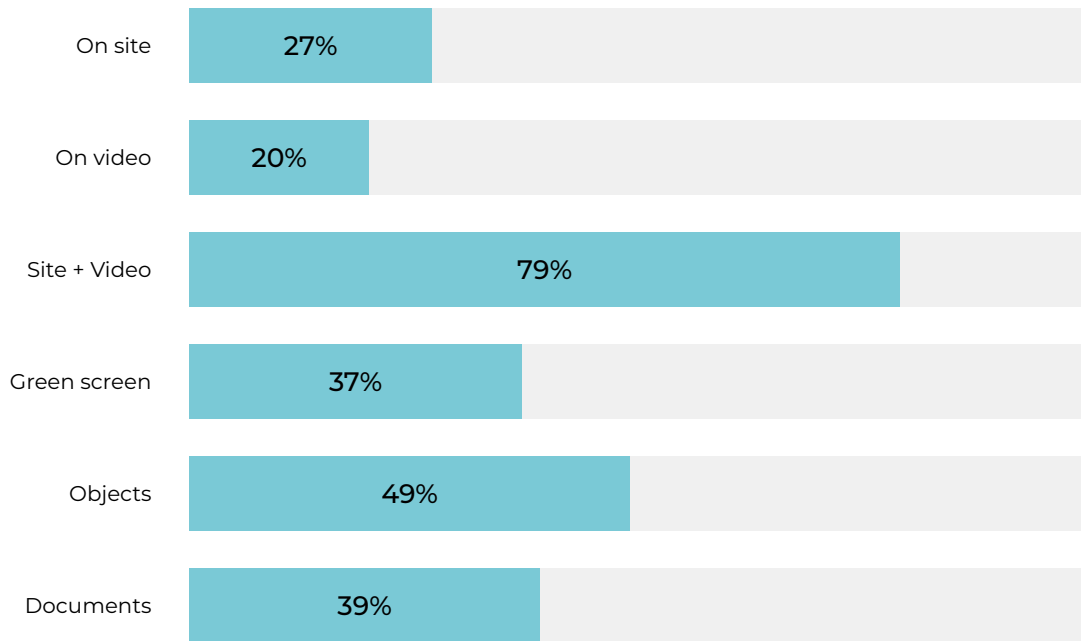
Exhibitions

Fig. 35. Focus of videos created and uploaded by participating institutions introducing exhibitions.

Use of Modes

The videos classified as site mode, resembling the popular visit videos often used by individuals to document their visits to former concentration camp sites or Holocaust-related museums online, constituted the majority at 87% (Fig. 36). Within the context of institutional videos, the site mode predominantly features the presenter on the actual site, adopting either a first-person perspective or a full-body presentation to engage viewers. These videos combine educational approaches with the introduction of the institutions' collections and the historical significance of the site.

Subsequently, we recognized that 72% of the videos incorporated testimonial elements. These encompassed the institutions' archival and exhibition efforts to preserve documents and materials related to victims, along with videos featuring survivors who shared their traumatic memories through TikTok's editing capabilities. These segments crafted an intimate and educational atmosphere, with some videos cleverly using features like questions & answers and duets to address viewer questions and facilitate multifaceted forms of digital witnessing.

Among the videos, 49% adopted an educational mode, leveraging institutional educational structures that were translated into the TikTok vernacular. This transformation led to the creation of bite-sized, fragmented and fast-paced units of knowledge often disseminated through a series of videos. Encompassing various subjects, these videos traverse from broader wartime history to specific camp-related events, delving into both iconic and lesser-known moments from prisoners' experiences within the former camps and beyond.

Comprising 37% of the videos, commemorative mode elements are evident, often tied to memorial days and integrated with TikTok's vernacular trends. These videos facilitate performative and artistic acts of commemoration, including participation in "challenges", while also showcasing diverse commemorative cultures across various former camps and regions, aligning with their educational approach to contextualized memorialization. Constituting 20% of the content, the explanatory mode was utilized in videos that provide contextual insights into disputed topics, prioritizing narratives that have been historically marginalized. These videos concentrate on presenting historical details as substantiated facts, engaging in historical storytelling that frequently spotlights individual biographies, delves into historical artefacts and incorporates archival documents or photographs.

Constituting 11% of the content, the responsive mode videos embody the participatory ethos of debate in TikTok's culture, where prevalent attitudes encompass challenging and rebuking users who draw inappropriate comparisons between the Holocaust and other subjects. In these videos, the historical Holocaust narrative intersects with the contemporary context, acting as a meta-reference to the ongoing presence of hate, discrimination, antisemitism and racism. These videos aim to counter problematic and distorting analogies between the past and present prevalent on TikTok. Institutions, on the other hand, tend to engage less in the responsive and explanatory modes, opting instead to concentrate on the past as the central theme for exploration in their videos rather than engaging in arguments, criticisms or using the present as a conduit for engagement.

Use of Modes

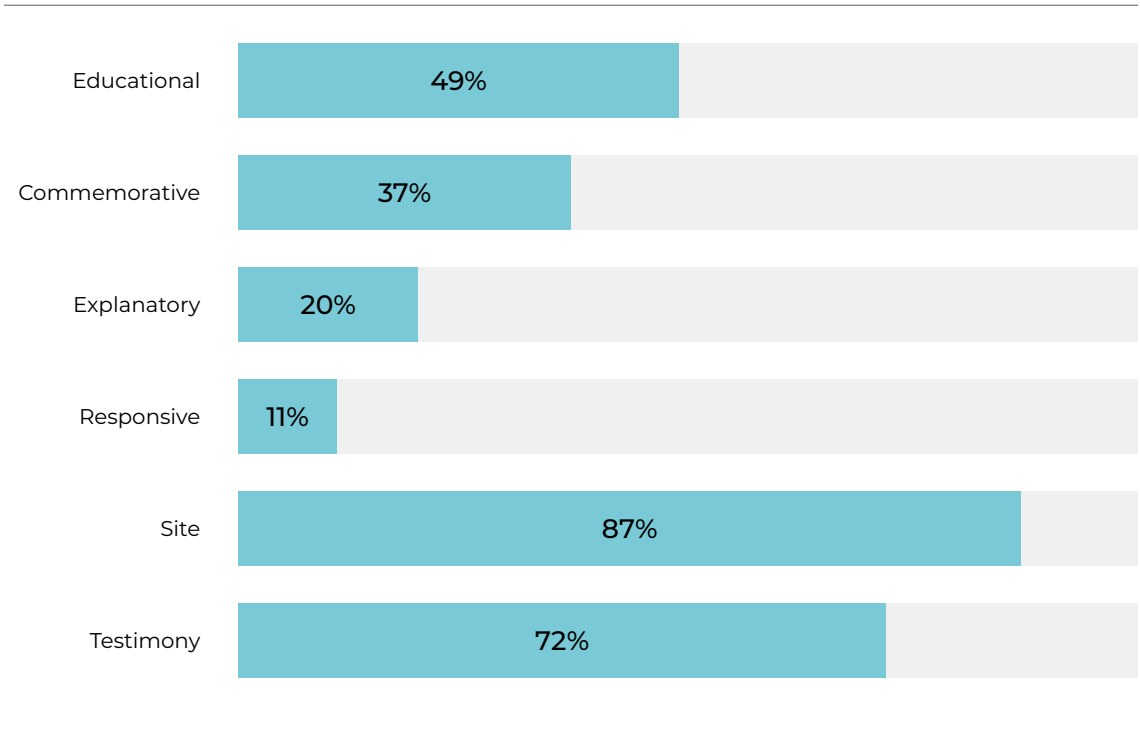| Mode	Percentage
Educational	49%
Commemorative	37%
Explanatory	20%
Responsive	11%
Site	87%
Testimony	72%

Fig. 36. Use of modes in videos created and uploaded by participating institutions.

Use of Features

The utilization of overlay text was evident in all the videos (100%), serving various purposes such as providing contextual guidance alongside the presenter, accentuating specific segments of the content and delivering the core arguments (Fig. 37). This text not only conveyed the narrative's essence but also functioned as historical signposts showcasing names, dates, people, historical facts and more, enhancing the viewers' understanding and engagement. Hashtags were a ubiquitous presence throughout the entire repository of videos (100%). They served primarily for enhancing discoverability, a common function of hashtags on social media platforms, while also aiding in video categorization and signifying to viewers within specific content realms. Hashtags included names of memorials, significant years and categories like #history or #worldwarII. Notably, the #fyp ("ForYouPage") hashtag was frequently employed for TikTok's discoverability, as it holds an algorithmic effectiveness that assists in featuring the video prominently within TikTok's main feed.

In 94% of the videos, the incorporation of music, whether through instrumentals, lyrics or human voices, aligns with the prevailing tendency seen in TikTok videos. These auditory elements predominantly shaped the content choices of all the institutions and are also recognized as influential factors contributing to virality and engagement on the platform. 43% of the videos utilized the green screen feature, enabling institutions to replace their video backgrounds with images or videos of their choice. This functionality empowers institutions to present themselves within various relevant contexts, enhancing the alignment between their content focus and the visual environment. In 39% of the videos, the questions & answers feature (also known as "answers to comments") was utilized, enabling creators to select comments from their videos and craft new video responses, using these comments as a starting point. This functionality offers a varied exposure to user-generated questions and comments that reflect curiosity in the institution's content.

The duet function was employed in 9% of videos, enabling direct reactions to videos by other creators. This feature involves displaying the original video alongside the new one, creating a split-screen presentation that facilitates direct commentary and encourages various forms of interaction with fellow creators' content. Within the realm of Holocaust-related material, this functionality not only provides a means to directly respond to contentious Holocaust comparisons with contemporary events but also fosters the creation of a commemorative community. This is accomplished by showcasing videos that depict acts of remembrance, such as participating in the one-minute silence initiative observed during the Israeli Holocaust Memorial Day 2022. Finally, 9% of the videos employed the stitch function, allowing creators to extract and respond to specific segments from other videos. This trend was notable in institutional content, where it facilitated a participatory narrative exchange among memorials. For instance, creators used this feature to interlace videos that recounted events like the liberation day of a camp, fostering thematic connections across their content.
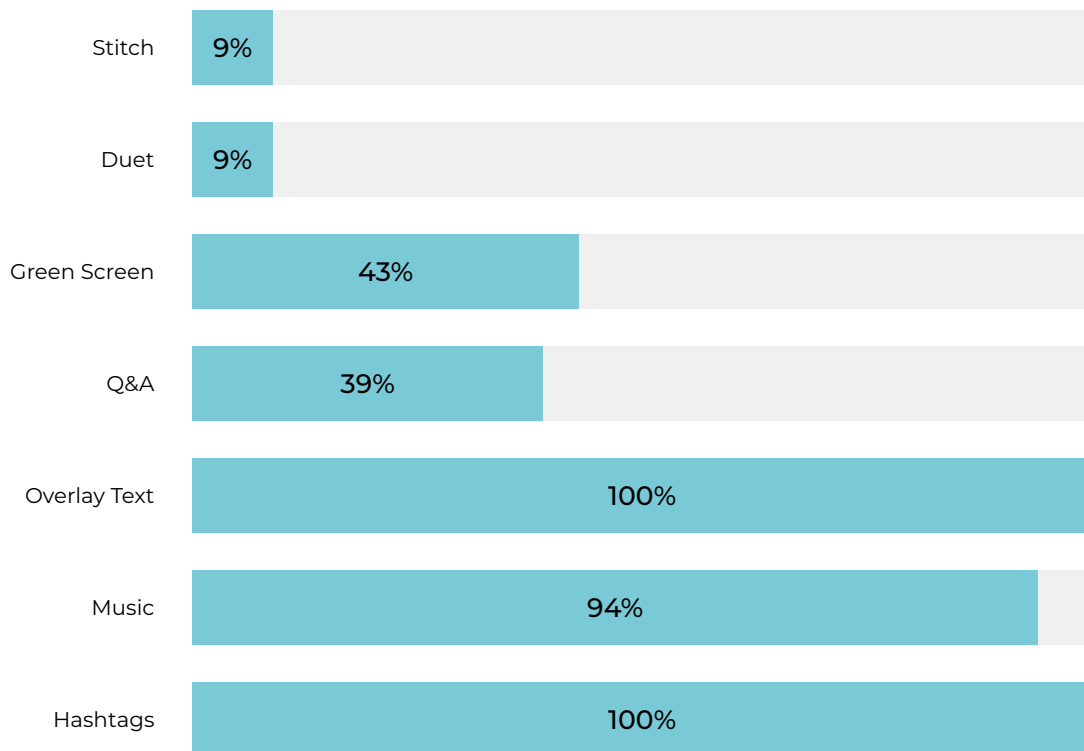
Use of Features

Feature	Value
Stitch	9%
Duet	9%
Green Screen	43%
Q&A	39%
Overlay Text	100%
Music	94%
Hashtags	100%

Fig. 37. Use of features in videos created and uploaded by participating institutions.

— Green Screen

The green screen feature emerged as a widely favored tool among institutions on TikTok, granting them the creative latitude to craft distinctive videos set within various virtual realms, thereby transforming their content and broadening storytelling prospects. Approximately a quarter (25%) of the videos employed green screens to construct backdrops that featured images of prisoners, providing a more immersive and intimate connection with the stories of those who perished in the camps (Fig. 38). Another 23% utilized maps as backgrounds, aiding viewers in grasping geographical and historical context, particularly when comprehending the locations of specific camps. 22% incorporated documents such as camp policies, classified records or excerpts from diaries, engaging viewers in an exploration of these documents to uncover nuances and historical significance, thereby deepening contextual understanding. 12% of the videos employed news items as backdrops, leveraging them to initiate discussions about the historical implications of the present, for instance, showcasing news reports highlighting increased Holocaust ignorance among youth. This approach reinforced institutional presence on TikTok while fostering relevant dialogues. Similarly, 10% featured various objects in the video backgrounds, which could be historical artefacts integral to exhibitions or non-exhibition pieces carrying significant historical value. These objects provided insight into prisoners' daily lives or unique items like gunpowder knapsacks utilized for food delivery. Lastly, 8% integrated drawings as backdrops, using them to recount stories of prisoners and showcase artistic documentation from the camp era.
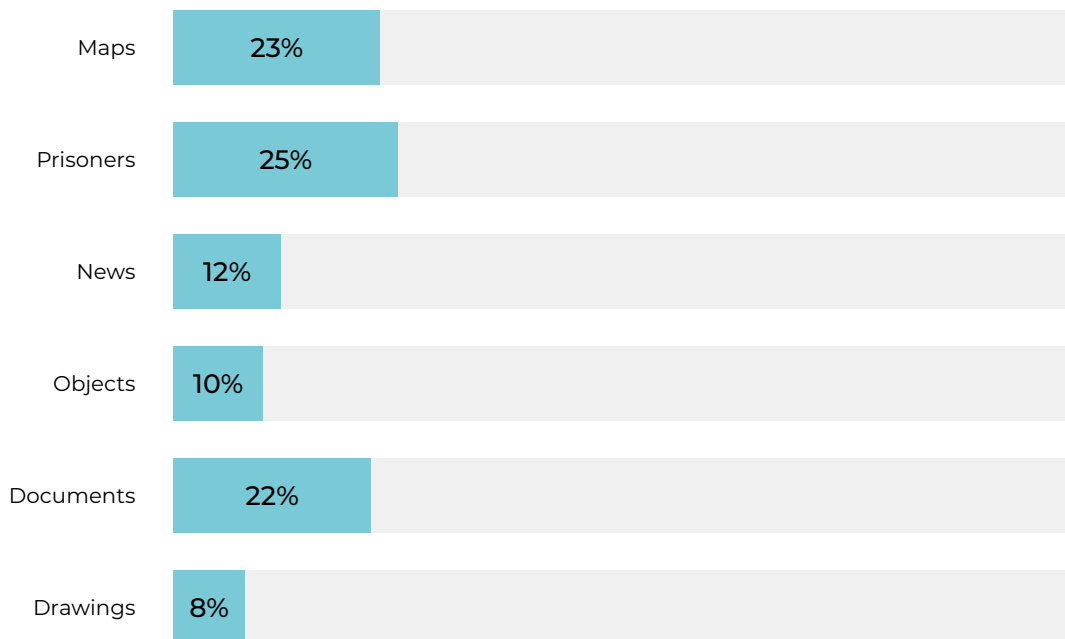
Green Screen

Maps	23%
Prisoners	25%
News	12%
Objects	10%
Documents	22%
Drawings	8%

Fig. 38. Use of the green screen effect videos created and uploaded by participating institutions. Green Screen.

Overlay Text

All videos extensively utilized the overlay text feature, allowing the incorporation of textual elements onto the screen (Fig. 39). Notably, 100% of these videos employed overlay text as subtitles in English. As TikTok's popular videos are typically fast-paced, rhythmic and last between 45-60 seconds, fully comprehending their messages might necessitate multiple viewings. When conveying historical, educational or context-dependent information, this rapid pace could present challenges. Consequently, the inclusion of subtitles assists viewers in following the message and potentially reduces the need for repeated viewings. Furthermore, 78% of the videos employed overlay text to emphasize content highlights, often reinforcing the main messages delivered by the video's presenters and underscoring the significance of their statements. In 38% of the cases, overlay text complemented the human voice of the presenters. While this technique condenses more information into the videos, it may also overwhelm viewers, as they must simultaneously listen to the presenters and absorb the additional textual content, potentially leading to information overload. Lastly, 17% of the overlay text served translation purposes, rendering the videos accessible to German-speaking audiences through English translations.

Overlay Text

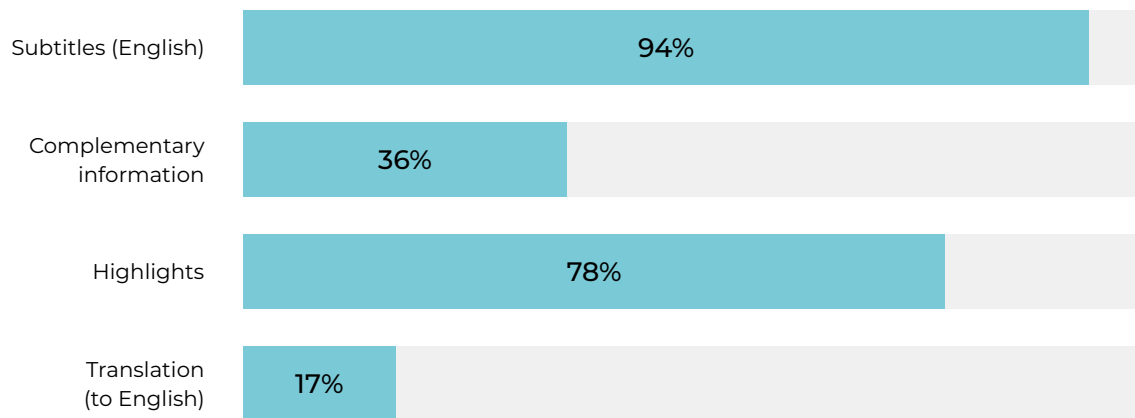|	
Subtitles (English)	94%
Complementary information	36%
Highlights	78%
Translation (to English)	17%

Fig. 39. Use of overlay text in videos created and uploaded by participating institutions.

Questions & Answers

A predominant utilization was observed in the questions & answers feature, also known as answers to comments, which empowers creators to select a comment from their videos and generate a new video in response, utilizing the chosen comment as a starting point. This feature engenders diverse avenues and modes of participation within the TikTok space, creating a triangular relationship where viewers transition from active commentators to creators with newfound agency. The questions & answers feature on TikTok adds an additional layer to the platform's structural amplification of voice, offering a significant insight into the comments section of videos. Among the instances were users' comments and questions transformed into videos by institutions; 25% pertained to the former camp or memorial site, with inquiries spanning areas not covered in the videos or seeking clarification on specific aspects conveyed in the content, such as rooms within the former camp or shower facilities (Fig. 40). 24% of user-generated video content emerged from comments and questions revolving around prisoners' stories, either seeking additional details or sharing similar anecdotes from their own acquaintances during the wartime period.

Additionally, 23% of user interactions centered on historical facts, fostering a deliberative space for users to engage in discussions, arguments and negotiations concerning historical knowledge, both amongst themselves and with the institutions. 19% of user-generated content originated from inquiries about prisoners' daily lives, as users sought to gain a deeper understanding of the everyday experiences within the camp. Furthermore, 6% of video content emerged from inquiries related to former camp/memorial activities, delving into the institution's mundane practices, the emotional capacity of young volunteers in such environments and more. Lastly, 5% of user-generated content revolved around documents and objects, with users either seeking supplementary information, providing additional context or searching for contrasting perspectives.

Questions & Answers

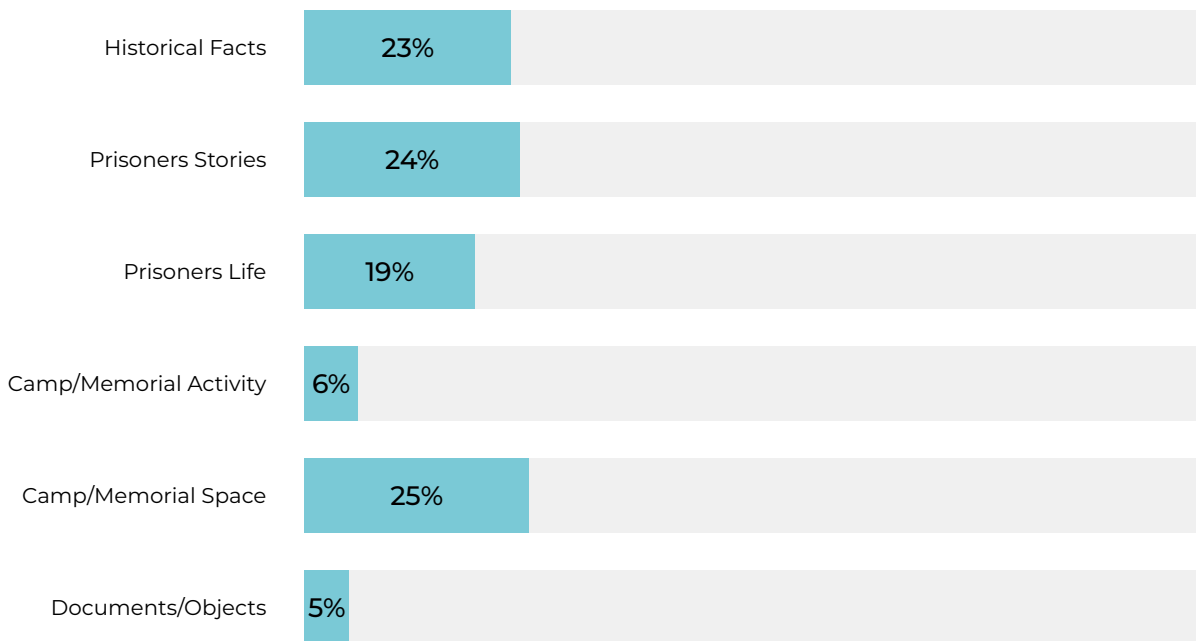|	
Historical Facts	23%
Prisoners Stories	24%
Prisoners Life	19%
Camp/Memorial Activity	6%
Camp/Memorial Space	25%
Documents/Objects	5%

Fig. 40. Use of the questions & answers feature in videos created and uploaded by participating institutions. Questions & Answers.

Music

As previously observed, an overwhelming majority of the videos (94%) harnessed Tik-Tok's prominent feature—music—to imbue the content with pertinent emotions, often gravitating towards melancholic or serene tones. The incorporation of music stands as a pivotal factor for driving engagement on TikTok, surpassing the influence of other features. Notably, 61% of institutional videos exercised careful consideration in their music choices, frequently opting for safer selections characterized by mellower piano compositions (Fig. 41). Furthermore, 22% of the videos employed attention-grabbing techniques to enhance visibility by aligning their content with trending hits on TikTok, endeavoring to strike a balance between popular choices and content that demands a more measured approach due to its inherent seriousness. Another 11% of the videos embraced upbeat musical tones, aligning with the prevailing energetic soundscape commonly associated with TikTok. This was particularly noticeable in videos where volunteers shared personal narratives and life trajectories leading to their involvement in the institution. Conversely, 6% of the videos eschewed musical accompaniment entirely, instead prioritizing the human voice or silence. This deliberate choice catered to specific focal points within the videos, acknowledging the viewer's need for a more direct and unadulterated engagement with particular aspects of the content.
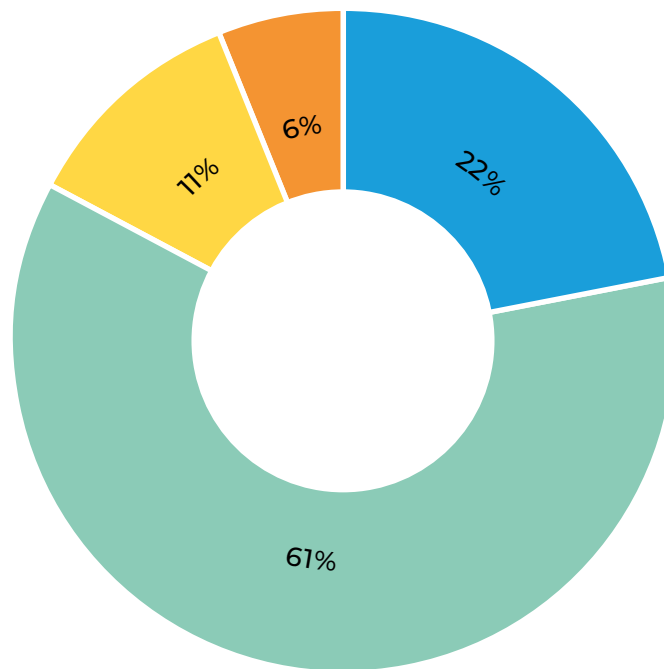
Music

Fig. 41. Music used in videos created and uploaded by participating institutions.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIALS AND MUSEUMS ON TIKTOK

A closer view of those accounts that have successfully maintained their presence following the initiative's launch and their continuous content posting reveals additional insights into best practices and the distinctive features of institutional videos addressing the history and memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust.

> *"You and the many volunteers for your project are bringing remembrance of the darkest chapters of our past to where it belongs: to the heart of our lives, the heart of our society."*
>
> **Annalena Baerbock**, Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs in the laudatory speech for the Shimon-Peres-Prize on 11.10.2022.[1]

In addition to the evaluation of the participants' perceptions and the quantitative analysis of the content created as a result of the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative, we used a mixed methods approach to analyze the five most successful accounts posting content during and after the first training seminar. For that purpose, we created a survey to which creators and representatives of the memorials and museums involved in the TikTok activities responded. This survey particularly asked for relevant information about user metrics and specific experiences with creating and uploading content. In addition, we did a qualitative analysis of the top three videos from each account with the most views until December 2022. Each of the five accounts developed a specific profile addressing different target groups and utilizing different features and practices for that purpose. Nevertheless, we could also identify characteristic elements shared by all or most of the analyzed accounts.
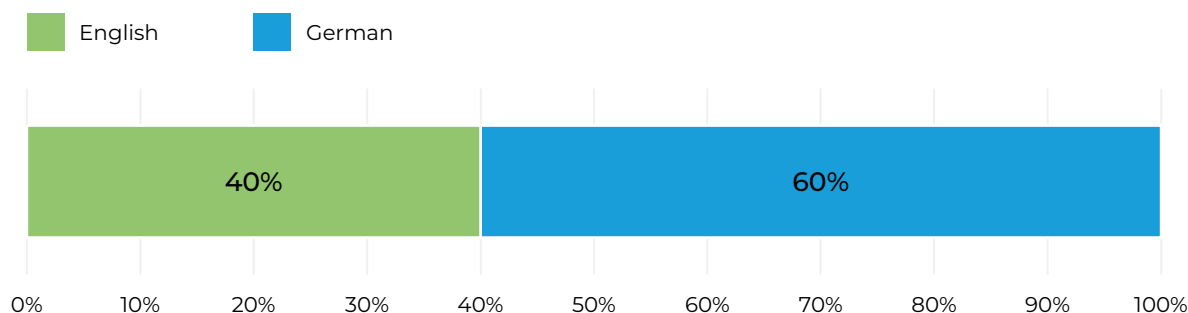
Account Language

Fig. 42. Language of the videos posted by five memorials and museums active on TikTok.

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1. See: https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/shimon-peres-prize/2557854 (last accessed: 298.9.2023).

Two memorials, the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial in Hamburg and the Austrian Mauthausen Memorial, decided to post videos in English with the particular aim of addressing international audiences (Fig. 42). The focus of these memorials is clearly on introducing the memorial site, informing about specific objects, telling related stories and presenting the memorial and its work.

The three other memorials and museums, the Bergen-Belsen Memorial, the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial and the Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference, post videos in German. Two of the three accounts primarily produce educational content that presents and explores stories and documents related to the specific history of the site. The account of the Bergen-Belsen Memorial has a "mixed" approach combining, informative and educational content and posting videos with German and English subtitles.

Age

18-24   25-34   35-44   45-54   55+

Bergen-Belsen Memorial
| 50% | 28% | 14% | 5% | 3% |

Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial
| 43% | 31% | 14% | 7% | 5% |

Mauthausen Memorial
| 58% | 25% | 9% | 5% | 3% |

Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference
| 17% | 21% | 21% | 23% | 18% |

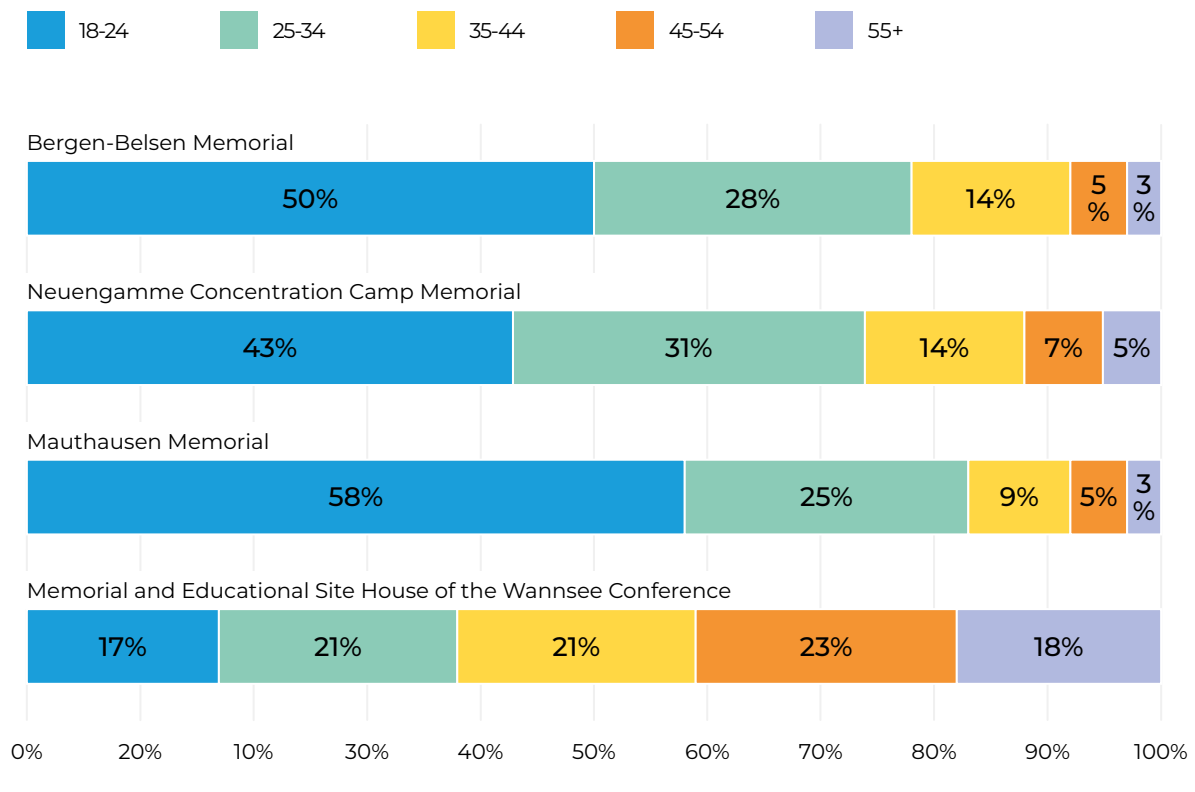0% 20% 10% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Fig. 43. Age of users engaging with five accounts of memorials and museums on TikTok until 12/2022.

The age structure of the respective viewing communities reveals that memorials and museums do not necessarily primarily reach particularly young users (Fig. 43). It also proves that TikTok is not solely a platform for Gen-Z anymore.

The Mauthausen Memorial performs best in the age group 18-24. The viewers of this account are predominantly below 35 years of age. Despite having a similar approach, young English-speaking creators addressing questions and fostering curiosity, the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial has a different age distribution and also attracts more users above 35.

Gender

Legend: ■ Female ■ Male ■ Other

Bergen-Belsen Memorial
Female 69% | Male 31%

Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial
Female 46% | Male 54%

Keeping Memories
Female 35% | Male 65%

Mauthausen Memorial
Female 60% | Male 40%

Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference
Female 37% | Male 63%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
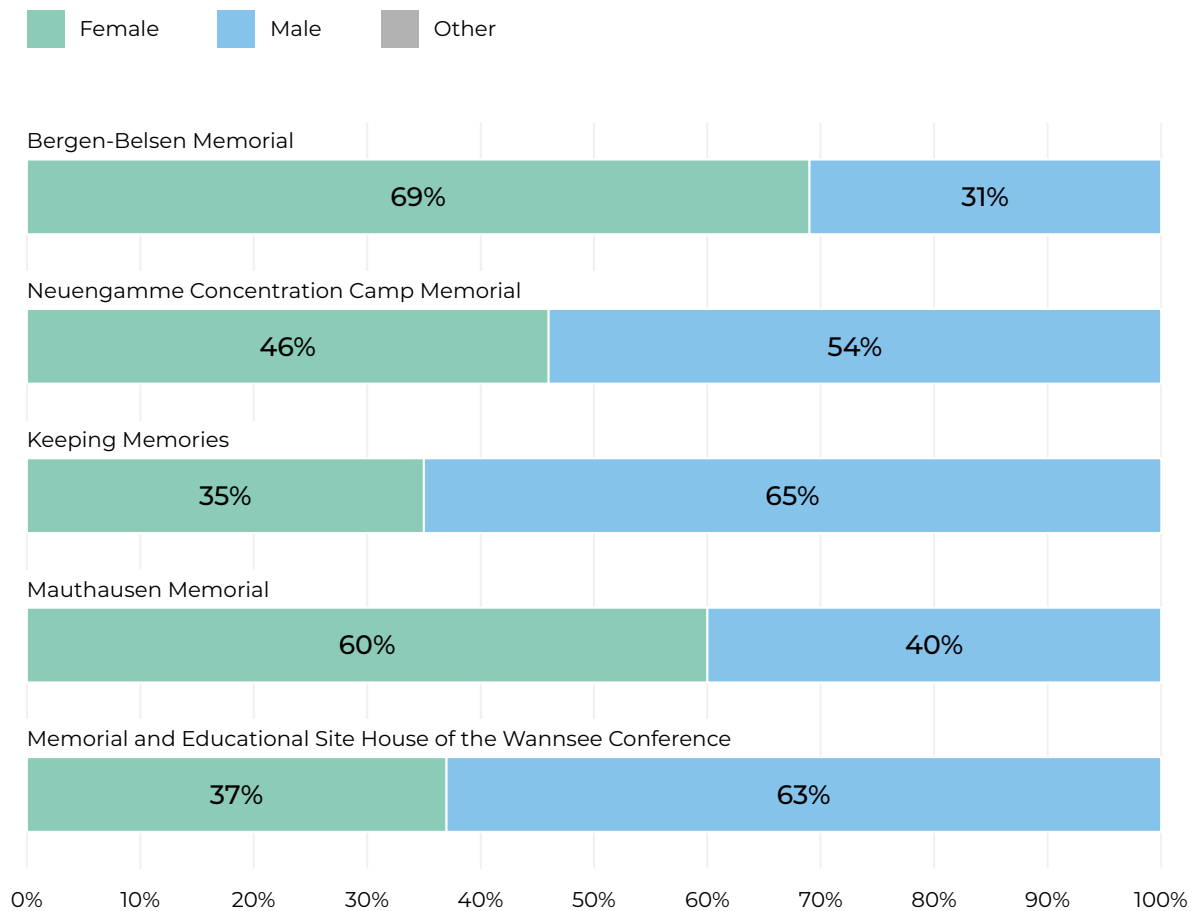
Fig. 44. Gender of users engaging with five accounts of memorials and museums on TikTok since 12/2022.

There are also differences in the gender structure of users, although we see a relatively even gender distribution of viewers (Fig. 44). While the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial and the House of the Wannsee Conference have predominantly male viewers, Bergen-Belsen and Mauthausen succeeded in addressing a majority of women. One reason could be differences in focusing more on informative or on educational content as well as the gender identification of the creators. However, this aspect deserves more research. The following sections analyze the profiles of the five active accounts based on information provided by the memorials and museums and a qualitative analysis of successfully performing videos.

Bergen-Belsen Memorial

@belsenmemorial

Located near the town of Bergen in Lower Saxony, Germany, the Bergen-Belsen Memorial serves as a place of remembrance and education, offering visitors the opportunity to reflect on National Socialist persecution and the Holocaust and pay tribute to its victims. Originally established in 1940 as a prisoner-of-war camp for French and Belgian soldiers, Bergen- Belsen later evolved into one of the most infamous Nazi concentration camps, resulting in the deaths of approximately 52,000 inmates during its existence and after its liberation on 15 April 1945.

The Bergen-Belsen Memorial started its account on January 19, 2022. The videos are in German, predominantly with English subtitles. Most of the 32 videos uploaded between January and December 2022 introduce the historical site and focus on particular aspects of the former camp's history. They mix an educational and informative approach with site- specific content.

Followers:	10,600
Videos:	32
Views:	2,895,672
Likes:	244,098
Comments:	2,810
(12/2022)	

By December 2022, the account had more than 10,000 followers. The videos received nearly 2.9 million views and around 250,000 likes. Users interacted 2,800 times with the account by posting comments to particular videos. This resulted in an active and responsive community. According to the questionnaire, "controversies among TikTok users in the comments motivated users to take a stand, often in a good way." Nevertheless, the memorial's representative said, "comment moderation is a challenge."

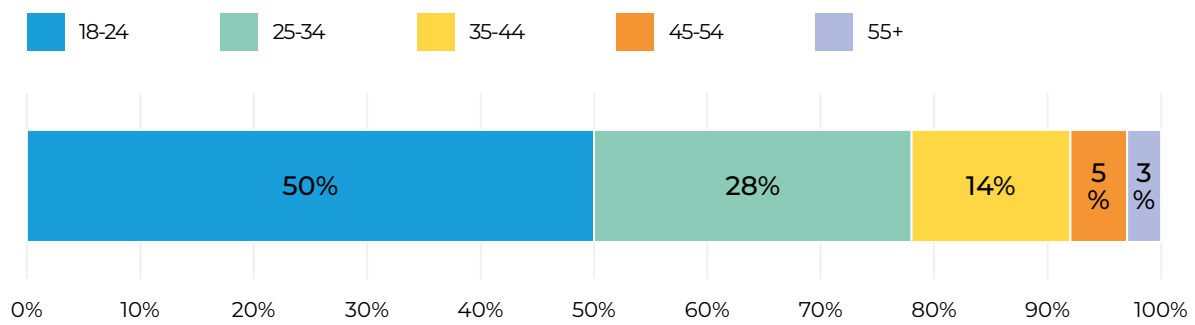## Age (Bergen-Belsen Memorial)

Fig. 45. Age of users of the Bergen-Belsen Memorial's TikTok account (12/2022).

Most of the videos uploaded to the account contain young presenters, mostly male and female volunteers, talking about Bergen-Belsen from their specific perspective and using accessible and understandable language.

For the volunteers, "creating content for TikTok was a great means of expression," as the questionnaire describes it. The videos are primarily addressed to a young target audience. Half of the viewers are below 24 years of age (Fig. 45). A little more of a quarter is 25-34. Hence, the memorial succeeded in addressing a particularly young cohort of a potentially interested audience. According to the memorial, these numbers suggest that by directly communicating with their target audience through the app, they succeeded to connect, particularly with younger viewers, which the memorial "hadn't been able to reach yet through other means."

A majority of nearly 70% of viewers identify as female (Fig. 46). The account of the Bergen- Belsen Memorial attracted the most interest of women compared with other accounts.

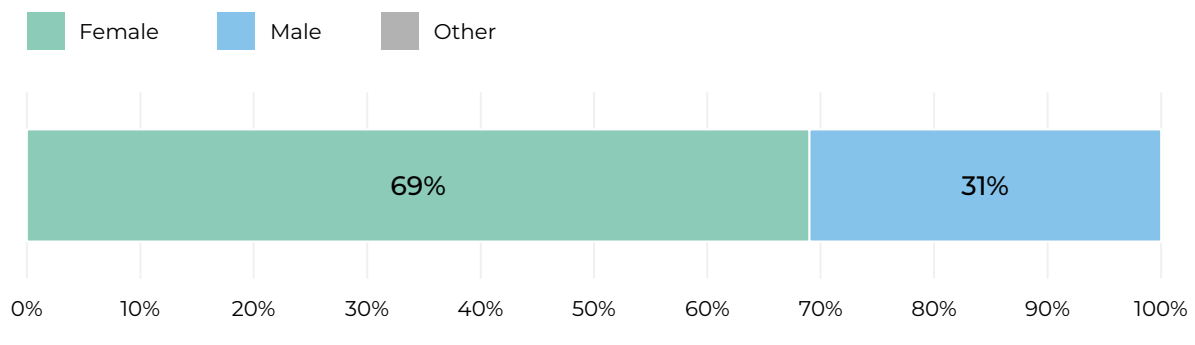## Gender (Bergen-Belsen Memorial)

Fig. 46. Gender with which users of the Bergen-Belsen Memorial's account identify (12/2022).

Although the English subtitles make the videos more accessible to international view-ers, those viewing communities are not yet significantly represented. The majority of viewers reside in Germany and other German-speaking countries. This is not surpris-ing as the spoken language is German (Fig. 47).
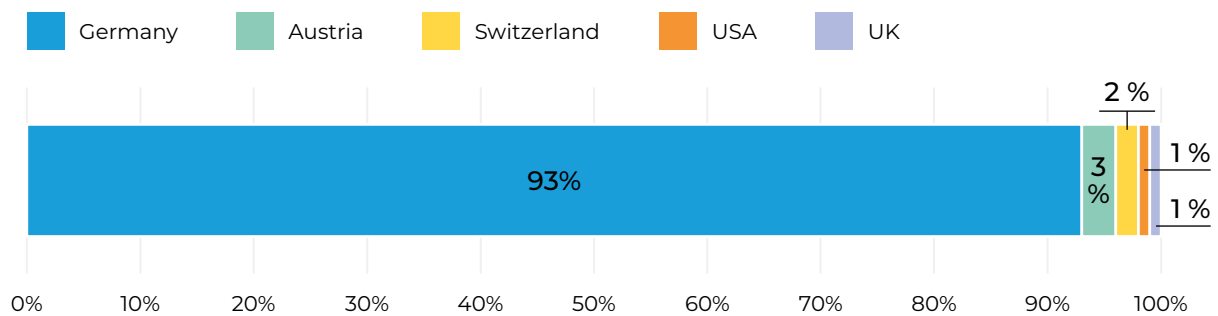
Countries (Bergen-Belsen Memorial)

Fig. 47. Countries, in which users of the Bergen-Belsen Memorials account reside (12/2022).

This finding shows that the memorial, on the one hand, succeeded in particularly reaching out to young German viewers and stimulating interest in the topic in general and the Bergen-Belsen Memorial in particular. However, considering the extensive efforts of museums and memorial sites to utilize social media platforms for enabling access from a distance, the Bergen-Belsen Memorial's TikTok channel had a primarily national impact. Nevertheless, according to the memorial's feedback, "the initiative offered valuable educational and training opportunities and a platform for exchange, discussion and collaboration among the participating individuals, institutions and memorials." TikTok enabled specifically new ways for the young creators to connect with the historical site. According to the memorial they "embraced the brevity of the medium" and utilized image, speech and written words to convey stories related to the site.

The three most successful videos of the memorial's account demonstrate the particu-lar forms of addressing TikTok viewers. In a TikTok marking the birthday of Anne Frank, who was murdered in the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp after her hiding place in Amsterdam was discovered and she was deported together with her sister Margot first to Auschwitz and then to Bergen-Belsen, the creators highlight a specific spot at the historical site.
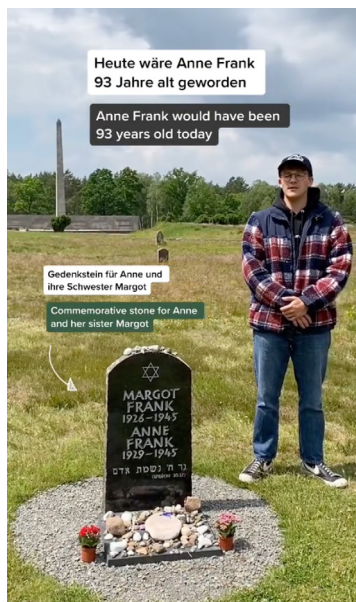
Fig. 48. Screenshot from "Heute wäre Anne Frank 93 Jahre alt geworden," @belsenmemorial.

The carefully chosen framing of the video interconnects an impressive obelisk in the background with the memorial stone for Margot and Anne Frank in the foreground, thereby emphasizing the commemorative character of the video (Fig. 48). The clear visual focus on the historical site and the specific commemorative object is intertwined with the presence of the speaker telling the story of Anne Frank in the form of peer-to-peer addressing. Text layers provide more information and make spoken text accessible for non-German speakers and viewers who are hard of hearing.

The video, with nearly one million views, primarily emphasizes the presence of the site and utilizes the memorial stone as a visible connection to the particular story of the young author of one of the most famous diaries written in the context of the Holocaust. Just a few jump cuts and a slight panning of the mobile camera create moments of motion. The main focus is clearly on the content and specifically on Anne Frank. The video starts with her name and invites viewers to watch it in a loop in order to discover additional details, such as the text overlays emphasized by the help of arrows.

The popularity of the video is mainly based on the focus on a famous and well-known historical person and parts of her story. This, however, also allows attention to be attracted to the historical site and the commemorative work at the Bergen-Belsen Memorial. The video combines the condensed TikTok format with site-specific and commemorative elements and thereby interrelates typical TikTok dialects with specific commemoration. The peer-to-peer addressing of recognizable and relatable content establishes a vivid connection between viewers and institutionalized memory. The crucial question is how far the popularity of such videos also succeed in motivating viewers to learn more about the history of Bergen-Belsen in particular and about National Socialist persecution and the Holocaust in general.

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1. See: https://www.tiktok.com/@belsenmemorial/video/7108278591523163397 (last accessed: 28.9.2023).

Videos such as a short TikTok about the remains of the delousing facility demonstrate the potential of short site-specific educational videos. This video nearly solely focuses on the site and the history of a particular place.

The mobile camera follows the presenter in the foreground and thereby creates a dynamic setting (Fig. 49). In addition, the video interacts with the site through text overlays and arrows. As viewers listen to the information about the facility and witness the current state of the building's remnants, they are encouraged to bridge the gap between the past and present through the power of historical imagination. The young presenter plays a pivotal role in forging this connection and acting as a mediator for the distant past.

"Überreste der Desinfektionsstation im früheren Konzentrationslager Bergen-Belsen" [1]

Date: 28.3.2022

Views: 586.3K

Likes: 35.7K

Comments: 200

(12/2022)

Fig. 49. Screenshot from "Überreste der Desinfektionsstation im früheren Konzentrationslager Bergen-Belsen," @belsenmemorial.

While predominantly adopting the role of a visitor, the video employs straightforward techniques to captivate the viewer's attention, focusing on a particular facet of the site's history. Surprisingly, the inclusion of the filmmaker's shadow, far from detracting, actually enhances the video's popularity. This imperfection serves to humanize the content, potentially contributing to its overall success.

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1. See: https://www.tiktok.com/@belsenmemorial/video/7080104397572787462 (last accessed: 28.9.2023).

TikTok's affinity for exploring particular details with the help of a mobile camera is also demonstrated by a video about stones placed at particular locations at the memorial.

The video opens with a question that immediately attracts attention because it focuses on a very specific detail that might create curiosity among non-Jewish viewers: the practice of putting small stones in memory of those who perished on gravestones at cemeteries (Fig. 50).

"Was bedeuten diese Steine" [1]

Date: 9.2.2022

Views: 541.2K

Likes: 59.6K

Comments: 750

Fig. 50. Screenshot from "Was bedeuten diese Steine," @belsenmemorial.

Supported by dynamic arrows, the camera highlights the detail of the stones at several points at the memorial site in Bergen-Belsen. Thereby, the video combines the responsive element of answering questions with the potential of focusing on objects and small details. This approach is supported by the fact that no presenter is visible in the video. The viewer only listens to an explanatory voice-over. The montage of different memorial stones, the graphics, the voice and the text overlay constitute a multitude of layers that result in a dynamic short video. This dynamic is even emphasized by the sudden "freeze" at the end when the close-up shots are replaced by a long shot of the memorial's empty space, which is thereby — emphasized by the voice-over mentioning the Jewish tradition of leaving stones at Jewish cemeteries—marked as a graveyard.

The most successful videos of the Bergen-Belsen Memorial demonstrate the importance of site-specific content and narrative as well as aesthetic elements that support the unique impression of the historical sites when creating content for TikTok at a memorial. The meticulous attention to details piques curiosity and captivates the interest of the audience. Utilizing text overlays, dynamic arrows, and subtitles enhances the accessibility of the content. This peer-to-peer approach eases the process of connecting with the challenging history of the Holocaust and National Socialism through concise video presentations.

1. See: https://www.tiktok.com/@belsenmemorial/video/7062653278630317318 (last accessed: 28.9.2023).

Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial

@neuengamme.memorial

Located near Hamburg, Neuengamme was the largest concentration camp in north-west Germany from 1938 to 1945. More than 100,000 people were imprisoned in Neuengamme and over 85 satellite camps. At least 42,900 prisoners lost their lives during its existence and during the camp evacuations at the end of the war. Today, the site hosts a center for exhibitions, discussions, encounters and historical studies located on the grounds of the former prisoners' barracks.

The Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial established its TikTok account on November 23, 2021, during the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative. At the end of 2022, the account had more than 27,000 followers. The primary language of the 156 videos is English. The short videos not only offer insight into the memorial's work but also contain information about the site and its history. In addition, the creators offered bereaved family members the possibility to tell the stories of their ancestors.

With the aim to learn more about users and visitors, in many videos, the creators also posed questions to the TikTok community in the digital space and collected responses from visitors. Until December 2022, the account's videos have been watched nearly 7 million times and received nearly 500,000 likes and 7,000 comments.

Followers:	27,037
Videos:	156
Views:	6,793,521
Likes:	456,900
Comments:	7,008

As one of the first TikTok accounts focusing on Holocaust education and the history of National Socialism, the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial succeeded in creating extraordinary visibility. The successful outreach on TikTok came as a surprise also for the creators at the memorial. "Compared to other social media platforms, but also compared to other digital or analog projects offered by the memorial, TikTok has by far the biggest outreach," explained the memorial's creators. They specifically emphasized that compared to other platforms, TikTok is quite activating. This resulted in a very active and international user community.

In particular, the international interest in the content uploaded to TikTok impressed the creators. Indeed, the majority of users reside in English-speaking countries such as the United States and the UK (Fig. 51). This demonstrates the account's success in reaching audiences beyond national borders and utilizing TikTok to offer access to the memorial's work from a distance.

Countries (Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial)

Germany ■ USA ■ UK ■ Canada ■ Australia ■

Germany	USA	UK	Canada	Australia
24%	29%	38%	5%	4%

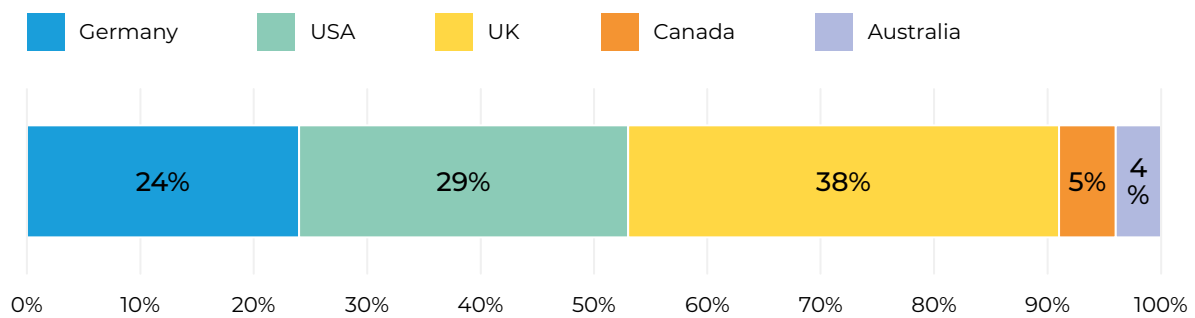0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Fig. 51. Countries, in which users of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial's account reside (12/2022).

The account attracted both female and male viewers, with a slight majority of male users until December 2022 (Fig. 52). Engagement with the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust was not limited to the platform "but also resulted in visits and encounters in the analogue memorial, which was originally not intended when we opened our account," described the memorial's creators.

Gender (Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial)

Female ■ Male ■ Other ■

Female	Male
46%	54%

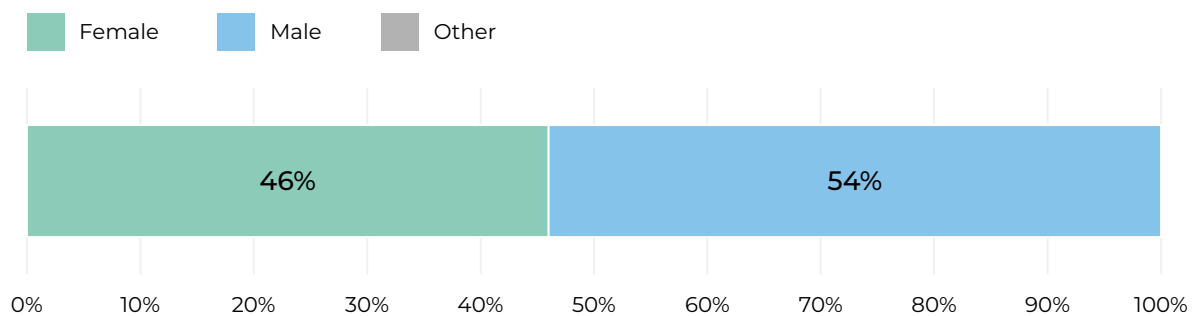0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Fig. 52. Gender with which users of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial's account identify (12/2022).

Considering the age of the users, the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial succeeded in reaching out to young users between 18 and 24 years of age. 43% of this cohort expressed interest in the account (Fig. 53). Nearly two-thirds of users who engaged with the account by December 2022 were below 35 years old. However, the account also attracted a significant number of older users. 26% were older than 35.
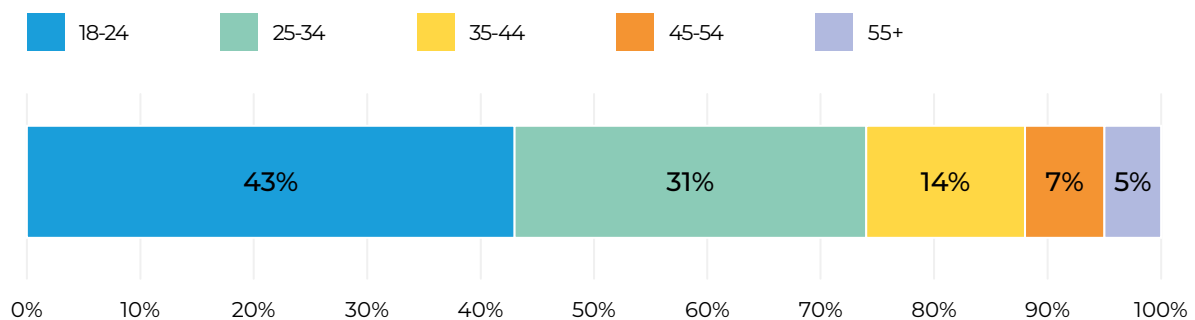
Age (Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial)

Fig. 53. Age of users of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial's TikTok account (12/2022).

During the production of the videos, the creators tried to focus on condensed information and created short series of content that allowed them to discuss a topic from multiple perspectives. Important aesthetic and stylistic elements were dynamic editing, text overlays that emphasized specific terms and information, as well as dynamic graphic elements such as stickers and particularly arrows that highlighted specific aspects. Many of the TikToks utilize a loop structure that invites viewers to repeatedly watch the videos and recognize additional information on different narrative and visual layers. Several videos also respond to comments and questions posed by users.

Some videos are intended to initiate reactions and responses in order to learn more about users. At least on two occasions, the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial initiated collaborations through challenges and stitches. The first was a stitch challenge on January 27, 2022. A second was related to November 9, 2022, and focused on stumbling stones. While only rarely integrating trends, trending hashtags or popular effects, the memorial's videos intentionally used personal peer-to-peer addressing and imperfect aesthetics in order to generate interest and directly address the community on TikTok. This can be seen by closely looking at some of the most successful videos created and uploaded by the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial.

The most popular video of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial, with 2.7 million views and 176,000 likes, is only nine seconds long. Comprising a single continuous shot, the video features a young presenter positioned alongside a window grating, elucidating the significance of closely examining objects.

"Look closely" [1]

Date: 6.7.2022

Views: 2.7M

Likes: 176.8K

Comments: 1,358

Fig. 54. Screenshot from "Look closely," @neuengamme.memorial.

This approach to historical sites is further emphasized by a text overlay that also directly addresses the viewer to "Look closely", which is intended to have an activating effect (Fig. 54). If they are supposed to look closely, there might be some hidden message in the video, which motivates viewers to continue watching. The presenter pointing towards the window directs the viewers to the object of the window grating. This is further intensified by a dynamic arrow highlighting its peculiar shape and structure.

Keen-eyed viewers may quickly discern that the grating bears a resemblance to a swastika, prompted by the presenter's inquiry, "Do you see what I see?" as the video cycles back to the beginning. This fosters curiosity and compels viewers to revisit the video multiple times to comprehend the meaning of this specific object, and even encourages them to contribute responses in the comments section. Conversely, numerous viewers who assert in the comment section that they noticed the swastika "immediately" engage with the video by perusing the comments and sharing their own experiences.

This type of video creation relies on a prevalent internet culture of speculative videos, wherein creators leverage viewers' curiosity to speculate, identify, and highlight specific elements within a video. This strategic approach elevates the video's performance and augments its popularity, elucidating why such a brief video garnered a substantial number of views. It showcases TikTok's capacity to interact with historical objects and sites through concise videos, affirming the compelling potential of multimodal videos that seamlessly integrate visuals, audio, text, forensic elements, and playful techniques.

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1. See: https://www.tiktok.com/@neuengamme.memorial/video/7117300652346313989 (last accessed: 29.9.2023).

In a similar vein, a video that delves into the symbolism behind the identification triangles on prisoner uniforms effectively harnesses this emphasis on historical artifacts. Opening with a shot of a prisoner's uniform as the video's "hook", immediately captures the viewers' attention, provoking their curiosity as it presents an uncommon subject within TikTok's usual content landscape.
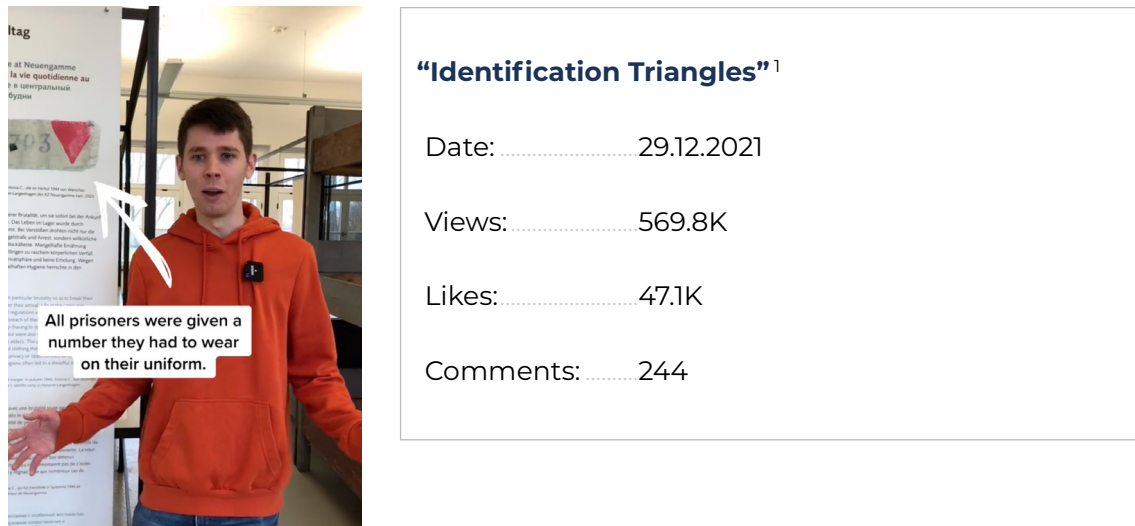

"Identification Triangles" [1]

Date: 29.12.2021

Views: 569.8K

Likes: 47.1K

Comments: 244

Fig. 55. Screenshot from "Identification Triangle," @neuengamme.memorial.

The material character of the object might also increase a feeling of historical authenticity, maybe even fascination. The panning shot to the presenter then interrupts this "auratic" appearance of the uniform and emphasizes the informative and educational character of the video, which was viewed more than half a million times and received more than 50,000 likes. One reason for this response is the direct addressing through the presenter as well as the dynamic panning camera, which assures ongoing interest. This is further intensified through the incorporation of text overlays and dynamic graphic elements like arrows, along with noticeable transitions (Fig. 55). The video ultimately "returns" its focus to another historical object, namely the red "P" denoting a prisoner from Poland. Through this narrative structure, despite consisting of just two shots, the video effectively transitions from one historical object to information (metaphorically "zooming-out") and back to another historical object. This illustrates the potential for intricate digital storytelling on TikTok, even within the constraints of condensed content.

The specificity of the historical site and its ability to bridge the gap between the past and present is demonstrated by a video with 350,000 views that explores archaeological remains, similar to the delousing facility video posted by the Bergen-Belsen Memorial. Utilizing the mobile camera to gain access to usually overlooked structures and remaining traces is an interesting way to raise awareness and curiosity.

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1. See: https://www.tiktok.com/@neuengamme.memorial/video/7047168643163065605 (last accessed: 28.9.2023).

The relatively short video is made from a single shot, but the loop structure invites viewers to watch it several times. The presenter effectively serves as a conduit to the historical site, skillfully directing the viewer's focus towards concealed archaeological intricacies (Fig. 56). This deliberate approach fosters curiosity and encourages viewers to scrutinize the video closely, often necessitating repeated viewings.

"Look out for archeological remains" [1]

Date: 2.7.2022

Views: 355.2K

Likes: 22.1K

Comments: 75

Fig. 56. Screenshot from "Look out for archeological remains," @neuengamme.memorial.

The audio and visual elements are complemented by subtle background music and captions, enhancing the video's accessibility, digestness and overall viewer experience. Here, like in many other cases, the videos combine the visiting mode of TikTok videos about the Holocaust with an educational purpose by mainly raising questions and intensifying awareness of the presence of the past.

In conclusion, the creators from the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial emphasized that TikTok offered an opportunity to think about how to communicate historical information in a bite-size manner that does not simplify the complexity of history while also respecting the audience's sensibilities. This, however, is still a challenging task. According to the memorial's creator, the biggest challenge is to create appropriate content that is brief, informative and still "entertaining." Participating in the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative offered an opportunity to look for adequate and appropriate forms of communicating and educating about history together with other institutions and experts in the field that combined historical and educational expertise, translated by TikTok's affordances into the platform's language, and localities of content creation.

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1. See: https://www.tiktok.com/@neuengamme.memorial/video/7062020397859900677 (last accessed: 28.9.2023).

Keeping Memories by
Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial

@keeping_memories

"Keeping Memories" is an educational digital platform established by the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial that offers access to the life stories of former prisoners. Located in the Bavarian region of Germany, Flossenbürg concentration camp initially served as a place of incarceration for political dissidents. The camp became a site of forced labor, torture and mass murder, with an estimated 30,000 prisoners losing their lives. Today, the Flossenbürg Memorial, established in 1947, offers visitors a chance to reflect on the atrocities of the past, honor the victims and learn about the history of National Socialist persecution.

The memorial's TikTok account was initially designed to be a supplementary component of the multimodal learning platform, tailored for educational purposes. "Our account is connected to that particular project, and we do not act as Flossenbürg Memorial itself. To us, it was a first test to get active and engaged with TikTok and to reassess our social media activities," explains a creator from the memorial. Therefore, the account operates in German, with the style and design of the videos corresponding to the platform's content and interface. Started on December 21, 2021, the "Keeping Memories" account focuses primarily on videos about biographies and life stories of former prisoners, many of them containing visual and textual archival sources such as photographs, diaries and extracts from video testimonies. That is why, as the creator explains in response to our questionnaire, "our videos were not very TikTok-like when comparing it to other institutions."

Followers:	1,684
Videos:	54
Views:	422,511
Likes:	20,400
Comments:	332

By the end of 2022, the account had 1,684 followers and contained 54 videos with nearly half a million views and 20,000 likes. Corresponding to its main language as well as to the close connection with the "Keeping Memories" platform, 98% of the account's users are from German-speaking countries, primarily from Germany (88%) (Fig. 57).

Countries (Keeping Memories)

Germany   Austria   Switzerland   USA

88%	7% 3% 2%

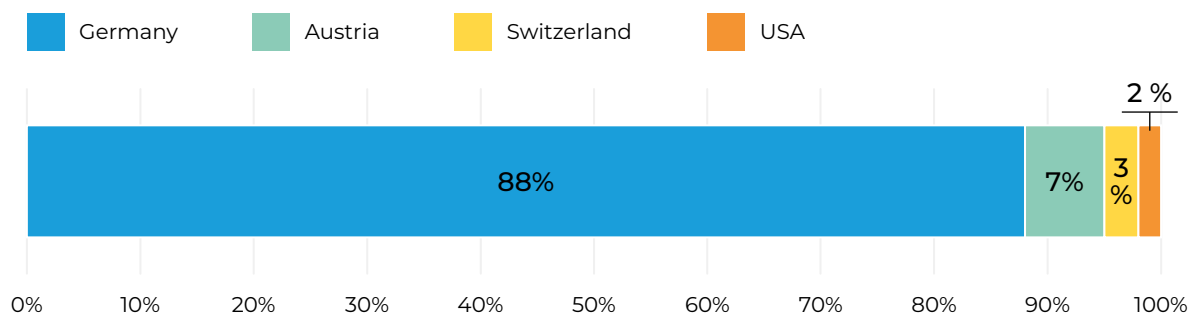0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Fig. 57. Countries, in which users of the "Keeping Memories" account reside (12/2022).

According to the creators of the account, it "encountered almost zero hate speech, and the moderation took less time than expected." Due to limited resources, however, it was not possible to "create further content on our own."

A majority of 65% of the account's users are male (Fig. 58). One reason for this might be the proportion of historical documents, photographs and footage and the primarily explanatory and less experimental character of the biographical videos. A better understanding of gender-related interest in institutional TikTok accounts, however, would demand further exploration and research.
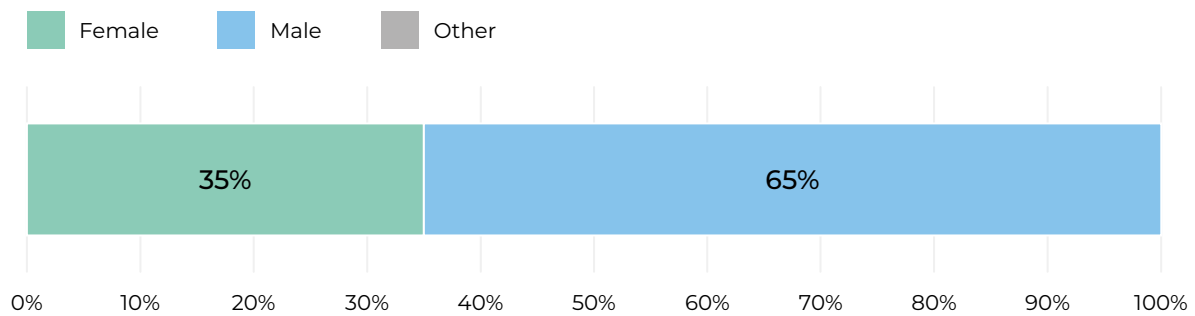
Gender (Keeping Memories)

Female   Male   Other

35%	65%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Fig. 58. Gender with which users of the "Keeping Memories" account identify (12/2022).

The primary aim of the "Keeping Memories" TikTok account is to "portray the survivors of Flossenbürg concentration camp and share their stories." They combine "first-hand sources and testimonies" with specifically designed and edited visuals and utilize similar and easily recognizable templates.

The three best-performing videos on the account as of December 2022 all relate to the same biography of Ljubiša Letíc, a former prisoner of the camp. The video about his survival in the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp gained nearly 120,000 views and received more than 5,000 likes. This particular extract of Letíc's memories focuses on moral dilemmas produced by the situation of imprisonment in a concentration camp. This relatable and relevant focus might be one reason for the increased interest in this particular TikTok.

"Überleben im KZ Flossenbürg" [1]

Date: 7.6.2022

Views: 116.9K

Likes: 5,262

Comments: 39

Fig. 59. Screenshot from "Überleben im KZ Flossenbürg," @keeping_memories.

The video aligns seamlessly with the established style of the "Keeping Memories" project, making it readily identifiable as a part of this initiative (Fig. 59). Nonetheless, it incorporates dynamic graphic elements, such as footprints that harmonize with the report's central theme —shoes—enhancing the narrative's appeal and piquing curiosity. Additionally, the subtle background music enhances the video's accessibility, while the text overlay contributes an extra layer of information and engagement.

Providing context information and interpretations, the text interacts with the voice-over and thereby contextualizes the testimony and the moral dilemmas expressed by the witness. Furthermore, these existential, even universal topics, result in increased interest in the video because they demonstrate the relevance these stories also have for contemporary audiences.

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1. See: https://www.tiktok.com/@keeping_memories/video/7106584132657908998 (last accessed: 29.9.2023).

Another video from this series, with 112,000 views as of December 2022, focuses on the moment of Ljubiša Letíc's liberation during a death march from Flossenbürg to Dachau. Again, the testimonies, read by a professional actor, and the music create an engaging atmosphere. This is further intensified by photographs and documents that are edited into the video, which received nearly 10,000 likes.

While some of the documents are carefully edited and integrated into the biography, for instance, a prisoner card containing Letíc's prisoner number highlighted by a dynamic circle, others are used in a mainly illustrative manner (Fig. 60).

"…ein freier Mensch"[1]

Date: 10.6.2022

Views: 112K

Likes: 9,765

Comments: 142

Fig. 60. Screenshot from "…ein freier Mensch," @keeping_memories.

Other than in the previously analyzed video, this TikTok clearly focuses on Letíc's report of the extraordinary situation. While in the previous video, text overlay and report were edited in order to create a certain tension and intensify the prisoner's dilemma, this time, the text overlays have a primarily informative function. While the former video mostly corresponds to the educational mode of videos about National Socialism and the Holocaust, this TikTok utilizes elements of an explanatory video. Nevertheless, it succeeds in integrating several perspectives through its multimodal structure. While the voice-over corresponds to the prisoner's perspective, the text overlay mainly addresses the perspective of the liberators. Also containing references to SS guards, the video can be seen as an interesting approach to multilayered historical storytelling.

With 17,000 views, the third most-watched video from the "Keeping Memories" account clearly lacks behind the two previously analyzed TikToks. Although this video also focuses on the biography of Ljubiša Letíc, it is less closely related to dilemmas and conflicts connected to imprisonment and liberation. This video focuses on Letíc's life before the war and, therefore, has a much more personal focus.

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1. See: https://www.tiktok.com/@keeping_memories/video/7107613911012281606 (last accessed: 29.9.2023).

"Jugoslawien im 2. Weltkrieg" [1]

Date: 9.5.2022

Views: 17K

Likes: 290

Comments: 1

Fig. 61. Screenshot from "Jugoslawien im 2. Weltkrieg," @keeping_memories.

Although the video also integrates context information, particularly about Yugoslavia during the war, Letíc's testimony and the visual documents edited into the video emphasize personalization. In addition, the use of dynamic elements and features, in particular graphical elements that highlight certain parts of photographs, contribute to a form of social media storytelling (Fig. 61). This resembles approaches that were applied, for instance, in popular projects such as @evastories or @ichbinsophiescholl on Instagram, despite the fact that the TikToks on "Keeping Memories" solely use documentary elements for digital storytelling.

While the video does harness TikTok's multimodal and multilayered structure, its primary intent lies in disseminating historical information and providing a concise glimpse into the protagonist's life before persecution. This diverges from the multifaceted and enigmatic moments spotlighted in previous, more successful videos, which, through a more "anecdotal" structure, serve as brief "emblems" of Nazi persecution.

Predominantly serving as a complement to the digital learning platform "Keeping Memories," the TikTok account's primary objective is to enhance the visibility of biographies and life stories originally researched for educational purposes on the platform. Although corresponding to the general template of the platform, the videos nevertheless differ in the way they utilize TikTok's aesthetics and visual storytelling methods. In this context, "anecdotal" condensed videos about relatable and relevant situations that resonate with the viewers' present situation seem to be the most successful, as well as those videos that communicate on a multitude of different layers. Accordingly, the creators of the account emphasized the importance of "getting to know the platform, its features" as an important outcome of the training seminar.

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1. See: https://www.tiktok.com/@keeping_memories/video/7095740772321922310 (last accessed: 29.9.2023).

Mauthausen Memorial

@mauthausenmemorial

Located near the town of Mauthausen in Austria, the Mauthausen Concentration Camp was established shortly after the "annexation" of Austria in 1938 and was one of the most notorious and brutal Nazi camps. The prisoners faced unimaginable hardship, including forced labor in quarries, medical experiments and systematic brutality. Today, the Mauthausen Memorial comprises the preserved camp infrastructure, including the main camp, subcamps and numerous historical exhibitions. Visitors can explore the remnants of the camp, such as the barracks, watchtowers and the infamous "Stairs of Death". The memorial also houses a comprehensive museum and archive that documents the history of the camp, featuring personal testimonies, photographs and artefacts.

Followers:	7,438
Videos:	62
Views:	868,550
Likes:	79,600
Comments:	2,013

The memorial's TikTok account was launched on January 13, 2022. It operates in English and had more than 7,000 followers as of the end of 2022. It primarily attracts users below the age of 34, with a huge majority of 58% between 18 and 24 (Fig. 62). It was very important for the memorial to open up "a direct channel to an audience between 13 and 25." As the creator explains, the memorial engages in its educational work with that age group on an everyday basis on-site, "but TikTok is the only platform where we were able to build a direct connection with young adults."
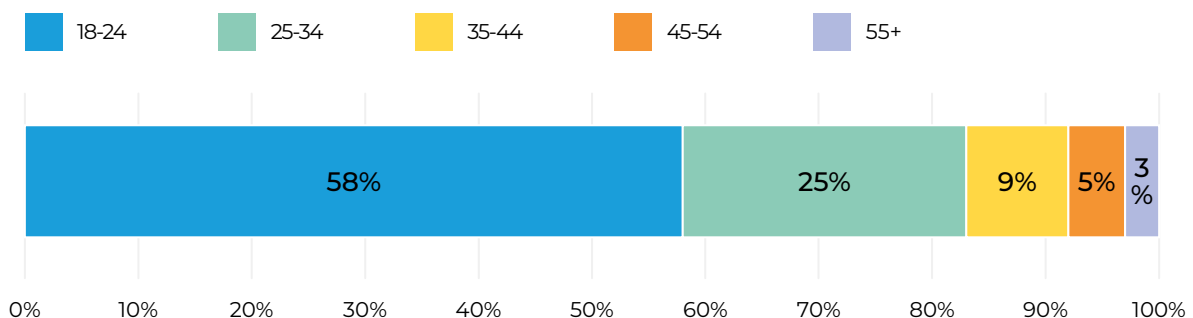
Age (Mauthausen Memorial)

Fig. 62. Age of users of the Mauthausen Memorial's TikTok account (12/2022).

The 62 videos that were uploaded to the account by December 2022 received nearly 900,000 views and nearly 80,000 likes. The account is run by a professional and experienced memorial guide who also acts as the main presenter. The videos that predominantly focus on introducing the historical site and the exhibition but also relate to topics debated within and outside TikTok, such as the controversial book and film "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas," attract a predominantly female viewership that counts for 60% of the account's total audience (Fig. 63). "We are quite happy," states the memorial's creator, "how many people we can reach on TikTok (quantity) and the wonderful community we are building (quality)".

Gender (Mauthausen Memorial)

Female **Male** **Other**

Female	Male
60%	40%
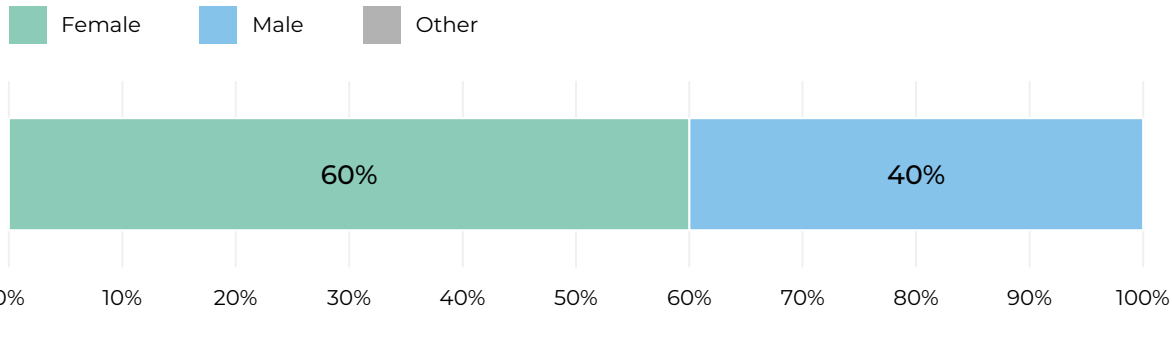
Fig. 63. Gender with which users of the Mauthausen Memorial's account identify (12/2022).

The majority of the users reside in Austria (Fig. 64). Despite attempts to reach audiences beyond the German-speaking countries by consequently addressing topics in English, the Mauthausen Memorial's TikTok account only reached 11% of its viewers in English-speaking countries.

Countries (Mauthausen Memorial)

Germany **Austria** **Switzerland** **USA** **UK**

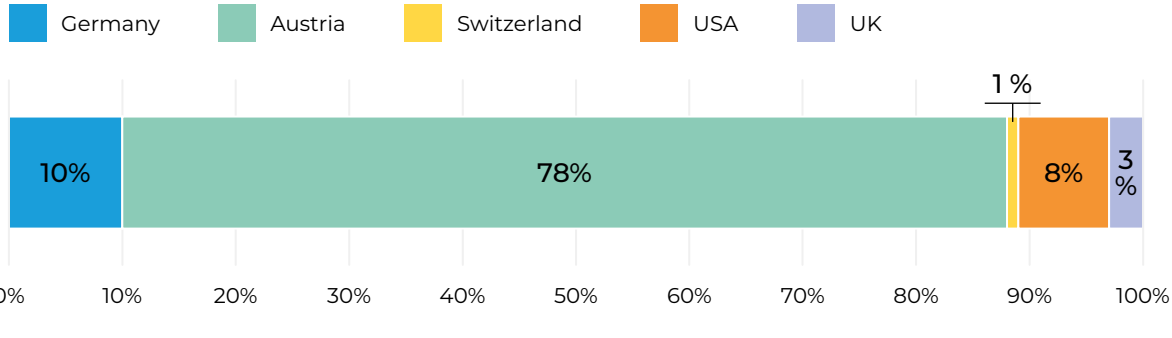| Germany	Austria	Switzerland	USA	UK
10%	78%	1 %	8%	3 %

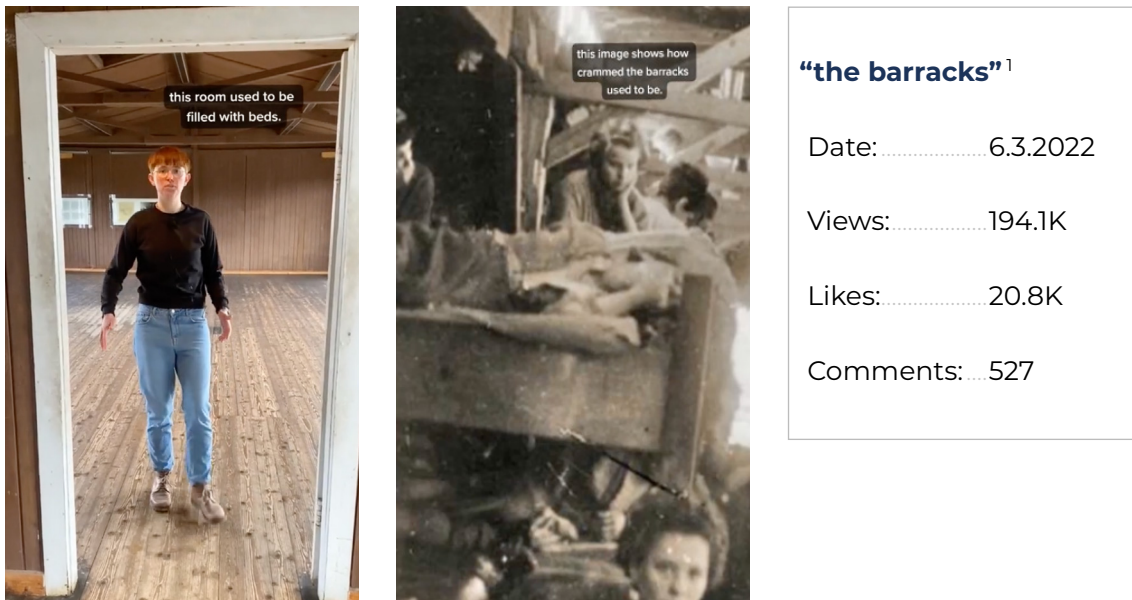Fig. 64. Countries, in which users of the Mauthausen Memorial's account reside (12/2022).

Fig. 65a-b. Screenshots from "the barracks," @mauthausenmemorial.

Based on the memorial's educational concept, the videos explore questions such as: "What does history have to do with me?" and "How was it possible?" For that purpose, educators, guides and creators closely reviewed TikTok in order to decide which elements suit their aims. "We are trying out different formats and are learning from them," explains the account's creator.

Condensing content into brief, snappy videos and devising an engaging hook that prevents people from scrolling, however, has been a challenging task. "Spending time on the app is the best way, and looking at content that might be suited for us (as best practice examples) to get inspired and a clear picture of what a video could look like is the best way to find our own style," recommends the creator.

The account's best-performing videos demonstrate the success of finding an individual style that corresponds with the approach of the memorial and attracts interest and attention among TikTok users. An important element of the Mauthausen Memorial's videos is the continuing presence of the presenter. She became the "face" of the memorial and developed an engaging way of communicating with the account's audience from the beginning. Most videos show her interacting with specific spots at the memorial site, introducing aspects of the Mauthausen Concentration Camp's history and shedding light on the experiences of the prisoners.

This video, garnering almost 200,000 views and 20,000 likes, offers a glimpse of the still-standing barracks within the former concentration camp grounds. The video kicks off with an extended tracking shot, tracing the creator's steps through the barrack's interior (Fig. 65a). This shot aims to immerse viewers, encouraging their sustained engagement. Simultaneously, it conveys a profound personal touch, symbolically welcoming the viewer into this historically significant space.

1. See: https://www.tiktok.com/@mauthausenmemorial/video/7075645595565755654 (last accessed: 29.9.2023).
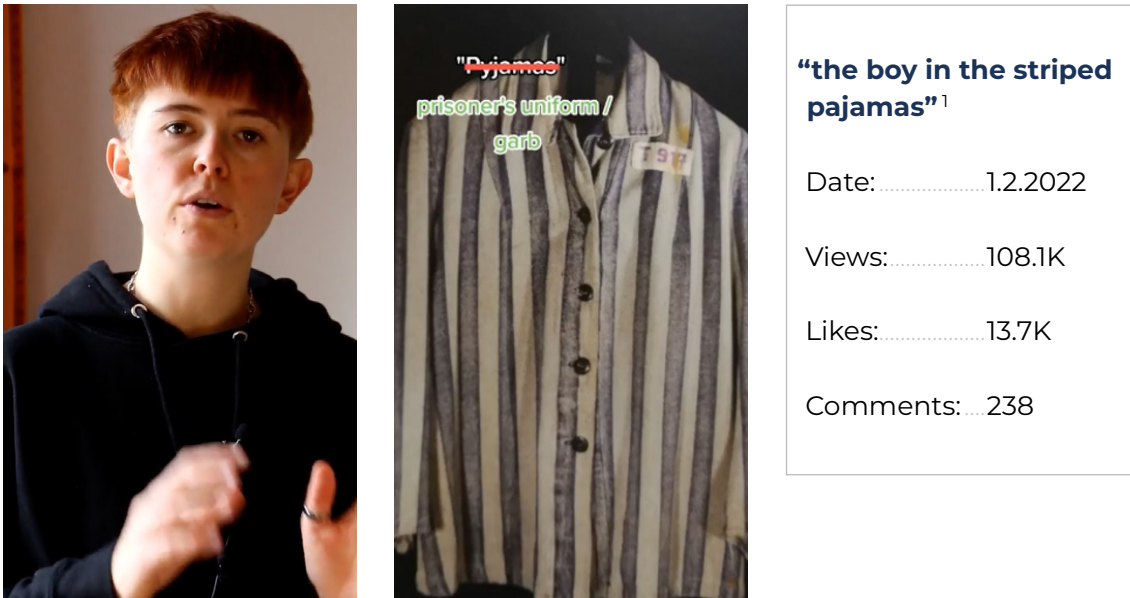
Fig. 66. Screenshots from "the boy in the striped pajamas," @mauthausenmemorial.

Similar to numerous videos crafted at former concentration camp sites, this video invites viewers to engage their imagination in reconstructing the past. Through a blend of the guide's narration, the tangible surroundings, and supplementary elements like text overlays and images, the viewer can establish a profound connection with the site's historical significance.

Stopping in front of a displayed document transforms the traditional guided tour format into a language tailored for the platform. The rhythmic interplay of movement and pauses orchestrates a dynamic narrative that weaves explanatory elements with illustrative gestures. Subsequent shots feature a historical photograph that bridges the gap between the camp's bustling past and its current emptiness (Fig. 65b). This juxtaposition encourages viewers to contemplate the stark contrast between historical eras while fostering a connection with the former prisoners' experiences. Presenting the photograph as a document before panning across the depicted scene, vividly illustrates the camp's claustrophobic barracks, exemplifies the effective use of photographs and images in a historically accurate and contextual manner.

Such attempts that interrelate TikTok with the expertise of a historical educational institution can also be identified in another very successful video that explains why the novel and movie "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas" have to be considered a problematic approach for communicating and educating about the history of the Holocaust.

The video, with more than 100,000 views, very much relies on the engaging addressing of the memorial's creator. Starting with a peculiar object, a striped prisoner uniform, the video teaches about problematic misconceptions fostered by misrepresentations of historical facts in movies and books (Fig. 66).

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1. See: https://www.tiktok.com/@mauthausenmemorial/video/7059734522681740549 (last accessed: 29.9.2023).
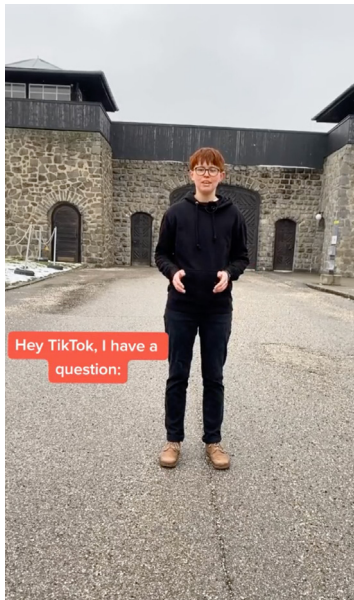
"the Memorial on TikTok" [1]

Date: 13.1.2022

Views: 103.8K

Likes: 10.9K

Comments: 339

Fig. 67. Screenshot from "the Memorial on TikTok," @mauthausenmemorial.

This TikTok video leans less towards education and more towards a responsive format, aiming to actively engage in ongoing debates through the unique perspective and expertise of a memorial institution. This approach aligns with the prevalent rhetoric found on TikTok and, as evidenced by its impressive engagement metrics, it effectively captures increased attention and visibility. With nearly 14,000 likes and 238 comments, it clearly strikes a chord with the audience. Furthermore, supported by additional sources such as studies, the video skillfully blends the responsive mode and the charismatic presence of the presenter with explanatory elements. This synthesis effectively ties the specific case study to the broader context of Holocaust education and commemoration.

More than 100,000 times TikTok users watched one of the first videos posted by the Mauthausen Memorial in January 2022. The video, which was liked more than 10,000 times and received 339 comments, explains why the institution joined TikTok and asks users to engage and respond with questions and comments.

The video already introduces the basic elements that became characteristic of the Mauthausen Memorial's TikTok account: the presence of the site and of the presenter in combination with engaging camera movements and questions directed directly towards the audience. Similar to the video about the barracks, the presenter "welcomes" the TikTok viewer at the iconic gate of the former camp (Fig. 67). The video opens with a question: "How do you feel about concentration camp memorials making TikTok videos?"

This underscores the platform's dialogic approach, where TikTok isn't merely a one-way channel for information dissemination and showcasing the memorial's history and current initiatives. Instead, it's actively employed to foster a responsive educational environment, enriching the TikTok experience with interactive engagement.

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1. https://www.tiktok.com/@mauthausenmemorial/video/7052635047496518917 (last accessed: 29.9.2023).

Reversing the flow in the video about the barracks, this video again intertwines camera movement and pausing. This time, the "composed" frame in front of the gate is put into motion and transforms into a tracking shot following the presenter walking along the site. Thereby, presenter and guiding mode, responsive, explanatory and educational elements are successfully combined. Serving as an introductory video, this particular TikTok set the tone for the following more than 60 videos made by the Mauthausen Memorial in 2022.

According to the memorial's creator, the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative paved the way for them to be on the platform. "In the initiative, we were both given the practical skills to do so, but also the overall understanding of the platform and encouragement to use TikTok for our purposes." In their video content, the Mauthausen Memorial fused TikTok dialects and aesthetics with educational principles. Dialogic elements, as well as direct engagement with particular spots at the site, as well as historical buildings and objects, are the guiding principles of the videos created for the account. In doing so, the memorial set standards for commemorating and educating about the Holocaust and National Socialism on the platform. According to the memorial's creator, "building a network amongst similar institutions helped strengthen our positions and efforts, and we can rely on each other and share knowledge. Without the initiative, we would probably not be on TikTok, or we would not be as successful."

Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference

@WannseeKonferenz

The Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference is located in Berlin, Germany, in the villa where the infamous Wannsee Conference took place on January 20, 1942. The conference was a pivotal event during the Holocaust, where high-ranking Nazi officials convened to discuss the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question." Today, the House of the Wannsee Conference hosts an exhibition and stands as a place of reflection and education. The memorial started regularly creating TikTok videos on June 30, 2022, managed by the memorial's PR department in close collaboration with educators.

Followers:	857
Videos:	26
Views:	78,864
Likes:	4,356
Comments:	364

As of the end of 2022, a total number of 26 videos were uploaded to the account, all of them in German, which was an intentional decision. Correspondingly, the majority of viewers reside in Germany (90%) and in German-speaking countries (total of 98%) (Fig. 68).

Countries (Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference)
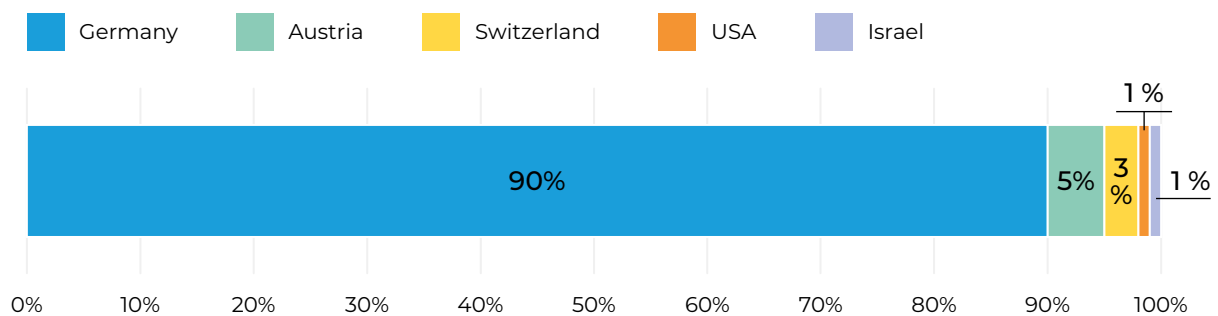

Fig. 68. Countries, in which users of the House of the Wannsee Conference's account reside (12/2022).

By December 2022, the account had 857 followers, and the uploaded videos were watched close to 80,000 times. They received more than 4,000 likes, and users commented 364 times. Like other memorials, the Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference also practices peer-to-peer communication. In most videos, a young volunteer presents topics connected to the history of the Wannsee Conference and the famous villa. The creators from the memorial emphasized that they wanted a "face" representing the account.

Gender (Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference)
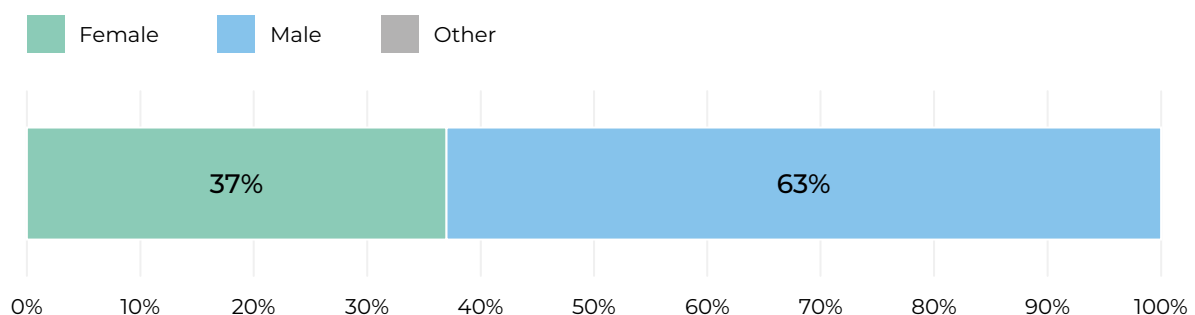

Fig. 69. Gender with which users of the House of the Wannsee Conference's account identify (12/2022).

Most of the account's users identify as male, 63% (Fig. 69). This is a similar percentage as in case of "Keeping Memories" and significantly higher than in the case of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial.

The content of the videos posted by the Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference is predominantly educational and explanatory. The content, however, primarily deals with perpetrator documents and discusses the history and memory of the Holocaust in relation to perpetrator perspectives. An important reference of several videos is the infamous protocol of the Wannsee Conference, which, as a facsimile, is also an important part of the current exhibition.

According to the memorial's creators, the account was still under construction as of the end of 2022, taking into account the fact that it was only launched months after the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative. Users of the account evenly represent all age groups.

Age (Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference)
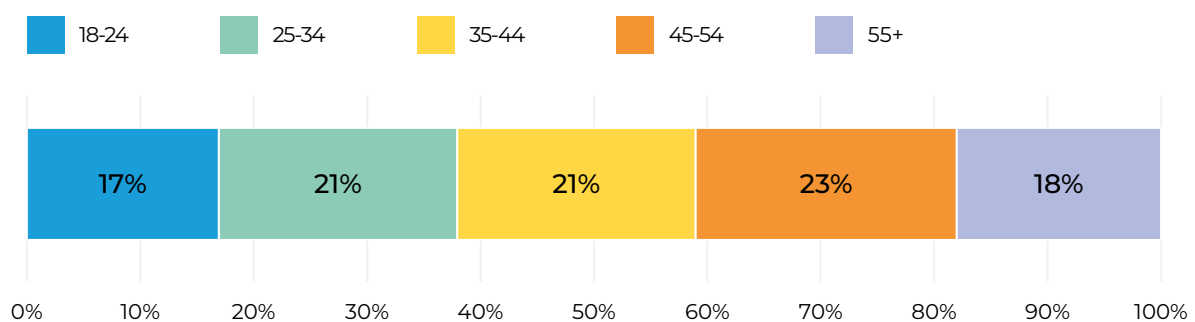

Fig. 70. Age of users of the House of the Wannsee Conference's account (12/2022).

The biggest user group, 41%, is aged 45 and older. 38% of the users are younger than 35 years of age. 21% of the users are aged 35-45 (Fig. 70).

According to the creators, they tried to adopt typical TikTok aesthetics in their videos, in particular loops, fast editing and music. The most successful videos underscore the fact that delving into historical documents heightened viewer engagement, with explanatory and informative content drawing considerable attention. One noteworthy example, the top-performing video up to the end of 2022, introduces the Wannsee Conference protocol as the initial segment of a two-part series dedicated to this historical document. Impressively, this video garnered 12,000 views and earned 360 likes.

"Das Protokoll Teil 1" [1]

Date: 18.7.2022

Views: 12K

Likes: 360

Comments: 13

Fig. 71. Screenshot from "das Protokoll Teil 1," @WannseeKonferenz.

The video uses the green screen effect to interact with the document for enhanced engagement (Fig. 71). Initially, the presenter appears in the foreground, providing an explanation of the historical context. Subsequently, the camera smoothly transitions to display the showcased facsimile of the protocol while featuring the presenter within the exhibition space.

In doing so, the memorial makes use of TikTok's potential to interrelate different visual layers. This is a particularly effective way to engage with and analyze historical sources such as documents or photographs. Opening with a question ("How do we actually know about the Wannsee Conference?"), the video seeks to attract interest among viewers. Taking into account that the protocol is rather iconic despite most people knowing few details about it, this TikTok, on the one hand, seeks to utilize the format of explanatory videos for the purpose of introducing the history of the Wannsee Conference and on the other hand develops a specific vocabulary for exploring historical sources by the help of short videos.

Based on a digital learning station in the memorial's exhibition that enables visitors to critically review historical photographs, the Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference's second best- performing video focuses on a picture depicting the deportation of Jews from the city of Baden-Baden and enacts an exemplary close reading of the photograph.

1. See: https://www.tiktok.com/@wannseekonferenz/video/7121765297832381701 (29.9.2023).

"Was ist in 1938 in Baden-Baden passiert?"[1]

Date: 2.7.2022

Views: 11.7K

Likes: 778
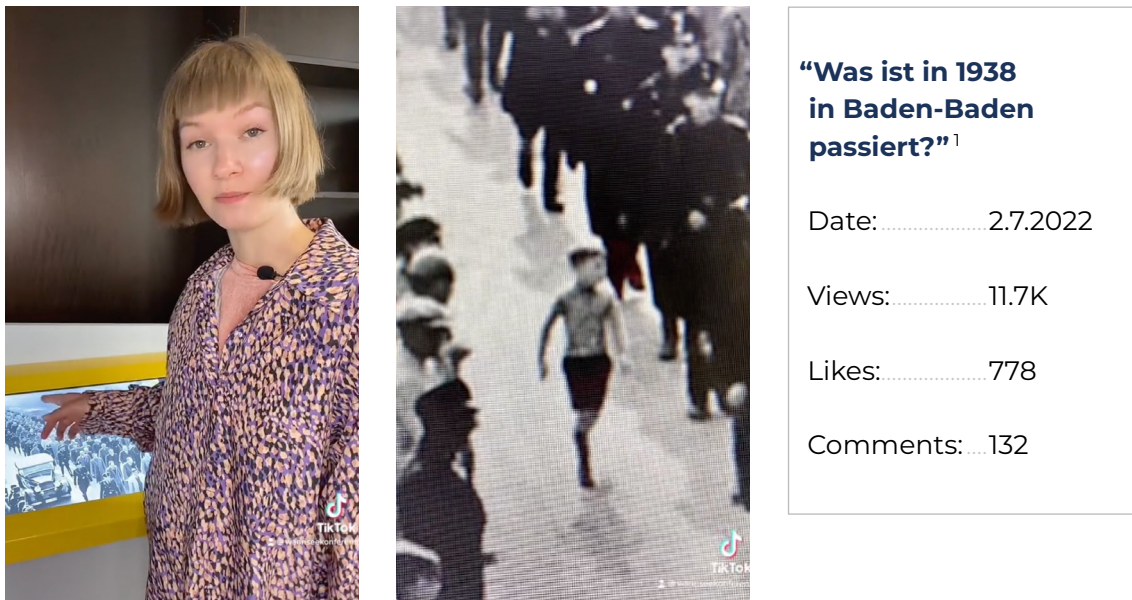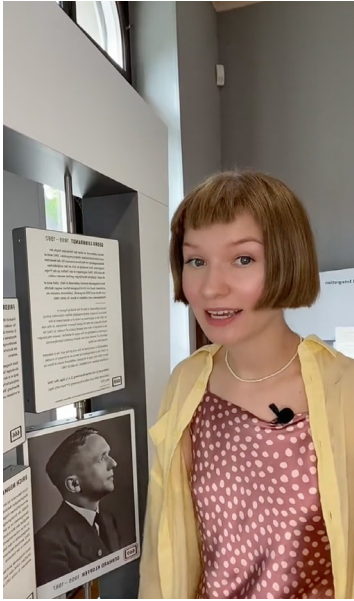
Comments: ... 132

Fig. 72. Screenshots from "Was ist in 1938 in Baden-Baden passiert?," @WannseeKonferenz.

The video starts with a direct address to the viewers: "Join me, I'd like to share an image with you." It then employs a zoom-in effect, transitioning from the digital learning station's display to the historical photograph, combining a typical TikTok effect with an immersive gesture (Fig. 72). The subsequent slow panning shot across the photograph is complemented by the presenter's contextual information. The camera then zooms in closely on specific details within the image. This TikTok video effectively conducts a detailed analysis, showcasing the format's capacity for investigating historical sources within the constraints of short videos.

Unlike the previously mentioned TikTok video, this one does not employ the green screen effect. Instead, interaction is facilitated through gestures, such as pointing at the displayed photograph on the learning station, and through exploratory camera movements, all accompanied by an informative voice-over narration.

The third best-performing video, with nearly 10,000 views and around 500 likes, has a similar narrative structure. It also starts in the exhibition and highlights a particular displayed object, in this case, the obituary notice of a former participant of the Wannsee Conference.

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1. See: https://www.tiktok.com/@wannseekonferenz/video/7115849860833758469 (last accessed: 29.9.2023).

Date: 4.7.2022

Views: 9226

Likes: 552

Comments: 31

Fig. 73. Screenshot from "Empörende Todesanzeige," @WannseeKonferenz.

Embodying the role of a guide in the exhibition, the presenter points towards the display, after which the camera slowly zooms-into the document. Other than the previously analyzed video, this TikTok utilizes music that creates a tense atmosphere.

The video uses jump cuts to create a dynamic narrative that begins with the post-war document and then shifts the focus to a specific participant of the conference and his post-war biography. While standing beside the portrait photograph of this participant in the exhibition, the video ingeniously replicates the green screen effect within the physical setting (Fig. 73). In its final shot, the video returns to the obituary notice, the central historical document, forming a circular narrative frame that encourages viewers to delve deeper into the history of the Wannsee Conference and its participants.

Aligned with the unique significance of the Wannsee Conference protocol and other documents associated with the perpetrators within the curatorial and educational framework of the memorial site, the House of the Wannsee Conference places a special emphasis on methods for effectively involving and connecting with historical documents and photographs. This approach harnesses a multimodal structure, incorporating elements like green screens, and leverages the exploratory capabilities of mobile cameras. Viewers are thus empowered to explore captivating historical artifacts and uncover the narratives concealed within the documents with the help of voice-over explanations and an engaging presenter.

1. See: https://www.tiktok.com/@wannseekonferenz/video/7116554767672872197 (last accessed: 29.9.2023).

COMPARATIVE SUMMARY

Each of the five institutions has carefully crafted unique strategies tailored to their specific objectives on TikTok. One commonality among all these institutions is their recognition of the significant impact achieved by incorporating historical documents and photographs into their TikTok content. This deliberate choice not only boosted viewer engagement with the institutions videos but also enhanced the educational aspect of their TikTok strategies.

Furthermore, there was a strong emphasis on educational content that unified the institutions creation strategies. They all aimed to utilize TikTok as an educational space to disseminate valuable knowledge about the Holocaust and National Socialism, while also providing viewers with profound insights into historical events and the personal experiences of victims, prisoners and those who are connected to these periods.

Effective storytelling was another key element in the institutions approach. They dedicated themselves to crafting compelling narratives within their TikTok videos, whether through the presentation of historical documents, personal biographies, or exploring thought-provoking questions posed by viewers. Their overarching objective was to capture the viewer's attention and ignite curiosity. Effective storytelling was achieved through the implementation of peer-to-peer communication, centered around a presenter acting as the official knowledge mediator. This approach ensured the institutions had a consistent presence on the 'For You' page, making their profile highly recognizable to viewers.

However, it's important to note the memorials employed diverse methods for incorporating various modes of historical storytelling. Concentration camp memorials often seamlessly merged the visit mode with explanatory or educational modes in their videos. In contrast, institutions like the Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference and "Keeping Memories" innovatively engaged with historical sources and illuminated biographical narratives. Additionally, "Keeping Memories" embraced a contemporary communication pattern by focusing on relatable topics like moral dilemmas, which sparked current discussions and resonated with viewers. Meanwhile, the Bergen-Belsen Memorial effectively utilized the well-known figure of Anne Frank to capture attention to the past, and raise awareness of their historical site.

Finally, institutions keenly recognize the symbiotic relationship between mobile cameras and the versatility of multimodal videos. This recognition empowers them to meticulously zoom in on specific historical details, uncover material remnants, and reveal concealed traces of stories. By harnessing these tools effectively, institutions succeed in not only piquing the curiosity of their audience but also kindling a genuine interest in content that delves into the intricate history and enduring memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust.

CONCLUSIONS

TikTok provides a unique environment for institutional endeavors aimed at safeguarding, transmitting, and perpetuating Holocaust memory among younger audiences. By translating traditional memorialization practices into the TikTok vernacular, accounts established in context of the TikTok Shoah Commemoration & Education Initiative developed innovative methods for commemorating the Holocaust that depart from conventional visual presentations and established online practices of remembrance and education. In this environment, users can generate responsive content templates that render the memory of the Holocaust more palpable and relatable to younger generations. In conclusion, our report identifies the following key indicators for the success of the initiative:

Engaging Diverse Audiences

Memorials and museums have succeeded in connecting with younger audiences on TikTok. Nonetheless, the institutions' profiles managed to significantly broaden their audience and reach a new cohort of interested individuals, highlighting their ability to captivate and engage a diverse range of age groups and adeptly bridge generational divides. This age deviation underscores TikTok's evolution from a platform that is exclusively for the young cohort to one that also draws older users genuinely interested in Holocaust and National Socialism- related content.

Personalizing History

Memorials and museums have adopted a personalized approach in their content creation to convey the history of the Holocaust. The institutions' personalized approach, frequently drawing upon individual stories, memories, letters or photographs, underscores TikTok's role as a platform for both disseminating information and fostering empathy with history, influenced by the platform's thriving micro-attention economy. Viewers are actively encouraged to engage with these individual sources, adding an immersive dimension to the learning experience.

Exploring History with Nuances

Memorials and museums have harnessed TikTok's unique ability to focus on videos that emphasize specific details, objects, locations, dates, or any other particularities. This capacity is immensely valuable for the educational and occasionally even forensic methodologies adopted by the institutions. It facilitates a more nuanced exploration of historical narratives and locations, as well as a meticulous examination of fragments from testimonies or documentation. Beyond merely piquing the curiosity of users, this approach actively encourages viewers to contemplate historical details that they might otherwise have overlooked.

Fostering Dialogue

Memorials and museums have skillfully cultivated a dialogic space for both commemoration and education on TikTok, fostering peer-to-peer communication in their videos. Through the use of presenters who effectively become the 'face' of their accounts, these institutions have established a steadfast and vital connection among viewers, historical sites, and human mediators. By incorporating personal narratives, encouraging interaction through questions and comments, and employing innovative visual techniques such as the green screen, these presenters inject TikTok with a dynamic and engaging quality, thereby making history more accessible and relatable to their audiences.

Composing Multilayered History

Memorials and museums have skillfully harnessed TikTok's multimodal features, incorporating a rich variety of visual and auditory elements. TikTok's layered aesthetic structure, including the frequent use of overlay text in instructional videos, has proven especially effective in conveying the intricate history of the Holocaust and National Socialism. This reliance on TikTok's multilayered nature underscores institutions' clear preference for the platform's dialogic and educational capabilities within this context.

Condensing, Yet Enriching Historytelling

Memorials and museums have embraced the time constraint of TikTok videos to explore fresh avenues for historical storytelling. These institutions predominantly employ the 'anecdotal' structure seen in explanatory and educational TikTok videos, crafting concise yet informative 'emblems' of the history of the Holocaust. This highlights the platform's potential for delivering brief yet rich and complex historical narratives within a 60-second timeframe. Short videos garnered the highest engagement rates, prompting institutions to devise strategies for addressing topics demanding deeper contextual exploration.

Showcasing Historical Sites

Memorials and museums frequently employ variations of the visit mode, with presenters physically present at the historical sites to introduce segments of their institutions' collections and spaces. This approach emphasizes the historical significance of these sites and other Holocaust-related locations, effectively serving as digital tour guides and granting virtual access to places that may be restricted for offline visitors. Consequently, these historical sites play a pivotal role in educating and fostering a deeper understanding of the Holocaust through the institutions' profiles.

Holocaust commemoration and education on TikTok

- Engages and Connects with Audiences of All Ages

- Facilitates Peer-to-Peer Communication and Highlights Personal Stories

- Guides Viewers Through Historical Sites and Locations

- Encourages Close Exploration of Historical Artifacts and Interaction with Sources

- Presents History Multimodally and in Multilayered Formats

- Leverages TikTok Features for Condensed Yet Powerful Historical Storytelling

Our research findings testify to the efficacy of employing TikTok for commemorative and educational objectives, emphasizing the importance of strengthening memorials and museums in their crucial endeavors to craft novel content that grapples with the complexities of this historical subject and establishes exemplary standards. These institutions have effectively devised strategies for conducting responsible dialogues regarding the Holocaust and National Socialism on TikTok, emphasizing the utmost significance of disseminating accurate information and engaging in ethical content creation. Consequently, it is imperative and immensely pertinent to advocate best practices in Holocaust education on TikTok.

Takeaways for future improvement of
Holocaust commemoration and education on TikTok:

- Innovative Approaches

- Diverse Content Modalities

- Educational Context

- Cultivate Creative Communal Engagement

- Support Memorials and Museums

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