

# Case Studies: Empowerment 1

## Case 1: Value analysis of TikTok's "For You" feed

**For this case study, we analyze TikTok's "For You" feed and conduct a value analysis of it. To achieve this, relevant information has been gathered from a variety of sources, including official TikTok support and media articles that explain the workings of the TikTok algorithm.**

### Task

Your task is to extract and identify insights and key elements from the provided information below:

- 1) Fill the Artifact Values questionnaire in the appendix for the "For You" feed of TikTok.
- 2) Identify a stakeholder of TikTok for whom there is one value-based benefit and one value-based harm: briefly describe the profile of this stakeholder (1 short paragraph) and fill out the table in the appendix.
- 3) Draw the value-based tension map corresponding to the table: do you identify value-based tensions?

### Provided information

#### Source 1:

"For You is a personalized feed of content based on your interests and engagement. The For You feed is the first feed you'll see when you open TikTok. The more you use TikTok, the more your For You feed will reflect your interests."

**"You can use the following features to help influence the content you see on your For You feed or have a new set of videos recommended to you:**

- Not interested: If you don't care for a specific video, you can share feedback if you're not interested and we'll show you fewer videos like it.
- Refresh your feed: You can refresh your For You feed to view a new set of popular videos, as if you've just signed up for TikTok."

#### Source 2:

"TikTok is designed around discovering content for you, not giving you a platform to find it for yourself. You open the app to the "For You" page — the stream of videos that TikTok thinks you'll like — which automatically plays a full-screen vertical video. There's no way to disable the autoplay. There are your typical engagement icons so you can "like," bookmark, share, and comment on the video."

**"We have information overload and choice overload, and this is a response to that,"** said Alec Pollak, EVP of engagement strategy at Area 23, an IPG Health company. **"It's a comfortable space to be in when you don't have to make choices."**

"TikTok is classified as a social media app, but it isn't designed around the social network you've curated for yourself. The social side of it is there, sure, but it's peripheral. TikTok's center is choosing content for you and featuring that by default. You can "curate" that content to a degree by feeding TikTok as much information as possible about you through your interactions with the app to get the best algorithmically driven For You page possible."

#### Source 3:

"Here are the key reasons why getting featured on the FYP is so important for your growth on TikTok:

- **Massive Visibility:** The FYP is where most users spend the majority of their time on TikTok. When your video appears on this highly-trafficked page, it exposes your content to countless new viewers, **vastly expanding your reach beyond your existing follower base.**
- **Diverse Audience:** **The FYP caters to various interests and demographics.** Thus, landing on the FYP allows you to connect with a broader, more diverse audience that you might not have reached through other means. [...]
- **Content Validation:** Getting featured on the FYP is a strong indicator that your content resonates with TikTok users. **This validation can boost your confidence as a content creator** and motivate you to continue creating engaging videos.
- **Viral Potential:** When a video performs exceptionally well on the FYP, it has the potential to go viral. Viral videos can garner millions of views and substantially accelerate your growth on TikTok.”

“TikTok says it visually scans content to look for things that violate its rules, such as nudity, but the company insists the For You algorithm doesn’t take into account what videos look like or the way they were filmed.”

#### Source 4:

“When you view content in your Friends Tab, For You, Following, and LIVE feeds, our goal is to find a balance between suggesting content that’s relevant to you while also allowing you to discover new and diverse content and creators, and **experience new perspectives and ideas.** [...] We typically don’t recommend content you’ve already seen and we’ll encourage you to explore different categories of content and creators through recommendations.”

“Our recommender systems are designed with safety as a key consideration and we remove any content identified as violating our Community Guideline”

## Case 2: Digital Ethics Canvas

### Scenario: Developing a Screen Time Reduction App

You are a developer working on an app called “QuitDoomScrolling” designed to help users reduce their screen time and promote healthier digital habits. The app tracks how much time users spend on various apps, sends notifications when they exceed their self-imposed limits, and offers suggestions for offline activities. The goal is to empower users to take control of their digital consumption and improve their overall well-being.

### Task

Before proceeding with development, you decide to **apply the Digital Ethics Canvas** to evaluate the ethical implications of this algorithm. Your task is:

1. **Evaluate the benefits:** list expected benefits + describe briefly the context and solution (NB: in the Digital Ethics Canvas, the term “solution” is used to name the software under analysis)
2. **Evaluate the risks:** Identify risks using the five ethical lenses and evaluate their level
3. **Reduce the risks:** Outline mitigation measures
4. **Review:** Assess if benefits outweigh risks and decide whether to proceed with the project

Here is the original [Template for the digital ethics canvas](#)

## Case 3: Exploring “dark” patterns in digital design

### Task

Visit the following website: [Dark Patterns](#) and engage with the various examples presented. Pay close attention to how these patterns affect your decision-making process. Then answer the following questions:

1. What emotions or reactions did you experience when encountering the patterns presented on the website?
2. Have you encountered similar or different types of patterns in apps or websites you use? If yes, what were they?
3. In what kind of situation might a software engineer find themselves implementing similar “dark” patterns in a software interface?

## Appendix

### Artifact Values Questionnaire

	Yes	No	DK
Power-Resources (POR) Power through control of material and social resources Manifestation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Power-Dominance (POD) Power through exercising control over people Manifestation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Achievement (AC) Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards Manifestation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hedonism (HE) Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself Manifestation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stimulation (ST) Excitement, novelty and challenge in life Manifestation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-Direction Action (SDA) The freedom to determine one’s own actions Manifestation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-Direction Thoughts (SDT) The freedom to cultivate one’s own ideas and abilities Manifestation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Universalism-Tolerance (UNT) Acceptance and understanding of those who are different from oneself Manifestation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Universalism-Concern (UNC) Commitment to equality, justice, and protection for all people Manifestation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Universalism-Nature (UNN) Preservation of the natural environment Manifestation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Humility (HUM)	Recognizing one’s insignificance in the larger scheme of things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manifestation:				
Benevolence-Dependability (BED)	Being a reliable a trustworthy member of the in-group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manifestation:				
Benevolence-Caring (BEC)	Devotion to the welfare of in-group members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manifestation:				
Tradition (TR)	Maintaining and preserving cultural, family, or religious traditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manifestation:				
Conformity-Interpersonal (COI)	Avoidance of upsetting or harming other people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manifestation:				
Conformity-Rules (COR)	Compliance with rules, laws, and formal obligations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manifestation:				
Security-Societal (SES)	Safety and stability in the wider society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manifestation:				
Security-Personal (SEP)	Safety in one’s immediate environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manifestation:				
Face (FAC)	Security and power through maintaining one’s public image and avoiding humiliation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manifestation:				

**Value-based benefits and harms table**

Stakeholder	Key values	Manifested	Benefits	Harms

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