The Political Game on Social Media
A quantitative study of to what extent Swedish first-time voters were influenced by political videos on “TikTok”
Abstract

This research explores if Sweden, a country with high trust in the political system could be challenged by social media. The study focuses on one spectrum of social media, TikTok, that exploded during the covid-19 pandemic and is proof of how fast social media develops and reaches out to human beings. The study addresses a research gap regarding this new social media platform as it examines exposure to political content and impact on political behavior. Specifically, the study focuses on first-time voters voting behavior in the Swedish election 2022. This thesis is based on a digital survey sent out to 139 respondents during November 2022. The result indicates that there is a relationship between viewing time on TikTok and voting behavior among young voters in the Swedish election 2022. The study ends with a discussion about how specific political content the respondent was exposed to on TikTok could have had an impact on the political behavior in the Swedish election 2022.

Key Words
Political science, Social media, TikTok, Political behavior, First-time voters, Swedish election 2022, Political psychology, The Funnel of Causality, Priming

Acknowledgements

This thesis was constructed through the political science program at Linnaeus University in 2022 by Bethina Dallmann. The research would not have been successfully completed without involvements by some specific individuals. Therefore, I would like to acknowledge and show gratitude to the respondents who answered the survey, my loved ones who have been there during the research process and the extraordinary supervisor Emma Ricknell, who always were available to guide and support the project. Both examiner and opponents shall be acknowledged for their great work of examining the work.
# Table of Contents

1 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 6
  1.1 Background ........................................................................................................ 6
  1.2 Research Gap ................................................................................................... 7
  1.3 Purpose and Research Questions .................................................................... 7
  1.4 Disposition ....................................................................................................... 8

2 Previous Research ................................................................................................. 8
  2.1 Social Media and Voting Behavior ................................................................. 8
  2.2 Social Media and Voting Behavior in Sweden ............................................. 9
  2.3 TikTok ............................................................................................................... 10

3 Theoretical Framework ......................................................................................... 12
  3.1 The Funnel of Causality .................................................................................. 12
  3.2 Priming ............................................................................................................ 13
  3.3 Theoretical Framework Summary ................................................................. 14

4 Method and Material ............................................................................................ 14
  4.1 Research Design ............................................................................................... 14
    4.1.1 Quantitative or Qualitative Approach .................................................. 15
    4.1.2 Data Collection Method ........................................................................ 15
  4.2 Data Collection Instruments .......................................................................... 16
    4.2.1 Survey ....................................................................................................... 16
  4.3 Operationalization ........................................................................................... 17
  4.4 Conceptual Framework ................................................................................... 19
  4.5 Research Model ............................................................................................... 20
  4.6 Sampling .......................................................................................................... 23
  4.7 Ethical Aspects ................................................................................................. 23
  4.8 Delimitations .................................................................................................... 24
  4.9 Quality Criteria ............................................................................................... 25
    4.9.1 Validity and Reliability ........................................................................... 25
    4.9.2 Trustworthiness ....................................................................................... 26
  4.10 Method and Material Summary ................................................................... 27

5 Results .................................................................................................................. 28
  5.1 Hypothesis 1 .................................................................................................... 28
  5.2 Hypothesis 2 .................................................................................................... 32
  5.3 Hypothesis 3 .................................................................................................... 35
  5.4 Summary of Result ......................................................................................... 39

6 Analysis and Discussion ....................................................................................... 40
  6.1 Research Question 1 ....................................................................................... 40
  6.2 Research Question 2 ....................................................................................... 41

7 General Discussion ............................................................................................... 42

8 Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 44

9 Further Research ................................................................................................ 44

10 Reference List ..................................................................................................... 46

11 Appendix ............................................................................................................. 49
List of Figures

Figure 1. The Funnel of Causality................................................................. 13
Figure 2. Research model 1, reconstruction of The Funnel of Causality ..... 20
Figure 3. Research model 2 ................................................................. 21
Figure 4. Close-up of Research Model 2 .............................................. 22
Figure 5. "Q6 How many days a week do you use the app TikTok?" by "Q10_1 I became more sure of what party to vote for after a video on TikTok" ........................................................................................................ 30
Figure 6. Percentage bar chart .......................................................... 33
Figure 7. Percentage bar chart.......................................................... 37

List of Tables

Table 1. Summary of the Theoretical Framework ........................................ 14
Table 2. Summary of Method and Material .............................................. 27
Table 3. Usage of TikTok days per week and voting confidence after political exposure on TikTok ................................................................. 28
Table 4. Correlation analysis ............................................................... 29
Table 5. Regression Analysis ............................................................... 31
Table 6. Descriptive Statistics .................................................................. 32
Table 7. Correlation Analysis ............................................................... 33
Table 8. Regression Analysis ............................................................... 34
Table 9. Descriptive Statistics ............................................................... 35
Table 10. Correlation Analysis .............................................................. 36
Table 11. Regression Analysis .............................................................. 38
Table 12. Summary of Result .............................................................. 39
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Historically, political actors reached out to voters by being visible on important locations, holding political speeches and writing articles in newspapers. Social media has contributed to new forms of communication and allowed political actors to expand their political campaign to levels that were previously unimaginable. Unlike traditional mass media, whomever can whenever publish content on social media in order to gain access to the public.

It seems that ninety-four percent of the Swedish population from the age of eight and above have used social media at least one time during the previous year, demonstrating in one aspect how Sweden is a highly digitalized country. The younger generation seems to use social media more frequently, and the popularity for using certain platforms has started to shift (Internetstiftelsen, 2022). Facebook was previously the most popular social media platform to use and is still most popular among people born in the 90s. However, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok are the most popular social media platforms among people born between 2000 and onwards. During the global pandemic, a period during which all households were kept isolated, the social media platform TikTok exploded (Internetstiftelsen, 2022).

Instead of traditional social media platforms, like Facebook or Twitter where people mostly networks through text messages and hyperlinks, TikTok is an app where people interact with video content. The young generation (born in 10-29 years old) spends generally 1.5 hours every day viewing the app TikTok (Doyle, 2022). Previous research has implied that TikTok had an impact on human voting behavior in the matter of increasing peoples’ already made-up values (Cottam et al., 2010, p. 152). Political actors and scientists have shown concerns regarding TikTok’s influence on human behavior and been eager to even ban the app (Serrano et al., 2020, p. 264., Wang & Shepardson, 2020).
It is rather unknown whether social media plays a big part on voting behavior since it is a new phenomenon and are constantly in change. Therefore, it is of high interest to explore if a change in the new generation’s voting behavior can be identified and if actors with political interest could see potential in changing their political strategies.

This thesis examines to what extent TikTok could have had an impact on first-time voters’ political behavior in the Swedish election 2022. This study aims to connect previous research, theories, and hypotheses that have been developed and apply these to the results of a digital survey sent out to first-time voters in Sweden after the Swedish election 2022.

1.2 Research Gap

Similar studies (e.g., Cerví & Marín Lladó 2021; Cottam et al., 2010; Mosco, 2019; Ricknell, 2019), mentioned in section 1.1 Background and chapter 2 Previous research, have focused on to what extent public opinion has been influenced by social media such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and 4Chan. However, these studies do not consider the voting behavior effects of the breakthrough of TikTok and to what extent political content affected first-time voters during the Swedish parliamentary election 2022.

1.3 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine if viewing time and exposure to political content correlates with how the respondent voted in the Swedish election 2022. The chosen field is relevant for political science since several political actors have invested increased number of resources on social media whereby citizens seemed to have been influenced by it. TikTok is an area of social media that is heavily used by first-time voters as well as its rather unexplored. These arguments have led to questioning if citizens’ rights of democracy could be manipulated by the social media and this thesis will investigate one spectrum of social media, TikTok.
Two main questions were developed to investigate the problem discussion and permeate the study. The research questions are:

- Q1 Is there a correlation between viewing time and first-time voters’ political behavior in the Swedish election 2022?
- Q2 Did the political content on TikTok affect first-time voters’ political behavior in the Swedish election 2022?

1.4 Disposition

The study will henceforward present previous research and theoretical framework before moving on to chapter 4 Method and Material that describes how the study was conducted and used materials. The results are presented in chapter 5, which is followed by chapter 6 Analysis and Discussion. Lastly, chapter 7 concludes the research and chapter 8 give proposals for further research.

2 Previous Research

Chapter 2 provides an account of previous research relevant to the study. It starts with a general presentation of previous research on plausible effects of social media on citizen’s voting behavior and TikTok.

2.1 Social Media and Voting Behavior

Skeptical scientists internationally, have expressed warnings of democracy being under threat due to algorithms and cyber troops angling the content spread to users. It has been reported that large social media platforms such as Facebook have the power to regulate ads on newspaper sites and what type of content that is ranked highest. This has effectively been used during elections to gain public opinion (Mosco, 2018).

In the essence of social media, the concept of cyber troops has been developed with purpose to influence public opinion. These have been identified globally and are considered as an international democracy threat.
Cyber troops are defined as “[…] government, military or political party teams committed to manipulating public opinion over social media” (Bradshaw & Howard, 2017, p. 3). These have engaged with users by commenting on different social media pages in favor of certain political beliefs/parties or have targeted individuals, e.g., journalists to make sure that they post certain content to satisfy their followers (Bradshaw & Howard, 2017, p. 10). The United States has invested large amounts of money to fund research about how human voting behavior is affected by interacting with online content which can be used in order to increase public opinion (Bradshaw & Howard, 2017, p. 20).

2.2 Social Media and Voting Behavior in Sweden

In the 2014 Swedish election, voters declared that the party they been exposed to the most on social media had been the Feminist Initiative party followed by the Left Party, the Center Party, and the Green Party. The parties that received the least exposure on social media were Moderate Party, Social Democrats, Liberals, the Sweden Democrats, and the Christian Democrats (Bjereld et al., 2018, p. 158).

According to the parties during the Swedish election of 2014, the Feminist Initiative party and the Moderates stated that they had been very active on social media whereas the Social Democrats had not been as active. Candidates for the Green Party and the Left Party were the most skeptical of using social media to mobilize voters’, but their members were highly active (Bjereld et al., 2018, pp. 165-166). The Sweden Democrats and Christian Party used social media the least and had least amount of exposure (Bjereld et al., 2018, p. 166).

Regarding mobilization of Swedish voters in connection with the 2018 election, it has been shown that traditional media was more effective than social media throughout all age groups (Bjereld et al., 2018, pp. 128-129). However, Social Democrats appear to have used social media heavily with the goal of trying to increase public opinion (Bjereld et al., 2018, p. 158). Social media has turned out to be a more effective tool for individual
politicians rather than for whole parties (Bjereld et al., 2018, pp. 130-132). Previous research has proven a relationship between political communication among alt-right sympathizers and political behavior through 4chan, a digital platform, where so-called “electronic tribes” seemed to have encouraged each other to discuss alt-right politics in connection with the 2018 Swedish election (Ricknell, 2019).

To summarize, digital platforms opened for a free and individualized society. This have led to political actors as well as cyber troops manipulating different digital platforms to build public opinion and in the long run may influence democracy internationally.

2.3 TikTok

The digital app, TikTok, with one billion users around the globe has proved to be one of the largest social media platforms globally in 2022 (Doyle, 2022). The app was originally constructed for users to make short videos that lasted for 15 seconds and had a different name, “musical.ly” that was merged to the Chinese company “Byte dance” in 2018 whereby the app changed name from “Musical.ly” to “TikTok”. The same concept remained (Internetstiftelsen, 2020).

There has been an increase of political actors on TikTok, who produce videos containing political messages (Cervi & Marin-Llado, 2021). Users on the app have also announced that their ‘Foryourpage’, the general page on TikTok, has been exposed to content based on their political interests through likes, viewing time and comments in videos (Cervi & Marin-Llado, 2021).

TikTok brings new aspects to social media since users can interact with video content instead of sharing hyperlinks. New technology such as face recognition have enabled for spreading specific content such as advertises, political content. Serrano et al. (2020, p. 264) even stated “[…] Political campaigns and third parties may be eager to collect data on young people as many of them are first time voters or are still not old enough to vote”.

10
TikTok has made restrictions for political actors to act directly on the app, but this has not prevented production of political content (TikTok, 2022). Individual party members, as well as political influencers, are not blocked for spreading political messages on a personal account. There are political youth parties that have accounts on the app. For instance, Social democrats youth party, SSU, has 64,200 followers and their most popular video, released 5 September 2022 had a reach of 849,200 views (27-12-2022). The moderate youth party, MUF, has 32,600 followers and their most popular video published before the Swedish election in August 16, 2022 and had a reach of 731,400 views in 27-12-2022 (MUF, 2022). The Moderates also has an account on TikTok with 69,100 followers where the most popular video had a reach of 1,900,000 views (Moderaterna, 2022). There are also anonymous political accounts that produce videos with political content that are angled to a particular party’s favor, for instance an account with 9,039 followers (27-12-2022) have made political videos around 9 September 2022 to favor the Sweden Democrats that have had a reach up to 2,100,000 views (sunt_fornuft, 2022). It seems that political influencers are established on the app producing videos encouraging users to value certain matters or even vote for a certain party (Papakyriakopoulos et al., 2022).

Users of TikTok have reported receiving one type of political content which may be concerning angled information affecting young peoples’ voting behavior (Cerví & Marin-Lladó, 2021). Previous demographic data indicates that there are usually young active voters on TikTok. Republicans tended to produce more political content with higher response frequency and Democrats seem to have been more engaged in different types of political discussions (Serrano et al., 2020, p. 257). Concerns has been expressed in different countries to ban the app (Crevi & Marin-Lladó, 2021). For instance, during his presidency Donald Trump claimed that TikTok should be banned due to its threat to U.S. security (Wang & Shepardson, 2020).
3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents two sections 3.1 The Funnel of Causality and 3.2 Priming that will be used as a theoretical framework in this study. These sections will complement each other and will permeate the study and contribute to the field political science.

3.1 The Funnel of Causality

The funnel of causality is a redevelopment of the Michigan School model that was originally developed to investigate American voter behavior. The Michigan school researchers investigated whether Americans had consistent values or not. Since the Michigan school model lacked information in some areas, researchers added a model of political attitudes to explore the relationship between political attitudes and socioeconomic factors. The Funnel of Causality was divided into long-term and short-term factors. The long-term factors included socioeconomic background (e.g. family status, gender, location), value orientation such as party identification and group interests. Short-term factors focused on current issues such as candidate image or current political matter (Cottam et al., 2010, pp. 135-136). For instance, a current issue opinion voters could have been affected by in the Swedish election 2022 is worrying for the electrician bills rising, high inflation or how the government handled the covid-19 pandemic. Candidate images, how the voters view the candidates are today shaped mainly through social media which allows individual politicians to gain public opinion. The model contains variables that explains human voting behavior through historical, geographical and socioeconomical factors as well as mass political behavior and the governmental institution. The variables have worked to complement each other and to build the individual political output (Wilder, 2016, p. 725). For instance, the model was used in Hagevi (2022) when conducting research on how peoples’ voting behavior with different socioeconomic backgrounds (pp. 64-68). The theory model is presented in different ways but are including the same aspects.
Note: Figure 1 is based on the framework from Cottam et al. (2010 p. 136). There are different ways of illustrating the framework, this is one way of demonstrating it.

3.2 Priming

Priming is a psychological term which in political terms means that actors with power of media (eg. political parties/actors/business with political interests, influencers, journalists) are able to decide questions of matter through the released content. Citizens who are exposed to the information via social media are unconsciously being guided into thinking what issues that are important. For instance, if the media is mostly talking about immigration policy making, then the citizens would think that immigration issues are the most important question for the election and base their vote on it (Cottam et al., 2010, pp. 150-151). The phenomenon could be applied on political parties as well, if a party is more available than the other political parties, or represented in a certain way, then the respondent’s interaction with that party may be affected (Cottam et al., 2010, pp. 150-151).
3.3 Theoretical Framework Summary

Table 1. Summary of the Theoretical Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Funnel of Causality</th>
<th>Methodological tool in political psychology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A model that shows long- and short-term factors on voting behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on social influences e.g., socioeconomic factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priming</td>
<td>A hermeneutic response by a stimulus which works as a shortcut for the memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High exposure of a stimulus will correspond with a response, e.g., a lot of exposure of a certain party doing something bad will make the receiver think the party is bad voting for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Method and Material

Chapter 4 describes more in-depth the study’s method and materials. The first section describes choice of approach and is followed by a description of data collection. Further, a description of how the variables were operationalized is presented together with sampling, research models and analysis schemes, ethical aspects, delimitations, and a discussion about how the quality criteria were handled.

4.1 Research Design

The research was planned, conducted, and analyzed during an eight-week period in November-December 2022. The study is deductive and aims to test if there is a causation between using TikTok and a) viewing time b) educational orientation and c) vote on political block in the Swedish election 2022. Since the study is quantitative and bases its results on statistical data, three hypotheses (H) were made to simplify the process of analyzing the research questions. The hypotheses were the following:

**H1** Viewing time on the app TikTok correlates with higher tendencies of confidence to vote for a certain party.

**H2** Respondents with a university-oriented education were more convinced to change which party to vote for after a political video on TikTok.
H3 Respondents that voted on a certain block in the Swedish election 2022 tended to have been exposed to a political video that favored the party on TikTok.

4.1.1 Quantitative or Qualitative Approach

Due to the scope of this research, a quantitative approach is the most suitable choice to examine a generalization from a large group based on how public opinion among first-time voters are shaped through the app TikTok. Quantitative research is considered more trustworthy since numbers seems to increase possibility of generalization that opens for discussion about statistical interference (Djurfeldt et al., 2018, p.101). On the contrary, the choice of quantitative approach could easily be limiting and have some serious disadvantages. To exemplify, a quantitative approach focuses on numbers which could lead to missing variables that potentially could be important for the bigger picture. The research questions might be missing important variables that could have affected the result but are not available to be measured through numbers (Clark et al., 2021, pp. 144-145). For further reading about validity bias see 4.6 Sampling. Since the study tries to explore a rather new subject and aims to draw generalized conclusions, a quantitative approach was preferable.

A qualitative approach would have been a more suitable choice for investigating research questions that tries to explain a problem more in-depth (Clark et al., 2021, pp. 425-426). For instance, it would have been possible to conduct semi-structured interviews with a focus on how the platform TikTok makes first-time voters feel about Swedish parties.

4.1.2 Data Collection Method

The data was obtained through a digital survey constructed via the program “Google forms” sent out digitally through a hyperlink and QR code. There was a risk that whoever had access to the hyperlink would be able to answer the questions, which could have led to sampling bias and have an impact on the research external validity aspect, as Djurfeldt et al. (2018, pp. 122-123) discuss. To prevent the risk, a password could have been required of the
respondents before answering the survey. However, the solution would have made it harder for the respondent to answer the survey questions since it would require more steps for the respondent to proceed the process. Therefore, no password was required and instead, the study contained “control questions”. For instance, the respondents had to fill in which age group they belonged to and if the Swedish election 2022 was the first time they voted. All respondents who answered they belonged to age groups other than the survey was aimed towards were automatically discounted. For further reading about whom the survey was sent to see chapter 4.6 Sampling.

4.2 Data Collection Instruments

4.2.1 Survey

The survey was introduced with a letter which contained information such as research purpose, the researcher, sample of population, guarantee for anonymity, description of how the survey was constructed, estimated response time, and closed with a thanks in advance. The survey questions were divided into blocks after similar questions to organize as a way of making it easier for the respondent to answer (Esaiasson et al., 2017, p. 246-248).

The questions were constructed in different scales, ordinal, nominal, and interval scale to enable more differentiated answers than “yes” and “no”. This enabled a deeper analysis of the coded variables later in the research but also kept the respondent active and interested in answering the questions.

Surveys in general should avoid including ‘do not know’ answers since previous studies’ have shown that respondents tend to fill that answer if they are bored to just “get finished” and that it would lead to a large margin error (Clark et al., 2021, p. 24). The survey contained questions with the alternative “I do not remember” with the argument that some people might not remember whether they were exposed to political content on TikTok during the specific period.
4.3 Operationalization

The respondents’ answers from the survey were programmed and coded in the statistical software program SPSS. SPSS allows to code variables and creating statistical analyses. One dependent variable was chosen to be tested for each hypothesis against independent variables. This section will go through each hypothesis and how its attached survey questions were operationalized.

**H1**, “viewing time on the app TikTok correlates with higher tendencies of confidence to vote for a certain party”, was examined via two questions in the survey a) “Q6. How many days per week do you use the app TikTok”, where the respondent was able to choose an answer on a scale from 1-7. Each number represents how many days per week they used the app. Q6 were coded as 1=1 days per week, 2=2 days per week, 3=3 days per week, 4=4 days per week, 5=5 days per week, 6=6 days per week, 7=7 days per week. Those who refused to answer were coded as 999= missing values, see Appendix.

The second survey question used for H1 were b) Q10 where the respondent was asked to answer how much he or she agreed with the statement; “I became more confident of which party I should vote for in the Swedish parliamentary election 2022 after watching a video on Tiktok”. The respondent was able to fill in a Likert scale from 1-7 of how much they agreed with the statement, where 0= “not at all” and 8= “very much”, see Appendix. The answers were recoded into a new variable, “Q10_1”, into four categories, 1-2= 0, 3-4= 1, 5-6= 2 and 7=3. These were labeled as 0=no, 1=somewhat, 2=probably, 3= yes. Those who refused to answer were coded as 999= missing values and those who responded that they did not remember = 88, see Appendix. The reason for merging the variables was to clarify the result. The dependent variable in H1 was “Q10_1” as the hypothesis tries to see if it changes due to viewing frequency. Therefore, Q6 was the independent variable when testing H1.
H2, “Respondents with a university-oriented education were more convinced to change which party to vote for after a political video on TikTok”, was measured through two questions c) “Q4. What educational orientation do you have?”. The respondent was able to fill in eight alternatives: economy, social science, technology, nature-based, arts-program, non-university-oriented program, I don’t study and other, see Appendix. The answers were merged into a new variable “Q4_Uniornot”, with two categories 0= not university oriented and 1= education towards university where respondents who refused to answer were coded as 999= missing values, see Appendix.

The other question d) used for H2 was measured through Q11 where the respondent was asked to answer how much he or she agreed with the statement “I have become more convinced to vote for a different party than what I originally thought after seeing videos on TikTok with Swedish political content”. The respondent was asked to choose an alternative on a Likert scale from 1-7 where 0= “not at all and 8= “very much likely”, see Appendix. These were recoded into a new variable, “Q11_1” in order to clarify the result. The answers were merged into 4 categories 1-2 = 0, 3-4= 1, 5-6= 2, 7=3. There were respondents who refused to answer or did not remember the answer, they were coded as: 88= don’t remember and 999= missing values, see Appendix. H2 tries to examine if respondents with university-oriented education tended to change which block they voted for after being exposed to a video on TikTok. Variable Q11_1 is the dependent and seems to change accordingly to Q4_Uniornot. Q4_Uniornot is the independent variable and Q11_1 is the dependent.

H3, “Respondents that voted on a certain block in the Swedish election 2022 tended to have been exposed to a political video that favored the party on TikTok”, was based on the survey questions “Q17 Which party did you vote for in the 2022 parliamentary election?” and “Q13 Have you received content on TikTok that supports the party you were thinking of voting for in the 2022 parliamentary election?”.
The respondents filled in one party that they voted for in the Swedish election 2022 in the survey at question seventeen (Q17). The answers were coded as numbers where the parties included in the left-block was numbered closer to zero and parties included in the right block was numbered closer to eight. 0=left, 1=Left party, 2= Swedish Social democratic Party, 3= Green party, 4 = Centre party, 5= Liberals, 6= the Christian democrats, 7= Moderate party, 8= Sweden Democrats and 9= Right, see Appendix. Q17 was recoded into a new variable, “Q17_1” which was dichotomous to asserting a straight line with only two values and coded following: 0= 1,2,3,4 and 1= 4,5,6,7, 88= don’t remember and 999= missing values, see Appendix. Disadvantages with dichotomous variables is that information about data will be missing since everything was merged into two categories. For instance, the result will indicate that everybody in a category was behaving the same way. Even if no respondent voted for the Green party, the result would indicate so.

Regarding Q13, Respondents were only able to fill in three alternatives: No, Yes and I don’t remember. Q13 was therefore coded as dichotomous where 0= no and 1 = yes. Respondents who refused to answer were coded as 999= missing values and 88= don’t remember, see Appendix.

H3 scrutinizes if respondents who had voted on a certain block tend to have gathered political content on TikTok that supported the party they thought of voting for before the Swedish election 2022. Therefore, variable Q17_1 is the dependent variable and Q13 is the independent.

4.4 Conceptual Framework

This chapter presents two research models that were developed with the purpose to clarify how the analytical process based on the result was conducted. The framework also connects the hypotheses presented below to the research questions.
4.5 Research Model

A conceptual framework has been developed based on concepts from the theoretical framework to distinct the relationship between the result and the discussion. The Funnel of Causality presented in the theoretical framework in chapter 3 illustrates how different socioeconomic factors affect human voting behavior. It has been used to explain that people tend to have different values depending on when they were born and how old they are (Hagevi, 2022, pp. 51-53). However, this research tries to examine to what extent first-time voters were influenced by the app TikTok when they voted in the Swedish parliamentary election 2022. Two research models have been developed based on 1) The Funnel of Causality with some changes to make it relevant for the study and 2) a scheme that illustrates the procedure of conducting an analysis based on the result.

**Figure 2. Research model 1, reconstruction of The Funnel of Causality**

![Diagram of Research Model 1](image)

*Note: Inspired by The Funnel of Causality presented in Cottam et al. (2010 p. 136).*

The research model presented in Figure 2 focuses on the two steps closest to the end of the funnel, which represents how the respondents voted. Figure 2 includes whether the voter is a TikTok user and if the exposure of political content on the app matches the voters’ previous party attachment and issue
opinions. The Funnel of Causality is relevant since it includes several aspects concerning voting behavior, for instance: socioeconomic factors, location, value orientation, party attachment and issue opinions. Figure 2 tries to test if other variables such as TikTok exposure could have an impact on first-time voters voting behavior.

In order to awareness the reader of how the thinking process during the research were made, a scheme was needed in pedagogical purpose and therefore research model 2 was developed. The scheme has its starting point in educational orientation followed by usage of TikTok with test-variables to understand the average respondent when testing each hypothesis.

**Figure 3. Research model 2**

```
Q4_University
University oriented  No university oriented
Q6
Usage of TikTok (days per week)
Q8
Political videos on TikTok
Q10_1
More certain to vote for a party
    Yes
    No
Q13
Political videos that supported the party the voter thought of vote for in the Swedish election 2022
    Yes
    No
Q17_1
Voted on that political block
    Yes
    No
Q11_1
Made voter more certain to vote for a different party
    Yes
    No
TikTok could affect first time voters
    Yes
    No
```

*Note:* The figure depicts an analysis scheme that were used during testing variables as well as conducting an analysis and conclusion. Q= the
operationalized variables that were used in the research and presented in chapter 6.

Research model 2 is based on the variables presented in chapter 5. The scheme was helpful when testing the variables in SPSS as well as analyzing the statistical material. It simplifies the process of connecting relevant test variables and conduct if first-time voters could potentially be affected by using TikTok. Notable is that the scheme does not follow the process of how variables were presented in chapter 5 Results. It focuses and divides variables with purpose to understand the average respondents voting behavior accordingly for each hypothesis.

**Figure 4. Close-up of Research Model 2**

![Research Model 2 Diagram]

*Note:* The scheme is a closeup based on Figure 2 showing how each hypothesis were practically measured. Q= the operationalized variables that was used in the research and presented in chapter 6. H= hypothesis.

Figure 4 presents a close-up of Figure 3, research model 2 were measured practically in chapter 5 Results and 6 Analysis and Discussion. Relevant variables were sorted out for each hypothesis to explore if TikTok could have affected first-time voters in the Swedish election 2022.
4.6 Sampling

The survey was answered by 139 respondents during the period November 16-25, 2022, of which 112 respondents were first-time voters in the Swedish parliamentary election 2022. It was sent to twelve different upper secondary schools and a total of fifteen different teachers. It was also sent to first-time voters through social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

There was a snowball effect, where the respondents were encouraged to help sending the survey to their contacts at different locations around in Sweden. Therefore, the sampling could be considered as non-probability sample. The non-probability sampling would fit into a mix between convenience sampling and snowball sampling. The choice of sampling is useful to the degree that this study should be viewed and therefore considered as a pilot before a large-scale study.

The sampling method was chosen due to several aspects such as the study’s research design, the economic benefits of the method and its effectiveness. Considerations have been made regarding the generalization and external validity aspect, see section 4.9 Quality Criteria.

Sampling error did occur due to respondents refusing to answer some questions in the survey and the trustworthiness in total was affected (Clark et al., 2021, 169-170). The dilemma was handled through a test of statistical significance to be able to draw conclusions about the statistical interference (Clark et al., 2021, 171).

4.7 Ethical Aspects

All research must consider ethical issues before, during and after research. The survey adheres to the guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (Swedish Research Council, 2017) and Diener and Crandall’s (1978) four ethical aspects to have in mind during research: 1) if it is dangerous for the respondents 2) if there is enough information about consent from all involved parties 3) if it violates respondents’ privacy and 4) if fraud is involved (Clark et al., 2021, p. 113). The information letter directed towards the respondents
included a guarantee for the respondents’ anonymity, which can be used as a way to make the respondents feel safe (Clark et al., 2021, pp. 109, 116).

The data was viewed and obtained by only the researcher and was not shared to other instances through internet clouds or similar. Neither have the research been used in any commercial sense nor other interests. The respondents in the research have been informed and agreed to the research agenda before answering the survey. In line with the Swedish Research Council (2017), this thesis has accounted for both method and results truthfully. Finally, the research has not violated the respondents’ anonymity since all respondents were not able to declare any names and their IP (Internet Protocol) addresses were only viewed by the researcher, the respondents were secured anonymity while answering the survey.

4.8 Delimitations

The study had to limit its scope due to limited time and resources. The research had a goal of receiving a minimum of 100 respondents and to be equally divided by gender, educational orientation, and location to be qualified. This was not the case. In total there were 139 respondents. However, there was a wide gap between male and female as well as the respondent’s location and educational orientation.

The research did keep high quality and led to contribution within the field political science. However, this thesis was limited to the country Sweden and focused on first-time voters in the Swedish parliamentary election 2022, with a user account on the social media platform TikTok. The research emphasis the issue of social medias impact on the democracy internationally.

The study was based on a digital survey and sent to first-time voters during November 16-25, 2022, which delimited the frequency of respondents which had an impact on the statistical interference and the result validity (Djurfeldt et al., 2018, p. 101). Therefore, the research should be considered as a pilot study preceding a more comprehensive research project.
Afterwards, some changes could have been done in the survey such as only including Likert scales with a range from 1-5 instead of 1-7. The used scale, 1-7, could have made the respondents “shyer” to answer and may have led to bias. A scale with fewer alternatives may have led to a result that indicated that the respondents considered themselves more “politically influenced” by TikTok than the result in this study reported. However, this study did merge the answers into new variables 10_1 and 11_1 into five categories, see Appendix.

The bias aspect should not be underestimated since the study does not take in count other factors, e.g., socioeconomical factors, that could have had an impact on the first-time voters voting behavior in the Swedish election 2022. Other impacts on the result could be technical issues since the least amount of insecurity could change the result. Therefore, it is of high importance that the data is coded correctly (Djurfeldt et al., 2018, p. 109).

4.9 Quality Criteria

To contribute to the field of political science, the research considered various quality criteria’s which include aspects of validity and reliability, further explained by trustworthiness. It captures concepts such as statistical significance, confident interval, and margin of error.

4.9.1 Validity and Reliability

High validity and reliability are necessary to reach high result validity, which implicates that the research has contributed to science. The two concepts are individually measured and have different meanings. Validity can be divided into internal and external. Internal validity secures to what extent the relationship between the variables is not influenced by other variables. External validity measures what generalizations that can be drawn from the study (Clark et al., 2021, pp. 40-41). There have been considerations regarding the aspect of reliability. Reliability measures to what extent the research is consistent, thus if other studies that replicate this study have or gets close to the same result as this study (Clark et al., 2021, p. 40).
This study has considered both aspects and tried to manage them through the choice of method. Firstly, a quantitative study based on a digital survey, opens for generalization which automatically increases the reliability. However, it was challenging to keep high result validity in the research due to the research scope. To reach high internal validity the variables should be secured to not be affected by other variables, which was severe to attain in the study. Therefore, the research contained distinct and measurable questions such as a) viewing frequency on TikTok b) educational orientation and c) what political block the respondent voted for in the Swedish election 2022. A regression analysis was made in chapter 5 Results, with multiple variables to reduce the chance of the statistical relationship to be biased.

Nonetheless, the chance of other elements, such as socio-economic factors, of influencing how first-time voters act are immense. On the other hand, the studies’ aim was not to reject the elements in The Funnel of Causality, neither to conclude that TikTok was the only factor that had an impact on first-time voters’ voting behavior. Instead, the study aimed to investigate if usage of TikTok contributed to first-time voters’ political behavior. The chance of other elements being bias to the result are there, but somewhat reduced through only measuring H1, H2 and H3. Regarding the external validity criteria, it is somewhat low for any generalization to be made. The reliability could be tested through further research that replicated this study on a broader scale (Clark et al., 2021, pp. 40-41). To read about the choice of sampling method and future research see 4.6 Sampling and chapter 7 Further Research.

### 4.9.2 Trustworthiness

This study had a goal of keeping high level trustworthiness. To enhance the trustworthiness, there was considerations about how the sources were obtained. The study is mainly based on peer-reviewed literature except for some statistical data which were gathered from governmental institutions as well as interest organizations. The empirical material presented in chapter 5 Results, was gathered through first-hand sources, and should be considered as trustworthy with some considerations.
Since the study is based on statistical data, concepts such as margin of error and sample size furthermore had to be considered. Sample sizes are dependent of how the sample is constructed. If the response rate is low, there would not be a statistically significant result. Statistically significance informs the researcher if the result is generalizable to the larger population (Djurfeldt et al., 2018, p. 122). Therefore, it was valuable for the research to have a high response rate. This research had a goal of receiving 100 respondents to be somewhat generalizable. If the number of respondents would double, it would strengthen the confident interval and result validity. It was of interest to aspire to as high response rate as possible (Djurfeldt et al., 2018, p. 122). For further reading about sampling see section 4.6.

4.10 Method and Material Summary

**Table 2.** Summary of Method and Material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>H1</strong> Viewing on the app TikTok correlates with higher tendencies of confidence to vote for a certain party.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H2</strong> Respondents with a university-oriented education were more convinced to change which party to vote for after a political video on TikTok</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H3</strong> Respondents that voted on a certain block in the Swedish election 2022 tended to have been exposed to a political video that favored the party on TikTok</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research design</th>
<th>• Quantitative approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data collection instruments</td>
<td>• Digital Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operationalization</td>
<td>• Variables programmed as numbers in SPSS, see Appendix.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td>• Sent out to 139 respondents through teachers and social media where 111 respondents were first-time voters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical aspects</td>
<td>• Followed the Swedish Research Council’s (principles and Diener and Crandalls (1978) four ethical aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations</td>
<td>• Limited time &amp; resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Limited to Sweden &amp; first-time voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Survey reach was limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Weakness in some survey questions scales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Risk of technical issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Results

Chapter 5 is divided by the chosen hypotheses made in chapter 4 Method and material. The result contains statistical analyses based on the reported data from the digital survey.

5.1 Hypothesis 1

To understand the respondents’ answers from the survey, regarding hypothesis 1 (H1), “Viewing on the app TikTok correlates with higher tendencies to vote for a certain party”, the answers were programmed into variables Q6 and Q10_1. To illustrate the response rate, descriptive statistics were developed to disentangle the involved variables.

Table 3. Usage of TikTok days per week and voting confidence after political exposure on TikTok

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q6. Usage of TikTok (days per week)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>1.290</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10_1. Voting Confidence after pol. exposure on TikTok</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.810</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The descriptive statistics demonstrates there were 107 valid answers out of 139 respondents in total regarding the variables Q6 and Q10_1. Q6 had an interval from 1-7 whereas Q10 had the same interval but the variable was merged into a new variable 10_1 with four categories “no, somewhat, probably and yes”, see Appendix.
Q6 contains a mean of 6.45 which means that the average respondent used TikTok approximately 6 days per week whilst Q10_1 had a mean of .72 which indicated that the average respondent felt somewhat confident of voting for a certain party after watching a political video on TikTok. The standard deviation for Q6 illustrates that the answers was clustered around the mean, 6.45 since the standard deviation was not high. The standard deviation for Q10_1 was also clustered around mean .72.

The descriptive statistics only explains basic data regarding each variable. To get more in-depth information about how the two variables correlates to each other a correlation analysis had to be done.

**Table 4.** Correlation analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q6 Usage of TikTok (days per week)</th>
<th>Q10_1 Voting Confidence after pol. exposure on Tiktok</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>.293**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10_1</td>
<td>.293**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *=p<.05 **=p<.01 ***=p<.001 (Wahlgren, 2012, p. 110).*

The bivariate analysis illustrates a significant relationship between Q6 and Q10_1. Depending on how the variables were coded, the relationship is either positive or negative. If the answers were at the higher end of the scale e.g., if it was many that had answered that they used TikTok 7 times a week and those respondents tended to have more voting confidence after exposure on TikTok, the statistical relationship would be positive. If it was the other way around, the statistical relationship would be negative. The significance is read through the asterisk that tells the strength of significance. In Table 4
the statistical relationship is positive and significant. The statistical relationship would be considered as highly significant if there was three asterisk, ***=p<001. To demonstrate the result more distinct a bar chart was developed.

**Figure 5.** "Q6 How many days a week do you use the app TikTok?" by "Q10_1 I became more sure of what party to vote for after a video on TikTok"

The bar chart in figure 5 illustrates the relationship between Q6 usage of TikTok (days per week) and Q10_1 “I became more sure which party I should vote for in the 2022 parliamentary election after watching a video on TikTok”. It clarified that respondents who use TikTok frequently tends to have been more certain of what party to vote for after a video on TikTok.

The correlation analysis depicts the statistical relationship between the chosen variables but does not take in count if there could be other variables that would change the significance (Wahlgren, 2012, p.110). To establish the strength of the correlation analyses and conclude it would not change by other variables, a regression analysis was made. Table 5 contains three models where model 1 contains the original variables, Q6 & Q10_1. Model 2 adds Q4_Uiniornot and model 3 is based on Q6, Q10_1, Q4_Uiniornot and
Q17_1. The dependent variable is Q10_1 since the hypothesis investigates whether the vote changes accordingly to viewing frequency.

Table 5. Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q6 Usage of TikTok (days per week)</td>
<td>.201** (.064)</td>
<td>.203** (.068)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4_Unicorn</td>
<td>-0.039 (.221)</td>
<td>-0.004 (.230)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17_1 Block vote</td>
<td>.092 (.165)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R2</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.063</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Dependent variable: “Q10_1”. Unstandardized B, Coefficients Std. Error. ***= p < .001 **= p < .01 *= p < .05 (Wahlgren, 2012, p.110).

All models indicates there is low probability that the relationship between Q6 and Q10_1 is error since the asterisk shows a significant correlation, 99% chance, that the relationship is correct. The adjusted r square explains the variation between the dependent variable and the independent from a scale of 0-100%. High adjusted r square indicates precise predictions whereas low are more common when examining human behavior (Frost, 2022). This study investigates human behavior which is unpredictable and therefore it is not surprising the result illustrates lower adjusted r square. Table 6 indicates precise prediction of 7.7% in model 1, 6.3% in model 2 and 5.2% in model 3. The adjusted r square is low which means there is low variance around a mean. However, there is a correlation between the variables in Table 5 which means the relationship is relevant to look into.

The correlation implies that the amount of viewing time on TikTok seems to increase the possibility for being surer of what party to vote for in the Swedish election 2022. Other significant relationship between other variables
and the dependent Q10_1 was not found. If other relationships would have been identified, then it would strengthen the hypothesis even more (Djurfeldt et al., 2018, p. 268).

5.2 Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 (H2), “Respondents with a university-oriented education were more convinced to change which party to vote for after a video on TikTok”, investigates the relationship between the variables, Q4_Uniornot and Q11_1. An overview of the variables was developed through descriptive statistics.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q4_Uniornot University oriented education</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>.8611</td>
<td>.34744</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11_1 Convinced to vote on a different party after a pol. video on TikTok</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.674</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In total there were 104 valid answers concerning variable Q4_Uniornot and Q11_1 out of 139 respondents. Q4_Uniornot was coded as a dichotomous variable which means that it only contains 2 values, 0 or 1 apart from 999= missing values and 88= don’t remember. The mean reflects that most of the respondents were university oriented and the standard deviation are low which means the answers were clustered around the value university-oriented education. Q11_1 indicated the respondent was somewhat convinced to vote on a different party after a video on TikTok with slightly higher standard deviation than Q4_Uniornot, which reports that the answers were slightly more outspread. To examine if the two variables Q4_Uniornot and 11_1 correlates a bivariate correlation analysis are presented.
Table 7. Correlation Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University oriented education</th>
<th>Convinced to vote on a different party after a pol. video on TikTok</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University oriented education</td>
<td>-.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convinced to vote on a different party after a pol. video on TikTok</td>
<td>-.164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * = p<.05 (Wahlgren, 2012, p. 110)

The results of the correlation analysis indicate the relationship is negative, respondents do most likely not feel convinced to vote for a different party after a video on TikTok. However, no asterisk was identified which tells that the correlation is too close to 0. Therefore, hypothesis 2 could not be validated. Bar chart 2 defines the result even clearer.

Figure 6. Percentage bar chart
Figure 6 illustrates if there is a difference between the respondent’s educational orientation regarding reporting if they were more likely to change party after a video, they were exposed to on TikTok. It seems like respondents with no university-oriented education tended to fill in “probably” more than university-oriented education, but the overall result between both education orientation seemed to be “no”. The bar chart does not give a distinct relationship if education orientated and conviction of what party to vote on and therefore no significant relationship could be identified.

To test if the correlation analysis in relation to other variables a regression analysis was made based on three models. Model 1 includes Q4_Uniornot and Q11_1. Model 2 adds Q6 and model 5 includes Q4_Uniornot, Q11_1, Q6 and Q17_1.

**Table 8. Regression Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q4_Uniornot</td>
<td>-.308</td>
<td>-.290</td>
<td>-.291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University oriented education</td>
<td>(.183)</td>
<td>(.183)</td>
<td>(.190)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6 Usage time of TikTok</td>
<td></td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.057)</td>
<td>(.058)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17_1 Block vote</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.136)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R2</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: ***= p <.001 **=p<.01 *=p<.05 (Wahlgren, 2012, p. 110).*

Dependent variable: “Q11_1 Convinced to vote on a different party after a video on TikTok”. Unstandardized B, Coefficients Std. Error.

The regression analysis reports that Q4_uniornot and Q11_1 do not have a significant relationship through all three models. It indicates it does not matter what educational orientation first-time voters have, the political
videos on TikTok does not seem to affect the tendency to vote for a different party. The adjusted r square was very low in all models. Model 1 had a precise predication of 1.7%, model 2 had 3.1% and model 3 had 1.9%. This means no variance on the regression line could be identified around any mean.

5.3 Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis (H3), “Respondents that voted on a certain block in the Swedish election 2022 tended to have been exposed to the party on TikTok”, was measured through the variables Q13 and Q17_1. To clarify the response rate for the variables, descriptive statistics is presented below.

**Table 9. Descriptive Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q17_1 Voted on block</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.502</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13 Received content that supported the selected party</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.288</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The data were gathered through a survey sent out to a total of 139 respondents.

There were 106 valid answers to Q17_1 and 100 to Q13. The two variables were coded as dichotomous variables, two values. Q17_1 was coded as 0=left pol. block and 1= right pol. block. Q14 was coded as 0=no and 1= yes. Those who refused to answer were coded as 999= missing values or 88= don’t remember. The mean for Q17_1 indicates that slightly more respondents voted for the right political block, 0.001 difference, and that there was a clustered standard deviation. Q14 had a mean that reported a majority had received content that supported the party they thought of voting for, since the result was closer to 1.
To see if the two variables Q17_1 and Q14 had a correlation, a bivariate correlation analysis were made.

Table 10. Correlation Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voted on block</th>
<th>Received pol. content that supported the selected party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q17_1 Voted on pol. block</td>
<td>.232*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13 Received pol. content that supported the selected block</td>
<td>.232*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *=p <.05 (Wahlgren, 2012, p. 110)

To see if the two variables had a relationship, a correlation analysis was made by testing the dependent variable: Q17_1 and independent variable: Q13 received content that supported the selected block. Respondents who voted on left-wing block were coded as 0, meanwhile respondents who voted on right-wing block were coded as 1. Table 10 signifies the relationship is positive, respondents who voted on the right block tends to have gathered more political content supporting the party they were thinking of voting for before the election 2022. If the relationship was negative, it would have been the other way around. The asterisk informs that the statistical relationship does correlate and is significant. This is due to the p-value is below p> .05 (Wahlgren, 2012, p. 110).
Figure 6. Percentage bar chart

Note: Percentage of received favorable political content on TikTok based on pol. block voters.

A difference was identified between what political block the respondent voted for and exposure to political content on TikTok. Respondents who voted for a party located to the right were more likely to have been exposed to content supporting the party they were thinking of voting for before the election. On the contrary, respondents who voted on left-wing block reported that they were exposed to less content supporting the party they were thinking of voting for.

The correlation analysis did not consider if the significance of the correlation could be affected of other variables. Therefore, a regression analysis with other variables were made to test the strength of the significance.
Table 11. Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q13 Received pol. content that supported the selected party</strong></td>
<td>.420* (.181)</td>
<td>.412* (.179)</td>
<td>.420* (.182)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q4_Uniornot University oriented education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.256 (.137)</td>
<td>-.258 (.137)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q6 Usage of TikTok</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.015 (.044)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusted R2</strong></td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: ***= p < .001 **= p < .01 *= p < .05 (Wahlgren, 2012, p 110). Dependent variable: “Q17_1Voted on block”. Unstandardized B, Coefficients Std. Error.

The test variables measure the statistical relationship between Q13 and Q17_1. Table 11 demonstrates three adjusted r squares where model 1 represents 4%, model 2 has 7% and model 3 has 6.1%. This means that all models are not trustworthy regarding precise predictions of human voting behavior. However, there is a significance between the variables and a discussion about the relationship is still relevant. Since model 1 seems to correlate in all models the significance is considered as somewhat strong.

Respondents who voted on the right block tends to have been exposed to political content on TikTok supporting the party they were thinking to vote for. The respondents who voted on the left tends to have received content supporting the party they voted on but not to the same extent as respondents who voted on the right block.
5.4 Summary of Result

Table 12. Summary of Result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Used variables</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>H1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Descriptive stats.</strong>, Q6 &amp; Q10</td>
<td><strong>Correlation analysis</strong> Q6 &amp; Q10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewing on the app TikTok correlates with higher tendencies to vote for a certain party.</td>
<td><strong>Regression analysis</strong> Q6, Q10, Q4_Unionnot, Q17_1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Descriptive stats.</strong> Q4_Unionnot &amp; Q11_1</td>
<td><strong>Correlation analysis</strong> Q4_Unionnot &amp; Q11_1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents with a university-oriented education were more convinced to change which party to vote for after a pol. video on TikTok</td>
<td><strong>Regression analysis</strong> Q4_Unionnot, Q11_1, Q6, Q17_1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Descriptive stats.</strong> Q17_1 &amp; Q14</td>
<td><strong>Correlation analysis</strong> Q17_1 &amp; Q14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents that voted for a certain block in the Swedish election 2022 tended to have been exposed to the party on TikTok</td>
<td><strong>Regression analysis</strong> Q17_1, Q14, Q6, Q4_Unionnot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: stats. = statistics. Q = variables. H= Hypothesis
6 Analysis and Discussion

This thesis began by presenting two research questions based on the subject field. To help answer these, three hypotheses were developed and used during in Chapter 5, presenting the results of the study. Chapter 6 focuses on connecting the results, previous research, theoretical and conceptual framework to the research questions. Chapter 6 ends with a general discussion about the empirical material, theoretical and conceptual framework.

6.1 Research Question 1

To be able to answer research question 1, “Is there a correlation between viewing time and first-time voters voting behavior in the Swedish election 2022?”, a hypothesis was constructed, “Viewing time on the app TikTok correlates with higher tendencies of confidence to vote for a certain party”. Chapter 6 Results illustrated a significant relationship between the variables Q6 and Q10_1 through correlation and regression analysis. The hypothesis was shown to be significant to 99%, which means that it has a 1% tendency to be shown otherwise.

By connecting the statement to The Funnel of Causality introduced in Chapter 3 Theoretical framework, it would mean that exposure on TikTok most likely did take place at the end of The Funnel of Causality. The conclusion is based on the establishment of TikTok in 2014, which cannot have affected the humans socioeconomic background, neither its value orientations but instead short-term factors such as issue opinions and candidate image forms. There was a significance between viewing time and confidence of what party to vote for in the election 2022. The psychological term priming makes it interesting to wonder what if the user also spent time on other social media platforms and were exposed to similar content, could this have an even greater impact on what issues that matters to the receiver and its political behavior? Could priming of political content control what political parties/candidates/companies with political interests the viewer chooses to vote for, and would this make the role of long-term social media
exposure play a bigger role? The result from this pilot demonstrates small indicators for believe in this way, but greater research within the field is required to draw such conclusions.

6.2 Research Question 2

Research question 2, “Did the political content on TikTok affect first-time voters’ political behavior in the Swedish election 2022?” were tested through two hypotheses, H2 “Respondents with a university-oriented education were more convinced to change which party to vote for after a video on TikTok” and “Respondents that voted on a certain block in the Swedish election 2022 tended to have been exposed to a political video that favored the party on TikTok”.

H2 illustrated a negative relationship but with no significance. It could not be identified whether respondents with a university-oriented education were more convinced to change party to vote for after being exposed to a video on TikTok. However, the statistical relationship seemed to indicate that people with no university orientation tends to have been slightly more convinced to change which party to vote for after being exposed to a video on TikTok. If the research had a higher response rate, then maybe a distinct result would appear.

H3 determined a significant positive relationship. Respondents who voted on the right-wing block tended to have been exposed to more videos on TikTok supporting the right-wing block. Respondents who voted on the left did also report to have been exposed to content supporting the left-wing block but not to the same extent. Parties from both blocks are represented on TikTok. Interestingly, there was a statistically significant relationship between the respondents vote and if the respondent had been exposed to the party on TikTok. The result strengthens previous research that the algorithms at social media does change depending on the viewers value opinion (Creví & Marin-Lladó, 2021). Other identifications of the results are the fact that respondents who voted on the left tend to have reported to have been exposed to slightly more right block parties which strengthen previous research regarding the
fact that humans that leans to the left tends to be more active on cross-party forums.

What makes the Swedish election year 2022 interesting from e.g. 2014 is that the respondents seem to have reported being more exposed to right parties than left. This was not the case in 2014 as discussed in chapter 2 where parties belonging to the right-wing block were not as active on social media platforms as the left-wing block. The right-wing block could have changed their political strategy whereas the left parties did not. This could be an explanation to why the respondents reported they been exposed to more political content from parties leaning to the right. However, it could also be as the case Ricknell (2019) presents, where alt. right users on 4chan tends to be interacting with that type of content. The empirical data could explain why respondents in this survey that sympathize with right-wing block tend to affect the TikTok algorithm into forming a so-called “electronic tribe” as presented in chapter 2.

7 General Discussion

TikTok is an effective tool for both companies with political interest and political parties, especially political candidates, to build public opinion. Chapter 2 reviews the previous research that proves this is the case. The TikTok algorithm is constructed to know what type of content the user is amused to and bases its content on it.

It raises questions if political parties/candidates/businesses with political interests could be buying certain content on TikTok. If the user has long exposure or interaction with that type of content, it will automatically generate more of that content which potentially could affect the users’ political views.

The fact that TikTok is one of the most popular used apps among children between the ages 13-16 makes it interesting to wonder how the app may influence even younger generations that grow up by being exposed to political content on TikTok. Could an innocent dance app be used as a tool
to shape humans value orientations from an early age? Especially when political candidates/parties/ business with political interests, could be paying users/ journalists or even TikTok as company to produce content on the app where the user’s algorithm decides what content they are exposed to.

The psychological term priming applied in political science is an aspect to also consider. The content users on TikTok are exposed to, contributes to how the respondent correlates with different matters. For instance, if the respondent receives a video made by a journalist that has been paid to produce certain content and the respondent seems to spend slightly longer in terms of seconds viewing that video or even interacting with it through likes would affect the algorithm to produce more such content in order to keep the user amused. This could potentially make the viewer believe that the type of content the viewer is exposed to is important questions to consider when voting, and therefore affect the user’s political behavior. It does not have to be journalists that make the users interested in specific political content.

The aspect of political influencers should neither be underestimated. Candidates or political sympathizers can produce political content to a massive public, where they are able to gain public opinion, consciously start a debate, and influence the TikTok algorithm to enhance such video content and influence user’s values. This concept contributes to the political influencers developing a strategic plan to raise number of views and followers to spread its political content.

Based on the conceptual framework, the amount of viewing time implied that longer viewing time on TikTok did correlate with being exposed to political content. Hypothesis 2 did question if educational orientation could have mattered if the respondents did change what party to vote for in the Swedish election 2022. Although, there was no significant relationship between the chosen variables, the conclusion could be drawn that it seems that the political content on TikTok did not change first-time voters’ values, instead it may have contributed to enhancing them.
8 Conclusion

This thesis focused on one spectrum of the social media, TikTok, and explored its potential to influence voting behavior of first-time voters in Sweden 2022. The findings demonstrated that first-time voters potentially could have been affected by political exposure on TikTok. The amount of viewing time seemed to correlate with tendencies to vote for a certain party as well as the respondents reported to have been exposed to the same parties as they thought of voting for in the Swedish parliamentary election 2022. Other conclusions were that educational orientation did not seem to correlate with tendencies to change party after being exposed to a political video on TikTok. On the contrary, it seemed that respondents that thought of voting for a certain party were also exposed for it on TikTok which implicates that the app could increase the previous value orientations. A discussion about exposure for specific political content on multiple social media platforms and the plausibility of first-time voters being influenced were made at the end which opened for further research within the field.

9 Further Research

TikTok shows efficiency in how rapidly an app can expand and have an impact on companies as well as political parties and politicians. It has totally changed the way humans gather information, instead of text messages and hyperlinks, TikTok contributed with video content. The result indicated that first-time voters in the Swedish election 2022 were partially influenced by TikTok. However, the research result is somewhat vague and should be viewed as a pilot for a more comprehensive study. Further studies should consider aspects such as influence during the next election, develop a large-scale study that includes more platforms and compare similarities and differences, what type of material a viewer could be exposed to by exploring how the algorithm works or compare how different generations are influenced by information on social media. Future research should also be open for testing The Funnel of Causality even deeper to see if social media could have a more in-depth impact on younger people to their political
behavior later in life. A qualitative approach should be considered to work as a compliment for this study. Other approaches such as mixed method, where the researcher uses both quantitative and qualitative data to investigate the research problem to develop a thorough study with stronger result validity.
10 Reference List


## 11 Appendix

This codebook contains a scheme that clarifies how the used variables were coded in the program SPSS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE NUMBER</th>
<th>VARIABLE NAME</th>
<th>VARIABLE CLASSIFICATIONS</th>
<th>EXPLANATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V3</td>
<td>Q3_Location</td>
<td>0= countryside 1= city 999= missing values</td>
<td>Four answers options merged into two in order to simplify the analyze process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sparse countryside + countryside = countryside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Urban area + metropolitan area = city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5</td>
<td>Q4_Education_orientation</td>
<td>0= Social science/ aesthete 1= Economy 2= Technology/nature 3= Humanities 4= No university oriented 5= Working 999= missing values</td>
<td>Variable based on Q4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4</td>
<td>Q4_Unionot</td>
<td>0= Not university oriented 1= University oriented 999= missing values</td>
<td>Variable based on Q4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7</td>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>1= 1 day a week 2= 2 days a week 3= 3 days a week 4= 4 days a week 5= 5 days a week 6= 6 days a week 7= 7 days a week 999= missing values</td>
<td>How many days a week do you use the app ’TikTok’?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V9</td>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>0=no 1=yes 88= Don’t remember 999= missing values</td>
<td>Have you experienced that you received more Swedish political content on Tiktok in the months/weeks before the parliamentary elections in 2022?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V21</td>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>0=”not at all” 1=1 2=2 3=3 4=4 5=5 6=6 7=7 8= “Very much” 999= missing values</td>
<td>”I became more sure which party I should vote for in the 2022 parliamentary election after watching a video on TikTok”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V58</td>
<td>Q10_1</td>
<td>0=no 1=Somewhat 2=Probably 3=Yes 88= Don’t remember 999= Missing values</td>
<td>”I became more sure which party I should vote in the 2022 parliamentary election after watching a video on TikTok”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>0=“not at all”</td>
<td>1=1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2=2</td>
<td>3=3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4=4</td>
<td>5=5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6=6</td>
<td>7=7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8=“very much”</td>
<td>999=missing values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'I have become more convinced to vote for a different party than what I originally thought after seeing videos on tiktok with Swedish political content.'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q11_1</th>
<th>0=no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1=Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2=Probably</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3=Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88=Don’t remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>999=Missing values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'I have become more convinced to vote for a different party than what I originally thought after seeing videos on tiktok with Swedish political content.'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q13</th>
<th>0=no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1=yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88=Don’t remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>999=missing values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have you received content on tiktok that supports the party you were thinking of voting for in the 2022 parliamentary election?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q16</th>
<th>0=no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1=yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88=Don’t remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>999=missing values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did you vote for the first time in the Parliamentary elections in 2022?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q17</th>
<th>0=Left</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1=The left party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2=Social Democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3=The Greens party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4=Centre Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5=Liberals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6=Christian Democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7=Moderate Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8=Sweden Democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9=Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88=Don’t remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>999=missing values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which party did you vote for in the 2022 parliamentary election?
The parties were programmed into numbers where parties that leaned to the left had a lower number and vice versa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q17_1</th>
<th>0=Left</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1=Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88=Don’t remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>999=missing values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Categorized the respondents votes into different block divisions based on the left-right scale.