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Addiction on TikTok among Young Adults in Malaysia

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Abstract

TikTok is gaining popularity in Malaysia. TikTok users in Malaysia have increased rapidly over the years, particularly with a large number of new users between 2017 and 2021. TikTok, as one of the most popular social media applications, provides people with a lot of entertainment and enjoyment. However, there are always consequences that can influence human behaviour in either positive or negative ways. The aim of this study is to better understand young adults' perceptions and usage, as well as to identify the effects of TikTok on society, particularly young adults. 117 young adults were involved in the survey, and the findings revealed that TikTok's positive influences outweighed its negative influences on Malaysian young adults. TikTok can provide better motivation for young adults to complete their daily tasks by allowing them to relieve stress. However, it has a negative impact on Malaysian young adults' daily routines because it makes it difficult to focus on work or study.

Keywords: TikTok, Addiction, Impact of TikTok, TikTok Active User, Online Education

Introduction

TikTok is a video-sharing media app that allows users to create, edit, and share short videos using filters, music, and other features to create amusing and interesting videos (Tankovska, 2021). In September 2016, it was officially launched as DouYin, with the app only available in China. ByteDance launched TikTok as an international version the following year, and it merged with Musical.ly (a lip-syncing to music app) (Iqbal, 2021). It provides users with a diverse range of sounds and music, as well as filters and special effects, allowing them to transform their video into a variety of different types of content (Geysler, 2021).

In China, the number of TikTok daily active users has already surpassed 150 million, with over 300 million monthly active users. Whereby, with over 500 million monthly active users, TikTok's international version has also become the most popular app downloaded in the world (Jiang, 2019), and it has over 80 million TikTok active users in the United States, which makes the US the most popular country using the app (Daniel, 2020). According to the statistics, the Chinese version of TikTok (DouYin) has gained a lot of traction in China. Chinese

mobile app users spent an average of 122.3 minutes on TikTok in 2020, which is double the length of time compared to 2019 (Thomala, 2020).

TikTok, on the other hand, is one of the most popular social media apps in the United States, especially among younger digital audiences. According to data, there were only 35.6 million active users in 2019, but by 2021, there were 73.7 million active users. The data also revealed that the majority of users in the United States are between the ages of 10 and 19, with a 25 percent distribution, and 22.4 percent of users aged 20 to 29 years. Users aged 50 and over make up the smallest percentage of TikTok users, accounting for only 11% of all users (Tankovska, 2021).

Many unique TikTok contents makers (also known as TikTokers) are developing in Malaysia, as they are in many other countries across the world, to captivate viewers with a range of subjects. With the right type of content and target demographic, TikTok has proven that video content such as singing, dancing, beauty, or sports can attract large audiences (Seto, 2021).

According to statistics, the number of TikTok users in Malaysia has increased rapidly over the years, with a large number of new users between 2017 and 2020. TikTok was launched in 2017 and had 0.13 million users at the time. The figure has since risen to 1.77 million users by 2020 (Degenhard, 2021). Furthermore, in Malaysia, the user base is skewed toward the younger generations, which are teenagers and young adults (Cheah, 2019). As a result, TikTok has proven to be appealing to the younger generation, with 41% of its users aged 16 to 24. 90% of TikTok users claim to use TikTok on a daily basis, and TikTok has grown to become one of the world's most popular social media platforms (Weimann & Masri, 2020).

The fact that TikTok is so simple to use is one of the reasons behind its popularity. It's easier to modify and distribute material than with other apps, and it's simple to produce content with a smartphone in hand. At the same time, TikTok's 'remix' production and enormous song selection have managed to appeal to music listeners of all ages. This feature adds a fascinating twist to new trends and difficulties, and there's always something new to mimic or learn about when new songs are released. Through social media, modern people, in particular, are looking for new ways to express themselves and communicate with others (Taulli, 2020).

Problem Statement

Previous research has discovered that young adults who are exposed to social media sites have a significant impact on them (Srivastava, 2012). It also demonstrated how social media usage among young adults has affected them both positively and negatively. Because of today's advanced technologies, there is a new way of advertising that focuses primarily on social media, which presents new opportunities and challenges for brands because users' purchase decisions are heavily influenced by social media interactions (Dennhardt, 2012). Internet, especially social media like TikTok has changed the behavior and lifestyle of the users. Tik Tok has developed a new self-media marketing mode which is mainly based on the Internet as the operation platform and carries out product publicity and promotion through different channels (Tang, 2019). Apart from that, social media is pushing learning beyond the borders of the classroom and providing a platform for sharing news and information. Tik Tok Short video clips with large information capacity can catch the eyeballs of young adults (Srivastava, 2012). Hence, it is significance for the researcher to find out how young adults depend on Tik Tok to get the latest information and knowledge.

Research Objective

The following are the research objectives for this study: 1) To identify the perceptions of young adults towards TikTok; 2) To identify the reasons of young adults becoming an active user on TikTok; 3) To determine the impacts of TikTok on young adult's daily routine.

Literature Review

User's Perceptions towards TikTok

According to Liang (2021), despite the fact that TikTok may be addictive for most people, the researcher discovered that almost all interviewees perceived TikTok as a time-consuming activity. The interviewees in the study stated that once they open the application and begin browsing through the videos, they will forget or disregard their original plans. The subjects in the study linked the potential harm to their future development, whether academic or professional, and then decided to stop using the application after becoming aware of the influences. Those who have uninstalled TikTok recognise TikTok's potential and tremendous impact. They decided to uninstall the application in order to avoid missing out on other opportunities. As a result, they believe that this long-term amusement will harm their future.

Nonetheless, despite the negative consequences of TikTok, some people continue to use the app. This is because users believe that using this application provides them with enough entertainment. They can release tension and express their emotions by watching TikTok videos. Even though they are aware of the negative consequences, some users continue to believe that the benefits of using TikTok far outweigh the drawbacks (Liang, 2021). As a result, they viewed TikTok as a useful platform for them to unwind.

The Impacts of TikTok

TikTok, as one of the most popular social media applications, provides people with a lot of entertainment and enjoyment; however, there are always consequences that can influence human behaviour in either positive or negative ways. TikTok, according to Jaffar et al (2019), allows teachers or educators to explain an example or concept that may benefit students. TikTok also allows users to showcase their acting abilities, special abilities, and other talents. This had a positive impact on the people because they could get informative content while also discovering hidden talented people.

TikTok, on the other hand, has an impact on the academic performance of adolescents, in addition to the effects mentioned above. According to the findings of a study conducted by Nichita et al (2021), 60% of teenagers said the application could be used for academic purposes. According to Liang (2021), the study also found that spending a lot of time on TikTok influences their original plans for work and studies, which affects their academic and working performance.

Methods

Research Design

This research implemented survey technique to collect the information from the respondents. Throughout the study, an online survey questionnaire was used. Because survey research is the most important tool for all quantitative outcome research techniques, online survey questionnaires were chosen. The researcher conducted survey research by asking numerous survey questions, collecting data from the general public, and analysing this data to produce numerical results (QuestionPro, 2021).

Respondents

117 respondents aged 15-30 years old were involved in this research. The majority of respondents 64.1% (75) are students, followed by working people 31.6% (37) of responses. Respondents who are unemployed, both students and working people, and housewives have the fewest responses 2.6 % (3), 0.9% (1), and 0.9% (1) respectively.

Findings and Discussion

The findings showed that the majority of participants began using TikTok to follow the trend rather than to create videos. 40% of those polled agreed that they would start using TikTok to keep up with the trend. Meanwhile, 30% of them agreed that they began using TikTok as a result of a suggestion from their friend. A total of 54 people disagreed that they should start using TikTok to keep in touch with friends and family (18% strongly disagree and 28% disagree). 32 percent of all respondents strongly opposed that they should start making videos on TikTok. However, Zhou (2019) discovered that TikTok users are more likely to create and post content on TikTok. According to the findings of this study, Malaysian young adults appear to be more passive in creating videos, preferring to watch and follow trends instead.

Furthermore, TikTok was perceived as a time-consuming activity by Malaysian young adults, as the 73% of participants agreed with this selection from the survey questionnaire. 50% of the respondents in this study also stated that when they use TikTok, they forget about their original plans. According to Liang (2021), the majority of users consider TikTok to be a time-consuming hobby that causes them to abandon their initial intentions once they open the app and begin browsing through the videos. This demonstrates the negative perception of TikTok among Malaysian young adults.

According to the survey results, 74% of the respondents perceive TikTok as a stress-relieving platform because they enjoy watching videos. 56% of them enjoy TikTok's video effects and functions as well, but they are unsure whether they feel it helps strengthen their bonds with their friends. Despite their negative perceptions of TikTok, participants are willing to recommend it to their friends or relatives, or will begin using it if a friend or relative recommends it to them. It is similar to research conducted by Liang (2021), who discovered that people can relieve tension and express their emotions while watching TikTok videos, and Ma et al (2019) discovered that users' preferences for interactive activities such as likes, comments, and shares can strengthen interpersonal bonds, which Malaysian young adults agree on, but the majority of them remain neutral from the survey questionnaire.

According to the study's findings, 87% of the respondents use TikTok for entertainment, 85% use TikTok to watch videos, take photos, and gain information. Furthermore, the application satisfied their stress-relieving, cognitive, and pleasure needs, as the participants in this study used TikTok to gain knowledge, learn new skills, escape from reality, and release stress.

Furthermore, 71% of the respondents spend 30 minutes above per day on TikTok, with only 29% spend less than 30 minutes per day. This demonstrates that Malaysian young adults are still addicted to TikTok despite their ability to manage their time spent on social media. Meanwhile, the reasons for young adults' becoming active users have been identified, 44% of the respondents becoming active users due to a desire to gain knowledge through TikTok and 47% of the want to have similar topics to discuss with friends.

As a result, while the time spent on a day by young adults in Malaysia is not considered addictive to TikTok, they have stated the reasons that caused them to become active users

and the reasons for which they use TikTok. As a result, the second goal has been met, and the reasons for young adults' becoming active TikTok users have been identified.

The third goal of this research is to determine the effects of TikTok on a young adult's daily routine. According to the results of the online survey questionnaire, the application has an impact on the participants' daily routines, with 66.7% of them responding in the affirmative. As a result, it is possible to conclude that the negative impact on young adults' daily routines in Malaysia is that it is difficult to focus on work or study, as it occupied 51.3% of the vote, which is also the highest vote. TikTok has an impact on their time management as well, as TikTok causes young adults to lose track of time while using it and neglect their original plans. This was revealed in a study conducted by Liang (2021), who found that spending a lot of time on TikTok affects their initial intentions for work and studies, affecting their academic and professional performance. Furthermore, spending a lot of time on TikTok has an impact on Malaysian young adults' sleeping habits, social skills with family and friends in real life, and behavioural changes as a result of improper content exposure.

TikTok, on the other hand, can provide better motivation for young adults to complete their daily tasks by allowing them to relieve stress, which received the most votes (69.2 percent). 60% of the respondents agreed that TikTok can also provide knowledge, as respondents stated that they have gained new knowledge through TikTok. Furthermore, 47% of the respondents agreed that they can learn new life skills that can improve their living conditions, get more updates on their friends' recent statuses (28%), find new topics to socialise with their friends (41%), and showcase their talents (14%). This was also discovered in study performed by Jaffar, Riaz, and Mushtaq (2019), who discovered that TikTok allows users to showcase their acting, singing, and other abilities, as well as instructional information supplied by TikTok. As a result, Malaysian young adults share the same appreciation for the beneficial influence TikTok has had on them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this research is to determine the prevalence of TikTok addiction among young adults in Malaysia by assessing their opinions of the app, their motivations for becoming active users, and their usage goals, as well as the app's effects. At the conclusion of the entire research, all research objectives have been met. The researcher was expected to examine prior studies conducted by other researchers in order to gain a better understanding of the social platform and a firmer grasp on the study's direction and execution.

According to the survey results, young adults initially use TikTok to keep up with the latest trends, and after a long period of exposure, they continue to use it for entertainment and are able to make good use of it, such as by gaining knowledge by watching the various types of videos it provides. Although they consider it a time-consuming pastime that frequently causes them to forget their initial intentions, lose concentration on their studies or work, be unable to organise their time, and suffer from sleep issues, the majority still believe that TikTok has more positive benefits. By utilising TikTok, users can relax and become more inspired to do everyday duties and acquire new knowledge or life skills that will improve their lives. The usage of TikTok provides various functions that are able to fulfill human's needs as well as bringing influences to their daily life.

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