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## #Gen Z On Tiktok: Understanding the Implications of The Users' Lifestyle Using Qualitative Phenomenological Approach

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### Abstract

Social media has proven to become an essential platform that acts as an important tool for human daily interactions for the new generation, especially in this modernized era. From using the platform for communication only, it has now also become a platform for business, marketing and spreading new information on various applications like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. After the outbreak of COVID-19, TikTok emerged into being a social media platform that provided much information and also pleasure towards users. TikTok has become a widely used platform for public health agencies to communicate health information. As the impact of TikTok grew, many people realised that TikTok is a platform that can be used to promote many important issues but can also be a platform where people use it for their greed. To understand more on the situation more, the researcher used the phenomenological approach whereby 10 Malaysian frequent TikTok users from the age 18 to 25 years old were interviewed. NVivo 12 is used for this study for the coding process. The findings revealed that TikTok affects the implications of the users' lifestyle in terms of searching and sharing information, boosting their self-confidence, enhances their creativity, educational purposes, productivity and their self-esteem.

**Keywords:** Tiktok, Gen Z, Implications, User's Lifestyle, Phenomenological Approach, Qualitative

### Introduction

Social media has become an essential platform that acts as a vital tool for human's daily communication for the new generation in this modernized era (Makki & Bali, 2021). It has

become a platform for various reasons such as for doing business, spreading information, socializing and many more. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and TikTok play a huge role in influencing users' lifestyles. The younger generation's consumption of social media has increased over the years as it is easier to get news at the end of their fingertips (Roslan, 2022). In addition to that, after the outbreak of COVID-19, TikTok emerged into being a social media platform that provided much information and also pleasure towards users (Li et al., 2021). TikTok has become a widely used platform for public health agencies to communicate health information. The creation of a 15-seconds video made an impact on many people as it is short yet memorable. According to Zainodin et al (2022) for fast, recent, immediate, and visual information, many consumers turn to user-generated online videos. Although most users do not use TikTok for health information and entertainment, it is still proven that TikTok is a great platform to sure information regardless of topic.

TikTok is known to be a user-generated media because the users are the ones that generate the content (Omar & Dequan, 2020). TikTok first appeared in September 2016 and immediately gained popularity. It was originally known as Douyin in China and was introduced by a Beijing-based company known as Bytedance. The application consists of filters, background music and lip-synching templates that allow people to express and entertain themselves. It became a huge platform for both adults and teenagers all around the world as it does not only provide information but also pleasure and entertainment. Furthermore, TikTok enables people to watch, like and comment on other people's videos as well. People are allowed to communicate with one another on a global scale. Due to its global popularity, TikTok has reached one billion users in the third quarter of 2021 and is expected to 1.8 billion by the end of 2022 (Iqbal, 2022).

TikTok has influenced the lifestyle of many people of all ranges of age. Lifestyle can be defined in many ways. Lifestyle can be seen as one lives their life like what to wear, what kind of food one prefers, one educational background and many more. TikTok has become a platform that influenced people in the aspects such as health, beauty, product consumption, education, etc. As mentioned earlier, TikTok has become a platform widely used for health information therefore, many users use this application to get information regarding diet, fitness and body images. A study by Wang et al (2022) was conducted on the usage of TikTok that influence healthy eating goals and food practices among teenagers, and it was found that most teenagers use TikTok to get food ideas for future reference. Besides that, they also learnt to substitute ingredients with organic or healthy ingredients. This led to teenagers wanting to practice healthy eating and experimenting with new recipes on TikTok.

The usage of TikTok became much more popular during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the United States, it is estimated that there are 80 million active TikTok users where 60% are female and 40% are male. Most of them are teenagers and young adults. In 2022, TikTok is ranked the second most downloaded mobile application in Malaysia and has about 4 million TikTok users where 56.8% are female and 43.2% are males (Joyce, 2022). Furthermore, just like any other social media platform, TikTok also has its advantages and disadvantages in the context of the user's lifestyle. TikTok has positive outcomes such as enhancing creativity, promoting originality and boosting your self-confidence (Jaffar et al., 2019). However, this could also lead to users feeling insecure with themselves. However, this could lead to users feeling insecure with themselves. As the trends on TikTok mostly focus on dancing and content creation, the users may feel pressured and constantly what to strive for followers and

likes on TikTok. This may somehow affect their self-esteem if the content they are doing did not receive the audience that they strive for (Palupi et al., 2020).

Furthermore, body image has also been seen as an issue especially among teenagers as they strive to reach the beauty standards of society and using TikTok could lead them into doubting their beauty. As society has set a certain "ideal" body image, this may affect the users, especially while using TikTok as it is a platform where users create a variety of videos which includes make-up and styling. This may lead to several mental illnesses such as depression and social anxiety. Body image can be described as the perception, thoughts, and feelings that people have regarding their physical selves. This topic has become a well-known topic on social media platforms especially platforms like Facebook and Instagram (Cohen et al, 2017) that allow users to post pictures and videos of themselves. Due to this, many young people were exposed to the ideal body images which had caused a long-term effect on their self-esteem (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019). Several studies were conducted on how TikTok influenced people regarding body images, and it was found that viral challenges can severely ruin the perception of the body among users (Liu, 2021). In addition to that, as TikTok has no age restrictions upon registration and videos randomly appear on their page, inappropriate videos may appear and affect the user. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the implications of TikTok towards users' lifestyles.

## Literature Review

### *TikTok and Positivity*

Many recent studies touch on the positive outcomes of TikTok towards a user's lifestyle. Most of them suggested that TikTok influences people's lifestyle in the aspect of beauty, health, education etc. Firstly, TikTok influences users' lifestyle in the aspect of health. As TikTok is a video platform, many content creators use this opportunity to promote a healthy lifestyle. This means that they provide tips on making healthy food, how to have a healthy diet and also sharing exercise routines. Content creators create hashtags to make it easier for people to search the videos. Some of the hashtags used were #30DaysOfHealthyBreakfasts, #HealthyRecipes, #30DaysWorkOutChallenge, etc. These videos have influenced people to live healthier lifestyles. A study conducted by Wang et. al (2022) on Teenagers' Perception and Use of Food Content in TikTok further proves that TikTok has indeed influenced a healthy lifestyle towards TikTok users. The study found out that teenagers learn food preparation techniques from those videos and also learned ingredient substitutions for healthier alternatives. In addition to that, TikTok has also influenced them into eating healthily by eating more fruits and vegetables.

Furthermore, TikTok also gives awareness regarding health and mental health issues. This could affect their perspective on taking care of their health. Social media has become a significant platform for health practitioners to convey health information. The emergence of COVID-19 and MCO has made social media such as Twitter and TikTok became a pivotal medium in conveying important statistics regarding COVID-19 cases and ways to prevent the disease from spreading. Therefore showing that TikTok has the potential to be an important platform for health messages. An example of a research study by Li et. al (2020) further explains how TikTok has the potential to be a significant platform to convey health information. This study found out video creators should include more hashtags so that users can find videos related to COVID-19 easily and create creative videos to get their attention. An example of this is the viral handwashing dance which the creator used to dance to promote

proper health behaviours such as washing hands, wearing a face and mask and social distancing.

Besides that, many mental illness survivors share their stories on TikTok to ensure those who are currently suffering from them are not alone. They provide advice regarding treatments, and therapy sessions and sometimes, create their group session just to share stories. Amoda et al (2022) conducted a study on self-esteem and social appearance and how getting support from family and friends on TikTok helped lower their social anxiety. Besides that, McCashin & Murphy (2022) explained in their study on using TikTok for public and youth mental health that TikTok has been used by young people to talk about serious issues like mental health as it is seen as an outlet to interact and gain different perspectives on the issue.

TikTok has also proven to be a platform to help students with education. TikTok has become a social media platform where short videos with effective and interesting English language communication learning resources are posted by English educators and native English speakers (Kaye et. al., 2020). TikTok now plays a critical role in English language communication competence acquisition during the pandemic of COVID-19 in the modern digital era with the development of technology, this type of media is blooming as the new capital allocation in the new international community. TikTok could make the learning process of the English language more entertaining and dynamic. Wu (2020) explained that the most popular social media platform among students is TikTok. TikTok integrated with short videos could help provide accessibility and exposure to English language communicative settings as well as decrease the inconvenience for language learners despite their distance and settings (Nariyati et. al., 2020) and help these English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to improve their English language communication competence in the modern digital arena. Xiuwen & Razali (2021) conducted a study on an overview of the usage of TikTok to improve English communication competence among EFL undergraduate students and found out that TikTok has influenced young students to engage in this application for educational purposes. This further proves that TikTok is a good platform for learning education, especially for the young generations in this new modern age.

#### *TikTok and Negativity*

Besides that, although TikTok can be seen as a positive platform for various reasons, TikTok could also give a negative impact towards users and one of them is towards one's self-esteem. As TikTok is a platform which allows people to share videos, many people share videos regarding beauty and body images. TikTok allows users to post videos of themselves doing various challenges. Although it is a good platform to explore one's self, this could affect one's self-esteem if their satisfaction is not reached. A study by Hulsing (2021) on the influence of TikTok on body images found that TikTok does have a negative influence on body images among users. This is because most fitness contents on TikTok portray the 'ideal' body type to motivate users to stay healthy. However, this only caused them to follow the 'ideal' body type to the extent of going on an extreme diet. In addition to that, although TikTok is an application for self-expression, many use this platform for prejudices as well.

Furthermore, because of these viral challenges on TikTok, some go overboard in creating content that could endanger their lives. One of the viral challenges on TikTok among European users is known as the #LabelloChallenge. This challenge started innocently as it is just a trend to guess the scent of a lip balm on another person. This, however, turned dark when some suggested using lip balm when they are sad which means when the lip balm is finished, they are meant to self-harm or commit suicide (Walfisz, 2022). Another example of

a dangerous trend on TikTok was the #SkullBreakerChallenge. This challenge was to make the user jump into the air and two others kick their legs out from under them, causing them to fall back which resulted in people having major injuries. Another recent challenge that has affected users is the Nutmeg Challenge where the user is to inhale a substance, which caused them to hallucinate and faint afterwards. These challenges are very dangerous, especially for children who are just starting to know the social media world as this could have a heavy negative influence towards their behaviour (Atherton, 2020).

### **Methodology**

This research uses a qualitative method of an in-depth interview to collect data. Qualitative research is an interpretative approach where it attempts to gain information regarding specific meanings and behaviours experienced in a certain social phenomenon through the experiences of participants (Palmer & Bolderston, 2006). This research uses the phenomenology approach as this study focuses on the platform TikTok which has become a phenomenon, especially after the emergence of COVID-19. This approach is suitable for this study as it focuses on developing an understanding of the behaviour and experience (Creswell, 2017) regarding TikTok's influences on a user's lifestyle.

Purposive sampling was used for this study to choose the sample which consisted of certain informants who could give the researchers the specific data that was needed for the study. The requirements were: 1) users must be frequent users of TikTok, 2) users must be in the age range of 18 to 25 years old and 3) users must be living in KL and Selangor. After the selection is done, in-depth interviews were conducted. Ten Malaysian TikTok users from the ages 18 to 25 years old were interviewed and the data were then analysed. Ten Malaysian TikTok users were interviewed. The interviews were then recorded and transcribed for the coding process. The interviews took approximately 3 months to complete and were conducted in an informal setting that was filled with insightful information and experience from the interviewees. Thematic analysis is used to organize and interpret the findings. Thematic analysis is a technique to organize and provide insights into patterns of meanings (themes) across data and this enables the researcher to make sense of the shared meanings and experiences in the study (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The NVivo12 software was used in the coding process. After compiling the data, the findings were deliberated to derive the objectives' outcome.

### **Findings**

Based on the qualitative phenomenology analysis used to analyse the data, the findings revealed six significant themes as follows.

- i. Searching and Sharing Information
- ii. Self-Confidence
- iii. Enhances Creativity
- iv. Education purposes
- v. Productivity
- vi. Self-esteem

#### *Theme 1: Searching and Sharing Information*

TikTok has become an essential platform ever since the emergence of COVID-19. TikTok is a video-generated platform whereby users may search various videos with a click of a button. TikTok is not only seen as a platform for entertainment but also a platform for sharing

information such as food recipes, travel guides, café reviews, mental health and many more. As the world is advancing at a fast pace, consumers nowadays too would also prefer fast ways to get information. This sentiment is reflected in the excerpts below:

*“TikTok is a good place to search for information because it is fast. We can search anything and it appears with visuals which will help me a lot.”* (TU1)

*“When you go on Twitter, you would have to read and sometimes you’re lazy so when you go on TikTok, they sometimes make videos with voiceovers which reads the contents for you so you don’t have to read. TikTok is easy and convenient for me especially when I want to search for information!”* (TU7)

Besides that, the informants also share that they use TikTok to search for café and restaurant reviews. They enjoy searching reviews on TikTok since they can see videos on what certain café and restaurant looks like and what kind of food they sell. In a way, TikTok acts like a guide and influences them in decision-making as they need to see reviews regarding a certain place and whether it is worth going to or not. This can be seen in the excerpts below:

*“I do refer to TikTok a lot for café hunting! Since lots of people share their reviews on cafes and so on, I will always bookmark the video so that I can go back to it when I am free! Like umm, I did go to a few cafes thanks to TikTok (laughs). I found this cute café in Petaling Jaya If and it was beautiful and the drinks were really good! Like TikTok is a good place to get information like this”* (TU5)

*“I think the biggest change is the way it affects my decision a lot. Like if I were to go and eat somewhere, I would use TikTok as a guide (laughs). I would search the restaurant up on TikTok and see videos regarding that particular restaurant where it’s a good restaurant or not”* (TU1)

TikTok's easy feature of less than one-minute video content is the reason TikTok has become a necessary component for information searching. According to Patrick (2018), millennials now frequently use short video platforms to share amusing and practical content on social media. This makes it very convenient for users to search for information on TikTok. In addition, individuals use TikTok to search for important topics like mental health and health concerns. Knowledge sharing has been a crucial component of TikTok's services as they have successfully become one of the most popular platforms (Jung & Qiyang, 2019).

*“TikTok is a good platform to share mental health awareness because there are a few TikTok influencers who share their experience with battling with mental health and some even make journals on TikTok just to share their journey so I think it is good so that people are aware that mental health is important to highlight on”* (TU4)

*“TikTok is a really good platform to advocate regarding certain issues like regarding mental health issues. TikTok is also a good platform to spread awareness on mental health issues cause as a person who have been diagnosed, being on TikTok makes me realize I am not facing problems on my own and sometimes (thinks), I can also relate to the contents made on TikTok regarding mental health issues.”* (TU6)

*“(thinks) Recently I came across a video on anxiety and it was something new to me because there are not many exposures on these issues. I mean, I did not have many exposures regarding this. The video explains on how anxiety looks like and that there are different types of anxiety so it was quite helpful and it certainly changed my perspective regarding those who have anxiety (thinks) because actually at first, I thought anxiety was a normal thing but after seeing the video, showed me that it can lead to something serious so yeah. So (thinks) sharing videos like this on TikTok could let people know that (thinks) this is serious you know.”*  
(TU7)

Furthermore, mental health has become a discussion which not many are comfortable talking about. This leads it to become taboo. However, many researchers claim that TikTok is a useful platform to discuss important issues like this. Both informants above show a positive reaction towards TikTok being a good platform for sharing mental health issues. The reason could be that both informants were exposed to that environment. Informant TU6 also mentioned that she had gone through mental health issues before and TikTok encouraged her to move forward despite her condition. This is why the informants believe TikTok is a good place to disseminate information regarding mental health. Although awareness regarding mental health issues has increased, there are still people who are not aware or do not know how serious mental health issues can be. Informant TU7 stated that she had never experienced mental health issues and neither did any of her friends too, which resulted in them being unaware of mental health issues.

#### *Theme 2: Self-Confidence*

Beauty standards have become an issue ever since the olden days. Women are supposed to have nice bodies and fair skin to fit into society. TikTok has become one of the platforms where TikTok could bring unnecessary beauty standards, especially among young teenagers. Due to this, many young people were exposed to the ideal body images which caused a long-term effect on their self-esteem (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019). Many past researchers have mentioned that toxic beauty standards existed on TikTok with idealistic body images and acne-free faces. However, in this study, the toxic beauty standards were not touched by the informants. The informants mentioned more about how beauty standards have evolved and how TikTok boosts their confidence. According to Ardari (2016), having self-confidence is having an attitude or belief in one's talents, feeling liberated to act following one's desires, and not giving consideration to other people's opinions. The excerpts below will prove sentiments:

*“There are also other content creators like Haneesya Hani, like Abby who throw away those beauty standards like being dark skin is also beautiful, being melanin is also beauty, having acne is okay. Like Haneesya, she said you don't have to be skinny or anything to be successful like you should just be yourself. So nowadays, I think there's a lot of positive environments for women and I think it gives me more confidence with my own body and beauty. I used to think we must be petite to be pretty but seeing all these TikTok influencers breaking the beauty standards, makes me want to confident too”*

(TU6)

*“I have to be honest; we are always given the perfect image on how a woman has to look like. For instance, women need to have flawless and fair skin, only then they are considered as pretty. But nowadays on TikTok, there are so many influencers that are going against those beauty standards such as Abby and Nalisa Amin. They are not petite so I think TikTok is a good platform that promotes new kind of beauty standards among users. I myself am not that small in size and not too big, but I do have issues with my skin but it does not bother me since lots of people go through that too so I just have to be confident with myself and all is good!”* (TU10)

TU6 and TU10's perspectives on beauty standards are particularly intriguing because they differed from what is anticipated for this study. The informants explained that beauty standards have evolved and it could be due to them not fitting the beauty standards in Malaysia yet they felt more encouraged in embracing their beauty. This led them into thinking positively about the beauty standards in Malaysia shown on TikTok. According to the findings, beauty standards have changed since TikTok first made people aware that it's acceptable to accept one's attractiveness because everyone is beautiful in their way. In Malaysia, women must have a fair complexion (Balkish, 2016) and tiny waists, prominent thigh gaps, and wide hips to be considered beautiful (Naginder et. al. 2022) as shown in the media, however, in this study, the informants explain otherwise. The informants also touch on how TikTok has given them more self-confidence. This is because there are several videos on TikTok about skincare and makeup routines that could have benefited them in different ways. This sentiment is reflected in the excerpt below:

*“Since using TikTok, I started wearing make-up and I started following skincare routines! I watch a lot (thinks) get ready with me videos! At first it was just western TikTok influencers but now I started watching Malaysian TikTok users since my skin tone is much more similar with them, so after watching I, (think) learnt how to do my make-up and so on. I think it's a positive influence because (thinks) I become more confident! (laughs) It really boosted my self-confidence”* (TU4)

*“TikTok really boosted my confidence. Before this, I was very insecure with myself so watching videos on TikTok about make up and fashion styles, really did help me improve in making myself look pretty. (thinks) so TikTok really did help me with my confidence”* (TU9)

*“I think it made me more confident with myself. I used to be not confident with myself but after watching people vlog on TikTok, I thought to myself “oh I should do this” (laughs) that's how I started vlogging”* (TU7)

All three of the aforementioned informants said that TikTok exposed them to numerous make-up and fashion trends, which boosted their confidence. As both informants grew up feeling insecure and believing they are not like other females who are stylish and representable, it can be seen that TikTok had a good implication on them. As a result, using TikTok encouraged them to become more beautiful. From the findings, it seems that TikTok managed to influence the change in attitude and opinion of the informants which led them in

being more accepting of their beauty rather than comparing it with others. In addition to that, TU7 talked about how TikTok gave her the confidence to record video diaries of her daily activities. According to the study, TikTok has developed into a platform where users can record memories and upload them for later viewing. They seem to use this as a form of escapism. Situmorang (2021) claims that TikTok does not only draw users but also serves as therapy or a sort of getaway for its users.

### *Theme 3: Enhances Creativity*

In this study, it is found that TikTok is also a platform that enhances one's creativity. TikTok is a video-creating platform whereby users may create videos and post them online. This somehow enhances their creativity in different ways. One of the informants, which is informant TU3, uses TikTok to post videos of him sharing his running routines. He mentioned that as time goes by, he notices how his videos have improved since the first video he made. Therefore, he agrees on how TikTok enhances his creative skills.

*"I feel like every content I post about running, the videos kind of like improve from one video to another. I do not talk in the videos but I post snippets during my running sessions and I started making it into different vibes like intense or chill vibes by adding songs or transitions. And from there, I can see what kind of videos I want to make"*

(TU3)

Furthermore, other informants also added that TikTok gives them more ideas on how to make videos look fun and in becoming more creative. There are many challenges on TikTok that users can do with different transitions and music which allows the users to interpret the challenge in their ways. Some of the challenges on TikTok that users can interpret for themselves are like involves make-up and outfit where they change from one look to another look with cool transitions. A challenge that went viral during the pandemic and in which many users participated was the #WipeItDownChallenge where the users wipe the mirror and, in every wipe, they change their outfits. The reason why the informants agree to TikTok enhancing their creativity skills could be because they are not creative so making videos on TikTok and adapting to the different transitions and ideas, helps them in being creative for themselves.

*"TikTok made me become more creative or help me gain more ideas, in a sense. I make videos and it so simple! And sometimes I just use the templates too so I think TikTok helps a lot in making me more creative. Sometimes I even join challenges and make it into my own way which is fun!"*

(TU4)

*"TikTok is a good app to enhance your creativity! (thinks) like I think since there are like templates, and (think) you can follow the videos on TikTok like maybe the transitions and all, so I think it can like help one with their creativity skills"*

(TU5)

*"I try to use that as an inspiration! TikTok somehow makes me more creative (laughs) since I really struggled a lot in sketching before and since I needed new ideas so (thinks) by watching TikTok, it gives me more ideas on what to sketch. It*

*enhances my creativity and I am really grateful for TikTok since it really helped me a lot"* (TU7)

Different from other informants, informant TU7 mentioned that she uses TikTok to gain inspiration in sketches as she is pursuing her Form 6 studies in Arts. TikTok helped her in getting more ideas which improved her sketching. This further proves that TikTok is a platform that can enhance one's creativity regardless of your background.

#### *Theme 4: Educational Purposes*

Besides that, TikTok also has a positive implication towards users regarding educational purposes. Educational purposes can be varied from learning subjects in school to language learning. Videos promoting language acquisition were in second place among those that shared knowledge the most in 2019 and abundant research has examined the benefits of using social media to help language learners improve their language abilities and proficiency (Pratiwi, et.al 2021). Ramli and Ismail (2021) also proposed that TikTok is a valuable Web 2.0 tool for language learning, especially under the category of multimedia learning, where the combination of pictures (such as illustrations, animations, and videos) and words (such as printed or spoken text) can facilitate learning. In this study, the informants mentioned that TikTok is a sufficient place to learn languages.

*"I do watch videos on grammar. (laughs) Like improving my English pronunciation and English grammar. It is really helpful cause like I did improve a lot because I spent my time watching that throughout MCO till now so my English is better now"* (TU2)

*"I actually learn Korean from TikTok (laughs) I mean I could've just learnt from Youtube but again the videos are long and my attention span is short (laughs) so I use TikTok to learn Korean! There are lots of TikTok Malaysian influencers who teaches Korean on TikTok like Hello Hilmi! I watch his videos a lot and they are both funny and educational. I mean I am not that fluent but I can say simple words like hello and you're pretty in Korean"* (TU4)

*Before this, I used to always join their live on TikTok to learn AddMaths! It helps me a lot. And for English, I sometimes watch people talk (laughs) it sounds weird right but I mean, I watch videos of people speaking in English (thinks) because my English is not that good so I go to TikTok and watch that to increase my vocabulary"* (TU7)

It is found that the pandemic and TikTok's practical qualities, such as its short videos, may have contributed to the application's popularity as a language learning aid. As a result of the pandemic, many people stayed at home, giving the informants plenty of time to learn new things. The informants did remark that the pandemic was the reason they started using TikTok, which is why TikTok has evolved into a platform for language acquisition. TU2 claimed that studying videos on proper English grammar and pronunciation helped her improve her understanding of the language. Informant TU2 mentioned how she could not speak English well before but now speaks fluently. TU7, who recently completed her high school education, on the other hand, claimed that she used TikTok to learn subjects like Add Maths because

there were lots of people using the platform to live-stream and provided free teaching sessions for others who could not afford to go to tuition. This demonstrates how TikTok pushes users to use it for both pleasure and education which gives a positive implication towards their lifestyle.

#### *Theme 5: Productivity*

Although TikTok has many positive benefits, there are also negative effects from TikTok. According to this study, there are two negative implications towards users' lifestyles. The first one touches on productivity. Productivity has always been an issue closely related to TikTok as TikTok takes up a lot of their time. The informants mentioned that TikTok causes them to lack productivity which leads them to procrastinate in doing tasks like assignments, work, chores or anything important. The excerpts below explain the sentiments:

*"I used to use it a lot like probably 3 hours or 4 hours straight like only took 5 to 10 mins off to pray or eat and sometimes I even eat while scrolling TikTok. It is actually not productive I feel like I wasted lots of time when I could have finished my assignments (laughs)"* (TU1)

*"I am quite addicted to TikTok because I think once I have nothing to do, I open TikTok and I fall down the rabbit hole like it was 2pm and suddenly its 3:30 pm and I realized I spent 1 hour and a half just scrolling on TikTok"* (TU6)

*"If I am being honest, (laughs) it used to be productive since I use it in school. I do watch art videos like sketching but I mostly spend my time on TikTok watching K-pop so it does not make me productive (laughs) I feel like I should have spent my time doing my assignments rather than scrolling through TikTok (laughs)"* (TU7)

The informants who spoke about a lack of productivity were mostly students or unemployed. This explains that they have lots of time to determine what to do with their free time. According to the study, the reason people claim they are not productive is that they have time and do not use it well. They ended up being on TikTok for more than two hours and neglected their tasks. An interesting discovery in this study is that other informants who are employed did not say how TikTok decreases their level of productivity. The working informants may also have good time management skills and probably utilise TikTok as a stress reliever during their free time could also be the reason why they do not claim to be underproductive or waste time.

#### *Theme 6: Self-esteem*

Another negative effect that shocked the researcher is how TikTok affects the users' self-esteem. However, the self-esteem in this study is not related to how one looks but it is more to comparing one's lifestyle with another. Joorabchi et al (2013) found that the students in their study go through a positive development in their youth while using the internet as they probably did not go through any mental health issues like depression or anxiety. In contrast with that study, most of the informants in this study express that they feel very ungrateful towards their lives when scrolling through TikTok. Besides being ungrateful, other negative emotions emerge as well which caused them to feel demotivated or discouraged. The sentiments are reflected in the excerpts below:

*“When I watch TikTok, I kind of compare myself with them and at one point, it affected my self-esteem. TikTok makes you compare yourself with their lives cause to me, TikTok is like setting standards for people like for instance, this person shows how productive their day is and I am still struggling to do one thing in a day so it affects my self-esteem somehow”* (TU3)

*“I try to not always rely on TikTok though since it can be a little toxic because TikTok is where you post videos, you share your life and activities, so there are times I feel ungrateful (doubtful) because (thinks) I mean I am grateful for the things I have now but sometimes scrolling through TikTok and seeing people travel outside of Malaysia or having better lifestyles, it makes me feel like ‘why can’t I have that life?’”* (TU1)

*“I do have to say that TikTok sometimes (thinks) makes me feel like my life is not enough. TikTok makes me question my life sometimes since I look at people travelling and I just feel like I want that too. (thinks) so TikTok makes me feel ungrateful which is not good for me”* (TU4)

The informants who felt this way were students. This could be because they still do not have the means or financial aid to support themselves in doing what they want. As they are still studying and probably still need permission from their parents to travel, it caused them to compare themselves in terms of lifestyle. Informant TU explained that he compares how productive one’s day is on TikTok. He explained that it affected his self-esteem since he is not as productive which makes him believe that he is worthless for not completing any tasks in a day. The researcher also believed that maturity could also be a factor as to why the informants feel that way. Maturity can be defined as a measure of an individual's developing competency in terms of social problem-solving, proper behaviour, interpersonal relationships, and judgement (Anand & Bharti, 2021). As the working informants may have reached a level of social maturity, that is why they do not compare their lives with those on TikTok since they know their limits, etc. In other words, they are pleased with their general well-being. General well-being is defined as the absence of anxiety and unhappiness, as well as the feelings of contentment, happiness, and satisfaction with one's life experiences or function in the workplace (Verman & Verman, 1989). However, the informants who are still studying or unemployed, are still struggling in understanding certain situations and limiting themselves as they have not reached a certain level of social maturity.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, it is evident that the positive implications outweigh the negative which explains that TikTok gives positive effects towards users’ lifestyles. TikTok is a good platform for finding and sharing knowledge on a variety of topics, including cuisine recipes, restaurant reviews, and mental health-related topics. Information may travel quickly through TikTok due to its practical features of less than a minute-long video, which is why people are so easily convinced by it. TikTok is a medium that also helps people feel more confident. As previously mentioned, beauty standards have always been a problem that has long-term effects on a large number of people, especially women. However, in this study, the majority of the informants explained that beauty standards have changed so that being beautiful no longer

just requires being small and fair-skinned. Additionally, the informants concurred that TikTok is a useful platform for raising awareness of significant issues like mental health.

TikTok, a platform for making videos, also offers users the ability to develop their creativity. Making movies and adapting tasks to their style requires creativity, and it did encourage them to do so. Another unforeseen beneficial effect is that TikTok is being used as a platform for educational reasons, in this example, language learning. The majority of the informants learned the language by watching grammar and pronunciation videos. This can be seen as a new insight as TikTok is an entertainment platform but also encourages users for educational reasons. Similar to other social media platforms, TikTok might have unfavourable effects. The informants said TikTok makes them less productive because it is a platform that generates videos to satisfy users' needs. This is because it causes them to avoid doing work and continue watching TikTok. Lastly, TikTok also affects the self-esteem of the users. Self-esteem can be affected in many like how one looks or how one's lifestyle. Most of the informants claim that sometimes being on TikTok causes them to feel ungrateful due to them not being able to have the same lavish lifestyle as shown on TikTok.

From the findings, it is clear that TikTok has a huge effect towards the users' lifestyle be it positive or negative. The researcher believes that TikTok will continue to be the 'it' thing until a new social media platform emerges. Till then, TikTok will remain at the top of the hierarchy of the young generation. Future scholars especially those in communication, will gain knowledge and insights from this study as it discusses on social media usage and the effects it has on people in various ways. This study is also significant as TikTok has become one of the most used platforms among social media user. Therefore, this will allow more researchers to discover the relevancy of TikTok in the future and create a new research. This study will help future researchers in understanding the implications TikTok has towards the lifestyle of TikTok users in both positive and negative aspects. For the negative aspects, this study will further help the society to be more aware and use TikTok wisely.

Future researchers can use this research as reference and find another research gap to do a study on. They can also focus on one positive or negative effect towards a user and use that as a new study. This will allow the researcher to learn more regarding that effect in a depth. Different methodologies can also be explored such as case studies and content analysis if future researchers would like to try different methods other than interviews.

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