

Uses and Gratification Theory: A Study of Social Media Usage, Tiktok among the Youth.

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Abstract: Due to the development of technology and social media, people now spend an increasing amount of time communicating on these platforms. The social media platform TikTok has been popular among young people worldwide. The study aims to identify the benefits and applications of TikTok among young people in Kumasi, Ghana. The study is supported by the influence theory as well as the use and pleasure theories. The ideas are important to this study because they help explain how TikTok could alter young people in Kumasi's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. The study also put a lot of effort into reading books and articles about the research variables. This is because by researching the uses and gratifications of TikTok among young people in Kumasi, the study may add to the greater body of literature on social media use and its implications on young people's lives. The study's focus is the quantitative method. In the other research, descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to analyze the data and provide a report. It is effective for using deductive reasoning to explain a particularly intriguing event.

Introduction

The amount of time individuals spend interacting via social media has significantly grown in recent years due to the growth of technology and social media. Social media use has permeated many young adults' everyday lives and has even become a part of who they are. 90% of young adults routinely utilized social media platforms including Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook as of 2015. (Barton, 2021). This has had a tremendous impact on how individuals connect, communicate, and acquire information. The way individuals engage with one another, share information, and consume entertainment has been changed by social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat. With more than 4.2 billion users globally, social media has ingrained itself into many people's everyday lives. According to research, young people spend an average of 8-10 hours a day surfing, enjoying, and publishing on social networking platforms (Wood, 2014). Young people across the world have become quite used to the social media site TikTok. The app's revolutionary features, which make it simple for users to make and share interesting short-form films, keep up with trends, and engage with a large user base, are responsible for its popularity. The most downloaded app of 2022 and 2023 is TikTok, which has expanded quickly to become the hottest app of 2023 (Lee, 2023) and has remained so since (Koetsier, 2023). Because of the users' usage of TikTok for amusement, self-expression, and social interaction, it has become a phenomenon in culture. The majority of TikTok's 500 million users are in the pre- to late adolescent age range. The ability for users to become someone on the platform is one of TikTok's distinctive features (Leight, 2019). Yet, since the platform's introduction in 2017, some experts in the music business have credited TikTok with helping to discover and promote new artists (Bereznak, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Although social media offers numerous advantages, such as promoting communication and connection, there are also worries about its detrimental impact on relationships, social behaviour, and mental health. Despite TikTok's rising popularity, young people still don't fully comprehend the benefits and applications of the program. In particular, research is required on the reasons why young people use TikTok, how often and how long they use it, and any possible harm it may do to their lives. By examining the uses and satisfactions of TikTok among young people in Kumasi, Ghana, and locating possible detrimental consequences of TikTok use on their lives, this study seeks to solve this issue.

Research has shown that young people who use social media for social comparison, validation seeking, and as an escape from reality are more likely to engage in problematic social media usage, such as addiction and detrimental mental health effects (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Moreover, studies have shown a connection between youth social media usage and depression and low self-esteem, particularly in the setting of excessive social media use and cyberbullying (Lin et al., 2016; Rideout et al., 2010).

Research Purpose

The purpose of the study is to determine the uses and gratifications of TikTok among youth in Kumasi, Ghana.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the motivation behind TikTok among youth in Kumasi.

2. To assess the potential effects of TikTok use on young people's lives in Kumasi.

Research Questions

1. What motivation is derived from the use of TikTok on the youth in Kumasi?
2. What is the effect of TikTok on the youth in Kumasi?

Justification

This study is rooted in the growing popularity of TikTok among young people globally and the potential impact of the platform on their well-being. As social media platforms become increasingly prevalent in everyday life, understanding how they are used and the impact they have on young people is essential. Additionally, exploring the motivations behind young people's use of TikTok can provide insights into how the platform can be leveraged to promote positive outcomes, such as increased social support and self-esteem. Furthermore, understanding the potential negative effects of TikTok use, such as cyberbullying and body image issues, can inform strategies to mitigate these effects. Therefore, investigating the uses and gratifications of TikTok among youth in Kumasi can contribute to the broader literature on social media use and its impact on young people's lives.

Literature Review

The present chapter focused on reviewing literature that pertains to the variables under study. The uses and gratification and influence theory were discussed, and the conceptual review was also discussed as well as the empirical review of the study.

Use and Gratification Theory

The use and gratification theory was propounded by Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz in 1973. The uses and gratification theory proposes that individuals use media to fulfill their needs and desires (Katz et al., 1973). In the case of social media platforms such as TikTok, users may turn to the platform to satisfy a variety of needs, including social interaction, entertainment, self-expression, and information seeking. Research has shown that TikTok users engage with the platform for multiple reasons, such as creating and sharing content, interacting with others, and gaining a sense of belonging (Chen et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2020). The usage of TikTok by young people is motivated by a variety of wants and desires, which makes the theory of uses and gratifications pertinent to this study. This research can offer insights into how TikTok can be used to generate positive outcomes by examining how the site satisfies users' requirements. The uses and gratification theory may be used to pinpoint any possible drawbacks of TikTok use, such as cyberbullying and problems with body image. This research can also shed light on potential ways to lessen harmful consequences by revealing the motives driving young people's use of TikTok. For instance, if a user uses TikTok primarily to feel like a part of something, measures to encourage pleasant relationships and lessen cyberbullying might be established. Understanding the reasons why young people use TikTok and the possible effects of the site on their well-being may be done with the help of the uses and satisfaction hypothesis. This research can contribute to the larger body of literature on social media use and its effects on young people's lives by examining the uses and gratifications of TikTok among youth in Kumasi.

Use of TikTok

With over one billion active users, TikTok has swiftly risen to the top of the list of social media applications worldwide. The software gives users access to a variety of creative tools that they may use to make and share short videos, typically up to 60 seconds long. TikTok is frequently used for amusement purposes. The app's algorithm is built to promote and highlight material that garners the greatest engagement, which frequently means that the most enjoyable or amusing videos tend to be the most well-liked. It brings happiness and relaxation to many individuals to watch and make these films. In fact, according to other studies, more than 90% of TikTok users said they used the app for enjoyment (Yang & Liao, 2020). TikTok may be used for creative expression as well. The software gives users a place to showcase their talents and unique personalities through little films. The software allows users to discuss their thoughts, show off their skills, and connect with people who have similar interests. Users may now discover and express their identities on TikTok, frequently through memes, trends, and challenges.

Social action has also been conducted via TikTok. The software has been utilized to raise people's awareness of social and political concerns and inspire action. The app has also been used to promote various social and environmental concerns and to increase awareness of climate change. Advertising and marketing have both used TikTok. Several companies and brands have started using TikTok to market their goods and services as the app's popularity has increased. Several firms now work with influencers and content producers on the app to promote their products, and they have also developed into significant marketing assets.

Effect of TikTok

Information technology is now undergoing important breakthroughs. The ease with which individuals may get information via a sizable internet network at any time and from any location is one illustration of this. TikTok, a social networking app that lets users create and share short videos, has gained a lot of traction among young people all around the world. TikTok's

innovative features, which enable users to easily create and share engaging content, follow trends, and interact with a sizable user community, may be attributed to the app's popularity. Nonetheless, despite its widespread use, it may or may not have positive or negative effects on its users, especially young people.

Among other things, TikTok has had a significant influence on mental health. According to a study by the Royal Society for Public Health, TikTok is the most harmful social media platform for young people's mental health, with the app being associated with higher levels of anxiety, dependency, and restless nights (Royal Society for Public Health, 2021). The app's algorithm is designed to prioritize and promote content with the highest level of engagement, which usually leads to the most stunning or upsetting videos being the most popular. Consumers could feel under pressure to produce more extreme material, which would make them unhappy and anxious.

Social relationships have also been significantly impacted by TikTok. The app's emphasis on quick, consumable videos has changed how users engage with one another and consume material. Users may now connect with people who share their passions thanks to the app, which has spawned new communities and subcultures centered on common interests, pastimes, and fashions. Yet, it has also increased feelings of loneliness and isolation, especially among younger users who can be more susceptible to social comparison and feel excluded from online networks (Lee, 2021). Online culture has been significantly impacted by TikTok. The software has fostered the spread of viral challenges and dance routines, as well as new trends and memes. This has democratized internet culture and made it possible for anybody to produce potentially viral material.

Empirical Review

This section focuses mainly on the review of studies relating to the use and gratification of TikTok among youth. The key motive for reviewing this empirical literature is to ascertain an understanding of the use and gratification of TikTok and how it affects the youth.

The research from 2020 by Bucknell and Kottasz, which was discussed in the article, examined the applications and gratifications sought after by TikTok's primary target market (pre-adolescent and teenage groups). The study also sought to ascertain the degree to which self-expression, social acceptability, and fame-seeking motivations, all of which are important development elements for adolescent psychology, were present in the use of this particular social networking site (SNS). Students from 60 schools in the five main administrative regions of Denmark were given self-completion questionnaires for the study. The findings demonstrated that passive consumption behaviours were prevalent in both pre-adolescent and adolescent populations and that the primary driver of all behaviours which includes passive consumption, participatory behaviours, and contributing behaviours was the enjoyment of entertainment or affect. Also, pre-adolescent groups utilized TikTok more frequently and heavily than teenage groups. The authors found that contributing behaviours were motivated by a desire to increase one's social circle, by a need for fame, for self-expression, and for the creation of an identity, according to theories in teenage psychology.

According to Mitchell and Madison (2021), the study's goals were to understand why young individuals with a sample size of 247 used TikTok. Overall, 52% of teens and young adults reported using TikTok. The three primary elements that summarised the users' TikTok experiences were also present. The following was discovered via the use of qualitative content analysis techniques: (1) enjoyment in one's own life and with others, (2) TikTok's deterrent features, and (3) meaningful short films. The realism, coolness, agency-enhancement, community-building, bandwagon, interaction, browsing/variety seeking, and play/fun gratifications were found to be satisfied by TikTok. The Uses and Gratifications theory is discussed concerning the findings. TikTok was perceived as being too immature and providing either too much agency (cyberbullying) or not enough by both former users and non-users.

Methodology

Research Approach

The quantitative approach is the focus of the study because it offers a formal, structured, objective, and methodical procedure for gathering factual data from numerical or quantitative data concerning actual events (Creswell, 2014). To get more accurate results for generalization, the quantitative method also requires collecting primary or secondary data and evaluating it using statistical techniques including mean, standard deviation, correlation, and linear regression (Clark & Creswell, 2014). It works well for utilizing deductive reasoning to describe a particular interesting occurrence. This approach may also be used to characterize variables, investigate correlations between variables, and spot interactions between or among various constructs that result in cause-and-effect relationships which opine with Bloomfield and Fisher's study in 2019.

The objective of the quantitative method is to determine if one variable significantly affects another, and linear regression may be used to do this (Almalki, 2016). In a similar vein, quantitative results allow for the generalization of findings across a particular population even if the researcher depends on a certain sample size (Saunders & Lewis, 2015). The research, which is required because it offers the essential procedures and tools to achieve this objective, examines the effect of perceived organizational

support and job satisfaction in the banking sector in Kumasi with the role of job commitment. This strategy is therefore appropriate and suitable for this kind of study.

Research Design

A research design is a methodical approach to collecting and examining data (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). The research design, they said, exposes what is required to respond to the study's research questions. As a result, the descriptive design was chosen for this study since it is pertinent to its objective, particular objectives, and methodology. According to Salaria (2012), descriptive design is related to describing an event in terms of a range of customs, circumstances, situations, procedures, beliefs, and trends. With the use of this technique, researchers may gather pertinent information from a sample of participants to describe the features of the wider community in which they are active participants (Quick & Hall, 2015). This design likewise focuses on gathering thorough information on prominent circumstances or events with the intent of describing and interpreting them.

According to Creswell and Clark (2017), the descriptive design emphasizes proper event identification, comparisons, analysis, and interpretation while building links. According to Creswell (2014), this design is critical in supplying crucial information for finding solutions to social challenges. It also assists in the collection of primary data from a large sample size to form impartial conclusions and better generalize findings (Quick & Hall, 2015). This study design is suitable for getting the youth's perceptions of the social media application through descriptive analysis as well as examining cause and effect correlations through inferential analysis.

Data Analysis

The IBM SPSS Statistics program will be used to code and process the relevant and valid data. The data will then be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics from the booth. The descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation scores will be used to achieve research objective 1. This statistical approach allowed the researcher to analyze the data using average scores, making it ideal for sorting the most to least perceived items. On the other hand, inferential statistics, notably linear regression, were used to analyze study objective 3. The linear regression method is effective for determining cause-and-effect relationships between variables. The study looked at how one variable (TikTok) influences another (youth) in this case. Due to the very large sample size (> 50), the rule of normality is met. This is because experts have stated that if a study includes more than 50 data sets, the rule of normality of data is met, showing adequate sampling (Creswell & Clark 2017; Creswell, 2014). As a result, the need for a thorough test of data normality is reduced.

Organization of the Study

The first chapter will include an overview of the study, including its history, explanation of the problem, general objectives, research questions, importance of the investigation, delineation of the study's scope, study constraints, definition of keywords, and chapter arrangement. The second chapter will be dedicated to a review of pertinent literature. The third chapter will discuss the research methods, which will cover the study area, study design, research approach, population of the study, sampling, and sample size, data needs, data collection methods, data analysis methods, sources of data, tools for data collection, and questionnaire structure, as well as reliability and data analysis. The examination of the data gathered from respondents will be covered in chapter four. The study's summary, the results reached because of the discussions and data analysis, and suggestions are presented in chapter five.

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