

Research on How to Perceive Their Behavior for International High School Students Based on Using TikTok with Semi-Structured Interview

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ABSTRACT

For this technologically advanced century, much more software emerged to attract people's attention, the genres of the software including entertainments, education, international as well as government issues. Then, a social media software named TikTok appeared and soon catches the public's attention, especially the high school teenagers. TikTok uses big data to push videos to its users according to their interests and time expends on a different genre of videos. Every user can post, like, and comment on the videos. It was also confirmed that TikTok had become a platform of online marketing with the appearance of live broadcasting function. In other words, this software is also playing a vital role in people's daily life. In light of this phenomenon, this paper aims to delve into how international high school students perceive their behaviors of using and enjoying the videos of TikTok by semi-structured interviews. The results show that the reflections toward TikTok among high school students are opposite and therefore, can be defined as 'keepers' and 'uninstallers'. Furthermore, although the consumer needs increase as the advertisements from live-broadcasting increase, no male interviewers show the increase of consumer needs. The reason behind it is due to that most genres of advertisements are about cosmetics and household items, which attract female users more.

Keywords: *International high school students, teenagers, TikTok, behavior, semi-structured interviews, influence of using TikTok*

1. INTRODUCTION

There has been extensive research on the negative impacts of excessive social media usage on adolescents in general. In the context of China, the issue of social media addiction among adolescents has also attracted a great deal of academic interests [1] [2] [3]. However, the majority of these studies focus on the issue of social media addiction in adolescents with prediction, symptoms, as well as behavior changes, such as attitude and personality changes and how the impact affect teenagers' growth and development. For example, when teenagers are addicted to TikTok, they lose social capital since they spend less time communicating with both society and nature, only left with increased desire towards social acceptance [4]. My research, on the other hand, aim to answer the effects to teenagers with teenager's own attitude and thoughts with little objective perspective. Most importantly, this research will not simply focus on the negative effects TikTok brings to the

mental, physical or even social side, which opposite to most of the other TikTok research.

To draw a well-rounded conclusion, this study employed the method of semi-structured interviews to unveil the underlying thoughts and perception of teenagers. Ten international high school students with an even mix of both genders attended the study's one-on-one interviews.

For the sampling, the research chose half of the sample size on each gender to look into the effect brought by gender difference. Moreover, the school, where the research took place, applies a class division system that has to mention. The sequence of the class number is corresponding to the ranking of the class's standardized score from high to low. For instance, the average GPA of class 3 is higher than the average score of class 11. For this reason, this study invited interviewees from separate classes.

The rest of the study will be illustrated in 4 sections. The first section is the basic perceptions of using TikTok and reflection through the process of watching videos on TikTok; the second is the interviewees' comments about the increasing consumer wants in TikTok; the third section is about the peer pressure of using TikTok and the last comes to the conclusion of the report.

2. CONTENTS

2.1. Different response to the negative side of TikTok

Despite a common perception which is TikTok could be highly addictive hence time-wasting, this paper discovered varied reactions in terms of the students' actual usage and perception of their usage of TikTok.

It is interesting to find that all the interviewees reflect that watching the videos in TikTok is a waste of time because once they open the software and enjoy watching the different video contexts, they would easily forget their original plans, especially for the important things such as reviewing for their exams or writing their essays. However, a notable fact is, despite well-aware of these side effects, some still indulge themselves in this APP.

Table 1. Information of interviewees

Number	Name	Gender	Class	Use TikTok or not
1	Ruoyun Wang	Male	8	Yes
2	Xiaoya Gong	Female	3	Yes
3	Jiaming Xu	Male	3	No
4	Yufan Zhang	Female	2	No
5	Peng Zhang	Female	6	Yes
6	Yizhen Ke	Female	4	Yes
7	Xu Liu	Male	4	No
8	Tianxin He	Male	2	Yes

9	Ziyun Liu	Female	7	Yes
10	Chengzhu Gao	Male	6	Yes

A difference between the interviewees lies in the cognition of the TikTok usage. Interviewees who uninstall the software realize the potential and powerful influences TikTok brings and then decided to make some changes, and we can call them uninstillers. In other words, they quenched the desire to enjoy and entertain when other opportunities have to be sacrificed and procrastination would come as a result. For interviewee number 3, 4 and 7, who uninstalled the software, they realized the potential harm of the video watching on TikTok and ceased to use it. Most importantly, they connect this potential harm to their further university application process and even future, which means due to the temptation of continuous enjoyment with the videos, they perceived that this long-time entertainment would lead to a severe consequence toward their nearly future. There are also other factors for uninstalling the TikTok. For example, interviewee Yufan Zhang said that the videos are mismatched with my taste, for the contents are too bulky, people with unique talents are leaving, and the rest are mostly internet stars with only good appearances. Thus, I uninstall the software under such awareness. (Zhang, personal interview, 29 August, 2019)

However, things are not always the same for others. After recognizing the potential and powerful influences that TikTok brings, another group of people act quite differently. This group can also be classified into two different types of students, with one perceiving the perks outweighing the side effects and the other completely overlooking the negative effect that the APP brings, and we can call all of them keepers. For the first type of students, even though they found that they are falling into the immense relaxation that the videos provided, they will still perceive the series of negative effects are a part of TikTok, which means they consider the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. After realizing the potential shortcoming of TikTok, those students chose to ignore these negative factors because, on most occasions, they do need a way to release their pressure and entertain themselves. Moreover, they enjoyed themselves in the videos to a large extent. The interviews reveal that both types take relaxation and killing time as their primary purpose of using TikTok. It has also been shown from Bucknell Bossen and Kottasz that the wish of obtaining entertainment is the primary driver [5].

Except the basic and well-known functions, such as relaxation that TikTok provides, there are other factors that influence the interviewees to continue using TikTok. For example, Tianxin He said that... "TikTok can also provide functions of enjoying humor, gaining knowledge about traveling, knowing the other's aspects and

managing the fragmentation of time” (He, personal interview, 29 August, 2019).

Compare to those merits brought from TikTok, these interviewees ignored the side effects it brought and immersed in the enjoyment, which illustrates the occurrence of resistance and ignorance of side effects of TikTok.

2.2. The increasing consumer wants arise in TikTok

Interestingly, except the different opinions and choices of using TikTok, the study also found another shared feeling toward it—promoting consumption. To be more specific, both of the participants who reported this feeling are female, but they belong to different types of interviewees, which means one of them is from keepers, and the other one is from uninstaller. Moreover, they hold the opposite opinion towards the occurrence of increasing consumer needs and wants. The uninstaller owns the perspective that the fact that TikTok with amount of advertisement increases the successful deals as well as transactions can promote GDP and develop several new product markets. Nevertheless, the keeper thinks that most of the consumptions are impulsive consumptions and the advertisements always show the positive side of products but seldom mention the downside. Sometimes the advertisements even propagandize nonexistent functions, which means tell lies when they introduce the products, to mislead the audiences as well as customers and create the dishonest transaction thus waste the money and consumer confidence. Gong said...

Most of the things I bought because of the advertisements on TikTok are useless’ and ‘This is not a good sign for the citizens. For the reason that most of the products are useless but still waste money. Take an instance, I bought a tooth paste in TikTok which cost me 128 CNY (equals to 18.4 dollars) but the effect is faint and even have no effects. In other words, I can definitely use 128 CNY to buy 20 normal tooth paste, which have the similar effects. (Gong, personal interview, 29 August, 2019)

Nonetheless, why no male interviewees mentioned this perspective? Because the interests of male interviewees rest on areas other than online shopping and advertisements. To put it into other words, women are more attracted by the advertisements in TikTok, especially TikTok has a great portion of cosmetics and female clothes advertisement, driving them to buy these products. However, males also buy product in the society, but most of the products in TikTok are surrounded with cosmetics, household items and female clothes, which make the buyers dominant with females

2.3. Will peer pressure occur when the surroundings are all using TikTok?

Before the interview and report, the study expected a common belief that TikTok could create a sense of community. However, after the interviews, it is found that the expectations towards the TikTok’s social communication function are quite the opposite. TikTok’s videos cover various themes, exciting points, fields and talented skills. Because of them, a high number of students downloaded TikTok and enjoyed deeply in the millions of videos. How about the students who do not download or uninstalled the software? Will they download back the software just for sharing and discussing heated topics with others? Before the report, it is expected that there would be at least one student that acts as I thought. However, the fact contradicts the original expectation.

Yufan Zhang, who uninstalled TikTok believes that real friends would must have some shared interests and topics to talk about, so there is no need to spend efforts on topic searching on TikTok. The following is what she said...

TikTok is not the only media to get interesting online topics, other software named Weibo can also deliver these meaningful, common, and interesting topics to internet users... Even if we did not download the same software, we could also show entertaining videos to our friends, which solves the problem. (Zhang, 29 August, 2019)

Thus, according to this information, it is with no meaning to download TikTok back just for finding more common interests and hot topics with their friends.

3. CONCLUSION

The different attitudes and behaviors demonstrate that high school students exhibit some agency, though to a limited degree, in their daily use of TikTok.

In conclusion, for the interviews conducted, the reflection of teenagers using TikTok has three suggestions. First, among the teenagers, there exist opposite feelings toward the APP usage. For instances, they either take it a waste of time and a stumbling block towards their self-development or perceive the APP as a relaxation tool and daily entertainment. Second, because of the social difference that most of the males pay less attention than female on the aspect of shopping and consumption especially when the advertisements are most of cosmetics and daily house items, there are no male interviewees who find the increasing consumer needs and transactions in TikTok. Third, contrary to the initial expectation, no participant downloads TikTok just for catering their friends, on the premise that almost all his/her friends are using TikTok. By contrast, they use

other social software and Apps with similar functions to enjoy and discuss with their friends. However, because of the time limits and resource limits, the number interviewees is restricted to 10. To be honest, this may lead to a few deviation and bias through the interviewing and analyzing process.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is individual project and wrote it after author conducting semi column interviews and analysis of results.

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I would like to make my sample size as big as possible that involves almost every student from different classes in order to make the report more accurate as well as generalized. However, because of the time limits and resource limits, I only invite at least one student from different classes. To be honest, this may lead to the occurrence of error and some bias through the interviewing process.

APPENDIX

Topic guide: questions to ask in interview

Questions ask to all of the interviewees

1. Do you use TikTok?
2. Why or why not?
3. Do you think it affects your study? in what ways?
4. Do you think it affects your relation with your classmates and friends? in what ways?
5. What do you think of the videos' contents in TikTok

6. Do your friends use TikTok?

7. What is the other points about TikTok that you want to mention in our interview?

Questions ask to the interviewees who install TikTok

1. What benefits?
2. What side effects?
3. How much time you spend on TikTok everyday?
4. When do you use TikTok?
5. Do you buy the commodes that promote in 'TikTok'?

Questions ask to the interviewees who uninstall TikTok

1. What other social media do you use?
2. What do you think about TikTok?

3. Do you feel uncomfortable or cannot get into the conversation when your surroundings talking about topics in TikTok?

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