

# ***TikTok Function in the Millennial Era***

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to describe the function of TikTok application in the millennial era. The research was conducted to explore the phenomenon of TikTok popularity, which is growing particularly in the YouTube platform in our society. TikTok has become a material expression not only for Indonesian millennials, but also the millennials in almost all countries around the world. Moreover, the main focus of this research is the forms of dance movement at TikTok. Various forms of dance moves on TikTok can be found on YouTube. Further, the research problem of this study is: to what extent is TikTok function for the millennial society. This research employs descriptive qualitative method. Data collection techniques used in this study are interviews, indirect observations, and questionnaires. The data sources contain lecturers and students of *Sendratasik* (Drama, Dance, and Music Department) of Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, and not limited to high school students. TikTok shows on YouTube on January to March in 2021 are also part of the sources. The function of TikTok in the Millennial Era can be considered as personal entertainment and aesthetic presentation. Both of them use simple, cheerful, and expressive movements.

**Keywords:** *Function, TikTok, Millennial.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Millennial Era is an era where people carry out their activities in hybrid. This era indicates the dependence of society on technology, especially gadgets. Both urban and rural communities have a great fondness for gadgets. It happens to either children or adults. They seem never to be separated from their dependence on devices and the internet due to various needs and activities always related to these two things. During a COVID-19 pandemic, most people are required to do their activities online.

This study examines community activities related to TikTok in the form of dance movement expressions. On social media, there are various forms of contents can be found at TikTok as something that is trendy and contemporary.

TikTok is an audio-visual media. It includes videos and photos made by juxtaposing music. This media is a medium that disseminates various forms of creativity and the uniqueness of each user. TikTok is a social media that provides special effects which are unique and interesting. This social media can make users feel

excited because their videos can be collaborated with various music. Each user seems to be happily addicted to TikTok because they frequently use it in their lives [1].

Researchers took this topic because TikTok is a contemporary culture that is currently on-trend. As an academic community who studies art, the TikTok culture is fascinating to learn. As a contemporary culture, TikTok has been widely used for various things or interests, including artistic expressions that show happiness as a product production, an education on the importance of washing hands to prevent COVID-19, a comedy entertainment, and else.

Theoretically, the objectives of this study are to contribute ideas to the TikTok trend development as an artistic expression in the millennial society. In a practical sense, it is hoped that this research can contribute to further study and as additional literature for other researchers also students who will carry out the study with similar topics.

Similar research entitled *The Influence of TikTok Social Media on Students' Achievement at SMPN 1 Gunung Sugih* was carried out. The result of this study indicated a significant influence between TikTok social media and learning achievement [1]. It was in

accordance with the researchers' calculations using the Microsoft Excel 2010 program which uses the correlation test with the value of  $t(count) > t(table)$  that was  $14,21978769 > 2,002272456$ . Therefore, it can be noted that there is a significant correlation between TikTok and learning achievement of the students.

In the article entitled *Utilizing TikTok Social Media as A Campaign Media for Handwashing Movement to Prevent COVID-19 in Indonesia*, it is stated that there were 64.8% of Indonesia population use the internet and 160 million individuals were social media users [2]. Referring to those facts, they make Indonesia to be a promising market for social media industry players such as the TikTok application. Since 2020, TikTok application becomes a popular culture in Indonesia, and that it has become an ideal medium for the World Health Organization (WHO), which campaigns for the proper handwashing to stop the transmission of the COVID-19 or Coronavirus, by producing videos with hashtag #SafeHand. The campaign has been widely watched, but there are several essential points: videos are the most watched, liked, and shared by TikTok users.

In addition, the study entitled *Public Perception towards TikTok Application (Descriptive Quantitative Research of the TikTok Application among Students of the Communication Studies Department of FISIP USU Stambuk 2015 and 2016)* resulted some important findings that there were 71 people perceive TikTok as a bad influence on its users [3]. Meanwhile, there were 64 individuals stated that its users had abused TikTok. Further, the factors that influence students' perceptions of the TikTok are number of negative cases related to it.

Arts can be divided into two functions, namely primary function and secondary function [4]. The primary function considers arts as life in general. Thus, it means that an artistic event occurs in the art forms itself. The art event, in this case, is a process of communication between what is contained in the artworks and the ability of human soul experience to a person who has plenty of fine arts knowledge. Thus, it gives birth to a life that truly reaches the target in the area of values is applied in the cultured human life. Next, the secondary function is the additional function such as ceremony, education, enlightenment, propaganda, entertainment, tourism, etc. The aesthetic quality of artworks has been utilized as a social energy and integrating individuals into groups since the era. Through the beauty aspect of arts, the main function of them is to provide happiness and serenity, enjoyment and coolness, harmony and suitability.

The social function of artworks is clearly demonstrated through components that build them, namely the initiator subject as the creator, the audience as the recipient, and the social problems that are

automatically displayed in the artworks. As a creator, the initiator subject is a member of the community.

Indonesian performing arts function is divided into two categories, namely primary function and secondary function [5]. The primary function includes: (1) as a means of ritual, (2) as the personal entertainment, and (3) aesthetic presentation. The secondary function includes some functions beyond the primary function.

Performing arts as personal entertainment usually do not have an audience because the audience is involved in the performance [6]. The entertainment focuses more on providing the feeling of satisfaction without having a specific purpose. Art performers only express their hobbies and develop their skills. Moreover, the aesthetic presentation is a form of performing arts that is deliberately commercialized by buying tickets. Therefore, the performance requires very serious cultivation due to the audience demands on a good and satisfying performance.

## 2. METHODS

Descriptive qualitative method was used in this study [7]. The study aims to describe the TikTok phenomenon in the form of function and meaning of TikTok as an artistic expression in the millennial society. The Department of Drama, Dance, and Music Arts at the Faculty of Languages and Arts, the State University of Surabaya, and several places according to the research subject's residence were taken as the research location. The research setting was conducted online because YouTube was used as a research source. Also, interviews, observations, and questionnaires were carried out to collect the data.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TikTok is an application that provides unique and interesting special effects that can be used by its users. This application can easily create marvelous short videos which can attract people attention. TikTok application is one of social networks and a music video sharing platform launched in September 2016. It is a short video creation application which is very popular among people including adults and minors. The application can also view short videos with various expressions of each creator. In TikTok, there is a stitch feature that lets users take part of someone else's TikTok video and use it in their own video [8].

TikTok application can be used as a media for learning the Indonesian language and literature [9]. The videos are also made by minors such as students who are not familiar with the message's meaning. Indicators of TikTok social media can be classified into two: (1) positive and negative impacts of using TikTok, and (2) users' creativity. There are many various video contents

on TikTok that the users want to make easily. Users are not only seeing and imitating or stitching other videos created by other creators, but they can also make videos on their own version or style. They can create creative videos according to their ideas such as dances, lip-syncs, and other interesting videos. The users can also participate in the challenges made by other creators. An article entitled *Positive and Negative Impacts of Social Media on Children's Moral Education* explained that TikTok application can also make the users known or famous [10]. Some of them are well known because their videos are creatively made, funny, and unique. All of them are based on the users or audiences' perspectives.

### **3.1. The History of TikTok**

TikTok application allows its users to create their own short music videos. The application was launched in September 2016, and developed by Chinese developer, ByteDance Inc. The company expanded its business in Indonesia by launching a music video and social networking application called TikTok. During the first quarter (Q1) in 2018, TikTok is the most downloaded application with 45.8 million times. According to Fatimah Kartini Bohang, TikTok in 2018 became the most well-known application and beat other popular application such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Instagram. Most users of TikTok application in Indonesia are millennial that commonly known as Generation Z. Besides, the Ministry of Communication and Information ever blocked TikTok in July 3, 2018 [11].

Monitoring the application was conducted for a month and found a lot of incoming reports in total 2,853 files complaining the application errors until July 3<sup>rd</sup>. From the initial launch of the application until these days, TikTok is very well-known among millennial and school-aged children who are commonly known as Gen Z. Moreover, there are a lot of contents that are actually inappropriate for minors, millennial or Gen Z to see and imitate. In fact, at the initial launching of the application, many teenagers tried to make videos with the latest DJ music or even *dangdut* songs. Also, many children who were famous for his out-of-the-box videos are Bowo and Nuraini. Both of them were quite famous for making interesting videos with adorable facial expressions. For instance, Nuraini made a video with the soundtrack of "Syantik" song. Due to her facial expressions, people talk and comment about her. Nuraini replaced the song lyrics with the name of Iqbal Ramadhan, a young actor who has many fans especially women. Meanwhile, Bowo was famous because of his good looking face. At that time, Bowo became so famous and was invited to play in soap operas by the production house. Also, there are many people who put efforts to be the ones like Bowo and Nuraini. People

opined that using social media is a big opportunity for their own existence by making videos as creative and interesting as possible. Therefore, a lot of people are currently downloading TikTok. It makes the students happy because they can be entertained if they use the video.

Nowadays, millennial era is marked by the increasing dependence of society to technology, particularly gadgets. There are several characteristics of the millennial generation [7]:

1. Easily bored to purchased items
2. Having a motto that is "No Gadget No Life"
3. Preferring cashless payments
4. Liking things that are fast as well as instant
5. Preferring experiences to assets
6. Having different behaviors in one group to another
7. Good at multitasking
8. Criticizing the social phenomenon

Nowadays, the use of gadgets is important for youth or older people. They waste all their time mostly for gadgets for their activity. The gadgets indeed offer many advantages and conveniences. The unlimited internet access also makes millennial surf it with ease at their home. Besides, sophisticated technology is necessary in education and work life so that it is no wonder that people, particularly millennial, cannot take their gadgets off their hands. Technological sophistication is not always related to gadgets, but transactions are also evolving. The development of cashless payments method has been widely used by the millennial generation. A technological development has influenced millennial to get what they want without waiting any longer. In addition, the dense mobility makes them choose something that is instant and hassle-free.

One of the characteristics that describe the millennial nowadays is that they prefer to spend their money to get certain experiences rather than saving to increase assets. Millennial generally prefer travelling around the world rather than saving for the investments. Instead of hanging out with friends to build relationships, chatting online in groups can be done easily through various chat-based applications. Everyone can send messages to a lot of friends at once in the group chat feature. In fact, most millennial have a different style or disposition between one group another. They are very good to be asked for doing several tasks at the same time. It is due to a high mobility as well as activity make them accustomed to do many things quickly [12].

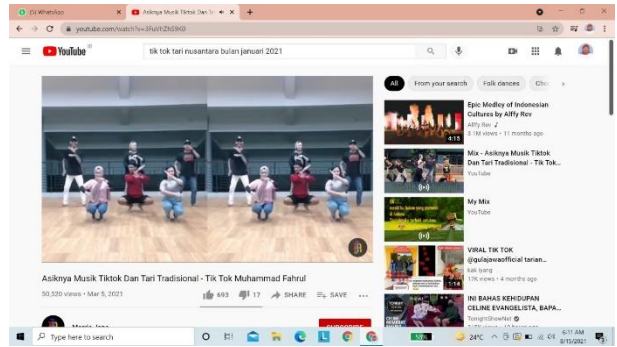
Based on the researchers' observations on the TikTok content on YouTube, which aired on March 5, 2021, it can be identified as follows:

1. There are 18 contents of TikTok on YouTube.
2. TikTok contents present various traditional dance forms from Indonesia.
3. In general, the forms of dance movements presented have been developed or created yet the characteristics of the Indonesia traditional dances are still dominant.
4. The costumes worn are varied and most of them are casual costumes such as T-shirt with jeans and a traditional dance costume such as Javanese, Sumatran, Kalimantan, *Gatokaca* dance, etc.
5. A natural dance make-up look.
6. There are folk songs such as *dangdut* and Indonesian pop music which are accompanying the dance.
7. Most TikTok users are 90% young people or millennial.

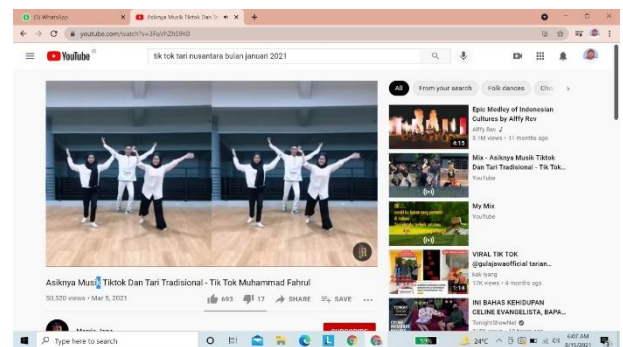
The visual of TikTok videos are shown in examples below:



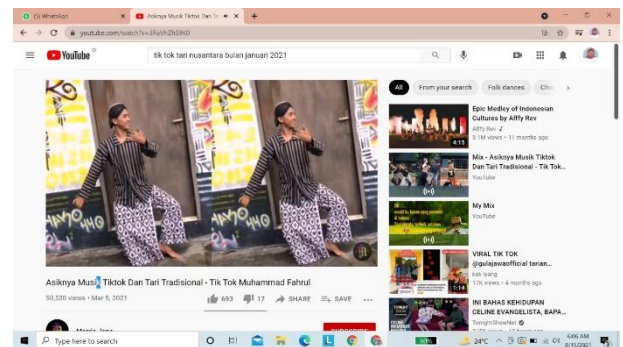
**Figure 1** TikTok Gatokaca costume (source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FuVhZhS9K0> ).



**Figure 2** TikTok with casual dresscode (source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FuVhZhS9K0> ).



**Figure 3** TikTok with casual costume (source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FuVhZhS9K0> ).



**Figure 4** TikTok with Javanese traditional costume (source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FuVhZhS9K0> ).

Indonesian performing arts function is divided into two categories, namely primary function and secondary function [5]. The primary function includes: (1) as a means of ritual, (2) as a personal entertainment, and (3) as an aesthetic presentation. The secondary function includes some functions outside the primary function. The function of TikTok in the Millennial Era can be

said for the personal entertainment and aesthetic presentation. Both of them use simple, cheerful, and expressive movements. These can be seen in the TikTok presentation which performs with a bright face and a smiling face and puts a lot of efforts into performing dance movements of various regions in Indonesia.

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