



A Thematic Analysis of Quality Tiktok Contents

Sofia Hayati Yusoff^(✉) and Nurul Najihah Mohd. Roffe

Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Bandar Baru Nilai, Nilai, Malaysia

sofia@usim.edu.my

Abstract. Social media applications have become very important to every individual. They are getting more involved in our lives nowadays. Of many social media that are available, TikTok is used globally and has gained over millions of downloads from all over the world. With that, User Generated Content (UGC) has also increased with all the rising content creators on TikTok. Since the lockdown period due to Covid-19 pandemic, TikTok influencers have been more active in creating contents and producing videos. Thus, this study conducted a thematic analysis of TikTok's quality contents produced by selected TikTok influencers. A total of 33 TikTok videos produced by four TikTok influencers were analysed. The finding of this study has resulted to the emergence of nine (9) themes from the selected Tiktok contents analysed. Due the limitations of this research, the researchers recommended future thematic analysis on bigger sample size at longer duration and to other Tiktok influencers. The future research can widen the horizon by selecting local and international TikTok influencers that are from different background.

Keywords: social media · TikTok · User Generated · Content (UGC) · influencers · quality contents

1 Introduction

Tiktok is a new social media application that has the function of creating a video for as short as 15 s to as long as 60 s, which has been gaining its own popularity over time since it was launched in 2016. Other than allowing users to easily compile video clips, Tiktok also allows users to apply various filters, motion editing and music to their videos [1]. The best way to make videos on TikTok is to follow the trends, as it works best if the content is based on what is going on at the moment. Tiktok videos, even a simple one, can go viral in short time and has the possibility to reach up to million views. Lip-syncing is the most famous trend of TikTok contents, either to songs, movie scenes famous or relatable jokes. TikTok videos are also based on challenges that the users need to complete.

Tiktok contents consist of quality videos, ranging from entertainment, educational, motivational and inspirational videos. An endless number of TikTok content creators focus on entertainment-based contents e.g., Rahul Rai (@TheRealRahulRai), whose videos are mainly of him lip-syncing to jokes and Spencer Polanco Knight (@SpencerX), a rising star who has extraordinary beat-boxing skill and is able to imitate the sound

of everyday stuffs (i.e. the sound of spray, the sound of drinking water). Educational contents are also famous, as numerous of creators are educating viewers on certain, particular topics. The videos are of random information, cooking and recipe, healthy eating and workout, psychology and mental health information, tips and tricks and so on. For instance, Abg Ambulance (@abgriz44) shares information about ambulances to his curious followers, and it is very interesting because knowledge about ambulances is not something that is openly shared by many. Next, Justin Agustin (@justin_agustin) shares his easy workout and yoga videos for beginners who are new to fitness. The simple workout videos can help a lot of people to stay active.

Ever since TikTok became very popular, many researchers in the field of communication have conducted analysis on TikTok from various angles. Li and his colleagues (2020) analysed TikTok use for tourism purpose. They claimed that contents like tourist destinations made by some TikTok influencers enabled marketing strategies. Along with tourism, TikTok is also used for culinary objective. Culinary marketing via TikTok attracts and exposes users among adolescents [2]. Research conducted by Akbari and her colleagues [3] on examining the evolution of marketing via TikTok have found a significant increase in marketing strategies whereby satisfaction of users were taken into account. While some TikTok researchers identified the correlation between the use of hashtags and user engagement. They claimed that the more hashtags on videos, the more engage the users are with the contents. This statement was proved when they analysed TikTok contents related to COVID-19 by using hashtag and code scheme [4]. Based on the literature above, most analysis done on TikTok look at marketing and users' engagement perspective yet very little found on thematic analysis of TikTok contents. Thus, this research looked at the themes of quality TikTok contents belong to selected Malaysian TikTok influencers. Nevertheless, quality contents are getting famous day by day. Since the number of TikTok users shows an increment and the quality contents are being known worldwide, this research will study about the frequency and themes of the quality contents that are being posted by the social media influencers on TikTok.

2 Research Objectives

This study was based on these research objectives:

1. To discover the frequencies of quality contents posted by selected Tiktok influencers.
2. To analyse the themes of contents they produce.

3 Literature Review

Social media is a website and software program that serve the function to social networking. It consists of extensive list of internets based and mobile services, which permit users to partake in on the Net reciprocity, provide to user-created content or participate in online communities [5]. Dewing [5] also explains that the types of services customarily associated with social media, or occasionally made a reference to Web 2.0, are blogs, Wikis, social bookmarking, social network sites, status-update services, virtual world

content and media sharing sites. According to Chai et al. [6], social media includes technology, social communication and user generated content (UGC) that makes it stand out from traditional media which consists of broadcasting and publishing media such as TV, newspapers and radio respectively. According to Miller [7], when traditional way of transmission and two ways reserved communication were merged into one, and it furnishes people with groups and some level of secrecy that allow users to be social, it can be defined as social media. The actual importance on why one specific social media is significant is emphasized on the contents and not the platform [7].

This research emphasizes on TikTok as the new social media platform that allows users to share short videos for various genres of entertainment. This video sharing app is owned by ByteDance, a company from China. TikTok originated in China, released in September 2016 and initially known as Douyin. In 2018, Douyin merged with Musical.ly and finally has widen the horizon as it has been known internationally as a new, short-video based mobile application, gaining millions of users from all over the world [8].

According to Dilon [9], TikTok is the only social media where users can create a 15 s video, or optionally they can merge the clips up to 60 s long, and when played on the feed, it will repeat the same video until users scroll down and proceed to the next video. The contents on Tiktok are user-generated as many content creators are joining in on TikTok, gaining popularity individually for their style of contents. Contents are personalized according to each user's personal preferences on their own #ForYou feed, making the #FY feed different from one user to another. The For You Page (FYP), on the other hand, is the page which all users can watch almost all recent, trending videos [10].

Xu et al. [1] agrees that the reason short video sharing app is becoming more popular now because it promotes extensive genres of contents, it is personalized and interactive, it can fulfil users' social needs and it advances socializing. TikTok contents are very engaging and it targeted youngsters who are still very imaginative and curious. Plus, the media become a centre of attraction to young people when celebrities joined in TikTok, appealing Gen Z from all over the world [9].

User Generated Content (UGC) is a new wave of contents in social media now especially on TikTok. According to Eastin [11], UGC is contents on media that are created by populace instead of hired professionals. The definition is supported by Kaplan and Haenlein [12], UGC are contents that are "shared, consumed and publicly available on the Internet". According to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [13], there are three requirements and noticeable qualities that enable contents to be defined as UGC; they have to be set for public view on the Net, they have to be creative and they have to be produced outside of professional setting [14]. Accordingly, UGC on TikTok are the videos produced by the social media users. A number of users are taking content creating to another level, consistently producing quality videos to their audiences, making them eligible for the title of social media influencers (SMIs).

Nowadays, the circumstances of users individually have been altered from only consuming the contents presented to them to creating and contributing contents themselves, due to the advancement of technology and the newly introduced participatory attribute that social media offered [15].

Hence, in social media sphere now, Social Media Influencers (SMI) are progressively growing and becoming more common. With the large number of followers, thousands or even millions of audiences on social media channels, it allows communication to happen between the SMIs and their followers and they have an influence on the large audience with their messages [16].

There are two ways in which SMIs use in creating content, they either create the content themselves [17] or they produce contents to promote brand that sponsors them [18].

TikTok influencers are rightfully using their platforms to produce quality contents that will be received by large audience. There are various kinds of quality contents on TikTok. Marketing and advertising have become one of the noticeable uses of social media. Influencers are using TikTok as a platform to promote their businesses and to engage with their customers. Since the online world has been involved and included in people's daily lives, be it adults, teenagers or even children, social media has become a centre of advertising for business owners and a channel for communication with customers [19].

Dickey and Lewis [20] state that the use of Internet has expanded from just for gaining information and communication across borders to now shopping and for individual entertainment.

Business owners that engage and communicate with their target market and clients on social media has a significant possibility to do well in business. In business, the use of social media and another online platform is not just an innovative effort from companies anymore but in fact, in today's world, communicating through the Internet has become indispensable, especially for businesses to grow [20].

Credible influencers focus on sharing diverse topics (about games, fashion and entertainment) while at the same time share about their own personal lives. According to Abidin [21]; de Veirman et al. [22], the trend of sharing personal lives among influencers has resulted in them being seen as easily approachable, affable, people that are like friends to their followers and they seem like they can simply pass impartial judgment. With the closeness and the relationship an influencer has established with their followers, they are extremely credible and reliable to the followers [16]. Therefore, their followers are free to ask random questions or opinions from the influencers, and in return the influencers can option to say a thing or two to their followers.

Since social media have been incorporated with people's daily lives and almost everyone uses social media routinely now, the chance is high that any educational contents will reach mass audience. Besides, people look up to social media to provide them new information now. While being entertained, audience are learning a thing or two every time they are on social media. This phenomenon suits the entertainment-education theory by Miguel Sabido.

This theory is also known as enter-educate and it mentioned that people learn by observing what others do and then they apply the behaviour of others to themselves. This communication strategy aims to entertain and educate audiences and the process involves planning and creating messages that would be effective to the audiences. It works this way: firstly, they entertain masses to capture their attention, then they educate the masses using easy approaches that would be easily understandable.

Programs that are designed using the theory are able to reach the people who are unreachable and they can advocate the people who are not easily like to be educated. Starting from television, now the media that are sending social messages by using entertainment have been developing to a wide range of choices, for instance films, cartoons, theatres and now, more recently is social media like TikTok.

Enter-educate theory is the best theory to be applied in this study because it focuses on the quality contents on TikTok. Those quality videos posted by the selected users are very entertaining while at the same time they educate and teach viewers on certain subjects. Judging from the total number of likes the quality videos have, it is a sign that the videos are doing a great work in delivering the information to the audiences and they actually like the way the information are being shared.

4 Methodology

This study has applied content analysis (quantitative and qualitative) to achieve the research objectives. Quantitative content analysis was done on the videos to study the frequency of the videos posted, and qualitative content analysis was applied to study the themes of the videos.

GAO [23] explained that this methodology allows researchers to easily go through numerous data systematically. It is also useful in helping us to ascertain and explain the importance aspect that personal, group, institution or even societal advertence [24]. The approach used for the second methodology was an inductive approach to generate themes from data collected.

5 Results

Two data analysis techniques were used in analysing this research. The first one is descriptive analysis that describes the frequencies of TikTok quality contents analysed and the second technique applied is thematic analysis technique. This technique was used to analyse among major themes emerged in all the videos selected in this study.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 shows the result of frequency of quality contents by the TikTok influencers.

Table 1. The frequencies of quality contents

Influencer	Frequency	Percent
Iqbal Ahyar (@iqbalahyar)	6	18.2
Irfan Khairi (@irfan.khairi)	17	51.5
Dianz (@dian_dianz)	4	12.1
Farhanah Ibrahim (@kakhanasafar)	6	18.2
TOTAL	33	100

Table 2. The themes of quality contents

	Themes	Frequency	%
1	General knowledge	9	28
2	Factual information	6	18
3	Opinion	6	18
4	Sharing	3	9
5	Humor	3	9
6	Religious	3	9
7	Psychological	1	3
8	Tutorial	1	3
9	Advertising	1	3
	Total	33	100%

Iqbal Ahyar

In this research, the first influencer, Iqbal Ahyar has produced six videos in total during the entire weekends of October 2020, contributing 18.2 percent.

Irfan Khairi

Irfan Khairi produced the most contents with 17 videos (51.5 percent) for every day of the weekends in October 2020.

Dianz

The third influencer is Dianz who posted the least out of all influencers, with four videos (12.1 percent).

Farhanah Ibrahim

Lastly, Farhanah Ibrahim produced six videos, contributing 18.2 percent, the same value as the first influencer.

Descriptive analysis was used to obtain the result. From the finding, each influencer contributed different amount of contents, except for two influencers. Irfan Khairi takes the lead as the most prominent influencer with 17 videos, contributing 50 percent to the statistics. Iqbal Ahyar and Farhanah Ibrahim followed next with six videos each, contributing 18.2 percent for each influencer. The last influencer is Dianz with four videos produced, putting the percentage the least in the list (12.1 percent).

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used for the second research objective of this research that is to study the themes of contents that TikTok influencers produce. The unit of analysis analysed and coded is TikTok videos. In order to study the themes, a total of 33 videos were analysed and coded. From all the 33 videos, nine themes have emerged. The following is the table for the themes, frequency and percentage (Table 2).

The most dominant theme of quality contents is 'general knowledge' that was found in nine TikTok videos (28 percent). Three out of four influencers created contents about general and random knowledge of various topics, explained in the simplest way to their audience. 'General knowledge' allows users on TikTok to learn about various topics

without having to search for the specific information. For instance, 'general knowledge' is found in 'Top 10 most expensive building in the world' by @irfan.khairi (October 3, 2020) and 'International songs that contain mature material and are not suitable for younger listeners' by @kakhnasafar (October 25, 2020).

The second dominant theme is 'factual information' which was found in six videos (18 percent) throughout the entire five periods. 'Factual information' revolves around videos that contains information that are science-based and facts that are taken from a verified source. 'Factual information' is crucial so viewers are aware of verified information, especially in science, thus can further learn more about the topics and practice the knowledge for themselves. Two examples of 'factual information' videos are about 'The nature and factual information about cats' and 'The concept of energy explained in both biology and chemistry context' by from @iqbalahyar, on October 11, 2020 and October 25, 2020 respectively.

Next, 'opinion' is the third theme that emerged during the analysis. 'Opinion' was found in six out of 33 videos, or 18 percent. Only one influencer has been posting videos about 'opinion'. This theme revolves around opinion that influencers give to their followers when requested or asked. This theme also involves videos of influencers answering questions that were asked by their followers. The examples for this theme include 'Reasons I do not prefer using an iPhone' (October 18, 2020) and 'How to start a business at the age of 13' (October 31, 2020) by @irfan.khairi.

'Sharing' emerged as the fourth theme with three videos (9 percent). This theme involves anything personal or close to the influencers that they share with their followers. This theme is also about stories about them or about their activities that the influencers willingly share with their followers. For 'sharing', only two influencers made videos about this theme, they are @irfan.khairi with 'Personal games collection' on (October 3, 2020) and @dian_dianz sharing her 'Business parcels' on (October 3, 2020).

The most interesting theme is 'humour' with three videos (9 percent). This theme is for videos that contain light-hearted jokes and are intentionally made to be humorous merely for entertainment purpose. In the videos, elements of laughter are edited in to make it look and sound more realistic. In the second example, the influencer managed to deliver an important message using such entertainment. Two influencers who contributed to this theme are @irfan.khairi with him acting as two personalities (October 24, 2020) and @kakhnasafar with her 'Mistakes in wearing mask and importance of wearing facemask correctly' (October 3, 2020).

'Religious' emerged as the sixth theme with three videos (9 percent). This theme is for videos involving religion and religious activities. For this theme, only @kakhnasafar produced videos that contain Islamic religious elements. The videos are 'The importance to utilize our day and time' (October 11, 2020) and 'A reminder to recite prayer to the Almighty when we are facing trouble' (October 17, 2020).

The seventh theme, 'psychological', only was contributed from one video (three percent). This theme is for video that share about psychological information or facts. The one and only video for this theme was about 'the first person you think of upon watching the video is the person you love the most' from @irfan.khairi (October 4, 2020).

The next theme that also was contributed from only one video (three percent) is 'tutorial'. This theme covers video in which the influencers teach or demonstrate an activity step by step. For this theme, only @dian_dianz posted a 'tutorial' on 'How to cook delicious 'corn shrimp fritters' (October 24, 2020).

The last theme found one video (three percent) out of all the 33 videos is 'advertising'. This theme is for videos that influencers produce to directly market their product. The only influencer who produced 'advertising' video is @kakhanaasafar advertising Shaklee ESP protein shake that she sells (October 18, 2020).

6 Discussion

The first research objective for this study required the use of descriptive analysis to obtain the result. From the finding, each influencer contributed different amount of contents, except for two influencers. Irfan Khairi takes the lead as the most prominent influencer with 17 videos, contributing 50 percent to the statistics. Iqbal Ahyar and Farhanah Ibrahim followed next with six videos each, contributing 18.2 percent for each influencers. The last influencer is Dianz with four videos produced, putting the percentage the least in the list (12.1 percent).

The result for the second research objective was obtained using thematic analysis. The total of 33 videos were analyzed and coded to identify all the themes for the contents. The analysis resulted in the emergent of nine themes for the entire unit of analysis. The themes are listed from the most dominant to the least dominant.

The most dominant theme, with nine videos (28 percent) is 'general knowledge'. The contributors for this theme are three out of four influencers; Irfan Khairi, Dianz and Farhanah Ibrahim. Videos analyzed under this theme focused on random but reliable and useful knowledge presented by the influencers.

The second and third prominent themes are from the same amount of videos (6 videos each) contributing 18 percent each for the statistics. The themes are 'factual information' and 'opinion' posted by different influencers. 'Factual information' focus on videos that revolves around information based on scientific study and evidence, and therefore is contributed by the influencer who is a Science teacher (Iqbal Ahyar). On the other hand, 'opinion' is merely based on the influencer's judgment and perspective, thus making Irfan Khairi reliable and credible to state his opinion since he is a prominent business figure in Malaysia.

The next theme is 'sharing' which are coded from videos that revolves around influencers' sharing about their personal life to their audience. For this theme, Irfan Khairi and Dianz contributed to the statistics with just three videos (nine percent).

'Humor' theme emerged from three videos (nine percent) that are made for entertainment purpose. Irfan Khairi and Farhanah Ibrahim have created contents based on this theme, and Farhanah Ibrahim has included a Public Service Announcement (PSA) at the end of her humorous video.

The sixth theme is 'religious' with three videos (nine percent) produced by Farhanah Ibrahim. This theme includes elements that are of Islamic religion.

The last three themes were coded from one video each. 'Psychological' theme coded from one video (three percent) by Irfan Khairi is simply about 'psychological' information. 'Tutorial' followed in next (one video, three percent) and it emerged from the video

that contain a step by step guide to an activity demonstrated by Dianz. The last theme is 'advertising' from a video (three percent) by Farhanah Ibrahim. This theme covers the video that has a straightforward marketing element that was obviously produced for advertising purpose.

From this research, it ought to bring some implications, both theoretical and practical implication. Theoretically, this study is expected to be a guide to new TikTok users on which influencers and what niche of contents they should follow on TikTok. For example, Irfan Khairi as a prominent businessman. This study will also help users identify which influencers will benefit users to their knowledge so when they spend time on TikTok, they will gain new information while at the same time be entertained by the application. Basically, this study will become a complete guide to all users so the next time they spend time scrolling TikTok, it will not be just waste of time.

The practicality benefit of this study is that this study is expected to give everyone who aims to be a prominent TikTok star the insights of what it takes to be one. This study will help them identify the niche of contents they should focus on making in order to gain likes and followers and finally becomes a prominent influencers. This study will greatly benefit the rising influencers in the future.

However, throughout this research, there are also a few limitations identified. The first limitation of this study is the small unit of analysis (TikTok videos). Since this study only focused on analyzing videos on weekends of October 2020, the frequency of videos posted by each of the influencers were imbalance. Furthermore, this study was done upon a small sample size, thus limiting the researchers to identify another themes of high quality contents in the analysis. Plus, all the influencers selected in this study are Malaysians, limiting the views about another issues that might be significant and beneficial to focus on.

Based on the listed limitations, the future researcher is recommended to do content analysis on videos from another period of analysis so the frequency is balanced between one influencer to another. If the researcher choose three days aside from weekends, the frequency of videos could increase. The more videos analyzed would probably produce more themes of high quality contents. This will benefit the researcher to see more quality contents that consist of bigger range of focus.

Next, researcher for future study should select a bigger sample size for the research. The researcher might need to analyze videos posted by at least six influencers. Furthermore, for wider focus of topics and contents, future researcher can widen the horizon by selecting local and international TikTok influencers that are also from different background. These factors can help researcher to view and analyze vast and various topics and field of expertise that both local and international influencers focus on. Thus, the researcher can further make a comparative analysis about themes of quality contents between local and international influencers.

7 Conclusion

This study reveals that there are good contents that are being presented to the world using TikTok. This is due to TikTok influencers and content creators having different backgrounds, skills and specialties that allow them to share vast knowledge to their

followers. The themes emerging from this study prove that there are a number of quality contents that influencers can produce, and it can be a guide to other TikTok influencers on the rise. They can explore their own niche and nature of quality contents to obtain their own group of fan and followers.

TikTok influencers are important nowadays given the contribution they have made to the society. Their TikTok videos are not merely just for entertainment purpose but they deliver important messages and are full of knowledge and information for their followers. Prominent influencer like Irfan Khairi for example can be an inspiration for his audience especially to young followers. Plus, secondary school students and other users in general are learning a lot of Science facts from Iqbal Ahyar, and the best thing is the information are all presented in very captivating ways, making everyone are hooked in watching the videos. The female influencers are also important as they contribute in terms of knowledge about skills. Plus, they reminded their followers of important practices such as healthy food option and religious activities.

Based on the limitation of this research, future researchers are advised to analyze contents for a longer period of analysis to stabilize and balance the frequency of videos from each influencers. Longer period of analysis also allows researchers to study various themes of quality contents and more themes can be discovered. Besides, future researchers are recommended to analyze contents from bigger sample size, and they should include local and international TikTok influencers to widen the horizon. Influencers from different background will provide vast genres of quality contents due to their own field of expertise and niche. Thus, the researcher can further make a comparative analysis about themes of quality contents between local and international influencers.

From this research, TikTok is seen to be the leading social media application that will provide its own benefits to users around the world. Everyone can be the next famous TikTok influencer, provided that they master the correct themes of quality content and has their personal niche to obtain their own followers.

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