

**THE USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF THE TIKTOK
AMONG THE ADOLESCENT AT SEKOLAH
MENENGAH KEBANGSAAN (SMK) KUBONG,
LIMBANG**



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VERIFICATION

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KUBONG, LIMBANG**

BY

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**This Academic Exercise is presented to fulfil part of the requirements to obtain a
Bachelor's Degree with Honours in the field of Communication.**

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DECLARATION

I acknowledge that this Academic Exercise on the Uses and Gratifications of TikTok Among the Adolescents at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (SMK) Kubong, Limbang is the result of my own efforts and work, unless all quotations, summaries, and references are attributed to me.



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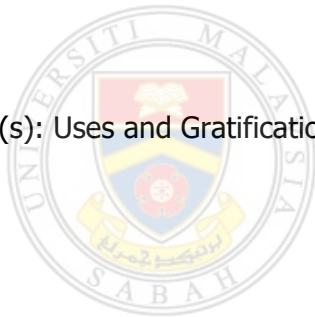
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ABSTRACT

This research is conducted to study the uses and gratification of *TikTok* among the adolescents at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (SMK) Kubong, Limbang. Uses and Gratification theory is implemented in this study. The objectives of the study is to identify the needs of *TikTok* usage among the adolescents at SMK Kubong Limbang. Besides that, to identify the uses of *TikTok* among the adolescents at SMK Kubong, Limbang. The last objective is to identify the gratifications obtained by the adolescents at SMK Kubong, Limbang from the *TikTok* usage. This study comprised 100 sample respondents who were SMK Kubong's students from Form 1 to Form 6 at Limbang. This study employs a quantitative method in the form of a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to respondents. The findings of the study for Research Question 1 is the adolescents at SMK Kubong use *TikTok* for their Tension and Release Needs. For Research Question 2, the adolescents at SMK Kubong use *TikTok* to seek entertainment the most. Lastly, for Research Question 3, the gratifications obtained by the adolescents at SMK Kubong is relaxation.

Keyword (s): Uses and Gratification, Adolescents, *TikTok*, student, secondary school



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FYP	:	FOR YOUR PAGE
SMKK	:	SEKOLAH MENENGAH KEBANGSAAN KUBONG
U&G	:	USES AND GRATIFICATIONS
SPSS	:	STATISTICAL PACKAGE FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCE
S.D	:	STRONGLY DISAGREE
D	:	DISAGREE
U	:	UNDECIDED
A	:	AGREE
S.A	:	STRONGLY AGREE



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

TikTok is currently one of the most popular social media platforms in the world. *TikTok* had enter the fifth place for the most popular social media platforms in 2021. It has certainly struck a chord as it is the youngest app to market, but has already seen incredible growth. In 2017, after only one year, the app became the fastest growing app worldwide. As of 2020, the app had been downloaded 2 billion times globally (Walsh, 2021). According to Lim (2021), *TikTok* has been predicted to take over social media in 2022, leaving other platforms to adapt. *TikTok* had the fastest growing among the social media because *ByteDance* have advertised *TikTok* virtually everywhere that young people hang out – including opposition social sites, such as Snapchat and YouTube (Geysler, 2021).

With more accessible social media and communication technologies, many knowledge related activities, such as learning and sharing, are taking place in online communities, introducing new forms of collaborative platforms (Dron & Anderson, 2014). According to Anderson, K.E. (2020), in September 2016, the Chinese company *ByteDance* released a lip-synching video creation app called *Douyin* and then launched *TikTok* for markets outside of China. In November 2017, *ByteDance* purchased Musical.ly and merged it with *TikTok* in 2018. With over 176 million downloads in the third quarter of 2019 (Business of Apps, 2020), *TikTok* was the second most downloaded Android app worldwide (Priori Data, 2020a) and the fifth most downloaded app worldwide from the Apple store (Priori Data, 2020b). The emergence of *TikTok* as one of the social media that surpassed the popularity of Facebook (K. Bhushan, 2021) make it one of wondrous topic to study.

TikTok copycat began to appear in 2020, both as competitive startup apps and as additional features on long-established platforms. For instance, in the second part of last year, *Instagram* put a lot of emphasis on their *TikTok*-like feature Reels, releasing it in what seemed like record time and even revamping their app interface to draw more attention to it (YPulse, 2021).

Tik Tok offers an excellent user experience and user interface design which thus assists it and it not only attract new users but also keep its existing ones (Yu, 2021). It is easy to navigate the TikTok. When users open the TikTok application, they will immediately face the menu bar on the bottom (refer to Figure 1) that consists of Home, Friends, Create Video, Inbox and Profile.

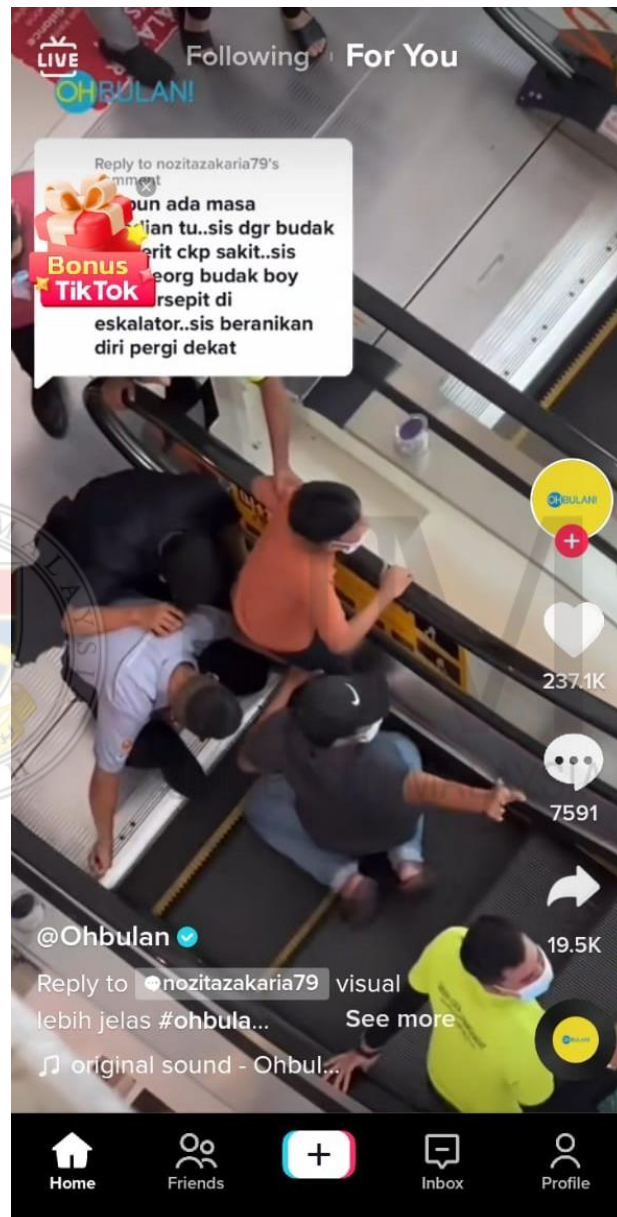


Figure 1.1: The TikTok's interface

The Home button has two feeds at the middle upper part of the interface that are Following and For You page (FYP) and also a Live button at the left upper side of the interface. The For you page is a curated feed of videos from creators users may not be familiar with, but TikTok's algorithm believes users would enjoy them based on the users' preferences and

previous interactions (Patel, 2022). On the other hand, the Following page is to show a list of the TikTok accounts that users are following. The TikTok Live button is to allow users and creators to interact in real-time (TikTok, 2022). Besides that, Friends button is a personalized feed dedicated to users' friends' videos (TikTok, 2022). Next, the Create Video button. The plus sign at the middle of menu bar is the Create Video button. This button is for recording the video and where the editing also take place.

For the Inbox button is where notifications and direct messages are found on TikTok (TikTok, 2022). Lastly, the users' Profile. The Profile button allow users to see the number of followers, the number of following and the the number of like. Other than that, in the Profile page, users can change their preference in the settings and privacy that are place at the left upper side of the Profile page.

Moreover, with celebrities take an interest in *TikTok* also contribute to the rise of the TikTok growth over the year. "The success of each blossoming app is generally connected to the early adoption of a prominent celebrity," according to the Guardian. *Snapchat's* fortunes have been intimately linked to Kylie Jenner's whims, *Instagram* has Selena Gomez, and *Twitter* now has a certain Mr. Trump. Jimmy Fallon, the late-night comedian, may be the user who pushes *TikTok* over the edge in the United States," (Geysler, 2021). Jimmy Fallon encouraged viewers to participate in a series of challenges, such as the *#TumbleweedChallenge*, which involves individuals stopping what they're doing and rolling about on the ground like a tumbleweed while listening to an old western movie soundtrack (Geysler, 2021). TikTok has a special characteristic such that users can "become someone" on the platform rather quickly (Leight, 2019). Since its launch in 2017, various music industry insiders have praised TikTok for its role in promoting and releasing new talent (Bereznak, 2019).

In addition, the attributions of collaboration and interaction of social media open the opportunities for people to share knowledge on the Internet. People tend to hold a positive attitude to collaborative learning on social media because it will provide a more interactive experience and more motivation during their involvement of knowledge-related activities on social media (Manca & Ranieri, 2016; Mao, 2014). Users on social media aren't just passively consuming information. They are becoming more engaged in the creation of User Generated Content (UGC). One of the key aspects of social media is the co-creation of UGC (Bowley, 2009). In the social media realm, users can participate in the creation, editing, commenting, annotating, evaluating, and disseminating of original content (Lerman, 2007).

1.2 Problem Statement

TikTok popularity soared during the pandemic (K. Lyons, 2021) especially among the adolescents. According to M. Iqbal (2021), the statistics of *TikTok*'s demographic for under 18 years old is 28% and a study has shown younger people ages four to fifteen spend an average of 80 minutes per day on *TikTok*. The study found that the app also drove growth in children' social app use by 100% in 2019 and 200% in 2020 (Casey. N, 2020).

The pandemic has driven many sectors especially education into changing from face-to-face to virtual realm where there the workers and teachers only need to work from home. There are vast difference in lifestyles before the pandemic happened and also during the pandemic or endemic Covid-19. The comparison between the usage of *TikTok* before the pandemic happened and during the pandemic or endemic Covid-19 still does not have many study is done regarding it especially among the adolescents.. To sum up, the research focus is to identify the needs of *TikTok* usage among the adolescents at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (SMK) Kubong, Limbang, to identify the uses of *TikTok* among adolescents at SMK Kubong, Limbang and to identify the gratifications obtained by the adolescents from the *TikTok* usage.

1.3 Research Question

Overall, this study aims to answer two research questions as below:

- i. What is the needs of TikTok usage among the adolescent at SMK Kubong, Limbang?
- ii. What is the uses of TikTok usage among the adolescent at SMK Kubong, Limbang
- ii. What is the gratifications obtained of *TikTok* usage among the adolescents at SMK Kubong, Limbang?

1.4 Objectives of Study

The objectives of this research include the following:

- i. To identify the needs of *TikTok* usage among the adolescents at SMK Kubong Limbang.
- ii. To identify the uses of *TikTok* among the adolescents at SMK Kubong, Limbang.
- iii. To identify the gratifications obtained by the adolescents at SMK Kubong, Limbang from the *TikTok* usage.

1.5 Theory

The theory use in the research is the Uses and Gratification Theory by Katz and Blumler (1974). The Uses and Gratification theory discusses the effects of the media on people. It explains how people use the media for their own need and get satisfied when their needs are fulfilled. In other words, it can be said that the theory argues what people do with media rather than what media does to people. This theory has a user or audience-centered approach. Even for communication, say – interpersonal, people refer to the media for the topic to discuss among themselves. By referring the media, they gain more knowledge and exposure to the world beyond their limited eyesight (Communication Theory, 2018).

In research from W. M. Lim and Ting (2012), the Uses and Gratifications theory (UGT) is a well-known media use theory that has been applied to scenarios spanning from radio to television, cable TV, and now the Internet (Roy, 2008). In particular, this theory seeks to recognize the important role of the individual in the use of mass media by focusing on what people do with mass media (Katz, 1959; Klapper, 1960).

Katz et al. (1974) have put forward the basic assumptions of the U & G approach. First, the audience is active and thus the use of mass media is goal directed. Second, the audience makes motivated choices, based on previous experience with the media. Third, media selection and use are purposive and motivated and people take the initiative in selecting and using communication vehicles to satisfy felt needs and desires. Fourth, the media compete with other sources of need satisfaction.

Finally, value judgements about the cultural significance of mass communication should be suspended while audience orientations are explored on their own terms. Therefore, based on the mentioned assumptions, Rubin (1994) suggests that the primary objective of the U&G theory is to explain and understand the psychological needs which shape people's reason for using the media and the reasons which motivate them to engage in certain media use behaviors for gratifications that fulfil their inherent needs, including the identification of the positive and negative consequences of individual media use.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study focus on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). The respondents of the study is the adolescents at SMK Kubong, Limbang, Sarawak. The main focuses of the study are to identify the needs of *TikTok* usage among the adolescents at SMK Kubong Limbang, to identify the uses of *TikTok* among the adolescents at SMK Kubong, Limbang and to identify the gratifications obtained by the adolescents from the *TikTok* usage.

1.7 Significant of the Study

First and foremost, the study of *TikTok* is a unique and intriguing topic, with little research on the subject. This is because *TikTok* is one of the newest social media to market but in a span of one year, the app had an incredible growth (Walsh, 2021). Besides, with the newest social media as the subject of the study, the Uses and Gratification theory can expand more and can contribute to knowing more about audience behavior and needs on why they choose the fastest growth social media in 2021. Moreover, through the Uses and Gratification Theory we can see the difference of social media usage especially during the pandemic.

Furthermore, the development of the use and gratification (U&G) theory on the use of *TikTok* is important to take into account in this study. In fact, the research conducted is valuable since it can serve as a model for future research.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Important terms that used in the study will be discussed under this section.

1.8.1 TikTok

Each *TikTok* is a 3- to 60-second video that loops after it has been finished. The video that the user has uploaded takes up the majority of the screen. Video captured using the user's smartphone, images uploaded from the web, emojis and other text superimposed on the video, and special effects are just a few of the choices available in the program for personalizing and merging these films. The app's filter and video-distorting effects are similar to Instagram's, but for video (Munger, 2020).

In research from Xu et al. (2019), *TikTok* is a short 15-second video community for young people. It can be divided into long video and short video depending on the length of the video. Short videos inevitably need to consider the form of realization. The existing monetization methods include advertising monetization and e-commerce and content realization. At present, many merchants on the vibrating platform have put into advertising such as *Mi Wei* video, but at present, few users are willing to short video content is paid for. In general, a short video of less than 15 seconds is relatively more difficult to charge than a short video of 5 minutes.

1.8.2 Needs

According to Leagans (1964), emerging from the framework within which people's needs to arise are important implications enabling us to assign rather explicit meaning to the term "need" and, therefore, build a functional concept. Six such implications will be identified and discussed:

- i. Needs represent an imbalance, lack of adjustment, or between the present situation or status quo and a new or changed set of conditions assumed to be more desirable. Needs may view as the difference between what is, and what ought to they always imply a gap.
- ii. People's needs are identified by finding the actual, the possible, and the valuable through situation analysis.
- iii. People have to recognize the gap between the actual, the possible, and the desirable, and place value on attaining the desirable before they become motivated to change.

- iv. Human behavior and the status of things can only be judged by some standard, and that standard can only be derived from a concept of what is valuable to attain.
- v. The needs of people may be classified according to different forms and categories.
- vi. Final decision about the selection or rejection of needs to include in a program should be made with a great care.

Thus, the researcher intended to identify the needs of *TikTok* usage among the adolescents at SMK Kubong.

1.8.3 Gratifications

Gratifications are usually described as some form of user satisfaction linked to the active use of the medium in question. Since individual users essentially control the internet's communicative process through their ability to initiate access to commercial sites, U & G's user-centric approach provides a theoretical framework for understanding the specific reasons that drive consumers to mediated online spaces where commerce takes place (Shin, 2010).

Thus, researcher intended to identify the gratification obtained by the adolescents through the *TikTok* usage.

1.8.4 Adolescent

Adolescence is the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from ages 10 to 19. Adolescents experience rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial growth. This affects how they feel, think, make decisions, and interact with the world around them (WHO, 2019).

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter discuss about the important elements in the study. In the Chapter 1, the background of study, problem statement, the objectives of the study, the research questions, scope of study, theory, the significant of study and the definition of terms are discussed in detail manner. In the next chapter, the literature review will be discussed in depth.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Uses and gratifications was first introduced in the 1940s as scholars began to study why people choose to consume various forms of media (Vinney, 2019). The theory is often credited to Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz's work in 1974 (Vinney, 2019). The Uses and Gratification theory is concerned with understanding why individuals use different types of media, what requirements they have to utilise them, and what gratifications they obtain from utilising them. The notion was first proposed in the 1940s to explain why individuals choose to absorb the various forms of media available at the time (Kasirye, 2021). Besides that, Eginli and Tas (2018) clarify that U&G theory explains how communication media is used to satisfy needs and seeks to understand the motivations behind certain behaviours related to social media.

The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) refers to the study of the gratifications or benefits that attract and hold users to different media and various contents that fulfill the user's psychological and social needs (Dunne et al., 2010). Rather than giving a fixed set of constructs, the UGT approach promotes the creation of a homological network for research. Information seeking, social contact, freedom of expression, enjoyment, social presence and belongingness, and social identity are all common personal and social goals for social networking sites (SNS) users (Cheung and Lee, 2010; Cao et al., 2013; Al-Jabri et al., 2015). The UGT developed by Katz and Blumler in 1974. Blumler developed four categories as to why people use the media: diversion or escapism; companionship and development of personal relationships; value reinforcement and exploring personal identity; and surveillance or getting information about the world. Katz came up with a slightly different list regarding motives for media use: cognitive needs, affective needs, and social integrative needs (Peirce, 2007).

According to Vinney (2019), the theory of uses and gratifications is based on two principles concerning media users. For instance, it portrays media consumers as active participants in the choices of the media they consume. People do not use media in a passive manner, according to this viewpoint. In their media choices, they are engaged and motivated.

Second, people are aware of their motivations for using various forms of media. They make media selections based on their understanding of their motivations in order to suit their individual objectives and needs. On the basis of those principles, uses and gratifications goes on to outline five assumptions (Vinney, 2019):

- The usage of media is intentional. Consumption of media is fueled by motivation.
- The expectation is that the media chosen will meet certain requirements and wants.
- Social and psychological aspects filter the media's influence on behaviour. As a result, one's personality and social milieu have an impact on the media choices and interpretations they make.
- For an individual's attention, media competes with other forms of communication. For example, rather than seeing a documentary about an issue, a person may prefer to have a face-to-face talk about it.
- People usually have control over the media and are therefore unaffected by it.

U&G theory has primarily been utilised to understand three media usage over the last two decades: radio, the World Wide Web (Eighmey and McCord, 1998), and virtual or online communities (Dholakia et al., 2004). As a result, this theory has been widely used to a variety of sectors, ranging from broadcast media to inter-personal conversations via online or virtual channels (Lee and Ma, 2012). Several researchers have applied U&G theory to various social media platforms, such as digital photo sharing on Facebook (Malik et al., 2016), Instagram (Sheldon and Bryant, 2016), Twitter use (Chen, 2011; Phua et al., 2017), Facebook (Krause et al., 2014; Phua et al., 2017), YouTube (Khan, 2017), and Pinterest (Mull and Lee, 2014).

Besides that, Lee et al. (2016) with a study entitled "*Uses and Gratifications of News Portal Among Malaysian Youths*" also used Uses and Gratification Theory to identify motivations and gratifications from the uses of news portals among Malaysia youths through three focus group discussions and a forum in social media. The popularity of smartphones has greatly contributed to the youth's choice for online news portals over television, newspapers, and radio, according to the findings. Friends' influence, as well as the utility of smartphones, has contributed to the new media usage trend, making it easier for people to share and distribute information. Thus, it can be seen that information seeking activities have not altered, but the form of the news has changed to an easier and less expensive way.