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## TikTok Users among University Students in Sarawak, Malaysia

Parveen Kaur<sup>1\*</sup>, Arif Jawaid<sup>2</sup>, Imelda Ulu Bilong<sup>3</sup>, Jessiria Phillipus<sup>3</sup>, Pui Siao Wei<sup>3</sup>,  
Sivashunmugam Sangaran<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, University of Malaysia, Sarawak, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> Professor, Lahore Garrison University, Pakistan

<sup>3</sup> University Malaysia, Sarawak, Malaysia

<sup>4</sup> Medical Officer, Bintulu Hospital, Sarawak, Malaysia

\* Corresponding author: [sspkaur@unimas.my](mailto:sspkaur@unimas.my)

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**Abstract:** TikTok is a video-sharing application that allows its users to record short video clips. The popularity of this application has shown a drastic growth over the past decade. It has proven to be one of the most downloaded applications in various statistics. This research aims to analyze public opinion toward TikTok and the factors and implications of getting involved with this video-sharing application. Based on user-centric theory, it focuses on user experiences, needs, and goals. User-centered design uses interactive design to enhance the relationship between users and technology applications. In addition, user experience theory can represent the emotions of users who use the application. The sample consisted of 100 students studying at the University Malaysia Sarawak, who were randomly selected and completed the questionnaire that we had on Google Forms. The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis and Spearman correlation. The study also indicates that some of the short videos contain inappropriate elements and profane language that can create rumors in society. However, the result also reveals that using the TikTok application can sharpen their skills in making videos and help them reduce their stress. Moreover, the results of the Spearman correlation showed a significantly high positive correlation between the interesting content of the TikTok short videos and the use of TikTok. This study illustrates several recommendations, which can hopefully improve the quality of the videos and reduce the number of inappropriate elements.

**Keywords:** TikTok, Malaysia, impacts, users, university, Sarawak.

## 馬來西亞砂拉越州大學生中的抖音用戶

**摘要：**抖音是一款視頻共享應用程序，允許用戶錄製短視頻片段。在過去的十年中，該應用程序的受歡迎程度急劇增長。事實證明，它是各種統計數據中下載次數最多的應用程序之一。本研究旨在分析公眾對抖音的看法以及參與該視頻共享應用程序的因素和影響。基於以用戶為中心的理論，關注用戶體驗、需求和目標。以用戶為中心的設計使用交互設計來增強用戶和技術應用程序之間的關係。此外，用戶體驗理論可以代表使用應用程序的用戶的情感。樣本由100名在馬來西亞砂拉越大學學習的學生組成，他們是隨機選擇的，並填寫了我

們在谷歌表單上的調查問卷。使用描述性分析和斯皮爾曼相關性對數據進行分析。研究還指出，部分短視頻含有不當元素和不敬語言，可能會在社會上製造謠言。然而，結果也表明，使用抖音應用程序可以提高他們製作視頻的技能，並幫助他們減輕壓力。此外，斯皮爾曼相關性的結果顯示，抖音短視頻的有趣內容與抖音的使用之間存在顯著較高的正相關性。這項研究提出了一些建議，有望提高視頻質量並減少不適當元素的數量。

**关键词：** 抖音、馬來西亞、影響、用戶、大學、砂拉越。

## 1. Introduction

Technology is now a necessity for everyone in society important throughout the world for various functions. One of the essential aspects of technology is social media. It has been used among the foremost famous platforms of communication, especially among youth. [25] stated that youth converse and communicate with their friends through various media and devices daily. Social media are websites or applications that allow users to participate in social networking by creating and sharing content. For instance, the most used social media platforms are Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Snapchat. According to research, youths spend an average of nine hours daily on social media [12]. In 2017, a social media application called “TikTok” was launched in the international market. TikTok is a video-sharing application owned by a Beijing company founded in 2012. This application allows users to create short lip-syncing clips and videos showcasing their talented and comedic sides.

The definition of TikTok is a video-sharing application where everyone can upload short videos, mainly about comedy or talent display. The application’s ability to showcase unique and creative talents quickly is the main reason for its success among youth. In terms of audience, the target group is mainly young people, which shows many challenges that provoke users to record themselves doing difficult things [22]. However, these applications have caused many problems in our society because some challenges have a negative impact. With short video applications, the content of gradually vulgar trends is also a big test for TikTok applications [16].

According to the research entitled ‘TikTok Users among University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) students’, the research aims to analyze people’s opinions toward TikTok. Next, it also determines the factors that influence people to use TikTok and to study the implications of getting involved in TikTok. This study signifies novelty as it examines the usage of TikTok among university students in Malaysia. Moreover, there are very few studies on this group of

subjects. To support our research, we use user-centered theory (UCT) to explain phenomena related to user experiences, needs, and goals before analyzing the data. Furthermore, the purpose of this research is to answer some of the research questions, such as ‘Does the society get involved with TikTok for popularity?’, ‘Do people get attracted to TikTok under their friend’s influence?’ and ‘Does TikTok bring negative implications to the users?’

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Origins of Technology

[13] pointed out that when the first prehistoric human being crawled from their cave in search of food and killed the animal by hitting it with a rock, he experimented with technology. Technology began when some people looked outside their bodies for something to support them [3]. Technology emerged with the growing needs of society. Technology is the tool with which one expands one’s capacities intertwined and describes human history [22]. The technology that dominates a specific historical period is used as a means of defining and linking periods such as the Stone Age, Industrial Age, and Digital Age [28].

### 2.2. Cultures of Technology

Nowadays, young people are often labeled as the digital generation. According to [6], young people are considered the thumb generation in Japan. [18] pointed out that “despite their origins in earlier times, the contemporary inflections of technology, especially in media, appear with a ubiquity that is simultaneously familiar and strange.” [15] shared a fascinating view that technology is rooted in notions of wealth and welfare, competitiveness, and productivity. Technological progress is endless; it reflects the achievements of humans and developed nations [3].

### 2.3. People’s Perceptions of TikTok

This social media platform is very popular in China [20]. Mostly, people in China like to watch short TikTok videos especially. A study reveals that there is

a global music video that is very popular in China [29]. In addition, people always use TikTok applications to shoot short videos [5]. A study also reveals that TikTok users like to share drawing skills on a video-sharing platform [31]. Usually, users like to share feelings or experiences through a social video platform [34]. Apart from that, according to a study on the perceived popularity of TikTok, about 18.70% of people feel they are left behind in time if they do not use this popular application [16]. Therefore, we can see that not many people think that they are behind even if they are not using the popular social media application. According to [23], approximately 40% of these users are under the age of 24 years. TikTok has become one of the most downloaded applications of 2018, and the users spend an average of 52 min per day, which leads to approximately 200 videos per day [14].

#### 2.4. Factors Influencing People to Use TikTok

By using the function of “Dance Dancer Machine,” the rate of people downloading the TikTok application has increased dramatically. “Users can play the dance machine on the mobile phone, mainly relying on the “human key point detection technology,” ultimately based on the intelligent algorithm technology supported by artificial intelligence (AI)” [33, p. 61]. According to [33], TikTok has encouraged twelve big stars, including Di Lieba, to make vibrating sounds during the Spring Festival of 2017. In addition, the higher number of users started increasing when TikTok became a marketing platform. Many advertisements, such as “Star Detective,” were created on this social media platform. Thus, popular stars in China, such as Lu Han and Bai Jing Ting, created short videos on TikTok. These advertisements were shown as trailers of movies to attract the audience.

[4] pointed out that adolescents use media to relieve their negative emotions. Adolescents state that one of their top motivations for watching music videos is simply entertainment. Several studies indicate that “listening to music” is the coping strategy most used by adolescents when they are unhappy, sad, and anxious [22]. [32] also shows the factors that influence people to use TikTok. Significant factors include the acquisition of knowledge and music dubbing. In addition, TikTok can help to relax one’s mind in terms of interaction. Another factor that can influence people to use TikTok is watching funny videos, sharing, liking, having powerful special effects, and being easy to learn [3].

#### 2.5. Implications of TikTok

##### 2.5.1. Positive Impact of Using the TikTok Application

According to [20], users have a positive impact on using TikTok. By using the TikTok application to create short videos, users can learn the skills of making videos. Users can use all these skills in real life and use

their free time effectively. A master’s thesis research released by Jinan University reveals that users have a positive impact on TikTok because they can learn many helpful skills in their lives [27]. Learning in the form of shorter videos will meaningfully encourage learners to participate in activities [26]. TikTok can also influence people in terms of interpersonal communication by using short videos.

Peer communication is an essential aspect of knowledge sharing [11]. Moreover, by using the TikTok application, users increase their confidence level and have a better immersive experience. Users can also develop their social confidence [22]. In addition, the TikTok application can also help people reduce stress during social distancing, and they are likely to use social media. According to research, when one feels nervous or alone, reaching out to friends, relatives, or maybe even a health care professional, using the latest technology to access things, and practicing hobbies can maintain a sense of calmness [31].

Furthermore, some researchers also indicate that the TikTok application positively impacts business [1]. By learning how to create, edit, and share short videos, one can also help certain people to gain income. In this context, most TikTok users create their videos and start sharing them with the public using another social media platform to earn money. TikTok users usually use YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram to share their videos [22]. These various forms of social media help to increase customer awareness of better product understanding. In addition, many researchers have identified users’ knowledge related to the behaviors of video sharing using another platform [21]. By having some knowledge of sharing a TikTok video on another social media platform, the most popular content creators can earn money.

##### 2.5.2. Negative Impacts of Using the TikTok Application

One study indicates that 57% of the students claim that they could not perform well in academics because of the lack of time for studies [30]. Creating a good video also requires much time. On the other hand, the study by Ohio State University shows that the students have less time for studies as they use popular social media such as Facebook and reveals lower grades compared with those students who have more time for their studies not using social media [17]. In addition, TikTok video applications contain some vulgar content. [1] states that by using social media platforms, users can be hacked and susceptible to private and secure information on the Internet. In addition, studies have revealed that TikTok applications contain inappropriate songs, lyrics, and pornography [1]. In addition, some TikTok videos on social media contain profane language. Studies have shown that some TikTok users received negative comments such as body shaming,

racist remarks, and criticism of their looks and skills to act [2]. Thus, users of TikTok can also be easily depressed or suicidal and trigger mental health problems, as they are being cyberbullied by others [3].

Furthermore, some researchers also indicate that the TikTok application positively affects business [1]. By learning how to create, edit, and share short videos, one can also help certain people to gain income. In this context, most TikTok users create videos and start sharing them with the public using another social media platform to earn money. TikTok users usually apply YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram to share their videos [22]. These various forms of social media help to increase customer awareness of better product understanding. In addition, many researchers have identified users' knowledge related to the behaviors of video sharing using another platform [21]. By having some knowledge of sharing a TikTok video on another social media platform, the most popular content creators can earn money.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

Fig. 1 shows the flowchart of the entire research process.

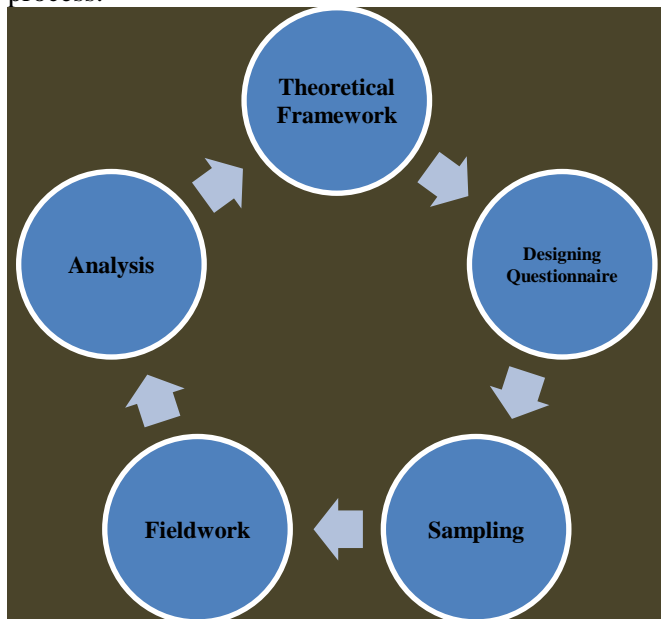


Fig. 1 Flowchart of the research

The research design selected was quantitative. By performing a quantitative research design, the primary data were collected through original and firsthand research. To answer the research questions, experimental research finalized and proved the hypothesis. Based on the survey, the variables were measured, calculated, and compared with the data. The research was conducted at UNIMAS.

#### 3.2. Number of Respondents

Based on our quantitative method of using a questionnaire, the total number of respondents in our research was 100. The research focused on students from UNIMAS chosen randomly from the faculties.

#### 3.3. Population and Sampling

According to [7], a sample is a portion of elements taken from a population that is representative. To collect the data, a questionnaire was administered to the respondents. The respondents were chosen randomly from the faculties of UNIMAS to analyze their opinions toward users involved in TikTok. This study investigated the factors that influence users of TikTok and their implications. In this context, 100 respondents were selected from different faculties. Hence, this study adopted a purposeful sampling method using a random sampling procedure.

#### 3.4. Instrument

The quantitative method was necessary for this research because statistics must describe the data of the research questions. The questionnaire consisted of four sections, which included sections A, B, C, and D. Section A gathered information about the background of the respondents. Meanwhile, Section B asked about the popularity of TikTok. Section C asked about the factors that influence people to use TikTok, and Section D asked about the implications of getting involved in TikTok. Sections B, C, and D used the Likert scale to measure the respondents' opinions.

#### 3.5. Methods of Analysis

After conducting the interviews, the findings were analyzed using the SPSS application. Two methods analyzed the data – descriptive analysis and hypothesis testing. For descriptive analysis, frequency, percentage, and mean were used to analyze the data. For hypothesis testing, we used Spearman's correlation to analyze the correlation between the content of short videos and the use of the TikTok application among UNIMAS students.

## 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1. Demographic Data

Table 1 shows that out of 100 participants, more were female (82%) and less were male (18%). Moreover, more than half of them were 22-27 (65%), and the smallest age group was 16-21 years old (35%). A large proportion of the ethnic group was Malay (36%), followed by Native of Sarawak (34%), Chinese (15%), Native of Sabah (14%), and the smallest group was Indian (1%). Among 100 respondents, the majority was from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (33%). The second highest was from the Faculty of Computer Science and Information

Technology (16%) followed by the Faculty of Resource Science and Technology (14%), Faculty of Engineering (11%), Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development (9%), and Faculty of Applied and Creative (7%). The smallest percentage was from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (1%), followed by the Faculty of Economics and Businesses (4%) and the Faculty of Language and Communication (5%).

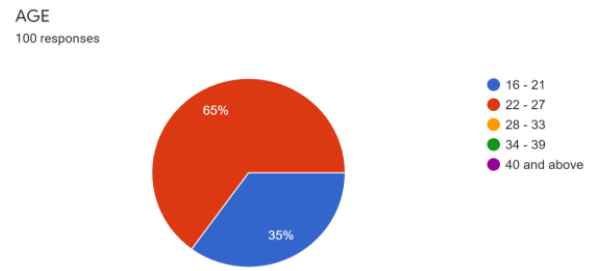


Fig. 2 Age

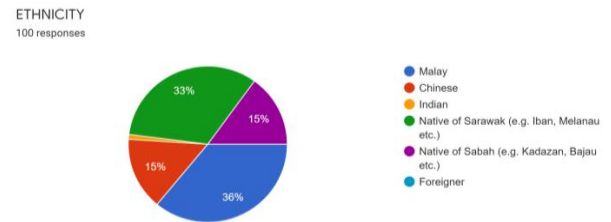


Fig. 3 Ethnicity

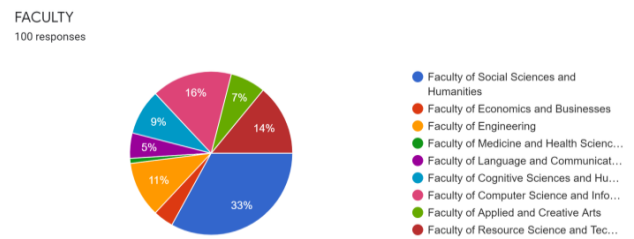


Fig. 4 Faculty

Table 1 Descriptive demographic analysis

Variables		f	%
Gender	Male	18	18
	Female	82	82
Age	16-21	35	35
	22-27	65	65
Ethnicity	Chinese	15	15
	Indian	1	1
	Malay	36	36
	Native to Sabah	14	14
	Native of Sarawak	34	34
	Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities	4	4
Faculty	Faculty of Economics and Business	11	11
	Faculty of Engineering	1	1
	Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences	5	5
	Faculty of Language and Communication	9	9
	Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts	16	16
	Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development	7	7
	Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology	14	14
	Faculty of Resource Science and Technology	14	14
	Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts	9	9
	Faculty of Language and Communication	16	16

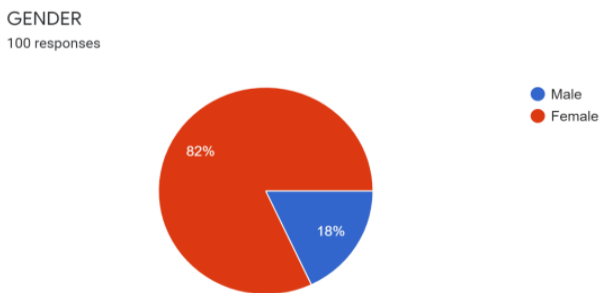


Fig. 1 Gender

### 4.2. People’s Perceptions of TikTok

Table 2 shows the description of the respondents’ opinions in descending order as follows. They show their agreement that TikTok is very popular among young people ( $\bar{x} = 4.44$ ) and they like to watch TikTok short videos ( $\bar{x} = 3.52$ ). [20] stated that TikTok is very popular and is used by many in China. However, they expressed their disagreement on the following issues: they always share TikTok short videos through social media ( $\bar{x} = 2.23$ ), they always use the TikTok application to shoot short videos ( $\bar{x} = 1.78$ ) and they feel left behind if they do not use the TikTok application ( $\bar{x} = 1.69$ ). [16] supported this information stating that only 18.70% of respondents feel left behind if they do not use TikTok.

Table 2 Mean, standard deviation, and popularity of TikTok

Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
I like to watch short TikTok videos.	11 (11%)	13 (13%)	21 (21%)	23 (23%)	32 (32%)	3.52	1.35
I always use the TikTok application to shoot short videos.	59 (59%)	17 (17%)	14 (14%)	7 (7%)	3 (3%)	1.75	1.12
I always share TikTok short videos on social media.	46 (46%)	19 (19%)	12 (12%)	12 (12%)	11 (11%)	2.23	1.42
I will feel left behind if I do not use TikTok.	61 (61%)	22 (22%)	9 (9%)	3 (3%)	5 (5%)	1.69	1.09
TikTok is very popular among young people.	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	9 (9%)	34 (34%)	56 (56%)	4.44	0.74

Notes: \* N = 100. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

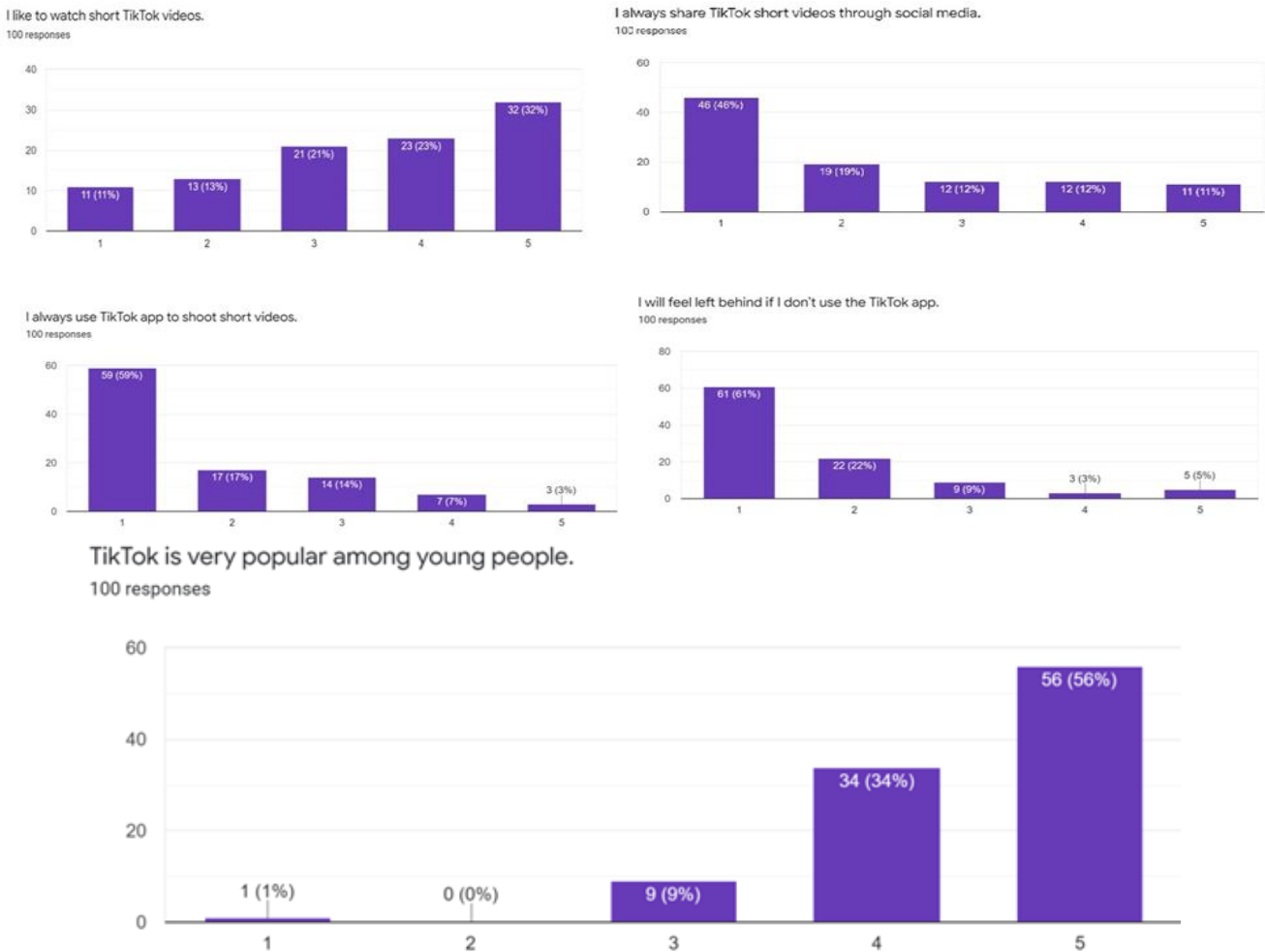


Fig. 5 Percentage of respondents on popularity of TikTok

Notes: N = 100. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### 4.3. Factors Influencing People to Use TikTok

Table 3 shows that the respondents agreed that interesting background songs and music attracted TikTok users ( $\bar{x} = 3.94$ ). In this context, [32] supported the factors of interesting background songs and music. The study shows that the factors that influence people to use TikTok are not only the acquisition of knowledge but also TikTok has provided music dubbing to make the songs and music more interesting. The respondents also agreed that the short videos of TikTok can entertain them ( $\bar{x} = 3.65$ ). [4] mentioned that adolescents use media to relieve their negative emotions, and one of their top motivations for watching music videos is simply for entertainment. The respondents also indicated that the contents of TikTok are also interesting ( $\bar{x} = 3.57$ ). This statement is

supported by the evidence of [32] because short videos are funny stories that can be shared and liked, have powerful special effects in editing, and are easy to learn.

Subsequently, the respondents also disagreed that they can buy the product promoted by TikTok ( $\bar{x} = 1.96$ ) while this evidence was not supported by [33], who agreed that TikTok had encouraged twelve big stars, including Di Lieba, to make vibrating sounds during the Spring Festival of 2017. It also shows that the number of users increased when TikTok was involved in marketing. Furthermore, respondents also disagreed that their friends influenced their use of TikTok ( $\bar{x} = 2.30$ ). However, there is no evidence to prove that friends influenced people to be involved in TikTok.

Table 3 Mean and standard deviation of the factors that influence people to use TikTok

Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
The background and song music is interesting	4%	7%	19%	31%	39%	3.94	1.11
I want to buy the product promoted in TikTok	49%	23%	14%	11%	3%	1.96	1.16

Continuation of Table 3							
The contents of the short videos are interesting	7%	12%	25%	29%	27%	3.57	1.21
Watching TikTok short videos can entertain me	12%	8%	22%	19%	39%	3.65	1.38
My friends influenced me	42%	20%	16%	10%	12%	2.30	1.41

Notes: \* n = 100. The items were rated on a 5-point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

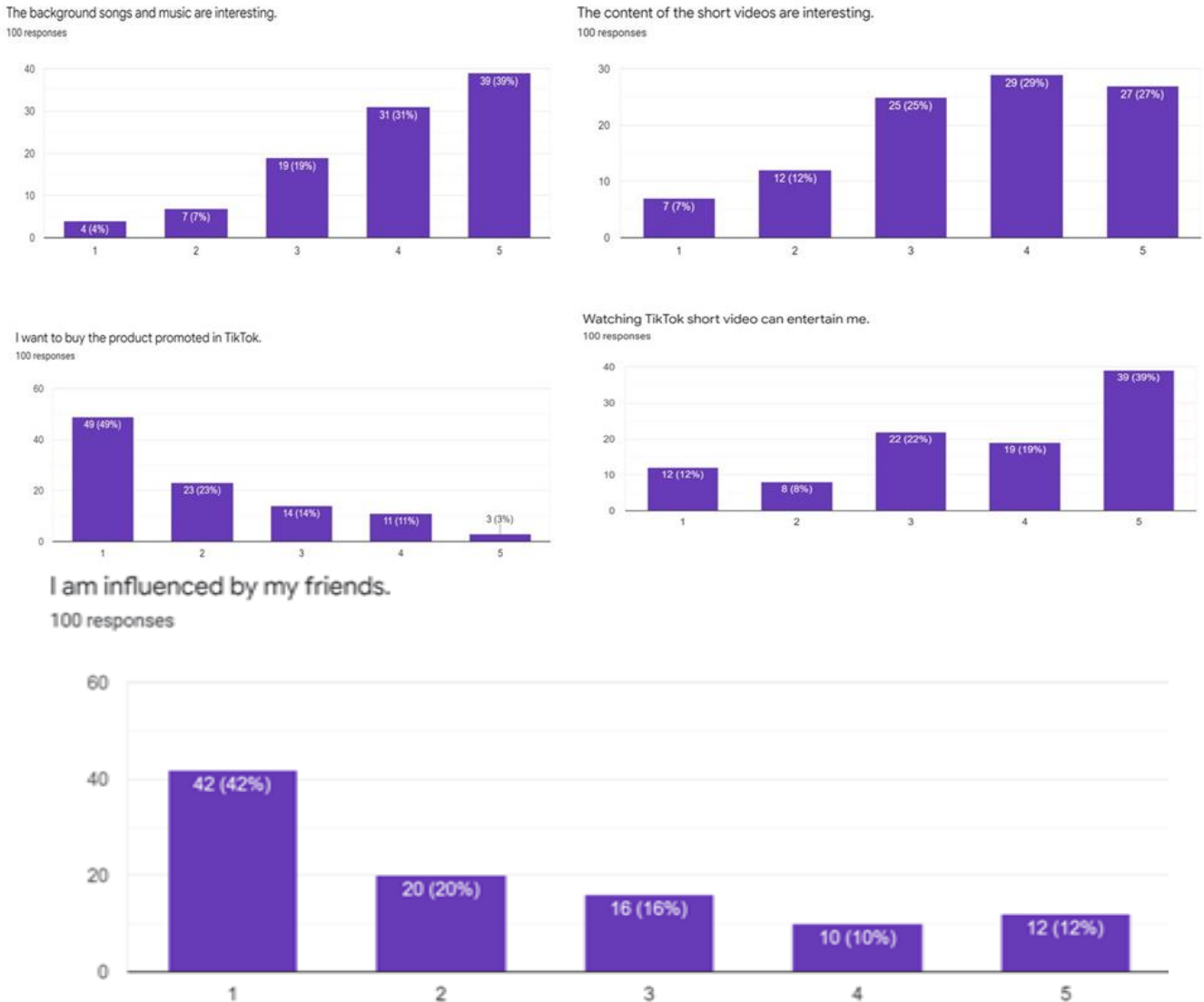


Fig. 6 Percentage of factors attributing to TikTok

Notes: N = 100. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

#### 4.4. Implications of Using TikTok

##### 4.4.1. Positive Impact of Using the TikTok Application

Table 4 shows that the respondents agreed that by using TikTok, stress is reduced and they develop creativity in making videos ( $\bar{x} = 3.36$ ). This evidence supports [31], who states that when people feel nervous or alone, reaching out to friends, relatives, or maybe health care professionals, using the latest technology to access the things they want, and practicing their hobbies can maintain a sense of calmness. By using TikTok, users will learn how to create, edit, and share

short videos; thus, it can help them develop their video editing skills [20]. However, they disagreed that using TikTok can fill their free time with beneficial activities ( $\bar{x} = 2.79$ ). The respondents also disclosed their neutral opinion on TikTok that it can increase their confidence level ( $\bar{x} = 2.61$ ) and make money ( $\bar{x} = 2.95$ ). TikTok can have a positive impact on business [1], and some of the users share their videos on social media, which helps the creators to earn money. Apart from that, using TikTok can develop social confidence, as it is a platform for interaction and communication with peers.

Table 4 Mean and standard deviation of positive impact of using TikTok

Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
It can increase my confidence level	25%	17%	37%	14%	7%	2.61	1.20
It can reduce my stress	16%	11%	18%	31%	24%	3.36	1.38
It can develop my creativity in making videos	16%	9%	21%	31%	23%	3.36	1.36
It can make money	18%	14%	36%	19%	13%	2.95	1.26

Notes: \* N = 100. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

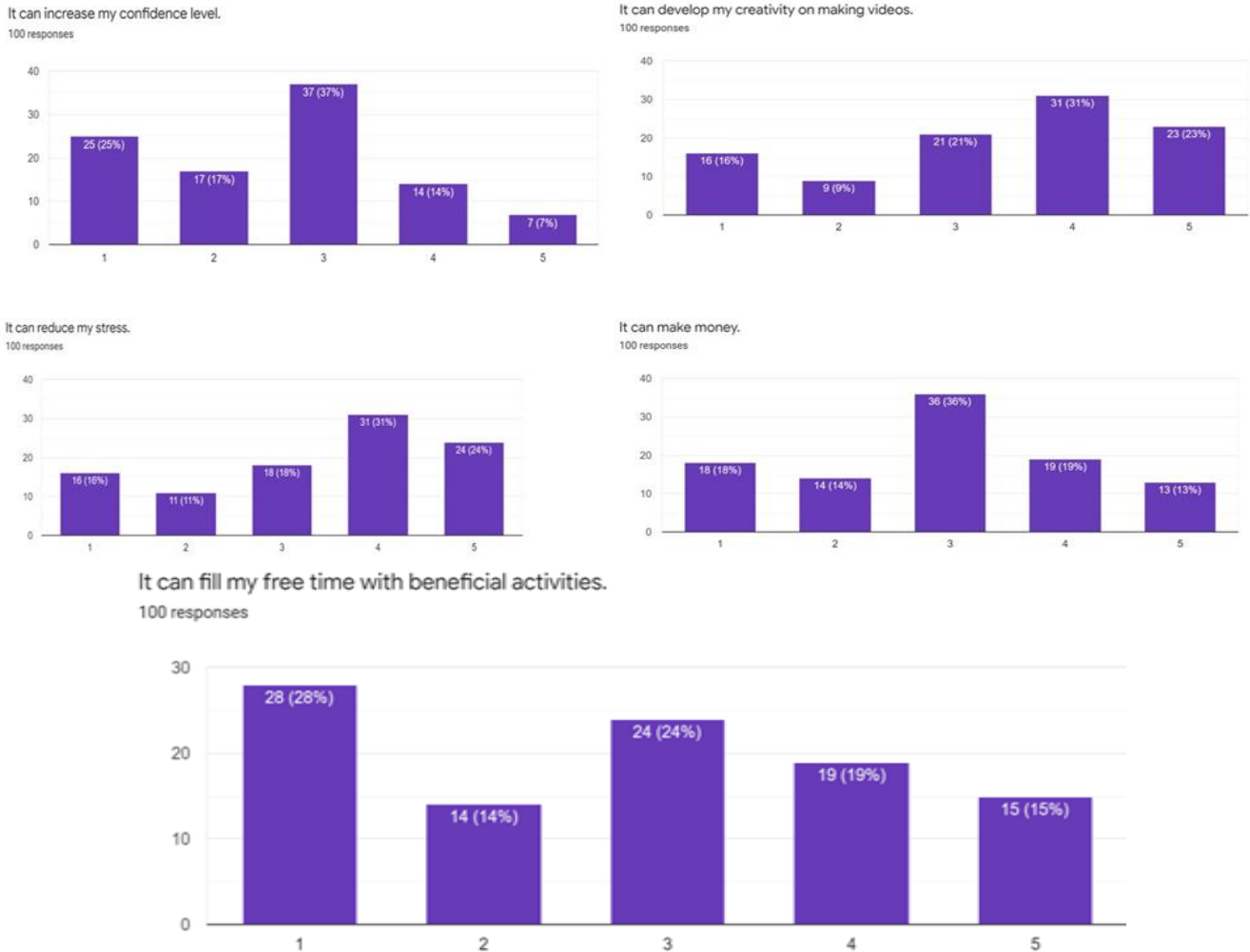


Fig. 7 Percentage of respondents on the positive impact of using TikTok

Notes: N = 100. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

4.4.2. Negative Impacts of Using TikTok

Table 5 (see Fig. 8) reveals that the respondents agreed that some TikTok videos contained vulgar contents ( $\bar{x} = 4.21$ ). Evidence has proved that by using social media platforms, our private and security information can be hacked and shared. These short videos also contain inappropriate songs and lyrics or even pornography. In addition, respondents also agreed that the use of TikTok creates unnecessary rumors

among society ( $\bar{x} = 4.12$ ). Cyberbullying can trigger users to suffer mental health problems. However, the respondents expressed a neutral opinion that using TikTok is just a waste of time ( $\bar{x} = 2.98$ ). The respondents agreed that some TikTok short videos used profane languages ( $\bar{x} = 3.94$ ). Studies have proven that some of the TikTok users received negative comments such as body shaming, race, looks, and skills to act [2].

Table 5 Mean and standard deviation of negative impacts of using TikTok

Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
Some TikTok videos contain bad elements	2	3	14	34	47	4.21	0.94



Continuation of Table 5							
Create unnecessary rumors among society	3	2	17	36	42	4.12	0.97
Some TikTok videos use profane language	1	2	30	36	31	3.94	0.86
Watching TikTok videos are wasting my time	15	19	37	11	18	2.98	1.23

Notes: \* N = 100. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

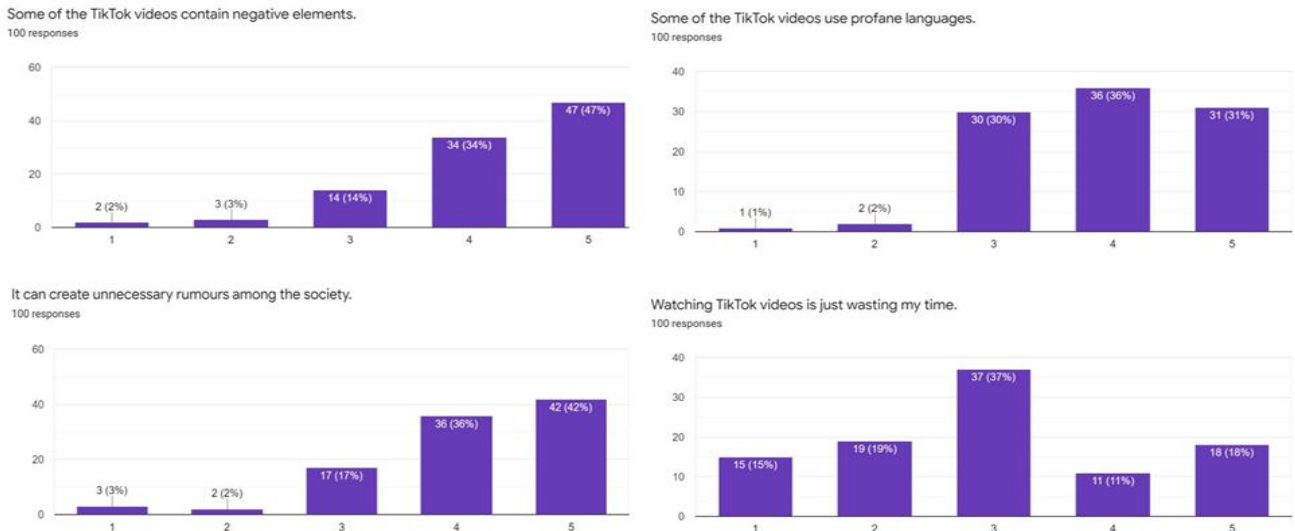


Fig. 8 Percentage of respondents on the negative impacts of using TikTok

Notes: N = 100. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### 4.5. Hypothesis Testing

H1: The interesting contents of the short videos positively influence UNIMAS students to use the TikTok application.

Table 6 shows that using Spearman Correlation, on average, “contents of the TikTok are interesting” ( $\bar{x}$  =

3.570) and “I like to watch TikTok” ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.520) have significantly high positive correlations ( $r = 0.761$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This shows that the more interesting contents of the short videos influence the students to use TikTok. Therefore, the hypothesis of this study is accepted.

Table 6 Correlation between contents of short videos and use of TikTok using spearman correlation

Correlations		I like to watch short TikTok videos	The content of the short TikTok videos is interesting
Spearman’s rho	I like to watch short TikTok videos	Correlation coefficient 1.000 Sig. (2-tailed) .000 N 100	.761** .000 100
	The content of the short TikTok videos is interesting	Correlation coefficient .761** Sig. (2-tailed) .000 N 100	1.000 .000 100

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## 5. Conclusion

The main findings of the study show that the majority of the respondents confirmed that TikTok is very popular and that they like to watch TikTok videos. [20] shares similar views on TikTok popularity. However, the respondents disagreed that they feel left behind if they do not use TikTok. They always use TikTok to shoot videos and share them on social media. The respondents agreed that TikTok background songs and music are interesting. A short video can entertain, and the contents are interesting and stimulate them to use TikTok. [34] also supports these findings. The respondents disagreed that they use TikTok to buy the products promoted and friends influence them. The respondents agreed that TikTok

reduces stress and promotes creativity in making videos.

The respondents disagreed that TikTok fills their free time with beneficial activities. They showed a neutral opinion on TikTok that it increases the confidence level. As the next negative impact of using TikTok, the respondents agreed that it contains vulgar content, creates unnecessary rumors in society, and uses profane language. The respondents expressed neutral opinions that TikTok is a waste of time. The hypothesis in this research is accepted because the interesting contents of the short videos show positive influences on Unimas students’ use of TikTok. Some researchers, such as [30, [17], and [1-3], highlighted these findings.

The implications of this study show the strengths and limitations of TikTok. Although TikTok has gained vast popularity and has a positive impact on many dimensions, unfortunately, its use also comes with many negative aspects. Users should use it wisely and not abuse it.

This study recommended that TikTok developers should improve the broadcast function by making it more attractive to users. Second, TikTok may add advertisements to help people promote their business products. Third, the TikTok developers may reduce vulgar elements and improve information quality.

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