

University for Business and Technology in Kosovo

UBT Knowledge Center

UBT International Conference

2023 UBT International Conference

Oct 28th, 8:00 AM - Oct 29th, 6:00 PM

“Requirements and elements of the use of social media TikTok by teenagers in Albania”

Anila Prethi
anilaprethi@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/conference>

Recommended Citation

Prethi, Anila, “Requirements and elements of the use of social media TikTok by teenagers in Albania” (2023). *UBT International Conference*. 1.
<https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/conference/IC/JMC/1>

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Publication and Journals at UBT Knowledge Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in UBT International Conference by an authorized administrator of UBT Knowledge Center. For more information, please contact knowledge.center@ubt-uni.net.

“Requirements and elements of the use of social media TikTok by teenagers in Albania”

Anila Prethi, Journalist, Durrës

anilaprethi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In the era of social media, where information and communication are distributed rapidly, TikTok has transcended being merely a video-sharing application. This platform has created a unique communication ecosystem, transforming how users share, consume, and engage with digital content. This study analyzes the use of the TikTok social media platform by adolescents aged 14-18 in Albania, focusing on the demands and elements that make the content appealing to this age group. Based on data analysis from surveys conducted with adolescents and interviews with communication experts, we have identified adolescents' preferences regarding the attractive elements and content offered by TikTok. Our findings explain how adolescents use this platform to express their identity, as well as the reasons behind the dissemination and consumption of digital content. Additionally, this analyse contributes to understanding the fundamental shifts in communication paradigms in the era of social media.

Keywords: *social media, TikTok, adolescent, digital content*

INTRODUCTION

According to Michael Cross (2013), social media is a term that describes a variety of technologies used to connect people for collaboration, exchange of information, and interaction through internet-based message content. Cross emphasizes that the internet is constantly evolving, with technologies and features available to users continually changing.

Individuals choose their communication medium based on whom they wish to communicate with and the message they intend to convey. If the chosen medium fails to meet their expectations, the satisfaction they aim to achieve will be limited.

In 2022, the utilization of social media by adolescents witnessed a significant surge. This rapid increase prompted my interest in studying the influence of social media platforms on adolescents aged 14-18. TikTok, boasting the highest number of users globally, particularly caught my attention. Recent statistics from Start.io for Albania indicate that TikTok holds 56.1% of users aged 18-24 (Insights on TikTok users in Albania, 2023).

Previous studies have indicated that social media, such as TikTok, profoundly influences the formation of adolescents' identity and social relationships. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a detailed analysis and identifying the attractive elements for adolescents on TikTok.

METHODOLOGY

Commencing from the traditional perspective of human experience processes, we are primarily guided by the quantitative model of perception, which serves as the main pillar of the scientific technique. The quantitative methodological approach, provides a scientific way to analyze social phenomena through techniques where social data can be interpreted (Barnham, 2015).

In our case study, the primary reason for applying the quantitative methodology is to be more objective and accurate with our target group, which in this specific case, are adolescents. The research is organized around surveying 150 adolescents aged 14-18, based on 10 fundamental questions about the elements and reasons for using TikTok. After identifying the variables, we

developed a structured survey with 10 closed-ended questions, prepared to gather sufficient information to identify the factors influencing the use of the TikTok platform.

After the questionnaire was developed, it underwent testing by experts in the field of communication (school psychologists) to assess the clarity and comprehensibility of the survey. Testing aided in identifying and correcting any possible errors or misunderstandings in the questionnaire before its use in the study. Following the testing of the questionnaire, it was distributed to the targeted groups, students aged 14-18 from grades 9th to 12th, through the WhatsApp platform. Recognizing the high level of reluctance among adolescents to provide personal information regarding their social media use, we ensured confidentiality, and for this reason, the questionnaire does not include overly personal questions.

The first part of the questionnaire contains demographic data related to gender and age. The second part consists of questions regarding usage time, types of content, reasons for usage, and the level of satisfaction from using TikTok. The estimated time needed to complete the questionnaire is approximately 4-5 minutes.

Objective

To understand the reasons why adolescents use TikTok.

Research Questions:

- a) Why do young people use the internet, specifically TikTok?
- b) What reflections do the users themselves have regarding this medium?

Hypothesis

The main reason why young people use TikTok is the entertainment factor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gen Z Post-Trends of TikTok

The characteristics of the TikTok application that aim to capture the attention of Generation Z are intriguing. They provide the opportunity to create educational content/videos on fast learning, which for adolescents always appears to be "boring." In reality, with the technological advancements of today, the golden age of the Generation Y has faded, and now it is time for Generation Z to shine. Generation Z is the cohort most influenced by technology and social networks. They are the most active users of these networks, especially TikTok, and use these platforms to meet some needs and fulfill some of their desires. Numerous studies have examined the identity of Generation Z adolescents, and based on the characteristics of this generation, it is understood that this generation is considered the internet generation. While the previous generation, Generation Y, is still transitioning from the era of internet and technology usage, Generation Z was born at a time when digital technology reached its peak. This is what gives this generation a character that is tech-savvy, more flexible, intelligent, and tolerant of cultural differences. Generation Z was born and grew up with digitization, and the digital era belongs to Generation Z. Digital technology is equipped with various applications with different features, where Generation Z can easily interact and even reach billions of people worldwide with just a click. (Pancaran Pendidikan, 2020)

According to Tanta et al. (2014), adolescents are assumed to be dependent on creating new social relationships to maintain strong mental health, and the consequences of failure to do so lead to low self-esteem, loneliness, and psychological distress. Although family relationships are still important, adolescents are spending an increasing amount of time with people outside their families. These non-family relationships fulfill many of the same functions that were previously thought to be only the competence of family relationships in childhood. (Courtois et al., 2009; Collins & Laursen, 2004; Bossen & Kottasz, 2020)

Research indicates that a particular role in the high engagement of adolescents on TikTok is also "fear of missing out" (FOMO). The term "FOMO" describes the fear that someone may miss out on information shared by other users on social media. Adolescents enjoy discussing challenges,

music, and TikTok-style short videos in class. If an adolescent has not checked TikTok recently, they begin to worry about not being able to join conversations with others due to a lack of information. (Yang, 2023)

The search for information and self-education are encompassed in our classification of this topic. TikTok and similar applications use extensive data to make people, especially adolescents, develop dependencies on their usage. The application predicts the types of videos adolescents are interested in, sending them similar videos over time. As time passes, adolescents slowly develop dependencies on TikTok videos, as new information continues to appear as long as their fingers keep sliding on the phone screen.

Adolescents, as a group developing awareness of the world and society, live in a time where their understanding and attitudes change rapidly. They are more sensitive to the effects of short videos than adults, and this is one of the reasons why high school students are believed to be more dependent on TikTok. Each adolescent's self-perception is influenced by various circumstances. High self-esteem helps them avoid engaging in harmful activities and increases their ability to study. They try to gain such self-esteem through various challenges among peers on the TikTok application. Adolescents with confidence will be able to assess themselves and successfully fulfill their responsibilities in life (Savira, Rifai, & Wahyunengsih, 2022).

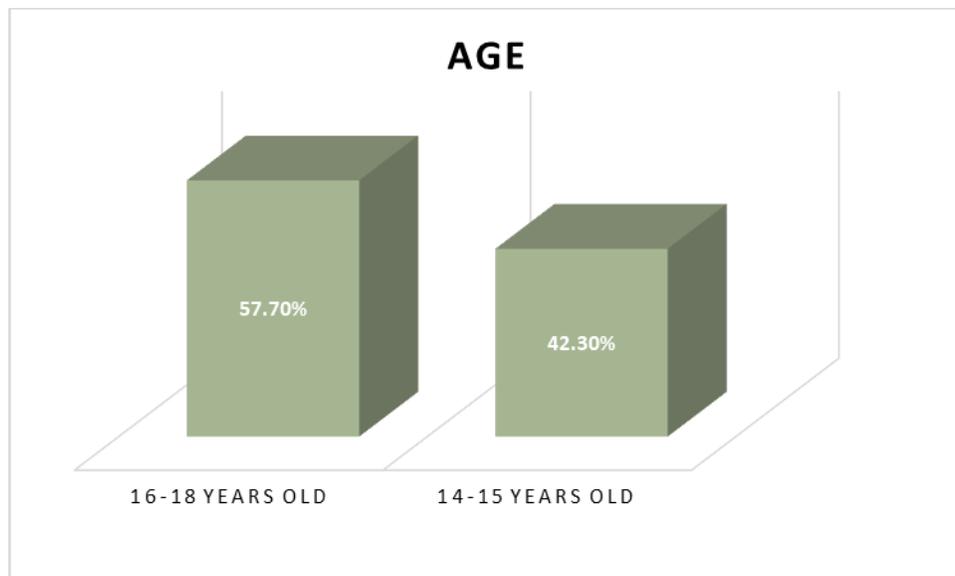
Despite offering adolescents the opportunity to express themselves, create connections with others, and experience feelings of satisfaction and fulfillment, this involvement also has its negative aspects. Some studies suggest that excessive use of time on social platforms can negatively impact adolescents' mental health, creating feelings of fatigue, social distancing, and negative effects on their self-image. However, it is crucial to better understand the positive potentials and challenges associated with the use of these platforms, aiming to develop practices and strategies for a safe and sustainable use of social media by adolescents (Duarte, 2022).

Following trends and social relationships are two factors that greatly influence an individual's behavior, especially in an environment like TikTok. An individual is significantly influenced by the group behavior around them, and to meet the group's expectations, they regulate their behavior by adapting their reactions to those of the group. On TikTok, short videos are shared on social networks, allowing many mobile users to learn and use TikTok, especially those who prefer to follow popular culture. They follow their friends and well-known figures on TikTok to

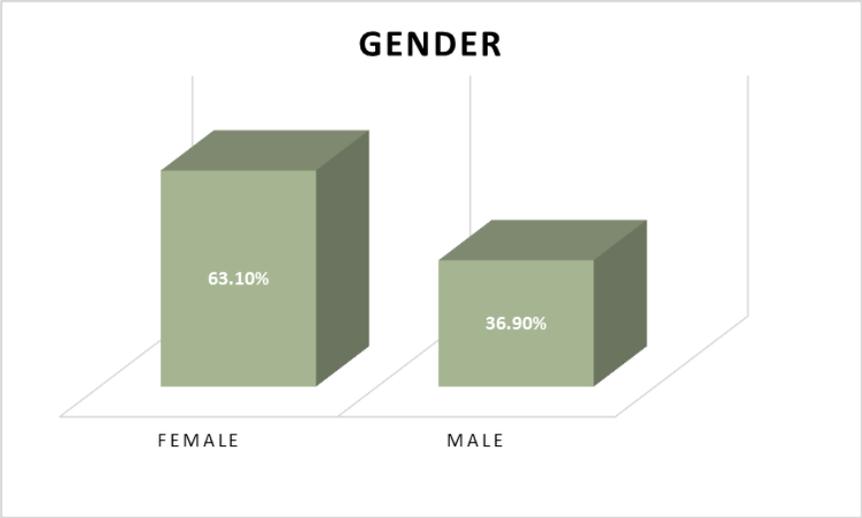
keep up with the latest trends. Due to the limited content on TikTok, users follow trends that involve content creation, as seen in challenges like the competition to imitate the "popular dance." To derive pleasure from media use, users increasingly rely on TikTok and other online activities to enhance their engagement on the platform.

DATA ANALYSIS

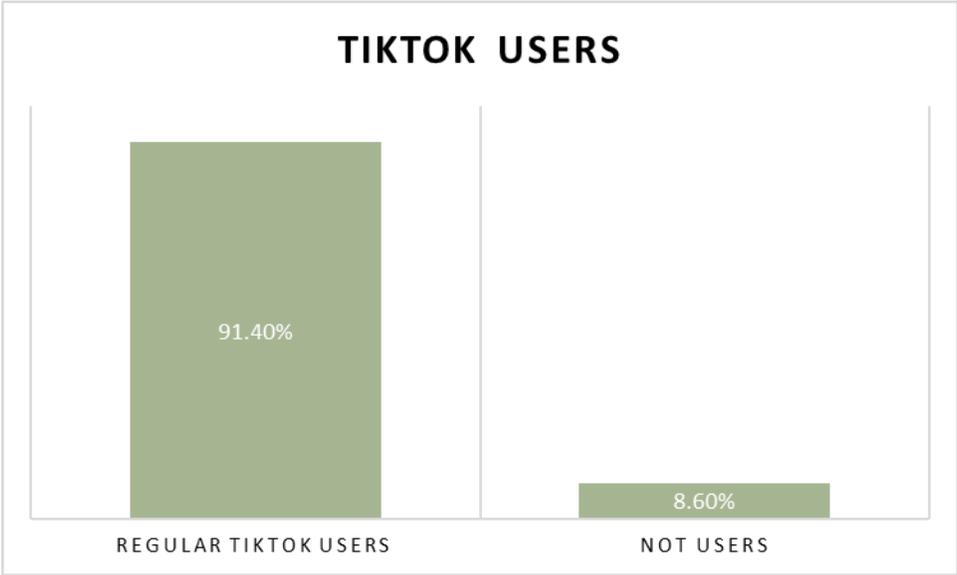
In the study participated 150 adolescent students from age 14-18, of which 42.3% belong to the age 14-15 years old and 57.7% belong to the age group of 16-18 years old.



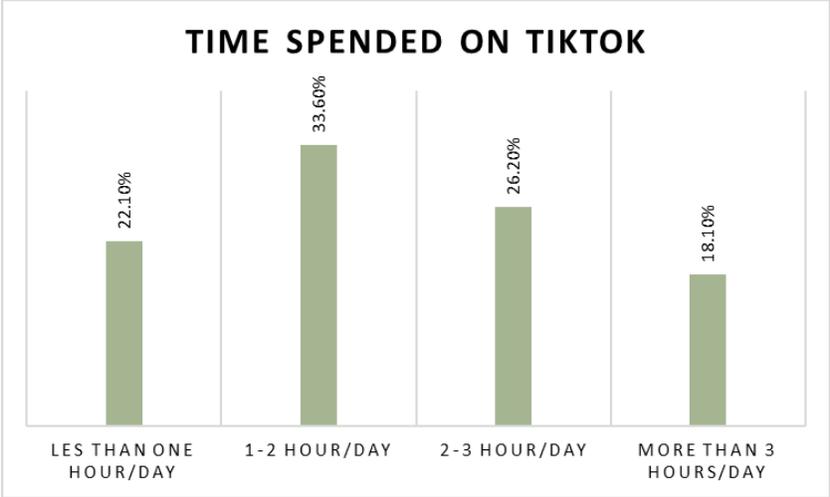
Separated by gender, we have a participation of 63.1% female adolescents and 36.9% male adolescents. Given that changes in technology usage and social media behaviors are rapid, the use of TikTok by male and female adolescents may be similar or different in various ways.



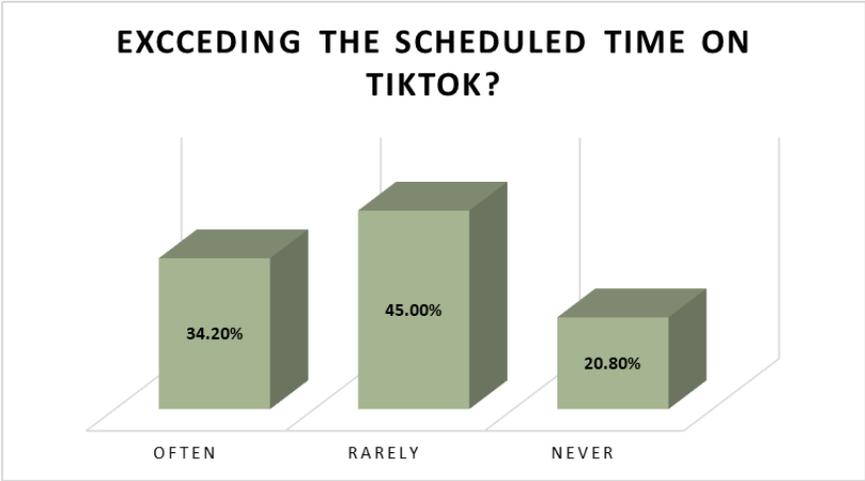
We have 8.7% teens who have confirmed that they are not users of this platform, despite owning a smartphone. Meanwhile, 91.3% of them, are regular TikTok users



In response to the question of how many hours a day they spend on TikTok, 33.6% answered that they spend 1-2 hours, 26% spend 2-3 hours, 22.1% spend less than an hour, and the number of students spending more than three hours, is 18.1%. Just with this data, if we talk about the gender variable, those who spend more than three hours on TikTok, the data shows that both genders, female and male teens, spend more than three hours on the TikTok platform.

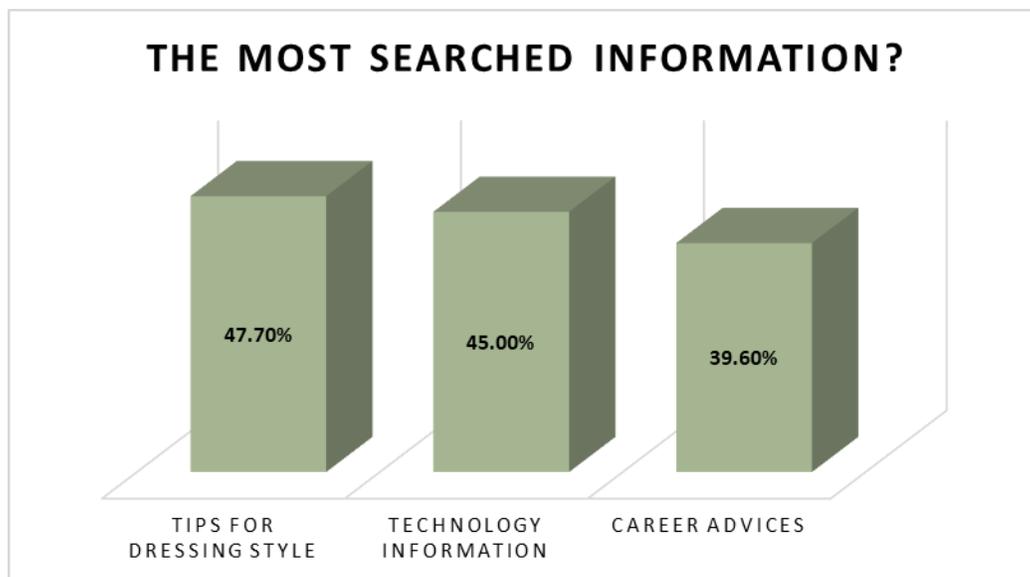


An important aspect emerging from our study is the time spent more than necessary on TikTok. As a well-known video-sharing platform that has gained significant popularity among this age group, it has been observed that some adolescents spend excessive time on TikTok, beyond the recommended limits. In fact, this data, from their responses, indicates that spending more time than initially planned surpasses nearly one-third of the interviewees. There are 34.2% who can be considered to have developed unavoidable dependency on TikTok usage. Meanwhile, 45% state that it rarely happens for them to exceed the planned time, and only 20.8% of them know how to manage or maintain the time limit on TikTok.

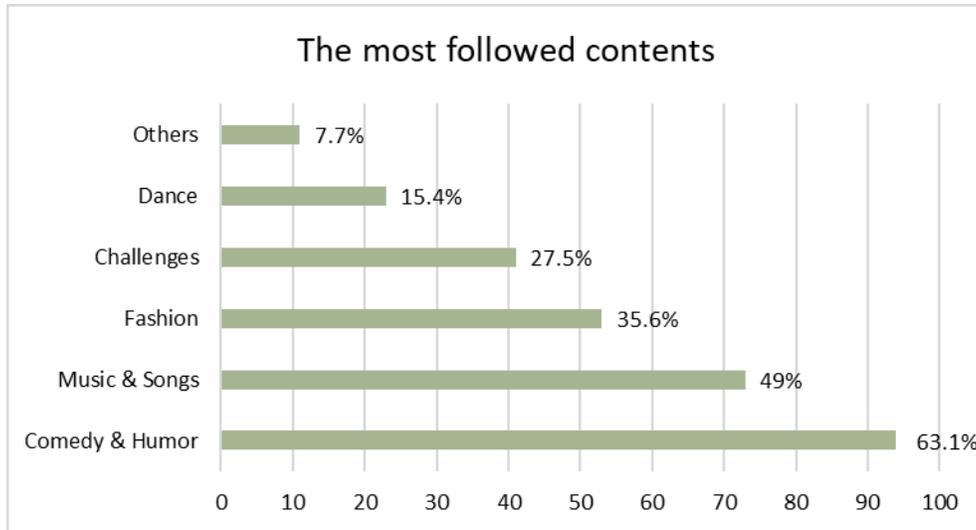


There are 47.7% who are regular followers of videos featuring new clothing and different styles. As fashion is a prominent trend on TikTok, along with dancing, this platform is capable of attracting users from around the world and engaging them in limitless interactive communication. Therefore, it serves as an information source for adolescents who refer to current fashion trends. (Guo, 2021)

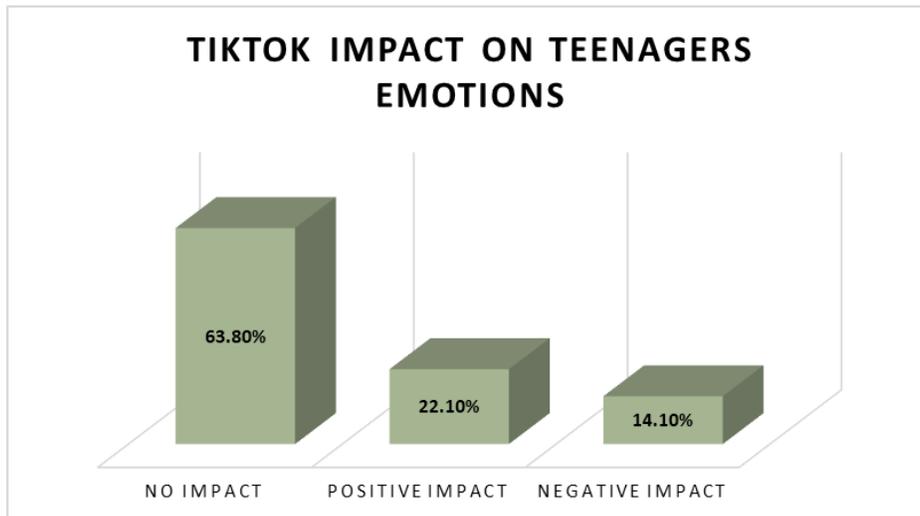
However, technology also claims a significant share of followers as the second-ranked sought-after information on TikTok. 45% have expressed that the most important information they seek from the TikTok application is related to technology. Meanwhile, 39.6% seek advice on career and education.



63.1% prefer "humor and comedy" content, 49% lean towards "songs and music," 35.6% are into "current trends" like fashion, etc. For "challenges and games" content, we have 27.5%, and for "dances or artistic performances," it's 15.4%. A small number of respondents expressed preferences for other content such as paintings, football, motivational videos, etc., with each of these categories constituting 7.7% of the respondents.



The videos that adolescents watch on TikTok contain content that expresses experiences, issues, or emotions similar to what they themselves go through, creating a sense of emotional connection and positively influencing their emotions. Not only watching videos but also the comments from followers leave an emotional impact on adolescents. When asked about the impact of using TikTok on their emotions, 63.8% stated that they haven't experienced any noticeable impact, 22.1% expressed a positive influence, and 14.1% mentioned a negative impact from excessive use of TikTok in their real lives.

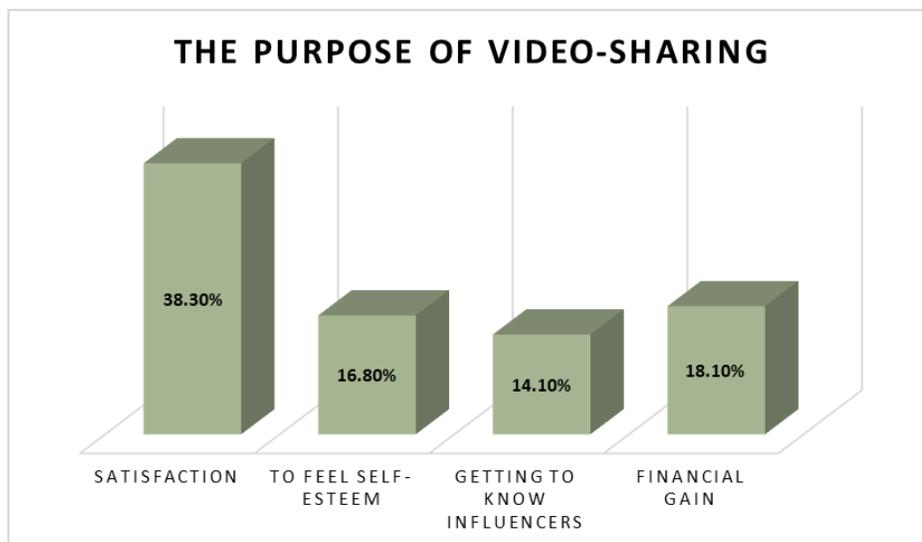


Is this phenomenon equally widespread among Albanian teenagers? In our survey, only 22% of adolescents chose the alternative "always." 28 % responded "sometimes." The highest number of

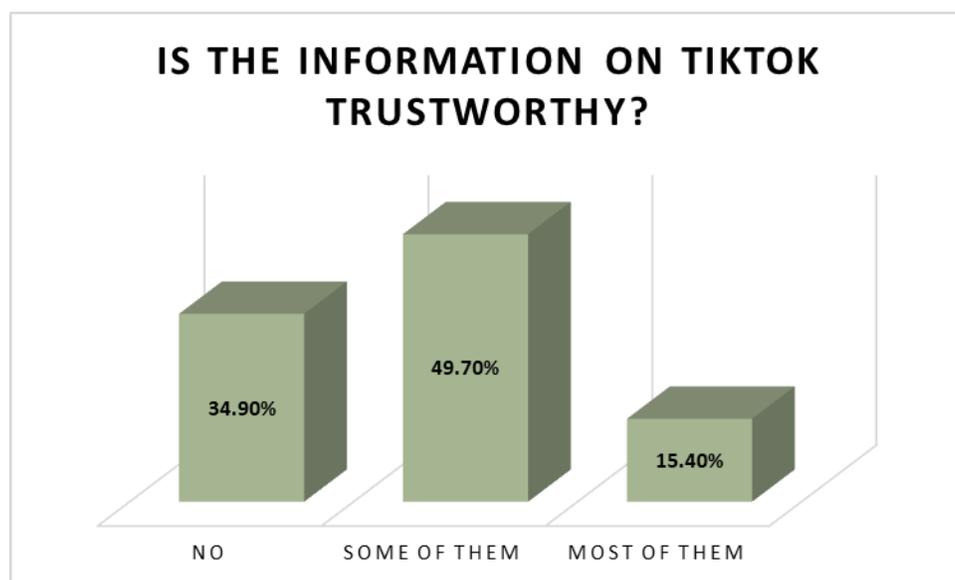
respondents, 49%, have never managed to discover any talent through video performances on TikTok.



The main factor in video sharing is simply for enjoyment, fulfillment and being part of the platform, 38.3%, while 9.4% are teenagers who follow and like video sharing from other influencers. 20.1% see the sharing opportunity as a financial gain factor. Only 16.8% of them share videos to feel appreciated.



How do teenagers discern whether a video posted on TikTok contains accurate and verified information? Especially on a platform like TikTok, which is popular among young people, it is crucial to establish and create more accurate content moderation systems. This is because a significant number of videos communicate dangerous or inaccurate information without including a warning label. The percentage of entertaining videos that disseminate false information or harmful content underscores the importance of educating teenage users. (Ling, Gummadi, & Zannettou, 2023) Nevertheless, their trust, according to our survey, is divided into: 49.7% believe that some information is reliable, 34.9% do not believe that TikTok is a platform where reliable information can be obtained, and 15.4% of respondents think that TikTok has the majority of reliable information.



CONCLUSION

According to the results of our survey with 10 basic questions, we come to understand that we have a mismatch between the time spent on the TikTok platform and the positive impact that the teenager has from its use. If the time spent on TikTok reaches more than 2 hours a day and almost 50% of teenagers do not trust 100% of the information or videos they watch on this platform, then we are dealing with addiction and not necessity of using this media. If many teenagers in other countries are creators of various contents and have many followers, in Albania this trend is not yet widespread. Although their presence is noticeable on TikTok, we can say that their

influence depends on the content they follow. In our case, the results show that the most watched contents are those of humor and comedies, and this may lead to a limited perception of negative influence among teenagers. As a result of this data, we can say that TikTok, in this case, plays the role of a small TV that the teenager chooses the content he wants to follow the most. Therefore, the sharing of these comic videos, which is defined as "*reason for the purpose of entertainment*" in our study, is done as a result of extending this pleasure with others.

The cultural and social environment in Albania is also strongly related to the culture of content that is followed on TikTok, compared to other cultural contexts. The most searches that teenagers make on TikTok, 63% of them are about information related to clothing and fashion tips, and very little about information related to studies or sports. The dominant factor above all is satisfaction.

Being more consumers than creators of content means that adolescents are not significantly influenced in their relationships with followers on TikTok. Considering age limits and the lack of new technological devices, at least those who exploit the platform do so for financial gain.

Finally, we conclude that this topic needs further research that could bring more effective results. The findings obtained so far would serve to better understand the adaptation of adolescent behavior to the use of the TikTok application in Albania.

REFERENCES

1. Cross, M. (2013). *Social media security: Leveraging social networking while mitigating risk*. Newnes.
2. Insights on TikTok users in Albania, 2023) <https://www.start.io/audience/tiktok-users-in-albania>
3. Barnham, C. (2015). Quantitative and qualitative research: Perceptual foundations. *International Journal of Market Research*, 57(6), 837-854.
4. Syah, R. J., Nurjanah, S., & Mayu, V. P. A. (2020). Tikio (TikTok app educational video) based on the character education of newton's laws concepts preferred to learning for generation Z. *Pancaran Pendidikan*, 9(4). <https://doi.org/10.25037/pancaran.v9i4.325>

5. Tanta, I., Mihovilović, M., & Sablić, Z. (2014). Uses and gratification theory—why adolescents use Facebook?. *Medijska istraživanja: znanstveno-stručni časopis za novinarstvo i medije*, 20(2), 85-111. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/133809>
6. Courtois, C. A., & Ford, J. D. (Eds.). (2009). *Treating complex traumatic stress disorders: An evidence-based guide* (p. 82). New York: Guilford Press.
7. Collins, W. A., & Laursen, B. (2004). Parent-adolescent relationships and influences. *Handbook of adolescent psychology*, 331-361.
8. Bossen, C., & Kottasz, R. (2020). Uses and gratifications sought by pre-adolescent and adolescent TikTok consumers. *Young Consumers*, 21(4), ISSN (print) 1747-3616. <https://doi.org/10.1108/YC-07-2020-1186>
9. Yang, Y. (2023). Reasons for Teenagers' Habitual Use of Social Media: A Case Study of TikTok. In *SHS Web of Conferences* (Vol. 155, p. 02006). EDP Sciences. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202315502006>
10. Savira, R., Rifai, M., & Wahyuningsih, W. (2022). Correlation between TikTok use and teenagers' self esteem. *Indonesian Journal of Learning Studies (IJLS)*, 2(1), 19-24. ISSN: 2775-5231.
11. Dias, P., & Duarte, A. (2022). TikTok practices among teenagers in Portugal: a uses & gratifications approach. *Journalism and Media*, 3(4), 615-632. DOI:10.3390/journalmedia3040041.
12. Guo, J. (2022, January). Research on the Influence of TikTok on Teenagers. In *2021 International Conference on Social Development and Media Communication (SDMC 2021)* (pp. 1390-1393). Atlantis Press. [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/125968665%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/125968665%20(2).pdf)
13. Ling, C., Gummadi, K. P., & Zannettou, S. (2023, June). " Learn the Facts About COVID-19": Analyzing the Use of Warning Labels on TikTok Videos. In *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media* (Vol. 17, pp. 554-565). [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/22168-Article%20Text-26231-1-2-20230602%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/22168-Article%20Text-26231-1-2-20230602%20(1).pdf)