

The Influence of TikTok Usage on Students' Dependence in Accessing Political News Information

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Abstract

TikTok is an online social media platform based on music videos, offering unique and attractive special effects. It has become one of the most popular social media platforms across all age groups. The current generation depends on this app, using TikTok as a medium or source of information, where the first source of information is often obtained through this platform. The diversity of information affects the accuracy and trustworthiness of the information circulating on this platform for the current generation. The purpose of this study is to determine whether TikTok influences the dependence of students in Malang on accessing political news information. This quantitative research uses a survey method, with data collected through questionnaires from 117 student respondents in Malang. The results show an influence between variable (X) and variable (Y), explaining that TikTok as an information medium impacts students' level of dependence by 69.5%. TikTok can help individuals meet their information needs, and the more one uses this social media, the higher their level of dependence becomes.

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Introduction

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology has made information production no longer exclusive to media institutions but accessible to all layers of society. Anyone can now create and publish information or news through social media, as evidenced by the fast-paced flow of information. The rise of social media has transformed real-world interactions into a "virtual world," where people can freely communicate and share information without the limitations of distance, time, cost, or other barriers. The diverse social media platforms available today have influenced social life and made it easier for people to access and use them. Social media is now used for communication and sharing interesting content, such as photos, videos, music, and more. Currently, video content is the most popular among users. Video content varies in genre, including unique tips, tutorials, dance videos, and more. Many apps now offer unique and engaging features for video creation.

One of the most popular video-making apps is TikTok. TikTok is an online social media platform based on music videos that offer unique special effects, allowing users to create, edit, and share short video clips with filters and music as background (Michael, 2019:39). Launched in September 2016 by Zhang Yiming, a software engineering graduate from Nankai University in China, TikTok is a platform focused on the creation, sharing, and viewing of short videos. It allows users to create videos lasting 15 to 60 seconds, with the option to upload videos up to 3 minutes long. TikTok has become one of the most downloaded non-gaming apps. Indonesia ranks second in terms of TikTok users, with 112.97 million users, following the United States with 116.49 million users. The difference between

the number of TikTok users in the U.S. and Indonesia is only 3.52 million. The largest group of TikTok users is 18-24, with 20.9% female and 17.5% male (Katadata, 2023).

TikTok is now popular among all age groups, including the young, old, and even children, who are familiar with and use the platform. As a form of entertainment following trends, TikTok is viewed positively among university students, as its content is highly addictive, keeping viewers engaged for long periods. Beyond humor and entertainment, TikTok has become a medium for sharing educational information, tips and tricks, and up-to-date news (Dizza & Dadi, 2022). As political seasons approach, TikTok has become a social media platform for disseminating information about the 2024 elections and other political news. Content ranges from election schedules, presidential candidates, election education, and the latest political news sourced from various places. TikTok has also become a campaign tool for presidential and vice-presidential candidates, with content circulating about each candidate. Information about political debates, candidate profiles, voting procedures, and more are presented engagingly to attract audiences.

In recent years, this short video-sharing platform has gained attention for its role in political discourse. Political figures, parties, and activists use TikTok to deliver messages to young voters. Creative short videos are often used to share political information, invite discussion, or criticize government policies. TikTok users worldwide actively engage in political challenges and trends. As a platform, TikTok allows news and information to spread quickly and presents content in a simple, easy-to-digest format. This is especially relevant given students' relatively low level of digital literacy. Students frequently access TikTok because it provides information they or the general public may need. As a result, students are becoming increasingly dependent on TikTok to fulfill their information needs (Yanuba & Dian, 2022).

This study builds upon previous research conducted by Yanuba Nuralinda and Dian Purworini (2022), titled "The Influence of Instagram as a News Platform on Students' Trust Level Regarding Covid-19 News," which explains how Instagram influences students' trust in Covid-19 news. The difference between their research and this study lies in the platform examined. In contrast, the previous study focused on Instagram, and this study examines students' dependence on TikTok for accessing political news information, as TikTok's features are considered effective in influencing audiences. The limitation of this study is that it focuses solely on TikTok as the social media platform influencing the dependent variable. The aim of this research is to determine whether students are dependent on TikTok to access political news.

Media Dependency Theory

According to Melvin DeFleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, the media dependency theory suggests that individuals depend on media for information to fulfill various needs. As a result, individuals' trust in media increases, and it is believed that audiences rely on media to achieve their goals. The higher the level of social anxiety, the greater the dependency on social media (Deatesaronika, 2023). Media has come to be viewed as the primary means of fulfilling people's needs. It is as if humans cannot live without the help of this media. Therefore, society accepts whatever comes from this technology in search of satisfaction. Its existence is considered a dominant social force. Neil Postman argues that technology has driven a "technopoly" culture, where society worships technology and controls all aspects of life (Deatesaronika, 2023).

Individuals develop higher levels of media dependency due to unmet needs. Thus, dependency theory can explain how individuals rely on media to obtain information. The main principle of this theory is that in contemporary culture, society increasingly relies on

mass media as a source of information (Sendjaja, 2018). In a study conducted by Alfiansha Zahra Fadia and Oki Achmad Ismail (2023) titled "The Influence of Information Exposure from the Gossip Account @Playitsaferbaby on Followers' Trust Levels," dependency theory was used to evaluate individuals' media dependency and analyze whether information from the gossip account still gained the trust of its followers. Here, media plays a role in influencing cognitive and behavioral effects on individuals who rely on it to meet their needs or goals.

This theory refers to the individual's attitude towards the information source, how society processes information to fulfill their needs, and the decision-making process based on trust in the chosen media (Yanuba & Dian, 2022). With TikTok as a social media platform enabling comprehensive communication, a phenomenon of social media dependency has emerged, particularly among tech-savvy Generation Z. Active TikTok users play a significant role in this, as TikTok meets the needs for information, news, entertainment, and more. This illustrates the dependency on TikTok due to a strong focus on fulfilling desired needs (Deatesaronika, 2023).

TikTok as a Social Media Platform

TikTok is an online social media platform based on music videos that offer unique and engaging special effects. TikTok is the second most frequently used social media platform, with 112.97 million users worldwide, following the United States, which has 116.49 million users (Katadata, 2023). This study explores TikTok as a news medium with features that help audiences obtain information to meet their needs. These features include hashtags, which allow users to search for information based on individual needs; share, a feature for distributing information to other social media platforms; follow, which enables users to stay updated on the accounts they follow; like, to express approval of certain information; comments, for users to interact or debate about particular content; and mention, a system for tagging other users. As a medium for disseminating information, TikTok has become a platform where numerous political issues related to elections appear on the "For You Page" (FYP). The widespread news on TikTok makes it essential to study its impact, especially in addressing misinformation, such as hoaxes.

Dependency

DeFleur and Rokeach identified two factors determining an individual's media dependency. First, individuals depend more on media when it simultaneously fulfills multiple needs. Second, social change and conflict can lead to changes in media consumption, such as the increased need for news access or entertainment. A study titled "The Level of Media Dependency among Students of UIN Prof. K.H. Saifudin Zuhri Purwokerto on Cyber Religion Content in Social Media" explained that students of UIN SAIZU Purwokerto showed a moderate level of dependency on social media. In this context, individuals' media dependency increases due to their need for information. In other situations, individuals' media consumption needs may decrease. The level and type of media dependency can be influenced by specific circumstances, with societal instability or conflict being the most essential factor. Mass media, particularly social media, provides information on various topics, including politics. Therefore, before processing the data, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis for the study:

H1: TikTok influences the dependency of students in Malang on accessing political news information through TikTok.

Research Method

This quantitative research utilizes a survey method. The goal is to identify the cause-and-effect relationship between using TikTok to deliver political news related to the 2024 elections, focusing on university students in Malang. Students were chosen as the sample because they represent Generation Z, who frequently consume TikTok for entertainment and information. This makes the app appealing with its video-posting and information-sharing features.

The population for this research consists of university students in Malang aged 19-21 who actively use TikTok. The study period runs from October to December 2023. The sample includes 117 university students in Malang who are active TikTok users, with 74 male and 43 female respondents. The data validity requires approximately 30-100 respondents, so the 117 responses are considered sufficient for data processing. Data was collected through questionnaires distributed via Google Forms to students in Malang, containing written questions related to the research problem.

Data is measured using a Likert scale to assess respondents' agreement or disagreement. Additionally, the researcher conducts data analysis using simple linear regression to determine the influence of one variable on another (Yanuba & Dian, 2022). This analysis will help identify the relationship between variable X (TikTok usage) and variable Y (student dependency). The independent variable is TikTok usage, while the dependent variable is students' media dependency. Based on the explanations above, the hypothesis for this research is as follows:

H0: TikTok does not influence the students in Malang's dependency on accessing political news information through TikTok.

H1: TikTok influences the dependency of students in Malang on accessing political news information through TikTok.

Research Indicators

Indicators are measurable components of a variable. The indicators used in this research are as follows:

Table 1. Indicators of TikTok App Usage (X)

Indicator	Questions
1. Attention	1. I prefer to view political information on TikTok. 2. I do not access other media besides TikTok when searching for political information. 3. TikTok provides political information that fits my needs. 4. I am only interested in political content provided on TikTok.
2. Duration	I can access TikTok for more than 2 hours a day.
3. Frequency	1. I always share the political information I get from TikTok with my friends. 2. I download political content from TikTok to review later. 3. I view political content/information on TikTok daily.
4. Comprehension	I tend to find it easier to understand political information through TikTok.

Table 2. Indicators of Student Dependency Behavior (Y)

Indicator	Questions
1. Level of Activity	1. I access the TikTok app every day. 2. I use TikTok late into the night. 3. I find it hard to sleep without accessing TikTok first. 4. I feel like something is missing if I don't access TikTok for a day.
2. Usage Priority	1. It is challenging to avoid opening TikTok, even when working on assignments or other activities. 2. I neglect sleep or other obligations to access TikTok. 3. When I am bored, I prefer accessing TikTok over doing other activities.
3. Content Verification	1. I use TikTok as an alternative or reference for finding political information. 2. I always seek to verify political information from other media through TikTok.

Research Instrument

The instrument used in this research is a questionnaire or survey, employing a Likert scale to measure respondents' attitudes, opinions, and perceptions regarding the research phenomenon. These responses will serve as a basis for constructing instrument items, which can be questions or statements. The measurement of respondent attitudes, specifically for active university students who use TikTok in the context of how TikTok influences their dependency on accessing political information, is as follows:

Table 3. Likert Scale Table.

Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	2
Agree	3
Strongly agree	4

Data Presentation

The study was conducted over three months, from October to December. A total of 117 respondents were obtained. Once the data was collected, it was analyzed using SPSS.

Classic Assumption Test

Normality Test

If the Asymptotic Significance value > 0.05 , the distribution is considered normal; if the Asymptotic Significance value < 0.05 , the distribution is not normal.

Table 4. Results of the Normality Test

Variable	<i>Asymptotic Significance (2-tailed P)</i>	Notes	Distribution
Unstandardized Residual	0,200	P > 0,05	Normal

The data distribution is normal. Therefore, further testing can proceed.

Multicollinearity Test

If the VIF value < 10 and the tolerance value > 0.1 , multicollinearity is absent.

Table 5. Results of the Multicollinearity Test

Variable	tolerance	VIF	Category
Use of TikTok Application	1.000	1.000	multicollinearity is not present.

The table shows a tolerance value of 1.000 and a VIF value of 1.000, indicating that the tolerance value is greater than 0.1 and the VIF value is less than 10. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data are non-multicollinear.

Results and Discussion

Linear Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between TikTok application use and student dependence behavior. The results of the linear regression analysis are presented below:

Table 6. Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Variable	Regression coefficient	t-count	t-table	sig	Category
Constant	6,380	7,984	2,048	0,000	significant
Use of TikTok Application	0,653				

Based on the table above, the regression coefficient values for the study are:

$$Y = a + bX$$

$$Y = 6,380 + 0,653X$$

The constant is 6.380, and the coefficient for TikTok application use is 0.653. The t-count is 7.984, which is more significant than the t-table of 2.048, which has a significance of 0.000. Since the significance value < 0.05 , H_0 is rejected, and H_1 is accepted. This indicates that TikTok can influence student dependence in Malang when accessing political news through TikTok. Therefore, there is an effect of TikTok as a medium for political news on student dependence in Malang.

Correlation Coefficient and Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

This test is conducted to determine the extent of the impact of the "TikTok application use" variable on the "student dependence behavior" variable.

Table 7. Results of Correlation Coefficient and Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

model	R	R. Square	Adjust Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0,834	0,695	0,684		2,488

The analysis yielded a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.695. This means that the influence of the TikTok application use variable (X) on student dependence behavior (Y) is 69.5%.

Based on the data analysis, the study focuses on whether TikTok influences student dependence in Malang when accessing political news. The validity test results for the independent variable "TikTok Use" and the dependent variable "Student Dependence Behavior" indicate that the items are valid because the calculated r-count is greater than the r-table of 0.361.

From the items on the independent variable, it can be concluded that TikTok is frequently used as a medium for students in Malang to access political news, with a percentage of 83.4%. TikTok is the most frequently accessed medium during political seasons, with much political information emerging on TikTok. The abundance of political news on social media makes students dependent on these media for information needs, as evidenced by a 68.4% dependency rate. This finding supports the media dependency theory, where TikTok becomes a primary tool for students to obtain political information; according to research by Yanuba Nurmawati and Dian Purworo (2022), the media dependency theory used in their study on Instagram as a news medium affects student trust levels. This supports the current study is finding that TikTok influences student dependence in Malang to access political news.

The study found that individuals consider Instagram as a valuable source of COVID-19 news during the pandemic, which aligns with the current study's findings. TikTok significantly influences student dependence in Malang for accessing political information, with a high impact on the level of dependence. The results from the respondents in Malang indicate that students rely more on TikTok for political information.

TikTok was chosen as the independent variable due to its popularity among students, especially Generation Z. The study found that many students access political information on TikTok and spend considerable time on it, supported by TikTok's features and content variety. Consequently, TikTok is concluded to be a primary medium for political information.

The dependent variable analysis shows that students frequently seek, pay attention to, and read political information on TikTok, with 52.1% using TikTok as an alternative source for political information.

The research concludes that TikTok significantly impacts student dependence. TikTok meets students' needs for political news, with students continuously viewing, searching, and verifying information through TikTok. The study's results show that TikTok is a major factor influencing student dependence, with an R^2 value of 0.695, meaning that TikTok application use explains 69.5% of the variance in student dependence behavior.

Conclusion

This study concludes that as a political information medium, TikTok significantly impacts student dependence in Malang. This means that TikTok fulfills students' needs for political information in Malang. The influence of TikTok on student dependence behavior is 69.5%.

According to dependency theory, students seek more information during political seasons to understand their social environment. If media helps individuals achieve their goals or meet their needs, their dependence on that media increases. In this case, respondents frequently use TikTok for information, thus meeting their information needs.

The limitation of this study is that it only uses one factor, TikTok, to examine its impact on the dependent variable. Future research should consider adding other factors or variables, such as Twitter, Facebook, or other social media platforms, to explore their influence on information needs.

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