Original Article

TikTok's Consumption Among Pakistani Youth: A Uses and Gratifications Theory Approach

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Abstract

Social media platforms are used more extensively than traditional media, like television, radio, and newspapers. People actively seek to gratify their social, informational, and entertainment needs through digital platforms. This study explores the TikTok consumption patterns among Pakistani university students through the lens of the Uses and Gratifications theory. TikTok is rapidly gaining popularity in Pakistan, particularly among the youth. The research investigates the motivations driving their engagement with the platform. The study employs a qualitative thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with (n=50) Kohat University students, (25 male and 25 female). The study identifies key gratifications, including entertainment, self-expression, social interaction, education, lifestyle inspiration, and emotional relief. The findings conclude that youth actively use TikTok to satisfy diverse psychological, social, and informational needs, with content consumption shaped by algorithmic personalization and short-form video design.

Keywords: youth, social media, TikTok, uses and gratifications

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Introduction

Social media has become a primary platform for communication, information sharing, and entertainment for young individuals (Shifman et al., 2025). Social media offers quick connectivity, diverse content, and opportunities for self-expression. The majority of social media users are young. According to David and Marija (2023), half of the world's population is under the age of 30. This generation has grown up in rapid change in technology and social-political transformation, especially in the global south. In January 2024, Pakistan had 71.7 million active social media users, which is 29.5 percent of the Country's total population (PromiAD, 2024). The youth population (under 30) is 64 percent. At the same time, about 29 percent are between 15 and 29 years old (Asia et al., 2024; Warraich & Ahmed, 2024).

Different platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, have long dominated the digital landscape, but in recent years, TikTok has emerged as a leading platform, particularly among younger users. This application was launched in China in 2016 by ByteDance, and in 2019, it became the most downloaded App worldwide and one of the outstanding social media platforms in annual growth (Xiaoye, 2019). Pakistan has also had the same flow in TikTok usage, especially among the youth, while increasing internet penetration and smartphone accessibility in the country.

User engagement on TikTok mainly arises from intrinsic motivations such as curiosity, entertainment, and self-expression (Jin et al., 2023). People use social media by choice; they participate in these platforms to satisfy personal interests and social needs (Tolokonnikova et al., 2020). Curiosity plays an essential role in encouraging individuals to explore viral trends, online challenges, and diverse viewpoints (Thomas & Vinuales, 2017). The visual nature of these platforms enhances engagement, as videos are easier to process than text, generating more powerful cognitive and emotional responses. Then text, eliciting stronger mental and emotional reactions (Lackmann et al., 2021).

Behind the personal motivation, TikTok has grown into a powerful tool for education, social awareness, and marketing (Sheak & Abdulrazak, 2023). The businesses utilized most of TikTok's audience to engage young users, while educators and social activists used it to share information and raise awareness about important issues. Numerous studies have pointed out the advantages and disadvantages of social media (Anderson, 2020; De Leyn et al., 2022; McCashin & Murphy, 2023; Montag et al., 2021; Zenone et al., 2021). Some scholars (Kencana et al., 2024; Merga, 2024); Slongo (2024) pointed out that there are some potential negative aspects of social media, including transmission of misinformation and false news, effects on mental wellbeing,

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cyberbullying and online abuse, privacy issues, addiction and time management challenges, and impact on social interaction skills (O'Sullivan et al., 2022).

The use of TikTok among special youth in Pakistan is rising; it uses entertainment, self-expression, and social engagement among young Pakistanis. But research on this topic remains limited. Most existing studies focus on China and Western contexts (De Leyn et al., 2022; O'Sullivan et al., 2022; Sheak & Abdulrazak, 2023). This study provides qualitative thematic analysis (semi-structured interviews with university students) and insights into TikTok's cultural significance and impact on youth engagement in Pakistan. This research explores how psychological, cultural, and social factors influence TikTok engagement, offering insights into the evolving digital behaviours of young Pakistanis. However, concerns about privacy, inappropriate content, and youth behaviour have led to regulatory scrutiny in Pakistan. Given these complexities, examining how TikTok influences students' social and academic lives is crucial. Applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), this study investigates why young Pakistanis engage with TikTok, what needs they seek to fulfil, and how their consumption patterns compare to broader media trends.

Research Questions

1. What principal uses and gratifications influence TikTok usage among Pakistani youth based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory?

2. In what ways do TikTok's features satisfy Pakistani youth's social, psychological, and entertainment needs in contrast to other social media platforms?

Research Objectives

- To explore the primary uses and gratifications behind TikTok usage among Pakistani youth through the Uses and Gratifications Theory.
- To examine how TikTok fulfils Pakistani youth's social, psychological, and entertainment needs compared to other social media platforms.

Theoretical framework

The Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory provides a valuable framework for understanding media consumption patterns, particularly in developing digital platforms like TikTok. This theory posits that media consumers are active, goal-oriented, and purposeful in their media choices (Blumler & Katz, 1974). It stresses why individuals choose specific media by looking at their media

selections (i.e., uses) and the needs these fulfil through media engagement (i.e., gratifications) (Alhabash & Ma, 2017).

In this study, U&G theory helps analyse why young Pakistani users engage with digital media platforms, what needs are fulfilled, and how TikTok's unique features enhance user satisfaction. Looking at the nature of TikTok as interactive and algorithm-driven, modern uses of U&G go beyond traditional media (Newspaper, Radio, and Television) motivations. They now offer new types of gratification enabled by advanced technologies and social interactions (Lin et al., 2017).

Traditionally, U&G theory focused on the media's role in fulfilling fundamental psychological or social needs. However, advancements in media technology have changed user behaviour and the influence of platforms like TikTok in meeting these needs (Montag et al., 2021). As the theory progressed, it addressed how newer media technologies, like TikTok, fulfil more specific gratifications, such as novelty, social interaction, and instant gratification.

TikTok's focus on short-form videos is a key factor that sets it apart from platforms like YouTube, which has traditionally supported longer content (Violot et al., 2024). It's a key source of entertainment, self-expression, and social engagement among users, especially young adults (Sheak & Abdulrazak, 2023). A significant element of TikTok's charm is the entertainment it offers users, which is recognized as a key satisfaction across various social media channels (Nath & Badra, 2021). These short-form videos enable users to effortlessly and easily consume content, meeting their needs for immediate gratification. The concise nature of TikTok's content appeals particularly to young adults looking for entertainment during other daily activities, as shorter videos are viewed as more accessible and less time-intensive (Söğüt & Öngel, 2022).

TikTok is significant in promoting social interaction and providing escapism, addressing users' desires for connection and helping maintain relationships through activities such as liking, commenting, following, and creating and sharing content (Schellewald, 2024). This trend is frequently observed on other social media platforms, including Facebook and Snapchat, and has been recognized as a common theme in U&G studies of these platforms (Bhandari & Bimo, 2020).

Content sharing on TikTok is centred on the platform's social dynamics, including presence, conversation, and connection (Ham et al., 2019). It allows the creation of relationships, friendships, and community sense (like, Singing,

artists, photographers, carpenters, and designers groups) (McLean et al., 2024).

TikTok's "Original Culture" feature allows users to express themselves freely and creatively through short videos using different designed templates (Pei et al., 2024). Other platforms, like YouTube or Instagram, often focus on longer or polished content, while TikTok encourages quick, authentic, and often natural posts (Omar & Dequan, 2020). This gives users the space to explore and show who they are (Bhandari & Bimo, 2020). These creative self-presentations not only entertain but also help users gain attention and appreciation from others (Bhandari & Bimo, 2020).

The Key point of the TikTok success is the use of artificial intelligence (AI), which gives freedom to each user to see what they want to see (Kang & Lou, 2022). The algorithms of the application track how people interact with videos and use that data to suggest more content they're likely to enjoy and keep them for long periods(Francisco & Ruhela, 2021). This shows how the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory is evolving, platforms like TikTok now offer more personalized experiences through advanced technology (Vaterlaus & Winter, 2021)

TikTok also helps users escape from daily stress. Many Users turn to the app for light, funny content, like Music, dancing, and humour, which allows them to relax and take a mental break from their routine(Abbasi et al., 2023). This escape fits with the U&G theory, which suggests people use media to cope with stress and find emotional relief. TikTok's growing popularity among young people makes sense when viewed through the lens of U&G theory. The platform offers content that entertains the user and is personally meaningful. Whether it's for Fun, connection, self-expression, or stress relief, TikTok meets different needs through a mix of smart algorithms, easy-to-use design, and engaging short videos.

TikTok's growing popularity among young people makes sense when viewed through the U&G lens. The platform offers content that's entertaining and personally meaningful, whether for entertainment, connection, self-expression, or stress relief. As the technology grows, TikTok brings a new phase to Uses and Gratification theory by showing how the AI and short-form of video content impact youth in their media consumption habits.

Significance of the Study

Currently, the social media platforms (like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok) are becoming the main source of information, education, and entertainment. This research is designed to understand how digital platforms, like TikTok, influence Pakistani Youth, Culture, Education, entertainment,

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and behaviour. Using the Uses and Gratifications approach, this study exposes why Pakistani university Students actively engage with TikTok, what they gain from it, and how it influences their daily lives. The findings are useful for academics, policymakers, and content creators by providing guidance on promoting healthy and positive use of social media. They can also support efforts to build media literacy and address the negative effects, including addiction and unhealthy comparisons.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach to explore the use of TikTok among Pakistani University students. The qualitative approach helps to understand participants' perceptions, experiences, and behaviours in detail. The research was framed using thematic analysis, which allowed for the identification of the themes and patterns within the collected data, aligning with the research objective.

The data was collected from (n=50) university students (25 male and 25 female) through a random purposive sampling technique. Students using TikTok at Kohat University of Science and Technology. The data collection took place during November and December 2024 through semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 10 to 20 minutes, and sessions were recorded with participants' consent to ensure accurate transcription and analysis.

Data Analysis

After gathering the data, we analyzed the responses using thematic analysis, a qualitative approach that identifies, analyzes, and interprets patterns (themes) within the data. We adhered to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps.

1. Familiarization: Engaging with the transcripts through multiple readings to deeply immerse ourselves in the data.

2. Generating Initial Codes: Identifying and labelling significant segments of data.

3. Searching for Themes: Organizing the codes into potential themes based on common meanings.

4. Reviewing Themes: Refining the themes to ensure they align with the research questions and removing redundancies.

5. Defining and Naming Themes: Clearly articulating the core of each theme.

6. Producing the Report: Synthesizing the findings into coherent narratives backed by participant quotes.

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During the Thematic analysis process, the key themes identified include TikTok's roles in entertainment, self-expression, social interaction, and information sharing, and its broader influence on students' social and academic behaviours.

Entertainment

TikTok's social media application has gained recognition as a popular entertainment platform (McLean et al., 2024). It also serves as a career opportunity for many young people, providing them with fame (Azmi et al., 2025). The majority of the participants agreed they use TikTok primarily for entertainment and enjoyment. Participant 9 noted, "I use TikTok for fun; users share short videos of dramas, films, and songs. As a music lover, I enjoy watching new Pashto and Indian Urdu songs for entertainment." Participant 14, a 20-year-old female, further mentioned, "I mainly watch romantic songs and music content. I follow various singers and artists on TikTok."

A standout feature of TikTok is its audio background. Musicians used to invest weeks recording in the studio. Today, technological advancements allow anyone with an Internet-connected device to record a track or music video easily (Vizcaíno-Verdú & Abidin, 2022). The platform's unique communication networks leverage this audio, including music from a broad range of genres and original sound clips: users' voices, industry songs, and lip-syncing competitions Zhang et al. (2013). Participant 32 further explained that

> TikTok's trending music, dances, and lip-sync challenges have emerged as popular ways for users to engage, showcasing the platform's focus on performative content. I uploaded my own videos featuring trending songs, then edited and finalized them on TikTok before sharing with my friends on the platform.

Feng et al. (2019) have an opinion that users often turn to TikTok to alleviate stress through entertaining and humorous content, mainly utilizing its music and audio features. It promotes emotional expression, interactivity, and user-friendly design, making it attractive for short, funny videos and shared trends (Abidin, 2021). Participants 35 and 19 have shared their thoughts on comedic relief and entertainment.

> I usually watch humorous content on TikTok because it makes me feel refreshed and happy after a hectic day. I enjoy watching comedy skits as they are entertaining and help me unwind.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory illustrates how engaging content can create immersive experiences that uplift mood and alleviate stress (Zhao & Wagner, 2022). For certain users, TikTok provides an emotional connection and release. Participant 6 noted, "I enjoy watching sad videos and poetry on TikTok because I appreciate this content." Conversely, some users seek out positive content to elevate their spirits. Participant 11 remarked, "I primarily view comedy and entertainment on TikTok for stress relief and to improve my mood."

Lifestyle and Self-Improvement

On TikTok, the consumption trends and lifestyle aspirations reflect Pierre Bourdieu's cultural capital and social hierarchy theories, implying that lifestyle content builds symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Furthermore, Zygmunt Bauman's notion of "liquid modernity" highlights how individuals frequently reshape their identities according to evolving social standards, which helps explain the popularity of lifestyle vlogs and aspirational content (Bauman, 2000). Certain users seek lifestyle enhancement and luxurious aesthetics. Participant 47 noted, "I view luxury and old money lifestyle videos on TikTok to elevate my lifestyle." Additionally, vlogs present insights into daily life and cultural traditions. Participant 23 emphasized, "I love watching lifestyle vlogs because they offer useful tips and insights into various cultures."

TikTok also serves as a source of personal inspiration. Many users seek the platform for motivational content that keeps them focused and optimistic. As participant 46 shared, *"Motivational content inspires me and gives me positive energy to tackle challenges in my life."* This kind of content promotes personal growth, resilience, and the motivation to overcome challenges, making TikTok an effective tool for self-improvement and fostering a positive mindset.

Similarly, Life events and personal interests, such as weddings or hobbies, hold cultural importance and are increasingly showcased on digital platforms like TikTok (Turner, 1969). This platform allows users to document and seek inspiration for meaningful occasions, including weddings. As Participant 19 stated, *"I primarily watch wedding decorations because my wedding is coming up, and I'm gathering ideas."* Additionally, TikTok has become a space where niche interests, like car enthusiasts, can connect with others. Participant 34 mentioned, *"I mainly watch car content because I love learning about them."* Thus, TikTok functions as a cultural hub where personal interests and key life events are expressed, celebrated, and collectively shared in a digital setting.

Education and Information

TikTok has emerged as an essential social media platform for education, information sharing, and promoting learning. Wahid and Jenuwa (2024) Research indicates that university students regard TikTok as a beneficial addition to traditional education, providing quick and accessible learning resources. In addition, Conde-Caballero et al. (2024) Studies suggest that TikTok's brief videos are well-suited to microlearning strategies, enhancing the overall educational experience and the learning experience. Users like Participant 32 shared, *"I watch informative videos on TikTok to encourage my knowledge,"* reflecting the platform's role in expanding knowledge. Educational materials like documentaries, informational videos, and news features appeal to many users. Participant 38, a Journalism student, remarked, *"I turn to TikTok for documentaries about individuals and locations, as I am eager to learn about them and find inspiration in those videos."* In contrast, Participant 4 noted, *"I appreciate educational videos because they are brief yet informative, allowing me to absorb knowledge swiftly."*

TikTok also plays a role in the political sphere. Research Ibrahim et al. (2025) TikTok's algorithm influenced the spread of partisan content during the 2024 U.S. presidential election, increasing visibility for Republican-aligned content. Participant 36, a political science student, shared, *"I watch political content, sports analysis, and cricket news to stay informed,"* highlighting TikTok's importance in informing users about current events. The studies emphasize TikTok's dual function in education and political discussions while stressing the necessity for media literacy and critical engagement with the platform's content.

Culinary content, beauty, and fashion trends

TikTok is a major platform for discovering food content, beauty, and fashion trends. The platform encourages users to share quick recipes, cooking hacks, and styling tips, positioning itself as a central hub for culinary and fashion inspiration, predominantly for female users.

Culinary exploration is a popular theme for food enthusiasts on TikTok. According to Wiklund (2022), the hashtag "# food" has reached an astonishing 268 billion views on the app, while "#recipes" and " #restaurant" have attracted 9.1 billion and 6.9 billion views, respectively. Additionally, Andrews (2021) found that 36 Percent of TikTok users in the USA have either visited or ordered from a restaurant after seeing a TikTok video related to it. Furthermore, 55 Percent of users went to a restaurant simply because the food appeared appealing in the video and the food looked appetizing. As a female participant, 27 shared, *"On TikTok, I love watching food videos as I am really*

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passionate about food. I enjoy exploring different cuisines, learning about popular dishes, and discovering unique places."

TikTok has also influenced consumer behaviour, particularly in the beauty industry. According to Alfreya Shahla and Fitri (2024) 89 Percent of TikTok users have purchased beauty products influenced by what they see on the platform, highlighting its influence on sales. Trends such as 'glass hair' and vibrant lashes have garnered millions of views on TikTok, highlighting the app's impact on beauty standards.

The #lashlift and #lashtint are big and growing lash trends of 2024, with 89 million and 116.7 million views on TikTok, respectively, shaping global beauty trends. TikTok serves as a hub for beauty-related content, such as makeup tutorials, beauty products, and live product unboxing. The young female users, like Participant 45, added, *"I am really interested in looking beautiful. I usually enjoy watching makeup videos and shopping from different online websites because the international products are unavailable in my hometown. Watching those videos is enjoyable and helps me discover new products".* With its interactive and captivating video content, TikTok strongly influences beauty trends and buying habits, making it an important platform for beauty lovers.

Discussion

This study was designed to find out why Pakistani University students use TikTok and what their basic motivations are. It utilized the Uses and Gratifications theory as its theoretical framework, which shows that the theory is still important for understanding how users, especially young users, use digital platforms to fulfil different personal and social needs. The study involved a qualitative thematic analysis of (n=50) Pakistani university students (Kohat University of Science and Technology), split evenly between male and female participants. The study identified key motivations for using TikTok, including entertainment, social connection, self-expression, learning new things, educational content, and inspiration for lifestyle and fashion.

Entertainment is a key motivation for using social media, especially on TikTok (Masciantonio et al., 2020; Bossen & Kottasz, 2021; Meng & Leung, 2021). Pakistani university students have noted that humour, music, lip-syncing, and emotional content are the primary reasons for their engagement on TikTok. They also mentioned that they enjoy Pashto, Urdu, Hindi, and romantic music. The findings suggest that the easy and quick creation of self-videos satisfies young people's desire for instant entertainment and emotional relief, particularly following long academic days. This serves as a means of relaxation and enjoyable release for emotional stress.

Interestingly, Self-expression and the exploration of identity are central themes for youth deriving gratification from TikTok, facilitating cultural exchange, personal development, and global connectivity. As TikTok grows, it will consistently play a vital role in shaping individual identities and broader societal norms. Many users leverage TikTok to display their creativity through various means, including fashion, women's makeup tutorials, cultural vlogs, dance performances, wedding content, and automotive videos. The findings of Omar and Dequan (2020); Shabbir et al. (2023) also support the idea that short video platforms enhance self-presentation and social interaction. They also affect consumer behaviour, especially in the beauty, fashion, and culinary industries. Their capacity to boost trends and sway purchasing decisions is notable.

This study also highlighted that students interact with their friends and family on social media by liking, sharing, and commenting on each other's content, fostering a sense of connection and engagement in digital communities. It further supports the McLean et al. (2024) research, which has claimed that TikTok is a platform for digital social bonding and emotional exchange.

The social interactions are not limited to always being directed at friends or familiar groups; they remain vital through likes, comments, duets, and interactive trends like challenges, strengthening the connection and involvement in these online communities. The significance of community on TikTok is underscored, even though interactions are primarily influenced by algorithmic content discovery instead of close personal networks. Although

Educational content on TikTok, such as informative short videos, documentaries, news segments, and motivational material, is popular among Pakistani students for quick and easy learning (micro-learning). Research by Conde-Caballero et al. (2024) and Wahid and Jenuwa (2024) also shared the concept of microlearning, particularly through TikTok. They highlight TikTok's role in enhancing students' general knowledge and its effectiveness as a microlearning platform, especially for tech-savvy students who are pressed for time.

TikTok is now introducing a special educational *STEM* feed to highlight content related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This new feature adds an additional layer of moderation, guaranteeing that shared videos remain accurate and relevant. It showcases TikTok's expanding influence in microlearning, with students leveraging short videos for efficient and straightforward learning. This trend is particularly noticeable in countries like Pakistan, where educational content, including short clips, mini-documentaries, news updates, and motivational videos, is gaining popularity. The research Conde-Caballero et al. (2024); Wahid and Jenuwa (2024) also

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supports the idea of microlearning through TikTok, noting how the platform blends entertainment with education in creative ways. For students who have limited time or access to traditional learning resources, TikTok offers an engaging and flexible alternative. The launch of a dedicated STEM feed shows that TikTok is not just a place for fun anymore; it's becoming a serious platform for focused, meaningful learning.

TikTok is also used for lifestyle and inspiration-focused content, including wedding videos, luxury living, and cars. It influences youth aspirations and mirrors contemporary digital life's symbolic dynamics. Additionally, although escapism is not the primary motivator, some users still noted it. They mentioned turning to TikTok for emotional release, such as viewing sad poetry, nostalgic clips, or calming content to escape real-life stressors.

Conclusion

This study determines that TikTok is not merely a platform for pleasure; it is a complex, culturally rooted digital space where young Pakistani users find entertainment, education, links with community, and social identity. The findings support the U&G theory of the core assumption that media users are active, goal-oriented, and gratify their specific needs by utilizing media.

The primary motivations for using TikTok are Entertainment, self-expression, social interaction, education, and lifestyle inspiration. These findings also reveal that Pakistani youth consume and contribute to digital culture uniquely, locally, and meaningfully, offering perspectives often overlooked in Western-centric social media research. Furthermore, the Platform's algorithmic personalization and short-form content design particularly appeal to Gen Z and university students. Social media is central to youth life, and TikTok will likely continue shaping their digital, social, and emotional landscapes.

This study pointed out the need to balance digital engagement and promote the constructive use of platforms like TikTok for educational and productive activities while being aware of their possible downsides. By acknowledging the platform's distinct impact and grasping its gratifications- such as self-expression, entertainment, microlearning, and community engagement-educators, families, and policymakers can collaborate to cultivate a digitally savvy, critically aware, and creatively empowered generation. In Pakistan, TikTok represents the vibrant digital spirit of youth: expressive, curious, adaptable, and inherently social. Understanding its effects on the lives of young people is vital for grasping modern identity formation, cultural negotiation, and youth psychology in a globally interconnected, algorithm-driven media landscape.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study hold significant implications for educators, policymakers, parents, content creators, and social media platforms. Given that many young people turn to TikTok for short educational and motivational videos, educational institutions and teachers might consider adopting TikTok-inspired formats or micro-content to engage students better. Moreover, the stress relief and emotional connection reported by participants indicate that TikTok could serve as a resource for youth well-being, provided appropriate guidance. Implementing content moderation and digital literacy initiatives is essential to foster positive, informative, and non-toxic content. Additionally, TikTok mirrors and amplifies cultural values, acting as a platform for expressing both traditions and modern aspirations. Pakistani youth play a significant role in creating and consuming cultural content, promoting opportunities for cultural preservation and contemporary storytelling. Awareness initiatives on TikTok should aim to educate young users about the risks associated with excessive use, social comparison, and addictive behaviors, while encouraging critical thinking regarding media consumption. Businesses and influencers must acknowledge the Pakistani youth's psychological and cultural sensitivities, as authentic, value-centered content will likely resonate more deeply than overt commercialization.

Theoretical Implications: Uses and Gratifications Theory

This research highlights TikTok's significance in addressing the diverse needs of young users through the framework of Uses and Gratifications (U&G) Theory. The theory posits that media consumers actively engage with content to satisfy specific desires (Blumler & Katz, 1974). For the youth in Pakistan, TikTok fulfills their needs for entertainment, social interaction, self-expression, and education.

The platform's algorithm-driven content delivers instant gratification, offering tailored, swift entertainment that particularly appeals to younger audiences, as noted by Violot et al. (2024). Its interactive features enhance social interactions, cultivating a sense of community, which aligns with U&G's emphasis on social needs (Schellewald, 2024). Moreover, TikTok supports self-expression through creative content, enabling users to seek social validation, a point discussed by Sheldon & Bryant (2016). The educational aspect of TikTok further illustrates U&G's focus on meeting informational needs. TikTok likewise affects consumer behavior, with trends spreading quickly and influencing buying decisions. This study highlights TikTok's extensive global impact, especially among young people, emphasizing its cultural importance in Pakistan and worldwide.

In summary, TikTok's effectiveness can be interpreted through the lens of U&G theory, as it caters to multiple user needs, from entertainment and social connections to self-expression and educational resources. This research advances our understanding of how platforms like TikTok shape digital habits and influence youth culture.

Limitations of the study

This study offers valuable insights but has limitations: It focused on 50 university students chosen through random sampling. While the participants had diverse academic backgrounds, the results might not reflect the experiences of all Pakistani youth, especially those in rural areas or outside the university setting. Additionally, the semi-structured interviews depend on participants' memories and self-awareness, which could lead to biases such as selective memory or social desirability. Furthermore, unlike some global studies, this research did not examine participation in TikTok challenges, which may mean that related motivations or behaviours (such as peer pressure and virality) were overlooked.

Future research

The long-term psychological impact of TikTok consumption on youth, gender-specific or regional differences in usage patterns, the role of TikTok in shaping political views or consumer behaviour, the impact of influencer culture on youth identity formation, and comparative studies between TikTok and newer platforms like YouTube Shorts or Instagram Reels.

Conclusion

The study concludes that TikTok is a multifaceted platform that meets the diverse needs of Pakistani youth, offering entertainment, self-expression, social interaction, and cultural representation. However, concerns about viral challenges, privacy, and mental health implications highlight the need for further research. Future studies could focus on the long-term psychological effects of TikTok usage, particularly with peer influence, self-image, and academic performance. Additionally, research into regulations and responsible platform use is necessary to ensure that TikTok contributes positively to youth development.

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