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FINAL ESSAY ON NEW TRENDS IN MEDIA

Professor:
Christopher Tunstil Meir

Bachellor in Film Television and Media Studies

Laura Bravo Hernández

Smartphones have a huge presence in our society, emerging as a key tool in the socialization of young people. Teenagers no longer imagine their existence without a smartphone in their hands and every decade there is a very palpable increase in the use of cell phones. According to different experts from the Department of Basic Psychology at the University of Valencia, there are essential characteristics that make smartphones very appealing. Cell phones allow adolescents to have independence and autonomy, and they can also establish links with their environment, being a tool that facilitates communication, thus also allowing them to expand their social circle and maintain friendships that are far away. Phones are constantly being renewed, with the advent of applications and social networks that attract the attention of teenagers, who are eager to seek out new influences (Chóliz et al., 2009). The main motivation of youth to use social networks and cell phones is social interaction, keeping in mind the goal of feeling fulfilled through socialization, for this they make use of instant messages, comments on publications and like the content they like. Likewise, they take the step to creation, both photographic and audiovisual, to show their life while generating an archive of who they are and what they do with their time in the social network. (Chóliz et al., 2009).

As a result, Tiktok becomes a place where young people express themselves and at the same time consume other people's content for inspiration, agreeing to expose themselves in exchange for observing, this is exhibitionism and voyeurism, whereby young people feel satisfaction in gaining access to other people's privacy (Omar & Dequan, 2020). "TikTok, users exhibit their lives or talents to others in the network who are expected to obtain personal, social and fantastical voyeuristic gratifications from its usage" (Omar & Dequan, 2020, p.125) so it becomes more evident that the easiness of access a fast and free satisfaction. This is the escapism caused by social networks, which in many cases can be positive. Still, quick and instant gratification can also produce negative results: addiction, loss of concentration, mental imbalance...

In the following research, I will delve into the effect that TikTok has on the relationship of young people with detachment from reality and their immersion in their own microworld, studying the complexity of growing up in an overstimulus society and its connection with social relationships, self-perception and self-esteem.

Dealing also with the growing addiction in youth through ever shorter doses of information.

The Covid pandemic and its quarantine brought us closer to cell phones, to content creation and to discovering new media. As a result, all social networks experienced the impact of the pandemic, but Tiktok in particular felt it even more. As explained in El País's report in 2020, this platform has grown exponentially due to the coronavirus crisis (Mendiola Zuriarrain, 2020).

Nevertheless, its success has not only to do with the sudden free time that young people had in the pandemic, Tiktok continues to have a great weight in the lives of many teenagers. It is relevant to mention the fact that there are three ways of interacting on Tiktok, according to the personality and needs of each user: Consuming, watching the performance and imitation videos, watching lifestyle-type videos, watching funny videos...; Participating, through comments and likes on the content or sharing the content with other people; and Producing, doing lip-syncing videos and producing TikTok's using its tools (Omar & Dequan, 2020). Research has found that the way users interact with the platform speaks volumes about what they actually need. In the case of those who only consumed content, they used the platform in an escapist way, wanting social interaction or to achieve personal objectives; those who participated aimed to express themselves, interact with people and get out of the pressure of everyday life; and in the case of those who produced content, they sought to achieve their goals of self-expression (Omar & Dequan, 2020).

Part of its success stems from its excellent algorithm, which makes it easy for consumers to acquire the content they want to consume. As the newspaper *20 minutos* explains, the algorithm's calculations are based on a combination of 'likes,' comments, how long a video is playing and whether it was ever viewed (Higuera, 2021). TikTok's ultimate purpose is to keep users using the app for longer, "TikTok focuses on hours spent and retaining individuals to keep them for as long as possible within the platform" (Higuera, 2021, para. 6, My translation). They aim to control the behavior of the platform users, but also of the creators, showing that they can earn a lot of money if they participate in the creation of videos on this platform, thus providing Tiktok with quality and entertaining videos. (Higuera, 2021)

For Tiktok, transparency in its algorithm is essential, so they continue to try to inform their users of the operation of the For you feed. Even so, to this day it is still very cumbersome, not very fast and intuitive information, which prevents effective communication with the user (Wang, 2022).

In short, keeping aside the deficient communication of its functioning with the user, the TikTok algorithm stands out in its work of predicting consumer tastes, generating a high consumption by its users. (Higuera, 2021) This rate of consumption and such quick but satisfactory doses of communication can generate addiction in teenagers.

Indeed, Digital addiction or Digital dementia is closely related to the constant improvement of this algorithm. The addiction to this social network is becoming more and more palpable in young people, determining their lives, their social relationships and their way of perceiving the world. The Tik Tok algorithm suddenly becomes a danger for teenagers and children, unless they consume it in a balanced way, they can spend an excessive amount of hours on the platform. (Maguire & Pellosmaa, 2022).

There are multiple consequences that this application can have on the mental health of adolescents, from stress to anxiety or even depression. The relationship between the time of use of this platform and the level of presence of these mental disorders is striking. Specifically, the so-called FOMO, "fear of missing out", is a type of social anxiety widespread in the audience that uses TikTok. Many teenagers addicted to TikTok believe that if they detach from their cell phones they will miss out on something significant and will lack certain rewarding experiences with the rest of their friends and peers (Dossey, 2014).

The emergence of smartphones has led to a radical growth in the presence of minors on the Internet, since the advent of the Internet, children and teenagers have made a niche in the networks, and nowadays that number continues increasing, as well as the number of hours invested by each of these users (Maguire & Pellosmaa, 2022). Through Tiktok, teenagers found a niche for entertainment and expression, the main premise of the platform, which is the creation of videos of up to 15 seconds, attracted the attention of the youngest audience from the very first moment. As a result, it has become a community in which they can exchange content and generate it themselves in a free and intuitive way. TikTok boosts the growth rate of the accounts, which achieves a significant impact, making TikTok a great source of

income for content creators. In addition, these content creators sometimes receive offers from brands to advertise their products, thus being a good advertising niche, through which companies get more sales, while *tiktokers* get more money thanks to collaborations and the fans of the creator get to know a new brand that their idol is recommending, thus being a great niche market.

Tiktok is not only a platform that appeals to teenagers and children, but it is also becoming increasingly popular among university students, as Husin, Khairi and Mohamad Nazeri (2021) explained in *E-Proceeding for Asian Conference on Business, Economics and Social Science (ACBESS*), university students are also willing to participate in the TikTok community, as it is also a tool for expressing themselves, being able to say things that they probably wouldn't say directly to anyone's face, to collect useful information that could help them in the future, as well as allowing them to disseminate the messages they want to while still gaining followers. TikTok has become a social network in which being a successful *tiktoker* gives you a certain reputation, showing numbers of followers or likes makes your friends perceive you in a different way. Therefore, fame is one of the goals of many of the university students who use the platform, the more followers you have, the greater the possibility of good comments you will acquire. The search for fame, recognition and reaffirmation by the people in the TikTok community, leads the user to a dependence on the platform and therefore on the cell phone, needing constant support and being afraid of the impact on their own reputation if they stop engaging with the platform for a few days.

All in all, this application acclaimed by all youth, which promises happiness, understanding and the creation of a community, if used excessively is very much connected to the feeling of loneliness, life dissatisfaction, and tendency to depression besides favoring the comparison with other people, thus generating lack of self-esteem among its users (Husin et al., 2021).

Even so, the reality is that there is a greater presence of the younger generations on the Internet, compared to an adult audience. But it is noteworthy that there is also a difference in the presence on social networks between men and women, as women are the ones who use the networks and therefore Tiktok more (del Rio, 2021). In the first stage of adolescence, we already find a differentiation in the definition of

friendship relationships and intimacy, which will determine the way they interact with people of the same gender, the opposite gender and with the world.

As a result of this social shaping that they do from the beginning of adolescence, we can find radical sexual differences in their interaction with cell phones. For girls it is a tool for emotional communication and confidence, understanding the cell phone as an instrument of pre-socialization and also as a tool that allowed them to maintain their friendships (Ling & Yttri, 2002), facilitating contact with people and being, in their opinion, essential to have a smartphone nowadays. Therefore, the girls used the cell phone as a form of interpersonal communication and as a means of managing anxiety or moments of loneliness, boredom or sadness (Chóliz et al., 2009).

In contrast, boys understood friendships more as a source of fun for sharing activities, rather than for emotional connection and trust as in the case of girls, they were more interested in cell phone functions such as games (Chóliz et al., 2009). Thus, boys used technological tools related to leisure or entertainment more than girls. Girls, in the case of feeling interest in technology, resorted to photo and video tools, a fact that makes sense because of their strong connection with social networks and interpersonal communication.

Therefore, in general, girls have a more favorable attitude towards smartphones, while at the same time they are the ones who are more dependent on them, being more affected when they do not receive calls or messages. Despite this, Tiktok is a platform that arouses the interest of young people of both genders. The addiction to this platform has been rampant, generating concern among parents, users and even the creators of TikTok. Because of this, the platform is developing new initiatives to curb this uncontrolled increase in addiction to the application among young people. It is curious how Tiktok itself is aware of its impact on the lives of teenagers and the power of its own algorithm. As Clara Rebollo points out in the El País article "TikTok encourages teenagers to avoid excessive use of its app", the Tiktok team, far from modifying the algorithm, has developed reminders with the goal of getting users to better manage the time they spend within the app (Rebollo, 2022).

Still, TikTok's specialized algorithm is not inherently a bad thing, the problem is misinformation among users (Wang, 2022). A different relationship with the user and

more transparent communication regarding the operation of the app could allow for a much healthier interaction with the platform. It is, therefore, possible that Tiktok's next moves, given the increasingly negative impact of the application on the young population, will be aimed at boosting this communication, not only by warning about the time of use but also by explaining how the platform works in a quick and intuitive way, thus allowing to understand the distribution strategies of the videos and the mechanisms of the algorithm.

In conclusion, we can say that Tiktok has carved a niche in the lives of teenagers, and although it can bring benefits such as entertainment, facilitation in communication, impulses in artistic creation and even new knowledge, it can also become negative due to the growing addiction they are developing towards the platform. As explained, TikTok continues to cause mental problems at a decisive moment in the personal development of adolescents, determining the way they relate to their environment, their self-perception and their relationship with their individuality and their time. Through this essay, the aim was to demonstrate the complexity of growing up in a society marked by overstimulation in which your own peers and friends urge you to be constantly present on social networks, in order not to be left behind.

This pattern that marks the social relationships among the youth today, makes it difficult to achieve that healthy and coherent relationship expected. Young people today must be present in Tiktok for good social integration, and once they are already participants in the application, it is very likely that they become addicted to it, due to its excellent algorithm, which generates immediate satisfaction in its audience.

Even so, it is clear that TikTok is aware of the presence and impacts the app has among the youth, and we can predict that, with the goal of warning its users of the negative impact the platform can have on their lives, they will start new initiatives to warn of the dangers or even prevent the excessive and unhealthy use of the app.

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