

The Level of Acceptance Towards Tiktok Changing the Beauty Standard in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms especially TikTok is well known and is one of the main platforms that have huge number of users across the world. It has become a habit or essential to the the users to at least spend a couple hours using TikTok daily. This study is done in order to find the level of acceptance towards TikTok changing the beauty standard in Malaysia. TikTok are chosen because of the amount of the users are big and often time being related to beauty standard issues in Malaysia. Technology has the potential to lead us to feel self-conscious, but it also provides an alluring and partially satisfactory alternative, with editing apps allowing users to quickly and easily remove flaws and imperfections. This study used cultivation theory as foundations theories for model development. The minimum sample size was determined through Raosoft Sample Size Calculator software. The study employs a quantitative approach via the Google Form platform, with 392 respondents from various backgrounds partaking. The findings indicate that most respondents are aware that TikTok is altering the standards of beauty (M=3.00), and with the information provided, the majority of respondents are also in agreement with how TikTok affects their own sense of self-esteem (M=2.63).

Keywords: TikTok, Beauty Standard, Acceptance

INTRODUCTION

The increased use of social media today can have a variety of repercussions on one's body image and the subsequent growth of beauty standards in society, according to Osbourne, 2021. Social media is used to facilitate contact and interactions between people in the same country or throughout the world, though, thanks to contemporary technologies like smartphones, digital gadgets, and more. Sadly, social media is influencing how we perceive beauty in this day and age. According to Henriques and Patnaik, 2020, It is evident that there is a connection between how individuals view their own bodies and how they compare themselves given the advent of social media, particularly TikTok, where there is a lot of constant exposure to photographs and videos that are being shared online. This chapter mainly focuses on how social media affects perceptions of beauty.

Social media is any digital tool that enables people to produce and distribute content to the public quickly. Numerous websites and apps are part of social media. Social media can take many different forms, including blogs, microblogs, wikis, social networking sites, photo and video sharing websites, instant messaging, podcasts, widgets, virtual reality, and more. Anybody with access to the internet can create a social media profile. They are free to post whatever they want on that profile, and everyone who visits their page or account can see what they share. Instantaneous posting of images, opinions, and happenings has altered how people live and conduct business. Globally, there are more than 3.8 billion users of social media, according to Statista (2021). The world of social media is always expanding and changing, with new applications like TikTok and Clubhouse entering the ranks of well-established social networks like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram.

Due to the huge number of social media users, the platform provides users with a variety of social media types and features. For individuals, social media is used to keep in touch with friends and extended family. Some people use different social media platforms to network for jobs, locate people around the world who share their interests, and exchange ideas, feelings, insights, and emotions. Members of this social network participate in these activities. Thus, social media is an essential tool for businesses. Businesses utilise the platform to locate and interact with customers, promote, and advertise products, track consumer trends, and provide customer care or support. There are countless ways for businesses to promote to their customers and target them so that they eventually make a purchase, whether each platform resonates with you personally. Social networks are here to stay because they let us connect with friends, locate information quickly, and add our unique characteristics to the online world.

TikTok is the world's seventh most popular social platform and has over 2 billion downloads globally, according to McLahlan (2022). A well-known social media platform called TikTok enables users to make, watch, and share 15-second films taken using mobile devices or webcams. The app is renowned for its highly engaging user base and addictive nature because to its tailored feeds of amusing short films set to music and sound effects. Both amateur and professional artists can cooperate on content and make split-screen duet videos even if they are in separate locations. They can also add effects like filters, background music, and stickers to their videos. Additionally, the moment a user launches the app, this brief video material starts playing. A user is immersed in a sea of enjoyable, captivating, and addictive video material as the videos begin to play one by one. People can easily spend hours watching random videos due to the sort of content's addicting nature. The format is ideal for comedy and entertainment. However, infotainment uses for it are growing. On TikTok, so-called influencers

who have a loyal following share quick pieces of guidance and advise coupled with self-promotion. Cooking, personal finance, beauty, and fashion are all common subjects for educational videos.

Having stated that, TikTok has gradually advanced to the point that it now offers boys and girls their interpretations of what is "perfect" or "beautiful," and it has begun to have an effect on self-esteem. According to research by Liu, (2021), Girls have a reputation for having troubles with their body image and what they need to look like to be more accepted by others. They begin to view others at a young age and concentrate on what they want to improve about themselves. They encounter the pictures and other postings that represent the ideal "beauty" of social media because it is a large part of their daily life. With this attitude, girls are more likely to be identified with eating disorders and other types of mental illnesses. Meanwhile, people tend to assume that girls are the majority of those who are affected when they think about how social media can lower one's self-esteem. However, the usage of social media and boys' self-esteem today can have an equally detrimental effect. Boys today see physical fitness and increased muscle mass as the desired "perfection." Boys may start using improper diets or supplements as a result in an effort to achieve the best outcomes.

Therefore, technology has the potential to make us feel insecure, but it also offers a seductive and partly satisfactory answer, and with the help of editing apps, users may quickly and easily get rid of flaws and faults. As a result, TikTok offers facial filters for augmented reality and attractiveness. But this app has created a twisted dream world for what individuals believe to be the best or most ideal way to be. The bulk of the pictures you view on social media are probably filtered or edited in some way. Basically, Users who edit images and apply filters may believe they have the power to alter their physical features in order to attract more favorable attention. This mismatch between perception and reality causes a growing disconnect between how individuals perceive themselves in real life and how they perceive their online identity, according to Henriques and Patnaik, (2020).

With that being said, cultivation theory assumes that frequent exposure to certain media can lead people to perceive the real world through the lens of their preferred media. This led to the research question of whether society is aware that TikTok changed the beauty standard in today's era. George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan, and Nancy Signorielli have developed cultivation theory, which analyzes the contributions made by television in an effort to understand the conceptions viewers have concerning social reality (Gerbner & Gross, 1973; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1984). This stems from Gerbner's position that the industrial revolution of technology creates symbolic environments that reflect the institutions the function and structure of the decision-making pressures, organizational forms, and power relations that disseminate particular messages (Gerbner,1998;1999).

This article will provide a reference for how the public should view the body image and the freedom of beauty standard on social platforms regardless of their skin colors and provide suggestions for the establishment of a healthier Internet social platform.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The usage of social media is widespread around the world. According to Chaffey (2022), 59% of the world's population uses social media. The average daily time spent using social media is 2 hours and 29 minutes. In Malaysia, TikTok had a total of 14.59 million users aged 18 and above in early 2022 (Global Digital Insights, 2022). From these figures, we can see how much

TikTok usage has been integrated into our daily life. Studies show that the usage of online social media can leave both positive and negative impacts on the mental health of younger users (Best et al., 2014).

Since the existence of TikTok and its variety of trends among the young generation, they are more conscious of their appearance. The young generation is starting to be quite particular about how they dress, how they make up, their style and their behavior (Liu, 2021). All these started when some so-called influencers posted videos that encouraged them to imitate the behavior. According to Feldman (2018), this became a problem when the trending videos with #KarmaisaBi**h, showing beautiful girls with hundreds of thousands of followers posted transition videos from being ugly and wearing ordinary clothes to them wearing makeup and styled with pretty outfits. Many emotionally fragile children and teenagers use TikTok, and they may take their "imperfections" to heart, developing a negative self-image, body dysmorphia, or poor mental health - all because of differences that cannot be changed (Benko & Benko, 2022).

With the increasing numbers of microcelebrities or social influencers on TikTok, many users are determined to try and showcase their personal life on TikTok to be one of the microcelebrities. According to Senft (2013), Microcelebrity is defined as a new style of online achievement in which people 'amplify' their popularity on the Internet through the use of technologies such as video, blogs, and social networking sites. Dare to say that most of these emerging teen influencers are mostly famous for being just pretty and stylish. These people are not even famous for being extraordinary for something beneficial. They also have the same pattern of physical traits and styles such as big eyes, slim bodies, fair and clear skin, and Korean-like clothing style. Since Korean culture waves are quite famous and accepted in Malaysia, the young generation has adopted the Korean style regardless in many aspects of life such as entertainment, food, beauty and culture (Chul Ho, 2010).

Not only that, the usage of beauty filters on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok created an illusion of our youth with the 'perfect' idea of beauty in the current beauty standards. These filters are mostly created with makeup overlay and some even change the size of the eyes, lips, and nose, and sharpen the jawlines (London, 2020). With the excessive usage of beauty filters, our young generation will keep on believing that the version of them on the screen is perfect and they will have low self-esteem without using beauty filters (Yeoh & Lee, 2022). This will also cause confusion when they don't look like how they do in the picture. Especially if they heavily edited their formal picture for official usage such as job seeking. This caused a problem because the excessively modified pictures made the employers feel like the candidates were not honest and had low self-confidence which became the reasons for being rejected (Bolza, 2016).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To identify the awareness level of TikTok changing the beauty standard
2. To identify the level of self-esteem influenced by TikTok.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research is intended to answer the questions below:

1. What is the awareness level of TikTok changing the beauty standard?
2. What is the level of self-esteem influenced by TikTok?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In conducting or coordinating the research, quantitative research is the main tool used in obstructing this study. The method consists of online survey, were given out throughout various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to the public via link specifically created to gather information. Since this study is necessary and focuses on public opinion in order to gather the findings and consequences of the topic addressed, using all of these platforms, especially the public, makes it easier for the researcher to reach and gather respondents (Ridzuan, Ridzuan and Ridzuan, 2015).

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling strategy, was used in this experiment. Non-probability sampling, a valuable sample strategy, was used in the study. According to McCombes (2021), individuals are chosen for inclusion in a non-probability sample using non-random criteria, therefore not everyone has an equal chance of doing so. The poll's participants are chosen at random from the general population and represent a wide range of occupations, including those in the public and commercial sectors, self-employment, education, full-time homemakers, retirees, and the unemployed (Ridzuan, Ridzuan and Ridzuan, 2018). According to Raosoft Sample Size Calculator, 385 respondents are required for a level of confidence of 95% in the research. However, researcher managed to get 392 respondents for this research.

RESEARCH MEASUREMENT

The demographic component of the questionnaire consists of 22 items. The research goals of the study are connected to the questionnaire. The questions contain rating scales from **1 to 4** (*strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4)*), MCQs, matrix questions, true-false questions, and true-or-false questions. Because the questions are so legitimate and credible, respondents find it easy to understand and react to them. To prevent any misconceptions during the question-and-answer period, it was also logically organized.

DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical Package of Social Science, or SPSS, version 23 software was used to analyze the data. The processes in the data analysis process include both creating the survey and uploading the data. The survey's questions are appropriate for the study's objectives, which include figuring out how popular and dependable booster immunization doses are with the general public. The questionnaire is distributed to the first 50 respondents in order to assess the research's validity. SPSS will be used to analyze and research the data. The researchers used descriptive statistics to calculate the frequency, percentage, and mean.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Section A: Demographic Profile

a) The demographic of the sample is discussed in terms of sex, age, occupation, ethnicity, region, current residing area and 3 general questions regarding the public awareness towards TikTok and beauty standard.

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by demographic (n=392)

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex:		
• Female	187	47.7
• Male	205	52.3
Age:		
• 18-22	209	53.3
• 23-27	133	33.9
• 28-32	15	3.8
• 33 and above	35	8.9
Occupation:		
• Government Sector	47	12
• Private Sector	46	11.7
• Student	275	70.2
• Unemployed	9	2.3
• Self-employed	7	1.8
• Full time housewife	1	12
• Retired	7	7
Ethnicity:		
• Malay	297	75.8
• Chinese	27	6.9
• Indian	25	6.4
• Others (Bumiputera Sabah, Bumiputera Sarawak, Orang Asli, etc)	43	11
Region:		
• Northern Region (Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak)	49	12.5
• East Coast Region (Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang)	17	4.3
• Central Region (Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya)	240	61.2
• Southern Region (Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor)	72	18.4
• Sabah & Sarawak	14	3.6
Current Residing Area:		

• Urban Area	339	86.5
• Rural Area	53	13.5

The demographic information of the 392 people that responded is presented in Table 1. According to the collected information, the vast majority of respondents who finished the surveys are male (52.3%), between the ages of 18 and 22 (53.3%), and originate from the Central Region (Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya). As a result, most respondents are urban dwellers (86.5%), while students make up 70.2% of the total.

b) Respondent's awareness towards TikTok and beauty standards

There are three questions that were asked in this section. The reason for asking these questions to the respondents is to know about their awareness regarding TikTok and beauty standards that occur in Malaysia.

Table 2: Respondent's awareness towards TikTok and beauty standards

Questions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How long do you think you spend on TikTok per day?		
• 1-2 hours	223	56.9
• 3-4 hours	106	27
• 5-6 hours	36	9.2
• 6 hours and above	27	6.9
Do you think TikTok affects beauty standards?		
• Yes	349	89
• No	43	11
Do you think the world's environment revolves around beauty standards?		
• Yes	349	89
• No	43	11

Table 2 above shows the respondent's awareness towards TikTok and beauty standards. Based on the findings, most of the respondents who answered the questionnaire stated that they spend 1-2 hours on TikTok per day (56.9%). Additionally, (89%) of respondents thought that social media platforms like TikTok have an impact on beauty standards. Finally, the vast majority of respondents (89%) believed that beauty standards are fundamental to today's world environment.

Table 3: The Awareness Level of TikTok Changing the Beauty Standard

Items	Mean
TikTok provides filters that influence the beauty standard in real life.	3.11
TikTok promotes healthy beauty tips to the younger generation nowadays.	3.09
I believe that if I meet beauty standards, people will treat me better.	3.09
TikTok promotes the idea that beautiful looks help individuals succeed.	3.09
I personally think that beauty standards differ according to one's race and culture	2.98
I tend to dress according to people's expectation, if not then I will be judged	2.63
Overall	3.00

According to Table 3, (M=3.11) is the highest mean for the level of awareness of TikTok influencing beauty standards, which implies that TikTok filters influence real-world beauty standards. It can be proven by this article from Big Newspaper (Benko & Benko, 2022) states that TikTok always promotes filters that impact beauty standards. For example, The Glow Look Filter, which gives you brilliant blue eyes, a little thinner nose, flushed cheeks, and larger lips, is intended to make you appear pretty, and this will do harm to individuals who do not correspond to those beauty standards. The second-highest mean consists of three items with identical mean scores (M=3.09). However, respondents were more in agreement with the statement that TikTok promotes healthy beauty tips for the younger generation. Croda, a personal care blog, states that TikTok users are the most likely to obtain beauty inspiration or guidance from social media platforms (TikTok Beauty Trends | How TikTok Beauty Trends Are Shaping the Personal Care Industry | Personal Care, 2022). Thus, the overall mean for the awareness level of TikTok changing the beauty standards is (M=3.00) which is relatively high. Given this data, it's safe to say that the majority of respondents are aware of the fact that TikTok has altered societal standards of physical beauty. In support of this claim, according to Akkaya, (2020), social media has enabled people to depict their lives as beautiful and unattainable, and this has caused a generation to develop unhealthy beauty standards.

Table 4: The Level of Self-Esteem Influenced by TikTok

Items	Mean
TikTok promotes content that affects my self-esteem	2.81
If TikTok was not around, I think people's self-esteem will be better as they were now	2.77
TikTok makes me feel more insecure about myself	2.69
I am only comfortable wearing the clothing that suits the current fashion line.	2.59
Due to TikTok, I believe I am an unattractive individual	2.57
I believe TikTok makes me feel less confident towards myself	2.49
As a result of using TikTok, I do not feel comfortable with my own appearance	2.46
Overall	2.63

According to Table 4, the majority of respondents believe that the content displayed on this platform influences their self-esteem ($M=2.81$). According to a study conducted by (Ishii, 2020), frequent social media use is associated with a greater desire for plastic surgery. The researchers at Johns Hopkins obtained this information by polling 252 persons aged 18 to 55 about their social media use, self-esteem, and interest in plastic surgery. They discovered that increased use of social media applications led to an increase in social comparison, which in turn increased the frequency with which individuals considered facial reconstruction. The respondents were also in agreement that the invention of TikTok would have a negative impact on people's self-esteem ($M = 2.77$). According to Al-Heeti, (2021), it would appear that use of social media platforms like TikTok can lead to a decrease in one's sense of self-esteem, with females between the ages of 10 and 14 being the age group most negatively impacted. The overall mean for the level of self-esteem influenced by TikTok is ($M=2.63$), which is considered a relatively high mean score. According to Cyberwise, (2022), TikTok, and other social networks, such as Instagram and Facebook, have been criticized for having negative effects on one's confidence. This can deeply hurt one's mental health. With the given statement, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between weak self-esteem and the use of social media such as TikTok.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the awareness level of TikTok changing the beauty standard has scored the highest mean ($M=3.00$), followed by the level of self-esteem influenced by TikTok that scored a total of mean ($M=2.63$). This has been shown that the public believes that the influence of TikTok does give a huge impact towards the beauty standards especially as social media are progressively growing throughout the years, spreading beauty remarks and tips that may or not affect their self-esteem as beauty standards are vital in this modern times.

TikTok has shown a tremendous growth in the beauty industry especially as the medium tends to promote and keeps influencing viewers with beauty product advertisement beauty filters, beautification tools and hacks that are available on the platform. It has become compulsory for everyone to think about their appearances and looks, self-esteem and how they represent themselves in the public eye as beauty standards have become an official custom on a daily life basis. As TikTok targeted audience are demographically from age of 18 – 21 years old, it has shown that beauty standard is very important to the younger generations nowadays as it increases their self-esteem and to them, beauty standards is not about being comfortable in your own skin or being yourself, but gaining approval, appraisal, and appreciation from the public's opinion.

As we all know, TikTok has influenced the majority of people, especially high school students to university students in believing that TikTok has become an essential part of our lives. TikTok's focus on promoting and exercising beauty standards or education has become an epidemic as beauty contents are becoming the medium's number one trend according to the algorithms of TikTok. The algorithms shown on viewers accounts tells that these categories of society that uses TikTok are more interested in such content as it gives them knowledge on how to be the better version of themselves as appearances does matter, but the question is does it benefit in delivering natural beauty or does it move forward towards unrealistic beauty standards.

According to the research carried out, filters provided by TikTok promote the importance of beauty standards among its users. This could lead to a negative impact on understanding what true beauty is all about and creating a misconception about the concept of natural beauty. The majority of people use these filters because they want to feel confident about themselves and knowing that in reality, they lack confidence because of how their image portrays themselves within the public, leading to an unhealthy lifestyle that has been practiced frequently. This type of lifestyle promotes being fake on social media, masking their true identity and colour and becoming someone else they are not. For instance, we can see that younger generations nowadays prioritize beauty instead of being their true selves as now the concept of beauty has changed rapidly because of the misleading content that TikTok projected on its user.

Today's society is full of advertisements and TV personalities who portray wildly exaggerated ideals of beauty. These expectations damage a woman's sense of self and may lead her to make dubious choices regarding her own particular self. Modern culture suffers from unrealistic beauty ideals. When women look around, they notice expectations about appearance everywhere. Issues with mental health and other problems may result from this. Women may strive to alter who they are in order to conform to social expectations as a result. What we read and watch in the media today has a big impact on society. Beautiful, fit women who appear perfect in the perspective of young teenagers are frequently shown especially on TikTok.

Table 5: Description of the level of acceptance towards TikTok changing the beauty standards in Malaysia.

Items	N	Mean
The awareness level of TikTok changing the beauty standard	392	3.00
The level of self-esteem influenced by TikTok	392	2.63

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