Reasons for Teenagers' Habitual Use of Social Media: A Case Study of TikTok

Yihan Yang*

Oldenburg Academy, Oldenburg, IN, 47006, the United States

Abstract. With the development of Internet and 5G, new social media has been constantly developing and updating. People are getting more and more used to get information from social media. People's lives have been filled with applications, such as TikTok and Instagram. These applications not only bring much fun and convenience to people, but also make it possible for people's fragmented time to be used wisely. However, at the same time, many people, especially teenagers with poor self-control, would easily be overdependent on the social media. As one of the most famous social media at present, with the help of big data, TikTok has successfully made some teenagers seriously depend on its platform by inferring the users' minds and accurately showing them the content they demand. This paper takes TikTok as a case study and teenagers as the research object to analysis the reasons why teenagers use social media habitually, and provide some reasonable solutions to reduce teenagers' media dependency. In short, teenagers get addicted to TikTok primarily because of their self-control is not strong enough so that they fell into the trap of TikTok. TikTok and other social media use big data to predict users' preference, and take advantage of users' psychology to make teenagers get addicted to social media without realizing. In order to get rid of the traps, network supervision departments should strengthen the management, TikTok and other social media should recommend more useful short videos to teenagers, and teenagers themselves can also take advantage of big data.

1 Introduction

We are now living in an era of mobile Internet. Social media have been embedded in all aspects of people's lives. Population of social media is increasing every single day. By 2020, there are around 3.81 billion users being active on social media all around the world [1]. Social media have huge influence on people, especially contemporary teenagers who are under a new media environment. Their connection with new media is much more dense and inseparable. Social medias provide our life a lot of convinence. Because of social medias, people can make better use of fragmented time, the connection between people is closer, and there is more fun in our lives … However, it is not a good idea to let teenagers get in touch with too many social medias. Many teenagers are still in the process of physical and mental growth. Due to the monotony of school life and their low self-control, many teenagers are currently addicted to the colorful world created by the media, where they can obtain information, socialize, and entertain [2]. TikTok, as one of the most famous new media, has more than 800 million daily active users as of August 2020, and 49% of them are teenagers. This kind of dependence on social media has caused serious problems to teenagers, such as unhealthy lifestyles and declined grades. This paper is going to talk about how social media, such as TikTok, work to make teenagers get media dependency. The paper also puts forward some targeted strategies for these pathological symptoms, striving to provide teenagers with a healthy and effective way of study and life.

2 Reasons for Teenagers' Overuse of Social Media

2.1 Big Data

Big data is now working well on its value orientation. First of all, the information in the Internet is much more abundant than tradition social media, while big data can help pick up valuable information, then organize it, and, at last, present the information. Secondly, big data can explain the connection between things. By using big data technology, people can analyze the relationship among different kinds of data information. It can also present the relationship more intuitively and comprehensively, which has great significance to enhance the value of data information. Finally, big data has the ability to predict. It can predict the development trend of unknown data according to the existing data information, and provide the possible basis to make decisions [3]. Big data has huge significance on the development of new media. It helps select the topics, enrich the types of news products, and

*Corresponding author: yihanhanyang@gmail.com

improve the accuracy of news reports. However, TikTok and other similar applications are also using big data to make people, especially teenagers, get addicted to it. Teenagers are considered the future hope of a country. They are the most energetic group. However, contemporary teenagers grow up in an increasingly affluent environment. With greater study pressure and a crowded urban environment, some teenagers show anxiety, depression, and other negative emotions in an early age. Online media provide teenagers a virtual world that they could make up their own names, heights, and even identities. It might bring a time of peace for teenagers to relax from the stressing work. However, there would not be any other good impacts on teenagers' growth if they indulge in the virtual online world too early, including TikTok short videos and other video games. According to Niu, up to 41.00% of teenagers in China said they would watch TikTok whenever and wherever they were free. There are 7.50% of teenagers said they would watch short videos several times a week. Only 3.00% of teenagers said they would watch it several times a month. This data demonstrates that the frequency of most teenagers watching TikTok is pretty high [4]. Teenagers are still too young to distinguish and separate between the real world and the online world. They can not make good use of the intelligence of big data since they are still too young to have self-control. When teenagers like, collect, or leave the comments on the TikTok platform, big data would start to analysis this data information, predict what kind of types of videos they are interested in, and then keep sending them the similar kinds of videos. In this way, as long as they open the application, something they are willing to keep watching would always show up. As time goes by, teenagers would slowly get addicted to TikTok videos.

2.2 Fear Of Missing Out

As fingers continue to slide, new content will continue to emerge. It is quite common to see people watching TikTok on the way to and from work, during work breaks, and even in the bathroom. All those social media have become part of our daily lives. We watch them, talk about them, and participant in them. Research shows that deep participation in social networks is partly due to the "fear of missing out" (fomo). Fomo refers to a sense of concern that one could miss out the information from other social media users. Fomo is a relevant predictor of social media addiction [6]. Teenagers like to talk about popular dance, music, and short videos from TikTok at school. If a teenager did not check TikTok recently, he or she might worry about being laughed at by other teenagers and is scared of being unable to join the conversation of other teenagers due to the missing out information from TikTok. Therefore, he or she could not help but keep checking TikTok.

2.3 Competition Relationship

Human beings not only need to keep in touch, but also like to participate in social competitions. This may also be a

factor driving the habitual use of social media [5]. Once there is a "like" button, it means that a person can record the number of likes they receive. Like will have a value, and teenagers use these statistics to improve self-esteem or satisfy vanity. They are at the age of comparing and flaunting. Once TikTok satisfies their vanity, they will spend more time on thinking how to make a better short video, so that they can gain more likes. They may also watch the videos with many likes to study from them. This makes social media users form a habit of checking their social platforms frequently.

2.4 A Way to Build Social Connections

Another reason that social media are so addictive is that they play one of the most basic roles of human beings - the establishment of social connections with others. Social media, such as TikTok, are very easy for users to post. After posting, one will wait for others to like the posts or leave a comment. Seeing someone "like" the posts can directly make the users' brain release dopamine and get pleasure. This can satisfy the desire to be recognized and make the users rely on it, especially teenagers who are at the age of proving that they have grown up. The returns are unpredictable. You would never know how many likes, comments, or followers you would get when you log in. As we all know, intermittent and unpredictable returns are the most addictive. At the same time, it is thought to be a kind of social reciprocity when someone likes or leaves a comment on others' posts. It feels as if people are establishing contact with each other. Schools are the communities for teenagers. Social media provides teenagers a place to build relationships with people online. They share videos with their friends online. In this way, they have common topics to talk about. According to Xue's study shown in Table 1, 58.33% of teenagers get to know TikTok from recommendation of their classmates and friends [8].

Table 1. How teenagers get to know TikTok [8].
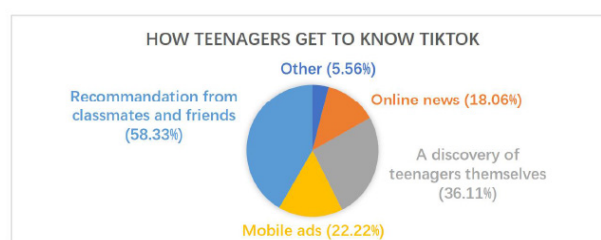
2.5 Pavlovian Response

As time goes by, teenagers may have trouble controlling themselves. In other words, they will check TikTok no matter it is necessary or not as long as they have phones in their hands. Just like Ivan Pavlov's experiments, the salivary reaction happening when putting food into a dog's mouth is a brain reaction. It is a direct connection between sensory and motor nerves in the spine or lower brain center. In contrast, conditioned reflexes, such as the salivation when hearing ringing tones or other previously neutral

stimulating sounds, are the result of new reflex channels established in the cerebral cortex during the formation of conditions [10]. As long as teenagers develop a conditioned reflex in their minds that the use of phone is to watch TikTok videos, then they would always watch TikTok when they have the phones even thought that was not what they meant to do in original. This is the worst condition.

3 Solutions

3.1 Strengthening the Management of the Internet

Controlling the Internet is not only a need to promote the healthy development of the Internet, but also an inevitable requirement to protect teenagers from its negative effects. China should continue to strengthen the management and restraint of the Internet. Taking Australia as an example, Australia is relatively strict in Internet management. Australia has established the communications and media authority agency. The agency is specifically responsible for restricting the content of Australian local websites. It will use filtering software to test investigating online gambling. As long as it involves in child pornography, sexual violence, abetting crime, racial hatred, terrorism, and other content, it will be strictly prohibited from spreading [7]. TikTok should learn from this and strengthen the audit. Even though it has been better after TikTok being sued, however, many users who have a large number of fans are not sealed. In order to make more profits, they take advantage of the sensitive words, keep selling things secretly, or spread some bad news information, which should be prohibited immediately.

3.2 Recommending Useful Videos

In another way, it is important for TikTok and other social media to recommend useful videos first. We are now in an era of entertainments. There are too many performances in the network world, and sometimes it is not clear where the boundary between the real and unreal is. Teenagers will find themselves in the information flow and gradually lose themselves. There are actually valuable short videos in TikTok. However, most of them are wasted. If TikTok can recommend short videos, such as cooking, fraud prevention, and life tips, it would improve teenagers' knowledge and help them live a better life [8]. TikTok can also give priority to add a "current events" column, so teenagers can pay more attention on latest national trends.

3.3 Taking Advantage of Big Data

Not only TikTok system itself needs to be advanced, but teenagers, as users, can also take advantage of the fact that "big data knows teenagers too well." As the author mentioned before, big data can analysis the information, and then keep recommending what users like and want to see. It is obviously one of the primary reasons that teenagers get addicted to TikTok. From this logic, if

teenagers want to stop watching too many TikTok short videos, they can intentionally watch some videos that they do not actually like. For example, if a teenager were not interested in watching short videos talking about animals at all, in order to stop over-watching TikTok short videos, the teenager needs to force himself or herself to finish watching all of short videos about animals, and then leave comments. At the same time, as long as the teenager sees funny videos he or she likes or are interested in, the videos can be quickly slid away. In this way, big data would think the teenager likes the content about animals, but not funny videos. As time goes by, as long as teenagers open the TikTok, it will always recommend videos that they do not like. Teenagers will then lose the interest in TikTok and other social media because there is nothing attractive. In short, teenagers need to develop their subjective critical consciousness. Heidegger believes that human nature has the ability to think independently. In order not to fall victim to the new media era, we should always realize that media is only a tool for human beings, not a product of dominating our spiritual world [9].

4 Conclusion

Human beings now have entered the era of new social media. The Internet has brought us so much convenience. However, it also means that the educational information technology innovation represented by the Internet will accompany the growing process of teenagers. TikTok and other new media are good at taking advantage of big data to analyse teenagers' preferences, and then keep recommending the contents they like. As long as teenagers open the application, short videos they like will always come up. Therefore, TikTok short videos are always attractive to them. Teenagers' self-control abilities are still not mature enough. Gradually, they would get addicted to the TikTok short videos and neglect their study. Furthermore, everyone, especially teenagers who are still not mature enough, has the desire to be seen, to be responded, and to be confirmed. The setting of "like" in the TikTok satisfies this desire. The "like" button allows teenagers to somehow satisfies their vanities. Furthermore, teenagers do not have the ability to distinguish right from wrong. Most of the time, they follow the crowd. It is a potential factor that teenagers get addicted to TikTok new media. The worst situation is when teenagers have conditioned reflexes that they always start to watch the TikTok videos as long as they have phones in hands. It is important for teenagers to focus on their study instead of TikTok short videos. It is necessary for China to continue to strengthen the management and restraint of the Internet. There is a need to strictly prohibit the dissemination of bad videos. Besides, schools should educate teenagers to improve their subjective critical consciousness. TikTok short videos could be useful for teenagers' studies. It is all depend on how they use it. If they keep watching the short videos that they are actually not interested in, TikTok will gradually lose the attraction to them. In short, this paper talks about how TikTok and other social media take advantage of big data and teenagers' social and behavior psychology to make them get addicted to TikTok gradually.

In order to avoid those traps, network supervision departments should strengthen the management, modify the system to recommend useful short videos to teenagers, and teenagers themselves can also take advantage of big data. Future studies can focus on the big data to further analyse its mechanism mentioned in this paper and provide more statistical evidence.

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