

The Phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in Tiktok Content Consumption Behavior Among Generation Z

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in TikTok content consumption behavior among Generation Z. The high intensity of TikTok usage among Generation Z has transformed social media into not only a platform for entertainment, but also a space for obtaining information, establishing social interactions, and maintaining self-existence within the digital environment.

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach using the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory. Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews and observations involving active TikTok users from Generation Z aged between 18 and 25 years old. The findings reveal that the phenomenon of FoMO emerges through individuals' tendency to continuously monitor trending topics and viral information on TikTok in order to avoid being left behind within their social environment. FoMO influences TikTok content consumption behavior, including repetitive application checking, prolonged scrolling activities, and participation in popular trends and challenges.

From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, TikTok usage among Generation Z is influenced by the needs for entertainment, information, social interaction, and personal identity. The study also demonstrates that TikTok's algorithm, particularly through the For You Page (FYP) feature, further strengthens the intensity of social media usage and amplifies the emergence of FoMO among Generation Z users. In addition to providing easy access to entertainment and information, the FoMO phenomenon also contributes to increasing dependence on social media and the emergence of social anxiety when users are disconnected from TikTok for a certain period of time.

Keyword: Fear of Missing Out, TikTok, Generation Z, Social Media,

INTRODUCTION

The development of communication technology and the internet has significantly influenced social life patterns, particularly in the use of social media. Social media no longer functions solely as a communication tool, but also serves as a platform for entertainment, information dissemination, personal branding, and self-actualization (Yusanda et al., 2021). One of the social media platforms that has experienced rapid growth is TikTok. The application is widely used because it provides various forms of engaging and easily accessible short-video content (Amalia et al., 2022). TikTok's popularity is especially prominent among Generation Z, namely individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Arum et al., 2023).

Generation Z is commonly recognized as a digital native generation that has grown alongside the advancement of digital technology, the internet, and social media since childhood (Rastati, 2018). Their close relationship with technology has made social media an inseparable aspect of everyday life. Among the numerous social media platforms available, TikTok has become one of the most preferred applications due to its interactive, engaging, and easily accessible short-video format. TikTok also offers diverse types of content, ranging from entertainment, music, education, and lifestyle to viral information that can be rapidly consumed by users.

For Generation Z, TikTok functions not only as an entertainment platform but also as a digital social space for following trends, interacting with other users, and expressing themselves through creative content (Putri & Anggreni, 2025). The high intensity of TikTok usage among Generation Z is strongly influenced by the platform's algorithmic system, which is capable of displaying personalized content based on users' interests and preferences through the For You Page (FYP) feature. This feature enables users to continuously receive personalized streams of information and entertainment quickly and without clear time limitations. Consequently, users tend to spend extended periods scrolling and consuming various forms of content appearing on their feeds.

Furthermore, users often feel compelled to continuously access the application in order to avoid missing trends, viral information, or widely discussed topics within their social environments. Therefore, TikTok has evolved beyond a mere entertainment platform and has become an essential component of communication patterns, lifestyles, and social interactions among Generation Z in the contemporary digital era (Pasauran et al., 2025). This condition has contributed to the emergence of the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) phenomenon, a psychological condition in which individuals experience anxiety about missing information, trends, or social activities occurring on social media platforms, commonly referred to as the fear of being left behind (Fuadiyah et al., 2023).

This phenomenon encourages individuals to continuously monitor social media in order to remain connected with their social environment. Among Generation Z, FoMO is reflected through repetitive TikTok checking behaviors, participation in viral trends, and the persistent need to stay informed about the latest developments. The FoMO phenomenon can be understood through the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explains that individuals use media to fulfill specific needs, including entertainment, information, personal identity, and social interaction. In the context of TikTok usage, Generation Z utilizes social media not only for entertainment purposes, but also as a means of obtaining social recognition and maintaining self-existence within digital spaces (Jannah, 2025).

Several previous studies have demonstrated that this phenomenon is closely associated with social media usage among Generation Z. Research conducted by Fuadiyah et al. (2023) regarding the impact of FoMO syndrome on students' information-seeking behavior found that FoMO drives individuals to continuously access digital media in order to avoid missing the latest information. The study emphasized that social media has become the primary medium for fulfilling users' informational needs and social connectedness in the digital era.

Another study conducted by Putri and Anggreni (2025) concerning the formation of Generation Z identity through the TikTok platform explained that TikTok is utilized not only as an entertainment medium, but also as a space for identity construction and social self-actualization. Generation Z uses TikTok to present self-image, follow trends, and obtain social recognition from their digital environment.

In addition, research by Pasauran et al. (2025) regarding changes in Generation Z social interactions through TikTok demonstrated that trends and viral content on TikTok significantly influence communication patterns and social interactions among Generation Z users. The study highlighted that social media shapes a new digital culture that encourages users to continuously follow trending developments in order to remain socially relevant within their communities.

Unlike previous studies, this research does not merely discuss the FoMO phenomenon in general terms, but specifically examines how FoMO influences TikTok content consumption behavior among Generation Z through the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory. Furthermore, this study integrates psychological aspects, media consumption behavior, and motives for social media use in order to comprehensively describe the FoMO phenomenon among Generation Z TikTok users and analyze the resulting patterns of TikTok content consumption behavior.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and behaviors of Generation Z in consuming TikTok content as influenced by the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). The research subjects consisted of Generation Z individuals aged between 18 and 25 years who actively use TikTok on a daily basis.

Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews and observations. Interviews were carried out to obtain information regarding participants' experiences of FoMO, their reasons for using TikTok, and their social media content consumption habits. Meanwhile, observations focused on users' TikTok usage behaviors, including the frequency of opening the application, the types of content consumed, and participation in viral trends.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study, the informants involved were Generation Z individuals who actively used the TikTok application for approximately three to eight hours per day. Most informants utilized TikTok as a medium for entertainment, obtaining the latest information, following viral trends, and interacting with friends and other social media users. The high intensity of TikTok usage indicates that the application has become an integral part

of Generation Z's daily activities in fulfilling communication and entertainment needs in the digital era.

The findings further reveal that the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) was experienced by the majority of informants. Participants admitted to feeling anxious when they did not access TikTok for a certain period because they feared missing information, trends, or viral topics circulating on social media. Several informants stated that they automatically opened TikTok whenever they had free time, even without any specific purpose. This condition demonstrates the existence of a psychological urge to remain continuously connected to social media in order to stay informed about the latest developments within their digital social environment.

The FoMO phenomenon was also reflected in informants' habits of continuously monitoring the latest trends through TikTok's For You Page (FYP) feature. Informants felt the need to stay updated on viral content in order to remain relevant in social conversations, both offline and online. One informant revealed feeling excluded when friends discussed trends or viral content that they had not yet encountered. This finding indicates that TikTok is utilized not only as an entertainment platform, but also as a medium for maintaining social connectedness and self-existence within digital environments.

From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, TikTok usage among Generation Z is influenced by several specific needs. First, entertainment needs, in which TikTok is used to reduce boredom through engaging and entertaining short-video content. Second, informational needs, namely the desire to obtain news, trends, and the latest developments being widely discussed on social media. Third, social interaction needs, where TikTok helps users remain connected with friends, communities, and popular conversational topics. Fourth, personal identity or personal branding needs, in which TikTok functions as a medium for self-expression and self-image construction through uploads and interactions on social media (Adistri & Rusman, 2024).

FoMO also influences TikTok content consumption behavior among Generation Z users. Informants demonstrated habits of prolonged scrolling, repeatedly checking TikTok, and participating in popular challenges and trends. The most frequently consumed types of content included entertainment, music, lifestyle, viral information, and light educational content. Informants also showed difficulty limiting their TikTok usage because the platform's algorithm continuously displayed content aligned with their interests and preferences. This condition contributes to the increasing integration of social media usage into everyday life.

Therefore, this study demonstrates that FoMO exerts a significant influence on social media consumption behavior among Generation Z. TikTok functions as a platform capable of fulfilling various user needs through its personalized and interactive algorithmic system. On one hand, the FoMO phenomenon provides positive impacts, such as easier access to entertainment, information, and social relationships. On the other hand, it also contributes to increased dependence on social media, longer TikTok usage duration, and the emergence of anxiety when users are disconnected from social media for a certain period of time.

The findings of this study reinforce previous research suggesting that social media has a substantial influence on Generation Z's digital behavior. Research conducted by Fuadiyah et al. (2023) demonstrated that FoMO encourages individuals to continuously seek information

through digital media in order to avoid missing recent developments. These findings are consistent with the results of the present study, which indicate that informants habitually reopened TikTok repeatedly because they feared missing trends and viral information circulating on social media.

In addition, the findings also support the study conducted by Amalia et al. (2022), which stated that TikTok is utilized by Generation Z as a medium for identity formation and social self-actualization. This study found that informants used TikTok not only for entertainment purposes, but also to maintain their self-existence within digital social environments. Informants felt the need to follow trends and understand viral content in order to remain relevant in social conversations with friends and communities.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates a relationship between FoMO and more intensive digital content consumption behavior. Informants exhibited prolonged scrolling habits, continuously checked TikTok, and experienced difficulty limiting social media usage. This condition illustrates that TikTok's algorithm, particularly through the For You Page (FYP) feature, is capable of creating personalized and repetitive media consumption patterns. This finding represents one of the strengths of the study because it demonstrates how TikTok's algorithmic system reinforces the FoMO phenomenon among Generation Z users.

From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, the findings indicate that TikTok usage among Generation Z is driven by entertainment, informational, social interaction, and personal identity needs. However, this study found that the need to remain relevant within digital social environments constitutes one of the dominant factors strengthening the emergence of FoMO. Therefore, this research does not merely view TikTok as an entertainment medium, but also as a digital social space that shapes the behavioral patterns, communication practices, and psychological conditions of Generation Z in the contemporary digital era.

Another strength of this study lies in the use of a descriptive qualitative approach, which enabled researchers to understand participants' experiences and behaviors more comprehensively. This research not only focused on the intensity of social media usage, but also described users' emotional experiences when feeling anxious about missing information or digital trends. Therefore, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the FoMO phenomenon in TikTok content consumption behavior among Generation Z.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that social media functions not only as a communication and entertainment platform, but also influences users' behaviors and psychological conditions. Therefore, greater awareness regarding wise and balanced social media usage is necessary to ensure that the intensity of TikTok usage does not generate excessive negative impacts on Generation Z users.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) influences TikTok content consumption behavior among Generation Z through the increasing intensity of social media usage and the continuous urge to follow viral trends and developments. Generation Z utilizes TikTok not only as a platform for entertainment, but also as a medium for obtaining information, maintaining social interaction, and constructing personal identity within digital

spaces. From the perspective of the applied theoretical framework, TikTok usage is influenced by entertainment needs, informational needs, social interaction needs, and personal identity or personal branding needs.

The findings reveal that FoMO encourages users to repeatedly open TikTok, engage in prolonged scrolling activities, and continuously monitor content through the For You Page (FYP) feature in order to remain socially relevant within their communities. Furthermore, TikTok's personalized and interactive algorithmic system reinforces repetitive media consumption behavior. The study also found that FoMO generates positive impacts, such as easier access to entertainment, information, and social relationships. However, on the other hand, it also produces negative consequences, including increased dependence on social media, prolonged TikTok usage duration, and the emergence of anxiety when users are disconnected from social media for a certain period of time.

Therefore, this study demonstrates that TikTok functions not only as a medium of entertainment and communication, but also as a platform that significantly influences the behavioral patterns and psychological conditions of Generation Z. Consequently, greater awareness and self-control in social media usage are necessary to ensure that the intensity of TikTok consumption does not produce excessive negative impacts on users' daily lives.

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