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Integrating Technology Acceptance and Uses & Gratifications Frameworks to Expound on the Perceived Popularity of TikTok in Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how structural variables like Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Perceived Usefulness (PU) combine with socio-psychological gratifications (information, entertainment, education and socialisation) to propel TikTok's popularity. Using a quantitative survey design, empirical data were collected from 307 TikTok users. Cross-tabulation, simple linear regression, and multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to examine the impact of tenure, PEOU, PU, and four specific need-gratifications (information, education, socialisation, and entertainment) on usage frequency or popularity. The cross-tabulation revealed a strong habituation effect on TikTok popularity among participants. Specifically, daily engagement rises sharply as user tenure increases, growing from 27.3% among novices (less than 1 year) to 73.3% among established users (3–4 years), with overall daily active usage reaching 51.1%. Furthermore, regression models confirmed that both PEOU (beta = 0.303, $p < .001$) and PU (beta = 0.284, $p < .001$) significantly drive platform popularity. PEOU showed a slightly stronger influence, reflecting TikTok's low-friction, algorithm-driven interface. Among user gratifications, entertainment was the primary driver of usage popularity ($B = 0.392$, $p < .001$), whereas education played a secondary role ($B = 0.165$, $p = .041$). In contrast, information and socialisation needs failed to significantly predict popularity, despite users reporting moderate satisfaction in these areas. This research recommends that content creators should embed entertainment elements into informational, educational, and socialisation content to maximise audience engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the media has been recognised for its capacity to inform, educate, and entertain audiences through its organised content delivery. However, technological evolution has fundamentally shifted this paradigm, rendering contemporary media highly interactive through the proliferation of Social Network Sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok. As Szabo (2021) noted, technological innovation has catalysed profound structural changes in contemporary communication, significantly optimising the gathering, production, and distribution of media content compared to preceding decades. Howard and Lekara-Bayo (2025) maintained that the emergence of social media platforms has significantly changed the way information is created, shared, and consumed in today's world.

Despite Facebook's nearly two decades of domination in the Social Media space in Cameroon, TikTok, released globally in 2016 (D'Souza, 2024), has demonstrated rapid adoption and shifting user demographics. Data reported in Kumka (2023), showed that as of January 2023, Cameroon had recorded 3.90 million active social media users, representing 13.8% of the total population. Crucially, TikTok has ascended to the position of the third most utilised platform nationally, trailing only Facebook and WhatsApp. Demographics showed that 68% of TikTok users in Cameroon are aged between 25 and 35, with dense concentrations in the metropolitan hubs of Douala and Yaoundé, while the domestic user

base is estimated at 1 million and projected to expand continuously (Kumka, 2023).

Globally, this platform dynamic reflects broader market competition. McCormick (2024) positioned Facebook as the most frequently used global platform, with TikTok occupying the sixth position. In response to the disturbing rise of TikTok's short-form video architecture, legacy platforms have engaged in feature replication; notably, Meta launched Instagram Reels globally to directly counter TikTok's market expansion (Wang, 2021).

It can be confirmed from extensive literature that individuals engage with SNSs to satisfy distinct socio-psychological goals, including communication, knowledge acquisition, and content distribution (Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009). This targeted consumption is fundamentally explained by the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which posits that media consumers are active agents who intentionally select specific media channels to fulfill goal-oriented personal needs (Caldwell, 2001). Expanding on this framework, Whiting and Williams (2013) identified ten primary dimensions of social media gratification, most notably social interaction, information seeking, entertainment, and relaxation. Beyond interpersonal utility, Hallikainen (2015) noted that these platforms have been successfully co-opted for commercial marketing.

While user engagement spans a continuum between content production and consumption, as stated in Napoli (2016), this study focuses specifically on individuals who are active within the TikTok ecosystem. That is, those who own at least a TikTok account. Given the rising

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popularity of TikTok in Cameroon, this research bridges structural and behavioural frameworks by integrating uses and gratifications theory with the Technology Acceptance Model, known as TAM. Specifically, this study investigates how structural variables, namely perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, interact with social and psychological gratifications regarding information, entertainment, education, and socialisation to drive TikTok popularity.

Elucidating these dynamics offers dual contributions. The first is that, it provides software engineers with empirical insights to optimise user-interface design. Secondly, it equips digital content creators and platform architects with data-driven strategies to tailor content delivery, maximise user retention, and sustain platform popularity in emerging markets.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding TikTok and its functionality

TikTok is described in contemporary scholarship as a highly interactive, short-form social networking platform designed primarily to facilitate mobile video creation, algorithmic dissemination, and user-driven entertainment (Fan, Luo, & Wang, 2023; Daryus, Ahmad, & Dada, 2022). Developed and operated by the multinational technology enterprise ByteDance, TikTok operates fundamentally as a mobile-first application optimised for smartphones and tablet devices (Shah *et al.*, 2022; Daryus *et al.*, 2022).

The platform's architecture emerged through strategic corporate synthesis. ByteDance initially launched the application in 2016 within the domestic Chinese market under the name Douyin, positioning it as a specialised video-sharing social network. In 2017, ByteDance acquired Musical.ly, an established social media application that enabled users to create and share fifteen-second lip-sync videos (Big 3 Media, 2020). To capture the international market, ByteDance subsequently dissolved the Musical.ly brand, integrated its foundational features and user data ecosystems into the core Douyin architecture, and released TikTok in August 2018 as the standardised global counterpart to Douyin (Big 3 Media, 2020; Sallem, 2022). This corporate merger created a single, consolidated platform characterised by an expanded global community, unified account data, and heightened infrastructural capacity (Sallem, 2022).

In alignment with broader shifts in Web 2.0 digital architecture, TikTok decentralised its media production by granting individual users, rather than traditional institutional organisations, the total capacity to produce and distribute information (Fan *et al.*, 2023; Shah *et al.*, 2022). This structural paradigm centred on the generation of User-Generated Content (UGC), enabling diverse modes of audience engagement. As Wu (2021) noted, platform participants engage in a multi-layered matrix of behavioural interactions, including primary video production, passive viewing, peer-to-peer distribution, and text-based commentary. A defining technical feature of the ecosystem is its hyper-transferability. That is, TikTok

content can be effortlessly downloaded by subscribers and cross-posted to external social networking platforms, thereby expanding the visibility of its digital artefacts beyond its native user base.

At its inception in 2016, TikTok functioned largely as a live social network service heavily anchored in music distribution and acoustic expression (Wang, 2021). However, comparative empirical analyses demonstrate that TikTok's growth velocity significantly outpaced concurrent web platforms due to continuous structural updates (Yao, Zhong, & Jiang, 2023). As reported by Rose (2022, cited in Yao *et al.*, 2023), the platform integrated live-broadcasting architectures and social-commerce applications, creating sustained algorithmic monetisation streams. The introduction of real-time broadcasting mechanisms allows platform anchors to manifest creative expression while interacting directly with audiences in synchronous space (Hu, 2020). This live streaming configuration addresses the psychological need for unmediated interaction between digital celebrities and their consumer base, thereby deepening parasocial relationships.

The platform's adoption is further accelerated because of its adjustable audio speeds that make music-video creation easy (Breshnick, 2019). It is this feature that has helped TikTok to reach the top ten downloaded apps in several Southeast Asian countries, mainly among teenagers (Batoebara, 2020). Structurally, TikTok standardises short-form content into micro-narratives lasting between 15 and 60 seconds, giving users the tools to compile looping video tracks that can be edited, augmented with digital filters, and published natively within the system (Omar & Dequan, 2020; Wang, 2021). Khlaif and Salha (2021) observed that the interface minimises friction, enabling rapid editing and uninhibited peer community sharing.

Also, the interface design is characterised by highly intuitive, straightforward navigation systems that lower the technical barriers to creative production (Rahmawati & Anwar, 2022; Fan *et al.*, 2023). These accessible configurations are paired with feature-rich editing suites that facilitate complex media manipulation. Furthermore, Jia, Xu, Zhou, and Liu (2023) emphasised that TikTok's foundational recommendation engine utilises a predictive algorithm that curates personal content streams based on real-time behavioural metrics. By delivering automated streams of personalised media, this predictive mechanism eliminates cognitive search costs for the consumer, a dynamic heavily reinforced by the application's rapid, continuous playback format (Yao *et al.*, 2023).

Thus, contemporary users engage with TikTok not merely as an instrument for information, education, socialisation, and entertainment, but also as a viable platform for economic production. Short-video networks have developed sophisticated, scalable business models that leverage algorithmic traffic to maximise online marketing efficacy, achieving highly stable commercial returns (Hu, 2020).

TikTok Use and its increasing popularity

The continuous evolution of information and communications technology (ICT) has subjected the social network market to unpredictable competitive pressures, forcing engineers and software developers to continuously optimise applications to avoid market obsolescence. Although TikTok is a relatively recent entrant compared to legacy platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and X (formerly Twitter), empirical data confirms it has achieved unprecedented global adoption within a condensed timeframe (Zulkifli, 2023; Daryus, Ahmad, & Dada, 2022). Studies consistently demonstrate that this popularity is highly concentrated among youthful demographics, with a pronounced adoption rate observed within female groups (Nwafor & Nnaemeka, 2023; Liang, 2023).

Demographic mapping of Indonesian user distributions conducted by Li *et al.* (2021) showed that the platform is predominantly occupied by Generation Z and Millennial consumers. Statistically, their data indicated that 27% of the domestic user base falls within the age bracket of 13 to 17 years old, while 42% is situated between 18 and 24 years of age. Taken together, these metrics revealed that 69% of active consumers are under the age of 25, and 85% are under 35, highlighting a highly youthful user concentration. At the macro level, this adoption trajectory experienced major expansion across geographically diverse global markets, most notably the United States, China, and India, between 2017 and 2019 (Dhaninee, 2021).

In Africa, regional reports show that TikTok has grown very fast in a short time (Pulse, 2024). After launching in big digital hubs like Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Uganda, and Côte d'Ivoire, the app followed global trends and drew in many young people. These users like quick, easy-to-watch, short videos (Pulse, 2024). The China Global South Project (2024) explained this trend by noting that Africa has the youngest median population in the world, and these young people are using TikTok's mobile interface faster and faster.

Given that youth demographics constitute the primary consumer segment across African digital spaces, corporate entities seeking market engagement are increasingly advised to establish an intentional strategic presence on the platform (Pulse, 2024). Advertising analytics further highlight the unique gendered dynamics of this market. In South Africa, for example, approximately 52% of the potential digital advertising reach on TikTok is comprised of female users, compared to 48% for male users (Cowling, 2024). This aligns with foundational assessments by Lu & Lu (2019), which identified TikTok as a dominant social media platform globally after it topped iOS App Store download charts with over 500 million active global users, half of whom were aged between 13 and 18. The literature thus established that TikTok adoption is strongly shaped by age and gender distributions (Lu & Lu (2019; Pulse, 2024; Cowling, 2024).

Still within the context of increasing TikTok popularity, its

global proliferation is reported to have been significantly accelerated by the socio-behavioral disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Jayarathne (2020) demonstrated that the psychological boredom resulting from prolonged domestic confinement had a direct, statistically positive impact on TikTok usage rates within Sri Lanka. As state-mandated lockdowns forced individuals into isolation, the application became a vital mechanism for psychological coping and leisure. Because the platform provides diverse options for active creative participation, youth demographics frequently utilised its interactive functions to generate entertainment, manage stress, and mitigate isolation (Jaffar, Riaz, & Mushtaq, 2019).

Observing that TikTok's architecture allows individuals to express themselves through highly adaptive modalities, such as vocal performance, choreography, acoustic lip-syncing, and comedic performance, Nwafor & Nnaemeka (2023) argued that these creative outlets offered critical opportunities for stress reduction during periods when physical socialisation was restricted. Salasac and Lobo (2022) attributed the rising popularity of TikTok to its ability to provide a broad range of content that spans sports, fashion, performing arts, and education. According to them, these features are encouraging users to join the community.

This pandemic-driven growth trajectory is supported by Zeng, Abidin, and Schäfer (2021), who confirmed that the 2020 global health crisis catalysed both a massive increase in download volumes and a significant diversification of TikTok's user base. Peak download phases occurred during the initial stages of the pandemic, during which TikTok expanded its demographic footprint into older groups, including parents, grandparents, educators, and healthcare professionals, by repositioning its ecosystem as a dual-purpose framework for lockdown leisure and informal education (Zeng *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, the platform's ability to maintain high engagement levels beyond the pandemic is tied to its targeted marketing utility (Cowling, 2024; Wang, 2021). TikTok expanded its institutional reach by executing structured on boarding campaigns that embedded prominent public figures and mainstream celebrities into the ecosystem (Wang, 2021). This strategic influx of high-profile creators generated self-sustaining networks of viewer traffic, optimised advertising visibility, stimulated digital fan subcultures, and continuously expanded the platform's global market share.

While multiple structural factors explain this growth, Pham (2016) largely attributed its early success within European and North American markets to its targeted focus on Generation Z. Jayatissa (2023) defined Generation Z as a highly distinct demographic group characterised by unique socio-psychological values, communicative attitudes, and behavioural habits that diverge from previous generations. Vidya Jha (2021) noted that these distinct traits extend to their long-term career aspirations, identity structures, and media consumption patterns. Given that Generation Z constitutes approximately 30%

of the aggregate global population and displays an innate reliance on mobile technology architectures (OECD, 2021), the platform's early focus on this demographic provided a strong foundation for its global expansion (Pham, 2016).

Empirical Evidence on the Relationship Between Consumers' Gratification and TikTok Popularity

Social media platforms have increasingly functioned as structural mediums for delivering digital educational materials in diverse formats. Early digital pedagogy research established a baseline for this dynamic; for instance, Tita and Moki (2017), in their study 'Students' Appraisal of Online Interactions with Lecturers using Facebook', identified a significant positive correlation between postgraduate student-lecturer digital interactions and academic performance ($\chi^2=20.564$, $df=2$, $p<.000$). This suggests that web-based platforms extend traditional pedagogical boundaries, offering asynchronous spaces for collaborative knowledge transfer.

This educational value of social media platforms like Facebook has successfully been transferred to short-form video architectures as seen today with the use of TikTok. Basch, Hillyer, and Jaime (2020) initially noted that early pandemic-related TikTok content was deficient in substantial public health data; however, subsequent ethnographic research revealed swift adaptation. Southerton (2021) noted that medical professionals managed to effectively use TikTok to spread public health information during the COVID-19 crisis by utilizing both overtly educational content and professional humor to reach the maximum number of people.

However, scholarly opinions are still divided on the inherent pedagogical validity of the platform. Taha (2021) warned that TikTok still remains an unstable educational source that easily generates academic plagiarism, digital distraction, and dependency. Similarly, Vaterlaus and Winter (2021) found a negative correlation between cognitive attention and time spent on TikTok among university students.

Looking beyond its pedagogical value, TikTok's global popularity is deeply dependent on its ability to satisfy the hedonic needs (the needs people satisfy just to feel good, entertained or the joy of life) of users. In the West African context, Ogunmokun (2021) and Culture Intelligence (2022) identified entertainment and psychological escapism as the primary drivers of TikTok usage in Nigeria. There, users are attracted towards light-hearted, humorous content. This is supported by Nwafor and Nnaemeka (2023), who applied the uses and gratifications framework in a study of university undergraduates. Their findings revealed that 13% of respondents isolated leisure as their exclusive motivation, while 50% sought a blended gratification matrix comprising entertainment, socialisation, self-expression, and learning.

In Southeast Asia, Fauzi *et al.* (2023) utilised Pearson correlation coefficients to demonstrate a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between

exposure to TikTok's entertainment content and youth user satisfaction within urban Malaysia. It is noted in this study that the platform's vast repository of stimulus-rich media actively shapes youth attitudes during critical developmental stages. This global appetite for hedonic gratification is further corroborated by Nath and Badra (2021) in India and Shah *et al.* (2022), who found that 60.4% of participants prioritised entertainment over skill development (8.6%) or education (2.2%).

This pattern of hedonic dominance is reinforced by large-scale comparative data. McClain, Anderson, and Gelles-Watnick (2024) surveyed 10,287 adult internet users in the United States to examine user experiences across contemporary social networks. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (76% for Facebook, 81% for X, 86% for Instagram, and 95% for TikTok) are drawn to these apps because of entertainment. Deep-dive metrics from this study confirmed that 81% of the TikTok cohort classified entertainment as their primary driver, positioning it ahead of all competing legacy applications.

Concurrently, the internet functions as a core apparatus for structural information seeking, a phenomenon Nicholas *et al.* (2000) termed the "information world's obsession". Applying Maslow's sense-making theory via Google Trends data, Opesade (2020) validated that perceived informational deficits compel users to leverage the World Wide Web to construct cognitive order out of reality. In the context of modern digital curation, Mashiyane (2022) noted that advanced information and communication technologies allow information science professionals to embed literacy skills directly within digital spaces, extending research access far beyond physical libraries.

As an algorithmically driven ecosystem, TikTok serves as a critical vector for daily information acquisition. Long *et al.* (2022) observed that the perceived informativeness of commercial content on TikTok positively mediated consumer attitudes and purchase behaviours among Vietnamese youth during pandemic lockdowns. Conversely, Jim and Alam (2023) found informativeness to be statistically insignificant regarding TikTok adoption among students in Dhaka, suggesting that users do not inherently view the platform as an information utility.

Furthermore, Galbe (2024) examined how journalism students perceived the application as a tool for news dissemination; although initially reluctant, participants recognised its utility for reaching younger, traditionally disengaged audiences, though they noted it lacked the structural depth of print or radio. Alarming, Wang and Guo (2023) established that information-seeking behaviour can also function as a maladaptive psychological driver, discovering a significant positive pathway ($\beta=0.20$) between information-motivated clip consumption and TikTok addiction among Chinese youth.

Given the high concentration of youth groups on the platform, its impact on interpersonal socialisation is a critical area of study. Zhang (2023) confirmed via

questionnaire analysis that short-form video consumption exerts a positive influence on adolescent socialisation pathways, though the intersecting effects of age and gender variables appeared inconsistent. In contrast, Cedruña and Civila (2014) reported that 73.33% of students surveyed at the University of Ankara demonstrated low levels of virtual socialisation on TikTok. Their behaviour indicated that the platform was used primarily for passive video consumption, with active interactions strictly confined to pre-existing offline social circles rather than expanding into novel virtual networks.

Beyond explicit psychological gratifications, TikTok's market dominance is heavily sustained by its technical accessibility, theoretically operationalised as perceived ease of use. Rosli *et al.* (2016) noted that platform architectures that minimise user effort directly increase both user retention and session duration. Taha (2021) and Fan, Luo, and Wang (2023) confirmed that TikTok's structural interface is explicitly optimised for simplicity, pairing straightforward user interfaces with feature-rich, accessible editing suites. This mechanical advantage was empirically quantified by Halim *et al.* (2022) within Indonesian Generation Z groups; their data revealed a highly significant positive effect ($p=.000$) of perceived ease of use on continuous behavioural intention to use the application, demonstrating that interface comfort is a primary driver of sustained user engagement.

Theoretical Framework

This study is theoretically anchored in a synthesised framework combining the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). Han, Mahamed, Abdullah, and Abas (2023), and Putra and Kasim (2023) combined these theories to explain individuals' motivations and intentions in using technological applications like social media platforms.

The Technology Acceptance Model

According to Han, Mahamed, Abdullah, and Abas (2023), and Putra and Kasim (2023), the Technology Acceptance Model is a creation of Davis Fred in 1989. He used this theory to detect, anticipate, and explain the determinants of technology acceptance and utilisation. His intention was to account for the reasons for the user's decision on whether or not to adopt a technology. The theory is based on two core assumptions. The first is that people adopt a technology based on the perceived usefulness. That is, when they believe using it will help improve their performance in a job. While the second assumption is that people turn to adopting a technology based on the perceived ease of use. That is when they believe they can use it with less effort or with much convenience. TAM will be used in this study to explore users' perceptions towards the use of TikTok in relation to their perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and attitudes. The assumption of the current study is that TikTok's rising popularity is influenced by individuals' perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of this app.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory was coined by Katz and Blumler (1974). Han, Mahamed, Abdullah, and Abas (2023) stated that the uses and gratifications theory is one of the most well-known theories in the field of media studies. This theory explains why and how users choose certain media to meet their specific social and psychological needs. Historically, Kasirye (2022) disclosed that the theory was initially introduced in the 1940s to understand why people chose to consume the various forms of media that were present at the time. The main assumptions of this theoretical framework are that media users actively choose and use media to fulfil their needs and desires and that media consumption is determined by individual motivations and goals. In this theory, media users are placed at the centre of media use.

By implication, those who use the media have the power to decide which media to consume as well as the content based on their specific needs. These could be needed for entertainment, information seeking, education, social interaction, emotional satisfaction, and passing time. This study limits itself to examining if there is a significant relationship between TikTok popularity and consumers' information, education, socialisation, and entertainment needs. This study looks at the possibility of integrating the Technology Acceptance Model and Uses and Gratification Theory frameworks to better understand the popularity of the use of TikTok by examining the contributory motivations on users' intentions to use it.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was chosen as it allows for the rapid, systematic collection of standardised data from a large sample, making it highly suitable for examining trends, exposures, and motivations within a specific population. Descriptive survey as explained by Macfarlane (1997), enables a researcher to study a sample or subset of a selected population since it is not usually possible or necessary to study the entire population.

The unit of analysis for this study comprised individual TikTok subscribers residing in four major urban centres in Cameroon: Yaoundé, Douala, Buea, and Bamenda. Due to the online nature of the target population, a non-probability convenience and virtual snowball sampling technique was used.

Data were gathered using a structured, predominantly closed-ended questionnaire. The instrument measured the respondents' level of exposure to TikTok (frequency and duration of use), examined user motivations for platform engagement and captured the demographic profile of the respondents. To ensure face validity and clarity, a pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted in October 2024, allowing the researcher to identify and correct typographical, grammatical, and structural ambiguities before final data collection was done.

The questionnaire was hosted online on SurveyMonkey. Data collection took place between December 12, 2024,

and January 6, 2025. The survey link was disseminated across various digital platforms, including WhatsApp groups, Facebook, TikTok, and email. To expand the sample, a snowballing mechanism was encouraged by asking participants to forward the link to other Cameroonian TikTok users. While the initial target was 300 respondents, a total of 337 individuals participated in the survey.

Of these, 30 incomplete or invalid responses were discarded. This screening process yielded a final sample of N=307 valid responses, representing a high completion rate of 91.1%. Following data collection, the raw dataset was exported from SurveyMonkey and imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for clean-up and analysis. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were computed to summarise demographic profiles and exposure levels. To test the formulated hypotheses, Linear Regression and its associated Analysis of Variance (F-test) were used to evaluate the significance of the relationships between the variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics analysis of respondents

A total of 307 respondents participated in this online survey. The descriptive data revealed that a majority (63.2%) of the participants were female, compared to 35.5% who were male, while 1.3% of the respondents did not disclose their gender. Regarding age distribution, the largest proportion of respondents (40.7%) fell within

the 21–25 age group. This was followed by those aged 36 years and above (23.5%), 26–30 years (18.2%), and 31–35 years (13.7%). Only 2.6% of the sample was aged 20 years and below, while 1.3% did not indicate their age group.

In terms of marital status, most respondents (72.0%) reported being single, 22.8% were married, 2.3% were divorced, and 2.0% were cohabiting. Widows and widowers accounted for 0.3% of the sample, while 0.7% did not specify their marital status. Analysis of employment status indicated that the largest proportion of respondents (30.6%) worked in the private sector, closely followed by students (28.7%). Additionally, 23.8% indicated that they worked for the state (public sector), 13.4% were self-employed, 1.6% identified with other employment categories, and 1.0% were retired. The remaining 1.0% did not specify their work status.

Regarding educational attainment, a majority (59.9%) of the respondents held a first degree (bachelor's), 26.1% possessed a master's degree, and 11.4% had completed an Advanced Level qualification. Only 1.6% and 0.3% of the respondents reported holding a PhD and an Ordinary Level qualification, respectively, while 0.7% did not indicate their level of education. In terms of geographical residence, nearly half of the respondents (48.5%) were based in Buea, followed by Bamenda (20.5%), Yaoundé (16.3%), and Douala (13.7%), with 1.0% omitting this information.

Evaluating respondent's longevity and frequency of TikTok use

Table 1: Respondents Frequency of TikTok use vis-à-vis longevity on the platform

Number of years using TikTok	Frequency of TikTok use				Total
	Rarely	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	
Less than 1 year	(38) 49.4%	(3) 3.9%	(15) 19.5%	(21) 27.3%	(77) 100.0%
Between 1-2 years	(29) 24.0%	(6) 5.0%	(27) 22.3%	(59) 48.8%	(121) 100.0%
Between 3-4 years	(9) 10.0%	(0) 0.0%	(15) 16.7%	(66) 73.3%	(90) 100.0%
More than 5 years	(5) 26.3%	(0) 0.0%	(3) 15.8%	(11) 57.9%	(19) 100.0%
Total	(81) 26.4%	(9) 2.9%	(60) 19.5%	(157) 51.1%	(307) 100.0%

Source: Field data 2024

To measure the relationship between longevity (how long respondents had been on TikTok) and frequency of use, a cross-tabulation analysis was conducted, with the results outlined in Table 1 above. The empirical data showed a strong, positive relationship between a respondent's longevity on TikTok and their frequency of daily platform engagement. Aggregately, the data showed that TikTok was characterised by highly active users, as daily use represented the absolute majority of the sample at 51.1%, while weekly users and rare users accounted for 19.5% and 26.4%, respectively. Conversely, monthly

use was the rarest frequency, representing only 2.9% of the sample. In terms of longevity of use, a clear pattern of habituation and increased platform dependency arose over time when breaking down usage frequency by the number of years a subscriber had used TikTok. Of the 77 respondents who had been using TikTok for less than a year (novice users), almost half (49.4%) used the platform "rarely", while only 27.3% used it daily. This indicated that newer users were still in the exploration or trial phase and had yet to integrate the platform into their daily activities.

Respondents who had used the platform for 1–2 years (intermediary users) represented the highest percentage in the sample ($n = 121$). In this group, the percentage of “rare” users halved to 24.0% ($n = 29$), while daily users nearly doubled to 48.8% ($n = 59$). At the peak of engagement were the established users (3–4 years), who comprised 29.3% ($n = 90$) of the total sample ($N = 307$). An overwhelming 73.3% of these established subscribers used the platform daily, while “rare” users dropped to a minor 10.0%. Monthly engagement was completely non-

existent (0.0%) in this group. The last group consisted of the veteran users (more than 5 years). For this smallest but oldest group ($n = 19$), daily usage remained dominant at 57.9% ($n = 11$), though there was a slight resurgence in rare usage (26.3%). This minor dip in daily frequency compared to the 3–4-year group suggested a slight platform fatigue effect or stabilisation of use after half a decade of subscription.

Assessing the ease of use and usefulness of TikTok

Table 2: Relationship of ease of use and usefulness on TikTok popularity compared to other social media

TikTok compared to other social media	Extent	Frequency of using TikTok				Total
		Rarely	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	
Ease of use	Very difficult	(1) 50.0%	(0) 0.0%	(0) 0.0%	(1) 50.0%	(2) 100.0%
	Difficult	(6) 50.0%	(0) 0.0%	(4) 33.3%	(2) 16.7%	(12) 100.0%
	Averagely easy	(39) 39.0%	(3) 3.0%	(21) 21.0%	(37) 37.0%	(100) 100.0%
	Easy	(27) 22.5%	(3) 2.5%	(29) 24.2%	(61) 50.8%	(120) 100.0%
	Very easy	(8) 11.0%	(3) 4.1%	(6) 8.2%	(56) 76.7%	(73) 100.0%
	Total	(81) 26.4%	(9) 2.9%	(60) 19.5%	(157) 51.1%	(307) 100.0%
Usefulness	No response	(0) 0.0%	(0) 0.0%	(0) 0.0%	(1) 100.0%	(1) 100.0%
	No extent	(3) 33.3%	(0) 0.0%	(2) 22.2%	(4) 44.4%	(9) 100.0%
	Low extent	(38) 46.9%	(3) 3.7%	(14) 17.3%	(26) 32.1%	(81) 100.0%
	Average extent	(28) 22.4%	(4) 3.2%	(33) 26.4%	(60) 48.0%	(125) 100.0%
	Large extent	(10) 14.9%	(0) 0.0%	(9) 13.4%	(48) 71.6%	(67) 100.0%
	Very large extent	(2) 8.3%	(2) 8.3%	(2) 8.3%	(18) 75.0%	(24) 100.0%
	Total	(81) 26.4%	(9) 2.9%	(60) 19.5%	(157) 51.1%	(307) 100.0%

Source: Field data 2024

Table 2 displays a cross-tabulation of user perceptions through two core constructs: Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Perceived Usefulness (PU), cross-referenced with respondents’ actual usage frequency.

Concerning perceived ease of use versus usage frequency, the data suggested that most respondents found TikTok to be highly accessible compared to other platforms. Of the 307 respondents, 62.9% in total found TikTok to be easy ($n = 120$, 39.1%) or very easy ($n = 73$, 23.8%) to use. A small proportion found the platform difficult ($n = 12$, 3.9%) or very difficult ($n = 2$, 0.7%). A notable upward pattern emerged: as perceived ease of use increased, daily usage rates increased substantially. Of those who rated

TikTok as “averagely easy”, 37.0% ($n = 37$) used it daily. This rate rose to 50.8% ($n = 61$) among those who rated it as “easy” and peaked at 76.7% ($n = 56$) among those who found it “very easy”. Conversely, as perceived difficulty increased, daily active usage dropped sharply.

Similarly, data on perceived usefulness (PU) versus frequency of use showed a positive trend when measuring the utility of TikTok relative to other social platforms. The results indicated that only 29.3% ($n = 90$) assessed the usefulness of TikTok as low or non-existent (0%–25%). A majority of the respondents (70.7%) found TikTok useful to an average, large, or very large degree (50%–100%). Utility proved to be a primary driver of

usage frequency. Respondents who found the platform useful to a “large extent” (75%) used the service daily (71.6%, $n = 48$). Daily use among those perceiving utility to a “very large extent” (100%) was 75.0% ($n = 18$). Conversely, those reporting a “low extent” (25%) of usefulness were primarily occasional users, with 46.9% (n

= 38 using the platform only “rarely”.

Hypothesis 1: Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness of TikTok, compared to other social media platforms, would have a significant positive impact on its popularity.

Table 3: ANOVA: Impact of perceived ease using TikTok compared to other social media platforms on frequency of TikTok use (popularity)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	45.015	1	45.015	30.898	.000b
	Residual	444.347	305	1.457		
	Total	489.362	306			

a. Dependent Variable: How often do you use TikTok?

b. Predictors: (Constant), How difficult or easy do you find using TikTok compared to other social media platforms?

Source: Field data 2024

The model summary showed that the R square was .092, which indicated that perceived ease of use explained 9.2% of the total variance in the frequency or popularity of TikTok usage. This left the remaining 90.8% of the variance to be explained by other factors, such as perceived usefulness, content trends, and peer influence. The goodness of fit for the model was tested using an ANOVA, which yielded a statistically significant result,

$F(1-305) = 30.898$, $p < .001$. The p-value of $< .001$ demonstrated a significant effect of perceived ease of use on TikTok usage frequency relative to other social media platforms. Overall, the R square value (.092) and the p-value ($< .001$) indicated a weak but statistically significant positive effect of perceived ease of use on TikTok usage frequency compared to other platforms.

Table 4: Regression coefficient: Impact of perceived ease using TikTok compared to other social media platforms on frequency of TikTok use (popularity)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.261	.312		7.240	.000
	How difficult or easy do you find using TikTok compared to other social media platforms?	.444	.080	.303	5.559	.000

a. Dependent Variable: How often do you use TikTok?

Source: Field data 2024

Based on the regression coefficient, the unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.444$) and standardized coefficient ($\beta = .303$, $t = 5.56$, $p < .001$) indicated that perceived ease of use had a moderate positive effect on TikTok usage frequency. The data suggested that for every

1-unit increase in perceived ease of use, the frequency of TikTok usage increased by 0.444 units. Consequently, the hypothesis was supported: perceived ease of using TikTok compared to other social media platforms had a moderate, statistically significant impact on its popularity.

Table 5: ANOVA: Impact of perceived usefulness of TikTok on its frequency of use (popularity)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	39.390	1	39.390	26.699	.000b
	Residual	449.972	305	1.475		
	Total	489.362	306			

a. Dependent Variable: How often do you use TikTok?

b. Predictors: (Constant), To what extent do you find it useful to use TikTok?

Source: Field data 2024

The model summary results suggested that perceived usefulness was a statistically significant but weak predictor

of the frequency of TikTok use ($R = .284$, $R \text{ square} = .080$, $\text{Adjusted } R \text{ square} = .077$). Based on the R square

value, perceived usefulness explained 8.0% of the total variance in the frequency or popularity of TikTok usage, leaving the remaining 92.0% of the variance unexplained. This indicated that while perceived usefulness was a contributing factor, other variables accounted for the majority of the variance in TikTok usage.

However, the goodness of fit for the model was tested using an ANOVA, which yielded a statistically significant result, $F(1, 305) = 26.70, p < .001$. The p -value ($< .001$)

demonstrated that the relationship was not due to chance; therefore, the perceived usefulness of TikTok did significantly determine how often individuals used it. Although the result was statistically significant, the effect was weak, mirroring the impact of perceived ease of use on usage frequency, with each construct explaining less than 10% of the total variance. Consequently, this suggested that additional factors were required to fully explain TikTok usage.

Table 6: Regression coefficient: Impact of perceived usefulness of TikTok on its frequency of use (popularity)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.830	.228		12.394	.000
	To what extent do you find it useful to use TikTok?	.370	.072	.284	5.167	.000

a. Dependent Variable: How often do you use TikTok?

Source: Field data 2024

The computed regression coefficient values showed that $B = .370$, $\beta = .284$, $t = 5.17$, and $p < .001$. This indicated that perceived usefulness significantly predicted the frequency of TikTok usage. That is, as users perceived TikTok to be more useful, they used it more frequently. The data suggested that for every 1-unit increase in

perceived usefulness, the frequency of TikTok usage increased by 0.370 units. Consequently, the hypothesis was supported: the perceived usefulness of TikTok had a moderate, statistically significant impact on its popularity.

Examining respondents' gratification and TikTok popularity

Table 7: Respondents reported TikTok level of satisfaction vis-à-vis various needs

Level of satisfaction	Needs			
	Information	Education	Socialisation	Entertainment
No response	(1) 0.3%	(2) 0.7%	(1) 0.3%	(0) 0.0%
Very dissatisfied	(34) 11.1%	(43) 14.0%	(49) 16.0%	(4) 1.3%
Dissatisfied	(2) 0.7%	(3) 1.0%	(6) 2.0%	(0) 0.0%
Averagely satisfied	(141) 45.9%	(138) 45.0%	(128) 41.7%	(62) 20.2%
Satisfied	(97) 31.6%	(91) 29.6%	(82) 26.7%	(99) 32.2%
Very satisfied	(32) 10.4%	(30) 9.8%	(41) 13.4%	(142) 46.3%
Total	(307) 100.0%	(307) 100.0%	(307) 100.0%	(307) 100.0%

Source: Field data 2024

The data in Table 7 showed how satisfied respondents were with TikTok in meeting four distinct needs: information, education, socialisation, and entertainment. The findings revealed that TikTok ratings were highest for entertainment, with 78.5% of respondents reporting that they were satisfied (32.2%) or very satisfied (46.3%). Only 1.3% reported dissatisfaction with this need. In contrast, satisfaction was moderate for information (42.0%), socialisation (40.1%), and education (39.4%),

with the majority of respondents rating their satisfaction as "average" for these three needs. Notably, socialisation recorded the highest level of dissatisfaction at 18.0% (2.0% for dissatisfied and 16.0% for very dissatisfied). This suggested that while TikTok was effectively satisfying the entertainment needs of users, it was conversely perceived as limited in fulfilling their informational, educational, and social needs. Ranking TikTok's performance based on the combined percentages of satisfied and very

satisfied users, entertainment was ranked first, followed by information, socialisation, and education.
Hypothesis 2: Respondents' level of satisfaction with

information, education, socialisation, and entertainment needs would have a significant relationship with their frequency of using TikTok.

Table 8: Regression coefficient: Impact respondents' satisfaction on TikTok on its frequency of use (popularity)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.258	.340		3.699	.000
	Rate your level of satisfaction with TikTok in meeting your information needs	.151	.086	.127	1.764	.079
	Rate your level of satisfaction with TikTok in meeting your education needs	.165	.080	.148	2.054	.041
	Rate your level of satisfaction with TikTok in meeting socialisation needs	.006	.061	.006	.099	.921
	Rate your level of satisfaction with TikTok in meeting entertainment needs	.392	.088	.266	4.458	.000

a. Dependent Variable: How often do you use TikTok?

Source: Field data 2024

The results in Table 8 is a multiple linear regression that examined the impact of the level of satisfaction with TikTok across the four needs. The data indicated that participants' satisfaction with TikTok meeting their entertainment needs significantly predicted frequency of use ($B = .392$, $SE = .088$, $\beta = .266$, $t = 4.46$, $p < .001$). Satisfaction with education also demonstrated that this need significantly predicted usage frequency ($B = .165$, $SE = .080$, $\beta = .148$, $t = 2.05$, $p = .041$). Although the regression results for satisfaction with entertainment and education needs were statistically significant, entertainment was found to be the strongest predictor, whereas education was substantially weaker.

This was not the case for satisfaction with information and socialisation needs ($B = .151$, $p = .079$, and $B = .006$, $p = .921$, respectively). These results suggested that TikTok meeting users' information and socialisation needs was not a significant predictor of its frequency of use. From the multiple linear regression results, it was concluded that users' frequency of TikTok use was primarily driven by how well the platform satisfied their entertainment and, to a lesser extent, their educational needs.

The focus of this study was to examine how frequently respondents used TikTok and to explore whether the frequency (popularity) of using it was determined by perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness compared to other social media platforms, as stated in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Likewise, to examine whether the popularity of TikTok was determined by the gratifications users received in terms of satisfying their information, entertainment, education, and socialisation needs, as explained by Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT).

The findings showed that a strong relationship existed

between respondents' longevity on TikTok and their frequency of use, which aligns with Katz and Blumler's (1974) Uses and Gratifications Theory. This theory posits that audiences actively select media that best satisfy their specific needs and that continued use is dependent on whether those gratifications are consistently met. While 49.4% of users with less than one year on the platform used it rarely, daily usage increased steadily with longevity (27.3% for less than 1 year, 48.8% for 1–2 years, 73.3% for 3–4 years, and 57.9% for above 5 years).

An assessment of the ease of use and usefulness of TikTok in relation to its popularity revealed that both constructs significantly predicted usage frequency. Although Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness both significantly predicted TikTok usage frequency, comparing the standardized beta values revealed that the former ($\beta = .303$) exerted a slightly stronger relative influence on usage frequency than the latter ($\beta = .284$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported. These empirical findings provide strong validation for the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), originally proposed by Fred Davis (1989). According to TAM, the adoption and continued usage of any digital technology are directly determined by two primary cognitive beliefs: Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Perceived Usefulness (PU). This finding also aligns with Khlaif and Salha (2021), who argued that users find social media platforms easy to use when they are designed with user-friendly interfaces. The low technical barrier of TikTok's interface compared to older text-dominant social platforms (such as Facebook or LinkedIn) proved to be a crucial driver of its popularity in Cameroon. Because TikTok relies heavily on a vertical swipe mechanism, automatic video playback,

and a zero-search algorithmic delivery system, users require almost no digital literacy to consume content. The high concentration of daily users among those who rated the platform as “Very easy” (76.7%) demonstrates that frictionless system design directly promotes platform familiarisation. This finding confirmed Rahmawati & Anwar (2022) and Fan *et al.*, (2023), earlier mentioned in this study who claimed that the interface design of TikTok is characterised by lower the technical barriers to creative production.

Similarly, examining respondents’ derived gratifications using multiple linear regression produced a significant positive relationship with TikTok popularity across only two needs (entertainment and education). However, the effect for entertainment ($B = .392$, $SE = .088$, $\beta = .266$, $t = 4.46$, $p < .001$) was found to be stronger, whereas that for education ($B = .165$, $SE = .080$, $\beta = .148$, $t = 2.05$, $p = .041$) was weaker. Satisfaction with information and socialisation needs did not predict usage. Although respondents reported descriptive satisfaction with information and socialisation, this satisfaction did not translate into higher usage frequency. As earlier stated in Jaffar, Riaz, & Mushtaq (2019) and other relevant literature mentioned in this study, youth demographics frequently utilise TikTok for the purpose of entertainment as a means to manage stress and mitigate isolation.

By combining TAM and UGT, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of TikTok’s popularity in urban Cameroon. TAM explains how the platform’s low technical barriers make it highly accessible, while UGT explains the psychological needs that keep users returning. Together, these frameworks demonstrate that TikTok’s success is driven by a powerful combination of a frictionless user experience and highly personalised gratification.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the findings of this study that as subscribers spend more years on TikTok, their usage transitions from casual, sporadic interaction (high “rare” rates in year one) to deeply ingrained daily routines (high “daily” rates in years two through four). The data also indicate that individuals do not use TikTok randomly in Cameroon; frequency of use aligns directly with perceived utility and gratification needs.

The nature of TikTok’s content also contributes significantly to its popularity. However, not all content gratifies user needs equally. Evidence from this study depicts that the majority of respondents frequently used TikTok because it satisfied their entertainment and education needs.

Based on these findings, this study recommends that software engineers consider designing future social media interfaces to minimise technical complexity and friction, thereby boosting user engagement. Additionally, content creators should integrate elements of entertainment into informational, educational, and socialisation content to maximise user gratification.

Finally, although Uses and Gratifications theory was conceived over half a century ago, it remains a powerful framework in modern communication studies. Future research should continue to integrate TAM and UGT to achieve a deeper understanding of emerging media adoption.

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