



Motivation of Tiktok Users

Cătălina – Oana Frățiță
MVNIA, Bucharest, Romania

ABSTRACT: In a world where technology is part of people's lives and where most people are present on social networks, research is needed to highlight the importance and usefulness of these social networks. Since 2016, a new social network has joined this community: TikTok. Through this approach we aim to identify the reasons why people stormed the social network TikTok. Through an analysis of the literature, we will follow the motivation of people to be present on TikTok and we will determine if the identified reasons are influenced by the coronavirus pandemic. Without a doubt, the pandemic that started at the end of 2019 has changed the lives of many people, from different perspectives. The analyzed perspective in this article is that of the activity on social networks. Through this study, we want to determine if the pandemic was the reason for the growth of the TikTok community in such short time.

KEYWORDS: Coronavirus, Online, Pandemic, Social Media, Tiktok

INTRODUCTION

Social networks have become indispensable in the lives of most people. They can be used in both personal and professional life, and the highlight in the use of social networks has been reached in 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has changed the way of life for many people. Restrictions to limit the spread of the virus have increased the use of social networks, either to be close to the loved ones, or to limit economic losses by carrying out activities in the online environment, or simply to get rid of boredom.

One of the social networks that has attracted a lot of users is TikTok. This social network was introduced in online environment in 2016 [1]. TikTok has had the largest increase in the number of users, in a very short time. If in the year 2018 were around 55 million users of TikTok, globally, in the year 2020 this number reached more than 689 million users [2]. So the impact that this social network has had has been of great proportions.

The objectives proposed through this research are to identify the characteristics of the social network TikTok and to identify the motivation of people to spend their time watching the content shared on this social network or creating content to share it with other users. To achieve these goals, we will study the literature. We will identify the research in which the TikTok phenomenon has been studied.

Our goal is to identify the reasons behind the use of the social network TikTok and, depending on these, to observe the impact that the pandemic has had on the increase in the number of users. We believe that if these reasons have to do with the isolation and restrictions imposed by the pandemic, then we can state that the pandemic has influenced the increase in the number of users of the social network TikTok. We assume that this is only an assumption and that any further studies could demonstrate that this increase in the number of users has no way with the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE PANDEMIC

Social networks have attracted a huge number of users over the last decade. Regardless of the reasons why they are used, whether for communication, for entertainment or for the performance of certain professional tasks, social networks have been an obvious success across the globe.

The pandemic has imposed certain restrictions to overcome the global health crisis. These restrictions have led to the isolation of people, and the lockdown has led to a large amount of free time. This free time has been a benefit for social networks that have achieved a greater number of users and more time allocated by existing users. And before the pandemic, social media was occupying an important place in people's lives, but the pandemic has helped to strengthen this position. One of the social networks that has seen a considerable increase in the number of users, during the pandemic, is TikTok. While there are several factors that have influenced this growth, the pandemic has certainly had an important impact as well.



Social networks have helped to carry out many activities, even during the national quarantine, imposed in each country. People used social media for both professional and personal activities. The free time that they had available due to the quarantine was spent in the online environment. This was the premise of the evolution of the social network TikTok: a huge number of people forced to stay in the house and with a lot of free time at their disposal.

This premise was also the basis for conducting research. The research has targeted both the benefits that social networks offer and the negative aspects they have. The benefits of social networks are obvious: it offers the possibility of communication, information, time efficiency, relaxation or the execution of certain activities. These are just some of the things that can be done through social media.

Regarding the negative aspects, Hamilton, Nesi and Choukas-Bradley [3] considered that the overuse of social networks could have a negative influence, which is why they conducted a study in which to identify this negative influence on American adolescents, adolescence being the period when the fastest biological, social and psychological changes take place. All these changes influence the development of any individual, and the isolation imposed by the pandemic has changed the way of life of adolescents. At the beginning of the pandemic, schools were closed, extracurricular activities were suspended, and physical interaction was limited, as far as possible, in all areas. This is where social networks have intervened, helping young people to satisfy their need for communication. Teenagers have used social media much more during the pandemic, either to combat boredom or to be connected with others [4]. The lack of the possibility to interact physically with others can have serious consequences for any person, but the most exposed are teenagers. For many of them, the restrictions imposed were felt as deprivation of liberty.

One of the features of social networks can be both a positive aspect and a negative aspect. The speed with which information can be shared on social networks and the huge number of people these messages can reach have given social networks an important role in disseminating information related to the evolution of the pandemic [5]. This is a positive aspect that has helped the population to be informed. Warning messages could also be sent when is the case. Instead, this benefit can turn into a problem when the information is non-compliant with reality and is intended to create panic among the population. Disinformation is one of the biggest threats that can exist during a global health crisis [6]. We support this statement and add that disinformation poses a threat in any context, regardless of whether or not there is a crisis.

During the pandemic, there was a social network that stood out due to the huge number of people who joined its community, and this social network is TikTok. This offers the possibility of expression through the distribution of videos, and this way of expression has been used frequently during the pandemic, thus ranking TikTok in the top of social networks around the world. Based on the fact that TikTok has had this exponential growth in popularity during the pandemic, we could state that the lockdown measures imposed to limit the spread of coronavirus infection have had an effect on this increase.

TIKTOK AT A GLANCE

Currently, TikTok is one of the most used social networks, worldwide. In a study conducted in October 2021 [7], based on data obtained from various companies, TikTok ranks seventh place (*Figure 1*). The ranking is made according to the number of active users within each social network.

TikTok is based on creating short videos and distributing them to other users. This social network was launched in September 2016 [8]. The original name of the social network was Musical.ly. From this name came the usefulness of the social network: the creation of music videos.

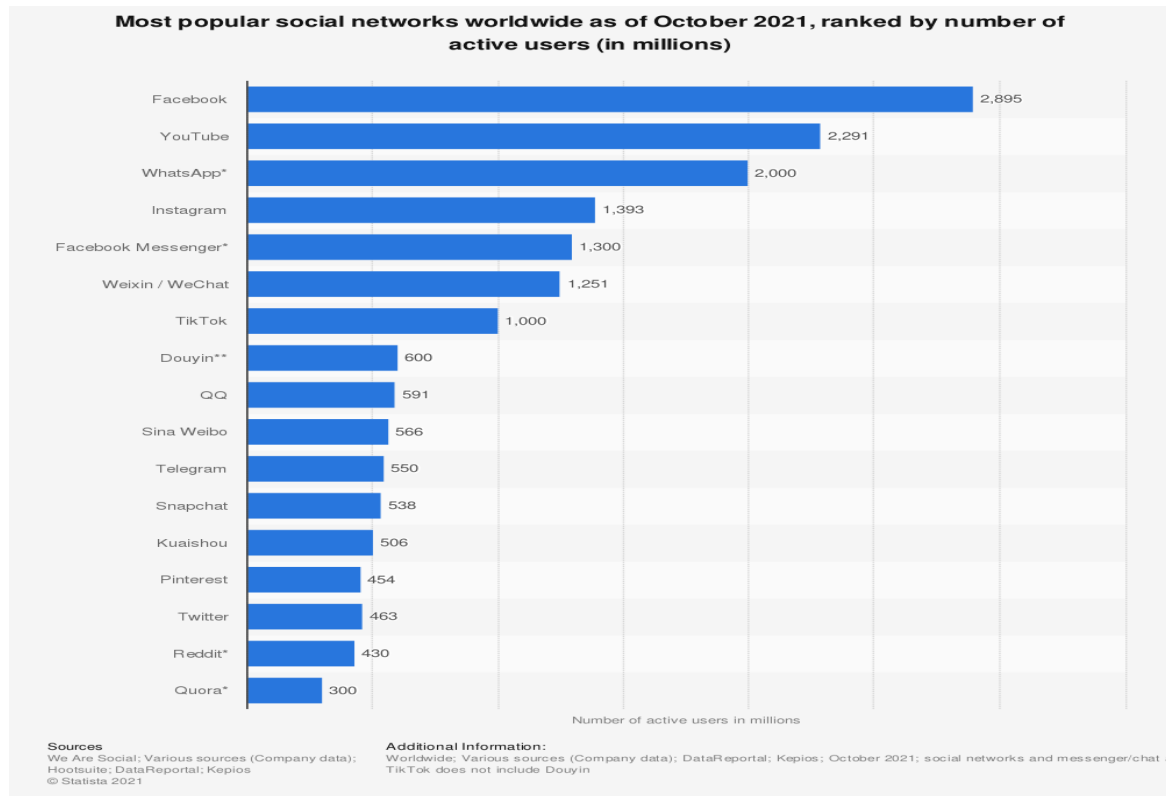


Figure 1 - Most popular social networks [7]

The popularity gained by this social network has determined the need to be updated so as to satisfy the needs of users. Thus, the social network updates brought new functions to attract users, and the objective was achieved because the total number of users increased from year to year, as can be seen in Figure 2 (see below).

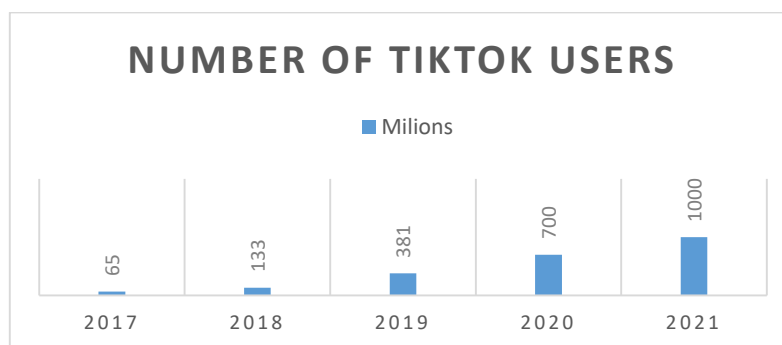


Figure 2 - Number of TikTok users [9]

If in 2017, the social network had around 65 million users, in 2021, their number reached over one billion. The largest increase was recorded in the year 2020, which is why we believe that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the increase in the popularity of the social network TikTok.

MOTIVATION FOR USING TIKTOK

The reasons behind using TikTok are different, and one of the differences lies in how to use this social network: either for tracking content created by other users or for creating content. Those who follow the content do so for reasons related to the desire to get rid



of their own reality or to interact with other people. Those who create content on the social network TikTok do it for reasons related to satisfying the need for expression [10].

The explosion in the number of users of the social network TikTok has caused an increase in the number of researches carried out on this topic. The researchers noticed the impact that TikTok had on the social media community, which is why they wanted to understand how a social network managed to reach the top, in such a short time.

Although the obvious reasons why TikTok users were attracted to this social network are based on activities specific to leisure time, there are also reasons that are based on the transmission of important messages. The content creators have also managed to convey important messages through the social network TikTok. They used humor to create messages that attack or criticize certain problems of violence [11].

In a study conducted in June 2020 [12], the most common reasons why people use social networks were identified, as can be seen in Figure 3. The question asked to respondents was "What are the main reasons why you use TikTok?" The sample was composed of English and American people. The result of this research has shown that most users have chosen TikTok for the funny videos that are shared within this social network.

Other reasons identified by the research are: occupying free time, expressing ideas, identifying new ideas, following famous people, learning new things, distributing their own videos or increasing popularity. So, we can say that there are two categories of people who use TikTok: the category of those who come out of anonymity and share content and the category of those who prefer to track the activity carried out by other users.

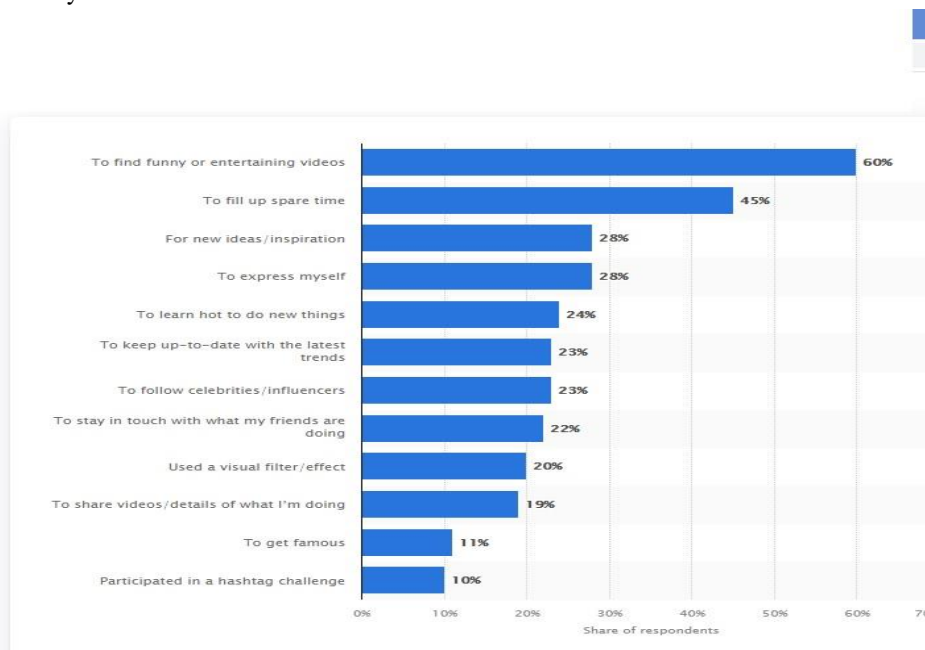


Figure 3- Source: [12]

We can see that the top three reasons why TikTok users spend their time browsing this social network are related to activities that take place in their free time. So, free time during quarantine can be a determining factor in the increase in popularity of the social network TikTok. Continuing the analysis of the other reasons why this social network is used, we reinforce the idea that the free time offered by the pandemic has led to an increase in the number of TikTok users.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the literature that we have carried out has confirmed to us that researchers have paid attention to the social network TikTok due to the rapid increase in the number of users. The reasons why TikTok users joined this community show that most of



them did it for carrying out certain activities related to their free time, and through this we can conclude that the popularity of TikTok has grown so quickly, in such a short time due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic around the world.

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