

## THE SOCIAL VALUES ATTACHED TO THE TIKTOK SOCIAL PLATFORM OF THE AGE CATEGORY 50+. A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### **Abstract**

This paper analyzes the social values through which users over the age of 50 identify with the new TikTok social platform. Although the other online social networks are mainly aimed at a young audience, the TikTok application has overcome this barrier and included the age segment of over 50 years in the categories targeted by it. The ease with which one can make their proper creations and the intuitiveness of the application has made that two years after the launch of the new social platform a quarter of its users are in a more tangible age category of novelty and online interaction. The reality shows that a social application does not contradict people from early youth at all, and if you provide them with sufficiently clear tools to express themselves, they will take advantage of them and make their genuine creations.

The present approach is based on existing data about the application in question and focuses on illustrating some values that emerge from the case study on TikTok.

**Keywords:** *social platforms, TikTok, social values, online applications, socialization at the age of 3.*

### **Résumé**

*Cet article analyse les valeurs sociales par lesquelles les utilisateurs de plus de 50 ans s'identifient à la nouvelle plateforme sociale TikTok. Si les autres réseaux sociaux en ligne s'adressent principalement à un public jeune, l'application TikTok a surmonté cet obstacle et a inclus le segment d'âge des plus de 50 ans dans les catégories qu'elle cible. La facilité avec laquelle on peut faire ses propres créations et l'intuitivité de l'application ont fait que deux ans après le lancement de la nouvelle plateforme sociale, un quart de ses utilisateurs se trouvent dans une catégorie d'âge plus tangible de nouveauté et d'interaction en ligne. La réalité est qu'une application sociale ne contredit pas du tout les gens qui ont passé leur jeunesse, et s'ils ont des outils suffisamment clairs pour s'exprimer, ils en profiteront et feront leurs propres créations.*

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*La présente approche est basée sur des données existantes sur l'application en question et se concentre sur l'illustration de certaines valeurs qui ressortent de l'étude de cas sur TikTok.*

**Mots-clés:** *plateformes sociales, TikTok, valeurs sociales, applications en ligne, socialisation au 3ème âge.*

### **Rezumat**

Lucrarea de față analizează valorile sociale prin care utilizatorii trecuți de 50 de ani se identifică cu noua platformă socială TikTok. Deși celelalte rețele de socializare online se adresează cu preponderență unui public tânăr, aplicația TikTok a depășit această barieră și a inclus segmentul de vârstă de peste 50 de ani în categoriile vizate de aceasta. Ușurința cu care cineva își poate realiza propriile creații și intuitivitatea aplicației a făcut ca la doi ani de la lansarea noii platforme sociale un sfert dintre utilizatorii ei să fie dintr-o categorie de vârstă mai greu tangibilă de noutate și interacțiune în online. Realitatea arată că o aplicație socială nu vine deloc în contradicție cu persoanele trecute de prima tinerețe, iar dacă le pui la dispoziție instrumentele suficient de clare prin care să se poată exprima, vor profita de acestea și își vor realiza propriile lor creații.

Abordarea de față are la bază datele existente de până acum despre aplicația în discuție și se concentrează pe ilustrarea unor valori care reies din studiul de caz asupra TikTok.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *platforme sociale, TikTok, valori sociale, aplicații online, socializare la vârsta a 3-a.*

## **1. Introduction**

The challenges of 2020 brought about changes unimaginable a few years ago. The pandemic changed behaviors and habits and offered new perspectives on thinking and doing things. The year 2020 has profoundly changed both the relationship to the environment inside the house and the outside, outside the family and intimate space. By far the most visible challenge was online for people who were not at all or too unfamiliar with it. Communication has migrated from face-to-face meeting to meeting through a smaller or larger screen that wants to more or less responsive to commands. Most social gatherings and interactions took place online and social and entertainment platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Linked In, TikTok have seen the biggest explosion (Naegoe, 2002) since they were launched. The global situation has unexpectedly attracted many users, Romania having an average of 9 social applications per user in 2020 (Kemp, 2021).

One of the social platforms with spectacular growth in 2020 is TikTok, an application in which anyone can create, upload, watch and distribute 15-second short films. The network has access to an infinite library with music, sound effects, audio sequences from movies, and multiple possibilities to edit your video creations. TikTok is the place where anyone can post anything as long as it is as funny and funny as possible. Pets are a must, and faithful copying of videos by changing only the protagonists is already famous on TikTok.

Table 1: Average number of social media accounts held by internet users in each country



Source: Global Web Index, [www.globalwebindex.com](http://www.globalwebindex.com)

## 2. Research methodology

This paper qualitatively approaches a case study on a new social platform that since its entry on the market indicates the widest range of users it addresses, and as a novelty brings the possibility that even the most authentic people wishing to be exposed to - can create its content as easily as possible. The direct effect of this opening was that one year after its launch, the application has a quarter of users over 50 years old.

The study is a desk research and represents a secondary analysis of existing data to date on the social platform TikTok. As a new platform, research on this are few and approaches to it are treated in general. Thus the limits of the research consist in the small volume of data and research existing on TikTok.

The basis of this study was the existing statistics so far, testimonies of some people from the management of TikTok Romania, but also the description of the application from GoogleApps or App Store where it can be downloaded and installed on any type of smartphone. Although each sentence in the description of the application is carefully constructed, highlighting all the tools with which anyone can create content according to their interests, they also reflect in their substrate certain values that I think resonate with people over 50 and who they are the basis of a large number of users within this age category.

The study is exploratory, likely to highlight how the trend of application developers is deeply rooted in reality, a reality that can not ignore the fact that even the needs of people over 50 years have changed and aligned with the times current.

### **3. Perceptions of TikTok. Values associated with the new application**

Although the general perception is that it would be an application mainly for teenagers, the current data give us reasons to reflect on the existing age categories on this platform not only in their capacity as users but also as video creators. A high degree of adaptation to this platform that entered the market in 2018 is visible in the age category of over 50 years, with a percentage of almost 25% of all TikTok users. (Iqbal, 2021).

The main reason for adopting this platform among any age group is easy to understand - the pandemic and the measures taken to stop the virus. The data indicate a doubling of the number of users in January-May 2020 compared to the entire year 2019, but after May 2020 the statistical projections indicate a spectacular increase, confirmed in January 2021 (applicable to Romania) by Laura Savu (Global Community Manager Tiktok) which shows that “in October there were 4,781,147 active users in Romania, and in terms of increasing the number of users from one year to the next we have an increase of 156%” (Machi, 202).

In the context in which the trigger for downloading the application was the physical distance that sent to a need for closeness in all its forms online, a natural direction to approach is the creation of content by the people we chose to make this analysis. While other social platforms have gradually attracted age groups that find it harder to use technology or adapt to it later, TikTok has less than a quarter of its current users less than 50 years old since its launch. What determines those over the age of 50 to make funny videos in which they are filmed in the most comical poses is an aspect that arouses interest immediately after the amusement created by watching these videos.

I believe that the interest in creating content by people over the age of 50 on a relatively new platform and created only for young people up to 18 years old is centered around values that, although not clearly expressed by the app owners, and of the business, and they were not even caught in a study conducted with the users of the platform, they emerge even from the description of the application.

The English translation of the description of the new social network shows that:

“TikTok is the destination of mobile videos. On TikTok, short videos are exciting, spontaneous, and authentic. Whether you're a sports fanatic, a pet enthusiast, or just looking to laugh, there's something for everyone on TikTok. All you have to do is watch, interact with what you like, skip what you don't like and you'll find an endless stream of short videos that appear customized just for you. From morning coffee to afternoon errands, TikTok has videos that are sure to make your day” (Google Play).

Although the description is in a friendly = formula, apparently aimed at young people who are just waiting to assert their talents on a new social

network, we notice that the audience addressed in this article is reached by a series of values such as:

- *Diversity.* In one sentence the TikTok application shows that no matter what a user's passions, daily activities, or ways to have fun, there is room for everyone. The application is open to any kind of content everyone wants.

- *Social inclusion.* The fact that “there is something for everyone on TikTok” (Google Play) shows that no one is taken off the platform and that no matter how or who you are, a place is provided on the platform. Moreover, the description makes it clear that you do not have to create content, you can view the content of others just by downloading the application. At the same time, another important aspect to be mentioned under this scope is the provision by TikTok of the multitude of intuitive video editing possibilities. “Our built-in editing tools let you easily cut, trim, merge and copy videos without leaving the app”(Google Play). Combining this option of the application with people over 50 known as reluctant to new technologies, we see how the new social platform attracts followers of all ages and helps them to be present there, and even involves them in creating their content.

- *Tolerance.* “Be entertained and inspired by a global community of creators. Millions of creators are on TikTok, showcasing their incredible skills and daily life. Get inspired” (Google Play). Releasing the type of content that can be created has attracted people for whom creating content spontaneously, without a strategy and any kind of conversion is the lack of belonging to one network or another.

- *The opportunity to reinvent.* The fact that the network offers anything for everyone, shows that virtually any type of content is good content as long as people choose what they like from the series of editing tools and add the favorite music genre in the background. This aspect also indicates that for anyone who wants to create content there are several listeners, there is an audience or niche that can be followed by other followers.

The above confirms that even social platforms that years ago targeted only certain categories of young audiences, are adapting today without excluding the elderly, but on the contrary, making them involved in the creative process. Each value highlighted above lies in the description of the application itself, which shows that the application developers understood and listened to both the needs of the public they had addressed until 2018, the year of the TikTok application, but those of an audience eager to express on social platforms, but somewhat lacking the necessary technical knowledge.

What TikTok does by making video editing available to anyone is actually to open the doors to everyone and thus become one of the fastest-growing applications in a very short time. Certainly, the pandemic played an important role in this explosion of the application, however, we tend to believe that above all was listening to the need of another category of the public - that of over 50 years. We don't know how things would have been in the absence of the pandemic, it is certain that we have grandparents everywhere in TikTok, in the

country or abroad who dance, make jokes, cook, craft, talk, or mime, and all this does not happen so often on Facebook or other social platforms.

#### 4. Conclusions

People over the age of 50 want to adapt to current times regardless of existing external factors. This is indicated by the figures of the social platform TikTok which has gained users for its main feature - the lack of focus on a particular type of content. Leaving it to each individual to create content and manage it, TikTok shows that one of the main values is tolerance, and the subliminal message is:

“Here you can upload any type of video, you don't need a strategy, you don't have to think about any time and conversion type, everyone here is welcome, and if someone doesn't like what you post, they will unsubscribe from your videos, they won't receive them anymore, but you can stay there without any problem” (Google Play).

The other values are in the same description of the application and only need to be read carefully, as their message includes diversity, social inclusion, reinvention regardless of age, and I think these are the strong beliefs that TikTok has attracted so many users. a very short time.

If the other social platforms focus around a certain type of content (Instagram - photos, Facebook - socializing, events, news, LinkedIn - professional network), although each of the networks has migrated and added new features to include as many tools and possibilities of expression, TikTok comes from the beginning with the proposal that if you did not know where you can do things as you feel or did not have where now you have the opportunity, is the chance to express yourself spontaneously, without any plan, without descriptions or commenting on a post. TikTok gives you the chance to appear without any inhibition and to do what you think the way you think.

At the same time, I believe that at a time when the pandemic was the main topic of discussion, escape through the application and with its help, understood by everyone in their way, is one of the valves through which users have managed to create their mechanisms for overcoming periods, especially those of total isolation.

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