

THE ROLE OF TIKTOK IN ACCELERATING THE ACQUISITION OF VIRAL INFORMATION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS (INABA)

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received Juli 2026

Revised Juli 2026

Accepted Juli 2026

Available online Juli 2026

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of the TikTok application in accelerating the acquisition of viral information among students of Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA). The study employed a descriptive qualitative method, with data collected through interviews with active university students as informants and supported by a literature review. The analysis was based on Everett M. Rogers' **Diffusion of Innovations Theory**, which explains how information spreads through communication channels. The findings indicate that TikTok serves as the primary platform for obtaining information about trending issues, current events, and viral topics. The **For You Page (FYP)** feature enables information to spread rapidly and allows users to access it without actively searching for it. The high frequency of TikTok usage also makes the platform more popular than other social media platforms as a source of information. Nevertheless, the study found that students recognize the importance of verifying information obtained from TikTok through other credible sources before trusting or sharing it. Therefore, TikTok has proven to be an effective platform for accelerating information dissemination among university students. However, its use should be accompanied by digital literacy and critical thinking to ensure that the information received remains accurate and reliable.

Keywords: TikTok, viral information, social media, university students, Diffusion of Innovations, digital literacy



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The rapid development of information and communication technology has significantly changed the way people obtain and disseminate information. One of the most notable developments is the emergence of social media, which has become an integral part of daily life, especially among university students. Various social media platforms provide easy and fast access to information, with TikTok currently being one of the fastest-growing digital platforms in terms of user numbers.

Initially recognized as an entertainment platform, TikTok has evolved into an important medium for disseminating viral information. Through its For You Page (FYP) feature, users can quickly access the latest information regarding current events, trends, social issues, educational topics, and news that attract public attention. TikTok's recommendation algorithm enables information to spread rapidly, allowing users to stay updated without conducting specific searches.

University students are among the most active users of social media as a source of information. Besides using TikTok for entertainment purposes, students also rely on the platform to keep up with trending issues and current developments. Its easy accessibility,

short-form video format, and engaging presentation make TikTok one of the preferred platforms for obtaining information quickly.

On the other hand, the convenience of obtaining information through TikTok also presents challenges. Information that spreads rapidly is not always accurate or trustworthy. Therefore, users are expected to possess the ability to filter and verify information before believing or redistributing it. Critical thinking is essential to prevent misunderstandings and the spread of misinformation or unverified content.

Based on this phenomenon, it is necessary to examine the role of TikTok in accelerating the acquisition of viral information among university students. This study focuses on students of Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) to explore how TikTok is utilized as a medium for obtaining viral information and to understand students' perceptions regarding the speed of information dissemination through the platform. The findings are expected to provide insights into TikTok's role as an information medium in the digital era while encouraging students to use social media responsibly and wisely.

1.2 Problem Identification

1. TikTok is utilized by university students as a medium for obtaining viral information.
2. Information spreads very rapidly through TikTok.
3. Not all information circulated on TikTok is accurate and reliable.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How do students of Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) utilize TikTok as a medium for obtaining viral information?
2. What are the perceptions of Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) students regarding the speed of information dissemination through TikTok?
3. How do Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) students evaluate the accuracy of information obtained from TikTok before believing or sharing it?

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To describe how students of Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) utilize TikTok as a medium for obtaining viral information.
2. To describe students' perceptions regarding the speed of information dissemination through TikTok.
3. To describe how students evaluate the accuracy of information obtained from TikTok before trusting or redistributing it.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to enrich academic knowledge and serve as a reference regarding the role of TikTok in accelerating the acquisition of viral information among university students.

Practical Significance

1. For Students: To encourage more responsible and critical use of TikTok as a source of information..

2. For Researchers: To broaden knowledge and research experience related to social media studies..
3. For the University: To serve as a reference for future studies concerning social media and information dissemination.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Communication Theory Applied

This study employs the Diffusion of Innovations Theory proposed by Everett M. Rogers. The theory explains that an innovation or piece of information spreads through communication channels within a social system over a certain period of time.

In this study, TikTok functions as a communication medium that accelerates the dissemination of viral information among university students. Through its For You Page (FYP) feature, information can quickly reach a large number of users without requiring them to actively search for it.

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory is considered appropriate for this study because it explains how TikTok facilitates the rapid acquisition and dissemination of viral information among students at Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA).

2.2 Key Concepts

This study is built upon three key concepts: TikTok, viral information, and university students.

TikTok is a short-video-based social media platform that enables users to create, share, and obtain various types of information.

Viral information refers to information that spreads rapidly through social media and attracts significant public attention within a short period.

University students refer to individuals enrolled in higher education institutions who actively use social media as one of their primary sources of information.

These three concepts are closely interconnected in this research, as the study seeks to understand how TikTok contributes to accelerating the acquisition of viral information among students of Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA).

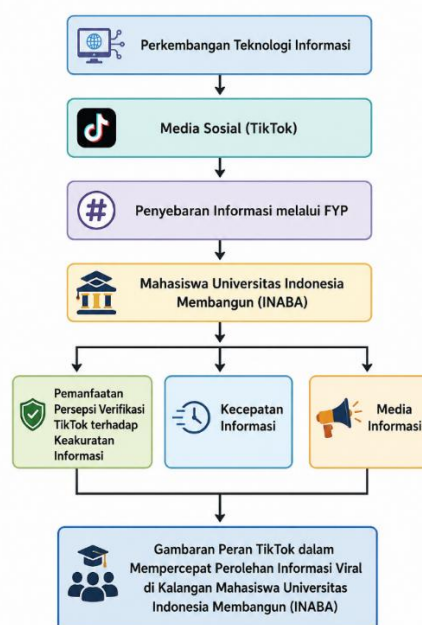
2.3 Previous Studies

1. **Khairani et al. (2022)**, in their study entitled *The Utilization of TikTok as an Information and Communication Medium among Generation Z*, concluded that TikTok is no longer used solely as an entertainment platform but has also become an important source of information related to education, health, lifestyle, and viral

events. The study found that the rapid dissemination of information is one of the primary reasons users prefer TikTok as an information source..

2. **Putri and Nugroho (2023)**, in their research *The Influence of TikTok Social Media Usage on Students' Information Acquisition*, found that university students rely on TikTok to follow current news and trending issues because the platform presents information in a concise, engaging, and easily understandable format. However, they also emphasized the importance of verifying information to avoid the spread of misinformation and hoaxes.
3. **Sari and Prasetyo (2022)**, through their study *The Role of Social Media in Digital Information Dissemination among the Younger Generation*, explained that social media enables information to spread much faster than conventional media. This rapid dissemination is influenced by platform algorithms and users' high levels of content-sharing activity. The study also highlighted the importance of digital literacy in enabling users to distinguish between valid information and misinformation.

2.4 Conceptual Framework



3. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Data Description

Based on interviews conducted with two students of Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA), namely **Risyel** and **Aurel**, it was found that TikTok has become one of the primary platforms for obtaining information regarding viral issues and trending topics within society.

Both participants stated that they regularly use TikTok as an information source, particularly through the **For You Page (FYP)** feature, which displays content according to users' interests and browsing activities.

The first participant, **Risyel**, explained that TikTok greatly facilitates access to trending information because viral content appears quickly on the FYP. According to her, this feature allows users to stay informed without searching for information on other platforms.

As stated during the interview:

"In my opinion, TikTok is very helpful because viral information usually appears quickly on the FYP. Therefore, I can immediately find out about it without having to search through other media." (Risyel, 2026)

Risyel also mentioned that TikTok is the social media platform she uses most frequently. Because of this high usage intensity, she tends to receive updates about emerging trends and viral topics through TikTok before encountering them on other platforms.

She stated:

"Since I open TikTok more frequently than other applications, I usually get information from TikTok first. Whenever something goes viral, I often find out about it there before seeing it on other social media platforms." (Risyel, 2026)

Meanwhile, the second participant, **Aurel**, explained that the rapid dissemination of information on TikTok has significantly influenced her daily activities as a university student.

She noted that information related to news, entertainment, and educational topics can be accessed more quickly, enabling her to keep up with current developments more efficiently.

However, Aurel emphasized that she always attempts to verify the accuracy of information before trusting or sharing it.

As she stated during the interview:

"It has a significant impact because I can keep up with current information much faster, whether it is related to news, entertainment, or education. However, I still try to verify the information through other sources before believing or sharing it because not everything on TikTok is necessarily true." (Aurel, 2026)

3.2 Data Analysis

The rapid development of social media has transformed the way university students obtain information, particularly regarding trending issues and viral topics. This study found that TikTok is the platform most frequently used by the participants because it delivers information rapidly through its For You Page (FYP) algorithm.

This convenience enables students to obtain current information without manually searching for it, making access to trending content faster and more practical.

In addition to accessibility, the frequency of TikTok usage strongly influences students' preference for obtaining information through the platform. Participants indicated that they spend more time on TikTok than on other social media platforms, making it their primary source for discovering new trends and viral events.

These findings suggest that habitual use of a particular platform shapes users' preferences regarding which source they perceive as the fastest and most convenient for obtaining information.

The findings also demonstrate that although TikTok enables information to spread rapidly, students remain aware of the importance of evaluating the credibility of the information they receive.

One participant explained that information obtained through TikTok is always cross-checked with other reliable sources before being accepted as true or redistributed.

This finding indicates that while TikTok accelerates information dissemination, users continue to play an essential role in determining the credibility of the information through verification.

Therefore, TikTok functions not only as an information-sharing platform but also as a medium that encourages users to think critically about the information they consume.

3.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal that TikTok plays a significant role as a medium for disseminating viral information among students of Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA).

Both participants stated that information concerning current issues, emerging trends, and public events is obtained more quickly through TikTok than through other social media platforms. This advantage is primarily supported by the For You Page (FYP) feature, which automatically recommends content based on users' interests and online activities.

As a result, students can access relevant information without conducting manual searches.

These findings are consistent with Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory. According to Rogers (2003), diffusion is the process through which an innovation or information spreads among members of a social system via communication channels over time.

In this study, TikTok serves as the communication channel, while viral information represents the innovation being disseminated. The For You Page (FYP) algorithm accelerates this diffusion process by enabling information to reach users rapidly and efficiently.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that students do not automatically accept every piece of information encountered on TikTok. One participant emphasized that information obtained from TikTok is verified through other credible sources before being trusted or shared.

This demonstrates that although information diffusion on TikTok occurs rapidly, users still play a crucial role in determining the credibility and reliability of the information they receive.

Overall, the study concludes that TikTok is an effective medium for accelerating the dissemination of viral information among students at Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA). Nevertheless, the acceptance and redistribution of information remain strongly influenced by users' critical thinking skills and their willingness to verify information before sharing it.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study regarding the role of TikTok as a medium for acquiring viral information among students of Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA), several conclusions can be drawn.

First, university students utilize TikTok as one of their primary sources of information regarding trending issues, current events, and topics that are widely discussed by the public. The For You Page (FYP) feature enables viral information to appear automatically on users' homepages, allowing students to obtain the latest information without actively searching for it. The high frequency of TikTok usage also makes it a more commonly used source of information than other social media platforms.

Second, the findings indicate that students have a positive perception of the speed at which information spreads through TikTok. Information related to news, entertainment, educational topics, and social issues can be accessed within a relatively short period. This rapid dissemination is supported by TikTok's recommendation algorithm, which distributes information efficiently to a large number of users, making it easier for students to stay updated on current trends.

Finally, although TikTok provides convenient and rapid access to information, students remain aware of the importance of verifying the accuracy of the information they receive. Before believing or sharing information obtained from TikTok, students generally compare it with other credible sources. This finding suggests that easy access to information through TikTok should be balanced with critical thinking and digital literacy to ensure that the information received and disseminated is accurate, trustworthy, and accountable.

4.2 Implications

This study has both theoretical and practical implications regarding digital media consumption among university students.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings reinforce Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory by demonstrating that TikTok's For You Page (FYP) algorithm significantly

accelerates the dissemination of information. Furthermore, the study contributes to communication studies by illustrating the transformation of social media from an entertainment platform into a major source of information for young people.

From a practical perspective, the rapid dissemination of viral information highlights the importance of strengthening students' digital literacy and critical thinking skills to minimize the risk of misinformation and hoaxes. In addition, the high level of student engagement with TikTok presents an opportunity for Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) to utilize the platform as a creative channel for academic communication and information dissemination.

At the same time, students should be encouraged to maintain a healthy balance between social media use and face-to-face communication so that excessive use of digital platforms does not negatively affect real-world social interactions.

4.3 Research Limitations

This study encountered no major obstacles during the research process because the research object had been clearly defined and the selected participants were available for interviews according to the research requirements.

However, the study has several limitations. The most significant limitation is that it involved only two student participants from Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA). Consequently, the findings are descriptive in nature and cannot fully represent the perspectives of the entire student population.

Despite this limitation, the collected data were sufficient to address the research questions and provide meaningful insights into the role of TikTok in accelerating the acquisition of viral information among university students.

4.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed for future research.

First, future studies are encouraged to involve a larger number of participants from various academic programs or higher education institutions. Doing so would provide a broader understanding of how TikTok functions as a medium for information dissemination across different student populations.

Second, future researchers may examine additional factors influencing users' trust in information obtained through TikTok, such as digital literacy, critical thinking skills, and the influence of social media algorithms on information dissemination. Investigating these factors would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of users' behavior in receiving, evaluating, and verifying information.

Finally, future studies are recommended to employ a wider range of research methods, such as quantitative or mixed-methods approaches. These methods would complement qualitative findings with statistical analysis, resulting in more comprehensive and generalizable conclusions.

Through these improvements, future research is expected to make a broader contribution to the development of communication studies, particularly in understanding the role of social media as an information source in the digital era.

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