

Exploration of High School Students Views on The Profession of Content Creator in Social Media

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Abstract

This study investigates the reasons for the students of Senior High School grade X, XI, and XII who are willing to become a professional, beneficial, and/or blue tick (verified) professional content creator. The age of the students falls between 14 and 18 years, while the participants are from the category of classes ranging between X to XII. Data were collected through an online questionnaire available to students from several selected schools within the area. Then, they were asked about their opinions regarding the time of use of social media, opinion about content creators, interest to take content creator as a profession, and opinions in regards to having a blue tick in social media. The themes were based on the analysis of content that emanated from the data collected in line with the motivation, aspiration, and perception of students for the profession of content creators. The research shows that the majority of the potential respondents are interested in being content creators, among the reasons such as possessing the ability to share creativity, bring goodness, and provide promising income opportunities. Added to this, the said respondents also feel that the blue checkmark status acts as a sim. These findings highlight the actuality that social media could indeed influence perceptions and aspirations within the young generation. It further underlines the challenges that prospective content creators can face. This study will provide insights into how social media have influenced young generations' career interests in the digital age for educators and policymakers.

Keywords: content creators; social media; blue ticks; male-female students

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The concept of content creators in the digital era has a very important role, especially in the context of marketing and influence on social media. According to Santoso and Riyanto (2023), content creators are individuals who create interesting, informative and entertaining content that is relevant to the target audience, which ultimately influences purchasing decisions. Their credibility and expertise in delivering product messages are key elements in the success of digital marketing campaigns. Furthermore, Praswary and Darma (2021) added that content creators also play a role in building strong relationships with audiences through creative and relevant content, which not only attracts attention but also strengthens personal branding or a certain brand image, especially among millennials and Gen Z who are active users of social media.

On the other hand, Thomas et al. (2022) highlighted the challenges faced by content creators, such as the online hate and harassment that is often a risk in creating content on large platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Even so, the financial opportunities remain great, and many creators manage to maintain positive relationships with their audiences. Ren et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of the relationship between content creators and consumer communities. They play a role in building a unique cultural community through collaboration with the audience, which increases consumer loyalty and interest in the promoted products.

In the context of skills development, Bashiroh et al. (2023) underlined the importance of training for content creators, which includes the ability to plan content, understand the market, and master production and editing techniques. This training helps creators stay relevant to evolving social media trends and audience needs, while opening up monetisation opportunities through adsense or sponsorship. In conclusion, content creators are not just content creators, but also digital community leaders who have a huge influence on consumers, and they need constantly evolving skills to succeed in the digital marketplace.

1.2 Research Previous

Research on social media and content creators shows significant variation in how content creators interact with platforms, audiences, and how the platforms themselves affect the creator economy. According to Cunningham and Craig (2019), the Social Media Entertainment (SME) industry presents governance challenges where platforms have dominant control through algorithms and policies, while creators seek fairer rights through bottom-up movements, such as the formation of the Internet Creators Guild. This research emphasises the need for a balance in power between creators and platforms through better regulation.

Hoose and Rosenbohm (2024) highlighted the challenges faced by creators in balancing authenticity with commercial demands, such as advertising and sponsorship. The work of content creators is considered laborious as it involves constant interaction with the community and relationship management with the platform. This research shows that while it may seem fun, the job of a creator actually requires great effort, especially in the face of changing platform rules.

Another study by Kopf (2020) focuses on monetisation schemes on platforms such as YouTube, describing monetisation as a 'privilege' for creators. However, full control remains in the hands of the platform, creating an unbalanced power relationship between creators and

platforms. Creators are often mere recipients of instructions in a system that is tightly regulated by the platform, even though they benefit financially.

Research by Jaakonmäki et al. (2017) examined how user engagement on platforms such as Instagram is influenced by creator, context and content factors. For example, creators with more followers and more experience are more likely to get higher engagement. In addition, the time and day of upload also play an important role in increasing the number of 'likes' and comments. Content with strong visual elements and positive emotional messages also tends to attract more user interaction.

Meanwhile, Wiley et al. (2023) focused on how nonprofit organisations use TikTok as a platform to build community and increase engagement. This research shows that community building is the most effective strategy on TikTok compared to information sharing or calls to action. TikTok also offers unique opportunities for more personalised two-way interactions, such as the use of duets and stitching features. However, many nonprofits are still in the early stages of adapting to TikTok-specific communication styles, requiring a more strategic approach to maximise user engagement.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study aims to explore the views of high school students in grades X to XII, aged 14 to 18, regarding their desire to be like content creators who are professional, useful, and have blue tick status (verified). The focus of this research is to understand students' perceptions of the social status and influence of content creators, and how these factors influence their motivation to want to be like them.

1.4 Research Similar in Indonesia

The role of content creators in social media has a broad and significant impact, both in the fields of marketing, proselytisation, and the development of social trends and creative industries. Through the concept of Employee Advocacy Program, content creators from among company employees can help strengthen the company's image by sharing authentic content and building brand awareness, which is especially beneficial in the context of start-up companies (Kembau et al., (2022)). Something similar is seen in religious contexts where content creators utilise platforms such as TikTok to spread da'wah messages through Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) technology. This enables two-way communication with diverse audiences through interactive features such as comments and live TikTok, which is particularly effective in reaching millennials and Gen-Z (Muthia et al., (2024)).

In product marketing, especially skincare products, content creators have also proven to have a major influence on consumer purchasing decisions. By using social media as the main channel, they are able to reach a wide audience at low cost, increase brand credibility, and attract consumers to buy the promoted products, as in the case of Somethinc (Santoso and Riyanto, (2023)). On the other hand, street content creators, as seen in the Citayam Fashion Week phenomenon, show that teenagers' creativity in utilising social media can turn them into significant cultural influences. They not only become famous but also create trends that influence lifestyles among the public, which indirectly fuels the growth of the creative industry (Yulia & Mujtahid, (2023)).

Research by Chen and Dermawan (2020) highlights the important role played by beauty vloggers on YouTube in shaping Indonesian consumers' purchase intention towards local cosmetic products. In this study, the YouTube platform is considered effective in activating

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WoM), where vloggers present product reviews through videos that allow audiences to get in-depth and interesting product information. Beauty vloggers who are active on the platform not only act as information providers, but also build close relationships with their community of followers, creating a high perception of credibility. This credibility is key in influencing consumer trust, as audiences feel confident that the reviews are based on real experiences and not just commercial promotions. This research shows that with the trust that vloggers build through their content, consumers are more likely to perceive the brand positively and ultimately be encouraged to make a purchase. This underscores how content creators, particularly in the beauty sector, are powerful marketing agents in influencing consumer behaviour through experiential and interaction-based communication strategies.

2. Literatur Review

2.1 Duration of Social Media Usage

Several studies have shown mixed impacts of social media use on aspects of student life, including eating behaviour, study motivation, sleep quality, and emotional stability. According to Karmila et al. (2020), high duration of Instagram use was significantly associated with unbalanced eating behaviour, where 70.3% of Instagram users who spent more than three hours per day showed unhealthy eating patterns. This suggests a relationship between high duration of social media use and unhealthy eating habits in university students.

On the other hand, research by Irawati et al. (2023) mentioned that the role of content creators also encourages users to spend more time on social media, which indirectly has a negative impact on sleep quality, such as increasing the risk of insomnia due to consumption of interesting content. In addition, Budianto and Khasanah (2024) added that the duration of social media use also has an impact on student learning motivation.

Longer duration of use is associated with decreased motivation to learn as students become lazier and tend to postpone academic work, while more purposeful use can support the learning process. However, findings from Annisty (2020) show that the duration of social media use does not significantly affect students' emotional stability, although students who use social media less than two hours per day are reported to have better emotional stability.

Another study from Sanzari et al. (2023) indicated that although social media use increased in the 2022 cohort compared to 2015, duration of use was not directly related to body image disturbance or disordered eating behaviour; instead, the type of content consumed was a more significant predictor.

2.2 A View on Content Creators

The roles and motivations of content creators across platforms show diversity in their approaches, goals, and ways of interacting with audiences. Shelton and Archambault (2019) describe 'online teacherpreneurs' as teachers who utilise online education platforms, such as TeachersPayTeachers, to sell their original teaching materials. These creators demonstrate creativity, collaboration and hard work in developing educational resources for the wider teacher community, often using social media to extend their reach.

Meanwhile, a different perspective on algorithms on platforms such as YouTube suggests that content creators personify algorithms as entities with specific personalities, such as 'Agent,' 'Gatekeeper,' and 'Drug Dealer,' to understand the role of algorithms in driving audience traffic to their content (Sanzari et al., (2023); Buf and Ștefăniță, (2020)).

This shows that creators are not only focused on content creation, but also on how algorithms affect the distribution and consumption of content by audiences. In addition, Weber et al. (2021) revealed that food influencers view themselves more as artists than marketers, with a focus on sharing culinary knowledge and inspiration for a healthy lifestyle. These influencers demonstrate a commitment to quality and authenticity, putting forward content that has a positive impact on their followers.

Meanwhile, Nielsen et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of ‘Automatic Persona Generation’ in understanding audiences, where content creators utilise automated data to better map audience preferences. This approach helps creators make more informed decisions regarding the type and style of content that is relevant to their target audience.

2.3 Desire to Become a Content Creator

The drive to become a content creator in the social media era reflects a mix of professional aspirations, economic opportunities and entrepreneurial spirit. Arriagada and Ibáñez (2020) reveal that many creators are motivated by the desire to achieve professionalisation and monetisation by creating personal ‘media brands’ that focus on authenticity and adaptation to platform changes. This allows them to maintain relationships with their followers and achieve greater visibility. On platforms such as YouTube, the opportunity to earn through product placements and collaborations with brands is also a major attraction for creators, as revealed by Gerhards (2019) in his study of creators in Germany.

The greater the number of subscribers, the greater the opportunity for creators to earn revenue from collaborations with brands. This phenomenon is emphasised by Hou (2019) who refers to content creators as part of the ‘newcelebrity industry,’ where their popularity is gained through direct interaction with audiences as well as income from advertising and brand collaborations. On a broader scale, Bhargava (2022) points out that the creator economy provides a significant revenue scheme through platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, which allow creators to earn revenue from advertising.

2.4 Opinion About Blue Tick (Verified)

The blue tick on verified accounts on social media has a significant influence on perceptions of credibility, especially in crisis situations or as a symbol of social status. Abdullahi and Mohammed (2024) explained that although the blue tick mark is not explicitly discussed as a ‘persona,’ this symbol gives an impression of credibility that increases the attractiveness of verified accounts, especially on platforms such as Facebook.

Similar findings were also found by Kirabo et al. (2021), who revealed that verified accounts on Twitter played an important role in increasing the reach of credible messages during the COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda. In this context, verified accounts are not only about social status, but also about responsibility in spreading reliable information. However, perceptions of the features associated with verification may also reflect dimensions of privacy and interpersonal ethics.

According to Ertika et al. (2024), students in Indonesia perceive disabling the ‘blue tick’ and ‘Last seen’ features on WhatsApp as a sign of privacy, but some also see it as impolite, which shows the complexity of perceptions of verification symbols on various platforms. On the other hand, Maragkou et al. (2019) criticised Twitter's verification system for not being neutral and favouring mainstream accounts. They highlighted how these verifications shape a ‘Face Culture’ that prioritises certain public profiles and can be perceived as biased. Overall,

verification symbols not only increase credibility, but also influence social dynamics, privacy perceptions and public trust in various cultural contexts and platforms.

2.5 Reasons to Follow Content Creators

The reasons why people follow content creators on social media are heavily influenced by the need for personal connectedness, authenticity, and inspiration, as well as by the influence of specific platforms on user behaviour. According to Pelletier et al. (2020), users tend to choose platforms based on their specific goals, such as using Facebook for social interaction or Instagram for visual entertainment. This shows that social media provides space for content creators to fulfil different needs according to the platform the audience uses.

Balaban and Mustăţea (2019) found that the influence of creator content on consumer purchasing behaviour is also influenced by user credibility and trust, where creator credibility drives higher engagement with brands. In addition, Cunningham and Craig (2019) underline the aspects of authenticity and community connectedness that allow followers to feel closer to creators, especially when creators present themselves as authentic ordinary people and build participatory communities.

Valsesia et al. (2020) add that the personal connection and expertise of the creator, especially when sharing life experiences and skills, strengthens the emotional bond with the audience, keeping them engaged through entertaining or inspiring content. Müller and Christandl (2019) highlight that aspects of trust and authenticity are crucial, where user-generated content is often perceived as more honest than content fully sponsored by brands. Overall, the choice to follow content creators is often driven by a combination of emotional and credibility needs, and how certain platforms facilitate these needs.

3. Material and Method

3.1 Resource Person

The sources of this research are students from grade X to grade XII in the South Tambun District, Bekasi Regency, with an age range of 14 to 18 years, with the condition that they are Generation Z who have social media and use social media as a whole for more than 2 hours. This research explores various aspects, such as the duration of social media use, views on content creators, interest in becoming content creators, as well as perceptions of verification status (blue tick) and motivation to follow content creators. Through this data, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of how young people interact with digital platforms and the role of content creators in their daily lives can be gained, providing insight into how social media influences the lives of Generation Z, particularly in shaping their perceptions of the role of content creators and digital interaction in general.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

This study aims to understand the views of students from grade X to grade XII in the South Tambun District, Bekasi Regency, regarding the content creator phenomenon. Respondents who belong to Generation Z are active social media users with a duration of use of more than 2 hours per day. Data collection was conducted through an online questionnaire survey to reach participants' perceptions. The content analysis stages applied followed steps similar to several previous studies.

For example, Buf and Ştefăniţă (2020) outline the importance of semi-structured interviews to unearth deep insights into how YouTube content creators interact with the platform's algorithm, accompanied by data triangulation to increase the reliability of the

findings. Additionally, Astuti et al. (2023) emphasised systematic observation of content creators on Instagram to understand the formation of personal branding, as well as data coding based on Montoya's theory.

Lebih lanjut, penelitian Hoose and Rosenbohm (2024) menyoroti pentingnya analisis komunikasi pragmatik dalam interaksi antara kreator dan audiens di YouTube. Seluruh tahapan ini diikuti dengan koding dan kategorisasi untuk mengidentifikasi pola-pola komunikasi dan perilaku kreator yang dipelajari melalui berbagai media sosial. Penelitian ini memberikan gambaran bagaimana Generasi Z melihat peran dan tantangan menjadi seorang content creator di dunia digital yang terus berkembang.

3.3 Analysis Method

The analysis method for this research is content analysis. Content analysis is a systematic technique used to identify patterns, themes, or categories in qualitative data, which in this context is related to respondents' views and perceptions of content creators. With this analysis, the research results will be able to provide deeper insight into the role and perceptions of content creators in the lives of Generation Z and the resulting psychosocial impacts.

Based on several studies, the stages of content analysis in the topic of content creators have similar steps. The first stage is data collection, which can be done through interviews, observations, or surveys. Researchers Buf and Ștefăniță (2020) used semi-structured interviews with YouTube content creators to understand their interactions with algorithms. In addition, surveys of online groups and analyses of algorithm-related content were also conducted, including videos on YouTube and discussion forums such as subreddits. Astuti et al. (2023) added systematic observation of creators' published content and in-depth interviews with their followers to explore their perceptions.

The next stage is coding and categorisation, where the collected data is organised by identifying certain themes or patterns. For example, Buf and Ștefăniță (2020) found that creators personified algorithms as 'Agent', 'Gatekeeper', or 'Drug Dealer' based on how they understood them. Similarly, Hoose and Rosenbohm (2024) conducted coding based on Grice's pragmatic communication principles to understand the interaction patterns used by creators in conveying messages to audiences.

The third stage is data triangulation to verify the reliability of the findings. This triangulation involves combining data from various sources, such as interviews, surveys, and observations, as done by Buf and Ștefăniță (2020). Once the data was organised, a thematic analysis was conducted that explored creators' strategies in maintaining audience engagement, as described by Hoose and Rosenbohm (2024). Finally, researchers interpreted the results to draw conclusions about creators' motivations, strategies, and interactions with their audiences. Overall, these studies illustrate how content analysis is applied to understand the dynamics of content creators in the digital world.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Duration of Social Media Usage

The duration of social media use is one of the important indicators that can illustrate how often and intensely a person engages in activities in the digital world. For the respondents, the time spent daily on social media serves various purposes, such as seeking information, entertainment, and interacting with friends and family. Here are some responses from respondents regarding the duration of their daily social media usage, which varies from one to

more than two hours. These responses provide an insight into the pattern of social media usage among today's teenagers.

Responses related to how long respondents use social media every day. Sample Answer:

- a. "more than 2 hours"
- b. "1 hour"
- c. "2 hours"

The duration of social media use has been shown to have a significant impact on various aspects of life, especially among teenagers and young adults. Based on research, the intensity of social media use can affect eating habits, sleep quality, learning motivation, emotional stability, as well as body image and eating behaviour. For example, Karmila et al. (2020) found that using Instagram for more than three hours per day among students at the University of North Sumatra was associated with unbalanced eating behaviour, due to exposure to culinary content that often does not pay attention to nutrition.

Irawati et al. (2023) showed that prolonged duration of social media use also has an impact on sleep health, where students who use social media for more than three to four hours per day experience severe insomnia. This was followed by the findings of Budianto and Khasanah (2024), who revealed that the long duration of social media use can reduce students' learning motivation, leading them to procrastinate academic tasks and decrease interest in learning.

In addition, the duration of social media use also affects users' emotional state. Research by Annisty (2020) shows that students who use social media for more than eight hours per day tend to experience low emotional stability, where exposure to negative content triggers anxiety and anger. Meanwhile, Sanzari et al. (2023) highlighted that while duration of use is important, the type of content consumed plays a more significant role in shaping body image and unhealthy eating patterns. Content such as 'thinspiration' or 'fitspiration,' which glorify thin bodies, may increase the risk of body image disturbance, especially for those who are exposed to this content repeatedly.

4.2 A View on Content Creators

The view of professional content creators is becoming increasingly relevant in the digital era, where various social media platforms provide space for creators to showcase their work. Respondents generally have a positive view of content creators, especially in terms of the benefits and appeal of the work they produce. For many people, content creators are able to inspire and have a positive impact, both in terms of entertainment and education. The following are some opinions from respondents who appreciate the creativity and beneficial impact of professional content creators.

Respondents' opinions on whether they see professional content creators as having interesting and useful work. Sample Answer:

- a. "Yes, because their content is inspiring."
- b. "Yes, their content is useful for many people."
- c. "Yes, it is very interesting and inspiring."
- d. "Yes, their work is creative and interesting."
- e. "Yes, they can have a positive impact."

The role of professional content creators in the digital age has grown rapidly, especially in providing useful and inspiring resources to their audiences across multiple platforms. In the

context of education, teacherpreneurs at TeachersPayTeachers.com contribute by making course materials accessible to teachers around the world, enriching the learning process and reducing the burden on other educators (Shelton & Archambault, (2019)). Not only in education, the challenges faced by creators are also related to social media algorithms that serve as gatekeepers to filter and promote content. Creators on platforms such as YouTube must adapt to algorithms to keep their content visible, adding complexity to their goal of making a positive impact (Wu et al., (2019)).

In addition to algorithmic challenges, research shows that content presented on social media also provides social gratification for creators, which includes social recognition and increased self-esteem, in line with Uses and Gratifications theory that underlines the importance of social interaction and validation from the audience (Buf and Ștefăniță, (2020)). There is also a positive outlook towards food content creators who utilise the Instagram platform to share recipes, culinary tips and healthy lifestyles. These food influencers not only provide visually appealing and inspiring content, but also provide educational and practical benefits to their followers, strengthening their reputation as positive influencers (Weber et al., (2021)).

Furthermore, developments in data analytics and the use of automated personas allow creators to better understand their audience's needs based on demographic data and online behaviour, which can be used to produce more relevant and useful content (Nielsen et al., (2019)). By leveraging this technology, creators can optimise their strategies so that the content they create has greater relevance and positive impact on specific audiences.

4.3 Desire to Become a Content Creator

Interest in becoming a professional content creator is increasing among the younger generation along with the development of social media as a platform for expression and creativity. Many respondents are interested in becoming content creators because they see it as an opportunity to share their creativity, motivate others, and even generate income. In addition, being a content creator is considered a fun and rewarding job, especially when the content produced can have a positive impact on others. The following are some answers from respondents regarding their desire to become professional and rewarding content creators.

Answers about whether respondents are interested in becoming professional and useful content creators. Sample Answer:

- a. "Yes, because I can share my creativity and earn money."
- b. "Yes, I want to be an inspiration to many people."
- c. "Yes, because this job looks fun."
- d. "Yes, I want to spread positivity."
- e. "Yes, because I can motivate others."

Young people's interest in becoming professional content creators is fuelled by the opportunity to express creativity, motivate audiences and earn revenue, with digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and Twitch playing an important role in providing spaces and tools that support such aspirations. Arriagada and Ibáñez (2020) highlight that the evolution of social media platforms has opened up opportunities for young people to build personal brands and manage direct interactions with their audiences, further strengthening their desire to pursue

careers as content creators. This aligns with the interests of respondents who see this occupation as a way to share their creativity and earn income, as well as to spread positivity.

In addition, Gerhards (2019) notes that professional content creators can capitalise on commercial opportunities through product placement and sponsorship, allowing them to combine creativity with potential income. This monetisation model is not only beneficial for creators but also helps build audience trust through integrity and transparency in product promotion. Meanwhile, Hou (2019) looks at the phenomenon of interest in becoming a content creator in the context of celebrification and self-branding, where social media becomes a means to develop a celebrity identity and personal connection with followers through direct interaction, as respondents want to motivate and be an inspiration to many people.

On the other hand, Bhargava (2022) emphasises the importance of platform design that provides financial incentives through an advertising revenue-sharing model, which supports creators' participation in the creator economy. Respondents' interest in inspiring and sharing their creativity corresponds to the intrinsic motivations mentioned in the article, where creators are encouraged to make a positive impact in their communities through creative and useful content.

4.4 Opinion About Blue Tick (Verified)

The blue tick or 'verified' status on social media is often seen as a symbol of recognition and credibility for content creators. Respondents had mixed views on the desirability of this status. Some see the blue tick as a way to gain more relationships, recognition and financial opportunities through sponsorships, while others argue that the status does not necessarily reflect the quality of the content. Nevertheless, the desire to be recognised and validated in the digital world was the main reason for many respondents. Here are some of their views on the blue tick status.

Respondents' opinions on whether they would like to have blue tick status like the content creators they see. Sample Answer:

- a. "I want to, because I get relationships and recognition."
- b. "Pengenn, famous and a lot of money."
- c. "No, the blue tick does not guarantee the quality of the content."
- d. "Yes, because I want to be recognised by many people."
- e. "Want to look cool and get sponsors."

Blue tick or verified status on social media has significant influence in terms of credibility, recognition, and financial opportunities for its users, yet there are mixed views on its importance. As a symbol of credibility, the blue tick is used by platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to mark the authenticity of public and professional accounts, such as journalists or public figures, helping to minimise fake accounts and increase trust in the information presented (Abdullahi & Mohammed, (2024)).

In line with this, many respondents stated that they would like to have a blue tick to gain social recognition, broader relationships, and financial access through sponsorships and collaborations, as seen in the motivations 'I want it because I can get relationships and recognition' or 'I want it because it looks cool and I can get sponsorships' (Kirabo et al., (2021)).

In addition to the recognition and opportunity aspects, blue tick status is also associated with higher levels of engagement and interaction on social media platforms. Research shows that verified accounts get more responses from audiences, which helps creators strengthen their brand and build a wider network (Maragkou et al., (2019)). However, not all respondents agreed that the blue tick is a guarantee of content quality. Some argue that this verification mark is not always directly proportional to the essence or value of the content displayed, as expressed in the statement ‘No, the blue tick does not guarantee the quality of the content’ (Ertika et al., (2024)).

On the other hand, verification status can also be seen as a validation in the digital world equivalent to the blue tick feature in messaging apps such as WhatsApp, which signifies openness and trust in interpersonal communication. These two symbols are often signs that are expected to increase the user's credibility, although they do not necessarily reflect the quality of the relationship or the content shared (Ertika et al., (2024)).

4.5 Reasons to Follow Content Creators

Why people follow content creators is often influenced by the type and quality of content they produce. For many respondents, educational, inspiring and useful content is the main factor that attracts their attention. In addition, the desire to learn from creators they admire and enjoy positive and fun content is also a big motivation in following content creators on digital platforms. The following are some of the reasons given by respondents regarding their interest in following content creators.

Reasons why respondents follow or are interested in content creators. Sample Answer:

- a. “Because the content is educational.”
- b. “The content creator inspires me.”
- c. “The content provides useful knowledge.”
- d. “I want to learn from the creator.”
- e. “The content is fun and positive.”

The reasons why people follow content creators on social media are often rooted in personal needs for information, entertainment and inspiration, which are explained through various theories and research findings. Based on the Uses and Gratifications theory, social media users choose platforms and creators to fulfil their specific needs. For example, respondents who stated that they follow creators because the content is ‘educational’ or ‘provides useful knowledge’ indicate a motivation to gain knowledge, where users are attracted to content that educates and adds insight (Pelletier et al., (2020)). The credibility aspect also plays an important role, especially when creators are perceived as having expertise in a particular field, so followers have more trust in the information they convey (Balaban & Mustăţea, (2019)).

In addition to informative motivation, inspiration and emotional connectedness are also major factors in following creators. Respondents' views that they follow creators because they are inspired or want to learn from them reflect para-social interactions, where audiences feel they have a personal connection with creators, even though the actual interaction takes place in cyberspace (Cunningham & Craig, (2019)). This is reinforced by research that mentions that the emotional impact of content, especially content that provides inspiration and motivation, can strengthen the bond between creators and their followers (Valsesia et al., (2020)).

Furthermore, the appeal of fun and positive content is also a strong reason for audiences to continue following creators. Content that brings a positive mood and provides entertainment, as expressed by respondents, is considered appealing because it helps them escape from their daily routine (Müller & Christandl, (2019)).

5. Conclusion

This study evaluates social media use among adolescents with a focus on three age groups: 14-15 years old, 16-17 years old, and 18 years old. The results show that the duration of social media use among teenagers is high, with the majority of respondents using social media for more than two hours per day. Respondents have a positive view of professional content creators who they find inspiring, useful and interesting. Interest in becoming a content creator is also high among teenagers, with the main motivations being the opportunity to share their creativity, inspire others and earn income. In addition, the blue tick or ‘verified’ status on social media is considered a symbol of prestige and recognition, which can open up networking and financial opportunities. The main reason why teenagers follow content creators is because the content is educational, inspiring and fun.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of several theories. The results support the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which suggests that social media users use these platforms to fulfil specific needs, such as entertainment and information. The findings also support the Self-Identity Construction Theory in the Digital World, where social media is used as a tool to shape self-identity, especially among teenagers. In addition, Source Credibility Theory is reinforced by the findings that blue tick status increases the credibility and influence of content creators. This research also shows that social media can influence individual behaviour and motivation, supporting the Social Media Impact on Behaviour and Motivation Theory, and demonstrates that social media plays an important role in digital social interaction in accordance with the Social Interaction in Digital Media Theory.

Managerially, this research provides an important contribution for companies that want to target the teenage segment in digital marketing strategies. Teenagers who actively use social media for more than two hours per day are a potential segment to be developed. Companies are also advised to work with content creators who have a positive reputation and blue ticks as a form of social validation. In addition, relevant and educational content can increase engagement and loyalty of teenage audiences.

This study has limitations, including only involving respondents aged 14-18 years and the limited number of social media platforms analysed. Future research is recommended to involve respondents from different age groups, examine social media platforms more specifically, and use quantitative methods to deepen the analysis of user behaviour. Longitudinal and cross-cultural research can also be conducted to understand the impact of social media more broadly and dynamically. Thus, future research can provide a deeper understanding of how social media affects the behaviour and preferences of users from different age groups and backgrounds.

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