Uncovering the Cognitive, Psychological, and Social Mechanisms Affecting TikTok’s Reuse Intention: Verifying the Role of Platform Characteristics, Psychological Distance, and Social Identity

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Abstract
With the consumption of user generated online contents content increasing rapidly, the short clip market in China is fast growing. TikTok, a leading short clip platform, has achieved great business success. However, there is not much research done on TikTok platform from the current customers’ social and psychological viewpoints. Against this background, this study aims to verify the cognitive, emotional and behavioral pre-cursors of platform reuse decision by focusing on the platform’s informational contents, users’ network traits, user attachment, user engagement, psychological distance, and social identity. This way, this study extends the current understanding on the antecedent factors affecting users’ behavioral intention of TikTok through broader perspectives including social and psychological predictors. During October 2021, an online questionnaire survey was administered in China. On the subject of TikTok platform. Firstly, the study found that both information characteristics and social network traits significantly affect the user engagement as well as attachment. Secondly, both the user attachment and engagement have a significant impact on reuse intention. Thirdly, the psychological distance plays a significant moderating role in the relationship between bridging network and attachment. Finally, the social identity
significantly moderates the relationship between bridging network and user engagement. The study result is expected to add to the current literature which has not examined the antecedent factors affecting users’ reuse intention of TikTok from broader aspects including social and psychological variables.

**Keywords**
platform characteristics, social network, user attachment, user engagement, psychological distance, social identity

**Introduction**

With the rapid development of mobile technology and the internet, a web 2.0 environment characterized by openness, engagement, and information sharing has taken shape and social media has become a dominant new sector (Jo, 2018). Social media is an online tool that allows anyone to create and share information. It is a service that helps form and manage relationships through two-way communication between users. Users are no longer content to be a passive user, thus increasingly desire active engagement. According to Anjana and Jeong (2012), user generated contents (here-in-after UGC) generally refer to articles, pictures, voices, videos, etc. uploaded by platform users on the internet. With the rapid advance of 5G network technology, content production technology, and explosive usage of smartphones, and mobile devices, the market size of UGC short videos in China is fast growing.

Launched in September 2016, TikTok is a multi-channel platform where users can make their own music videos using functions such as lip-synching, improvisation, music, and various visual effects. TikTok achieved its first 3 billion downloads in July 2021, making it the world’s most popular UGC platform.

In this modern age of snack culture living, it is a critical challenge for web applications developers to retain their current users and to secure new users. In order to address this issue in depth, it is necessary to empirically determine the factors affecting the sustainable usage intention of the UGC platforms such as TikTok. The aim of this study is to verify whether two facets of social media platform contribute to users’ reuse intention of the platform. First element is the informational characteristics of the messages created in the platform, and the second element is the social aspect of the platform users, specifically the social network traits of the platform users. In further detail, this study attempts to ascertain whether informational qualities of the message (i.e., vividness, usefulness, consistency, trustworthiness, and interaction) and social network traits (i.e., bonding and bridging) influence user engagement and attachment to TikTok platform. Further, the study aims to confirm whether user engagement and attachment affect the intention to reuse TikTok. Secondly, this study attempts to verify the moderating roles of social identity between network traits and engagement, and psychological distance between network traits and attachment.

Looking at previous studies on antecedent factors of social media usage, many studies investigated variables such as use motivation (Lee & Choi, 2015), social media status and usage behavior, and social media characteristics (Jang & Shim, 2020). Previous studies on the use of TikTok mainly focused on analyzing market related success factors. For instance, they mostly looked into TikTok’s current status and content analysis, TikTok’s influence on traditional media, and TikTok’s marketing impact. However, almost no previous research examined the antecedent
factors affecting users’ reuse intention of TikTok from broader aspects including social and psychological variables.

**Review of literature**

*Information characteristics*

According to Kim & Seo (2010), it is not the opinions or comments of the media experts, but rather the consumer’s evaluative comments that is more valuable when it comes to users’ decision to buy products on online shopping malls. Similarly, Kim & Heo (2011) argued that the exchange of positive or negative materials and information between consumers through indirect or direct product and service experiences is the most effective way to promote social media traffic.

Typically, information posted on UGC platforms contains the user-produced materials such as videos, articles, and photographs, and reflects the characteristics of content information and the medium by which the message is carried (Hong, 2017). In an effort to make a systematic approach to the informational traits, Lee (2007) classified the online platform-based message type into consistency, entertainment, vividness, timeliness, and agreeableness, whereas Yang et al. (2011) proposed trustworthiness, agreeableness, mutual production, vividness, and user manageability as classifiable traits of content messages. In addition, Bang (2015) came up with four factors inclusive of interaction, consistency, vividness, and usefulness. The following table shows a summary review of the existing literature that examined the major contents of online SNS platforms.

**Social network traits**

Network refers to a group of people participating in specific communities or organizations that form specific social relationships within a society. Network plays a critical role in promoting trust and norm and helps increase social capital (Jung & Jung, 2020). Social capital describes the process and outcome of how people can obtain the maximum use of limited resources through social networks, free exchange of information, which is facilitated by a sense of social cohesion, mutual trust, and commitment between members (Villalonga-Olives and Kawachi, 2015).

Social networks can be broadly divided into two types, those with strong bonds between individuals in homogeneous context, and conversely, those with weaker connections in heterogeneous contexts. The former has been named bonding networks, while the latter as bridging networks. Bonding network refers to relationships within groups with strong ties such as family members or good friends, while bridging network refers to friends or colleagues who are distant (Office for National Statistics, 2001). Weak ties between people are associated with bridging networks, indicating loose connections with individuals or people of different backgrounds. In contrast, bonding networks are primarily found among individuals who are emotionally close or strongly connected, like family or good friends (Ellison et al., 2006).

**User engagement**

Kim (2013) defined SNS (Social Network Service) as an interpersonal network formation service operating on a community-based website taking one-person media or community format, that shares information and helps to spread communication through the Internet. Some other definitions focused on user engagement and accessibility. For instance, Kim (2010) defined SNS as a composite concept embracing engagement, openness, dialogue, community, and connection, which facilitates
users’ feedback, comments, and information sharing, and opens up users’ access to the contents created by others. Furthermore, SNS enables users to engage in communication with each other, inducing a sense of closeness, and through this interaction, the flow of knowledge and information is created, shared, and diffused.

Based on previous definitions of SNS, this study approaches the concept of user engagement in terms of the interaction between users and content creators, and the interaction between users of TikTok’s short videos.

**User attachment**

Attachment implies a strong emotional bonding to a particular person or thing due to fondness or intimacy (Ainsworth, 1970). That is, this fondness is associated with a certain object and causes a strong emotional attachment to the object (Mugge et al., 2010). This fondness extends to love of brand (brand attachment) and love of place (place attachment). Particularly in the field of tourism, many studies of place attachment have been conducted from the perspective of area residents or tourists (Li & Li, 2017).

Recent studies have mostly applied the concept of attachment to the phenomenon of forming relationships on the internet, and the emotional bond formed in online communities has been conceptualized as online community attachment (Park, 2006). In addition, attachment has also been considered as an emotional, social expression of identity implying a degree of affective intervention within the community (Qu & Lee, 2011). In particular, attachment for community members elicits good feelings or positive action towards organizational goals, and thus was viewed as a predictor of community action (Lee, Reid, & Kim, 2014). In sum, the influence of attachment has been measured in the context of information sharing in social media (Jung & Lee, 2020), social interactions (Lee et al., 2014), and voluntary participation (Yun, Jeon, & Lee, 2014). Therefore, this study adopted attachment as an important factor influencing platform users’ engagement.

**Psychological distance**

According to a previous study, psychological distance tends to increase as people tend to think of an object in more abstract and simpler terms (Trope & Liberman, 2010). The psychological distance is divided into three categories. The first one is spatial distance, which means the psychological distance between the object of interest and oneself in the context of space (Lim, Cha, Park, Lee, & Kim, 2012). The second one is temporal distance, which means a distance from the perceiver’s present time in terms of perceived target time that is independent of the past or present. Finally, social distance implies the perceived importance of a relationship (Lim et al., 2012). In short, the more people are closer to each other in a space, the more people react in the real time, and the deeper the relationship with an object gets, the smaller psychological distance becomes.

Psychological distance is an important factor for SNS since it operates on the basis of people’s relationships. Previous research on psychological distance shows that psychological distance determines people’s acceptance of the WOM source (i.e., Facebook and Blogs) (Lee, Jeong, Jane, & Rhu, 2013). Lim et al. (2012) studied the causes and effects of psychological distance in social media live video services, and concluded that psychological distance is caused by space recognition, and the interaction between users and objects within social media, which results in co-engagement. On the other hand, Choi & Kim (2012) stated that social distance within SNS, as part of psychological distance, has an impact on product attitudes. In addition, Kim, Kim, & Boo. (2012) posited that social distance influences the perception of information about public events within SNS.
This study adopts the psychological distance for its role in affecting users’ emotional attitude towards TikTok in view of its association with the social network formation.

**Social identity**

Social identity plays the role of a basis of social awareness (norms, values, and beliefs) for group-related actions (e.g., fan clubs) and is formed through the process of self-categorization (Hogg & Terry, 2000). The desire to express one’s identity online comes from the need for self-expression, which denotes the act of expressing one’s identity and creating a positive social image and avoiding negative impressions (Leary, 1995). This idea of social identity reflects an individual’s tendency to inform others of one’s information or current condition (Collins & Miller, 1994). Furthermore, individuals try to give favorable impression of themselves in order to achieve valuable goals, and avoid negative images (Dominick, 1999). And when people are online, they tend to feel less restrictions on expressing themselves than when they are offline, because they can form and express their image in more diverse ways (Jensen Schau & Gilly, 2003). By sharing one’s thoughts, conditions, and knowledge through videos or photos, one can feel that they belong to certain social community and show actions designed to earn recognition as a significant member of the community or a social group (Kelly & McKillop, 1996).

Therefore, applying the concept of social identity to TikTok platform users, it is tenable that TikTok users who have high level of social identity would be desirous of expressing their own ideas or opinions, and are intent on creating image that is congruent with that of other TikTok users.

**Research method**

**Research model**

Based on findings discussed in the literature review, this study proposed a research model as shown in Figure 1 which contains relationships among two predictive variables (information characteristics and network traits), user engagement, user attachment, and continuous use intention of TikTok.

**Research hypotheses**

*Relationship between information characteristics on SNS and user engagement.* The previous literature is fairly consistent in arguing that the kind of information encountered by users of SNS affect their intention or motivation to partake in the SNS. For instance, Jo (2021) confirmed that positive information on SNS has a significant positive effect on active engagement. Also, Jo (2013) suggested that SNS use positively influences engagement satisfaction and re-use intention. Specifically, engagement satisfaction acts as a partial mediator between SNS use and re-use intentions for sporting activities. In addition, Jang and Shim (2020) posited that among online information characteristics, consistency, trustworthiness, and interactions had a significant effect on the degree of engagement. Similarly, Lee (2021) reported that interactivity, connectivity and reliability of content information positively influenced consumers’ engagement. It was also confirmed that, the sense of vividness exerts positive effect on the overall intention to participate in the festival activities (Ji & Kim, 2021).

Since TikTok is a social media where users can get vivid video messages that meet their needs, it is possible that users will engage more if they evaluate the content posted on TikTok positively.
In sum, based on prior research, it is proposed that the characteristics of contents posted on TikTok will play a significant role in impacting users’ engagement. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed.

**H1.** The characteristics of contents posted on TikTok have a significant effect on users’ engagement.

**H1-1.** The vividness has a significant effect on SNS engagement.

**H1-2.** The usefulness has a significant impact on SNS engagement.

**H1-3.** The trustworthiness has a significant effect on users’ engagement.

**H1-4.** The consistency has a significant effect on users’ engagement.

**H1-5.** The interactivity has a significant effect on users’ engagement.

*Relationship between contents characteristics on SNS and user attachment.* A review of previous literature reveals that the way information is presented to social media users strongly influences the extent to which users are attached to the media. For instance, Kim (2020) asserts that the effect of SNS informational attributes on the information’s favorability is determined by consumers’ motivation for SNS use. In addition, through a study on the effect of scenic storytelling advertising, it was confirmed that narrative advertising message has an impact on the favorable attitude of the advertisements (Jo, 2018). In addition, Guak (2013) found in a study targeting dining out customers who use SNS that interactivity, trustworthiness, and up-to-datedness of information on SNS directly influences the degree of psychological attachment to SNS. In addition, in another study by Yoon (2013), a close relationship was found between the trustworthiness of travel information received by mobile phones and the level of attachment to the destination and revisit intention. Furthermore, in a study of TikTok platform, Ju et al. (2021) confirmed that the information vividness of TikTok has an impact on users’ attachment to the platform.
The above revelations of prior studies suggest that in the SNS environment, the strong interaction between users of TikTok and those who share the video clips will generate strong motivational support among themselves, which will create a high level of attachment. Based on the prior findings on the impact of informational traits on users’ emotional attachment, this study proposed research hypothesis as below.

**H2.** The contents characteristics of TikTok platform have a significant positive effect on users’ attachment.  
**H2-1.** The vividness has a significant effect on SNS attachment.  
**H2-2.** The usefulness has a significant impact on SNS attachment.  
**H2-3.** The trustworthiness has a significant effect on SNS attachment.  
**H2-4.** The consistency has a significant effect on SNS attachment.  
**H2-5.** The interactivity has a significant effect on SNS attachment.

**Relationship between social network traits and user engagement.** Previous studies on the effect of social networks on causing people to participate in social media have consistently proven its influence. For instance, Yoon et al. (2013) showed that social network attributes have a significant impact on users’ SNS engagement. On the other hand, Kang and Lee (2016) asserted that the interactive nature of the socially networked community increases political engagement in social networks. Some other studies showed that the impact of social network differs by the type of social capital (Cho, 2021). For instance, Jung and Lee (2020) posited that social capital built upon networks (bonding networks and bridging networks) has a positive effect on the engagement of fashion users in their SNS use. In addition, Cho (2021) found that university students forming bridging network rather than bonding network in social media spaces showed higher level of engagement.

Based on the prior research results discussed so far, it is possible to predict that the network and its type will have a significant impact on TikTok users’ engagement level. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed.

**H3.** Network traits have a significant effect on user engagement.  
**H3-1.** Bonding network has a significant effect on user engagement.  
**H3-2.** Bridging network has a significant effect on user engagement.

**Relationship between social network traits and user attachment.** It appears that only a few of previous literature have verified the relationship between social network and users’ emotional attachment to social media. For instance, Kim and Cho (2018) found that bonding network compared with bridging network significantly more influenced attachment to social media. Furthermore, Yang et al. (2021), who conducted research on urban revitalization tourism argued that experiential value when it is based on bonding network ties exerted a positive influence on the tourists’ attachment to the destination place. In addition, Zhou (2020). In a study of TikTok usage concluded that TikTok users’ engagement in video watching is determined by network relationships, which also influences user attachment and empathy of TikTok. Some other studies also reported the network type was not influential on its impact on SNS attitude. For instance, bonding networks and bridging networks both were found to have an impact on favorability and liking of SNS (Choi et al., 2013). Based on these prior study results, the following research hypothesis 4 is proposed.

**H4.** Network traits have a significant positive effect on attachment.  
**H4-1.** Bonding network has a significant positive effect on attachment.
H4-2. Bridging network has a significant positive effect on attachment.

Moderation effect of psychological distance. Previous research has reported that network type and tie strength can influence psychological distance perceptions through the process of reducing the sense of temporal and spatial distance to the network (Cho & Friley, 2014). Kim and Cho (2018), for instance, showed that offline psychological distance increases or weakens the influence of bridging and bonding social capital on social media attachment. In addition, Han, Chung, Chulmo, & Namho (2016) and Zhao et al. (2021) found that the smaller the psychological distance between SNS users, the greater attachment is formed and the more active the interactions within the SNS will get. These results are in line with Ren et al. (2012) seminal finding that psychological distance plays an important role in forming attachment.

Although it is hard to find the role of psychological distance as a moderator between network traits and users’ attachment, it seems reasonable based on the previous literature that people maintaining certain type of network formation (bonding or bridging) would be more or less feel attached to SNS depending upon the level of psychological distance between the users. Thus, it is proposed in this study that the psychological distance will moderate the relationship between network traits and users’ attachment to TikTok. Based on this rationale the following hypothesis 5 is proposed.

H5. Psychological distance moderates the relationship between network traits and attachment.
H5-1. Psychological distance moderates the relationship between bonding network and attachment.
H5-2. Psychological distance moderates the relationship between bridging network and attachment.

Moderation effect of social identity. Yoon (2013) reported that social identity, particularly cognitive identity, significantly affects the relationship between network centrality and emotional engagement in SNS. Specifically, the strong ties of people with high network tie strength are likely to exhibit higher level of emotional engagement when they have cognitive identity about the SNS community membership. Translating this to TikTok case, when TikTok users perceive identification between their self-image and other users in the same platform, this will increase their engagement level (Sirgy & Su, 2000). Furthermore, Wallace and Jun (2019) confirmed that Instagram users utilize Instagram in pursuit of social identity, which has a significant a positive impact on user engagement. Chung, Han, & Koo (2012) similarly concluded that the stronger people’s social identity is, the more strongly they identify group success as their own individual success, which encourages participatory activities on SNS.

Therefore, based on the above review of literature, social identity is to help a TikTok user identify with other members within TikTok, which will further strengthen the extent to which network traits (bonding or bridging) influences SNS engagement. Thus, this study proposed the following research hypothesis.

H6. Social identity moderates the relationship between network traits and user engagement.
H6-1. Social identity moderates the relationship bonding network and user engagement.
H6-2. Social identity moderates the relationship between bridging network and user engagement.
**Relationship between user engagement and user attachment.** Lee (2012) confirmed that users form emotional attachment through informational engagement in SNS, which also has a positive influence on consumers’ purchase intention for cultural products. In addition, Kim (2015) argued that users’ activities and engagement on company SNS creates happiness and consequently increases consumer attachment. According to Lee (2017), participation intensity at a company’s blog is positively related to brand attachment and brand love. Moreover, Li and Li (2017) asserted that active engagement behavior leads to good feelings towards SNS platform. In addition, Wallace and Jun (2019) confirmed that the more Instagram users engage in Instagram actions in pursuit of self-expression, the more likely they are going to be attached to the platform.

Drawing on the previous study results discussed so far, it seems highly possible that TikTok users who actively engage in the platform will be attached to it. Thus, this study proposed the following hypothesis.

**H7.** Users’ engagement has a significant positive effect on attachment.

**Relationship between user engagement and reuse intention.** Jo (2013) found that satisfactory engagement positively influences reuse intention and brand loyalty. Similarly, Lee and Kung (2015) reported a positive relationship between customer engagement and actual patronage intention of Western restaurants. Furthermore, Li and Li (2017) argued that users’ habitual engagement with mobile social platform has a positive influence on intention to reuse it. In addition, a study by Min (2016) also confirmed the impact of user behavior (engagement and search) on reusing intention. Based on these results, therefore, it is predicted that TikTok users will continue to use it if they are actively engaged in the platform. Thus, this study proposed the following hypothesis.

**H8.** User engagement has a significant positive effect on reuse intention.

**Relationship between user attachment and reuse intention.** Previously, Choi (2016) found that consumers who have experienced tourism services have high revisit intention, which intensified when tourists were emotionally attached to the service providers. In the same vein, Li and Li (2017) asserts that if users’ positive experience of SNS generates good feelings, it had a strong impact on reuse intention. Jung and Lee (2020) also confirmed that fashion-related SNS users who love the fashion products have strong intention to use the brands consistently. Likewise, Wallace and Jun (2019) reported that Instagram users, in the pursuit of their social identity, fall in love with platform, which has strong effect on continued use intention.

Based on these previous findings, it is arguable that TikTok users who are attached to its features or services will be encouraged to reuse the platform. Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis.

**H9.** Users’ attachment has a significant positive effect on reuse intention.

**Analysis and results**

**Data collection and method of analysis**

In order to test the hypotheses for the research model, an online survey was conducted on consumers who have previously experienced TikTok platform. The survey was conducted during a period between October 6 and November 10, 2021, and a total of 670 questionnaires were collected for
analysis of the data after discarding unusable questionnaires. The researcher commissioned an online research firm located in China, which maintains diverse panel groups. We used a judgmental sampling since only those who had previous experience of using TikTok were selected for analysis. The statistical tools used in the empirical analysis include SPSS which was used to test measures’ reliability and validity, AMOS ver 19 was used to test structural and measurement models and to conduct path analysis for hypothesis testing. Finally, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed using SPSS to verify the moderating effect.

Measurements

**Contents characteristics.** In this study, survey questions were prepared using the scale of Jung (2013) for the purpose of measuring the characteristics of platform contents. We asked the respondents about how they evaluate the contents posted (images and texts) on the TikTok platform. Measurement variables of information characteristics were divided into five categories: vividness, trustworthiness, usefulness, consistency, and interactivity. The scale for this consists of a total of 19 questions, including vividness of the platform’s contents characteristics (3 questions), reliability of word of mouth contents (4 questions), usefulness (3 questions), extent of consent with the arguments (4 questions), and interaction between users (5 questions). All questions used a Likert 5-point scale ranging from 1 = completely disagree to 5 = completely agree with 3 = neutral.

**Social network traits.** This study drew from Jung’s study (2015) for the conceptual definition of network traits. The question items for network traits were divided into two, bonding and bridging attributes. We defined bridging network as a network composed of people from different backgrounds who are interested in seeking a quantity of information, and defined bonding network as a network of people with strong sense of solidarity and who share from similar backgrounds. Bonding network scale consists of 3 questions with bridging network also consisting of 3 questions. All questions used a Likert 5-point scale ranging from 1 = completely disagree to 5 = completely agree with 3 = neutral.

**User engagement.** This study adopted a conceptual definition of user engagement proposed by Yoon et al. (2013). The actual items used for this study were modified to suit this study by adapting scales used by Yoon et al. (2013). The questions are drawn on two dimensions that contained both quantitative and qualitative engagement to measure the degree of engagement in TikTok. Actual items for user engagement consisted of 3 questions and a Likert 5-point scale was used.

**Attachment.** This study drew on studies by Ahn et al. (2016) and Lee et al. (2014) for the conceptual definition of SNS attachment and modified their scales to suit this study’s research objective. The final measures consist of 4 questions on bonding, tie strength, sense of community, and attachment to SNS among friends through SNS, respectively. For this scale, a Likert 5-point scale was used.

**Psychological distance.** This study used studies of Jo et al. (2021) for the conceptual definition of psychological distance. The measures of psychological distance are divided into three categories: temporal distance, social distance, and spatial distance. Upon readjustment, this study employed 6
items composed of temporal distance (3 questions) and social distance (3 questions). For the measures, we used a Likert 5-point scale.

Social identity. For the conceptual definition of social identity, this study adapted a previous study by Jung and Lee (2020). The final measures consist of 9 items that include the process of categorizing oneself with TikTok community members (3 questions), the degree of emotional involvement with TikTok community, (3 questions), and the evaluative self-worth of belonging to TikTok community (3 questions) (see Table 1).

Reuse intention. This study adapted a scale of Jo (2013) to measure the intention to continue using TikTok. In this study, in order to measure the degree of intention to continuously use TikTok, the reuse intention measure includes three questions constructed on a Likert 5-point scale.

Table 1. Classification of online SNS message contents.

| Researcher       | Research factor                                      |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Park (2017)      | Reliability, timeliness, interaction, vividness       |
| Jeon & Lee (2018)| Vividness, reliability, usefulness, correctness      |
| Bai (2018)       | Usefulness, consistency, vividness, entertainment, interaction |
| Sun (2019)       | Entertainment, reliability, interaction, epidemic     |

Table 2. Shows the demographic composition of the sampled respondents.

| Item                        | Category     | Frequency | Ratio (%) |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| Gender                      | Male         | 325       | 48.5      |
|                             | Female       | 345       | 51.5      |
| Age                         | Under20      | 131       | 19.6      |
|                             | 20–29 years old | 279     | 41.6      |
|                             | 30–39 years old | 192     | 28.7      |
|                             | 40–49 years old | 46      | 6.9       |
|                             | 50–59 years old | 22      | 3.3       |
| Frequency of TikTok use     | Less than 3 times | 78       | 11.6      |
|                             | 3–5 times     | 229       | 34.2      |
|                             | 6–10 times    | 248       | 37.1      |
|                             | Less than 10 times | 115     | 17.2      |
| Purpose of TikTok use       | Music         | 97        | 14.5      |
|                             | Fashion       | 146       | 21.8      |
|                             | Live          | 208       | 31.1      |
|                             | Beauty        | 39        | 5.8       |
|                             | Sports        | 59        | 8.8       |
|                             | Fiscal economy | 66       | 9.9       |
|                             | Food          | 55        | 8.2       |
| Sum up                      |               | 670       | 100       |
|                          | Psychological distance | Social identity | Engagement | Interaction | Reuse intention | Consistency | Attachment | Vividness | Trust | Usefulness | Bonding | Bridging |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|------------|-----------|-------|-----------|---------|----------|
| SI1                      | .874                   | .031            | .091       | .105        | .036           | .080        | .087       | .044      | .063  | .044      | .059    | .088     |
| SI9                      | .793                   | .023            | .114       | .072        | .105           | .067        | .034       | .040      | .051  | .046      | .045    | .032     |
| SI2                      | .786                   | .052            | .063       | .097        | .009           | .062        | .080       | .049      | .060  | .013      | .088    | .009     |
| SI5                      | .786                   | .267            | .116       | .086        | .069           | .093        | .077       | .044      | .043  | .031      | .016    | .084     |
| SI7                      | .770                   | .036            | .060       | .052        | .069           | .124        | .129       | .029      | .027  | .090      | .039    | .034     |
| SI6                      | .769                   | .045            | .131       | .072        | .090           | .070        | .025       | .070      | .034  | .068      | .037    | .081     |
| SI4                      | .751                   | .061            | .053       | .059        | .123           | .106        | .112       | .091      | .040  | .009      | .002    | .047     |
| SI8                      | .741                   | -.009           | .110       | .104        | .108           | .105        | .072       | .011      | .033  | .062      | .029    | .064     |
| SI3                      | .734                   | .031            | .085       | .071        | .017           | .083        | .112       | .012      | .067  | -.006     | .127    | .072     |
| PD1                      | .054                   | .887            | .064       | .095        | -.002          | .092        | .062       | .013      | .028  | -.006     | .021    | .044     |
| PD2                      | .074                   | .823            | .053       | .039        | .022           | .064        | .063       | .005      | .050  | .013      | -.002   | .015     |
| PD4                      | .026                   | .821            | .105       | .037        | .065           | .079        | -.009      | -.021     | -.031 | .026      | .003    | -.044    |
| PD5                      | .095                   | .798            | .045       | .051        | .012           | .027        | .092       | .017      | .020  | -.002     | .025    | .011     |
| PD3                      | .042                   | .796            | .039       | -.009       | .013           | .096        | .025       | .059      | -.021 | .000      | .002    | .095     |
| PD6                      | .089                   | .793            | .017       | .075        | -.003          | .042        | .045       | .082      | .026  | -.003     | .075    | .080     |
| participate1             | .148                   | .097            | .832       | .128        | .139           | .089        | .147       | .080      | .102  | .056      | .117    | .114     |
| participate3             | .152                   | .037            | .772       | .085        | .059           | .112        | .134       | .080      | .090  | .044      | .086    | .116     |
| participate4             | .147                   | .121            | .768       | .053        | .158           | .103        | .133       | .055      | .047  | .090      | .095    | .047     |
| participate2             | .170                   | .075            | .757       | .073        | .095           | .090        | .138       | .068      | .049  | .058      | .116    | .098     |
| participate5             | .157                   | .052            | .718       | .131        | .096           | .148        | .107       | .112      | .116  | .069      | .187    | .123     |
| inter1                   | .104                   | .051            | .096       | .863        | .103           | .022        | .049       | .051      | .013  | .017      | .047    | .096     |
| inter3                   | .124                   | .046            | .078       | .819        | .119           | -.036       | .028       | .027      | .050  | .009      | -.011   | .028     |
| inter4                   | .129                   | .084            | .060       | .805        | .114           | .020        | .025       | .008      | -.032 | .006      | .006    | .086     |
| inter2                   | .102                   | .012            | .095       | .792        | .091           | .095        | .038       | .029      | .011  | .035      | .023    | .075     |
| inter5                   | .146                   | .116            | .071       | .711        | .128           | .038        | .299       | .001      | .023  | .030      | .027    | .075     |
| UI1                      | .144                   | .071            | .128       | .148        | .784           | .113        | .219       | .129      | .107  | .145      | .141    | .190     |
| UI5                      | .117                   | -.015           | .169       | .143        | .744           | .057        | .122       | .052      | .070  | .159      | .142    | .088     |
| UI3                      | .153                   | .000            | .078       | .170        | .672           | .108        | .099       | .154      | .100  | .169      | .205    | .185     |

(continued)
| Psychological distance | Social identity | Engagement | Interaction | Reuse intention | Consistency | Attachment | Vividness | Trust | Usefulness | Bonding | Bridging |
|------------------------|----------------|------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|------------|-----------|-------|------------|---------|----------|
| UI4                    | 0.162          | 0.071      | 0.106       | 0.174          | 0.662       | 0.101      | 0.158     | 0.116 | 0.131      | 0.172   | 0.137    | 0.194    |
| UI2                    | 0.105          | 0.023      | 0.163       | 0.152          | 0.652       | 0.099      | 0.136     | 0.119 | 0.192      | 0.103   | 0.169    | 0.207    |
| con1                   | 0.186          | 0.105      | 0.108       | 0.033          | 0.095       | 0.851      | 0.119     | 0.032 | 0.049      | 0.041   | 0.078    | 0.070    |
| con3                   | 0.163          | 0.102      | 0.135       | 0.042          | 0.019       | 0.790      | 0.051     | 0.019 | 0.026      | 0.062   | 0.068    | 0.080    |
| con2                   | 0.168          | 0.103      | 0.121       | 0.036          | 0.134       | 0.788      | 0.090     | -0.004 | -0.011     | 0.018   | 0.060    | 0.017    |
| con4                   | 0.161          | 0.113      | 0.103       | 0.020          | 0.094       | 0.773      | 0.083     | 0.153 | 0.012      | 0.045   | 0.036    | 0.118    |
| attach1                | 0.205          | 0.091      | 0.219       | 0.090          | 0.151       | 0.097      | 0.817     | 0.111 | 0.058      | 0.095   | 0.094    | 0.103    |
| attach4                | 0.177          | 0.068      | 0.118       | 0.080          | 0.173       | 0.087      | 0.740     | 0.126 | 0.074      | 0.076   | 0.082    | 0.087    |
| attach3                | 0.162          | 0.117      | 0.168       | 0.165          | 0.145       | 0.100      | 0.734     | 0.067 | 0.080      | 0.114   | 0.108    | 0.124    |
| attach2                | 0.161          | 0.056      | 0.194       | 0.081          | 0.141       | 0.117      | 0.707     | 0.116 | 0.123      | 0.085   | 0.093    | 0.122    |
| vv1                    | 0.097          | 0.060      | 0.110       | 0.050          | 0.096       | 0.051      | 0.122     | 0.896 | 0.062      | -0.008  | -0.044   |          |
| vv2                    | 0.054          | 0.045      | 0.105       | 0.023          | 0.116       | 0.071      | 0.139     | 0.852 | 0.032      | 0.061   | -0.039   | 0.010    |
| vv3                    | 0.108          | 0.044      | 0.101       | 0.034          | 0.150       | 0.053      | 0.068     | 0.845 | 0.068      | 0.074   | 0.015    | -0.041   |
| trust1                 | 0.109          | 0.013      | 0.112       | 0.037          | 0.120       | 0.040      | 0.065     | 0.040 | 0.894      | -0.037  | 0.082    | -0.015   |
| trust3                 | 0.077          | 0.037      | 0.128       | 0.007          | 0.099       | -0.023     | 0.092     | 0.068 | 0.828      | 0.062   | 0.214    | 0.043    |
| trust2                 | 0.126          | 0.009      | 0.070       | 0.007          | 0.155       | 0.047      | 0.097     | 0.048 | 0.823      | 0.099   | 0.038    | -0.013   |
| use1                   | 0.102          | 0.005      | 0.088       | 0.048          | 0.151       | 0.060      | 0.087     | 0.068 | 0.078      | 0.883   | 0.022    | 0.034    |
| use2                   | 0.052          | -0.015     | 0.099       | 0.008          | 0.233       | 0.048      | 0.085     | 0.044 | 0.040      | 0.831   | -0.003   | 0.023    |
| use3                   | 0.090          | 0.028      | 0.064       | 0.025          | 0.116       | 0.043      | 0.112     | 0.113 | 0.084      | 0.809   | 0.020    | -0.060   |
| bond1                  | 0.113          | 0.075      | 0.172       | 0.035          | 0.179       | 0.079      | 0.078     | -0.006 | 0.044      | 0.031   | 0.858    | -0.016   |
| bond3                  | 0.145          | 0.019      | 0.186       | 0.034          | 0.211       | 0.039      | 0.096     | 0.008 | 0.052      | -0.011  | 0.796    | 0.011    |
| bond2                  | 0.095          | 0.026      | 0.152       | 0.004          | 0.164       | 0.112      | 0.132     | -0.040 | 0.052      | 0.020   | 0.791    | 0.029    |
| bridge1                | 0.177          | 0.073      | 0.175       | 0.122          | 0.213       | 0.144      | 0.137     | -0.050 | 0.010      | 0.024   | 0.002    | 0.809    |
| bridge2                | 0.111          | 0.091      | 0.126       | 0.128          | 0.253       | 0.109      | 0.110     | -0.055 | -0.025     | -0.024  | 0.007    | 0.789    |
| bridge3                | 0.157          | 0.061      | 0.177       | 0.143          | 0.201       | 0.056      | 0.159     | 0.009 | 0.030      | -0.011  | 0.015    | 0.783    |
| Eigen value            | 13.259         | 4.027      | 3.760       | 3.064          | 2.567       | 2.205      | 2.083     | 1.812 | 1.755      | 1.722   | 1.526    | 0.731    |
| Cronbach alpha         | 0.934          | 0.911      | 0.900       | 0.888          | 0.890       | 0.874      | 0.875     | 0.885 | 0.857      | 0.853   | 0.848    | 0.864    | (continued) |
| % Of variance | Psychological distance | Social identity | Engagement | Interaction | Reuse intention | Consistency | Attachment | Vividness | Trust | Usefulness | Bonding | Bridging |
|---------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|------------|-----------|-------|------------|---------|----------|
| 25.018        | 7.598                  | 7.095           | 5.782      | 4.844       | 4.160          | 3.930       | 3.418      | 3.312     | 3.249 | 2.879      | 1.379   |
| Cumulative %  | 25.018                 | 32.615          | 39.710     | 45.492      | 50.336         | 54.496      | 58.427     | 61.845     | 65.157 | 68.405     | 71.284 | 72.663   |

KMO = .919 Bartlett's test of sphericity = 22737.250 (p = .000) cumulative: 72.663%
Statistical analysis

Reliability and validity tests. The reliability test of the measurement was performed to test the internal consistency of the items. In order to secure consistency, we used the reliability analysis of SPSS 20.0 to obtain the Cronbach alpha values. As the result of the analysis, internal consistency was judged adequate because the alpha scores of all factors exceeded 0.8.

Next, we conducted exploratory factor analysis to verify the validity of each conceptual factor extracted. As shown in Tables 2 and 3, a cumulative variance explained is 72.663, showing the appropriate level of explanatory power, and the KMO verification result also confirmed the validity of factor analysis.

Next, the study performed correlation analysis to verify the discriminant validity of the measures, and the result confirmed most of all correlation coefficients support the hypothesized directionality. And because all of the factor coefficients are less than the squared value of factor-specific AVEs, the study concluded that discrimination validity was established.

Result of hypothesis tests. The result of testing structural equation modeling conducted to verify the research hypothesis shows that all paths are statistically significant. The results showing the path significance are shown in Table 3 below with the corresponding path diagram shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. SEM path analysis result.
Next, the study conducted a hierarchical regression analysis to verify the moderating effects of social identity and psychological distance. As shown in Tables 3–5 and Tables 3–6, respectively. In Tables 3, 4, and 5, model 3 (R^2 = 31.5%) that shows the interaction term between network traits and psychological distance on attachment (β = .160, p < .01) revealed the positive (+) effect of bridging network. On the other hand, the effect of the interaction term between bonding and psychological distance on attachment (β = .048, p > .05) is not significant. Therefore, hypothesis 5–1 was partly supported.

In Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6, model 3 (R^2 = 31.8 shows the interaction term between bridging network and social identity has a positive (+) effect on user engagement (β = .155, p < .01). On the other

| Hypothesis | Path | Standardized Estimate | S.E. | c.r | p   |
|------------|------|-----------------------|------|-----|-----|
| H1-1       | Vividness → Engagement | 0.175 | 0.034 | 4.940 | *** |
| H1-2       | Usefulness → Engagement | 0.085 | 0.037 | 2.361 | 0.018 |
| H1-3       | Trust → Engagement      | 0.135 | 0.035 | 3.778 | *** |
| H1-4       | Consistency → Engagement | 0.116 | 0.039 | 3.022 | 0.003 |
| H1-5       | Interaction → Engagement | 0.108 | 0.039 | 2.913 | 0.004 |
| H3-1       | Bonding → Engagement    | 0.291 | 0.039 | 7.756 | *** |
| H3-2       | Bridging → Engagement   | 0.285 | 0.042 | 7.132 | *** |
| H2-1       | Vividness → Attachment  | 0.203 | 0.034 | 5.586 | *** |
| H2-2       | Usefulness → Attachment | 0.142 | 0.036 | 3.948 | *** |
| H2-3       | Trust → Attachment      | 0.095 | 0.034 | 2.645 | 0.008 |
| H2-4       | Consistency → Attachment | 0.094 | 0.038 | 2.447 | 0.014 |
| H2-5       | Interaction → Attachment | 0.103 | 0.039 | 2.780 | 0.005 |
| H4-1       | Bonding → Attachment    | 0.172 | 0.040 | 4.348 | *** |
| H4-2       | Bridging → Attachment   | 0.267 | 0.043 | 6.308 | *** |
| H7-1       | Engagement → Attachment | 0.138 | 0.046 | 2.937 | 0.003 |
| H8-1       | Engagement → Reuse intention | 0.247 | 0.042 | 5.862 | *** |
| H9-1       | Attachment → Reuse intention | 0.470 | 0.044 | 10.777 | *** |

***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1.

| Variables                              | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|----------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Bonding                                | .278**  | .227**  | .214**  |
| Bridging                               | .347**  | .281**  | .294**  |
| Psychological distance                 | .240**  | .267**  | .408    |
| Bonding * Psy distance                 |         |         | .160**  |
| Bridging * Psy distance                | .238    | .288    | .315    |
| R^2                                    | 34.556**| 38.179**| 33.660**|
| ΔR^2                                   | .231    | .280    | .305    |

***p < .01 *p < .05.
Conclusions

Study results

The result of this study can be summarized as follows. Firstly, the five dimensions of platform contents characteristics, namely vividness, trustworthiness, consistency, usefulness, and interaction had a positive significant impact on user engagement. Secondly, the same five dimensions had a positive significant impact on attachment. Therefore, the more vivid the content, the more useful information in the content, the more consistent the evaluation of the content, the more trustworthy the content and the more interaction between users using TikTok, the more likely they are to participate and attach themselves to TikTok. Thirdly, the two traits of social network traits, bonding and bridging, had a positive significant impact on user engagement. Fourthly, the two of social network traits had a positive significant impact on attachment. Fifthly, the result confirmed that the social identity only significantly moderated the relationship between bridging network and user engagement. On the other hand, psychological distance was proven to significantly moderate the relationship between bridging network and user attachment. Sixth, user engagement positively influenced user attachment and reuse intention of TikTok. Finally, user engagement significantly influenced user attachment.

Theoretical implications

Based on the results, the findings provide the following noteworthy theoretical implications. Firstly, as social platforms that offer a wide variety of UGC (user generated contents) meet growing popularity worldwide, it is important to understand the theoretical basis of what makes people use or reuse UGC services like TikTok from diverse theoretical backgrounds. Under this research motivation, this study proposed a conceptual framework built upon on two predictive factors, one from the platform side (platform’s contents characteristics) and another from user side (social network traits). This study has broadened the conventional theoretical conceptualizations to provide a deeper look at the intermediary mechanism affecting the reuse intention of TikTok by incorporating affective (user attachment) and behavioral (user engagement) variables as intervening variables.
affecting reuse intention, the finding that user attachment has a significant impact on reuse intention provides an interesting theoretical outcome in that it finds previous support from Wallace and Jun (2019) who argues that Instagram users’ emotional attachment is a powerful predictor of continuous use of Instagram, which was motivated by the pursuit of social identity.

Another noteworthy theoretical implication to be raised by this study’s result is the relationship between user engagement and attachment. Although the relationship was proven significant in this study, it will be a useful research effort if future research extends a line of thought on this relationship. For instance, it will be theoretically insightful if future research effort may to switch the hypothesized direction to confirm whether user attachment causes user engagement rather than the other way around. This will be an interesting approach in the hope of confirming temporal sequence between cognitive and emotional precursor of behavioral intention.

Next, this study has extended the current understanding of the social as well as psychological control factors by incorporating two moderators (social identity and psychological distance). The finding that the two moderators significantly interacted with the bridging network to influence both user attachment and user engagement imparts a useful theoretical implication as bonding network has been found in the literature to have a greater impact on user attachment (Kim and Cho 2018; Jung & Lee, 2020; Yang and Han, 2021) and user engagement (Yoon et al., 2013; Choi, 2016; Jung & Lee, 2020).

Practical implications

In as far as practical implications are concerned, the results on the impact of TikTok’s information characteristics (vividness, usefulness, consistency, trustworthiness, and interaction) and network traits on user engagement and attachment can provide useful implications for UGC platform companies in developing media strategies and targeting strategies. By placing more vivid, more useful, more trustworthy, and interactive short videos on recommended list of contents, TikTok can increase the degree of user enjoyment and participation. In addition, TikTok can establish targeting strategy based on the nature and intensity of networking among the users. To elaborate, TikTok needs to decide on targeting users who have either bonding or bridging network tendency depending upon their expected goals (inducing greater user’s attachment or enhancing user engagement).

Finally, with the widespread use of UGC platforms, people are gaining more experience in using, participating in and sharing through UGC platform. In order to gain a competitive advantage, it is necessary for short video operators like TikTok to develop strategies that allow users to personalize their experience on TikTok. In order to achieve this strategic goal, the TikTok needs to increase user engagement by creating contents that cater to the users’ needs and tastes. One of the ways to provide online services that meet users’ personalization need would be to filter out contents that do not contribute to inducing users’ reuse intentions. For instance, based on the weighted contribution scores (e.g., SEM’s path coefficients) of the five dimensions of information characteristics, TikTok can sort out and discontinue providing short video clips that fail to deliver users’ desired responses such as user engagement and user attachment.

Future research directions

Limitations of this study and suggestions for future research are as follows.
This study took TikTok as the research object. However, this platform is only one of a few short-video platforms operating in China currently such as Kuai Shou (快手) and Xi Gua Videos (西瓜视频) that are as popular as TikTok within China. Thus, it is necessary for future studies to include other consumers who currently use other UGC platforms to be able to generalize the current research findings. Secondly, user engagement and attachment were chosen as parameters that represent emotional as well as behavioral intermediate mechanism that affects platform reuse intention. In addition, future research needs to add some of the functional features relevant to UGC platforms such as user convenience and degree of personalization as precursors of reuse intention.

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