



SOUTH JAKARTA YOUTH'S URBAN LIFESTYLE AS A FORM OF SELF-EXISTENCE ON TIKTOK

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Abstract

TikTok has become a primary space for urban teenagers in South Jakarta to express themselves and shape their social identity amidst the pressures of modern lifestyle. Its function has gone beyond mere entertainment, serving as a platform for existence and the pursuit of social recognition. Teenagers face various social pressures that push them to follow trends and present themselves visually through content related to fashion, social activities, and participation in viral phenomena. This study aims to understand how the urban youth lifestyle is reflected in TikTok content, and how social demands and the desire for existence shape their digital behavior. Using a qualitative method with an interpretive paradigm and a case study strategy, data were collected through content observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The theoretical framework applied is hedonism, which explains how individuals seek pleasure and recognition from their social environment. The findings reveal that TikTok plays a significant role in influencing the lifestyle and identity formation of teenagers, where digital existence becomes an essential part of their self-actualization process.

Keywords: *Urban Lifestyle, Teenagers, TikTok, Social Pressure, Self-Existence, Digital Identity.*

Abstrak

TikTok kini berperan sebagai ruang utama bagi remaja urban di Jakarta Selatan dalam mengekspresikan diri dan membentuk citra sosial di tengah tuntutan gaya hidup modern. Fungsi platform ini telah melampaui sekadar hiburan, menjadi sarana eksistensi dan pencarian pengakuan sosial yang signifikan. Remaja menghadapi berbagai tekanan sosial yang mendorong mereka untuk mengikuti tren dan menampilkan diri secara visual melalui konten fesyen, aktivitas sosial, dan partisipasi dalam fenomena viral. Penelitian ini bertujuan memahami bagaimana gaya hidup urban remaja tergambar dalam konten TikTok serta bagaimana pengaruh tuntutan sosial dan keinginan eksistensi membentuk perilaku digital mereka. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif, paradigma interpretif, dan strategi studi kasus, data diperoleh melalui observasi konten, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Teori hedonisme menjadi landasan dalam melihat bagaimana remaja mencari kepuasan dan pengakuan dari lingkungan sosial digital. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa TikTok memainkan peran besar dalam memengaruhi gaya hidup dan pembentukan identitas remaja, di mana eksistensi digital menjadi bagian penting dari proses aktualisasi diri mereka.



Kata Kunci: Gaya Hidup Urban, Remaja, TikTok, Tuntutan Sosial, Eksistensi Diri, Identitas Digital.

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has transformed the way people interact and shape their social identities, especially among adolescents who are searching for their identity. Social media has become a primary platform for adolescents to express themselves and actively participate in sharing and creating content. Platforms such as blogs, social networking sites, and wikis are commonly used. Generally, social media is a web-based service that facilitates interaction within a virtual community. Users can share information, collaborate, and build relationships through text, images, or video. Popular social media platforms include Twitter, Facebook, blogs, and Foursquare. These platforms have now become an essential part of adolescents' lives (Risqi Inayah & Allaam, 2021).

However, the use of social media does not always have a positive impact. Many parties misuse it to spread false information (hoaxes) or provocative content. Some even spread material containing elements of ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations (SARA), harassment, and insults. This has a negative impact on users, especially adolescents who are still vulnerable and in the process of forming their identities. Social media, which should be a space for information, can instead become a source of social pressure. This negative content creates unrest and the potential for social conflict. Therefore, digital literacy is crucial for guiding teenagers in using media wisely. (Solten RadjaGukguk, Risqi Inayah & Sri Desti, 2020)

Social media has become a virtual space that provides unlimited opportunities for its users to build self-image, seek social validation, and even demonstrate their existence. Among the various social media platforms available, TikTok has emerged as one of the most dominant and popular, especially among urban teenagers in large cities like South Jakarta.

The phenomenon of TikTok usage is not merely a means of entertainment; it has also evolved into a lifestyle, cultural identity, and social space that represents one's status and preferences. In this context, urban teenagers in South Jakarta are an interesting object of study because this area is known for its complex social, economic, and cultural dynamics. On the one hand, South Jakarta has an image as a center of youth trends, an elite area, and a gathering place for the upper middle class. On the other hand, this region has also become

fertile ground for the growth of social pressures and demands for existence amidst a consumerist and competitive culture.

Afrizal (2018) stated that social media has now become a digital space that allows users to establish social interactions while expressing their identity. These platforms serve not only as communication tools but also as stages where individuals can showcase various aspects of their lives to a wider audience.

As technology advances, social media platforms are becoming increasingly diverse, and almost everyone has an account on these platforms. Apps like TikTok are not only a source of information and communication but also a medium for channeling ideas, creativity, and building a personal presence in the digital space (Annisa et al., 2021). The existence of social media makes it easier for individuals, including teenagers, to express their identities. However, adapting to this digital world does not happen instantly. It takes time and a learning process for someone to be able to interact and behave according to prevailing social norms. Marshall and Mathias (2016) noted that the transition from a familiar environment to a new situation often presents challenges. Failure of this process can trigger stress and culture shock (Helen Olivia, Achmad Budiman & Fitri Sarasati, 2024).

In the context of urban youth in South Jakarta, TikTok has significant implications for shaping their lifestyles. Trends emerging on TikTok influence their clothing styles, hangout locations, communication styles, and even music and food preferences. Teenagers are not just spectators but also active creators who contribute to the spread of these lifestyle trends. They leverage TikTok's popularity to gain recognition and presence among their peers. This demonstrates that social media has become a crucial part of identity formation and social relationships. By constantly following trends, teens strive to maintain relevance within their digital communities. This phenomenon reflects the powerful influence of media on the lives of today's youth.

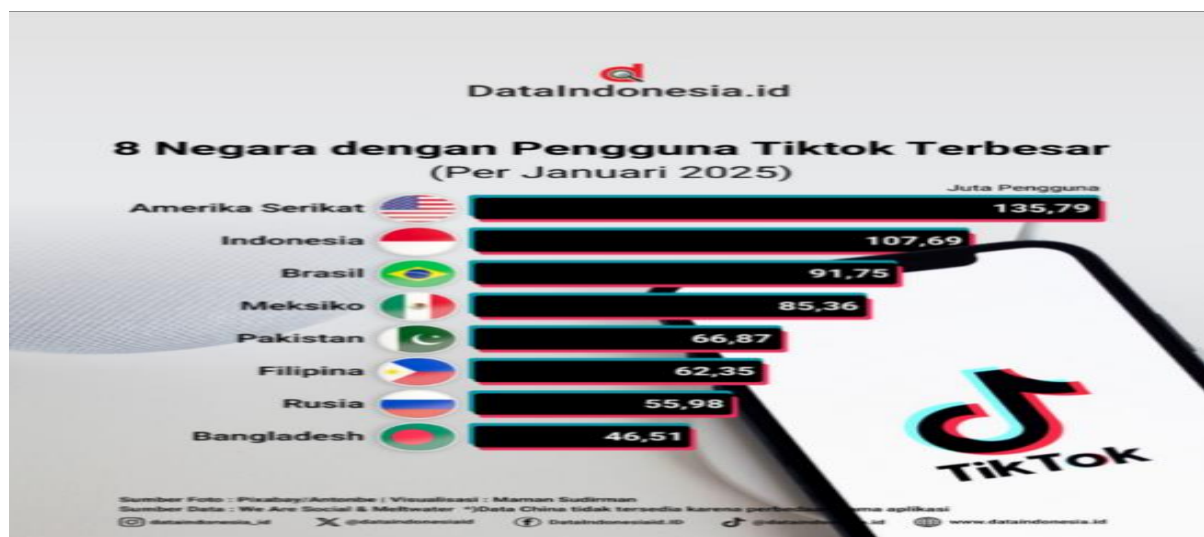


Figure 1. Largest TikTok User Data

Source: dataindonesia.id

TikTok's strong influence in shaping the social dynamics of Indonesian youth can be seen from the high number of users on the platform nationally. According to data from DataIndonesia.id (2025), Indonesia ranks second as the country with the most TikTok users in the world, reaching 107.69 million users. This position is only behind the United States with 135.79 million users, and far above other countries such as Brazil, Mexico, and Russia.

Existence on social media like TikTok is closely related to the concept of "Impression Management" proposed by Erving Goffman. According to Goffman, individuals constantly perform social performances in front of audiences with the aim of creating a certain impression.

In the context of TikTok, urban youth play specific roles that align with the expectations of their digital environment. They choose specific music, wear trendy outfits, use catchy filters and captions, and even participate in popular challenges to stay relevant and gain attention. This process places adolescents in a dilemma: they must either express their true selves or create a false identity to meet social expectations.

This phenomenon is further complicated by social pressures from their surroundings, both online and offline. Teenagers in South Jakarta are often exposed to certain social standards regarding success, beauty, socializing, and lifestyle. These standards are fueled by a highly consumerist culture, where clothing brands, hangout spots, and lifestyles are portrayed in the media.

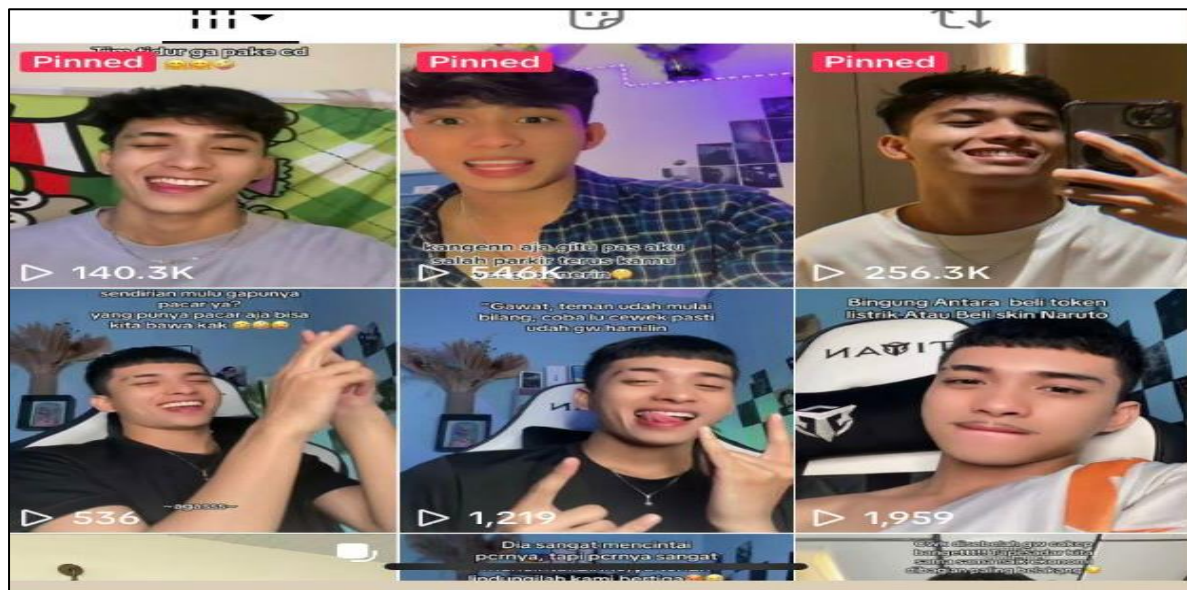


Figure 2. TikTok @agasss.ae

Source: TikTok

This phenomenon can also be seen in the rise of teenage figures gaining popularity through TikTok content. One such account is @agasss.ae, which has over 26,000 followers and hundreds of thousands of views.

On this account, TikTokers showcase a variety of self-expressions related to romance, humor, and teenage anxieties. Their relaxed delivery style, use of expressive facial expressions, and distinctive speaking style are particularly appealing to their audience. This demonstrates that their presence on TikTok is not only built on the quality of their information, but also on the ability to project a socially and emotionally engaging personality.

Urban youth, such as those in South Jakarta, tend to emulate or even use these figures as benchmarks for their lifestyle and existence. Amidst the influx of social demands from school, friends, and the media, TikTok serves as a channel for escape and the formation of new identities, constructed visually and emotionally. They compete to be the "best version" of themselves, seeking recognition from the digital public. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how social pressure and the drive to exist on TikTok influence how urban youth in South Jakarta shape their lifestyle and self-image.



Figure 3. Age of TikTok Users

Source: businessofapps

Based on the graph presented by Business of Apps, it can be seen that the 18-24 age group is the largest TikTok user, followed by the 25-34 age group. This data is highly relevant to research focused on urban youth in South Jakarta, as this age group is in the process of discovering their identity and is highly susceptible to social influences, including in shaping their lifestyle.

Given this complex and multidimensional background, it is highly relevant to address the issue of urban youth lifestyle in South Jakarta within the framework of TikTok. This research is expected to contribute to an understanding of the dynamics of youth identity in the digital age, particularly in the context of urban Indonesia. This study is also crucial for formulating a more holistic approach to assisting the younger generation in utilizing social media in a healthy, wise, and empowering manner.

This research also stems from the practical need to understand the behavioral patterns of youth, who will become important actors in future social development. By understanding how social demands and existential needs shape their lifestyles, various parties such as educators, policy makers, and media industry players can design more targeted strategies to support the psychologically and socially healthy growth and development of adolescents.

II. THEORETICAL STUDIES

According to Jean Paul Sartre, the concept of human existence is related to his perspective on being and existence as "being and doing." To illustrate being and being, Sartre coined the terms *l'être-en-soi* (being-in-itself) and *l'être-pour-soi* (being-for-itself). The meaning of *l'être-en-soi*, or "being-in-itself," is a form of being per se (Hadiwijono, 1980).

According to Sartre, humans are free individuals who determine their own destiny. Existence comes first, while meaning (essence, identity) is formed later through choices made sincerely and responsibly. According to him, existence precedes essence: humans exist first, then shape themselves through freedom, choice, and responsibility; true self-existence is only achieved when life is lived authentically.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of in-depth understanding of how the urban lifestyles of teenagers in South Jakarta are shaped through their use of TikTok, particularly in relation to social demands and the need for self-existence. A descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to describe social phenomena contextually based on the realities experienced by the research subjects. Thus, this approach can uncover the meanings embedded in teenagers' digital behavior and how they interpret their presence in virtual spaces. This research focuses on exploring the subjective experiences and social symbols displayed by teenagers through the digital content they produce and consume.

The paradigm used in this research is an interpretive paradigm. This paradigm starts from the assumption that social reality is subjective and constructed through experience, language, and social interactions between individuals. In the context of this research, the interpretive paradigm provides researchers with the opportunity to understand how teenagers interpret the use of TikTok as a medium for forming digital identities, responding to social pressures, and expressing themselves amidst evolving popular culture. This paradigm also encourages researchers to capture the social dynamics that occur naturally in teenagers' lives, particularly in terms of their participation in digital trends circulating on social media.

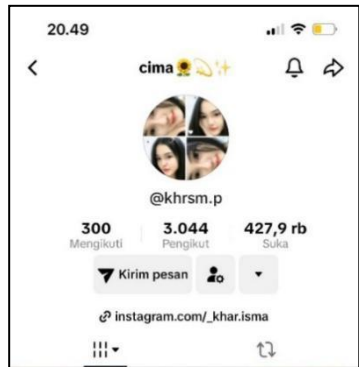
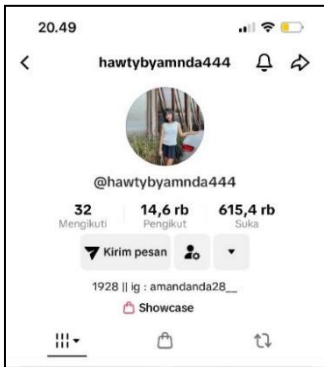
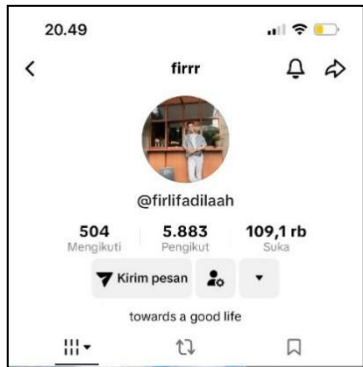
Data collection techniques used were in-depth interviews with informants who are active TikTok users in South Jakarta, along with supporting visual documentation. Observations aimed to identify patterns of self-representation, lifestyle practices, and forms of digital social interaction that emerged in the content. Interviews were used to obtain personal narratives regarding the informants' motivations, perceptions, and experiences in using TikTok as a means of self-expression and self-image. Documentation in the form of screenshots, the number of content interactions, and visual descriptions were used as supplementary materials in the analysis. To maintain data validity, the researcher applied source and technique triangulation techniques. Data analysis was conducted thematically

through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing processes to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of social media in shaping the lifestyle and identity of urban youth in the digital era.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

The main research findings, based on interviews with informants, consistently demonstrate that TikTok has become a significant transformative agent in shaping the lifestyles and self-identities of urban youth. More than just an entertainment app, TikTok serves as a primary platform for adolescents to construct and project their desired self-image, as well as a space for responding to the various social expectations they face. In an increasingly connected digital environment, online presence or digital validation has become an essential component in the self-actualization process of contemporary adolescents.

Table 1: Informant Table

Informan Kharisma Putri Aulia (@khrsm.p)	Informan 2 Alfath Alamanda Putri (@hawtybyamnda444)	Informan 3 Firly Fadilah (@firlifadilaah)
		

Source: TikTok processed by Researchers, 2025

The informants in this study consisted of three urban teenagers who actively use TikTok in South Jakarta, each exhibiting different motivations, habits, and perspectives on using the platform. Kharisma Putri Aulia (21), a college student, has been using TikTok since 2021, spending 2-4 hours per day. She uses TikTok as a space to express herself through OOTD (Outfit of the Day) content, dance trends, and everyday life that reflects her personal identity. She admitted to often being tempted to buy viral products and feeling satisfied when her videos appear on FYP, thus viewing TikTok as a platform for her existence and potential income through creative content. Alfath Alamanda Putri (22), a content creator, uses TikTok

intensively for 6-8 hours per day. She actively utilizes the affiliate and TikTok Shop features, and uses the platform as a primary means to build her personal brand and generate income.

Manda is inspired by her fellow successful creators and strives to create her own trends through fashion content aimed at inspiring fellow petite women. Meanwhile, Firly Fadilah (22), an employee at the Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in South Jakarta, uses TikTok for about three hours a day before bed, primarily as a quick source of information. He is not interested in actively following lifestyle or digital trends, considering their relevance to real life and financial situation. Firly focuses more on using TikTok to build a positive image and personal branding appropriate for the professional world, emphasizing that the platform is merely a supplementary medium, not a primary tool for self-expression. The three informants indicated that TikTok plays a diverse role in the lives of urban youth, ranging from a space for self-expression, a means of establishing a digital presence, to a medium for consuming information and providing economic opportunities, all of which depend heavily on each user's personal motives and goals.

Table 2. Reasons for Using TikTok

Penggunaan Tiktok	Durasi Menggunakan TikTok
	Alasan Penggunaan TikTok
	Pengaruh Terhadap Gaya Hidp
	Perilaku Konsumtif
	Mengikut Trend

Source: Researcher's Analysis, 2025

According to interviews with the three informants, TikTok usage duration varies, reflecting their level of engagement. Manda, a content creator, has the highest usage duration, at 6 to 8 hours per day, as she not only consumes content but also produces it. Kharisma, a student, uses TikTok for 2 to 4 hours per day for entertainment and trend exploration. Firly, who works for a government agency, uses TikTok for 3 hours per day, particularly in the evenings, as a quick source of information before bed. These differences indicate that usage duration is highly influenced by each user's goals and role on the platform.

The reasons for using TikTok also reflect diverse preferences. Kharisma likes TikTok for its varied, entertaining, and informative content. Manda uses TikTok to keep up with the latest trends and understand the market as part of her content creator strategy. Firly is more attracted to TikTok's informative aspect, viewing it as a quicker and more efficient alternative to reading long articles. In terms of lifestyle influences, TikTok inspires Kharisma and

Manda in terms of fashion, self-care, and self-expression, while Firly doesn't feel influenced by lifestyle trends and tends to be more selective and true to his own values.

In terms of consumer behavior and attitudes toward trends, TikTok has a significant but uneven influence. Kharisma and Manda exhibit a high tendency toward consumer behavior, particularly after exposure to reviews and FYP content. Firly began shopping on TikTok for competitive prices, not driven by trends. Regarding trends, Kharisma only follows those that align with his preferences, Manda is more open and active in following and creating trends that support his image as a creator, while Firly is critical and rejects unrealistic trends.

Table 3. Categorization of TikTok Use as a Medium for Self-Expression

Hasil Kategori	Gaya Hidup Urban dan Hedonisme di Tiktok
	Tuntutan Sosial dan Eksistensi Diri
	Peran Tiktik dalam Pembentukan Identitas di Era Digital
	Eksistensi Diri dan Peran Tiktok sebagai “Panggung Digital”

Source: Research Processing, 2025

Based on the results of in-depth interviews conducted with three informants: Manda, Kharisma, and Firly, it can be seen that TikTok use among teenagers and young adults in South Jakarta is not merely a entertainment activity but is also closely related to identity formation, the search for self-existence, and a reflection of the urban lifestyle developing in the metropolitan area. Each individual exhibits different usage patterns, which are fundamentally influenced by their work background, social orientation, and personal values. In this regard, TikTok becomes more than just a social media application, but a digital social space that enables self-expression, social interaction, and even a transformation in perspectives on daily life.

Manda (23), a content creator, uses TikTok intensively, approximately seven to eight hours a day, as her primary medium for channeling her creativity and boosting her presence in the digital world. In the interview, Manda admitted that she not only watches other people's content but also actively produces videos on makeup, outfits, and lifestyle themes. Her motivation is rooted in the desire to be recognized, appreciated, and even earn income from the audience she has built organically. Manda's lifestyle reflects a fast-paced, competitive urban environment that emphasizes visual performance as a form of self-validation. Manda's decision to become a content creator also reflects a hedonistic lifestyle focused on achieving pleasure and external rewards, whether in the form of likes, positive comments, or brand partnerships. Referring to Sartre's theory of Self-Existence, the pursuit of

happiness and pleasure is the primary goal in life, meaning that true self-existence is only achieved when life is lived authentically. This aligns with Manda's feelings when she sees her content's views increase or garners public attention, which she says "makes me excited and satisfied, as if the fatigue of creating content is being healed."

Kharisma (22), a student who also works part-time, has a slightly different approach. She uses TikTok for two to four hours every night to relax after her academic and work routines. She prefers to be a passive viewer of content with enjoyable topics such as daily vlogs, OOTDs (Outfit of the Day), hangout recommendations, and skincare product reviews. Kharisma admitted that watching TikTok helps him "escape from the fatigue of reality" and provides a reference for living a lifestyle considered contemporary. In this context, the theory of Self-Existence explains that content consumption is done to satisfy the desire for entertainment and emotional comfort. Kharisma's busy and stressful life actually makes him crave enjoyable moments of escape through light, humorous, and relatable content. This shows that TikTok also functions as a coping mechanism for the stress commonly faced by young urbanites, as well as a channel of inspiration for developing an ideal self-image that aligns with social demands.

Meanwhile, Firly (25), an employee at a government agency, demonstrates a more selective and conscious preference in his use of TikTok. He spends around two to three hours each day watching educational and informative content. He firmly states that he avoids consumptive and hyperactive content, because, according to him, "it tires the brain and actually increases overthinking." Firly uses TikTok as a tool for self-development and to gain new information that he can apply to his work and personal life. Nevertheless, pleasure remains a part of his social media experience, but the pleasure he derives comes from aspects of productivity and intellectual enrichment. In more modern hedonistic theory, Firly's approach suggests that pleasure can come not only from entertainment but also from personal achievement and a sense of self-control.

These three informants' narratives demonstrate the complex spectrum of urban lifestyles in South Jakarta. Although all informants live in densely populated areas, with ample access to information, and a strong connection to popular culture, the ways they interpret TikTok and adapt it to their daily lives differ significantly. This demonstrates that urban lifestyle is not a single concept, but rather something negotiated personally by each individual. Manda displays a lifestyle oriented more toward performativity and social

achievement; Kharisma's approach focuses on escapism and ideal lifestyle references; while Firly represents the rational and reflective urban segment.

In the context of self-existence, TikTok becomes a crucial space for informants to construct and maintain their personal image. Sartre provides a framework for viewing urban youth's personal image as a form of existential project—a creative process of shaping identity through the freedom to choose content. TikTok becomes a space where they manifest their existence through the creation of a personal image. TikTok, in this case, becomes a digital stage, where every gesture, music choice, filter, and caption become part of a performative script that reflects the identity they wish to project. Manda, for example, crafts her content in such a way that it appears attractive and fashionable. Kharisma chooses content that aligns with the persona she wants to build as a young woman concerned with aesthetics and trends. Firly, though not actively creating content, still selectively consumes information to maintain her image as a mature and controlled individual.

Referring to Sartre's theory of Self-Existence regarding the reality of urban teenagers on social media on TikTok, which states that identity is shaped through the content choices they create on TikTok, how they express themselves, and what they pursue, the radical freedom chosen by the informant is freedom. Nothing is absolutely coercive—despite social pressures or trends, it's still up to them to decide and live authentically. The informant, as an urban teenager, dares to show their authentic self—for example, sharing real experiences, original work, or content that aligns with their passions. In short, the informant's self-existence as an urban teenager on TikTok is manifested in their freedom to choose content, responsibility for its impact, and the courage to live authentically, rather than simply following the crowd.

However, it's important to note that existence in TikTok use isn't always negative. In fact, in some cases, like Firly's, digital enjoyment can be directed towards supporting self-improvement. Experience encompasses more than just the pursuit of physical pleasure or sensation, but also the search for a personally satisfying meaning in life. This means that TikTok becomes both a reflective and expressive space, depending on how users position themselves and filter the available information.

Furthermore, these interviews reflect how TikTok has become an integral part of the construction of a flexible and fluid urban lifestyle. Urbanity is not just about geographic location, but rather a mental and cultural condition formed through interactions with

technology, information, and symbols of modernity. In this regard, TikTok acts as an agent of digital urbanization, facilitating a fast-paced, instant, and image-driven lifestyle. Access to lifestyle content, tutorials, trends, and product recommendations shapes ways of thinking, choices, and even self-love based on TikTok's media standards.

The findings from the three informants also indicate an emotional attachment to TikTok that makes users feel "close" to the content they consume. This isn't just about its sophisticated algorithmic features, but also about how TikTok has become part of their daily routine, a safe zone, and even a source of inspiration. This reinforces the argument that digital lifestyles have become integral to the lives of young urbanites, and social media platforms like TikTok have become key instruments in their social and personal navigation.

Overall, these interviews confirm that TikTok has significant implications for shaping the urban lifestyles of young people in South Jakarta. Using the theory of hedonism, it can be understood that an orientation toward pleasure, satisfaction, and validation are the primary driving factors in content consumption and production. However, the varying approaches of each informant demonstrate that social media use remains subjective and influenced by each individual's values and life goals. TikTok, in this case, reflects the dynamics of an urban lifestyle that is fast-paced, complex, and full of negotiations between pleasure and self-awareness.

V. CONCLUSION

Research on the urban lifestyle phenomenon of teenagers in South Jakarta using the TikTok platform concludes that TikTok serves as more than just an entertainment medium; it also serves as an important platform for teenagers to express their identity and respond to existing social demands. This research demonstrates that teenagers are not only influenced by existing trends but also actively choose and adapt the content they consume and create. Interviews with informants indicate that although they are exposed to pressure to appear popular, they still have space to express their unique selves.

Furthermore, this study reveals that South Jakarta teenagers' use of TikTok is influenced by a competitive social and cultural context. Teenagers feel compelled to gain social recognition through interactions on the platform, which often leads to consumer behavior. However, not all teenagers fall into impulsive consumption patterns; some demonstrate the ability to be critical and choose content that aligns with their personal values and goals. This reflects the fluid and fluid dynamics of self-existence, where the meaning of

"existence" can change with age and life experiences. Thus, TikTok provides a platform that allows teenagers to negotiate the balance between social demands and the search for an authentic identity.

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