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TIKTOK USE, MONETIZATION AND OBJECTIFICATION AMONG FEMALE UNDERGRADUATES IN ANAMBRA STATE

By

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Abstract

The increasing popularity of TikTok has transformed social media participation by integrating content creation with monetization opportunities. While these opportunities promote digital entrepreneurship, concerns have emerged regarding their influence on content creation, objectification, and the psychological well-being of female users. This study examined TikTok use, monetization, and objectification among female undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, it investigated the underlying motives for TikTok use, examined the influence of monetization on content creation practices, assessed the extent to which monetized TikTok content contributes to objectification, and explored its perceived social and psychological effects. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and was anchored on the Uses and Gratifications Theory and Objectification Theory. Data were collected from 325 female undergraduates selected through a multistage sampling technique from three universities representing the federal, state, and mission university categories in Anambra State. A structured questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection, while weighted mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that female undergraduates primarily use TikTok for entertainment, creativity, learning, social interaction, and social recognition. Monetization was found to significantly influence content creation practices by encouraging increased content production, audience engagement, and posting consistency for financial rewards. The study further established that monetized TikTok content contributes to the objectification of female undergraduates by promoting appearance-oriented self-presentation and emphasizing physical attractiveness over competence. Respondents also perceived that monetized TikTok content has significant social and psychological effects, including body image concerns, reduced self-esteem, psychological pressure, emotional discomfort, and altered self-perception. The study concludes that while TikTok provides valuable opportunities for creativity and income generation, its monetization ecosystem may inadvertently reinforce appearance-based evaluation and objectification. It recommends strengthening digital media literacy and promoting platform policies that reward creativity, originality, and educational value over appearance-driven engagement.

Keywords: *TikTok, monetization, objectification, female undergraduates, content creation, body image, Anambra State.*

Abbreviations: *AI – Artificial Intelligence; SD – Standard Deviation; UGT – Uses and Gratifications Theory.*

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social media has fundamentally transformed digital communication, information dissemination, and content creation across the globe. Unlike traditional media, which largely relied on one-way communication, social networking platforms have enabled users to create, share, and monetize digital content while interacting with diverse audiences in real time. This transformation has shifted users from being passive consumers of information to active participants in the digital content ecosystem, creating new opportunities for entrepreneurship, self-expression, education, entertainment, and social interaction (Peres, Schreier, Schweidel, & Sorescu, 2024). Among the various social media platforms, TikTok has emerged as one of the fastest-growing short-video applications worldwide because of its artificial intelligence-driven recommendation algorithm, which personalizes content

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and allows creators to reach extensive audiences regardless of their follower base (Boeker & Urman, 2022).

Unlike earlier social networking sites that primarily facilitated interpersonal communication, TikTok integrates entertainment, digital entrepreneurship, and creator monetization into a single platform. Through monetization mechanisms such as the Creator Rewards Programme, live-stream gifting, affiliate marketing, TikTok Shop, brand sponsorships, and paid partnerships, the platform enables users to generate income from the content they produce (Peres et al., 2024). These monetization opportunities have transformed many users, particularly young adults and university students, from passive consumers into active digital content creators. Consequently, content production is increasingly influenced by audience engagement indicators such as views, likes, comments, shares, and follower growth, which determine creators' visibility and earning potential. This transformation has contributed significantly to the expansion of the digital creator economy, where creativity, influence, and audience engagement have become valuable economic assets (Peres et al., 2024).

The rapid commercialization of TikTok has generated increasing scholarly attention because financial incentives are gradually reshaping the motivations underlying social media participation. While many users initially join TikTok for entertainment, social interaction, information seeking, and self-expression, the prospect of earning income has introduced economic motivations that increasingly influence both the quantity and nature of content produced. The Uses and Gratifications Theory explains that individuals actively select media platforms to satisfy specific psychological and social needs, including entertainment, information acquisition, personal identity, social interaction, and self-expression (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). Recent empirical studies have similarly reported that entertainment, creativity, social interaction, and information seeking remain the dominant motivations for undergraduate TikTok users, although financial rewards are becoming increasingly important among content creators (Olagunju & Adebayo, 2024).

Despite these benefits, TikTok's monetization architecture has generated growing concern regarding the commercialization of physical appearance and the increasing emphasis placed on attractiveness as a determinant of online visibility and economic success. Since the platform's recommendation algorithm rewards highly engaging content, creators may become inclined to produce videos that maximize audience attention, sometimes by emphasizing physical appearance rather than competence, creativity, or intellectual ability. Consequently, financial incentives and algorithmic visibility may reinforce appearance-oriented self-presentation and encourage creators to prioritize body exposure or conformity to prevailing beauty ideals in pursuit of greater engagement and monetization opportunities (Ward, Daniels, Zurbriggen, & Rosenscruggs, 2023).

The increasing emphasis on appearance-oriented content has intensified scholarly concerns regarding the objectification of women on digital platforms. Objectification Theory posits that women are frequently treated as objects whose value is determined primarily by their physical appearance rather than their abilities, character, or achievements (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Within social media environments such as TikTok, repeated exposure to appearance-focused content and audience evaluation may encourage female users to internalize an observer's perspective of their bodies, leading to self-objectification, body surveillance, and appearance-based self-worth. Such experiences have been associated with body dissatisfaction, reduced self-esteem, anxiety, emotional distress, and other adverse psychological outcomes (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019). Recent studies further suggest that social media platforms continue to reproduce gender stereotypes by rewarding content that aligns with conventional beauty standards, thereby reinforcing the objectification of women within digital spaces (Ward et al., 2023).

Although previous studies have examined TikTok usage motivations, digital entrepreneurship, body image, and social media objectification, relatively few have integrated these variables within a single analytical framework. Existing research has largely focused on entertainment gratifications, platform adoption, influencer marketing, or body image concerns in Western and Asian societies, with comparatively limited empirical evidence from Nigeria. Furthermore, little attention has been devoted to understanding how TikTok monetization influences content creation practices, contributes to the objectification of female undergraduates, and affects their social and psychological well-being simultaneously. This gap is particularly evident in Anambra State, where the growing popularity of TikTok among university students has not been matched by corresponding empirical investigations into the implications of monetization for female users.

Against this background, this study examined TikTok use, monetization, and objectification among female undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the underlying motives for female undergraduates' use of TikTok, examine the influence of monetization on TikTok content creation practices, assess the extent to which monetized TikTok content contributes to the objectification of female undergraduates, and investigate the perceived social and psychological effects associated with monetized TikTok content. The study was anchored on the Uses and Gratifications Theory and Objectification Theory, which together provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the motivations underlying TikTok use and the consequences of monetized, appearance-oriented content among female undergraduates.

The emergence of the creator economy has fundamentally transformed digital media from a platform for communication into an ecosystem that supports entrepreneurship, innovation, and income generation. The creator economy refers to an economic system in which individuals create, distribute, and monetize digital content through online platforms using their creativity, expertise, and influence. Enabled by social media platforms, artificial intelligence, and digital technologies, content creators are increasingly able to establish personal

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brands, cultivate audiences, and generate revenue without relying on traditional media intermediaries (Peres, Schreier, Schweidel, & Sorescu, 2024). This transformation has repositioned social media users from passive consumers of information to active producers of economic value through digital content creation.

The rapid expansion of the creator economy has been driven largely by platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, which provide creators with multiple opportunities to monetize their content. According to Peres et al. (2024), the global creator economy has grown into a multibillion-dollar digital ecosystem where bloggers, influencers, musicians, educators, gamers, and other digital creators monetize their talents through audience engagement and platform-supported revenue models. The authors argue that advances in artificial intelligence and digital platforms have significantly lowered entry barriers for content creation while simultaneously increasing opportunities for creators to commercialize their digital products and services.

Among these platforms, TikTok has become one of the most influential drivers of the creator economy because of its algorithm-driven content recommendation system and diverse monetization opportunities. Unlike conventional social networking platforms that primarily facilitate communication, TikTok integrates entertainment, commerce, and digital entrepreneurship through monetization mechanisms such as the Creator Rewards Programme, TikTok Shop, affiliate marketing, live-stream gifts, subscriptions, brand partnerships, and sponsored content. These monetization features encourage creators to produce content consistently while simultaneously rewarding audience engagement through views, likes, comments, shares, and follower growth (Peres et al., 2024).

The increasing availability of monetization opportunities has also altered users' motivations for content creation. Whereas many users initially participate in social media for entertainment, information seeking, or social interaction, financial incentives have increasingly become an important determinant of content production. As creators seek to maximize visibility and earnings, they are more likely to develop content strategically tailored to audience preferences and platform algorithms. Consequently, content creation has evolved into a form of digital labour in which creativity, online influence, and audience engagement are transformed into economic resources that generate financial returns (Peres et al., 2024).

Despite its economic benefits, scholars have expressed concerns that the creator economy may inadvertently encourage excessive dependence on platform algorithms and audience approval. Since creators' visibility and earnings are largely determined by engagement metrics, content producers may increasingly prioritize content that attracts greater public attention rather than content that reflects originality or educational value. Such dynamics have intensified competition among creators and contributed to concerns regarding algorithmic dependence, commercialization of online identity, and the increasing commodification of personal attributes, particularly physical appearance, within the social media environment (Peres et al., 2024). These concerns have become particularly relevant on TikTok, where algorithmic amplification and monetization opportunities may influence not only the quantity of content produced but also the nature of self-presentation adopted by creators.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

This study is anchored on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), originally developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973). The theory emerged as a response to traditional media effects theories that viewed audiences as passive recipients of media messages. Instead, the Uses and Gratifications Theory posits that media audiences are active participants who consciously select media channels and content to satisfy specific psychological and social needs. According to the theory, individuals choose media based on the gratifications they seek, such as entertainment, information seeking, personal identity, social interaction, escapism, and self-expression (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973).

The theory has become one of the most widely applied frameworks in the study of digital and social media because it recognizes that users actively engage with online platforms for different purposes depending on their personal motivations and expected benefits. With the emergence of social networking platforms, the Uses and Gratifications Theory has been extended beyond traditional media to explain why individuals adopt and continuously use digital communication technologies. Contemporary studies have shown that users engage with platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok to satisfy diverse needs, including entertainment, social connectedness, creativity, self-presentation, information acquisition, and professional development (Sundar & Limperos, 2013).

Within the context of TikTok, the Uses and Gratifications Theory provides a suitable explanation for why female undergraduates actively use the platform. Although entertainment remains one of the primary motivations for TikTok use, users increasingly utilize the platform to express creativity, learn new skills, follow social trends, build online identities, and establish social relationships. The emergence of TikTok's monetization ecosystem has further expanded these motivations by introducing financial gratification as an additional incentive for content creation. Through opportunities such as brand collaborations, affiliate marketing, live-stream gifting, TikTok Shop, and creator reward programmes, users are motivated not only by social and psychological needs but also by economic benefits associated with digital content creation (Peres, Schreier, Schweidel, & Sorescu, 2024).

The assumptions of the Uses and Gratifications Theory align closely with the objectives of the present study. The first objective seeks to identify the underlying motives for female undergraduates' use of TikTok, which directly reflects the theory's proposition that individuals deliberately choose media platforms to satisfy particular needs. The second objective

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examines how monetization influences content creation practices, recognizing that financial rewards have become an emerging gratification that shapes users' behaviour on digital platforms. The theory therefore provides a useful framework for explaining how personal, social, informational, creative, and economic motivations collectively influence TikTok use among female undergraduates.

Although the Uses and Gratifications Theory effectively explains why individuals choose TikTok and the gratifications they derive from its use, it provides limited explanation of the potential consequences associated with prolonged exposure to appearance-oriented content. Consequently, the present study complements the Uses and Gratifications Theory with Objectification Theory to explain how monetization-driven self-presentation may contribute to the objectification of female undergraduates and influence their psychological well-being. The integration of both theories therefore provides a comprehensive framework for understanding not only the motivations for TikTok use but also the social and psychological implications of monetized content among female undergraduates in Anambra State.

Objectification Theory

This study is also anchored on Objectification Theory, developed by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), to explain how social and cultural environments that emphasize physical appearance influence women's perceptions of themselves and their psychological well-being. The theory argues that women are frequently treated and evaluated as objects whose worth is based primarily on their physical appearance rather than their abilities, intelligence, or personal attributes. As a result of repeated exposure to objectifying experiences, women may internalize an observer's perspective of their bodies, a process referred to as self-objectification. This internalization encourages women to habitually monitor and evaluate their physical appearance, often leading to body surveillance, body shame, anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and other adverse psychological outcomes (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Objectification Theory further posits that self-objectification is reinforced by cultural institutions, including the media, which frequently portray women as objects of visual evaluation. Traditional media have long been criticized for portraying women in sexually objectifying ways; however, the emergence of social media has intensified this phenomenon by allowing users not only to consume but also to produce appearance-oriented content. Unlike traditional media, social media platforms encourage continuous self-presentation and audience evaluation through features such as likes, comments, shares, and follower counts. These interactive features create environments in which women may increasingly evaluate themselves from the perspective of others in order to obtain social approval and acceptance (Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn, & Thompson, 2011).

The relevance of Objectification Theory has become even more pronounced with the emergence of TikTok, whose recommendation algorithm prioritizes highly engaging visual content. As creators compete for audience attention and monetization opportunities, there is increasing pressure to produce content that aligns with prevailing beauty standards and attracts greater engagement. Consequently, female creators may become more likely to emphasize physical attractiveness and body exposure to increase visibility, followers, and financial rewards. This commercialization of appearance reinforces self-objectification by encouraging women to perceive their bodies as economic assets capable of generating social recognition and monetary benefits (Ward, Daniels, Zurbriggen, & Rosenscruggs, 2023).

Empirical studies have consistently supported the assumptions of Objectification Theory. A comprehensive review by Ward et al. (2023) concluded that exposure to sexually objectifying media contributes to increased self-objectification, body dissatisfaction, body surveillance, anxiety, and diminished psychological well-being among women. Similarly, Fardouly and Vartanian (2016) observed that social media environments characterized by frequent appearance comparisons significantly predict body dissatisfaction and lower self-esteem, particularly among young women. These findings suggest that visual social media platforms such as TikTok may amplify appearance-based evaluation because users are constantly exposed to curated images and videos that portray idealized beauty standards.

Objectification Theory is particularly relevant to the present study because it explains how TikTok monetization may contribute to the objectification of female undergraduates. The theory provides a useful framework for understanding why financial incentives and algorithm-driven visibility may encourage appearance-oriented content creation, thereby reinforcing self-objectification and influencing body image, self-esteem, and psychological well-being. Specifically, the theory underpins the third research question, which examines the extent to which monetized TikTok content contributes to objectification, and the fourth research question, which investigates the perceived social and psychological effects of monetized TikTok content. By integrating Objectification Theory with the Uses and Gratifications Theory, this study explains both the motivations for TikTok use and the consequences associated with monetized, appearance-driven content among female undergraduates in Anambra State.

Empirical Review and Research Gap

Empirical evidence on TikTok use has expanded considerably in recent years, with studies examining users' motivations, content creation practices, body image, objectification, and psychological well-being. However, most existing studies have investigated these variables independently, with relatively few integrating TikTok use, monetization, objectification, and psychological outcomes within a single analytical framework.

In the Nigerian context, Nwafor and Nnaemeka (2023) investigated the uses and gratifications of TikTok among undergraduates of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State. Using the Uses and Gratifications Theory and a survey design involving 400 respondents, the study found that students primarily used TikTok for

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entertainment, leisure, self-expression, learning, and making new friends. Entertainment emerged as the dominant gratification, while educational and informational benefits were secondary. The study concluded that although TikTok provides multiple gratifications, students should be encouraged to utilize the platform more for educational purposes than entertainment.

Similarly, Akintola (2024) examined social media use as a predictor of body image and self-esteem among undergraduates in selected universities in Osun State, Nigeria. The study established that extensive engagement with social media significantly predicted body image perception and self-esteem among undergraduate students. The findings indicated that prolonged exposure to idealized online images contributed to body dissatisfaction and reduced self-esteem, particularly among female students, thereby emphasizing the psychological consequences of visual social media consumption.

Another Nigerian study by Aina, Adejumo, and colleagues (2024) investigated the relationship between selfitis and body image satisfaction among undergraduates in a private Nigerian university. Using a descriptive survey of 440 students, the researchers found a significant relationship between excessive selfie behaviour and body image dissatisfaction. The study concluded that frequent engagement in appearance-oriented online behaviour may negatively influence young people's perception of their physical appearance and psychological well-being.

Internationally, Fardouly and Vartanian (2016) reported that frequent exposure to appearance-focused social media content increases body dissatisfaction through appearance-based social comparison. Their review demonstrated that users who regularly compare themselves with idealized online images are more likely to experience lower self-esteem and negative body image. Likewise, Saiphoo and Vahedi (2019), in a meta-analysis of social media and body image research, concluded that greater social media engagement was consistently associated with increased body image concerns, particularly among young women.

More recently, Prichard et al. (2024) conducted a content analysis of popular fitness-related TikTok videos and found that appearance-oriented and idealized body representations dominated highly viewed content. The study revealed that videos emphasizing physical attractiveness and ideal body standards attracted considerable audience engagement and may reinforce unrealistic beauty ideals among viewers.

Furthermore, Ward, Daniels, Zurbriggen, and Rosenscruggs (2023) reviewed decades of research on sexual objectification and concluded that visual media continue to portray women primarily in terms of physical attractiveness, resulting in increased self-objectification, body surveillance, body dissatisfaction, anxiety, and diminished psychological well-being. Their review emphasized that digital media platforms have intensified these outcomes by encouraging continuous appearance-based evaluation and audience feedback.

Although these studies have contributed significantly to understanding TikTok use, social media engagement, and objectification, several gaps remain. First, most Nigerian studies have concentrated on users' motivations for TikTok use or the general influence of social media on body image and self-esteem without examining the role of TikTok monetization. Second, international studies have largely investigated body image, appearance comparison, and objectification within Western or Asian contexts, limiting the applicability of their findings to Nigerian university students. Third, few studies have simultaneously examined how monetization influences content creation practices, contributes to the objectification of female users, and affects their social and psychological well-being. Finally, there is a paucity of empirical studies focusing specifically on female undergraduates in Anambra State despite the increasing popularity of TikTok and the growing participation of young women in the digital creator economy.

It is against these identified gaps that the present study investigates TikTok use, monetization, and objectification among female undergraduates in Anambra State. Specifically, the study examines the underlying motives for TikTok use, determines the influence of monetization on content creation practices, assesses the extent to which monetized TikTok content contributes to objectification, and evaluates the perceived social and psychological effects associated with monetized TikTok content among female undergraduates.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine TikTok use, monetization and objectification among female undergraduates in Anambra State.

The specific objectives were to:

1. determine the underlying motives for TikTok use among female undergraduates in Anambra State;
2. examine the influence of TikTok monetization on content creation practices among female undergraduates in Anambra State;
3. assess the extent to which monetized TikTok content contributes to the objectification of female undergraduates in Anambra State; and
4. investigate the perceived social and psychological effects of monetized TikTok content among female undergraduates in Anambra State.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative survey design to examine TikTok use, monetization, and objectification among female undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria. The design was considered appropriate because it facilitated the collection of quantitative data from respondents at a single point in time to examine their perceptions of TikTok use, the influence of monetization on content creation practices, the extent to which monetized TikTok content contributes to objectification, and the associated social and psychological effects.

The study was conducted in three universities in Anambra State selected to represent the major categories of university

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ownership in Nigeria. These comprised one federal university, one state university, and one mission-owned university. The target population consisted of female undergraduate students in the selected institutions who actively use TikTok. A sample of 325 respondents was selected using a multistage sampling technique. The universities were purposively selected to ensure representation across ownership categories, after which faculties and departments were selected through stratified sampling. Eligible female undergraduate TikTok users were subsequently selected using simple random sampling.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from an extensive review of literature on TikTok use, social media monetization, objectification, and psychological well-being. The instrument comprised items measuring four major constructs: motives for TikTok use, the influence of monetization on content creation practices, the extent to which monetized TikTok content contributes to objectification, and the perceived social and psychological effects of monetized TikTok content. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

To ensure the quality of the instrument, face and content validity were established through expert evaluation by specialists in Mass Communication and Measurement and Evaluation. Their recommendations were incorporated before the final administration of the questionnaire. A pilot study was conducted among female undergraduate TikTok users outside the study area to determine the reliability of the instrument. Internal consistency was established using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study.

The questionnaires were administered personally by the researchers with the assistance of trained research assistants after obtaining informed consent from the respondents. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study. A total of 325 completed questionnaires were retrieved and found suitable for analysis.

The data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 25. The research questions were answered using weighted mean and standard deviation. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted as the decision benchmark, such that weighted mean scores of 2.50 and above were regarded as accepted, while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as rejected. Ethical principles governing research involving human participants were strictly observed. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and the information provided was treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the Underlying Motives for Female Undergraduates' Use of TikTok? (N = 325)

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	I use TikTok mainly for entertainment and relaxation.	3.23	0.70	Accepted
2	I use TikTok to express my creativity and personal talent.	3.16	0.71	Accepted
3	I use TikTok because it helps me connect with friends and social trends.	3.03	0.78	Accepted
4	I use TikTok to learn useful information and skills.	3.12	0.63	Accepted
5	I use TikTok to gain popularity and social attention.	3.06	0.67	Accepted
	Cluster Mean	3.12	0.70	Accepted

Decision Rule: Mean ≥ 2.50 = Accepted; Mean < 2.50 = Rejected.

Interpretation

The findings indicate that female undergraduates in Anambra State use TikTok for diverse personal, social, and informational purposes. All the statements recorded weighted mean scores above the benchmark of 2.50, with mean values ranging from 3.03 to 3.23, indicating general agreement among the respondents. The highest mean score was recorded for using TikTok mainly for entertainment and relaxation (M = 3.23, SD = 0.70), followed by using the platform to express creativity and personal talent (M = 3.16, SD = 0.71). Respondents also agreed that they use TikTok to learn useful information and skills, connect with friends and social trends, and gain popularity and social attention. The cluster mean of 3.12 (SD = 0.70) indicates that female undergraduates in Anambra State are motivated to use TikTok for entertainment, creativity, social interaction, information seeking, and social recognition.

Research Question 2: What is the Influence of Monetization on TikTok Content Creation Practices? (N = 325)

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	The possibility of earning money influences the type of content I create on TikTok.	3.15	0.56	Accepted
2	I create more content when I	3.26	0.67	Accepted

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	believe it can attract financial benefits.			
3	I focus on increasing views and engagement because of monetization opportunities.	3.13	0.78	Accepted
4	Monetization features encourage me to be more consistent in posting videos.	3.12	0.55	Accepted
5	I create content mainly for fun, not for financial gain.	1.98	0.61	Rejected
	Cluster Mean	2.93	0.63	Accepted

Decision Rule: Mean ≥ 2.50 = Accepted; Mean < 2.50 = Rejected.

Interpretation

The findings indicate that monetization significantly influences TikTok content creation practices among female undergraduates. Four of the five statements recorded weighted mean scores above the decision benchmark of 2.50, with mean values ranging from 3.12 to 3.26, indicating that respondents agreed that financial incentives shape the type of content they create, motivate them to produce more content, encourage them to increase views and engagement, and promote consistency in posting videos. The highest mean score was recorded for the statement "I create more content when I believe it can attract financial benefits" (M = 3.26, SD = 0.67), suggesting that the prospect of financial rewards is a major driver of content creation. However, respondents rejected the statement "I create content mainly for fun, not for financial gain" (M = 1.98, SD = 0.61), implying that financial incentives, rather than mere enjoyment, are an important motivation for creating TikTok content. The cluster mean of 2.93 (SD = 0.63) indicates that monetization has a substantial influence on the content creation practices of female undergraduates on TikTok**.**

Research Question 3: What is the Extent to which monetized TikTok Content Contributes to Objectification? (N = 325)

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Monetized TikTok content sometimes encourages users to focus on physical appearance.	3.28	0.57	Accepted
2	Female TikTok creators often gain attention due to their looks rather than their skills.	2.96	0.50	Accepted
3	TikTok monetization promotes creativity and talent rather than body exposure.	1.14	0.38	Rejected
4	Female undergraduates feel pressured to present themselves in attractive ways for engagement.	3.08	0.48	Accepted
5	TikTok content does not necessarily lead to the objectification of female users.	1.50	0.91	Rejected

Decision Rule: Mean ≥ 2.50 = Accepted; Mean < 2.50 = Rejected.

Interpretation

The findings reveal that monetized TikTok content contributes to the objectification of female undergraduates. Respondents agreed that monetized TikTok content encourages users to focus on physical appearance (M = 3.28, SD = 0.57), that female TikTok creators often gain attention because of their physical appearance rather than their skills (M = 2.96, SD = 0.50), and that some female undergraduates feel pressured to present themselves in attractive ways to attract engagement (M = 3.08, SD = 0.48). Conversely, respondents rejected the statement that TikTok monetization promotes creativity and talent rather than body exposure (M = 1.14, SD = 0.38), implying that they perceive monetization as placing greater emphasis on body exposure than on creativity and talent. They also rejected the statement that TikTok content does not necessarily lead to the objectification of female users (M = 1.50, SD = 0.91), suggesting that they believe TikTok content contributes to the objectification of female users. Overall, these findings indicate that respondents perceive monetized TikTok content as reinforcing appearance-based evaluation and objectification among female undergraduates.

Research Question 4: Perceived Social and Psychological Effects of Monetized TikTok Content (N = 325)

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Exposure to objectified content on TikTok can affect self-esteem among female users.	2.93	0.57	Accepted
2	Continuous exposure to	3.04	0.47	Accepted

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	appearance-focused content may influence body image perception.			
3	Users may feel psychological pressure from TikTok content.	2.93	0.60	Accepted
4	Objectification on TikTok can contribute to stress or emotional discomfort among users.	3.07	0.43	Accepted
5	TikTok content has no significant effect on how users perceive themselves.	1.96	0.58	Rejected

Decision Rule: Mean ≥ 2.50 = Accepted; Mean < 2.50 = Rejected.

Interpretation

The findings indicate that respondents perceived monetized TikTok content as having significant social and psychological effects. They agreed that exposure to objectified TikTok content affects female users' self-esteem (M = 2.93, SD = 0.57), that continuous exposure to appearance-focused content influences body image perception (M = 3.04, SD = 0.47), and that TikTok content creates psychological pressure among users (M = 2.93, SD = 0.60). Respondents also agreed that objectification on TikTok contributes to stress and emotional discomfort (M = 3.07, SD = 0.43). However, they rejected the statement that TikTok content has no significant effect on how users perceive themselves (M = 1.96, SD = 0.58), implying that they believe TikTok content significantly influences users' self-perception. Overall, the findings suggest that monetized TikTok content has notable social and psychological implications for female undergraduates, particularly regarding self-esteem, body image, psychological pressure, emotional well-being, and self-perception.

Discussion of Findings

The study examined the motives for TikTok use, the influence of monetization on content creation practices, the extent to which monetized TikTok content contributes to objectification, and its perceived social and psychological effects among female undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Regarding the first research question, which sought to determine the underlying motives for female undergraduates' use of TikTok, the findings revealed that respondents use the platform primarily for entertainment, creativity, social interaction, information seeking, and social recognition. Entertainment and relaxation emerged as the strongest motivation, followed closely by creativity and personal talent. These findings reinforce the assumptions of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which posits that media audiences actively select media platforms to satisfy specific cognitive, affective, personal, and social needs. The findings suggest that TikTok has evolved beyond an entertainment platform into a multifunctional medium through which female undergraduates seek knowledge, build social relationships, showcase creativity, and enhance their social visibility.

The findings corroborate those of Omar and Dequan (2021), who found that entertainment, self-expression, trend participation, and social interaction constitute the primary motivations for TikTok use among young adults. Likewise, D'Souza et al. (2022) reported that entertainment, information seeking, social interaction, and self-expression significantly predict young people's participation in TikTok activities. Similarly, Nwafor and Nnaemeka (2023) observed that Nigerian university undergraduates predominantly use TikTok for entertainment, learning, social interaction, and self-expression. The convergence of these findings suggests that despite contextual differences, the motivational factors underlying TikTok use remain relatively stable across different populations. However, unlike earlier studies that identified entertainment as the overwhelmingly dominant motive, the present study demonstrates that female undergraduates in Anambra State also attach considerable importance to creativity, learning, and social recognition, reflecting the evolving functions of TikTok as both a recreational and productive digital platform.

Addressing the second research question on the influence of monetization on TikTok content creation practices, the findings indicate that monetization significantly shapes how female undergraduates create content. Respondents agreed that the possibility of earning income influences the type of content they produce, motivates them to create more content, encourages them to pursue higher engagement, and promotes consistency in content production. They, however, rejected the notion that they create content mainly for fun rather than financial gain, suggesting that economic incentives have become a central motivation for sustained content creation. This finding illustrates the increasing commercialization of user-generated content on social media platforms, where visibility, engagement metrics, and financial rewards increasingly determine users' creative decisions.

The finding is consistent with Jung et al. (2025), who reported that financial expectations and audience engagement significantly motivate sustained TikTok participation among young creators. Similarly, Cotter (2019) argued that creators increasingly adapt their content to align with platform algorithms and monetization opportunities, thereby transforming creative expression into entrepreneurial activity. In contrast, Nwafor and Nnaemeka (2023) found that Nigerian undergraduates primarily used TikTok for entertainment and social interaction rather than financial gain. The observed difference may be attributed to the rapid expansion of TikTok's monetization ecosystem, creator funds, brand partnerships, affiliate marketing, and influencer marketing opportunities, which have significantly altered users' motivations in recent years.

With respect to the third research question, the findings demonstrate that monetized TikTok content contributes substantially to the objectification of female undergraduates.

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Respondents agreed that monetized content encourages greater emphasis on physical appearance, that female creators often receive recognition because of their physical attractiveness rather than their competence, and that many female undergraduates experience pressure to present themselves attractively to increase engagement. Respondents also rejected the notion that TikTok monetization promotes creativity and talent more than body exposure, implying that appearance-oriented content is perceived as receiving greater visibility and financial rewards. Likewise, respondents rejected the statement that TikTok content does not contribute to objectification, indicating a widespread perception that the platform reinforces appearance-based evaluation of women.

These findings lend empirical support to Objectification Theory, which argues that women are frequently valued according to their physical appearance, resulting in self-objectification and heightened appearance monitoring. The findings agree with Westenberg and Oberle (2023), who found that exposure to appearance-focused TikTok videos increased body dissatisfaction and appearance monitoring among young women. Likewise, Fardouly and Vartanian (2016) observed that repeated exposure to appearance-oriented social media content encourages self-objectification and social comparison among female users. However, the present findings contrast with studies suggesting that TikTok primarily functions as a platform for creativity, empowerment, and authentic self-expression. While TikTok undoubtedly provides opportunities for creative expression, the findings indicate that monetization mechanisms may unintentionally prioritize appearance-focused content because such content is perceived to generate greater engagement and financial returns.

Finally, in addressing the fourth research question, the findings reveal that monetized TikTok content has significant social and psychological implications for female undergraduates. Respondents agreed that exposure to objectified content negatively affects self-esteem, influences body image perception, creates psychological pressure, and contributes to stress and emotional discomfort. They also rejected the assertion that TikTok content has no significant influence on users' self-perception, suggesting that respondents believe the platform substantially shapes how they perceive themselves. These findings indicate that the social rewards embedded within TikTok's monetization system may inadvertently contribute to adverse psychological outcomes among young women, particularly when success on the platform is strongly associated with physical attractiveness.

The findings support those of Westenberg and Oberle (2023), who reported that appearance-focused TikTok content significantly affects body image satisfaction and emotional well-being among female users. Similarly, Fardouly et al. (2018) found that appearance-based social media engagement predicts body dissatisfaction, reduced self-esteem, and negative emotional outcomes among young women. Conversely, the findings differ from studies highlighting the psychological benefits of TikTok, including increased confidence, creativity, and social connectedness. Although the present study acknowledges that TikTok may foster creativity and self-expression, it suggests that the social and psychological costs associated with monetized appearance-focused content outweigh these positive outcomes among female undergraduates in Anambra State.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that while TikTok continues to satisfy users' entertainment, informational, and social needs, the increasing influence of monetization has reshaped content creation practices in ways that reinforce appearance-based validation and objectification. Consequently, these dynamics have significant implications for female undergraduates' body image, self-esteem, psychological well-being, and self-perception, underscoring the need for digital media literacy programmes and platform policies that promote creativity and talent over appearance-driven engagement

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