

# ***The Impact of TIKTOK on the Formation of High School Students' Values in the Social Media Environment***

**Zimo Zhang**

*Shenzhen New Channel - Shenzhen Bona School, Shenzhen, China  
zhangximo@qq.com*

**Abstract.** This paper takes Jitterbug as an example to explore the influence of short video platforms on the value formation of high school students. The high school stage is a critical period for the development of individual values, and TIKTOK, as a widely used social media platform, exerts a dual influence on high school students' value formation with its algorithmic recommendation and content characteristics. This paper adopts the literature research method and conducts analysis based on developmental psychology and social learning theory. It is found that while TIKTOK meets the needs of high school students for emotional regulation, social belonging and knowledge expansion, it may also lead to cognitive fragmentation and biased consumption concepts. Accordingly, this paper proposes guidance strategies from the perspective of educational intervention, aiming to help adolescents form healthy and stable values in the digital environment.

**Keywords:** Tiktok, Jitterbug, High School Student, Developmental psychology and social learning theory

## **1. Introduction**

As one of the mainstream social media platforms, TIKTOK has attracted a wide range of users across all age groups with its huge user base. Its increasingly optimized algorithmic mechanisms and accurate content delivery enable users to have a deeply immersive experience. The high school stage is a key period of individual growth, during which many important psychological and social characteristics are gradually formed. The high degree of openness of the online environment has a particularly significant impact on high school students. In recent years, the role of social media in shaping the values of high school students has become more and more prominent.

Students in high school are facing multiple pressures from academics and development, and their psychological and social development is in a critical period, during which their value system is gradually stabilized and susceptible to the influence of external factors. With the improvement of education, they begin to think more independently, but in the process of contacting the society, they are also more susceptible to the influence of family, network and peer groups, and often form values with certain tension and contradiction.

From the point of view of psychological development, the adolescent stage marks the significant improvement of thinking ability and the second awakening of self-consciousness. The mode of social cognition gradually changes from "authority-oriented" to "based on rational and autonomous

judgement", and the development of values also reflects the transition from external acceptance to internal construction. This stage is not only crucial to the establishment of their value systems but also has a profound impact on the development of their mental health.

Existing research focuses on the general use of social media or isolated psychological effects, but there is a lack of in-depth exploration of how short video platforms systematically influence high school students' value construction, especially the interactions between their algorithmic mechanisms, content characteristics, and the development of adolescent values. To address this research gap, this paper focuses on the relationship between the TIKTOK platform and high school students' value formation, and is dedicated to exploring the following specific questions: through which mechanisms does TIKTOK influence high school students' value formation? What are the pros and cons and what are the risks? How to adopt targeted educational strategies to guide their positive development? This study adopts the literature research method to systematically sort out and analyze the relevant literature. The results of this study not only help to deepen the theoretical understanding of the relationship between short-video media and adolescent development, but also provide a practical basis for collaborative education among schools, families and platforms, which is of great practical significance in promoting healthy Internet habits, literacy education and values cultivation among youth.

## 2. Impact of TIKTOK use

### 2.1. Emotional regulation

Students in high school generally face heavy academic pressure and the burden of further studies. At the same time, as their psychological development gradually moves toward independence and maturity, they are often resistant to parental discipline, which can easily lead to parent-child conflicts. Being at the bottom of the class and being frequently compared to others by their parents are more likely to make high school students in a psychologically sensitive period fall into self-doubt and identity anxiety. In this context, Jitterbit, with its unique emotional regulation mechanism, meets high school students' immediate emotional needs to a certain extent. Short video content has the characteristics of "short duration, high content density, instant feedback", which can effectively interrupt the continuous spread of negative emotions by quickly shifting users' attention. For example, after the examination, students are often in a state of fatigue and anxiety, and the short-term use of Jitterbug can, to a certain extent, bring emotional relaxation. This mechanism helps to alleviate the state of psychological depression in the short term. In addition, the platform's algorithmic personalized content recommendation can provide a "customized comfort". For example, students who stay up late to study for a long time can easily feel understood and empathized with when they see videos such as "The lamp at 3 a. m. works as hard as you do". Although this type of content does not constitute a professional psychological intervention, it achieves a kind of "alternative appeasement" function through emotional resonance. Similarly, by posting emotionally cathartic videos, such as "the moment I was misunderstood by my parents, " and gaining empathy from unfamiliar users, high school students can achieve a certain degree of emotional catharsis. From the perspective of psychological mechanisms, this process is similar to "cathartic therapy", that is, with the expression and response, the individual releases the inner tension and obtains social acceptance, which contributes to the regulation and alleviation of emotions [1].

## 2.2. Social need

More importantly, high school is a period when an individual's need for peer acceptance peaks, which developmental psychology defines as the "peer-orientated period". At this time, high school students' fear of "isolation" is far greater than their concern for adult evaluation. In this psychological context, Jitterbug plays a key role as a "social currency" - popular content often becomes a "common topic" among peer groups. For example, when more than half of the students in a class are discussing the details of a popular gesture dance, students who do not know the content are very likely to feel socially isolated. This kind of pressure does not come from obvious group exclusion, but rather from the sense of brought about by the inability to participate in common topics, which aligns with the herd mechanism in social psychology: to avoid being alienated from the group, individuals will actively imitate the majority's behavioral patterns..

At the same time, the interactive features provided by the TIKTOK platform further strengthen this social connection. Users actively invite their friends to comment on their videos, essentially promoting psychological intimacy through "self-exposure". For example, forwarding content with high emotional resonance, such as "the moment a high school student breaks his guard", implies the emotional support of "I understand you", which is in line with the path of "from shallow interaction to deeper relationships" proposed by social penetration theory. "This is in line with the path from shallow interaction to deep relationship as proposed in the social penetration theory. Therefore, not using tiktok for high school students not only means losing a form of entertainment, but also may lead to exclusion from peer social networks—and this implicit pressure encourages them to actively integrate into the platform's ecosystem.

According to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, high school students are at a critical stage of "self-identity versus role confusion, " and urgently need to confirm their self-identity and group affiliation through social interaction. TIKTOK provides a low-cost way for them to explore different social roles by posting clips of their daily lives, imitating popular behaviors, or displaying their personal hobbies. For example, some students build up their identity as "school masters" by sharing videos of problem solving, while others become "atmosphere builders" in their classes with humorous content. Such behaviors are not only for entertainment, but also constitute important practices for self-awareness and development.

Most importantly, TIKTOK also visualizes the construction of social identity: the act of "liking" is transformed into a public, quantifiable signal of approval, making abstract emotional support tangible and visible. This feedback mechanism further strengthens users' sense of belonging and self-confirmation.

## 2.3. Expanding horizons

The purpose of teenagers' participation in short videos is leisure entertainment, followed by broadening their horizons and acquiring learning skills [2]. High school students are exposed to structured subject knowledge in school, with a relatively fixed scope of content; short video platforms provide an important channel for them to expand their cognitive boundaries. With the help of Jittery Voice and other platforms, students can watch popular science videos to gain a deeper understanding of natural phenomena and scientific principles; they can also learn about the cultural customs and social landscape of different regions through the documentary content of travel bloggers, thus breaking the time and space constraints and realizing the accumulation of cross-cultural cognition.

In terms of skills acquisition, school education focuses on theoretical teaching and the knowledge systems specified in curriculum standards, while short video platforms are a powerful complement with their rich and diverse life skills content. High school students can learn practical skills—such as daily cooking, basic maintenance, and outdoor survival—through the platform's tutorial videos, thereby enhancing their independent living abilities and social adaptability.

Therefore, short-video platforms effectively compensate for the limitations of traditional school education in terms of knowledge breadth and practicability by making use of their low-threshold, high accessibility and visual presentation, providing more diversified and personalised learning paths for high school students.

### 3. What is the impact on the shaping of values

Short-video platforms like Shake it off have a wide variety of ways to sink content into them, involving diverse content and transmitting a wide range of values. Plus, it is filled with excessive entertainment and non-nutritious information. In the era of self-media, where everyone has the right to speak, the audience is wrapped in a cocoon of information wrapped in algorithms as soon as they are born, and long-term passive acceptance of the information pushed by the platform leads to the audience indulging in the pleasure brought by short videos for a long time, thus giving up in-depth thinking and self-selection. Jittery Voice is a huge short video platform with an almost no-threshold group of users.

#### 3.1. One-dimensional thinking

Albert Bandura's sociological theory study states that the consequences of the role model's behaviour is a determining factor in whether or not a child spontaneously imitates. Children in the study imitated sexual behaviour when they watched how adults who were role models in the control group treated Popova. This leads to the conclusion that children can acquire new behaviors by observing the behaviour of adult role models [3].

Similarly, it can be concluded that high school students—who are in the peak period of observational learning—will directly or indirectly imitate the behavioral habits of others they see on Jitterbug through extensive exposure. For example, there is currently a popular cultural genre called "subculture" on Shake Shack [2]. Stuart Hall, a representative of the Birmingham School in the United Kingdom, said that subculture often exists as the antithesis of mainstream culture, reflecting the value and identity of a specific group. In this social media context, the maverick genre, usually attracts high school students who are eager to pursue individuality. They begin to learn and imitate the unique ways of dressing and life behaviors of others on Jitterbug, thus showing their own individuality. They don't want to be confined to the same old student clothes and the same old rustic student appearance. This process is the process of recognizing and consolidating their own value system.

Thinking mode is a relatively stable cognitive framework formed by individuals in the cognitive process, which is the habitual path of receiving information, analyzing, reasoning, judging and problem solving. From the perspective of educational psychology, the thinking mode not only contains specific thinking methods, but also involves the belief in their own cognitive ability of systematic thinking. Thinking modes are mainly characterized by of stability, contextuality and functionality. Jitterbug's "short and fast" content through the cognitive load theory of "low cognitive input" characteristics, so that high school students are accustomed to receiving information with no need to think. At the same time, the platform's algorithm will continue to push content that meets

preferences, forming an "information cocoon" that further undermines the motivation for active exploration. At present, short video platforms like Shake Shack are filled with a wide variety of subject matter talent, and yet these areas are also more or less entertaining. Therefore, the information cocoon will be caused by monolithic information resulting in values. Personalized algorithms will constantly push content that you are interested in, making the user essentially only exposed to what he is interested in. However, at the high school stage of high school students, it is the time when they should go for constant exposure to a diverse range of knowledge, and excessive monolithic exposure will lead to an overly one-sided thinking pattern of the students. Additionally, short-video platforms tend to prioritize polarized content for greater appeal. After long-term exposure to such emotional content, students will unconsciously develop a black-and-white thinking style—rather than engaging in rational reasoning [4]. One-sided thinking can amplify negative emotions through the type of cognitive distortion in psychology. After making a mistake during a class presentation, students will identify "the whole class is laughing at me, and I will never be able to hold my head up again", thus infinitely expanding the impact of a single event as well as its consequences, leading to the triggering of a strong sense of shame and anxiety. This pattern of thinking over-activates the amygdala of the brain and inhibits the functioning of the prefrontal cortex, leading to a degradation of emotional regulation. Emotional buffering skills that high school students should develop, such as self-motivation and self-regulation, are replaced by "polarized interpretation". Causing long-term emotional internal depletion can also affect physical and mental health. Studies have shown that adolescents who are used to one-sided thinking are more prone to "persistent anxiety" and "depressive tendencies" because their cognitive system is unable to filter out 'unnecessary negative associations, resulting in an over-consumption of mental resources. For example, when the examination is approaching, they will not pay attention to how to review efficiently, but repeatedly obsessed about what to do if they fail the examination, how to explain to their parents this "ruminant thinking" will further reduce the efficiency of learning, and the formation of a vicious cycle of poor mood to poor learning and then to a worse mood. In the long run, one-sided values will not only affect students' current learning and life, but also their future choices. For example, it can be seen in the selection of high school courses as well as the choice of university, many students in order to escape the high intensity degree of immediate study and go to choose relatively easy to look at the liberal arts, but ignored the choice of future college majors. The concept of "lifelong learning literacy" in educational psychology emphasizes that "flexibility of thinking" is more important than "knowledge quantity"—and one-sided thinking is the biggest barrier to developing such literacy.

### 3.2. Misguided consumerism

Jitterbug provides people with a platform to show themselves, but also gives people the opportunity to access things they can't access. In 2007, the Ministry of Education announced 171 popular vocabulary words including the concept of "showing off wealth" [5] Consumption outlook refers to a relatively stable value judgement and behavioral tendency expressed by individuals or groups in their consumption behaviors, which reflects people's understanding of and trade-offs between material needs and spiritual pursuits, immediate gratification and long-term development, and personal desires and social norms. It reflects people's understanding of material needs and spiritual pursuits, instant gratification and long-term development, personal desires and social norms. The real embodiment of the concept of consumption is actually the hidden views and habits behind an individual's spending decisions and product choices. It is not only about affordability, but also about why, what and how to buy. The choice of these relationship points actually quietly reflects how we

look at material and spiritual needs and so on. At the same time, its formation is deeply influenced by the environment, such as the family environment in the parents' consumption style is often imitated by us. At the same time, social mores, advertising campaigns and comparisons between peers also continue to shape our consumer attitudes. For example, if we need to buy fewer snacks to buy a notebook when we were young, and if we give up recreational activities in the pursuit of a famous brand in the future when we grow up, there is a consumerism attitude working silently behind all these choices. So it can be seen that consumerism is not just something as simple as spending money on things, it is part of our values, reflecting what we identify with, what we value, and even about what kind of person we want to be. Therefore, in this song filled with a lot of suspended content of Shake Shack, a lot of teenagers will be envious of the exorbitant goods on Shake Shack and develop a wrong concept of consumption. The psychology of students who have long been in a state of comparison but are always lower than others will also produce a powerful sense of discrepancy, feeling that they are not better than others. Therefore, due to a large number of "show off" behaviors on TIKTOK, the wrong consumption concepts of high school students triggered by the large gap with the real life will have a great impact on the psychological balance of high school students.

#### 4. Conclusion

The main problem is to address the mindset and consumerism mentioned above. The correction of one-dimensional thinking mainly targets two key issues: fragmented reception of information and a one-sided way of thinking. To address these, teachers should focus on cultivating students' ability for in-depth thinking, moving beyond the traditional "knowledge indoctrination" framework to turn thinking into a perceptible and trainable skill. Half day from the classroom design can break the laziness of thinking by asking questions and other ways, so that students form the habit of active thinking. For example, Vygotsky's theory of "zone of nearest development" reveals the dynamic relationship between individual learning and development. Students can be stimulated to think actively beyond their knowledge. In terms of consumerism, educators can guide students to evaluate the true value of goods through comparative analysis, and school teachers can also set up second-hand trading corners for students to participate in pricing and selling. You can also organize survival challenge activities with limited funds, requiring students to use limited funds to plan a day of food and transport, in the purchase of snacks and take the underground or save money to buy other things in the trade-off, intuitively feel the relationship between the limited nature of the resources and the choice of priorities, to develop the "live within your means" of the consumption of self-consciousness. Effective correction of the students' more erroneous concept of consumption. Furthermore, home and school cooperation also need to build a consistent value orientation, to avoid the mutual cancellation of the effect of education, parents can also be at home with students to buy supplies in the way to let children participate in the decision-making process, to develop their critical thinking skills but also fosters a rational consumption outlook.

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