Not Just for Viral Dance Trends: Exploring Gen Z's Motivations and Methods for Enacting Social Change Using TikTok

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ABSTRACT

Although some research has already been completed on Gen Z's attitudes and approaches toward social justice issues, additional study is needed to explore the ways in which they engage with activism. The rise of TikTok as a social media giant provides a unique opportunity for researchers; while the platform was intended as a space for lighthearted content and viral dance trends, the app is increasingly being leveraged for news, political content, and activism. In addition, the Pew Research Center reports that the majority of users on the app are teens and young adults; approximately two-thirds of American teens have and use TikTok. The explosive growth of the platform over the last few years means that little formal study has been done on TikTok in general. All these factors combined make TikTok an ideal focus for examining the reasons members of Gen Z have for engaging in activism both on and offline, as well as the ways they utilize TikTok's unique affordances to achieve their goals. This study will collect quantitative data using a survey of self-reported Gen Z activists. This survey will provide data on respondents' motivations and attitudes towards activism, users' engagement in activism on the platform, how users utilize TikTok's affordances to engage with activist content, Gen Z's engagement in activist behaviors both on- and offline, and how effective they believe their efforts are.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Political economy of the information society; Social justice; Social media; Specific populations

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Activism; Gen Z; TikTok