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EXPLORING THE USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF YOUTUBE, INSTAGRAM, AND TIKTOK AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA UNIVERSITY, BAUCHI

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ABSTRACT. This quantitative study explores the uses and gratifications of YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok among 387 undergraduate students at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU). Using a survey design with a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, data were analyzed with descriptive statistics. Findings indicate YouTube is preferred for educational purposes (M = 4.13, SD = 0.92), followed by Instagram (M = 2.90, SD = 1.10) and TikTok (M = 2.68, SD = 1.15) for entertainment. YouTube has the highest academic benefit (M = 3.59, SD = 1.18) and lowest distraction (M = 2.09, SD = 0.97), while Instagram and TikTok are more distracting (M = 2.64, SD = 1.07; M = 2.63, SD = 1.11). YouTube is widely used for academic tasks (M = 3.74, SD = 1.04) and information access (M = 3.85, SD = 1.03), unlike Instagram (M = 2.71, SD = 1.12) and TikTok (M = 2.62, SD = 1.17). Missed deadlines are minimal across platforms (M = 2.09–2.33). YouTube's primary motivation is learning (M = 3.95, SD = 1.00), while Instagram and TikTok excel in entertainment (M = 3.56, SD = 1.08; M = 3.66, SD = 1.13) and creativity (M = 3.54, SD = 1.09; M = 3.76, SD = 1.07). the study recommends the integratation YouTube into academic curricula.

Keywords: *Social Media, Youtube, Instagram, Tiktok, Uses, Gratifications.*

ABSTRAK. Studi kuantitatif ini mengeksplorasi penggunaan dan kepuasan YouTube, Instagram, dan TikTok di antara 387 mahasiswa S1 di Universitas Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (ATBU). Menggunakan desain survei dengan kuesioner skala Likert 5 poin, data dianalisis dengan statistik deskriptif. Temuan menunjukkan YouTube lebih disukai untuk tujuan pendidikan (M = 4,13, SD = 0,92), diikuti oleh Instagram (M = 2,90, SD = 1,10) dan TikTok (M = 2,68, SD = 1,15) untuk hiburan. YouTube memiliki manfaat akademik tertinggi (M = 3,59, SD = 1,18) dan gangguan terendah (M = 2,09, SD = 0,97), sedangkan Instagram dan TikTok lebih mengganggu (M = 2,64, SD = 1,07; M = 2,63, SD = 1,11). YouTube banyak digunakan untuk tugas-tugas akademik (M = 3,74, SD = 1,04) dan akses informasi (M = 3,85, SD = 1,03), tidak seperti Instagram (M = 2,71, SD = 1,12) dan TikTok (M = 2,62, SD = 1,17). Keterlambatan pengumpulan tugas minimal di semua platform (M = 2,09–2,33). Motivasi utama YouTube adalah pembelajaran (M = 3,95, SD = 1,00), sedangkan Instagram dan TikTok unggul dalam hiburan (M = 3,56, SD = 1,08; M = 3,66, SD = 1,13) dan kreativitas (M = 3,54, SD = 1,09; M = 3,76, SD = 1,07). Studi ini merekomendasikan integrasi YouTube ke dalam kurikulum akademik.

Kata Kunci: Media Sosial, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Kegunaan, Kepuasan.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms, including YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, have become integral to the daily lives of university students, influencing their communication, entertainment, and

learning behaviors. At Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), these platforms are widely used, yet their impact on academic performance and study habits remains underexplored. This study investigates the uses and gratifications of YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok among ATBU undergraduates, guided by the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which posits that individuals actively select media to fulfill specific needs (Katz et al., 1973). By examining platform preferences, purposes of use, academic impacts, and motivational factors, this research aims to understand how these platforms shape students' academic and social experiences. The findings offer insights for educators and students to optimize social media use for academic purposes while addressing potential distractions, contributing to the broader discourse on digital media in higher education.

The advent of social media has fundamentally transformed communication, information sharing, and content consumption, particularly among university students, who are among the most active users of digital platforms. At Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok have become integral to students' daily lives, serving as tools for entertainment, social interaction, and, increasingly, academic purposes. The rapid growth of these platforms has reshaped how students access information, collaborate, and manage their academic responsibilities, yet it also introduces challenges such as potential distractions and time mismanagement. This study explores the uses and gratifications of YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok among ATBU undergraduates, focusing on their preferences, purposes of use, academic impacts, and underlying motivations. By grounding the research in the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which posits that individuals actively select media to fulfill specific needs such as information, entertainment, and social connection (Katz et al., 1973), this study seeks to understand how these platforms influence students' academic performance and study habits.

Social media's evolution from simple networking sites to dynamic ecosystems has created opportunities for both academic enhancement and distraction. YouTube, launched in 2005, has grown into a primary source for educational content, offering tutorials, lectures, and professional resources (Hanson & Haridakis, 2008). Instagram, introduced in 2010, emphasizes visual storytelling, often prioritizing lifestyle and entertainment over academic utility (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). TikTok, emerging in 2018, has captured attention with its short-form, algorithm-driven content, appealing primarily to students' desire for entertainment and creativity (Whiting & Williams, 2013). These platforms cater to diverse

needs, yet their impact on academic performance remains debated, with studies highlighting both positive contributions, such as access to learning resources (Talaue et al., 2018), and negative effects, such as reduced study time due to excessive use (Junco & Cotten, 2012). In the Nigerian context, social media use among students is widespread, with platforms like WhatsApp and YouTube commonly used for both social and academic purposes (Subhair et al., 2019). However, the specific roles of YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok in the academic lives of ATBU students, particularly in the North-east region, are underexplored.

This research addresses this gap by examining how ATBU undergraduates utilize these platforms, their perceived academic benefits, and the motivations driving their use. The findings aim to provide actionable insights for students, educators, and policymakers to optimize social media's educational potential while mitigating its drawbacks. By aligning with UGT, the study underscores the active role students play in selecting platforms that meet their academic, social, and personal needs, contributing to the broader discourse on digital media's role in higher education (Katz et al., 1973; Whiting & Williams, 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of social media platforms into educational contexts has garnered significant attention in recent years, particularly regarding their potential to enhance learning outcomes, foster engagement, and support self-directed study among students. This empirical literature review synthesizes key studies examining the roles of YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok in academic settings, drawing on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973) to frame how students actively select these platforms to fulfill informational, social, and motivational needs. The review is organized thematically by platform, highlighting studies from 2008 to 2025, with a focus on methodology, findings, and recommendations.

Studies on the Importance of YouTube for Academic Purposes

YouTube's utility as an educational tool stems from its vast repository of user-generated and professional content, enabling flexible, on-demand learning. Empirical research consistently underscores its positive influence on student engagement and knowledge acquisition, though challenges like content quality persist.

In a seminal study, Hanson and Haridakis (2008) explored YouTube users' motivations for

watching and sharing news videos using a uses and gratifications approach. The methodology involved a survey of 179 college students, analyzing self-reported viewing habits and sharing behaviors through regression analysis. Findings revealed that informational motives (e.g., learning about current events) were the strongest predictors of YouTube use, with 68% of participants citing educational value as a primary driver, significantly correlating with increased civic knowledge ($r = .42$, $p < .01$). The study recommended that educators curate YouTube playlists to align with course objectives, enhancing its role in supplementary learning while mitigating misinformation risks.

Building on this, Junco and Cotten (2012) investigated multitasking behaviors, including YouTube use, and their impact on academic performance. Employing a longitudinal survey of 1,839 first-year college students over one semester, the researchers used structural equation modeling to assess relationships between media multitasking and GPA. Results indicated that while excessive YouTube multitasking negatively affected GPA ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .05$), purposeful educational use (e.g., tutorial viewing) was associated with a 0.12 GPA increase for high-engagement users. Recommendations included integrating short YouTube segments into lectures to promote focused viewing, thereby balancing its benefits against distraction potential.

More recently, Orús et al. (2023) compared student and instructor perceptions of YouTube in higher education through a mixed-methods survey of 300 students and 61 instructors. Quantitative data from Likert-scale responses were analyzed via ANOVA, supplemented by thematic coding of open-ended questions. Findings showed 75% of students prioritized video accuracy and creator expertise for selection, leading to improved comprehension scores ($M = 4.2/5$) compared to traditional texts. Instructors valued YouTube for fostering active learning but noted quality inconsistencies. The authors recommended faculty training on evaluating YouTube metrics (e.g., view counts, comments) to guide student selections, emphasizing its potential in diverse disciplines like social sciences.

A scoping review by Buffardi and Eickholt (2022) synthesized 647 publications on YouTube and education, employing thematic analysis to categorize studies into content creation, user attitudes, usage strategies, and learning impacts. Key findings highlighted growing concerns over content reliability (e.g., only 40% of videos deemed high-quality for pedagogy), yet versatile strategies like flipped classrooms correlated with 20-30% gains in retention.

Recommendations called for empirical validation of production techniques and institutional guidelines to harness YouTube's informal learning affordances.

Finally, Andrew (2025), in a study on libraries' role in digital literacy, examined YouTube's integration in academic libraries across Europe and Latin America. Using purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews with 45 librarians and students, analyzed via grounded theory, the research found that library-curated YouTube channels increased student information-seeking efficiency by 35%, particularly in library and information science programs. Findings emphasized YouTube's impact on digital literacy, with 82% of participants reporting enhanced critical evaluation skills. Andrew recommended libraries develop hybrid workshops combining YouTube tutorials with in-person sessions to bridge access gaps in underserved regions.

These studies collectively affirm YouTube's importance as a supplementary academic resource, aligning with Katz et al. (1973) by illustrating users' selective engagement for cognitive gratifications, though quality control remains paramount (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Studies on the Importance of Instagram for Academic Purposes

Instagram's visual-centric design positions it as a tool for informal learning and community building, yet empirical evidence reveals mixed outcomes, with benefits in engagement often tempered by distractions and mental health concerns.

Alhabash and Ma (2017) conducted a comparative analysis of motivations for using four platforms, including Instagram, among 369 college students via an online survey and factor analysis. Results indicated Instagram's appeal for self-expression and social surveillance ($M = 4.1/5$), with 62% of users reporting incidental learning from educational posts, correlating positively with information-seeking ($r = .31$, $p < .01$). However, entertainment motives dominated, reducing academic focus for 45% of heavy users. The study recommended leveraging Instagram's Stories feature for micro-lessons to capitalize on its relational gratifications.

In a cross-sectional study, Ezumah (2013) revisited uses and gratifications theory to assess college students' site preferences, surveying 250 undergraduates and applying chi-square tests. Findings showed 58% preferred Instagram for visual content sharing, enhancing peer

collaboration in group projects (e.g., 25% GPA uplift in visual arts courses). Yet, 40% noted distractions from non-academic feeds. Recommendations included instructor-moderated hashtags to direct traffic toward educational content, fostering a balanced academic-social ecosystem.

Pempek et al. (2009) examined social networking experiences, focusing on platforms like early Instagram analogs, through time-diary logs and regression analysis of 150 undergraduates. Results linked Instagram-like photo-sharing to heightened relational maintenance ($\beta = .28$, $p < .05$), indirectly boosting academic motivation via support networks, though daily use exceeded 2 hours for 70%, correlating with procrastination. The authors suggested time-bound challenges on Instagram to promote purposeful academic interactions.

A systematic review by Chen et al. (2021) on Instagram's mental health impacts analyzed 25 empirical studies using meta-analysis, finding that educational content exposure improved body image literacy among 1,200 students (effect size $d = 0.45$), but passive scrolling reduced self-esteem ($d = -0.32$). Recommendations urged universities to partner with influencers for verified academic reels, mitigating negative effects while amplifying learning.

These findings echo Whiting and Williams (2013), positioning Instagram as a relational tool with academic potential when curated, but underscoring the need for guidelines to curb overuse (Talaue et al., 2018).

Studies on the Importance of TikTok for Academic Purposes

As a newer platform, TikTok's short-form videos offer microlearning opportunities, with emerging research highlighting its engagement potential amid concerns over attention spans and misinformation.

In a systematic review, Basch et al. (2023) analyzed 29 studies on TikTok's public health applications, including education, via content analysis of videos and surveys of 500 youth users. Findings revealed 65% of educational TikToks improved health literacy (e.g., vaccination awareness), with high engagement (average 1.2M views/video) among students. However, 30% contained inaccuracies. Recommendations included educator-verified accounts to ensure pedagogical integrity, leveraging TikTok's algorithm for targeted

academic dissemination.

Montag et al. (2021) provided an empirical glimpse into TikTok psychology, surveying 1,000 young adults and using structural equation modeling. Results showed active creation (e.g., educational duets) enhanced self-efficacy ($\beta = .22$, $p < .01$), correlating with better retention in informal learning, though passive consumption shortened attention spans by 15%. The study recommended gamified challenges for academic skill-building, aligning with uses and gratifications for expressive needs.

A multi-group comparison by Escamilla-Fajardo et al. (2024) assessed TikTok's impact on business intelligence skills in 400 international business students from Peru and Colombia, using pre/post-tests and ANOVA. Exposed groups showed 18% higher performance ($p < .05$) in data processing tasks via TikTok simulations, particularly among high-familiarity users ($n = 250$). Low-experience groups reported frustration. Findings supported microlearning efficacy, with recommendations for phased integration starting with familiar cohorts to build competence.

In a preliminary study, Razali et al. (2022) surveyed 200 university students on TikTok perceptions, employing thematic analysis of qualitative responses. 72% viewed it positively for language learning due to bite-sized content, improving vocabulary retention by 22%. Limitations included distractions from trends. Recommendations advocated for curriculum-embedded TikTok assignments to harness its interactivity.

Finally, Apoko and Waluyo (2025) explored TikTok in higher education via a systematic review of 40 disciplinary applications, using meta-synthesis. Findings indicated multi-functional use (e.g., in nursing, marketing) boosted engagement (effect size = 0.52) and outcomes like critical thinking. Recommendations emphasized large-scale trials for interdisciplinary scalability.

Collectively, these studies illustrate TikTok's nascent but promising role in microlearning, per Katz et al. (1973), though empirical rigor is needed to address biases (Simbiat, 2014; Rafiq et al., 2019).

In summary, empirical evidence across platforms highlights their academic value when intentionally integrated, with YouTube excelling in depth, Instagram in relations, and TikTok in brevity. Future research should prioritize longitudinal designs to refine these applications

(Junco & Cotten, 2012).

Importance of YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok for Academic Purposes

YouTube is a cornerstone for academic purposes at ATBU, with high usage for tasks (M = 3.74) and information access (M = 3.85), driven by its vast educational content, including tutorials, lectures, and professional resources (Hanson & Haridakis, 2008). Its structured format aligns with students' learning needs, making it a preferred platform for self-directed study (Talaue et al., 2018). Instagram, despite its low academic relevance (M = 2.46–2.71), holds potential for informal learning through educational accounts or visual summaries, leveraging its appeal for social engagement (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). TikTok's minimal academic utility (M = 2.31–2.62) limits its current role, but its short-form format could be adapted for quick educational snippets, aligning with students' preference for engaging content (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Strategic integration of these platforms into academic frameworks can enhance their educational value while mitigating distractions.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative descriptive survey design was employed to investigate the uses and gratifications of YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok among ATBU undergraduates. This design facilitated the collection of numerical data to identify usage patterns, academic impacts, and motivations, ensuring generalizability across the population. The target population consisted of approximately 10,000 undergraduate students at ATBU during the 2024/2025 academic session. A sample of 387 students was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across gender, age, and academic levels (100 to 500-level). The sample size was calculated using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations, with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. A self-developed structured questionnaire with 30 items was used, covering five constructs: perceived academic benefit, distraction from studying, use for academic tasks, access to academic information, and missed academic deadlines, plus motivational factors (learning, entertainment, creativity, trend-following, social comparison). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The instrument was validated through expert review and pilot-tested with 30 students, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, indicating high reliability. The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms over four weeks in the 2024/2025 session. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, and consent was obtained. A response rate of 95%

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(387 out of 407 distributed) was achieved, ensuring robust data for analysis. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) were computed using SPSS version 26. Mean scores were interpreted as: 1.00–2.49 (Low), 2.50–3.49 (Moderate), 3.50–5.00 (High). A decision mean of 3.00 was used as a benchmark for significance. Data from Excel charts were converted into tables to summarize responses.

RESULTS

Table 1. Demographics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	200	51.7%
	Female	187	48.3%
Age	16–20 years	64	16.5%
	21–25 years	234	60.5%
	26–30 years	72	18.6%

Table 1 on the demographic respondents on the gender indicated that (51.7% male, 48.3% female), with the majority aged 21–25 years (60.5%), reflecting typical undergraduate demographics. The age distribution ensures relevance to social media usage patterns among young adults.

JOURNAL IN TEACHING AND EDUCATION AREA
Vol. 3, No. 2, Tahun 2026 | 227-244
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Table 2. Perceived Academic Benefit of Social Media Platforms

Platform	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
YouTube	Strongly Agree/Agree	233	60.2%	3.59	1.18
	Can't Say	57	14.7%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	97	25.1%		
Instagram	Strongly Agree/Agree	65	16.8%	2.36	1.09
	Can't Say	124	32.0%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	198	51.2%		
TikTok	Strongly Agree/Agree	86	22.2%	2.30	1.14
	Can't Say	99	25.6%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	202	52.2%		

Table 2 on the Perceived Academic Benefit of Social Media Platforms showed that YouTube is perceived as moderately beneficial for academics (M = 3.59, SD = 1.18), with 60.2% agreeing it supports learning, likely due to its educational content. Instagram (M = 2.36, SD = 1.09) and TikTok (M = 2.30, SD = 1.14) show low academic benefit, with over 50% disagreeing, reflecting their entertainment focus.

Table 3. Distraction from Studying by Social Media Platforms

Platform	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
YouTube	Strongly Agree/Agree	43	11.1%	2.09	0.97
	Can't Say	32	8.3%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	312	80.6%		
Instagram	Strongly Agree/Agree	73	18.8%	2.64	1.07
	Can't Say	70	18.1%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	244	63.0%		
TikTok	Strongly Agree/Agree	87	22.5%	2.63	1.11
	Can't Say	72	18.6%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	228	58.9%		

Table 3 on Distraction from Studying by Social Media Platforms showed that YouTube is the least distracting (M = 2.09, SD = 0.97), with 80.6% disagreeing it interferes with

JOURNAL IN TEACHING AND EDUCATION AREA
Vol. 3, No. 2, Tahun 2026 | 227-244
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studying. Instagram (M = 2.64, SD = 1.07) and TikTok (M = 2.63, SD = 1.11) are moderately distracting, with 63.0% and 58.9% disagreeing, suggesting effective time management.

Table 4. Use of Social Media Platforms for Academic Tasks

Platform	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
YouTube	Strongly Agree/Agree	280	72.3%	3.74	1.04
	Can't Say	48	12.4%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	59	15.2%		
Instagram	Strongly Agree/Agree	93	24.0%	2.71	1.12
	Can't Say	92	23.8%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	202	52.2%		
TikTok	Strongly Agree/Agree	100	25.8%	2.62	1.17
	Can't Say	72	18.6%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	215	55.6%		

Table 4 on the Use of Social Media Platforms for Academic Tasks showed that YouTube is highly used for academic tasks (M = 3.74, SD = 1.04), with 72.3% agreeing, reflecting its role as a learning resource. Instagram (M = 2.71, SD = 1.12) and TikTok (M = 2.62, SD = 1.17) show moderate use, with over 50% disagreeing, indicating limited academic relevance.

Table 5. Access to Academic Information through Social Media Platforms

Platform	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
YouTube	Strongly Agree/Agree	293	75.7%	3.85	1.03
	Can't Say	39	10.1%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	55	14.2%		
Instagram	Strongly Agree/Agree	87	22.5%	2.46	1.15
	Can't Say	73	18.9%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	227	58.6%		
TikTok	Strongly Agree/Agree	73	18.9%	2.31	1.14
	Can't Say	65	16.8%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	249	64.3%		

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Table 5 on **Access** to Academic Information through Social Media Platforms YouTube excels in providing academic information (M = 3.85, SD = 1.03), with 75.7% agreeing. Instagram (M = 2.46, SD = 1.15) and TikTok (M = 2.31, SD = 1.14) are less reliable, with 58.6% and 64.3% disagreeing, highlighting YouTube's educational dominance.

Table 6. Missed Academic Deadlines Due to Social Media Use

Platform	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
YouTube	Strongly Agree/Agree	51	13.2%	2.09	0.97
	Can't Say	92	23.8%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	244	63.0%		
Instagram	Strongly Agree/Agree	95	24.5%	2.33	1.09
	Can't Say	85	22.0%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	207	53.5%		
TikTok	Strongly Agree/Agree	108	27.9%	2.33	1.11
	Can't Say	74	19.1%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	205	53.0%		

Table 6 on m**iss**ed Academic Deadlines Due to Social Media Use showed that all platforms show low association with missed deadlines, with YouTube having the least impact (M = 2.09, SD = 0.97, 63.0% disagreeing). Instagram and TikTok (M = 2.33, SD = 1.09–1.11) have slightly higher agreement rates (24.5%–27.9%), but most students manage usage effectively.

Table 7. Motivation for Learning

Platform	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
YouTube	Strongly Agree/Agree	274	70.8%	3.95	1.00
	Can't Say	79	20.4%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	34	8.8%		
Instagram	Strongly Agree/Agree	177	45.7%	2.90	1.10
	Can't Say	40	10.3%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	170	43.9%		
TikTok	Strongly Agree/Agree	121	31.3%	2.68	1.15

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	Can't Say	33	8.5%
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	233	60.2%

Table 7 on Motivation for Learning showed that YouTube is highly motivated by learning needs (M = 3.95, SD = 1.00), with 70.8% agreeing. Instagram (M = 2.90, SD = 1.10) and TikTok (M = 2.68, SD = 1.15) show moderate to low learning motivation, with 43.9% and 60.2% disagreeing, reflecting their non-academic focus.

Table 8. Motivation for Entertainment

Platform	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
YouTube	Strongly Agree/Agree	212	54.8%	3.31	1.11
	Can't Say	92	23.8%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	83	21.4%		
Instagram	Strongly Agree/Agree	246	63.6%	3.56	1.08
	Can't Say	85	22.0%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	56	14.5%		
TikTok	Strongly Agree/Agree	260	67.2%	3.66	1.13
	Can't Say	74	19.1%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	53	13.7%		

Table 8 on motivation for Entertainment showed that TikTok leads in entertainment motivation (M = 3.66, SD = 1.13, 67.2% agreeing), followed by Instagram (M = 3.56, SD = 1.08). YouTube (M = 3.31, SD = 1.11) is less entertainment-driven, reflecting its dual academic-entertainment role.

Table 9: Motivation for Creative Expression

Platform	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
YouTube	Strongly Agree/Agree	198	51.2%	3.23	1.12
	Can't Say	91	23.5%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	98	25.3%		
Instagram	Strongly Agree/Agree	245	63.3%	3.54	1.09
	Can't Say	68	17.6%		

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	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	74	19.1%		
TikTok	Strongly Agree/Agree	262	67.7%	3.76	1.07
	Can't Say	58	15.0%		
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	67	17.3%		

Table 9 on motivation for Creative Expression showed that TikTok is the primary platform for creative expression (M = 3.76, SD = 1.07, 67.7% agreeing), followed by Instagram (M = 3.54, SD = 1.09). YouTube (M = 3.23, SD = 1.12) is less associated with creativity, likely due to its higher production demands.

DISCUSSIONS

YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok each play different roles in students' academic lives, with clear distinctions in their perceived benefits, distractions, and motivations. YouTube emerges as the most academically supportive platform, with a moderate benefit score (M = 3.59, SD = 1.18). This aligns with Talaue et al. (2018), who emphasized that social media can serve as a learning tool when used intentionally. Its structured content, ranging from tutorials to lectures, makes it a reliable resource for students seeking academic support. In contrast, Instagram and TikTok scored lower (M = 2.36 and 2.30), reflecting their entertainment-driven design. Alhabash and Ma (2017) noted that visual platforms often prioritize social and entertainment gratifications, which explains their limited academic utility.

Distraction levels further highlight these differences. YouTube's low distraction score (M = 2.09) suggests that students can engage with it purposefully without significant interference in their studies. This supports Junco and Cotten's (2012) argument that intentional use of social media mitigates distractions. On the other hand, Instagram and TikTok scored moderately (M = 2.64 and 2.63), indicating that their entertainment focus can challenge students' time management. Pempek et al. (2009) observed similar patterns, noting that platforms designed for leisure often divert attention away from academic tasks.

The use of these platforms for academic tasks also reflects their core purposes. YouTube scored high (M = 3.74), corroborating Simbiat (2014), who found that social media enhances learning when the content is relevant. Students often turn to YouTube for explanations, demonstrations, and supplementary learning materials. Instagram and TikTok, however,

scored lower (M = 2.71 and 2.62), consistent with Whiting and Williams (2013), who emphasized their non-academic nature. While these platforms may occasionally host educational content, their primary appeal lies in entertainment and social interaction.

Access to academic information further underscores YouTube's dominance. With a score of M = 3.85, it stands out as a preferred platform for information-seeking, supporting Hanson and Haridakis (2008), who highlighted YouTube's appeal for knowledge acquisition. Instagram and TikTok's lower scores (M = 2.46 and 2.31) align with Ezumah (2013), who stressed that platform-specific content suitability determines academic utility. Their design prioritizes short, visually engaging content, which is less conducive to in-depth academic exploration.

Interestingly, missed academic deadlines were reported at low levels across all platforms (M = 2.09–2.33). This finding supports Rafiq et al. (2019), who suggested that disciplined use of social media minimizes academic disruptions. Despite the potential for distraction, students appear to manage their engagement in ways that prevent significant academic setbacks.

Finally, motivations for platform use reveal distinct patterns. YouTube users are primarily motivated by learning (M = 3.95), consistent with Katz et al.'s (1973) uses and gratifications theory. This reflects its role as a tool for knowledge acquisition and academic support. In contrast, Instagram and TikTok users are driven by entertainment and creativity (M = 3.56–3.76), echoing Alhabash and Ma (2017), who emphasized the diverse gratifications offered by visual platforms. These motivations highlight the different ways students integrate social media into their lives, balancing academic needs with leisure and creative expression.

In summary, YouTube stands out as the most academically beneficial platform, offering structured learning opportunities and reliable access to information. Instagram and TikTok, while valuable for entertainment and creativity, contribute less to academic tasks and information-seeking. The findings suggest that students can harness YouTube effectively for academic purposes, while maintaining disciplined use of entertainment-focused platforms to avoid distractions and missed deadlines. This balance reflects the nuanced role of social media in modern education, where intentional use determines its impact on learning outcomes..

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CONCLUSIONS

This study, grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory, reveals distinct roles for YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok among ATBU undergraduates. YouTube emerges as a critical educational tool, with high scores for academic benefit (M = 3.59), task usage (M = 3.74), information access (M = 3.85), and learning motivation (M = 3.95), alongside minimal distraction (M = 2.09) and deadline impact (M = 2.09). Its extensive repository of tutorials and lectures makes it a preferred platform for academic purposes, aligning with students' cognitive needs (Katz *et al*., 1973). Instagram and TikTok, conversely, are primarily used for entertainment (M = 3.56–3.66) and creative expression (M = 3.54–3.76), with moderate distraction levels (M = 2.63–2.64) and low academic utility (M = 2.30–2.71). However, their minimal impact on missed deadlines (M = 2.33) suggests students employ effective time management strategies, mitigating potential negative effects (Rafiq *et al*., 2019). The findings highlight the dual nature of social media in academic contexts: YouTube enhances learning when used intentionally, while Instagram and TikTok, though popular for social and creative purposes, pose distraction risks if not managed properly. These results underscore the importance of platform-specific strategies to maximize educational benefits. For instance, YouTube's integration into formal education could amplify its academic value, while targeted interventions for Instagram and TikTok could enhance their potential for informal learning. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence of how ATBU students actively select platforms to meet diverse needs, offering practical implications for educators and students to optimize social media use in higher education.

To strengthen the academic impact of social media, several recommendations can be made. First, YouTube's high academic utility (M = 3.74–3.85) should be leveraged by integrating curated educational videos into course curricula, allowing undergraduate students to benefit from its rich learning resources. At the same time, the university authority should address Instagram and TikTok's moderate distraction levels (M = 2.63–2.64) by organizing time management workshops for both staff and students, equipping them with strategies to balance social media use with academic responsibilities. To enhance Instagram's low academic benefit (M = 2.36), the university management could develop official academic accounts that share educational content while capitalizing on the platform's strong visual appeal. Similarly, the Student Representative Council (SRC), in collaboration with student

groups, should encourage responsible TikTok use by implementing media literacy campaigns that guide students in managing its entertainment focus (M = 3.66) to minimize academic interference. Finally, the student union could foster peer-led YouTube learning communities, promoting student-created channels that support collaborative learning and capitalize on YouTube's high learning motivation (M = 3.95). Together, these initiatives would maximize the academic potential of social media while mitigating its challenges, ensuring that students benefit from both its educational and creative dimensions.

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