

Tik Tok is bad for Everyone (exercice)

D- While it would be unfair to tar all Chinese apps with the same brush, it is undeniable that TikTok has endured more than its fair share of controversies. One of the biggest controversies surrounding TikTok is the influence of its parent company, Chinese tech giant ByteDance. Given the close relationship between the Chinese government and businesses operating within the country, there are concerns that TikTok could be used as a tool for the Chinese government to collect and exploit user data or spread propaganda.

Is TikTok bad? Well, it's bad enough to inspire these actions by government officials:

- In June 2020, India led the pack of countries banning TikTok after the government said the app was "prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defense of India, security of the state, and public order."
- In 2020, Reuters reported TikTok would "pull out" of Hong Kong following issues surrounding the region.
- The US government came within a whisker of banning TikTok in America in August 2020 after then-president Donald Trump said he had evidence that ByteDance "might take action that threatens to impair the national security of the United States."
- In December 2022, the United States banned TikTok on all federally owned government devices, according to The Guardian.
- Also in 2022, the BBC announced Taliban-run Afghanistan issued a ban on TikTok for "leading Afghan youths astray."

TikTok has maintained that it is a neutral and independent company and that it stores user data in the US and Singapore, not in China. However, the controversy surrounding TikTok's Chinese influence remains a major issue, and the company will likely continue to face scrutiny and challenges in the coming years.

A- According to The Independent, TikTok's format of short videos has been linked to decreased attention spans when the app is used for more than 90 minutes a day.

The problem became so severe that TikTok was forced to take action. The company hired influencers, including Gabe Erwin, Alan Chikin Chow, James Henry, and Cosette Rinab, to ask users to take breaks and created pop-up warnings to encourage users to stop scrolling.

While using an app that harms your brain is not a good idea for anyone, the issue is particularly pertinent to TikTok due to its demographics. According to TikTok statistics published by Wallaroo Media, more than 60 percent of users are "Gen Zers," which makes them somewhere between ages 11 and 26 — and the human brain is not fully developed until age 25.

C- TikTok moderation is a mess, with censorship rife across the platform. For instance, the problem surrounding the removal of tags has led some already marginalized communities to become even more excluded. Users who protested racism in their videos reported a drop in the popularity of their other content. There is no list of banned words or phrases. And it is unclear whether the mod team is run by AI or by humans.

And if you think all this is hearsay, think again. In March 2020, The Intercept got its hands on some internal TikTok documents that said moderators needed to suppress posts by users who were "too ugly, poor, or disabled". The problem is getting worse, not better.

H- Social media challenges are nothing new. Many of them are harmless fun and often raise money for a good cause. Who could forget classics such as the "ice bucket challenge" or the "mannequin challenge"?

However, some of them stray into dangerous territory, and this is where things get worrying. Planking was one of the early trendsetters, with people putting themselves in vulnerable positions (such as atop skyscrapers or on train tracks) just to grab an image for Instagram.

TikTok has taken the idea of dangerous challenges to new extremes. The "penny challenge" (in which you drop a penny between a wall socket and a plug) has started house fires, while the "skull breaker challenge" involves intentionally tripping people up. Nasty injuries have been reported. There is also the "devious licks" challenge. The challenge encourages students to steal or vandalize school property. Several students have been arrested, and schools have been forced to spend money on fixing broken property.

All of this makes TikTok entirely inappropriate for kids, and yet they keep using the app.

F- TikTok has been criticized for its handling of user data and privacy. The app collects a large amount of personal information from its users, including their location, contacts, and message contents. Such widespread collection is terrible on privacy grounds, but also has implications for your security.

TikTok has been the target of cyberattacks in the past, with hackers accessing sensitive user information such as passwords and phone numbers. TikTok has also been criticized for its moderation practices, with some users reporting that the app allows the spreading of hate speech, misinformation, and extremist content. Furthermore, many security researchers have found security vulnerabilities in the TikTok app. They range from hackers using SMS messages to gain unauthorized access to accounts, through to issues surrounding the use of HTTP and HTTPS when delivering videos.

G- No shortage of research proves how bad social media is for your mental health. The toll on your brain comes in many forms. You'll find ample cases of the usual social media scourges—harassment, abuse, and cyberbullying.

But the problem runs deeper. For example, many younger users have uploaded sexually provocative content, while there have also been cases of ex-partners attempting to ruin their previous partners' lives by uploading videos and photos from their old relationships.

This has real-world consequences for users. In Egypt, five women were sentenced to two years in prison for "violating public morals" in their TikTok videos.

Sadly, there is also a never-ending stream of anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia. There have even been cases of ISIS using the platform to promote its extremist propaganda.

All these issues can lead you on a path you don't want to go down. Don't put yourself in these positions unnecessarily.

E- At its core, TikTok is a social media app that lets users create, share, and view short videos. The app is primarily used for creating and sharing creative and entertaining content, such as lip-syncs, dances, and comedy skits, but you'll also find filters, effects, and music overlays to enhance your video content. However, it's not the only short-form video platform out there.

If you're concerned about the various issues surrounding the service, consider switching to one of the best TikTok alternatives. For example, the apps below all boast features similar to TikTok.

Thriller : This social media app allows users to create short music videos. It has a growing userbase and offers a wide range of creative tools.

Dubsmash: This social media app allows users to create short videos by lip-syncing to popular songs.

Instagram Reels: This feature of the popular photo-sharing app is similar to TikTok, in that it allows users to create and share short videos, but offers more robust moderation and privacy features.

YouTube Shorts: This feature allows users to create and share short videos too. It offers a range of handy tools and a vast community of content creators.

If you decide to continue using TikTok, please do so safely. Adjust your privacy settings to control who can see your profile and videos, and make your account private so only people you approve can view your content.

B- Back in 2018, the #DeleteFacebook movement took hold as users protested some of the company's ulterior motives and suspicious practices. But while Facebook is no angel and unquestionably deserves to be under the spotlight for the decisions it has taken in recent years, TikTok is a lot worse. The bottom line is quite simple. You should not have an account, you should not have the app on your phone, and you should not encourage other users to sign up.
