Enhancing Graduate Stage Photography Quality through TikTok-Based Educational Content: A Digital Communication Paradigm Shift

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the challenge of improving the quality of stage photographs received by graduates during convocation ceremonies at University Teknologi MARA (UiTM), where traditional printed communication methods have become outdated and ineffective. The research investigates the potential of educational content shared on TikTok as an innovative communication medium to enhance graduates' understanding and preparedness for their stage photography. The objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of TikTok-based educational content in providing valuable tips and tricks to improve stage photo quality. A quantitative research approach was employed, utilizing TikTok analytics data to assess audience engagement, such as views, likes, shares, and comments, to measure the impact of the content. The findings revealed high engagement with TikTok-based educational content, as evidenced by significant views, likes, shares, and positive feedback in comments, with graduates expressing appreciation for the practical tips that helped them prepare for their stage photographs. This study recommends that Malaysian educational institutions use TikTok and similar platforms to improve graduates' preparation and stage photograph quality during convocation ceremonies.

Keywords: Communication, Photography, TikTok, Higher Education, Graduation

INTRODUCTION

University Teknologi MARA (UiTM) stands as one of Malaysia's largest and most prominent institutions of higher learning, with a significant impact on the nation's educational landscape. As of the most recent data, UiTM has approximately 196,055 students enrolled, and 1,081,934 graduates have completed their studies across an estimated 518 academic programs offered at 34 campuses nationwide [1]. These impressive figures underscore UiTM's reputation for catering to the diverse educational needs of students across Malaysia. The university's extensive network of campuses has allowed it to provide access to quality education for students from a wide range of backgrounds, contributing to its esteemed position in the Malaysian education system.

The adaptability and resilience of UiTM were particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted educational institutions globally. Despite the closure of its campuses, UiTM successfully transitioned to Open and Distance Learning (ODL) methodologies, ensuring continuity in teaching and learning processes. Classes were conducted daily, while university programs, including webinars, meetings, and staff activities, proceeded as scheduled. Moreover, the admission of new students was seamlessly

managed through an online system, maintaining a strong connection between prospective students and the university [2].

With its ability to accommodate a growing number of students, UiTM has produced an estimated 770,000 alumni who now contribute their expertise at both national and international levels across various industries [3]. However, the pandemic also posed challenges to the university's traditional ceremonies, including the convocation ceremonies, which are significant milestones for graduates. In 2022, the University Executive Council (MEU) decided to postpone the 93rd convocation ceremony, originally planned for March 2 to March 23, to safeguard the health and well-being of 27,287 graduates during the COVID-19 crisis [4].

Despite this setback, UiTM demonstrated its commitment to honouring graduates by conducting the 92nd convocation ceremony using an innovative appointment and online format. This approach enabled 22,834 graduates to participate by attending in shifts at their respective state campuses, where their photographs were seamlessly integrated with those of the award presenters [5].

In response to the postponement of the 93rd convocation ceremony, UiTM implemented a strategic schedule to accommodate the backlog of graduates. Three convocation ceremonies were held in 2023: the 96th (May–June), 97th (August–September), and 98th (November–December). The 99th and 100th convocation ceremonies are scheduled for September and December 2024, respectively. These efforts underscore UiTM's dedication to upholding its traditions while adapting to unprecedented circumstances.

Amid these developments, improving the quality of stage photography during convocation ceremonies has become increasingly important. Graduation photographs serve as cherished mementos, yet their quality often depends on graduates' awareness and preparation. Traditional communication methods, such as printed guides, have become less effective in addressing this need. In contrast, social media platforms like TikTok offer innovative opportunities to engage graduates through educational content. Previous study has proven that the TikTok platform has been utilized in various educational activities in higher education, including at UiTM [6]. TikTok's multimedia capabilities allow for the dissemination of practical tips and tricks in engaging formats, such as videos, animations, and slide presentations, making it an ideal platform for this purpose.

The research problem centres on the challenge of improving stage photography quality during UiTM convocation ceremonies, as traditional communication methods like printed guides have proven ineffective in preparing graduates. With TikTok's multimedia capabilities offering innovative engagement opportunities, this research aims to investigate the effectiveness of TikTok-based educational content in enhancing graduates' awareness and preparedness for stage photography. Using a quantitative methodology, the study analyses TikTok analytics data to evaluate the performance and impact of various content formats. The objective is to assess the impact of TikTok content formats and provide insights into adopting digital communication strategies to elevate the graduation experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Case Study: Challenging in Convocation Stage Photography at UiTM

On average, the number of graduates from UiTM during a single convocation session is approximately 25,000 individuals. This implies that, should all graduates attend the convocation, the UiTM Photo Centre (UPC) would need to produce an average of 75,000 stage photographs, as each graduate is entitled to receive three photographs: one full-body and two half-body images. The stage photographs of the convocation represent the core for every graduate who strives to participate in their respective ceremonies. These photographs embody the true meaning and purpose of the event, serving as a symbolic representation of an individual's pinnacle of success, which can be cherished as a lifelong memory and proudly showcased to others.

The UiTM Photo Centre (UPC) is the unit responsible for managing the photographic affairs of graduates in UiTM Shah Alam from the first convocation session to the final one. This significant role and responsibility must be undertaken with utmost care and diligence, as it involves moments that occur only once in a lifetime

for each graduate. The photographs produced and received by graduates capture the moment when (graduates receive their scrolls from the award presenters, with both the recipient and the presenter gazing at each other while smiling).

Fig. 1 Scroll admission guide information poster

What typically occurs often differs from what is planned. To ensure successful stage photographs of graduates, effective collaboration between the photographer and the graduates is essential. If everything is left to the photographer, but the graduates are unaware of the proper techniques (such as tips and tricks) for receiving their scrolls on stage, the photos may not turn out as envisioned. Although the actions graduates need to take while on stage are quite simple, many still fail to execute them correctly. The necessary steps for the graduates to follow are provided as shown in Figure 1. These actions are further detailed in Table 1 below.

Table I Essential Actions for Graduates

What Needs to be Done	What Should Be Avoided
Be Prepared and Stay Calm	Do Not Bow or Hunch Over While Receiving the Scroll
Stand upright at the designated spot.	Do Not Look at the Camera
Ensure Eye Contact and Smile	Do Not Let Hair Fall Loose (for Women)

The poster on Figure 1 serves as a written guide that is printed and placed along the pathway where graduates queue to enter the hall. The purpose of this poster is to provide information to graduates about the proper procedures for receiving their scrolls on stage. This aims to ensure that graduates obtain beautiful and well-composed stage photographs when they come to collect their images the following day (the concept of collecting stage photographs at UiTM; graduation occurs today, and the photographs are ready for collection the next day). The duration for each graduate to ascend the stage to receive their scroll from the award presenter is very brief, as the average number of graduates for each UiTM convocation session is around 1,000 individuals. When a graduate's name is called, they are required to walk along the directional signs affixed to the carpeted stage until they reach the award presenter while adhering to all the guidelines shared in the posters placed along the pathway.

However, the question now arises: Are the roles of such printed posters sufficient to convey information accurately to the average of 25,000 graduates attending the convocation session? Will each graduate waiting in line to enter the hall notice these posters, or will they merely glance at them and, when their names are

called, proceed without retaining the information they have seen and read? This question arises because, through observation and monitoring of the photographs of graduates and the actions they take when receiving their scrolls from the award presenters, it shows that many of them behave as if they have not received direct information regarding the do's and don'ts while on stage receiving their scrolls. The common errors committed by graduates are presented in Table 2 below.

Table II Common Errors Committed by Graduates

What Needs to be Done	What Should Be Avoided
Graduates are anxious and nervous.	Some bow and hunch over.
Graduates do not stand and walk according to the directional signs provided.	Some look at the camera, some are uncertain, and some look at the TV screen in front of them.
There is no eye contact and no smiles.	Most women let their hair down, covering their faces.

Such issues need to be addressed with more practical methods compared to outdated information dissemination approaches. Promotion through digital technology is a key element in educational management and is increasingly evolving with the emergence of sophisticated gadgets that facilitate access to information.

As noted by Budnyk et al. [7], the delivery of information has become more flexible and seamless, enabling access anytime and anywhere, whether at home, at breakfast, or while relaxing. Given this, the reliance on traditional information media is increasingly questionable. Traditional methods often fail to effectively reach a wider audience and struggle to engage their target demographic. In contrast, digital platforms like TikTok offer a dynamic and modern approach to disseminating information, reflecting the evolving nature of communication in the digital age.

This study aims to digitally share tips and tricks for obtaining beautiful stage photographs during convocation. Given TikTok's popularity among students, it is an ideal platform to effectively reach and engage graduates, moving away from outdated methods of communication.

Educational Content and Digital Media

The transition from traditional media to digital media for information dissemination is crucial in the educational landscape of this era. The integration of digital and media literacy into formal education can bridge the digital divide and enhance student engagement across various subject areas. This shift not only empowers students with critical thinking skills but also provides equal opportunities within a digital environment, making information more accessible and engaging [8].

The exploration of digital media and the integration of technology within educational institutions underscore the importance for educators to continually adapt to contemporary educational methods and emerging digital technologies. A study conducted by Al-Hail et al. [9] demonstrates that teachers with a strong understanding of the digital landscape are more adept at comprehending and exploring the latest digital tools, which can enhance modern learning methodologies with their students.

The utilization of social media as an educational platform is no longer deemed unusual. Social media serves as a significant instrument for communication and learning, with billions of active users engaging with the site daily. This presents substantial opportunity for educational institutions to utilize social media for knowledge dissemination and improving student engagement [10]. The necessity to transition from obsolete information transmission methods to contemporary approaches is clear. The integration of digital technology improves accessibility and engagement in educational materials while also equipping pupils for a progressively intricate and swiftly changing digital environment. As technology rapidly advances and integrates into daily life, educational institutions must adapt to these changes to maintain relevance and effectiveness in their teaching methodologies.

TikTok as a digital medium for educational content

TikTok is a popular social media platform that is increasingly regarded as an effective medium for delivering educational content. Recent study indicates that social media platforms, including TikTok, can enhance knowledge acquisition among users [11][12]. This underscores TikTok's potential to reach a broad audience and effectively convey important information.

The initiative introduced by #LearnOnTikTok illustrates how educational institutions and organizations have utilized TikTok to engage audiences in learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Smout [13] discusses how educational institutions have adapted their communication strategies to align with the unique characteristics of TikTok, emphasizing the necessity for content that resonates with users through a blend of entertainment and education. This adaptability is crucial for maximizing the impact of information delivery in an increasingly dynamic digital landscape [14].

A notable study was undertaken by Shrivastava et al. [15] discovered that TikTok serves as a platform for health education, illustrating the significant benefits of TikTok, since it has evolved into a medium for medical experts to disseminate information to the public. This platform facilitates a casual, engaging, and creative interaction between experts and the public. This medium is selected by educators to enhance engagement and learning outcomes.

Exploration of new technology is critical for preparing students to meet the demands of the modern world [16]. This adjustment not only enhances information availability, but it also expands opportunities and integrates the learning experience. Using and adapting to TikTok not only enhances information accessibility and structure, but it also prepares students for the quick changes that will occur in the new digital environment. Educational institutions must embrace and adapt to these changes to remain relevant and up to speed on new positive advancements.

The importance of visual aesthetics in social media

With a particular emphasis on the context of social media and the realm of digital communication. Visual communication is an essential component in boosting engagement across multiple platforms. They are important to the public in terms of the context and function of the visuals themselves. For instance, when it comes to climate change, producing powerful images that are laced with profound themes can inspire viewers by expressing feelings of compassion and optimism [17]. This indicates that images not only transmit information but also arouse feelings in viewers, increasing their level of involvement. In a similar vein, the "beautiful body weight" marketing graphic may inspire a drive to try or a want to attain the outcomes that the target audience witnessed [18].

The format of content disseminated on social media directly affects user behavior. Visuals, audiovisuals, and written content can affect user engagement in various manners. Research indicates that a company must exercise caution in implementing its content strategy to effectively engage users [19]. Currently, TikTok and Instagram have emerged as the predominant platforms selected by educational institutions to disseminate knowledge through compelling graphics and instructive material [20].

In the realm of education, it has been demonstrated that visual communication significantly enhances student engagement and learning outcomes. The study conducted by Lai [21] indicate that informal contexts on social media significantly impact students' motivation to engage and succeed in language learning, encompassing both verbal and written skills.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative data approach through action research to evaluate the impact of digital content in enhancing the quality of stage photographs for graduates during the UiTM convocation. The researcher, serving as the official photographer for the UiTM convocation, is responsible for capturing the stage photographs of graduates. Over the course of the 97th, 98th, 99th, and 100th convocations, the

researcher produced and disseminated a total of 60 "tips and tricks" content pieces via his TikTok account, aimed at improving the stage photographs for graduates.

The content, created in various formats, shares a common goal: to provide graduates with helpful guidance to make informed decisions and execute actions that result in high-quality stage photographs. The content pieces included video tutorials and visual instructions that addressed common challenges and offered solutions for obtaining better photographs during the convocation ceremony.

From the 60 content pieces produced, four videos with the highest view counts were selected from each convocation ceremony. These four videos were deemed to have garnered the most attention and engagement compared to the other 56 pieces. The TikTok analytics provided key quantitative data, including video views, profile views, likes, comments, and shares. This data was extracted and analysed using descriptive statistics to identify patterns, trends, and the effectiveness of the content in reaching and engaging graduates.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data was then organized (refer Table 3) and analysed using descriptive statistics. This included calculating averages and frequencies for the views, likes, comments, and shares across the selected videos. The analysis aimed to identify trends in engagement, assess the effectiveness of the educational content in influencing the graduates' behavior on stage, and determine whether the TikTok platform successfully communicated the tips for obtaining quality stage photographs.

First set of data: the 99th convocation

The September data contains 18 days of observations. The average video views were 150,440, with a standard deviation of 88,897, showing considerable variation in engagement. Profile views averaged 1,580 with a standard deviation of 759, suggesting some days had significantly more profile views. Likes had an average of 8,622, with 5,778 as the standard deviation, indicating variability in audience engagement. Comments averaged 393, while shares had a mean of 1,319, showing that interactions like shares were generally higher than comments.

Second set of data: the 100th convocation

November data contains 16 days of observations. The average video views in November were significantly higher, at 333,834, reflecting a larger reach and engagement. The profile views increased to an average of 2,039, indicating higher profile interaction compared to September. The average number of likes in November was 12,062, significantly higher than September, with shares also showing higher engagement (1,785 on average). Comments were lower in November compared to September, averaging 322, which might suggest the audience engaged more with likes and shares than comments.

Table III Overall TikTok Analytics during the 99th and 100th Convocation Ceremonies

FIRST SET OF DATA: THE 99TH CONVOCATION					
DATE	**Video Views**	**Profile Views**	**Likes**	**Comments**	**Shares**
2-SEP	300596	2690	14175	770	3509
3-SEP	419041	2444	24192	1172	5570
4-SEP	123084	1817	5716	397	1063
5-SEP	152492	1486	8694	480	1512
6-SEP	104638	1120	6784	386	1556

DATE					
7-SEP	97727	895	5826	312	1016
8-SEP	100532	810	5666	270	928
9-SEP	82763	1120	4436	255	763
10-SEP	77004	1261	4084	217	570
11-SEP	256274	3768	21494	872	3249
12-SEP	160962	2184	11934	408	1046
13-SEP	98375	1413	7220	256	661
14-SEP	163488	1609	6255	229	356
15-SEP	113100	1096	5489	155	267
16-SEP	113222	1165	5696	159	246
17-SEP	93172	1005	4795	161	315
18-SEP	132222	1470	5880	268	654
19-SEP	119222	1088	6865	313	460
	2707914	**28441**	**155201**	**7080**	**23741**

THE SECOND SET OF DATA: THE 100TH CONVOCATION

DATE	Video Views	Profile Views	Likes	Comments	Shares
13-NOV	58716	779	2129	121	398
14-NOV	230551	1261	7887	300	1416
15-NOV	143943	849	3875	150	576
16-NOV	174193	115	5769	233	977
17-NOV	124860	870	4339	127	662
18-NOV	176945	1308	7108	257	1166
19-NOV	116014	821	4165	152	642
20-NOV	608225	4732	27211	810	8120
21-NOV	406562	3733	20484	601	3415
22-NOV	556557	3421	18971	435	3237
23-NOV	819347	3529	21660	424	2030
24-NOV	493434	3436	17250	379	1529
25-NOV	350717	2257	12005	302	1064
26-NOV	287440	2290	10623	190	732
27-NOV	503122	1822	18457	405	1722
28-NOV	290710	1394	11062	262	878
	5341336	**33617**	**192995**	**5148**	**28564**

Combination of data

When combining the data from both months, the average video views are 236,743, showing a general mid-range viewership between the two months. Profile views averaged 1,825, which balances between the two months. Likes had an average of 10,241, and comments averaged 360, both values falling between the trends seen in September and November. Shares had an average of 1,538, representing a middle ground. Overall, the combined data reveals a clear increase in engagement from September to November, with more likes, shares, and views in November, pointing to potentially better content performance or more effective strategies during that month.
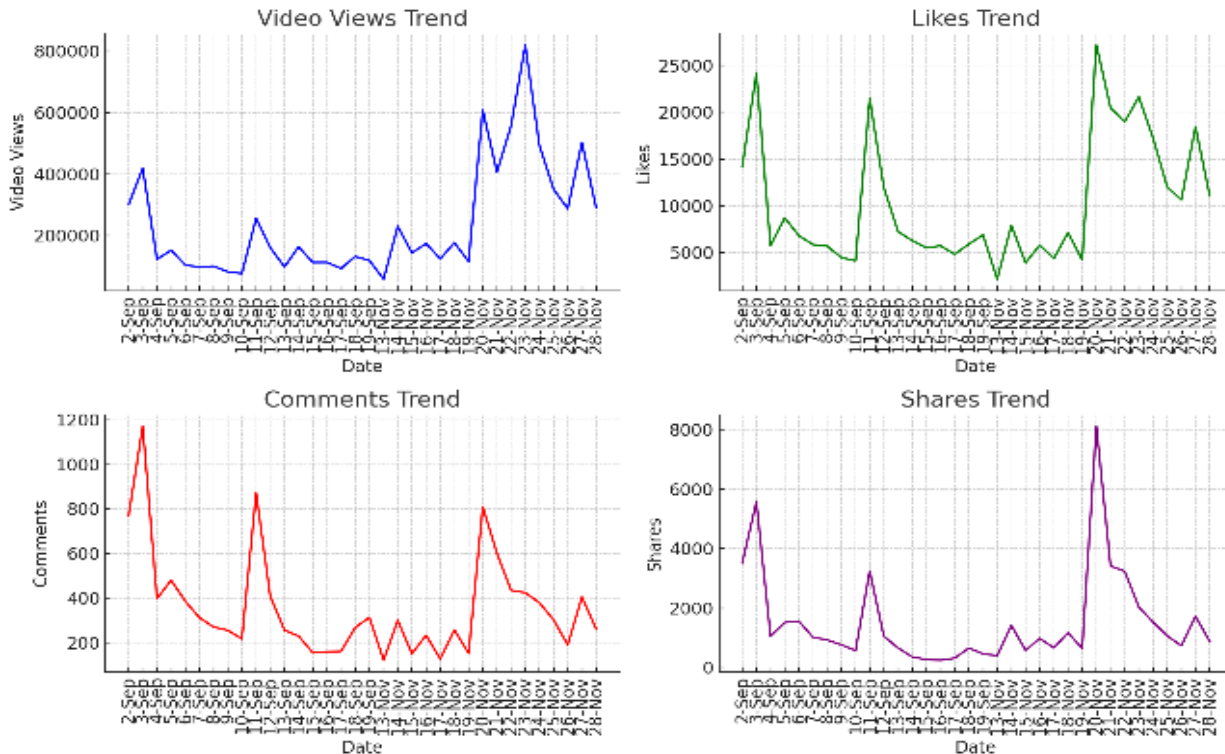

Fig. 2 Trend Analysis

The graphs in Figure 2 reveal fluctuations in key metrics such as video views, likes, comments, and shares over time. There is a noticeable spike in video views and shares in certain days, notably on 20-Nov (608,225 video views and 8,120 shares), showing that specific content performed significantly better on those days, due to viral content and highly engaging videos.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A total of 60 short videos of "tips and tricks" content from the researcher's TikTok account (the number will increase further) aimed at ensuring the quality of graduates' stage photographs has been produced and disseminated, starting from the 97th Convocation, 98th, 99th, and the most recent 100th Convocation. All these educational contents, created in various formats, share a singular objective: to assist graduates attending the convocation in making informed and precise decisions, thereby enabling them to take home beautiful stage photographs that they can cherish and proudly showcase throughout their lives. From this collection of 60 pieces, four videos with the highest view counts were selected from each convocation ceremony's content. These four educational contents (refer Table 4) pieces received a higher number of views compared to the other 56 pieces.

The first educational content, titled *"Please Jangan Buat"* (Please Don't Do), was published on August 16, 2023, at 2:08 PM during the 97th convocation. The most recent data indicates that this content has garnered a total of 1,022,629 views. It received 64,000 likes overall, and the number of comments from viewers interacting with the content stands at 380. Additionally, the share button was pressed 7,139 times, indicating

that this content captured the audience's attention and was shared among viewers. Furthermore, the save button was pressed 17,000 times, reflecting the importance of this content for viewers who wished to save it for later viewing, ensuring that it would not be lost or difficult to find again.

A total of 1,028,601 views were recorded for the second selected content titled *"Follow macamni mesti jadi!"* (Follow this, and it must work!). This educational content was published on TikTok at 10:24 PM during the 98th convocation ceremony, dated November 25, 2023. The collected data indicates that the content received 39,000 likes from viewers, along with 246 comments. Additionally, the content was shared among TikTok users a total of 5,100 times, and it was saved 17,000 times by viewers who found it important and beneficial for future viewing.

The third educational content recorded the second highest total views overall, amounting to 1,482,580 views. This content was created and published for audience viewing on September 2, 2024, at 9:54 PM, and is titled *"Jangan tunduk kalau tak buruk!"* (Don't bow down, or your picture will turn out poorly!). The content received 77,000 likes from viewers who appreciated the message conveyed, accompanied by a substantial number of comments totalling 570. Additionally, the content was shared 18,000 times by individuals who viewed it, and it was saved 15,000 times by viewers, demonstrating the significant relevance of such information to graduates.

The final selected content, which has achieved the highest number of views to date, totalling 1,531,998 views, is the fourth educational content titled *"Gambar Overlap"* (Overlap Images). This content was published during the 100th convocation ceremony on November 22, 2024, at 2:22 PM. It addresses issues faced by graduates, such as walking slowly while receiving their scrolls, wearing tight robes, and wearing loose shoes, which resulted in overlapping images of the graduates in the background. The content received 21,000 likes and accumulated 156 comments. Despite its exceptionally high view count, the number of shares among TikTok users was the lowest compared to previous educational content, with only 1,635 shares and a low save count of 1,530 button saves. Nevertheless, it remains a testament to the success of educational content of this nature, effectively achieving its objectives.

Table IV Four Selected Educational Contents
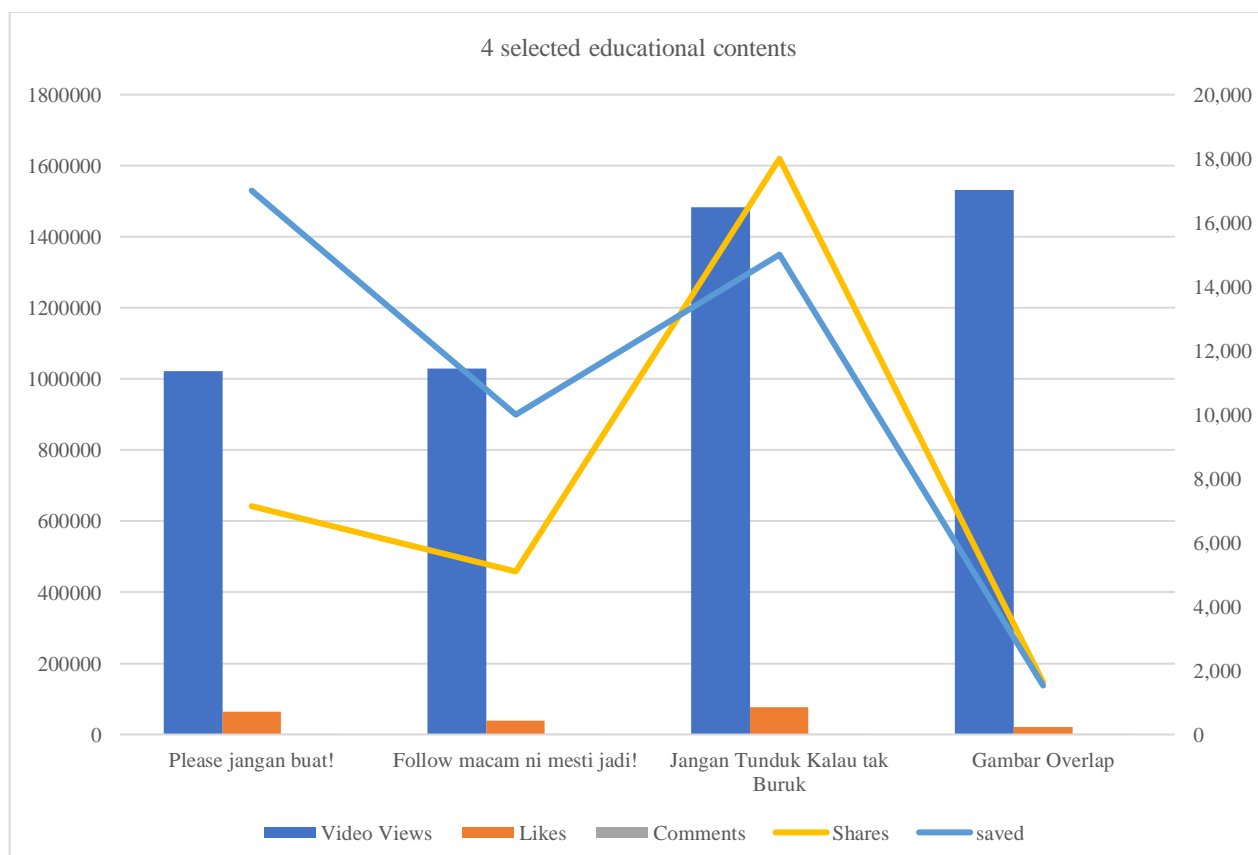
The patterns observed in the TikTok data have already demonstrated a significant impact on improving the quality of graduation stage photographs. The substantial increase in video views and engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares) indicates that graduates who viewed the educational content were more informed and better prepared to follow essential tips for achieving beautiful stage photographs. This higher engagement directly correlates with graduates implementing correct posture, handling of scrolls, and other photo-related actions, resulting in improved photo quality.

The consistent rise in profile views suggests that viewers not only consumed the content but also sought further information, demonstrating a proactive effort to internalize the tips for better performance on stage. Additionally, the increase in shares amplified the content's reach, ensuring that more graduates were aware of the necessary steps, which further contributed to improved photograph quality. Engagement through comments also allowed for personalized guidance, ensuring that graduates fine-tuned their actions based on specific feedback.

The overall positive feedback, reflected in the growing number of likes, shows that graduates appreciated the content and were more likely to follow the tips, leading to higher-quality stage photos. These combined engagement patterns reveal that the educational TikTok content had a direct and tangible impact on improving the preparation and execution of graduates, resulting in more flattering and well-composed photographs during the convocation ceremonies.

CONCLUSION

This research has successfully demonstrated the effectiveness of digital content, particularly through TikTok, in improving the quality of graduation stage photographs for UiTM graduates. By providing targeted "tips and tricks" through engaging and easily accessible videos, the study has shown that graduates were better informed and more prepared to take actions that contributed to achieving beautiful and professional photographs. The significant increase in engagement metrics such as video views, likes, comments, and shares further highlights the positive impact of digital media on educating and guiding graduates in real-time. The results indicate that the integration of technology into informational campaigns can bridge the gap in traditional communication methods, offering a more dynamic, interactive, and effective way to ensure that graduates are well-equipped to perform optimally on stage. This research underscores the importance of leveraging digital platforms to enhance not only the educational experience but also the overall convocation ceremony experience, leading to lasting memories that graduates can cherish for years to come.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the university adopt and formalize the use of digital platforms, specifically TikTok, to disseminate educational content on how graduates can enhance the quality of their stage photographs during convocation. The researcher's personal initiative has proven effective in increasing graduates' awareness and understanding of the necessary actions to take during the ceremony. However, this method has yet to be officially recognized or integrated into the university's communication strategy. Therefore, it is suggested that the university create official content that includes tips and guidelines on posing, receiving the scroll, and other important actions for obtaining beautiful stage photographs.

To further maximize the effectiveness of this approach, the university could consider displaying such educational videos on LED screens within the convocation hall prior to the ceremony, ensuring that all graduates receive the information in real time. The data from TikTok analytics indicates that this format has a significant impact on engagement and understanding, and applying it in the convocation setting would likely lead to even better results.

Moreover, by leveraging TikTok's popularity and accessibility, the university can not only reach a wider audience but also establish a modern and interactive approach to information dissemination, aligning with the changing dynamics of communication in higher education. This strategy would not only benefit the graduates, ensuring high-quality photographs, but also enhance the overall reputation of the institution and the official

photographers involved. Through these efforts, TikTok could evolve from a tool of entertainment to an essential platform for teaching and learning in the context of higher education.

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