

(52%) say they prefer a digital platform – a news website, search engine, social media or podcast. Pew Research also showed an overall decline among all social media platforms as news sources – with the

According to Stanford Business School Professor Dr. Michal Kosinski, these AI generated profiles are better than the ones created by human experts.²⁰ This is likely because the underlying data is more complete, unfiltered and nuanced, as opposed to filling out surveys and answering questions. TikTok refines their model in real time, using traditional A/B testing through additional video content, with the results immediately incorporated. Because this function is automated, it works extremely fast. The app will make calculated determinations of a user's most likely interests, then queue options up for them. Like the standardized tests we take in high school, it asks the same questions at different times and in different ways, learning a user's real interests and mitigating any chance of 'gaming' the system.

Their proprietary psychographic model is extremely accurate, able to measure the user's extraversion, likableness, neurosis, and agreeableness.²¹ These are normally quantified by professional evaluation tools such as the Fiero-B, the DISC Assessment, or the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). From this, TikTok knows a person's behavioral tics, their emotional state, and how they'll respond to specific stimuli. The algorithm could potentially calculate the best type of information to influence a user's behavior before specific events occur – which is the basis for the concern expressed by U.S. and European authorities.

TikTok users don't have to give the app explicit permission to do anything. TikTok automatically maps out their psyche to provide the 'best user experience possible'. But the flip side of that is the app could also manipulate users into justifying a range of disturbing actions, including suicide. Some of the loudest opposition to TikTok comes from its proclivity for recommending videos on suicide and eating disorders to vulnerable users.²²

What It All Means

Ten years ago, Target Corporation famously sent coupons for diapers and baby formula to a seventeen-year-old high school girl in Minneapolis.²⁶ Her very angry father contacted the local store to complain. What he didn't know was Target's market intelligence team had analyzed her credit card purchases against other young women with similar buying patterns. A few days later he called again to apologize. His daughter had admitted she was in her second trimester. Target knew she was pregnant before her own father did.

While this so-called surveillance capitalism created salacious headlines, as a nation we've fallen way

turnover in other big Chinese tech companies – Jack Ma at Alibaba, Colin Huang Zheng at PDD, even Bytedance’s own CEO-founder Zhang Yiming.⁶¹

Forbes noted a couple of years back that Singapore straddles the divide between East and West.⁶² In many ways Singapore is for this Cold War what Berlin was for the last one. Or to put it less diplomatically, it’s a waypoint for data going to Beijing.

On average, TikTok users spend over an hour and a half a day on the app, more than any other social media platform.⁶³

