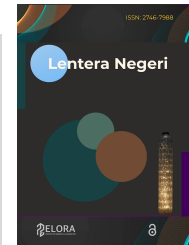




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Does TikTok Social Media Increase Public Interest in the Seafarer Profession?

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ABSTRACT

Background: The rise of TikTok videos showing life and work at sea has increased public exposure to the seafarer profession. Many seafarers actively share their experiences on board ships, creating wider professional visibility. However, previous studies mainly discuss TikTok as a platform for entertainment and promotion, while limited studies examine its role in influencing career interest in the maritime profession. This creates a research gap regarding how TikTok shapes public motivation toward becoming seafarers. **Objective:** This study aims to investigate the influence of TikTok social media on public interest in the seafarer profession. **Methods:** This study uses a mixed-method approach with concurrent quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires distributed via Microsoft Teams to students participating in level 1 and level 2 seafarer training in Semarang. From a population of 126 participants, 95 respondents were selected based on the Krejcie and Morgan table with a 95% confidence level. Qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews and TikTok content analysis. **Results:** The results show a significant positive relationship between TikTok exposure and interest in the seafarer profession (Pearson correlation = 0.936; $p < 0.001$), indicating a strong association between maritime-related content consumption and career interest. Qualitative findings show that educational content, visual attractiveness, and influencer narratives increase motivation, while occupational risks and incomplete professional representation remain important barriers. **Conclusion:** TikTok plays an important role as a strategic medium for career visibility and professional promotion in the maritime sector, although the findings indicate correlation rather than direct causality.



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Introduction

Social media is a digital platform that is in demand and used by many people worldwide, whether for communication, information, entertainment, or sharing other interactions. With the widespread development of the internet, social media digital platforms are widely popular, so content production increases (Ferguson et al., 2025). Social media is also a significant breakthrough in information technology that has changed many aspects of daily life (Allahverdi et al., 2025; Ferguson et al., 2025). In recent years, social media and digital platforms have become the centre of attention and are very popular among youth and teenagers because they influence how people access information and make career-related decisions (Hansen, 2025). The characteristics of social media are similar to traditional media, so they are still considered media oriented to digital platforms (Menon, 2022).

TikTok is one of the applications on social media platforms that is widely loved and used by most internet users. The TikTok application is an application that connects social and image videos, launched in early September 2016 in China (Wisnu Nugroho Aji; Dwi Bambang Putut Setiyadi, 2020). The TikTok application has succeeded in almost every corner of the world as a social media platform to share videos, and even the motives of users are still not widely available in the literature (Menon, 2022). It can make TikTok a promotional medium effectively due to so many users, including celebrities, who can easily use and attractively feature promotions to spread easily (Gratia et al., 2022). This wide accessibility makes TikTok an influential platform in shaping public perception toward professions and career choices.

Several seafarers and their colleagues often share videos on social media, TikTok, regarding work and life on board a ship. Those affect the society's awareness relating to the seafarer profession. In the maritime industry, the placement of seafarers as human resources plays an important role in guaranteeing and ensuring ship and cargo security and safety (Cicek et al., 2019; Dewan & Godina, 2023; Liu et al., 2021). According to Aalberg et al. (2024), seafarers believe more in their knowledge based on their experiences, which forms competent and capable seafarers rather than formal knowledge. Therefore, digital exposure through TikTok may also contribute to shaping public perceptions and interest toward this profession.

The convenience and widely available internet make it possible for people to access information about the prerequisites to become seafarers, such as educational institutions, job opportunities, and career steps. According to Menon, (2022), the internet has helped us a lot in life, from online communication to social media. For professions such as seafaring, where direct public exposure is often limited, social media becomes an alternative source of occupational representation and career information. TikTok views provide a broader picture to the public about the seafarer profession. Visual and experiential content shared through TikTok helps users better understand the realities of working at sea and may influence career motivation.

Previous studies have discussed TikTok mainly as a platform for entertainment, promotion, and consumer behavior (Gratia et al., 2022; Menon, 2022), while studies on seafarers have focused more on competence, work pressure, well-being, and professional development (Aalberg et al., 2024; Dewan & Godina, 2023; Muslu, 2022). However, limited studies specifically examine how TikTok influences public interest in choosing the seafarer profession as a career path. Most existing literature discusses social media usage and seafarer welfare separately, without connecting digital exposure to maritime career motivation. This indicates a research gap regarding the role of TikTok as a career influence platform in the maritime profession.

The information provided on social media sometimes tends to be misleading, that is, by giving an image that is not real, only part of the frame, to make it look fun and attract viewers. On the one hand, TikTok can provide positive visibility by showing career success, international travel opportunities, and professional experiences at sea. On the other hand, it may only display enjoyable aspects while ignoring the real challenges of the profession. Long spans of time separated from family, socially isolated from the living environment, heavy workload, and work environment pressures such as engine vibrations, wave swaying, and pirate threats (Dewan & Godina, 2023). This contrast raises an important question regarding whether TikTok genuinely increases career interest or merely builds an idealized image of seafaring life.

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model and UTAUT-2 theory. In this context, TikTok content functions as the stimulus that provides visual exposure and professional information about seafarer life. Public perception, motivation, and awareness represent the organism, while the increased interest in choosing the seafarer profession becomes the response. UTAUT-2 supports this explanation by emphasizing that user perceptions, social influence, and facilitating conditions affect behavioral intention in adopting information and making career decisions. Therefore, these two frameworks are relevant in explaining how TikTok may influence career interest in the maritime profession.

Not all internet users will use social media with the TikTok application, so the information is not conveyed properly. There is convincing evidence that social media has positive and negative psychological and social consequences (Delogu et al., 2025). Moreover, the existence of a trend that provides an overview of information about a product, such as unboxing or reviews, makes TikTok like poison for its viewers (Gratia et al., 2022). According to Haythornthwaite (2023), this social media has taken root in real daily life, where there is a need to anticipate offensive content and behavior. Therefore, understanding the influence of TikTok on career choice requires critical examination, especially in professions with high responsibility and occupational risks such as seafaring.

Although working as a seafarer may seem attractive, it also involves significant personal sacrifice and professional challenges. Long periods away from family, loneliness, and demanding working conditions can affect well-being and quality of life (Muslu, 2022; Sánchez-González et al., 2024). Health related to psychosocial conditions on board also remains a serious concern for seafarers (Pauksztat et al., 2022). Therefore, understanding the influence of TikTok on career choice requires critical examination, especially in professions with high responsibility and occupational risks such as seafaring.

This research is important in order to examine whether there is a positive influence of social media, with its TikTok application, on increasing public interest in the seafarer profession. Furthermore, to measure and find out how much influence social media has on motivating or changing the interest of TikTok users in particular, into a new career, namely, becoming a seafarer. The conceptual framework of this study assumes that exposure to TikTok content about seafarer life influences public perception, which subsequently affects career interest and motivation. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is that TikTok social media has a significant positive effect on public interest in the seafarer profession. This article explores how the influence of social media, specifically TikTok, increases public interest in the seafarer profession.

Method

This study uses mixed methods by combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative Approach will measure the level of public interest through questionnaires, while the qualitative Approach will be through in-depth interviews and TikTok content analysis. This mixed-method design was chosen to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how TikTok influences public interest in the seafarer profession, by integrating numerical measurement with deeper contextual interpretation. Quantitative findings were used to identify patterns of influence, while qualitative findings were used to explain and strengthen the interpretation of the statistical results.

The study takes into account the population in the Semarang area, with the population being the number of officers of seafarer education and training students class 1 (one) and 2 (two), as many as 126 people who were attending the training. Semarang was selected because it is one of the important maritime education centers in Indonesia and has a concentration of active seafarer training participants who are directly relevant to the objectives of this study. This population was considered appropriate because the respondents have direct experience, exposure, and understanding of the seafarer profession. However, this study acknowledges that the findings are limited to this training center and cannot be fully generalized to the national public context. The sample is the number of respondents needed to respond.

This research was conducted during April 2025 on seafarers who were completing further education in Semarang, so the results of the study do not reflect the perception of the public nationally. Respondents were limited to seafarers having the intensity of using TikTok and were initially interested in videos of activities on board. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, because respondents were selected based on specific criteria, namely active TikTok users, exposure to maritime-related TikTok content, and involvement in seafarer education and training. This sampling technique was considered suitable to ensure that respondents had direct relevance to the research objectives.

According to the Krejcie & Morgan table, the recommended number of samples based on population and a 95% confidence level is 95 for a population of 126 (Azimkhani, 2024). The research instrument was conducted by sending a questionnaire based on the Likert scale (ranging from 1 to 5) to 110 respondents. However, 15 respondents did not have a TikTok account and were excluded from the measurement. The remaining 95 respondents were included in the measurement.

Before the main data collection, the questionnaire instrument was tested through a pilot test involving 20 respondents with similar characteristics to ensure clarity, relevance, and consistency of the statements. Face validity was evaluated through expert judgment from maritime education lecturers and research methodology experts, while construct validity was assessed using item-total correlation analysis. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha showed acceptable values above 0.80 for both independent and dependent variables, indicating good internal consistency.

These results are to measure the frequency and duration of TikTok use, the type of content they like, such as education, entertainment, and profession, and look at interest in the seafarer profession, such as motivation, knowledge, and aspirations.

For qualitative data, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 selected participants representing active TikTok users and respondents who showed strong interest in the seafarer profession. Each interview lasted

approximately 30–45 minutes using semi-structured interview guidelines focusing on perceptions, motivation, and career considerations influenced by TikTok content. All interviews were recorded with participant consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic coding to identify recurring patterns and key themes. Data saturation was considered achieved when no new significant themes emerged.

In addition, TikTok content analysis was conducted on 30 videos related to seafarer life, selected based on popularity, relevance, and engagement level. The analysis focused on content themes such as professional activities, career motivation, work challenges, and lifestyle representation. Coding reliability was maintained by using repeated coding and cross-checking between categories to ensure consistency of interpretation.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings was conducted through triangulation and joint interpretation. Quantitative results provided measurable evidence of TikTok's influence, while qualitative findings strengthened the explanation of why and how such influence occurs. This integration helped produce more comprehensive conclusions and stronger research validity.

Table 1. Research Variables

| Research Variabel | Type | Indicator |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|---|
| Use of TikTok | Independent | Duration of use, frequency of access, attention to maritime content, interaction with profession-related videos, and preferred type of content (education, entertainment, profession) |
| Interests of the Seafarer Profession | Dependent | Career interest, knowledge of seafarer profession, motivation to join maritime education, and intention to choose a career as a sailor |

Results and Discussions

Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to provide an overview of respondent responses regarding the use of TikTok and interest in the seafarer profession.

| Descriptive Statistics | | | | | | |
|------------------------|----|---------|---------|-----|------|----------------|
| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Sum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| Pernyataan X1 | 95 | 1 | 5 | 341 | 3.59 | .928 |
| Pernyataan X2 | 95 | 1 | 5 | 342 | 3.60 | .961 |
| Pernyataan X3 | 95 | 2 | 5 | 336 | 3.54 | .873 |
| Pernyataan X4 | 95 | 1 | 5 | 360 | 3.79 | .898 |
| Pernyataan X5 | 95 | 1 | 5 | 346 | 3.64 | .933 |
| Pernyataan Y1 | 95 | 1 | 5 | 347 | 3.65 | .931 |
| Pernyataan Y2 | 95 | 1 | 5 | 351 | 3.69 | .912 |
| Pernyataan Y3 | 95 | 1 | 5 | 351 | 3.69 | .979 |
| Pernyataan Y4 | 95 | 1 | 5 | 360 | 3.79 | .933 |
| Pernyataan Y5 | 95 | 1 | 5 | 359 | 3.78 | 1.033 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 95 | | | | | |

Figure 1. Descriptive Statistics

According to Figure 1's descriptive statistics, the minimum value is Mean 3.54, which means that the average satisfaction of the respondents is between the categories of "satisfied" and "very satisfied" (Likert scale 1–5). At least Std. Dev is 0.912, which shows the distribution of data from the average, where the smaller the data, the more homogeneous the data. The Min and Max values indicate the range of values that respondents assign, where N is the number of respondents measured. In addition, the descriptive statistics also indicate that the data distribution is relatively stable, with no extreme variation among respondents. The standard deviation value below 1.00 suggests that respondents tend to have similar perceptions regarding TikTok usage and interest in the seafarer profession. This supports the consistency of responses for further statistical testing.

Validity and Reliability Tests (Cronbach's Alpha).

With 110 respondents providing answers and only 95 of those respondents having a TikTok account, all are valid for statements distributed through questionnaires with the Microsoft Teams application. The validity test was conducted using Pearson Product Moment correlation by comparing r calculated with r table. With a significance level of 5% and degrees of freedom (df = n-2 = 93), the r table value was 0.202. Since all statement items produced r calculated > 0.202, all questionnaire items were declared valid and suitable for measurement. With the information where r calculates > r table, so that all statements are valid.

Case Processing Summary

| | | N | % |
|-------|-----------------------|----|-------|
| Cases | Valid | 95 | 100.0 |
| | Excluded ^a | 0 | .0 |
| | Total | 95 | 100.0 |

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Figure 2. Case Processing Summary

| Reliability Statistics | | Reliability Statistics | |
|------------------------|------------|------------------------|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items | Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
| .861 | 5 | .883 | 5 |

Figure 3. Reliability Statistics

For the reliability test, Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.861 for statements X1 to X5 and 0.883 for statements Y1 to Y5 indicate a high value, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 to 0.60 considered fair or moderate. These values indicate good internal consistency among the questionnaire items. In addition, inter-item correlation was also reviewed to ensure that each indicator consistently measured the same construct, and no item showed excessively low correlation. This confirms that the instrument is reliable for measuring both TikTok influence and interest in the seafarer profession.

Correlation Test (Pearson correlation)

The relationship between the interest of the seafaring profession and the influence of TikTok was 0.936; this shows that the higher the influence of TikTok, the greater the interest in the seafaring profession also increases. The level of correlation significance of the output is measured by the probability level of producing a number < 0.001. Because the significance level of probability is 0.001, which is below 0.05, the correlation between the influence of TikTok and the interest in the seafarer profession is very real.

Correlations

| | | Profesi Pelaut Y | Tik Tok X |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------|
| Pearson Correlation | Profesi Pelaut Y | 1.000 | .936 |
| | Tik Tok X | .936 | 1.000 |
| Sig. (1-tailed) | Profesi Pelaut Y | . | <.001 |
| | Tik Tok X | .000 | . |
| N | Profesi Pelaut Y | 95 | 95 |
| | Tik Tok X | 95 | 95 |

Figure 4. Correlations

Although the Pearson correlation coefficient (r = 0.936) shows a very strong positive relationship, additional attention was given to the possibility of common method bias due to the use of self-reported

questionnaire data. A Harman's single-factor test was conducted to examine this issue, and the first factor explained less than 50% of the total variance, indicating that common method bias was not dominant in this study. Therefore, the strong correlation can still be interpreted as statistically meaningful, although it should not be directly interpreted as causal influence.

Regression Test and ANOVA

This section displays the test results of the determination coefficient of this test result, determined F count 653.299 with a sig <0.001 and a sig value of < 0.05. TikTok has a significant influence on the interest in the seafarer profession. Before conducting regression analysis, assumption testing was carried out, including normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, and independence of errors. The residual distribution showed normal patterns, no serious heteroscedasticity was identified, and independence assumptions were considered acceptable for regression analysis. Therefore, the regression model was considered appropriate for further interpretation.

ANOVA^a

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|----|-------------|---------|--------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 1289.083 | 1 | 1289.083 | 653.299 | <.001 ^b |
| | Residual | 183.507 | 93 | 1.973 | | |
| | Total | 1472.589 | 94 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Profesi Pelaut Y
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Tik Tok X

Figure 5. ANOVA

The coefficient of determination (R^2) also showed a high explanatory value, indicating that a substantial proportion of variation in interest in the seafarer profession could be explained by TikTok influence. However, this result should still be interpreted carefully because other external variables outside the model may also contribute to career interest formation.

Coefficients^a

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|-------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | .364 | .728 | | .500 | .618 |
| | Tik Tok X | 1.005 | .039 | .936 | 25.560 | <.001 |

a. Dependent Variable: Profesi Pelaut Y

Figure 6. Coefficients

This section displays the regression and test line equations. The regression line equation can be obtained from the unstandardized coefficient column as $Y = 0.364 + 1.005X$. The constant of 0.364 shows that if the influence of TikTok (X) is considered fixed, but influenced by variables outside the model, it is estimated that the interest of the seafarer profession (Y) will increase by 0.364. The regression coefficient of the influence of TikTok of 1,005 means that the influence of TikTok increases by one unit, then the interest of the seafaring profession will increase by 1,005, assuming other variables have a fixed value. To test the coefficients of the lines, refer to the columns t and sig. The test results found a calculated t-value of 25,560 with a sig < 0.001 because the sig value < 0.05, so H_0 was rejected, and H_a was accepted, which means that TikTok has a positive influence on the interest of the seafarer profession.

However, this result should be interpreted as a significant positive association rather than direct causality, because this study uses cross-sectional survey data. It is also possible that respondents who already had an interest in maritime careers were more likely to consume TikTok content related to seafaring. Therefore, TikTok may function both as a reinforcing factor and as an informational medium rather than the sole cause of career interest formation.

Qualitative Analysis Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R)

We pay attention to how humans will react to certain stimuli within the online domain. Understanding the S-O-R paradigm will provide insight into how humans will respond to signals from within the surrounding social environment (Wu et al., 2021). The theory comes from psychology and communication, and is used to understand how an external stimulus can affect a person's behavioral response through internal processes. Based on the stimulus-organism-response (SIR) framework, a structural model was created that links exposure to online information sources, TikTok (environmental stimuli), with behavioral responses of TikTok influencers and interest in the seafaring profession (Laato et al., 2020). In this study, TikTok videos function as the stimulus because they provide repeated visual exposure regarding life on board, career opportunities, and professional identity. The organism refers to users' internal responses such as curiosity, admiration, emotional engagement, and perception changes toward the seafarer profession. The response is reflected in increased interest, motivation, and the intention to explore maritime careers further. Thus, S-O-R is not only descriptive but explains the psychological process through which TikTok content influences professional interest.

Table 1. S-O-R

| Component | The meaning enshrined in the context of TikTok and the seafarer profession |
|-----------|---|
| Stimulus | The content of the TikTok video is educational, dramatic, encouraging, and looks at the conditions of life on the ship. |
| Organism | Users from TikTok: students of Merchant Marine schools and people who choose a career in marine transportation. |
| Response | An increase in interest, curiosity, or a decision to explore the seafaring profession |

In the process, TikTok content results in emotional or cognitive reactions (for example: admiration, curiosity), thus influencing perception and shaping or increasing interest in the seafarer profession.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT-2)

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT-2) is a development of UTAUT that further expands understanding of the factors that affect technology adoption by individuals. In UTAUT-2, there are several independent variables such as performance expectancy (PE), effort expectancy (EE), social influence (SI), facilitating conditions (FC), hedonic motivation (HM), price value (PV), and habit (Zhu et al., 2023). Moreover, with UTAUT-2, it results in substantial increases in the variance explained in behavioral intention and technology use (Chang, 2012). In this study, UTAUT-2 helps explain why respondents actively use TikTok as a medium for career exploration. Performance expectancy appears when users believe TikTok provides useful information about maritime careers. Social influence emerges from encouragement by friends, influencers, and maritime communities. Hedonic motivation is reflected in the enjoyable and entertaining experience of watching ship-related content. Habit also becomes important because repeated exposure to maritime content gradually shapes stronger career interest. Therefore, UTAUT-2 complements S-O-R by explaining not only psychological response, but also the behavioral intention behind technology use.

Table 3. UATUT-2

| UTAUT 2 Construct | Its application in research related to TikTok & the seafarer profession |
|-------------------------|--|
| Performance Expectancy | Impressions on TikTok are a source of information and inspiration for those who watch. |
| Effort Expectancy | It is easy to enter the digital world and learn about shipping. |
| Social Influence | There is enthusiasm and encouragement from friends, seafaring influencers, and the TikTok community. |
| Facilitating Conditions | Support for the convenience of devices (HP, internet) in watching TikTok content |
| Hedonic Motivation | There is excitement and entertainment from watching content about ships and related topics. |
| Price Value | Free and easily accessible content allows us to explore the careers and professions of seafarers. |
| Habbit | Watching TikTok shows can lead to interest in the seafarer profession. |

These two theories complement each other: S-O-R highlights the psychological-responsive aspect, while UTAUT-2 focuses more on technology adoption and social-behavioral factors.

Open, Axial, and Selective Coding of Interview Transcripts

Open Coding

This process identifies important pieces of information from the transcript.

Table 4. Open Coding

| Respondent Quotes | Initial Code |
|--|---|
| "I often watch content about ships on TikTok, so I started to be interested in becoming a sailor." | Interest arises from TikTok content. |
| "At first, I thought working at sea was scary, but after seeing the sailor vlogs, I became curious." | Perception of the profession changes through content. |
| "Lots of funny and fun sailor videos, look fun." | Maritime content as entertainment |
| "My friend posted an activity on the board ship, so I wanted to join." | Social influence of TikTok users |
| "If there is a maritime training that goes viral, it makes me want to try it." | Viral content drives action. |

In addition to these representative quotes, repeated statements from other interview participants also showed similar patterns regarding emotional attraction, curiosity, and social encouragement. The coding process continued until thematic saturation was reached, where no new significant themes emerged from additional interviews. This strengthened the consistency of qualitative findings.

Axial Coding

Group open codes into categories and subcategories based on cause-and-effect relationships.

Table 5. Axial Coding

| Category | Subcategories | Explanation |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Content Influence | Educational, Entertainment, Visual, Emotional | TikTok content affects the understanding and perception of the seafarer profession. |
| Changes in Perception | Fear → Curiosity | Video content can change the view of the seafarer profession |
| Social Encouragement | Friends, Influencers, Trends, | Social factors from other users drive career interest |
| Action Motivation | Interested Searching Information → for | Content triggers exploratory actions against maritime careers |

The axial coding process shows that career interest does not emerge directly from TikTok exposure, but through gradual perception changes. Educational and visual content first reduces fear and uncertainty, followed by curiosity and motivation to seek more information. This process supports the S-O-R theoretical explanation where internal psychological response becomes the mediator between stimulus and behavioral response.

Selective Coding

Finding the core narrative or core category that is the common thread of the research. Core Category:

"TikTok as a medium of transformational influence on the perception and interest of the younger generation in the seafarer profession."

Narrative explanation: TikTok is not just an entertainment platform, but a means that contributes to shaping the perceptions and interests of the younger generation in the maritime profession. Visual, social, and emotional content is changing traditional paradigms and forming new motivations to choose a career path at sea. The term "transformational influence" in this study does not imply direct causal change, but refers to the gradual shift in perception reported by respondents before and after repeated exposure to maritime content. Respondents who initially perceived seafaring as dangerous and unattractive reported increased curiosity and openness after watching TikTok videos. This indicates perceptual transformation rather than direct behavioral conversion.

Categories of motivational themes, obstacles, and visual perception on videos.

Theme Category: Motivation

The motivation theme shows that TikTok content does not only provide information, but also creates emotional engagement through visual attractiveness and symbolic professional identity. Educational content increases cognitive interest, while aesthetic and inspirational content strengthens emotional attachment. This combination makes the seafarer profession appear more accessible and desirable to young audiences. The presence of maritime influencers also functions as a role model effect, where viewers imagine themselves following a similar career path.

Table 6. Motivasi

| Subtopic | Information | Representative Quotes |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Inspiration from educational content | Video tutorials or technical explanations about boats encourage curiosity | "Look at the explanation of the navigation system, it is cool." |
| Role model/seafarer influencer | Seafarer figures who are active on TikTok inspire others to follow in their footsteps. | "The captain often shares tips, so he is motivated." |
| The aesthetics of life at sea | Beautiful images of the sea, sunrise, and ships that attract emotional attention | "The scenery is amazing, and I became interested in becoming a seafarer." |

Theme Category: Obstacles

Although TikTok increases interest, significant obstacles remain in the decision-making process. Fear of occupational risk and limited family support are the strongest barriers found in interviews. In addition, respondents recognized that TikTok often presents only attractive aspects of the profession without fully showing physical demands, long separation from family, and psychological pressures. This creates uncertainty and may reduce the transition from interest into actual career decisions.

Table 2. Hambatan

| Subtopic | Information | Representative Quotes |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Fear of risk | Content that shows storms, accidents, or hard work causes anxiety | "See the video of the storm in the middle of the sea, I am scared." |
| Low family support | Some respondents said that their families were not supportive because of the stereotype of seafarers. | "My parents said working at sea was dangerous." |
| Incomplete information | TikTok content is considered to have not explained the entire reality of the profession. | "It just looks exciting in the video; I do not know how original it is." |

Theme Category: Visual Perception

Visual perception plays a dominant role in shaping professional imagination. Cinematic editing, sea landscapes, teamwork, and adventure narratives create a glamorous and idealized image of the seafarer profession. However, this visual dominance may also create unrealistic expectations because difficult working conditions are underrepresented. This finding is important because perception formed through visual media can strongly influence career aspiration, especially among younger audiences with limited direct maritime exposure.

Table 8. Visual Perception

| Subtopic | Information | Representative Quotes |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Attractive visuals | The profession appears exciting because of cinematic editing and scenery | "The videos make life at sea look exciting." |
| Idealized professional image | TikTok creates a glamorous and adventurous impression | "It looks like a prestigious and adventurous career." |
| Limited representation of difficulty | Hardship and routine workload are rarely shown | "Most videos only show the good side of working at sea." |

Data triangulation Triangulation Scheme Method

The triangulation process was conducted to strengthen research validity by comparing findings from three different data sources: questionnaires, interviews, and TikTok content analysis. This method helps ensure that the findings are not based on a single source of evidence but are supported through convergence across quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire provided measurable patterns of TikTok usage and professional interest, interviews provided deeper personal narratives and motivations, while content analysis examined how the profession was visually represented on TikTok

Table 9. Triangulation Method

| Data Source | Information Focus | Convergence of Findings |
|------------------|--|---|
| Questionnaire | Frequency of use of TikTok, type of content consumed, and level of professional interest | The high frequency of maritime content consumption is directly proportional to the interest in becoming a seafarer. |
| Interview | Individual narratives of motivations, obstacles, and visual perception | Video content forms a positive perception, but barriers such as fear persist. |
| Content Analysis | Themes, visualizations, and messages conveyed in sailor videos | The majority of the content is dramatic and positive, but lacks real challenges. |

The findings show strong convergence in the motivational aspect, where all three methods indicate that educational and inspirational maritime content contributes positively to interest in the seafarer profession. However, triangulation also reveals an important inconsistency regarding professional obstacles. Interviews and questionnaires reveal concerns about occupational risk, family disapproval, and uncertainty regarding working conditions, while TikTok videos rarely present these challenges explicitly. This contradiction indicates that TikTok tends to construct an idealized representation of the profession rather than a fully realistic one.

Triangulation Results Per Theme Motivation

This consistency indicates that TikTok functions not only as entertainment media but also as a career awareness platform. Repeated exposure to positive professional narratives strengthens curiosity and creates emotional attachment to maritime careers. The combination of visual attractiveness and professional storytelling increases the accessibility of the seafarer profession to younger audiences who may previously have had limited knowledge about maritime work.

Table 10. Motivation

| Result | Statement |
|---------------|---|
| Questionnaire | Respondents stated that educational and inspirational content encourages interest. |
| Interview | Motivational narratives emerge from influencers and visualizations of life at sea. |
| Video Content | Many feature the romantic side of the seafarer's profession (scenery, solidarity, adventure). |

High consistency: all methods show TikTok content has a positive motivational impact.

Obstacles

This medium consistency is a significant finding rather than a weakness. It shows that while TikTok successfully builds interest, it may also create incomplete professional expectations. The absence of realistic portrayals of fatigue, isolation, and work pressure can lead to idealized perceptions among viewers. This suggests the need for more balanced maritime communication strategies that include both opportunities and professional realities.

Table 3. Obstacles

| Result | Statement |
|---------------|---|
| Questionnaire | Some respondents cited fear and lack of support. |
| Interview | There are concerns about risk, as well as social/family pressures. |
| Video Content | Lack of risk representation means that challenges are rarely displayed. |

Medium consistency: interviews and questionnaires reveal barriers, but video content does not show many of these aspects.

Visual Perception

Visual dominance becomes one of the strongest mechanisms influencing career perception. Attractive editing, ocean scenery, teamwork, and adventure narratives create symbolic prestige around the seafarer profession. However, this also creates a gap between representation and occupational reality. The profession may appear easier and more glamorous than it actually is, which can influence expectations and decision-making among prospective seafarers.

Table 4. Visual Perception

| Result | Statement |
|---------------|--|
| Questionnaire | Having attractive visuals makes the seafarer profession look fun. |
| Interview | Content that uses cinematic editing so that it gives a glamorous and ideal impression. |
| Video Content | It has a dominant aesthetic, a positive, good narrative, and a small quantity of the reality of hard work. |

High consistency: visualization on TikTok reinforces idealistic perceptions of seafarer's profession.

Discussion

Information provided through TikTok social media tends to display interesting parts and lack detail, so further thought and study are needed. The study also concluded that the increase in the use of social media was offset by the increase in cyber-hate (Anwar, 2017). In the utilization of social media, it can be revealed that people who received negative feedback from their social media posts were more susceptible to emotional distress (Beyari, 2023). With the increasing amount of information available on social media, it is undeniable that many hoaxes or fake news have fooled social media users who are less critical in receiving information on social media (Arafah & Hasyim, 2023). Concerns have also been raised about the potential role of social media use in adolescent internalization and well-being issues, and recent research has also shown the relevance of differentiating these (Luijten et al., 2022). However, in the context of this study, these findings should be interpreted specifically in relation to how TikTok content shapes perceptions of the seafarer profession, rather than general social media effects.

Not all social media users are active in watching videos on the TikTok app, but it may be more frequent on social media platforms other than TikTok, such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Individual perceptions and social stimuli can also play a key role in how individuals assess their social media use. The results of this study indicate that TikTok usage is associated with increased interest in the seafarer profession; however, this relationship should be understood as a significant correlation rather than a direct causal effect. It is possible that individuals who already have an initial interest in maritime careers are more likely to seek and consume TikTok content related to seafaring. Therefore, TikTok may act as a reinforcing and amplifying medium rather than the primary cause of career interest formation.

The high interest of viewers in TikTok video content on activities on board ships and stories that inspire sailors shows that TikTok can play a role as an educational medium and elevate seafarers' careers. It is in line with the theory of Uses and Gratifications, which states that media users actively seek out content according to their psychological needs and social status (Karunia H et al., 2021). Social Media, in this case, refers to websites, blogs, chats, or computer programs, i.e., any form of electronic communication with a content-based basis that allows users to share information and expose ideas (Muftah, 2024). This finding supports the quantitative results, where high exposure to maritime-related TikTok content is associated with higher levels of career interest. The integration of S-O-R and UTAUT-2 frameworks further explains that visual exposure (stimulus) and user motivation (organism), combined with social and technological factors, contribute to behavioral intention (response).

Content with a view of work routines on ships, sea views, and the challenges of the seafarer's profession provides a real picture that was previously difficult for the general public to access. Similar to other industries, the shipping industry has faced many changes over the past half-century that have impacted seafarers' careers, ultimately facilitating a shift to a more flexible work environment (Baum-Talmor & Kitada, 2022a). However, the findings from triangulation indicate that TikTok content tends to emphasize positive and aesthetic aspects of the profession while underrepresenting the actual challenges. This creates an imbalance between representation and reality, which may influence how individuals form expectations about maritime careers.

Before watching TikTok video content, many respondents considered the seafarer profession to be a rough, complex, and less interesting job. After seeing humanistic and inspiring video content, the perception changes significantly. This shift in perception supports the qualitative findings from the S-O-R framework, where repeated exposure to positive stimuli leads to cognitive and emotional changes. However, this transformation should be interpreted as a perceptual shift rather than a guaranteed behavioral outcome. Interest does not always translate into actual career decisions.

Seafarers face a variety of challenges and risks on board that significantly impact their mental health and well-being. There are many factors involved, including long periods away from family, isolation, heavy workload, irregular work hours, and physical risks (Dewan & Godina, 2023). The contrast between these realities and the dominant representation on TikTok highlights a critical gap identified in this study. While TikTok increases awareness and interest, it does not fully communicate the complexity and risks of the profession. This gap is an important contribution of this research, showing that digital media can simultaneously inform and distort professional understanding.

Interviews with seafarers who actively create content show that they not only share personal experiences but also act as ambassadors of the profession. Their interactions with followers open up a space for dialogue about seafarer education, job challenges, and career opportunities. This finding suggests that TikTok has potential as a strategic communication tool for maritime institutions. However, its use should be more structured to ensure balanced information, combining inspirational content with realistic professional insights.

These findings have important implications for maritime education institutions and related agencies. TikTok can be used as a strategic communication channel to increase maritime literacy and attract the interest of the younger generation. Structured and real-experience digital campaigns can be a new approach in promoting the seafarer's profession. At the same time, stakeholders should be cautious about over-reliance on social media narratives, as they may create biased perceptions if not supported by accurate and comprehensive information.

Further research is suggested to explore the long-term impact of TikTok content exposure on career decision-making, as well as to develop a more systematic digital communication strategy to promote the maritime profession. Future studies should also consider longitudinal designs and broader populations to better understand causality and improve generalizability beyond specific training contexts.

Conclusions

In this study, it is shown that TikTok social media has become an important platform associated with increasing public interest in the seafarer profession. TikTok has provided positive information and support related to the seafarer profession and life on board a ship. The increasing number of TikTok views provides a clear indication of success, a clear career path on board a ship, leading to increased public interest in the profession of being a seafarer. Through visual, interactive, and authentic content, TikTok can form positive perceptions and attract attention. Thus, TikTok not only serves as an entertainment medium but also has the potential to function as a means of educational and strategic promotion of the seafarer profession. However, this influence should be understood as a significant association rather than direct proof of effectiveness, since this study does not compare TikTok with other social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, or YouTube. The wise use of this platform can support the efforts of various parties in promoting the image of the seafarer profession to the public. This study only measured the relationship between exposure to the influence of TikTok videos on people's interest in becoming seafarers, without considering other external factors, such as family background, social environment, existing seafaring education conditions, and economic conditions that affect career choices. These factors may act as important threats to validity because career decisions are often influenced by multiple personal and structural conditions beyond social media exposure. Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted carefully and not generalized as the sole influence of TikTok on professional interest. This study also only looked at the influence of TikTok video impressions without considering video impressions from other social media, such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, that have duplicate seafarer professional video content. As a result, the comparative effectiveness of TikTok compared to other digital platforms cannot be fully determined in this research. For maritime education institutions and related stakeholders, this study suggests that TikTok can be used more strategically as a communication and promotional channel by presenting balanced content that includes both career opportunities and the real challenges of working at sea. Maritime schools, training centers, and seafarer influencers are encouraged to create more structured educational content that improves maritime literacy while avoiding overly idealized professional representations. Future research is recommended to

involve broader populations beyond one maritime training center and to apply comparative studies across multiple social media platforms to determine which platform most strongly influences maritime career interest. Longitudinal research is also needed to examine whether initial interest generated by TikTok exposure actually develops into real educational enrollment and long-term career decisions in the maritime sector.

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