

TikTokers Unite: Using TikTok to support social causes



THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA. Sakthi Mekana, 23, is a TikTok influencer and social media advocate for bullying, mental health and sexual abuse since 2019.

PHOTO: Alexandria Alcid

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More Singaporeans are using TikTok as an increasingly influential platform to drive awareness for social causes such as racism and mental health.

According to mobile app analytics firm Sensor Tower, TikTok saw an estimated 1.04 million new downloads from Singapore between January and July last year.

TikTok influencer Sakthi Mekana, 23, said she uses TikTok to share her personal experiences of racism and has garnered a large following in the past two months.

“I wanted to talk about issues that I’ve gone through growing up in Singapore and what I felt had to be voiced out,” she said.

“I decided to research more about racism, share my experiences with racism and I think that’s how people started to notice such social issues in Singapore just recently.”

With the app being more popular among Generation Z users, TikTok users typically create content that is relatable to this target audience.

Ms Mekana said the majority of her audience are “minorities” and between the age range of 13-30 years old.

Because of this, her content focuses on minority empowerment and spreads the message throughout the Singaporean TikTok community.

“I know that once they’ve watched content of mine, they will definitely talk about it to people around them, and that’s going to create change,” she said.

On the other hand, TikTok videos can also be used to look down on a community than to enlighten users.

Being part of a minority race in Singapore, Republic Polytechnic student Diyanah Amani Binte Ismail, 17, finds some videos on TikTok “disheartening”.

“We are seen as a rowdy group online,” she said.

“I don’t get the stigma behind the Malay race being seen as a lower standard.”

However, videos that use TikTok trends and hashtags create greater public awareness and leave users with a positive social impact.

Ms Diyanah believes TikTok influencers who use trending audio on their videos are more likely to interest Singaporeans.

“I honestly think that’s quite smart because they’re using what’s trending to speak up about social causes and all of the things that’s going on in Singapore,” she said.

“If they know what’s popular and use it to their advantage, then more things can be spoken up about.

“That’s a good thing because you need to know your audience.”

Ms Mekana said her growing popularity has made her more conscious of her opinions as an online public figure.

“With more followers on my social media, I have an increased sense of responsibility in terms of what I say and what I promote,” she said.

Ms Mekana’s videos have also influenced her followers to create similarly empowering content on TikTok.

“They have taken a step themselves and then it makes a ripple effect — now they don’t feel alone and it has helped them cope with what they’re going through,” she said.

“I’ve been able to contribute something to the world and make them feel better about themselves.”