TikTok's Graphical User Interface: What Is It and How Does It Work?

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Introduction

Below, the user will find an in-depth description of what a graphical user interface (GUI) is and how Tiktok applies it to the main interface of their mobile application. A graphical user interface is used in TikTok for the user to interact with the application by touching or pressing buttons. Tiktok is a state-of-the-art social platform where users can view, create, and share videos. It is one of the best video-sharing social platforms available to content creators and viewers. After reading this, the user will understand the main interface and how it works to enhance the user's experience.

Technical Definition

A graphical user interface is a human-computer interaction system that allows humans to interact with the computer by manipulating visual representations of objects or commands. (Issitt, 2018). Without a GUI, users would have great difficulty interacting with computers. A GUI's purpose is simple yet crucial in assisting the application and user to perform its designed function.

Before GUIs, humans had to interact with computers via a command prompt. "At one time, interacting with a personal computer required knowing how to use a command-line interface in which the user typed in instructions--often worded in abstract technical language-- for a computer to execute." (Lee, 2012). Using a command prompt would mean the average user today would struggle to interact with computers. However, GUIs naturally evolved to make computers useable by anyone, not just computer scientists.

TikTok's Graphic User Interface

With the understanding of what a GUI does, it is apparent that TikTok uses one in its application for ease of use. TikTok's GUI has four significant parts, three of which are button-

based and the last which is touchscreen-based. The button-based parts can be broken down into a top menu bar, a side menu bar, and a bottom menu bar. Within each of these major parts are minor components that perform specific functions.

Touchscreen Feature

While the entire application revolves around the touchscreen, this major component's functions are not explicitly laid out like the other parts. The application has two layers to its appearance. The touchscreen and video are laid on the screen, and then the menu bars are overlayed onto the touchscreen feature. The touchscreen feature has the actual TikTok video automatically played when the application is loaded or a new video is selected. It is the touchscreen that allows the user to control the video being played. The hidden functions involve swiping up, swiping down, and pressing the screen.

These three functions are minor parts. Swiping up senses the user's finger movement to move the current video up and away, presenting a new video, and conversely, swiping down moves the previous video back onscreen. Lastly, pressing the screen detects the press and converts the touch into the video to be paused or resumed. They are critical in the functionality of TikTok because they save screen space for the video.

Top Menu Bar

The top menu bar is the primary video search and selection. There are four buttons available. The top menu bar allows the user to find and watch videos where they get the most enjoyment. They have options when searching, which is the main purpose of the four buttons.

The four buttons are Live, Following, For You, and Search. The Live button brings the user to a page to watch current content creators live as they record and stream the video. The Live button is a small television icon with the words placed in the icon. The Following button takes the user to a page that shows them videos of content creators they previously enjoyed

and now follow to see more videos as they post them to the application. The For You button is the default page that shows the user a random assortment of videos. Both previous buttons are just text-based, meaning they do not have icons associated with them. The last button is the Search button, taking on the appearance of a magnifying glass, which takes what the user is looking for and looks through the database to find the video the user seeks.

Right Menu Bar

The right menu bar is all related to the current video. It displays who the creator is and provides buttons to allow the user to approve of the video, write something about it, share the video, and a few more options.

The right menu bar consists of five minor elements. The creator profile takes the user to who created the video onscreen. The Like button sends approval of the video and displays a count of how many likes were received. The Comment button displays a window that allows the user to say something about the video for everyone to see. It also counts how many comments were made to the video. The Share button gives the option to post the video on various other social platforms for others to watch the video. The last option is the Creator Other Video button, which displays the creator's other videos for the user's choosing.

Bottom Menu Bar

The bottom menu bar is mainly about the user's TikTok account. This has five parts to it, and three serve purposes directly related to the user account. The other two are for navigating the application.

The first button is Home, a navigation button, which serves as the main area of the application. The user watches videos here with the main interface overlayed on top of the video. Following that is Discover, another navigation feature, which has a page to search videos that interest the user and shows trending videos and categories of videos.

The three final buttons are all related to the user. The middle button, which is shown as a plus sign, means create a new video. This allows the user to record a video to post to their account. Inbox, which allows the user to read, send, and reply to messages received from others. The last button is Profile, which contains the user's personal information, including statistics about video performance.

Conclusion

TikTok is a popular video-sharing application that is one of the best. They utilize a GUI to make their application user-friendly and extremely easy to use. After understanding its purpose in the application, the user can use the application to its full potential. With the knowledge of TikTok's GUI, the use can also understand its necessity in enhancing the user experience.

References

1. Issitt, M.L. (2018). Graphical User Interface. *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Science*.
2. Lee, M. (2012). Human-Computer Interaction. *Applied Science*, 981.