

CHAPTER I

1.1 Background of The Study

1.1.1 The rise of the #kaburajadulu campaign

TikTok has taken its part significantly in the participatory digital culture among the young users. They use TikTok to engage with social and political issues through various creative expression. Previous studies present conclusions that TikTok is one of the platforms mostly used by the movement participants, in order to share perspectives through storytelling (Blevins et al., 2019; Li et al., 2021; Vivienne & Burgess, 2012). The platform is dominated by Generation Z (Vogels et al., 2022; Zeng et al., 2021), a demographic with their well-known self-expression in online political participation (Literat et al., 2018). This fact aligns with the theory proposed by Jenkins' (2006) regarding the participatory culture where users contribute in such meaning-making process through creative interactions. The #kaburajadulu hashtag on TikTok that recently went viral, is part of how participatory affordances shape the public discourse. It was initially used as a humorous or sarcastic expression to "escape" from frustrating social realities in Indonesia. Over time, however, the hashtag gained broader traction as users began to attach personal narratives and social commentary, reflecting collective emotional expression in digital spaces (Papacharissi, 2015). Rather than functioning as formal campaign with specific objective, #kaburajadulu was organic, as users employed storytelling and personal relatable struggles, sometimes added with humor, to articulate their dissatisfaction or emotional exhaustion. Some of the creators that are abroad made comparisons of their current living condition with their unpleasant

past experience in Indonesia. This reinforces the symbolics meaning in “kabur” as personal and socio-political expressions. Storytelling can shape participatory dynamic. Through such personal narratives such as expression of frustration to reflections on opportunities abroad, the TikTok users would construct identity and build their emotional resonance with the audience. This aligns with McAdams (2001) argument, that, personal storytelling will contribute to the identity formation and psychological resilience. TikTok creators share their experiences on TikTok, thus they express themselves and also provide relatable narratives that will attract engagement or even critique from wide range of audience.

The #kaburajadulu trend is a manifestation of how TikTok is facilitating the community formation through the shared experience and collective interpretation. The users interact with one another through TikTok features; comments, stitch, duet, and the repeated narrative patterns. All these finally create a sense of recognition and belonging. As Drouin et al. (2020) explained, social media can foster supportive online environment where users can feel validated. In the case of #kaburajadulu, this is manifested through the comment threads where the users express mutual agreement, humor, or even frustration. This is how personal experiences turn into shared socio-cultural reflections.

Furthermore, the “virality” as in TikTok can make the #kaburajadulu to circulate widely. This contributes to such broader cultural discussion. In fact, the trend is not an organized movement, but the widespread visibility that can influence or foster public discourse as it amplified youth perspectives on the societal issues. This connects with the findings by Boulianne’s (2019) that claimed digital

platforms can shape public opinion through repeated exposure to the user-generated political or social commentary.

In today's participatory environment, the audience engagement is important. The users' comments are the primary interaction in the #kaburajadulu trend, and the users were then able to negotiate the meanings as collective; they can share their emotional response and also articulate such socio-political attitudes. Such interactions can be drawn as how the digital public can construct shared interpretation through a discursive exchange.

1.1.2 #Kaburajadulu and the Virality Culture

The concept of virality is popular these days for such an effective message distribution on social media. There are many contemporary campaigns that rely to the speed of reach of platforms to disseminate messages from one user to another. This bypasses the conventional communication channels. The mentioned case of the #kaburajadulu hashtag is an example, a hashtag that gained popularity on TikTok through a variety of creative contents of personal narratives to social critiques.

Initially, #kaburajadulu was more of humorous way for the Indonesian users in expressing to "run away" from everyday pressures and uncomfortable situations of living in Indonesia. It was more of a digital outlet for frustrations related to societal expectations and bureaucratic inefficiencies. This then quickly resonates with young netizens through shared emotional expression in digital spaces (Papacharissi, 2015). At its core, the hashtag reflected the individual responses in such situational stress, and its viral spread signalled broader patterns of the

disappointment of the people. Over time, however, the hashtag got beyond such temporary internet joke. TikTok users began engaging with the trend through duets, stitches, and original videos, and as a result, reshaped it for reflection of their own experiences and social commentaries. Many users compared the life in Indonesia with life outside Indonesia. While others employed satire to critique the governmental policy that are considered controversial (Putri & Hidayat, 2024). Through this process, #kaburajadulu then transformed to and facilitates the digital activism. It evidenced how creativity and relatability can be tool for public discourse.

The viral trending #kaburajadulu is seen as an emotionally resonant content that can make ordinary users to participate in broader conversation and discourse. Among Gen Z who tend to be vocal and expressive on the online platforms, the idea of “escaping” made the hashtag relatable in a different level. And as the users continued to reinterpret the trend, it then expands to beyond the initial comedic tone. Moreover, the TikTok’s algorithm favors emotionally charged content which further amplified the wide reach. Many comments, those that express frustration, such as *“Gue kayaknya gabisa ngeliat masa depan gue dengan cerah dengan pemerintahan yang masih jelek banget ini”*, exhaustion *“Kadang kepikiran mau kabur juga, hidup di Indo bikin capek banget”*, or the ones with uncertainties, all these reveals how the people’s emotions accumulate into such collective sentiment. This eventually has turned a simple trend to a new whole social commentary.

Additionally, the Indonesians that are living abroad took big part in this trend, significantly shaping the movement of the trend. Their contents often

compared various aspect, one of which is the daily life in their host countries; such as access to quality education, healthcare, safety, work-life balance, cleaner environments, and efficient public transportation, contrary with their experiences in Indonesia. Through humorous or even reflective criticism, these narratives framed the “escaping” both as a literal and symbolic action. It emphasized the broader socio-economic aspirations and systemic concerns.

These patterns indicate that the virality of #kaburajadulu is closely intertwined with the circulation of shared sentiments and evaluations among users where it positioned the hashtag as a site where public opinion is articulated through everyday digital interactions. The virality of the #kaburajadulu hashtag on TikTok cannot be separated from the dynamics of public opinion formation in digital spaces. As the hashtag gained visibility, the comment sections became active arenas where users expressed shared emotions, humor, frustration, and social critique regarding perceived social and economic conditions in Indonesia. Through these interactions, users did not merely react to the content but also contributed personal narratives and evaluations that reinforced the hashtag’s meaning within a broader collective discourse.

This circulation of opinions illustrates how virality on TikTok is sustained not only by content dissemination but also by participatory engagement in the form of user-generated comments. The accumulation of similar sentiments and recurring viewpoints within comment threads suggests the emergence of public opinion shaped by emotional resonance and peer interaction, rather than formal deliberation. Such dynamics highlight how viral hashtags function as spaces for

collective expression and social commentary in contemporary digital culture (Papacharissi, 2015).

1.1.3 Framing Audience Engagement in the Digital Age

The ways the audiences interact with the media has been unique in this digital era. The interactive social media platforms can make the audience engagement in the digital age changed to actively participating. Engagement now encompasses activities like remixing, commenting, co-creating, and reinterpreting messages within vibrant online communities, rather than just liking or sharing content. This shift reflects a broader cultural transformation in how media is produced and experienced, where users are not merely audiences but also contributors to meaning-making processes (Jenkins, 2006). Given this, the theory of "participatory culture" becomes essential to comprehending how people engage with social and political campaigns on the internet.

According to research by Highfield and Leaver (2016), users can frame their responses in ways that are consistent with their social realities thanks to digital platforms that facilitate a fluid interplay between individual expression and group discourse. Similar like this, Abidin (2021) investigates how, particularly in youth-driven settings, engagement on platforms such as TikTok entails not only attention but also affect, humor, and performativity. According to these studies, audience engagement should be viewed as complex, relational, and contextual practices that represent larger socio-political dynamics in the digital realm rather than merely as quantitative metrics (likes or views). The campaign allows a wide variety of voices to influence its story thanks to TikTok's features. According to the Understanding

Audience Engagement: A Qualitative Study of User Responses to the #kaburajadulu Campaign on TikTok, users' primary means of actively participating in the campaign is through commenting. They share their firsthand knowledge and interpretations of the campaign. This interaction becomes the evidence of how the users are active on the comment section, rather than through duets or other features, to co-create the meaning of the campaign. Through the text-based interaction that speaks their shared experiences, it is eventually becomes possible for people to reshape their political and social narratives, it mirrors the changing nature from the audience involvement. The Collective Action Theory, in this sense, can explain how such repeated and interconnected individual expressions can form the patterns of coordinated participations, even without any formal organization involved (Olson, 1965). On TikTok, the comments and repeated narratives can make the users to collectively construct the meanings and signal their shared concerns. At the same time, the Public Opinion Theory becomes relevant in this matter. The emotional response, the social judgments reflect such broader sentiments circulating among the Indonesian youth (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). The comment section is sphere where people put and express their reactions, and it reflects the accumulation of agreement or critique, as collective sentiment. Finally, Participatory Culture serves as the last theoretical framework that complements this research to explain how TikTok users actively engage with the #kaburajadulu campaign. This theory highlights how audiences are no longer passive consumers but become active participants who contribute to the creation and circulation of meaning in digital spaces (Henry Jenkins, 2006).

Within the context of TikTok, users express their thoughts and experiences through comments by sharing personal stories, humor, emotional reactions, and interpretations. These forms of participation demonstrate how individuals contribute to a broader cultural conversation surrounding frustration, social realities, and collective experiences. The comment section, therefore, functions as a space where meanings are continuously negotiated and co-created among users (Jenkins, 2006). As explained by Henry Jenkins (2006), participatory culture is characterized by low barriers to expression, strong support for sharing, and informal mentorship among users. In the #kaburajadulu campaign, these characteristics are evident in how users freely voice their opinions and respond to one another, creating an interactive environment that encourages ongoing engagement. Although participation may appear casual and fragmented, the accumulation of user contributions reflects a shared understanding shaped through continuous interaction. This demonstrates how digital platforms like TikTok enable users to collaboratively construct meanings and social narratives, making participatory culture essential in understanding how audience engagement operates within this campaign (Jenkins, 2006; Henry Jenkins et al., 2009). Regarding this, Henry Jenkins (2006) did not focus on a single specific digital platform when developing the concept of participatory culture. Instead, his work was grounded in early digital environments such as blogs, online forums, and fan communities, where users actively contributed to content creation and meaning-making. Therefore, this research extends Jenkins' framework into the context of TikTok as a contemporary

platform, where participatory culture is manifested through features such as comment sections, user interaction, and audience-driven discourse.

1.1.4 Introduction of social media, specifically TiKTok platform

The technological advancement on social media has been deeply embedded in our society. Social media reshaped the people's ways to connect and exchange information. It is marked since the early 2000s, that the social media platforms have grown continuously in popularity, with significant influence found to be towards the adolescents and young adults. Burgess et al. (2017) defined social media as “digital platforms and apps built around the convergence of content sharing, and public communication.”

This development makes social media as a significant channel for the news distribution and public campaigns. As huge amount of young people relies in social media for news, it leads to higher level of news literacy to become a thing. This shift encouraged the rise of media literacy programs aimed at strengthening the young users' abilities to navigate the online information as critical. Swart (2021) in their studies, conducted in-depth interviews with 36 individuals aged 16–22, and revealed that young people had diverse strategies to access and engage with the news. This underlines that news literacy can be shaped by the social context spread on online platforms.

In this matter, TikTok is a relevant platform that is facilitating for content creations and engagement. The reason has to do with the huge world popularity ranking. Since the release in 2016, TikTok has over 2.6 billion downloads and approximately one billion monthly active users as of early 2021 (TikTok Statistics,

2021). According to the Digital News Report in 2023, TikTok alongside with Instagram is among the fastest-growing platforms for news consumption worldwide, and it exceeds the direct access to news websites or applications (Newman et al., 2023).

TikTok's popularity is driven by its features, that promote the participatory and expressive affordances. The users can authentically express themselves through diverse content genres such as lip-syncing, dancing, comedy sketches, storytelling, educational videos, etc. These many forms of expression foster the users' creativity, spontaneity, and a sense of community. The ordinary users are empowered to share their personal stories and everyday experiences, and this contributes to what Burgess (2006) terms as "vernacular creativity", which is a mode of cultural participation that emerges from non-elite social context on digital storytelling.

These participatory features of TikTok become a space for entertainment for the users and has made TikTok as a platform with strong relation to collective expression, social critique, and various engagements. TikTok users engage with the global awareness campaigns and issues as frequently, as well as the political discourse, as they leveraging the platform's algorithm reach. As Lee and Abidin (2023) stated in their study, TikTok becomes a tool for the communities to participate in activism, and it reinforces the role as a platform with significant influence on culture and socials.

1.2 Research Problem

Social media impacts the communication pattern of the society significantly (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This shift affects the personal interaction, and it has

reshaped the strategies used by companies and organizations. These platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, and LinkedIn, are all known to help for wider audience reach and information dissemination done through the online interaction (Kietzmann et al., 2011). As TikTok becomes more popular with its short-form video platform, online campaigns also rose its popularity, and becoming a powerful tool to gain the audience engagement. TikTok's interactive features enable users to actively participate through responses, reactions and discussions in the comment section. However, despite TikTok's popularity, there is still limited research, research examining about the audience engagement with viral TikTok contents particularly regarding perceptions, emotional expressions, and social judgments.

In the context of #kaburajadulu campaign, it presents as a relevant case in examining the ways the Indonesian youth express dissatisfaction and social concerns through the digital interactions. The campaign highlights on the users' way of utilizing the TikTok's comment section to articulate emotions and viewpoints, reflecting broader patterns of engagement within online spaces. Therefore, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of audience engagement in viral social media campaigns by focusing on user interactions and expressions found in the comment section. Referring on this gap, the research comes with the following questions:

1. How do TikTok users express positive and negative sentiments toward the #kaburajadulu campaign in the comment section of a selected TikTok video?

2. What dominant narratives characterize positive sentiments and negative sentiments expressed by TikTok users in response to the #kaburajadulu campaign?
3. How do positive and negative sentiments and narratives combine to shape audience engagement in the comment section of the #kaburajadulu campaign?

1.3 Research Objective

This study seeks to:

- a. To analyze positive and negative sentiments expressed by TikTok users toward the #kaburajadulu campaign through analysis of comments in the selected TikTok video.
- b. To Identify the narratives that characterize positive sentiments and negative sentiments expressed by TikTok users in response to the #kaburajadulu campaign.
- c. To examine how positive and negative sentiments and their narratives combine to shape patterns of audience engagement in the comment section of the #kaburajadulu campaign.

1.4 Research Significance

This research conducted to examine the audience perception and engagement with the #kaburajadulu campaign, seen through the responses of the TikTok users engaged. An analysis of the audience interactions with viral content

will be conducted, thus this research can present theoretical, practical, and social contribution.

1.4.1 Academics Significance

Theoretically, this research will contribute to the digital communication as it aims to address the major social issue notorious among the Indonesian youth. There are feelings of fear, confusion, and many complicated others that will be revealed in navigating the social expectation. The analysis to the #kaburajadulu TikTok campaign towards the user reaction will be done, thus this research can reveal qualitatively and comprehensively on how the digital content can capture the emotional expression, social judgment, and collective sentiment in young people in Indonesia. The finding is expected to enrich the academic discourse on topic of digital culture, audience engagement, youth expression, and affective participation on social media.

1.4.2 Practical

Practically, this research expected to present novel findings regarding the audience engagement with various digital content on TikTok. The study then identifies the patterns of the audience behavior, their emotional reactions and participation in viral content. This is done by examining the user's responses to the #kaburajadulu campaign. This information gathered can guide the other researchers, communication practitioners and to digital strategists in understanding more topics. The topics are such as user engagement dynamics, virality mechanisms, and the ways audiences interact with social and cultural narrative in the digital environments.

1.4.3 Social

Socially, this research will be contributing on how the adolescents and young adults express their feelings and engage with social concerns on digital platforms. Once the response to the #kaburajadulu campaigns are evaluated, the research illustrates the ways viral content when functioning as a reflection of youth sentiment and for social awareness in the Indonesian young people.

The finding is expected to strengthen TikTok's role as a space for emotional expression, for public discussion, and many significant roles on contemporary youth issues of uncertainty and dissatisfaction with the societal condition. This understanding benefits policymakers, educators, and social practitioners in seeking to better connect with young people. Furthermore, the research will add to the broader academic discourse on the digital culture, youth participation, and social media-based activism as it will present the ways online interactions shape lived social realities.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

1.5.1 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm offers a framework of beliefs that shapes how research is conducted and interpreted (Scotland, 2012). One paradigm is the constructivist paradigm, utilized in this research, where constructionists view that every phenomenon is actively created and shared through the human interactions and cultural practice. Nevertheless, this perspective emphasizes the ways individuals actively interpret the meanings, but often criticized for the limited attention to broader social and linguistic contexts where the meaning-making occurs

(Schwandt, 2000). This sense of constructionism is also called as perspectivism (Fay, 1996). According to (Spink, 2004), language is understood as a social practice that produces realities and shapes the human action.

This research employed the constructivist paradigm, the paradigm which believes that reality is created by individuals' interpretations and social interactions. In relations to this, the study investigated the ways the TikTok users interpret the #kaburajadulu campaign, done by analyzing their emotional reactions and evaluative judgments mentioned in the comment sections. The constructivist approach is a fit for this investigation. It has the feature of exploration about different subjective realities shaped by cultural, social, and contextual elements. This research used the qualitative comment analysis method to understand how users interact with and interpret viral content within the comment section, allowing the researcher to identify patterns of sentiment, narratives, and audience engagement.

1.5.2 State of The Art

01. “OkBoomer, Time to Meet the Zoomers”: Studying the Memefication of Intergenerational Politics on TikTok

This research examined the ways and transformations of political content on TikTok. The study put the focus on the intergenerational political discourse between two generations; Boomers and Gen Z. A qualitative content analysis was employed, then the research explored the ways those memes and short videos function as tool in expressing the political views and shaping public discourse. The author stated that TikTok is humor-driven and visual-based memefication, and this

process makes the previously complex political topics become more understandable and relatable to the younger audience. This research is relevant to the current research as it illustrated the ways TikTok encourages the audience participation and political expression through creative formats. This is correlated closely with the way #kaburajadulu uses humor, trends, and memes to articulate the social frustrations among the Indonesian youth (Zeng & Abidin, 2021).

02. Understanding the Popularity and Affordances of TikTok Through User Experiences

This research was to investigate the ways teenagers engage with TikTok's contents and what platform affordances contributed to its widespread popularity. The author employed an anthropological approach; field notes, digital ethnography, screen recordings, and semi-structured interviews with teenagers in the UK. The results revealed that, TikTok fosters emotional expression, identity performance, and a sense of "being seen." The results emphasize that audience participation is affective, and it is driven by the emotional reactions and personalized interactions enabled by the algorithm. This is in line with the present research's interest, as we aim to understand the emotional expressions within #kaburajadulu comments. This reinforces the idea that TikTok is a site of affective participation and meaning-making (Schellewald, 2023).

03. Instagrammatics and Digital Methods: Studying Visual Social Media

The third research is titled 'Instagrammatics and digital methods: studying visual social media, from selfies and GIFs to memes and emoji'. By presenting the idea of "Instagrammatics," this research is aimed to examine at how people interact

with visual social media content on sites like Instagram, including selfies, memes, GIFs, and emojis. This research was examining on how these digital forms create meaning and represent online culture. They used qualitative content analysis of platform-native graphic elements to accomplish this, concentrating on the ways in which users convey humor, identity, and sociopolitical commentary. According to their results, users engage in shared cultural discourses through highly contextual, memetic, and platform-specific expressions through visual content on social media, which serves as a type of vernacular creativity. Though their research focused on visual content, the results of this research support this research's point that TikTok users engage with digital content not only by consuming it, but also by actively analyzing and emotionally responding to it. In the framework of this research, TikTok comments under the #kaburajadulu campaign are a textual extension of the participatory culture defined by Highfield and Leaver. Through emojis, humor, sarcasm, and expressions of emotional or social judgment, users co-construct meaning and reflect broader social feelings, replicating engagement habits seen in visual media. Thus, this shifts the content analysis focus from visual material to comment sections, indicating that audience participation in viral campaigns may be usefully evaluated using textual comments. (Highfield & Leaver, 2016)

04. Youth Collective Political Expression on Social Media: The Role of Affordances and Memetic Dimensions

The fourth research examines how young people collectively expressed their political views during the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election on social media, with a special emphasis on the app musical.ly, which is now a part of TikTok. The

research shows how young people express their political opinions through the platform's features, political hashtags, and memetic elements. In order to comprehend how TikTok users, like those involved in the #kaburajadulu campaign, use the platform's features to creatively and collectively express their political opinions, demonstrating audience participation in social and political discourse. (Literat & Kliger-Vilenchik, 2019)

05. Presence in Digital Spaces: A Phenomenological Concept of Presence in Mediatized Communication

This study aims to understand how “presence” can be established in digital spaces, even when interactions do not occur physically. Using a phenomenological approach, Keller & Kall (2023) draw on Hermann Schmitz's concept of embodied space and Helmuth Plessner's idea of the lived body to explain how the experience of presence can emerge through technology-mediated communication.

Through an analysis of the Linux Kernel Mailing List (LKML), the research shows that asynchronous, text-based interactions can still generate a “social resonance space,” a condition in which individuals feel socially connected and emotionally close even without face-to-face contact. The findings are evidence of the digital space capacity to foster in such sense of presence.

It relates to this current research as the study strengthens that, TikTok comments are functioning as asynchronous communication that can elicit the emotional closeness and it fosters the audience participation. Thus, the concept of such “social resonance space” supports the analysis in how interactions in the #kaburajadulu

comment section can be such a space of public opinion formation as well as and collective engagements (Keller & Kall, 2023).

06. A Qualitative Study of User Responses to Duolingo's TikTok Marketing

This research aimed to explore the ways users respond to Duolingo's TikTok contents, and their emotional connection built with the brand. Some semi-structured interviews with the Duolingo's TikTok followers were conducted, done to gather the users' opinions and reactions to the company's posts.

The results indicate that the participated users were highly engaged with the Duolingo's personality-driven and humorous content. This strengthened their emotional bond with the brand. The company used memes and participated in many trending challenges; thus, the company successfully became more relatable to the younger audience. As a result, the users reported increased brand loyalty and more positive attitudes toward Duolingo.

This study is relevant to this research, as humor, personality, and trend participation are major factors in the #kaburajadulu campaign for driving engagement and fostering the emotional connections. This will be helpful in analyzing the ways TikTok content can influence the audience participation, emotional expression, and collective engagement (Keller & Kall, 2023).

The novelty of this research lies on the audience engagement and emotional reactions to the #kaburajadulu campaign on TikTok. This campaign is a localized movement in the Indonesian context that has not received sufficient attention in the academic research yet. Therefore, we would like to bridge the gap. As opposed to earlier research that had major focus on brand-centred contents or Western political

discourse, this research uses an audience-centred lens to investigate comprehensively on how the users perceive, react to, and interact with a social campaign. The research is expected to provide deeper new information on the intensity of public sentiment. This is done by revealing the emotional depth and complexity within the user comments through the use of sentiment analysis and thematic coding. Additionally, it will also present how asynchronous and text-based interactions can foster the emotional connection.

Previous researchers in their studies have shown that social media, particularly TikTok and Instagram, function beyond entertainments. Rather, it is a platform with intensive young people participation where they express themselves and co-create meaning. The users often link their individual statements, that it will form such chains in audience engagement; for example, statement of “I love this country, but I hate the government in this country” or hashtags such as #kaburajadulu, all these are illustrating how individual reactions all together connect and thus result in social and political meaning. This reflects the participatory culture discussed in many previous studies. Research such as that in ‘OkBoomer, time to meet the Zoomers’ and ‘Youth collective political expression on social media,’ for example, puts sufficient emphasis on how memes and platform features can make the users to voicing out on political and social opinions all together collectively. While the studies on TikTok’s affordances emphasize that, an interaction goes beyond watching or liking content, passively, an interaction involves the emotional engagement and the co-construction in the meanings. Relating all these, the present study was then to investigate qualitatively regarding

these individual comments and hashtags link together as collective in creating chains, the chains of participation that can change the scattered actions into one recognizable movement. Analyzing the public opinion, as seen by the TikTok comments can help to constructing such a concrete way to observe the ways users engage, emotionally and socially. This shows how the individual reactions, whether it is humor or critique, could contribute in the meaning-making as collective and the formation of audience engagement. This turns the viral campaigns like the #kaburajadulu into spaces for both social and political engagement.

However, while many previous research focus on the visual contents or user experiences, a gap in understanding the audience participation as collective action is still there. It is particularly regarding the viral campaigns like the #kaburajadulu campaign. This research employs the Collective Action Theory and aimed to explore how TikTok comments move beyond the individual reactions and collective expression. The users co-construct meaning together with humor and social judgment, and this all becomes evidence that viral campaigns are space for social and political engagement. In this way, the research comes to bring with a new perspective, as it examined such collective action through textual interactions. This underlines that audiences actively participate and create shared meaning that feel interconnected and social. Furthermore, this research also transforms participatory culture theory to better explain these forms of interaction. While Henry Jenkins (2006) defines participatory culture as a system in which users actively create and distribute contents, his framework mainly focuses on media convergence and content creation. This research, on the other hand, expands on Jenkins' idea by

highlighting text-based participation through comment sections, as a form of engagement and meaning-making.

Lastly, this research emphasizes how audience engagement develops through collective textual interaction, in contrast to previous research like Zeng & Abidin (2021), which examine memefication and visual political expression on TikTok, and Schellewald (2023), which focuses on user experience and platform affordances. Rather than conducting content analysis, this research examines how users interpret, negotiate, and create meaning through comments.

1.6 Operationalization of Concepts

This research operationalizes audience engagement through two analytical components identified from user-generated comments on a selected #kaburajadulu related video campaign: (1) the content discussed in the comments and (2) user responses towards the campaign. The video itself serves only as a contextual trigger, while the primary unit of analysis remains the comment section. This approach is consistent with the qualitative comment analysis, which examines user-generated comments as meaningful textual data for understanding interpretation and engagement in digital spaces (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2016; Boberg et al., 2020).

1. Content Discussed in the Comments

Conceptual definition:

Content refers to the main issue, theme, and topic articulated by users in the comment section in response to the #kaburajadulu campaign.

Operational definition:

Content is identified through recurring themes and issues discussed in the comments section such as expressions of social dissatisfaction, emotional exhaustion, comparisons of living conditions inside and outside Indonesia, reflections on migration, nationalism, or the desire to “escape.” These themes are derived solely from textual comment data rather than from analysis of the video itself. This approach is consistent with qualitative comment analysis, on how the use-generated comments were examined as meaningful textual data to understand interpretation and engagement in digital spaces (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2016; Boberg et al., 2020).

2. User Responses

User responses refer to the audience’s reaction that is discussed in the comments. In this research, user responses are operationalized through two dimensions: sentiment and emotional expression.

a. Sentiment Response

Conceptual definition:

Sentiment response refers to how the users evaluate the stances toward the issues and narratives discussed in the comment section.

Operational definition:

Sentiment is identified through supportive or critical comments which include agreement, disagreement, validation, or opposition toward the content discussed by other users or toward the campaign narrative. These responses represent users’ evaluative or judgmental stances toward the discussed issue. This classification is

based on qualitative methods to analyze public opinion and evaluative judgment in online comment spaces (Saldaña, 2016; Boberg et al., 2020).

b. Emotional Expression

Conceptual definition:

Emotional expression refers to affective reactions conveyed by users in the comment section.

Operational definition:

Emotional expressions are identified through verbal and non-verbal cues in comments, including words, phrases, emojis, capitalization, repeated punctuation, and tone indicators. Emotional categories include happiness, sadness, anger, disappointment, envy, and worry. Emotional expressions refer to affective reactions conveyed by users in the comment section. In this research, emotional expressions are identified through verbal and non-verbal cues within comments, including words, phrases, emojis, capitalization, repeated punctuation, and tone indicators. Emotional categories observed in the comments include happiness, sadness, anger, disappointment, envy, and worry. In addition, several comments also reflect emotions such as frustration, sadness, irritation, and exhaustion, which are commonly expressed through Indonesian terms such as “muak,” “sedih,” “kesel,” and “capek.” Comments are categorized under emotional engagement when the primary focus of the statement emphasizes the user’s emotional reaction rather than descriptive information or evaluative judgment. These emotional indicators are used to identify how users communicate their affective responses toward the #kaburajadulu campaign.

These cues are frequently used in qualitative research on digital communication to record affective engagement and emotional intensity (Highfield & Leaver, 2016).

1.7 Research Methodology

1.7.1 Research Type

This research employs qualitative comment analysis, utilizing textual data derived from user-generated comments on TikTok. The dataset consists of audience responses that express emotions, perceptions, and judgmental evaluations related to the #kaburajadulu campaign. As the study emphasizes meaning-making, interpretation, and affective reactions, the data are non-numerical and are analyzed through qualitative coding and thematic categorization.

To collect the data, comments were extracted from one selected TikTok video associated with the #kaburajadulu campaign. This video was intentionally chosen using purposive sampling because it generated the highest number of audience comments and contained extensive text-based discussions rather than simple emotive reactions such as emojis. The data collection process was facilitated through a third-party web-based data extraction tool that operates by accessing TikTok's Application Programming Interface (API), enabling the retrieval and organization of publicly available user-generated comments from TikTok. This method ensured a systematic and efficient retrieval of naturally occurring discussions, providing rich textual data suitable for qualitative analysis and enabling a deeper examination of emotional and judgmental audience responses.

Following data collection, the comments were thematically organized into two analytical dimensions: emotional responses and judgmental stances. Emotional responses were classified into categories such as happiness, sadness, anger, disappointment, envy, and worry, allowing the analysis to identify patterns of meaning across the textual data. Meanwhile, judgmental comments were categorized into positive (supportive) and negative (critical) perspectives toward the campaign's message.

The results of this research are presented through a combination of descriptive tables and narrative interpretations. The descriptive tables include comment classifications, representative comments, and their overall distributions, clearly illustrating patterns and nuances in audience responses. By combining emotional and judgmental dimensions, the analysis offers a more comprehensive understanding of how digital audiences engage with and interpret public communication campaigns on social media. In addition, narrative interpretations are employed to elaborate on key patterns, contrasts, and insights emerging from the audience comments.

1.7.2 Population and Sample

1.7.2.1. Population

The population of this research consists of all user-generated comments appearing under the selected TikTok video containing the #kaburajadulu hashtag. This includes every comment posted by TikTok users on the video during the period when the data were accessible.

1.7.2.2. Sample

The sample consists of comments collected from the selected TikTok video, representing audience reactions relevant to the #kaburajadulu campaign.

1.7.2.3. Sampling Technique

This research employs a purposive sampling technique (also known as intentional sampling) to select the data sources. Purposive sampling was chosen because the research requires specific content that aligns with the theme and objectives of the #kaburajadulu campaign on TikTok. This technique allows the researcher to deliberately select the video that best represent the characteristics of the phenomenon being examined. The selected TikTok video included in this study were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Directly addresses the #kaburajadulu campaign, either by responding to, critiquing, or engaging with the main ideas and discussions surrounding the campaign.
2. Contains clear narrative or argumentative content that communicates opinions, perspectives, or reflections related to the campaign's themes.
3. Generates sustained audience interaction, with comment threads that involve discussion, responses, and opinions between users.

In addition, from the total of 1,347 accessible comments, 500 comments were purposively selected for analysis. This number was chosen to ensure the dataset remains manageable, allowing for systematic coding and in-depth qualitative interpretation. The selection of 500 comments reflects the principle that qualitative research prioritizes depth of analysis over quantity. Therefore, this

sample size was considered sufficient to capture recurring patterns, emotional expressions, and dominant narratives within audience responses. This approach aligns with qualitative research principles, which emphasize data saturation and interpretative depth rather than representativeness (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2016).

1.7.3 Type and Sources of Data

1.7.3.1. Type of Data

This research employs qualitative comment analysis, focusing on audience engagement expressed through user-generated comments on TikTok. The data consist of textual responses that reflect users' emotions, perceptions, and judgmental evaluations toward the #kaburajadulu campaign. Because the research examines meaning-making and affective engagement, the data are non-numerical and are analyzed through qualitative coding and thematic categorization. This approach is supported by Boberg et al. (2020), who demonstrate that user-generated comments serve as valuable qualitative data for examining public reactions, emotional expressions, and evaluative judgments in digital spaces. Their comment analysis on YouTube illustrates how non-numerical textual responses can be systematically analyzed to understand meaning-making processes within online publics.

The object of this research is one selected TikTok video associated with the #kaburajadulu campaign, along with the comments posted in its comment section.

The video was uploaded on 17th February, 2025. At the time of data collection (4th February 2026), the video had received 885.700 views with 70.300

likes, 1.495 comments, 4.693 saves and 3.678 shares. The selected video addresses the public discussion around the #kaburajadulu campaign by responding to public debates on nationalism and migration, particularly within the relation to Indonesian living abroad. Through its content, the video reflects expressions of exhaustion, dissatisfaction, and critical responses toward social and structural conditions in Indonesia, which then eventually stimulates audience discussion in the comment section.

This video was specifically chosen through purposive sampling based on several considerations. First, this video received the most comments compared to other campaign-related content, showing strong audience engagement. Second, the comments include meaningful discussions, personal thoughts, arguments, and emotional reactions instead of just short responses with emojis. Third, the video sparked ongoing interactions among users, with many comments getting replies and creating discussion threads. These features make the video suitable for a detailed qualitative analysis of sentiment, narrative building, and engagement dynamics.

1.7.3.2. Data Sources

All comments were obtained from publicly accessible content on TikTok and consists of user-generated comments posted under the selected TikTok video related to the #kaburajadulu campaign. All comments were collected using a third-party TikTok data extraction tool based on TikTok API, which retrieves available comment data in a structured and organized format. This dataset represents authentic audience reactions within the digital environment and forms the basis for the qualitative analysis conducted in this study.

1.7.4 Measurement Scale

Since this research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, the data are analyzed in the form of textual expressions. Therefore, the measurement scale used in this study is categorical (nominal). Audience comments are classified into predefined conceptual categories based on their content and meaning.

The nominal scale in this research is applied through the categorization of comments into three main analytical dimensions:

1. Perception - Comments reflecting understanding, interpretation, agreement, confusion, or critique of the campaign's message.
2. Emotional Engagement - Comments expressing emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, disappointment, envy, or worry, identified through words, phrases, emojis, and tone indicators.
3. Judgmental Evaluations - Comments presenting value-based evaluations, supportive or critical stances, and argumentative reasoning toward the campaign. Because these categories serve to classify audience reactions without ranking or numerical scoring, the nominal scale is appropriate for capturing the qualitative nature of the data.

1.7.5 Data Collection Method

This research employs a qualitative comment analysis approach to examine audience reactions to the #kaburajadulu campaign on TikTok. The data were collected through user-generated comments on a specific campaign-related video. The goal was to capture naturally occurring discussion within the TikTok comment section. The data source consisted of one TikTok video that used the hashtag

#kaburajadulu and reflected the campaign's message. This video was chosen using intentional sampling based on the following criteria:

1. The video was uploaded by Gerald Vincent, an Indonesian digital content creator who frequently discusses viral social phenomena, including the #kaburajadulu discourse circulating on social media. The specific video is used as a data source as it illustrates how the phenomenon is explained and communicated to online audiences.
2. The video generated the highest number of audience comments compared to other campaign-related content, indicating strong public engagement.
3. The comment section was characterized by extensive text-based discussions, including opinions, reflections, and evaluative responses, rather than being dominated by simple emotive reactions such as emojis.

To extract the comments, the researcher utilized TikTok API, a web-based data collection tool that enables automated retrieval of comment data from TikTok. This tool was selected for its ability to collect large volumes of data in a structured and spreadsheet-compatible format (e.g., Excel), while retaining important metadata such as username, original text, timestamps and engagement metrics like likes on comments. Furthermore, the tool allowed for efficient and systematic data extraction without accessing private user information, thereby aligning with ethical research practices. The data collection process took place on 4th February, 2026. During this period, the selected TikTok video was input into a TikTok API extraction tool, which automatically retrieved the available comments. The extracted comments included a variety of responses, encompassing a variety of

responses ranging from short emotional reactions to longer reflective statements and conversational replies.

Following the extraction, the dataset underwent a manual cleaning and sorting process. This included removing duplicate entries, filtering out irrelevant or off-topic comments, and organizing the remaining comments into initial categories prior to formal coding. The manual separation ensured that only meaningful and contextually relevant comments were retained, allowing for a more accurate and thorough qualitative analysis.

The research strictly adheres to ethical guidelines for digital content analysis. All data was obtained via TikTok's publicly accessible content, without any direct connection or involvement with users. To ensure user anonymity, no personal identifiers such as usernames or profile links were included in the dataset. By focusing solely on public discourse and omitting individual identities, the research maintained ethical standards in handling digital data.

1.7.6 Data Analysis Method

This research employs a qualitative descriptive analysis to gather and interpret audience responses toward the #kaburajadulu campaign. The analysis will identify the patterns of perception, emotional engagement, and judgmental evaluation found in the user-generated comments extracted from TikTok. This analytical approach follows qualitative comment and thematic analysis procedures, which emphasize systematic coding and interpretation of textual data to identify recurring meanings and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2016).

The data analysis process involved several stages:

1. Data Familiarization

The researcher first read all the extracted comments to gain an overall understanding of audience reactions. During this stage, initial impressions, recurring expressions, and potential thematic cues were noted. This step aligns with the familiarization phase in qualitative thematic analysis, which emphasizes the researcher's immersion in the dataset prior to formal coding and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2016).

2. Data Cleaning and Organization

Comments that were duplicated, irrelevant, off-topic, or not directly related to the campaign were removed. The remaining comments were organized into preliminary categories based on their content and tone, preparing them for systematic coding.

3. Coding Process

A manual coding technique was applied to classify comments according to the three analytical dimensions established in the conceptual framework (Saldaña, 2016):

- a. Perception (understanding, agreement, confusion, critique)
- b. Emotional Engagement (expressions of happiness, sadness, anger, disappointment, envy, and worry, including emojis and tone indicators)
- c. Judgmental Response (supportive or critical evaluative statements) Each comment was reviewed and assigned to one or more codes based on its textual indicators, keywords, emotional cues, or argumentative structure.

d. Thematic Categorization

After coding, comments were grouped into thematic categories within each dimension. Emotional comments were further categorized based on specific emotion types identified through verbal and non-verbal indicators. Judgmental comments were divided into positive and negative evaluative stances. The purpose of this step is to identify consistent patterns of meaning across the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

e. Interpretation and Presentation

The findings were presented through a descriptive table and narrative explanations. The tables summarize categories, example comments, and frequency counts, while the narrative interpretation explains the underlying patterns, contrasts, and implications of audience engagement with the campaign. This analysis method enables a comprehensive understanding of how TikTok users perceive, emotionally respond to, and evaluate the #kaburajadulu campaign within a digital public sphere, and this presentation approach supports clarity while maintaining interpretative depth in qualitative analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

1.8 Research Limitations

Despite providing meaningful insights into audience engagement with the #kaburajadulu campaign on TikTok, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged:

1. Single Video Focus

This study analyzes comments from only one selected TikTok video related to the #kaburajadulu campaign. While this video was intentionally chosen based on relevance and engagement, which enabled in-depth qualitative analysis, the findings may not fully represent the wider ecosystem of #kaburajadulu content across the platform.

2. Focus on Comments Only (No Visual/Algorithmic Analysis)

The analysis concentrates solely on the comment section. It does not examine the visual content, tone of voice, editing style, or algorithmic factors that may have influenced audience perception and emotional responses. Therefore, the findings reflect user interpretations after seeing the video, not how the video itself shaped those interpretations.

3. Limited Time Frame of Data Collection

Data were collected within a specific period. Audience responses on TikTok can shift rapidly as trends evolve. This snapshot may not capture long-term sentiment or changes in public discourse over time.

4. Potential Bias in Public Commenters

Comments on TikTok are made by users who voluntarily engage. This means the data naturally excludes silent viewers, passive scrollers, or individuals who chose not to comment. As a result, findings reflect active participants rather than the entire audience.

5. Emojis, Slang, and Ambiguity in Interpretation

Because TikTok users often communicate using emojis, sarcasm, Gen Z slang, or ambiguous statements, interpretations may vary. Despite careful coding,

some emotional expressions or judgments may have been subtly encoded or context-dependent.

6. No Demographic Verification of Commenters

The research does not have access to the demographic details (age, gender, location) of commenters. Therefore, assumptions about “Indonesian youth” are based on contextual cues rather than verified identities.

7. Data Access Restrictions from TikTok API

Due to TikTok API's regulations, only 1,347 comments were successfully extracted using the API extraction tool, despite the selected video contains of total 1496 comments at the time of data collection. This limitation occurred due to platform regulations and data access restrictions that prevent the full retrieval of all available comments. As a result, the analysis was conducted by using the available dataset, which might not accurately reflect all of the audience responses shown in the comment section

