

## **Audience Response and Visual Content Interpretation: An Analysis of Reception on the Wiki\_Etika TikTok Account**

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### **Abstract**

TikTok is currently a popular social media platform. This demonstrates the development of technology that can be used as a medium for interaction, information acquisition, and self-expression. The perceptions of each follower are urgent for research, especially in the context of media regulation and human rights protection in the digital age. This relates to @wiki\_etika TikTok content about food reviews, but the way it was delivered invited negative comments that could alter the content's meaning in terms of audience response. Qualitative research methods and reception study analysis based on Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory were used in this study, which helped researchers analyze how visual content messages are interpreted by audience responses. Two techniques were used to collect data: in-depth interviews and documentation. The results of this study demonstrated differences in the participants' understanding of the video. One informant held a dominant hegemonic position, acknowledging, accepting, and fully agreeing with the content; four other informants held a bargained reading, agreeing and accepting the content but with several caveats; and no informants held an oppositional reading, completely rejecting the content. This research also revealed that audiences have varying understandings of commenting ethics, but many are still unaware of the legal consequences of their actions.

*Keywords:* audience, encoding, decoding, social media, TikTok

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## Introduction

Information and entertainment media are now widely available due to technological developments. Social media is a general term for various digital media platforms that allow users to present themselves on personal profiles, connect and communicate with others, and create, share, and comment on digital media content such as text, images, audio, and video (Ariestyani & Ramadhanty, 2022). The term social media is composed of two words: “media” and “social.” “Media” is defined as a communication tool. Meanwhile, “social” is defined as the social reality that each individual carries out actions that contribute to society (Mulawarman & Nurfitri, 2017).

The existence of social media has become a platform for people to carry out all their activities. Many social media are used by people, one of which is TikTok social media. As a new communication medium that is currently widely discussed and used by the public (Claretta et al., 2022). TikTok was first released in China under the name Douyin by Zhang Yi Ming in September 2016. According to findings (Buana & Maharani, 2020), the TikTok application has experienced an increase in popularity (Tinuiti, 2020). As of September 2020, TikTok is available in 154 countries and has 850 million active users per month who spend at least 52 minutes every day accessing the application. Even users under the age of 15 can spend 80 minutes per day accessing the TikTok application.

The emergence of TikTok as a social media platform allows anyone to become a content creator, sharing creativity and information through photos or videos ranging from 15 seconds to 10 minutes. Currently, many content creators share culinary reviews as a means of self-expression, information, or even a way to earn income through social media. Uploaded videos naturally receive comments, both negative and positive, from their audience. Furthermore, TikTok is often used as a culinary reference platform. Those who create reference videos are referred to as content creators. Content creators who enjoy making food review videos are known as food vloggers. Food vloggers' videos often go viral on their For Your Page (FYP), enabling TikTok users to learn about various culinary topics through this platform.

The content creator with the handle @wiki\_etika frequently appears on TikTok's FYP homepage. The owner of the @wiki\_etika account, often called Wiki, is from Surabaya and is known for addressing her audience with the phrase “hello, bro.” Her substantial TikTok following of 278,300 has naturally led to varying perceptions among Wiki's followers. TikTok can serve as a platform for the dissemination of harmful content that can provoke others to commit crimes. One example is online sexual harassment, which takes the form of negative comments about a person's body.

This perception of each follower is the urgency of this research. The urgency of this research lies in the increasing role of TikTok as a digital public space used not only for interaction and information acquisition but also for shaping audience opinions and behavior. The food review content on the @wiki\_etika TikTok account demonstrates that the way visual messages are conveyed can elicit diverse interpretations and responses from audiences, including negative comments that could potentially distort the content's original meaning. This condition is important to study because the audience's awareness of commenting ethics and the legal consequences that can arise from their activities in the digital space is still low, which is directly related to the issue of human rights protection and media regulation. Through a reception study approach with Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory, this research is important for understanding how audiences interpret media content differently, while also providing

academic and practical contributions in strengthening digital literacy, social media ethics, and formulating policies that are more responsive to the dynamics of communication in social media.

From the perspective of social media regulations, this research is relevant to various existing regulations, such as the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE) and the Law on Sexual Violence Crimes (UU TPKS). By analyzing audience comments and responses, this research can provide input for monitoring and law enforcement against harassment on social media.

Every user, whether content creator or audience, has the right to freedom of expression and opinion. Therefore, with the existence of freedom of expression and use of digital media in the current era, every citizen has Human Rights (HAM), namely fundamental, natural, eternal, and God-given rights that must be respected, maintained, and protected. (1) In the digital era, human rights also include Digital Rights. (2) Digital rights are the human rights of every citizen to be able to use and engage in activities on digital media. This is a form of implementation of Article 28 F of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. (3) One form of digital rights is the right to freedom of expression and to express opinions and the right to receive protection and a sense of security from digital violence, such as hacking, doxxing, phishing, and sexual harassment and online gender-based violence.

In practice, the implementation of these rights is often misused and causes problems, one of which is sexual harassment on social media (Fikriyah et al., 2023). In addition to the provisions of the TPKS Law, sexual harassment on social media is also prohibited by the UUIE and its amendments, namely Article 27 paragraph (1) of the ITE Law in conjunction with Article 1 number 1 of Law 19/2016, which states that anyone who distributes and/or transmits and/or conveys indecent electronic information and/or electronic documents with obscene content.

Considering that electronic data in Article 1(1) of Law 19/2016 is one or a collection of electronic data, including writing, sound, images, maps, photographs, electronic data interchange (EDI), email, telegram, telex, facsimile or similar, letters, signs, numbers, codes, symbols that have meaning or can be understood by those who understand them.

Based on the statement above, online sexual harassment, such as inappropriate comments, is interpreted as a violation of good morals. Inappropriate comments are prosecuted under the UUTPKS (Public Relations Law) and UUIE (UUIE) (Fikriyah et al., 2023). Social media is also a platform capable of creating various forms of communication and providing a wide range of information for all levels of society (Buana & Maharani, 2020).

This concern is relevant to research because it demonstrates differences in audience interpretation of visual content, which triggers conflicting responses. Low public awareness of the social and psychological impacts of comments on social media underscores the urgency of strengthening commenting ethics in digital spaces. Furthermore, this research reflects a broader structural issue, namely the influence of gender and social norms on audience interactions with media content. Women appearing on social media are often considered more vulnerable to harassment, thus highlighting inequality and injustice in the digital space.

## Literature Review

This research references several relevant previous studies, including a study entitled “Analysis of Audience Reception of Intercultural Communication Represented in the Film *Bumi Manusia*,” which used descriptive qualitative methods with reception analysis based on Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory through in-depth interviews. The results showed differences in audience interpretation positions: negotiation, opposition, and dominance in each scene representing intercultural communication through dialogue, visuals, and cultural attributes (Amelia et al., 2022). Furthermore, a study titled “Audience Reception of Skincare Review Content on the TikTok Account @drrichardlee” found that skincare review content sparked controversy due to its presentation style, which was perceived as demeaning, but was also understood as a form of education (Savira & Zuhri, 2022). This study revealed variations in audience interpretations, divided into dominant and negotiating positions, with no oppositional positions.

Different from previous research, this study offers significant innovations by focusing on TikTok visual content, particularly culinary content, and highlighting the issue of online sexual harassment that emerged from audience responses. The methodology used is more comprehensive, combining in-depth interviews and comment analysis, thus providing a more holistic understanding of audience responses. Furthermore, this study presents a more detailed categorization of audience meaning, taking into account the background and experiences of informants, to uncover the complexity of the process of interpreting digital content.

## Theoretical Framework

A theoretical basis is a reference or foundation used as a framework for thinking in a study, ensuring its validity is scientifically proven. This study uses audience reception analysis using Stuart Hall's Encoding-Decoding theory and reception theory. Both theories are used in this study, focusing on the text, production, and audience within a context, and each element can be analyzed. According to Stuart Hall's statement, quoted from (Claretta et al., 2022), in the Encoding-Decoding theory, there are three types of meaning transfer between the author and the reader, and how the message is read by both. These three types are:

1. Dominant Hegemonic Position, where the audience fully acknowledges, accepts, and agrees with the message creator's intended meaning without any objection.
2. Negotiated Reading, where the audience is in a position that is aligned with the message they receive, but can also modify it to reflect their individual positions and interests. Therefore, audiences in this type still have certain limitations that prevent them from fully agreeing with the message creator's intended meaning.
3. Oppositional Reading, where the audience disagrees with the message they receive. The audience rejects the meaning conveyed and can then determine their own alternative framework for interpreting the message.

Stuart Hall's Encoding–Decoding Theory is used to understand the media communication process, emphasizing that the meaning of a message is not solely determined by the content creator but also shaped through the audience's interpretation. This theory views the audience as an active subject who assigns meaning to media messages based on their experiences and backgrounds (Dwiputra, 2021). In the context of this research, reception theory is used to analyze how the visual content on the TikTok account @wiki\_etika is interpreted differently by the audience, influenced by contextual factors such as identity, social experience, and individual perception. Through this approach, the research aims to examine the meaning and

audience response to @wiki\_etika is TikTok content as a result of the interaction between the media text and the audience.

### Methodology

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of exploring in depth the phenomenon of audience interpretation of media content through reception analysis. This approach was chosen because it can comprehensively explain social phenomena through in-depth and contextual data collection (Moleong in Savira & Zuhri, 2022). Qualitative research emphasizes understanding meanings and social processes that cannot be explained through statistical or quantification approaches (Murdiyanto, 2020). In this context, the study adopted Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory as an analytical framework to understand how media messages are encoded by creators and interpreted differently by audiences (Afifah & Suwanto, 2019).

Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews and documentation. Interviews were used to gain a deep understanding of audience perceptions and interpretations of TikTok content on the @wiki\_etika account, while documentation served to complement and strengthen the research data through archival searches and audience comments (Savira & Zuhri, 2022). Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, with the criteria being followers of the @wiki\_etika account who were deemed credible in providing information according to the research focus. The research object focused on one video with the highest number of views out of a total of 30 uploaded in June 2024, namely the video dated June 27, 2024. Data analysis was carried out by grouping the audience's interpretation into three reception positions, namely dominant hegemonic, negotiated reading, and oppositional reading, in order to understand the variations in the audience's reception of the visual messages conveyed by the media.

**Table 1**

*Informant Information*

No.	Name	Gender	Background
1.	TA	Female	Housewife
2.	FN	Male	Private Employees
3.	EN	Female	Elementary School Students
4.	FM	Female	Housewife
5.	NC	Male	Entrepreneur

After collecting various data from in-depth interviews with the five informants mentioned above, the informants were gathered from the Wiki Etika audience who follow the account and actively comment on the uploaded content. The researchers then processed the data by analyzing the answers from the informants. The interview transcripts were then reviewed and categorized based on the questions, answers, and responses provided by the informants. The analysis process used qualitative analysis related to the audience's perception of the meaning of the visual content messages from the TikTok account @wiki\_etika.

## Result and Discussion

The encoding-decoding theory proposed by Stuart Hall is relevant in analyzing the TikTok content on the @wiki\_etika account because it explains the non-linear process of meaning formation. In this context, the messages encoded by the creator as culinary reviews and recommendations are not fully perceived as intended. Audiences, as active subjects, engage in a decoding process based on their social backgrounds, experiences, values, and norms, resulting in differing interpretations of the visual content.

The relevance of this theory is evident in the findings of varying audience reception positions, particularly in the dominant-hegemonic and negotiated reading categories. Audiences in the dominant position interpret the content according to the creator's intent, namely as informative and useful culinary information. Meanwhile, audiences in the negotiating position accept the message's substance but criticize aspects of the visual presentation that are deemed inconsistent with norms of politeness and social constructs related to gender. The absence of an oppositional reading position indicates that audiences do not reject the message completely but rather negotiate meaning due to the tension between the media message and their social values.

Encoding–decoding theory provides an appropriate analytical framework for understanding how social media content is interpreted differently and how contextual factors, including gender norms and digital culture, influence audience interpretation. This theory also helps explain the shift in focus from the content's substance to the visual aspects of the creator's personality, which contributes to the rise of negative comments and online sexual harassment in digital spaces.

**Table 2**

*Comment Findings*

No.	Informant Name	Dominant Hegemonic	Negotiated Reading	Oppositional Reading	Additional Information
1.	TA		v		“Sorry in advance, Miss, I myself am not a good person, not a pious person, not a religious expert, but I just want to say to Miss, ‘please don't embarrass your own religion’ by behaving like that Miss, wearing a hijab is already very good, MasyaAllah, but why do you behave like that, Miss, it's the same as exposing your aurat if you can't wear a hijab that covers your chest, it's okay, but please wear ‘modest’ clothes and don't be humiliated...”

2.	FN		v		“Sis, don't keep posting content like this. If papaya is sweet, if it's saggy breasts wobbling, it's disgusting.”
3.	EN		v		“is that a balloon?”
4.	FM	v			“perhaps with her mother's trademark jiggling of her breasts”
5.	NC		v		“You've already mentioned the twin mountains, but you still haven't reflected? Is it really intentional to make things more interesting?”

### **Dominant Hegemonic**

In this theory, an informant can be classified as dominant hegemonic if they fully accept, acknowledge, and agree with the content of the @wiki\_etika video about understanding and interpreting its contents without any negative thoughts. Of the five informants interviewed, only four said they had no problem with the content wiki creates on its TikTok account. The informant, identified as FM, indirectly defended wiki with a comment he posted, “Maybe this is Simbak's trademark,” FM said. This comment was confirmed by an in-depth interview with FM. He also stated that each person likely has their own unique way of packaging and presenting content.

“After all, it all comes back to us, the viewers. If our minds weren't perverted, we wouldn't have such dirty thoughts,” FM said.

In relation to the Sturt Hall encoding-decoding model of reception theory used, informant 4 can be classified as Dominant Hegemonic. This type of behavior occurs because informant 4 accepts, acknowledges, and agrees with the video creator's intended meaning, which is simply to share information about food reviews.

“I'm aware of that comment, and I think it's her characteristic. And I'm actually saddened by the way people are so reckless with their words and indecent comments,” she said.

From what she observed, FM tends to be positive and receptive to the content created by @wiki\_etika. FM is also aware of the laws surrounding social media use. However, without these regulations, FM, as a woman, knows the etiquette of speaking or commenting in public spaces. As she stated, “As a woman, I'm more careful in my comments, especially when it comes to women's intimate parts. Whether there are criminal penalties or not, people should be more prudent and polite in their communication on social media.”

### **Negotiated Reading**

An informant can fall into the negotiated reading category if they receive the message and agree with what is conveyed in the TikTok food review video uploaded by @wiki\_etika. However, there are several things informants need to consider, such as how to convey it

appropriately and politely. After viewing the uploaded content, informants 1, 2, 3, and 5 agreed with the food review, noting that the delivery in the video was good and clear. However, these four informants regretted that Wiki presentation required highlighting her body parts in the opening of the video.

According to an interview with informant 1:

Actually, there's nothing wrong with reviewing food; it's fine. It would be better to cover up anything that stands out. If the market demands that the content requires shaking, that's fine. But as a woman, I recommend wearing clothing that can conceal Rachel and Samantha's figure. The content is good, and the presentation is complete, including location, price, and opening hours. The only downside is the opening.

Informant 1 also stated that she consciously wrote her comment criticizing the perpetrator, @wiki\_etika. She stated:

I was aware of writing the comment, and I believe it was correct, and I had good intentions in criticizing her, rather than using it as mere material for men. As for whether or not I'm aware of the applicable laws, I honestly don't really know or follow them. As long as I haven't been blocked from that social media platform, it's still normal for me.

“The content is good, and the content is informative. But it's embarrassing, especially with her wearing a hijab, which destroys women's dignity. That's clearly disgusting. At least in the digital space, she should be able to maintain her dignity,” said informant 2. She also stated, “I don't really know the rules and sanctions for social media policies. Even if this is a problem, I'll ask again, where are the policies for filtering content that is suitable for broadcast,” said FN.

A different story for informant 3, identified as EN. During an in-depth interview, she felt she had made her comments. However, EN is an elementary school student, and such content isn't displayed on her homepage. EN's comments were limited to what she saw, unaware of the penalties for freedom of expression in public spaces. “The content is informative, but disgusting.” “I didn't know there were rules, I was just messing around and saying what I saw,” said EN, informant 3.

Similarly, informant 5, interviewed, believed the @wiki\_etika account delivered good content, being very informative and comprehensive. However, she regretted having to highlight her body parts. “It's a shame the content is interesting, but it's constantly being pushed to improve so it doesn't become negative content, but it's still being continued,” said NC.

In the interview, NC also stated that she wasn't aware of the law:

I don't really know, but I'm also aware that I'm writing this comment because I'm annoyed by seeing someone seeking fame by highlighting their body parts. And it seems like a lot of people are making nasty comments on their account.

Therefore, based on informants 1, 2, 3, and 5's encoding-decoding theory, these four informants fall into the Negotiated Reading category. This is because they stated they could understand and interpret the content conveyed by @wiki\_etika, but they also considered several factors,

such as the format in which the food review was presented. These issues can influence the interpretation of the content and the audience's response.

The results of the study indicate that the audience of the TikTok account @wiki\_etika has diverse interpretations of the culinary review content analyzed. Based on in-depth interviews with five informants and an analysis of comments on the video uploaded on June 27, 2024, it was found that the audience did not interpret the content uniformly, even though the objects and visual messages consumed were the same. These variations in interpretation are influenced by social background, personal experiences, and the values held by each audience.

Based on a reception analysis using Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding model, informants were classified into three interpretation positions. One informant was in a dominant hegemonic position, fully accepting and agreeing with the message conveyed by the content creator. This informant interpreted the content as an attempt to convey culinary information and considered the delivery style to be the creator's personal characteristic. The other four informants were in a negotiated reading position, accepting the culinary information conveyed but criticizing the visual presentation, which they considered to emphasize body parts and potentially trigger comedy.

### **Oppositional Reading**

Within Stuart Hall's reception theory framework, informants are categorized as having an oppositional reading position if they interpret and interpret media messages in a way that contradicts the creator's intended meaning. In this position, the audience actively rejects the main message and constructs alternative interpretations that contradict the creator's goals. However, based on the results of a thorough review and analysis of the interview data and the informants' responses in this study, no audiences were found to be in this position. All informants essentially still accepted and understood the main message of the food review video content uploaded by the TikTok account @wiki\_etika, although some expressed criticism of certain aspects of the delivery method. This finding indicates that the audience did not totally reject the meaning, but rather still agreed with the substance of the message conveyed by the creator, so the oppositional reading position did not appear in this study.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the analysis, TikTok functions as a digital public space that allows users to express themselves, share information, and build identities. The culinary review content on the TikTok account @wiki\_etika is generally perceived by audiences as informative and useful. However, the audience's focus on the visual aspect of the content delivery has led to a shift in interpretation, leading some audience responses to comments with nuances of sexual harassment. This finding suggests that the negative audience response was not entirely directed at the content's substance, but rather at the visual presentation strategy, which was deemed inconsistent with social norms, while the content's primary meaning remained understandable.

Reception analysis based on Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory reveals variations in audience interpretation, dominated by dominant hegemonic positions and negotiated readings, without finding a complete rejection of meaning (oppositional reading). Audiences in the dominant position accept the content in accordance with the creator's intentions, while audiences in the negotiating position accept the message but criticize the delivery method. This finding confirms that audience interpretation is influenced by social, cultural, and personal

contexts, and highlights the importance of ethical commenting and understanding the legal consequences of social media. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy and more educational and responsive policies are needed to create a digital space that is safe, fair, and protects all users, especially content creators.

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