

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Since its inception, social media has grown rapidly and has changed the way people interact, communicate and share information around the world. However, with the advent of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, social media has evolved into a multifunctional space that covers entertainment, business, education, and emotional areas. Social media offers various advantages, as evidenced by its effectiveness in knowledge sharing (Fayyaz et al., 2020) with a wider audience reach and can open up opportunities for dialog and interaction for its users (Ghalavand et al., 2022). As social media evolves, content shared across various platforms becomes more important, as it can effectively convey messages to a wider audience, while encouraging deeper interaction and engagement.

Due to the growing popularity of social media around the world, enterprise social networks are growing at a rapid pace, to build online engagement among their customers (Hallock, 2019). In this case, distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire and relate to a well-defined and understood target audience, to create customer-brand engagement (Lou & Xie, 2021). To achieve this goal, an approach is needed that not only prioritizes the distribution of high-quality content, but also ensures that the content allows the audience to interact and actively participate, the content must be interesting, interactive, and an important aspect of the content developed is to allow customers to interact and provide feedback through various channels in the content marketing funnel (Lopes & Casais, 2022) which includes various content formats, such as videos, e-newsletters, ezines, podcasts, white papers, infographics, webinars, and virtual conferences (Fox et al., 2019).

According to Dolan et al (2019) in the study “Social media engagement behavior”, explains how certain types of social media content (grouped into rational messages vs. emotional messages) can influence both passive and active online engagement behavior, where rational tends to encourage more active engagement when users make a conscious decision to share information or comment, while emotional content does not require direct involvement where the audience only reads or observes (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021). Therefore, understanding the difference between rational and emotional content is crucial, especially because of how emotional content encourages more active participation and helps build

stronger and more sustainable relationships with audiences in this information-heavy digital age.

The importance of emotional content in advertising is increasingly emphasized, proposing that emotions can substantially impact the decision-making process. In the realm of social media, emotional appeals have the power to enhance ad recall and foster favorable brand connections, resulting in sustained customer engagement (Tabrizi et al., 2024). Emotional impact is particularly significant in the digital environment, where consumers are constantly inundated with information. So brands need to differentiate themselves by building emotional relationships with the brand's target audience. According to (Zhang et al., 2020), this suggests that emotional content can elicit more intense responses and generate more significant engagement, such as more sharing and commenting, which increases the reach to the audience. Thus, the application of emotional appeals in marketing content becomes highly relevant, as it can not only increase emotional appeal, but also strengthen audience engagement more profoundly and memorably.

Emotional stimuli are commonly used in persuasive communication (Hamelin et al., 2020). Effective emotional stimuli can influence audience perception and create an immersive experience. Emotional appeals perform better than informational appeals by generating more positive attitudes and reactions Quach et al (2021) as demonstrated by the efficacy of emotional appeals in fostering positive perceptions of advertisements. The use of emotional appeals in advertising can increase the likelihood of sharing on social media as it activates arousal that can simulate various actions, such as responses to offers and sharing information online (Liu et al., 2017). Audiences are may be actively engaged when they are emotionally connected to the content, this can be seen in interactions such as sharing, commenting and liking content.

In line with emotional appeal, according to Kitchen et al (2014) through his research on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) which has the assumption that changes in individual attitudes can be caused by two routes of influence, namely the central route and the peripheral route. The central route requires a person to think critically about arguments related to the issue, while the peripheral route often relies on superficial information without giving enough thought and cognitive effort (Li et al., 2021). In other words, the peripheral route is particularly relevant to emotional appeals, where emotional or aesthetic cues influence audiences without deeply processing information. For example, an ad with touching music or an inspiring story can stir the audience's emotions and motivate them to engage, even if they do not fully pay attention to the details of the message.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) is one of the relevant communication theories in understanding audience behavior in the digital era, especially in the context of social media. Audiences are more likely to process messages through peripheral rather than central pathways in a digital landscape filled with a flood of information and fast-paced content. Research conducted by Segev & Fernandes (2023) shows that peripheral cues are more dominantly used in viral advertising, which emphasizes that visual or emotional appeals are more effective in attracting the attention of social media users. This is in line (Indah & Maulida, 2017) findings that peripheral cues in advertising make consumers focus more on messengers such as celebrities or entertainment elements such as music, rather than on the core product message itself. Therefore, understanding ELM is important to create a digital communication plan that can optimize engagement through attractive peripheral elements. To deepen our understanding of how audiences tend to process messages through peripheral pathways, it is important to look at how individual characteristics influence how they receive and respond to information in digital media.

Individuals who process information through the central route have a high level of elaboration and are motivated to investigate the content of the information they receive. Meanwhile, individuals who have a low level of elaboration and lack the motivation to analyze in depth tend to process information through the peripheral route (Nitisara et al., 2024). Individuals who use the peripheral route often rely on the credibility of the source (Chen et al., 2022). When people use the peripheral route to process information, they tend to be more influenced by emotional appeals, rather than rational arguments. In these situations, emotional appeals serve as signals that can increase the attractiveness of the message and trigger a positive response from the audience. For example, an ad that features a touching story or strong visuals can create an emotional bond and make the audience more likely to engage with the content, even if the audience does not conduct an in-depth evaluation of the information conveyed.

Content that emphasizes emotional elements is perfect for the TikTok platform, as its short video format is able to convey feelings quickly and effectively, thus encouraging interaction and sharing among users. TikTok's success is largely thanks to its highly effective algorithm, which provides personalized content according to users' needs. In addition, the app offers an extensive library of songs for users to incorporate into their short videos, thus increasing appeal and engagement (Hu, 2024). The findings of Chawla & Mehrotra (2021) suggest that emotionally charged content has the potential to spread widely. In addition, TikTok users in Indonesia have increased rapidly. According to data published by Radio Republik

Indonesia (RRI), Indonesia has 157 million users worldwide, making it the country with the most users in the world.

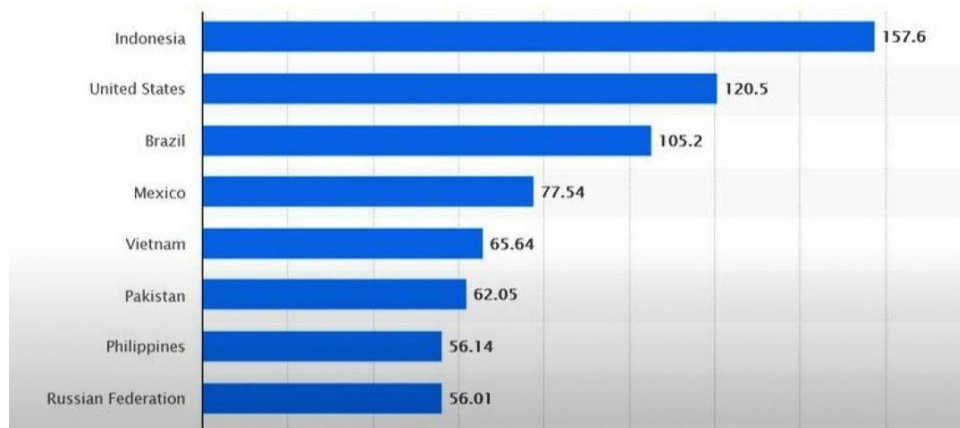


Figure 1.1 Countries with the number of Tiktok Social Media Users

Source: Official website <https://www.rri.co.id/ipitek/1053639/indonesia-jadi-negara-pengguna-tiktok-terbanyak>

This report puts Indonesia at the top of the list of countries with the most TikTok users, surpassing several other major countries. This significant increase is considered to be due to the growing digital trend in Indonesia, especially among the younger generation (RRI, 2024).

Thus, the increase in the number of TikTok users in Indonesia creates a significant opportunity for brands to utilize this platform in marketing tools, including Rucas who has successfully utilized this trend to attract public attention through emotionally touching content. This approach is relevant to the approach used by Rucas into their campaign that shared via conten, where emotional appeal is a key component in its makeover content. Because Rucas' approach emphasizes humanist and emotional values, the researcher chose Rucas as the object of research compared to other local brands. As a further illustration of Rucas' success in utilizing the platform for promotion, the following table shows a comparison of the number of followers and likes of several local brands.

Followers and Likes of Local Brands

NO	Local Brands	Followers	Likes
1	3Second	347 K	858 K
2	Aero Street	2.7 M	30.8 M
3	Eiger Adventure	509 K	1,2 M
4	Erigo	2,7 M	58.5 M
5	Green Light	147.4 K	1.7 M
6	Karung Jantan	2 M	25.2 M
7	Rucas	1,2 M	67 M

Figure 1.2 Followership and Favorability of Local Brands

With high engagement, Rucas' TikTok account has reached 66 million likes, more than any other brand. In addition, Rucas' unique approach of using an unconventional or parking attendant-like model, as well as its significant social impact, makes it an interesting example to examine how emotional appeals can build engagement between audiences and brands.

Rucas continues to grow and positively impact the fashion industry by using emotional appeals to create deeper bonds with audiences and interactions formed between audiences and brands through Rucas' emotional content. The phenomenon of Rucas shows how emotional appeals can create a strong bond with audiences, especially on TikTok. Rucas successfully introduced a new concept in the fashion world, namely by featuring unconventional models where they featured individuals from unusual backgrounds as main figures such as street workers, parking attendants, punks or individuals from low economic classes as “models” to promote their fashion products. This method captures the audience's attention, encouraging them to interact and share their experiences through content that focuses on diversity and change.

The emotional content created by Rucas has a strong appeal because it can touch the human side of the audience through stories that inspire and emphasize the values of diversity and inclusion. Rucas is able to create heartfelt visual stories by featuring unconventional models from various sources, such as street workers who are transformed into fashion models.



Figure 1.3 Rucas Invites Low Income People to Become Brand Ambassadors

Source: TikTok Rucas.Official on 02/27/2025

This kind of content focuses not only on products, but also messages about human potential and diversity. With this approach, Rucas manages to build a stronger emotional

connection with its audience and utilizes TikTok as a platform to spread this message in a more effective way and opens up great possibilities to increase engagement.

Through the emotional appeal approach, Rucas creates an evocative narrative by showcasing the struggles and life changes of individuals who are typically underrepresented in the fashion industry. The content often presents a person's journey from humble beginnings to appreciation as part of their campaigns, which creates a sense of empathy and inspiration among the audience. In addition, the use of authentic visuals and relatable storytelling makes the message feel more personal and relatable to the audience's real-life experiences.

More than just showcasing unconventional models, Rucas also demonstrates its commitment to humanity by providing tangible support for the individuals involved in its content. In some cases, Rucas even assists with the treatment of aspiring models with health issues, ensuring that they not only get the opportunity to perform but also have a better life. This further strengthens the emotional appeal of their content, making audiences not only appreciate the visuals but also feel emotionally connected to the struggles and transformations. This encourages more positive interactions, such as supportive comments and increased engagement through sharing and dissemination of content.



Figure 1.4 Rucas Helps with The Treatment of His Aspiring Model

Source: TikTok Rucas.Official on 10/05/2025

The content presented by Rucas, especially those featuring underprivileged people as models, is not a form of exploitation, but rather part of an emotional communication strategy that is loaded with humanitarian and empowerment values. In its content, Rucas showcases the

positive transformation of marginalized individuals, demonstrating that everyone has the potential to appear confident and valued, regardless of their socio-economic background. According to Campbell et al. (2023) which emphasize that the representation of vulnerable groups in advertising, such as disabilities or other marginalized groups, can have a positive impact when done through credible storytelling and based on strengths, not pity. They explained that when advertising shows individuals as subjects with humanitarian and empowerment values, it not only expands social representation, but also strengthens audience emotional engagement without exploitation. Furthermore, they state that such representations change society's perception of underrepresented groups, making them part of an aspirational and inspirational space, rather than objects of sympathy.

This approach is not meant to exploit their conditions for profit, but rather to provide a space for representation and elevate their dignity through digital platforms.

This approach directly influences the audience's engagement behavior, such as liking, commenting, and even sharing user-generated content. Rucas utilizes strong emotional elements to capture the audience's attention and encourage them to actively participate-both through direct interaction on the platform and by building a deeper emotional bond with the brand. In addition, the findings of Shahbaznezhad et al (2021) in the study “The role of social media content format and platform in users' engagement behavior” show that if emotional content is presented in video format it stimulates an increase in active engagement (comments). Thus, it can be concluded that emotional content may be best suited for higher media richness formats (video), as it can convey a greater level of emotional stimuli such as music and movement compared to photo posts.

Rucas' emotional appeal approach has proven effective in increasing audience engagement behavior. Content that touches on the emotional side tends to get more interactions compared to regular content. Data shows that videos featuring inspirational stories or social transformations of individuals featured by Rucas often achieve a much higher number of likes, comments and shares compared to more generic product promotional content. such as one of the Rucas contents in figure 1.5 which invites non-conventional models to be made over.



Figure 1.5 Inspirational Rucas Content with Non-Conventional Models

Source: TikTok Rucas.Official on 01/26/2024

In contrast, Rucas content that uses conventional models in promotions tends to have lower emotional appeal compared to content featuring non-conventional models. Conventional models usually represent the standard of beauty and style prevalent in the fashion world, making the message feel generic and less emotionally evocative. In contrast, when Rucas features individuals from unconventional backgrounds-such as field workers or low-income communities-the content becomes more moving because it contains a strong element of life change and human value. This approach creates a deeper emotional bond with the audience, which in turn encourages active engagement such as commenting, liking and sharing the content. As such, promotional strategies through unconventional models have proven to be more successful in building authentic emotional connections compared to the use of standard fashion industry models, as shown in figure 1.6.



Figure 1.6 Rucas Content With Conventional Model

Source: TikTok Rucas.Official on 10/31/2025

This is due to the emotional appeal that triggers audiences to actively engage, both by expressing empathy in the comments section and by sharing the content with others. In addition, audience responses also show that they feel more compelled to support brands that have social values and care for the community. With this high engagement, Rucas not only succeeded in building audience loyalty, but also organically expanded the reach and impact of their marketing campaigns.

Engagement behavior is “brand-related cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activities that are positively rated by customers during or related to the consumer/brand interaction in focus” (Hollebeek et al., 2014). A survey-based empirical study with 203 respondents conducted Busalim et al (2021) shows that customer engagement behavior is largely determined by social interactions, technological factors (interactivity and system quality), and motivational factors (hedonic and utilitarian motivations and perceived value). Engagement behavior, as explained by (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021), includes customers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activities towards brands, which can be either passive or active engagement. Passive engagement involves actions such as reading content and giving likes, while active engagement includes activities such as leaving comments or creating new brand-related content. Furthermore, engagement behavior can be categorized into three main activities: consuming, contributing, and creating. Where consuming involves passive activities, contributing and creating involve active participation. An understanding of engagement

behavior is relevant in this research, given that the emotional appeals used by Rucas on TikTok are designed to maximize active audience engagement.

One study on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) has been used in various contexts, including the formation of personal branding on social media, as described by Wika et al (2023) in an analysis of Nex Carlos' personal branding formation through central and peripheral routes. Although the study provides insight into how ELM is applied in the context of personal branding, which according to Kue & Sahertian (2019) in their journal article entitled “Elaboration Likelihood Model in the Formation of Personal branding Pita's Life on Youtube Channel” reveals that the concept of personal branding can be analyzed using ELM theory on social media. there are significant differences with this study which focuses on TikTok. This research uses the TikTok platform which prioritizes short video formats and emotional appeal, in contrast to previous research using YouTube with a focus on food vlogs.

Rucas' research focuses on the emotional effects on audience engagement behavior, without going in-depth into the arguments as is done in ELM-based research. The context of Nex Carlos' research is more oriented towards building an individual's image as a food vlogger, whereas Rucas' research highlights the emotional impact of content in encouraging a human connection with the audience. In the audience approach, the peripheral route in Nex Carlos' research accentuates communicator attributes such as credibility and attractiveness to build trust, while Rucas' research utilizes emotional elements in the content to motivate active action from the audience. This difference confirms that Rucas' research offers a new perspective by exploring the influence of emotional appeals on engagement behavior in the dynamic TikTok social media ecosystem.

As for the research conducted by (Dolan et al., 2019) in the European Journal of Marketing highlights the influence of emotional appeals on engagement behavior on social media. The study found that while rational appeals are more effective in increasing active engagement such as likes, sharing, and commenting, that focuses on how content that presents logical, factual, and argumentative information can influence audience engagement behavior. In addition, rational appeals in the context of social media, particularly TikTok, may include explanations of product benefits, functional advantages, price comparisons, or data that support the audience's rational decisions. Meanwhile, emotional appeals are more likely to generate passive engagement, such as reading and viewing content. The results suggest that while emotional content can attract attention and create strong emotional engagement, the resulting interactions tend not to be as high as content containing rational information or incentives. As such, while emotional appeal-based marketing strategies, such as the one Rucas employs, are

effective in building emotional connections with audiences, this approach needs to be combined with rational elements to encourage more active engagement, such as commenting and sharing content.

Research by Dolan et al (2019) found that emotional content tends to be more effective in increasing passive engagement, such as views, compared to active engagement, such as likes, comments and shares. In contrast, rational content that provides more concrete information or benefits encourages more active interaction from the audience. However, these findings do not fully explain how certain emotional appeals can influence engagement behavior in a deeper way, especially in the context of brands that consistently use emotional approaches in their strategies. This phenomenon suggests that certain emotional appeals can create deeper engagement and are not limited to a mere liking or viewing response. By further understanding how emotional elements in content can trigger active participation, this research provides insights for other brands in developing more effective communication strategies, especially in the growing emotion-based digital marketing.

This research provides a deeper understanding of how emotional appeals can actively influence engagement behavior, not just passively as found in the study by (Dolan et al., 2019). Many brands use emotion-based strategies in digital marketing, but there is still a gap in understanding how certain types of emotional appeals can encourage audiences to not only like, but also comment and share content. By examining the case of Rucas, this research can provide insights for other brands in designing more effective communication strategies to increase audience engagement and build closer relationships with their consumers.

This research will examine the emotional appeals used by Rucas on TikTok, specifically in content that utilizes an unconventional model for marketing campaigns. With this approach, Rucas not only creates unique and interesting content, but also builds a strong emotional connection with its audience. This research utilizes a quantitative approach with the content analysis method, which was chosen for its ability to systematically evaluate messages in social media content. Content analysis allows the identification of patterns and themes that emerge in emotional messages, making it more suitable than other methods such as surveys or experiments, especially when the focus of the research is on the elements of the message and its effect on the audience. From a number of TikTok contents produced by Rucas, the researcher will analyze 91 contents that use the unconventional model as a sample, as these contents consistently show strong emotional appeals and humanist elements that can influence the active engagement of the audience.

This study will look at the emotional appeal of Rucas used on TikTok. By using an unconventional model for marketing campaigns, Rucas not only creates unique and interesting content, but also engages a strong emotional connection with its audience. This research will complement the existing literature by examining the effectiveness of emotional appeals in content marketing on TikTok and their associations with engagement behavior. Using ELM, this research aims to understand the influence of peripheral routes in a more dynamic social media context, as well as how emotional elements can significantly increase engagement behavior. With the phenomenon that occurred, the researcher conducted a study with the title **“The Effect of Emotional Appeal on Rucas Content Towards Engagement Behavior”**.

1.2 Problem Formulation

According to the background that has been described, this research focuses on how the emotional appeal used by Rucas on the TikTok platform correlates with engagement behavior. The purpose of this study is to determine the cause-and-effect relationship between the variables under study. The following is the formulation of the proposed problem:

1. Is there a relationship between Rucas' TikTok emotional appeal content and engagement behavior?
2. Does Rucas' TikTok emotional appeal content influence engagement behavior?
3. How much influence does Rucas' TikTok emotional appeal content have on engagement behavior?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To determine the relationship between TikTok Rucas' emotional appeal content and engagement behavior.
2. To determine the effect of TikTok Rucas' emotional appeal content on engagement behavior.
3. To measure the extent of influence of TikTok Rucas' emotional appeal content on engagement behavior.

1.4 Research Benefits

1.4.1 Theoretical Benefits

The theoretical benefit of this research is to enrich academic studies regarding the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) in the context of marketing on social media platforms, especially TikTok. With a focus on emotional appeal as a key element, this study offers in-depth insights into how peripheral pathways can influence audience engagement behavior through emotional aspects in marketing content and how TikTok, as a short video platform, helps deliver emotional messages more efficiently. In general, this study contributes to the literature on the relationship between emotional appeals, ELM, and engagement behavior, especially in the context of digital marketing in the growing social media era.

1.4.1 Practical Benefits

This research is expected to provide practical benefits for digital marketing practitioners, especially in designing efficient emotional content. Using the findings of this study, practitioners can realize the significance of emotional appeals in increasing audience engagement behavior. This study also provides an understanding of the optimal utilization of the TikTok platform, as an appropriate means to deliver emotion-based content. In addition, the results of this study can assist brands in designing more effective marketing campaigns by creating stronger emotional bonds with audiences, which build long-term connections. Furthermore, this study encourages brands to adopt Rucas' approach to produce content that is not only engaging but also generates positive social impact, such as featuring transformational stories, social and emotional inclusion in marketing campaigns.

1.5 Time and Research Period

Table 1.1 Research Timeline

No	Type of Activity	2024		2025			
		10	12	3	5	6	7
1	Preliminary Research						
2	Title Seminar						
3	Proposal Seminar						

4	Finalization of Thesis						
5	Thesis Session						

Source: (Researcher Processed Data, 2024)

1.6 Systematics of Writing

The writing systematics consists of several chapters and is intended to provide direction to the reader and provide a clear picture of the research problems that have been carried out. These chapters include:

a. CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter is general and concise and accurately reflects the core of the research. The contents of this chapter consist of an overview of the object of research, research background, problem formulation, research objectives, research benefits, and systematics of writing the final project.

b. CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter covers the research framework, general theory to specific theory, and previous research before concluding the hypothesis and its feasibility. Followed by a research framework and ended with the required hypothesis.

c. CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter examines the strategies, procedures, and methods used to collect and examine data that can be used to resolve research questions. This chapter includes the type of research, operational variables, population and sample, data collection, validity and reliability tests, and data analysis techniques.

d. CHAPTER IV RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter has various subheadings and is explained systematically according to the research problem and objectives. This chapter is divided into two parts, the first part presents the research results and the second part discusses or analyzes the results. Each topic discussed should begin with the results of data analysis, interpret them, and end with a conclusion. Arguments should be compared with previous research or relevant theoretical foundations.

e. CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The conclusion answers the research question and then develops into recommendations to achieve good research. Related to research excellence.