The Effect of Emotional Appeal on Rucas Content Towards Engagement Behavior

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the extent to which emotional appeals in Rucas' TikTok content influence audience engagement behavior. Using a quantitative approach and content analysis method, this study examines 91 videos from Rucas' official account that feature unconventional models and contain emotional elements. The independent variable in this study is emotional appeal, which is divided into two categories: positive (such as hope, happiness, concern, and pride) and negative (such as sadness, anger, guilt, and fear). Meanwhile, the dependent variable is engagement behavior, which includes passive engagement (views) and active engagement (likes, comments, and shares). The results show that emotional appeals have a significant influence on engagement behavior, while strengthening the applicability of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)-specifically through peripheral pathways-in understanding how emotional messages can trigger audience engagement without requiring in-depth information analysis.

Keyword: Emotional appeal, engagement behavior, Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), emotional content

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi sejauh mana daya tarik emosional dalam konten TikTok Rucas memengaruhi perilaku keterlibatan audiens. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dan metode analisis konten, penelitian ini meneliti 91 video dari akun resmi Rucas yang menampilkan model tidak konvensional dan mengandung unsur emosional. Variabel independen dalam penelitian ini adalah daya tarik emosional, yang terbagi menjadi dua kategori: positif (seperti harapan, kebahagiaan, perhatian, dan kebanggaan) dan negatif (seperti kesedihan, kemarahan, rasa bersalah, dan ketakutan). Sementara itu, variabel dependen adalah perilaku keterlibatan, yang meliputi keterlibatan pasif (tampilan) dan keterlibatan aktif (suka, komentar, dan bagikan). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa daya tarik emosional memiliki pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap perilaku keterlibatan, sekaligus memperkuat penerapan Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) - khususnya melalui jalur periferal - dalam memahami bagaimana pesan emosional dapat memicu keterlibatan audiens tanpa memerlukan analisis informasi yang mendalam.

Kata Kunci: Pemasaran Afiliasi, Kepercayaan Konsumen, Kredibilitas Sumber E-WOM, Shopee

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I. INTRODUCTION

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, n.d.) 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 emotional content tends to encourage more active engagement when users make a conscious decision to share information or comment, while rational 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.

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 more likely to 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 (Qin et al., 2024). 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.

This approach is relevant to the approach used by Rucas in its content, where emotional appeal is a key component in its makeover content. Because Rucas' approach emphasizes humanist and emotional values, 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 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. 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).

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.

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.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), developed by Petty and Cacioppo, is a dual-process theory that explains how attitudes are formed and changed through two routes of information processing: the central and peripheral routes. The central route involves deep cognitive engagement where individuals thoughtfully assess message content, while the peripheral route relies on superficial cues such as emotions or attractiveness, often without critical scrutiny (Shi et al., 2018; Shahin et al., 2021). In digital marketing contexts like TikTok, audiences tend to process content via the peripheral route due to the fast-paced nature of the platform. Emotional elements—such as touching narratives or visuals—play a dominant role in capturing attention and eliciting engagement behaviors like commenting, liking, or sharing, without requiring audiences to deeply analyze the message (Dolan et al., 2019). This study aligns with those findings, as Rucas' emotionally driven content is more likely to influence audiences through peripheral pathways, emphasizing the importance of emotional appeal in stimulating active user interaction. Thus, understanding ELM, particularly the peripheral route, is essential for analyzing how emotional stimuli in social media content affect engagement behavior (Lange et al., 2012; Cyr et al., 2018).

2.2 Emotional Appeal

Emotional appeal is a persuasive strategy designed to evoke emotional responses from audiences by utilizing emotionally charged content, such as sad stories, triumphant music, or heartfelt visuals (Lee & Hong, 2016). It functions as an advertising stimulus that can influence consumer attitudes and preferences toward products (Qin et al., 2024), and is broadly categorized into positive appeals—eliciting joy, pride, or hope—and negative appeals—evoking fear, guilt, or sadness (Yousef et al., 2021; Ruchi, 2012; Zheng, 2020; Wang et al., 2022). These emotional cues play a critical role in generating affective responses that strengthen message resonance (Das et al., 2015; Vazifehdoust et al., 2014). Within the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), emotional appeals serve as peripheral cues that influence attitudes without requiring in-depth cognitive processing, particularly among audiences with low motivation or ability to elaborate on information (Oktafiany, 2024). This makes emotional appeal especially effective in digital spaces like TikTok, where content is rapidly consumed and rich in visual-emotional stimuli (Dolan et al., 2019). Rucas exemplifies this by integrating emotional narratives and unconventional models into its TikTok campaigns, fostering a sense of inclusion and humanity that has resulted in massive engagement, including 66 million likes. Such approaches not only enhance emotional connectivity but also drive both passive and active engagement behavior, highlighting the critical role of emotional appeals in shaping marketing success in today’s fast-paced digital ecosystem.

2.3 Engagement Behavior

Engagement behavior refers to various forms of consumer interaction with brands on social media beyond mere purchases, driven by motivational factors (Dolan et al., 2019). It encompasses both psychological states and actual user actions during brand experiences (Brodie et al., 2013) and includes passive activities like viewing or reading, as well as active behaviors such as liking, commenting, sharing, or creating content (Cao et al., 2021). Passive engagement is characterized by minimal user involvement, typically intuitive and emotional in nature, aligning with Daniel Kahneman's "System 1" processing—fast, automatic, and unconscious (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021). In contrast, active engagement involves deliberate interaction, divided into contributing (interacting with existing content) and creating (generating original content) (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021). Prior research shows that while emotional content more often drives passive engagement, it can also spark active involvement depending on how it's framed (Dolan et al., 2019). This is evident in the case of Rucas, whose emotionally rich TikTok content featuring unconventional models and inspirational stories has successfully built deeper brand-audience connections and triggered high engagement, reflected in significant numbers of likes, shares, and comments.

2.4 Research Framework

A concept known as a framework is used as a guide in research or analysis to help the research or analysis understand the relationship between variables systematically. It is used in both the academic and practical worlds, and helps in formulating problems, determining the right approach, and directing research to fit the predetermined objectives. Based on the description above, researchers on the Effect of Emotional Appeal on Rucas Content on Engagement Behavior. Where emotional appeal as variable X and engagement behavior as variable Y. Then this research framework can be described as follows:

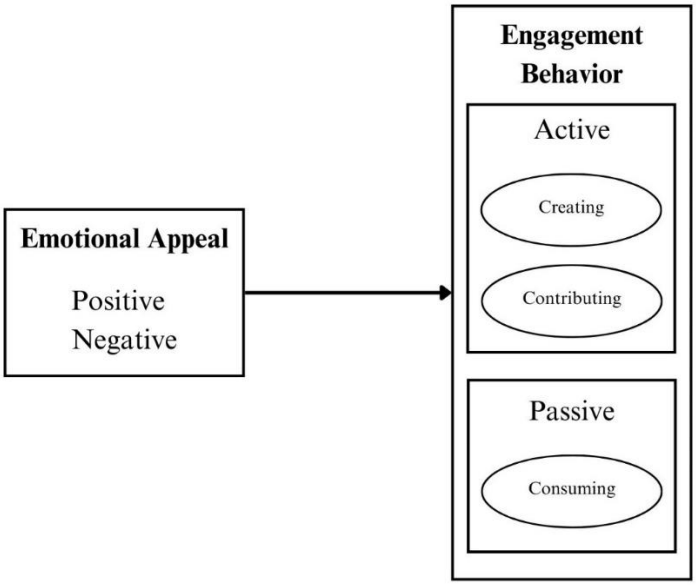

Figure 1 Research Framework

Source: Author's Processed Data

2.5 Research Hypothesis

From the framework above, the researcher draws a hypothesis as follows:

H0: Emotional appeal in Rucas content has no effect on audience engagement behavior.

H1: Emotional appeal in Rucas content affects audience engagement behavior.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a quantitative approach, which aims to describe a problem broadly and can be generalized without overemphasizing the depth of the data. The method used is quantitative content analysis, which is carried out systematically, objectively, and measurably against the message under study. Systematic means that this research has clear steps in determining the content of the communication to be analyzed. Objective means that the researcher must be neutral and not influenced by personal opinions so that the results of the analysis can be trusted. Meanwhile, quantitative means that each category of data is recorded in the form of numbers and then analyzed based on its frequency. This approach is often used in media, document, and mass communication research to find patterns or trends in content.

In this research, the method used is content analysis, which is a research technique used to identify patterns, themes, and meanings in a written, visual, or audio communication. According to Eriyanto (2013) content analysis, it can be defined as a scientific research technique aimed at knowing the description of content characteristics and drawing inferences from the content. This method allows researchers to systematically evaluate the content of communication in an objective and quantitative way.

Content analysis has several advantages over other research methods. First, content analysis focuses on the messages contained in communication, where these messages can be separated from communicators and communicants. With the support of a strong theoretical framework, researchers can draw conclusions from the content of the message without having to gain direct access to the communicator. Secondly, the content or archival documents analyzed have a longer durability than the communicators, audiences, or events described in the communication, allowing analysis of long-term trends or changes. Third, through a proper operationalization process, content analysis is able to maintain meaningful differences among the data collected due to its objective and systematic nature (Riffe et al., 2016).

Content analysis requires testing that is different from other methods, with help from experts or from coders. In the following study, the researcher used 2 coders. In this study, the researcher acted as a coder. There are 2 coders in this study, coder 1 is Farhan Farandityo Fasihaulrazy and coder 2 is Tieara Raida Taqiyya.

In order for a concept to be empirically researched and measured, it needs to be reduced to something that can be observed. This process is known as concept operationalization. In this operationalization, researchers need to establish an operational definition, which is a set of procedures used to explain how a concept is measured in research. Operational definitions do not simply refer to theoretical meanings as found in textbooks, but rather focus on determining indicators or concrete measures of a variable. Thus, the indicators used must be clear, measurable, and can be tested empirically, so that they are no longer abstract.

Variable operationalization in this study aims to transform theoretical concepts into indicators that can be measured empirically. This study consists of two main variables, namely emotional appeal as the independent variable (X) and engagement behavior as the dependent variable (Y).

Table 1 Variable Operationalization

Variable	Sub Variable	Dimension	Indicator	Scale Measurement
Emotional Appeal (X)	Positive Emotional Appeal (Pramesthi, 2022)	Positive feelings	(Pramesthi, 2022) Lists positive emotions to be: • Gratitude • Pride • Feelings of Happiness • Care • Hope	**(1** = Strongly Disagree **2 =** Disagree **3** = Agree **4** = Strongly Agree**)**
	Negative Emotional Appeal (Zheng, 2020)	Negative feeling	According to Zheng (2020), there are 4 types of negative emotions in advertising: • Fear • Guilt • Sadness • Anger.	
Engagement Behavior (Y)	Passive Engagement (Dolan et al., 2019)	Consuming	Views	Number of Unit
	Active Engagement (Dolan et al., 2019)	Creating and Contributing	• Comments • Likes • Shares	

Source: Author's Processed Data

3.1 Population and Sample

The sample in this study was selected using purposive sampling method, which is a sample selection technique based on certain criteria set by the researcher. The criteria used in this study are TikTok Rucas videos that contain positive emotional appeal or negative emotional appeal, and have significant interactions in the form of likes, comments, shares, and views.

Determining the number of samples in this study, using the Slovin formula because in drawing samples, the number must be representative so that the research results can be generalized and the calculation does not require a sample size table, but can be done with simple formulas and calculations.

The Slovin formula for determining the sample is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

The total population in this study is 960 of the entire Rucas content by taking an error tolerance (e) of 10%. So to find out the research sample, with the following calculations:

$n = \frac{960}{1+960(0.10)^2} = 90.57$; Rounded to 91

Thus, based on the Slovin formula above, this study will examine 91 samples of Rucas content containing emotional appeals including positive and negative to represent the entire content.

3.2 Validity and Reliability Test

To ensure the accuracy and consistency of the data in this study, validity and reliability tests were conducted on the research instruments. Validity was tested using face validity to confirm that the coding categories truly measured the intended concepts—emotional appeal and engagement behavior—by training both coders to interpret indicators uniformly (Eriyanto, 2013:260). Reliability was measured using R. Holsti's intercoder reliability formula, which calculates the agreement between coders; a coefficient (CR) of ≥ 0.7 indicates acceptable reliability. In this study, two independent coders analyzed 91 TikTok videos from Rucas, and if discrepancies arose, the coders engaged in discussions, clarified coding guidelines, or consulted a third party to ensure consistent and trustworthy results.

3.3 Descriptive Analysis

Researchers use percentages from descriptive analysis to get the results of emotional appeal (X) and engagement behavior (Y) variables. Some of the criteria items that need to be considered in conducting descriptive analysis. The results of the descriptive analysis will be further analyzed through the preparation of a continuum scale. This scale serves to group data based on a certain range of values into categories such as very low, low, high, and very high. The purpose of creating a continuum is to provide a more structured picture of the level of occurrence of indicators in the analyzed TikTok Rucas content, both on the Emotional Appeal (X) and Engagement Behavior (Y) variables, Rucas Content With Conventional Model, as shown in figure 2 below

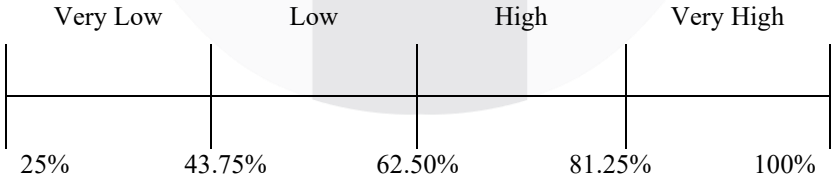

Figure 2 Table of Continuum Scale
Source: Author's Processed Data

Through this approach, the data interpretation process becomes more directed and objective, because researchers can classify findings based on the average score that has been calculated. The use of a continuum scale also makes

it easier to present data visually and quantitatively, so that the patterns or trends of each variable can be understood more clearly by the reader.

3.4 Classic Assumption Test

Classic assumption tests are carried out to evaluate if parametric or nonparametric statistics should be employed in the study. The normality test in statistical analysis determines if data distribution is normal or not. A normal distribution is one in which the mean, mode, and median are in the center of the data. The heteroskedasticity test is used to determine whether there is inconsistent residual variance among observations in regression analysis.

3.5 Method of Successive Interval (MSI)

The transformation of the ordinal scale to the distance scale was done using the Method of Successive Intervals (MSI). This method is done by calculating the proportion of each choice on the scale used, then finding the value that corresponds to the proportion to normal dispersion. By using MSI, in addition to transforming from ordinal scale to distance scale, the data is also transformed to have normal dispersion. Therefore, parametric statistical tests can be used (Waryanto. B & Milafati, 2006).

3.6 Product Moment Correlation Test

Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is commonly utilized to measure the strength of the association between two interval or ratio variables. The Pearson correlation test requires several characteristics to be achieved, including the presence of a linear and symmetrical relationship, the utilization of random samples, interval or ratio scales for variable measurement, and adherence to normal distribution assumptions.

3.7 Hypothesis Test

Researchers may not only be satisfied with presenting the data from content analysis descriptively. Researchers can process and explore the results of this content analysis, including through hypothesis testing. Hypothesis testing is basically ensuring whether the findings obtained by researchers through analysis can be used to describe the actual situation in the population. Or in other words, hypothesis testing is a decision-making process through inference from sample results (Eriyanto, 2013).

In this study, hypothesis testing was conducted using the t-test to determine whether there is a significant influence between the independent variable, namely emotional appeal, on the dependent variable, namely engagement behavior.

The T-test can be analyzed using the hypothesis technique to test the significance as follows:

H0: Emotional appeal in Rucas content has no effect on audience engagement behavior.

H1: Emotional appeal in Rucas content affects audience engagement behavior.

3.8 Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Simple linear regression is based on the causal relationship between the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y). The findings generated through calculations carried out via SPSS software will determine the significance of variable X is on variable Y.

3.9 Coefficient of Determination Test

The coefficient of determination test is intended to measure the extent to which an independent variable influences a dependent variable. The coefficient of determination is presented as a percentage. Using the formula, it's possible to determine whether the independent variable causes variations in the dependent variable. A higher correlation coefficient means a greater coefficient of determination.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics explain the research data in detail for each variable and sub-variable used in this study. The following research found that both emotional appeal and engagement behavior have varying mean scores and distributions. The following average score of variables;

Emotional Appeal: 64.5 that categorized as High
Engagement Behavior: 27.5 that categorized as Very Low

For The normality test using one sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov analysis shows that the Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) of 0.200 was obtained and the value exceeded 0.050 significant value as required for the normality test. Therefore, it can be concluded that the distribution of the data in this research is normal. But, the regression model is affected by symptoms of heteroscedasticity, which is indicated by the emotional appeal variable (EA) 0.013, which means the value is less than 0.05. To overcome the problem of heteroscedasticity, the park test can be used and it shows that there is no heteroscedasticity problem in the data. This can be proven by assessing the significance of 0.268 which exceeds the 0.05 confidence level. Therefore, it can be confirmed by both tests that the data of this research does not contain heteroscedasticity, and the data can be used for analysis.

Table 2 Product Moment Correlation Test

Correlations			
		Emotional Appeal	Engagement Behavior
Emotional Appeal	Pearson Correlation	1	**-.261**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.013
	N	91	91
Engagement Behavior	Pearson Correlation	**-.261**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	
	N	91	91

The Pearson correlation test results between the Engagement Behavior (EB) and Emotional Appeal (EA) variables show a correlation coefficient of -0.261 with a significance value of 0.013 ($p < 0.05$). The results show that there is a negative and statistically significant relationship between engagement behavior and emotional appeal. However, the correlation coefficient value ranges between -0.20 and -0.39, which indicates that the strength of this relationship is weak.

Table 3 Simple Linear Regression & T-test Result

Coefficients		
	T	Sig
(Constant)	**6.150**	<,001
Emotional Appeal	**-2.549**	**.013**

The partial statistical test results, which can be seen from table 3, show that the significance value of emotional appeal is 0.013 <0.05, so H1 is accepted, indicating that the emotional appeal variable affects engagement behavior. The regression equation Y = 12.233-0.206X. Indicates that, engagement behavior will decrease by 0.206 units if emotional appeal increases by 1 unit. According to the previous correlation results, the negative sign (-0.206) indicates a negative influence between emotional appeal and engagement behavior.

The results of simple linear regression analysis show that emotional appeal has a significant influence on engagement behavior. In other words, although greater emotional content incorporated into the content tends to cause audience engagement behavior to be lower, this indicates that emotional appeal has a significant influence on engagement behavior. The significance value below 0.05 (p = 0.013) indicates that this regression model is statistically valid to explain the relationship between the two variables.

Table 4 Determination Coefficient Test Result

Model Summary		
	R	R Square
1	.261	**.068**

Based on the results of the coefficient of determination test in table 4, the R Square value is 0.068 or 6.8%. So it can be concluded that emotional appeal has an influence on engagement behavior by 6.8% and the remaining 93.2% is influenced by other variables outside the study.

The results showed that emotional appeals used in TikTok's Rucas content have a significant effect on engagement behavior. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) theory says that peripheral pathways tend to process emotionally charged messages; these pathways allow audiences to respond based on emotional cues without performing deep cognitive elaboration (Cacioppo et al., 1986).

The Pearson Product Moment correlation test results show that there is a negative relationship between Emotional Appeal (EA) and Engagement Behavior (EB), with a correlation coefficient of -0.261 and a significance of 0.013. Although the correlation value belongs to the weak category, the relationship is still statistically significant, as the p value is smaller than the 0.05 threshold. This means that there is a real relationship between the intensity of emotional appeals in TikTok Rucas content and audience engagement behavior, although the direction is opposite, which means that if the emotional appeal increases, the engagement behavior decreases. This is in line with Qin et al (2024) who mentioned that emotional overload on social media can initially lead to social media fatigue, a condition in which users feel tired and reluctant to actively interact and explained that emotional overload and information overload have a direct impact on decreasing active engagement because users prefer to be “lurkers” - passive observers who only look without interacting.

Based on the research findings of this paper, the effect of emotional appeal on engagement behavior was analyzed using simple linear regression tests and partial t-tests. According to the results of the simple linear

regression analysis, the equation Y=12.233-0.206X was found. This indicates that an increase in emotional appeal (EA) by one unit will be followed by a decrease in engagement behavior (EB) by 0.206 units. The previous correlation test showed a significant negative relationship between the two variables; this regression coefficient result shows a negative value. This means that the attractiveness of Rucas' content on TikTok does not necessarily encourage audiences to actively participate. Instead, higher emotional intensity may reduce the audience's desire to participate, such as by commenting or sharing the content. This suggests that, while emotional appeals may attract initial attention, excessive emotional content may lead to saturation or emotional exhaustion, which in turn reduces engagement (Qin et al., 2024).

The t-test results show that the variable for emotional appeal (EA) has a significant value of 0.013. This means it is less than 0.05. This indicates that emotional appeal has a statistically significant impact on engagement behavior (EB). As a result, the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. This suggests that the content of Tikkok Rucas, including emotional elements, can actually influence audience participation.

Despite its significant influence, the contribution of emotional appeal to engagement behavior remains relatively low. This is evidenced by the result of the coefficient of determination (R Square) which is only 0.068 or 6.8%. This means that only 6.8 variations in engagement behavior can be explained by emotional appeal, while the remaining 93.2% is explained by other variables apart from this research model. Although emotional appeal is highly influential on engagement behavior, its contribution is only 6.8%. This shows that other factors influence most of the variation in engagement.

Descriptively, the average Rucas score for emotional interest in TikTok content is in the high category with a percentage of 64.5% however, action engagement is very low, at only 27.5%. Breaking it down further, active engagement, such as likes, shares, and comments, are only 27%, 27%, and 26%, respectively, and passive engagement such as views only get 28%. While emotional appeal is highly influential on engagement behavior, its contribution is only 6.8%, which is entirely minimal. This low level of engagement is likely due to several factors, one of which is the lack of strategic elements in the content such as strong captions and call-to-action (CTA) as stated by Christyanti (2018) that the strength of softsell content is in the caption. The caption needs to provide information and create interaction with the audience. The caption must also contain a Call to Action. Companies try to always build communication that builds not only in one direction. In other words, emotional desirability is just one of the many factors that shape the act of engagement, not the main one.

The results of this study show that, although with weak strength, emotional appeal has a negative and significant effect on engagement behavior. This study reveals that the use of emotional appeals in TikTok content by Rucas is effective in encouraging audience engagement behavior, both in passive forms such as likes and views, as well as active ones such as comments and shares. These results extend the findings of Dolan et al (2019) which stated that emotional content generally only triggers passive engagement. In contrast, this study shows that a strong and consistent emotional approach-especially with narratives that touch on human values and the use of unconventional models-can generate a deep emotional response, thus encouraging audiences to engage more actively. Therefore, this study adds a new perspective that the type and intensity of emotional appeals play an important role in shaping audience engagement levels, especially on short video-based platforms like TikTok that emphasize the power of visuals and stories.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the results of a study of 91 TikTok contents from the Rucas account analyzed by two independent raters, it was found that there is a significant negative relationship between emotional appeal and engagement

behavior. The Pearson correlation test results show a value of r = -0.261 with a significance of p = 0.013 (<0.05), which indicates that the stronger the emotional appeal in the content, the resulting engagement level tends to decrease, although this relationship is relatively weak. Further analysis through the coefficient of determination (R^2) test shows that emotional appeal contributes 6.8% to variations in engagement behavior, while the rest is influenced by other factors such as captions and Call To Action. This finding is in line with previous research which shows that the use of emotional elements in TikTok content, both positive such as hope and happiness and negative such as sadness and empathy, can influence engagement behavior, but does not necessarily increase active user interactions such as commenting or sharing content.

In contrast, rational appeals—those that emphasize facts, logic, or product-related information—tend to encourage more active engagement because they require deeper cognitive processing and offer tangible value or relevance to the audience. Studies such as Dolan et al (2019) have demonstrated that while emotional content captures initial attention and evokes affective responses, rational content is more likely to generate critical reflection and interaction, especially in the form of comments and shares. Therefore, an effective communication strategy on platforms like TikTok may benefit from a balanced combination of emotional and rational appeals, to not only attract but also sustain active and meaningful audience participation.Suggestions

5.2.1 Theoretical Suggestions

This research contributes to the development of digital marketing communication studies, particularly in understanding the effectiveness of emotional appeals on short video-based platforms such as TikTok. The finding that emotional appeal has a negative but significant relationship with engagement behavior expands the discourse in the application of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) theory, especially the peripheral path. It also opens up space for comparing the influence of rational appeal and emotional appeal on different forms of engagement (active vs. passive). This research also confirms that engagement behavior is not only influenced by one variable, but by various other factors such as entertainment value, visual quality, content interactivity, and source credibility. Therefore, future research is recommended to add or replace independent variables to see the contribution of other more complex factors, such as rational appeal, message framing, or audience motivation, in shaping audience engagement behavior more thoroughly.

5.2.2 Practical Suggestions

the findings of this study serve as a reference for digital marketing practitioners and social media creative teams, including brands like Rucas, to not rely solely on emotional appeal as a key strategy. While emotional appeals can create initial connections, the study results show that their impact on active engagement is relatively low. Therefore, content strategies should integrate rational appeals, such as product information, testimonials, or educational content, to encourage deeper elaboration from the audience. In addition, other factors that influence engagement behavior should also be considered, such as the use of catchy captions, clear call-to-action (CTA), appropriate content upload time, and engaging visual formats. By combining emotional and rational elements in a balanced way, brands will be better able to create interactions that are not only passive, but also active and sustainable.

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