

The Influence of Banyumas Promotional Themes on Engagement Levels on TikTok in 2025

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ABSTRACT

Background: Social media, particularly TikTok, has emerged as a significant instrument in digital marketing communication strategies and regional promotion campaigns in Indonesia.

Objectives: This study aims to analyze the influence of promotional themes—tourism, culture, and culinary—on the engagement rate of Banyumas Regency's promotional content on the TikTok platform in 2025.

Method: This study employed Quantitative Content Analysis with a population comprising all Banyumas promotional content uploaded during the period of January 1 to August 30, 2025. A total of 165 samples were selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data collection was conducted through non-participatory observation with systematic coding using a coding sheet. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and inferential testing through One-Way ANOVA.

Result: Findings indicate that culture-themed content achieved the highest engagement rate (1.39), followed by tourism-themed content (1.28) and culinary-themed content (1.27). The ANOVA test yielded a significance value of 0.429 (> 0.05), indicating that the influence of promotional themes on engagement rate is statistically not significant.

Conclusion: TikTok engagement performance is not primarily determined by thematic substance but rather by the degree to which content aligns with the platform's algorithmic logic. Therefore, regional promotion efforts through TikTok should prioritize content creativity, production quality, and stylistic adaptation to platform norms over mere thematic selection.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media has undergone rapid evolution, extending beyond its primary function as a communication and entertainment platform to become a crucial tool in marketing strategies and community building. Essentially, social media is a web-based technology that allows users to share content, ideas, and information within a virtual network (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The phenomenon of social media usage in Indonesia is highly significant. Recent data from We Are Social (2024) indicates that there are more than 191 million active social media users in Indonesia, supported by a 2023 APJII report that recorded internet penetration reaching 78.19%, equivalent to 215.63 million people. This data confirms social media's immense potential as a tool for reaching a broad audience at a relatively efficient cost (Azizah et al., 2021).

One of the social media platforms with the most significant growth and influence in recent years is TikTok. TikTok is a short-video sharing app that lets users create, edit, and share creative content ranging from 15 seconds to 10 minutes, with features like special effects, music, and filters. TikTok's user base is global, with Indonesia leading with a significant number of active users. TikTok's role in this context can then be directly addressed by focusing research on audience engagement. The key to building engagement on TikTok lies in creating content that follows trends and is engaging, entertaining, and informative, with high viral potential.

This engagement-building phenomenon becomes more specific when applied to a regional context, such as Banyumas Regency. Regional promotion is a strategic effort to boost tourism and the local creative economy. Several entities in Banyumas Regency have recognized the power of social media, such as Hetero Space Banyumas, which uses Instagram to promote its services and collaborates with local MSMEs to preserve Banyumasan culture (Asih, M.S., 2025). However, the TikTok platform's high viral potential has not been fully leveraged to showcase the richness of Banyumas Regency.

Digital marketing communication is a strategic method that uses social media to deliver promotional messages quickly, interactively, and effectively. Purwaningrum (2017) states that social media offers a significant opportunity for a region to build a destination image by distributing content that generates electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). The more frequently the content is shared, the stronger the region's image is remembered by the digital audience. In the case of Banyumas Regency, content related to tourism, culture, and culinary posted via TikTok can encourage users to share it with their friends. Therefore, this study will focus the analysis on efforts to build engagement through content that represents the potential

of Banyumas Regency, which can be categorized into three main areas: tourism (for example, promoting tourist attractions like Baturraden or Curug Ceheng), culture (such as Ebeg performances, Banyumasan language - Ngapak, or traditional festivals), and culinary (such as mendoan, soto sokaraja, and fried getuk). By analysing these contents, this study aims to identify effective strategies for building audience engagement on the TikTok platform, ultimately contributing to increasing the visibility and economic development of Banyumas Regency.

METHODS

This study uses the Quantitative Content Analysis method to systematically and objectively analyze the influence of Banyumas Regency's promotional themes on engagement levels on TikTok in 2025. The research focuses on three categories of content themes, namely tourism themes, cultural themes, and culinary themes, to identify the most effective patterns and characteristics in building audience interaction. The study population comprises all promotional TikTok videos for Banyumas Regency uploaded between January 1 and August 30, 2025. The sample was selected using a simple random sampling technique to ensure representativeness, with 165 videos meeting the inclusion criteria and selected for analysis. Data were collected through non-participatory observation, where researchers observed the content without direct interaction, and through coding using a code sheet containing categories and indicators related to promotional themes and engagement metrics. The collected data were analyzed using One-Way ANOVA and Chi-Square analysis techniques to test the influence and relationship between promotional theme variables and engagement levels.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study describes the data from 165 samples of promotional TikTok content for Banyumas Regency, focusing on Tourism, Culture, and Culinary. This study aims to examine and analyze the influence of promotional themes on engagement levels for Banyumas Regency promotional content on the TikTok platform in 2025. Content was selected using a nonprobability sampling technique, specifically simple random sampling. The selected content was video content that explicitly or implicitly displayed, discussed, or promoted aspects of Banyumas Regency (tourism, culinary, and culture) between January 1 and August 30, 2025. Engagement levels were categorized as high and low, calculated by summing likes, comments, and shares. Then, the average of the total engagement across all samples was calculated, and the results were categorized into high and low categories. This study used One-Way ANOVA statistical analysis to examine the effect of

promotion on engagement, and Chi-square statistical analysis to examine the relationship between the two variables.

Table 1. Themes of Promotional Content for Banyumas Regency

Theme	Number of Contents	Percentage
Tourism	58	35,15 %
Culture	28	16,96 %
Culinary	79	47,89 %
Total	165	100 %

Based on the table of promotional content themes for Banyumas Regency, culinary content dominates the promotional strategy, accounting for the largest share and(47.89%), representing 79 out of a total of 165 content items. This indicates that culinary content is positioned as the primary attraction and leading asset in Banyumas Regency's branding. Meanwhile, tourism accounted for a significant share (35.15%), indicating that promoting tourist destinations and activities remains a priority, though less focused on culinary content. On the other hand, cultural content received the lowest share (16.96%), suggesting that cultural aspects are more often integrated or used as a background in culinary and tourism promotions. Overall, Banyumas Regency's promotional strategy appears to focus on a combination of culinary and tourism appeal, with culinary content serving as the primary gateway to attracting audience interest.

Table 2: Promotional Engagement for Banyumas Regency

Theme	Like	Comment	Share
Tourism	470517	5511	49419
Culinary	210602	5032	97158
Culture	97608	2489	9446

The engagement table shows that tourism-themed content leads in likes (470,517), indicating its high potential to attract widespread appreciation and encourage sharing. Culinary content excels in interactions in the form of shares (97,158), indicating that food content has a very strong viral potential or social utility for sharing. Meanwhile, cultural content recorded lower engagement rates across all categories, often considered less popular.

The process of value submission of promotional themes (travel, culinary, and culture) can be analysed through Jürgen Habermas's (1987) concept of the colonisation of the lifeworld, which has been developed in a digital context by Muttaqin (2020). Habermas distinguishes between the lifeworld, as the realm of social interaction imbued with shared norms, meanings, and understandings, and systems operated by instrumental logics such as money and power. Social media, particularly commercial platforms like TikTok, is a manifestation of this system invading the lifeworld. The lifeworld of Banyumas Regency, with its authentic cultural richness (such as the philosophy behind Ebeg art, the linguistic richness of the Ngapak language, or the culinary history of mendoan), has been penetrated by algorithmic logic oriented toward metrics (engagement, views, reach). These intrinsic values are reduced to variables that can be measured, optimised, and traded.

The research findings, which show the insignificance of themes, demonstrate that what platforms are interested in is not the depth of cultural meaning, but rather its ability to convert into attention, which can then be capitalized on. In other words, the three promotional themes (tourism, culture, and culinary) have transformed into commodity signs in the digital attention market, as Satrio (2020) points out. Curug Ceheng, for example, is no longer primarily promoted as a place with a unique natural ecosystem, but as an Instagrammable photo spot; the Ngapak language is no longer a marker of strong community identity, but rather as humorous content that can be easily remixed. This shift is the essence of colonization, as the lifeworld is emptied of its substantive meaning and filled with the logic of commodity exchange.

Table 2. ANOVA Results

Sumber Variansi	df	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2	0.851	0.429
Within Groups	162		
Total	164		

The data shows a significance value of 0.429 and a calculated F-value of 0.851. Since the sig. 0.429 value is > 0.05 , the Null Hypothesis (H0) is accepted, and the Alternative Hypothesis (H1) is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant influence between promotional themes (tourism, culture, culinary) and engagement levels for Banyumas Regency promotional content on TikTok in 2025.

Within the framework of Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory (1984), elaborated by Nashir (2012) in the Indonesian context, Banyumas Regency's promotional practices on TikTok can be understood as a dialectic between structure and agency. Structure here refers to TikTok's algorithmic logic: a system of rules and resources that both enable and constrain. TikTok's algorithm, designed to maximize user retention, tends to encourage short-form, visually striking, musical, and trending content. Meanwhile, the agency is played by content creators (whether official government accounts, business actors, or members of the public) who strive to promote the riches of Banyumas Regency.

The finding that the theme was insignificant indicates that the agency's success is no longer determined by the substance of the material being promoted (tourism, culture, culinary), but rather by its capacity for duality of structure—the ability to adopt, utilize, and even manipulate the platform's structural logic. Successful creators are those with algorithmic savvy, namely the ability to translate local values into platform-friendly formats, such as using viral sounds, hashtag challenges, fast editing, and narrative patterns that spark curiosity within the first 15 seconds. Thus, cultural content like Ebeg is no longer enjoyed as a sacred and meaningful ritual performance, but is instead transformed into spectacular visual clips, synchronized with popular music, and designed for duet challenges. This process represents a form of forced modernization at the level of representation, where culture must submit to the platform's technical imperatives.

Table 4. Chi-Square

Jenis Uji	Value	df	Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.715	2	0.424
Likelihood Ratio	1.642	2	0.440
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.044	1	0.834
N of Valid Cases	165		

The Pearson Chi-Square test yielded a value of 1.715 with 2 degrees of freedom (df) and a p-value of 0.424. Since the significance value of $0.424 > 0.005$, the Null Hypothesis (H0) is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between the choice of promotional theme type and the level of engagement generated by promotional content. This result is consistent with the One-Way ANOVA, which found no significant effect of the promotional theme variable.

The findings of this study reveal a paradox in digital marketing communications in the platform era. The Chi-Square result with a significance of

0.424 further confirms the absence of a significant relationship between the variables. This finding is not simply a matter of statistical meaningfulness, but rather a gateway to dissecting fundamental transformations in the logic of production, distribution, and consumption of meaning in the digital space. Drawing on the critical perspectives of media sociology and communication theory, this section will unravel how platform algorithms reconfigure local cultural values, encourage the commodification of signs, and create a new hyperreality in regional promotion.

Furthermore, this condition gives rise to a hyper-reality as conceptualized by Jean Baudrillard (1994) and examined in the context of TikTok by Maharani et al. (2022). Baudrillard argued that in postmodern society, signs (representations) no longer refer to original reality, but instead create their own reality that is more real than the original (simulacra). The findings of this study confirm that in the Banyumas Regency TikTok, what the audience sees is not the real Banyumas Regency, but rather a TikTok version of Banyumas Regency, a construction of reality built from cultural fragments that are cut, beautified, and arranged by algorithms. This hyper-reality is often more influential in shaping perceptions and visiting intentions than direct experience or conventional promotion. A potential tourist may be more interested in visiting a location after seeing it in a viral challenge, regardless of the depth of information about it.

Thus, the engagement (likes, comments, shares) that occurred was more a response to simulacra or representations separated from their original references, reflecting a form of appreciation for the theme's intrinsic value. This explains why the average engagement for the three themes was statistically similar. In the platform attention economy, they have become equivalent to raw materials for the production of simulacra.

From a Digital Marketing Communications perspective, this finding aligns with criticisms of content approaches that are overly message-centric and ignore the medium's context. As Purwaningrum (2017) stated, the effectiveness of social media lies in its ability to create interactive electronic word of mouth (eWOM). However, this study shows that eWOM is not automatically triggered by the type of message (theme), but by how the message speaks the language of the platform. TikTok's algorithm functions as a new gatekeeper, significantly determining content visibility. The platform's participation-encouraging features, such as duets, stitches, and remixes, suggest that successful content invites further interaction rather than simply being informative. Therefore, culinary content about Soto Sokaraja presented simply as a cooking documentation video will lose out to content that encourages guessing games or mukbang with dramatic reactions.

Creativity in designing implicit calls to action is what differentiates them, not the choice between promoting Soto Sokaraja or Curug Ceheng.

The sociological implications of these findings are quite profound. First, there is a cultural flattening, in which the complexity and historical context of Banyumas Regency's culture are threatened by the need to be snackable content. Second, new digital inequalities are emerging among promoters. Individual creators or MSMEs with high algorithmic intelligence may be more effective in promoting Banyumas Regency than official institutions that still rely on conventional approaches. Third, the collective identity of Banyumas Regency may undergo a resignification, shifting from one grounded in shared experiences and a long history to one shaped by viral trends and popular representations on platforms.

For stakeholders in Banyumas Regency, these findings offer both an opportunity and a warning. The opportunity lies in shifting the focus from debates over which themes sell best to increasing the capacity to produce creative, technically sound, and strategically aligned content that interacts with algorithms. The local government needs to shift from being a content publisher to a content enabler by providing training, developing a creative resource bank (music, Banyumas-specific filters), and building collaborations with platform-savvy local creators. The caveat is maintaining a balance between platform adaptation and preserving substance. Promotional strategies must be accompanied by parallel efforts to create a downward pathway that connects digital engagement with authentic experiences and a deeper understanding of Banyumas Regency culture, for example, by integrating more comprehensive information into account bios or collaborating with tourism websites.

Ultimately, the lack of a significant influence of promotional themes on engagement is not a failure, but rather a reflection of the new reality of social mediatization. Regional promotion in the platform era is no longer solely about what is told, but is largely determined by how it is told within a media ecology driven by algorithms, by the logic of virality, and by consumption in simulacra. This research strengthens the thesis that to understand contemporary social dynamics, we must focus our analysis on the platform logic that increasingly regulates various spheres of life, including efforts to preserve and promote regional culture.

CONCLUSION

Based on statistical analysis showing no significant influence of promotional themes (tourism, culture, culinary) on engagement levels on TikTok, proven through the One-Way ANOVA statistical test tool with a significance of

0.429 and a Chi-Square significance value of 0.424. This study concludes that the success of Banyumas Regency promotional content is more determined by its suitability to the platform's algorithmic logic than the substance of its theme, a phenomenon that in the perspective of Giddens' structuration theory and Habermas's concept of colonization of the lifeworld reflects the submission of local values under the platform's technical imperatives that commodify culture into digital signs and create hyper-reality of regional representation. The implication is that the next promotional strategy needs to shift from a theme-based approach to a platform-based approach with a focus on increasing creativity in content production, adaptation to algorithmic trends, and adequate digital literacy, while maintaining the integrity of cultural substance through the integration of digital appeal and authentic experiences so that promotions are not only statistically viral but also socioculturally meaningful.

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