

Unraveling the Motivational Threads of Content Creators Embracing Mud Bath Content on TikTok

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Abstract:

Mud bathing through the TikTok platform has been a trend in Indonesia for the past few years. The purpose of this study is to determine the motivation of content creators to create live mud bath content through the TikTok platform. The method used in this study is a quantitative method with a descriptive approach based on frequency distribution. Determination of the number of samples using the Lemeshow formula so that a sample of 96 respondents who were the subjects of the study was obtained. The results of this study show that the motivation of content creators in creating mud bath content is to make money through online begging techniques, such as choosing elderly actors to do live mud baths and asking for gifts from the audience. The behavior of content creators is seen as a form of exploitation of the elderly with motives begging online. The implications of this research are that social media platforms need to take action to prevent content that is exploitative and harmful to others from being posted on their platforms. This can be done by tightening rules and regulations for creating and posting content and supervising and removing content that violates these rules.

Keywords: Begging Online, Content Creator, Motivation, Live Mud Bath, TikTok.

1. Introduction

TikTok has emerged as a prominent platform for numerous companies and brands seeking to enhance their visibility by collaborating with renowned TikTok content creators, particularly those based in Indonesia. This trend is substantiated by insights from the "Digital 2022" report, jointly published by We Are Social and Hootsuite (2023), revealing that Indonesia secured the second position globally for the highest number of TikTok users in 2022. At the onset of that year, the TikTok user base in Indonesia had surpassed a staggering 109.9 million monthly active users. This surge in numbers vividly underscores the widespread popularity and exponential growth of the TikTok application within the Indonesian market over recent years. Positioned as the second-largest contributor to TikTok's user base worldwide, Indonesia boasts a wealth of active and talented TikTok content creators, consistently churning out trending and viral content. The diverse array of popular content on TikTok Indonesia includes music videos, tutorials, comedy sketches, and engaging challenges, such as the widely embraced mud baths.

This vibrant landscape of creative expression on TikTok reflects not only the app's influence but also the dynamic and participative nature of Indonesia's digital audience, making it an opportune space for companies and brands to connect with their target consumers.

The trend of mud bath content has gained significant traction in Indonesia in recent years, with numerous prominent content creators amassing large followings on platforms such as TikTok and other social media. A notable phenomenon emerging in early 2023 is the rise of live streaming content that appeals to audience sympathy. According to PKM-RSH UGM (2023), a number of TikTok users have recently leveraged elderly individuals to engage in mud baths and endure water splashes during live streams, hoping to receive virtual gifts from viewers. This form of live streaming, designed to evoke empathy, has raised concerns as it can be categorized as the commodification of poverty for profit. The newfound popularity of mud bath content, often carrying undertones of begging, highlights the need for a deeper investigation into the motivations driving its creation and dissemination, as depicted in Figure 1. Data from a PKM-RSH UGM (2023) survey reveal that 60.5% (61 respondents) of viewers admitted to identifying themselves as beggars while watching such TikTok Live content. This behavior reflects an empathetic response to the live streams, underscoring the intricate emotional and psychological dynamics at play. This research aims to uncover valuable insights into the factors propelling content creators to produce mud bath content with an emphasis on eliciting audience sympathy. By understanding these motivations, researchers and industry stakeholders can better comprehend the broader implications of such content on creators, audiences, and the evolving digital content ecosystem. Ultimately, this study aspires to contribute meaningful perspectives to the discourse on digital content creation, shedding light on the exploitation of poverty within the realm of viral mud bath content.

Several studies have delved into the dynamics of livestreaming events, highlighting key factors that shape viewers' and content creators' behaviors. For instance, Chen & Lin, (2018) emphasized the pivotal role of entertainment and social interaction in influencing viewers' intentions to engage with livestream content. Similarly, Zhao et al., (2018) explored streamers' motivations through the lens of self-determination theory, shedding light on the intricate interplay between content creators and viewers within the livestreaming ecosystem. These studies significantly advance our understanding of the factors guiding behaviors in traditional livestreaming contexts. In a more specific focus, Vauziyah (2023) conducted an analysis of the concept of *ju'alah* concerning the acquisition of gifts in livestreaming events on TikTok, using the live mud bath trend as a case study. This study provides a unique perspective on the ethical and transactional dimensions of gifting in livestreaming. Additionally, Fauzi, Arifin, & Umam, (2022) examined the live TikTok mud bath phenomenon from an Islamic perspective, offering insights into its cultural and religious implications. While these studies provide valuable foundations for understanding the behaviors and motivations associated with the live mud bath trend, significant gaps remain in comprehending the drivers of content creation in such unconventional livestream scenarios. To address this, further investigations are necessary to unravel the underlying motivations of content creators within this unique context. Such research has the potential to deepen our understanding of the complexities and evolving dynamics of online behaviors, particularly in non-traditional and emerging livestreaming phenomena.



Figure 1: Live Tiktok mud bath played by the elderly

After examining various prior studies, it is evident that a notable gap exists in the research concerning the motivations driving content creators to seek donations or financial support from their audiences. Additionally, there is a dearth of investigation into the peculiar phenomenon of mud bathing during live broadcasts on TikTok. Consequently, this study has been undertaken with the primary objective of delving into the intricacies of live mud baths. The aim is to bridge existing knowledge gaps and offer fresh perspectives that can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of human motivation and behavior. By shedding light on the motivations behind soliciting financial support in the realm of content creation and exploring the uncharted territory of mud bathing in TikTok live broadcasts, this research endeavors to enrich the scholarly discourse. The findings from this study are anticipated to not only fill voids in current literature but also to provide valuable insights that may have practical implications in various fields related to human behavior and digital content creation.

Theoretically, motivation plays a pivotal role in driving individuals to undertake specific actions, and this is particularly evident in the phenomenon of content creators embracing mud bath content on TikTok. The self-determination theory (SDT) provides a pertinent and robust motivational framework for this study, as it emphasizes the importance of internal factors, particularly intrinsic motivation—an innate drive originating from within an individual (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation offers a compelling lens to understand various stimuli influencing behavior, such as boredom, pleasure, hobbies, social interaction, thrill-seeking, entertainment, aspirations for popularity, and financial incentives. SDT posits that individuals are more likely to engage in and excel at activities that inherently satisfy basic psychological needs. In the context of this study, SDT's relevance lies in its ability to explain why content creators are motivated to produce unique content like living mud baths, which may satisfy their need for self-expression, creativity, and connection with audiences. The theory provides insight into how these intrinsic drivers, along with external incentives like popularity or financial rewards, interplay to shape behavior. By addressing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, SDT offers a comprehensive understanding of the diverse motivations behind this phenomenon. Ultimately, it highlights the multifaceted nature of human motivation and sheds light on why certain content resonates with creators and audiences alike, thus enriching the analysis of TikTok trends.

The motivations behind the usage of social networking apps like TikTok have been extensively explored in numerous scientific studies from various perspectives. Intrinsic factors, such as boredom (Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009), fun (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011), and entertainment (Kim, Kim, & Nam, 2014) including conditions of humor, warmth, passion, and expertise are required (Silaban et al., 2023) have been identified as crucial elements that actively prompt individuals to engage in social networking sites. Furthermore, the social dimension is increasingly acknowledged as a significant motivator for utilizing these platforms.

Many users leverage social networking sites to cultivate relationships with friends, family, and even strangers, thereby expanding their social circle on a global scale (Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009). Beyond mere socialization, these platforms offer a convenient means to manage relationships and coordinate social activities. Users employ the platform's functionality to organize events, extend invitations to friends, and share information about planned social engagements (Beldad & Koehorst, 2015; Tosun, 2012). In essence, social networking sites function as multifaceted tools, satisfying both intrinsic desires and basic human needs for social interaction, thus becoming an integral component of contemporary social dynamics. These platforms not only serve as sources of entertainment but also as facilitators of interpersonal connections and the coordination of social experiences, reflecting their role as essential elements in modern social interactions.

In this context, social networking sites offer a unique avenue for connecting with specific groups and engaging in meaningful interactions (Joinson, 2008). Various social media platforms enable users to join communities or groups centered around shared interests or hobbies, facilitating interaction with like-minded individuals (Kim et al., 2014; Lin & Lu, 2011). These virtual communities emulate real-world social experiences, fostering mutual support, assistance, and recognition, ultimately enhancing users' sense of value and belonging within the group (Cheung et al., 2011). Despite the absence of predefined social structures, users retain the autonomy to establish their communities on these platforms (Hollenbaugh & Ferris, 2014). The motivations driving engagement on social network sites are diverse and encompass self-expression, the desire for recognition, and the pursuit of financial gain (Greenwood, 2013). A comprehensive literature review has identified distinct motivational categories, with a particular emphasis on content creators, including boredom alleviation, enjoyment, the pursuit of hobbies, social interaction, sensation-seeking, entertainment, the quest for popularity, and the aspiration to generate income (literature sources). In essence, users' participation on social network sites is multifaceted, driven by a myriad of motives that contribute to the dynamic and evolving nature of online social interactions.

2. Method

The research utilized a quantitative descriptive method, a systematic approach aimed at providing an objective and numerical representation of a specific situation. This method encompasses various stages, beginning with the collection of data and progressing through the interpretation of this data to the presentation and analysis of results (S. Sangadji, 2023; Sidel, Bleibaum, & Tao, 2018; Stone, 1992). The focus of this study was exclusively on observing and analyzing the content generated by mud bath creators on the TikTok platform. By utilizing this methodological framework, the research aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of the content creation practices within this specific niche. The observations were meticulous and centered on the diverse aspects of mud bath content, shedding light on the trends, patterns, and nuances prevalent in the TikTok community. The utilization of quantitative measures allowed for a nuanced examination, facilitating the extraction of meaningful insights from the collected data. The findings, rooted in the quantitative descriptive approach, contribute to the broader understanding of content creation dynamics on TikTok, specifically within the context of mud bath content, thus enriching the existing body of knowledge in the field.

The sample for this study was chosen through a judgmental sampling approach, guided by the population that aligns most closely with the researcher's aims and objectives, as outlined by Malhotra (2012); and S. Sangadji et al. (2022). Researchers opt for this approach due to its time efficiency and overall effectiveness. To determine the sample size, the Lemeshow formula is employed. This formula serves to calculate a representative sample within an unknown population state, as elucidated by Levy & Lemeshow (2013). The calculation process for determining the sample size is conducted according to the Lemeshow formula. This strategic

selection of samples ensures that the study remains methodologically sound and aligned with the research goals. The utilization of the Lemeshow formula adds a layer of statistical rigor to the sampling process, allowing for a more accurate representation of the broader population under investigation. This approach not only expedites the sampling process but also enhances the efficiency and reliability of the study, contributing to the robustness of the research methodology.

$$n = \frac{Z \cdot P(1 - P)}{d^2}$$

Description.

n = Number of Samples

Z = Distribution value z at CI 5%

P = Maximum probability of estimation

d = Alpha

$$n = \frac{1,64 \times 0,5(1 - 0,5)}{0,05^2}$$

n = 96 Sample

The results of these calculations show that the respondents in this study are 96 samples, with the main criterion being TikTok content creators who are active in creating mud bath content. The data collection methodology employed in this study involved the use of questionnaires utilizing a dichotomous scale. As elucidated by Schmidt (1997), the dichotomous scale stands out as a particularly convenient measurement tool for research endeavors, particularly in the context of online surveys. This preference is attributed to its user-friendly nature, where respondents are tasked with selecting one of two answer choices, thereby streamlining the data collection process and facilitating a more straightforward analysis. The simplicity of this scale not only makes it easy for participants to engage but also enhances the efficiency of subsequent data analysis. Once the primary data is acquired through the questionnaire, the next phase involves data analysis. In this regard, the study adopts a univariate frequency distribution-based analysis approach aimed at offering a comprehensive depiction of the motivation variable's distribution. This analytical technique proves instrumental in portraying the patterns and tendencies within the motivation variable, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the research subject. The utilization of this method ensures a thorough exploration of the data collected, aligning with the study's objectives and enhancing the overall robustness of the research findings.

3. Findings and Discussion

In order to discern the motivation behind content creators generating mud bath content while living on TikTok, our approach involves employing descriptive analysis based on frequency distribution. The primary objective of employing frequency distribution analysis lies in categorizing data into distinct categories or intervals, followed by the computation of the quantity of data falling within each category or interval, as outlined by Cortinhas & Black (2012). This analytical method proves invaluable for researchers as it facilitates a comprehensive comprehension of data distribution, enabling the identification of prevalent patterns or emerging trends within it. Furthermore, through frequency distribution analysis, the percentage of total data falling within each category or interval can be calculated, offering insights into the proportional representation of respondents' reactions concerning the measured data in alignment with the methodology presented by Anderson et al. (2016). The ensuing section provides a presentation of the data gleaned from the frequency distribution analysis conducted in this study.

Table 1. Content Creator Motivation

| Motivation | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Boredom | 1 | 1.04 |
| Pleasure | 5 | 5.21 |
| Hobby | 3 | 3.13 |
| Socialize | 2 | 2.08 |
| Sensation | 8 | 8.33 |
| Entertaining | 17 | 17.71 |
| Popularity | 9 | 9.38 |
| Make Money | 51 | 53.13 |

Based on the data presented, it is evident that the primary driving force behind content creators producing mud bath content is the pursuit of financial gain, constituting a significant majority at 53.3%. Furthermore, motivations centered around providing entertainment (17.71%) and enhancing one's popularity (9.38%) also play crucial roles in influencing the creation of such content. Interestingly, a subset of content creators engages in mud bath content creation purely for the sake of enjoyment (5.21%), as a hobby (3.13%), for socialization purposes (2.08%), and seeking sensationalism (8.33%). These findings align with a previous article that delineated two primary motives among content creators involved in crafting mud bath content—namely, the aspiration for fame and the pursuit of immediate profits (Arifin, Fauzi, & Umam, 2023). This study underscores the multifaceted nature of motivations driving content creation within the realm of mud bath content, highlighting a diverse range of factors beyond mere financial considerations, such as the desire for amusement, personal interests, social connections, and the allure of creating content that captivates audiences.

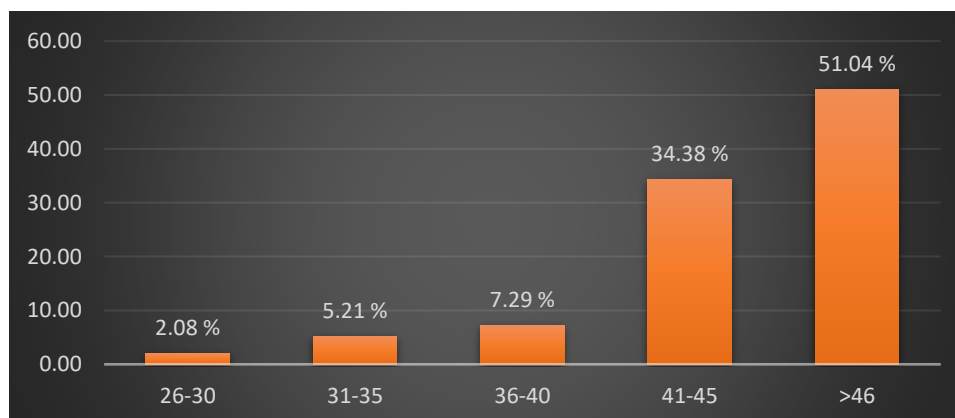


Figure 2: Percentage of Live Tiktok Actors taking mud baths by Age

Based on the data presented in Figure 2, it is evident that content creators predominantly select actors aged over 46 years for live mud baths, constituting 51.04% of the chosen demographic. The remaining percentages include individuals aged 26-30 years (2.08%), 31-35 years (5.21%), 36-40 years (7.29%), and 41-45 years (34.38%). Consequently, it can be asserted that the primary motivation of content creators, as outlined in Table 1, aligns with the selection of older actors for live mud baths on the TikTok platform, as illustrated in Figure 2. Essentially, the underlying motive appears to be a form of solicitation, with a clear indication of exploiting the elderly to evoke sympathy from the audience, encouraging them to contribute gifts generously. These gifts, acquired through the showcased actions, hold monetary value based on the accumulated points, reinforcing the notion that this behavior parallels a new-age form of begging. In essence, it involves leveraging social media platforms to elicit compassion

from the audience, thereby gaining financial support in a manner reminiscent of traditional begging. The author emphasizes the parallels between this contemporary approach and conventional begging, both aiming to elicit empathy and financial contributions from the public.

The findings of this research align with the perspectives of Jannah & Fasadena (2023), who assert that the income generated from these live sessions is, in fact, utilized by the account owners or content creators to indulge in the purchase of luxury items and extravagant activities. In their study, Jannah and Fasadena shed light on the financial behavior of individuals in the realm of online content creation, emphasizing that the revenue earned through live sessions serves as a means for these content creators to acquire high-end goods and engage in lavish lifestyles. The researchers' observations underscore a noteworthy trend wherein the monetary gains from such platforms are channeled toward the pursuit of opulence rather than being directed toward more prudent financial endeavors. This insight into the spending habits of account owners and content creators adds depth to the understanding of the economic dynamics within the digital content creation landscape. Moreover, it prompts further inquiry into the implications of this financial disposition on the sustainability and long-term financial well-being of those involved in the burgeoning field of online content creation.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the aforementioned research, a clear conclusion emerges that the primary driving force behind the creation of mud bath content by the majority of content creators is the pursuit of financial gain. Moreover, the deliberate choice of casting elderly actors aged 46 and above to engage in live mud baths raises ethical concerns, as it can be interpreted as exploiting the elderly for the purpose of soliciting gifts from the audience—a practice indicative of online begging. This choice of action underscores a motive that extends beyond mere content creation. It suggests a desire to profit through unconventional means, utilizing the vulnerability and generosity of the audience. Notably, the subsequent use of earnings from this content to purchase luxury items and indulge in extravagance further accentuates the profit-driven mindset of the content creator. This emphasis on personal satisfaction and financial gain, rather than the creation of valuable or educational content for the audience, underscores a prioritization of self-interest over the provision of meaningful content. In essence, the research illuminates a trend where content creators prioritize monetary rewards and personal gratification, potentially at the expense of ethical considerations and the delivery of substantive content to their audience.

4.1. Practical Implications

The research underscores a crucial practical implication, emphasizing the imperative for content creators to conscientiously acknowledge that the content they generate wields a profound influence on society and the encompassing environment. It becomes imperative for content creators to meticulously contemplate ethics and morals during the content creation process, ensuring that the output does not precipitate adverse impacts on viewers and other stakeholders in the content creation ecosystem. Simultaneously, there exists a pressing need for social media platforms to implement robust measures aimed at thwarting the dissemination of exploitative and detrimental content within their realms. This necessitates the imposition of stringent rules and regulations governing content creation and posting, coupled with vigilant supervision and expeditious removal of content that transgresses these stipulations.

Furthermore, social media users assume a pivotal role in cultivating a responsible online environment. This involves a conscientious evaluation of the repercussions of their actions, especially when bestowing gifts or financial support upon content creators. It is imperative to ascertain that the support extended does not become a vehicle for actions that inflict harm on

others or the ambient environment. By fostering awareness and engendering judicious actions across all relevant stakeholders, the aspiration is to forge a social media milieu characterized by positivity and mutual benefit for all users and participants involved in content creation.

4.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study is subject to several limitations. Firstly, its scope is restricted to content creators generating mud bath content exclusively on TikTok, potentially limiting its generalizability to content creators across other social media platforms. Secondly, the study relies solely on frequency distribution-based descriptive data analysis, inherently lacking the ability to establish causal relationships or make predictions about broader populations. Thirdly, the research employs survey methods employing questionnaires as data collection tools, which are inherently weak when it comes to capturing qualitative and intricate data, such as the motivations and rationales guiding content creators' actions.

As a remedy for these limitations, future research endeavors should consider employing a more diverse array of in-depth data collection methods, such as interviews and observations. These methods would offer a richer understanding of content creators' motivations and actions. Exploring beyond the confines of quantitative analysis could yield a more comprehensive perspective. Moving forward, research should extend its focus to comprehending the social and psychological impacts of mud bath content and similar content on social media, particularly on vulnerable demographics such as children and adolescents. Investigating the influence and role of social media in shaping behaviors, attitudes, and values among the youth is crucial. Additionally, future research could concentrate on formulating more effective guidelines and regulations to promote ethical and moral standards in social media usage. Addressing these aspects will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play in the realm of social media content creation and consumption.

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