

From Couple Goals to Romantic Expectations: A Qualitative Content Analysis of TikTok Comments

Novita Natarina* , Tiara Septia Utami

LSPR Institute of Communication and Business, Indonesia

Email: 25072220014@lspr.edu*, 25072220026@lspr.edu

Keywords:

TikTok; Couple Goals; Romantic Relationship Expectations; Qualitative Content Analysis; User Comments; Digital Culture

ABSTRACT

TikTok has become a significant digital platform where romantic relationship representations are produced, consumed, and negotiated among young users. Relationship-themed content, particularly couple goals, often presents idealized portrayals of romance that may influence users' perceptions, expectations, and interpretations of real-life relationships. This study aims to examine how ideal romantic relationship standards are constructed through TikTok user comments and to explore how social comparison processes emerge within digital interactions. This research employed a qualitative approach using qualitative content analysis. Data were collected from 20 TikTok videos related to couple goals and healthy relationships uploaded between 2024 and 2026, resulting in the analysis of 200 highly engaged user comments selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed through inductive thematic analysis using Cultivation Theory and Social Comparison Theory as analytical frameworks. The findings reveal five major themes: the idealization of romantic relationships as emotional standards, upward social comparison, humor and irony as emotional coping mechanisms, critical negotiation of romanticized relationships, and the normalization of healthy relationships as aspirations among younger generations. The results indicate that TikTok functions not only as an entertainment medium but also as an affective digital space where romantic expectations are collectively constructed, reinforced, and challenged. This study concludes that algorithm-driven exposure and user participation contribute to shaping contemporary romantic norms, while also encouraging critical reflection on unrealistic relationship expectations in digital culture.

INTRODUCTION

TikTok is one of the social media platforms with very rapid user growth globally. As of January 2026, TikTok has around 1.99 billion monthly active users with annual audience growth of 17%, surpassing several other social media platforms such as Instagram and LinkedIn (SocialPilot, 2026). The app has also been downloaded more than 5.48 billion times worldwide, with an average usage time of 95 minutes per day. Around 66% of TikTok's audience is in the age range of 18–34 years, showing the dominance of the younger generation in the use of the platform (Dreamgrow, 2026). TikTok is not only an entertainment platform, but also a social space shaped by algorithmic systems that influence the user experience. TikTok's algorithm, especially in the For You Page feature, shapes young users' daily content consumption patterns while influencing the way they understand and interpret emerging content. Additionally, TikTok use has become a part of daily routines as it is considered to provide easily accessible entertainment and escape, especially among young adults (Schellewald, 2023; Issar, 2023).

One type of content that dominates user consumption on TikTok is relationship-themed content that continues to evolve following the dynamics of digital culture, ranging from relationship goals and couple aesthetics to discussions around situationship, green flags, red flags, and healing relationships. Such content generally features a harmonious representation of relationships, emotionally attentive, and oriented towards the idealization of the couple. In the context of social media, relationship goals refer to the representation of romantic relationships that are perceived as ideal and used as an aspirational standard by users in interpreting interpersonal relationships. These representations generally feature harmonious, supportive, romantic, and emotionally validated relationships that form certain expectations about relationships that are considered desirable in digital culture.

In the perspective of Cultivation Theory, repeated and continuous exposure to certain representations in the media has the potential to shape an individual's perception of social reality as if it were a commonly accepted norm. In the context of TikTok, this mechanism has the potential to influence how users define the standards of romantic relationships that are considered normal and ideal.

TikTok's algorithmic characteristics reinforce that dynamic. The platform works through a personalized-based recommendation system that distributes content based on user interaction patterns and preferences, thus increasing the likelihood of users being repeatedly exposed to certain types of content (Novita Natarina* , Tiara Septia Utami LSPR Institute of Communication and Business, Indonesia Email: 25072220014@lspr.edu* , 25072220026@lspr.eduKaye, Chen, & Zeng, 2021). This system creates an echo chamber effect where users who consume relationship content will be continuously presented with similar content in a curated and intensified manner. This consistent exposure condition is relevant to Social Comparison Theory, which explains that individuals tend to compare their personal lives with representations of other people's lives as a form of self-evaluation. In the context of social media, this process is generally in the form of upward comparison, where users compare their personal relationships with representations that seem more ideal in the media, which has the potential to cause dissatisfaction with the real relationships they are living (Vogel et al., 2014).

User responses to relationship content on TikTok do not stop at passive consumption. The comment section is a space where users actively express their emotions, personal experiences, and views on romantic relationships. Comments like "when did I have a relationship like this", "this guy only exists on TikTok", or "relationship goals are really good" reflect the construction of meaning that takes place organically in the digital space. Papacharissi (2015) explained that the comment column on social media serves as an arena for the formation of affective discourse, where emotions, values, and social norms are negotiated publicly. Mendelson and Smith (2024) explain that trends and narratives of romantic relationships on TikTok can influence the process of forming romantic identities and the meaning of interpersonal relationships through mediated learning practices in digital spaces. In the perspective of digital participatory culture, media audiences are no longer positioned as passive recipients of messages, but as active participants who participate in creating, sharing, and interpreting content through interaction in digital spaces (Burgess & Green, 2018).

A number of previous studies have confirmed the relevance of this phenomenon. Research shows that social media can influence romantic beliefs, partner expectations, and

relationship dynamics in young age groups (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2017). In addition, the use of social media and exposure to romantic relationship content are also related to increasing relational expectations, jealousy, and the internalization of ideal relationship standards in romantic relationships (Aloia, 2023). In the context of social media use in Indonesia, research shows that TikTok can influence how users view romantic relationships, both in positive and negative aspects, including in shaping perceptions of ideal relationships, emotional expectations, and the quality of interpersonal relationships. These findings also confirm the importance of digital literacy and critical awareness in accessing romantic content on social media (Kumala et al., 2025). However, most previous research has focused on the impact of social media consumption on self-esteem, body image, or individual relational satisfaction. Meanwhile, studies examining how the standard of ideal romantic relationships are constructed collectively through user interaction in TikTok's comment column are still limited, especially in the context of Indonesia's digital culture. In fact, the comment column is a participatory space where users actively negotiate the meaning of romantic relationships through affective expression, humor, and social comparison.

This phenomenon is important to research because the perception of ideal relationships has direct implications for how individuals interpret love, commitment, and interpersonal relationships in real life. Fox and Warber (2014) remind that the ideals of relationships formed through social media have the potential to create unrealistic relationship expectations that have an impact on relational satisfaction and emotional well-being. The comment column as an authentic, unstructured space of expression offers direct access to how users actually interpret and respond to representations of romantic relationships they consume, data that cannot be obtained through conventional survey approaches.

Based on the research gap, this study aims to analyze how the perception of an ideal romantic relationship is constructed through user comment columns on couple goals content on TikTok, as well as understand how the process of social comparison is manifested in these digital interactions. This research is expected to contribute to the study of digital communication and social media culture, especially in understanding the construction of the meaning of romantic relationships in the era of algorithm-based platforms.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach with a qualitative content analysis method. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on the social meanings and constructions that emerge in the digital interactions of social media users, rather than on statistical measurements (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative content analysis is seen as appropriate for examining digital texts that are naturalistic in nature because it allows researchers to capture numerical nuances of meaning, including emotional expressions, irony, and social comparisons that appear implicitly in user comments (Mayring, 2022). The process of identifying and interpreting themes refers to Braun and Clarke's (2019) inductive thematic analysis guide, in which themes are developed flexibly based on patterns of meaning emerging from the data, without using predefined categories. This approach allows researchers to explore the user's perspective and experience in depth through a reflective interpretive process.

The object of the research is user comments on TikTok content with the theme of couple goals and relationships. Content is selected purposively based on several criteria: using relevant

keywords or hashtags such as #relationshipgoals, #couplegoals, and #hubungansehat; uploaded in the 2024–2026 period; having a high engagement rate shown through at least 100 thousand views and 100 thousand engagements; and is not sponsored content or paid advertising whose representation is not organic. Purposive sampling was chosen because it allows researchers to select the most relevant and informative data sources according to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). The study used 20 TikTok videos as a data source, with a total of 200 comments collected from the top comments on each video. Top comments were chosen because they have the highest level of visibility and interaction so that they have the potential to represent the dominant discourse that gains social legitimacy from other users through the mechanism of likes and engagement. The sample size of such comments is considered adequate in qualitative research because the primary goal is depth and richness of data, not statistical representation (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The data collected is public comments and can be accessed openly without authentication. However, the study still considers the ethical aspects of digital research by not including the personal identity of the user and using only comments that are relevant to the focus of the research, considering that the use of social media data still requires ethical considerations related to privacy and digital research responsibilities (Zimmer & Kinder-Kurlanda, 2017).

Digital observation is a technique commonly used in social media research because it allows researchers to observe user interactions and content produced directly in a digital environment without intervention on user activity (Sloan & Quan-Haase, 2016). Each comment is recorded along with supporting information including the source of the video, the content of the comment, the number of comments liked, and the time of publication. This supporting information is used to provide adequate context in the process of data analysis and interpretation. Comments that are spammy, promotional, non-Indonesian, in the form of replies between users that are not relevant to the topic, or are not related to the focus of the research are excluded from the research data.

Data analysis was carried out through several stages adapted from Braun and Clarke (2019), including data familiarization, inductive coding, theme development, and interpretation. At the coding stage, each comment is analyzed based on the meaning and context that appears in the data. The initial codes were then interpreted reflectively to identify broader patterns of meaning and constructed into the main themes of the study. The final interpretation is carried out using the framework of Cultivation Theory and Social Comparison Theory as an analytical lens to understand how the discourse of ideal romantic relationships is constructed in the digital comment space. These two theories are used in a complementary manner: in the perspective of Cultivation Theory, repeated and continuous media exposure has the potential to shape the public's perception of social realities and norms that are considered normal in daily life (Junaidi, 2018). In the context of TikTok, intense consumption of relationship content can contribute to the formation of a standard of romantic relationships that are perceived as ideal, normal, and desirable by users. While Social Comparison Theory is used to identify how users compare their personal relational experiences to representations of romantic relationships displayed in TikTok content, as manifested through the expression of user comments (Shen, 2025).

To increase the credibility and depth of interpretation, this study uses more than one analytical perspective in understanding the phenomenon being studied, thus allowing for a

more comprehensive interpretation of the data (Denzin, 2017). In addition, the researcher also applies reflexivity by explicitly reflecting on positions, experiences, and assumptions that have the potential to affect the data interpretation process. This approach is carried out to maintain analytical transparency while recognizing the active involvement of researchers in the process of constructing themes and meanings during the analysis (Byrne, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on an analysis of 20 TikTok videos themed on couple goals, secure relationship, and relationship maturity with a total of 200 comments with the most likes, this study found that the TikTok comment column functions as a space for users' spontaneous responses, but also becomes an arena for collective construction regarding the standard of ideal romantic relationships among the younger generation. User interactions show that the consumption of relationship content on TikTok involves an active process of emotional interpretation, where users not only enjoy the representation of romantic relationships, but also connect them to personal experiences, relational aspirations, and their own emotional insecurities.

Table 1. Thematic Coding Sample

Theme	Sample Comments	Code of Meaning
The Idealization of a Romantic Relationship	"It feels calm, steady, safe and CONSISTENT"	emotional safety, relational stability
Upward social comparison	"When I have a relationship like this"	Romantic Aspirations, social comparison
Humor as coping	"It's so frustrating when it happens"	emotional exhaustion, coping mechanism
Critical negotiation	"What are you missing?"	Resistance to romanticization
Healthy relationship ideal	"find a secure man. it changes everything"	emotional maturity, secure attachment

Through the inductive coding process using a reflexive thematic analysis approach, this study identifies five main themes, namely: (1) idealization of romantic relationships as a new emotional standard, (2) upward social comparison manifestations, (3) humor and irony as coping mechanisms emotional, (4) critical negotiation of the romanticization of relationships, and (5) normalization of healthy relationships as the aspirations of the younger generation. The five themes show that TikTok's comment column serves as a place for users to simultaneously reproduce, validate, and reinterpret the meaning of romantic relationships in algorithm-based social media culture.

The Idealization of Romantic Relationships as the New Emotional Standard

The most dominant theme in the data showed that users interpreted simple actions in relationships as a form of emotionally high romantic ideals. Content that displays small attention, such as helping to dry your partner's hair, remembering small things, being a soft spoken, providing a sense of security, carrying your partner's belongings, or showing concern through acts of service, garnered a very high response in the form of appreciative and aspirational comments.

In the video of @alyaaiqii account, for example, a male comment such as "It turns out that there is a person after dating says thank you" received more than 42 thousand likes. The high engagement with these comments shows the scarcity of emotional appreciation in user relationships. Similar things also appear in comments such as "a form of appreciation for men who always work for us" and "guys who like to appreciate their girls' little things make them happy", which shows that emotional validation is an important element in defining ideal relationships in the digital space.

In addition, users also place emotional safety as the main indicator of a healthy relationship. In the secure relationship-themed videos of @shinnnnns_ and @jessicaanatama, user comments repeatedly emphasize words such as "calm", "safe", "stable", "mature", "supportive", and "consistent". One of the comments mentioned:

"It feels calm, steady, safe and CONSISTENT."

While another comment wrote:

"A calming adult relationship is not confused without explanation."

These findings show a shift in the meaning of romance among young TikTok users. The idealization of relationships is no longer centered on material symbols or large romanticization's, but on the ability of couples to create emotional safety, emotional maturity, and psychological stability. This phenomenon is in line with research by Mendelson and Smith (2024) which shows that romantic content and trends on TikTok can influence the formation of romantic identities as well as the way young users interpret interpersonal relationships in digital culture through the mediated learning process.

In the perspective of Cultivation Theory, repeated exposure to the representation of supportive and harmonious relationships on TikTok has the potential to shape users' perceptions of relationships that are considered normal and desirable. This is strengthened by the characteristics of the TikTok algorithm that works through an interest graph, so that users who often interact with relationship content will continue to be exposed to the representation of similar relationships intensively and repeatedly (Bucher, 2018).

In contrast to traditional media, TikTok's algorithmic architecture amplifies emotional repetition through a personalized recommendation system, so that representations of ideal romantic relationships can continue to circulate consistently within the user's affective environment. This repeated exposure allows certain relationship standards to not only be consumed as entertainment, but also internalized as emotional and relational references in everyday life. Thus, TikTok's algorithm serves not only as a content distribution system, but also as a cultural mechanism that normalizes the norms of romantic relationships through algorithmic repetition

Upward Social Comparison Manifestations in "When Yes" Expressions

The second theme that appears very consistently is the practice of upward social comparison, which is the tendency for users to compare their relational lives with the more ideal representation of relationships on TikTok. The most dominant form of this phenomenon appears through expressions such as "*when ya*", "*i wish*", "one day", "manifesting", and "when yes" found almost all of the research videos.

Comments like:

"I'M GOING TO HAVE A BOYFRIEND THIS YEAR, AND I WANT TO BE LIKE THAT."

or:

“ya Allah mau act of service man”

It shows that users not only passively enjoy the content, but also use it as an emotional reference point to evaluate their personal relational experiences. In this context, TikTok serves as an aspirational space where users project romantic desires, hopes, and expectations onto a relationship that is considered ideal.

In some commentaries, the process of social comparison even appears in the form of deeper and melancholy emotional reflections. One of the comments reads:

"When yes is a gentle question to myself, when is it my turn to feel it?"

The comment suggests that the expression "when ya" is not just a typical repetitive TikTok joke, but a form of emotional articulation of longing for an ideal relationship that users don't yet have. Repetitive expressions such as "when ya", "manifesting", and "one day" can also be understood as a form of performative digital vernaculars, which are the typical language of digital culture that users use to mark their participation in the relationship romanticization culture on TikTok. In this context, comments serve not only as a personal emotional expression, but also as a form of social engagement and cultural affiliation within the digital community of TikTok users. Interestingly, comments like these get high engagement, which shows a collective emotional resonance.

These findings reinforce Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954), specifically the concept of upward comparison in which individuals compare themselves to representations that are considered better or ideal. In the context of social media, exposure to the representation of ideal relationships and social comparison processes can affect relationship satisfaction and give rise to unrealistic relational expectations in users (Morry & Sucharyna, 2019).

In addition, the intensity of the appearance of "*when ya*", "*i wish*", and "*manifesting*" comments shows how TikTok's algorithm also strengthens the cycle of social comparison. Repeated exposure to romantic content causes the ideal relationship standard to continue to be algorithmically reproduced, so that users are increasingly encouraged to compare their personal lives with harmonious representations of relationships on social media. This phenomenon is also in line with the findings of Aloia (2023) which shows that the consumption of romantic content on social media is related to increased relationship expectations and the internalization of ideal relational norms.

Humor and Irony as Emotional Coping Mechanisms

Another finding that stands out is the use of humor, irony and self-deprecating jokes as a user's strategy in responding to the inequality between the reality of their relationship and the ideal representation seen on TikTok. Many comments use a joking, hyperbolic, or sarcastic format to convey jealousy, loneliness, or emotional exhaustion due to repeated exposure to relationship content.

Comments like:

"You're going to block it"

"It's Hard to Believe When You're Ready"

"That is why we don't want to go to the gym at 3 a.m."

or:

"I don't even want to tell you when I'm lazy"

Indicates the existence of emotional ambivalence in the consumption of romantic content. Users enjoy the content while feeling tired, left behind, or emotionally intimidated due to the relationship standards that continue to be reproduced on TikTok.

Interestingly, the humor in these comments often gets high likes. Thus, humor not only serves as an individual expression, but also as a social mechanism to build emotional solidarity between users who have similar relational experiences.

This phenomenon shows that TikTok's commentary culture works through a shared emotional culture, where envy, loneliness, and romantic desires are negotiated through humorous language to be lighter and socially acceptable. This is in line with the concept of affective publics from Papacharissi (2015), who explains that interactions on social media are shaped by the circulation of collective emotions that bring individuals together through shared emotional experiences.

Critical Negotiations on the Romanticization of Relationships

While the majority of comments indicated aspirations for ideal relationships, the study also found comments that were critical of the romanticization of relationships on TikTok. Some users are starting to question whether the representation of healthy relationships on social media is really realistic and can be applied in real life.

Some comments show resistance to the simplification of romantic relationships, such as:

"What are you missing?"

or:

"It's a little bit of a shame that we don't have to remember that we are important."

Other comments also show a critical negotiation of the concept of an overly stable relationship:

"At first, it was a bit of a struggle, but after a while the spark disappeared."

Additionally, some users highlight that a healthy relationship doesn't necessarily mean a conflict-free relationship. Comments like:

"I don't want to be angry with you, but if you don't want to be angry with someone else, why don't you do it?"

shows that users still view certain emotional boundaries that are non-negotiable in a romantic relationship.

These findings show that TikTok users are not entirely passive in accepting the construction of the ideal relationship from the media. They also perform critical interpretations based on more complex personal experiences. In this context, TikTok's comment column has become a dynamic arena for social negotiations, where users can simultaneously affirm, question, or reject the standards of relationships circulating on the platform.

This phenomenon strengthens the view of Burgess and Green (2018) regarding participatory culture, where social media users not only play the role of passive consumers, but

also as active participants who produce, share, and shape cultural meanings through digital interactions on new media platforms.

Normalization of Healthy Relationships as the Aspiration of the Young Generation

The last theme shows a transformation of relational values among young TikTok users, where the ideal romantic relationship is no longer constructed as an intense, possessive, or full of dramatic emotional dynamics, but as a relationship that presents a sense of security, emotional stability, open communication, consistency, and the ability to grow together psychologically. In this context, the concept of a healthy relationship has been redefined in the digital space as a relationship that is emotionally soothing and able to provide psychological validation for couples.

Comments like:

"More calm"

"A comfortable and safe place for couples"

"find a secure man. it changes everything"

shows that emotional maturity is beginning to be constructed as a new standard of romance among the younger generation. The ideal relationship is no longer a relationship filled with big romantic gestures or hyperbolic emotional intensity, but one that is able to create a sense of security, stability, and emotional openness consistently. These findings indicate a shift in digital romantic culture from passionate relationship orientation to emotionally secure relationships.

In addition, there are also aspirations for more mature and realistic relationships, such as accepting the couple's busyness, the importance of me time, open communication, and the ability to resolve conflicts in a healthy manner. This is seen in the comments:

"Relationships are focused on growing and continuing to improve themselves"

and:

"Sometimes relationships aren't 50:50 continuous."

These findings suggest a shift in digital relational culture from the romanticization of hyperemotional relationships to relationships that are more oriented towards psychological stability and emotional security.

However, the study also found that the standards of healthy relationships that are constantly being reproduced on TikTok have the potential to create new emotional distress. When ideal relationships continue to be presented as harmonious, supportive, and emotionally available, users who don't have similar experiences tend to feel emotionally or romantically left behind. In this context, TikTok simultaneously functions as a space of emotional aspiration as well as a space of emotional pressure. On the one hand, users idealize emotionally safe relationships as a healthier alternative to toxic relationship dynamics. But on the other hand, repeated exposure to such representations of relationships also creates new normative pressures on how romantic relationships should be lived, felt, and displayed. This condition can be seen from the appearance of comments that implicitly show a sense of emotional and romantic lag when users constantly compare their personal relationships with the relationship standards

circulating on TikTok. Thus, healthy relationships that were initially constructed as an ideal form of relationship have the potential to turn into new normative standards that are difficult to achieve realistically. This is in line with Fox and Warber (2014) who explained that the idealization of relationships on social media can give rise to unrealistic relationship expectations that affect individual relational satisfaction.

Overall, couple goals content on TikTok not only serves as entertainment, but also as a cultural mechanism that shapes the relational expectations of the younger generation collectively. The comment column becomes an affective and participatory space where the norms of romantic relationships are produced, negotiated, internalized, and publicly questioned by users in an algorithm-based social media culture.

The findings of this study show that the construction of romantic relationships on TikTok does not only take place through visual representations of video content, but is also produced collectively through affective interactions in the comment column. Thus, the comment column cannot be viewed simply as an audience response space, but rather as a participatory arena where the standards of romantic relationships are socially and algorithmically negotiated. These findings expand the study of Cultivation Theory in the context of algorithm-based platforms, where the cultivation process no longer takes place one-way through media exposure, but also through participatory reproduction of meaning between users.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the comment column on couple goals content on TikTok not only serves as a space for users' spontaneous responses, but also becomes an arena of digital culture where the ideal romantic relationship standards are constructed, negotiated, and validated collectively. Through an analysis of user comments on various TikTok relationship content, it was found that users actively interpret ideal relationships as relationships that provide a sense of security, emotional attention, healthy communication, consistency, emotional support, and the ability to grow together emotionally. In this context, the idealization of romantic relationships on social media is no longer solely centered on big romantic gestures or material aspects, but rather on emotional safety, emotional maturity, and relational calmness. The study also found that user interaction in the comment column showed the strength of upward social comparison practices shown through repetitive expressions such as "when ya", "i wish", "one day", and "manifesting". The expression suggests that users not only passively consume romantic content, but also use it as an emotional reference to evaluate their own relational experiences while projecting expectations towards an ideal relationship in the future. Repeated exposure to TikTok's algorithm-curated romantic content then reinforces the reproduction of certain relationship standards that are considered desirable in real life. These findings show the relevance of Cultivation Theory and Social Comparison Theory in understanding how social media shapes the romantic expectations of the younger generation in the era of algorithm-based platforms. On the other hand, this study also shows that users are not completely passive in accepting the romanticization of relationships on TikTok. A number of comments show skepticism, resistance, and critical negotiation of the ideal relationship standards circulating on social media. Humor, irony, self-deprecating jokes, and sarcastic comments emerged as an emotional coping mechanism as well as a form of digital solidarity

between users who have similar relational experiences. This shows that TikTok's comment column is a dynamic participatory space, where users simultaneously reproduce, question, and reinterpret the meaning of romantic relationships based on their personal experiences.

REFERENCES

- Aloia, L. S. (2023). Antecedents and consequences of interpersonal electronic surveillance in romantic relationships. *Communication Quarterly*, 71(4), 436–455. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2023.2228860>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Burgess, J., & Green, J. (2018). *YouTube: Online video and participatory culture* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.
- Byrne, D. (2022). A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis. *Quality & Quantity*, 56, 1391–1412. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01182-y>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (C. N. Poth, Ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Denzin, N. K. (2017). *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*. Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315134543>
- Dreamgrow. (2026). *TikTok statistics 2026: Usage, downloads, and demographics*. <https://www.dreamgrow.com/tiktok-statistics/>
- Fox, J., & Warber, K. M. (2014). Social networking sites in romantic relationships: Attachment, uncertainty, and partner surveillance on Facebook. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 17(1), 3–7. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2012.0667>
- Hennink, M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2022). Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research: A systematic review of empirical tests. *Social Science & Medicine*, 292. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114523>
- Issar, S. (2023). The social construction of algorithms in everyday life: Examining TikTok users' algorithm awareness and perceptions. *International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2023.2233138>
- Junaidi. (2018). Cultivation Theory in Communication Science. *SIMBOLIKA*, 4(1), 42–51. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326034932_Mengenal_Teori_Kultivasi_dalam_Ilmu_Komunikasi
- Kaye, D. B. V., Chen, X., & Zeng, J. (2021). The co-evolution of two Chinese mobile short video apps: Parallel platformization of Douyin and TikTok. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 9(2), 229–253. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157920952120>
- Kumala, E. C., Cahayani, I. R., Santika, N. D., Rahim, B., Ilham, M., & Periantalo, J. (2025). Kualitas hubungan romansa pengguna TikTok pada young adulthood. *Jurnal Multidisiplin Inovatif*. <https://sejurnal.com/pub/index.php/jmi/article/view/4097>
- Mayring, P. (2022). *Qualitative Content Analysis: A Step-by-Step Guide* (First ed.). Sage Publication Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781036231798>

- Mendelson, E. A., & Smith, J. K. (2024). Mediated sexual and romantic learning on TikTok: The Dating Wrapped trend. *Social Media + Society*, 10(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051241279255>
- Morry, M. M., & Sucharyna, T. A. (2019). Relationship social comparisons in dating and marital relationships: Adding relationship social comparison interpretations. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 159(4), 398–416. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2018.1498826>
- Papacharissi, Z. (2015). *Affective publics: Sentiment, technology, and politics*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199999736.001.0001>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications. https://ia800500.us.archive.org/30/items/michael-quinn-patton-qualitative-research-evaluation-methods-integrating-theory-/Michael%20Quinn%20Patton%20-%20Qualitative%20Research%20&%20Evaluation%20Methods_%20Integrating%20Theory%20and%20Practice-Sage%20Publi
- Schellewald, A. (2023). Understanding the popularity and affordances of TikTok through user experiences. *New Media & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437221144562>
- Shen, Y. (2025). Social Comparison on Social Media and Its Impact on Self-Esteem, Appearance Anxiety, and Career Worry. *Communications in Humanities Research*, 97(1), 41-48. DOI:10.54254/2753-7064/2025.HT29807
- Sloan, L., & Quan-Haase, A. (2016). Building Interdisciplinary Social Media Research Teams: Motivations, Challenges, and Policy Frameworks. *Sage Research Methods*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473983847.n4>
- SocialPilot. (2026). TikTok statistics: Usage, growth, and trends (2026). <https://www.socialpilot.co/tiktok-marketing/tiktok-statistics>
- Vannier, S. A., & O'Sullivan, L. F. (2016). Passion, connection, and destiny: How romantic expectations help predict satisfaction and commitment in young adults' dating relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 34(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407516631156>
- Vogel, E. A., Rose, J. P., Roberts, L. R., & Eckles, K. (2014). Social comparison, social media, and self-esteem. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 3(4), 206–222. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000047>
- Zimmer, M., & Kinder-Kurlanda, K. (Eds.). (2017). *Internet Research Ethics for the Social Age: New Challenges, Cases, and Contexts*. Peter Lang Publishing, Incorporated. https://michaelzimmer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/internet_research_ethics_social_age_cc_license.pdf