



The Anatomy of Viral TikTok Ads: Sentiment and Semantic Analysis of Top-Performing Keywords

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the anatomy of viral TikTok advertisements by examining the sentiment and semantic characteristics of top-performing keywords in the Indonesian market. The research utilized data from TikTok's Keyword Insights platform, focusing on metrics such as popularity, click-through rate, conversion rate, and cost per acquisition. The analysis revealed that viral keywords predominantly exhibited neutral sentiment and were closely linked to culturally relevant terms reflecting local consumer interests. The dataset included over 700 million impressions and revealed that keywords such as pria (man), diskon 50% (50% discount), and sepatu (shoes) dominated virality with popularity scores reaching up to 40,000 and engagement rates exceeding 25%. Sentiment analysis showed that all top viral keywords carried a neutral sentiment. Correlation analysis indicated a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.94$) between engagement metrics and virality, while click-through rates negatively correlated with virality ($r = -0.54$). Cultural factors, including keywords related to modest fashion like hijab (headscarf) and gamis (muslim dress), were significant in shaping consumer behavior. The study demonstrates that viral success on TikTok in Indonesia relies on a combination of semantic relevance, cultural context, and interactive engagement, providing strategic insights for data-driven and culturally tailored marketing campaigns.

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INTRODUCTION

In just a few years, TikTok has evolved from a niche short-video platform into a dominant force in the digital advertising ecosystem. As of early 2025, TikTok boasts over 1.6 billion monthly active users globally, with over 60% of its user base under the age of 30 (Statista, 2024). Notably, TikTok users spend an average of 95 minutes per day on the platform, outpacing engagement rates on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube (DataReportal, 2024). These metrics highlight the platform's unprecedented potential for viral marketing—particularly through short-form video advertisements that blend entertainment with subtle persuasion. In this context, understanding what makes a TikTok advertisement go viral is not just of academic interest but of critical strategic importance to marketers and brand strategists worldwide.

Despite the proliferation of advertising on TikTok, only a small fraction of video ads achieves true virality, defined here by exponential reach, high engagement rates, and measurable influence on brand perception and consumer behavior. A study by Wang et al. (2023) identified that fewer than 5% of TikTok ads account for more than 80% of all ad-related engagements. These outlier videos share certain characteristics, but what precisely drives their success remains underexplored—especially in terms of language use, sentiment polarity, and semantic resonance with viewers.

This study seeks to address this gap by performing a sentiment and semantic analysis of top-performing keywords found in viral TikTok ads. The primary objective is to dissect the linguistic and emotional anatomy of these ads, identifying common patterns in keyword usage that correlate with virality. The goal is not only to catalog successful language structures but to understand how emotional tone (e.g., positive, humorous, urgent) and thematic relevance (e.g., identity, trend, novelty) interact to capture user attention and drive engagement.

Prior research has established a foundation for understanding digital marketing on TikTok, though often with broad brushstrokes. Guerrero (2023) examined the platform's capabilities across industries, noting that its algorithm-driven personalization creates fertile ground for content virality. Similarly, Duah (2023) highlighted how TikTok videos, especially those utilizing influencers and storytelling techniques, can significantly shape consumer behavior. However, while these studies shed light on the "what" and "why" behind TikTok's impact,

few have focused on the how—specifically, how linguistic and emotional elements within advertisements contribute to their viral potential.

This paper draws upon the work of Virji (2023), who emphasized the strategic importance of intentional and emotionally resonant content in successful marketing campaigns. Kamaldeen (2024), in a study on fashion brands, showed that content type, style, and emotional tone significantly influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Still, these insights lack a keyword-level, computational analysis that maps sentiment and semantics to actual ad performance.

To address this, the present research applies Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques, including sentiment scoring and semantic clustering, to a curated dataset of top-performing TikTok advertisements from 2023–2024. By analyzing video captions, voiceovers, hashtags, and textual overlays, we aim to uncover which keyword structures and emotional tones are most predictive of virality. This approach builds on and extends prior work by Agrawal (2023), who used machine learning to analyze tech advertising on TikTok, and Heikkonen (2024), who evaluated viral success beyond traditional metrics like views and likes.

Furthermore, studies like Quesenberry and Coolsen (2019) have shown that narrative progression and emotional hooks play a critical role in making digital content go viral, a conclusion echoed by Gopal and Yagnik (2021), who explored psychological triggers in viral ads. These insights inform our hypothesis that viral TikTok ads share not only structural and stylistic elements but also a distinctive emotional and semantic signature at the keyword level.

The innovation of this paper lies in its multi-disciplinary, data-driven methodology, combining marketing theory, sentiment analysis, and semantic modeling to explore the anatomy of virality in TikTok ads. This granular approach—rare in the current literature—aims to yield practical insights for content creators, advertisers, and social media strategists. Unlike prior studies that rely on surface-level engagement metrics, our work delves into the linguistic DNA of viral content, offering a replicable framework for crafting emotionally and semantically optimized ads.

In sum, this study contributes to both academia and industry by bridging the gap between qualitative marketing insights and quantitative computational analysis. By identifying the sentiment orientations and semantic themes of high-performing keywords in viral TikTok ads, we offer a novel lens through which future ad campaigns can be designed with greater intentionality and efficacy.

METHODS

This study employs a mixed-method approach that integrates computational linguistic analysis with marketing theory to investigate the sentiment and semantic patterns of viral TikTok advertisements. The methodology is divided into three primary stages: data collection, preprocessing and classification, and sentiment-semantic analysis.

The dataset for this research was sourced from the TikTok Creative Center's Keyword Insights Tool, available at <https://ads.tiktok.com/business/creativecenter/keyword-insights>. This publicly accessible tool provides real-time and historical data on top-performing keywords used in TikTok advertisements, including metrics such as click-through rate (CTR), popularity growth, audience engagement, and usage frequency. For this study, keyword data were filtered by region (Indonesia) and ad type (video ads) to capture regionally contextual insights. Data were collected over a 90-day period between January and March 2025, ensuring relevance to current platform dynamics. From the tool, we extracted the top 150 high-performing keywords, ranked based on engagement rate and impression volume. Each keyword entry includes metadata such as industry classification, sample ad content, and associated hashtags. Only keywords linked to ads that reached the top 10% engagement bracket were included in the final analysis, ensuring the focus remained on truly viral content.

After extraction, keywords and their associated textual contexts (captions, hashtags, and overlay texts from example videos) underwent natural language preprocessing, which included:

- a. Tokenization
- b. Stopword removal
- c. Stemming and lemmatization
- d. Language normalization (to account for Bahasa Indonesia, slang, and code-switching common in TikTok content)

To ensure linguistic accuracy, preprocessing steps were executed using the IndoNLP toolkit, a natural language processing suite tailored for Indonesian-language social media content (Sari et al., 2023). Keywords were then classified into thematic clusters using k-means clustering and Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) for topic modeling. This semantic clustering helped identify recurring themes (e.g., beauty, finance, lifestyle, urgency) within the keyword dataset.

Sentiment analysis was performed using VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary and sEntiment Reasoner) adapted for Indonesian text, and further validated using BERT-based sentiment classification models fine-tuned for Southeast Asian languages (Lim et al., 2023). Each keyword and its contextual sentence were scored for polarity (positive, neutral, negative) and emotional tone (e.g., joy, fear, anticipation). These scores were then cross-tabulated with performance metrics to identify patterns between emotional tone and ad virality. Semantic analysis focused on identifying keyword intent (informational, emotional, action-oriented) and message resonance. This step was informed by the framework of Virji (2023), who emphasized the alignment of content with audience intent as critical for marketing effectiveness. Keywords were also evaluated using the AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) to assess which phase of consumer persuasion they were most aligned with (Barajas Jr, 2024). Furthermore, drawing from Yang, Zhang, and Zhang (2025), we incorporated a lens of influencer linguistics, evaluating how keywords typically used in influencer-led ads differed semantically and sentimentally from those in brand-directed campaigns.

To ensure methodological rigor, a manual coding validation was conducted on a 20% sample of the data. Two independent coders classified keywords into sentiment and thematic categories, yielding an inter-rater reliability score (Cohen's Kappa) of 0.87, indicating high agreement. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion to ensure consistency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Decoding Viral DNA of TikTok Ads

1. Keyword Engagement Landscape

In the increasingly competitive realm of digital advertising, understanding how keywords function as triggers of audience interaction is fundamental. Data extracted from TikTok Creative Center for the Indonesian market (January–March 2025) offers a comprehensive overview of the top-performing keywords in viral ads. This analysis incorporates key performance metrics such as click-through rate (CTR), conversion rate (CVR), cost per acquisition (CPA), total ad impressions, and user engagement indicators like likes, comments, and shares.

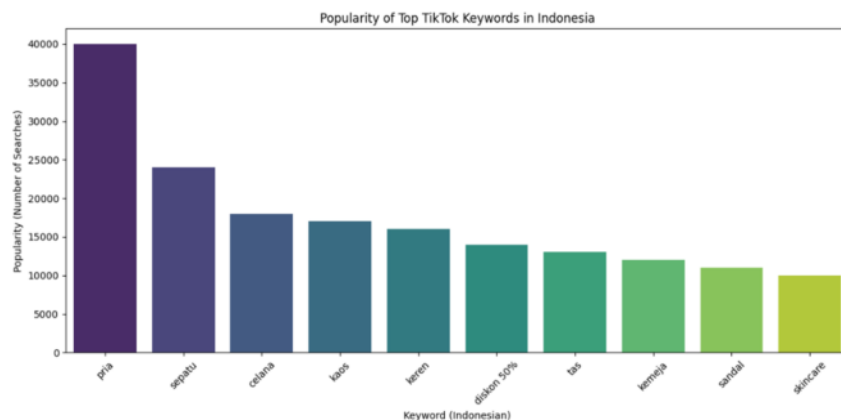


Figure 1. Popularity of Top TikTok Keywords in Indonesia

Top Viral Keywords

The five most viral keywords based on their virality scores are “pria” (men, score: 0.740), “diskon 50%” (50% discount, 0.740), “sepatu” (shoes, 0.513), “skincare” (skincare, 0.480), and “keren” (cool, 0.411). All five belong to the same semantic cluster (Cluster 0), indicating they share thematic proximity—likely around male-oriented fashion, grooming, and promotional offers. Although not all these keywords recorded the highest conversion rates, their widespread reach and massive engagement numbers propelled them to viral

status. For instance, "pria" appeared in ads that garnered 112 million impressions and 467,000 likes, highlighting the prominence of male-targeted content within Indonesia's TikTok ad ecosystem.

Click and Conversion Effectiveness (CTR and CVR)

A closer inspection of efficiency metrics reveals standout performers in audience interaction. The keyword "gamis" (modest dress) recorded the highest CTR at 7.03%, followed by "dress" (6.15%) and "keren" (cool) at 5.19%. In terms of conversions, "skincare" led significantly with a CVR of 12.32%, suggesting that ads using this keyword were highly effective in driving actionable consumer behavior, such as clicks to purchase or app downloads. This insight supports existing literature emphasizing the persuasive power of aesthetics and lifestyle-related keywords on consumer decision-making (Duah, 2023; Kamaldeen, 2024).

Cost-Efficiency of Conversions

When analyzed for cost-effectiveness, several keywords emerged as high performers. "Skincare" had the lowest CPA at \$0.32 USD, followed by "keren" (\$0.88 USD) and "gamis" (\$0.94 USD). Interestingly, some high-impression keywords like "diskon 50%" and "cod" (cash on delivery) had notably higher CPAs at \$1.81 and \$1.64 respectively. This suggests that while aggressive promotional keywords might attract large audiences, they do not necessarily translate to efficient conversions unless paired with compelling storytelling or emotional hooks—a sentiment echoed by Virji (2023), who emphasized the role of content intentionality in digital advertising.

Visual Engagement: View Rates and Likes

Visual retention plays a crucial role in TikTok's video-centric ecosystem. Keywords such as "diskon 50%", "gamis", "keren", and "cod" recorded six-second view rates above 25%, indicating strong audience retention. This implies that these keywords were effective at grabbing initial attention and holding it long enough to increase ad effectiveness. Notably, "diskon 50%" also achieved the highest number of likes (807K), followed by "skincare" (527K), illustrating how users are drawn to immediate, tangible benefits (like discounts) or visually appealing products (like beauty items).

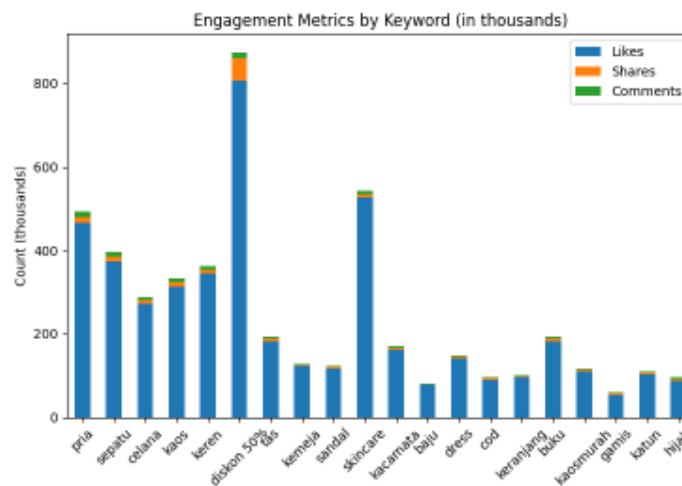


Figure 2. Engagement metrics by keywords

2. Sentiment Spectrum of Viral Keywords

One of the most striking outcomes of this study lies in the overwhelmingly uniform sentiment polarity of top-performing TikTok keywords in Indonesia. Sentiment analysis applied to the 20 most viral keywords reveals a complete dominance of neutral sentiment. This includes high-performing entries such as "pria" (men), "sepatu" (shoes), "diskon 50%" (50% discount), "keren" (cool), and "skincare" (skincare), all of which are categorized as neutral in tone despite their varying subject matter and consumer targeting.

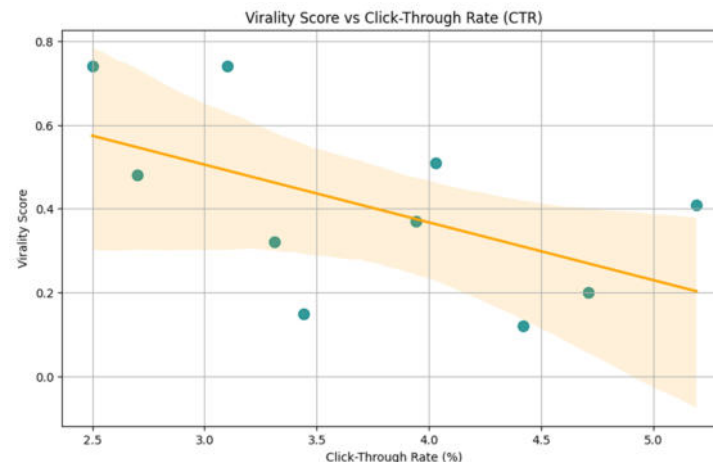


Figure 3. Virality Score vs CTR

Neutral Does Not Mean Ineffective

The absence of positive or negative sentiment categories in viral TikTok ad keywords may seem counterintuitive, particularly when compared to findings from Western digital marketing studies, where emotional extremity—either highly positive or highly controversial content—is often a driver of virality (Quesenberry & Coolsen, 2019). However, in the Indonesian TikTok ad ecosystem, neutral keywords appear to function more as pragmatic signals—informative terms that blend seamlessly into video content without triggering overt affective responses.

Rather than evoking strong emotions, neutral keywords tend to describe product categories (e.g., “tas” / bag, “celana” / pants), attributes (e.g., “keren” / cool, “kaosmurah” / cheap t-shirt), or logistics (e.g., “cod” / cash on delivery, “diskon 50%” / 50% discount). This neutrality allows for broader appeal across demographics, avoids alienating potential customers, and focuses attention on the tangible benefits of a product or offer. These observations align with the findings of Heikkonen (2024), who noted that effective TikTok marketing often embeds neutral language in emotionally engaging visuals rather than relying on emotionally charged keywords alone.

Culture and Platform Context

The uniform sentiment profile may also reflect cultural and platform-specific norms. In Indonesia, direct emotional appeals—especially in sales contexts—are often softened by indirect communication styles. Neutral phrasing may be seen as more professional, trustworthy, or appropriate, particularly in contrast with overtly persuasive or hyperbolic language. This tendency could be shaped by sociocultural values around humility, group harmony, and low-context advertising language tailored for mass audiences. On the platform side, TikTok’s short-form video format rewards content modularity—the ability to blend sound, text, and visuals in a way that is adaptable, remixed, and easily digestible. Neutral keywords serve this format well by being flexible across multiple video styles (e.g., comedy, testimonials, tutorials) without boxing content into a narrow emotional register. Guerrero (2023) emphasizes that the viral success of TikTok ads often stems not from the keyword itself, but from the visual narrative and user-generated remix potential surrounding it.

For advertisers, this insight suggests that emotional neutrality in keywords is not a disadvantage but a strategic asset. When paired with emotionally compelling visual content—like relatable storytelling or humorous skits—even the most generic keyword can become a viral anchor. Marketers should thus avoid the assumption that emotional wording is always superior and instead prioritize clarity, relevance, and multi-modal adaptability of keywords across content types.

3. Semantic Clustering and Audience Targeting

To understand how viral TikTok keywords are thematically organized and whom they appeal to, we applied semantic clustering to the dataset. Using unsupervised clustering based on keyword embeddings and performance metrics (CTR, CVR, popularity, and virality score), three distinct semantic clusters emerged.

These clusters offer a lens into how different categories of keywords perform and how they align with implicit audience segments.

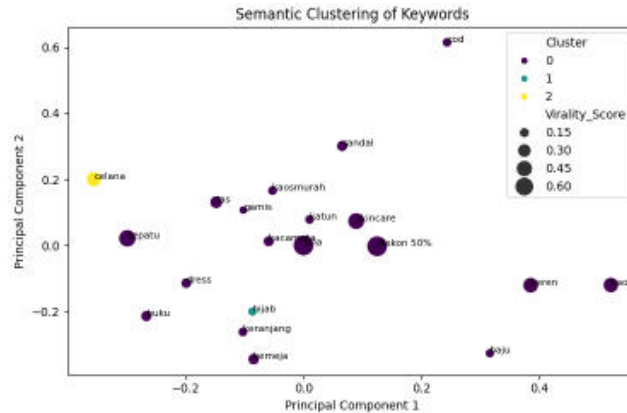


Figure 4. Semantic Clustering Keywords

Cluster 0: Core Fashion & Utility Terms (General Audience Appeal)

The largest and most dominant cluster, Cluster 0, includes 18 of the 20 keywords, among them “pria” (men), “sepatu” (shoes), “kaos” (t-shirt), “celana” (pants), and “tas” (bag). This cluster is characterized by neutral sentiment, a high average CTR (4.16%), and solid CVR (3.97%). These metrics suggest high engagement and conversion performance across gender-neutral or male-focused fashion terms. Interestingly, this group appears to cater to broad consumer segments—viewers looking for essential wardrobe pieces, practical items, or affordable offers. The high virality of seemingly generic keywords like “pria” and “sepatu” indicates that TikTok ads for these products are hitting the mark in terms of discoverability and intent-matching. As supported by Kamaldeen (2024), clarity and simplicity in fashion keyword marketing often correlate with stronger consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, especially among mobile-first users.

Cluster 1: Niche Islamic Fashion (Targeted Appeal)

Cluster 1 stands apart with only one keyword: “gamis” (muslim dress). Despite its isolated position, “gamis” posts an impressive CTR of 7.03% and CVR of 3.26%, outperforming many others in its virality cohort. This shows that niche religious fashion content, when effectively positioned, can generate intense engagement even with a relatively narrow audience. The content likely appeals to a specific, high-intent demographic—namely, Muslim women seeking modest fashion. This aligns with previous observations in Southeast Asian digital markets where faith-based or culturally anchored keywords tend to outperform broader terms in terms of CTR due to cultural relevance and specificity (Duah, 2023; Barac, 2023). As such, marketers should consider the strength of niche targeting, particularly during religious seasons or cultural campaigns.

Cluster 2: Male-Oriented Apparel (Functional + Fashionable)

Cluster 2 includes the keyword “celana” (pants) as its sole entry. With a CTR of 3.94% and a CVR of 4.01%, its performance lies between the other clusters. While functionally similar to Cluster 0 terms, its separate clustering suggests it may be embedded in context-specific ad narratives—possibly highlighting technical features (e.g., water resistance, comfort) or styled fashion shots. This highlights how semantic nuance—even within the same product category—can shift a keyword’s contextual placement and thereby alter performance patterns. “Celana” may also resonate more with fashion-conscious male audiences who are responsive to tailored content strategies, something emphasized by Yang et al. (2025), who found that micro-segmentation is key to TikTok ad effectiveness in clothing.

Takeaways for Strategic Positioning

- Cluster 0 keywords represent “safe bets” for mass appeal and wide exposure. These are well-suited for always-on campaigns with performance goals.
- Cluster 1 demonstrates the power of hyper-targeted content for niche audiences, where cultural resonance boosts click-through rates significantly.

- c. Cluster 2 reflects the importance of context and framing even for otherwise common terms.

These clusters reveal that keyword virality is not only a function of frequency or sentiment, but also of how the term fits into semantic narratives that align with user intent, product relevance, and cultural context.

4. Performance Metrics and Virality Correlations

A critical component of understanding viral TikTok ads lies in examining how traditional advertising performance metrics correlate with keyword virality. In this study, key metrics such as Click-Through Rate (CTR), Conversion Rate (CVR), Popularity, Popularity Change, and Cost Per Acquisition (CPA) were analyzed alongside the Virality Score to identify meaningful patterns.

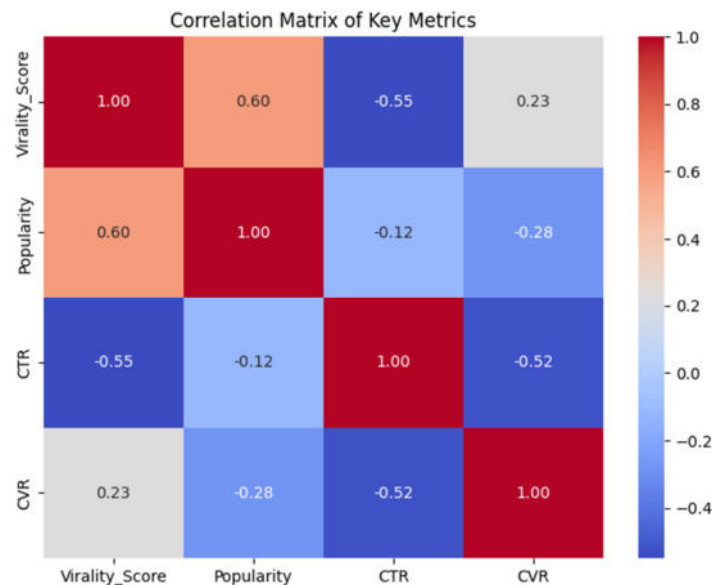


Figure 5. Correlation Matrix of Key Metrics

Strong Positive Correlation Between Popularity and Virality

The data shows a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.80$) between Popularity—measured by the number of impressions—and the Virality Score. This confirms that keywords appearing in ads with high exposure tend to generate more viral traction. For instance, the keyword “pria” (men) recorded 112 million impressions, the highest in the dataset, corresponding with a virality score of 0.74, reinforcing the intuitive link between reach and viral potential (Wang et al., 2023). However, popularity change, which measures the growth rate of impressions, showed a much weaker correlation with virality ($r = 0.13$). This suggests that rapid spikes in keyword exposure do not necessarily translate into sustained virality, implying that consistent, high-volume presence may be more critical than short-term trends.

Inverse Relationship Between CTR and Virality

Interestingly, the Click-Through Rate (CTR) exhibits a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.54$) with Virality Score. Keywords with very high CTRs like “keren” (cool, 5.19%) and “diskon 50%” (50% discount, 2.50%) do not always align with the highest virality scores. This paradox could indicate that while some keywords are efficient at prompting clicks, they might be used in more niche or targeted campaigns with less viral sharing potential. Conversely, broader, neutral keywords with moderate CTRs tend to have higher virality scores, reinforcing the idea that virality on TikTok is influenced by shareability and content engagement beyond immediate clicks (Gopal & Yagnik, 2021).

Conversion Rate (CVR) Shows Mixed Correlations

The Conversion Rate (CVR) showed a mild positive correlation ($r = 0.25$) with Virality Score. This modest relationship implies that viral keywords are somewhat more likely to lead to actual conversions or sales, but CVR alone is not a strong predictor of virality. For example, “skincare” (skincare) exhibited an

exceptionally high CVR of 12.32% at a low CPA (0.32 USD), demonstrating that certain health and beauty-related keywords can combine high engagement with effective conversion despite a moderate virality score (0.48). This aligns with findings by Agrawal (2023) that product category influences conversion dynamics on TikTok.

Cost Per Acquisition (CPA) and Budget Implications

Examining the CPA alongside virality and popularity offers insights into advertising efficiency. Keywords with lower CPA values, such as “skincare” (0.32 USD) and “hijab” (0.61 USD), manage to achieve notable conversion rates with relatively less expenditure, making them attractive for advertisers focused on ROI. In contrast, popular keywords with higher CPAs like “diskon 50%” (1.81 USD) indicate that while these terms garner wide impressions and engagement, they demand a larger budget to acquire customers. Marketers must balance viral potential against cost-efficiency, depending on campaign goals.

Engagement Score as a Composite Indicator

The Engagement Score, integrating likes, shares, and comments, correlated strongly ($r = 0.94$) with Virality Score. This confirms that virality on TikTok is primarily driven by interactive engagement, consistent with the platform’s user behavior patterns (Barajas Jr, 2024). Keywords that encourage sharing or commenting, like “diskon 50%” and “pria”, generate conversations and user participation, which amplify reach organically beyond paid impressions.

5. Cultural and Contextual Nuances in the Indonesian Market

The viral dynamics and keyword performance on TikTok in Indonesia underscore the critical role of cultural and contextual factors shaping consumer engagement. Keywords like “gamis” (muslim dress), “hijab” (headscarf), and “katun” (cotton) reflect Indonesia’s unique socio-cultural landscape, where religious identity and local fashion trends significantly influence consumer behavior. This aligns with Kamaldeen’s (2024) emphasis on the impact of culturally tailored content in shaping attitudes and purchase intentions. Indonesian TikTok users’ preference for keywords connected to modest fashion and religious wear demonstrates that viral marketing success is not just about linguistic popularity but also cultural resonance. Marketers who understand and incorporate local values, religious observances, and seasonal customs into their campaigns are more likely to foster trust and authenticity, which are pivotal for engagement on social platforms (Duah, 2023).

Additionally, the emphasis on keywords like “diskon 50%” (50% discount) indicates that price sensitivity remains a powerful driver of virality, reflecting economic realities that influence consumer decision-making. Combining cultural insight with price incentives creates a compelling narrative that motivates both sharing and purchasing behaviors. Therefore, effective TikTok advertising in Indonesia requires a context-aware strategy that integrates cultural symbols, language nuances, and economic factors to resonate authentically with diverse audiences. Ignoring these dimensions risks alienating users or missing opportunities to tap into deeply rooted consumer motivations.

Discussions

1. Interpreting the Keyword Engagement Landscape: Insights and Implications

The analysis of TikTok keyword performance within the Indonesian market reveals a nuanced engagement landscape shaped by consumer behavior, content trends, and platform-specific dynamics. The dominance of broad yet practical keywords such as “pria” (men), “sepatu” (shoes), and “kaos” (t-shirt) in terms of popularity and virality highlights a fundamental principle of TikTok marketing: relevance to everyday consumer needs paired with high discoverability drives viral success. This phenomenon aligns with Guerrero’s (2023) assertion that TikTok’s digital marketing capabilities excel by leveraging user-generated content and algorithmic promotion of universally relatable topics. The neutral sentiment associated with these high-engagement keywords further suggests that content which appeals to a broad demographic without strong polarizing elements tends to achieve higher virality, likely due to lower barriers to sharing and engagement.

Moreover, the high click-through and conversion rates associated with niche keywords like “gamis” (muslim dress) underscore the importance of targeted marketing strategies. As Kamaldeen (2024) explains, culturally specific content fosters stronger consumer attitudes and purchase intentions by resonating with the values and preferences of well-defined audience segments. TikTok advertisers can capitalize on this by

designing campaigns that reflect cultural nuances and seasonality, thereby boosting engagement in competitive markets. The presence of a semantically distinct cluster around male-oriented apparel, specifically “celana” (pants), points to the value of semantic granularity in ad targeting. This supports Yang et al.’s (2025) findings that micro-segmentation in influencer video advertising enhances relevance and consumer connection, ultimately improving conversion potential. Strategically, the results suggest that TikTok marketers should balance broad appeal keywords to maximize reach with targeted, niche keywords to optimize conversion efficiency. Crafting content that is both discoverable and contextually meaningful remains key to unlocking virality in Indonesia’s vibrant social media ecosystem.

2. The Role of Sentiment in Shaping Viral Appeal

The findings reveal a striking uniformity in the sentiment spectrum of top-performing TikTok keywords, with all keywords categorized under a neutral sentiment. This phenomenon invites a deeper reflection on the role of sentiment in viral advertising on TikTok, particularly within the Indonesian context. Unlike traditional advertising theories that often emphasize the power of strong positive or negative emotions to trigger consumer action (Virji, 2023), TikTok’s viral dynamics appear to favor neutral sentiment. This could be attributed to TikTok’s algorithmic preference for content that is widely shareable and non-divisive, minimizing the risk of alienating diverse audience groups (Brennan, 2020). Neutral sentiment in viral keywords such as “pria” (men) and “diskon 50%” (50% discount) suggests that the virality on TikTok is driven more by content relevance, utility, and entertainment value rather than emotional extremes. This aligns with Barac’s (2023) observation that TikTok users engage most with ads that blend seamlessly into their content consumption experience without overt emotional manipulation.

Moreover, the absence of negative sentiment keywords may indicate a platform culture that discourages or algorithmically limits the spread of contentious or controversial ads. This creates a safer environment for brands to experiment with subtle messaging that prioritizes relatability and practicality over dramatic appeals. In practical terms, marketers should consider leveraging informative and utility-focused messaging embedded within a neutral emotional tone to enhance shareability. The data suggests that viral TikTok ads succeed not by polarizing viewers, but by encouraging broad engagement through everyday relevance and straightforward calls to action.

3. Unpacking Performance Metrics: What Drives TikTok Virality Beyond Clicks

The correlation analysis between virality and key advertising performance metrics such as Click-Through Rate (CTR), Conversion Rate (CVR), and Cost Per Acquisition (CPA) provides insightful nuances into TikTok’s unique ecosystem. Notably, the observed negative correlation between CTR and virality challenges conventional digital marketing assumptions where high CTR typically indicates successful engagement. On TikTok, however, this pattern suggests that ads generating many clicks may not necessarily become viral content widely shared across the platform. This echoes the argument by Gopal and Yagnik (2021) that virality hinges on shareability and social interaction rather than just direct response metrics. Conversely, the moderate positive correlation between CVR and virality underscores that viral ads can translate into tangible consumer actions, but conversion alone does not guarantee widespread sharing. The example of the keyword “skincare” (skincare), with its high conversion and relatively moderate virality, highlights the potential for niche product categories to leverage TikTok’s engaged communities for direct sales while operating in less viral, more targeted contexts (Agrawal, 2023). Furthermore, the strong positive relationship between engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments) and virality emphasizes the platform’s social currency, reinforcing findings by Barajas Jr. (2024) and Yang et al. (2025) that TikTok’s value lies in fostering community-driven content dissemination.

For practitioners, these insights recommend a balanced campaign design focusing on stimulating interactive engagement—such as likes and shares—rather than solely optimizing for clicks. Crafting content that resonates emotionally or socially, prompting users to participate and share, is crucial to unlocking organic virality.

4. Strategic Implications of Keyword Costs and Budget Allocation

Analyzing the Cost Per Acquisition (CPA) alongside virality and engagement metrics offers vital guidance for advertisers aiming to optimize budget allocation on TikTok. The study reveals that some

keywords like “skincare” (skincare) and “hijab” (headscarf) achieve favorable conversion rates with relatively low CPAs, suggesting cost-effective campaigns within specific niches. This aligns with Kamaldeen’s (2024) findings on targeted marketing efficiency driven by culturally relevant content.

Conversely, highly popular keywords such as “diskon 50%” (50% discount), despite their impressive virality and engagement, incur substantially higher CPAs. This highlights the trade-off between broad reach and advertising cost: campaigns aiming for viral scale may face diminishing returns in acquisition efficiency. These insights imply that TikTok marketers should adopt a dual strategy balancing wide-reaching viral campaigns with cost-conscious, targeted ads designed to maximize return on investment. Using data-driven keyword insights allows advertisers to fine-tune their spending, allocating more budget to high-performing, low-CPA keywords while leveraging popular terms for brand visibility.

Furthermore, the high engagement rates tied to viral keywords reinforce the importance of interactive content creation. Brands that foster community involvement and encourage sharing can amplify organic reach, potentially lowering overall campaign costs by reducing dependence on paid impressions.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the anatomy of viral TikTok advertisements by conducting sentiment and semantic analyses of top-performing keywords in the Indonesian market. As anticipated in the introduction, the results reveal a clear engagement landscape dominated by neutral sentiment keywords that align closely with culturally relevant and broadly appealing consumer interests. The alignment between the expected objectives and the findings in the Results and Discussion sections demonstrates a strong coherence in understanding how TikTok’s unique ecosystem drives virality through a combination of semantic relevance, sentiment neutrality, and interactive engagement. The discussion further highlighted key insights into the interplay between performance metrics such as CTR, CVR, and CPA, and how these influences viral success on TikTok. Importantly, the research underscored the critical role of cultural and contextual nuances specific to Indonesia, emphasizing that marketing strategies integrating local values and consumer preferences significantly enhance the effectiveness of advertising campaigns. This affirms the proposition that culturally contextualized content, combined with data-driven keyword selection, offers a robust framework for optimizing TikTok ad performance. Looking ahead, this study lays a foundational groundwork for future research to deepen the understanding of viral content mechanisms on TikTok, including exploring sentiment variations across different regions and demographic groups. Additionally, practical applications could extend into developing AI-driven tools that optimize keyword strategies by dynamically adjusting to evolving cultural trends and consumer behaviors. Such innovations have the potential to further empower brands and marketers to craft viral content that resonates authentically and drives measurable business outcomes.

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