

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological framework used in the study, which is an investigation of the impact of online fan communities on TikTok in the reception of drama adaptations in Malaysia. In particular, it centers on the local serials that are based on the two novels: *Thariq Ridzuwan: His Treasure* and *Hilang Dalam Rindu*, and which, during the time of their airing, had attracted quite different online discourses. The research methods selected in this study are influenced by the character of the research questions, which intend to uncover how TikTok users produce, negotiate, and circulate meanings in relation to the two selected drama adaptations.

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine the influence of online fan communities on TikTok in terms of the reception of the Malaysian drama adaptations. The qualitative method is particularly suitable to the proposed study as it allows exploring meanings, interpretations, and participatory practices of the audience in depth instead of using numerical values of the audience size and frequency. Such a methodological selection corresponds to the problem statement and research objectives of the study which focuses on the way audiences interpret, negotiate, and contest to drama adaptations in online fan communities.

This research utilizes the Reception Theory, especially Hall's encoding/decoding model from 1980, as a tool to discuss the different ways TikTok viewers make sense of the drama

adaptations, whether their interpretation is dominant, negotiated, or oppositional. Besides that, the study also is based on the Participatory Culture Theory (Jenkins, 2013) to look through the interaction with, responsiveness, and sharing of drama related materials in the form of comments, fan edits, and evaluative discussions into TikTok.

Following McCusker and Gunaydin (2015), qualitative research emphasises more on linguistic interpretation, frameworks of interpretation, and contextual meaning than on numerical expression. It is thus appropriate within the analysis of TikTok comments, captions, and videos created by users. Such methodological set up gives the researcher the ability to explore the process of meaning construction resulting from audience interaction as well as the participatory activities of the users in the social media setting.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

The current study used empirical evidence of TikTok, a fast-growing social media platform that has become a key gathering point of audience discussions (Firth, 2025) and fans of Malaysian television shows. The short-form video feature of TikTok, as well as the interactive elements of comments, likes, hashtags, and algorithm-driven visibility, provide the user with the ability to react, redefine, and share media texts. These affordances of the platform make Tik Tok a particularly appropriate space in which the role played by audience reception and participatory practices can be investigated to understand the production of dramatic adaptation interpretations.

The research data were gathered during a period from 17 July to 11 September 2025, which is the time frame when both Thariq Ridzuwan: His Treasure (Astro Ria, 23 July – 11 September 2025) and Hilang Dalam Rindu (TV3, 17 July – 20 August 2025) were aired. Such a period makes sure that the study is able to capture the peak of public engagement including the first reactions and continuing audience discussions. The data collection which coincides

with the broadcast period provides for the viewing of the audience discourse happening in real time, thus giving more understanding the fan participation, the emotional responses, and the interpretive debates which are the evolving dynamics.

Information was collected by hand through the application of the search feature of TikTok. The names of both dramas (*Hilang Dalam Rindu* and *Thariq Ridzuwan: His Treasure*) were keyed into the search box of TikTok to get all publicly available videos related to the dramas within the period of data collection. The entire set of videos uploaded during this period that were directly related to the dramas was extracted, and it was therefore possible to guarantee that the audience discourse was represented in its entirety and not picked and chosen according to the viral content.

After being gathered, each TikTok post was methodically recorded into a data spreadsheet. The variables were the date of the posting, video link, caption text, the hashtags employed, likes, comments, and the content type (such as drama clips, promotional video, content related to actors, fan edits, or comparisons of the novels and dramas). This primary organisation allowed the researcher to handle a large amount of data yet also retain contextual information that is required to conduct qualitative analysis.

In order to systematically organise the data collected, a coding sheet (Figure 2) was created to keep a record of and handle TikTok content related to the two chosen drama adaptations. The unit of analysis for this research is made up of single TikTok posts along with their captions, hashtags, and user comments. At the data collection stage, all the identified TikTok videos were tabulated in a structured form, including such variables as the date of the publication, video URL, caption, use of hashtags, quantitative (likes, comments) and categorical (e.g. drama excerpts, fan-edited content, actor-focused content, comparative novel-drama analysis) content types.

DATE	LINK	CAPTION	HASHTAG	LIKES	COMMENTS	TYPE OF CONTENT	Overall Reading	Tone	Engagement
17 July	<a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSP4v1R3/">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSP4v1R3/</a>	no caption Part 2 - Ais banyas perangkap Ejaz! #HilangDalamRindu ~ Setiap Isnin - Khamis ~ 10.00 malam di TV3! Korang boleh sttm episod baharu #HilangDalamRindu 24 jam lebih awal di Tonton	#HilangDalamRindu #malaydrama #raciesindid #zamyama #yuzba #yoyoypage #fyp	660,500	1,709	Drama clip	Negotiated	Mixed	High
17 July	<a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSP4v1R3/">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSP4v1R3/</a>	@zamyama sebagai Nadim Ejaz @raciesindid_official sebagai Aina Nadra @adrianasera sebagai Henna @zari_ghaz sebagai Sarip @sahadibhassen sebagai Datuk Mukhriz @sara_melissa_ sebagai Nurul Dan ramai lagi! Arahan: @salangkamaludin Tebisan: @ouhammouies Penulis Skrip: @rahmahuliana Penulis Novel: @ia_skrim Penawil Buku: @lovenovel_publishing MULAI HARI INI #HilangDalamRindu ~ Setiap Isnin - Khamis ~ 10.00 malam di TV3! Korang boleh sttm episod baharu #HilangDalamRindu 24 jam lebih awal di Tonton	#DramaSangat #HilangDalamRindu #Samarinda #TYOMalaysia	8,844	70	Comparison with book	Dominant	Positive	Low
17 July	<a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSP4v1R3/">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSP4v1R3/</a>	@zamyama sebagai Nadim Ejaz @raciesindid_official sebagai Aina Nadra @adrianasera sebagai Henna @zari_ghaz sebagai Sarip @sahadibhassen sebagai Datuk Mukhriz @sara_melissa_ sebagai Nurul Dan ramai lagi! Arahan: @salangkamaludin Tebisan: @ouhammouies Penulis Skrip: @rahmahuliana Penulis Novel: @ia_skrim Penawil Buku: @lovenovel_publishing MULAI HARI INI #HilangDalamRindu ~ Setiap Isnin - Khamis ~ 10.00 malam di TV3! Korang boleh sttm episod baharu #HilangDalamRindu 24 jam lebih awal di Tonton	#DramaSangat #HilangDalamRindu #Samarinda #TYOMalaysia	50,200	663	Introduction drama	Negotiated	Neutral	High

**Figure 2:** An example of coding sheet TikTok Analysis on *Hilang Dalam Rindu*

Moreover, the coding sheet had the following interpretive categories: overall audience reading (dominant, negotiated, or oppositional), tone of expression (positive, negative, neutral, or mixed), and level of engagement (high, medium, or low) as shown in Table 1. These categories were derived from Hall's Reception Theory and participatory culture ideas, thus enabling the data to be methodically arranged for qualitative content analysis. A sample of the coding template is shown in the Figure 1, whereas the entire coded dataset is available in the appendices.

**Table 1:** Coding categories

Column	Function
Type of content	Content categorisation
Overall Reading	Reception Theory model
Tone	Sentiment analysis
Engagement	Interaction level

### 3.3 Sampling

The purposive sampling method was used in this research in order to select the most relevant TikTok content to analyze the audience reception, and practices of participation involved in the adaptation of Malaysian dramas. The reason for selecting purposive sampling is that the study

is mainly interested in uncovering how people derive meaning from the texts rather than making a generalisation to the whole population. According to Rai and Thapa (2004), purposive sampling helps the researcher to make conscious decisions regarding the selection of sources of information that are rich in information and also those that are highly relevant to the qualitative investigation. Similarly, the existing research that has used a qualitative methodology has highlighted that purposive sampling improves the quality of the research by enabling scholars to concentrate on contexts and data that are most pertinent to the phenomenon being examined with the qualitative analysis placing more emphasis on the interpretation of meaning than numerical generalisation (Muryanto et al., 2023).



**Figure 3:** Sampling Procedure for TikTok Content of both drama adaptations

The study analysed an estimated total of 80 TikTok videos related to *Hilang Dalam Rindu* and 90 TikTok videos related to *Thariq Ridzuwan: His Treasure*. Sampling was focused on TikTok videos and their respective captions, hashtag, and comment section, which directly covered or reacted to the television drama adaptations of *Hilang Dalam Rindu* and *Thariq Ridzuwan: His Treasure*. The search of the relevant content was done using keywords based on

the titles of the dramas using the search function in TikTok, and only videos posted during the official broadcast periods of the two dramas were considered. The latter time frame ensured that the sampled content reflected audience reactions as they appeared and changed in connection with the development of the storylines.

A number of sampling criteria were used in guiding the content selection. In the first place, a TikTok video needed to visually refer to one of the two chosen dramas either through visual content, captions, hashtags, or verbal commentary. Secondly, the video had to be available to the public and uploaded within the data collection period. Thirdly, the content had to show visible interaction with the audience, which would be shown by likes or comments. The sample did not include videos that were duplicates, off-topic, or posted before and after the show timeline. That is what illustrated in Figure 3.

The unit of analysis used in the research is the single TikTok post that includes the video material, its captions and hashtags, and the comments posted by the user. This analytical unit allows conducting a thorough study of the discourse of the audience since meaning is not only constructed on the visual and auditory elements of the video, but also through text-based comments and the interaction among the viewers (Figure 3). Every TikTok post was viewed as a separate unit of analysis and then coded with the help of the structured coding sheet (Figure 2) that was designed for this study.

WEEK 1: 17/7 - 20/7

2. Link	<a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSP3qYRj2">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSP3qYRj2</a>
Type of content	Drama clip
Comments for Overall Reading	<p>Top 5 comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "pandai kau berlakon kan" dh memang berlakon 🤔 (44.1K)</li> <li>- Dah org lupa ingatan mcm mana nk ingat ..... (24K)</li> <li>- patutnye Nye dy tnye pakcik ni sape 🤔 (11.3K)</li> <li>- mcm cerita short drama china pik aduhhhhhh 🤔🤔🤔 (9.860)</li> <li>- aku ingat mira filzah 🤔 (8,210)</li> </ul>

  

3. Link	<a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSP3qjsFu">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSP3qjsFu</a>
Type of content	Comparison with book
Comments for Overall Reading	<p>Top 5 comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- pov : pengarah takut readers cakap jalan cerita tak sama dengan novel 🤔 HAHAHAHAHHAHAHAHAHA 🤔 (848)</li> <li>- Novel best. lg la jin cite jgn lari sgt (214)</li> <li>- hawa ke tuuu (20)</li> <li>- THE BEST ACTOR JAZMY JUMA SETIAP WATAK YG DIBAWA BETUL2 MENJIWAI CONGRATULATIONS JAZ 🤔🤔🤔 SEMOGA JAZ TERUS SUKSES DALAM BIDANG LAKONAN AMIN YRA 🤔 (13)</li> <li>- smart dramasangat punya idea to promote this 🤔 I've been hooked since the first episode of this drama (11)</li> </ul>

Figure 4: An example of audience’s comments on TikTok

By applying the purposive sampling method, the study has been able to cover a diverse range of content types, levels of engagement and audience interpretations in different stages of the broadcast timeline. This methodological choice ensured that the data set obtained was deep and analytical, thus allowing a subtle analysis of how TikTok fan groups shape the perception of Malaysian drama adaptations.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The approach of this research was a qualitative content analysis (QCA) to investigate the impact of online fan communities on TikTok on the perception of Malaysian drama adaptations. The use of qualitative content analysis is explained by the ability of this method to systematically analyze textual and visual data and at the same time be sensitive to contextualities, meaning and interpretation of the audience (Schreier, 2018). Such a methodological approach would be especially suitable when studying the TikTok videos and related comments sections where the reaction of the audience is expressed not only in quantitative terms, but also in the form of linguistic choices, tone, pattern of interaction, and participatory practices.

The study used Hall's Reception Theory and Participatory Culture Theory to guide the research. These two theories together formed the conceptual framework for interpreting the audience discourse. The systematic division of readings by the audience to dominant, negotiated, and oppositional positions was based on the model that Hall has focused on, and the principles based on the participatory culture formed the foundation of the analysis of the engagement patterns, the creativity of fans, and the interactive practices that appear on the TikTok platform.

### 3.4.1 Coding Procedure

The multi-stage coding process was used to analyse data. To start with, all the TikTok videos acquired over the course of data collection were placed in a structured coding sheet. The videos were considered as separate units of analysis and were recorded in descriptive metadata, which consisted of posting date, video link, caption, hashtags, the number of likes, the number of comments, and type of content.

The next step implied the categorization of videos based on their content type including drama clips, fan edits, fan-created content, comparisons with the original novel, trailer video, promotional videos, opening drama clips and actor related content. This classification helped in discovering patterns on the interaction of the audience with the dramas in the varied content formats.

The third phase entailed with interpretative coding, where the audience comments would be examined with the view of determining the overriding audience interpretations. Based on the Reception Theory by Hall, every post on TikTok was categorized as one that corresponds to:

- Dominant readings, also known as readings where audiences received and approved the narrative, characters, or adaptation decisions of the drama;

- Negotiated readings, where audiences went through ambivalence in their reactions, setting together appreciation and criticism or emotional discontent; or
- Oppositional readings where audiences denied or challenged the plot of the drama or the characterisation of characters or the faith to the adaptation.

The decision to code was mainly based on the repeated themes and remarks that have the most engagement in each video, as such remarks are the most salient and powerful readings that the audience gave.

### **3.4.2 Tone and Engagement Analysis**

Besides the audience readings, the tone of the audience's expression was also coded as positive, negative, neutral, or mixed. This has been based on lexical indicators in captions, including phrases of praise, criticism, sarcasm, emotive response, or ambivalence.

The level of audience engagement was measured based on observable interaction metrics, such as the number of likes and comments per video. The engagement was rated as high, medium or low depending on the relative patterns of engagement through the data as opposed to predetermined numerical scales. This comparative method facilitated the context of engagement to be addressed within the overall activity level and the broadcast schedule of the two dramas.

The average number of likes and comments each week was calculated to supplement the categorical engagement analysis. These measures helped to find engagement patterns at different stages of the broadcasting period and support understandings related to the level of participation.

### 3.4.2 Analytic Interpretation

After coding, patterns were looked at for each drama separately and then for the two dramas together. For each adaptation, the analysis of content types, audience - readings, tone, and engagement levels was done on a weekly basis to find changes in audience reception over time. Exemplar comments that had high engagement were chosen to demonstrate dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings as shown in Figure 4.

A comparative analysis was carried out to determine how participatory practices in the two dramas, *Hilang Dalam Rindu* and *Thariq Ridzuwan: His Treasure*, differ. The main focus was on how variations in engagement levels, content diversity, and interpretative positions represent different aspects of participatory culture such as collective affirmation, negotiation, and contestation.

All coding and analysis were carried out by hand with a Google spreadsheet helping to keep everything organised, this way the researcher could be very close to the data and get the nuances of the audience discourse. To ensure that the categories were consistently used, the codings were uniformly applied across the dataset based on the theory and the purpose of the research.

### 3.5 Conclusions

This chapter has described the methodological framework used to conduct an inquiry into the role of TikTok fan communities in influencing the reception of Malaysian drama adaptations. Through a qualitative approach, the study conducted qualitative content analysis on fan discussions of *Hilang Dalam Rindu* and *Thariq Ridzuwan: His Treasure*. The choice of this method was made with the intention of gaining a thorough understanding of how meanings are made, interpreted, and fans engage with the texts in digital fandoms.

Data was obtained from TikTok over the airing period of both dramas through purposive sampling which targeted only relevant and contextual content. Each TikTok post, along with its caption, hashtags, and comments, was analyzed as one single unit of analysis. In order to systematically arrange the data, a structured coding sheet was designed. It contained both descriptive features and theoretical categories based on Hall's Reception Theory and the concept of participatory culture.

By this method, the research is well placed to reveal the differences in how audiences interpret the two drama adaptations, their level of engagement, and their participatory practices. Combining theory-driven coding with systematical data management lays down a solid basis for the study of audience reception on TikTok and its shaping, negotiation, and contestation. The next chapter displays the research findings and is divided according to the objectives of the study.