



NETIZEN RESPONSES ON TIKTOK REGARDING THE LABUAN BAJO TOURISM TRAGEDY ON THE @detikcom ACCOUNT (DECEMBER 26, 2025)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze how the TikTok account @detikcom framed the Labuan Bajo tourism tragedy on December 26, 2025, and how netizens responded to the news through the comments section. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on TikTok as a digital public space in the context of the tourism crisis, which is still relatively rarely studied compared to other social media platforms. The study used a qualitative approach with content analysis methods. Data came from approximately 3,500 comments on three TikTok videos, then 300 comments were purposively selected based on three criteria: relevance to the issue, having a clear meaning, and containing substantive responses to the news content. The results showed that the @detikcom news primarily emphasized issues of ship crossing procedures and safety facilities and infrastructure. Of the 300 selected comments, 248 comments could be categorized, while 52 comments were eliminated due to being irrelevant, spam, or ambiguous. Netizen responses were dominated by criticism (98 comments), evaluative (94 comments), emotional (42 comments), and tourism image (14 comments). These findings demonstrate that public responses on TikTok extend beyond emotional expression to include rational assessments of tourism safety governance. Thus, TikTok serves as a discursive arena that shapes public opinion while demonstrating digital social control over tourism safety issues.

Keywords: netizen response, TikTok, content analysis, crisis communication, tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of social media has fundamentally changed public communication patterns, particularly in responding to events with high news value, risk, and broad social impact. In the digital era, the public no longer relies on one-way information from mainstream media, but rather contributes to the production of meaning, judgment, and reactions through open, fast-paced, and participatory comment spaces. In this context, TikTok has developed not only as a short video-based entertainment medium but also as a discursive arena where public opinion is formed, exchanged, and debated. TikTok's interactive nature makes the platform relevant for examining how audiences interpret

crisis issues, as comments generated not only reflect spontaneous emotions but can also reflect knowledge, judgment, and social attitudes toward the events being reported (Darmansyah, 2024; Nasrullah et al., 2023).

In crisis situations, the media holds a strategic position because it not only conveys facts but also directs audience attention by highlighting specific aspects of an event. The way the media selects and emphasizes certain elements can influence how the public perceives the cause, severity, and who is considered responsible for an incident. In tourism, this reporting pattern is crucial because crises related to accidents, safety, or governance failures can immediately impact public perceptions of the safety of a tourist destination. In other words, media coverage in the tourism context operates not only at the information level but also at the level of constructing meaning, which has implications for the destination's image, tourist trust, and public evaluation of safety management (Hasyim et al., 2025; Maharani & Rahmawati, 2025; Shaffira & Silvana, 2022).

The relevance of this issue was evident in the Labuan Bajo tourism tragedy, reported by the TikTok account @detikcom on December 26, 2025. This incident attracted widespread attention because Labuan Bajo has long been positioned as one of Indonesia's leading destinations. Therefore, any incident related to tourism safety is not merely read as an isolated event but also as an indicator of the quality of destination governance. In the context of tourism, safety is a fundamental element directly related to the sustainability of a destination, tourists' sense of security, and the legitimacy of managing institutions. When the media highlights ship crossing procedures and safety infrastructure, public attention tends to shift from a mere chronology of events to a broader evaluation of operational standards, the responsibilities of relevant parties, and the readiness of the tourism system to ensure tourist safety (Andzani et al., 2024; Sazali et al., 2025; Suwanda & Suwanda, 2025).

Several previous studies have discussed crisis communication, media framing, public opinion, and the image of tourism in the digital space. However, most studies still focus on social media in general as the object of analysis, or focus on more established platforms in public opinion studies such as X/Twitter and Instagram. On the other hand, studies of media framing in tourism issues have primarily examined news texts on online portals, rather than audience interactions in TikTok comment sections, which are a form of real-time public reception. This gap makes research on netizen comments on TikTok crucial, as the platform's audiovisual, algorithmic, and participatory nature differs from other social media platforms, potentially generating distinct public response patterns. Therefore, there is still room for further research to explain how coverage of the tourism crisis on TikTok is received, negotiated, and responded to by netizens as active audiences (Aqilah et al., 2025; Darmansyah, 2024; Hasyim et al., 2025).

Based on this gap, this study utilizes netizen comments on the TikTok account @detikcom as the primary data source to understand the dynamics of public response to the Labuan Bajo tourism tragedy. This focus is crucial because comments on social media are not merely news supplementary, but rather a representation of public discourse, demonstrating how audiences assess safety issues, articulate criticism, express emotions, and connect crisis events to the image of the tourism destination. In this study, audience response theory is used to examine the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of netizen responses, while the concept of framing is used as a supporting approach to

understand the possible relationship between the emphasis of issues in news coverage and the resulting response tendencies. Through this approach, this study goes beyond simply counting comment categories but seeks to interpret the social meaning of public responses in the context of digital communication and the tourism crisis (Nasrullah et al., 2023; Shaffira & Silvana, 2022).

Therefore, this study aims to analyze how the TikTok account @detikcom framed the Labuan Bajo tourism tragedy, particularly through its emphasis on boat crossing procedures and safety facilities and infrastructure, and to explain how netizens responded to the news through the comments section. Academically, this research is expected to contribute to strengthening digital communication studies by placing TikTok as a digital public space in the context of the tourism crisis. Practically, this research can be a reference for the media, destination managers and policy makers to understand that public responses on social media are an important indicator in reading public perceptions of tourism safety issues. Thus, this research is important not only because it discusses viral tragedies in digital spaces, but also because it shows how the media and the public together shape discourses about security, responsibility and the image of tourism in the platform era (Andzani et al., 2024; Aqilah et al., 2025; Sazali et al., 2025).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with content analysis to examine two levels of data in an integrated manner: the news content of three TikTok videos from the @detikcom account about the Labuan Bajo tourism tragedy and the netizen responses in the comments section. The units of analysis in this study included, first, the video content elements highlighting issues related to ship crossing procedures and safety facilities and infrastructure; and second, individual netizen comments representing responses to the news content. Of the approximately 3,500 comments identified, the researchers selected 300 comments as the initial corpus through purposive sampling, with three criteria: comments must be relevant to the event, have a clear meaning, and contain substantive responses to the news content. Purposive sampling was used because this study did not aim to make statistical generalizations but rather to understand the patterns of public response in the digital space.

Data collection was conducted through non-participant observation and digital documentation. The researchers closely observed the content of the three video uploads, the narratives they constructed, and the dynamics of the comments that emerged without engaging in interactions on the platform. All data was then documented and organized using NVivo software to facilitate data management, retrieval, and coding. The analysis process was carried out in stages, starting with repeated reading of comments, assigning initial codes, grouping codes into more conceptual categories, and then interpreting the relationship between the emphasis of issues in the news and netizen response tendencies. Comment categorization was developed by combining theoretical foundations of audience response and empirical reading of the data, resulting in four main categories: criticism, evaluative, emotional, and tourism image. Within this framework, the evaluative category represents the cognitive dimension, the emotional category represents the affective dimension, the criticism category represents the conative dimension, and the tourism

image category was used to capture comments that explicitly linked the tragedy to the reputation of the tourist destination.

To ensure the validity of the analysis, coding was not conducted individually but was checked through researcher triangulation. Initially, a portion of data was coded separately by more than one researcher to align the operational definitions of each category. The results were then compared and discussed until a consensus was reached on the coding indicators. Subsequently, all comments were reanalyzed consistently within the agreed-upon category framework. Of the 300 comments included in the initial corpus, 248 were deemed worthy of categorization, while 52 comments were removed at the final stage due to being found to be spam, repetitive, irrelevant, too ambiguous, or lacking sufficient meaning for analysis. The percentages in this study are used solely to indicate the distribution of response categories for a more systematic reading of the results, not to transform this research into a quantitative study. Thus, the primary focus of the study remains on interpreting the meaning of netizen responses and their relationship to the framing of safety issues in TikTok news coverage.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Based on the results of the study, netizen responses to the news coverage of the Labuan Bajo tourist boat accident on the TikTok account @detikcom were analyzed based on comment coding using NVivo software. This analysis was conducted to determine the public's response trends to events reported on social media (Hartono Hartono et al., 2025).

The analysis showed that the news coverage on the @detikcom TikTok account regarding the Labuan Bajo tourist boat accident highlighted aspects of safety procedures and ferry operations. This focus directed public attention to the importance of complying with safety standards in tourism activities. In this case, the media not only conveyed information but also framed the event by emphasizing the responsibility of the applicable safety system, thus shaping public perception of the reported issue (Hasyim et al., 2025; Maharani & Rahmawati, 2025).

Furthermore, the news coverage also featured information about the safety facilities and infrastructure used in tourism activities. This emphasis on these aspects demonstrates the media's role in shaping the image of tourist destinations in the public eye. Information conveyed through social media can influence public perceptions of the readiness and quality of a tourist destination (Andzani et al., 2024; Sazali et al., 2025).

Based on the analysis of 300 comments, 248 comments were classified as relevant, while 52 comments were not analyzed because they did not align with the research focus. The following is the distribution of netizen response categories:

Table 1. Distribution of Netizen Response Categories

No	Response Category	Jumlah	Percentage
1	Criticism	98	39.5%
2	Evaluation	94	37.9%
3	Emotional	42	16.9%

4	Tourism Image	14	5.7%
Total	Response Category	248	100%

Based on Table 1, netizen responses were dominated by criticism, accounting for 39.5% of the responses, or 98 comments. This indicates that netizens tended to evaluate the parties involved in the incident. From an audience response theory perspective, this phenomenon falls under the conative aspect, which is the tendency of individuals to express attitudes or judgments regarding an issue (Lubis & Putri, 2025).

The evaluation category, with 94 comments, indicates that netizens not only reacted spontaneously but also rationally analyzed the causes of the incident. This response reflects the cognitive aspect, namely the thought process and understanding of the information received.

Furthermore, the emotional category, with 42 comments, indicated responses in the form of empathy, sympathy, and concern for the victims. This falls under the affective aspect, which relates to individual feelings about an incident.

The tourism image category, with 14 comments, indicates that some netizens associated the incident with the reputation of the tourist destination. This indicates that social media plays a role in shaping tourism image through public perception that develops from the information conveyed (Andzani et al., 2024; Aqilah et al., 2025).

The predominance of critical responses in this study indicates a tendency for the public to be more evaluative of safety issues in the tourism sector. This strong tendency is likely influenced by the emphasis on news coverage that highlights safety procedures and the responsibilities of relevant parties. This emphasis directs public attention to errors and system evaluations, thus triggering a critical response.

This finding aligns with previous research that suggests that in crisis situations, the public tends to respond evaluatively and critically to those deemed responsible, particularly when the media emphasizes risk and safety (Amril & Sazali, 2025). Therefore, netizen responses in this study were influenced not only by the event itself but also by how the media framed the information conveyed.

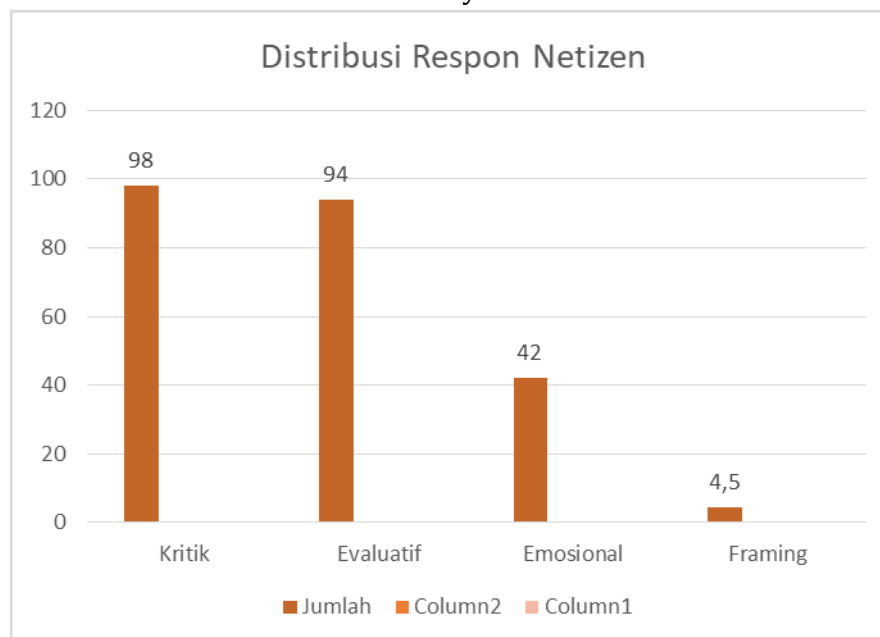


Figure 1 Visualization of Netizen Response Distribution Using NVivo

Figure 1 shows that the criticism category has the highest proportion compared to other categories. This visualization emphasizes the dominance of netizen responses in the criticism category compared to other categories, making it easier to understand the analysis results visually.

Overall, the research results indicate that netizen responses are dominated by criticism and rational evaluation, reflecting the function of social media as a digital public space. In this space, audiences not only receive information but also provide active responses, whether in the form of assessments, analyses, or emotional expressions regarding an event.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the coverage of the Labuan Bajo tourism tragedy on the TikTok account @detikcom not only served as a source of information but also shaped the public's focus on issues of ship crossing procedures and tourism safety, which then influenced the direction of netizen responses in the comments section. The dominance of critical and evaluative responses confirms that TikTok audiences act as an active digital public, not only expressing emotions but also making rational assessments of safety governance and the responsibilities of related parties. These findings strengthen the understanding that interactions on social media are a crucial part of the dynamics of crisis communication and the formation of public opinion, while also broadening the study of audience responses in the context of short video-based platforms. Practically, the results of this study emphasize the importance of accurate, proportional, and responsible presentation of crisis information by the media, as well as the need to strengthen safety standards by tourism managers because public perception of a destination is now also shaped through digital discourse that is developing rapidly, openly, and broadly.

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