

ANALYSIS OF TIKTOK NETIZENS' RECEPTION OF GIMMICK MARKETING IN PRILLY LATUCONSINA'S "OPEN TO WORK" CAMPAIGN FOR SENSODYNE ON THE LINKEDIN PLATFORM

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Abstract

The advancement of digital marketing strategies has encouraged brands to adopt user-generated content (UGC)-style marketing to create a sense of authenticity through content that resembles users' personal experiences. Although this approach is effective in attracting audience attention, it also has the potential to blur the distinction between personal content and promotional messages, leading to diverse audience interpretations. This study aims to analyze TikTok netizens' reception of the gimmick marketing strategy employed in Prilly Latuconsina's Open to Work campaign for Sensodyne on the LinkedIn platform. The study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with five purposively selected informants and analyzed using Stuart Hall's reception analysis theory through the encoding-decoding framework. The findings indicate that the UGC-style marketing strategy successfully established a perception of authenticity during the initial stage, leading most informants to perceive the post as a genuine personal experience. However, after the commercial nature of the campaign was revealed, audience reception shifted. Three informants were categorized within the oppositional reading position, one informant within the negotiated reading position, and one informant within the dominant reading position. Differences in audience reception were influenced by the informants' personal experiences, backgrounds, and emotional proximity to employment-related issues. Furthermore, most informants experienced difficulty associating the campaign narrative with the Sensodyne brand and its products, indicating that the campaign's brand relevance was not fully achieved. These findings suggest that the success of gimmick marketing is determined not only by its ability to generate virality but also by contextual appropriateness, communication transparency, sensitivity to social issues, and the clarity of the relationship between the promotional message and the brand identity.

Keywords: reception analysis, gimmick marketing, UGC-style marketing, TikTok, LinkedIn, Stuart Hall.

INTRODUCTION

In today's era of digital communication, many brands have discovered new ways to establish relationships with their audiences. Significant changes, particularly in marketing communication practices, have shifted from conventional media such as television and print to social media. This transition demonstrates that the transformation of advertising extends beyond distribution channels to encompass the ways in which messages are constructed and interpreted by the public. Social media is no longer merely a

communication channel but has evolved into an interactive space where audiences actively respond to, interpret, and construct meanings from the messages created and disseminated through these platforms (Jatisidi, 2024).

In the context of marketing, communication with audiences through advertising constitutes an integral component of the marketing mix, particularly the promotion element, whose primary function is to communicate the value of a product to its target audience (Kotler & Keller, 2020). As a promotional tool, advertising plays a strategic role in delivering brand messages. Nevertheless, advertising practices must adhere to ethical principles, including transparency and the avoidance of manipulative communication. Advertisements that fail to comply with ethical standards may lead to misunderstandings and diminish audience trust in a brand, particularly when their commercial intent is intentionally concealed. Therefore, maintaining a clear distinction between commercial and non-commercial content has become increasingly important in advertising practices within today's complex digital environment (Widyaningsih et al., 2024).

Conceptually, advertising is understood not merely as the delivery of promotional messages but also as a strategic communication process specifically designed to influence audience perceptions and behaviors through structured media channels (Jatisidi, 2024). According to Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller, advertising is one of the company's integrated marketing communication efforts aimed at building brand awareness, shaping corporate image, and encouraging consumer action through persuasive messages (Kotler & Keller, 2020). Likewise, Don E. Schultz, in *Strategic Advertising Campaigns* (1990), defines advertising as a form of non-personal communication involving systematic message planning and dissemination through various media to reach a broad audience.

Prior to the emergence of social media as a marketing platform, advertising activities were predominantly conducted through conventional mass media by presenting promotional messages in carefully designed visual and narrative formats to capture audience attention. However, technological advancements have transformed advertising from a one-way communication process into a more adaptive approach that aligns with the characteristics of each communication medium. Consequently, advertising has become increasingly contextual, extending its objectives beyond message delivery to maximizing the construction of promotional meaning and creating positive audience experiences with a brand. This transformation suggests that advertising effectiveness depends largely on the alignment between the message and the characteristics of the media through which it is delivered (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022).

The integration of social media into contemporary marketing practices has enabled audiences to respond to and interpret brand messages almost instantaneously (Kotler & Keller, 2020). Platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter now known as X have been widely adopted by brands to implement interactive and creative marketing strategies, making advertisements more effective in establishing connections with targeted markets (Putri et al., 2024).

Digital marketing practices have continued to expand alongside the increasing rate of internet usage in Indonesia. According to Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in its *Indonesia Telecommunications Statistics 2024* publication, internet penetration in Indonesia reached 72.78%, an increase from 69.21% in the previous year. BPS further reported that internet usage among Indonesians is strongly influenced by economic needs. Approximately 25.85% of internet users utilize the internet to search for information on goods and services, while 23% have completed online purchasing transactions (Syakilah et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), in its 2025 report on internet user profiles and market segmentation, recorded that 80.66% of Indonesia's population had internet access, equivalent to 229,428,417 individuals out of the country's total population of 284,484,900 in 2025. Among these users, 24.80% accessed the internet primarily for social media activities, 14.68% for entertainment purposes, and 14.95% for conducting online transactions (APJII, 2025).

Within the context of digital media, each platform possesses distinct communication patterns, audience characteristics, and interaction norms. Consequently, advertising strategies cannot be uniformly applied across different platforms. For instance, TikTok emphasizes spontaneous, creative, and participatory content, making overly formal or explicitly promotional messages less effective in capturing audience attention (Liu, 2022). TikTok also functions as an interactive discussion platform, enabling users to redistribute content across multiple social media platforms while providing a space for netizens to express their opinions openly. This interactive environment is further supported by features such as Duet and Stitch, which are designed to maximize user engagement (Afifi & Amalia, 2024). According to global social media statistics for 2024, the number of TikTok users aged 18 years and above in Indonesia reached 126.8 million, representing 64.8% of the adult population and 68.5% of all internet users regardless of age (Kemp, 2024).

In contrast, LinkedIn is characterized as a professional networking platform that emphasizes credibility and career-oriented interactions. According to the 2024 Global Digital Report, LinkedIn has surpassed one billion users worldwide (Kemp, 2024). These characteristics make the platform less compatible with overly casual or entertainment-oriented content, as such content may create contextual incongruity (Saeidi & Hollensen, 2024).

A mismatch between communication strategies and platform characteristics may result in divergent interpretations or even audience rejection of the intended message. This challenge becomes increasingly complex when advertising strategies not only adapt to the characteristics of a platform but also imitate the forms of personal communication commonly used by its users (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). This approach has evolved alongside the growing importance of user-generated content (UGC) within the digital marketing ecosystem, where content created by users is generally perceived as more authentic, relevant, and trustworthy than content produced entirely by brands. Consequently, UGC plays a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions, fostering engagement, and influencing purchasing decisions because it is viewed as representing genuine user experiences (Azmi et al., 2021).

As digital marketing has evolved, brands have moved beyond simply utilizing organic UGC and have increasingly adopted communication strategies that imitate UGC as part of their marketing efforts. This practice aims to create a perception of authenticity while enhancing message effectiveness amid audience fatigue toward overtly promotional content (Usman & Wijaya, 2025). This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that content resembling users' personal experiences is more likely to attract attention and increase audience engagement on social media. Authenticity has become a central value sought by social media users; therefore, strategies that effectively represent personal experiences tend to be received more favorably than content that explicitly reveals its commercial intent (Wang, 2024).

The adoption of communication strategies that resemble users' personal content reflects a shift in marketing practices, whereby brands no longer rely solely on explicit advertising but instead package promotional messages in creative formats that imitate users' everyday experiences on social media. This approach has become known as UGC-style marketing, which seeks to generate high levels of audience participation while allowing brands to maintain control over the promotional message conveyed through advertisements (Christopher & Sibarani, 2024).

The imitation of user-generated content (UGC) by brands is not a new phenomenon. Indirect promotional messages generated by consumers are often perceived as more authentic than company-generated content (CGC) because they are built upon shared experiences among consumers. Consequently, UGC remains a critical asset for brands, as the messages are created and circulated within the consumer sphere rather than being fully controlled by the brand itself (Azmi et al., 2021).

Despite its effectiveness in increasing engagement, UGC-style marketing also raises several concerns, particularly when the boundary between personal and commercial content becomes blurred. A lack of transparency in message delivery can create ambiguity, opening the possibility for multiple audience interpretations. In such situations, audiences evaluate not only the content itself but also the context, intent, and authenticity of the communication. When audiences are unaware that the content they consume forms part of a marketing strategy, the likelihood of misinterpretation increases substantially. This condition may generate a wide range of responses, from acceptance to rejection, particularly when audiences perceive themselves as being emotionally manipulated through non-transparent marketing communication (Saefudin, 2024).

Nevertheless, UGC-style marketing is not universally perceived as negative because its creative format aligns well with contemporary social media culture. Content that reflects personal experiences is often regarded as relevant to everyday life, thereby fostering emotional connections between prospective consumers and the content shared by brands (El-Shihy & Awaad, 2025). Criticism of UGC-style marketing primarily stems from negative public perceptions regarding disguised promotional activities, which are considered ethically problematic because brands fail to disclose the commercial nature of the content, leading audiences to feel emotionally manipulated for commercial purposes (Christopher & Sibarani, 2024).

The ambiguity associated with UGC-style marketing in marketing communication practices can be observed across various social media campaigns employing similar approaches. One prominent example is the "Open to Work" campaign featuring Prilly Latuconsina. Initially, the campaign was presented as a personal narrative concerning job searching on the professional networking platform LinkedIn. It was later revealed, however, that the post constituted a promotional gimmick for the toothpaste brand Sensodyne (Sirait, 2026).

Public responses to the "Open to Work" campaign revealed considerable differences in audience interpretation. Some audiences viewed the campaign as a creative marketing strategy that effectively aligned with the characteristics of social media, whereas others argued that employing a narrative resembling a personal job-search experience appeared insensitive and potentially misleading. These contrasting interpretations demonstrate that messages presented in the form of personal experiences are not necessarily interpreted uniformly by audiences (Masna & Mamonto-Shrestha, 2026).

Public discussion surrounding the campaign extended beyond LinkedIn to other social media platforms, particularly TikTok. To examine these differing audience responses, this study adopts Stuart Hall's reception analysis through the Encoding/Decoding Theory, which conceptualizes audiences as active interpreters of media messages. According to this perspective, meaning is not determined solely by message producers but is constructed through interpretation shaped by individuals' social backgrounds, personal experiences, and contextual circumstances. The concepts of encoding and decoding explain that media messages may be interpreted differently by different audiences, resulting in multiple meanings derived from the same message (Hall, 1980).

Brian L. Ott and Robert L. Mack, in *Critical Media Studies* (2014), explain that reception theory emerged from developments in media effects research that initially relied on the hypodermic needle model. This model assumed that media messages possessed a single, fixed meaning and that audiences, viewed as passive recipients, were unable to negotiate or reinterpret those meanings. This perspective was subsequently challenged by Paul Lazarsfeld's two-step flow model, which introduced the concept of opinion leaders as intermediaries who influence the dissemination and interpretation of information among broader audiences.

As media evolved, both approaches were considered to have important limitations because they failed to recognize the active role of audiences in constructing meaning based on their diverse backgrounds and experiences (Ott & Mack, 2014). Accordingly, Stuart Hall's reception analysis conceptualizes encoding as the process by which message producers construct meanings, while decoding refers to the ways audiences interpret those meanings (Afifi & Amalia, 2024).

The application of this theoretical framework is particularly relevant to the present study because UGC-style marketing campaigns inherently involve ambiguity in message delivery, resulting in varying audience interpretations, as demonstrated by Prilly Latuconsina's "Open to Work" campaign. Within Stuart Hall's reception framework, these interpretations can be classified into three reading positions: dominant reading, negotiated reading, and oppositional reading, each representing a different level of audience acceptance of the intended message (Hall, 1980).

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how audiences interpret marketing communication phenomena within the context of social and digital media. This approach was selected because the research emphasizes the exploration of meanings, interpretations, and subjective responses shaped by individuals' experiences and backgrounds rather than quantitative measurement. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with TikTok users who had been exposed to and were familiar with the "Open to Work" campaign involving Prilly Latuconsina and the Sensodyne brand.

The use of in-depth interviews enabled the identification of variations in audience interpretations, which were subsequently analyzed using the framework of Stuart Hall's reception analysis. Through this study, it is expected that a more comprehensive understanding of audience reception and interpretation of user-generated content (UGC)-based marketing strategies and similar approaches will be developed, thereby addressing existing gaps identified in previous research.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted within the digital environment, specifically on TikTok as a space for audience reception, during the period of April–May 2026. A qualitative approach employing a descriptive method was adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of audience interpretations of the gimmick marketing content featured in Prilly Latuconsina's "Open to Work" campaign for Sensodyne on LinkedIn. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, documentation, and a literature review, and were subsequently analyzed using Stuart Hall's reception analysis through the encoding-decoding framework to identify the audience's reception positions, namely dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional (Hall, 1980).

The object of this study was the gimmick marketing content employed in the "Open to Work" campaign, which adopted a UGC-style marketing approach by presenting promotional content that resembled user-generated content through the elements of surprise, creativity, brand relevance, and timing. This strategy was examined as a form of marketing communication that blurs the distinction between commercial and non-commercial content, thereby potentially influencing audience perceptions. The research participants consisted of five informants selected through purposive sampling. They were active users of both TikTok and LinkedIn, aged 20–25 years, who had been exposed to the campaign and were willing to participate in in-depth interviews (Sugiyono, 2023).

The data were analyzed qualitatively following the stages of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification, as proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). Subsequently, the findings were categorized according to Stuart Hall's three reception positions to identify how audiences accepted, negotiated, or rejected the messages conveyed in the gimmick marketing campaign. This approach enabled the researchers to develop a comprehensive understanding of the audience's meaning-making process regarding the digital marketing communication strategy employed in the "Open to Work" campaign (Hall, 1980).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data Analysis Presentation

The data presented in this study were obtained through in-depth interviews with five informants, all of whom were active users of both TikTok and LinkedIn and had been exposed to Prilly Latuconsina's "Open to Work" campaign for the Sensodyne brand. The analysis was conducted by identifying and categorizing patterns of meaning that emerged naturally throughout the interview process rather than adhering strictly to the sequence of the interview questions.

Informant Profiles and Platform Usage History

The informants' backgrounds, their history of using LinkedIn and TikTok, and their proximity to the context of job seeking constituted important aspects of the reception analysis, as individuals' social positions and personal experiences influence their interpretation of media messages (Hall, 1980). The interview findings revealed that all informants were active users of both platforms, although they differed in their level of engagement with employment-related issues. Informants 1 and 5 had direct experience using the #OpenToWork feature, Informant 2 was actively seeking employment despite never having used the feature, Informant 3 had indirect experience through difficulties in securing an internship, while Informant 4 had the least connection to the issue because

the job-search process had been relatively straightforward. These variations in personal experience indicate differing levels of sensitivity toward the narrative presented in the "Open to Work" campaign, which subsequently influenced how each informant interpreted the campaign message.

Audience Reception of the Post as a Personal Experience

Most informants initially interpreted Prilly Latuconsina's LinkedIn post as an authentic personal experience upon first viewing it. This perception was shaped by the user-generated content (UGC)-style communication strategy, which incorporated elements such as a first-person point of view, a natural narrative, and language that aligned with LinkedIn's professional communication style, thereby avoiding the appearance of overt promotional content. The majority of informants stated that they believed the post because it was consistent with Prilly's public image as a celebrity known for exploring new experiences and because it was delivered in a casual, personal, and relatable manner. In contrast, two informants adopted a more critical perspective, perceiving the post as a gimmick or an attempt to attract public attention, although one of them had not yet realized that the content formed part of a marketing strategy. These findings suggest that the UGC-style marketing approach successfully established a perception of authenticity during the initial stage of audience reception, thereby further blurring the distinction between personal and commercial content (Christopher & Sibarani, 2024).

Audience Appreciation of the Campaign's Creativity

Despite expressing varying ethical concerns, all informants acknowledged that Prilly Latuconsina's "Open to Work" campaign for Sensodyne demonstrated a high level of creativity through the elements of surprise and creativity, as described by Rachmad (2024). This creativity was reflected in the use of the #OpenToWork feature by a public figure, the presentation of promotional content in the style of user-generated content (UGC), and the utilization of LinkedIn as an unconventional advertising platform, all of which successfully stimulated audience curiosity. Several informants considered this approach effective in creating a promotional message that appeared natural, differentiated itself from conventional advertising, and successfully attracted public attention, ultimately generating viral engagement. However, some informants emphasized that the campaign's creative success remained overshadowed by ethical concerns arising from its use of the sensitive issue of job seeking. Consequently, while all informants appreciated the campaign's creativity, their levels of acceptance differed. Some believed that its creative execution outweighed the controversy, whereas others continued to regard the ethical implications as the campaign's primary concern.

Audience Criticism of the Use of the Job-Seeking Context

Most informants criticized the campaign's use of the job-search context because the #OpenToWork label was perceived as a symbol representing the genuine experiences of job seekers and therefore should not be exploited for commercial purposes, particularly amid Indonesia's challenging employment conditions (Pertiwi, 2026). Informants who had directly used the feature or were actively seeking employment expressed stronger opposition, arguing that the campaign lacked sensitivity toward existing social realities. Others questioned the inconsistency between Prilly Latuconsina's status as a public figure

and the narrative portraying her as a job seeker. Nevertheless, one informant considered the approach to be an acceptable and creative promotional strategy that did not cause direct harm. These findings indicate that the degree of personal experience with employment-related issues influenced the intensity of audience criticism. Accordingly, the results support Stuart Hall's argument that individuals' personal experiences and social positions play a crucial role in the decoding process of media messages (Hall, 1980).

Audience Questioning the Relevance and Clarity of the Promotional Message

Most informants questioned both the relevance and the clarity of the relationship between the campaign narrative and the Sensodyne brand and its products. Although the UGC-style marketing strategy successfully maintained a perception of authenticity, nearly all informants reported that they were unable to identify any connection between Prilly Latuconsina's LinkedIn post and its underlying commercial message until an official clarification was provided. As a result, the brand relevance component of the gimmick marketing strategy was perceived as inadequately achieved (Rachmad, 2024). Several informants further argued that the campaign's virality generated greater controversy than it did improvements in brand image or product understanding, whereas only one informant interpreted the lack of clarity as an intentional display of promotional creativity. These findings suggest that efforts to conceal the campaign's commercial intent in order to preserve a sense of authenticity ultimately weakened the perceived relationship between the promotional message, the brand, and the product. Consequently, the marketing communication objective of establishing a strong association with the Sensodyne brand was not fully achieved.

Audience Perceptions of the Ambiguity Between Personal Content and Promotional Messages

Most informants perceived that the campaign created ambiguity between personal content and promotional messages through its UGC-style marketing approach, thereby blurring the distinction between authentic communication and commercial content. The majority regarded this strategy as a form of manipulation because it concealed the campaign's promotional intent, potentially diminished trust in the Sensodyne brand, and was considered insufficiently transparent and ethically questionable, particularly because it incorporated the sensitive issue of job seeking. In contrast, a minority of informants considered such ambiguity to be an acceptable aspect of creativity and the evolving nature of digital marketing, although they still criticized the use of employment-related issues as the basis of the campaign. These differences in audience reception were influenced by the informants' personal experiences, levels of media literacy, and emotional proximity to the issue addressed in the campaign (Hall, 1980). Accordingly, audience tolerance toward covert promotional practices varied considerably and served as the basis for determining each informant's reception position within Stuart Hall's reception analysis framework.

Discussion

TikTok Netizens' Reception of the Evolution of Digital Marketing Strategies

Within Stuart Hall's reception analysis framework, the dominant reading or dominant-hegemonic position occurs when audiences interpret and accept a message in accordance with the meaning intended by the message producer. Individuals occupying

this position fully understand and accept the preferred meaning of the message without negotiating or opposing its dominant interpretation.

In the present study, Informant 4 was the only participant who occupied the dominant reading or dominant-hegemonic position. Informant 4 was a 23-year-old fresh graduate who actively used LinkedIn for career development and had previously worked as a Campus Ambassador for a job-search platform. This professional background and familiarity with the ecosystem of professional networking platforms enabled Informant 4 to readily understand the communication strategy employed in the campaign.

Informant 4's placement within the dominant reading position was demonstrated by the acceptance of Prilly Latuconsina's LinkedIn post as a genuine and authentic personal narrative. This positive evaluation remained unchanged even after discovering that the content was part of Prilly Latuconsina's promotional campaign for the Sensodyne brand.

Informant 4: "At first, I was surprised when I found out that it was actually promoting a brand. However, I still think it was a very creative and perfectly reasonable promotional strategy. Looking at it positively, I think the advertisement also encourages us to explore ourselves, doesn't it?"

When asked whether any aspect of Prilly Latuconsina's post made them feel uncomfortable or inclined to reject the message, Informant 4 explicitly stated that no such concerns existed.

Informant 4: "Hmm... I don't think so. Honestly, nothing really bothered me. As I mentioned earlier, as human beings we have to adapt to changing times."

Furthermore, Informant 4 did not perceive the ambiguity between personal content and promotional content as a significant ethical issue, considering it instead to be a natural consequence of the evolution of digital marketing communication that audiences should accept with maturity.

Informant 4: "As for its impact on audiences, I think we simply need to become more selective in evaluating content because, whether we like it or not, we have to keep up with technological and societal developments."

Informant 4's classification within the dominant reading position can be explained by several factors consistent with Stuart Hall's reception analysis, which argues that the decoding process is influenced by an individual's background, experiences, and social context (Hall, 1980). As an active LinkedIn user familiar with the platform's characteristics, Informant 4 possessed a greater capacity to interpret the campaign within its intended context without being influenced by negative emotions arising from previous personal experiences.

Moreover, Informant 4's experience as a Campus Ambassador for a job-search platform provided a more mature understanding of emerging digital marketing practices, enabling them to readily accept the communication strategy developed by Prilly Latuconsina and Sensodyne. As a fresh graduate who had never used the #OpenToWork feature to seek employment, Informant 4 also lacked any emotional attachment to the label employed in the campaign.

This background enabled Informant 4 to perceive the use of LinkedIn's #OpenToWork feature as a creative communication element rather than as an attempt to offend or exploit any particular group. Furthermore, Informant 4 consistently adopted a positive perspective throughout the interview, resulting in a dominant reading position

that most closely aligned with the preferred meaning intended by Sensodyne as the message producer.

Negotiating the Meaning of Campaign Creativity and the Job-Seeking Context

Within Stuart Hall's reception analysis framework, the negotiated reading position occurs when audiences accept certain aspects of the dominant meaning while simultaneously adapting, modifying, or partially rejecting the message based on their own experiences and circumstances. In this position, audiences neither fully accept nor completely reject the intended message; instead, they continuously negotiate its meaning by accepting the preferred interpretation while reinterpreting it according to their own social context (Hall, 1980).

In the present study, Informant 5 was the only participant classified within the negotiated reading position. Informant 5 was a final-year student at Universitas Airlangga who had previously completed an internship at an office in Jakarta. The combination of the informant's appreciation for the campaign's creativity and emotional response to the exploitation of employment-related issues resulted in a reception position characterized by both acceptance and criticism.

Informant 5's negotiated position was reflected in the evolution of their perception of the campaign. Initially, the informant reacted emotionally to the post but later expressed admiration after discovering that it formed part of Sensodyne's marketing strategy.

Informant 5: "My first impression of the post was that it was rage bait because it felt very misleading."

Informant 5: "When I found out it was actually promoting a brand, I thought it was incredibly out of the box. The fact that I personally fell for the rage bait made me think, 'Wow, that's an extraordinary idea!'"

This shift in opinion reflects the defining characteristic of the negotiated reading position, in which audiences do not immediately adopt a fixed interpretation but instead continuously adjust their understanding as new information becomes available (Hall, 1980).

Although Informant 5 admired the creative strategy developed by Sensodyne, they also rejected certain aspects of the campaign, particularly its use of the employment context as the basis for digital marketing. In the informant's view, this approach exceeded the boundaries of what was socially acceptable.

Informant 5: "There is definitely something I reject. Employment opportunities shouldn't be treated like this, especially when so many members of Generation Z are struggling to find jobs. LinkedIn isn't a platform for this kind of marketing. In my opinion, it's simply not an appropriate marketing approach."

Informant 5 further acknowledged the campaign's promotional approach after understanding its underlying context while continuing to express critical reservations.

Informant 5: "In terms of how the promotion was delivered, I can accept it to some extent after learning that Prilly's post was actually part of Sensodyne's marketing campaign. However, I still think it raises concerns and feels somewhat inappropriate because people have very different perspectives, and, especially in Indonesia, many people still lack strong reading literacy."

The negotiated position demonstrated by Informant 5 emerged from the tension between two equally influential aspects of their background. As a social media user with a

high level of media literacy regarding UGC-style marketing, Informant 5 was able to appreciate the creativity and innovation reflected in contemporary digital marketing strategies. At the same time, the informant had personally experienced difficulties in securing internship opportunities and had encountered the intense competition within the labor market. Consequently, Informant 5 was unable to fully accept the use of the #OpenToWork symbol by a public figure whose socioeconomic circumstances differed significantly from those of most job seekers. This combination of professional appreciation and personal sensitivity ultimately positioned Informant 5 within the negotiated reading category, accepting the campaign's creative execution while simultaneously questioning its ethical appropriateness.

Oppositional Readings Based on Personal Experience and Professional Ethics

Within Stuart Hall's reception analysis, the oppositional reading position occurs when audiences interpret a message in a manner that directly opposes the dominant meaning intended by the message producer. Individuals occupying this position construct alternative meanings and reject the preferred interpretation based on values and perspectives that differ from those embedded in the original message (Hall, 1980).

In this study, three informants—Informants 1, 2, and 3—were categorized within the oppositional reading position. Although all three shared the same reception category, their rejection of the campaign was shaped by different personal backgrounds and experiences.

Informant 1, a Sales and Marketing Officer, had previously used the #OpenToWork feature directly while searching for employment. This personal experience created a close emotional connection to the symbol appropriated in the campaign, ultimately becoming the primary reason for rejecting Prilly Latuconsina's "Open to Work" campaign for Sensodyne.

Informant 1: "It definitely changed my opinion. I think it was quite inappropriate because there's no way they didn't expect this campaign to become huge. From the very beginning, they never talked about the brand directly—they only focused on Prilly."

As a marketing professional, Informant 1 also evaluated the campaign from a professional perspective, arguing that the brand had failed to meet ethical standards and questioning the rationale behind implementing such a campaign. The informant further questioned whether a campaign that achieved virality primarily through negative public responses could genuinely be considered a successful marketing effort.

Informant 1: "They should have considered first whether the narrative would be acceptable or offensive. Although advertising is often considered successful simply because many people see it, can it still be called successful if the majority of those responses are negative?"

Informant 1's rejection reflects an oppositional reading grounded in both personal experience and professional judgment. The campaign was perceived as personally offensive because it exploited a symbol with which the informant closely identified, while simultaneously representing an ethical failure from the standpoint of digital marketing communication.

Meanwhile, Informant 2, who was actively seeking employment after recently leaving a previous position, based their rejection on a different ethical concern: the brand's lack of transparency and its failure to assume public responsibility while the controversy unfolded.

Informant 2: "In my opinion, it's completely unacceptable. This campaign really needs to be reevaluated."

Informant 2: "Even on Instagram, they didn't respond at all. They stayed silent, didn't issue any clarification or even an Instagram Story. As a result, the public figure became the only person facing the backlash."

Informant 2 also expressed concern about the broader consequences of deceptive marketing practices for public trust in brands.

Informant 2: "If a brand isn't honest, sooner or later people will stop trusting it."

Accordingly, Informant 2's oppositional reading was shaped primarily by principles of honesty and transparency in marketing communication. Their status as an active job seeker further reinforced their rejection of the campaign's use of employment-related issues as the basis for a marketing gimmick.

The final participant occupying the oppositional reading position was Informant 3, a final-year university student who had experienced considerable difficulty securing internship opportunities without personal connections. Unlike Informants 1 and 2, whose perspectives shifted toward opposition after learning the campaign's commercial intent, Informant 3 adopted an oppositional stance from the outset. This position stemmed from skepticism regarding the plausibility of a well-established public figure portraying the role of someone genuinely seeking employment.

Informant 3: "In my opinion, the post was always going to generate both support and criticism, but probably more criticism because, at the time it was posted, job opportunities were very limited, whereas she is an influencer whose income is already far above the average."

Informant 3's rejection was based on the belief that Prilly Latuconsina should demonstrate greater social responsibility. According to the informant, someone with substantial financial resources should be creating employment opportunities rather than appearing to compete with ordinary job seekers.

Informant 3: "She should be creating jobs, not presenting herself as someone who is 'Open to Work.'"

Although Informant 3 acknowledged the campaign's creative value, this recognition did not alter the overall evaluation. The rejection extended to the campaign's entire concept and execution.

Informant 3: "I reject the entire promotional campaign. As I've already explained, it simply feels too disconnected from reality."

Collectively, the oppositional reading demonstrated by these three informants indicates that close personal experiences with employment-related challenges whether as current job seekers, former job seekers, or individuals who have directly observed such difficulties constituted a significant factor underlying their rejection of a campaign perceived as exploiting the realities of the contemporary labor market.

Audience Reception Analysis of the #OpenToWork Campaign Message Construction by Sensodyne and Prilly Latuconsina

The encoding process of the "Open to Work" campaign was deliberately designed by Sensodyne without relying on conventional advertising formats that explicitly display the product or brand name. Instead, the campaign adopted a UGC-style marketing approach by employing a career exploration narrative as the central gimmick of its marketing communication.

Several encoding components can be identified within this campaign. First, the use of the professional networking platform LinkedIn served as the primary medium for message delivery. In this context, LinkedIn functioned not merely as a communication channel but also as an instrument for reinforcing the credibility and professionalism of the campaign narrative. By utilizing LinkedIn, the campaign created the impression that Prilly Latuconsina was genuinely seeking to expand her professional career.

The second encoding component was the selection of Prilly Latuconsina as the campaign spokesperson. The brand carefully considered the alignment between Prilly's public image and the intended campaign message. She is widely recognized as an individual who is exploratory, multi-talented, and actively pursues self-development across various professional fields. These characteristics strengthened the credibility of the career exploration narrative communicated through LinkedIn. The selection of a public figure whose image closely aligned with the constructed narrative constituted an encoding strategy designed to minimize audiences' initial resistance to the campaign message.

The third component involved the construction of the campaign text through carefully selected words and narratives. Sensodyne and Prilly Latuconsina employed phrases such as "want to learn something new," "challenge myself," and "a phase of exploration" to strengthen the emotional connection between Prilly and audiences familiar with the experiences of job searching and personal development. This strategy is consistent with Stuart Hall's encoding concept, which argues that media messages are never neutral but are intentionally constructed to achieve specific communication objectives (Hall, 1980).

The final encoding component was the deliberate omission of the brand's explicit identity from the campaign post. Sensodyne intentionally avoided mentioning its brand name in order to make the content appear as a genuine personal story rather than an advertisement, thereby increasing the likelihood that audiences would interpret it as an authentic personal experience. Although this strategy proved effective in preserving the campaign's sense of authenticity, it also carried a significant risk by weakening the perceived association between the advertisement and the Sensodyne brand.

Meaning Construction by TikTok Netizens

The decoding process undertaken by the five informants demonstrated the complexity of audience interpretations in response to a single encoded message. These variations were shaped by differences in social backgrounds, personal experiences, and individual frames of reference.

The initial reception among Informants 1, 2, 4, and 5 indicated that the post, which resembled a personal experience, was largely accepted as authentic. This finding suggests that the message constructed by Sensodyne successfully passed audiences' initial filtering process, which typically distinguishes commercial from non-commercial content. Such findings are consistent with the primary objective of UGC-style marketing, namely attracting audience attention through content that is more readily accepted than explicitly promotional material (Wang, 2024).

However, audience reception did not end with these initial interpretations. Once the commercial identity of the post was revealed, audience interpretations shifted as new information became available. At this stage, clearer reception positions emerged, with audiences reassessing the campaign based on their individual backgrounds and personal experiences. This reassessment was particularly evident among participants who had close

personal connections to employment-related issues, leading them to adopt interpretations that diverged from the dominant meaning intended by the brand.

Informant 3 represented a unique case in this study, as they had already occupied the oppositional reading position before the campaign's commercial purpose was disclosed. The informant immediately recognized both the UGC-style format and the implausibility of the narrative being represented by a well-established public figure. This finding indicates that UGC-style marketing does not necessarily succeed in persuading all audiences, as some individuals are capable of identifying and critically evaluating such strategies from the outset.

Research Findings

The findings indicate that the UGC-style marketing strategy employed in the #OpenToWork campaign successfully established a perception of authenticity during the initial stage of audience reception. However, audience evaluations became predominantly negative after the campaign's commercial intent was disclosed, particularly among informants with personal experiences related to employment issues. Audience reception positions were influenced by participants' lived experiences and emotional proximity to job-search-related concerns, consistent with Stuart Hall's reception analysis theory (1980). Specifically, three informants were classified within the oppositional reading position, one informant within the negotiated reading position, and one informant within the dominant reading position.

Furthermore, although the UGC-style marketing approach successfully generated an authentic impression, it also made it difficult for most informants to establish a clear connection between the campaign narrative and the Sensodyne brand and its products, thereby weakening the campaign's brand relevance. Overall, despite achieving substantial virality and widespread public attention, the predominance of oppositional responses suggests that generating high levels of engagement does not necessarily reflect the effectiveness of a marketing campaign in accomplishing its intended communication objectives.

Table 2. Informants' Reception Positions

No.	Status	Background and Proximity to the Issue	Reception Position
1	Sales & Marketing Officer	Previously used the #OpenToWork feature actively during their job search.	Oppositional Reading
2	Former Business Support Staff	An active job seeker after leaving a previous position due to an unfavorable work environment.	Oppositional Reading
3	Final-Year University Student	Experienced difficulties securing internship opportunities without personal connections to fulfill academic requirements.	Oppositional Reading
4	Fresh Graduate	Recently graduated and previously served as a Campus Ambassador for a job vacancy platform.	Dominant Reading
5	Final-Year University Student	Previously completed an internship in Jakarta with a disproportionate workload after experiencing difficulties obtaining the internship opportunity.	Negotiated Reading

Source: Compiled by the researchers.

This study demonstrates that a gimmick marketing approach based on UGC-style marketing that exploits sensitive social issues carries substantial communication risks. The creativity and viral impact generated by such a strategy were not proportional to the negative public responses it received, particularly when the campaign was perceived as exceeding the boundaries of social sensitivity regarding a real-world issue. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how Stuart Hall's reception analysis can be applied to examine the dynamics of audience reception toward increasingly complex digital marketing communication in the social media era.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that TikTok netizens' reception of the gimmick marketing strategy employed in Prilly Latuconsina's "Open to Work" campaign for the Sensodyne brand varied according to the informants' backgrounds, personal experiences, and proximity to employment-related issues. These findings support Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model, which argues that audiences actively interpret media messages, resulting in meanings that do not necessarily correspond to those intended by the message producer.

The encoding process implemented by Sensodyne through the use of the LinkedIn platform, the #OpenToWork feature, and a narrative resembling a personal experience successfully supported the campaign's UGC-style marketing strategy. This approach effectively established an initial perception of authenticity regarding the uploaded content. However, once the audience became aware that the post was part of a promotional campaign, many participants revised their interpretations, particularly those with personal experience and close emotional connections to the employment-related context represented in the campaign. These findings indicate that the social context embedded within a campaign plays a significant role in shaping audience meaning-making processes.

According to Stuart Hall's reception analysis theory, the five informants were classified into three reception positions: one informant occupied the dominant-hegemonic position, one informant the negotiated position, and the remaining three informants the oppositional position. These positions respectively reflect audiences who accepted the campaign as a creative marketing innovation, accepted its creative elements while simultaneously criticizing certain aspects of its implementation, and rejected the campaign because it employed an inappropriate issue and platform for promotional purposes.

Furthermore, this study found that most informants experienced difficulty associating the campaign narrative with the Sensodyne product. This finding suggests that promotional strategies focusing excessively on generating curiosity may inadvertently weaken the connection between the campaign message and the brand identity, thereby reducing brand relevance, one of the essential components of the gimmick marketing concept discussed in the literature review. Moreover, the use of employment-related issues as part of the gimmick marketing strategy created ambiguity between personal and promotional content, leading to diverse audience interpretations.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the success of a gimmick marketing strategy is determined not only by its ability to capture audience attention but also by the appropriateness of its context, its sensitivity toward social issues, and the clarity of the relationship between the promotional message and the brand being promoted. Therefore,

audience reception of the "Open to Work" campaign cannot be understood as a single or uniform response but rather as the result of a process of negotiated meaning shaped by each individual's experiences and frame of reference.

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