



Does Dangdut Music as Pop Culture Influence User Engagement through Content Marketing? Evidence from Indonesian TikTok Users

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ABSTRACT: TikTok has emerged as an important platform for disseminating popular culture through digital content marketing. In Indonesia, dangdut music has regained its cultural significance as a genre that shapes user interactions on the platform. Building on this context, this study aimed to examine the influence of popular culture, represented by dangdut music, on user experience and user engagement on TikTok. The study employed a quantitative survey of 389 Indonesian TikTok users, and the data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results revealed that popular culture had significant positive effects on content marketing, user experience, and user engagement. In addition, content marketing positively influenced both user experience and user engagement, while user experience emerged as a strong predictor of user engagement. Furthermore, content marketing partially mediated the relationships between popular culture and both user experience and user engagement. These findings contributed to the literature on popular culture and content marketing by demonstrating how elements of local popular culture could be effectively integrated into digital platforms to enhance user experience and foster stronger user engagement.

KEYWORDS: Dangdut music; popular culture; content marketing; user experience; user engagement; TikTok

1. Introduction

Dangdut has long been recognized as one of Indonesia's most influential musical genres, with its roots in traditional Malay rhythms and influences from Indian, Arabic, and Western musical traditions. Historically associated with working-class communities, dangdut has undergone a remarkable transformation, evolving from a form of local entertainment into a prominent national cultural icon. Over the past five years, digital platforms, particularly TikTok, have accelerated this transformation by reshaping how dangdut was consumed, reproduced, and commercialized within Indonesia's cultural industry. TikTok, especially in Southeast Asia, emerged as a key driver of popular culture by enabling short-form video content to spread rapidly through algorithmically curated recommendation systems. Its "For You Page" algorithm amplified content based on user engagement patterns [1], allowing previously

marginalized or niche cultural products, such as dangdut, to reach broad audiences within a short period. This development suggested that TikTok was not merely a social media platform but also a cultural infrastructure that played an important role in shaping popularity, identity formation, and the dynamics of cultural industries [2].

Content marketing played a crucial role in reintroducing dangdut to younger Indonesian audiences. Musicians, influencers, record labels, and ordinary users strategically utilized TikTok features, such as dance challenges, remixes, duets, and sound memes, to position dangdut as an entertaining, relatable, and contemporary cultural product [3]. These practices blurred the boundaries between content producers and audiences and fostered a participatory culture in which users actively co-created meanings and identities through music-based content [4]. As Generation Z became increasingly familiar with dangdut, they remixed the genre in ways that reflected their identities, sense of humor, and cultural experiences. Previous studies also reported that dangdut increased public engagement in activities such as group gymnastics and community events [5]. This phenomenon demonstrated that dangdut extended beyond entertainment and contributed to cultural events, creative industries, and other social sectors.

The algorithmic visibility provided by TikTok transformed dangdut songs into viral cultural commodities, influencing music streaming performance, live entertainment markets, and commercial brand collaborations [6]. Consequently, record labels and artists increasingly relied on TikTok-driven content marketing strategies to strengthen audience engagement and shape cultural production. The platform's role in identity construction and cultural circulation raised an important research question regarding how TikTok's content marketing reshaped dangdut's identity, cultural meaning, and industrial value, ultimately positioning it as a dominant force in Indonesian popular culture. Accordingly, this study aimed to examine the influence of TikTok content marketing on identity construction, audience engagement, and the broader dynamics of Indonesia's dangdut industry. By positioning TikTok as a site of cultural production, this study contributed to the growing literature on digital popular culture, algorithmic visibility, and the evolving relationship between media platforms and cultural industries in Indonesia.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Theoretical background.

Dangdut has long been recognized as one of Indonesia's most culturally significant musical genres. Originating from local musical traditions, it has been widely acknowledged as a form of contemporary folk music [7]. By blending Malay, Indian, and Arabic musical influences, dangdut evolved into a popular form of entertainment enjoyed across different social classes and regions. Beyond entertainment, it became an integral part of Indonesia's cultural identity and public life, frequently featured at celebrations, media broadcasts, and community gatherings. Moreover, subgenres such as *dangdut koplo* demonstrated the genre's ability to adapt to changing audience preferences while maintaining its cultural relevance [8]. Recent studies suggested that dangdut also played an important role in the creation of TikTok content. A qualitative study on *dangdut koplo* reported that these songs were frequently used as background soundtracks by TikTok creators because of their distinctive musical characteristics and emotional appeal [9]. The selection of these songs enhanced the attractiveness of videos, encouraged user interaction, and contributed to the emergence of viral content and online

discussions. These findings indicated that dangdut was not only culturally significant but also highly effective in encouraging user participation on social media platforms. Other studies further reported that TikTok had facilitated the global dissemination of *dangdut koplo*, enabling audiences beyond its place of origin to discover and engage with the genre [10]. By providing a platform where traditional music could be reinterpreted within contemporary digital culture, TikTok fostered creativity, cultural exchange, and the preservation of local musical heritage.

Unlike traditional media, TikTok employed algorithm-driven recommendation systems that promoted content based on engagement metrics such as views, likes, shares, and comments. Research on TikTok music communities demonstrated that user activities extended beyond entertainment to include active meaning-making and social interaction, with users constructing identities and communities through symbolic engagement with music [11]. Encouraging user participation further strengthened social connections and sustained engagement within the platform's dynamic digital environment [12]. Recent studies also demonstrated that influencer collaborations, branded challenges, and trend-based content strategies were particularly effective in maintaining long-term audience engagement. Consequently, TikTok functioned not only as a social networking platform but also as a sophisticated digital marketing tool, with its features substantially influencing how audiences interacted with content [13]. Furthermore, research examining TikTok's influence on music discovery and streaming behavior revealed that engagement with music-related content was positively associated with music consumption on other digital platforms. High levels of likes, comments, and shares increased the visibility of songs and artists while stimulating broader consumer demand [14]. Although these studies focused on music in general rather than specifically on dangdut, they demonstrated the considerable influence of TikTok engagement on music consumption and audience behavior, providing a strong foundation for investigating the role of dangdut in digital content marketing and user engagement.

2.2. Hypothesis development and research framework.

In this section, all the variables with hypotheses are discussed in detail, and the proposed research framework and hypothesized relationships among the study variables are presented in Figure 1.

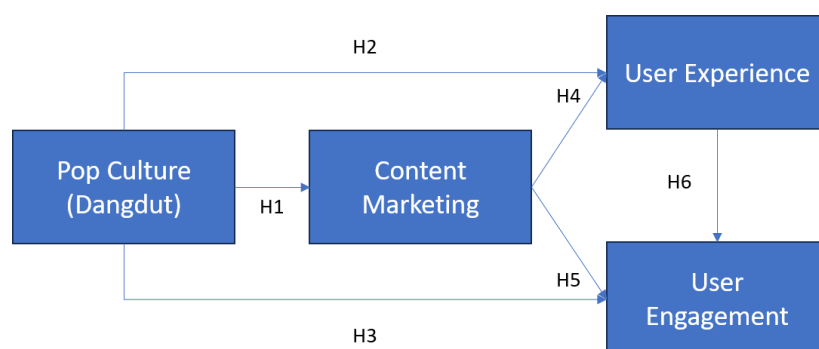


Figure 1. Proposed research framework and hypothesis.

Popular culture has been recognized as not only a source of entertainment but also a symbolic and strategic resource in contemporary marketing communication. Popular Culture Theory suggests that cultural products provide shared meanings, identities, and emotional experiences that influence how individuals perceive and respond to media content. Cultural symbols that

resonate with audiences are more likely to generate attention, foster emotional attachment, and stimulate social interaction, making them valuable assets in digital marketing environments [15]. Within social media platforms, culturally relevant content enhances message authenticity and strengthens audience identification with content creators or brands.

Dangdut has been widely regarded as one of the most influential forms of Indonesian popular culture, reflecting cultural values, collective memory, social identity, and emotional expression. Its popularity across diverse demographic groups has enabled it to achieve substantial visibility within digital media ecosystems. Because dangdut evokes familiarity and emotional resonance, it provides content creators and marketers with an effective means of establishing stronger connections with their audiences. Previous studies have shown that culturally embedded music genres are frequently incorporated into marketing communications because they enhance content relevance, authenticity, and audience engagement [16]. Content that aligns with users' cultural backgrounds and lived experiences is more likely to attract attention and encourage active interaction. Therefore, dangdut can be considered a strategic cultural resource for improving the effectiveness of content marketing on TikTok.

The relationship between popular culture and user experience can also be explained through Experiential Consumption Theory, which proposes that consumers derive value not only from functional information but also from emotional, symbolic, and sensory experiences. Unlike traditional media, which primarily encourages passive consumption, TikTok facilitates participatory culture by enabling users to actively create, remix, and share cultural content. Consequently, culturally relevant content, such as dangdut, is expected to enhance both user experience and engagement. Based on these theoretical arguments, it was hypothesized that dangdut popular culture positively influenced content marketing (H1) and user experience (H2) among Indonesian TikTok users, and that it also exerted a positive effect on user engagement (H3).

Content Marketing Theory suggested that organizations created and distributed valuable, relevant, and engaging content to attract target audiences and establish long-term relationships. Rather than relying solely on promotional messages, content marketing focused on delivering informational, emotional, and entertainment value that enhanced users' experiences with digital media [17]. On social media platforms such as TikTok, content marketing was commonly implemented through storytelling, influencer collaborations, user-generated content, and trend-based campaigns designed to stimulate audience engagement. Well-designed content marketing enhanced entertainment value, emotional resonance, and perceived authenticity, thereby creating more positive user experiences [18].

Previous studies demonstrated that entertaining, informative, authentic, and culturally relevant content strengthened users' cognitive and emotional responses, resulting in greater satisfaction and enjoyment. On TikTok, content marketing strategies that incorporated engaging narratives, creative visual elements, and popular cultural symbols such as dangdut were expected to create immersive experiences that improved users' perceptions of digital content. Consequently, content marketing was hypothesized to positively influence user experience (H4). A positive user experience, characterized by enjoyment, satisfaction, and emotional involvement, was also expected to encourage users to interact more actively with digital content [19].

In addition to enhancing user experience, content marketing was expected to strengthen user engagement. User Engagement Theory proposed that audiences became more actively

involved with content that was meaningful, relevant, and emotionally engaging. Effective content marketing not only encouraged content consumption but also motivated users to like, comment, share, and create their own content. Previous research consistently reported that compelling content marketing activities increased behavioral engagement across social media platforms. Therefore, content marketing was hypothesized to have a positive effect on user engagement (H5). Furthermore, studies on music-based digital platforms indicated that culturally relevant content enhanced users' perceived enjoyment and the meaningfulness of their interactions [20]. User experience had also been widely recognized as an important antecedent of user engagement, with previous studies demonstrating that positive user experiences significantly increased engagement across various digital platforms [21]. Accordingly, user experience was hypothesized to positively influence user engagement on TikTok (H6).

Content marketing also functioned as a mechanism through which cultural elements were translated into digital experiences that audiences could consume, interpret, and interact with. Consequently, it was expected to mediate the relationship between popular culture and user outcomes. This mediating role can be explained by the concept of value creation, whereby content marketing transformed cultural value into experiential value through narrative framing, visual presentation, and interactive features [22]. By converting culturally meaningful elements into engaging digital experiences, content marketing enabled audiences to participate more actively in online interactions [23,24].

Within the TikTok environment, content featuring dangdut music and presented through creative storytelling, viral challenges, and trending formats was more likely to capture users' attention and stimulate interaction [25]. Although dangdut inherently possessed symbolic and emotional value, this value needed to be effectively communicated through attractive content design, compelling storytelling, visual creativity, and interactive features to maximize user experience. In this context, content marketing served as the bridge connecting popular culture with positive user outcomes by transforming dangdut from a cultural artifact into an engaging social media experience. Based on these theoretical arguments, content marketing was hypothesized to mediate the relationship between dangdut popular culture and user experience (H7), as well as the relationship between dangdut popular culture and user engagement (H8).

2.3. Methodology.

This study adopted a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey approach to test theoretically grounded hypotheses and examine the causal relationships among the latent variables [26]. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which was considered appropriate for prediction-oriented research models and complex mediation analysis. The target population consisted of Indonesian TikTok users who actively consumed or interacted with dangdut-related content. As presented in Table 1, the study included several constructs and their corresponding measurement items. All constructs were measured using multi-item scales adapted from previous studies and modified to fit the context of TikTok and dangdut. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 1. Measurement items and sources.

Variable	Questionnaire Items	Adapted Description	Adapted Sources
Pop Culture of Dangdut	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dangdut content on TikTok feels culturally familiar to me. 2. It's Dangdut videos on TikTok that make me feel connected to Indonesia's culture. 3. I'm a part of my culture. 4. I like watching TikTok videos that have Dangdut music or themes. 5. I am interested in Indonesian pop culture. 	Based on cultural identity and popular culture scales by contextualizing items to dangdut content on TikTok	[27–29]
Content Marketing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. TikTok Dangdut content is entertaining. 2. The way content creators/brands use dangdut gets my attention. 3. I feel like the Dangdut I see on TikTok is relevant to me. 4. TikTok videos of dangdut are creative and well-produced. 5. The dangdut content on TikTok affects my interest in the creator/brand. 	Adapted from content marketing effectiveness scales to reflect dangdut-related TikTok content.	[30, 31]
User Experience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watching dangdut-related content on TikTok is enjoyable for me. 2. Dangdut videos on TikTok make me feel entertained. 3. I spend way too much time getting sucked into dangdut content on TikTok. 4. I'm focused on the dangdut stuff on TikTok. 5. Overall, I am happy with the experience of watching the content of dangdut on TikTok. 6. Watching dangdut videos on TikTok helps me feel connected to Indonesian culture. 	Adapted from digital media user experience scales for TikTok-based dangdut consumption	[32]
User Engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I often like, comment, and share Dangdut TikTok videos. 2. I spend time watching Dangdut-related content on TikTok. 3. I actively participate in Dangdut challenges or trends on TikTok. 4. I follow creators who frequently use Dangdut content. 5. I feel excited or entertained when engaging with Dangdut content on TikTok. 	Adapted from social media engagement scales for dangdut-related TikTok activities	[33]

Respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure that they had sufficient exposure to dangdut-related content on TikTok. To be eligible for participation, respondents were required to (1) actively use TikTok, (2) watch, like, share, or create dangdut-related content, and (3) be at least 17 years of age. Content validity was established through expert review by three specialists in digital marketing and popular culture, who evaluated the adapted questionnaire items for clarity, relevance, and representativeness. A pilot study involving 35 respondents was subsequently conducted to verify the clarity and appropriateness of the measurement items. The minimum sample size was determined based on the 10-times rule and statistical power considerations recommended for PLS-SEM analysis [34]. Data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4 following a two-stage analytical procedure consisting of (1) measurement model assessment and (2) structural model assessment. The measurement model was evaluated by examining indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Indicator reliability was considered acceptable when factor loadings exceeded 0.70. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with values greater than 0.70 indicating satisfactory reliability. Convergent validity was established when the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50. Discriminant validity was assessed using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT), with HTMT values below 0.90 indicating adequate discriminant validity [35].

The structural model was subsequently evaluated by examining path coefficients, the coefficient of determination (R^2), and effect sizes (f^2). The significance of the hypothesized relationships was tested using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to evaluate the explanatory power of the model, while effect size (f^2) measured the magnitude of each structural relationship. Mediation effects were examined using the bootstrapping procedure recommended for PLS-SEM [36]. Specifically, content marketing was tested as a mediating variable in the relationships between dangdut popular culture and (1) user experience and (2) user engagement. A mediation effect was considered significant when the indirect effect was statistically significant and its 95% confidence interval did not include zero. The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical research standards. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were fully protected, informed consent was obtained prior to participation, and all collected data were used exclusively for academic research purposes.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Overview of respondent demographics.

The research was conducted on 389 respondents throughout Indonesia. More than 80% of the sample are part of Generation Z and young millennials, with the majority of the sample being young adults aged 21–25 years, followed by respondents aged 15–20 years. The people using this thing are a lot like the people using TikTok. They also like to be a part of groups. So they are a group to look at to see how dangdut is used on TikTok. The number of men and women is much the same, so we do not think the results will be unfair to one or the other. This means the results might show what men and women who use TikTok think. The people using TikTok are mostly students and young people. The findings also indicate that most respondents spend more than two hours on TikTok each day. The more people use platforms, the more they are exposed to digital content, content marketing activities, and popular culture trends. Therefore, the respondents are more familiar with the engagement features of TikTok. And while most respondents consume content primarily, around 58% say they actively create or upload content. The results indicated that the respondents represented the primary demographic groups driving TikTok usage in Indonesia, particularly young adults who actively consumed and interacted with digital content. This level of participation was particularly important because users who actively engaged with TikTok were more likely to participate in cultural trends, viral challenges, and content marketing activities. Therefore, the significant relationship identified between user experience and user engagement in this study could be attributed to the high level of user participation. Respondents primarily used TikTok not only for entertainment but also to explore trending content and discover new information. Most respondents resided on the island of Java, the most populous region in Indonesia and the country's primary hub for digital media and cultural production. Nevertheless, the inclusion of respondents from multiple regions enhanced the geographical diversity of the sample and increased the generalizability of the findings across different parts of Indonesia. Overall, the demographic characteristics indicated that the sample was well suited for examining the role of dangdut as a form of popular culture in shaping content marketing effectiveness, user experience, and user engagement on TikTok. A detailed summary of the respondents' demographic characteristics is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic profile of respondents.

Category	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	15–20	102	26.2
	21–25	131	33.7
	25–30	82	21.1
	30–40	52	13.4
	Above 40	22	5.6
Gender	Male	194	49.9
	Female	195	50.1
Education Level	Junior High School (SMP/Mts)	38	9.8
	Senior High School (SMA/SMK/MA)	142	36.5
	Diploma (D1–D3)	54	13.9
	Bachelor's (S1)	117	30.1
	Master's (S2)	30	7.7
	Doctorate (S3)	8	2
Occupation	Student	176	45.2
	Employee	121	31.1
	Freelancer / Content Creator	43	11.1
	Business Owner	27	6.9
	Unemployed	18	4.6
	Other	4	1.1
Daily TikTok Usage	< 1 hour	55	14.1
	1–2 hours	113	29
	2–3 hours	129	33.2
	> 3 hours	92	23.7
TikTok Account Status	Viewer only	162	41.6
	Sometimes create content	118	30.3
	Regular content creator	73	18.8
	Influencer/creator	36	9.3
Primary Purpose of TikTok Use	Entertainment	189	48.6
	Information/learning	69	17.7
	Following trends/pop culture	72	18.5
	Social interaction	45	11.6
	Content creation	14	3.6
Familiarity with Dangdut	Unfamiliar	36	9.3
	Sometimes familiar	97	24.9
	Neutral	85	21.9
	Familiar	101	26
Region of Residence	Very familiar	70	18
	Java	176	45.2
	Sumatra	71	18.3
	Kalimantan	42	10.8
	Sulawesi	40	10.3
	Bali	19	4.9
	Nusa Tenggara	23	5.9
	Maluku	10	2.6
Papua	8	2	

3.2. Validity and reliability.

The measurement model was assessed by examining indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity as shown in Table 3, following the guidelines for PLS-SEM. The outer loadings for all indicators in the four constructs of Pop Culture (PC), Content Marketing (CM), User Experience (UX), and User Engagement (UE) are high, ranging from 0.861 to 0.908. All values are greater than the threshold value of 0.70 recommended, showing that each indicator has strong reliability and adequately reflects its corresponding latent construct. Thus, no indicator removal was necessary. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) were used to test internal consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha values were from 0.934 to 0.941. The composite reliability values are between 0.950 and 0.953. Both measures are above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70, confirming excellent internal

consistency for all the constructs. Besides, the values of CR are less than 0.950-0.970, which shows that there is no problem of multicollinearity between indicators. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to measure convergent validity. AVE values are in the range of 0.771–0.799. These values are well above the recommended cut-off of 0.50, indicating that each of the constructs explains more than 77% of the variance in its indicators. This confirms a good convergent validity of all constructs in the model. Overall results indicate that the measurement model meets all recommended criteria for reliability and validity. The high outer loading, internal consistency, and strong convergent validity indicate that the constructs of pop culture (dangdut), content marketing, user experience, and user engagement are measured accurately and consistently. Therefore, the measuring model is sufficient and appropriate for the next step to analyze the structural model and hypothesis testing.

Table 3. Measurement model evaluation results.

Construct	Items	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Pop Culture (PC)	PC1	0.894	0.934	0.950	0.791
	PC2	0.896			
	PC3	0.891			
	PC4	0.871			
	PC5	0.895			
Content Marketing (CM)	CM1	0.892	0.937	0.952	0.799
	CM2	0.891			
	CM3	0.896			
	CM4	0.884			
	CM5	0.906			
User Experience (UX)	UX1	0.888	0.941	0.953	0.771
	UX2	0.882			
	UX3	0.868			
	UX4	0.861			
	UX5	0.880			
	UX6	0.889			
User Engagement (UE)	UE1	0.896	0.937	0.952	0.798
	UE2	0.891			
	UE3	0.880			
	UE4	0.891			
	UE5	0.908			

Following the assessment of convergent validity, discriminant validity was evaluated to ensure that each construct was empirically distinct from the others. Two complementary approaches were employed: the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio and the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which are widely recommended for PLS-SEM analysis. Figure 2 presents the results of the structural model. The model explained 21.3% of the variance in Content Marketing ($R^2 = 0.213$), indicating that Pop Culture (Dangdut) accounted for a meaningful proportion of the variation in content marketing perceptions. The model also explained 19.5% of the variance in User Experience ($R^2 = 0.195$), suggesting that Pop Culture and Content Marketing jointly contributed to users' experiences when interacting with TikTok content. Furthermore, the model explained 36.3% of the variance in User Engagement ($R^2 = 0.363$), indicating moderate explanatory power for predicting engagement behavior. Among the structural relationships, the strongest effect was observed between Pop Culture and Content Marketing ($\beta = 0.462$), followed by the relationship between Content Marketing and User Experience ($\beta = 0.441$). These findings suggested that culturally meaningful content played an important role in enhancing marketing effectiveness and improving user experiences. User Experience also had a positive and significant effect on User Engagement ($\beta = 0.409$), indicating that enjoyable and meaningful interactions encouraged greater participation on TikTok. Moreover, Content

Marketing had a positive direct effect on User Engagement ($\beta = 0.298$), demonstrating that effective content strategies promoted engagement beyond their indirect influence through User Experience.

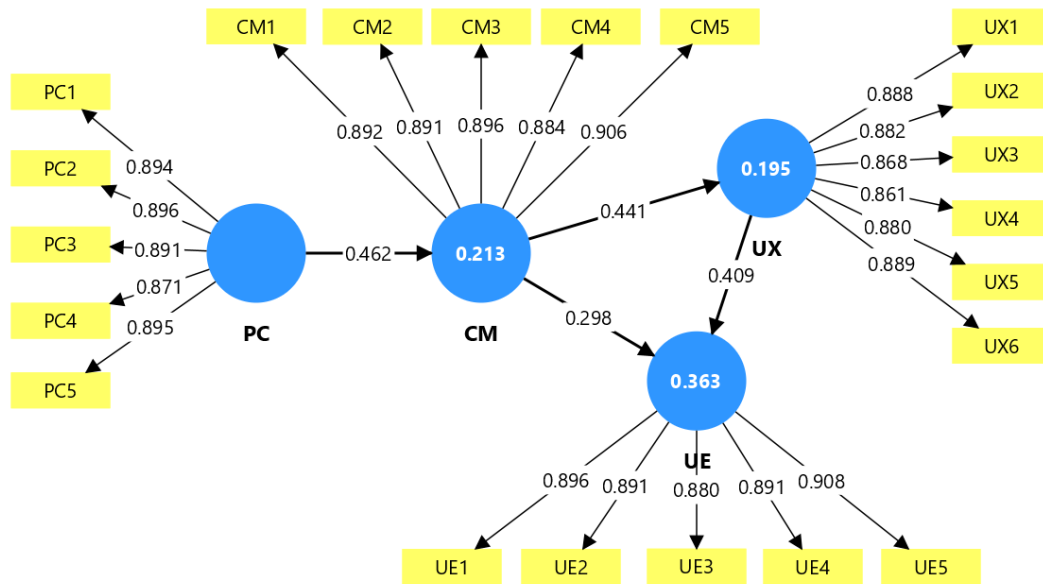


Figure 2. PLS Model Structural Results

Table 4 presents the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio used to assess discriminant validity. All HTMT values ranged from 0.383 to 0.575, which were well below the recommended threshold of 0.90. These results confirmed that the constructs were empirically distinct and exhibited adequate discriminant validity.

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Results.

	CM	PC	UE	UX
CM				
PC	0.492			
UE	0.510	0.383		
UX	0.469	0.438	0.575	

Table 5 reports the Fornell–Larcker criterion for discriminant validity assessment. The square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct (diagonal values) exceeded its correlations with all other constructs, satisfying the Fornell–Larcker criterion. These findings further confirmed that each construct measured a unique concept and that discriminant validity was successfully established.

Table 5. Fornell-Larcker Results.

	CM	PC	UE	UX
CM				
PC	0.492			
UE	0.510	0.383		
UX	0.469	0.438	0.575	

The results show that Pop Culture (PC) has a significant positive effect on Content Marketing (CM), which means that elements of dangdut as a form of popular culture can significantly strengthen the effectiveness of content marketing strategies on TikTok. In addition, PC has a significant positive influence on UX and UE, indicating that culturally embedded content enhances the users' experiential perceptions and directly increases their interaction levels. The results of the measurement model presented in Table 3 show strong reliability and validity for all constructs. First, all the loadings of the indicators are above the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.861 to 0.908. These high loadings show that each measurement item is strongly associated with its respective construct and measures the underlying theoretical construct sufficiently. The similar high loadings suggest that the respondents interpreted the questionnaire items in a consistent manner, which in turn supports the content validity of the adapted measurement scales. Reliability values are relatively high but below the commonly suggested threshold of 0.95, indicating strong internal consistency but not too much item redundancy. Moreover, Content Marketing (CM) is at the heart of user outcomes. CM has a large impact on User Experience and User Engagement, which means that the design and cultural fit of marketing content improve users' perception and participation. User experience (UX) is also proven to have a significant impact on user engagement, which means that high experiential quality results in more user engagement. Regarding the mediation effects, Content Marketing partially mediates the relationship between Pop Culture and User Experience and User Engagement. Our results show that the effect of pop culture on user outcomes is not only direct but is significantly enhanced when mediated through the practices of strategic content marketing.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) to provide a more comprehensive assessment of construct distinctiveness. The simultaneous use of both approaches is recommended in contemporary PLS-SEM research on the grounds that they deliver complementary evidence for discriminant validity. The traditional Fornell-Larcker approach is based on shared variance between constructs, whereas HTMT is a more stringent and sensitive measure that can reveal potential discriminant validity issues that may not be captured by the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Table 4 shows that the HTMT values are all below the threshold value of 0.85 (or 0.90 depending on research context), suggesting that the constructs are sufficiently different from each other. The results show that the latent variables are capturing distinct phenomena at the conceptual level, and there is no excessive overlap among constructs. The Fornell-Larcker criterion in Table 5 further confirms that the square root of the AVE of each construct is higher than its correlations with other constructs. This finding supports the contention that each construct has more variance in common with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model. Thus, the constructs have adequate discriminant validity and retain conceptual distinctiveness. The HTMT and Fornell-Larcker results are consistent and offer strong evidence that Pop Culture (Dangdut), Content Marketing, User Experience, and User Engagement are empirically separate constructs. This is especially important because the constructs are theoretically linked and should be correlated. Discriminant validity is established to ensure that the relationships found in the structural model are meaningful theoretical relationships and not just overlapping measures between constructs.

3.3. Hypotheses testing result.

The results of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 6. The structural model was evaluated using path coefficients (β), t-statistics, and p-values, obtained through bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

Table 6. Hypotheses testing results.

HYPOTHESES		Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ((O/STDEV))	P values	Decision
H1	PC -> CM	0.462	0.463	0.042	10.946	0.000	Supported
H2	PC -> UX	0.204	0.206	0.031	6.604	0.000	Supported
H3	PC -> UE	0.221	0.223	0.031	7.138	0.000	Supported
H4	CM -> UX	0.441	0.443	0.041	10.881	0.000	Supported
H5	CM -> UE	0.298	0.298	0.048	6.21	0.000	Supported
H6	UX -> UE	0.409	0.409	0.045	9.077	0.000	Supported
H7	PC -> CM -> UX	0.204	0.206	0.031	6.604	0.000	Supported
H8	PC -> CM -> UE	0.138	0.138	0.027	5.083	0.000	Supported

H1 reports that Pop Culture (PC) has a positive effect on Content Marketing (CM). The results show a strong and significant effect ($\beta = 0.462$, $t = 10.946$, $p < 0.001$), which supports H1. The results prove that dangdut, as popular culture, has a significant contribution to the development of an effective content marketing strategy on TikTok. H2 examines the direct effect of Pop Culture on User Experience (UX). The path coefficient value is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.204$, $t = 6.604$, $p < 0.001$), which means that pop culture in dangdut content increases users' experiential perceptions. So H2 gets some support. H3 analyzes the effect of Pop Culture on User Engagement (UE). The results show a strong positive impact ($\beta = 0.441$, $t = 10.881$, $p < 0.001$) that a well-designed content marketing strategy can significantly improve the perception and experience of TikTok content for users. Thus, H4 is supported. The results show that the use of pop culture content, specifically based on dangdut, has a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.221$, $t = 7.138$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that user engagement on TikTok can be increased. Therefore, H3 is supported. H5 examines the effect of Content Marketing on User Engagement. The results show a positive and significant relationship ($\beta = 0.298$, $t = 6.210$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that content marketing strategies that effectively leverage pop culture can enhance user interaction and engagement. Consequently, H5 is validated. H6 investigates whether User Experience has an effect on User Engagement. The result indicates a significant and strong effect ($\beta = 0.409$, $t = 9.077$, $p < 0.001$), which shows that positive user experience is directly related to the level of engagement. Thus, H6 is supported. H7: Content Marketing mediates the relationship between Pop Culture and User Experience. The indirect effect is substantial ($\beta = 0.204$, $t = 6.604$, $p < 0.001$), which indicates that content marketing somewhat mediates the effect of pop culture on user experience. The results demonstrate that the attractiveness of dangdut culture can improve user experience, especially when it is interwoven into content marketing methods in a smart way. H8: Based on H7, Content Marketing mediates the interaction between Pop Culture and User Engagement. The indirect effect was also significant ($\beta = 0.138$, $t = 5.083$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that content marketing is a substantial transmission route via which pop culture can influence user engagement. This supports H8. Overall, all the hypothesized relationships (H1–H8) were empirically supported. The results of this study prove that dangdut, as a popular culture, has an important role in the effectiveness of content marketing that can improve user experience and user engagement on

TikTok. The substantial mediating effects also underscore the strategic role of content marketing in converting cultural elements into meaningful digital engagement outcomes.

Table 7 contains the results of the model goodness-of-fit and predictive assessment. The R² values show that Pop Culture (PC) explains 21.3% of the variance in Content Marketing (CM), and CM explains 19.5% of the variance in User Experience (UX). Moreover, CM and UX together explain 36.3% of the variance in User Engagement (UE). The R² values show poor to moderate explanatory power, and the model has the strongest explanatory power for UE. The effect size (f^2) results indicate that the exogenous constructs have a significant impact on the endogenous variables. Specifically, the f^2 values of 0.271 for CM, 0.242 for UX, and 0.211 for UE indicate medium effect sizes, which show that the predictor constructs contribute substantially to explaining the respective endogenous constructs. The evaluation of the predictive relevance via Q²predict shows positive values for all the endogenous variables (CM = 0.208, UX = 0.124, and UE = 0.108). As all the Q²predict values are greater than zero, the model has adequate predictive relevance and out-of-sample predictive ability. This suggests that the model is able to predict future observations beyond the sample reasonably used for analysis. Moreover, the prediction error measures (RMSE, MAE) are quite low and comparable across constructs (RMSE from 0.894 to 0.948; MAE from 0.751 to 0.822), which suggests an acceptable prediction accuracy and further reinforces the robustness of the structural model.

Table 7. Model goodness of fit statistics.

	R-square	R-square adjusted	f^2	Q ² predict	RMSE	MAE
CM	0.213	0.211	0.271	0.208	0.894	0.751
UE	0.363	0.360	0.211	0.108	0.948	0.822
UX	0.195	0.193	0.242	0.124	0.939	0.810

3.4. Discussion.

This study examined the effects of dangdut as a form of Indonesian popular culture on content marketing, user experience, and user engagement on TikTok. The findings provided empirical evidence supporting Popular Culture Theory, Content Marketing Theory, and User Engagement Theory by demonstrating that culturally embedded digital content played a significant role in influencing engagement outcomes within social media contexts. The results showed that dangdut, as a form of popular culture, had a significant positive effect on content marketing (H1). These findings indicated that dangdut functioned not merely as entertainment but also as an important cultural asset that enhanced the relevance, authenticity, and emotional appeal of TikTok content. Its strong cultural resonance made digital content more engaging and persuasive, thereby increasing the effectiveness of content marketing strategies. This finding supported Popular Culture Theory, which suggests that cultural symbols help audiences construct meaning and identity, making culturally meaningful content more persuasive and memorable [37]. The results were consistent with previous studies reporting that culturally embedded content enhanced audience attention and perceived authenticity in social media marketing [38, 39]. However, unlike earlier studies that primarily focused on global popular culture, celebrity culture, or mainstream entertainment, the present study demonstrated that a localized cultural phenomenon such as dangdut could generate comparable marketing benefits. This finding extended the existing literature by showing that local cultural content could be strategically utilized to improve content effectiveness in platform-based marketing environments.

The results also revealed that dangdut positively influenced both user experience (H2) and user engagement (H3). These findings suggested that dangdut created richer emotional and sensory experiences by evoking nostalgia, humor, familiarity, and a shared cultural identity. Similar relationships have been reported in previous studies examining cultural content and audience engagement [40]. However, the present findings suggested that these effects were amplified within TikTok's participatory ecosystem. Unlike traditional social media platforms, which primarily encouraged passive content consumption, TikTok promoted active participation through challenges, remixes, duets, and trend-based interactions. Consequently, users were not merely consumers of cultural content but also co-creators who continuously interpreted and reproduced cultural meanings.

The findings further demonstrated that content marketing significantly influenced user experience (H4) and user engagement (H5). These results supported Content Marketing Theory, which emphasizes the importance of delivering valuable, relevant, and engaging content to generate favorable audience responses [41]. Previous studies likewise reported that effective content marketing improved customer satisfaction and engagement across digital platforms. The present findings further indicated that cultural relevance served as an important contextual factor that strengthened the effectiveness of content marketing. Furthermore, previous research identified positive user experiences as one of the strongest drivers of behavioral engagement on digital platforms [42, 43], which was consistent with the significant positive relationship observed between user experience and user engagement (H6).

The findings also suggested that users were more likely to engage in activities such as liking, commenting, sharing, and creating content when their experiences were enjoyable, meaningful, and emotionally satisfying. Although previous research had largely examined this relationship within general social media contexts, the present study demonstrated that the relationship between user experience and user engagement remained particularly strong in culturally driven digital environments. These findings suggested that user experience served as a key mechanism through which cultural content promoted sustained participation and interaction.

Importantly, the mediation analysis revealed that content marketing partially mediated the relationship between popular culture and user experience (H7) as well as the relationship between popular culture and user engagement (H8). These findings indicated that the cultural attractiveness of dangdut alone was insufficient to maximize user experience and engagement. Instead, cultural elements needed to be translated into effective content marketing strategies that aligned with platform characteristics and audience expectations. This finding extended the existing literature by identifying content marketing as a cultural transmission mechanism that transformed cultural resources into measurable digital outcomes [44]. Consequently, the present study addressed an important research gap by demonstrating that content marketing functioned as an intermediary mechanism linking popular culture with user behavior.

This study made several theoretical and practical contributions. First, it integrated perspectives from Popular Culture Theory, Content Marketing Theory, and User Engagement Theory into a single conceptual framework. Second, it extended the existing literature by investigating dangdut as a localized cultural phenomenon rather than focusing solely on global entertainment trends. Third, it emphasized the importance of platform-specific participation mechanisms for maximizing the impact of culturally relevant content. Finally, by identifying content marketing as a mediating mechanism, the study provided new insights into how cultural

expressions were transformed into enhanced user experience and engagement outcomes. Overall, these findings improved the understanding of the interaction among culture, marketing, and user behavior within contemporary social media ecosystems.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggested that content creators and marketers should strategically incorporate culturally relevant elements such as dangdut into their TikTok marketing campaigns. The strong cultural resonance of dangdut enhanced content relevance, authenticity, and audience appeal, enabling creators to differentiate their content within an increasingly competitive digital environment. Furthermore, the significant effects of content marketing on user experience and engagement indicated that marketers should move beyond using dangdut merely as background music. Instead, they should integrate dangdut into storytelling, influencer collaborations, viral challenges, and other interactive content formats to create richer user experiences and stronger audience engagement. Such strategies could simultaneously improve marketing effectiveness while promoting and preserving Indonesian cultural identity on digital platforms.

4. Conclusions

This study examined the influence of dangdut, one of Indonesia's most prominent cultural expressions, on content marketing, user experience, and user engagement on TikTok. Based on data collected from 389 TikTok users in Indonesia and analyzed using PLS-SEM, the findings demonstrated that dangdut significantly influenced content marketing, user experience, and user engagement. In addition, content marketing positively affected both user experience and user engagement, while user experience emerged as a strong predictor of user engagement. The results further confirmed that content marketing partially mediated the relationships between dangdut and both user experience and user engagement. These findings extend the literature on digital marketing and cultural branding by demonstrating that integrating local cultural elements into social media content can enhance audience engagement while simultaneously supporting cultural preservation. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that businesses, content creators, and cultural institutions should strategically incorporate dangdut and other local cultural elements into TikTok marketing campaigns. Rather than using dangdut merely as background music, it should be integrated into storytelling, interactive challenges, and other engaging content formats to enrich user experience and strengthen audience engagement. Furthermore, policymakers and stakeholders in the creative industry may leverage dangdut as a form of cultural capital to promote Indonesia's digital creative economy while preserving local cultural heritage through platform-based innovation. Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. The cross-sectional research design limited the ability to establish causal relationships, while the exclusive focus on Indonesian TikTok users may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other countries, cultures, or social media platforms. Future research is therefore encouraged to employ longitudinal or experimental research designs, compare different genres of popular culture, examine other social media platforms, and investigate additional factors, such as algorithmic recommendation systems, influencer credibility, or cultural identity, that may further explain user engagement in digital cultural marketing.

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Author Contribution

Idrus Jamalulel contributed to the conceptualization of the study, data collection, and data analysis. Anfitri Sihombing was responsible for the methodology, review, and drafting the manuscript. Supervision was provided by Idrus Jamalulel.

Competing Interest

All authors declare that there are no financial, personal, or professional relationships that might influence or appear to influence their research.

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