

# Media Analysis of Sexist Humor Content about Culture of Uang Panai on Social Media

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DOI:<https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100500209>

Received: 28 April 2025; Accepted: 04 May 2026; Published: 27 May 2026

## ABSTRACT

The development of social media, particularly TikTok, has changed the way culture and social values are represented in digital spaces. This study aims to analyze the representation of sexist humor in bride price cultural content on the TikTok platform using Stuart Hall's representation theory. The method used is a qualitative approach with media analysis of video content depicting humorous narratives related to the practice of bride price in Bugis society. The results of the study show that humor content on TikTok represents women as objects of economic transactions through the "unboxing" format that resembles consumer culture. Humor in this content functions as a normalization mechanism that makes messages with sexist and patriarchal nuances more acceptable to audiences. Furthermore, this representation also reflects the reproduction of patriarchal ideology in digital spaces, where men are portrayed as holders of economic power while women are positioned as objects to be 'acquired.' Nevertheless, the meaning formed is dynamic because the audience plays an active role in the process of meaning-making through interaction on social media. This study asserts that social media is not only a space for entertainment but also an arena for the construction of meaning that influences the formation of gender perceptions and culture in society.

**Keywords:** Digital Medi, Humor Sexist, Uang Panai, Representation

## INTRODUCTION

Advances in digital technology and social media have drastically changed the way individuals produce, distribute, and consume information. One of the platforms that has a significant impact on shaping public views is TikTok. This platform provides an opportunity for users to produce short videos that often contain entertainment, viewpoints, and criticism of social issues. The characteristics of light and entertaining content make humor one of the dominant forms of communication and one of the most popular categories and is a communication strategy used to convey messages more attractively so that it can increase audience attention and reduce resistance to the message conveyed. It is a study of the policymaking of Community Radio in South Asia using a bottom-up approach that eventually contributes to the author's original theoretical contribution the 'Deliberative Policy (Rifqi & Rahmadi, 2025).

In the context of digital communication, humor not only serves as entertainment, but also as a medium of social representation that can reproduce certain values, norms, and ideologies. International research shows that gender-based humor on social media is often a means of reproducing social stereotypes through the mechanisms of language, symbols, and narratives that seem light but have strong ideological implications. Sexist humor, for example, can normalize gender bias because discriminatory messages are conveyed in the form of comedy that audiences perceive as unserious. Studies Ford et al. (2008) show that sexist humor can function as a prejudiced releasing function, where discriminatory messages become more acceptable when conveyed in the form of humor.

On the other hand, the Tiktok platform also serves as a forum to showcase various local cultures through creative content. One of the traditions that is often discussed in the digital world is the practice of uang panai among the

Bugis people. Uang panai is a sum of money handed over by the man to the woman's family as part of the provisions in the implementation of traditional marriage (Apyunita et al., 2023). In Bugis society, this tradition is interpreted as a symbol of respect and appreciation for women and their families in the social order.

Anthropologically, the practice of money can be understood as part of the tradition of marriage exchange known globally as bride price or bridewealth, which is also found in various parts of Africa, South Asia, and Oceania. Cross cultural studies show that the practice is not solely an economic transaction, but serves as a mechanism for the formation of family alliances, a symbol of social reward, and the legitimacy of marital relationships in traditional societies (Brandl & Colleran, 2024). However, uang panai has distinctive characteristics compared to similar practices in various other countries because the amount of value given is greatly influenced by social status, education level, and the prestige of women's families (Rinaldi et al., 2023). This condition makes the uang panai not only a traditional tradition, but also a symbol of complex social stratification in contemporary Bugis society.

With the rise of digital media, the cultural significance of uang panai is no longer confined to traditional settings or the family sphere, but is also being reproduced in social media spaces. This shift reflects a change in cultural meaning within modern society (Aziz & Lestari, 2018). On TikTok, this tradition is often portrayed through humorous content, parodies, and social satire that depict men's experiences in dealing with the demands of the uang panai. In this context, the uang panai is not only understood as a tradition but also as a social symbol that can be analyzed through a semiotic approach (Ilmiawan et al., 2025). Some content narrates uang panai as an economic challenge or a symbol of a man's financial success in obtaining a partner. This kind of representation shows that local culture is undergoing a process of reinterpretation when it enters the digital media ecosystem based on entertainment and virality.

This type of humor not only offers entertainment, but also contains gender stereotypes that can generate sexist views, as women are portrayed as objects that are "acquired" after customary transactions are carried out. In the study of communication and gender, these types of representations have the potential to influence people's understanding of the relationship between men and women in cultural contexts, especially when such content is widely consumed by social media users. Based on the theory of representation proposed by Stuart Hall, the media not only plays a role in conveying reality, but also shapes and arranges meaning through symbols, language, and stories displayed (Difa & Setyawan, 2024). Therefore, humorous content about uang panai on TikTok can be understood as a form of cultural representation that is built from the perspective of creators and social media viewers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The cultural practice of uang panai in Bugis society has long been recognized as a significant element in marriage traditions, carrying social, economic, and symbolic meanings. In contemporary contexts, this practice is not only discussed within traditional settings but has also become a subject of discourse in digital spaces, particularly on platforms such as TikTok. User generated content has altered the way cultural values are communicated, frequently, rehased as humor. Humor is frequently viewed as amusement, but it can also serve as a channel for conveying more profound social messages, such as those pertaining to gender roles and cultural norms.

Recent studies have increasingly examined uang panai from perspectives of culture, economy, and gender, highlighting its role in shaping social structures and reinforcing certain ideologies. However, limited attention has been given to how this cultural practice is represented in digital humor, particularly in short-form video content. Given that media plays an active role in constructing meaning, it is important to analyze how sexist humor on TikTok represents gender relations within the context of uang panai. Therefore, this literature review aims to explore previous studies related to uang panai, gender representation, and media, in order to identify existing gaps and position this research within the broader academic discourse.

Several studies conducted within the last five years have examined the cultural, social, and gender dimensions of uang panai, demonstrating its complexity as both a tradition and a social construct.

The first study by Ahmad and Lilik Andaryuni (Ahmad & Andaryuni, 2025) explores the role of uang panai in

shaping social inequality within Bugis society. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study finds that uang panai serves not only as a cultural symbol but also contributes to social stratification. The high value assigned to uang panai can create economic pressure and reinforce hierarchical social structures in marriage practices.

In a similar vein, Ilmiawan, Fajrul Khaer and Amal Akbar (2025) analyzes uang panai from gender and cultural perspectives. The research reveals that beyond its symbolic meaning, uang panai contains ideological implications related to patriarchy and power relations. It often positions women within a framework that can be interpreted as objectification in social structures.

Another significant study by A. Mappatunru and Sriwaya Ismail Zainuddin (Mappatunru & Ismail Zainuddin, 2023) examines the commodification of women within the tradition of uang panai. The findings suggest that women may be symbolically positioned within a “value system” where their worth is associated with social status and cultural expectations. This reinforces gender inequality and reflects broader patriarchal structures in society.

Based on the review of previous studies, it can be concluded that uang panai has been widely analyzed from cultural, social, economic, and gender perspectives. Many studies highlight its role in reinforcing social hierarchy and patriarchal values, as well as its contribution to gender inequality. Additionally, some research has examined how media represents these issues, particularly in films and traditional narratives. However, there is still limited research focusing on how uang panai is represented in digital humor, especially on platforms such as TikTok. Existing studies tend to overlook the role of humor as a medium that can subtly reproduce and normalize sexist ideas through everyday content consumption.

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing sexist humor related to uang panai on TikTok using the theory of representation proposed by Stuart Hall. This research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how gender meanings are constructed, circulated, and normalized in digital media contexts.

## Theoretical Framework

This study uses the theory of representation proposed by Stuart Hall as the primary framework for analyzing sexist humor regarding the panai money culture on social media, particularly on the TikTok platform. According to Hall, representation is the process of producing meaning through language, symbols, and cultural practices, in which the media not only reflects reality but also actively shapes and constructs social reality (Hall et al., 1997).

Stuart Hall (Hall et al., 1997) explains the concept of stereotypes as part of the practice of representation. A stereotype is a process of simplifying the characteristics of a group, which are exaggerated and repeatedly reproduced in the media. In the context of sexist humor, stereotypes appear in the form of jokes that portray women or men based on traditional roles, thereby potentially reinforcing gender inequality. This concept is comprehensively explained in Hall’s seminal work on representation.

In the context of social media, representation has become increasingly important because content is produced and disseminated on a massive scale by users. TikTok, as a short-form video platform, enables the rapid dissemination of meaning through a combination of visuals, audio, text, and humor. Humorous content circulating online serves not only as entertainment but also conveys social messages that can influence public perceptions of certain issues, including gender and culture. This aligns with Hall’s view that media is a system of representation that operates through signs and language to shape meaning within society.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach using media analysis to examine sexist humor content related to the cultural practice of uang panai on TikTok. A qualitative approach is appropriate because it enables an in-depth understanding of meaning, social context, and representation embedded in media texts rather than focusing on numerical data (Sugiyono, 2020).

The subject of this study is video content published on TikTok that relates to the uang panai culture and contains elements of sexist humor. Meanwhile, the object of the study is the representation of sexism that appears in this content, specifically how women and men are portrayed and how gender stereotypes are formed and reproduced.

Data collection was conducted using a documentation method, which involved collecting, identifying, and archiving TikTok video content relevant to the study. Data collection was carried out using specific keywords and hashtags such as “uang panai,” “Bugis dowry,” and other related terms. This documentation method allowed the researcher to obtain natural data from the digital environment (Demirci, 2024).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on observations of content on the TikTok platform, certain patterns of representation were found in several videos with the narrative “POV: unboxing the uang panai result with a certain amount of money.” The videos feature a man who positions himself as if he is performing an unboxing process on the woman he married after giving the dowry. This format adopts a popular style in digital media, namely unboxing content that is generally used to showcase consumer products. This phenomenon shows that TikTok, as short video based media, has the ability to shape meaning through a combination of visuals, audio, and text simultaneously.

The content also shows the use of humor as a main communication strategy. Humor is used to attract the audience's attention while increasing user engagement. In the context of digital media, humor has proven to be one of the effective elements in enhancing content appeal as well as expanding the reach of message distribution (Barta et al., 2023). Thus, humor not only serves as entertainment, but also as a means of delivering social messages that have an impact on audience perception.

Furthermore, the analysis results show that there is the use of language and symbols related to economic logic, such as the use of the words “results”, “150 million”, and “unboxing”. This indicates a tendency to represent women as objects with exchange value. In media studies, this phenomenon can be categorized as a form of objectification, which is a process in which individuals are reduced to objects evaluated based on certain aspects, such as economic or physical value.

### Representation of Women as a Symbolic Commodity

From the perspective of Stuart Hall's theory of representation, the media plays a role in producing and reproducing meaning through a system of signs and symbols. The content of “unboxing dowry money results” shows that women are represented as a symbolic commodity that is “obtained” through economic transactions. The use of the unboxing format reinforces the association between women and consumption objects, thus shaping certain meanings in the minds of the audience.

These findings are in line with research showing that digital media often represents women within the framework of objectification and commodification, especially in the context of popular culture. Additionally, in the context of local culture, the practice of bride price also has the potential to be interpreted as a form of symbolizing women's value in the social structure (Mappatunru & Ismail Zainuddin, 2023).

### Representation Humor as a Normalization Mechanism

The use of humor in this content functions as a mechanism that masks potentially problematic meanings. Humor allows messages containing elements of sexism to be conveyed in a lighter way, thus not provoking resistance from the audience. In this context, humor serves as a tool of normalization that makes sexist representations appear reasonable and acceptable.

Research shows that humor on social media has the ability to reduce the audience's sensitivity to certain issues, so the messages conveyed tend to be accepted without deep criticism. In addition, humor also serves as an effective communication strategy in enhancing message acceptance in digital content (Barta et al., 2023). Thus, the humor in this content is not neutral, but rather has significant ideological implications.

### Representation of Patriarchal Ideology in Digital Media

Content like “unboxing dowry money” also reflects the reproduction of patriarchal ideology in digital media. Men are represented as the parties who hold economic power, while women are positioned as objects who are “acquired.” This representation reflects an imbalanced power relation between men and women.

In media and gender studies, such representations contribute to the preservation of patriarchal norms in society. The study found gender disparities in career advancement.

Furthermore, other research indicates that social media plays an important role in reinforcing or challenging gender norms through widely consumed content. Therefore, humorous content on TikTok cannot be separated from the social and cultural context that surrounds it.

### **Audience as Active Subjects in Meaning Production**

In Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory, meaning is not fixed but is produced through the interaction between message creators and the audience. In the context of TikTok, the audience not only serves as message receivers but also as active participants who interpret and reproduce meaning.

Research shows that social media audiences have the ability to make diverse interpretations of the same content, depending on their backgrounds and experiences. Moreover, interactions such as comments, duets, and remixes allow the audience to engage directly in the meaning production process.

### **Social Media as an Arena for Meaning Construction**

TikTok as a digital media serves as an arena where social meaning is constructed, negotiated, and disseminated. Humorous content such as “unboxing bride price results” not only reflects social realities but also contributes to shaping the public's perspective on gender and culture.

Research shows that social media has a significant role in shaping social perceptions through the rapid and wide distribution of content. Thus, even content that appears simple can have a broad impact on the construction of meaning in society.

## **CONCLUSION**

Through the use of an unboxing format identical to consumption activities, women are represented as objects obtained through economic transactions. This representation shows a shift in meaning in the bride price cultural practice, from a symbol of respect to a symbol of economic value attached to women in a digital context.

In addition, the use of humor in the content functions as a mechanism that normalizes sexist messages. Humor makes representations containing gender inequality seem light and acceptable to the audience, thereby reducing sensitivity to the issue. From the perspective of Stuart Hall's representation theory, this indicates that the media has an active role in shaping and reproducing meaning, including in maintaining patriarchal ideology through communication practices that appear simple, such as digital humor.

Furthermore, the meaning generated from the content is dynamic and depends on audience interpretation. As a participatory medium, TikTok allows users not only to consume but also to interpret and reproduce meaning through digital interaction. Thus, humorous content about dowry does not only reflect social reality but also contributes to shaping society's perspectives on gender and culture. Therefore, it is important to understand that social media is an arena for meaning construction that has a significant impact on social perceptions and values in society.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The author expresses the utmost gratitude to the Supervising Lecturers for all the time, attention, guidance, and mentorship provided throughout the process of preparing this article. The various inputs, corrections, and motivations given have greatly assisted the author in completing this research, despite all the limitations of the author's abilities. Hopefully, all these kindnesses will be rewarded manifold by Almighty God.

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