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# Humor and Gen- Z: A Reception Study of Bintang Emon's Stand-Up Comedy in Somasi Content

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**Abstract:** Amidst the global pandemic, stand-up comedy in Indonesia experienced rapid growth as comedians turned to digital platforms, particularly YouTube, to entertain a broader audience confined to their homes. This shift allowed them to connect with fans and cater to the increasing demand for entertainment during uncertain times. The study focuses on analyzing the reception of Bintang Emon's stand-up comedy video from the Somasi event. Bintang's use of satire, sarcasm, and irony resonated with Generation Z, the target audience, as he touched on various societal issues and political events. The reception analysis revealed dominant, oppositional, and negotiation stances among the audience, reflecting diverse perspectives within this demographic. Understanding the preferences and perspectives of Generation Z can guide comedians in crafting relevant and engaging content, maintaining audience interest, and contributing to a more informed and connected society. This research sheds light on the effectiveness and impact of stand-up comedy performances, showcasing their role as a means of social commentary in addressing timely and relatable topics, thus providing valuable insights into public sentiment and attitudes

**Keywords:** Stand-Up Comedy, Politics of Laughter, Political Communication, Bintang Emon, Reception Analysis

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the midst of the unprecedented challenges brought on by the global pandemic, one unexpected cultural phenomenon emerged in Indonesia - the rapid growth of stand-up comedy (Arifin, 2020; Mejer Lumantow, 2020). As the world sought solace and amusement from the confines of their homes, a new form of entertainment blossomed, and comedians found a virtual stage on which to showcase their talent. This newfound appreciation for stand-up comedy owes its proliferation to the advent of digital platforms, particularly YouTube, and the escalating need for captivating diversions in times of uncertainty.

The pandemic altered the traditional landscape of entertainment, prompting comedians to adapt and innovate. With comedy clubs and live venues temporarily shuttered, many comedians turned to the digital realm, harnessing the power of social media platforms like YouTube to share their comedic brilliance with a broader audience. By exploiting this online avenue, comedians found a way to remain connected with their fans while introducing their craft to new viewers who sought laughter as a means of alleviating pandemic-induced stress and anxiety (Triana, 2021).

YouTube, in particular, played a pivotal role in the meteoric rise of stand-up comedy during the pandemic. Its vast user base and easy accessibility allowed comedians to upload their routines, sketches, and humorous commentaries, reaching millions of viewers across the archipelago and beyond (Lindgren, 2017). With the ability to stream live performances and interact with their audience in real-time, comedians fostered a sense of community and engagement, transcending geographical boundaries.

Moreover, the digital transformation of stand-up comedy was not solely a product of convenience but a reflection of the changing preferences and needs of the audience (Alvin, 2022a, 2022b). As individuals navigated the challenges of remote work, social isolation, and restricted mobility, the demand for entertainment skyrocketed. Comedy emerged as a cathartic outlet, offering a momentary escape from the grim realities of the pandemic.

In 2021, Deddy Corbuzier prepared a platform for comedians to perform under the title "Somasi," which stands for "Stand On Mic Take It Easy" (Ningtyas, 2021). The name was chosen to convey the anxiety felt by Deddy and the comedians, fearing potential legal consequences.

Stand-up comedy often serves as a means for comedians to express their opinions in unique ways (Alvin, 2023a). One of the popular comedians today is Bintang Emon. Bintang Emon is a solo comedian who began his career in 2014 and was also the champion of Stand Up Comedy Academy 3. He is known for being vocal and critical about specific issues. Currently, Bintang has 5.5 million followers on Instagram as of July 3, 2023, and 1.2 million followers on TikTok as of July 3, 2023. After a long hiatus from stand-up comedy, Bintang decided to participate in the Somasi event organized by Deddy Corbuzier.

The Somasi video featuring Bintang Emon was uploaded on May 29, 2022, and has reached 7.5 million views. In this video, Bintang Emon performs stand-up comedy, discussing his concerns about specific issues. Unlike other comedians, Bintang often employs satire to convey his anxieties, making his delivery more engaging and impactful. For these reasons, the researchers have decided to analyze the viewers' reception of Bintang's stand-up comedy video from the Somasi event.

Stand-up comedy often delves into societal issues and current events. Analyzing audience reception helps determine the relevance and relatability of the comedian's content. It can shed light on which topics are timely and which may need updating to maintain audience interest. reception analysis is a crucial research endeavor as it provides valuable insights into the effectiveness and impact of stand-up comedy performances.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Stand-up Comedy**

According to Papana (2016), stand-up comedy is one of the modern comedic art performances where comedians, often referred to as "komika," entertain the audience with prepared material. Stand-up comedy differs slightly from other forms of comedy as the content for the performance is already prepared by the comedian. The most common formula used in stand-up comedy is the "set up" and "punch line." The set-up is the unfunny part of a joke that serves as an introduction or a connection to the punch line, which is the funny part of the joke. The largest stand-up comedy community in Indonesia is called Stand Up Indo,

initiated by Ernest Prakasa, Ryan Adriandhy, Raditya Dika, Pandji Pragiwaksono, and Isman H.

One of the sources for stand-up comedy material is "keresahan" or concerns and anxieties. Comedians write and shape these concerns into material to present to the audience. Therefore, the audience's reception may vary from one comedian to another. Each comedian has their own distinctive style; from the material they present to their delivery. Some comedians are accustomed to discussing dark jokes (sensitive topics such as illness, ethnicity, religion, pandemic, and others) like Coki Pardede and Tretan Muslim. Some comedians frequently address their concerns about political issues, such as Bintang Emon, Mamat Alkatiri, Abdur Arsyad, and Pandji Pragiwaksono. Even though Bintang's audience may not necessarily enjoy Mamat's style, as Bintang has a different way of delivering his material. Mamat is known for his explicit comedy, while Bintang is recognized for being critical and often uses figures of speech such as satire and sarcasm. Each person has their own preferences when choosing which comedian to watch.

Figures of speech are classified into four primary groups. The first group is Figures of Opposition, which involves the use of contrasting elements in real situations, including antithesis, paradox, oxymoron, and anachronism. The second group, Figures of Comparison, employs comparisons in figures of speech, such as allegory, personification, metaphor, hyperbole, simile, metonymy, and other similar devices. Figures of Satire make up the third group, and they are used for conveying irony and satire through linguistic tools like irony, sarcasm, cynicism, antiphrasis, and innuendo. Lastly, the fourth group is Figures of Emphasis, which are used to express ideas clearly and distinctly, incorporating repetition, pleonasm, alliteration, parallelism, and other related techniques.

In the world of comedy, comedians frequently rely on specific figures of speech such as metaphor, hyperbole, sarcasm, irony, and cynicism. These linguistic devices assist comedians in enhancing their delivery and conveying subtle implicit messages in a more cautious manner.

Stand-up comedy is a reflection of the intersection of politics, culture, and economy, which become subjects of humor (Krissandi & Setiawan, 2018; Leonardo & Junaidi, 2020; Sasa, 2020). Therefore, stand-up comedy is often used as a tool or medium for satire and commentary on specific issues. Comedy, in general, has frequently been used as a means to criticize certain issues, like Warkop DKI. In the 1990s, Warkop DKI often criticized policies during the Soeharto era, such as restrictions on freedom of speech and expression. Even Pandji created a stand-up comedy special titled "Septictank." This special discussed Pandji's experiences and thoughts during his involvement in the 2019 DKI Jakarta election. The title "Septictank" is used as an analogy to illustrate the dirtiness of the political world, much like a septic tank filled with various types of waste.

#### **Reception Analysis**

Reception is the process of meaning-making carried out by the audience or the public concerning a particular broadcast. In reception theory, the focus is on the active engagement of the audience in receiving and interpreting the conveyed message. One of the most well-known theories of interpretation is Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding theory (Hall, 2007; Shaw, 2017).

In the process of encoding and decoding, the message sender forms the message in various forms, such as text, video, or audio. The intended message is transmitted through a specific medium to be received by the recipient. After receiving the message through the media, the recipient interprets or decodes the message based on their own understanding. Simply put, encoding is the process of forming the message, while decoding is the process of interpreting the message from a particular media.

In this study, encoding is performed by Bintang Emon, who conveys various criticisms presented in the form of stand-up comedy aired on Deddy Corbuzier's YouTube channel. Bintang packages his material with specific diction because the video is freely available for everyone (both fans and critics) to watch. Hence, Bintang must choose the appropriate diction to protect himself. Decoding is carried out by the audience who receives Bintang's message, and the audience will interpret it based on their own thoughts.

During the decoding process by the audience, there is a possibility of differences in interpreting the message influenced by background, ideology, socio-economic status, experiences, and even the political situation.

Stuart Hall suggests three final positions: First, the position of dominant hegemony, where the audience shares the same interpretation as the content presented by the media. The audience can understand the intended message conveyed by the media. Second, the position of negotiation, where the audience predominantly accepts the message but may reject some applications under certain circumstances. In this position, the audience generally accepts the message but makes some exceptions in its application. Third, the position of opposition, where the audience does not share the same interpretation of the broadcast provided by the media. Simply put, the position of opposition is when the audience rejects the entire meaning of the message conveyed by the media.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this study, the researcher used the constructivism paradigm. According to Creswell (2018), the constructivism paradigm views that each individual seeks an understanding of the world they inhabit. Each person will develop subjective meanings based on their experiences. Individual understanding and perspectives can be influenced by personal experiences, culture, and history. The constructivist paradigm sees that there is no natural reality, as all realities are the result of an individual's cognitive construction.

The researcher used purposive sampling technique to select informants. Purposive sampling is a technique for selecting informants based on specific considerations and criteria. The criteria for the informants are as follows:

1. Generation Z individuals aged 17-23 years.

Data from PEW Research (Dimock, 2019) shows that comedy is one of the preferred genres among Generation Z. Individuals within this age range can watch various types of comedy as they are considered adults. At this age, people can independently interpret the messages conveyed. The researcher did not select older age groups as most adults may not enjoy stand-up comedy, making the conveyed messages potentially irrelevant due to the comedy format used by Bintang Emon.

- 2. Viewers of Bintang's Somasi content. This study focuses on Bintang Emon's stand-up comedy video in Somasi. Therefore, the informants must be viewers of the Somasi show.
- 3. Stand-up comedy enthusiasts This criterion ensures that the informants are familiar with the diction and figures of speech commonly used by comedians.
- 4. Knowledgeable about political news from early 2019 to early 2023 This criterion was chosen because Bintang delivers critiques related to events from early 2019 to early 2023. If the informant lacks sufficient information, they may not fully understand Bintang's messages.

Data collection technique for this research is through interviews. The researcher will conduct online interviews using the Zoom application, and the interview results will be transcribed for analysis. For this study, the researcher selected informants based on the predetermined criteria. Three participants were chosen, comprising two females and one male

who enjoy stand-up comedy and have knowledge about political news. The informants are aged between 20 and 21 years and are currently students.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In the stand-up comedy video of Bintang Emon in Somasi, there are 16 statements delivered by Bintang. All the statements provided by Bintang have been asked by the researcher to each informant. The researcher will present how the informants interpret Bintang Emon's statements. The result are summarized in the table below.

Table 1. Bintang Emon's Reception Analysis				
No	The Statements of Bintang Emon in Somasi	Reception Analysis	<b>Quotation of Informant's Statements</b>	
1	The police became the Chairman of PSSI	Dominant	In my opinion, if someone wants to be a chairman, they should be a leader and mentor for the people below them, you know. So, I think the chairman should understand and be in that field, you know, because if they don't understand it, how can they lead the people below them?" (Benita, 2023)	
2	Criticism and Solution	Dominant	because sometimes there are situations where we don't always have to provide solutions when giving criticism. In this context, one of the responsibilities of society is to provide aspirations, and it is the responsibility of the Government to come up with the solutions and manage the aspirations of the public." (Brian, 2023).	
3	Many officials are corrupt	Dominant	So, just like how a wealthy person should know the responsibilities that come with their wealth, officials should also understand the responsibilities that are entrusted to them when they choose to take office. (Moudy, 2023).	
4	Side jobs of officials	Dominant	I agree with Bintang Emon's statement. We all know that many officials are wealthier than what Google shows, just as Bintang Emon said. We can see from their financial reports that there is a lot of money with unknown sources or origins. In my opinion, it has become common knowledge that officials often engage in the buying and selling of seats in the DPR or ministerial positions. (Benita, 2023).	
5	Sarcasm from officials against criticism	Dominant	Well, I don't agree with those officials who turn a deaf ear because, if they don't want to be criticized and refuse to listen, they shouldn't be holding that position in the first place. It's not just about seeking comfort, after all. (Brian, 2023).	
6	Analogy of Driver No. 2	Dominant	Well, in my opinion, umm, I agree with Bintang Emon's analogy because, to be honest, even I rarely or almost never see news about this Driver No. 2, haha. In my opinion, the government should have more information transparency so that we, as the public, can know whether Driver No. 2 is actually working but not being exposed or if it's just a case of receiving a salary without doing anything. (Benita, 2023).	
7	Active Driver Analogy	Dominant	Well, I agree with Bintang's opinion that the selection of a driver should be based on their capabilities, not party favors, because if it's based on party favors, in the end, the driver will be continuously controlled by the party. So, umm, it's better if the driver is qualified, but if not, it's questionable. It's possible that the party just wants to use their name to advance as a presidential candidate in the next term, haha. (Benita, 2023).	
8	Old Driver Analogy	Dominant	I do agree with the point that the old drivers (reffering to Megawati) shouldn't interfere anymore because the road conditions have changed a lot with new policies, like new roads and roads that didn't exist ten years ago. Now they want to get involved, but it's better to just pass through here, when,	

			in fact, there are better options now. So, the old drivers shouldn't interfere because the new drivers are more aware and understand the current road conditions, so basically, the old drivers are no longer relevant. (Brian, 2023).
9	Celebrities Becoming Officials	Opposition	As for Bintang's statement this time, I don't agree because, in my opinion, even though he is a celebrity, it doesn't mean he is ignorant in politics. Although we haven't seen many good examples of celebrities transitioning into politics, we can't judge him just because he is a celebrity. People have various capabilities; for example, take Tompi, who is a singer but is also a cosmetic doctor. (Benita, 2023).
10	Oath of Government Office	Opposition	This time, I differ from Bintang Emon's opinion because Indonesia is a country based on the belief in God, so whatever it is, the foundation should be based on the divine. It's actually normal for a system to have officials take an oath of office. It's reasonable if we focus on God. However, in the end, whether they commit crimes or not, it depends on each individual's choices." (Brian, 2023).
11	Contract Letter	Negotiation	"I actually agree and disagree at the same time. I agree that it's better to add a contract letter, but I disagree with removing the holy scriptures as an oath because, in the beginning, we should focus on God first. So, maybe adding the contract letter is a better option than removing the other one." (Brian, 2023).
12	Reason for Mistake	Negotiation	Your officials shouldn't use that excuse. They should not reduce the punishment they deserve by using the excuse of making a mistake (khilaf)." (Moudy, 2023).
13	Hearing Moment Wearing Hijab and Cap	Opposition	Continuing to wear a peci (traditional hat) and hijab during a corruption trial is a matter of individual rights for each person, but it should not reduce their punishment either because the punishment should not be affected by wearing a peci and hijab. (Moudy, 2023).
14	Use of Voorijder (privileged access)	Dominant	"This has also been discussed in the traffic law that the use of a voorijder is only for urgent purposes, such as for ambulances, firefighting, traffic accident assistance, and for foreign leaders and officials." (Benita, 2023).
15	Greeting Photo	Opposition	Having excessively large photos of officials can also affect the image of that person and make them appear narcissistic. Consequently, the government's image will be perceived negatively. (Moudy, 2023).
16	Billboard Installation	Negotiation	The installation of billboards has already been regulated by the Election Commission (KPU). (Moudy, 2023).

Source: Research Findings (2023)

In the context of Indonesia's political landscape, the opinions and attitudes of Generation Z (Gen-Z) hold significant relevance. Gen-Z, as the young and digitally-savvy generation, has shown a distaste for political turbulence in the country (Alvin, 2023b; Asmarantika et al., 2022; Robin et al., 2022). They expect public officials to be solution-oriented, exhibit good leadership, and set positive examples. Additionally, Gen-Z strongly rejects corruption in government, seeking accountability and integrity in public service. In this era, the use of sarcasm and humor has emerged as an alternative means for Gen-Z to deliver criticism. This discussion will explore the implications of these attitudes and preferences for Indonesia's political climate.

Moreover, Gen-Z's aversion to political turbulence in Indonesia is evident from their expressed desire for a stable and progressive political environment. They have witnessed various instances of political unrest and controversies, which have left a negative impression on them. Instead of contributing to the noise, Gen-Z looks to public officials to provide

effective solutions to the challenges facing the nation. This expectation stems from their belief that leaders should be problem-solvers and catalysts for positive change.

In addition, from this research we can also notice that Gen-Z feels corruption remains a deeply troubling issue in Indonesia. They view corruption as a major impediment to the country's development and prosperity. Gen-Z desires leaders who uphold transparency, honesty, and integrity in their actions. Pejabat (officials) who engage in corrupt practices are met with strong disapproval from Gen-Z, as they believe that such behavior undermines public trust and hinders progress.

In the current digital era, sarcasm and humor have become prevalent tools for Gen-Z to express their discontent and criticism towards political matters. Social media platforms, such as YouTube, provide avenues for Gen-Z to engage in satirical commentary and comedic critique. These forms of expression allow them to voice their opinions creatively while avoiding the confrontational approach often seen in traditional political discourse.

Gen-Z's attitudes and preferences have implications for Indonesia's political climate. Public officials must recognize and adapt to the demands of this tech-savvy generation. By providing tangible solutions, exhibiting good leadership, and adhering to ethical standards, officials can garner the support and trust of Gen-Z. Addressing corruption and promoting transparency will also resonate positively with this generation, leading to a more accountable and responsible government.

Regarding practical implications, the analysis suggests public officials must accommodate Gen-Z's demands, yet potential challenges faced by officials in reconciling these demands with the complexities of governance require deeper exploration.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The research findings highlight the significant impact of the global pandemic on the stand-up comedy scene in Indonesia. The pandemic-induced restrictions on live entertainment led comedians to explore digital platforms, particularly YouTube, to share their comedic brilliance with a broader audience. This shift to the digital realm allowed comedians to stay connected with their fans and cater to the growing demand for entertainment during uncertain times.

YouTube played a pivotal role in the meteoric rise of stand-up comedy during the pandemic, enabling comedians to reach millions of viewers across the archipelago and beyond. The digital transformation of stand-up comedy was not only a matter of convenience but also a reflection of the changing preferences and needs of the audience. Comedy emerged as a cathartic outlet, offering a momentary escape from the grim realities of the pandemic.

The study focused on analyzing the reception of Bintang Emon's stand-up comedy video from the Somasi event. Through the reception analysis, it became evident that Bintang's material resonated with the audience, touching upon various societal issues and political events. His use of sarcasm, satire, and irony enhanced the delivery of his messages, making them engaging and impactful.

Generation Z, as the target audience, displayed dominant, oppositional, and negotiation stances in interpreting Bintang's content. The reception varied based on individual backgrounds, ideologies, and experiences, indicating the diverse perspectives within this demographic. Some statements aligned with the dominant stance, where the audience shared similar interpretations with the comedian. Oppositional stances emerged when the audience rejected the intended meaning, while negotiation stances reflected a mix of agreement and disagreement with certain points.

The research contributes to the understanding of the effectiveness and impact of standup comedy performances in Indonesia. Comedians play a crucial role in reflecting societal concerns and political issues, providing a unique medium for satire and commentary. The audience's reception analysis sheds light on timely and relatable topics, which can inform comedians' material and maintain audience interest.

As the world continues to navigate the aftermath of the pandemic, the popularity of stand-up comedy is likely to persist. The digital landscape offers comedians new opportunities to connect with their audience and bring laughter to people's lives, even in challenging times. Understanding the preferences and perspectives of Generation Z can guide comedians in crafting relevant and engaging content that resonates with this influential demographic. Additionally, stand-up comedy's role as a means of social commentary provides valuable insights into public sentiment and attitudes, contributing to a more informed and connected society.

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