

Evaluating Dietary Content in TikTok's "What I Eat in A Day" Videos

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ABSTRACT

TikTok is widely used for content related to eating. One type of content uploaded by many content creators or influencers on TikTok is "What I Eat in A Day". There is a complex relationship between social media use and dietary habits, showing that social media can influence food choices and contribute to unhealthy eating patterns. This study aims to analyse the nutritional content of "What I Eat in a Day" videos on TikTok, examining the characteristics of content creators and evaluating their video dietary content over the past three months from a nutritional perspective. This study uses a content analysis approach that involved the collection and analysis of Indonesian TikTok "What I Eat in a Day" videos from February to May 2024, consisting of 38 accounts. The nutritional variables assessed included fruit and vegetable consumption, calorie counting, weight monitoring, types of diets, and adherence to the "*Isi Piringku*" guidelines. The analysis revealed that less than 70% of content creators included fruits in their diet, with only half of them consuming vegetables. None of the videos adhered to the "*Isi Piringku*" dietary guidelines. These findings highlight a significant gap in promoting balanced diets among popular TikTok content. The rising trend of "What I Eat in a Day" videos on TikTok necessitates further research into their potential impact on viewers' dietary habits. Future studies should investigate how exposure to these videos influences audience behaviour and nutritional choices. Understanding this dynamic can inform public health strategies to promote healthier eating habits through digital media platforms.



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INTRODUCTION

Social media refers to online social networking sites that facilitate communication, including Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. It is helpful to share information, including health information, to make it available and accessible. A study found that social media has both positive and negative impacts on public health concerns. The positives include making it easier for practitioners to communicate directly with the community, facilitating disease and public health surveillance, inducing public health and behavioral change, and encouraging health promotion. The negative aspects include widespread misinformation, concerns about patient privacy, a negative influence on mental health, and a lack of legal requirements for social media use in the healthcare sector (Kanchan & Gaidhane, 2023).

Maintaining a healthy eating habit is a crucial step in promoting overall health and well-being. This is supported by one of the causes of non-communicable diseases, which is a poor diet, including the consumption of junk food, high sugar, saturated fat, and high salt, all of which can lead to insulin resistance, cardiovascular disease, and obesity (Shinde & Garg, 2020). The 2018 Riskesdas showed that 95.5% of the Indonesian population aged 5 years and above fell into the category of low fruit and vegetable consumption. In the same year, a study showed that 10% of respondents in Indonesia had non-communicable disease (Arifin et al., 2022). "*Isi Piringku*" is a government-issued guide to daily food consumption. "*Isi Piringku*" divides the plate into three

parts and is filled with balanced, nutritious food, namely 50% fruit and vegetables. The remaining 50% is divided into two parts: carbohydrates and side dishes rich in protein (animal and plant-based). The Ministry of Health also promotes the four pillars of balanced nutrition, including consuming a variety of foods, adopting an active lifestyle and exercising, implementing a clean and healthy lifestyle, and maintaining an ideal body weight (Atasasih, 2022). The exponential growth in social media usage over the past decade has prompted nutrition and health professionals, as well as governmental and non-governmental health organizations, to explore ways to leverage social media to promote healthy food choices and nutrition-related behaviors within the community (Rounsefell et al., 2020). However, the quality of nutrition information shared on social media by influencers is often questionable, and there is a pressing need for intervention strategies that promote evidence-based content (Klassen, 2018). On Instagram, the food items most frequently posted are fast food, high-calorie, high-carbohydrate, high-fat, high-sodium, low-protein, and low-fiber foods (Haamiim et al., 2019). Therefore, the author conducted a content analysis of "What I Eat in a Day" on TikTok social media to determine the implementation of "*Isi Piringku*" and healthy eating habits in the community.

The TikTok application is currently widely discussed, especially among young people. TikTok originates from China and was first released in 2016. By 2018, TikTok had been downloaded 45.8 million times, surpassing WhatsApp and Instagram (Aji et al., 2020). TikTok reached 500 million active users in 2019 and became the top non-gaming app in 2020 (Pardianti et al., 2022). On the TikTok app, various types of content are available, including cooking, beauty, educational, dance, health, and other content categories (Pardianti et al., 2022). The ease provided by TikTok through its various features has led to the emergence of numerous content creators and influencers, who share their creative content.

One type of content uploaded by many content creators or influencers on TikTok is "What I Eat in A Day" content. The content of "What I Eat in A Day" involves content creators or influencers documenting the food they consume per day. Some content creators or influencers also occasionally include the process of making the food, its composition, and the nutritional content of their meals (Pfender et al., 2024). In April 2023, approximately 16.1 billion "What I Eat in A Day" content uploads were made. Besides being a source of entertainment, "What I Eat in A Day" content can also serve as meal references for viewers (Pfender et al., 2024). Research highlights the complex relationship between social media use and dietary habits, showing that social media can influence food choices and contribute to unhealthy eating patterns. Studies have shown that exposure to food-related content on social media can impact users' cognitive impulsivity and restraint, potentially leading to poor dietary choices (Filippone et al., 2022). Thus, the role of content creators and food trends can influence the eating habits of social media users.

TikTok has wide reach, has the potential to significantly shape food-related content, influencing both young people and adults. This study primarily aims to descriptively analyze the general characteristics of influencers who post "What I Eat in a Day" content on TikTok and to evaluate the nutritional content of these posts. The goal is to provide a detailed understanding of the types of influencers involved and the nutritional quality of the content they share over the past three months.

METHOD

This study uses a content analysis approach that involves the collection and analysis of Indonesian TikTok "What I Eat in a Day" videos. The inclusion criteria were: (1) in a span of three months (February 6 to May 6, 2024) and (2) Indonesian content creators. The research method employed is a qualitative approach that analyzes the content of TikTok videos. The authors employed content analysis, in which six reviewers manually assessed videos searched using the filter feature on TikTok. All videos, from February to May, were reviewed and analyzed using a structured checklist developed in spreadsheets. The contents were classified in order to categorize them by gender, fruit-related content, vegetable-related content, calorie counting, weight tracking, sponsorship, type of diet, compliance with the "*Isi Piringku*" guidelines, and influencer category. The influencer category was classified according to the framework proposed by Farrell et al. (2022). The study sample consisted of 38 accounts. This research has undergone

an ethical review through the Ethics Commission of the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Gadjah Mada with Number KE/1092/07/202.

The analysis was conducted based on the characteristics of the content creator and nutritional variables, including fruit and vegetable consumption, calorie calculation, weight monitoring, and diet type. Videos retrieved using the keyword "*#whatieatinaday*" were assessed to determine whether they included information on fruit and vegetable consumption, calorie counting of the diet, and body weight monitoring. We assessed the whole videos by analysing whether they consume fruits and vegetables or not. We also analyzed whether they included calorie counting in their diets, as well as whether they monitored their body weight. The analysis of influencer characteristics and video content is presented descriptively in a tabular format. Further discussions use related journals and the "*Isi Piringku*" guidelines from the Ministry of Health.

RESULTS

Table 1. Content creator characteristics

Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Male	4	10.53
Female	34	89.47
Sponsorship		
Yes	5	13.16
No	33	86.84
Influencer Category		
Mega-influencer	2	5.26
Macro-influencer	17	44.74
Micro-influencer	16	42.11
Nano-influencer	3	7.89

Table 1 presents the characteristics analyzed in this research. Based on the first table, content creators who uploaded "What I Eat In a Day" content on TikTok are mostly macro-influencers (100,000 - 1 million followers; 44.74%, n=17) and micro-influencers (10,000-100,000 followers; 42.11%, n=16). The sample primarily consisted of females (73.68%, n=34) and included only a few sponsored posts (13.16%, n=5).

Table 2. Frequencies of nutritional variables

Characteristics	n	%
Fruits Consumption		
Yes	10	26.32
No	28	73.68
Vegetables Consumption		
Yes	25	65.79
No	13	34.21
Calorie Consumption		
Yes	2	5.26
No	36	94.74
Weight Monitoring		
Yes	7	18.42
No	31	81.68
Adherence to " <i>Isi Piringku</i> "		
Yes	0	0
No	38	100

Table 2 presents the frequencies of nutritional variables, including fruit and vegetable consumption, calorie counting, weight monitoring, types of diets, and adherence to the "*Isi Piringku*" diet. Based on Table 2, most content creators who uploaded "What I Eat In a Day" content on TikTok did not consume fruit (73.68%, n=28). However, more than half of the content

creators ate vegetables (65.79%, $n = 25$). On the other hand, there were only a few contents containing calorie calculation and weight monitoring, respectively (5.26%, $n=2$; 18.42%, $n=7$). From the content analysis of "What I Eat In A Day" on TikTok, it was found that no content adheres to the "Isi Piringku" guideline.

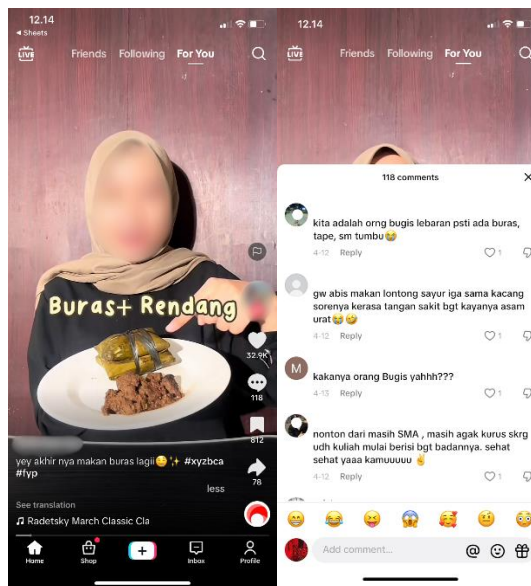


Figure 1. Example of TikTok video "What I Eat in A Day"

Figure 1 shows an example of the TikTok Video "What I Eat in A Day". The video maker shows the food menu that she consumes. The food menu shown is "buras" and "rendang".



Figure 2. Example of product placement in TikTok videos

Figure 2 illustrates how food brands are typically integrated into content on TikTok. The video maker will explain what they eat in a day according to the video theme, and in the middle of the video, they will show consuming the sponsorship product as one of the foods they consumed that day.



Figure 3. Example of TikTok video "What I Eat in A Day" during Fasting

Figure 3 shows an example of the TikTok Video "What I Eat in A Day" made by user "Sans". The video maker shows the food menu that she consumes during fasting. The food menu shown includes "*dendeng kuah lambok*," which is a source of protein and fat, and "rice and *kriuk kentang*," classified as a source of carbohydrates. However, we cannot see any vegetables or fruits listed.

DISCUSSION

The characteristics of the content creators analyzed were individuals who uploaded "What I Eat In a Day" content, comprising 4 men and 34 women, over 3 months. The number of female content creators exceeds that of males, in line with a previous study by Shutsko (2020), which analyzed 1,000 videos on TikTok. The study revealed a total of 405 videos featuring female performers, whereas male performers appeared in only 201 videos. In addition, content creators range from nano-influencers to mega-influencers, with the most significant number being macro-influencers, comprising as many as 17 people.

Nowadays, information about food is easily accessible on social media, which is frequently used by the public. The popularity of social media platforms, such as TikTok, has encouraged content creators to produce engaging videos that garner significant user traction (Drivas et al., 2024). Content related to food for content creators is important because the messages conveyed can influence and shape attitudes and habits (Looi et al., 2023). However, widespread misinformation among content creators can have negative effects on the health of viewers (Pfender et al., 2024). With the increase in misinformation on social media, it is essential to analyze "What I Eat in A Day" content by connecting it with several nutritional perspectives, such as the presence or absence of vegetables and fruits, conformity with the "*Isi Piringku*" principle, and others.

Buras is a food classified as a source of carbohydrates, while rendang is classified as a source of protein and fat, indicating a lack of fiber sources from vegetables and fruits. Several comments were obtained from the content. A user commented, "We, Bugis people, Lebaran have buras, tape, and tumbu," validating that the food shown in the video is commonly consumed by most people as well. In addition to buras, tape, and tumbu, which have been mentioned, are typical Indonesian foods made from sticky rice, which is a source of carbohydrates. Another comment from a different user said, "I have been watching you since high school, you were still a bit skinny, now you are in college and you look chubbier. Please always be healthy". Indicating that the video maker appears to have gained weight in the eyes of her viewers. However, it cannot be concluded that the food shown in this video alone is the type of food she consumes every day, which causes the weight gain.

Referring to Figure 2, researchers found that sponsorship can increase brand awareness, namely, consumers' ability to recognize and remember a brand. Sponsorship is also considered a marketing strategy that can be used to attract consumers and promote certain goods (Dixon et al., 2018). In the analysis conducted by the author, it was found that only 5 out of 38 content creators involved advertising or sponsorship in their content. The absence of advertisements or sponsorships in the content can result in a lack of interest or engagement from viewers towards the product being promoted.

Based on Table 2, 65.79% of content creators who uploaded the content "What I Eat In A Day" consumed vegetables. However, most still do not consume fruits (73.68%). A study conducted by Zeng et al. (2025) found that content about fruit consumption on TikTok is minimal, unfocused, and most of it appears only in the context of recipes or diet trends, making it prone to bias and misinformation. Most of the nutrition content on TikTok is created by non-expert content creators, such as health and wellness influencers (32%) and fitness creators (18%). In comparison, nutritionists and dietitians contribute only 4–5% of the total uploads. Furthermore, many people have the perception that they do not have time to include fruits and vegetables in their daily diet due to work or the responsibility of caring for their children. This perception of limited time can affect a person's ability to prioritize a healthy diet, leading them to choose processed foods that are more convenient than fresh fruits and vegetables (Livingstone et al., 2020).

This content analysis was conducted from February 6 to May 6, 2024, which coincided with the month of Ramadan and the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, also known as Lebaran. A study conducted by Sadiya et al. found that during and after the fasting month of Ramadan, there was a change in eating patterns, characterized by a decrease in the consumption of fruits and vegetables. In contrast, consumption of fat and sugar increased (Pirsaheb et al., 2013). During Ramadan, dietary patterns are characterized by two principal meals: Sahur, taken before dawn, and Iftar, taken after sunset. During this period, dietary fat consumption tends to increase, resulting in higher levels of trans fatty acids and cholesterol compared to non-Ramadan periods. However, fasting during Ramadan is commonly linked to a reduction in overall daily caloric intake. Even though Ramadan fasting has been shown to promote weight loss, this effect is not sustained one month after Ramadan (Khaled & Belbraouet, 2009).

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis period was relatively short, covering only three months, which may not fully capture the broader trends in "What I Eat in a Day" content on TikTok. Additionally, the study did not deeply examine the relationship between the influencer level and the quality of nutritional content produced, nor did it explore the correlation between influencers, their nutritional content, and the engagement levels of their followers. The analysis methods employed were relatively simple and not robust, reflecting the exploratory nature of this initial research. Furthermore, the study did not utilize advanced statistical techniques or automated tools to analyze TikTok statistics, which may limit the depth and precision of the findings. Despite these limitations, this research lays a foundation for more comprehensive future studies that can build upon these preliminary insights. This could be one explanation for why none of the videos analyzed were in accordance with the contents of "Isi Piringku". As many as 73.68% did not consume fruits, and 34.21% did not consume vegetables.

CONCLUSION

The majority of influencers identified in this research were macroinfluencers. The analysis revealed that the eating patterns and nutritional quality of TikTok content creators over the past three months do not align with the "Isi Piringku" guidelines, as the majority of content creators do not consume fruit, and less than half do not consume vegetables. This is due to the influence of the holiday period, leading to increased consumption of fat and sugar among content creators. Consequently, the "What I Eat in a Day" videos from the last 3 months are not suitable for TikTok users to follow in their daily consumption.

The next research can analyze the content of "What I Eat in a Day" that does not coincide with a holiday, so that the content can be more diverse in terms of food variety, as well as reflect

the food consumed in daily life. In addition, content analysis can also be carried out through other social media, such as YouTube and Instagram Reels, with a longer analysis duration.

Future research should investigate the relationship between the level of influence and the quality of nutritional content produced by influencers. Additionally, it would be valuable to explore the correlation between influencers, the nutritional content they create, and the level of engagement from their followers. Understanding these dynamics could provide deeper insights into how influencer status influences content quality and audience impact.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

Authors' contributions and responsibilities

PHD, AD, BNP, DP, FC, RSS: conceptualization, methodology, data collection, data analysis, writing-original draft, and editing draft; **DB, SH, AF:** methodology, supervision, writing, review, and editing of draft.

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Availability of data and materials

All data are available from the authors.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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