

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

A popular trend that has consistently gained traction on TikTok is astrology-focused content, particularly zodiac-themed videos. Astrology has come a long way since the coronavirus pandemic (Blanchfield Theodora, 2024). In TikTok, this trend typically includes insights into personality traits, compatibility, and daily or monthly predictions based on zodiac signs, offering viewers relatable and entertaining interpretations. It aligns with previous research, which states that zodiac signs often serve as references for personality and behavior in social interactions, where individuals adopt and internalize zodiac-based characteristics (Huizi & Yiwei, 2022).

According to TikTok data, videos using the #ZodiacSign hashtag have been uploaded up to 1.3 million times, while related hashtags such as #zodiacsigns and #astrology have garnered 4.3 million and 4.7 million uploads. Many TikTok creators are capitalizing on this trend to boost brand visibility-for example, @zodiac.boyfriend, whose videos have garnered 333.2 million likes. @brandynlee1 which has gotten 132.7 million likes, and @loveagainjen whose videos have gotten 7.8 million likes. Zodiac themes have also permeated everyday culture, becoming common in newspapers, magazines, and online media (Rui, 2022).

Zodiac trends have become part of popular culture, as long as they are accepted by most people in society (Kumar Singh, 2022). Their popularity has generated significant engagement among youth audiences, primarily Gen Z, born between the mid-1990s and the mid-2010s (Times of India, 2024). Gen Z is the first generation in the hyper-connected digital age. Social media has become an inseparable part of Generation Z's daily lives (Siagian et al., 2023). Astrological content on TikTok aligns closely with Gen Z's preferences, with its relatable and easily accessible descriptions of personality traits by zodiac sign offering users a framework for self-reflection and self-expression. Additionally, it fosters online communities where individuals connect over shared experiences, helping users explore and understand their personalities and identities (Times of India, 2024). This is further supported by Clements (2022), who notes that astrology, particularly zodiac signs, has historically been pivotal in personal reflection and identity formation.

According to Statista (2024), Indonesia has the most TikTok users in the world at around 157.6 million (Marchelin, 2025). It makes Indonesia potential to produce zodiac content. One of Indonesia's creators, Guff Perdana, is famous for creating roasted zodiac content and has garnered 75.2 million likes on his TikTok account, @justaregularguf. This number indicates that this trend remains relevant today due to its ability to help individuals gain a deeper understanding of themselves (Otu, 2025). Furthermore, astrology in digital media has been reproduced, which impacts the economic and consumption aspects. Astrology in its various forms has become a commodity where the product being traded is the “future”, as seen from paid services to predict one's future based on the zodiac and

zodiac sign content on TikTok that attracts engagement, resulting in financial gain for the creator (Pınarbaşı, 2021). From a psychological perspective, the astrological content of the zodiac serves as an attribute of self-identification. A clinical psychologist from the University of Indonesia, Vera Itabiliana, stated that Gen Z often uses zodiac characteristics as a reference because they seek a sense of similarity with others in a group (Defianti, 2024). Thus, the way the zodiac is represented through TikTok has created a belief in the zodiac as a means of social identity and commodity.

The widespread interest in zodiac content is not unique only to Indonesia. In the United States, astrology has also gained significant popularity, especially among the younger generation through platforms like TikTok. In fact, 30% of Americans aged 18 to 29 consult astrology or a horoscope, tarot cards, or a fortune teller at least once a year, according to a Pew Research Center survey in 2024. They tend to do it just for fun, and most do not make significant decisions based on what they have learned. Nonetheless, astrology has developed into a cultural expression on TikTok (Rotolo, 2025). This cultural expression reaches beyond entertainment, but also serves as a means to navigate personal identity and meaning. Forbes found that young Americans believe astrology has an effect on their career choices, indicating that astrology is a social expression as much as a tool for self-reflection and growth (Robinson, 2024).

Various academic studies have explored the above discoveries between astrology and personal meaning-making. Existing studies clarify how social media affects identity, highlighting the noteworthy influence of zodiac trends on identity. Clements (2022) conducted a study that explores the role of astrology in personal

self-reflection and identity formation in modernity. It emphasizes that astrology, although lacking formal legitimacy in scientific and religious institutions, continues to play an essential role in the modern search for self-identity. Through this study, the researcher reveals that astrology enables individuals to engage in “self-identity projects” by interpreting astrological symbols in ways that resonate with their personal experiences.

Prior research conducted by Bhandari & Bimo (2022) found that identity formation on TikTok is also influenced by algorithms that actively display content that matches audience preferences. This finding relates to the never-ending zodiac content spread on TikTok that allows them to form an understanding of themselves. Consequently, identity formation is evolving in new and broader ways. Regarding the issue, this research leads to the representation of zodiac sign content in forming a certain identity using the Circuit of Culture theory, focusing on representation and identity constructed by the content creator and Social Semiotics to analyze meaning construction through textual and visual elements.

Another study by Swastika and Tanaka (2025), used Circuit of Culture theory to examine the forms of representation of black women on the cover of British Vogue magazine. The research uses production, representation, consumption, regulation, and identity to understand the process affecting black women's identity and representation. In the production process, the researcher found that the selection of black models is a deliberate strategy to display inclusivity and expand the definition of beauty. In the regulation process, this research highlights the rules of Vogue in determining who is eligible to be a cover model. As a result, Vogue prioritizes figures with achievements and marketability. While

in consumption, audience responses show diverse meanings on both covers. Furthermore, in terms of identity, it is noted that the two black women on the cover are creators of new beauty trends and inspiring figures. Then, in the representation process, the black women on the cover convey symbolic meanings about cultural shifts and women's identity in the fashion industry. This research concludes that media such as British Vogue play an essential role in shaping the cultural meaning and identity of black women through visual representation.

Qoriah (2020) analyzed visual social semiotics by applying Kress and Leeuwen's theory to investigate the meaning embedded in the images in the English Textbook. The purpose of this study is to determine whether the meaning of the images included is in line with the written text by referring to representational, interactive, and compositional meaning. In representational meaning, it is found that the majority of images use narrative patterns. While the rest use conceptual patterns. In terms of interactive meaning, three dimensions were considered, which are image act (gaze), social distance, and perspective. The results show that most of the images do not build direct interaction and create different levels of intimacy. As for the compositional meaning, the research findings show that there are two kinds of information value used, which are aligning elements on the left and right as well as up and down. In conclusion, the Kress and Leeuwen framework motivates an in-depth analysis of how these meanings correspond to the written message.

While existing research explores the broader influence of social media on identity and culture, it lacks a specific analysis of how TikTok's zodiac trends directly impact individual identity. This research aims to address this gap by examining how creators on TikTok shape identity formation through their content.

Given the growing trend among young people, especially those in their teens and early twenties, of using zodiac interpretations to understand themselves and others, this research is particularly important. This practice has the potential to significantly influence their social interactions and behaviour.

This research will focus on analyzing three TikTok accounts, there are @zodiac.boyfriend, @brandynlee1, and @loveagainjen. These accounts are American-based creator known for producing videos related to zodiac signs using the hashtag #Zodiacsign. In selecting these accounts, this research uses measurement of Engagement Rate (ER) by HypeAuditor, a social media marketing analytics based in United States. HypeAuditor has been used in peer-reviewed studies to measure engagement rates and content effectiveness. In addition, the platform harnesses the power of artificial intelligence to analysis the audiences demographics thus ensuring the authenticity and credibility (Gujar et.al, 2024). According to HypeAuditor, @brandynlee1 has 13.41%, classified as excellent, @zodiac.boyfriend has 10.34%, categorized as very good, and @loveagainjen has 8.21% which is categorized good. The parameters offer a quantifiable basis for evaluating audience engagement and content performance within selected accounts.

The primary data for this study will consist of the account's video posts, the narratives presented within those videos, and the comments left by viewers. The selected videos are from the post-pandemic era, specifically between 2022 until 2024. These sources will be examined to understand how zodiac sign content on TikTok influences the development of audience identity.

The decision to analyze an American content creator is primarily due to the cultural background in which astrology is popular. For instance, an astrology app

called Co-Star has become proof that astrology is heavily practiced since CNN United States reported that the app has been downloaded 20 million times with almost 3 to 4 seconds in the United States without advertising services (Bohra & Willingham, 2021). According to IBIS World report, practices such as astrology and tarot reading have become lucrative businesses that generate revenues of about \$2.3 billion (Associated Press, 2025). Both of these illustrate that astrology, including the zodiac, has become a part of American life.

To conduct this analysis, the study will draw upon two key components of Stuart Hall's Circuit of Culture theory: representation and identity, as well as Social Semiotics by Kress and Van Leeuwen. These elements provide a robust framework for investigating how #Zodiacsign content on TikTok contributes to identity formation. Specifically, the theory will be used to explore how zodiac-themed content is created, how it is interpreted and consumed by audiences, and why it maintains consistent appeal among this demographic.

1.2 Research Question

1. How are identities portrayed in @zodiac.boyfriend, @brandynlee1, and @loveagainjen's TikTok account?

1.3 Purpose of Study

1. To examine how identities are portrayed in @zodiac.boyfriend, @brandynlee1, and @loveagainjen's TikTok content.

1.4 Scope of Study

The study focuses on analyzing textuales and visuals in the zodiac sign characteristics presented on the three TikTok accounts to understand how creators construct identity. Their videos will be selected based on the most viewers. The scope is limited to the cultural representation of zodiac symbols within the chosen videos, which does not involve any religious or spiritual beliefs.

1.5 Significance of Study

This study intends to explore in detail how zodiac sign content to explore how zodiac sign content construct the identity. The author anticipates that this work will stimulate future investigations into how digital trends contribute to the shaping of identity.

