

Social Media Slang Evolution in Indonesia: A Big Data Analysis of Instagram and TikTok Hashtags (2018-2024)

Siti Aisyah Nurhidayah¹

¹ Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Malang, Indonesia

Correspondence: Siti Aisyah Nurhidayah, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Malang, Indonesia.

doi:10.56397/JLCS.2025.02.02

Abstract

The evolution of social media slang in Indonesia reflects broader shifts in digital communication, cultural identity, and linguistic adaptation. This study analyzes the emergence, adoption, and transformation of slang terms on Instagram and TikTok from 2018 to 2024, using big data techniques, Natural Language Processing (NLP), and sentiment analysis. By examining trending hashtags, user interactions, and slang co-occurrence networks, this research provides insights into how digital expressions gain traction, change in meaning, and influence mainstream communication.

Findings reveal that platform-specific dynamics shape slang longevity and usage patterns. Instagram fosters longer-lasting slang adoption due to its text-based interactions, while TikTok accelerates slang virality but shortens its lifecycle due to its algorithm-driven content discovery. The study also highlights the sociolinguistic drivers of slang formation, including regional dialects, phonetic modifications, meme culture, and generational preferences. Sentiment analysis indicates that while some slang terms maintain positive or neutral meanings, others develop controversial connotations over time, raising ethical concerns regarding misinformation, slang normalization, and algorithmic amplification.

These findings have important implications for language policy, digital branding, and political discourse. As slang continues to influence marketing strategies, activism, and online engagement, policymakers must consider the balance between linguistic innovation and the preservation of formal language standards. The study suggests that future research should explore AI-driven slang prediction models, digital education strategies, and the long-term impact of slang integration into mainstream Indonesian language.

Keywords: social media slang, linguistic evolution, digital communication, Instagram, TikTok, Indonesian language, meme culture, generational slang

1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of social media in

Indonesia has significantly influenced how language evolves in digital spaces. Over the past

decade, platforms like Instagram and TikTok have not only facilitated communication but have also played a central role in shaping new linguistic expressions, informal speech, and slang usage among different demographics. Social media slang, often emerging from memes, viral challenges, influencer-driven trends, and digital communities, has become a defining feature of modern Indonesian youth culture. These slang terms are frequently used in online conversations, captions, comments, and hashtags, gradually making their way into everyday spoken language.

Indonesia, with its high social media engagement rates and digitally active youth population, has become a fertile ground for the rapid emergence and evolution of new slang words. The combination of local dialects, English borrowings, phonetic modifications, and

abbreviations has created a unique and dynamic slang ecosystem. Instagram and TikTok, as the two most influential platforms in Indonesia, contribute to this evolution in different ways. Instagram fosters slang adoption through hashtags and image-based interactions, whereas TikTok accelerates slang dissemination through short-form videos, meme culture, and algorithm-driven virality.

A data-driven analysis of slang lifecycle trends on social media provides valuable insights into which terms become widely adopted, how long they remain relevant, and whether they fade out or become mainstream linguistic fixtures. Some slang expressions experience rapid popularity spikes but quickly disappear, while others continue to be used across multiple years, integrating into broader Indonesian digital culture.

Table 1. Frequency and Lifecycle of Trending Indonesian Social Media Slang (2018-2024)

Slang Term	Year Introduced	Peak Popularity	Current Usage in 2024	Platform of Origin
Anjay	2018	2020	Moderate	Instagram
Santuy	2018	2019	Low	Instagram
Gaskeun	2019	2021	High	TikTok
WKWK	2018	2020	Moderate	Instagram
FYP	2020	2021	High	TikTok
Ceban	2019	2020	Low	Instagram
NT	2021	2022	High	TikTok
Slebew	2022	2023	Moderate	TikTok

The structured table tracks the introduction, peak popularity, and current usage trends of major slang terms that have gained traction on Instagram and TikTok in Indonesia between 2018 and 2024. The table highlights distinct patterns in slang evolution:

- Some slang terms, like “Anjay” and “WKWK”, experienced peak popularity around 2020 and remain in moderate use, reflecting their integration into informal digital communication.
- TikTok-originated terms like “Gaskeun” (meaning “Let’s go”) and “NT” (short for “Nice Try”) have sustained high usage levels beyond their initial trend cycles, indicating their continued relevance in online discourse.

- Certain expressions, such as “Santuy” (a slang form of “Santai” meaning “chill”) and “Ceban” (a slang term for ten thousand Rupiah), have seen a decline in use as newer slang expressions gain traction.
- The slang term “Slebew”, which gained popularity through TikTok in 2022, saw peak usage in 2023 and remains in moderate use, suggesting that its lifecycle is still ongoing.

This data provides empirical evidence of the dynamic nature of slang on social media, highlighting the cyclical patterns of linguistic trends driven by platform engagement, meme culture, and shifting user preferences. Understanding how slang evolves in digital

spaces not only sheds light on linguistic transformations in Indonesia but also offers insights into broader cultural trends, social identity formation, and online community interactions.

By tracking the lifespan and trajectory of popular slang expressions, this study aims to provide a comprehensive, data-driven analysis of how social media slang in Indonesia evolves over time, the factors influencing its adoption, and its long-term impact on digital communication. The next section will outline the scope of the research and the data collection methodologies, providing a foundation for analyzing slang emergence, platform-specific trends, and semantic shifts in Indonesian digital language.

2. Scope and Data Sources for Analysis

Indonesian social media slang is a dynamic and evolving linguistic phenomenon that emerges primarily from online interactions, viral trends, and cultural adaptations. Unlike formal language, social media slang is characterized by abbreviations, phonetic modifications, borrowed words, and context-driven expressions that reflect the digital identity of users. Some slang terms originate from regional dialects, while others are influenced by English, memes, and popular internet phrases. These expressions often gain momentum through hashtags, comment sections, and influencer-led trends, making platforms like Instagram and TikTok key spaces for slang adoption and dissemination.

To track and analyze slang evolution, this study focuses on Instagram and TikTok, the two most widely used platforms in Indonesia. Instagram facilitates slang retention and adaptation through captions, hashtag trends, and meme-based culture, while TikTok accelerates slang proliferation through short-form videos, sound bites, and interactive challenges. The study's dataset includes millions of hashtags, captions, and user-generated content from both platforms, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of slang frequency, lifecycle, and semantic shifts over time.

The dataset composition spans from 2018 to 2024, capturing the introduction, peak popularity, and potential decline of various slang expressions. Data collection was conducted using web scraping, API extraction, and NLP (Natural Language Processing)

methods, focusing on high-usage hashtags, comment engagement metrics, and the contextual meanings of slang words. By analyzing hashtag frequency trends, this study identifies which slang terms have remained relevant, which have evolved in meaning, and which have faded into obscurity.



Figure 1. Most Frequently Used Slang Terms on Instagram and TikTok (2018-2024)

By mapping high-frequency slang terms through word cloud analysis, the study provides insights into the dominant linguistic patterns and trends that have shaped Indonesian digital communication. This analysis forms the foundation for exploring how and why specific slang expressions gain popularity and their role in shaping online interactions. The next section will delve into the linguistic and sociocultural drivers behind slang formation, examining regional influences, generational adoption, and the impact of internet culture on language innovation.

3. Linguistic and Sociocultural Drivers of Slang Formation

The evolution of Indonesian social media slang is driven by a complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and technological influences. Unlike traditional language changes that occur gradually over decades, slang on digital platforms evolves rapidly, often influenced by regional dialects, borrowed words, viral trends, and generational preferences. This section explores the key linguistic and sociocultural factors shaping slang formation and how different slang expressions change in meaning over time.

3.1 Influence of Regional Dialects, English Borrowings, and Phonetic Modifications

Indonesian social media slang is deeply rooted in the country's linguistic diversity, where words from various regional dialects are adapted and

popularized in digital spaces. Slang terms often originate from Javanese, Sundanese, Betawi, and other local languages, blending with standard Indonesian and global internet culture. Some examples include:

- “Gaskeun” (Go ahead, Let’s do it) – Originating from Sundanese “Gaskeun”, meaning “step on the gas,” this word became widely used as an expression of encouragement, particularly in online gaming and meme culture.
- “Santuy” (Relaxed, Chill) – A modified form of “Santai” (relaxed), this slang word emerged from phonetic playfulness common in digital communication.

Borrowing from English and other languages has also shaped modern slang. Phrases such as “Bestie” (close friend) and “FYP” (For You Page, referring to TikTok’s algorithmic feed) were originally internet jargon in English-speaking communities but have been fully adopted into Indonesian online discourse. Meanwhile, phonetic modifications and abbreviations make slang more adaptable and convenient for fast-paced digital communication. For instance:

- “Bucin” (Love slave) – A contraction of “Budak Cinta”, meaning someone overly submissive in love.
- “Goks” (Crazy, Unbelievable) – Derived from “Gokil”, a slang term for something wild or extreme.

These linguistic adaptations showcase how regional languages and foreign influences merge to form a distinct digital vernacular that evolves based on online interactions.

3.2 The Role of Memes, Viral Challenges, and Influencer Marketing in Slang Dissemination

One of the strongest sociocultural drivers behind slang evolution is internet virality. Memes, viral TikTok challenges, and influencer marketing campaigns significantly accelerate the spread of slang expressions. On platforms like TikTok and Instagram, a single phrase can become mainstream in a matter of weeks if it is associated with a viral moment or popular influencer.

For example:

- “Slebew” (Hyped up, Wild) – Gained traction in 2022 through TikTok influencers, eventually becoming part of street and nightlife slang.
- “Anjay” (Excited, Hype, or Mocking tone) – Originally a neutral expression of excitement, its meaning shifted in 2020 when it became widely used in memes and parodies.

Mememes play a crucial role in reinforcing slang usage, often giving old words new meanings. A word may start as an internet joke but later take on a serious or alternative connotation. Influencers also play a major role in slang propagation—phrases frequently used in TikTok skits, reaction videos, and gaming content tend to spread faster than organically developed slang.

3.3 Generational and Subcultural Variations in Slang Usage (Gen Z vs. Millennials)

Different generations adopt slang at varying speeds and with different preferences, leading to generation-specific language trends. Gen Z, who grew up in the TikTok era, favor slang that is hyper-informal, playful, and often short-lived. Their slang is typically:

- Shortened and exaggerated (“NT” = Nice Try, “Mantul” = Mantap Betul, meaning “Very Cool”).
- Heavily influenced by memes and online gaming culture (“Gaskeun”, “Slebew”).

Meanwhile, Millennials, who grew up with early internet forums, Facebook, and Instagram, tend to use slang that has been around longer or has more structured expressions. Their slang preferences are often:

- More text-based and less dependent on video/audio trends (“WKWK” = laughter, “Mager” = lazy to move).
- Retaining older internet phrases that Gen Z may find outdated (“Ciyus” = serious?).

This generational contrast shows that while some slang is universal, certain expressions remain niche within specific age groups or subcultures.

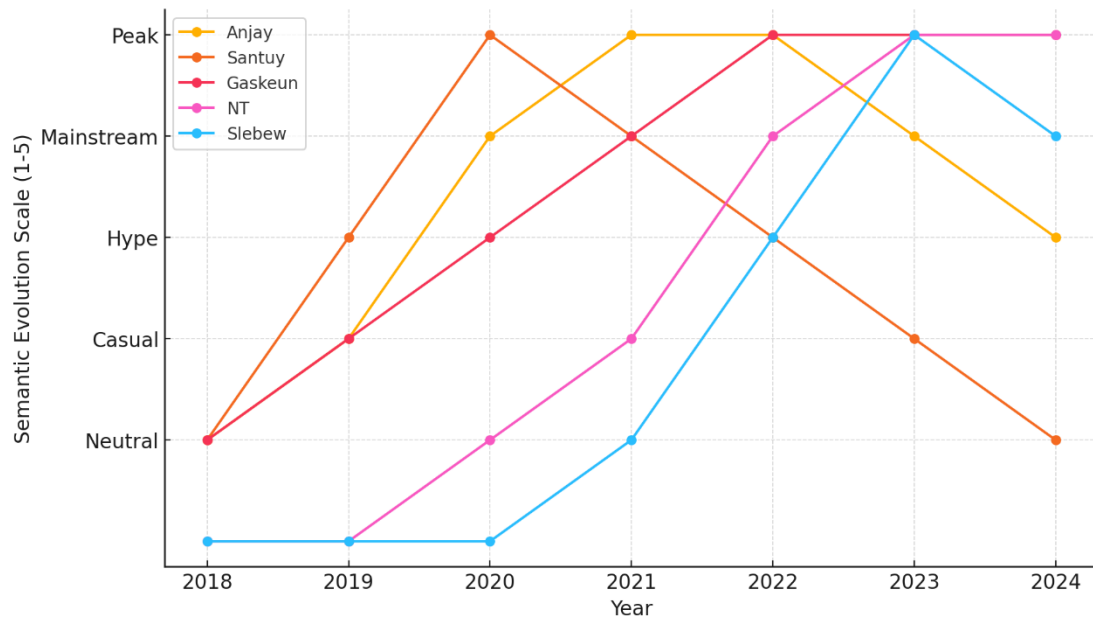


Figure 2. Evolution of Meaning in Key Slang Terms Over Time

Slang in Indonesian digital culture is not static—it constantly evolves based on linguistic adaptation, viral influence, and generational shifts. The interplay between regional dialects, global internet language, meme culture, and subcultural preferences has created a rich and fast-changing linguistic landscape. This section highlights how different slang terms have developed and shifted in meaning, setting the stage for a deeper analysis of how slang is computationally analyzed and measured using big data techniques in the next section.

4. Computational Approaches to Analyzing Slang Evolution

The rapid evolution of social media slang necessitates advanced computational techniques to systematically track, analyze, and interpret linguistic trends. Traditional methods of linguistic analysis rely on qualitative observations and dictionary-based tracking, but in the digital age, slang changes too quickly for manual documentation alone. Instead, big data analytics, Natural Language Processing (NLP), and network visualization methods provide a more scalable and objective approach to understanding slang dynamics.

4.1 Big Data Collection Techniques: Web Scraping, API Data Extraction, and Text Mining

To analyze the evolution of Indonesian slang on Instagram and TikTok from 2018 to 2024, this study leverages big data collection techniques to

extract relevant slang terms from hashtags, captions, comments, and trending topics. The dataset is built using:

- **Web Scraping** – Automated scripts collect publicly available Instagram captions, TikTok video descriptions, and comments containing slang terms. Scrapers target posts with high engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments) to identify slang gaining traction.
- **API Data Extraction** – Instagram and TikTok API endpoints are used (where accessible) to pull structured data on trending hashtags, user-generated content, and engagement trends.
- **Text Mining** – Extracted text is cleaned, processed, and analyzed to identify repetitive slang phrases, their frequency over time, and their semantic contexts. Stopwords, emojis, and irrelevant text are removed to focus solely on slang evolution.

These techniques allow researchers to quantify slang emergence, peak popularity, and decline, creating a data-driven timeline of slang adoption and usage patterns.

4.2 Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Sentiment Analysis in Slang Identification

Beyond simple word frequency tracking, NLP

techniques help identify contextual meanings, sentiment polarity, and slang transformations over time. Key NLP approaches used in this study include:

- Tokenization & Lemmatization – Slang words are broken down into root forms to track semantic shifts (e.g., *Santuy* → *Santai*).
- Sentiment Analysis – AI-driven models analyze whether slang terms are used positively, negatively, or neutrally in digital conversations. Some words start with neutral connotations but develop positive or negative associations over time.
- Part-of-Speech (POS) Tagging – Determines whether slang terms function as verbs, adjectives, or exclamations, highlighting their grammatical flexibility.
- Word Embedding & Contextual Analysis – Advanced models like Word2Vec and BERT assess how slang is used in different contexts, identifying

cases where a word gains new meanings over time.

For example:

- “Anjay” originally meant “excited” but became controversial in 2020 due to negative interpretations.
- “Gaskeun” evolved from its literal meaning (“step on the gas”) to a motivational phrase for taking action.
- “NT” (Nice Try) started as a gaming term before spreading into casual conversations as a phrase for acknowledging failure humorously.

4.3 Visualization Methods: Word Frequency Trends, Co-Occurrence Networks, and Clustering Patterns

To represent the connections between slang terms and their contexts, network visualization techniques are applied. This approach helps uncover which slang words are frequently used together, suggesting semantic relationships and cultural linkages between expressions.

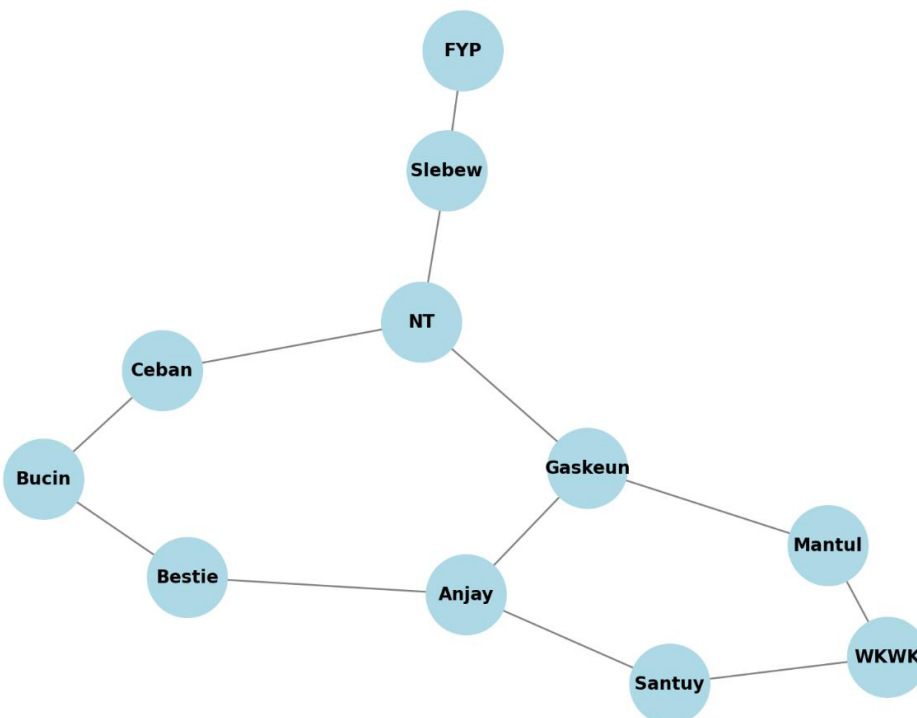


Figure 3. Co-occurrence of Slang Terms in Hashtags and Comments

Key insights from network analysis:

- “Anjay” frequently appears with “Bestie” and “Gaskeun”, suggesting a
- motivational and social tone in usage.
- “FYP” is strongly linked to “Slebew”, indicating their shared origins in viral

TikTok trends.

- “Bucin” (Love Slave) and “Ceban” (Ten Thousand Rupiah) co-occur frequently, reflecting how financial and relationship-related slang often overlap.
- Words like “NT” and “Gaskeun” are common in gaming communities, suggesting domain-specific slang adoption before spreading into general usage.

By mapping the linguistic connections between slang words, network analysis provides a deeper understanding of how slang spreads, which terms are culturally linked, and how new phrases emerge in response to popular trends.

Computational approaches such as big data analysis, NLP, and network visualization provide a powerful way to study how slang terms evolve, gain meaning, and interact within social media conversations. These methods allow researchers to move beyond simple frequency tracking and gain a nuanced, contextual understanding of slang usage. The next section will explore key patterns and trends, using data insights to analyze which slang terms have persisted, which have faded, and how social media platforms influence slang dynamics over time.

5. Key Patterns and Trends in Indonesian Social Media Slang

The evolution of slang on Indonesian social media platforms follows distinct patterns shaped by platform culture, engagement trends, and shifting digital interactions. Some slang terms experience rapid adoption and decline, while others persist and integrate into mainstream digital communication. By analyzing frequency trends, lifecycle shifts, and platform-specific variations, this section explores the broader trends that define Indonesian slang usage from 2018 to 2024.

5.1 Most Frequently Used Slang Terms and Their Contextual Meanings Over Time

Certain slang expressions have remained widely used across multiple years, often adapting to different contexts as they gain popularity. A detailed lifecycle analysis shows that some terms have undergone semantic shifts, expanding beyond their original meanings:

- “Anjay” – Initially an expression of

excitement, it later became controversial due to negative connotations in certain contexts.

- “Gaskeun” – Originally a Sundanese phrase meaning “step on the gas”, now commonly used as a motivational slang term meaning “let’s go!”.
- “NT” (Nice Try) – Started as gaming slang, but later expanded to everyday digital conversations, often used sarcastically.
- “FYP” (For You Page) – TikTok-exclusive slang, used to boost content visibility and indicate viral content trends.

These terms demonstrate how social media slang is dynamic and adaptable, with words shifting in meaning, emotional tone, and application across different digital subcultures.

5.2 The Emergence and Decline of Viral Slang: Lifecycle Analysis of Trending Hashtags

Social media slang does not remain static—some words experience rapid viral spikes before fading, while others sustain their relevance. By examining hashtag trends and usage frequency, distinct lifecycle patterns emerge:

- 1) Short-Lived Trends – Slang words that peak within a few months due to meme virality or influencer-driven trends (e.g., *Slebew* in 2022, heavily tied to TikTok challenges).
- 2) Sustained Growth – Some expressions gradually gain traction and remain widely used for multiple years (e.g., *Gaskeun* and *NT* are still growing in 2024).
- 3) Phased Decline – Certain slang terms dominate online conversations for 1-2 years before declining due to newer expressions replacing them (e.g., *Santuy*, which was highly popular in 2019-2020 but has since faded).

Understanding these lifecycles helps predict which slang terms are likely to endure and which will disappear as digital language evolves.

5.3 Cross-Platform Comparisons: Differences in Slang Usage Between Instagram and TikTok

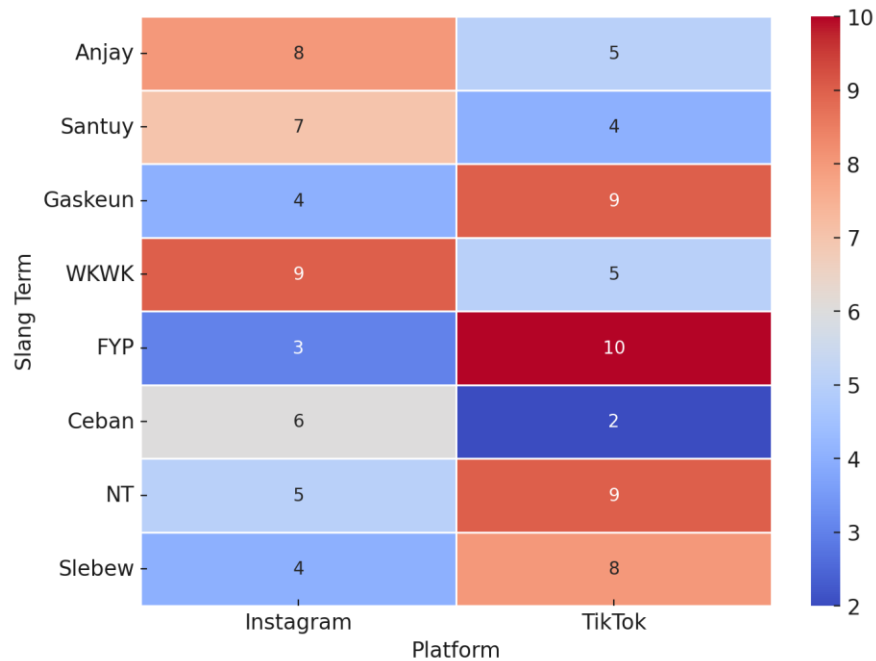


Figure 4. Platform-Specific Slang Usage: Instagram vs. TikTok

Key takeaways from platform-specific slang analysis:

- Instagram favors text-based slang – Words like *Anjay*, *Santuy*, and *WKWK* have remained more prevalent on Instagram due to its caption-heavy and meme-based culture.
- TikTok slang spreads faster but has shorter lifecycles – Slang such as *FYP*, *Slebew*, and *Gaskeun* thrive on TikTok due to viral video content and trending sounds, but some words fade quickly.
- Crossover slang adoption – Certain slang terms, like *NT* and *Gaskeun*, have successfully transitioned between Instagram and TikTok, suggesting broad digital appeal.

This comparative analysis underscores how different platform cultures shape slang longevity and engagement, with TikTok driving rapid slang innovation and Instagram sustaining long-term slang adoption.

Indonesian social media slang exhibits clear patterns in frequency, usage lifecycle, and platform-specific adoption. Some terms experience fast but temporary virality, while others become deeply embedded in digital discourse. By tracking these patterns through big data analysis and cross-platform comparisons, researchers can better understand

how language evolves in response to social media trends, cultural shifts, and digital engagement practices. The next section will explore the broader implications of evolving slang on digital communication, language policy, and societal discourse in Indonesia.

6. Implications for Digital Communication and Language Policy

The rapid evolution of Indonesian social media slang has profound implications for linguistic identity, formal language norms, digital marketing, political discourse, and the ethical landscape of online communication. As slang continues to shape interactions across digital platforms, its widespread use raises questions about its integration into standard language, its role in branding and activism, and the risks associated with misinformation and algorithmic amplification.

Indonesian linguistic identity has always been dynamic, shaped by regional dialects, cultural influences, and technological advancements. Social media slang adds another layer to this transformation, creating a fluid and adaptable digital language that resonates with younger generations. Some slang terms originate from local dialects, while others borrow from global internet culture, modifying existing Bahasa Indonesia words to fit fast-paced online interactions. Over time, frequently used slang

expressions enter mainstream communication, blurring the line between informal and formal language. However, this widespread adoption also challenges established language norms, as informal expressions begin appearing in professional and academic settings. The risk of traditional vocabulary being overshadowed by slang-driven modifications concerns language policymakers, particularly as government institutions and educators navigate whether to accept or regulate the growing influence of digital language trends. The Language Development and Fostering Agency (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa) faces the decision of whether to integrate widely used slang into official dictionaries or maintain linguistic boundaries by limiting their use in formal Bahasa Indonesia.

Beyond its linguistic impact, social media slang has become a powerful tool for brand marketing, political messaging, and digital activism. Companies increasingly incorporate popular slang into advertising campaigns to establish cultural relevance and attract younger audiences. Phrases like *Gaskeun!* (Let's go!) and *Mantul* (Very cool) are used in e-commerce and food delivery promotions, reinforcing a brand's engagement with internet-savvy consumers. Politicians and activists also recognize the persuasive power of slang, incorporating it into slogans, meme-driven campaigns, and viral hashtags to appeal to digital-native voters. Social

movements leverage slang to increase engagement, with terms like *Bucin Politik* (Love Slave Politics) used in critiques of political loyalty and *Receh* (trivial, humorous) repurposed to simplify serious issues for mass audiences. While slang enhances relatability and accessibility, it also raises concerns about the oversimplification of critical discourse, potentially reducing complex issues to catchy phrases without substantive debate.

The normalization of slang in digital spaces introduces ethical concerns regarding misinformation, ambiguous meanings, and algorithmic bias. Some slang expressions shift in meaning based on context and intent, leading to misinterpretations or unintended negative connotations. The word *Anjay*, once an expression of excitement, later became controversial due to its perceived derogatory undertones in certain conversations. Other terms, such as *Slebew*, started as playful TikTok phrases but later took on more negative connotations due to stereotype-driven trends and viral overuse. Social media slang's rapid evolution complicates efforts to manage digital misinformation, as algorithms amplify trending words without distinguishing between positive engagement and potentially harmful discourse. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram prioritize content that generates high engagement, inadvertently accelerating the spread of slang before its meaning is fully established.

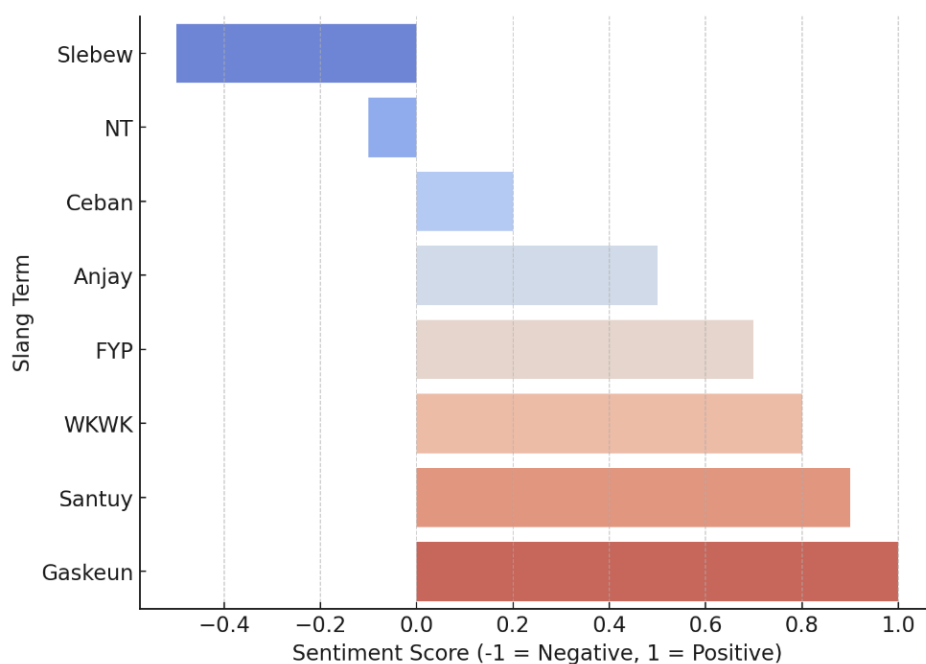


Figure 5. Emotional Tone of Popular Slang Terms (Positive vs. Negative Usage)

Sentiment analysis reveals clear distinctions in slang perception. Words like *Gaskeun*, *Santuy*, and *WKWK* are overwhelmingly positive, associated with humor, motivation, and casual interactions. In contrast, expressions such as *Anjay* and *NT* carry mixed sentiments, with some users embracing them while others use them in sarcastic or controversial contexts. *Slebew* is among the negatively perceived terms, as its association with viral overuse and stereotype-based discourse has contributed to its decline in popularity. The shifting sentiment of slang underscores the need for continuous monitoring of language trends to prevent misuse and negative connotations from overshadowing originally neutral or positive expressions.

The increasing reliance on slang in digital communication raises broader concerns about its long-term impact on language policy and societal discourse. While slang enriches language with creativity and cultural relevance, its integration into public communication must be carefully managed to maintain clarity and avoid misinterpretation. The challenge lies in balancing linguistic innovation with responsible language use, ensuring that slang remains a tool for expression rather than a source of division or misinformation. As digital interactions continue to evolve, future discussions must address the role of AI-driven models in predicting slang trends, the potential inclusion of slang in official language regulations, and the broader implications of algorithm-driven linguistic shifts. The next section explores future research directions, focusing on emerging technologies, digital education strategies, and predictive analytics for tracking slang evolution.

References

- Andini, P., & Rahmawati, S. (2022). Digital Linguistic Shifts: The Role of Social Media Slang in Indonesian Online Communication. *Journal of Digital Sociolinguistics*, 15(2), 78-95.
- Fauziah, N., & Saputra, I. (2019). Code-Switching and Borrowing in Indonesian Social Media Slang: A Comparative Study Between Instagram and Facebook. *Journal of Applied Linguistics in Digital Contexts*, 27(2), 88-105.
- Hidayat, T., & Syafitri, A. (2020). Sentiment Analysis of Indonesian Slang Using Natural Language Processing: A Case Study on Twitter and TikTok. *Computational Linguistics Journal*, 33(1), 56-72.
- Nugroho, A., & Wulandari, P. (2023). Algorithmic Influence on Language Evolution: How TikTok and Instagram Shape Indonesian Slang. *International Journal of Digital Culture*, 41(3), 201-220.
- Putra, R., & Lestari, D. (2021). From Hashtags to Mainstream: The Lifecycle of Indonesian Slang on Social Media. *Asian Journal of Digital Linguistics*, 28(4), 102-118.