

# Analysis public sentiment on freeport's sustainability and its impact on the Pestapora Festival: A social media analysis

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## Abstract

Pestapora, one of the biggest annual music festivals in Jakarta held by the promoter Boss Creator, faced controversy after announcing PT Freeport Indonesia as one of their sponsors. The partnership drew public criticism over Freeport's environmental and human rights track record in Papua. This study examines how public sentiment toward Freeport's sustainability efforts affects the perception of Pestapora on social media. Using qualitative content analysis, comments from Instagram posts on Pestapora's official account and from artists who withdrew from the lineup, were analysed. Guided by Audience Reception Theory from Stuart Hall, comments were categorized as dominant, negotiated, or oppositional reading to analyse how context shapes sentiment. Findings show audience responses were predominantly negotiated, showing that digital audiences actively reinterpret messages through ethical and cultural considerations. Individual actions received more dominant readings than institutional communication, indicating higher perceived moral credibility toward personal decisions in sponsorship controversies.

## Keywords

Public sentiment, Sustainability, Social media

## Introduction

Pestapora is one of the biggest music festivals in Indonesia, so it has a large audience and artist line-ups. This festival was held for the first time in 2022, and the event lasted three days straight. 174 artists performed to a record audience of 75,000. In 2023, Pestapora did an even greater number, with a total of 226 artists who performed and an audience of 97,000, which shows a great increase from the previous year. And in 2024, it was stated that 280 artists made the festival a great success, and over 90,000 tickets were sold, which reached 100,000 by the end of the event. These statistics show that Pestapora is indeed a festival that is anticipated by many. However, when something controversial happens, which in this case is a sponsor issue, it can attract various sentiments from the ticket holders and generate a strong public reaction.

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The controversy isn't just about music and entertainment; it also touches sustainability and ethics, as PT Freeport Indonesia is a major mining company that is known to have both ethical and sustainability issues. Therefore, the sudden news of Freeport being Pestapora's sponsor has brought much attention to the event in a negative light.

Public dissatisfaction toward Freeport which now operates in Mimika, Central Papua and in Gresik, East Java stems from its long and troubled history in Indonesia, beginning with its establishment under Soeharto's 1967 investment law. Over the decades, the company expanded its operations dramatically and particularly after securing the 1991 Contract of Work II, which increased its mining area from 10,908 hectares to 2.6 million hectares [1]. The expansion was followed by allegations of operating in protected forest zones without proper permits and neglecting financial obligations, including reclamation guarantees and post-mining funding requirements. These issues reinforced the perception that Freeport operated with limited oversight and frequently breached regulatory requirements.

However, the strongest public criticism centers on Freeport's environmental impact. The company has long been accused of dumping mine waste (tailings) into rivers, forests, estuaries, and coastal areas, leading to widespread ecological destruction. Because these violations span decades and continue to affect ecosystems and communities, groups like Merah Putih Stratejik Institut (MPSI) argue the case must not be dismissed and urge legal institutions to hold Freeport accountable. These persistent concerns about environmental harm, regulatory breaches, and financial losses have shaped strong public distrust and resentment toward Freeport. Freeport has also been repeatedly linked to serious human rights violations involving Indonesian security forces and the company's own security personnel [2].

Freeport's long and troubling track record made many people react strongly when Pestapora announced the mining company as one of its sponsors. The announcement prompted several headlining acts to withdraw from the festival, as they chose to stand by their principles and distance themselves from the controversy. Although the promoter, Boss Creator, eventually terminated the sponsorship contract with Freeport on September 6, 2025, the backlash had already taken its toll. Many audiences and observers were left feeling disappointed and regretful, and some began to question how the committee could have overlooked Freeport's long-standing issues in the first place [3].

The post with the most engagement was Pestapora's clarification uploaded on Instagram. Social media, particularly Instagram, plays an important role in this research because the platform offers a fast, accessible, and highly interactive space where public responses can be observed directly. Instagram's strong visual orientation through photos, videos, carousels, and reels allows messages to gain attention more effectively than text-based platforms. Visual content often shapes public opinion more quickly, as it triggers emotional reactions and helps users feel more connected to the issue being presented. When an account has a large follower base, its comment section becomes

even more valuable, since the responses collected can better represent a wide range of public perspectives.

Instagram is also significant for research because its features make audience engagement easy to track through likes, shares, saves, and, most importantly, comments. The comment section provides rich data for reception analysis or sentiment analysis, as users can freely express their agreement, disagreement, or negotiation toward the information posted. Studying responses on Instagram allows researchers to capture spontaneous, unfiltered public reactions, which is something that is often missing in more formal communication channels. This makes it possible to understand how audiences interpret, negotiate, or challenge particular narratives. When the account involved has a large audience, the findings become even more relevant, as they reflect broader public sentiment.

Despite growing debates on ethical sponsorship and corporate sustainability, limited research has examined how digital audiences interpret controversial sponsorships through a reception theory framework. The author conducted a literature review to look at previous studies on the Pestapora music festival. Several existing studies focus on event management strategies at the Pestapora festival [3], the influence of exposure to Instagram content on audience visit interest [4]. The author found no research that examined how audience sentiment towards Freeport's sustainability affects Pestapora's reputation. This study addresses that gap by analyzing how Instagram users interpreted the Pestapora–Freeport sponsorship controversy using Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding model. The research problem, therefore, centers on understanding how public sentiment toward corporate sustainability influences audience perception of cultural events in the context of digital communication.

## Method

This research uses a qualitative method, applying sentiment analysis to examine public responses surrounding the Pestapora Freeport controversy. Sentiment Analysis is a technique for extracting text data that aims to obtain information about positive, neutral or negative sentiments given by internet users on social media to provide a personal assessment or opinion [5]. The study selects two Instagram posts as primary data sources: one post from Pestapora during the peak of the controversy, within the first three to five days of public reaction and one post from an artist, namely Feast/Hindia, who publicly withdrew from the festival due to ethical concerns regarding Freeport. These posts were chosen because they represent the central actors in the discourse, the festival organizer at the center of the controversy, and a performer whose decisions significantly shaped public opinion. The comment sections of these posts provide rich qualitative data reflecting how audiences responded, debated, and negotiated the issue.

The collected comments are exported using an Instagram comment extraction tool. Each comment is then analysed and categorized using Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding

theory. Stuart Hall's theory is relevant to use. In his theory, he views the audience as a producer of meaning who has great power to create meaning [6]. Stuart Hall divides audience responses into three types: dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings. Dominant readings fully agree with the message or stance of the post; negotiated readings show partial agreement while expressing personal reservations or alternative views; and oppositional readings reject or challenge the message altogether.

The coding-decoding model was developed to explain the dynamics of meaning in media. Messages constructed by media producers within a specific ideological framework are transmitted by the audience through three reading positions: the dominant position, which is characterized by full acceptance of the message; the negotiating position, which reflects partial acceptance and partial rejection; and the consistent position, which indicates complete rejection [7].

## Results and discussion

Stuart Hall focuses on the position of the audience in receiving messages in the media [8]. Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding model serves as a seminal framework in media research, originally formulated to challenge the traditional linear transmission model of communication. Hall conceptualized communication as a complex process of meaning production deeply rooted in semiotic frameworks. In this model, the production and reception of media messages are treated as distinct moments that are relatively independent of one another. Hall posits that the correspondence between the meaning intended by the producer and the meaning interpreted by the audience cannot be guaranteed beforehand; rather, it relies on the specific frameworks of knowledge and codes utilized during both the encoding and decoding phases [9].

Encoding is the process of creating a message that corresponds to a certain code, while decoding is the process of using the code to interpret the message given [10]. The phase encoding involves the production of meaning by the author. Hall refers to this as the creation of meaning structures where technical infrastructure, relations of production, and frameworks of knowledge combine to produce a programme as a meaningful discourse. Hall posits that media texts, particularly news, are predominantly encoded within the dominant or hegemonic ideology. Decoding is the moment of reception where the audience interprets the message to produce meaning structures. Because the audience possesses its own frameworks of knowledge and relations of production, the decoded meaning does not necessarily mirror the encoded meaning.

A central component of Hall's theory is the typology, which outlines three hypothetical positions from which audiences construct meaning from televisual discourse. These positions explain how audiences navigate the ideological structures embedded within media texts. First, the Dominant-Hegemonic Position. In this position, the viewer decodes the message in terms of the same reference code in which it was encoded. This is considered the ideal-typical case of perfectly transparent communication, where the viewer accepts the connoted meaning fully and directly, operating entirely inside the

dominant code. This position implies that the audience aligns with the hegemonic definition of the world presented by the media producers.

Second, the Negotiated Position. The negotiated position represents a complex mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements. Here, the audience acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make grand significations at an abstract level. However, at a more restricted or situational level, the viewer creates their own ground rules and operates with exceptions to the rule. This position allows the audience to accept the dominant ideology generally while contesting its application to specific local conditions.

Third, the oppositional position. In the oppositional position, the viewer perfectly understands both the literal and connotative inflections of the discourse but decodes the message in a globally contrary way. The interpreter utilizes a radically different frame of meaning to read the message, effectively opposing the ideological stance of the text. A classic example provided by Hall is a viewer interpreting a reference to "national interest" as "class interest," thereby rejecting the preferred reading in favor of an alternative framework.

### *Pestapora's post*

The analysis of 150 comments on the Freeport - Pestapora post shows that the majority of the audience occupies the Negotiated position, indicating a conflict between support for the music event and rejection of the sponsoring entity present in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1.** Comment type percentage of pestapora's post

Reaction Type	Number of Comments	Percentage (%)	Case Implication
Negotiated	100	66.67%	The majority of the audience understands the conflict and seeks compromise.
Oppositional Reading	30	20.00%	Clear oppositional responses that challenged the legitimacy of the sponsorship.
Dominant	20	13.33%	Uncritical acceptance of the sponsor message.
Total	150	100.00%	

The findings suggest that the encoded sponsorship message did not resonate strongly with most commenters. Many commenters adopted negotiated readings, balancing ethical concerns with their interest in the festival. The media message (sponsor post) was encoded to be accepted within a dominant framework, but the audience was able to sort and interpret the message into three positions:

#### 1. Negotiated position (negotiated reaction)

This is a position of partial acceptance and partial rejection. The audience accepts the general framework (e.g., the idea of the Pestapora music festival is good), but rejects the specific implications enforced by the dominant code (e.g., PTFI is a worthy sponsor). They adapt the message at a local level according to their interests and awareness.

**Mechanism:** The audience acknowledges PTFI's ethical issues but prioritizes their interest in entertainment. They attempt to find a balance that allows them to still enjoy Pestapora without completely ignoring the Freeport issue.

**Representative Quote:** One prominent comment pattern involves criticism balanced with humor or personal justification: "@iqbaalandriana kalau sponsor nya alkohol oke oke ja ya.. 🤔" ("@iqbaalandriana if the sponsor was alcohol, it would be okay.. 🤔"). This quote shows criticism (implying alcohol is more ethical than PTFI), but it is delivered with a casual tone and jokes, indicating a negotiation where ethical standards are questioned but still responded to lightly. Another similar comment is "Orang-orang sibuk joget, bukan sibuk ribut" ("People are busy dancing, not busy fighting"), which explicitly chooses personal interest over ideological conflict.

## 2. Oppositional reading position (oppositional reaction)

The position where the audience rejects the message totally, even though they understand the meaning intended by the producer. They decode the message using a counter-hegemonic or alternative ideological framework.

**Mechanism:** The audience views this sponsorship message as an attempt to rehabilitate its image or manage its reputation to divert attention from issues. They reject PTFI's legitimacy to be part of a cultural event.

**Representative Quote:** Strongly critical and direct comments rejected the message, often touching on sensitive issues: "Kam lucu, maksudnya kam blg dong sponsorr kam untk senang diatas penderitaan orang Papua" ("You are funny, meaning you say your sponsor is for fun on top of the suffering of Papuan people") This quote radically rejects the message of "fun" promoted by Pestapora and replaces it with a narrative of suffering and exploitation, directly opposing the entire premise of the sponsorship.

## 3. Dominant-hegemonic position (dominant reaction)

The position where the audience accepts the message according to the code used to encode it. They view this sponsorship message as normal and positive, consistent with the ideology of capitalism and corporate support for the arts.

**Mechanism:** This audience focuses solely on the positive outcome (financially supported music events) and ignores or is unaware of the controversy behind the sponsor.

**Representative Quote:** Comments showing direct support and enthusiasm: "Kerenn👍👍" ("Cool👍👍") "good job mas @kikiauliaucup 👍" These quotes convey pure support and praise without a single element of criticism or negotiation.

### Hindia/ Feast's post

The message encoded by Hindia is a message of moral integrity and idealism. Audience reaction to this message was highly polarized, but the Negotiated position (Critical Compromise) remained the most dominant show at [Table 2](#).

**Table 2.** Comment type percentage of Hindia/ Feast's post

Reaction Type	Number of Comments	Percentage (%)	Case Implication
Negotiated	94	62.7%	The majority respects the artist's decision but negotiates it against practical realities (e.g., fan losses).
Dominant	35	23.3%	Strong acceptance of the message, validating the artist's moral integrity and idealism.
Oppositional Reading	21	14%	Rejection of the stance, often viewing it as performative or hypocritical.
Total	150	100%	

The percentage of the Dominant position (full acceptance) increased significantly compared to the general Pestapora post, indicating strong support for Hindia's idealism. However, the majority (62.7%) still processed it with compromise and consideration of existing realities.

Hindia's message regarding a critical stance against the Freeport sponsor is a moral message challenging market ideology (corporations). Audience reactions are clearly divided into the following three decoding positions:

1. Negotiated position (negotiated reaction)

This is a position of partial acceptance of Hindia's stance. The audience accepts the moral value (that Hindia acted correctly) but rejects or adjusts it at a practical/situational level (impact on fans, difficulty of absolute consistency, or implications for the event).

Mechanism: Balancing Hindia's idealism with reality (such as sacrificed tickets). They seek sympathy for Hindia's dilemma but also demonstrate personal loss.

Representative Quote: Comments that show that they understood the message but also reject it "gue sangat amat respect yg sebesar besarnya sama keputusan lo bas, tapi coba liat dari sudut pandang penonton bas, mungkin ada yg dari luar kota bela belain dateng cuma buat nonton feast dan hindia..." ("I have the utmost respect for your decision Bas, but try looking from the audience's perspective Bas, maybe there are those from out of town who went out of their way to come just to watch Feast and Hindia...").

2. Oppositional reading position (oppositional reaction)

The position where the audience totally rejects Hindia/Bas's stance, even though they understand the moral message. They decode this message with a counter-ideological framework or label Hindia's stance as hypocrisy or naive.

Mechanism: Demanding absolute consistency or comparing this stance with daily life contradictions (e.g., use of mining products).

Representative Quote: Comments that questions Hindia's hypocrisy "Keluar dari spotify dong jan nangung" klo mau idealis yang jelas spotify ingin merusak dunia!!" ("Get off Spotify, don't be halfway... if you want to be idealist, Spotify clearly wants to destroy the world!!") "Halah hape lu buat posting ini kira2 batterynya dari apa? Tempe?" ("Halah, the phone you used to post this, what do you think the battery is made of? Tempeh?")

3. Dominant-hegemonic position (dominant reaction)

The position where the audience fully accepts the message of idealism encoded by Hindia. They view the decision as a correct, heroic moral action consistent with the musician's image, without considering costs or contradictions.

Mechanism: Reflects full identification with Hindia's ideology (idealism and consistency).

Representative Quote: Comments that shows respect and support towards Hindia "Sungkem ☐" ("Respect/Bow down ☐") "Respectt" or "Konsisten 😊" ("Consistent 😊")

## Conclusion

The predominance of negotiated readings in both posts indicates that audience responses were not polarized into simple support or rejection. Consistent with Stuart Hall's framework, meaning was reconstructed within specific socio-cultural contexts where ethical concerns intersected with cultural consumption. The higher proportion of dominant readings in response to Hindia's withdrawal suggests that audiences may attribute greater moral credibility to individual actors than to institutional communication. These findings highlight how digital platforms function as spaces for interpretive negotiation rather than passive message reception.

This study examined how public sentiment toward Freeport's sustainability record influenced perceptions of the Pestapora festival. Using Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model, the findings demonstrate that audience responses were primarily negotiated rather than purely supportive or oppositional. While some commenters fully rejected the sponsorship, many balanced ethical considerations with their interest in attending the festival. In contrast, individual acts of withdrawal were more frequently decoded in

dominant terms, reflecting stronger alignment with perceived moral consistency. These findings suggest that digital audiences actively participate in shaping reputational outcomes during sponsorship controversies. Future research may extend this analysis to other platforms or comparative case studies to explore whether similar patterns of audience interpretation emerge in different cultural contexts.

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