
Audience Engagement Analysis of the Drama Cinta Sedalam Rindu through Uses and Gratification Theory

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the motivation and audience engagement toward the television drama Cinta Sedalam Rindu through the Uses and Gratifications Theory approach. Produced by SinemArt and broadcast on SCTV, the series portrays themes of love and the struggles of young people in the digital era, successfully capturing the attention of both teenage and adult audiences. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach using content analysis and social media observation techniques, encompassing platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook. The findings reveal that audiences actively use this drama to fulfill various needs: cognitive (gaining insight into life and social relationships), affective (expressing emotions and empathy), personal identity (reinforcing self-image through relatable characters), social integration (engaging with online communities and the cast), and diversion (escaping from daily routines and stress). Moreover, active audience participation on social media fosters a strong fan community and enhances emotional attachment to the content. These findings affirm that Cinta Sedalam Rindu serves not merely as a form of entertainment but also as a medium of social communication capable of shaping the audience's identity, emotions, and social relationships in the digital age.

Keywords: Audience Response, Media Interaction, Uses and Gratification Theory

INTRODUCTION

In the current modern era, the variety of communication media has developed very rapidly. These developments make it easier for the public to obtain information, expand their horizons, and allow virtual interaction without space and time limitations. Among the various forms of communication media, social media and television are the two most dominant platforms and are in great demand by the public. Social media, in particular, functions as a digital platform that provides a variety of features to facilitate users in creating, sharing, and actively participating in content exchanges and online community activities (Ichwan & Irawan, 2022).

Television still maintains its position as one of the media with the widest audience reach and the highest level of time consumption. Its popularity has remained stable and even increased for more than three decades in various parts of the world (Kothur & Pandey, 2023). The presence of television not only serves as a means of entertainment, but has also become part of people's lifestyles as well as trendsetters among its viewers. One of the flagship programs that dominate the television screen is soap operas. In the context of the Indonesian language, soap operas (electronic cinema) are audiovisual works that are produced specifically for broadcast through television media. Soap operas function not

only as entertainment, but also as a medium to convey moral messages and representations of social values that reflect the reality of people's daily lives (Bouchra et al., 2024).

The Sinemart production house on August 2, 2025 released the premiere of the latest soap opera titled *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* on the SCTV television station (Surya Citra Televisi) at 18.35 WIB. This soap opera directed by Akbar Bhakti is present as one of the flagship shows that represents the meaning of love, struggle, and sacrifice in facing the reality of life. According to Banardi Rachmad as Deputy Director of Programming of SCTV, the production of *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* aims to display a touching and inspiring love story, reflect the reality of today's young generation, and instill moral values about love, family, and life struggles.

The presence of soap operas that carry the theme of romance of Generation Z teenagers in Indonesia received a positive response from the public. The audience's enthusiasm is reflected in the achievement of the broadcast performance in the first episode which managed to achieve a TVR of 3.9 with an audience share of 16.6 percent. In addition, the soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* also recorded significant achievements on digital platforms with the number of views reaching 55,000 streams through the Vidio service. These findings show the audience's high interest in the representation of stories and characters that are relevant to the lives of today's adolescents.

The main character Aluna, played by Esta Pramanita, is portrayed as a tough girl who has to struggle alongside her mother after her father passes away and leaves behind a large amount of debt. The event drastically changed Aluna's life and forced her to work hard to maintain her family's life. In her solitude, Aluna found an escape in the world of online games by using the pseudonym Gulagula. Through the virtual world, she meets Ezra, played by Farhan Rasyid, without realizing that their relationship will continue and have a significant impact on their lives in the real world.

Ezra is described as an intelligent and soft-hearted figure, but has to face inner conflicts due to environmental pressures and his feelings for Aluna. The conflict is further complicated by the presence of Felicia, played by Danna Salsabilla, the daughter of a wealthy company owner who is ambitious, confident, and used to getting what she wants, including Ezra. Felicia's efforts to gain Ezra's love often trigger conflicts, both with Aluna and with the social environment around her. On the other hand, the character of Galaxy, played by Immanuel Caesar Hito, is present as an adult male figure who sincerely loves Aluna. Although Aluna often seems indifferent and insensitive to Galaxy's feelings, she still shows patience and sincerity, thus forming a complex love triangle dynamic between Aluna, Ezra, and Galaxy.

This soap opera has managed to attract the attention of adolescent and adult audiences because it raises the theme of life struggle, love, and sincerity in the midst of economic difficulties, which is wrapped in an emotional storyline and characters that are close to the reality of today's young generation. The conflict between love, family, and life pressures makes *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* not only serve as entertainment, but also as a medium to convey moral messages about determination, compassion, and hope in the midst of suffering.

The success of this soap opera is not only reflected in the achievement of high television ratings, but also from the significant level of digital interaction on various social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok. The intensity of the audience's participation in online discussions shows that *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* is able to build a strong emotional attachment with its audience (M.Maulana & Yulianti, 2023). Social media acts as an interactive space for the fan community to communicate, share opinions, and express appreciation for the show. Activities such as liking, commenting,

re-uploading scene snippets, and drafting theories about characters and storylines show the active participation of the audience in the construction of the soap opera narrative (Ichwan & Irawan, 2022).

This phenomenon indicates that social media not only serves as a means of promotion, but also as a participatory cultural space that strengthens the relationship between media texts and their audiences. This engagement reflects the high level of affection and social identification of the audience, as well as illustrates how soap operas are able to play a role in the formation of cultural identity and social networks among Generation Z, thus making them popular and viral in the digital space (Qanitah Salma et al., 2025)

In this context, understanding the motivations behind the interaction and audience response to the soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* is important to be studied academically. The Uses and Gratifications theory approach is relevant to analyze how viewers use social media in relation to the show to meet their various needs (Damanik & Tambotoh, 2022). This theory views individuals as active subjects who use media to obtain certain rewards, such as meeting cognitive, affective needs, social integration, and escape from daily routines.

In the context of the soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu*, the audience not only consumes the show as entertainment, but also makes it a space for expression and social interaction through various activities on social media, ranging from sharing opinions, making video footage, to discussing the storyline and main characters. Therefore, this study aims to explore the forms of digital interaction that appear on social media and analyze how the soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* is able to meet the emotional, social, and cognitive needs of its audience, thereby creating a deep engagement between the show and the audience. The author will analyze data obtained from various sources, such as comments, discussions, and content uploaded by official accounts and fans of the soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* on social media. This study will highlight how these forms of digital interaction reflect the emotional involvement and perception of the audience towards the storyline, characters, and moral messages conveyed in soap operas. In addition, this research will also discuss how *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* affects the audience's perspective on the meaning of love, sincerity, life struggles, family relationships, and social dynamics in the digital era.

By understanding the interaction patterns and responses of audiences in the online space, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive picture of the role of soap operas in shaping the emotional experiences and social values of their audiences, as well as explaining how television media contributes to the formation of people's views and behaviors, especially the younger generation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory Uses and Gratifications

The theory of Uses and Gratifications was first introduced by three communication scientists, namely Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch. The birth of this theory began from the observation of the behavior of the audience who are no longer seen as passive parties in receiving media messages, but as active individuals who have the psychological and social drive to choose and use the media according to their needs. (Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, 1973)

According to the theory of Uses and Gratifications, individuals are seen as active parties in choosing and using media to obtain certain satisfaction or results that suit their personal needs (A. Heravi, S. Mubarak, 2018) This theory assumes that audiences have the ability to assess, learn, and evaluate different types of media, so as to determine which media is most effective in achieving their communicative goals. In this framework, individuals not

only choose a particular medium, but also interpret the personal value of each of these media functions. McQuail and his colleagues, as quoted in West & Turner, identified four main categories of needs and satisfaction that audiences obtain through the media, namely:

1. Diversion — media is used as a means to escape from routines, stress, or problems of daily life.
2. Personal relationships — media serves as a substitute for social interaction, providing a sense of closeness or friendship for individuals.
3. Personal identity — media helps individuals reinforce their values, beliefs, and self-image.
4. Surveillance — media is used as a source of information to understand the environment and assist individuals in decision-making.

Audiences use media as a means to meet various specific needs, including (Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, 1973):

1. Cognitive
Cognitive needs reflect an individual's drive to acquire information, knowledge, and a broader understanding of the surrounding environment. This encouragement makes the media an instrument of learning and a source of knowledge, where individuals actively utilize various forms of media to enrich their insights and deepen their understanding of social realities and the phenomena that occur around them.
2. Affective
Affective needs refer to the individual's drive to fulfill the emotional aspect and seek pleasurable experiences through media consumption. This need is closely related to feelings, emotions, and moods, where media content plays a role in arousing, channeling, and regulating the emotional state of individuals so as to produce certain psychological satisfaction.
3. Personal Identity
The need for personal identity describes an individual's drive to increase self-confidence, strengthen social status, and build self-image and value through media consumption. This need is related to the role of media in helping individuals understand their identity, affirm personal values, and gain social validation or recognition from their surroundings.
4. Social Integration and Interaction
The need for social integration reflects the individual's drive to strengthen interpersonal relationships, maintain social connections, and foster a sense of togetherness in a community through the use of media. This need affirms the role of media as a forum for social interaction that allows individuals to participate, share experiences, and build meaningful social relationships in daily life.
5. Escape
Diversion needs describe an individual's drive to reduce stress and emotional distress through media consumption activities. This need focuses on the role of media as a means of escape and entertainment that helps individuals escape from routine, boredom, frustration, and mental exhaustion, thus serving as a form of psychological relaxation and emotional recovery in daily life.

The Uses and Gratifications theory focuses on the reasons behind the choice of media by the audience, emphasizing that individuals consciously choose a particular medium according to their communication needs and goals. This perspective emerged in response to the increasingly diverse media options available, allowing each individual to determine

media usage preferences based on personal and situational motives. Thus, this theory views that the main concern lies in why and when audiences choose and use a medium, not solely on the effects caused by that medium (Adistri et al., 2024).

Soap Operas and Social Media

Soap operas or television series are interesting because they have the potential to influence their audience. Consciously or not, these influences can begin to be seen and felt in the form of words, emotions and behavior of the viewers of the show (Haqqi, 2024). In its function as an entertainment medium, soap operas act as a representation of the social and psychological reality of society. Mass media, including soap operas, not only present the existing socio-cultural reality, but also contribute to shaping and constructing that culture (Hakim, 2017).

Through the narrative and characters presented, soap operas function as a mirror of social life, where various values, norms, and dynamics of society are reflected into dramatic forms that are easily understood by the audience. As expressed by Happy (2019), soap operas are a record of the social reality that develops in society, as well as presenting symbolic meanings that reflect the socio-psychological conditions of society itself. Because of its proximity to everyday experiences, soap operas are often considered close to the real lives of their viewers.

Furthermore, the results of the study Happy (2019) shows that soap operas are able to represent the values of sincerity and morality, while studies by Rohmah et al (2020) revealed that soap operas can also present representations of kindness and the humanist side in social life, even in characters who are stereotypically considered negative, such as thugs. Thus, soap operas not only function as entertainment, but also as a reflective medium that shapes society's understanding of human and social values.

Individual needs for social integration and interaction, as well as the desire to obtain social benefits, have been identified as one of the main motivations in internet and social media use (Budiono & Tandaju, 2023). These motivations include efforts to build a sense of belonging, establish relationships with friends, family, and community, and gain social support or replace direct interactions in real life. Social media is seen as a safe and accessible space for users to express their feelings, share personal views and experiences, and convey the latest information to their social environment. Thus, the use of social media not only serves as a means of communication, but also as a mechanism for meeting the social and emotional needs of individuals in the context of modern life that is increasingly digital (Maulana & Julyazti, 2025).

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method to explore the form of interaction and audience response on social media to the soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu*. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand the meaning, interaction patterns, and subjective experiences of viewers in responding to soap operas, not to measure causal relationships or statistical generalizations.

Data Collection Techniques

The research data was collected through social media observation and content analysis of online uploads and interactions related to the soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu*. Data sources include the official account of the SCTV television station, the official account of the soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu*, and fan and viewer accounts on four main social media platforms, namely Instagram, TikTok, Twitter (X), and Facebook. These four platforms were chosen because they have different interaction characteristics and are the main space for soap opera audience participation in Indonesia.

Data collection is carried out by:

1. Identify uploads that explicitly discuss *Cinta Sedalam Rindu*, such as scene trailers, episode posters, short videos, or official promotional uploads.
2. Collect comments, replies, and discussions that appear on the post within a certain time frame since the premiere of the episode.
3. Record the form of audience interaction, including the number of comments, forms of emotional expression (praise, criticism, empathy), and discussion patterns between users.

The data collected were in the form of text (comments, captions, tweets), visuals (images and short videos), and other forms of digital interaction relevant to the focus of the research.

Purposive Sampling Criteria and Techniques

Data selection is carried out by purposive sampling, which is the deliberate selection of samples based on certain considerations relevant to the research objectives. The purposive sampling criteria in this study are set operationally as follows:

1. Activity Level
Content or accounts are selected if they show consistent activities in discussing the soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu*, such as:
 - a. Upload soap opera-related content more than once,
 - b. Actively participate in comments or online discussions,
 - c. Generate follow-up responses (reply, duet, stitch, or retweet).
2. Engagement Level
Data is prioritized from uploads that have a high engagement rate, which is measured qualitatively through:
 - a. A lot of comments or replies,
 - b. The intensity of discussions between users,
 - c. There is emotional interaction such as support for characters, empathy for story conflicts, or debates about plot and characters.
3. Content Relevance
The selected content must be directly related to:
 - a. Storylines, characters, or conflicts in *Love as Deep as Longing*,
 - b. The moral message, the value of love, the struggle of life, or the family dynamics shown,
 - c. Audience perception and interpretation of the show.

Comments or uploads that are spammy, irrelevant, or not directly related to soap operas are excluded from the analysis.

Content Analysis Techniques and Data Coding Process

Data analysis was carried out using qualitative content analysis, which aims to identify patterns of meaning, themes, and tendencies of audience responses. The analysis process is carried out through several systematic stages, namely:

1. Data Reduction
Raw data in the form of comments and uploads were selected based on purposive sampling criteria to ensure the relevance and depth of information.
2. Coding (Coding Data)
The selected data is then coded into thematic categories arranged based on the theoretical framework of Uses and Gratifications, including:

- a. Affective needs (emotional expression, empathy, attachment to character),
 - b. The need for social integration (discussions, interaction between fans, community building),
 - c. Cognitive needs (story interpretation, character analysis, reflection of moral messages),
 - d. The need for escapism (escape from reality, entertainment, release of emotions).
3. Categorization and Interpretation
- Each comment or post is analyzed to see the tendency of the theme, the form of interaction, and the meaning contained in it. The results of the categorization were then interpreted to understand the pattern of audience engagement and the relationship between soap opera shows and the audience's digital activities.

Purpose of Analysis

Through this content analysis and social media observation technique, the research is expected to be able to describe:

- a. Audience digital participation patterns,
- b. Forms of emotional and social attachment of the audience,
- c. The audience's perception of the values and moral messages conveyed in the soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu*.

This approach allows researchers to understand soap operas not only as media texts, but also as social experiences that are actively negotiated by audiences in digital spaces.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Key Findings

Overview of Research Objects

The soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* is an Indonesian television series produced by SinemArt which premiered on August 2, 2025 on SCTV (Surya Citra Television). This soap opera is directed by Akbar Bhakti and stars Esta Pramanita, Farhan Rasyid, Immanuel Caesar Hito, Danna Salsabilla, and a number of other young actors and actresses. As one of SCTV's flagship shows, *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* has managed to attract the attention of teenagers to adults, which can be seen from the high intensity of discussions and audience responses on various social media platforms.

The observation results show that the audience not only follows this soap opera as entertainment, but also shows active involvement through commentary, discussion, and digital content production related to the storyline, characters, and messages conveyed.

Finding 1: The Appeal of Young Actors and Actresses

The results of observations of audience comments and discussions on social media show that the presence of young actors and actresses is one of the main attractions of the soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu*. The main players such as Esta Pramanita, Farhan Rasyid, Immanuel Caesar Hito, and Danna Salsabilla are often referred to by the audience as figures who are able to represent the characters strongly and emotionally.

Esta Pramanita's performance as Aluna received the most attention, with many comments assessing her acting as natural, expressive, and able to evoke the audience's emotions. Some viewers called Aluna's character a figure who "reinforces" and "depicts the reality of life", thus giving rise to an intense sense of emotional closeness.

Finding 2: Storylines That Relate to the Lives of the Younger Generation

The results of the content analysis show that the audience considers the storyline of *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* to be relevant to the lives of the younger generation, especially Gen Z. Narratives that raise love conflicts, emotional dilemmas, social pressure, and family

problems are the most frequently discussed topics in the comment column and online discussions.

The characters of Aluna, Ezra, Felicia, and Galaxy are perceived as diverse and realistic representations of personalities. Love triangle conflicts and issues of social inequality and life struggles are often associated by the audience with their personal experiences, which is reflected in the reflective and empathetic commentary.

Finding 3: The Role of Soundtracks in Strengthening Audience Emotions

Data shows that the soundtrack of the soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* is an important element in building a viewing experience. The audience actively comments on the songs used in soap operas, both in terms of lyrics, atmosphere, and their relationship to certain scenes.

The involvement of the main players as the performers of the theme song is also a concern for the audience and is often cited as a factor that strengthens the personal and emotional impression of the story. The soundtrack is considered to be able to deepen the emotional atmosphere and strengthen the meaning of the scenes shown.

Finding 4: The Construction of Hype and Social Media Activity

The observation results show that *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* builds high popularity through consistent social media activity on Instagram, TikTok, Twitter (X), and Facebook. The official soap opera and SCTV accounts regularly upload promotional content, episode trailers, favorite character polls, and behind-the-scenes content.

The content triggered a high response from viewers in the form of comments, re-uploads, and discussions between users. This activity forms an active and continuous interaction space outside of television airtime.

Finding 5: Player Interaction with Audience

Other findings showed that soap opera performers were actively engaged in interacting with audiences through social media. These interactions include reply comments, live sessions, personal uploads related to soap operas, and behind-the-scenes content.

This interaction encourages the formation of various fanbase accounts and fan communities that actively discuss and share viewing experiences. The audience shows a sense of emotional closeness not only to the story, but also to the cast of the soap opera.

Data Analysis With Uses And Gratification Theory

In the perspective of Uses and Gratifications (U&G), audiences are seen as active individuals who consciously choose and use media to meet specific needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch). The findings of this study show that the engagement of *the audience of Cinta Sedalam Rindu* does not stop at the consumption of television shows, but extends to digital participation that reflects the form of meeting U&G's needs in the context of convergent media.

Fulfillment of Cognitive Needs

Findings regarding the audience's interest in storylines and social conflicts show that this soap opera serves as a source of social and emotional understanding. The audience not only follows the story, but also interprets the meaning behind love conflicts, family relationships, and life stresses. This affirms the findings of cutting-edge research that states that entertainment content now serves as a space for social reflection and emotional learning for young audiences (Ichwan & Irawan, 2022).

Fulfillment of Affective Needs

The audience's emotional attachment to the characters, the actors' acting, and the soundtrack shows the strong fulfillment of affective needs. Intense emotional experiences are amplified by the music and performances of the actors, who create what is referred to as *Emotional immersion* in contemporary digital media studies (Haqqi, 2024). Thus, *Love as Deep as Longing* Not only is it entertaining, but it also provides a space for emotional catharsis for its audience.

Personal Identity and Self-Reflection

The audience's identification of the characters of Aluna, Ezra, and other characters shows that this soap opera functions as a medium for the formation and reflection of personal identity. These findings expand on the classic U&G concept by showing that audience identities are not only built through media consumption, but also through collective discussions and narratives on social media, as confirmed in a recent study on *identity-based media engagement* (Andrianto, 2018).

Social Integration as a New Form of Gratification

One of the important contributions of this research is the finding that the social integration of audiences occurs strongly through social media. Discussions, polls, fanbases, and interactions with players show that the need for social integration within U&G is undergoing a transformation in the digital age. Social integration is no longer limited to interpersonal conversations, but evolves into **Participatory Online Community**, as described in the recent literature on *Networked Fandom* and *participatory culture* (Bouchra et al., 2024).

Escapism

Findings regarding the use of soap operas as a means of entertainment and escape from routine show that *Love as Deep as Longing* fulfills the function of escapism. However, this escapism is active, as the audience not only "escapes" through the spectacle, but also extends the experience through digital interaction. This is in line with recent research that calls digital escapism as *Active Escapism*, where audiences engage creatively and socially (Andrianto, 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* is actively used by the audience to meet various media needs as described in the Theory of Uses and Gratifications, especially cognitive needs, affective, personal identity, social integration, and escapism. This utilization does not stop at the consumption of television shows, but continues to the digital space through interaction activities on social media.

Audience interaction on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook shows that social media serves as an advanced space to deepen the viewing experience, strengthen emotional attachment, and build social relationships based on shared interest in soap operas. Thus, the soap opera *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* operates as a convergent and participatory media experience, not just linear entertainment.

Scientifically, these findings contribute to expanding the application of Uses and Gratifications Theory in the context of converged media, by showing that meeting the needs of audiences—especially social integration—is now taking place through the practice of digital communities and online participation. This research emphasizes that soap operas in the digital era have a strategic role as a space for the formation of meaning, identity, and social relations of audiences, so it is relevant to be studied not only as a media text, but also as a cross-platform cultural communication phenomenon.

Advice

1. For Manufacturers and Production Houses
Soap opera producers, especially SinemArt and SCTV, are expected to continue to use social media as an interactive means to strengthen relationships with audiences. Strategies such as behind-the-scenes content, live interaction, and polling favorite characters can be effective ways to maintain engagement and create a loyal fan community. In addition, producers need to consider audience input in the development of storylines so that shows remain relevant to the social and emotional dynamics of the younger generation.
2. For Subsequent Writers and Researchers
Subsequent research is recommended to use a quantitative approach or mixed methods to obtain a deeper picture of the relationship between audience motivation and their level of engagement on social media. Comparative analysis between soap operas or digital platforms can also provide new insights into media consumption patterns among Generation Z and millennials.
3. For the Audience and the Community
Viewers are expected to use soap operas as a medium of social reflection, not just entertainment. The moral and emotional values displayed in *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* can be used as learning material to understand the dynamics of human relationships, empathy, and sincerity in real life.
4. On behalf of Academics and Media Observers
Educational institutions and researchers in the field of communication and popular culture can use the phenomenon of *Cinta Sedalam Rindu* as an example of media representation that builds audience participation in the digital era. Further studies of the interaction between entertainment media and the social identity of audiences can enrich the literature in the study of modern mass communication.

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