

Practice Commodification of Homeless Media in Content Instagram @Infopku and @Pkuline as Digital Sublime

Received: 07-06-2026 Revised: 03-09-2026 Accepted: 06-09-2026

DOI: 10.29240/jdk.v11i2.17206

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Keywords: Homeless Media;
Commodification; Digital
Sublime

ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study will analyze the commodification practices of content, audiences, and workers on the @infopku and @pkuline. As a new entity in the information media landscape, homeless media is not immune to practices of commodification, such as the dramatization of content, selling follower data and the capitalization of journalists' labor.

Method – This qualitative study used Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis method to analyze a content uploaded by @infopku and @pkuline by focusing on text analysis, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. Interviews were conducted with the @infopku and @pkuline account owner and the Press Council to support data enrichment.

Findings – The results show that @infopku and @pkuline commodifies content by prioritizing elements of dramatization and simplification. Audiences are commodified by collecting follower data, such as the age and gender of the account's followers, and then offering it to clients. The commodification of workers was revealed when the @infopku and @pkuline account republished journalists' work in the media without compensation. The account owner also engaged in self-commodification of workers by providing content for the Instagram platform for free, without receiving any incentives.

Cite this article:: Sihaloho, F., Yasir, & Yesicha, C. (2026). Practice Commodification of Homeless Media in Content Instagram @Infopku and @Pkuline as Digital Sublime. Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi, 11(2), 420–434. <https://doi.org/10.29240/jdk.v11i2.17206>

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INTRODUCTION

The public was shocked by the statement by the Head of the Government Communications Agency of the Republic of Indonesia (Bakom RI), Muhammad Qodari, who claimed to have collaborated with more than 35 homeless media accounts. However, the statement, released on May 6, 2026, received responses from impersonated accounts such as @bapak2id, @NgomonginUang, @USSFeeds, @PandemicTalks, and others. They denied it and claimed to have never met with Bakom. Given this phenomenon, the public sought to learn

more about homeless media, which may be a new and unfamiliar term (Akbar, 2026). Based on Google search records from May 6 to 14, 2026, the keyword "homeless media" experienced a breakout, with search volume increasing by up to 5,000 percent. Generally, searches related to what homeless media is (Google, 2026)

Marconi, (Marconi, 2015) published an article titled "The Rise of Homeless Media," explaining the background to the emergence of these accounts. It stated that advances in internet technology have opened up new opportunities for developing information channels. The monetization offered by platforms has also encouraged many people to distribute various information through personal accounts and new accounts created under names similar to those of press organizations. In addition, the number of internet users and the duration of gadget use also increase every year (We Are Social, 2024). Homeless media accounts in Indonesia are managed by individuals or small groups and focus on local events (Riyanto, 2024). Generally, homeless media sources draw on various conventional media outlets and rework their content into more engaging formats, such as infographics and audiovisuals (Alexander & Junaidi, 2022). Furthermore, the uploaded content also originates from netizens who submit various information in the form of photos, videos, and text. This citizen journalism activity makes homeless media more popular because it can convey news directly from the location, making it more authentic and factual (Mardani et al., 2022)

Homeless, when translated, means having no home or residence. Home, in this sense, refers to media that lack an organizational structure and legal standing to govern their practices. This differs from press institutions, which are required to have a legal entity under Law Number 40 of 1999 concerning the press. Under this legal umbrella, lawsuits against the press cannot be pursued through criminal proceedings but through the Press Law mechanism. Homeless media, which fall outside this legal framework, raises the question: are they part of the press that carries out journalistic work even though they are not yet legally incorporated? The two largest professional organizations of journalists in Indonesia have differing views. The Indonesian Journalists Association (PWI) believes that homeless media need to be verified by the Press Council. In contrast, the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) believes that such verification will only limit press freedom and freedom of expression (Pratopo, 2018). Regarding these two opinions, this study will provide a deeper understanding of the complexity of homeless media.

Homeless media has become a new entity, a preferred information channel by the public. In addition to providing engaging content, these accounts serve as tools for marginalized groups to express their opinions and gain support for an issue (Robbani et al., 2025). Meanwhile, in mainstream media, conveying opinions is quite complicated due to the need for editorial space and writing standards. Therefore, homeless media is believed to be an alternative space for increasing information democratization, public engagement, and social change (Bambang Mudjiyanto et al., 2025). Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier in Fuchs (2012) detailed the concept of alternative media in the social media era. First, content production involves community members. In practice, homeless media often reshapes content about events submitted by their followers. Second, the discourse they construct is non-dominant and distinct from official media. In homeless media, this is evident in the variety of topics covered about local events that fall outside official media's reach. Third, alternative media is believed to be a counter-hegemonic medium that exists between state-owned media and media owned by large corporations. In this section, homeless media serves as a platform for the public to voice their grievances about public

facilities that receive less attention from mainstream media. Fourth, alternative media is viewed as rhizomatic, referring to the connection between protest groups and social movements, thus expanding the movement's reach. In homeless media, this concept is reflected in posts by homeless media accounts that reposted the 17+8 People's Demands, thereby making it a national issue.

Several similar studies have identified homeless media as a new media entity offering several advantages over conventional media. Candra & Chaerowati (2026), in their article Homeless Media and the Transformation of the Local Information Ecosystem in the Digital Era, highlighted the @infobandungkota account. This study concluded that homeless media is no longer an alternative but surpasses conventional media because it is more flexible and lacks an editorial office, resulting in faster, more accessible information for local communities. Meanwhile, Apriliyanti et al (2024) concluded that citizen journalism activities republished by homeless media serve as initial data for journalists from mainstream media in designing coverage. At this stage, journalists function as verifiers of an event. In Pekanbaru City, homeless media has mushroomed and become a more popular information channel than mainstream social media accounts. For example, the Instagram account @infopku has more than 455,000 followers. Meanwhile, official local media such as Riau Pos, Cakaplah, and Riau Online have 97,000, 58,000, and 61,000 followers, respectively (data as of May 24, 2026). The emergence of many new accounts on social media is also driven by the shift in promotional media for various businesses, both small and large scale, which feel the positive impact when advertising on social media (Safitri & Harahap, 2025)

The narrative of homeless media, which many articles claim is an alternative medium offering greater convenience and freedom than conventional media, deserves criticism. Based on research conducted by researchers using open scientific data sources such as *PublishPerish*, *Google Scholar*, and *Claude.ai*, searches spanning the past 10 years for the keyword "homeless media" reveal that research on the topic is relatively unknown. However, the research found that homeless media is still generally viewed as a new media entity that offers several advantages to the public in accessing information. This research will present a new perspective on the emergence of homeless media critically by examining the commodification practices carried out. Therefore, Mosco's perspective on the digital sublime is crucial to this research, enriching the researcher's perspective. As Mosco explained, advances in information technology are often framed by the promise of a new, more democratic, open society free from old limitations. However, in practice, the opposite is true.

"Digitization expands the commodification of content by extending opportunities to measure and monitor, package, and repackage entertainment and information" (Mosco, 2009, p. 156).

The quote above explains that digitalization has expanded the practice of commodification, which is the process by which something previously valued as a utility becomes an economic commodity. It means that, with digitalization, commodification practices become more measurable and specific, as social media algorithms can present detailed audience data such as age and location. This phenomenon then encouraged many capital owners to capitalize on this new potential in the early 2000s (Sudibyo, 2019). While in the era of traditional media such as television, the data traded focused only on viewership or ratings, in the internet era, audiences are commodified more specifically, including user age, habits, and location (Fuchs, 2012). This data serves as a bargaining chip for homeless media accounts when establishing

business partnerships.

This research will examine the practice of homeless media using the political economy of communication theory developed by Mosco (2009). This theory provides a framework for studying the mechanisms of communication, audience patterns, and how media transforms attention into a commodity with economic value in the digital era (Hanifah et al., 2021). There are three concepts in this theory: first, commodification, which addresses the process of changing use value into bargaining value; second, spatialization, which analyzes media expansion efforts by adding new networks; and third, structuration, which concerns the process of change carried out by social agents, thus becoming servants of media owners (Muslikhin et al., 2021). Commodification is divided into three parts: content commodification, which involves transforming information into valuable products; audience commodification, which treats audiences as commodity objects; and worker commodification, which involves exploiting workers through low wages.

This research only focuses on the concept of commodification because this concept is directly related to analyzing the practice of shifting use value, in this case, information, into something of bargaining value. The concept of commodification is also relevant to the novelty this research offers: homeless media, in practice, cannot be separated from the logic of the digital economy. Meanwhile, the concepts of spatialization and structuration focus more on the study of media expansion efforts through ownership conglomeration, organizational relations, and the social dynamics surrounding the media. Furthermore, homeless media are generally still operated individually without editorial organizations or investors supporting their capital for business expansion.

The homeless media accounts examined in this research are @infopku and @pkuline. Several considerations informed this selection, including @infopku's operations since 2012 and its growth to over 400,000 followers. Meanwhile, @pkuline is managed by an active journalist, which enriches the research analysis with their information and practices. Two pieces of content from each account will be analyzed using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to identify practices of commodification of content, audiences, and workers.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative study with a critical paradigm. A critical approach in communication studies examines the true meaning behind discourse because humans are often unaware that they have been colonized by the media and directed towards dehumanization ((Yasir, 2017). Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis is a research method that presents a comprehensive framework for dismantling discourse by analyzing the relationships among language structure, style, and meaning that interact to form a particular message (Fairclough, 2003). The study included a content types on the Instagram account @infopku and @pkuline is about Riau Governor Abdul Wahid being caught in a KPK O'TT. The topic was chosen because the news has high value, considering Abdul Wahid is the fourth Riau Governor arrested by the KPK. The owner of the @infopku account, Muhammad Zaki (informant 1), owner @pkuline, Delvi Candra (informant 2) and Abdul Manan (informant 3) of the Press Council's Legal and Legislation Commission were also interviewed to support data collection.

Fairclough's AWK also served as a data analysis tool, consisting of three parts. The first dimension is text, such as speech, writing, images, or a combination of the three. This data

includes captions, visual content, word choice, symbols, and other forms of representation used in presenting information. Furthermore, in the discursive practice dimension, the data analysis focused on the content production and distribution process, including message construction patterns, information dissemination strategies, and forms of media interaction with digital audiences. Furthermore, in the social practice dimension, data analysis was linked to the social, economic, cultural, and ideological conditions underlying the production of the content (Durmaz & Yoğun, 2022). Data in this dimension were also obtained through interviews. The data analysis stages included classification, organization, processing, and summarization of data to answer the research questions.

The data sources for this research were divided into two parts. Primary data consists of the researcher's observations of an activity while the data is still raw and unprocessed (Sulung, 2024). In the digital era, observing social media content refers to collecting site data from text, photos, graphics, audiovisuals, music, and so on (Kozinets in Dwiarsianti (2022). Primary data for this study were also collected through interviews with informants. Interviews are necessary to obtain additional information about the research that cannot be obtained through the observation process (Sari et al., 2025). Secondary data come from sources such as articles in national and international journals, academic manuscripts, previous research, and studies related to the press and social media. Data validity testing was not included in this study because it is intended primarily for research that focuses on participants' objective experiences, as explored through interviews and social interactions (Susanto et al., 2023). Meanwhile, Fairclough's AWK approach prioritizes depth of interpretation, consistency of text analysis, and the relationship between the discourse inherent in the text and its social context (Riyanti, 2023).

Table 1. Data Analyst Unit

Account	Content Post Title and Date	Content Screenshot	URL Content
@infopku	KPK OTT Pejabat Riau, Pemprov: Gubernur Hanya Dimintai Keterangan (3 November 2025)		https://acesse.one/o72ookw
@pkuline	Soal Operasi Tangkap Tangan KPK di Riau, Ini Kata UAS (3 November 2025)		https://acesse.one/6bdqgl0

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher will present the results of the analysis based on observations and interviews with informants to answer the research questions. Content from @infopku and @pkuline will be analyzed using Fairclough's AWK approach, then discussed in the next step.

Results

The @infopku account posted news of the arrest of Riau Governor Abdul Wahid by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in November 2025. From various official media reports, @infopku selected news from Riauonline.co.id to repurpose. The news was shared via a photo showing Abdul Wahid leading a meeting. The photo featured the caption "KPK Stings Riau Official, Provincial Government: Governor only asked for Information." The sub-clause of the title, "KPK Stings Riau Official," reflects the facts. However, when combined with the sub-clause "Provincial Government: Governor Only Asked for Information," the meaning is no longer neutral. The phrase "only asked for information" can be assumed to be an attempt to obscure Governor Abdul Wahid's involvement, given that the KPK had not yet officially released his status.

The content is also packaged with elements of dramatization. This is evident from the use of the term "OTT," which appears more than twice, yet there is no in-depth explanation of what OTT is or its requirements. This is because an OTT can be carried out only by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) if an arrest occurs during a transaction accompanied by physical evidence, such as cash. However, this content is packaged simply for quick public consumption without providing complete context

Elements of dramatization are also found in the narrative in the post's caption. For example, the sentence "Famous Riau cleric Ustaz Abdul Somad (UAS) also issued a rebuttal regarding the sting operation (OTT) of Governor Abdul Wahid." The use of the term "famous cleric" is an attempt by the text to attract the audience's attention because UAS has an emotional closeness to the Riau community. Furthermore, simplification is also an approach the account uses to commodify information. For example, there is no explanation of the OTT or UAS's capacity in the text, which makes his statement worthy of quotation. Consequently, the audience's understanding is only built through the battle of narrative claims between actors in the text, while explanations of the context and legal process are not given space.

The @pkuline account also did something similar. Taking text from cakaplah.com, this content featured a video explaining UAS. However, the content did not explain UAS's capacity. The choice of UAS was not without reason; he is a popular cleric among the Riau community, so his statement would be taken as truthful. The shared text contains numerous diction and phrases that emphasize dramatic aspects. For example, the opening sentence of the paragraph reads, "The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) secured 10 people in a sting operation (OTT)." The choice of the words "secured" and "10 people" is an attempt by the text producer to convey that a serious incident has occurred. Furthermore, the detail of six cars in the sentence, "Monitoring in the field on Monday evening, around six cars left the location," also reinforces the impression of an arrest scene. Non-substantive information is also seen in the description of gestures in the sentence, "He even had time to throw a smile at journalists who had been waiting at the location." The text's strategy, packaged with a dramatic narrative above, shows that the producer's orientation is to focus public attention on the legal incident at hand. In conclusion, information is no longer seen as an instrument for public enlightenment in consuming an event, but as something valuable.

The shared text is also simplified, omitting the legal aspects of the incident. The narrative tends to focus solely on whether Riau Governor Abdul Wahid was involved in the sting operation. In fact, the text leads readers to believe that Abdul Wahid was not involved, as seen

in UAS's sentence, "The correct news is that the Head of the PUPR Office and the Head of the OTT Technical Implementation Unit (UPI), the Governor of Riau, were questioned. That is the truth." The use of the word "correct" twice in one sentence simplifies the event by framing it solely as a choice between right and wrong.

In both posts, the comments section was filled with a variety of netizen opinions, both supportive and critical. However, what has been highlighted is the account owners' tendency to be passive in responding to their followers' responses. This means the comment section is left open to a free-for-all, often unrelated to the point, to the point of slander and hate speech. This is despite Instagram's ability to hide and delete comments when negative interactions occur. This neglect positions the audience not as a subject to be protected, but as a commodity to increase the reach of posts. The accumulated comments indirectly fuel the account's performance.

Figure 1. Audience Comments on @infopku Content

No	Account	Comments	Interpretation
1	@sucialvio	So what does this mean? He was caught in a sting operation alongside nine others, and yet he claims to have been completely unaware of any cash transactions? Is this for real?"	Netizens are confused because the information posted is unclear. In this context, followers are viewed merely as a commodity in the race for posting speed
2	@longzain93	"That fast? No way. At the very least, they should interrogate those people first before summoning him. But this? It happened all at once."	Netizens appear skeptical and doubtful regarding the information shared by the account.
3	@kikio285	"Previous governors scored a hat-trick, and this one is the fastest. Riau governors always have achievements."	Satirical comments alluding to the Riau Governor frequently getting entangled in corruption cases.

Figure 2. Audience Comments on @pkuline Content

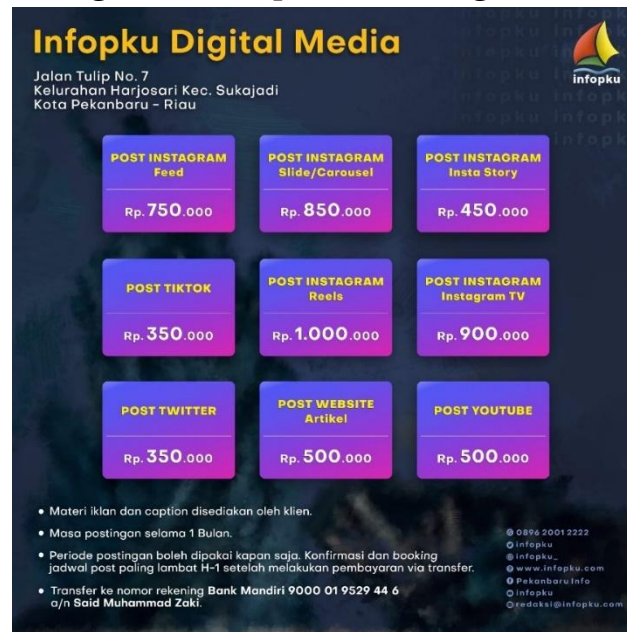
No	Account	Comments	Interpretation
1	@ndy21	Aren't you ashamed, UAS? He was caught, he was already handcuffed	Netizens questioned the involvement of UAS as a religious figure in commenting on the news of Abdul Wahid's arrest.
	@aldosagala18	Don't teach hate speech, making your own perception as if your words are completely right, oh God ustadz	
	@jizic.anga	What is wrong with you ustadz... As if you are defending someone who is clearly in the wrong	

Audiences are no longer seen as passive recipients of the latest information. Instead, they have become valuable commodities that can be traded with business owners. This audience data then becomes a consideration for capital owners in supporting the sustainability of their businesses. In this transactional process, the audience receives no economic benefit. While account owners benefit from the collaboration, advertisers' needs to promote their services and products can be better met.

"Before collaborating, advertisers will request data on our account's followers, such as gender, age, and geographic location," (interview with Zaki, 8 April 2026)

"Advertisers typically request a screenshot of the account's insights data, showing the gender, age, and geographic location of the followers," (interview with Delvi, 22 April 2026)

Figure 3. @infopku Advertising Rates



The poster for Infopku Digital Media lists advertising rates for various platforms. It includes contact information and terms of service.

Platform	Rate (Rp.)
POST INSTAGRAM Feed	750.000
POST INSTAGRAM Slide/Carousel	850.000
POST INSTAGRAM Insta Story	450.000
POST TIKTOK	350.000
POST INSTAGRAM Reels	1.000.000
POST INSTAGRAM Instagram TV	900.000
POST TWITTER	350.000
POST WEBSITE Artikel	500.000
POST YOUTUBE	500.000

Infopku Digital Media
Jalan Tulip No. 7
Kelurahan Harjosari Kec. Sukajadi
Kota Pekanbaru - Riau

- Materi iklan dan caption disediakan oleh klien.
- Masa postingan selama 1 Bulan.
- Periode postingan boleh dipakai kapan saja. Konfirmasi dan booking jadwal post paling lambat H-1 setelah melakukan pembayaran via transfer.
- Transfer ke nomor rekening Bank Mandiri 9000 01 9529 44 6 a/n Said Muhammad Zaki.

☎ 0896 2001222
@infopku
www.infopku.com
Pekanbaru Info
infopku
gedaksi@infopku.com

The rates charged by the @infopku account are much higher than those charged by the @pkuline account. This disparity in rates is due to the size of the audiences of both accounts and their follower engagement, which can be measured through Instagram's insights feature. The number of followers and the intensity of audience interaction are what determine an account's value in today's digital ecosystem.

“The rate is IDR 200,000 per post, though that figure can fluctuate based on negotiations with the advertiser. I don't feel comfortable setting a high price yet, as I realize my follower count is still in the tens of thousands. It's a different story for those with hundreds of thousands of followers; they usually charge upwards of IDR 500,000 per post,” (interview with Delvi, 22 April 2026)

The explanation above depicts the audience as a crucial economic asset and a bargaining chip. Audience engagement has been converted into tradable economic value. Therefore, in this context, the audience is considered to be free digital labor, as they gain no economic benefit from their activities.

For the Dewan Pers, homeless media falls outside the legal framework of the press and therefore has distinct characteristics. The Press Council views social media accounts, such as homeless media and influencers, as a new platform for advertisers, both government and private, because their content is more engaging and has a broader reach.

“Advertisers—let's say, the government—might prefer "homeless media" over conventional media because such outlets will simply publish the data they are given without verification. Take, for instance, claims of declining poverty figures; if the press received this information, they would cross-check the data against facts on the ground,” (interview with Abdul Manan, 14 Mei 2026)

Informant 3 also stated that the Dewan Pers will hold a meeting with the Indonesian Communications Agency (Bakom RI) to discuss the phenomenon of homeless media. One of the topics to be discussed is how the government will define homeless media and further regulate

it.

In practice, homeless media often recycle various news stories from conventional media. This is evident in their habit of citing the source of the quoted text. For example, the @infopku account takes content from riaonline.co.id. Indirectly, the @infopku account has piggybacked on riaonline.co.id workers freely and without consequence. On the other hand, the @infopku account manager has also been unknowingly exploited by the platform, as Instagram provides no compensation beyond digital infrastructure. In this context, the account owner has become an "unpaid worker" because the burden of production and creativity falls on them. Meanwhile, the platform can freely use the account owner's data and work results as bargaining chips with advertisers.

As it has evolved, the @infopku account has also partnered with journalists working for conventional media outlets. These journalists act as shadow workers for @infopku, receiving mutually agreed-upon wages and without social security. This is because coverage of major events is typically accessible only to journalists with press cards from official media outlets.

"For the past few years, we have also been collaborating with several journalists from mainstream media outlets. We pay them a monthly salary for content covering local events that are difficult for us to access. Typically, they submit news material in the form of text and video," (interview with Zaki, 8 April 2026)

Meanwhile, @pkuline also did something similar, namely, taking text from conventional media. However, what is interesting is that the owner of the @pkuline account created the news article himself, as he is an editor at cakaplah.com. This explanation is evident in the editor's name embedded at the end of the news text uploaded to the cakaplah.com website. This practice shows that, as an individual, he has commodified himself into two elements. First, cakaplah.com obtained free branding opportunities through an account managed by its employees. Second, he voluntarily worked on the platform without receiving any compensation. This shows that this individual has engaged in the practice of commodification, both consciously and unconsciously.

"The leadership at Cakaplah is aware that I manage the @pkuline account. There is no issue, provided I prioritize my work as an editor at Cakaplah. The same applies to the Cakaplah content that I repost on @pkuline," (interview with Delvi, 22 April 2026)

Table 2. Commodification Analysis Results

Commodification Practices	Findings	Explanation
Commodification of Content	Dramatization	Information is packaged emotionally to elicit a reader's reaction, even though the text shared is not relevant to the actual context.
	Found in the use of sensationalist diction such as <i>ulama kondang, membantu, senyum, Tidak ada, aman</i>	
	Simplification	Complex events, such as legal cases, are simplified and replaced with information that emphasizes conflict, emotion, or dramatization rather than comprehensive and balanced legal explanations. The same applies to content that emphasizes baseless claims.
	Audience as a commodity	Audience size and audience

Commodification of Audience	The comment section becomes an arena for free and wild opinions, with the account owner not attempting to enlighten or provide explanations.	reactions become primary commodities because they can be sold to advertisers.
	Audience as digital data The number of followers, reach, and characteristics of followers are used as standards in determining advertising partnership pricing.	Audience profiles, such as age and location, are digital assets with economic value
	Audiences as free labor Audiences gain nothing economically	Through sensational and emotional content, audience reactions fuel homeless media accounts, boosting their performance
Commodification of Workers	Exploitation of Journalists' Work No Compensation for Journalists Who Produce content	Homeless Media content originates from journalists' reporting published by their respective media outlets. This fabrication process provides no compensation to the journalists themselves or the companies where the work is published.
	Low wages Paid for one piece of content without social security	Journalists are offered collaboration on content production at low wages, without agreement or social security.
	Self-Commodification Never receiving incentives or skill development from the platform	Homeless media account holders are also unknowingly commodified by the platform without receiving any compensation. Furthermore, their work is also vulnerable to legal entanglements.

Discussion

In the digital age, anyone feels they can become an information producer through social media, even without an adequate background or knowledge. As a result, the information distributed is no longer aimed at educating readers but is instead packaged sensationally to be friendly to platform algorithms (Luhukay & Rusadi, 2023). It is therefore not surprising that many false claims and hoaxes are found, which can lead to disinformation, slander, and hatred (DFK). Referring to the previously presented research findings, homeless media commodifies content through two strategies: dramatization and simplification.

Dramatization is an attempt to narrate an ordinary event in an emotionally charged way. Alternatively, conversely, emphasizing emotional aspects rather than providing a comprehensive understanding of a complex event. Dai et al (2026) discuss clickbait headline strategies that can arouse readers' curiosity through decontextualization. This involves separating the context from

the facts to make them easier for readers to understand, then repackaging them more engagingly. The article concludes that content that emphasizes clickbait can feel manipulative because it plays on readers' surprise to arouse curiosity instantly.

The next practice of content commodification is simplification. In the context of homeless media, the content studied has been simplified, such as the packaging of legal events, but without providing a deeper analysis or knowledge of the law itself. This practice is not without reason, because in general, account owners do not have a background in journalism, and they understand that writing and presentation styles on social media do not necessarily comply with journalistic code of ethics standards because they are on different platforms (Puspitoningrum, 2025). On the one hand, simplification can increase reader accessibility or knowledge in the short term. However, in the long term, it will reduce critical thinking, making it difficult to distinguish between real and fake information (Khawar & Boukes, 2025). For example, the simplification of news coverage of Ustadz Abdul Somad's statement on the arrest of Riau Governor Abdul Wahid. Both accounts, @infopku and @pkuline, did not explain UAS's capacity in detail, making his statement unsuitable for quoting and public knowledge. Furthermore, there was no explanation regarding the legal requirement that the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) must inform the public within 24 hours of any operation. As a result of this simplification, the comments section of posts has become an arena for citizens to express their opinions wildly, which can even lead to hate speech.

Fuchs (2012) explains that, in the digital era, audience commodification practices are easier to implement due to the internet. In traditional media, audience data was traded to advertisers, such as ratings and viewership for a single show. In the internet era, however, the audience data that can be capitalized on is more diverse, specific, and extensive. The commodification of audiences in the social media era is also increasingly widespread, carried out not only by platforms but also by platform users with large followings. In the context of this research, audiences are sold twice within the Instagram ecosystem: first by Homeless Media and second by Instagram.

The phenomenon of audience commodification in the digital age is referred to as the attention economy. Davenport and Beck (2001) explain that human attention has become a scarce commodity in the digital age. Media, platforms, governments, and even the private sector are competing to capture audiences' attention through various strategies. For example, information is packaged in a way that emphasizes drama and sensation, making it algorithm-friendly. Therefore, today's civilization is more accurately described as the attention economy rather than the information economy. This means that digital media and its developments no longer view information as something society needs, but rather as something that can be capitalized on. Ultimately, the process of producing and distributing information in the digital era is no longer oriented towards public interest, but rather towards generating a lot of interaction (Suciati & Fauziah, 2020). Furthermore, the development of media in the digital era has also been exploited by political actors to gain support. For example, the obscuring of facts about President Prabowo's past since his run in the 2014 election has led to the development of a new persona suited to the needs of contemporary Indonesian politics (Meilandi, 2025). Therefore, the public needs to critically examine dramatization and simplification in the media to avoid being misled by a deliberately polished image.

In today's digital economic ecosystem, homeless media account holders can also be

positioned as "victims." In addition to the government's lack of attention in regulating their presence, the Instagram platform also plays a crucial role. Instagram does not value its work economically in the digital space. Interviews with the owners of both accounts revealed that they had never received any training or incentives from the platform. Instead, they were forced to continue working and adapt to algorithm changes if they wanted high visibility. Terranova (2000) refers to this practice as the concept of free digital labor. This concept attempts to explain that the digital space is often perceived as a free platform where anyone can create content, write comments, and share information voluntarily, without payment. However, in practice, these activities are capitalized by digital companies as data to be sold as offerings, with the profits reaped solely by the companies themselves (Novianto., 2017)

Sudibyo (2019) criticized the use of the term "social" in the context of social media, suggesting that platforms like Instagram are designed for the benefit of the public. The notion of social media as a "free highway" for anyone needs to be reconsidered, as in practice, it has economic value and is no longer a social activity. For example, Ruby (2024) report states that Instagram advertising revenue has reportedly continued to increase, particularly from 2020 to 2024, with an increase of up to 150 percent. In the context of this research, the surge in revenue is assumed to originate from the activities of homeless media account holders and audiences who become "free workers." Therefore, from a digital sublime perspective, it is the social and free narrative that policymakers should further examine to protect the public. This way, the narrative of social media, perceived as a new economic opportunity, no longer serves as a shared mechanism for normalizing ongoing exploitative practices.

Based on the discussion above, the researcher concludes that the commodification practices of content, audiences, and workers are intertwined. Content commodification is carried out through strategies of dramatization and information simplification to reach a wider audience. The greater the interaction generated, the greater the economic opportunities. This commodification process is facilitated by the absence of legal regulations governing the copyright of journalists' works, which account owners freely capitalize on. In this study, audiences are also viewed as free laborers because their every reaction is a primary commodity for the account's survival.

Meanwhile, Instagram benefits the most. This is because the Homeless Media account owner indirectly supports their businesses without requiring any compensation. The audience is then concluded to be the most disadvantaged party because they are commodified in layers without deriving any economic benefit. They are turned into digital laborers by Instagram and Homeless Media.

CONCLUSION

Homeless media, or media without a home, operates on various social media platforms for free. Its emergence was considered an alternative medium because it lacked an editorial structure, leading to a perception of greater freedom to present diverse events than conventional media. However, over time, homeless media has become a new arena for the digital economy, ready for use by capitalists and those in power. Starting from capitalizing on information, homeless media has also commodified audiences and workers.

Homeless media commodifies content by prioritizing elements of dramatization and simplification. The information packaged is no longer oriented toward comprehensiveness, but

rather toward attracting a wider audience and achieving relevance with the platform's algorithm. The ultimate goal of this process is to increase the account's visibility and, thus, its economic value. The greater the reach of content, the greater the audience's chances of reacting, such as following, commenting, or re-sharing. This increases the diversity of audience data, which can be used as a bargaining chip for advertisers. The economic value gained is also substantial, as there are no costs to workers, since the content generated is derived from official media content without compensation.

The practice of commodification in the social media era is carried out more profoundly and subtly. From audiences to Homeless Media account holders to journalists, they are becoming indirect objects of the platform's commodification. This naivety in realizing this is not without reason. The development of communication technology is often narrated as something noble, as if it has resolved various human problems, from guaranteeing freedom of speech and unlimited access to information to offering new economic opportunities. Therefore, this research contributes to the development of the political economy of communication theory by advancing understanding of the evolution of digital media.

This research also encourages the government to immediately introduce adaptive and inclusive regulations governing the media and the Instagram platform used by account owners. These regulations are expected to encourage wiser media practices among account managers, information producers, and the public as information consumers. This will then create concrete protections for journalistic work produced by journalists and media outlets.

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