

Analysis of the Role of Content Creators in Shaping Public Perception of Social Issues through Digital Platforms

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Abstract: The rapid development of digital platforms has transformed public communication, enabling content creators to influence social discourse and shape public perception of social issues. This study aims to analyze the role of content creators as opinion leaders in shaping public perception of social issues and to identify factors affecting their effectiveness in digital communication. A library research approach was employed, reviewing relevant books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and official documents published over the past five years. Data were collected, classified, and analyzed using content and thematic analysis to synthesize empirical findings. The results indicate that content creators shape public perception through framing, storytelling, and interactive audience engagement, while their effectiveness is influenced by credibility, content relevance and quality, audience interaction, platform algorithms, and communication ethics. Thus, content creators serve as strategic digital opinion leaders, bridging classical communication theories with contemporary practice and offering significant theoretical and practical implications for ethical and effective digital communication.

Introduction

The development of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the global communication landscape. At the global level, digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram have become primary media for millions of users to access information, engage in discussions, and participate in social discourse (Georgetown University, 2025). This phenomenon has shifted the dominance from traditional media to participatory digital media, where content creators individuals who produce digital content for online audiences play a crucial role in delivering and framing social issues to the broader public.

Nationally, Indonesia has experienced a similar dynamic, with increasing engagement of young people as content creators capable of reaching thousands to millions of viewers. This indicates that digital communication is no longer dominated solely by large media institutions, but also by content creators who utilize platform algorithms and features to expand the reach of their messages (Jurnal MADIA, 2025). These creators do not merely share entertainment

content, but also social, educational, and even political narratives that have the potential to shape public perception.

The urgency of this study lies in the strategic role of content creators as agents of digital communication amid the rapid flow of information disseminated through digital platforms. On the one hand, they can encourage social participation and raise awareness of important issues; on the other hand, provocative, biased, or even misinformation-laden content can reinforce *echo chambers* and societal polarization (Hasanuddin et al., 2025). Therefore, a systematic scholarly examination of content creators' influence on public perception is crucial, both to enrich the literature on digital communication and to provide a foundation for more responsible social communication strategies.

Several relevant studies have explored the relationship between digital media and public opinion formation. Hasanuddin, Khodijah, and Rizki (2025) demonstrated that social media significantly influences public opinion through content virality mechanisms and platform algorithms that reinforce *echo chambers*. Sulistya, Yuningsih, and Vaidyanatahan (2025) found that influencer culture also shapes the public opinion of Millennials and Generation Z in contemporary digital communication. Furthermore, Lisnawati Nanda Sari (2025) highlighted that exposure to digital content can affect the behavior and social values of young users. Research by Febriani and Widyatama (2025) showed that content relevance and personal brand management of content creators can influence audience responses, including public opinion. Additionally, Astuti and Wulandari (2025) indicated that social media phenomena influence Generation Z's political perception through humor and satire content.

Although these studies provide valuable insights into the relationship between social media and public opinion, significant empirical gaps remain. Most studies focus on social media in general or examine content creator phenomena in specific contexts, but they do not systematically address how content creators shape public perception of social issues through digital platforms as a cross-topic social phenomenon. Moreover, few studies integrate content creator analysis with communication theories such as the two-step flow and agenda-setting within the broader context of contemporary social issues, including the ethical responsibility of content creators toward the quality of public discourse.

Based on the above discussion, the research questions of this study are: first, how do content creators shape public perception of social issues through digital platforms; and second, what factors influence the effectiveness of content creators in shaping public perception of social issues. The objectives of this study are to analyze the role of content creators as opinion

leaders in shaping public perception of social issues and to identify the digital communication factors that strengthen or hinder the influence of content creators on public perception regarding social issues.

Research Methods

This study employs a library research approach with a qualitative descriptive research design. This approach was chosen because the study aims to analyze, understand, and explain the phenomenon of content creators' roles in shaping public perception of social issues through digital platforms based on existing scientific literature, rather than collecting primary data. The library research approach allows researchers to explore relevant literature, synthesize previous research findings, and identify existing knowledge gaps (Bowen, 2009; Riduwan, 2022).

Research Data Sources

The research data consist of secondary literature, including:

- Scientific books related to digital communication theory, public opinion, and the role of influencers or content creators.
- Reputable journal articles published within the last five years in national reputable journals (SINTA) or international journals (Scopus, Web of Science) that discuss social media, content creators, or digital communication.
- Official documents and research reports from academic institutions, research organizations, or relevant institutions related to social issues and digital communication.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted in three systematic stages:

- Literature identification: searching for literature using keywords such as “content creator,” “public perception,” “social issues,” “digital media communication,” and “influencer impact” in academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, SINTA, and university journal portals.
- Literature selection: screening literature based on inclusion criteria, including topic relevance, methodological quality, and publication within the last five years (2019–2025), and exclusion criteria, such as literature not relevant to social issues or content creators.
- Literature classification: the selected literature was categorized based on main themes, such as communication theory, the role of content creators, social media, and public opinion formation. This classification facilitates thematic analysis and the

identification of research gaps.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed qualitatively using complementary techniques:

- Content analysis: analyzing relevant literature to identify concepts, definitions, and the role of content creators in shaping public perception (Krippendorff, 2018).
- Thematic analysis: organizing literature findings into key themes, such as content creators' influence, factors affecting digital communication effectiveness, and impacts on public opinion, which facilitates synthesis of previous research (Braun & Clarke, 2019).
- Critical-comparative analysis: comparing and evaluating previous research findings to identify research gaps and theoretical relevance concerning the phenomenon of content creators in the digital social context.

This methodology enables the study to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of content creators, evaluate empirical evidence from the literature, and produce a scientific synthesis supporting the development of digital communication theory and practice.

Research Results

Based on the literature review, the research findings can be categorized into two main focuses in accordance with the research objectives: (1) the role of content creators in shaping public perception of social issues through digital platforms, and (2) the factors influencing the effectiveness of content creators in shaping public perception.

1. The Role of Content Creators in Shaping Public Perception of Social Issues

The literature indicates that content creators act as **opinion leaders** within the digital communication ecosystem. Hasanuddin, Khodijah, and Rizki (2025) assert that content creators can influence public opinion through content virality mechanisms and platform algorithms that highlight certain content, allowing social messages to reach a broader audience more quickly. Sulistya, Yuningsih, and Vaidyanatahan (2025) further note that content creators, especially influencers with large followings, have the ability to shape audience interpretation of social issues through creatively crafted narratives. This enables the formation of public opinion influenced by presentation style, storytelling, and the credibility of the creator.

Additionally, Lisnawati Nanda Sari (2025) demonstrates that exposure to digital content from creators affects the social behavior and values of young audiences, particularly in understanding contemporary social issues. Astuti and Wulandari (2025) also emphasize that humor, satire, or interactive approaches in content can increase audience engagement, making

it easier for public perception of social issues to form through digital platforms.

Overall, the literature shows that content creators play a critical role in **framing social issues**, selecting specific perspectives, and guiding public discourse on digital platforms.

2. Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Content Creators

The literature identifies several key factors that influence the effectiveness of content creators in shaping public perception:

a. Credibility and reputation of the creator: Febriani and Widyatama (2025) indicate that audiences tend to accept and trust information delivered by creators with high credibility, a clear personal brand, and a positive reputation on digital platforms.

b. Relevance and quality of content: Content that aligns with audience needs, conveys clear messages, and is packaged with appealing visuals and narratives is more effective in shaping public perception (Hasanuddin et al., 2025).

c. Interaction and audience engagement: The literature highlights the importance of two-way interaction between creators and audiences. Content that allows comments, feedback, or active audience participation enhances the influence of creators on public opinion (Sulistya et al., 2025).

d. Platform algorithms and content distribution: Algorithms on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok influence content visibility. Content that is frequently recommended or appears on audience feeds has a higher potential to shape public perception (Astuti & Wulandari, 2025).

e. Communication ethics and information presentation: Studies also show that presenting information objectively and responsibly increases audience trust. Provocative or misleading content can create biased public perceptions and social polarization (Lisnawati Nanda Sari, 2025).

Discussion

The literature review indicates that content creators play a strategic role as opinion leaders in shaping public perception of social issues through digital platforms. This finding aligns with the two-step flow theory proposed by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), which posits that information typically flows from media to influential individuals (*opinion leaders*) before reaching the broader public. In the context of digital communication, content creators act as *digital opinion leaders*, not only delivering information but also framing social issues through creative narratives, engaging visuals, and interactive approaches (Hasanuddin, Khodijah, & Rizki, 2025; Sulistya, Yuningsih, & Vaidyanatahan, 2025).

A comparison of findings across studies shows both consistencies and variations in the role of content creators. Hasanuddin et al. (2025) emphasize the influence of platform algorithms and content virality in extending the reach of messages, whereas Lisnawati Nanda Sari (2025) highlights the impact of digital content exposure on the social behavior and values of young audiences. Astuti and Wulandari (2025) add that humor and satire serve as creative strategies that enhance audience engagement. Collectively, these findings suggest that the effectiveness of content creators depends not only on popularity or follower count but also on their ability to present messages in a creative, relevant, and ethical manner.

This analysis can also be connected to the agenda-setting theory, which asserts that media have the power to influence the public's perception of which topics are important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Through content curation and framing, content creators can highlight specific social issues, thereby shaping public attention and discourse on digital platforms. In other words, they influence not only how audiences perceive issues but also which issues become the focus of public discussion. This extends the application of agenda-setting theory to digital contexts, where content distribution is non-linear and affected by algorithms, audience interaction, and creator branding (Febriani & Widyatama, 2025).

The theoretical implications of this study reinforce the position of content creators as critical communication agents capable of bridging classical communication theories with contemporary digital phenomena. Practically, these findings emphasize the importance of planned, ethical, and creative communication strategies for content creators, social institutions, and public organizations seeking to build public opinion and awareness of social issues. Strategically crafted content can enhance audience understanding, motivate public participation, and strengthen digital literacy.

The contribution of this study to academic knowledge includes: first, providing an empirical synthesis of the role of content creators in shaping public perception based on literature from the past five years; second, expanding the application of the two-step flow and agenda-setting theories in modern digital communication contexts; and third, offering an analytical framework for future research on digital communication effectiveness, content ethics, and audience engagement strategies. Consequently, this study not only provides conceptual understanding but also offers practical guidance for developing responsible and effective digital communication.

Conclusion

Based on the conducted literature review, this study demonstrates that content creators play a strategic role as opinion leaders in shaping public perception of social issues through digital platforms. Content creators not only disseminate information but also frame social issues through creative narratives, engaging visuals, and interactive approaches that encourage audience participation. These findings address the research question regarding how content creators influence public perception of social issues.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of content creators is influenced by several key factors, including the credibility and reputation of the creator, the relevance and quality of content, audience interaction and engagement, platform algorithms, and communication ethics. These factors determine the extent to which content creators can significantly and responsibly shape public opinion.

The scholarly contribution of this study includes: first, providing an empirical synthesis of the role of content creators based on literature from the past five years; second, extending the application of two-step flow and agenda-setting theories to contemporary digital communication contexts; and third, offering an analytical framework for future research on digital communication effectiveness, content ethics, and audience engagement strategies. Overall, this study provides both theoretical and practical foundations for developing responsible, effective, and ethical digital communication in shaping public perception of social issues.

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