

## Homeless Media and the Transformation of the Local Information Ecosystem in the Digital Era

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### Abstract

Although scholarship on digital journalism and platform-based news production has continued to expand, empirical research on *homeless media* operating as community-based information systems in non-Western urban contexts remains limited. Most existing studies focus on alternative, hyperlocal, or networked journalism within Western institutional settings, leaving the dynamics of *homeless media* in Global South cities insufficiently explored. This gap obscures how platform-native media without physical newsrooms construct credibility, authority, and sustainability within technologically mediated public spheres. Addressing this gap, this study examines the Instagram account @infobandungkota (IBK) as a case of *homeless media* operating within the local information ecosystem of Bandung, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with media managers, digital observation (netnography) of Instagram content, and online archival documentation. Thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns of content production, information verification practices, audience interaction, and platform dependency. The findings reveal that IBK has evolved from a user-generated content aggregator into a professionalized community media actor. Despite operating without a formal newsroom, IBK maintains journalistic credibility through multilayered verification practices. The absence of a physical media “home” provides operational flexibility, enabling rapid field reporting and fostering relational proximity with local communities. IBK functions as a trusted node within Bandung’s local information ecosystem by integrating participatory reporting, localized cultural communication, and distribution strategies attuned to platform algorithmic logics. However, this autonomy is accompanied by structural vulnerabilities, particularly reliance on platform algorithms, the absence of institutional financial support, and increasing emotional labor among media workers. Theoretically, this study contributes to digital journalism and media ecology scholarship by reconceptualizing *homeless media* as autonomous local information ecosystems rather than merely platform-dependent content producers. By extending the concepts of *networked publics* and *portable communities*, the study demonstrates that media authority in non-Western urban contexts is increasingly constructed through community trust, public participation, and socio-technical adaptability, rather than through institutional infrastructure alone.

Keywords : Homeless Media, InfoBandungKota, digital journalism, local media, information ecosystem.

### Introduction

Digital transformation over the past decade has revolutionized the way humans communicate, consume information, and construct social meaning. Social media has become the epicenter of modern digital life, where individuals have the opportunity to become both producers and consumers of information (prosumer) (Jenkins, 2019). The emergence of various community-based media has become a significant phenomenon marking the shift in Indonesia's information ecosystem. One form of this is Homeless Media. Media that operates without a physical office, without a conventional

editorial structure, yet still disseminates news and public information (Detik.com, 2023).

Homeless Media has emerged as a response to two major phenomena: digital technology disruption and the public's crisis of trust in mainstream media. While conventional media faces economic pressure and changes in audience behavior, local community-based media are thriving in the digital space (Tirto.id, 2024). Media like @infobandungkota exemplify how digital social spaces can be used to build more adaptive local information systems. International studies show similar phenomena occurring globally. Deuze (2019) refers to this as liquid journalism, a form of journalism that is no longer dependent on traditional newsrooms but maintains professionalism through online networks. Meanwhile, Napoli (2019) explains that social media algorithms have become the "primary determinant" of how widely news can be seen. This phenomenon indicates that media is no longer solely controlled by newsrooms, but also by the public and the digital systems they use. This suggests that media is no longer dependent on large institutions, but rather on active and collaborative social networks (Castells, 2020).

The term Homeless Media is used to describe the characteristics of media that do not have a physical "home" but can operate through a "digital home" in the form of an active social media account. This concept marks a shift in the media paradigm from a centralized system to a decentralized, community-based system. Boyd (2010) calls this phenomenon "networked publics," where public spaces are formed and managed through digital networks. However, in this context, the boundaries between information producers and consumers become increasingly blurred. Every user can participate in public discourse production through comments, reposts, and direct reporting from the field.

Homeless Media is rooted in the theory of network society (Castells, 2020). In a network society, information production and distribution are no longer dependent on central institutions but on interactions between individuals in digital spaces. Chayko (2018) refers to this phenomenon as a "portable community" that moves through digital devices and online connections. Homeless Media becomes a new form of community media that operates without spatial and temporal boundaries.

The main advantages of Homeless Media include speed of distribution, closeness to the local community, and cost efficiency. These characteristics enable Homeless Media to respond quickly to public issues, especially in dynamic urban areas like Bandung. However, its weaknesses lie in aspects of ethics and accuracy. Without a standardized editing system, the verification process often relies on individual initiative. The biggest challenge for Homeless Media is balancing speed and accuracy of information (Omong-omong.com, 2023).

In Indonesia, the emergence of Homeless Media cannot be separated from the increasing internet penetration and social media usage. According to a report by We Are Social (2024), 69.7% of Indonesia's population is actively using social media, with an average usage time of 3 hours and 15 minutes per day. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X have become the primary channels for

news dissemination, entertainment, and public opinion. In this context, Homeless Media plays a role as a bridge between society and local realities that often go unreported by mainstream media. This shift not only shows changes in the media business model but also demonstrates how local communities build their own information spaces. IBK regularly covers urban issues, traffic, culinary, and cultural activities with a light, visual, and interactive communication style.

Although it is homeless, IBK applies verification principles in its reporting. This activity demonstrates a new form of digital journalism rooted in citizen participation while maintaining information ethics. In this case, Homeless Media becomes a reflection of the emergence of a local journalism ecosystem that prioritizes speed, social closeness, and public engagement (Bungin, 2021). Additionally, the high dependence on social media algorithms makes Homeless Media vulnerable to platform policies. Small changes in Instagram or TikTok algorithms can significantly reduce the reach and audience interaction (Kompas.id, 2024).

In the media economy, Homeless Media also symbolizes industry restructuring. Mass layoffs in conventional media during the 2020-2024 period indicate a shift of professional workers towards independent digital media (Tirto.id, 2024). Many journalists choose to build community-based media due to flexibility and low operational costs. This aligns with Jenkins' (2019) idea of participatory culture, which explains that individuals are no longer passive consumers but active actors in cultural and information production.

Previous research on Instagram-based media has been conducted by Sundar, Oeldorf-Hirsch, & Xu (2022), who found that high interactivity features on social media increase emotional engagement and audience trust in community news accounts. However, most studies still focus on national or commercial media, not on local community-based media like @infobandungkota. This opens up a research gap that this study aims to address.

Based on the above phenomenon, this study aims to analyze the role and characteristics of Homeless Media in local communication systems in the digital era, describe content production strategies, information verification, and interaction between media and audiences, and identify challenges and social implications of Homeless Media's existence on information credibility and sustainability of local digital media ecosystems.

This study seeks to answer three main questions: (1) How does @infobandungkota's text character and communication style build credibility as Homeless Media? (2) How are production strategies and editorial practices applied by @infobandungkota as Homeless Media? (3) How does the socio-cultural context of Bandung society influence @infobandungkota's approach to development and public acceptance? To answer these questions, this study uses three levels of discourse analysis: text, text producers, and socio-cultural context, as formulated by Fairclough (1995).

This research is important because it contributes to academic discourse on changes in Indonesia's

media ecosystem. In digital journalism, this study demonstrates how independent local media adapt to technological disruption while maintaining their social function. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for other local media managers in developing credible, participatory, and sustainable digital communication strategies. This study confirms that media is no longer a single institution but has become part of a digital information ecosystem consisting of community networks, algorithms, and public participation. Homeless Media like @infobandungkota functions as news disseminators and social agents that mediate relationships between citizens, government, and digital public spaces (Reuters, 2024; Time, 2024).

## Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis method. This method was chosen because it is capable of revealing the relationship between text, production process, and socio-cultural context that shapes the communication practices of @infobandungkota as Homeless Media. In this study, media is seen not only as a news transmitter but also as a party that helps shape how society understands and interacts in digital spaces.

Within the framework of critical discourse analysis, this study divides its focus into three levels: (1) Text analysis, which examines the linguistic structure, visuals, and narrative content of @infobandungkota; (2) Analysis of text producers, namely the production and distribution process of messages by the management team; (3) Analysis of socio-cultural context, including the relationship between media and local community and the cultural values of Bandung residents represented in the content. This approach was chosen because the study aims to understand social phenomena and communication practices that occur naturally, rather than measuring variables statistically (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This approach is also in line with Denzin & Lincoln's (2018) view that qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena from the participants' perspective, taking into account the cultural and social context in which the phenomenon emerges. In this study, the phenomenon of Homeless Media cannot be separated from changes in digital behavior of Bandung society, citizen participation culture, and the evolution of local media in the algorithmic era. This study not only examines the form and characteristics of Homeless Media but also understands how media contributes to the formation of local information ecosystems in the digital era.

The object of this study is the application of digital communication and information production patterns on the @infobandungkota account on the Instagram platform. The research focus is directed at three main aspects, including content production and distribution patterns, information verification and credibility mechanisms, and the relationship between the editorial team and the audience and digital community.

Meanwhile, the subjects of this study are the @infobandungkota management team, including the

main admin and several creative team members involved in managing the account. The determination of subjects was done purposively, meaning they were chosen because they were considered to have in-depth understanding and direct involvement in the phenomenon being studied (Sugiyono, 2022).

The research was conducted in Bandung City, because this city is one of the most dynamic local media ecosystems in Indonesia with the emergence of various community-based media. Interviews and data collection were conducted during the period of July to October 2025, both online and offline. The timing was adjusted to the intensity of editorial activities and the high dynamics of content production by @infobandungkota leading up to annual local events such as the Flower City Fest and Asia Africa Festival.

To obtain comprehensive data, this study uses three main techniques: (1) In-depth interviews with a semi-structured format, (2) Digital observation (netnography) on the activity of the @infobandungkota account on Instagram for three months, including analysis of feed posts, reels, stories, visual communication style, interaction in the comments column, and audience engagement patterns, (3) Documentation and digital archives.

Data analysis was conducted using Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model to examine text, text producers, and socio-cultural context. Through this analysis, data obtained from interviews and observations were identified into several major themes such as information verification practices, the role of the community in content distribution, and dependence on social media algorithms. Each theme was then linked to theoretical concepts such as networked publics (Boyd, 2010) and portable community (Chayko, 2018) to produce deeper meaning.

To strengthen the validity of the data, source and method triangulation techniques were used. Source triangulation was done by comparing interview results with digital observations and documentation data. Meanwhile, method triangulation was done by using more than one data collection technique (Denzin, 2017). This approach aims to ensure the consistency and credibility of research findings. Validation of analysis results was done through member checking with key informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation does not deviate from the empirical context. Additionally, peer debriefing was conducted with digital communication academics to test the consistency of meaning across levels of discourse analysis.

The entire process of data collection and analysis was conducted transparently and ethically. Researchers obtained informed consent from sources, ensured confidentiality of identity if requested, and did not manipulate data for specific purposes. This principle is in line with digital media research ethics as emphasized by the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR, 2019). In line with the principle of do no harm (Bruckman, 2020), this study prioritized the welfare and comfort of participants, especially since the sources work in a digital environment with high pressure and significant public exposure.

This study has limitations in terms of data scope because it only focuses on one Homeless Media

account, namely @infobandungkota. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all local digital media in Indonesia. However, the in-depth case study approach is expected to provide rich and relevant contextual understanding for further research development, especially in the field of digital communication and local journalism.

## Results and Discussion

The phenomenon of Homeless Media in Bandung City finds its concrete form through the InfoBandungKota (IBK) account, which since its emergence in 2013 has become one of the most prominent digital local media in the area. Based on the research results, IBK began its journey as a simple Instagram account that served as a platform for sharing citizen information. Its content in the early days still consisted of reposts of community reports about daily incidents such as traffic jams, thefts, or other local events. However, since 2020, IBK has undergone a significant transformation when its team decided to no longer solely rely on citizen reports but instead produce original content through direct field coverage. This change became a turning point that showcased IBK's maturity as a digital media entity with homeless characteristics that is not based on a physical office but has high social strength and credibility in the online sphere.

### Text Analysis on Structure, Language, and Visual Communication Patterns

The analysis at the text level examines how @infobandungkota builds credibility and closeness with the audience through language choices, visuals, and message format. Based on the results of digital observation over three months, it was found that IBK uses a communication style that is concise, informative, and local in nuance, with a combination of Indonesian and light Sundanese dialect. Content visualization is dominated by field photos and multi-slide infographics that serve to accelerate public understanding.

**Figure 1.** Content Visualization of @infobandungkota.



Source: @infobandungkota

([https://www.instagram.com/infobandungkota?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_button\\_share\\_sheet&igsh=ZDNlZDc0MzIxNw==](https://www.instagram.com/infobandungkota?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet&igsh=ZDNlZDc0MzIxNw==))

Based on Fairclough's discourse analysis, the way IBK writes reflects values of closeness and speed. The sentences used are simple and direct, for example, "Hati-hati lur, macet di Pasteur." This style makes IBK feel like a friend to the citizens, rather than a media outlet speaking from a superior position. Here is the classification of content based on the analysis of 120 IBK posts during the period of July–September 2025:

**Table 1. Content Classification of @infobandungkota Account**

Content Category	Language & Visual Characteristics	Communication Purpose	Audience Response
<b>Public Information (traffic, city events)</b>	Brief language, real-time visuals	Providing quick updates	High (500–1000 comments)
<b>Culinary &amp; Local Lifestyle</b>	Brief language, real-time visuals	Entertainment & local pride	Positive & interactive
<b>Cultural &amp; Heritage Content</b>	Formal, historical	Educating city identity	Moderate
<b>Local Humor &amp; Memes</b>	Mixed Indonesian language, caricatural visuals	Engagement, emotional closeness	Very high
<b>Social Issues (disasters, crime)</b>	Neutral, factual	Public information & awareness	Fluctuating depending on the issue

Source: Researcher's analysis of the @infobandungkota account

([https://www.instagram.com/infobandungkota?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_button\\_share\\_sheet&igsh=ZDNlZDc0MzIxNw==](https://www.instagram.com/infobandungkota?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet&igsh=ZDNlZDc0MzIxNw==))

This pattern shows that IBK builds a discourse ecosystem that is not rigid like mainstream media, but rather builds a fluid, participatory, and community-based impression. The use of local language serves as a symbol of social inclusion that affirms the identity of Bandung residents as an "autonomous digital community". Within Fairclough's framework, this layer represents micro-discursive practices, specifically how texts become tools for negotiating meaning between the media and citizens.

This transformation marks the development of IBK as a media outlet and represents the pattern of societal adaptation to the new information ecosystem in the digital era. The absence of a conventional office or editorial structure provides great flexibility in the news coverage and distribution process. Each team member works mobilely, producing content directly from the scene, editing, and uploading it through personal devices. This fast, efficient, and trust-based workflow becomes one of IBK's main strengths and reflects what Chayko (2018) calls a "portable community" - a digital community that is not dependent on physical space but lives through always-connected

social networks. This phenomenon shows how media can "move homes" from editorial rooms to digital spaces without losing its social function.

IBK upholds the principles of professional journalism despite not having a formal editorial system. Every piece of information received from the public undergoes a multi-layered verification process before publication. The IBK team has a policy to ensure that every report is equipped with valid evidence, such as police reports (LP) for criminal cases or confirmation from relevant government agencies for public service issues. If the information has not been verified, the team chooses to withhold publication to avoid spreading hoaxes. This approach demonstrates the internalization of the value of tabayyun, verification of information as mandated in the Quran, Al-Hujurat: 6, into digital journalism activities. Amidst the proliferation of online media that prioritizes speed over accuracy, IBK's step shows high social responsibility and distinguishes it from many other Homeless Media that merely pursue virality.

Consistency in verification also shows a change in the orientation of local journalism, which is increasingly aware of ethical responsibility. Although the IBK team has experienced publication errors and has dealt with law enforcement officials due to unvalidated information, the incident became an important learning experience that strengthened their commitment to information accuracy. After the case, the team implemented an internal double-check system before content is published. This corrective step proves the ability of local digital media to learn and adapt to the legal and social consequences that arise from online activities. IBK applies the audience gatekeeping model (Shoemaker & Vos, 2019), where the role of citizens is not just as recipients of news, but also as providers and guardians of information validity. This role creates a symbiotic relationship between the media and the public, strengthening the information ecosystem at the local level.

In terms of content, IBK has a unique approach to its audience. Using the tagline #LebihTahuBandung, this media consistently raises issues that are very close to people's lives, such as traffic information, culinary, heritage buildings, and city agendas. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a shift in content direction from focusing on criminal events to positive themes that "make citizens happy." This decision was born from direct feedback from netizens who felt tired of negative news during the crisis period. By adjusting the content theme to the emotional condition of the community, IBK shows high social sensitivity and the ability to read the psychological needs of its audience. Within the framework of uses and gratifications theory (Katz et al., 2017), this strategy reflects the media's efforts to provide emotional and social satisfaction to its users. IBK is present and designed as a source of information, entertainment, and reinforcement of Bandung residents' identity.

The relationship between IBK and its audience is not one-way. In the comments column, the admin team actively replies to user responses with a distinctive "nyeleneh" style, humor, and using familiar Sundanese language. This interaction builds emotional closeness and strengthens the

audience's sense of belonging to the account. This communication model shows the characteristics of Homeless Media operating in the realm of networked publics (Boyd, 2010), a space where the boundaries between producers and consumers of information are increasingly blurred. Every citizen can be part of the communication process, including as reporters, content creators, or commentators who enrich the discourse. In this study, IBK functions as both a media outlet and a digital community platform that brings Bandung residents together in a shared information space.

Another interesting finding is how IBK manages its work structure flexibly yet remains organized. Although it does not have a central office, its team is divided into several specific roles such as screen planner, reporter, writer, content creator, designer, and marketing. This division facilitates efficient coordination in content production despite being done remotely. This role-based work system shows that Homeless Media has a non-hierarchical structure that is adaptive to the digital environment. This model approaches the concept of liquid journalism (Deuze, 2019), a form of journalism that is fluid and collaborative where professional roles blend with community participation. Some IBK members also come from other media communities like Bandung Fox and Bandung Mutual, which can strengthen collaborative cross-media networks and expand its influence in the local sphere.

### **Analysis of Text Producers on Strategy, Values, and Production Practices**

At the second level, the analysis focuses on the text producers, namely the IBK management team, as actors shaping media discourse. Based on in-depth interviews with three team members, including the chief admin, content planner, and field reporter, it was found that IBK's work structure is collaborative and based on personal trust.

The IBK team communicates via WhatsApp groups without a rigid leadership structure. Each member is free to determine ideas and writing styles, as long as they adhere to IBK's main principles: fast, clear, and verified (tabayyun). This process shows flexible teamwork while maintaining ethical responsibility. This value reflects a form of digital community ethics that upholds horizontal verification rather than top-down like mainstream media.

Technically, the team uses a double-check system to ensure the authenticity of information sent by citizens. Data must be accompanied by visual evidence or confirmation from relevant agencies. This shows a new form of gatekeeping that is not based on editorial positions but rather on the moral responsibility of team members.

From Fairclough's discourse analysis perspective, text producers play a role as agents forming local media ideology that affirms the role of citizens as journalists and shifts news authority from editorial rooms to digital public spaces. This shows a meso-discursive process where message production becomes a form of symbolic power distributed equally among community members.

However, flexibility also brings new challenges, especially in terms of accountability and mental well-being. The pressure to always respond quickly to citizen reports, high audience demands, and

the risk of information errors often cause psychological burdens for managers. One notable experience was when IBK admins experienced stress due to a domestic violence case that went viral, resulting in public pressure due to delayed reporting. This experience illustrates the emotional side that is rarely discussed in digital media studies, that behind the scenes of Homeless Media, there are humans facing psychological risks due to high-intensity public interactions and the lack of clear work boundaries. This highlights the importance of expanding digital journalism studies to include technological dimensions and media worker well-being in online spaces.

In terms of distribution strategy, IBK heavily relies on platform algorithms. Instagram is the main channel for spreading information, while TikTok and the website serve as complements. The team understands that content performance is largely determined by algorithmic logic that governs reach and interaction. To increase visibility, the IBK team follows patterns favored by algorithms, such as using multi-slide photos or reels with popular songs.

**Figure 2.** Content performance on the @infobandungkota account



Source: @infobandungkota

([https://www.instagram.com/p/DQinsy6k8Hf/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWF1ZA==](https://www.instagram.com/p/DQinsy6k8Hf/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWF1ZA==))

This dependence on algorithms places IBK in a position referred to by Napoli (2019) as algorithmic vulnerability, where media are vulnerable to changes in platform policies. IBK attempts to anticipate this by expanding its distribution channels through YouTube and podcasts, so as not to be entirely dependent on one platform. This effort aligns with the concept of resilient media ecosystems (Horowitz, 2023), which emphasizes the importance of diversifying channels to maintain the sustainability of local media in the midst of a fluctuating digital ecosystem.

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IBK's engagement with mainstream media also shows new dynamics between community media and large industries. Some national media outlets, such as CNN, Trans TV, and Narasi, have reportedly asked for permission to use IBK's coverage videos. This interaction shows a reversal in the information ecosystem, where national media are no longer the primary source, but local digital media now provide news material for large media outlets. This phenomenon marks an epistemological shift in the media industry from centralization to decentralization of information production. In this study, IBK can be referred to as a symbol of distributed journalism, where news value is no longer determined by editorial hierarchy but by the media's closeness to the community and its speed of adaptation to technology.

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### **Socio-Cultural Analysis of Homeless Media and Bandung Community Identity**

The third layer in critical discourse analysis focuses on the social and cultural context in which the discourse of Homeless Media grows. In the media @infobandungkota, the social structure of Bandung's community-based society, local humor, and citizen participation are the main factors in the success of this media.

The observation results show that IBK's audience is not just consumers but also active participants in the digital community. Citizens participate by sending reports, comments, and even correcting information errors, indicating citizen-based information democracy practices.

Culturally, IBK presents the identity of Bandung as a creative and harmonious city. Local humor, the use of the Sundanese term "moal baleg", and nostalgic posts become symbols of emotional closeness between the media and citizens. This shows that Homeless Media is not just an information tool but also a means of reproducing local culture in the digital era.

**Figure 3.** Local humor on the @infobandungkota account



Sumber: @infobandungkota

([https://www.instagram.com/reel/DQg8UDvE\\_M/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFIZA==](https://www.instagram.com/reel/DQg8UDvE_M/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFIZA==))

In Fairclough's view, this is referred to as socio-cultural practice, a situation where the content and creators of messages are influenced by the values and habits of the surrounding community. Here, IBK demonstrates that the trust and sense of togetherness among Bandung residents are the main foundations of its success as a local digital media. IBK shows that in a network society, media authority no longer lies in institutions but in the social relationships built through digital trust. Thus, Homeless Media functions as a new public space (networked publics) that shapes urban citizen awareness.

From the overall findings, Homeless Media operates as an autonomous yet interconnected information ecosystem. IBK proves that even without a fixed office, local media can function well if supported by a strong community network, consistent verification ethics, and adaptability to algorithms. IBK combines the principles of professional journalism with participatory practices characteristic of social media, resulting in a new hybrid media model. This phenomenon confirms Deuze's (2019) view that the future of journalism will be fluid, participatory, and rooted in collaboration between producers and audiences.

This study also reveals fundamental challenges in the sustainability of Homeless Media. Dependence on algorithms places such media in a vulnerable position against technical changes in platforms. Additionally, the absence of a funding system makes operational sustainability dependent

on voluntary work and collaboration. On the other hand, emotional pressure due to high public exposure poses a risk of burnout for managers. These challenges show that although Homeless Media has succeeded in democratizing the information space, they still need structural support and policies that ensure job security and economic independence.

The IBK phenomenon enriches our understanding of media evolution in the digital era. It proves that media authority is no longer determined by owning a newsroom building or large capital but by the ability to build trust and closeness with the community. IBK's success shows that digital public space can be an effective vessel for citizen participation if managed with ethics, verification, and social sensitivity. Thus, it can be said that Homeless Media is not a form of decline from professional journalism but rather a form of evolution that adapts to the social and technological logic of modern network society.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *homeless media* cannot be understood merely as an alternative form of digital media or as a byproduct of social media platform logics. Through a case study of the Instagram account @infobandungkota (IBK), the research reveals that homeless media operate as autonomous local information ecosystems constructed through community relations, participatory practices, and adaptation to algorithmic environments. The absence of a physical newsroom and conventional institutional structures does not indicate a weakened journalistic function; rather, it constitutes a source of operational flexibility that enables rapid, contextualized responses to urban dynamics.

Theoretically, these findings extend and challenge dominant assumptions in digital journalism scholarship that continue to anchor media legitimacy in institutional infrastructure and formal organizational arrangements. By reconceptualizing homeless media as autonomous local information ecosystems, this study enriches the concepts of *networked publics* and *portable communities*, demonstrating that media authority at the local level can emerge from accumulated social trust, consistent verification practices, and sustained community engagement. In this configuration, journalistic legitimacy is no longer top-down but is relationally constructed through interactions among media actors, audiences, and platform technologies.

The cross-city and cross-national implications of these findings are particularly salient for urban contexts in the Global South that share characteristics with Bandung, such as rapid urbanization, widespread social media penetration, and limited mainstream media coverage of everyday civic issues. The model of homeless media identified in this study invites comparative analysis with other cities including Manila, Mumbai, Lagos, and São Paulo where community based digital media have similarly emerged in response to local information gaps. Accordingly, homeless media should be understood as a globally relevant yet locally embedded phenomenon rather than a culturally specific

anomaly confined to Indonesia.

From a methodological perspective, this research underscores the importance of qualitative, case-based approaches and digital ethnography for examining media practices that operate outside conventional institutional frameworks. Such approaches enable scholars to capture relational dynamics, emotional dimensions, and ethical negotiations that are often overlooked in quantitative studies centered on platform metrics alone. The findings concerning emotional labor and algorithmic vulnerability further expand the agenda of digital journalism studies to encompass media workers' well-being and the sustainability of local information ecosystems.

This study is limited by its focus on a single homeless media case within one city. Future research should therefore pursue comparative, cross-city, and cross-national studies to test the consistency of the identified patterns across diverse social, cultural, and regulatory contexts. Further inquiry may also explore the relationship between homeless media and platform governance, alternative funding models, and the role of the state in ensuring sustainability and labor protection for community-based digital media actors.

Overall, this study affirms that the future of local journalism in the digital era is not determined solely by the power of large media institutions but also by the capacity of community based media to cultivate trust, uphold information ethics, and critically adapt to technological logics. *Homeless media*, as exemplified by @infobandungkota, represent an evolutionary form of local journalism with global relevance and merit serious scholarly attention within contemporary communication and media studies.

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