

# *Commodification in the Era of Network Society: A Case Study of Youtube Indonesia*

Widya Salsabilah, Dani Hamdani, Muhammad Sony Danaru, Luthfi Ardiansah, Rizky Arya Saputra, Eko Purwanto, Umar Faisal, Fitria Santi

Communication Science Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences

University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang

widyasalsabilah@gmail.com

hamdannydanny2003@gmail.com

Muhammadsonydanaru@gmail.com

luutfii5578@gmail.com

aryarizky274@gmail.com

eko.purwanto@umt.ac.id

umar.farisal@umt.ac.id

fitria78santi@gmail.com



**Abstract**— This study investigates the phenomenon of content commodification in the era of network society, focusing on the case study of YouTube Indonesia. Through a qualitative approach involving in-depth interviews with content creators, video content analysis, and literature studies, this research aims to understand the commodification process, its impact on creators and audiences, as well as the responses and strategies adopted by content creators. Research findings reveal that the process of commodifying content on YouTube Indonesia involves complex interactions between internal and external factors of the platform. Factors such as monetization policies, search algorithms, and market trends play a key role in shaping the dynamics of commodification. The impact of content commodification varies, with creators experiencing increased revenue and professionalization of content, but also at risk of decreased originality and creativity. Responses to commodification pressures also vary, from acceptance and utilization of commercialization to efforts to maintain creative quality and integrity. The results of this study provide a deep insight into the evolution of social media as a space for content commodification, and highlight the challenges and opportunities faced by content creators in dealing with this phenomenon.

**Keywords**— Commodification, networking society, Youtube.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The main content that is often traded on YouTube Indonesia is related to the themes of horror, myth, and mysticism, often delivered in an entertaining and lighthearted way to captivate viewers (Arifana, 2023). Content producers such as Risa Journal and Kimbaba Family exploit these themes by integrating cultural aspects such as Sundanese customs and Korean influences to appeal to a wide audience (Naibaho et al., 2023). These producers consciously or unconsciously change their content to align with audience preferences, thereby increasing online traffic and profitability. In addition, channels like Popularic Islam

effectively monetize Islamic-themed content, taking advantage of new media personnel while reaping financial benefits from their media efforts. In essence, the most trafficked content on YouTube Indonesia revolves around horror, myth, cultural fusion, and religious motifs, strategically crafted to captivate viewers and increase profitability.

Commodification plays an important role in the YouTube network community in Indonesia, exerting influence on content creation, audience engagement, and labor exploitation (AR et al., 2022). Prominent creators such as Baim Paula and Kimbaba Family use commodification strategies to develop engaging content, focusing on topics such as "money sharing" and cultural merging (Syafuddin & Okta Wibowo, 2023). The utilization of commodification in content creation and work practices allows these creators to attract viewers, generate profits, and secure advertising opportunities. Nonetheless, this process can also lead to labor exploitation, evident in the demanding workload and inadequate remuneration faced by media personnel on platforms such as YouTube. In addition to serving as a source of profit for content creators, the commodification of content can also contribute to the exploitation of media workers, as evidenced in examples such as Popular Islam, where the success of channels primarily benefits advertisers rather than creators themselves.

Advertising, sponsorship, and monetization are important components in facilitating the phenomenon of content commodification on YouTube in the Indonesian context. Prominent creators like Baim Paula and Kimbaba Family are leveraging this strategy to generate revenue and attract viewers. Through the process of commodification of content, audience, and creative energy, YouTube fosters commercial engagement, standardizes transactional mechanisms, and nurtures trust (Nurhasanah et al., 2022). Structured collaboration agreements between YouTube and creators, along with ad payment systems, adhere to specific protocols and guidelines to ensure ethical equity and compliance (Ørmen & Gregersen, 2023). In addition, the demanding workload and inadequate remuneration of media professionals on platforms such as YouTube contribute to the continuity of the commodification trend, consequently affecting the quality of news reporting (Takhim et al., 2022).

The influence of commodification on the authenticity and credibility of content on YouTube in Indonesia is very important. Content creators such as KompasTV, Kimbaba Family, Baim Paula, and Deddy Corbuzier have undergone a commodification process that impacts the nature of their content. This process often results in a focus on financial gain, sometimes sacrificing original authenticity and credibility of the content (Evanalia et al., 2023). The pressure to cater to audience preferences, increase online traffic, and maximize profits can lead to a shift toward more commercial and less authentic content. In addition, the integration of the creative economy sector into cultural goods can affect authenticity and commodification, thus impacting various industries such as performing arts, tourism, and culinary experiences (Khairiyani, 2022).

The commodification of community dynamics and user interaction on YouTube in Indonesia has had a significant impact. YouTube channels like Baim Paula and Kimbaba Family use the commodification process to attract viewers, generate profits, and cater to viewer preferences (AR et al., 2022). This commodification includes content, audience, and labor, affecting individual adaptation to new media technologies and impacting the Indonesian economy (Adi et al., 2021). In addition, media platforms such as YouTube take part in the commodification of workers to maintain their presence, potentially jeopardizing the quality of news coverage as content creators prioritize meeting audience expectations over journalistic standards (Evanalia et al., 2023). Multicultural families like the Kimbaba Family leverage their unique dynamics as lucrative commodities, demonstrating potential financial gains through the production of audio-visual content (Lobodally, 2022).

The commodification process on YouTube has elicited mixed reactions from creators and viewers. Content creators like Deddy Corbuzier, for example, initially used YouTube as a means to challenge media monopolies but eventually turned to profit-driven content creation (Ørmen & Gregersen, 2023). This transition underscores a compromise in ethical standards and a shift toward producing less critical content that appeals to a wider audience. On the contrary, some creators, such as those affiliated with KompasTV, have faced exploitation and isolation as a result of heavy labor demands and inadequate remuneration, leading to the establishment of sustainable commodification strategies (Evanalia et al., 2023). Despite the difficulties faced, platforms like YouTube have given producers the opportunity to leverage audiences and monetize various forms of audience engagement, thereby affecting the vulnerability of users and content creators (AR et al., 2022). Responses from the community reveal complex dynamics involving resistance, adjustment, and exploitation amidst the process of commodification that develops on digital platforms like YouTube.

Policies and regulations, both at national and international levels, play an important role in influencing the commodification process on YouTube in the Indonesian context. On a domestic scale, regulations such as Government Regulation No. 56 of 2021

on Song and Music Royalties are designed to protect intellectual property rights and address issues such as copyright infringement committed by cover song performers (AR et al., 2022). Furthermore, the implementation of Government Regulation No. 24 of 2022 allows the establishment of fiduciary guarantees for copyrights related to YouTube content, thus impacting the commodification process (Nurhasanah et al., 2022). To mitigate adverse consequences, the proposed policy should concentrate on current regulatory changes to ensure legal protection for content producers and to address issues related to exploitation, alienation, and inadequate remuneration within the realm of media professionals (Habibi, 2022). This action has the potential to reduce the negative impact of commodification on YouTube in Indonesia.

The commodification process on YouTube in Indonesia reflects patterns observed on various social networking platforms around the world. In Indonesia, YouTube, similar to platforms in other locations, generates innovative content, audiences, and influences to generate revenue through commercial transactions and conventional exchange systems (Juanita, 2023). These procedures include catering to audience preferences, developing engaging content, and building collaborations with advertisers and brands to leverage attention and engagement. The commodification of workers, such as content producers, is evident due to the pressure to create profitable content while facing problems such as exploitation and disengagement. In general, YouTube's commodification method aligns with the platform's broader strategy, highlighting the monetization of user interactions and audience sales to advertisers.

The findings obtained from the research contribute to illuminating the implications for theoretical understanding across multiple domains. The investigation revealed the strategies used by @menjadimanusia.id and GoFood in the commodification of labor and content (Adi et al., 2021), in addition to the utilization of social media for news distribution and audience monetization by Tribunnews.com (Villalobos-López, 2022). These examples serve as illustrations of the convergence between political economy communication and media, highlighting the exploitation of digital labor and profit-driven content. Furthermore, scientific inquiry underscores the dynamic landscape of interconnected societies, where social media takes an important role in disseminating information and engaging audiences (Muslikhin et al., 2021). Insights into these implications are critical to understanding the complex dynamics of commodification, media economics, and social frameworks in the contemporary digital age.

Practical advice to protect creators, strengthen cultural identity, and reduce the adverse consequences of commodification on YouTube Indonesia involves implementing legal protections for viewers against objectionable content (Evanalia et al., 2023), promotion of diverse content that goes beyond conventional norms (Indrianingsih & Budiarsih, 2022), and encouraging creators to uphold cultural integrity in their content creation (Naibaho et al., 2023). In addition, creating a nurturing environment for content creators to fight mutual exploitation and marginalization (AR et al., 2022) by increasing supervisory measures in digital media to assess content quality and audience acceptance (Nurhasanah et al., 2022), is crucial. Underscoring the importance of ethical content creation and audience engagement can help align commercial interests with cultural preservation and creator well-being. These suggestions are geared towards safeguarding creators' rights, upholding cultural values, and reducing the adverse impact of commodification on the YouTube landscape in Indonesia.

## **II. RESEARCH METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method to understand commodification in the era of network society, especially on the Indonesian YouTube platform. This literature study aims to identify, analyze, and synthesize information present in academic literature, industry reports, and other reliable sources.

## **III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

### **3.1. Key findings about the process of content commodification on YouTube Indonesia**

YouTube's policies and algorithms have a significant impact on the process of commodifying content in Indonesia. Content regulation on the platform, which is often influenced by American culture, clashes with stricter social norms in Indonesia, resulting in controversies such as those involving Awkarin and Young Lex (Wahyuningtyas, 2023). In addition, Indonesian content creators such as Kimbaba Family strategically navigate the commodification of content by presenting Sundanese culture to attract audiences and generate revenue, demonstrating the influence of digital traffic on content development and audience engagement (Lee, 2022). Concerns regarding algorithmic pricing and implicit collusion among sellers in Indonesia's concentrated market underscore the need for a deeper understanding of algorithm-facilitated anti-competitive behavior,

underscoring the important task of identifying such practices to ensure fair competition (Nurhasanah et al., 2022). In essence, YouTube's policies and algorithms play an important role in shaping the commodification of content in Indonesia, striking a balance between cultural considerations, financial incentives, and competition issues.

### **3.2. Impact of Commodification on Content Creators and Audiences**

The commodification of content on YouTube in Indonesia has shown a positive impact on content creators. Through content commercialization, content creators such as Baim Paula and Kimbaba Family have managed to attract a wide audience, generate a large audience, and increase their income through advertising (Evanalia et al., 2023). This procedure has allowed them to produce popular and profitable programs that resonate with viewers' preferences, resulting in increased digital traffic and financial gains (Nurhasanah et al., 2022). In addition, the commercialization of workers in this content production process has empowered content creators to maintain their visibility on the platform and leverage the ingenuity and contribution of their team members, despite facing obstacles such as exploitation and isolation (Adi et al., 2021). Overall, the commercialization of content on YouTube in Indonesia has facilitated creators' progress and triumphs by leveraging audience engagement and opportunities for monetization.

The commercialization of content, as seen on various digital platforms such as YouTube and GoFood, has indeed resulted in adverse effects for content creators and viewers. The commercialization of content, audience, and labor on platforms such as YouTube and GoFood has contributed to the exploitation and insecurity of creators and workers (Adi et al., 2021). This phenomenon often leads to meager pay for media workers, alienation, and normalization of exploitation, which ultimately impacts the quality of the content produced (Evanalia et al., 2023). In addition, the prevalence of creative industries stemming from the commercialization of copyright has limited the public domain, potentially limiting creativity and user rights (Macmillan, 2013). Content commercialization not only leverages attention but also commercializes all types of interactions, affecting the well-being and prominence of content for creators and audiences (AR et al., 2022).

### **3.3. Content Creators' Response and Strategy to Commodification Pressure**

Content creators on YouTube Indonesia usually use various strategies in response to pressure related to commodification. They often take part in the commodification of content and workers to attract viewers and generate profits (Nurhasanah et al., 2022). This process entails packaging cultural components, such as Sundanese traditions or Korean influences, with the aim of attracting a wide audience and increasing online traffic (Evanalia et al., 2023). In addition, challenges such as heavy workloads and inadequate remuneration can be faced by content creators, encouraging them to persist in commodification practices to enforce their presence on the platform and reap the benefits (Ryan & Holmes, 2009). Certain content creators, such as Deddy Corbuzier, initially resisted media monopolies but eventually adapted their content to fit prevailing trends for financial gain, suggesting a transition towards profit-oriented content creation (Khairiyani, 2022). In essence, this reaction underscores how creators navigate the pressures of commodification on YouTube Indonesia through leveraging cultural elements, accommodating audience preferences, and pursuing financial rewards.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

This research has revealed various aspects related to the commodification of content on YouTube Indonesia, providing deep insights into the process, impact, and response and strategies adopted by content creators.

From the results of the study, it can be concluded that the process of commodifying content on YouTube Indonesia involves complex interactions between creators, audiences, and the platform itself. Factors such as monetization policies, search algorithms, and market trends play a key role in shaping the dynamics of commodification. It can be seen that content that was originally personal and creative can turn into commodities that are traded for economic gain.

The impact of commodification of content on YouTube Indonesia is very diverse. On the one hand, content creators can experience increased revenue and professionalization of their content. However, on the other hand, there is a risk of influence on the originality and creativity of content, as well as pressure to produce content that matches market trends and desires.

The response and strategies adopted by content creators also vary. Some creators leverage commodification to increase their visibility and earnings, while others choose to stay focused on the quality and artistic value of their content. Responses are also seen in the form of content diversification, collaborations with brands, or deeper engagement with fan communities.

In conclusion, YouTube Indonesia is a dynamic arena where content commodification occurs continuously. This research makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of YouTube's role in the networking community and highlights the challenges and opportunities faced by content creators in the face of the commodification phenomenon. By understanding this dynamic, it is hoped that an environment can be created that supports a balance between commercial and creative aspects in content production on the Indonesian YouTube platform.

These conclusions reflect the main findings and implications of the study, and underscore the importance of understanding the phenomenon of commodification in the digital age and its impact on content creators and audiences.

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