



## Marginalized Voices: Homeless Media as an Agent of Social Transformation

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**Abstract.** *Today the shifting media platform usage from conventional media accounts to homeless media (HM) is an undeniable fact. Through qualitative research using a phenomenological and virtual ethnographic approach, as well as utility and satisfaction theory, this study found that HM accounts have been widely operating on various official social media platforms, filling the information gap that conventional media cannot reach, especially at the level of marginalized and local communities. Despite internal challenges still surrounding HM, it holds significant potential as an alternative information provider, especially for local and marginalized communities. HM is a crucial phenomenon in the social transformation of Indonesia's digital society landscape today. With its speed of distribution, content innovation, and social mobilization capabilities, HM opens new avenues for information democratization, public participation, and social change dynamics. Synergy between HM, conventional media, and the public, along with news content accuracy, ethics, and journalistic responsibility, will be key to achieving inclusive and meaningful social transformation in the future.*

**Keywords:** *Information democratization, homeless media, marginal group, marginalized voices, social transformation.*

**Abstrak.** Saat ini pergeseran penggunaan platform media dari akun media konvensional ke *homeless media* (HM) adalah fakta yang sulit dibantah. Melalui kajian kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi dan etnografi virtual serta teori kegunaan dan kepuasan, studi ini menemukan akun-akun HM telah beroperasi luas di berbagai platform resmi media sosial, mengisi kekosongan informasi yang sulit dijangkau media konvensional, terutama di level komunitas marjinal dan lokal. Meski disana-sini kondisi internal HM masih dibalut oleh berbagai tantangan, HM memiliki potensi besar menjadi penyedia informasi alternatif, terutama bagi masyarakat lokal dan marjinal. HM adalah fenomena penting dalam transformasi sosial pada lanskap masyarakat digital Indonesia saat ini. Dengan kecepatan distribusi, inovasi konten, dan kemampuan mobilisasi sosial, HM membuka ruang baru bagi demokratisasi informasi, partisipasi publik, dan dinamika perubahan sosial. Sinergi antara HM, media konvensional, dan publik serta akurasi konten berita, etika, dan tanggung jawab jurnalistik, ke depan menjadi kata kunci keberhasilan transformasi sosial yang inklusif dan bermakna.

**Kata kunci:** Demokratisasi informasi, homeless media, kelompok marjinal, suara pinggiran, transformasi sosial.

## BACKGROUND

In the post-truth era, information disruption has fundamentally transformed Indonesia's digital communication ecosystem, shifting the dominance of conventional media toward social platformization. Within this context, the phenomenon of *homeless media* (abbreviated HM hereafter) has emerged: journalistic entities or content producers operating without physical office infrastructure or proprietary distribution channels. As an adaptation to the logic of platformization, HM utilize social media platforms as their primary operational base for disseminating information and content. These entities are fluid, nomadic, and rely on social media platforms and algorithms—such as TikTok, X/Twitter, and Instagram—as their sole operational foundation for the production and dissemination of information, thereby detaching themselves from traditional institutional structures.

For active social media users, particularly Gen Z and Gen Y, consuming news from mainstream media is no longer the primary choice. According to a report by Kompas, a survey conducted by Maverick Indonesia in 2022 revealed that Gen Z prefers obtaining news from social media rather than online news portals (kompas.id, 2020). Furthermore, one of the survey's notable findings showed that Gen Z chooses HM as a news source. On the other hand, a study by Riyanto (2024) states that HM has now become an effective and rapid center of local information due to audience contributions and local content circulating on social media. Not only that, many mainstream media journalists also utilize homeless media to monitor the early development of up-to-date information at the local level.

The legitimacy of HM is no longer questioned merely on the basis of licensing formalities or institutional status. Instead, HM excel in speed and depth of local penetration through crowdsourced information mechanisms involving audiences. This effectiveness has created a new form of mutualistic symbiosis, in which mainstream media journalists—often constrained by bureaucracy and limited regional resources—now rely on homeless media as an early sensor to map social dynamics at the local level. This indicates a paradigm shift in the face of digital media, from traditional gatekeeping toward decentralized information-network collaboration (Riyanto, 2024).

HM emerged as a response to the limitations of mainstream media in addressing local issues and advocating for marginalized voices. Conventional media are often

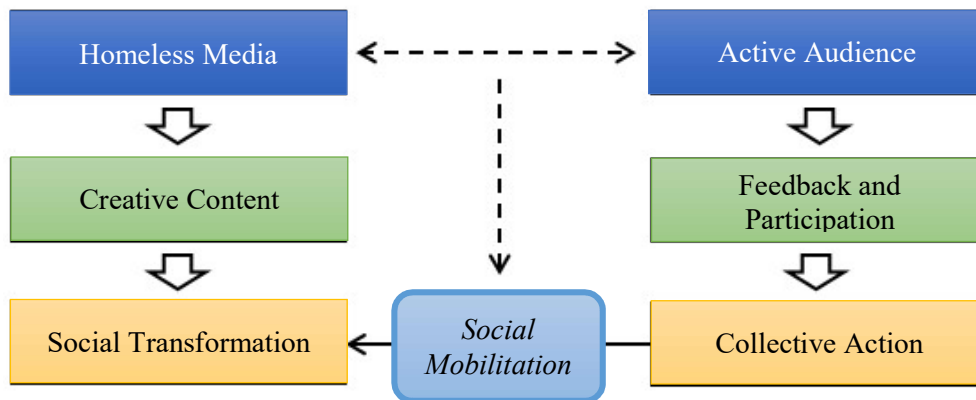
entangled in administrative complexities, bureaucratic constraints, and particular business interests, which ultimately limit the diversity of narratives. In contrast, HM offers space for citizen journalism and alternative discourses that are inclusive and contextual, while simultaneously empowering marginalized communities and advocating for local issues. Through creative and interactive forms of presentation, HM is able to build emotional closeness with its communities and strengthen public participation in socio-political discourse (Azzahra & Masitoh, 2025: 44).

The HM phenomenon also reflects changes in public information- consumption patterns, particularly among young generations who increasingly rely on social media as their primary source of news and entertainment. Gen Z, for instance, tends to seek content that is fast, easily accessible, and relevant to their needs. From the perspective of young people, HM is considered capable of presenting content that is light yet informative, while also utilizing interactive features that enable audiences to become media content producers rather than merely audiences or media consumers (Giobriandi, 2023). This reality certainly opens new opportunities for the democratization of information and the process of community empowerment among netizens.

However, behind this great potential, HM also faces various serious problems and challenges. The absence of formal regulations and strict journalistic standards makes HM vulnerable to the spread of false information or hoaxes. In addition, HM's dependence on social media platforms may limit the reach of content that is considered less commercially appealing, thereby affecting its existence, prospects, and long-term sustainability. Other urgent challenges that must be addressed include legal risks, minimal protection for HM managers, and issues of credibility in building and maintaining public trust.

In the context of social mobilization and social transformation, HM plays a strategic role as an agent of change capable of raising social issues that have long been marginalized, such as social inequality, minority rights, and environmental issues. HM is not only proficient in disseminating information, but also in mobilizing communities to actively participate in social actions and campaigns for change. In other words, HM is a rapidly growing digital media phenomenon in the social media era, where it does not possess a 'home' (an independent website or application), but instead relies entirely on third-party platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter/X, TikTok, and other social media platforms for content distribution and intensive social interaction with audiences.

**FIGURE 1. Conceptual Relationship between Homeless Media and Social Transformation**



Source: Modified by the author

From the various existing studies, HM is perceived as a form of media that plays an important role in shaping collective awareness and strengthening participatory democracy in the digital era. This indicates that HM can have a significant impact in stimulating the dynamics of social change. In practice, HM not only offers rapid content distribution and low operational costs, but is also capable of reaching broad audiences without geographical limitations. Therefore, the existence and dynamics of HM in the digital era have become an interesting phenomenon to examine within the context of digital social transformation.

### THEORITICAL REVIEW

HM is a digital media phenomenon that operates solely by utilizing social media platforms (such as Instagram, Twitter/X, TikTok, or Facebook) as the primary platform for content dissemination. HM itself refers to the term “media without a home, without an office, or without an official website”; yet capable of reaching a broad audience.

**TABLE 1. Differences in Characteristics of Homeless Media and Conventional Media**

Aspects	Homeless Media	Conventional Media
Definition	Media whose content is distributed entirely through social media platforms without their own websites or apps (media without a home) are media that have an official home in the form of a website, app, and traditional media infrastructure, such as print, TV, and radio	Media with official homes in the form of websites, apps, and traditional media infrastructure, such as print, TV, and radio

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Main Platform	Instagram, Twitter (X), TikTok, Facebook	Official website, app, print media, television, radio
Organizational Structure	Typically managed by a small team (2 to 5 people), with a simple and informal hierarchical chain	Large organizations with long, formal, and bureaucratic hierarchical structures
Infrastructure	Without a physical office, without a formal organizational structure, without an official platform, and without official permits	Large organizations, with hierarchical structures, are characterized by strict, formal, and bureaucratic structures; they possess official platforms and permits
Content Type	Content is concise, visually engaging (short videos, infographics, memes), easy to consume	Content is more diverse and in-depth, including long-form articles, investigative reports, and live broadcasts
Content Production Process	The production process was relatively fast, informal, without a strict editorial process	The production process was formal/slow, with rigorous editorial and fact-verification stages
Distribution Speed	Very fast, content can be broadcast in real time and easily go viral	The production and publication process is longer, with editing and verification stages
Interaction with Audience	Intensive, two-way	Low speed, limited, one-way
Audience Reach	Global, without geographical boundaries	Limited, relying on physical distribution
Information Speed	Very fast	Relatively slow
Monetization	Through social media features, such as advertising, endorsements, and branded content	Through advertising, subscriptions, sponsorships, and content sales
Credibility and Trustworthiness	Still questionable, as it is managed by non-professional journalists and without a rigorous editorial process	Credible and trustworthy, managed by professional journalists with a rigorous editorial process
Regulation and Ethics	Minimal, informal	Maximum, formal
Operational Costs	Low cost, requiring only simple devices and an internet connection	High cost, requiring a large office, production equipment, journalists, and staff
Challenges	Publish news is vulnerable to hoax infection, weak quality control, and permanent dependence on third-party platforms.	Publish news is generally unverified, release costs are high, technological lag is slow, and the potential threat of audience decline is significant

Source: Data processed by the author from various sources

The main characteristics of HM include flexibility, speed of distribution, and the ability to interact directly with audiences, enabling it to become a responsive alternative

narrative space for social media users regarding sensitive social issues at a local and marginal scale (Giobriandi, 2023; Riyanto et al., 2024; Puspitoningrum, 2024).

Other prominent characteristics of HM include:

1. A means of “information democratization”. HM provides access to information to the wider public without relying on traditional media (Jenkins, 2006; Giobriandi, 2023).
2. A means of “alternative information dissemination”. HM provides educational and informative content, alternative news, and even counter-discourse.
3. A means of “literacy and public awareness”. HM helps the public improve literacy and foster critical awareness (Riyanto, et al., 2024).
4. A means of “echo chamber”. HM serves as an echo chamber that facilitates social, economic, and political issues untouched by conventional media (Riyanto et al., 2024).
5. A means of “information virality”. HM utilizes social media algorithms to disseminate news quickly, widely, and massively (Boyd, 2014).
6. A means of “public participation and engagement”. HM encourages public participation and actively involves social media users (netizens) in disseminating information (Giobriandi, 2023).
7. An “alternative and democratizing communication” medium. HM provides a broad platform for marginalized groups experiencing structural marginalization from social issues, thereby strengthening the information landscape and communication democracy (Castells, 2013; Riyanto & Hendro, 2024).
8. A means of “citizen journalism”. Citizen journalism provides space and positions netizens as news producers, enabling the emergence of more diverse and inclusive narratives, often overlooked by mainstream media due to its formal, centralized, and bureaucratic nature (Wahyudi, 2020; Simanjuntak, 2023; Giobriandi, 2024).
9. A vehicle for “social transformation via digital media”. HM is a crucial instrument in the process of social transformation by accelerating the dissemination of information and facilitating public participation; a means of building collective awareness and social mobilization through the dissemination

of critical-alternative narratives (presenting content that is interactive, responsive, creative, and innovative) (Barus, 2019; Puspitoningrum, 2024).

The following characteristics inherent to HM—which differ from conventional media—include: (1) using social media as a platform for disseminating information without relying on official websites; (2) the information presented is fast and easily accessible to netizens; (3) users can interact directly through comments, likes, and shares, so that communication is two-way with high information virality; (4) not bound by formal/verifiable Journalistic Ethics; (5); political positions are in the citizen journalism frame (active participation of citizens in the process of collecting, covering, and disseminating news/information to the public through social media, blogs, and independent news sites); and (6) focus and concentration on local and marginal issues.

Referring to the characteristics of homeless media (HM), this study adopts the Uses and Gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974) to analyze audience agency in actively selecting and consuming media content to fulfill informational needs and specific gratification expectations (Karunia et al., 2021). This theory posits that audiences are not passive recipients, but rather rational actors who utilize media as functional instruments to achieve specific goals. In the context of HM, the Uses and Gratifications theory explains the paradox where users continue to rely on platforms without formal institutional legitimacy, as long as the content offered meets the expected criteria of relevance, speed, and accessibility, so that functional utility becomes the primary determinant of audience trust, surpassing the structural credibility of conventional media.

*Second*, Nancy Fraser's theory of Subaltern Counterpublics critiques Habermas's idealization of the public sphere, which presupposes universal participation but structurally excludes marginalized groups. Fraser proposes the concept of a "counterpublic sphere" as a parallel discursive arena where subaltern groups—women, ethnic minorities, and the working class—articulate alternative narratives to the hegemony of dominant discourse. For Fraser, the counterpublic sphere serves a dual function: (1) internally as a space for deliberation and collective identity formation; and (2) externally as a platform for symbolic contestation to expand the boundaries of mainstream public discourse. Fraser's theory asserts that deliberative democracy requires a plurality of interacting public spheres, not Habermas's pseudo-consensus that obscures asymmetrical power relations (Fraser, 1990; 2007).

*Third*, Axel Honnet's (1995) theory of *The Struggle for Recognition* (the politics of recognition) postulates that the formation of autonomous identity and social justice depends on intersubjective recognition in three normative domains: love in primary relationships that builds self-confidence; respect for rights in the legal-political sphere that fosters self-esteem; and solidarity within communities of values that strengthens self-esteem. Misrecognition produces moral suffering that motivates social conflict as a normative struggle for the restitution of dignity. This framework integrates moral psychology with critical theory, offering an analytical foundation for contemporary emancipatory movements (Honneth, 1995).

*Fourth*, James C. Scott's theory of Weapons of the Weak (daily routine resistance). This theory explains that subordinate groups rarely engage in open resistance, but instead adopt covert, decentralized, and low-risk forms of everyday resistance—such as gossip, satire, symbolic delay, or silent defiance. This resistance is collective, functioning to undermine the legitimacy of power, slow the implementation of repressive policies, and maintain moral autonomy without direct confrontation. This concept emphasizes subaltern agency in spaces of power imbalance and shifts the focus of analysis from revolutionary resistance to persistent micro-political practices. In a digital context, satirical narratives or memes can be understood as contemporary extensions of these symbolic “weapons” (Scott, 1985).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative research design with an inductive approach and descriptive-interpretive analysis to comprehensively explore the HM phenomenon and its relationship to social transformation. The research focuses on an in-depth explanation of communication practices, the construction of meaning, and the socio-cultural implications formed within the HM ecosystem, drawing on Sugianto's (2015) methodological framework.

To understand the subjective dimensions and experiences of HM actors, this study integrates a phenomenological approach (Halaluddin, 2018) with virtual ethnography approach (Hine, 2015). The phenomenological approach allows for the exploration of the essence of individual consciousness and perception in responding to social change through HM, while virtual ethnography facilitates non-participatory observation of

dynamic digital content, interactions, and culture in social media spaces—without a physical presence in the field.

Data collection was conducted through systematic observation of HM accounts on various social media platforms, using digital archival documentation techniques in the form of posts, comments, and audience interaction patterns. Data analysis was conducted thematically and interpretively to identify narrative patterns, communication strategies, and socio-digital dynamics that reflect the role of HM in the process of social transformation.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study explores the role of HM in building interactions with Gen Z and Gen Y, articulating alternative narratives and marginalized issues, and encouraging social mobilization and transformation. These dynamics are inseparable from the disruption of the digital communications industry, which has fundamentally transformed the ecosystem of information dissemination and user engagement in the contemporary era.

### **Homeless Media and Engagement**

With a relatively high number of followers (user engagement), HM has now become a central actor in meeting the information needs of internet users, particularly local residents (or netizens). Engagement is the intense interaction that occurs between HM accounts and their audiences on social media. This interaction can take the form of likes, comments, subscriptions, or news shares, which can be used as indicators of audience interest and engagement with the posted news content.

This is because local residents are currently quite active on social media, and HM offers content that is engaging and relevant to local needs. This high engagement is reflected in HM's speed in disseminating information, its broad reach, and its rapid interaction across various social media platforms with local residents.

A study by Remotivi (2020) shows that HM emerged in response to the information gap left by mainstream media in covering local issues. In large cities like Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, and Medan, the public feels that national media (especially streaming broadcasters such as RCTI, SCTV, Indosiar, TVRI, MetroTV, ANTV, tvOne, Kompas TV, and Net TV) tends to focus more on national or international political and economic issues. Conversely, local events that directly impact daily life are

often overlooked. HM fills this gap (niche market) by utilizing social media platforms that are closer and more relevant to local communities. They offer information that is not only fast but also tailored to the needs of local communities. This, as reviewed by John Arvin Glo (2023), aligns with the uses and gratifications theory of Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) in communication studies. Uses and Gratifications theory assumes that audiences actively seek out media (as news/information sources) that are assumed to meet their needs.

**Figure 2. Percentage of Homeless Media Platforms Preferred by Teenagers and Young Adults for Personal Branding Needs**

Platform	Persen
Facebook	70%
Instagram	41%
Don't use	26%
LinkedIn	15%
YouTube	14%
Messenger	9%
Twitter	8%
Pinterest	4%
Snapchat	1%

Source: Social Media Examine / kompasiana.com

One of the main advantages of HM (whose motto is “fast and local”) is its flexibility in gathering and disseminating information. Unbound by bureaucracy, complex editorial procedures, or rigid journalistic principles, HM can respond to events in near real time. Active community participation is also a key element. The public is not only a consumer of information but also a contributor, sending reports, photos, or videos directly from the scene.

Often, the topic is not new. However, active public participation directly provides new perspectives that were previously unimagined. This enriches information on the topic being discussed, while simultaneously breaking down the dichotomy between producers and consumers of information. In the concept of participatory culture, Jenkins (2006) states that active audience involvement in content production and distribution creates a more democratic communication ecosystem; maximizes the flow of information to be more horizontal, circular, and inclusive; and HM fulfills Jenkins's thesis.

Building a solid community and personal branding is key for young people who want to appear elegant on social media. HM domains, such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, or YouTube, are currently the main platforms that can be used as effective tools for building a personal brand and community development. Before starting to build a personal brand, they must be ready to define their values and the message they want to convey, highlight their passions and added value, or craft the best narrative they want to promote (shafiq.id, 2024).

Figure 3. Screenshot @folkative; Figure 5. Screenshot @opiniid



Source: [instagram.com/folkative/?hl=id](https://www.instagram.com/folkative/?hl=id); [www.instagram.com/opiniid/](https://www.instagram.com/opiniid/)

One of the HM accounts that frequently displays news content on Instagram is @folkative. Founded in 2016, this account carries the theme "Creative Culture" and targets Gen Z and millennials. Indonesian pop culture content, covering news, arts, culture, and brands, is currently in high demand, becoming a popular tool for folkative to attract a large readership (Simanjuntak, 2023). Currently, @folkative has approximately 6.5 million followers and has been verified by Instagram. The @folkative account, a platform for disseminating the latest and viral information, has led Generation Z and millennials to prefer reading and following the latest and viral news, due to its simple, concise, light, straightforward, and clear presentation.

Second, the @opini.id account is another example of an HM platform that focuses on presenting opinions and the latest news quickly. Formed in 2012, @opini.id was previously a news portal called opini.co.id. Due to competition from similar HM media outlets, opini.co.id changed its name to @opini.id in 2014. By the end of 2024, the @opini.id account had approximately 574,000 followers. This account practices an online journalism model that utilizes websites and social media platforms to disseminate news,

including Instagram, which focuses on voicing aspirations and raising sensitive issues that are relatively current, factual, and valid (Putri, 2018).

**Figure 4. Screenshot from @merapi\_uncover/;**  
**Figure 5. Screenshot from @folkshitt/**



Source: [instagram.com/merapi\\_uncover/](https://www.instagram.com/merapi_uncover/); [www.instagram.com/folkshitt/](https://www.instagram.com/folkshitt/)

Third, the @merapi\_uncover account. This account provides local information about Mount Merapi's activity, providing quick updates that are highly useful for the local community and its followers on social media. Based on Instagram and Twitter (X), the @merapi\_uncover account was founded in 2011 and currently has approximately 941,000 followers. Besides focusing on sharing information about Mount Merapi, it also shares information on tourism events, natural disasters, traffic, accidents, crime, and various local information in Yogyakarta and its surrounding areas. This account actively posts photos, videos, and real-time updates, often breaking news related to events in the area, such as traffic accidents and traffic jams. The content presented is informative and timely, making this account a widely relied upon source of local news for direct and reliable updates (Sari & Sa'idah, 2025).

Fourth, the account @folkshitt.id, an HM account that addresses social and cultural issues in an engaging and youth-friendly style. @folkshitt.id is a popular account with approximately 2 million followers. This account is known as a source of trending news and local “shitpost” content, popular among Generation Z. @folkshitt.id regularly shares content in the form of photos, videos, and memes that address current issues with a slang and humorous style typical of young people. The uploaded content often uses slang and acronyms, reflecting informal communication, creating a friendly and emotionally close atmosphere with its followers (Khatimah & Rohainy, 2024).

Fifth, the @merekamjakarta account is an Instagram account with approximately 244,000 followers. This account focuses on archiving and documenting life and events occurring around Jakarta. This account's routine activities include sharing photos, videos, and the latest information about Jakarta, such as traffic accidents, social assistance, traffic jams, fires, and daily activities of residents. The uploaded content is informative and documentary-style, making this account a source of local news, helping the public receive fast and accurate updates on the situation in the capital.

Furthermore, the @merekamjakarta account also acts as a media partner with various communities and other local media outlets, strengthening its coverage and information dissemination network in Jakarta and the surrounding areas. This account also has an educational character, inviting netizens to participate in recording and reporting events in Jakarta, thus building a participatory community in citizen journalism. @merekamjakarta is an Indonesian News Agency (HM) account that combines documentation, citizen coverage, and the rapid and reliable dissemination of local information, especially for Jakarta residents seeking fast and instant information.

Other well-known Indonesian News Agency (HM) accounts on Instagram, known for their fast, informative, accessible, relevant, and locally specific news presentation style, include @infojakarta, @jkt.info, @bdg.info, @aslisuroboyo, @lovesuroboyo, @buletinmedan, @lombokinfo, @wargabanua, @kalseltime, @banjarinfo, @kabarsamarinda, @infopadang, @bushcoo, and dozens of others. Popular national-focused HM accounts include remotivi.co.id, @infocitimedianetwork, Good News From Indonesia (GNFI), @ussfeed, @volixmedia, and dozens more.

### **Homeless Media: The Construction of Alternative Narratives and Localistic-Marginal Characteristics**

Since the beginning of the New Order, alternative narratives or "marginal voices" have been virtually unheard, if not considered absurd, in mainstream media coverage that tends to be elitist, Jakarta-biased, and controlled by the central government. Citizens' access to information to voice their opinions and participate in political, economic, social, and cultural life under the control of the development regime was virtually unheard of. However, since the political reforms of 1998 (and the advent of the internet and the boom in social media), the mass media (especially those initiated by critical journalists, activists, students, and democracy advocates) have realized the need to champion

alternative narratives and equal rights for the voices of marginalized groups. The “business” and “elitist” media need to be corrected. The existence of the media (as the fourth pillar of democracy) remains crucial for the continued “breath of democracy”, but it must be accompanied by the presence of alternative media oriented towards advocacy on public issues, particularly to voice the aspirations and interests of minority and vulnerable groups (Nugroho et al., 2013; Castells, 2013).

In this context, HM emerged as a response to the limitations and dissatisfaction of the public (especially local communities/residents) with mainstream media, which often ignores (if not obscures) the dynamics of local issues or the aspirations of marginalized/vulnerable groups at the local level. Mainstream media tends to focus on general, commercially profitable national or international news, often marginalizing the unique and specific dynamics of local issues surrounding the realities of minority and vulnerable groups at the local level (Riyanto & Hendro, 2024).

HM, which operates without a “home” and primarily utilizes social media as its base, provides a platform for voices that have previously been underheard. HM serves as an alternative channel that can address issues “out of reach of conventional media”, such as community-level social issues, local environmental issues, minority rights, and other local issues (Riyanto & Hendro, 2024; Widodo, 2024). HM exists as an alternative source of information outside the mainstream media, highlighting topics that are not only light and relevant to people's daily lives, but also provide sensitive news not covered by the mainstream media. Some of the local and sensitive issues frequently raised include:

*First*, social injustice issues. HM frequently highlights issues of social injustice often overlooked by the mainstream media, such as violence, poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and legal disparities. HM gives voice to those who experience legal injustice and encourages concrete action. For example, by highlighting the issue of legal injustice as an alternative narrative that filled social media content/pages in the murder case of Vina Dewi, also known as “Vina Cirebon”, with the sole suspect Muhammad Rizky, also known as “Eki di Cirebon”, eight years ago. According to an analysis by kompas.com (2024), much digital media content has sparked netizens’ attention, focusing on the details of the Vina Cirebon murder case and efforts to resolve it legally.

The most attention-grabbing content was a summary of the Vina case on Denny Sumargo’s podcast uploaded by the Twitter account (X) @dramatiktokid on May 15,

2024. This content received more than 7.6 million impressions with 63,400 interactions from netizens using the Twitter account (X). Meanwhile, other content that also received a lot of netizen attention was an upload on TikTok that highlighted the story of the intervention of two mysterious men during the making of the film *Vina*. This content has been watched by 1.46 million viewers and received 38,300 interactions from TikTok users. On the Instagram platform, the upload of news about the *Vina* Cirebon case from the account @inversi.id received 1,640 likes.

**Figure 6. Screenshot from @inversi.id; Figure 7. Screenshot from @tanahuntukrakyat**



Source: [instagram.com/p/CdupL7EOeHI/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CdupL7EOeHI/); [instagram.com/inversimedia/](https://www.instagram.com/inversimedia/)

Second, environmental issues, such as the environmental crisis affecting many regions in Indonesia, such as deforestation, land grabbing, and industrial waste pollution, also became the focus of HM's reporting. They are able to make often small and local environmental issues go viral and garner widespread attention, thus prompting a response from the government and relevant parties.

Another example is the news coverage of food estate projects in Papua and Central Kalimantan, which have led to agrarian conflicts, peatland degradation, and the eviction of indigenous communities. The coverage and advocacy of these issues were widely highlighted and criticized by regional HM news networks, particularly regarding the central government's policies, which were deemed not serious about protecting the environment. Food estate projects in both regions are predicted to increase deforestation rates by up to 600,000 hectares by 2025, resulting in ecosystem damage and social conflict at the local level (hukumonline.com, 2025). Netizens' attention to the food estate issue, posted on Instagram by the account @tanahuntukrakyat (owned by the NGO Konsorsium Pembangunan Agraria), received 5,960 likes.

Furthermore, the flooding that occurred in various regions, including Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi, and Cianjur (Jabodetabekjur) in early 2025 also drew attention. This flood was triggered by deforestation due to the conversion of forest into agricultural, residential, and tourism areas, which damaged the Ciliwung River Basin. HM utilizes social media platforms to disseminate information and educate the public about the relationship between environmental damage and flooding. HM frequently raises these issues because they directly impact the lives of local communities. HM presents alternative narratives that critique government policies and environmental impacts that receive less attention from mainstream media (cakaplah.com, 2023).

*Third*, local economic issues. In many cases, HM also frequently presents information related to the economic conditions of local communities that receive less attention, such as the economic impact of central government policies on rising food and staple food prices in the region, or the difficulties faced by MSMEs in obtaining central government assistance, such as Micro Business Productive Assistance (BPUM)/BLT MSME, the People's Business Credit Program (KUR), Business Capital Assistance from the Social Service, the Digital MSME Assistance Program, or Ease of Licensing and Tax Incentives. A case in point is the news coverage of the impact of industrial estate development policies in areas surrounding the capital, such as Bekasi, Karawang, and Cikarang.

HM advocates on this issue, focusing on the challenges faced by local MSMEs, which struggle to compete due to the entry of large corporations and changes in spatial planning that shift economic activity. Furthermore, licensing and access to capital for small businesses are often inadequately addressed by local and central governments. Furthermore, rising land prices and the cost of living burden local communities, especially workers and micro-entrepreneurs, pose a significant challenge.

*Fourth*, local political issues. In addition to social and environmental issues, HM also addresses political issues often too sensitive for mainstream media outlets, such as the dynamics of local political corruption, the transparency of local government policies, and local community participation in decision-making. An example of a local political issue involving a conflict of interest that has garnered HM's attention is the conflict between the National Strategic Project (PSN) and the rights of indigenous peoples. This conflict often triggers conflict between local governments, investors, and indigenous

communities who feel disadvantaged by the seizure of their customary territories and the legal recognition of their customary rights. HM actively raises this issue as an alternative narrative that is critical of government policies that are considered to favor capital interests over the aspirations of local communities (aman.or.id, 2024).

**Figure 8. Screenshot from the @amnestyindonesia account**



Source: [instagram.com/p/DAILvEtSuMn/](https://www.instagram.com/p/DAILvEtSuMn/)

From 2024 to 2025, conflicts between the National Awakening Party (PSN) and indigenous communities continued to escalate, with at least 121 cases involving the seizure of more than 2.8 million hectares of indigenous territories across 140 communities. This issue has drawn attention because it involves conflicts of interest between the central and regional governments, and indigenous communities, leading to criminalization and violence against them. Furthermore, conflicts of interest also arise in local political contexts, such as the process of establishing new autonomous regions (tempo.co, 2024).

The most recent case involved intimidation and violence by authorities against Rempang residents who strongly opposed the construction of the Rempang Eco City National Strategic Project (PSN). In the name of development, indigenous peoples' rights to land, culture, and local wisdom are often ignored by the state and turned into investment commodities. When local indigenous communities speak out and fight for their rights, they are attacked, criminalized, and accused of opposing state policy. An Instagram post by @amnestyindonesia regarding the Rempang case—which also went viral in various media reports—received 1,738 likes from netizens.

### **Homeless Media, Mobilization, and Social Transformation**

Post-reform, social media has become a primary tool for organizing community action, such as the expansion of news coverage through the viral hashtag #ReformasiDikorupsi on Twitter and Instagram, which many consider quite successful in garnering public support to pressure the government into policy reforms. "Reform Corrupted, Democracy Repressed" is the theme of the 2019 Year-End Notes, a snapshot of the deteriorating state of Indonesian democracy.

**Figure 9. Screenshot from the LBH Instagram account**



Source: [instagram.com/p/C1ne\\_1\\_Swop/](https://www.instagram.com/p/C1ne_1_Swop/)

After 21 years of reform, Indonesian democracy has experienced significant decline in almost all sectors of life, particularly politics and law. The 2019 election, a manifestation of popular sovereignty, instead became the “worst” democratic contestation since the reform era, successfully “deceiving” and “victimizing” the people and solidifying the hegemony of oligarchies and political parties (Maulana et al., 2019).

According to Kholili’s (2025) survey of communication science students at a private university in Yogyakarta, communication science students’ trust in independent media stems not only from their more contemporary appearance, but also from their courage to raise issues close to the public's daily lives (read: gender issues, environmental issues, human rights issues, and social criticism), presented in a casual, colloquial style. While mainstream media outlets are preoccupied with high-level politics and elite drama, independent media are present in the small public space: covering citizen unrest, student movements, and inspiring stories from the suburbs.

In the eyes of Generation Z, independent media seemingly represents their own voice. Generation Z feels more connected because its communication style doesn’t position readers as objects, but as discussion partners. Mainstream media is also often

considered too “distant” from reality and doesn’t represent public aspirations. Formal language, clickbait-like headlines, and news that copies other media outlets cause mainstream media to lose its authenticity (Kholili, 2025).

HM's ability to raise urgent and specific local social issues and its creativity in developing alternative, factual narratives has sparked public attention. This is driven by the following four factors (Widodo, 2024; loker.id, 2025):

1. Rapid and widespread information distribution. Using social media platforms (such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, or Twitter) allows for real-time information dissemination to audiences. This speed facilitates rapid public mobilization on sensitive and pressing issues.
2. Engaging news content. HM presents news/information in a simple, concise, and easy-to-understand style, thus engaging netizens, especially Gen Z and millennials. Here, there is increased youth involvement, strengthening the impact of social transformation through comments, sharing, and discussions.
3. Flexible and creative in content presentation. Compared to mainstream media, HM is better able to convey social messages in a more relaxed and humanistic manner, thus making social issues more easily accepted and eliciting a quick public response.
4. Interactive and audience engagement. This allows for two-way interaction through comments, likes, shares, or polls. This intense and effective interactivity and audience engagement are thought to be able to coordinate and consolidate advocacy or social actions, such as awareness campaigns, mass opinion gathering, or protests.

An example of HM content that has been able to shift public perception on specific issues is Folkative's content on Instagram. Folkative uses simple yet engaging visuals, with concise text and easy-to-understand language. Folkative addresses social, cultural, and entertainment issues with a light yet informative approach, thus reaching and influencing public perception, particularly among young people. Furthermore, HM channels like Good News From Indonesia (GNFI) are also known for their effectiveness in developing alternative narratives that are more relaxed and creative than those of mainstream media. By focusing on specific issues, such as local news or specific social issues, they are able to become primary sources of reference and change the public’s

perspective on these issues through lighter, more accessible delivery (Simanjuntak, 2023).

Another example is the HM account @ussfeed, which presents political issues in a lighthearted and interactive style, thereby increasing the political interest and participation of Gen Z—who tend to seek simple news content and to-the-point headlines. The @ussfeed account frequently creates short content or posts on Instagram and TikTok that explain the political process, voting rights, and current political issues in easy-to-understand language and engaging visuals (Rumanti & Hendro, 2024).

**Figure 9. Screenshots of the @folkative, @crativox, and @jogjainfo accounts**



Source: teraspers.uajy.ac.id, 2024

Furthermore, the accounts @aslisemarang and @sejarahwonosobo also frequently raise local issues and encourage the public to actively participate in promoting environmental awareness issues such as deforestation, flooding, and the impacts of infrastructure projects that harm local communities. This content is often accompanied by calls to participate in social action, fundraising, or public policy advocacy (Puspitoningrum, 2024).

Several HM accounts also frequently highlight cases of corruption and social injustice at the regional level, which then sparks public discussion and pressure on local governments to act. This content sparks solidarity and citizen mobilization to oversee legal processes and policy changes. HM accounts that focus on uncovering corruption cases, including anti-corruption education and social mobilization, are the @KPK\_RI account on TikTok and the @official.kpk account on Instagram. Both accounts were officially launched by the KPK in September 2024; specifically created to attract the

participation of the younger generation—especially Gen Z and Gen Y—in corruption eradication efforts by presenting creative, innovative, and interactive content.

**Figure 11. Screenshot Account @kpk\_ri;**  
**Figure 12. Screenshot Account @official.kpk**



Source: [www.tiktok.com/@kpk\\_ri](https://www.tiktok.com/@kpk_ri); [www.instagram.com/official.kpk/](https://www.instagram.com/official.kpk/)

Some Homeless Media (HM) accounts adopted a participatory journalism model by inviting content contributions (news, photos, videos) from followers to strengthen audience solidarity and ownership. Accounts like @solokini and @aslisemarang illustrate this practice: the former leverages media convergence for creative presentations of local news, while the latter focuses on building a digital community that cares about the dynamics of Semarang City.

The active involvement of audiences in the production and distribution of media content has created a more democratic digital ecosystem for HM, enabling a more horizontal and inclusive flow of information. The emergence of this phenomenon presupposes public autonomy in choosing media outlets based on their potential for democratizing information. In particular, HM's ability to disseminate information quickly and widely, present relevant and engaging content for its followers, empower citizen journalism, and build interaction and engagement with its community are all factors that position HM as a strategic medium for encouraging active public participation and social transformation in the current digital era.

## CONCLUSION

Homeless media (HM) in Indonesia, as digital entities without formal editorial infrastructure, fill local information gaps through algorithmic speed and flexibility. While they have the potential to democratize information and mobilize public participation, HM face crucial challenges related to accuracy and credibility. Therefore, synergy between

HM, conventional media, and public literacy is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable, inclusive and meaningful social transformation.

The expanding role of HM is a fact that is difficult to deny, although HM's internal conditions are still beset by various challenges. HM has great potential to become an alternative information provider, particularly in raising public awareness and driving social change. Moving forward, the risk of misinformation must also be anticipated. Content accuracy must remain a priority, ensuring that efforts to disseminate information quickly remain grounded in journalistic ethics and responsibility, ensuring HM can provide maximum benefits without compromising audience trust.

In conclusion, HM is a crucial phenomenon in the social transformation of digital society. With its speed of distribution, content creativity, and social mobilization capabilities, HM opens up new space for the democratization of information and public participation. However, issues of information quality, platform dependency, and credibility must be addressed in the future so that HM can contribute positively and continue to influence social change. Synergy between HM, conventional media, and the public is key to the success of inclusive and meaningful social transformation in the future.

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