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AUDIENCE TRUST IN HOMELESS MEDIA: CREDIBILITY, CONTENT QUALITY, AND ENGAGEMENT ON INSTAGRAM EVIDENCE FROM THE @INFOBANDUNGKOTA INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT

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ABSTRAK

Media informasi lokal yang beroperasi terutama melalui platform media sosial semakin berperan sebagai perantara informasi komunitas. Namun, bukti empiris mengenai faktor-faktor yang berkaitan dengan kepercayaan audiens terhadap homeless media masih terbatas. Penelitian ini menganalisis hubungan kredibilitas informasi, kualitas konten, dan keterlibatan media sosial dengan kepercayaan audiens terhadap akun Instagram @InfoBandungKota di Bandung Raya. Penelitian menggunakan desain survei kuantitatif eksplanatori potong lintang dengan 285 responden yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Responden merupakan pengguna Instagram berusia minimal 18 tahun, berdomisili di Bandung Raya, mengikuti akun @InfoBandungKota, dan pernah melihat kontennya dalam tiga bulan terakhir. Data dianalisis melalui model jalur partial least squares dengan konstruk reflektif dan pengujian bootstrap sebanyak 2.000 resampling. Hasil estimasi ulang menunjukkan bahwa kredibilitas informasi (β = 0,454; 95% CI [0,363, 0,539]), kualitas konten (β = 0,228; 95% CI [0,132, 0,324]), dan keterlibatan media sosial (β = 0,190; 95% CI [0,105, 0,278]) berhubungan positif dengan kepercayaan audiens. Model menjelaskan 53,9% variasi kepercayaan audiens (R^2 = 0,539; adjusted R^2 = 0,534). Seluruh konstruk menunjukkan reliabilitas internal dan validitas konvergen yang memadai, sedangkan nilai HTMT berada pada rentang 0,486–0,750. Kontribusi penelitian terletak pada pemisahan kredibilitas pesan, kegunaan informasi, dan partisipasi audiens sebagai dimensi yang berbeda dalam pembentukan kepercayaan terhadap media lokal berbasis platform. Karena desain penelitian bersifat potong lintang, hasil ditafsirkan sebagai hubungan statistik, bukan bukti sebab-akibat.

Keywords:
Audience Trust; Content Quality; Homeless Media; Information Credibility; Social Media Engagement

ABSTRACT

Social media-native local information accounts have become visible intermediaries in community news, yet the conditions under which audiences trust these accounts remain insufficiently tested. Existing research on homeless media in Indonesia has largely described organizational practices, while less is known about how audiences evaluate information credibility, content quality, and engagement as distinct trust cues. This study examines the associations between these dimensions and audience trust in @InfoBandungKota, an Instagram-based local information account serving Greater Bandung. A quantitative, explanatory, cross-sectional survey was conducted with 285 eligible respondents selected through purposive sampling. The respondent-level data were independently

re-estimated using a reflective partial least squares path model and 2,000 nonparametric bootstrap resamples. The reanalysis indicates positive associations between information credibility (β = 0.454; 95% CI [0.363, 0.539]), content quality (β = 0.228; 95% CI [0.132, 0.324]), and social media engagement (β = 0.190; 95% CI [0.105, 0.278]) with audience trust. The model explains 53.9% of the variance in audience trust (R^2 = 0.539; adjusted R^2 = 0.534). Measurement checks indicate outer loadings of 0.767–0.866, Cronbach's alpha of 0.874–0.902, composite reliability of 0.910–0.928, and AVE of 0.640–0.720; HTMT values range from 0.486 to 0.750. The distinctive contribution is an audience-centered model that separates message credibility, information utility, and participatory engagement as complementary correlates of trust in a platform-dependent local information account. The findings are interpreted as associations rather than causal effects because of the cross-sectional design.

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1. Introduction

Social media platforms have become important infrastructures through which people discover, discuss, and circulate information about their communities. Alongside established news organizations, locally oriented accounts operating primarily through social media have emerged as visible information intermediaries. In Indonesia, some of these accounts are commonly described as homeless media: media-like publishing actors whose primary or exclusive publishing and distribution presence is located on social media platforms rather than on an independently controlled website or conventional publishing infrastructure. The term "homeless" refers principally to the absence of a stable digital home under the publisher's own control; it does not, by itself, establish whether an account is professional, independent, citizen-led, or journalistically rigorous. Research on Indonesian homeless media describes the growth of informal local news outlets that rely heavily on platforms such as Instagram and develop locally resonant information flows (Internews, 2024).

Homeless media should be distinguished from three related concepts. First, citizen journalism refers to the participation of non-professional citizens in reporting, documenting, producing, or distributing information. It is a practice of participation and content production, not necessarily a type of media organization. A homeless media account may use citizen-generated material, but it may also employ editors, moderators, verification routines, and its own editorial selection. Second, independent digital media refers broadly to media organizations or publishers that operate with editorial or financial independence from state or corporate control. Such media may have their own websites,

applications, newsletters, or social channels; therefore, independence does not imply platform dependence or the absence of a website. Third, platform-based local news outlets are publishers that use social media or other digital platforms to distribute geographically focused news. This category is broader than homeless media because a conventional local newsroom with a website may also distribute content through Instagram. In this article, homeless media is used more narrowly to describe a platform-native local information account whose principal publishing presence is hosted on a third-party social platform.

This distinction matters because the account's platform dependence shapes the signals available to audiences. Conventional news organizations may draw on institutional reputation, identifiable newsroom structures, established editorial policies, and a stable website. A platform-native account may instead be evaluated through the accuracy and traceability of individual posts, the usefulness and clarity of its content, visible interaction with followers, and the consistency of its account-level practices. Digital journalism research has shown that audiences use multiple content, social, and platform cues when evaluating unfamiliar news sources online (Ross Arguedas et al., 2024). The credibility of a post can also be influenced by its distribution context and by perceptions of the platform itself (Karlsen & Aalberg, 2023).

The study of @InfoBandungKota by Candra and Chaerowati (2026) provides a relevant organizational account of how a homeless media actor can develop from a user-generated content aggregator into a community information intermediary. Their qualitative case study discusses verification, participatory reporting, localized communication, and adaptation to platform logics. These insights explain organizational practices, but they do not statistically test how audiences evaluate those practices or how different audience-facing cues are associated with trust. The present study addresses this audience-side gap.

Three constructs are examined simultaneously because they represent analytically distinct routes through which audiences may form trust. Information credibility concerns whether a message is perceived as believable, accurate, dependable, and verifiable. Content quality concerns whether information is relevant, timely, complete, clear, and useful. Social media engagement concerns the audience's behavioral participation with the account and its content. These dimensions may be correlated, but they are not interchangeable. A post may be visually clear and relevant yet factually inaccurate; an accurate post may be difficult to use if context is missing; and a highly engaged post may be popular because it is emotional or entertaining rather than reliable. Recent research likewise cautions against treating social endorsement or interaction as a substitute for source and message credibility (Millet et al., 2024).

The research gap is therefore not simply whether social media activity is related to trust. It is the limited empirical examination of how message-level credibility, information usefulness, and audience participation jointly relate to trust in Indonesian platform-native local information accounts. By testing these dimensions as separate predictors in the context of @InfoBandungKota, this study extends prior qualitative work on homeless media with an audience-centered quantitative framework. The study asks: to what extent

are information credibility, content quality, and social media engagement associated with audience trust toward @InfoBandungKota?

1.1. Conceptual framework and hypotheses

Information credibility refers to the audience's perception that information is believable, accurate, dependable, and supported by adequate evidence. Online credibility judgments are shaped by message characteristics, source cues, and users' verification practices (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007; Metzger, 2007; Metzger & Flanagin, 2013). Message credibility is conceptually distinguishable from general source reputation and can be measured through audience judgments of the message itself (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). For a platform-native account with a less formal institutional identity, visible sourcing, corroboration, and correction practices may be particularly important. Therefore:

H1: Perceived information credibility is positively associated with audience trust toward @InfoBandungKota.

Content quality refers to the extent to which information is relevant, timely, sufficiently complete, clear, and useful for audience needs. Information quality is multidimensional and depends on whether information is fit for the purpose for which users need it (Wang & Strong, 1996). In local information settings, timely updates, understandable captions, adequate context, and relevance to everyday community concerns can reduce ambiguity and support informed judgments. Research reviewing quality journalism on social media also highlights the need to consider journalistic quality beyond the technical affordances of the platform (Degen et al., 2024). Therefore:

H2: Perceived content quality is positively associated with audience trust toward @InfoBandungKota.

Social media engagement describes audience participation with a media account and its content, including reacting, commenting, sharing, saving, replying, and submitting information. Engagement can create opportunities for reciprocal communication, familiarity, and responsiveness, and may provide social cues about the perceived relevance of a post. However, engagement metrics do not independently verify factual accuracy. Research on social media news has found that the relationship between social endorsement, credibility, and engagement is not straightforward (Millet et al., 2024), while audience trust and participation may also relate in complex ways (Fletcher & Park, 2017). Engagement is therefore included as a relational and participatory dimension, not as a proxy for truth. Accordingly:

H3: Social media engagement is positively associated with audience trust toward @InfoBandungKota.

The proposed model specifies information credibility, content quality, and social media engagement as three distinct predictor constructs and audience trust as the outcome construct. The model tests their direct associations while recognizing that the cross-sectional design does not establish temporal precedence or causal effects.

2. Method

This study uses a quantitative, explanatory, cross-sectional survey design focusing on followers of the Instagram account @InfoBandungKota. The geographic scope is Greater Bandung (Bandung Raya), comprising Kota Bandung, Kabupaten Bandung, Kabupaten Bandung Barat, and Kota Cimahi. The account was selected because it is the focal case in the preceding qualitative study by Candra and Chaerowati (2026), allowing the present study to examine audience-side evaluations of the same local information actor.

The target population comprises Instagram users aged 18 years or older who reside in Greater Bandung, follow @InfoBandungKota, and have viewed its information content during the three months preceding data collection. Purposive sampling was used because participation required respondents to meet these exposure-related inclusion criteria. The working dataset contains 312 initial responses; 27 cases were excluded (14 that did not pass screening, eight straight-lined responses, and five implausibly short completions), leaving 285 usable responses.

The sample size was evaluated using the inverse square root method for PLS-SEM (Kock & Hadaya, 2018). With the smallest standardized path coefficient of approximately 0.19, the minimum sample estimate is $(2.486/0.19)^2 \approx 171$ cases under the method's conventional 5% significance and 80% power assumptions. The achieved sample of 285 exceeds this estimate. This is a retrospective adequacy check and should not be described as an a priori power analysis. The result supports the numerical adequacy of the sample for estimating the specified three-predictor model, subject to the limitations of purposive sampling.

Data were collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire using five-point Likert-type response options (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). The instrument operationalized information credibility through perceived accuracy, verifiability, dependability, source transparency, and balanced presentation; content quality through relevance, timeliness, completeness, clarity, and usefulness; social media engagement through reacting, commenting, sharing, saving, replying, and submitting information; and audience trust through perceived dependability, honesty, consistency, confidence, and willingness to rely on the account. These dimensions were informed by established work on online credibility, information quality, and social media engagement (Appelman & Sundar, 2016; Flanagin & Metzger, 2007; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Wang & Strong, 1996).

The respondent-level file contains 21 item variables: five indicators for information credibility (IC1–IC5), five for content quality (CQ1–CQ5), six for social media engagement (SME1–SME6), and five for audience trust (AT1–AT5). The questionnaire used five-point Likert response categories, coded from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The conceptual dimensions were informed by established work on message credibility, information quality, and engagement (Appelman & Sundar, 2016; Flanagin & Metzger, 2007; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Wang & Strong, 1996). The exact wording of all 21 items and the item-by-item source/adaptation mapping should be supplied as a supplementary instrument. The survey dates, translation procedure, expert review, and pilot-test details were not present in the files available for this revision and must be inserted from the original fieldwork records; they are not inferred here.

The supplied respondent-level dataset was independently re-estimated using a reflective partial least squares path model. Each construct was specified as a Mode A reflective block. Indicator variables were standardized; outer weights were iteratively updated using the path-weighting inner scheme until convergence. Structural paths were estimated by ordinary least squares regression of the standardized endogenous construct score on the three standardized predictor scores. Sampling uncertainty was assessed using 2,000 nonparametric case-bootstrap resamples. Measurement quality was evaluated using indicator loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT). Structural assessment included standardized path coefficients, bootstrap confidence intervals, R^2, adjusted R^2, effect sizes (f^2), and inner VIF. This is an independently reproducible PLS path-model implementation using the supplied raw file; it is not represented as a native SmartPLS 4 export. The previous workbook's rho_A, Q^2predict, SRMR, NFI, and PLSpredict statistics were not retained because the supplied workbook did not provide a reproducible SmartPLS project or case-level prediction output.

The results below are based on a single consistent analysis of the 285 respondent-level records. They replace the unreconciled values in the earlier SmartPLS workbook. The algorithm, construct blocks, bootstrap procedure, and reported diagnostics are specified above so that the analysis can be reproduced in SmartPLS 4.

The authors confirm that the 285 records are from the original field survey. Before submission, the authors must insert the actual survey dates and the precise consent procedure used in the fieldwork. The manuscript must also state the institutional ethics approval number or, where formal review was not required, the documented institutional exemption or applicable ethical basis. These details cannot be reconstructed from the spreadsheet and must be taken from the original research documentation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The working dataset contains 285 respondent records. According to the draft's data audit, all respondents answered "Yes" to the three screening questions: age 18 or older, following @InfoBandungKota, and viewing its content during the preceding three months. The file was reported to contain no missing values and no duplicate respondent IDs. Female respondents accounted for 54.4% (n = 155) and male respondents for 45.6% (n = 130). The largest age groups were 18–24 years (42.8%; n = 122) and 25–34 years (36.5%; n = 104). Most respondents lived in Kota Bandung (61.8%; n = 176), had followed the account for more than one year (64.2%; n = 183), and viewed its content daily (58.6%; n = 167). These descriptive statistics are reproduced from the working draft and should be checked against the final locked dataset.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	155	54.4
	Male	130	45.6
Age	18–24	122	42.8
	25–34	104	36.5

	35–44	42	14.7
	45 or older	17	6.0
Residence	Kota Bandung	176	61.8
	Kabupaten Bandung	52	18.2
	Kabupaten Bandung Barat	33	11.6
	Kota Cimahi	24	8.4
Following duration	More than 1 year	183	64.2
	7–12 months	64	22.5
	3–6 months	38	13.3
Viewing frequency	Daily	167	58.6
	Several times a week	97	34.0
	Weekly	21	7.4

Measurement model assessment

An independent re-estimation from the 285 respondent-level records produces Cronbach's alpha values of 0.898 for information credibility, 0.874 for content quality, 0.884 for social media engagement, and 0.902 for audience trust. The PLS path-model estimates produce outer loadings between 0.767 and 0.866, composite reliability between 0.910 and 0.928, and AVE between 0.640 and 0.720. These values exceed commonly used minimum criteria for indicator reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity. Unlike the earlier workbook, the values in Table 2 below are calculated from the supplied 285-row file using one consistent indicator set. The HTMT values range from 0.486 to 0.750, below the conservative 0.85 threshold, supporting discriminant validity. The Fornell–Larcker comparison is also satisfied: each construct's square root of AVE exceeds its correlations with the other constructs. These calculations are independent estimates and should be cross-checked against the authors' SmartPLS project.

Table 2. Measurement-model assessment recalculated from the supplied respondent-level dataset

Construct	Outer loading range	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability (CR)	AVE
Information credibility	0.827–0.857	0.898	0.925	0.710
Content quality	0.810–0.828	0.874	0.910	0.668
Social media engagement	0.767–0.820	0.884	0.914	0.640
Audience trust	0.832–0.866	0.902	0.928	0.720

Structural model and hypothesis testing

The independently re-estimated PLS path model indicates positive associations between all three predictors and audience trust. Information credibility has the largest standardized path coefficient (β = 0.454), followed by content quality (β = 0.228) and social

media engagement (β = 0.190). The 2,000-resample bootstrap confidence intervals are positive and do not include zero. Inner VIF values range from 1.381 to 1.773, indicating no problematic collinearity under the commonly used threshold of 3.3. The model explains 53.9% of the variance in audience trust (R^2 = 0.539; adjusted R^2 = 0.534). These results replace the unreconciled coefficients and R^2 reported in the earlier workbook. Predictive statistics such as Q^2predict, PLSpredict, SRMR, and NFI are not reported because they were not independently reproduced from the supplied project files.

Table.3 Structural model and hypothesis testing

Path	β	Bootstrap SE	t*	p (bootstrap)	95% bootstrap CI	VIF	f^2	Decision
Information credibility → Audience trust	0.454	0.046	9.99	<0.001	[0.363, 0.539]	1.654	0.270	Supported
Content quality → Audience trust	0.228	0.050	4.58	<0.001	[0.132, 0.324]	1.773	0.064	Supported
Social media engagement → Audience trust	0.190	0.045	4.23	<0.001	[0.105, 0.278]	1.381	0.057	Supported

*t is calculated as the absolute standardized path estimate divided by its bootstrap standard error. The bootstrap confidence intervals are percentile intervals from 2,000 case resamples; all intervals exclude zero.

Table 4. Bootstrap Confidence

Endogenous construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Audience trust	0.539	0.534

As a robustness-oriented descriptive check, an ordinary least squares regression using the unweighted mean of each construct's indicators yields R^2 = 0.535 (adjusted R^2 = 0.530). This composite-score regression is not the PLS path-model result, but its proximity to the PLS estimate (R^2 = 0.539) indicates that the explained variance is not solely an artifact of the PLS score construction. The earlier workbook's R^2 = 0.668 is not reproduced by either analysis and is therefore excluded from the findings.

Discussion

Information credibility and audience trust

The independently re-estimated model identifies information credibility as the strongest correlate of audience trust (β = 0.454; f^2 = 0.270). This pattern suggests that

followers place particular weight on whether local information appears accurate, dependable, and open to verification. This interpretation is consistent with research showing that audiences rely on message and source cues when evaluating online information (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007; Appelman & Sundar, 2016). It is also consistent with research on unfamiliar digital news sources, which identifies content, social, and platform cues as important elements of trust judgments (Ross Arguedas et al., 2024). The finding should not be interpreted as evidence that audiences independently verified the factual accuracy of every post: the construct measures perceived credibility, not an external audit of published information.

The finding should not be interpreted as evidence that audiences independently verified the factual accuracy of every post. The construct measures perceived credibility, not an external audit of published information. Perceived credibility may be shaped by source attribution, consistency, transparent corrections, the account's prior performance, and the audience's familiarity with the publisher. For homeless media, credibility-building therefore requires visible editorial routines: identifying the origin of submitted material, distinguishing eyewitness content from verified information, corroborating claims when possible, and correcting errors transparently. The result also indicates why follower counts or viral reach should not be treated as sufficient evidence of trustworthiness.

Content quality and local information utility

The reported coefficient for content quality ($\beta = 0.228$; $f^2 = 0.064$) places it second among the three predictors. If confirmed, this would indicate that audiences evaluate not only whether information seems true but also whether it is useful for understanding local events and decisions. Relevance, timeliness, completeness, clarity, and usefulness represent distinct dimensions of information quality (Wang & Strong, 1996). In a local information account covering public services, traffic, weather, community events, and municipal developments, concise presentation should be accompanied by adequate context, dates, locations, and links or references to authoritative sources where available.

This interpretation also connects with scholarship on quality journalism in social media, which argues that quality needs to be assessed in relation to journalistic functions and not simply platform-native presentation or popularity (Degen et al., 2024). Thus, visual appeal and brevity may support accessibility, but they cannot replace context, completeness, and accuracy. The practical implication is to develop content standards that balance speed and readability with sufficient explanation.

Social media engagement and relational participation

Social media engagement has the smallest reported coefficient ($\beta = 0.191$; $f^2 = 0.057$), although the supplied output indicates a positive association. If verified, this pattern would suggest that interaction contributes to trust but may be less central than the perceived credibility and usefulness of the information itself. Engagement can provide opportunities for responsiveness, correction, clarification, and community participation. However, likes, comments, and shares may also reflect emotional intensity, entertainment value, or algorithmic visibility rather than factual reliability.

This distinction is important because research has found that social endorsement does not necessarily increase perceived credibility of news posts (Millet et al., 2024).

Audience engagement should therefore be understood as a relational resource rather than a verification mechanism. For @InfoBandungKota, constructive engagement would include responding to questions, acknowledging user contributions, clarifying developing stories, and maintaining safeguards when handling citizen submissions. The goal should be meaningful and accountable participation, not maximizing interaction counts in isolation.

Theoretical contribution

The study's theoretical contribution lies in treating three audience-facing dimensions as separate predictors of trust in a platform-dependent local information account. Information credibility represents the perceived believability and verifiability of a message; content quality represents its fitness for audience information needs; and engagement represents participatory and relational involvement. Their separation avoids collapsing popularity, usefulness, and credibility into a single generalized perception of quality. This framework extends qualitative accounts of homeless media by specifying measurable audience-side relationships and can be tested in comparative studies involving other accounts, cities, and platforms.

Practical implications

The results suggest three priorities for platform-native local information publishers. First, strengthen credibility through source attribution, corroboration, transparent corrections, and clear distinctions between confirmed reports and unverified submissions. Second, improve content quality through local relevance, timeliness, clear captions, sufficient context, and accessible presentation. Third, cultivate engagement through responsive and respectful communication while retaining editorial verification standards. These practices may help a homeless media account develop trust without relying exclusively on platform popularity signals.

Limitations

Trust as a multidimensional audience judgment

The results invite a distinction between trust in a media actor and trust in an individual message. Audience trust toward an account may accumulate through repeated encounters with posts, visible editorial routines, and perceived consistency over time. Message credibility, by contrast, may be judged at the level of a particular claim or item of information. Kohring and Matthes (2007) conceptualize trust in news media as multidimensional, including judgments about topic selection, fact selection, accuracy of depictions, and journalistic assessment. Appelman and Sundar (2016) similarly emphasize that message credibility should be measured as an evaluation of the message rather than treated as a synonym for source reputation. In the present model, information credibility and audience trust are separate constructs, but both are audience perceptions collected through the same survey. This shared method may increase their observed association. Future research should distinguish trust in the account, trust in a specific post, and trust in the underlying source through separate measurement instruments and, where possible, independent behavioral or content-based indicators.

Platform dependence and the limits of engagement metrics

The platform-native character of homeless media makes engagement particularly ambiguous. Likes, comments, shares, and saves are visible traces of interaction, but they are also shaped by platform ranking systems, audience habits, and the emotional characteristics of a post. Recent cross-platform research shows that news publishers adapt content and presentation to the affordances and audience expectations of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X (Hase et al., 2023). Research on local online newspapers also indicates that users' engagement with news features varies across audience groups and interaction types (Solvoll & Larsson, 2020). Nevertheless, interaction metrics should not be interpreted as direct evidence of accuracy or trust. The smaller coefficient for engagement in this study is consistent with a cautious interpretation: participation may contribute to relational familiarity and responsiveness, but it does not replace verification.

Implications for editorial practice and platform governance

The findings suggest that audience trust should be managed through an integrated editorial system rather than a single communication tactic. First, a verification protocol can document the origin of user-submitted material, distinguish eyewitness accounts from independently confirmed information, and preserve records of corrections. Second, content standards can require a clear location, date, context, and source attribution for posts that report incidents or public-service information. Third, audience interaction can be structured to support clarification and correction rather than simply maximizing reactions. These recommendations are consistent with the broader view that platform distribution changes the conditions under which journalistic authority and visibility are negotiated (Carlson, 2017; DeVito, 2017; Degen et al., 2024). They also align with research in ISIHUMOR on public trust in local digital news and the role of account credibility, content credibility, and interaction intensity (Hutabarat & Rasyid, 2026), as well as research on Instagram engagement and institutional communication (Nataly et al., 2026).

Alternative explanations and common-method considerations

The positive relationships should also be considered alongside plausible alternative explanations. Respondents who already trust @InfoBandungKota may rate its information as more credible and its content as higher quality, meaning that reverse directionality cannot be ruled out in cross-sectional data. Familiarity with the account, frequency of exposure, perceived local relevance, media literacy, and prior experience with corrections may also influence trust but are not included in the specified model. In addition, all constructs were measured through a single questionnaire, creating the possibility of common-method variance. The inner VIF values in the structural model indicate that the three predictors are not excessively collinear with one another, but this diagnostic does not by itself eliminate common-method bias. Future studies should incorporate procedural remedies, temporal separation of measures, marker variables where appropriate, platform analytics, and independent coding of post quality.

Contribution to research on platform-native local media

By examining a platform-native account in Greater Bandung, this study contributes evidence from a non-Western local information ecosystem to debates that have often

centered on legacy news organizations or large international platforms. Candra and Chaerowati (2026) describe how @InfoBandungKota combines participatory reporting, verification practices, localized communication, and platform-dependent distribution. The present survey complements that organizational account by examining audience perceptions and testing whether credibility, content quality, and engagement are associated with trust. The findings should not be generalized to all homeless media, because accounts differ in ownership, editorial capacity, geographic reach, and verification standards. Rather, the study provides a case-specific model that can be replicated across accounts and cities.

Recent audience research further supports the need to treat trust as context-dependent rather than as a fixed attitude toward all news. Swart and Broersma (2022) show that young audiences use practical and sometimes intuitive tactics to judge news reliability, while Mangold et al. (2024) demonstrate that audiences allocate trust across journalistic media, social media, and interpersonal sources rather than applying a single generalized trust judgment. Karlsen and Aalberg (2023) find that the platform through which a story is encountered can influence perceived credibility. More recent work also shows that the perceived authenticity of social media news is inferred from reputation, endorsement, and consistency cues (Gehrke et al., 2025), and that credibility judgments about social media as a news outlet are associated with source perceptions and patterns of media use (Cha, 2025). Together, these findings reinforce the present study's distinction between message credibility, content quality, and engagement, while also suggesting that future models should include source familiarity, platform trust, and media-use intensity as potential explanatory variables.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional survey captures perceptions at one point in time and cannot establish temporal precedence or causal effects. Second, purposive sampling of followers of one Instagram account limits generalization to other homeless media accounts, platforms, and populations. Third, self-reported engagement may be affected by recall and social desirability bias. Fourth, the study measures perceived credibility rather than independently auditing the factual accuracy of posts. Fifth, all constructs were collected through the same questionnaire, so common-method variance remains a possibility even though inner VIF values do not indicate problematic predictor collinearity. Sixth, the supplied dataset does not contain survey-platform metadata, original consent records, or the full questionnaire wording. The authors should retain the original survey export, instrument, fieldwork dates, consent documentation, and any institutional ethics approval or exemption for auditability. Finally, the PLS path model was independently re-estimated from the supplied raw file and should be reproduced in the authors' SmartPLS 4 project before the final submission.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examines how perceived information credibility, content quality, and social media engagement are associated with audience trust toward @InfoBandungKota. Reanalysis of the 285 field-survey records indicates positive associations for all three predictors, with information credibility showing the largest standardized association,

followed by content quality and social media engagement. The model explains 53.9% of the variance in audience trust. The findings suggest that trust in platform-native local information accounts is related to the perceived credibility of messages, the usefulness and clarity of content, and the quality of audience participation. For practice, local information publishers should combine transparent verification, contextualized reporting, and responsive interaction. Because the study is cross-sectional and based on self-reported perceptions, these results should be interpreted as associations rather than causal effects. Future research should compare multiple accounts and platforms, use longitudinal data, and integrate independent content audits and platform analytics. Because the research uses cross-sectional observational survey data, the findings should be interpreted as associations rather than causal effects. Subject to verification of the model, the results may help platform-native local information publishers prioritize transparent verification, useful and contextualized content, and accountable audience interaction as complementary practices for building audience trust.

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