



# Journalism Beyond the Mainstream: YouTube Talk Shows and the Practice of Independent News Interviews in Indonesia

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**Abstract.** Digital journalism is rapidly growing beyond mainstream media, as media consumption behavior changes. This paper aims to analyze the style of talk show in YouTube talk shows between journalists (podcasters) and sources as a practice of independent press in Indonesia. Several YouTube channels, such as Mata Najwa, Bocor Alus, Wisnu Nugroho, Sentana TV, DI's Way, and Kanal Alternatif were selected as samples for analysis, determined by the criteria that podcasters are journalists. These channels also reflect journalistic independence and professional news storytelling. A qualitative approach was used through content analysis, including text, verbal, and audio-visual content, across several dimensions, such as narrative construction, interview dynamics, and the assertion of press autonomy outside of traditional media institutions. The analysis reveals that journalists combine professional norms with self-image, present in-depth critical discourse from diverse perspectives, and play an agenda-setting role. On the other hand, YouTube journalists also consider the pressures of monetization measurements and strive to engage viewers with each piece of news content. The implications of this research require an in-depth study of the entrepreneurial perspective in digital journalism and the development of an independent character within the profession.

**Keywords:** content analysis, digital journalism, journalistic independent, news talk show, YouTube news contents

## 1 Introduction

A shift has occurred from consuming information and content from institutional media to citizen media, reflecting changes in media behavior and the resulting consumption of diverse human needs as consumers and the public. While mainstream media has made adjustments in the context of convergence management, consumer tastes have changed, and audiences now increasingly access content from podcasters or information from journalists on YouTube. Digital platforms are fostering a new era of citizen journalism driven by professionals from within the institutional media journalism community itself. Some journalists are developing their institutional media by establishing podcast channels, while others are separating from their institutional media organizations to pursue professional citizen journalism.

In Indonesia's digital and online communication climate, a new wave of journalism is emerging, eagerly awaited and embraced by new media users. These new journalism practitioners are no longer tied to institutions or organizations like media companies, but rather, as individual professional journalists or in small groups, independently utilize online channels to host talk shows, conduct interviews with relevant sources, and disseminate the latest news to YouTube viewers. Audiences in every family indicate a shift: television in the living room is no longer a regular viewing experience, and many families even no longer own or display a television in their living room, instead providing internet access for the entire family. Each family member tends to access online media, and the frequency of physical meetings between family members is decreasing. This shift in media consumption behavior has fueled the growth of journalism through YouTube channels, enabling them to keep pace with developments in information and entertainment.

Media service providers offering information, entertainment, and education services are also experiencing changes and adjustments to consumer behavior. The phenomenon of producing and broadcasting news and information content is seen as an opportunity to establish their businesses while still working professionally as journalists, or to remain integrated with their media institutions while being given the freedom to manage YouTube broadcast channels as entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs. Journalists then create a media ecosystem with low operational costs and fast turnaround times. Several channels in this study, taken from both journalists who independently established YouTube channels as podcasters and some journalists who still work on behalf of their media institutions, are highlighted for analysis.

Talk shows like *Mata Najwa* (Narasi TV), Wisnu Nugroho's channel, *Bocor Alus*, *Sentana TV*, *Dahlan Iskan's DI's Way*, and *Kanal Alternatif* are some of the news and information channels that have become favorites among viewers, exemplifying the shift in journalism in Indonesia. These platforms balance professional integrity with the convenience of digital media, raising important questions about the independence, credibility, and construction of interview news. This study aims to analyze how these YouTube journalists position themselves as independent press actors and how their talk show contributes to news.

Various similar studies have placed YouTube talk show under various scrutiny, including comparative studies of practices across countries and across platforms within the context of media convergence (Hendrickx & Vázquez-Herrero, 2024). Researchers have also highlighted the quality of journalistic work and its presentation to the public. Changes in media institutions have also led to shifts in orientation at the individual journalist level. YouTubers and journalism are now redefining news production practices (López-González, Guerrero-Solé, & Haynes, 2021). Some are determined to continue their roles and strategies for gathering, processing, and presenting news as professionals (Lichtenstein, Herbers, & Bause, 2021). However, because most of the public finds it difficult to digest news with potentially heavy topics, YouTube journalists also play a role in processing and simplifying it by choosing TikTok, Instagram, and X channels (Mondéjar, García-Ortega, & García-Avilés, 2025). The appearance of YouTube journalists must attract viewers' attention to gain a large subscriber base. Directly and indirectly, the performance of YouTube journalists is related to the concept

of micro-celebrity, and their political community also serves as an attraction for viewers to be willing to spend time listening to the content (Lewis, 2020).

Unlike some of the previous research mentioned above, this paper explores a more specific and unique approach, such as journalism with a direct interview style with sources, as a form of in-depth discussion with experts or those related to the topic. Most professionally managed YouTube talk show models rely on this conversational style, and this keeps viewers engaged. The authentic expressions of relevant people are crucial for audience engagement.

Several research questions are raised in this paper, such as: first, how do Indonesian YouTube journalists construct news narratives within their talk show formats? Second, what forms of journalistic independence are demonstrated on selected YouTube channels? Finally, how do these platforms negotiate professionalism, personal branding, and monetization? Furthermore, the purpose of this paper is to explore the characteristics, techniques, and implications of journalism on YouTube, particularly talk shows in Indonesia, as an independent press effort to produce interview-based news.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Hybridity Journalism**

Today, it's difficult to separate journalism from digital technology, even from the history of media itself, since printing has been inherent in technology since its time. The entire process, from finding sources, recording interviews, typing and editing, to now, typing on a smartphone, tablet, or laptop, to layout, all involves digitization. Only physical newspapers have been left behind, and now digitization brings speed, innovation, complexity, sociality, connectivity, ease of storage, ease of searching, and most importantly, flexibility to journalism (Duffy & Ang, 2024) and hybridity journalism as a characteristic of contemporary broadcast journalism (Baym, 2017). Journalism on YouTube channels adopts the news talk format found on television and radio, but with a more "casual" style, reminiscent of everyday conversation, to appear more authentic and unscripted. This hybrid journalistic style is intended to create a more friendly, less formal relationship with the audience, thus preventing audience turnover (Tolson, 2006). Every professional journalist can plan and manage their own news content for YouTube podcasts, eliminating the need for gatekeeping in a newsroom involving an editorial board. Even with minimal infrastructure, YouTube journalists can operate to reach their audiences (Carlson & Lewis, 2015). This phenomenal growth means that YouTube channels now offer a democratic space for the public, with alternative narratives and voices emerging for the growth of democracy.

### **2.2 Talk Show as a Journalistic Genre.**

Television talk shows are one of the broadcast programs that attract audiences, although some viewers may be fed up with programs featuring political figures. People want to

relieve stress after work and want to enjoy entertainment on their gadgets. Nevertheless, talk shows remain a long-awaited program when people want to know and understand what is happening in their environment. Now, some of these programs have shifted from television to YouTube because, for audiences, similar TV shows can be paused or fast-forwarded while watching. Talk shows are hybrid programs that combine elements of entertainment and information (Tolson, 2001).

### **2.3 Entrepreneurial and YouTube Platform.**

This paper has an economic dimension from an entrepreneurial perspective, as the discussion concerns “entrepreneurial logic” or a part of the “platform economy.” Therefore, this paper proposes that entrepreneurship is treated as an embedded practice because journalists in media institutions separate themselves to build their companies by utilizing media convergence.

Media institutions and individual journalists manage news talk show channels on YouTube to develop viewer-oriented personal brands (Hunter, 2016). However, a country's political climate also determines the growth of digital journalism in this news service sector. The definition of entrepreneurial journalism is more about its sustainability consequences as it relates to financial resources. According to O'Brien and Wellbrock (2024), the reduction in fixed costs at the production stage has enabled smaller entities, entrepreneurs, and startups to produce high-quality journalistic content. However, one accepted belief is that entrepreneurship is not only acceptable but even vital for survival in the digital age (Vos & Singer, 2016).

YouTube is just one platform within the digital communication channel, and the same applies to journalism. YouTube is transforming distribution practices, intimacy, and tempo, not creating a new stream of fundamental journalistic theory (Ruggiero, Serafini, & Bomba, 2024).

## **3 Research Method**

A qualitative approach using content analysis was used as the methodology for various YouTube accounts categorized as news talk shows. The analysis was conducted to systematically and objectively interpret the content of the YouTube content, whether in text, audio, or video formats. The objective of the analysis focused on identifying patterns, themes, or relationships within news talk show content. Dimensions examined for news talk shows included the topics or themes discussed, the language style used, the representation of figures or groups as sources, and the framing of the issues presented.

Data collection was conducted by subjectively selecting various news talk show content on YouTube, considering categories such as "news talk show," "current issues," "hot news," "political news," "democratic dialogue," "Indonesian economy," "viral events," "socio-cultural discussions," and similar. After searching the YouTube channels, six accounts were identified for content analysis: Mata Najwa (Narasi TV), Wisnu

Nugroho, Bocor Alus, DI's Way, Sentana TV, and Kanal Alternatif. Each channel has its own unique characteristics and focusses of discussion, consistent with the categorization. In addition, the collection of content series as research samples was determined by additional criteria such as “talk show episodes published between 2023–2025,” “focused on political, social, or cultural topics,” “use of structured interview formats,” and “inclusion of public figures or whistleblowers.”

The issue analysis of news talk show content covers five dimensions such as narrative structure, framing and critical discourse, independence indicators, visual and verbal style, and audience interaction and monetization clues.

## **4 Results and Discussions**

### **4.1 Constructing the Narrative: Critical and Personal**

Journalism styles vary among the numerous news and talk show channels on YouTube; despite their hosts all having grown up in media institutions with predominantly news programming. Some news talk show channels strongly craft narratives as a distinctive identity compared to other podcasters. Mata Najwa, for example, prioritizes journalistic talk shows by combining investigative journalism, political commentary, and in-depth interviews. Current topics are discussed from a different perspective and in greater depth than formal reporting in mainstream media. The broadcast duration is divided into several edited segments, with an emphasis on original content.

Mata Najwa creates a formal structure based on data, particularly on socio-political and legal topics, including corruption, elections, democracy, and public policy. Najwa's framing is reflected in sharp, probing, yet rhetorical questions to her sources. However, it is often accompanied by ironic narratives to appeal to the public's emotional side and hold the sources accountable as figures or institutions. Najwa's wit and skill in extracting honest expressions from her sources are palpable. Distinctiveness of personal narratives to humanize public issues, such as victims of state violence and whistleblowers in corruption cases, for example. These narratives are framed with empathetic storytelling as an invitation to self-reflection in the audience, to arouse a sense of civic urgency. Mata Najwa's visuals are presented with a setting and tone that emphasize high aesthetics to the audience, full of intellectualism even in a semi-formal atmosphere, so that serious topics can be enjoyed in a relaxed manner. The visual language also often features dark lighting, the appearance of strong close-ups accompanied by an overlay of main title text as a segment divider. Najwa's performance as a host is constructed personally as a mediator of a public truth, appearing as a representation of critical citizens with a high moral position, and demanding that power work on constitutional rails.

The next narrative construct is found in Bocor Alus as a news talk show with a satirical and subcultural critique style. The coffee shop chat style is free but maintains an agenda. Meanwhile, street-style visuals are interspersed with dark humor and political criticism of young people in the style of Millennials and Gen Z, although sometimes guided by Gen Xers. The strength and appeal of Bocor Alus for viewers is its parody,

satire, and anti-mainstream aesthetic. The stories behind the news that are the individual experiences of journalists are explored and watched by students on stage, besides the YouTube channel, which is popular among young and urban internet users.

The narrative style of Bocor Alus differs significantly from most serious news talk shows on television and YouTube. Topics are discussed with a behind-the-scenes perspective, reflecting the individual experiences of journalists in the field. Journalists tell stories indirectly through humor, skits, or short visual editorials. The team of journalists who appear avoids the formal, straightforward reporting model, but instead deconstructs dominant narratives and ridicules hypocrisies in political, legal, and pop culture. These young people skillfully evade censorship and accusations of defamation through visual metaphors, absurdity, and often humorous coded language. However, their tone is imbued with rebellion against the poor political conditions and behavior that are corruptive, undemocratic, and feudalistic. Although relaxed and full of laughter, these young people are disappointed in their country's situation.

Bocor Alus performs team cohesion, not personal ones, and forgoes individual biographies, even though the journalists' names and faces have become very familiar to viewers. Collective and subcultural identities are reflected as a form of shared frustration or satire against mismanaged conditions. The identity of young people who are resisting in their way, hoping for meaningful and righteous improvements to the constitution. An aesthetic style with moving visual pieces like TikTok with glitch effects and voiceovers is a distinctive visual technique used by Bocor Alus. But most importantly, this is a reflection of the intellectualism of young people who are endlessly creative in creating political memes, viral content trends, and street slang to create codes for outsiders and insiders. The anonymous voices of student street demonstrations are also heard with a cynical tone towards the abuse of power.

## 4.2 Journalistic Independence as Branding

The freedom referred to in the context of individual journalists not working under the pressure of a media company organization. They freely define their own newsroom and lead their own teams. Independence is more about the spirit of news talk show hosts. While this varies among journalists, subtle gradations are evident from episode to episode. Two channels categorized as highly independent, *Mata Najwa* and *Bocor Alus*, demonstrate that talk show managers, both individuals and institutions (groups), firmly adhere to the principle of independence.

*Mata Najwa*, or *Narasi TV*, prioritizes accuracy and data journalism, always exercising caution in drafting editorials. This commitment to independence is built from the outset, structurally, through channel ownership, which established in 2020, also rejects commercial pressures fueled by clickbait.

Independence, with the spirit of upholding press freedom, is demonstrated by Bocor Alus, a media institution offering multi-platform products to consumers. However, Tempo TV, as the umbrella organization for digital visual content, provides the public with access to investigative content. *Bocor Alus* clearly positions itself as an independent channel, guided by the logic of the media economic cycle, supported by advertisers.

Investigative information and leaks from trusted sources are verified with ethical anonymity. Bocor Alus's stance and methods remain steadfast despite external criticism due to potential bias.

### **4.3 Interview as Dialogic Engagement**

Several YouTube news talk shows combine investigative journalism with the host's personal storytelling. Mata Najwa, for example, maintains its format, structured and based on issues, through in-depth critical questions to selected sources on its YouTube channel. Unlike Bocor Alus, the informal, young Millennial style is filled with a conspiratorial atmosphere, with low lighting and off-the-record cues. Relaxed conversations interspersed with jokes create an investigative narrative style that appeals to viewers of the same age.

Older generation journalists are more drawn to the personal experiences of their sources as inspiring stories for everyone. DI's Way uses this creative approach, modeled after veteran journalist Dahlan Iskan. Reflective storytelling with dialogue connects the host and guest to a shared narrative or action. The style of encounters with guests, venues, and conversations is more relaxed and informal. Meanwhile, Mata Najwa, while still dialogical, is tightly controlled by the host's questioning, resulting in high accountability but a less organic conversational flow. Bocor Alus tends to be a story behind the assignment of field journalists gathering information, the story behind the news, and viewers do not get a natural conversation, edited footage while certain very valuable parts are held back to be offered as paid content to viewers.

### **4.4 Navigating Monetization and Algorithm**

Several channels analyzed demonstrate the consequences of success through growth in navigating monetization and algorithms, such as Mata Najwa, Bocor Alus, and DI's Way. Viewers access Mata Najwa or Narasi TV to obtain information about public services in Indonesia, and how the government should work for the people. Monetization is not the primary goal of these channels, but rather a secondary positive impact. The channels focus on building independent credibility and personal branding. Najwa Shihab is known as a strong presenter of weekly television news and articles. High viewership reflects high viewer satisfaction and consistent positive feedback on monetization.

Similarly, Bocor Alus has also continued to build credibility alongside the well-known media institution that oversees it, Tempo. This approach includes avoiding clickbait as a monetization tactic. However, Bocor Alus prefers a verified content syndication model for public broadcast as part of its corporate policy. Tempo's editorial team oversees the distribution of this youth-driven visual news program to strengthen public trust. The indirect effects of monetization, in addition to the brand's growing recognition among younger audiences, are also a major draw for advertising traffic and the viral appeal of various events affecting the team, particularly those related to political issues. Finally, the DI's Way channel also exhibits similar algorithmic navigation towards aggressive monetization, as is the case with many YouTube channels. This

respected senior journalist inspires activating long-term viewer or subscriber engagement. DI's Way seeks ongoing dialogue and interactivity with viewers. DI focuses on audience retention and subject enrichment to achieve content differentiation.

#### **4.5 Visual Simplicity and Intimate Settings**

Visual simplicity and a familiar or intimate setting are crucial for viewers to feel comfortable and at home while watching each piece of content. Visual aspects do indeed impact viewers' psychological perceptions and impressions. On the Mata Najwa channel, visual simplicity is displayed through a dark, minimalist design with a single main table on stage, dim lighting, and graphic overlays for guest identification or data. This nuance allows viewers to focus on the conversation. The camera is positioned at a moderate and close distance from Najwa and her guests, fostering a sense of closeness and direct involvement. The overall aesthetic reinforces the impression of professionalism and credibility of the show and the host's persona, even though the content is complex, and the lighting is soft.

Bocor Alus presents visual data to complement newsroom conversations between journalists. The discussion about report progress is enhanced by edited videos with voiceovers over simple visuals such as slides, graphics, or simple moving images of journalists' progress reports. The discussions also feature an intimate setting with closeness to viewers through greetings in the storytelling, even though a group of viewers is physically present. Bocor Alus' investigative content is a strong characteristic of this talk show, providing a meaningful impact and credibility for viewers.

The DI's Way channel depicts the simplicity of senior journalist Dahlan Iskan's daily life, a home-based studio, with a casual, unadorned studio. DI welcomes guests as if they were neighbors or friends visiting to chat, creating an intimate setting in the visuals and conversations. The closeness to guests is reflected in the soft lighting and warm ambiance of two sofas or chairs. Viewers have positive references to DI's character, establishing credibility from the start, and each session builds trust in an informal setting.

Journalists' independence on YouTube channels isn't absolute; it's inherent to the economic cycle of an industry connected to consumers (audiences). YouTube channels offer more accurate algorithmic visibility measurements through audience metrics, and monetization rules create conditional independence. Credibility is built independently, including through personal branding. However, this is what is meant by "negotiated professionalism" under platform capitalism.

## **5 Conclusion**

News talk show YouTube channels in Indonesia are managed by professional journalists from mainstream media outlets who have transitioned to media convergence. In their operations, talk shows construct narratives by critically examining situations, especially those of public interest. Some channels, like Mata Najwa, maintain a struc-

tured, issue-based format with critical questions. Others, like Bocor Alus, create a conspiracy-fueled atmosphere with low-light settings and off-the-record cues, creating an investigative narrative style. Still others emphasize inspiring role models.

YouTube talk shows emphasize the role of digital journalism in building democracy, asserting its autonomy and independence while remaining committed to the public interest, fostering democracy, educating the nation, and promoting unity amidst diversity.

Dialogic interviews serve as a learning experience for democracy, engaging viewers to provide their reviews and comments, both live and in delayed form. This dialogic model illustrates the convergence of journalism, culture, influencers, and civic activism to foster democratic citizen engagement.

In navigating monetization and algorithms, talk show channels don't prioritize quantity, and professionals don't use clickbait to attract viewers. YouTube talk shows combine traditional journalistic investigation with personal storytelling, emphasizing simple visuals, dim lighting, and intimate seating on chairs.

Theoretically, this paper highlights three important perspectives that contribute to the development, namely 1) Digital convergence journalism, 2) Public sphere transformation, and 3) Hybrid professionalism, where journalists are active as media workers while simultaneously building a personal brand.

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