Watch, Trust, Engage: Turning Credibility into Audience Engagement in Tempo's *Bocor Alus Politik* YouTube Podcast

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Abstract. The rise of digital media and mobile technology has transformed how people consume information and news, with audiences now favoring audio–visual platforms. Tempo Media Group (PT Tempo Inti Media Tbk) recognize this shift by launching several YouTube podcasts, including Bocor Alus Politik. Since its debut on May 20, 2024, the program has significantly increased the number of subscribers and views of the Tempodotco YouTube channel, as well as the revenue of PT. TV Tempo. This study examines the impact of perceived source credibility—comprising expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness—on trust and its subsequent effect on viewer engagement across cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Using data from 190 respondents analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0, all hypotheses were supported. Grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, the findings show that perceived source credibility (stimulus) significantly influences trust (organism), which mediates and enhances audience engagement (response). The study provides conceptual insight for developing trust-based engagement marketing strategies on YouTube and extends the source credibility theory to digital political media contexts in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Bocor Alus Politik*, source credibility, trust, engagement, SOR model

1 Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally reshaped how people access and consume information. The shift from print-based formats to audiovisual platforms—particularly video-driven channels such as YouTube—has altered public engagement with news and political content. As noted in the Reuters Digital News Report, contemporary audiences increasingly rely on audiovisual media because it is perceived as faster, more concise, and easier to process than long-form text [1]. This behavioral transformation requires media organizations to adapt their distribution strategies to remain relevant within a highly competitive digital ecosystem.

This trend is reflected in the digital strategy of Tempo Media Group, which launched the YouTube program Bocor Alus Politik as part of its broader transformation in news dissemination. According to Tempo's internal report [2], the program has become not only a vehicle for expanding political information reach, but also a channel

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demonstrating substantial growth in audience performance and engagement. As reflected in the proposal, Tempodotco's subscribers increased from 307,000 in May 2023 to more than 1.7 million by August 2025—an increase of approximately 4,700%—while total views reached 462 million. This growth underscores the strong appeal of political digital content when delivered in a credible, interactive, and contextually relevant format.

Within mass communication scholarship, source credibility is a key determinant of message acceptance and audience involvement. Early persuasion research argues that message effectiveness is shaped by audiences' perceptions of a communicator's expertise and trustworthiness [3]. This framework was later expanded to include attractiveness as a complementary dimension that enhances perceived credibility [4]. In digital environments, influencer credibility has been shown to significantly strengthen audience trust and engagement with content [5].

Trust also serves as a critical psychological mechanism in the relationship between media and audiences. Trust is conceptualized as the belief that an information source behaves honestly, reliably, and consistently [6]. In the context of digital political media, trust in media determines whether audiences are willing to accept, share, and actively engage in political discourse [7]. Thus, credibility shapes trust, and trust functions as a gateway to engagement.

Audience engagement—whether cognitive, affective, or behavioral—is a key indicator of digital content success. Engagement is defined as a multidimensional psychological state that influences attention, emotional connection, and audience actions toward digital entities [8]. On YouTube, engagement manifests through viewing behavior, liking, sharing, commenting, and participation in political discussions. Empirical studies demonstrate that digital influencer credibility directly enhances engagement, while trust amplifies this effect through a mediating mechanism [9,10].

Although numerous studies examine credibility in commercial marketing and e-commerce contexts, research on credibility in digital political journalism remains limited. Political content carries higher sensitivity, requires stronger informational validity, and is heavily dependent on public trust. This gap highlights the need to examine how the credibility of political news hosts influences trust and engagement, particularly in the Indonesian context.

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the influence of perceived credibility on audience trust and engagement with Bocor Alus Politik, and tests whether trust mediates this relationship. The findings are expected to enrich theoretical understanding of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model [11] and provide practical implications for developing effective digital media content strategies amid an increasingly complex information landscape.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Behavior and the S–O–R (Stimulus–Organism–Response) Theory

Consumer behavior examines how individuals receive, process, and respond to information before making decisions, a process shaped by marketing stimuli and environmental factors. Consumer behavior is not merely a reaction to external stimuli but a complex cognitive process occurring within the consumer's "black box," which is influenced by perception, motivation, beliefs, and learning [12]. This perspective

aligns with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, which posits that responses do not emerge directly from stimuli but are mediated by internal states such as emotions, perceptions, and cognitive appraisals [11,13]. These organismic states play a decisive role in determining how stimuli are transformed into actual behaviors, including purchase decisions, engagement, or public participation [14].

In digital media contexts, stimuli such as content credibility and the quality of information delivery are processed internally through psychological mechanisms such as trust, which subsequently shape response behaviors like engagement. Empirical evidence shows that credible social media stimuli trigger strong emotional and cognitive reactions, resulting in higher levels of engagement [15]. Similarly, studies in political media demonstrate that source credibility influences the organismic state of trust, which in turn drives political participation and audience engagement [16]. Accordingly, in this study, the stimulus is represented by the perceived credibility of the Bocor Alus Politik host, the organism by audience trust, and the response by audience engagement.

2.2 Perceived Credibility

Perceived credibility is a psychological construct describing the extent to which audiences evaluate an information source as expert, honest, and appealing. Credibility has long been recognized as a fundamental determinant of persuasive communication effectiveness. Audiences are more likely to accept messages from communicators perceived as expert and trustworthy [3]. This perspective was later formalized into three core dimensions—expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness—which have been consistently shown to influence attitudes, perceptions, and consumer behavior [4]. Contemporary research further reinforces the importance of these dimensions in shaping message resonance and digital engagement [5].

The expertise dimension reflects the perceived competence and capability of a communicator in delivering accurate information. Expert communicators possess an authoritative influence that increases message acceptance [17]. Empirical findings also demonstrate that perceived expertise enhances consumer trust and positive behavioral responses [18]. Moreover, expertise extends beyond technical skill to include experience and relevance to the topic being communicated [19].

Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which audiences believe the communicator acts honestly and without bias. Trustworthiness arises when message delivery is perceived as transparent and authentic [4]. It has been identified as a strong predictor of emotional connection between influencers and audiences [5] and plays a crucial role in determining the perceived quality of communication [20]. In digital political contexts, trustworthiness is a key determinant of whether political news sources are perceived as accountable [7].

Attractiveness encompasses communication style, charisma, and interpersonal warmth. Attractiveness creates emotional closeness that facilitates message acceptance [17]. Studies show that attractive influencers generate higher engagement [21], while other findings indicate that attractiveness strengthens persuasion by increasing audience attention [22].

Consistent with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model [11], perceived credibility functions as a stimulus that triggers the internal response of trust, which in turn shapes external engagement behaviors. Prior studies have consistently

demonstrated that credibility influences trust [9,10,23] and audience engagement [9,24,25]. Based on this theoretical and empirical foundation, the following hypotheses are proposed:
H1: Perceived credibility has a positive effect on audience trust.
H2: Perceived credibility has a positive effect on audience engagement.

2.3 Trust

Trust is the belief that an information source acts with integrity, competence, and goodwill. Trust is defined as the willingness to rely on another party based on the belief that the party is honest and capable of fulfilling commitments [6]. In digital marketing contexts, trust is shaped by audience perceptions of a communicator's reliability, integrity, and behavioral consistency [26]. Trust in social media environments emerges when communicators behave consistently and refrain from manipulating information [27].

The indicators of trust have strong theoretical grounding. Integrity refers to perceptions that the communicator behaves honestly [26]. Competence concerns the belief that the communicator possesses adequate knowledge and ability [28]. Predictability reflects the communicator's behavioral consistency over time [29]. Benevolence captures the notion that the communicator cares about the audience's well-being [30].

Trust has been widely validated as a predictor of engagement. Empirical evidence shows that trust significantly influences multiple forms of engagement, including augmenting, influencing, and mobilizing behaviors [23]. Other studies demonstrate that trust strengthens audience intention to interact with digital content and influencers [31]. In political media contexts, trust has been identified as the primary driver of political engagement [16]. Aligned with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework [11], trust serves as the organismic mechanism mediating the influence of credibility (stimulus) on engagement (response). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H3: Trust has a positive effect on audience engagement.

2.4 Audience Engagement and the Mediation Relationship

Audience engagement represents the cognitive, affective, and behavioral intensity of an individual's interaction with content. Engagement has been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct involving information processing, emotional involvement, and behavioral actions [32]. It is further described as a psychological state encompassing focused attention, emotional attachment, and outward behavioral expression toward digital entities [8]. This concept has been expanded to include beyond-purchase behaviors such as liking, commenting, and sharing [33].

The cognitive dimension of engagement is rooted in information processing and mental investment in content [34]. The affective dimension captures emotional attachment and feelings generated during content interaction [35]. The behavioral dimension involves participatory actions such as sharing content, posting comments, and other observable forms of interaction [36]. In digital political media, engagement is closely associated with public participation and broader social discourse [37].

Prior studies demonstrate that trust mediates the relationship between credibility and engagement [23,31,38]. Credibility has been shown to influence engagement primarily through trust as a psychological mechanism [5]. In the context of digital journalism, media credibility enhances political engagement particularly when audience trust is high [16]. Following the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model [11], credibility is conceptualized as the stimulus, trust as the organismic mechanism, and engagement as the behavioral response. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: Trust mediates the effect of perceived credibility on audience engagement.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey design using a cross-sectional approach in which data were collected at a single point in time to examine causal relationships among variables. This design is widely used to analyze consumer behavior models and mediation mechanisms in digital media contexts. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using the Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) technique was adopted, as it is appropriate for predictive modeling, multidimensional latent constructs, and moderate sample sizes [39]. PLS-SEM also enables simultaneous testing of direct, indirect, and mediating effects.

3.2 Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

The population of this study comprised viewers of the YouTube program Bocor Alus Politik produced by Tempo Media Group. As no official sampling frame was available, a purposive sampling approach was applied. Respondents were recruited through an online questionnaire distributed via social media channels frequented by audiences interested in political and public affairs content. Eligibility was limited to individuals who had watched at least one episode of Bocor Alus Politik within the last three months to ensure relevant viewing experience. A total of 190 valid responses were obtained, which satisfies the minimum sample size requirement for PLS-SEM, namely ten times the largest number of indicators in the model [39]. Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained prior to questionnaire completion. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all responses were recorded anonymously. Given the minimal risk and the use of anonymous survey data, formal ethical approval was not required.

3.3 Data Sources and Data Collection Procedure

Primary data were collected using an online questionnaire administered through Google Forms and distributed across various social media platforms. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire items were adapted from validated instruments in prior studies. Participation was voluntary, and respondents provided informed consent.

No personally identifiable information was collected, ensuring adherence to ethical research standards.

3.4 Data Validity

To ensure the rigor of the measurement instruments, several validation procedures were conducted in accordance with PLS-SEM standards. Prior to data analysis, content and face validity were assessed by two experts in digital media and marketing, who reviewed all questionnaire items for clarity, relevance, and contextual suitability, resulting in minor refinements. The final dataset consisted of 190 purposively selected respondents, which was deemed adequate for PLS-SEM analysis based on the minimum sample size rule recommended in prior methodological literature [39]. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, with all values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory reliability. Convergent validity was established by confirming that all retained indicators had outer loadings above 0.70 and that each construct achieved an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) greater than 0.50. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and HTMT ratios, both of which confirmed that the constructs were empirically distinct. To test the statistical significance of the measurement and structural model estimates, a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was applied. Bootstrapping was used to generate standard errors, t-values, and p-values without relying on distributional assumptions, making it appropriate for the non-probability sampling design employed in this study. In addition, potential common method bias was addressed procedurally by ensuring respondent anonymity and counterbalancing the questionnaire order, and statistically by examining full collinearity VIFs, all of which were below 3.3. Multicollinearity diagnostics further indicated that all VIF values were below 5.

3.5 Measures

This survey-based study took a cross-sectional approach to its analysis. The study model's variables were operationalized by adapting and modifying measurement items from validated instruments used in earlier studies on digital communication and social media behavior. All survey items were multiple-choice statements rated using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The questionnaire items and the supporting literature sources used to develop each construct are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Questionnaire

Variable	Reference	Items
Credibility	[4]; [40]	13
Trust	[26]; [6]	8
Engageme	[8]; [32]	9

4 Results

4.1 Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

Table 2 Outer Loading (Initial Evaluation)

Indicators	Trust (Y1)	Engagement (Y2)	Credibility (X)	Outer Loading Coeficient	Description
X1.1.1			0.801	0,7	Valid
X1.1.2			0.85	0,7	Valid
X1.1.3			0.674	0,7	Not Valid
X1.1.4			0.724	0,7	Valid
X1.1.5			0.834	0,7	Valid
X1.2.1			0.834	0,7	Valid
X1.2.2			0.822	0,7	Valid
X1.2.3			0.842	0,7	Valid
X1.2.4			0.836	0,7	Valid
X1.2.5			0.835	0,7	Valid
X1.3.1			0.804	0,7	Valid
X1.3.2			0.843	0,7	Valid
X1.3.3			0.796	0,7	Valid
Y1.1.1	0.837			0,7	Valid
Y1.1.2	0.784			0,7	Valid
Y1.2.1	0.794			0,7	Valid
Y1.2.2	0.83			0,7	Valid
Y1.3.1	0.849			0,7	Valid
Y1.3.2	0.845			0,7	Valid
Y1.4.1	0.807			0,7	Valid
Y1.4.2	0.643			0,7	Not Valid
Y2.1.1		0.756		0,7	Valid
Y2.1.2		0.698		0,7	Not Valid
Y2.2.1		0.821		0,7	Valid
Y2.2.2		0.767		0,7	Valid
Y2.2.3		0.605		0,7	Not Valid
Y2.3.1		0.786		0,7	Valid
Y2.3.2		0.821		0,7	Valid
Y2.3.3		0.802		0,7	Valid
Y2.3.4		0.853		0,7	Valid

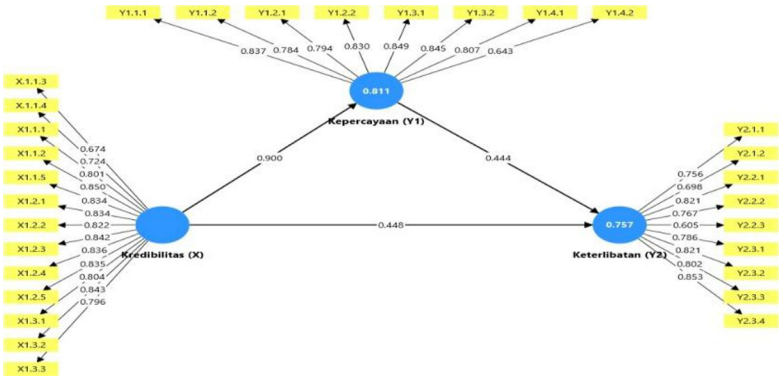


Fig. 2, Structural Model (Initial Evaluation)

The initial evaluation of the measurement model was carried out to ensure that all indicators satisfied the required reliability and validity standards. Indicators with outer loading values below 0.70 were excluded, so that only items with adequate measurement strength were retained. Subsequently, several indicators were further eliminated due to indications of high correlations with indicators from other constructs. This step was conducted using cross-loading analysis to identify items that did not load distinctly on their intended constructs. The elimination process was undertaken to ensure that discriminant validity was adequately achieved in the final measurement model.

Table 3, Measurement items and validity assessment

Construct	Indicators	Factor Loading	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Credibility	**X1.1.1**	0.793	0.952	0.952	0.675
	X1.1.2	0.832			
	X1.1.4	0.711			
	X1.2.1	0.846			
	X1.2.2	0.841			
	X1.2.3	0.854			
	X1.2.4	0.848			
	X1.2.5	0.849			
	X1.3.1	0.804			
	X1.3.2	0.85			
	X1.3.3	0.801			
Trust	**Y1.1.2**	0.784	0.898	0.899	0.711
	Y1.2.1	0.828			
	Y1.3.1	0.881			
	Y1.3.2	0.873			
	Y1.4.1	0.846			
Engagement	**Y2.1.1**	0.766	0.952	0.914	0.654
	Y2.1.2	0.716			
	Y2.2.1	0.79			
	Y2.3.1	0.823			
	Y2.3.2	0.859			
	Y2.3.3	0.834			
	Y2.3.4	0.863			

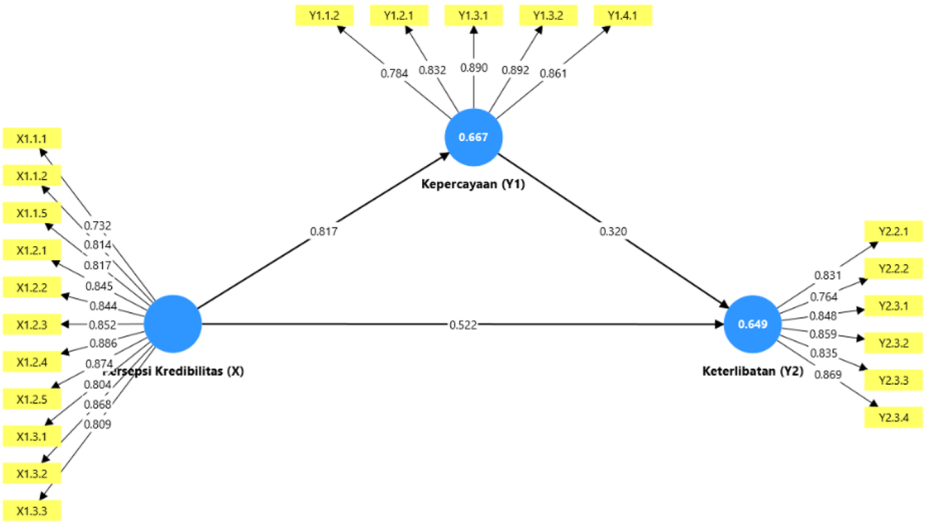


Fig. 3, Structural Model (After elimination)

All retained indicators exhibited outer loading values of 0.70 or higher, indicating adequate indicator reliability and confirming that each item meaningfully represented its respective construct. Internal consistency reliability was also well established. The Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, with most values approaching or surpassing 0.90, which reflects a high level of internal consistency among the indicators. Furthermore, convergent validity was confirmed, as all constructs achieved Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values greater than 0.50. Specifically, the AVE values were 0.675 for Credibility, 0.711 for Trust, and 0.654 for Engagement, indicating that each construct accounted for more than half of the variance in its observed indicators. Collectively, these results demonstrate that the measurement model meets the required standards of reliability and convergent validity and is suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 4, Fornell-Larcker criterion

	Trust (Y1)	Engagement (Y2)	Credibility (X)
Trust (Y1)	0,843		
Engagement (Y2)	0,729	0,809	
Credibility (X)	0,817	0,807	0,822

Table 5, Heterotrait Monotrait Ration Test (HTMT)

	Trust (Y1)	Engagement (Y2)	Credibility (X)
Trust (Y1)			
Engagement (Y2)	0,794		
Credibility (X)	0,884	0,86	

Discriminant validity was assessed using two complementary criteria. First, the Fornell–Larcker criterion indicated that the square root of the AVE for each construct (Trust = 0.843; Engagement = 0.809; Credibility = 0.822) was higher than its correlations with other constructs, confirming adequate construct separation. Second, the HTMT values were all below the conservative threshold of 0.90, indicating that the constructs were empirically distinct and did not exhibit problematic overlap. Taken together, these results demonstrate that the measurement model satisfies discriminant validity requirements and is appropriate for structural model evaluation.

4.2 Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

Collinearity assessment indicated that all VIF values were below 5, suggesting the absence of multicollinearity among predictor variables. The structural path analysis revealed that all hypothesized relationships were significant.

Table 6, VIF

Direct Effect	VIF
Trust (Y1) -> Engagement (Y2)	3.004
Credibility (X) -> Trust (Y1)	1.000
Credibility (X) -> Engagement (Y2)	3.004

After proving that there is no multicollinearity in the model, the next step is to examine the variables' explanatory and predictive power and the relationships between them.

Table 7, Results of R^2, R^2 Adjusted, Q^2predict, RMSE, and MAE

Variable	R^2	R^2 Adjusted	Q^2predict	RMSE	MAE
Trust (Y1)	0.667	0.665	0.651	0.597	0.434
Engagement (Y2)	0.665	0.662	0.642	0.602	0.462

The results indicate that the structural model demonstrates strong explanatory and predictive performance for both endogenous variables. For Trust (Y1), the R^2 value of 0.667 shows that perceived credibility explains approximately 66.7% of the variance

in trust. The adjusted R^2 of 0.665 confirms that this explanatory power remains stable after accounting for model complexity. The Q^2_predict value of 0.651 is well above zero, indicating strong predictive relevance. In addition, the relatively low RMSE (0.597) and MAE (0.434) values suggest that the model predicts trust with a high level of accuracy and minimal error. Similarly, for Engagement (Y2), the R^2 value of 0.665 indicates that credibility and trust jointly explain about 66.5% of the variance in audience engagement. The adjusted R^2 of 0.662 confirms the robustness of this explanation. The Q^2_predict value of 0.642 further demonstrates strong out-of-sample predictive capability. The RMSE (0.602) and MAE (0.462) values remain low, indicating reliable and precise prediction of engagement outcomes.

Table 8, Results of Effect Size (f^2)

	Trust (Y1)	Engagement (Y2)
Trust (Y1)		0.044
Credibility (X)	2.004	0.401

Effect size (f^2) analysis revealed that Credibility had a very large effect on Trust ($f^2 = 2.004$) and a medium-to-large effect on Engagement ($f^2 = 0.401$). Conversely, Trust had a small but significant effect on Engagement ($f^2 = 0.044$). These results confirm that Credibility is the primary driver of audience behavioral outcomes in the model.

Table 9, Results of SRMR

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.076	0.076

Additionally, the SRMR value of 0.076—below the recommended maximum of 0.08—shows that the model exhibits acceptable goodness-of-fit.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted by examining the path coefficients, T-statistics, and p-values generated through the bootstrapping procedure of the structural model.

Table 10, Results of Hypotesis Tests (Bootsrapping)

Hypotesis	Type of Effect	Relationship Between Constructs	Path Coefficient (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Conclusion
H1	Direct Effect	Credibility (X) → Trust (Y1)	0.817	0.820	0.037	21.935	0.000	Supported
H2	Direct Effect	Credibility (X) → Engagement (Y2)	0.635	0.639	0.072	8.830	0.000	Supported
H3	Direct Effect	Trust (Y1) → Engagement (Y2)	0.210	0.209	0.086	2.441	0.015	Supported
H4	Indirect Effect	Credibility (X) → Trust (Y1) → Engagement (Y2)	0.171	0.171	0.071	2.407	0.016	Supported

Using a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), a hypothesis is supported when the T-statistic exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05. Overall, all hypothesized paths were statistically significant and aligned with the proposed theoretical directions. Credibility exerted a strong positive effect on Trust ($\beta = 0.817$; $T = 21.935$; $p < 0.001$) and a significant positive effect on Engagement ($\beta = 0.635$; $T = 8.830$; $p < 0.001$). Trust also had a positive effect on Engagement ($\beta = 0.210$; $T = 2.441$; $p = 0.015$). The indirect effect analysis further demonstrated that Credibility significantly influenced Engagement through Trust ($\beta = 0.171$; $T = 2.407$; $p = 0.016$). Since both the direct and indirect effects were significant, Trust functions as a partial mediator in the relationship between Credibility and Engagement.

The results indicate that credibility has a highly significant and positive effect on trust, with a path coefficient of 0.817, $T = 21.935$, and $p < 0.001$. The coefficient approaching 1 suggests that increases in perceived credibility lead to substantial increases in trust, while the extremely low p-value confirms the robustness of this effect. Accordingly, H1 is supported, indicating that audiences are more likely to trust Bocor Alus Politik when they perceive the host and content as credible in terms of expertise, honesty, and attractiveness. This finding is consistent with classical source credibility theory, which posits that expertise and trustworthiness are primary determinants of trust formation [3]. Similar conclusions have been drawn in subsequent credibility research, demonstrating that communicators perceived as highly expert and honest generate stronger trust [4]. In digital environments, empirical evidence also shows that credibility significantly enhances audience trust [38]. More recent studies confirm that expertise and trustworthiness of digital content creators strengthen audience trust [10], and that source credibility directly reinforces trust in interactive digital contexts [23].

Credibility also exerts a significant positive effect on audience engagement, with a path coefficient of 0.635, $T = 8.830$, and $p < 0.001$. These results indicate that credibility not only builds trust but also motivates audiences to engage more actively by watching longer, commenting, liking, and sharing content. The magnitude of the coefficient demonstrates that credibility is one of the strongest drivers of engagement.

Thus, H2 is supported. This outcome is consistent with prior evidence showing that influencer credibility directly increases online customer engagement [9]. WOM credibility has also been shown to stimulate engagement behaviors such as information sharing and digital discussion [24]. Evidence from digital content contexts further indicates that expertise and trustworthiness significantly increase engagement [39]. In political communication, source credibility also enhances political content engagement through both consumption and participatory behaviors [25].

The third hypothesis examines whether trust translates into engagement. The analysis shows that trust has a significant positive effect on engagement, with a path coefficient of 0.210, T = 2.441, and p = 0.015. Although smaller than the direct effect of credibility on engagement, this relationship remains statistically significant, indicating that trust contributes complementarily to audience engagement. Hence, H3 is supported, suggesting that audiences with higher levels of trust in the channel and its host tend to exhibit higher engagement. This finding is supported by evidence showing that trust in live-stream hosts significantly increases engagement behaviors such as augmenting, influencing, and mobilizing [23]. Additional findings demonstrate that trust in influencers elevates interaction intensity and participation [31]. In digital political media, trust in media is also a key determinant of political engagement, including commenting, information sharing, and public discussion [16].

The mediation analysis confirms that trust plays a significant intervening role in the relationship between credibility and engagement. The indirect effect of credibility on engagement through trust is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.171$; T = 2.407; p = 0.016), indicating that higher perceived credibility first strengthens trust, which subsequently enhances audience engagement. Since the direct effect of credibility on engagement (H2) remains significant, the mediation is partial in nature. This suggests that credibility not only exerts a direct influence on engagement, but also operates indirectly by shaping trust as a key psychological mechanism. Accordingly, H4 is supported. From the perspective of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework [11], these findings reinforce the theoretical proposition that external stimuli influence behavioral outcomes through internal psychological states. In this study, perceived credibility functions as the stimulus, trust represents the organismic response, and engagement emerges as the behavioral outcome.

This pattern is consistent with empirical evidence from other digital interaction contexts. For instance, real-time interactivity in live streaming shopping has been shown to influence impulsive buying both directly and indirectly through perceived enjoyment, indicating that interactive stimuli trigger emotional and cognitive responses that then shape behavioral outcomes [41]. Although conducted in a commercial setting, such findings highlight a similar psychological mechanism whereby external cues activate internal affective states that mediate behavioral responses. In parallel, the present study shows that credibility does not merely prompt engagement directly; instead, it first cultivates trust, which then amplifies audience participation. These results are also aligned with studies emphasizing trust as a mediating construct in digital environments [23,31,38]. In the context of influencer communication, credibility has been shown to enhance engagement primarily by first generating trust [5]. Within political media, media credibility also fosters political engagement more effectively when audience trust is strong [16].

5 Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings and designing future research. First, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which measures the relationships among variables at a single point in time. As a result, the model cannot capture the dynamic changes in perceived credibility, trust, or audience engagement that may evolve alongside shifts in political context or content characteristics. A longitudinal design is recommended to assess the stability of these relationships over time.

Second, the sampling technique relied on non-probability purposive sampling. Although appropriate for digital populations, this approach limits the generalizability of the findings to the broader audience of Bocor Alus Politik or other political digital media consumers. Future studies may benefit from probability sampling or panel-based sampling to enhance representativeness.

Third, all variables were measured using self-reported instruments. While widely used, self-report measures are vulnerable to common method bias, social desirability bias, and respondents' tendency to provide socially acceptable answers. Although validation procedures were conducted, incorporating behavioral data—such as YouTube analytics on watch duration, commenting frequency, or actual engagement—would strengthen the robustness of future findings.

Fourth, the study focused exclusively on three constructs: credibility, trust, and engagement. However, prior literature suggests that factors such as political motivation, partisan orientation, perceived usefulness, and media literacy may also influence these relationships. Future research could incorporate moderating or additional variables to develop a more comprehensive explanatory model.

Fifth, the study examined only one YouTube channel—Bocor Alus Politik by Tempo Media Group. Content characteristics, host delivery style, and the reputation of the media organization may represent contextual factors that limit generalizability to other political channels. Comparative studies across different political content creators or across platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, or podcast audio may provide broader insights.

Considering these limitations, future research has substantial opportunities to strengthen methodological rigor, broaden the scope of inquiry, and deepen understanding of audience behavior in digital political media environments.

6 Conclusion

This study examined the influence of perceived credibility on audience engagement with the Bocor Alus Politik YouTube program, with trust serving as a mediating variable, using the PLS-SEM approach. The findings demonstrate that source credibility—comprising the communicator's expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness—is the most dominant factor shaping audience responses. Credibility exerts a very strong positive effect on trust and a significant direct effect on audience engagement. Trust also significantly influences engagement, although its magnitude is smaller than the direct effect of credibility. Furthermore, trust partially mediates the relationship between credibility and engagement, indicating that credibility not only drives engagement directly but also enhances engagement indirectly by fostering audience trust in the host and the content. The explanatory power of the model is

substantial, with more than 66% of the variance in trust and engagement explained by the variables included in the study.

From the perspective of content marketing for political podcasts, these findings underscore the centrality of building and maintaining communicator credibility. Accurate information delivery, honesty, and an authentic, engaging communication style were shown to strengthen credibility perceptions. High credibility increases the likelihood that audiences will watch episodes in full, share content, comment, and return for subsequent episodes—behaviors that are key indicators of effective content marketing. The results also indicate that trust is a critical asset in the political podcast ecosystem. Audiences are more likely to participate actively in platforms perceived as honest, independent, and reliable. Consequently, reputation management, consistency in editorial values, and transparency in presenting analysis or opinions are essential components of content marketing strategy.

Importantly, the findings affirm the relevance of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework in explaining audience behavior toward political digital content. In this study, perceived credibility functions as the stimulus, trust represents the internal organism state that shapes psychological processing, and engagement emerges as the response. The model demonstrates that audience engagement is not merely a reaction to content characteristics but is mediated by internal cognitive–affective states triggered by credibility perceptions. This research confirms that credibility and trust are foundational pillars of political podcast content marketing. They directly strengthen public engagement, facilitate discursive participation, and organically expand audience reach—highlighting their strategic importance for digital media organizations operating in competitive and fast-evolving political communication environments.

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Appendix
Full measurement items

Construct	Indicator	Dimension	Item	Measurement Items
Credibility [4]; [40]	Expertise	Qualified	X1.1.1	The host of Bocor Alus Politik has strong qualifications to discuss political issues.
		Knowledgeable	X1.1.2	The host demonstrates broad knowledge of political and public affairs.
		Skilled	X1.1.3	The host presents political issues in a skillful and competent manner.
		Experienced	X1.1.4	The host has sufficient experience in political journalism.
		Expert	X1.1.5	The host can be considered an expert in political analysis.
	Trustworthiness	Reliable	X1.2.1	Information presented in Bocor Alus Politik is reliable.
		Honest	X1.2.2	The host delivers information honestly.
		Trustworhty	X1.2.3	The host can be trusted as a source of political information.
		Dependable	X1.2.4	The program consistently presents accurate information.
		Sincere	X1.2.5	The host conveys information sincerely.
	Attractiveness	Attractive	X1.3.1	The presentation style of the host is engaging.
		Elegant	X1.3.2	The host presents political content in a professional manner.
		Classy	X1.3.3	The overall appearance and delivery of the program are of high quality.
Trust [26]; [6]	Integrity	Autenticity	Y1.1.1	Bocor Alus Politik presents information as it is, without manipulation.
		Promise Fulfillment	Y1.1.2	The program consistently fulfills its informational promises.
	Benevolence	Corncern for Other's Interest	Y1.2.1	The program considers the public interest when discussing political issues.
		Positive Intentions	Y1.2.2	The program is motivated by positive intentions.
	Competence	Ability to Provide Relevant Information	Y1.3.1	The program provides information that is relevant to my needs.
		Fullfilment of Expectations	Y1.3.2	The program meets my expectations regarding political information quality.
	Predictability	Consistency	Y1.4.1	The program delivers political content consistently over time.
		Predictability	Y1.4.2	The content of the program is predictable in terms of quality and focus.
Engagement [8]; [32]	Cognitive	Paying close attention	Y2.1.1	I pay close attention when watching Bocor Alus Politik.
		Deep thinking	Y2.1.2	I think carefully about the issues discussed in the program.
	Affective	Enjoyment	Y2.2.1	I enjoy watching Bocor Alus Politik.
		Emotional involvement	Y2.2.2	I hope that Bocor Alus Politik Tempo continues to grow and achieve greater success in the journalism industry.
		Sense of Connection	Y2.2.3	I feel uncomfortable when there are threats or intimidation directed at the presenters of Bocor Alus Politik Tempo.
	Behavioral	Commenting	Y2.3.1	I comment on Bocor Alus Politik videos.
		Content sharing	Y2.3.2	I share Bocor Alus Politik content with others.
		Subscribing	Y2.3.3	I subscribe to the Bocor Alus Politik YouTube channel.
		Recommending	Y2.3.4	I recommend Bocor Alus Politik to others.

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