

# Netizen Journalism and the Democratization of Local News: A Case Study of @abouttng on Instagram in Tangerang, Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history</b>  <i>Received: March 12, 2025</i>  <i>Revised: March 20, 2025</i>  <i>Accepted: May 5, 2025</i></p> <p><b>Keywords</b>  <i>Netizen journalism</i>  <i>Participatory media</i>  <i>Instagram news</i>  <i>Platforms</i>  <i>Civic engagement</i></p> <p> DOI: 10.12928/channel.v13i1.1342</p>	<p>The rise of social media has transformed the production and distribution of news, giving birth to participatory models of journalism often referred to as netizen journalism. This study investigates the role of the Instagram account @abouttng as a platform for local information dissemination and civic engagement in Tangerang, Indonesia. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, the research examines @abouttng's use of visual media, interaction patterns, and thematic content—focusing on topics such as infrastructure, transportation, environmental concerns, and public safety. The findings reveal that @abouttng functions not only as an alternative news outlet but also as a participatory space where netizens act as content producers, commentators, and civic advocates. Visual storytelling enhances content credibility and reach, while active user engagement facilitates real-time discourse and collective problem-solving. The study highlights both the democratic potential and ethical challenges of decentralized information environments, including issues of misinformation, content moderation, and the absence of traditional editorial oversight. By expanding on the theoretical framework of participatory journalism, this research provides insight into how hyperlocal social media accounts contribute to grassroots communication ecosystems, community awareness, and digital civic engagement in the Global South.</p> <p>This is an open-access article under the <a href="#">CC-BY-SA</a> license. </p>

## INTRODUCTION

The advancement of information and communication technologies has significantly transformed the practice of journalism. Historically, the production and dissemination of news content were monopolized by conventional media institutions. In contrast, the contemporary media landscape enables individuals to actively disseminate information via the internet and social media platforms. Utari et al. (2024) argue that digital communication has evolved into a phase characterized as *Beyond Human Communication*, wherein interactions on social media transcend interpersonal exchanges and incorporate artificial intelligence in the processes of information distribution and moderation. This phenomenon is often referred to as *netizen journalism*, wherein members of the public assume dual roles as both consumers and producers of news, thereby acquiring the capacity to shape public discourse. In this context, Hermida (2010) highlights that netizen journalism has reconfigured traditional mass communication models by facilitating direct engagement between content creators and audiences, circumventing the gatekeeping functions of legacy media institutions. The dissolution of conventional boundaries—between journalist and audience, news and opinion, fact and emotion—defines the current digital news ecosystem. This evolving dynamic not only exemplifies the participatory nature of contemporary media but also underscores the heightened susceptibility of digital publics to misinformation. As evidenced by Widyatama et al. (2023), even individuals with advanced educational backgrounds and high digital accessibility may unwittingly become vectors of misinformation, influenced by emotional triggers, algorithmic biases, and insufficient critical media literacy. Pramana et al. (2023) contend that the development of artificial intelligence (AI) has fundamentally reshaped human communication, particularly within the context of social media and digital interactions. AI now operates not merely as a

conduit for communication but as an autonomous agent capable of generating, modifying, and distributing messages in real time. This technological advancement has further catalyzed the transformation of social media into an increasingly dynamic arena for interaction and information exchange, thereby enhancing opportunities for public engagement in the processes of digital news production.

In Indonesia, the growth of netizen journalism has accelerated in parallel with expanding access to the internet and social media platforms. According to the 2023 report by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), the number of internet users in the country reached 215.63 million, with over 191 million identified as active social media users (Prasetyo et al., 2024). Among these platforms, Instagram has emerged as a prominent medium for information dissemination, boasting more than 120 million users in Indonesia (NapoleonCat, 2024). The platform supports the distribution of news through visual content and brief textual narratives, while additional features such as Stories, Reels, and Live facilitate real-time information sharing. The 2023 report by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism indicates that over 60% of Indonesians rely on social media as their primary source of news, signaling a significant shift from traditional media to digital platforms for information consumption (Newman et al., 2023).

At the local level, the Instagram account @abouttng illustrates the role of netizen journalism in facilitating public information flows. The account functions as a digital news outlet for residents of Tangerang, providing updates on traffic conditions, local government policies, emergency situations, and community events. Through Instagram's interactive capabilities, @abouttng fosters active user engagement by enabling followers to participate in discussions, share opinions, and report firsthand experiences. This case exemplifies the participatory nature of netizen journalism, wherein individuals are not only informed but also empowered to contribute to public discourse.

The emergence of netizen journalism accounts such as @abouttng exemplifies the phenomenon of media disintermediation, wherein the public increasingly bypasses mainstream media as the primary source of news and information (Aziz, 2018). Papacharissi and Oliveira (2012) argue that social media has expanded the digital public sphere by democratizing access to conversations once monopolized by legacy media institutions. However, this openness has also contributed to a rise in ethical tensions within digital communication spaces, largely due to the absence of standardized moral frameworks governing social media interactions (Priastuty et al., 2023). In this context, the boundaries of communication ethics have become increasingly fluid, as distinctions between appropriateness and offensiveness are redefined by varying cultural norms and individualized digital experiences.

In this context, @abouttng functions as a communicative bridge between residents of Tangerang and underreported local issues. As its popularity increases, it becomes apparent that the public is drawn to news that is timely, contextually grounded, and reflective of everyday lived experiences. Achmad (2021) posits that in the Society 5.0 era, the distinction between citizen society and netizen society has become increasingly evident. While citizens engage within physical public spaces, netizens operate in digitally mediated environments characterized by accelerated interactions and reconfigured normative boundaries. This paradigm shift facilitates self-empowerment through digital expression but also signifies the gradual erosion of traditional values, ultimately reshaping communication behavior in online spaces.

Despite these transformative potentials, netizen journalism also faces critical challenges, particularly in ensuring the accuracy and credibility of disseminated information. The absence of editorial oversight—typically present in conventional media—renders netizen journalism more susceptible to the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation. Carlson (2017) observes that the proliferation of individual news producers often occurs without the rigorous fact-checking protocols of institutional journalism, thereby heightening ethical concerns surrounding bias and unverifiable claims. According to the 2022 report by the Reuters Institute, approximately 40% of internet users in Indonesia have encountered false or misleading information via social media platforms (Akbar, 2023; Saptoyo & Galih, 2022). In response to these concerns, netizen journalism platforms such as @abouttng bear a heightened ethical responsibility to ensure the credibility and reliability of the information they disseminate, particularly in contexts involving sensitive or high-stakes public issues.

Building on this, Peña-Fernández et al. (2024) contend that, despite the initial optimism surrounding citizen journalism, actual audience engagement in content creation remains limited. Their systematic review reveals that the majority of users function primarily as redistributors rather than originators of news content. This behavior results in what they conceptualize as *mediatised participation*, wherein audiences do not assume editorial responsibility but instead influence journalistic practices indirectly—through mechanisms such as sharing, commenting, and reacting on social media. These actions affect the visibility and circulation of news content, shaping journalistic routines through engagement metrics rather than substantive editorial input.

Beyond concerns of credibility, netizen journalism also grapples with ethical dilemmas distinct from those encountered by traditional media. Whereas legacy media organizations typically operate under established journalistic standards and ethical frameworks, netizen journalism tends to be less regulated, thereby increasing the risk of disseminating partial, unverified, or biased information. Silverman (2015) underscores that while netizen journalism offers enhanced opportunities for public involvement in the news process, the absence of clear regulatory structures enables the potential for content to be shaped by individual or collective agendas. In light of these challenges, it becomes essential to examine

how platforms such as @abouttng engage in information filtering, authenticity verification, and the cultivation of public trust within an increasingly fragmented and algorithmically mediated digital ecosystem.

The existing body of literature highlights a critical gap in understanding the contemporary media landscape, which markedly diverges from the norms of conventional journalism. A central question emerges: To what extent are journalistic ethics still rigorously upheld in the current news production environment, especially when compared to traditional media practices? The widespread accessibility of digital and social media has enabled virtually anyone to produce and disseminate news content, giving rise to a decentralized form of information sharing in which netizens leverage personal platforms for news dissemination. This article seeks to explore this gap by critically examining the evolving norms and practices of netizen journalism.

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to analyze the role of the Instagram account @abouttng in the dissemination of local information in Tangerang, Indonesia. Specifically, it investigates how the account contributes to shaping public discourse through digital platforms. The study further identifies the key challenges encountered by netizen journalism, including those related to information accuracy, credibility, and ethical standards in news dissemination. In addition, it examines the degree of audience engagement in consuming and interacting with the content provided by @abouttng, as well as the digital communication strategies employed to foster engagement and cultivate public trust.

Crucially, this study addresses a significant knowledge gap: how local netizen journalism platforms negotiate the tension between participatory inclusivity and the maintenance of journalistic verification standards. The central research question underpinning this inquiry is as follows: Can netizen journalism preserve both the participatory openness of digital media and the credibility associated with conventional journalistic ethics?

## METHOD

This study was conducted between March and September 2024 and employed a qualitative approach to examine the communication patterns of netizen journalism as represented by the Instagram account @abouttng. The unit of analysis in this research was digital content—rather than individual users—comprising Instagram posts, accompanying captions, and user interactions, including comments and shares. Data were collected through systematic documentation of content uploads using a structured coding sheet. The coding categories included the thematic focus of posts (e.g., local issues), media format (text, photo, or video), and user engagement metrics.

The study utilized qualitative content analysis to enable a nuanced interpretation of message structures and meaning-making processes on social media platforms (Kriyantono, 2012). The analytical process involved data reduction, which entailed filtering and selecting only content that was directly relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2014). The selected data were then categorized thematically into domains such as local events, social issues, and forms of user participation within the broader context of netizen journalism.

The conceptual framework of this study is grounded in the theory of netizen journalism—also referred to as participatory journalism—which posits that citizens, empowered by digital media, actively engage in the production and dissemination of news content. This theoretical orientation challenges the traditional model of journalistic gatekeeping, wherein news narratives were predominantly shaped by professional journalists and legacy media institutions. The rise of social media has redefined the dynamics of news creation and distribution, positioning netizens as influential actors within the contemporary media ecosystem.

The data were analyzed using the process of data reduction, a critical phase in qualitative research methodology as outlined by Sugiyono (2014). This process involved filtering, simplifying, and organizing the raw data obtained from the @abouttng Instagram account to ensure that only content relevant to the study's objectives was retained. Initially, the researchers conducted a comprehensive review of all collected data—including posts, user comments, and interaction metrics—to eliminate irrelevant, redundant, or non-substantive entries. The remaining data were then categorized according to recurring thematic patterns, such as local events, social issues, and netizen participation, particularly in the form of user comments and shared content.

This thematic categorization facilitated a structured and focused analysis of communication patterns within the dataset, enabling the identification of key trends that characterize @abouttng's role in netizen journalism. Following this, the researchers further refined the dataset by selecting the most illustrative posts and user interactions that exemplify the account's function in disseminating local information and encouraging community discourse. Through this methodical analysis, the study was able to demonstrate how @abouttng not only serves as an information-sharing platform but also actively fosters public engagement and dialogue on issues pertinent to the Tangerang community.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Instagram account @abouttng functions as a prominent digital platform for disseminating local information related to events occurring in Tangerang. With a follower base exceeding 1.3 million, the account has emerged as a widely used alternative news source for the local community, offering timely access to region-specific updates. Beyond its role

in reporting local events, @abouttng serves as a participatory space where community members can voice opinions, express criticisms, and lodge complaints. Users frequently submit reports or share information by sending direct messages (DMs) or tagging the account in their posts, after which the content is curated and reposted by account administrators to reach a broader audience. This participatory model enhances the platform's interactivity, enabling a more immediate and responsive flow of information compared to traditional media outlets.

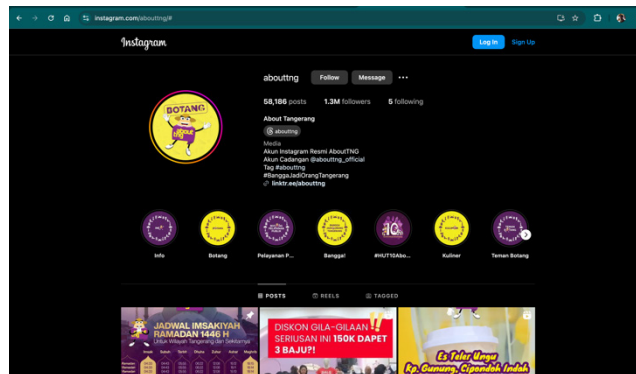


Figure 1. Display of the Instagram profile page of @abouttng  
Source: <https://instagram.com/abouttng>

The presence of the @abouttng account exemplifies the phenomenon of netizen journalism, wherein members of the public actively engage in the production and dissemination of information via digital platforms. This model marks a significant departure from traditional journalism, representing a shift toward participatory media practices in which individuals assume the role of information producers (Bruns & Highfield, 2012). A central function of @abouttng is its role as a communication intermediary between citizens and their local environment. The platform enables users to report events they have directly experienced or observed, thereby positioning the account as a conduit through which individual narratives are amplified to a broader audience. This participatory function is further illustrated by the account's frequent practice of reposting user-submitted content, which underscores the evolving role of social media users as not only information consumers but also as co-producers of news.

Beyond its function as an alternative news source, the @abouttng account also serves as a dynamic space for public dialogue. Each post frequently generates substantial interaction in the form of comments, discussions, and public debates concerning issues relevant to the Tangerang community. These exchanges often revolve around topics such as local policy implementation, infrastructure conditions, transportation systems, and social events that influence residents' everyday lives. Notably, users do not merely express opinions but frequently propose constructive solutions—ranging from infrastructure improvements to supplementary contextual information—highlighting a participatory culture of problem-solving.

This participatory discourse underscores the dual role of @abouttng as both an information channel and a civic forum, fostering inclusive public communication. The account's ability to facilitate collective engagement illustrates the broader potential of social media platforms to cultivate public awareness, enable community-driven communication, and expedite the circulation of locally relevant information. As such, the @abouttng case demonstrates how netizen journalism can serve as a catalyst for civic participation and community cohesion within the digital public sphere.

#### A. Content Analysis of the Instagram Account @abouttng

An analysis of the content uploaded by @abouttng indicates the strategic use of multiple media formats—including text, photographs, and videos—to communicate information effectively. This multimodal approach enhances the accessibility, depth, and appeal of the content, thereby increasing public engagement with the platform. Across numerous posts, there is clear evidence of active netizen participation, particularly through user-submitted reports detailing incidents occurring in Tangerang. This form of engagement demonstrates that the public functions not only as a recipient of news but also as a proactive contributor in the information ecosystem. By enabling the rapid and direct circulation of locally relevant news, independent of conventional media channels, @abouttng exemplifies the participatory nature of netizen journalism and its capacity to democratize information flows.



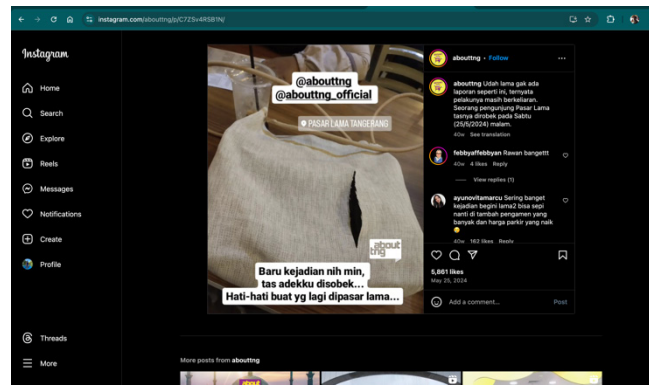


Figure 2. Example of a netizen journalism content post  
Source: <https://instagram.com/abouttng>

An illustrative example of netizen journalism is found in a post reporting an incident in which a bag was slashed at Pasar Lama. In this instance, the @abouttng account shared a photograph of the damaged bag accompanied by a quote from a user-submitted message: *“This just happened, admin. My sister’s bag was slashed... Be careful if you’re at Pasar Lama.”* This post highlights how netizens act as primary sources of information, with their firsthand accounts being relayed to a wider public through social media. It exemplifies the core principle of netizen journalism—where ordinary individuals, independent of traditional media institutions, contribute directly to news production and dissemination.

Moreover, various other posts by @abouttng demonstrate netizens’ engagement with broader social issues. For instance, reports concerning traffic congestion, often attributed to traffic violations, are frequently submitted by users to raise awareness and promote road safety. Similarly, netizens report infrastructural problems—such as potholes, broken traffic lights, or damaged bridges—with the aim of drawing the attention of local authorities and prompting remedial action. These examples underscore the dual function of the @abouttng account: as both an information provider and a civic advocacy platform that facilitates community participation in addressing local challenges.

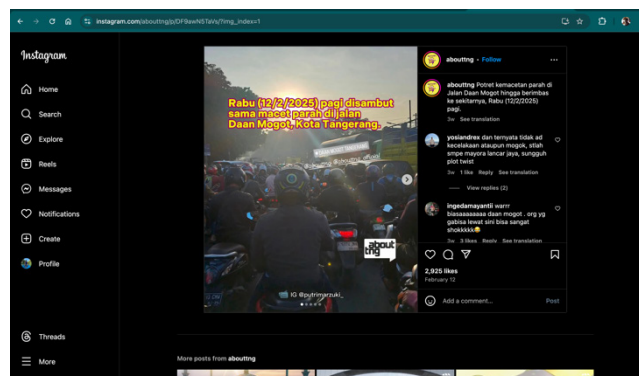


Figure 3. Example of a netizen-generated post addressing traffic congestion conditions  
Source: <https://instagram.com/abouttng>

In addition to event reporting, the @abouttng account strategically utilizes the affordances of social media to present information in a more engaging and interactive format. One notable approach is the use of short video-based posts, which allows users to directly observe reported incidents without the need to read extensive textual descriptions. Coupled with concise yet informative captions, this format caters to the preferences of Instagram users, who are generally more responsive to visual content. This multimedia strategy has proven effective in fostering high levels of user engagement across the platform’s posts.

Furthermore, the active participation of netizens in contributing news content underscores @abouttng’s role as a communicative intermediary between citizens and local authorities. Posts featuring public reports—particularly those concerning public facilities or infrastructure—often garner responses from relevant government agencies, who subsequently initiate remedial action. This evidences the platform’s dual function: not only as a decentralized source of news but also as a mechanism for transmitting public concerns and aspirations to decision-makers.

Beyond reporting, @abouttng also cultivates a dynamic space for public discourse. Each post typically attracts hundreds to thousands of user comments, which include opinions, suggestions, and critiques of existing policies. This robust interaction highlights the platform’s role in facilitating deliberative communication and social reflection, reinforcing

the notion that netizen journalism extends beyond information dissemination to include participatory dialogue and civic engagement.

The findings of this study indicate that @abouttng employs an effective model for constructing a participatory digital communication environment. By enabling the public to share information and engage with issues relevant to daily life, the platform has helped institutionalize a form of netizen journalism rooted in everyday civic experience. Moreover, the account demonstrates that social media can function as a credible source of news—provided the content is grounded in factual reporting and subject to verification. As netizen participation continues to grow, @abouttng exemplifies the potential of digital platforms to foster a more inclusive, responsive, and democratic media ecosystem.

## B. Dominant Topics in Netizen Journalism

The content analysis of posts uploaded by the @abouttng account reveals several key thematic areas that frequently surface in netizen journalism within the Tangerang context. These topics reflect public concerns with issues that have an immediate and tangible impact on daily life. Based on the collected data, the most frequently addressed subjects include infrastructure, transportation, environmental conditions, and social issues. These four categories consistently emerge not only in netizen-submitted reports but also in the ensuing discussions within the comment sections of the @abouttng account.

Within the framework of netizen journalism, these themes demonstrate the active role of netizens in observing, documenting, and disseminating information about their immediate environment. Importantly, netizens go beyond merely reporting events; they also articulate opinions and engage in discourse surrounding the broader implications of these issues for their communities. As such, the @abouttng account functions not only as a channel for localized information sharing but also as a participatory forum where the public can exchange perspectives and collaboratively explore potential solutions to community challenges.

## C. Infrastructure as a Key Issue

One of the most prominently featured topics in @abouttng's posts is the condition of public infrastructure. Netizens frequently report a range of issues related to inadequate public facilities, including potholes, damaged bridges, clogged drainage systems, and the absence of adequate pedestrian infrastructure. These concerns are recurrent and highly visible within the platform, reflecting the extent to which substandard infrastructure impacts residents' daily lives.

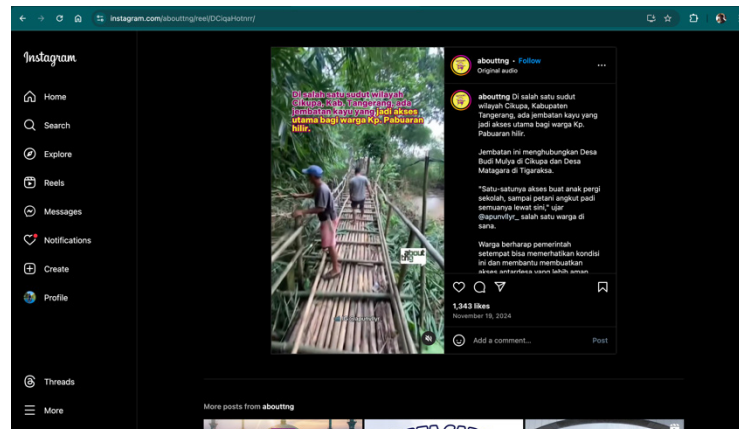


Figure 4. Example of a netizen-generated post addressing infrastructure issues

Source: <https://instagram.com/abouttng>

For instance, one post on the @abouttng account featured a video documenting the deteriorating condition of a wooden bridge in Cikupa, Tangerang Regency. The bridge, which serves as the sole access route for residents of Kampung Pabuaran Hilir to attend school and transport agricultural goods, was shown to be in a precarious state. The post garnered substantial attention from netizens, many of whom expressed strong criticism toward the perceived neglect by local authorities in addressing critical infrastructure issues.

Comments on the post reflected widespread concern about the inadequate condition of public facilities, with several users urging the local government to take immediate remedial action to ensure community safety. Within the framework of netizen journalism, this post functions not merely as a news item but also as a vehicle for public advocacy—mobilizing digital discourse to prompt governmental accountability.

#### D. Transportation and Public Mobility

In addition to infrastructure, transportation emerges as one of the most frequently discussed topics in netizen reports shared on the @abouttng account. Netizens routinely voice concerns regarding traffic congestion, deteriorating road conditions, and disorderly behavior among road users. The account features numerous posts that depict the daily mobility challenges faced by Tangerang residents, including congested thoroughfares, illegally parked vehicles, and the general lack of road discipline among drivers.

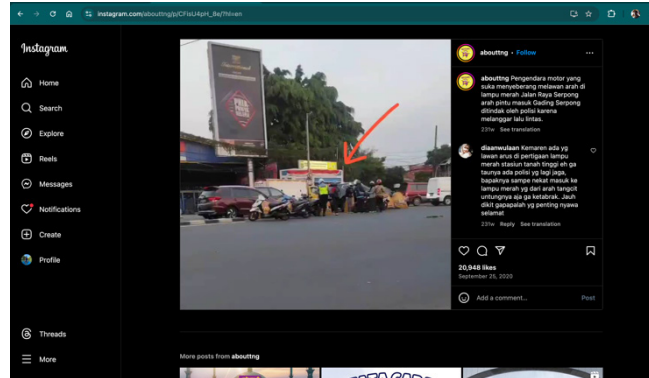


Figure 5. Example of a netizen-generated post addressing transportation and public mobility issues

Source: <https://instagram.com/abouttng>

A notable example of public concern over transportation issues is a post highlighting traffic congestion on one of Tangerang's main roads, caused by motorcyclists and car drivers traveling against the designated traffic flow. The post received considerable attention from netizens and prompted an extensive discussion in the comment section. Many users criticized the reckless behavior of drivers who disregard traffic regulations, while others emphasized that the issue stems not only from individual negligence but also from inadequate supervision and the lack of consistent law enforcement by relevant authorities.

This pattern of public discourse aligns with findings by Hidayat et al. (2024), who documented the role of social media platforms as critical tools for information coordination and community mobilization during the 2021 South Kalimantan flood. In that case, participatory digital networks enabled citizens and volunteers to navigate infrastructural breakdowns, demonstrating the strategic utility of social media in facilitating local responses to crises.

In the context of netizen journalism, the comments on the post extend beyond complaint to include proactive suggestions. Several users recommended that law enforcement agencies conduct more frequent traffic inspections and install additional signage at locations prone to violations. This interaction illustrates the capacity of social media platforms not only to expose systemic issues but also to serve as participatory spaces for critiquing public policy and advocating for tangible improvements in transportation governance.

#### E. Environment and Public Health Issues

Environmental issues also feature prominently in numerous posts shared by the @abouttng account. Netizens frequently report incidents related to environmental cleanliness, air pollution, flooding, and land fires. These posts not only serve as informational content but also function as public alerts, encouraging heightened awareness of local environmental conditions.

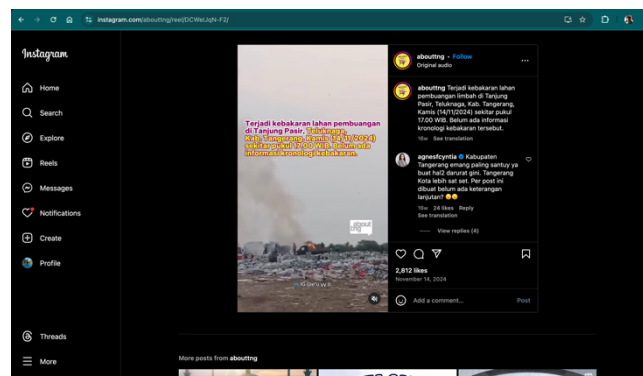


Figure 6. Example of a netizen-generated post related to environmental and public health issues

Source: <https://instagram.com/abouttng>

A notable example is a post documenting a landfill fire in Tanjung Pasir, Teluk Naga, Tangerang Regency. The post included a video showing thick black smoke billowing from the site, accompanied by a narration noting the absence of official information regarding the fire’s cause. The post drew a range of responses from netizens, including criticism of insufficient oversight of illegal waste disposal and reminders of the heightened fire risk during the dry season.

Flooding is another recurring environmental concern addressed on the platform. Netizens frequently report instances of inundated roads caused by heavy rainfall or inadequate drainage infrastructure. Posts on flooding are often accompanied by appeals to government authorities to take preventive action, such as improving drainage systems or implementing river normalization initiatives.

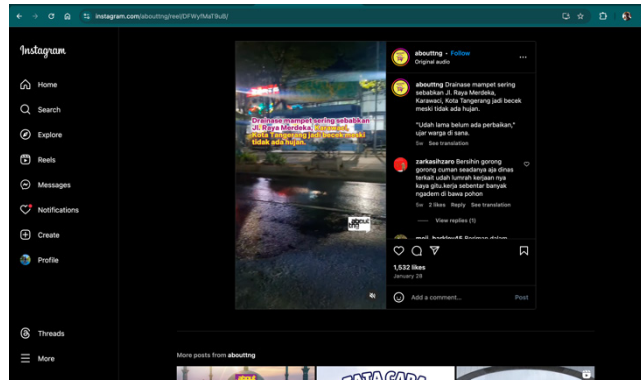


Figure 6. Example of a netizen-generated post related to environmental and public health issues, heightened environmental awareness and advocacy.

Source: <https://instagram.com/abouttng>

Within the context of netizen journalism, these environmental reports reflect a high level of community awareness regarding the relationship between environmental conditions and quality of life. The @abouttng account enables residents to document local environmental challenges, foster collective awareness, and advocate for responsive governance from relevant institutions.

**F. Social Issues and Public Safety**

In addition to infrastructure, transportation, and environmental concerns, social issues and public safety also constitute dominant themes within the netizen journalism content on the @abouttng account. Netizens frequently report incidents involving theft, robbery, fraud, and acts of violence occurring in various parts of Tangerang.

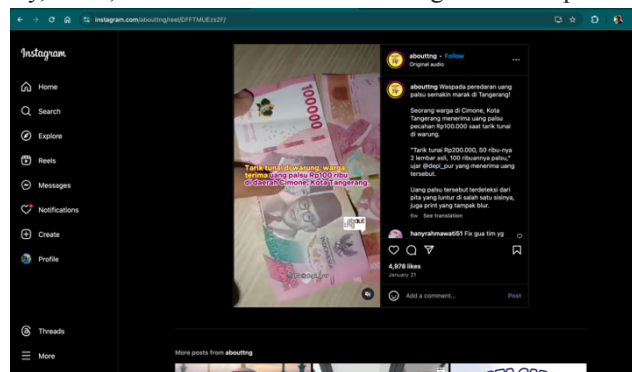


Figure 7. Example of a netizen-generated post related to social issues and public safety

Source: <https://instagram.com/abouttng>

A post that garnered significant attention involved a case of fraud at a shopping center in Tangerang, where a netizen recounted a personal experience involving the circulation of counterfeit currency. According to the post, the perpetrator posed as a legitimate buyer but attempted to complete the transaction using counterfeit money. The post prompted a wide array of responses in the comment section, with several users reporting similar experiences at other locations in the city. Many netizens offered practical advice on verifying currency authenticity and urged the public to remain cautious during transactions with unfamiliar individuals.

This example illustrates how netizen journalism on @abouttng extends beyond information dissemination to foster public awareness and community-based knowledge sharing. By highlighting criminal tactics and encouraging dialogue



around prevention strategies, the account contributes to enhancing public safety and promoting collective vigilance.

### G. The Use of Visual Media

The use of visual media on the @abouttng account constitutes a critical component of information dissemination within the practice of netizen journalism. As a platform reliant on user participation in content creation, @abouttng effectively employs photographs and videos to deliver clear, immediate, and context-rich representations of local events. Most posts on the account include visual documentation submitted by netizens present at the scene, offering a grounded, eyewitness perspective on issues occurring across Tangerang. This strategic use of visual media not only enhances the communicative appeal of the content but also accelerates the diffusion of information across digital networks.

A key advantage of visual media lies in the speed and efficiency with which it facilitates information flow. In the contemporary digital environment, audiences tend to prefer highly consumable formats such as images and short videos over extended text. Visual content allows information to be more rapidly interpreted and redistributed, thereby broadening its reach. For instance, in a post documenting flooding in various areas of Tangerang, @abouttng featured a video submitted by a netizen showing submerged roads and stranded vehicles. The post immediately captured widespread attention and was extensively shared via reposts and Instagram Stories, demonstrating the viral potential of visual storytelling.

In addition to accelerating information dissemination, visual media significantly boosts user engagement. Posts accompanied by visual elements consistently generate higher levels of interaction—measured through likes, comments, and shares—than those relying solely on text. This is attributed to the emotional resonance and immediacy that visual content conveys. For example, a post highlighting the deteriorating condition of a wooden bridge in Cikupa received substantial attention, prompting netizens to share similar experiences and advocate for urgent government intervention.

Moreover, in an online environment increasingly saturated with misinformation, visual evidence enhances the credibility and perceived authenticity of user-generated reports. Text-only posts are more vulnerable to skepticism, especially when unsupported by verifiable proof. The @abouttng account addresses this challenge by integrating visual verification into its reporting. In a post about a landfill fire in Teluk Naga, for example, a video depicting thick black smoke and firefighting efforts provided tangible confirmation of the incident, mitigating potential misinformation and reinforcing public trust in the content.

Importantly, the reliance on visual content has encouraged greater netizen participation in the journalism process itself. Many users actively submit photos and videos from the field, illustrating their role as both consumers and producers of information. In this regard, visual media serves not only as a communicative tool but also as a mechanism for fostering active public engagement and enhancing the transparency and reliability of grassroots reporting.

These findings are consistent with the conclusions of Pramana et al. (2020), who identified visual media as a strategic tool in public communication campaigns. In their study on Covid-19 protocol outreach in Klaten, visual formats such as infographics and posters were shown to improve comprehension and encourage community engagement, particularly through widely used platforms like WhatsApp. This supports the assertion that visual content on @abouttng plays a pivotal role in participatory digital communication by enhancing message clarity, stimulating public feedback, and enabling rapid, decentralized information flows.

### H. Interaction with Netizens

The interaction between the @abouttng account and its followers is a key feature that illustrates the evolving nature of netizen journalism on social media platforms. The consistently high level of user engagement—evident in the form of likes, comments, and shares—demonstrates that @abouttng functions not merely as an information outlet, but also as an active space for public discourse. On average, each post receives between 500 and 1,000 likes and 50 to 100 comments, indicating robust participation from netizens in response to the content shared.

A particularly notable example of such interaction involved a post on traffic congestion caused by undisciplined drivers. The post, sourced from a user-submitted video by the account @sand5snare, depicted motorists traveling against traffic on a narrow road, causing significant congestion and raising the risk of accidents. This post attracted widespread attention, garnering over 200,000 views, more than 4,000 likes, and over 500 comments. The majority of responses consisted of public criticism, reflections on traffic behavior, and suggestions for improvement.

Many comments expressed frustration over the lack of discipline among drivers. One of the most-liked comments, posted by @hari.fierceee, stated: *“Honestly, traffic jams aren’t caused by anything else, but rather by behavior like this,”* accompanied by an angry emoji. The comment resonated with many users and received broad support. Another user, @muhammadalnu, contributed a more nuanced observation: *“One row of motorcycles is still fine, but if there are two, it becomes chaotic.”* These comments reflect that the platform enables not only criticism but also personal testimonies and collective reflection on daily transportation challenges in Tangerang.

Importantly, the comment section often extends beyond critique to include constructive suggestions. Some users proposed increased regulation by the transportation department and local police, while others emphasized the importance of individual responsibility. For example, @latief\_zhea commented: “*Self-awareness is key; we shouldn’t just blame other institutions,*” highlighting a recognition that structural and behavioral factors jointly contribute to urban mobility issues. These findings align with Utari and Pramana (2025), who argue that digital communication has evolved into an interactive domain in which audience participation is central to the co-production of information. Social media, in this context, serves not only as a news distribution tool but also as a forum for dialogue, critique, and social learning.

The interactions surrounding this post exemplify how @abouttng functions as a participatory communication platform where users are not passive recipients of information but active agents in framing narratives and proposing solutions. This dynamic is consistent with Pramana and Priastuty’s (2023) findings on public discourse surrounding health insurance policies, which demonstrated that digital communication platforms significantly influence how citizens interpret and respond to public policy developments. Similarly, @abouttng provides a space for localized civic discourse, where netizens critically assess social conditions and engage in collaborative meaning-making processes.

Ultimately, the high volume and quality of engagement on the @abouttng platform demonstrate its significance as more than just a channel for disseminating news. It acts as a digital public sphere—facilitating civic participation, amplifying public sentiment, and contributing to grassroots-level critique and reform. Through this model of interaction, @abouttng exemplifies how netizen journalism can foster meaningful public engagement on social issues that directly impact everyday life.

### I. Theoretical Comparison and Integration with Prior Research

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Instagram account @abouttng operates not merely as a local news source but as a participatory platform where citizens actively engage in reporting incidents, expressing opinions, and contributing to critical public discussions on a wide range of local issues. This participatory dynamic mirrors the patterns identified in Oktavia’s (2021) study on the Twitter account @e100ss, where users—despite often lacking awareness of the term “netizen journalism”—nonetheless engaged in journalistic practices by sharing firsthand reports on traffic conditions, accidents, and social matters. Drawing on Alfred Schutz’s phenomenological framework, that study distinguished between *in-order-to* motives (deliberate actions aimed at helping others through information sharing) and *because* motives (habitual or emotionally driven participation). These motives help explain the active role of @abouttng contributors, who are motivated by both instrumental concerns and affective ties to their communities.

The empirical insights from this research reinforce the theoretical assumptions of participatory journalism—or netizen journalism—which conceptualizes digital-era individuals as co-creators of news content, thereby dissolving the conventional boundaries between journalists and audiences (Deuze, 2006; Domingo et al., 2008).

Xiang (2019) underscores how the proliferation of user-generated news—particularly through short video platforms such as Kwai and Pear Video in China—has significantly restructured the news production ecosystem by decentralizing journalistic authority. In this context, ordinary users, now recognized as netizen journalists, contribute firsthand content that is subsequently filtered and reframed through algorithmic processes and editorial oversight. This dynamic reflects the emergence of a “negotiated public sphere,” in which the framing of issues is increasingly influenced by grassroots participation while remaining subject to structural and institutional constraints. Xiang’s study highlights a key tension in digital journalism: while media technologies expand opportunities for public engagement, they also delineate the boundaries of visibility through mechanisms of control and selection.

Complementing this perspective, Srikandi et al. (2023) argue that social media users function as decentralized gatekeepers, whose acts of engaging, commenting, and sharing directly shape content circulation within algorithmically governed environments. Their findings suggest that audience literacy and participation not only determine information exposure but also serve as a distributed check-and-balance system capable of mitigating the spread of misinformation. Within the case of @abouttng, this dynamic is clearly observable: the decisions made by netizens to submit, amplify, or react to content significantly influence which narratives gain traction.

Elvianti and Wibowo (2022) analyze netizen communication behavior using the framework of communication ethnography, uncovering distinct ethical orientations that shape digital interactions. Their study of public responses to President Joko Widodo’s Instagram account reveals a clear dichotomy between users who convey support and appreciation—often expressing gratitude and encouragement—and those who breach norms of civility through harsh language and personal attacks. Applying the *maxim of wisdom* and *maxim of appreciation* to classify speech acts, the authors illustrate how digital discourse mirrors broader societal values related to politeness and moral conduct. These findings underscore the significance of netiquette in sustaining constructive dialogue on public social media platforms and highlight the potential of digital communication to either uphold or undermine ethical standards in online public discourse.

In a related vein, Winarni and Lestari (2019) examine the ethical implications of incorporating netizen statements as journalistic sources—a practice that has become increasingly common in online news production. Focusing on content published by *Jogja.tribunnews.com*, they argue that while the use of user-generated comments does not inherently breach journalistic ethics, it necessitates strict adherence to credibility and verification protocols. The authors propose four essential criteria for evaluating the credibility of netizen-based news content: believability, factual accuracy, reduction of bias, and completeness. Their findings caution against the uncritical incorporation of popular or viral content, emphasizing that without thorough source validation, such practices may jeopardize the ethical integrity of journalistic reporting.

Bruns and Highfield (2012) introduced the concept of *produsage*, which describes a hybrid role wherein individuals simultaneously act as both content producers and consumers. This concept is clearly embodied in the operational model of the @abouttng account, where a significant portion of the content is derived from user-generated submissions—ranging from eyewitness reports and photographic documentation to community commentary. This form of collective and distributed content production reflects a decentralized journalistic paradigm in which community members collaboratively contribute to shaping the local news agenda.

In a different yet complementary context, Pramana et al. (2025) examine the role of family communication in shaping individuals' perceptions of health risks and their willingness to adopt preventive behaviors. Their study identifies two dominant family communication patterns: *anxious* and *responsive*. While anxious families tend to suppress discussions around health risks due to emotional discomfort, responsive families engage in open dialogue and collaborative decision-making. The study further highlights the role of younger family members as bottom-up agents in facilitating the flow of health information within households. These findings emphasize the critical role of emotional framing and structural communication dynamics in transforming awareness into sustainable behavior.

The findings of this study further reinforce Hermida's (2010) concept of *ambient journalism*, which describes the continuous, informal flow of news and information across digital platforms. The interactions observed on the @abouttng account—particularly within comment threads and public responses—illustrate the emergence of fluid, decentralized dialogue among citizens. This supports Hermida's assertion that digital journalism is increasingly constituted through networked, real-time contributions from audiences, rather than through traditional top-down editorial processes.

Extending this perspective, Duffy and Ang (2019) argue that the study of digital journalism must move beyond viewing digitization as a mere technological modifier of journalistic practice. Instead, they contend that journalism itself is becoming an embodiment of digital principles. In their framework, journalism is fundamentally reshaped by the core values of the digital era: speed, fluidity, interactivity, storability, and visibility. This transformation challenges conventional definitions of journalism by foregrounding the influence of audience participation, algorithmic curation, and platform-driven virality in shaping news production and public discourse.

The participatory dynamics observed in this case study also align with the concept of *networked publics* as articulated by Papacharissi and Oliveira (2012). They argue that social media platforms foster digitally connected publics who actively shape discourse and civic engagement. This dynamic is evident in posts on @abouttng, which frequently catalyze large-scale discussions on urban governance, infrastructure development, and the delivery of public services. In many cases, netizens move beyond critique to offer actionable suggestions, illustrating how online engagement can evolve into deliberative, civic-minded dialogue.

This phenomenon is consistent with the findings of Aziz (2018), who examined the role of hyperlocal social media accounts in addressing the information void left by mainstream media. Aziz asserts that platforms such as @abouttng not only disseminate news but also empower citizens to construct and share their own narratives, bringing attention to underreported issues. In doing so, these platforms contribute to the democratization of media from the ground up, facilitating greater inclusivity and community representation in local journalism.

However, this study also brings to light a key limitation widely noted in the literature on participatory journalism: the challenge of ensuring information credibility in the absence of formal editorial standards. As Carlson (2017) and Silverman (2015) argue, while participatory platforms expand access to the journalistic process, they also risk amplifying misinformation when verification mechanisms are absent or insufficient. Although @abouttng appears to exercise a degree of content moderation, the absence of transparent verification protocols leaves it vulnerable to credibility concerns. Carlson (2017) emphasizes that in such contexts, the perceived legitimacy of information often depends more on social validation—likes, shares, and comments—than on institutional editorial scrutiny, thereby complicating efforts to uphold journalistic integrity in digital public spheres.

Silverman (2015) cautions that participatory media ecosystems, in the absence of adequate oversight, may foster echo chambers and selectively amplify narratives shaped by group interests or emotionally charged responses. While the high level of community engagement observed on @abouttng reflects a vibrant and responsive digital discourse, it simultaneously underscores the need for careful content validation and strategies to mitigate bias.

This study affirms the theoretical foundations of participatory journalism and demonstrates their practical realization through the case of @abouttng. The platform exemplifies a model of digital journalism that is decentralized, responsive,

and deeply integrated into the fabric of everyday civic life. By enabling netizens to act as both news contributors and commentators, @abouttng illustrates the transformative potential of user-generated content in shaping public discourse and amplifying community concerns. The findings underscore how digital platforms can serve as democratic spaces for local storytelling, social critique, and grassroots advocacy.

However, this participatory model also raises critical concerns regarding ethical standards, fact-checking practices, and the role of algorithmic systems in shaping content visibility. As the boundaries between professional journalism and citizen participation continue to blur, the sustainability and credibility of digital public spheres depend increasingly on mechanisms for content validation, bias mitigation, and institutional accountability.

This perspective is reinforced by Srikandi (2023), who argues that in an era defined by pervasive social media usage, the traditional gatekeeping function has been decentralized and redistributed among digital users themselves. Whereas media professionals once controlled content selection and editorial framing, today's platforms enable individuals to serve simultaneously as content creators, curators, and amplifiers. Her study emphasizes that these audience-driven gatekeeping practices—often enacted without formal oversight—necessitate greater media literacy, ethical awareness, and self-regulation to safeguard the integrity of public discourse in the digital era.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Instagram account @abouttng plays a significant role in advancing netizen journalism, particularly in the dissemination of localized information in Tangerang. Functioning as both an alternative news outlet and an interactive civic forum, @abouttng enables netizens to actively participate in the production and distribution of information. Through the affordances of social media, the account has cultivated a digital public space in which residents can share reports, voice opinions, and engage in dialogue on issues that directly affect their daily lives.

The content analysis reveals that the most frequently addressed topics on the platform include infrastructure, transportation, environmental concerns, and public safety. Netizens regularly report incidents such as road damage, traffic violations, waste management issues, and criminal activities. These contributions have elevated public awareness of hyperlocal issues and encouraged broader community involvement in articulating concerns and seeking solutions.

The strategic use of visual media—photos and videos—is a critical factor in the platform's communicative effectiveness. Visual content enhances contextual understanding, emotional resonance, and information credibility, while also mitigating the risk of misinformation. This format facilitates more immediate engagement and supports higher levels of participation, as netizens are more likely to interact with and redistribute visually driven content.

Moreover, user interactions on @abouttng demonstrate a dynamic and participatory communication pattern. Netizens do not merely react to posts; they contribute supplementary information, critique policy implementations, and propose solutions. These interactions reflect the platform's role in fostering collective awareness and enabling community-driven dialogue, positioning netizen journalism as a mechanism for democratic, decentralized, and interactive digital communication.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study advances the discourse on participatory journalism by examining how a hyperlocal, Instagram-based news platform maintains public engagement and trust without relying on traditional journalistic institutions. Practically, it shows that platforms like @abouttng can effectively address the gaps left by mainstream media in covering real-time, localized events—so long as they incorporate responsible content moderation and maintain informational integrity.

Future research should explore the algorithmic dynamics that shape the visibility and virality of netizen-generated content on social media platforms, as these mechanisms critically influence public discourse. Additionally, longitudinal studies could investigate how sustained exposure to netizen journalism affects public trust in traditional media and assess whether both forms of media can coexist to support a more informed, engaged, and participatory society.

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