

RECONSTRUCTING THE DIGITAL JOURNALISM PARADIGM ON TIKTOK: A CASE STUDY OF THE @gerakanberaninusantara ACCOUNT

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Abstract : The diffusion of short-form video platforms has opened a new arena in which non-media actors engage in practices that resemble, and in important respects reconstitute, the norms and functions of digital journalism. This study examines how the TikTok account @gerakanberaninusantara, operated by the civic organisation Gerakan Berani Nusantara (G-BRAN), produces and distributes social and political information through platform-native communicative strategies. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through systematic content observation of ten purposively sampled videos, semi-structured interviews with account administrators, and digital documentation spanning December 2025 to April 2026. Analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model and was theoretically grounded in Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality framework. Findings demonstrate that G-BRAN externalises organisational knowledge through visually encoded short videos; objectivates information by leveraging algorithmic distribution mechanisms including hashtags and the For You Page; and achieves audience internalisation through interactive engagement. These three social constructionist processes together constitute a discernible reconstruction of the digital journalism paradigm, in which authorial authority, presentational form, and distributional logic are all substantially transformed.

Keywords: Digital Journalism Paradigm, Tiktok, Social Construction of Reality, Non-Media Actors; Platformisation, Digital Public Communication

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Introduction

The structural transformation of public information ecosystems precipitated by digital technology represents one of the most consequential developments in the history of media. What was once a relatively stable arrangement in which licensed media institutions commanded the production, editorial processing, and distribution of public information has been fundamentally destabilised by the emergence of networked digital platforms that enable virtually any social actor to publish content reaching audiences at scale. Saragih and Harahap (2020) observe that the digitisation of information has driven a pronounced migration in news consumption patterns, shifting audiences away from conventional media outlets toward digital platforms that offer greater speed, interactivity, and accessibility. This shift is not a mere channel substitution; it entails a comprehensive reorganisation of public knowledge production, altering the identities of legitimate information producers, the acceptable formats for information presentation, and the mechanisms through which information is routed to its intended audiences.

Within this transformed media environment, TikTok has emerged as a platform of extraordinary communicative significance. Initially constructed and widely perceived as an entertainment medium oriented toward music, dance, and comedic short-form video, the platform has undergone a functional evolution that positions it as a meaningful space for the circulation of social, political, and cultural information. Its defining technical features a recommendation algorithm centred on the For You Page (FYP), an interface optimised for video content of fifteen seconds to three minutes, and an engagement architecture that rewards visual creativity and emotional salience have given rise to distinctive communicative norms that differ substantially from those governing both traditional journalism and earlier generations of social media (Nielsen & Fletcher, 2023). The platform's algorithmic logic prioritises content resonance over source authority, enabling information produced by non-institutional actors to achieve circulation patterns previously reserved for established media outlets.

The theoretical significance of this development lies in its implications for what scholars of digital journalism have termed the *de-monopolisation* of information production. Deuze and Witschge (2020) argue that digital technology has catalysed a progressive opening of journalism as a social practice, eroding the institutional boundaries that once distinguished professional journalists from non-professional communicators and creating conditions in which actors outside the recognised media system can perform many functions traditionally associated with journalism including the selection of issues for public attention, the narrative framing of social reality, and the targeted dissemination of information to defined audiences. Bruns (2018) conceptualises a related transformation through the notion of *gatewatching*, arguing that the classical gatekeeper model in which editorial hierarchies within media institutions determine what information reaches the public has been supplemented, and in some contexts supplanted, by a distributed model in which networked actors curate

and amplify information flows without occupying any formally recognised journalistic role.

The platformisation of media, theorised by Van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal (2018), provides an essential complementary framework for understanding these dynamics. Platformisation describes the process through which digital platforms governed by proprietary algorithms, data extraction logics, and engagement-maximising interface designs increasingly constitute the infrastructural conditions within which all information production and distribution takes place. Within this framework, the practices of non-media actors who produce and distribute information on platforms like TikTok are not merely analogous to journalism; they are shaped by, and responsive to, the specific affordances and constraints of the platform ecosystem in which they operate. The platform does not serve as a neutral channel for pre-formed information; it actively co-produces the communicative norms, content formats, and audience relationships that characterise information circulating within it.

Against this theoretical backdrop, the TikTok account *@gerakanberaninusantara*, maintained by the Indonesian civic organisation Gerakan Berani Nusantara (G-BRAN), presents a compelling object of empirical inquiry. G-BRAN is a formally registered mass organisation that evolved from a community of supporters of former President Joko Widodo through an intermediate formation known as Barisan Geng Solo before assuming its current institutional identity. The account which at the time of this study maintained 6,254 followers and 48,500 likes functions as the organisation's primary digital communication instrument, producing and distributing short-form video content addressing social issues, political developments, civic education, organisational activities, and matters relating to public figures of national significance. Despite operating entirely outside the professional media system, the account enacts a range of practices issue selection, information packaging, editorial verification, and strategic distribution that bear substantial structural resemblance to digital journalism as conventionally understood.

Previous scholarly attention to digital journalism on TikTok has yielded valuable insights but has also revealed significant gaps that the present study seeks to address. Agustin, Sihabudin, and Duku (2023) examined online journalism trends on TikTok through a study of the media account *@sripoku.com*, while Widyaswarawati and Hasfi (2023) analysed the new media journalism characteristics apparent in TikTok news presentation. Nurazizah (2024) explored how digital editorial teams exercise creativity and innovation in adapting news content for the short-video format. Saragih (2024) documents the broader transformation of TikTok from an entertainment platform into a new arena for digital journalism practices. Hermida (2021) and Hendrickx (2023) have each theorised the social and structural dimensions of social media journalism at a higher level of abstraction. Taken together, these contributions establish the parameters of an emerging field; however, they share a systematic orientation toward professional media institutions and formally recognised journalistic actors. The specific dynamics through which civic organisations and other non-media actors

reconstruct journalistic paradigms through platform-native practices remain, by contrast, substantially under-examined.

The theoretical framework guiding this study integrates three complementary conceptual resources. The foundational framework is Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction of reality, which conceptualises social knowledge as the product of a dialectical process encompassing externalisation (the projection of human activity into the social world), objectivation (the acquisition by externalised activity of an objective, intersubjectively accessible reality), and internalisation (the appropriation by individuals of that objective social world as a structuring element of subjective consciousness). Applied to digital communication, this framework illuminates how an organisation's information-producing activities are not merely technical operations but are processes through which a particular version of social reality is constructed and made available for public appropriation. Complementing this social constructionist perspective are the concept of digital journalism as a body of practices governing digital production and distribution of public information, and the concept of platformisation, which draws attention to the ways in which the algorithmic and interface logics of digital platforms shape and constrain the informational practices conducted within them.

This study pursues two interconnected analytical objectives: first, to document and interpret the specific practices through which *@gerakanberaninusantara* produces and distributes digital information on TikTok; and second, to analyse how these practices collectively constitute a reconstruction of the digital journalism paradigm in the context of non-media civic communication. In pursuing these objectives, the study seeks to make a threefold contribution: theoretical, by extending the application of Berger and Luckmann's framework to the digital platform context; empirical, by providing a detailed account of civic organisational communication on TikTok; and practical, by illuminating the possibilities and constraints of platform-based public information work for organisations operating outside the formal media system. The study argues that the reconstruction of digital journalism paradigms by non-media actors is not an incidental or peripheral phenomenon but a structurally significant feature of contemporary digital public communication that demands sustained scholarly attention.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design (Creswell, 2013) with a case study method (Yin, 2018), selected for its capacity to generate deep, contextually situated understanding of a bounded contemporary phenomenon. The research site is the TikTok account *@gerakanberaninusantara*, which was chosen through purposive sampling because it uniquely combines the institutional characteristics of a formally registered civic organisation with the communicative practices of a non-media digital information producer engaged in the sustained publication of social and political content. The observational period extended from December 2025 to April 2026,

during which the account was systematically monitored and ten videos were selected for detailed analysis on the basis of their thematic relevance to social and political issues and their representativeness of the account's broader content repertoire. At the time of the study, the account maintained 6,254 followers and had accumulated 48,500 likes.

Data were collected through three complementary instruments: systematic content observation of TikTok videos with attention to presentational format, visual elements, communicative structure, and distribution strategies; semi-structured interviews with account administrators to elicit emic perspectives on content production decisions, editorial processes, and audience conceptualisations; and documentary analysis of captions, hashtags, screenshots, comment threads, and TikTok Studio analytics data. The researcher served as the primary research instrument, supported by an observation protocol, an interview guide, and a digital documentation archive. Data were analysed following the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), proceeding through iterative cycles of data reduction, data display, and conclusion-drawing. Theoretical interpretation was conducted against the three dimensions of Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality externalisation, objectivation, and internalization as well as the analytical frameworks of digital journalism and platformisation. Trustworthiness was secured through source triangulation (cross-referencing interview accounts with observational and documentary evidence) and technique triangulation (deploying multiple data collection methods for the same analytical questions).

Results and Discussion

The findings are organised in accordance with the three dimensions of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction of reality, each of which is shown to correspond to a distinct phase of the *@gerakanberaninusantara* account's digital information practices. Following the presentation of dimension-specific findings, a synthetic analysis addresses the account's overall reconstruction of the digital journalism paradigm within the logic of TikTok's platform ecosystem.

Digital Journalism Practices on the G-BRAN TikTok Account

Observational and interview data converge on the finding that *@gerakanberaninusantara* operates not merely as an organisational publication channel but as a substantive site of digital information production oriented toward the public sphere. The content published through the account encompasses a consistently defined thematic domain social issues, civic education, political developments, organisational activities, and matters relating to prominent public figures that reflects a deliberate editorial orientation toward public interest communication. This thematic consistency distinguishes the account from general-purpose social media presences and marks it as an actor engaged in sustained, purposeful public information work (Saragih, 2024).

The account enacts recognisable journalistic practices through a structured production and distribution workflow. Issue selection is conducted by account administrators on the basis of perceived public relevance; incoming information is subject to a basic editorial verification process in which material is cross-referenced against available sources before publication; content is systematically packaged in formats calibrated to TikTok's platform affordances; and distribution is actively managed through the strategic deployment of platform features including hashtags, publication timing, and engagement monitoring. The presence of an editorial verification step is particularly noteworthy: it represents the voluntary adoption, by a non-media civic organisation, of an epistemic norm that has historically been regarded as specifically journalistic. In this respect, the account enacts what Deuze and Witschge (2020) identify as the diffusion of journalistic norms beyond the boundaries of institutional media, a phenomenon that characterises the transformation of journalism in the digital era.

Furthermore, the account deploys a wide range of TikTok's native content features captions, hashtags, subtitles, background music, and visual effects as systematic instruments for extending informational reach and deepening audience engagement. The strategic and consistent integration of these features into the account's production workflow demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of platform logic and its implications for the visibility and reception of information. These findings align with Saragih's (2024) characterisation of TikTok as a new space for digital journalism practice and confirm that non-media actors are capable of operationalising platform affordances in ways that produce functionally journalistic outcomes.

Figure 1. TikTok Account Profile of @gerakanberaninusantara (G-BRAN)



The account profile illustrated in Figure 1 makes visible the organisational identity and communicative positioning of @gerakanberaninusantara within the TikTok platform environment. The account's bio, visual identity, and content organisation collectively project an institutional presence that signals consistency,

purposefulness, and commitment to the communication of civic information. These profile characteristics function as a form of para-textual credentialing establishing, at the point of first encounter, a framework of trust and expectation that conditions audience reception of the information the account produces. This dimension of platform-based public communication aligns with broader scholarship on the role of digital identity construction in shaping the credibility and authority of information sources (Nielsen & Fletcher, 2023).

Externalisation: The Production and Encoding of Digital Information

In Berger and Luckmann's (1966) framework, externalisation designates the foundational dialectical moment through which human subjectivity encompassing knowledge, intention, and social orientation is projected outward into the material and social world in the form of products, practices, and symbolic expressions. In the context of platform-based digital communication, externalisation manifests as the process through which an organisation's understanding of social reality is encoded into publishable digital content. For *@gerakanberaninusantara*, this process is both substantively and formally distinctive. Substantively, the account's content addresses a consistently defined thematic domain social issues, political developments, civic education, organisational activities, and public figures of national significance which reflects the organisation's reading of what constitutes relevant and communicatively urgent public knowledge.

Formally, the externalisation of organisational knowledge is conducted through a platform-native presentational logic that departs markedly from the conventions of conventional journalistic production. Observational analysis of the ten sampled videos reveals that virtually all published content incorporates a standard set of visual and sonic enhancements: subtitles, background music, motion effects, and visual transitions. This is not an incidental stylistic choice but a deliberate communicative strategy calibrated to the specific cognitive and affective conditions of TikTok consumption. Subtitles function as a primary mechanism for rapid information transfer, enabling viewers to absorb content in contexts where audio is muted a common consumption pattern in mobile platform environments. Background music performs a complementary affective function, establishing an emotional register that primes receptivity to the informational content. These findings confirm Widyaswarawati and Hasfi's (2023) characterisation of TikTok's inherently multi-modal communicative logic as a defining feature of new media journalism on the platform.

Critically, the externalisation process at *@gerakanberaninusantara* incorporates an editorial pre-verification procedure: before uploading, administrators cross-reference received information against available sources to ensure factual accuracy and guard against the dissemination of misleading content. This practice operationalises, within the workflow of a non-media civic organisation, the epistemic norm of information verification that has historically been treated as distinctively

journalistic. Its presence signals that the account has internalised and enacted a commitment to epistemic responsibility that goes beyond the minimal requirements of platform participation.

Figure 2. Use of Subtitles in @gerakanberaninusantara TikTok Content



Figure 2 illustrates the deployment of subtitles as a core component of the account's information externalisation strategy. The systematic integration of textual subtitles into video content reflects an understanding of the multi-modal conditions of digital content consumption: viewers frequently engage with TikTok content in public or noise-sensitive environments where audio cannot be activated. By encoding the verbal information of a video as simultaneous on-screen text, the account maximises informational accessibility across the full range of consumption contexts. This strategy also serves to reinforce the information density of short-format content, compensating for temporal brevity through simultaneous visual redundancy. The communicative philosophy underlying this practice delivering complex information in a visually accessible, immediately comprehensible format reflects a productive synthesis of journalistic informational purpose and platform-native presentational logic.

Objectivation: The Distribution of Information Through Platform Infrastructure

Objectivation, in Berger and Luckmann's (1966) conceptualisation, describes the moment at which externalised human products acquire an objective, intersubjectively accessible existence a reality experienced as existing independently of and prior to the subjective consciousness of any individual. In the digital platform context, objectivation occurs when information produced and encoded by an organisational

actor is released into the platform's distribution infrastructure and thereby made available to audiences who may have no prior connection to the producing organisation. For *@gerakanberaninusantara*, this objectivation process is mediated and substantially shaped by TikTok's algorithmic recommendation system, which determines the extent and character of the audience to whom the information becomes accessible.

Analysis of the account's distribution strategy reveals a sophisticated engagement with the platform's algorithmic logic. The account systematically deploys topical and politically resonant hashtags including references to key national political figures as instruments for inserting content into TikTok's topical categorisation system. This is not merely a technical tagging practice; it is a strategic act of algorithmic positioning that routes the account's content toward users whose prior viewing behaviour has marked them as members of the intended audience. The For You Page recommendation system then amplifies this positioning by surfacing content to users who have not previously encountered the account, effecting a form of audience expansion that is structurally unlike the circulation mechanisms of either traditional media or earlier social media models dependent primarily on follower networks. As Nielsen and Fletcher (2023) demonstrate, platformisation has fundamentally altered news distribution dynamics precisely because algorithmic recommendation systems systematically generate audiences that transcend the pre-existing social networks of information producers.

Figure 3. Hashtag Usage Strategy in *@gerakanberaninusantara* TikTok Content



Figure 3 provides a concrete illustration of the hashtag strategy through which *@gerakanberaninusantara* achieves objectivation of its information within TikTok's platform ecosystem. The hashtags deployed are not generic but are carefully selected to align with topics of demonstrated audience interest and algorithmic salience, maximising the probability that the content will be routed to users with relevant

topical engagement histories. This deliberate algorithmic positioning transforms the account's published content from an organisational utterance addressed to a pre-defined audience into a public digital artefact that circulates through the platform's recommendation infrastructure toward audiences constituted by shared algorithmic interest profiles rather than prior social connection. The reflexive orientation toward platform analytics evidenced by the account's use of TikTok Studio to monitor content performance further confirms that objectivation is understood and managed as a strategic process rather than an incidental outcome of publication (Van Dijck et al., 2018).

Internalisation: Audience Engagement and the Co-construction of Social Reality

The third moment in Berger and Luckmann's (1966) dialectical schema internalization designates the process through which the objective social reality that has been externalised and objectivated is appropriated by individuals as a meaningful framework for their own subjective experience. In digital communication contexts, internalisation is most visibly manifest in the responsive behaviours of audiences: the ways in which they engage with, respond to, and integrate digital information into their own understanding of social reality. For the *@gerakanberaninusantara* account, the primary empirical indicators of internalisation are the comment responses, likes, and sharing behaviours constituting TikTok's engagement architecture.

Observational analysis of comment sections across the ten sampled videos reveals a qualitatively differentiated pattern of audience response. Comments range from expressions of agreement or emotional affirmation of the information presented, through requests for clarification or supplementary information, to critical contestations of the account's framing of particular social or political issues. This variation is theoretically significant: it indicates that audience members are not processing the account's content as passive information receivers but are engaging with it as an occasion for their own interpretive activity, bringing prior knowledge, values, and social positions to bear on the externalised information and producing individuated responses reflecting their particular internalisation trajectories. This interactive communication dynamic is structurally unlike the communication of information through conventional broadcast media. Hermida (2021) characterises this transformation as the emergence of *ambient journalism* a mode of public information circulation in which social media platforms sustain a continuous, participatory communicative environment in which audiences are simultaneously receivers and potential co-producers of information.

Figure 4. Audience Interaction on @gerakanberaninusantara TikTok Content

Figure 4 makes visible the interactive engagement dimension of the account's communicative practice. The presence of diverse comment types affirmative, interrogative, and contestatory across the published content confirms that audiences are not passive recipients of organisational information but active interpretive participants in the construction of public meaning. Interview data corroborate this finding: administrators conceptualise audience engagement as an integral component of the communicative process rather than an incidental by-product of publication. Comment content and quantitative engagement indicators alike are treated as meaningful evidence of whether the externalised information has achieved genuine public uptake and comprehension. This reflexive orientation toward audience response reflects a participatory philosophy of communication that aligns with models of digital journalism emphasising the co-constitutive relationship between information producers and their audiences (Bruns, 2018; Saragih, 2024).

Reconstruction of the Digital Journalism Paradigm: A Synthetic Analysis

The findings presented across the three social constructionist dimensions collectively articulate a coherent transformation of the digital journalism paradigm that is both theoretically significant and empirically grounded. What emerges from the case of @gerakanberaninusantara is not a simple imitation of professional journalism by a non-media actor, but a qualitatively distinctive reconstruction that reconfigures four fundamental dimensions of the journalistic paradigm: the constitution of legitimate information producers, the formal conventions of information presentation, the mechanisms of information distribution, and the characterisation of the audience relationship.

On the first dimension the constitution of legitimate information producers the account exemplifies the broader dissolution of the institutional monopoly on journalistic practice that Deuze and Witschge (2020) identify as a defining

characteristic of digital-era journalism. The account's editorial verification practice, its sustained engagement with matters of public interest, and its deployment of informational formats oriented toward public comprehension all operationalise norms traditionally associated with professional journalism within an organisational context that lacks any of the institutional credentials that conventionally ground claims to journalistic legitimacy. This functional performance of journalistic norms by non-media actors is what Bruns (2018) theorises as the emergence of gatewatching a distributed model of information curation in which civic and social actors exercise quasi-editorial functions.

On the second dimension the formal conventions of information presentation the account's practices constitute a decisive departure from the presentational norms of conventional journalism. Where traditional journalism orients toward comprehensive, textually elaborate, source-attributed accounts of public events, *@gerakanberaninusantara* deploys a radically condensed, visually dominant, and affectively calibrated presentational format constituted by and responsive to TikTok's platform affordances. As Hendrickx (2023) argues in his theorisation of TikTok as the fourth wave of news production, this format is not a degraded version of journalism but an emergent communicative form with its own distinctive epistemic and aesthetic logic, adapted to the temporality and attention dynamics of platform-mediated consumption.

On the third dimension the mechanisms of information distribution the findings demonstrate the extent to which algorithmic infrastructure has displaced the institutional channels and social networks through which journalistic information has historically circulated. The account's strategic engagement with TikTok's hashtag system, FYP recommendation algorithm, and publication timing practices represents an adaptation to what Nielsen and Fletcher (2023) call the platformisation of news distribution. This is a structurally transformative development because it decouples distributional reach from institutional authority a civic organisation with 6,254 followers can, through effective algorithmic positioning, achieve audience penetration that rivals or exceeds that of formally credentialed media outlets. On the fourth dimension the characterisation of the audience relationship the account's interactive engagement dynamics, illustrated in Figure 4, instantiate a communicative model in which the audience is not a passive recipient of journalistic output but an active participant in the construction and circulation of public knowledge (Hermida, 2021).

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the TikTok account *@gerakanberaninusantara*, operated by the civic organisation Gerakan Berani Nusantara, constitutes an empirically grounded instance of the reconstruction of the digital journalism paradigm by a non-media actor. Through systematic analysis guided by Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality framework, the study has shown that the account's communicative practices encompass all three moments of the

constructionist dialectic. Externalisation manifests in the encoding of organisational knowledge into platform-native short-form video content characterised by multimodal visual design, editorial pre-verification, and issue-oriented narrative framing. Objectivation is achieved through strategic deployment of TikTok's algorithmic distribution infrastructure including topical hashtags, FYP-calibrated content formats, and reflexive analytics monitoring which grants the account's information an objective, publicly accessible presence extending well beyond its immediate follower base. Internalisation is evidenced in the differentiated engagement behaviours of audiences, whose comments, likes, and content-sharing activities demonstrate active interpretive participation in the construction of social meaning from the account's informational output.

The reconstruction of the digital journalism paradigm that these practices collectively instantiate involves four interdependent transformations: the functional democratisation of information production beyond institutional media boundaries; the platformisation of presentational norms toward visual and affective short-form formats; the algorithmisation of distributional mechanisms away from institutional channels; and the reconstitution of the audience as an active communicative participant rather than a passive informational recipient. Theoretically, this study extends Berger and Luckmann's constructionist framework into the digital platform context and validates its continued analytical productivity for understanding contemporary public communication. Practically, it offers a transferable model of how civic organisations can develop informed, strategically coherent digital communication practices fulfilling meaningful public information functions. Future research should extend this inquiry through comparative case studies across multiple platforms and organisational types, and should incorporate systematic audience reception studies capable of tracing the full internalisation arc from content production to the formation of public understanding.

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