

Digital Consumption and Audience Trust in the RadarPertanian YouTube Affiliate Ecosystem

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Abstract: *Digital platforms have transformed information consumption while expanding economic opportunities through the YouTube Affiliate ecosystem. This study analyses how audience trust is formed through digital consumption habitus within the YouTube Affiliate ecosystem, using the RadarPertanian YouTube channel as a case study. The study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with purposively selected channel managers involved in content production, audience interaction, and affiliate activities. Additional data were collected through observation and documentation, including video archives, audience interactions, channel analytics, and affiliate activity data. Data were analysed interactively through coding, categorisation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, supported by source and methodological triangulation. Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital guided the analysis. The findings indicate that audience trust is associated with authentic communication, practical agricultural experience, consistent educational content, and sustained creator-audience interaction. These practices generate repeated digital consumption experiences and support recognition of the creator's competence as a credible information source. This recognition contributes to symbolic capital formation within the digital field. Affiliate activity data provide contextual evidence of economic activities and do not establish that trust directly causes affiliate clicks or purchases. The study contributes to digital sociology by conceptualising audience trust as a social process shaped by repeated practices, actors' positions, and recognition of creators' capital.*

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INTRODUCTION

The transformation brought about by the development of digital technology has driven major changes in patterns of communication, knowledge production, and economic practices within society (Sukmana et al., 2025). The YouTube platform no longer functions merely as a medium for entertainment and passive information, but has developed into a space for meaning production and a highly dynamic digital economic arena. Content creators are no longer merely information providers, but actors within the platform ecosystem who integrate content production, social relationships, and commercialisation practices through various monetisation schemes such as AdSense, sponsorships, and affiliate programmes (Amriwan et al., 2024). These changes demonstrate the transformation of society into a digital society (Sukmana et al., 2025).

In this context, watching YouTube cannot be understood merely as a passive activity. Content consumption takes place repeatedly and systematically, shaping particular preferences over a long period of time. From a sociological perspective, such continuous consumption patterns can be

understood as digital habitus, namely a set of habits and perceptual frameworks formed through routine interactions with content, algorithms, and digital communities (Rahman et al., 2025). In the digital space, habitus not only shapes patterns of consumption and interaction, but is also related to the process of forming and contesting symbolic capital. Digital practices can serve as a means for individuals to gain social recognition and establish symbolic positions within the social media environment (Husna & Bakhri, 2025). From a digital sociology perspective, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital remain relevant for understanding how social relations and inequalities are reproduced through digital communication technologies (Ignatow & Robinson, 2017). Such habitus shapes how audiences understand information, assess the credibility of creators, and determine their attitudes towards product recommendations presented through videos (Bourdieu, 2018). Creator credibility is one of the important factors in building audience trust in the information and products being recommended. This indicates that the success of creator-based marketing is determined not only by the size of the audience, but also by the credibility built through interactions between creators and audiences (Wibowo et al., 2023).

Affiliate marketing has a significant influence on brand trust among Shopee users, particularly Generation Z. These findings indicate that affiliate activities can play a role in shaping consumer trust within the digital commerce environment (Pertiwi et al., 2024). In an environment saturated with advertisements and promotions, consumers are becoming increasingly cautious in determining where and for what they spend their money. Partners who have proven themselves to be trusted sources of information and advice make a significant contribution to customer trust by providing honest reviews and content that is genuinely intended to inform and assist their audiences (Sutandi et al., 2024).

Transparency in marketing practices, the provision of valuable and relevant content, and direct communication with audiences through various channels such as email and social media can increase customer trust. Honest, transparent, and valuable interactions between affiliates and customers can establish a strong foundation of trust, influencing customer trust and the success of affiliate marketing (Sutandi et al., 2024). Honest, transparent, and valuable interactions between affiliates and customers can establish a strong foundation of trust, influencing customer trust and the success of affiliate marketing. Without trust, product recommendations tend to be perceived merely as forms of commercial promotion. Conversely, when strong trust has been established, such recommendations can be perceived as legitimate, honest, and relevant advice (Ananda, 2017).

This phenomenon becomes increasingly interesting when examined through a thematic channel with a specific audience segmentation and a focus on practical production needs, such as the RadarPertanian YouTube channel. This channel focuses on educational and informative content related to agriculture, including cultivation techniques, the use of agricultural tools and machinery, fertiliser formulations, seeds, and agricultural technology innovations.

The RadarPertanian channel has a distinctive communication pattern with an audience consisting predominantly of farmers, small and medium-sized agricultural business operators, and people with an interest in agriculture. Interactions in the comment section often include technical questions, practical field experiences, and discussions regarding the effectiveness of particular products. This interaction pattern demonstrates the formation of a digital community based on shared interests and needs (Salsabila & Anshori, 2025). In this context, content creators not only act as information providers, but also as reference figures possessing symbolic authority.

These conditions create opportunities for the formation of strong trust. When audiences repeatedly access content, obtain practical benefits, and observe consistency in the delivery of information, social legitimacy towards the creator begins to develop. This legitimacy subsequently influences audience decisions in responding to product recommendations through affiliate schemes.

Previous studies have extensively examined the relationships among digital creators, credibility, trust, and consumer behaviour. Prasetyo and Sobari (2024), for instance, investigated the effect of influencer credibility on purchase intention, with trust and online engagement acting as mediating variables. Their findings demonstrated that creator credibility plays an important role in shaping consumer responses to digital marketing activities. Similar findings have been reported in YouTube-related studies, which identify influencer attributes as important factors influencing information credibility, information adoption, and audiences' purchase intentions or decisions (Mohamed & Jaafar, 2025). Overall, previous research has tended to conceptualise credibility as a characteristic of creators that subsequently affects trust, information acceptance, engagement, or audience purchasing behaviour.

Research on creator-audience relationships on YouTube has also increasingly highlighted the importance of audience experiences in content consumption. Seo et al. (2025) explained that perceived value in the relationship between YouTube influencers and users can enhance audience trust and commitment, which subsequently influence attitudes and purchase intentions towards promoted products or brands. Similarly, broader research on influencer marketing has demonstrated that characteristics such as expertise, trustworthiness, credibility, informativeness, and congruence between creators and products are significantly associated with consumer engagement and purchase intentions (Masuda et al., 2023). These studies provide an important foundation for understanding the role of trust in creator-audience relationships; however, their primary focus remains on explaining how creator attributes or audience perceptions influence specific marketing outcomes.

Studies on affiliate marketing have likewise predominantly focused on the relationship between affiliate activities, consumer trust, and purchasing decisions. Piliana and Maradona (2024) emphasised the importance of information transparency, affiliate reputation, relevance, and product and service quality in strengthening consumer trust in affiliate links on social media. Other studies have shown that affiliate marketing can influence purchasing decisions through the mediating role of consumer trust, as demonstrated by Nugraha and Widyastuti (2025) in their study of affiliate marketing and online customer reviews. In addition, Rahandini (2025) found that affiliate content types and source credibility can shape perceived trust, which is subsequently associated with purchase intentions in the context of TikTok Shop. These findings indicate that existing literature has provided substantial explanations of the factors influencing trust and the effectiveness of affiliate marketing activities, particularly in relation to consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions.

However, a significant research gap remains in the way previous studies conceptualise the process through which trust is formed. Much of the existing literature treats trust as an independent, dependent, or mediating variable within relatively linear relationships, such as the effect of creator credibility on trust, affiliate marketing on purchasing decisions, or trust on purchase intentions. Yet, within digital consumption practices, trust may not emerge merely as an immediate response to a single piece of content or promotional message. Audiences may consume content repeatedly, develop particular preferences, gain practical experiences, engage in interactions, and gradually construct perceptions of a creator's competence and social position. Thus, there remains limited research

examining how routine and sustained content consumption contributes to the formation of audience dispositions to trust creators, particularly in contexts where creator–audience relationships are established before, or simultaneously with, affiliate promotional activities. This limitation highlights the need for an approach that moves beyond examining direct relationships between marketing variables and instead investigates the social processes underlying the formation of trust in digital spaces.

This gap becomes particularly evident in the context of experience-based educational channels. Previous studies have predominantly focused on influencers whose content is directly oriented towards product promotion, particularly in areas such as beauty, lifestyle, skincare, and other consumer goods. Even within the YouTube context, recent studies have largely examined the relationships among influencer attributes, information credibility, information adoption, and purchase intentions (Mohamed & Jaafar, 2025). Similarly, studies of affiliate content have mainly employed consumer behaviour and marketing effectiveness perspectives, often positioning trust as a mediating factor between affiliate content and purchase intention (Azrani & Amelia, 2026). Consequently, limited attention has been given to channels that primarily build their audiences through the repeated production and dissemination of practical knowledge while simultaneously integrating product recommendations into an affiliate ecosystem.

Based on this gap, the novelty of the present study lies in its integration of the concepts of digital consumption habitus, creators' symbolic capital, and the formation of audience trust within the YouTube Affiliate ecosystem. Unlike previous studies that primarily examine whether creator credibility influences trust or whether trust affects purchase decisions, this study seeks to explain how trust itself is formed. Repeated content consumption is understood as a practice that may shape audiences' digital habitus, referring to the development of particular dispositions and perceptual frameworks through which audiences receive, evaluate, and respond to information. Within this process, audiences' experiences of gaining practical benefits from content, observing consistency in information production, and participating in digital interactions may strengthen their recognition of the creator's competence. Such recognition can subsequently be understood as contributing to the accumulation of symbolic capital, namely the legitimacy and recognition that enable creators to occupy positions as trusted reference figures within a particular digital field.

Drawing on the perspective of digital sociology and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital, this study conceptualises trust not merely as a psychological variable or an instrument for increasing purchase intention, but as the outcome of a social process that develops through repeated practices of digital consumption and interaction. This approach is relevant to recent discussions of the creator economy, which suggest that creator activities involve not only direct promotional relationships between brands and consumers but also complex networks of relationships, value creation, and actor positioning within digital ecosystems (Libai et al., 2025). Accordingly, the present study extends discussions of creator credibility and affiliate marketing beyond promotional effectiveness by examining the processes through which legitimacy and trust are constructed within digital social relationships.

Empirically, this novelty is examined through the case of the RadarPertanian YouTube channel, which is particularly relevant because it combines educational and commercial functions within a single digital space. Rather than merely producing promotional content, the channel provides information on cultivation techniques, agricultural tools and machinery, fertilisers, seeds, and agricultural technology innovations that are directly relevant to the practical needs of its audience. Through repeated content

consumption, audiences may develop a more sustained relationship with the creator than would be expected from exposure to advertisements or isolated promotional messages alone. Under such conditions, affiliate product recommendations may acquire different meanings because audiences have already accumulated experiences of accessing information, assessing consistency, and observing the creator's competence.

Therefore, the principal distinction between this study and previous research lies in its analytical focus. Studies of creator credibility generally explain how creators' attributes or characteristics influence audience trust and behaviour; studies of consumer trust commonly examine its role in shaping purchase intentions or decisions; whereas studies of affiliate marketing primarily investigate promotional effectiveness, information transparency, affiliate reputation, and their effects on consumer behaviour. In contrast, this study connects these three dimensions through a social-process perspective by examining how digital consumption habitus, formed through repeated content consumption, contributes to the recognition of creators' symbolic capital and ultimately shapes audience trust in affiliate recommendations. Thus, rather than only identifying the factors that influence trust, this study seeks to explain how trust is produced and reproduced through the relationships among creators, audiences, content, and commercial interests within the digital field.

Based on the identified research gap and novelty, the RadarPertanian channel provides a relevant case for examining the formation of audience trust within the YouTube Affiliate ecosystem. This study aims to analyse how digital consumption habitus shapes audience trust through repeated experiences of content consumption, recognition of creator competence, and the formation of symbolic capital within the digital field. Accordingly, the study offers a conceptual contribution by providing a more sociological understanding of the relationship between digital habitus, symbolic capital, and audience trust, while also extending existing scholarship on affiliate marketing, which has predominantly focused on the direct relationships among credibility, trust, and purchasing behaviour.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to analyse the process through which audience trust is formed within the YouTube Affiliate ecosystem through digital consumption practices on the Radar Pertanian YouTube channel. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of the meanings, experiences, and social practices that shape relationships between creators and audiences in digital spaces (Sugiyono, 2017).

The study focused on the Radar Pertanian YouTube channel, which was purposively selected as the research case. The channel was chosen because it consistently produces agricultural educational content based on practical field experience while also using the YouTube Affiliate Programme as one of its monetisation strategies. The case was selected based on the intersection of educational content production, creator–audience interaction, and digital economic activities through affiliate marketing.

A total of six informants were selected using purposive sampling. The selection criteria included: (1) direct involvement in the management of the Radar Pertanian channel; (2) knowledge and experience related to content production and publication; (3) an understanding of channel development strategies and audience interactions; and (4) involvement in or knowledge of the implementation of the YouTube Affiliate Programme. The primary informant was the manager of the Radar Pertanian channel, while the supporting informants consisted of one editor, three community

members involved as talents, and one account manager. These informants were selected based on their relevant knowledge and involvement in content production, channel management, audience interaction, and affiliate-related activities. Their diverse roles provided complementary perspectives on content production practices, audience engagement, channel management, and the implementation of the YouTube Affiliate Programme within the Radar Pertanian channel.

The audience perspective in this study was not obtained through direct interviews with audience members. Accordingly, this study does not directly claim to represent the subjective experiences or perceptions of the entire audience. Audience perspectives were examined in a limited manner through available digital interaction traces, particularly audience comments, patterns of questions and responses in the comment section, and audience statistics and characteristics available through YouTube Studio Analytics. These data were used to identify patterns of audience interaction and responses to content and product recommendations and were subsequently compared with information obtained from the channel managers. Therefore, the interpretation of audience trust was based on triangulation among the perspectives of channel managers, audience interaction traces, content observations, and documentary data rather than on direct measurement of audience perceptions.

Data were collected in February 2026. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and observation, whereas secondary data were collected through documentation. Interviews were conducted face-to-face using a semi-structured interview guide. The interviews addressed content production processes, strategies for developing relationships with audiences, creators' experiences in responding to audience interactions, product recommendation practices, and the implementation of the YouTube Affiliate Programme. Each interview lasted approximately 10 minutes and was conducted over two sessions, depending on the need for further exploration. With the informants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed for coding and analysis.

Observations were conducted throughout the research period and focused on the activities and characteristics of the Radar Pertanian channel, including patterns of content presentation, content themes and publication consistency, modes of information delivery, the presentation of practical experiences, creator-audience interactions, and the integration of affiliate product recommendations. The comment section was also observed to identify the types of questions, responses, practical experiences, and reactions expressed by audiences regarding the information and products presented on the channel. Documentation included video archives, video descriptions, audience comments, screenshots of channel performance data, audience statistics, and documents and data related to affiliate activities.

YouTube Studio Analytics were used as supporting data to contextualise the qualitative findings. The available data showed 618,055 product impressions and 9,795 product clicks, indicating the extent to which products recommended through the Radar Pertanian channel were displayed and accessed by audiences. The channel had published 623 videos and had 21,800 subscribers. In addition, the Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) generated through affiliate-related product activities reached Rp21,724,437. These data were used to describe the reach, audience interaction with recommended products, content production activity, and economic activities associated with the YouTube Affiliate Programme. However, analytics and affiliate data were not treated as direct evidence of audience trust. Instead, they were used as contextual data and compared with interview findings, observations, audience comments, and documentary evidence.

Data adequacy was determined according to the principle of data saturation. Data collection continued until information obtained from interviews, observations, audience comments, and documentation demonstrated recurring patterns and no longer generated substantively new categories relevant to the research focus. Data trustworthiness was enhanced through source and methodological triangulation by comparing information obtained from informants, observations, audience comments, documentation, YouTube Studio Analytics, and affiliate data.

Data analysis was conducted interactively through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. At the initial stage, interview data were transcribed and compiled together with observation notes, audience comments, and relevant research documents. Initial coding was then conducted by assigning codes to data relevant to the research focus, including content production practices, creator–audience interaction patterns, repeated content consumption, practical benefits obtained by audiences, creator consistency, competence, audience recognition, credibility, product recommendations, and responses to affiliate activities. Related codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories and developed into the main themes of the study.

The subsequent stage involved categorical and thematic coding to connect these categories with the main research themes. Findings from interviews, observations, audience comments, documentation, YouTube Studio Analytics, and affiliate data were then compared across sources. This process was used to distinguish information obtained directly from informants from interpretations of audience perspectives based on digital interaction traces. The findings were subsequently interpreted through a digital sociology perspective, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital as the primary conceptual framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile and Characteristics of the Radar Pertanian Channel

The RadarPertanian channel is a YouTube platform that focuses on producing content related to agriculture and farm management. During the research period, the channel had published more than 623 videos, accumulated 21,800 subscribers, and recorded a total of 3,233,023 views. Its content is organised into several thematic categories, including gardening techniques, planting in polybags, grafting techniques, agricultural start-up capital, crop cultivation reviews, and post-harvest processing.

The RadarPertanian content production system is independently managed and relatively simple. Content is developed based on practical agricultural experience, recorded using a smartphone camera, and edited in-house. A key characteristic of this production process is the direct presentation of content by the channel managers without the use of voice-overs. This approach enables practical agricultural experiences to be communicated directly while simplifying the video production process.

Despite its relatively modest production scale, the channel managers also apply a YouTube Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) strategy. Early content on grafting techniques and planting in polybags was selected based on the demand for these topics. This strategy indicates that content production is based not only on practical experience but also on considerations related to information distribution and visibility within the digital platform ecosystem.

According to YouTube Studio Analytics, the RadarPertanian audience is dominated by viewers from Indonesia (94 per cent), followed by Malaysia (2.7 per cent), India (0.1 per cent), and other

countries (less than 0.1 per cent). This distribution indicates that the channel primarily reaches domestic audiences with an interest in agricultural content.

Affiliate data indicate the presence of economic activity within the channel ecosystem, as reflected in product impressions, product clicks, and Gross Merchandise Value. These data are used to describe the level of YouTube Affiliate activity on the RadarPertanian channel and are not directly interpreted as evidence that audience trust causes clicks or purchases.

Tabel. 1. Statistical Performance of the Radar Pertanian YouTube Affiliate Channel

No.	Metric	Value
1	Product Impressions	618.055 views
2	Product Clicks	9.795 clicks
3	Gross Merchandise Value	Rp 21.724.437
4	Video published	623 video
5	Subscribers	21.800 subscribers

Sumber: Source: YouTube Studio Analytics Report & Radar Pertanian Affiliate Report (2026)

The evolving digital consumption patterns amongst Radar Pertanian's audience are rooted in functional and practical needs. The audience is not merely seeking entertainment, but rather solutions to the agricultural challenges they face. From Bourdieu's perspective, repeated engagement with agricultural educational content shapes their digital consumption habitus. The audience has become accustomed to using Radar Pertanian videos as their primary reference before making technical decisions on their farmland or in their gardens. This also demonstrates that the form of inquiry within the digital habitus is not a uniform, singular entity, but rather a social space fraught with tensions, dilemmas, and differences (Fauziah et al., 2025)

The RadarPertanian Channel as a Digital Arena within the YouTube Affiliate Ecosystem

The development of the digital economy has transformed YouTube from a medium for information distribution into a social field in which creators, audiences, platform algorithms, and digital economic activities interact. From a sociological perspective, a field is a social space in which actors occupy particular positions and mobilise different forms of capital. In this study, the RadarPertanian channel is understood as a digital field that brings together agricultural educational content production and monetisation activities through the YouTube Affiliate Programme (Nagara, 2021).

RadarPertanian is a YouTube channel focused on disseminating agricultural information and education under the tagline "Agriculture for the Future." Since its establishment in 2020, the channel has consistently produced content on crop cultivation techniques, grafting, planting in polybags, agricultural produce management, and the use of agricultural production tools. This consistency indicates that the channel functions as a space for distributing information and sharing practical experiences derived from agricultural activities.

Unlike creators who rely on complex visual production, RadarPertanian adopts a relatively simple content production strategy. Videos are recorded using a smartphone, and the material is presented directly without voice-overs. Based on the research findings, these production characteristics constitute part of the creator's practices in communicating agricultural experiences to the audience. However, audience assessments of the creator's authenticity and credibility should be based on evidence obtained from audience interactions or other available empirical data.

The channel managers also implement an SEO strategy by selecting topics that correspond to the needs of YouTube users. Keyword selection and relevant topics support content distribution and visibility within the digital field. Accordingly, SEO is understood in this study as one of the mechanisms affecting content visibility, whereas audience trust is analysed through practices, interactions, and empirical evidence obtained during the research process.

The development of content production and affiliate activities indicates that RadarPertanian integrates educational and economic functions within a single digital space. Data on subscriber numbers, product clicks, and transaction values demonstrate the development of channel reach and affiliate activity. However, these data are not used to establish a direct causal relationship between content production, audience trust, and affiliate success.

Digital Consumption Habits in the Formation of Audience Trust

One of the findings of this study indicates that audience trust in the creator is not formed instantaneously but is associated with repeated experiences of digital content consumption. From Bourdieu's perspective, this process can be understood through the concept of habitus, namely dispositions formed through experiences and practices that are continuously reproduced. In the context of this study, it is important to distinguish between creators' production practices and audiences' consumption habitus. Creators' practices are reflected in content production based on agricultural experience, direct communication, and consistent publication, whereas audience consumption habitus refers to tendencies to repeatedly access and use RadarPertanian content as a source of agricultural information.

RadarPertanian develops its content production practices on the basis of direct experience in agricultural activities. Demonstrations of tool use, cultivation techniques, and crop management are presented in practical field settings. According to one informant, "When I create content, I usually draw from my own experiences. It makes it easier for me to decide what I want to share because I actually know about it and have experienced it firsthand. It also makes the story feel more real and easier to explain to the audience. For example, if I have a problem with chili plants that are difficult to flower and produce fruit, I will try different solutions one by one until I find the one that works best. After that, I turn the experience into content that I can share with the audience." This finding suggests that practical experience and agricultural knowledge may be understood as forms of the creator's cultural capital.

In contrast, audience consumption habitus is reflected in repeated patterns of content use to obtain information relevant to practical needs. Based on interview findings, one informant explained, "When I have a problem with my crops, I usually look for information on RadarPertanian first. I have tried some of the methods shown in their videos, and they have been quite helpful. So, whenever I have another problem, I usually check RadarPertanian's content first." This indicates that RadarPertanian content is not only consumed for general information but is also repeatedly used as a practical reference when audiences encounter problems in their agricultural activities. Within Bourdieu's framework, such repeated consumption may be understood as a process through which dispositions are formed and influence how audiences receive and evaluate information sources based on their previous consumption experiences.

The findings also indicate that showing the creator's face, using first-person narration, and maintaining consistency in the production of educational content constitute production practices

associated with the development of relationships with audiences. According to one informant, “I try to appear directly in front of the camera and talk to the audience as if we were having a casual conversation. I also make sure to greet them, as if we were having a two-way conversation. I also try to consistently produce content so that the audience continues to follow it and understands that the information I share is based on my own experience and is relevant to the everyday problems faced by most farmers.” This statement indicates that direct and personal communication, combined with consistent content production, is used to build closer relationships with the audience while strengthening the relevance and credibility of the information presented. Through these practices, the creator’s cultural capital, in the form of agricultural knowledge and experience, may gain recognition within digital interactions. Such recognition is subsequently analysed as a process associated with the formation of symbolic capital in the form of legitimacy attributed to the creator’s competence and credibility.

Accordingly, audience trust in this study is not understood as the direct result of a single promotional activity but as a process associated with consumption experiences, interactions, and the recognition of creator competence. Affiliate performance data, such as product clicks and transaction values, are used to demonstrate the presence of economic activity within the channel ecosystem; however, they are not directly interpreted as evidence that trust causes audiences to click on affiliate links or make purchases.

Symbolic Capital and Strategies for Building Trust in the YouTube Affiliate Ecosystem

The findings indicate that the development of the YouTube Affiliate Programme on the RadarPertanian channel occurs alongside consistent content production practices. However, this study does not conclude that subscriber numbers, upload frequency, or audience trust directly cause the success of affiliate activities. Product click and transaction data are used to illustrate the level of affiliate activity, whereas the process of trust formation is analysed on the basis of informants’ experiences and accounts and findings concerning creator–audience interactions.

From Bourdieu’s perspective, symbolic capital in this study refers to the recognition and legitimacy acquired by the creator through knowledge and experience. On the RadarPertanian channel, such capital is associated with content production based on direct experience, straightforward communication, and consistency in sharing information. According to one informant, “At first, people may not immediately trust me, but because I consistently create content and the information I share is based on my experience in the field, they gradually begin to trust me. Some of them even frequently ask questions or seek my advice when they encounter problems in their fields.” This statement indicates that consistent content production and experience-based information can gradually build audience trust. When audiences begin to rely on the creator for agricultural advice, the creator’s practical knowledge and experience gain greater recognition within the digital field. This finding illustrates how cultural capital, in the form of agricultural knowledge and practical experience, may gain recognition within the digital field and potentially develop into symbolic capital.

The findings also show that SEO functions as a supporting strategy for expanding content reach. The selection of relevant keywords, topics aligned with users’ needs, and consistent publication increases the likelihood that content will be discovered by new audiences. Within this study, SEO is positioned as part of the mechanisms related to content distribution and visibility within the digital

field, whereas habitus refers to dispositions formed through repeated practices, particularly audience content consumption.

Thus, Bourdieu's concepts can be directly connected to the empirical findings of this study. Cultural capital is reflected in the creator's agricultural knowledge and practical experience; the digital field is represented by YouTube as a space in which creators, audiences, algorithms, and affiliate activities interact; habitus is reflected in repeated practices, particularly audience content consumption; and symbolic capital is associated with the recognition and legitimacy attributed to the creator's competence on the basis of experiences and interactions identified in the research data. These interconnected concepts suggest that audience trust should be understood as a social process developing within the digital field rather than as a direct causal relationship between product promotion and purchasing behavior.

A Sociological Model of Audience Trust Formation within the YouTube Affiliate Ecosystem

Based on the research findings, this study proposes a conceptual model of audience trust formation within the YouTube Affiliate ecosystem from a sociological perspective. The model positions trust not as the direct outcome of a single promotional activity but as part of a social process associated with content production practices, digital consumption experiences, interactions, and the recognition of creator competence within the digital field.

Conceptually, this process begins with content production practices based on experience, direct communication, and publication consistency. Repeated consumption practices may subsequently contribute to the formation of audience dispositions or digital habitus in receiving and evaluating information. Within this process, the creator's knowledge and experience may be understood as cultural capital, whereas relationships and interactions with audiences are associated with social capital. Recognition of the creator's competence and credibility is then analysed as a form of symbolic capital associated with the formation of audience trust.

The empirical findings demonstrate the presence of affiliate activity within the RadarPertanian ecosystem, as reflected in product click and transaction data. However, this study does not claim that audience trust directly causes clicks, purchases, or the success of the affiliate programme. Therefore, the relationship between trust formation and affiliate activity in the proposed model should be understood as a conceptual relationship that requires further empirical testing.

Accordingly, the contribution of this study lies in applying a sociological perspective to understand the relationships among content production practices, digital habitus, different forms of capital, and trust formation within the YouTube field. The proposed conceptual model illustrates the relationship between content production practices → repeated consumption practices and the formation of digital habitus → recognition of the creator's cultural and social capital → the development of symbolic capital and audience trust → its relationship with affiliate activities. The model is not intended to demonstrate a directly established causal relationship but rather to provide a conceptual framework grounded in the findings of this study that can be examined further in future research.marketing.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that audience trust within the YouTube Affiliate ecosystem is a social process associated with the continuous reproduction of digital practices. Empirical findings from the

RadarPertanian channel indicate that trust develops through consistent content production, the creator's direct experience, authentic communication, and ongoing audience interaction. Agricultural educational content contributes to repeated digital consumption experiences that strengthen audiences' recognition of the creator as a credible information source.

From a sociological perspective, YouTube functions as a digital field in which habitus, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital are interrelated. The creator's practical experience represents cultural capital, relationships and audience interactions are associated with social capital, while recognition of competence and credibility contributes to symbolic capital. Audience trust is therefore understood as recognition developed through repeated consumption experiences and interactions. Affiliate activity data show an association between content production, audience interactions, and digital economic activities, but do not establish that trust directly causes affiliate clicks or purchasing decisions.

Based on these findings, this study proposes a conceptual model linking content production practices, digital habitus, the accumulation of cultural, social, and symbolic capital, repeated interactions within the digital field, and audience trust. The model represents a conceptual contribution and does not imply empirically tested causal relationships. Practically, creators should prioritise information quality, practical experience, authenticity, and consistency in audience interactions. The study is limited by its qualitative single-case design, so findings cannot be generalised. Future research should test the proposed relationships across content categories and platforms using quantitative or mixed-methods approaches.

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