

**ORIGINAL ARTICLE**

# Verifying user-generated content (UGC) through the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI): Maintaining nationalism or threatening freedom of expression?

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**Abstract**

The revision of the Law on User-Generated Content (UGC) has sparked public debate because it is perceived as potentially limiting freedom of expression. This study examines the implications of the policy, particularly the requirement for content verification through the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI), and its impact on society and the broadcasting ecosystem. Using a qualitative policy analysis approach based on literature review, media reports, and relevant usage data, this study evaluates the relevance and effectiveness of the regulation. The findings indicate that the verification policy may create practical difficulties, especially considering that approximately 34.7–54.8% of media consumption is dominated by UGC platforms such as YouTube and TikTok. Additionally, KPI is traditionally positioned as a supervisory body for broadcasting institutions rather than individual content creators, leading to regulatory ambiguity. These results suggest that the policy requires further review to avoid negative social impacts, including restrictions on public expression. Collaboration between government, media, and society is essential to maintain nationalism while safeguarding freedom of expression, ensuring that regulatory policies support a healthy broadcasting ecosystem without suppressing public participation.

**Keywords**

User Generated Content, Freedom of expression, Indonesian Broadcasting Commission, Nationalism, Digital regulation.

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of the digital era has fundamentally transformed modern society, creating an environment where information circulates instantly across geographic, political, and cultural boundaries. Digital communication technologies, particularly social media platforms, have reshaped how individuals access information, express their opinions, and participate in public discourse. In contemporary society, a nation's ability to manage its information ecosystem is closely linked to social stability, democratic resilience, and national cohesion. The digital sphere no longer functions merely as a supplementary communication channel; rather, it has evolved into a primary arena in which political narratives, social movements, economic activities, and cultural identities are negotiated.

Indonesia is one of the most dynamic digital societies in the world. With a large population and rapidly expanding internet penetration, the country has emerged as a major global social media market (Priyadharma, 2021). Digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and other user-generated content (UGC) channels have become central to everyday communication, entertainment, education, and entrepreneurship. These platforms empower citizens by providing opportunities for expression, creativity, and participation in democratic discourse (Albogami, 2024; Koswara, 2025). At the same time, however, the open and decentralized nature of digital media introduces significant risks, including the rapid dissemination of misinformation, disinformation, propaganda, and polarizing narratives that may threaten social harmony and public trust (Kunnathully et al., 2025).

The Indonesian government has increasingly recognized these risks and sought to strengthen the regulatory oversight of digital information flows. Concerns regarding the potential misuse of digital platforms for political manipulation, ideological polarization, and social fragmentation have prompted discussions about more proactive governance mechanisms. One of the most prominent policy proposals in this context is the revision of the Broadcasting Law, which aims to introduce a mandatory content verification mechanism for user-generated content through the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (*Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia or KPI*) (Sukendar et al., 2020). This proposal reflects a broader governmental effort to ensure that digital information environments support the national interests, public order, and social stability.

However, this proposed regulatory shift has generated significant debate among academics, media practitioners, civil society organizations, digital creators, and the general public. Critics argue that extending the KPI's authority to digital platforms represents a departure from its original institutional mandate, which historically focused on supervising traditional broadcasting institutions such as television networks, radio stations, and production houses (Rabinowitz, 2022; Azeem et al., 2023). Unlike conventional broadcasting, digital platforms operate in a decentralized and participatory environment, where individuals, rather than corporations, produce and distribute content. Applying traditional broadcasting regulatory frameworks to this new media landscape raises questions regarding institutional capacity, regulatory effectiveness, and legal clarity.

Another major concern relates to freedom of expression, widely regarded as a fundamental pillar of democratic governance. In the digital era, content creation and sharing are not merely recreational activities but are integral aspects of civic engagement, economic participation, and cultural exchange. Mandatory content verification mechanisms may create bureaucratic barriers that discourage public participation and inhibit spontaneous expressions. Scholars often describe this phenomenon as a "chilling effect," where individuals self-censor due to perceived regulatory risks or administrative burdens. These outcomes could potentially undermine democratic dialogue, media diversity, and citizen empowerment (Nurlinah et al., 2025).

In addition to concerns about civil liberties, practical challenges arise regarding the feasibility of large-scale content verification. Digital platforms generate enormous volumes of content every second, making comprehensive pre-publication oversight both technically and administratively complex (Lim, 2017). Questions remain regarding whether regulatory institutions possess sufficient resources, technological capabilities, and

procedural frameworks to implement such oversight effectively without causing delays, inconsistencies, or selective enforcement. These practical considerations highlight the importance of balancing regulatory ambitions and operational realities.

The debate surrounding digital content regulation in Indonesia intersects with broader discussions on nationalism and national resilience. Governments often frame media regulation as a strategy to protect national identity, social cohesion, and ideological stability against global information flows. While nationalism can serve as a unifying force, excessive reliance on restrictive information policies may paradoxically weaken public trust and civic engagement (Liambomba, 2023). Sustainable nationalism in democratic societies typically relies on informed citizens, open dialogue, and critical media literacy, rather than strict information control.

Furthermore, Indonesia's position as a leading democracy in Southeast Asia adds international significance to its digital governance policies. The regulatory approaches adopted in Indonesia may influence regional standards and perceptions of digital freedom, democratic governance, and information management. Policies perceived as overly restrictive could affect Indonesia's global reputation as a democratic nation committed to balancing diversity, openness, and social stability. Given these complexities, the challenge facing policymakers is not simply whether digital regulation is necessary but how such regulation should be designed to maintain equilibrium between national security, public order, democratic freedoms, and technological innovation. Overregulation risks suppressing creativity, innovation, and civic participation, whereas insufficient regulation may allow harmful misinformation ecosystems to flourish. Achieving this balance requires careful consideration of institutional roles, legal frameworks, technological capacities, and societal expectations (Majebi & Drakeford, 2025).

The novelty of this study lies in its integrated examination of the proposed UGC content verification policy from the combined perspectives of media governance, freedom of expression, and nationalism within Indonesia's rapidly evolving digital ecosystem. Unlike previous studies that tend to focus solely on regulatory frameworks or misinformation control, this study highlights the institutional challenges of extending traditional broadcasting regulations to participatory digital media while critically assessing their broader democratic and socio-political implications. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implications of the proposed UGC content verification policy within the revised Broadcasting Law, particularly in relation to freedom of expression, media governance, and nationalism in Indonesia. The analysis examines regulatory rationales, institutional mandates, sociopolitical contexts, and the evolving digital communication landscape.

## 2 | REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1 | Digital Media Governance and Regulation of User-Generated Content

The rapid expansion of digital platforms has fundamentally altered the traditional media governance frameworks (Bonina et al., 2021; Fenwick et al., 2019; Törnberg, 2023). Unlike conventional broadcasting systems that rely on centralized production and distribution, digital media ecosystems are characterized by decentralized participation, where individuals simultaneously act as content producers, distributors, and consumers. This transformation challenges regulatory institutions that were originally designed to oversee professional broadcasting entities, prompting ongoing debates about how regulatory authority should adapt to the realities of user-generated content (UGC).

Scholarly discussions emphasize that governments increasingly view digital media regulation as necessary to address risks such as misinformation, hate speech, online propaganda, and social polarization (Vese, 2022). Regulatory interventions are often framed as protective measures intended to preserve public order, national security, and the integrity of information (Heide & Villeneuve, 2021). However, research also highlights that excessive or poorly designed regulations may reduce media innovation, create barriers to digital participation, and

generate institutional inefficiencies, particularly when legacy regulatory models are applied to fast-moving digital environments (Ahern, 2025; Petani et al., 2023).

Institutional capacity remains a central concern in digital media governance. The massive scale of online content production presents significant logistical challenges for verification, monitoring, and enforcement of laws (Chen et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023). Studies suggest that regulatory bodies may struggle to process large volumes of digital content without advanced technological infrastructure, transparent procedures, and collaboration with platform providers (Beaumier et al., 2020; van Dijck, 2020). Consequently, many scholars advocate hybrid governance models that combine state regulation, platform self-regulation, and public digital literacy initiatives rather than relying solely on centralized verification mechanisms.

## 2.2 | Freedom of Expression, Nationalism, and Democratic Implications

Freedom of expression is widely recognized as the cornerstone of democratic societies, particularly in the digital age, where online platforms function as the primary spaces for civic engagement and public discourse (Caruso, 2025; Hintz, 2016). Digital media enables individuals to share ideas, mobilize social movements, and participate in political dialogues beyond traditional institutional channels (Dumitrica & Felt, 2020). However, regulatory interventions aimed at controlling misinformation can sometimes unintentionally restrict legitimate expression, creating tensions between security concerns and democratic freedom.

The relationship between media regulation and nationalism adds complexity to this issue. Governments often justify information control as necessary to protect national unity, cultural identity, and ideological stability (Slawotsky, 2021). While nationalism can serve as a cohesive social force, scholars caution that restrictive information policies may undermine public trust and democratic legitimacy if perceived as suppressing dissent or limiting transparency. Sustainable nationalism, according to several studies, tends to emerge from inclusive dialogue, education, and media literacy rather than rigid information control.

In addition, socio-cultural perspectives highlight the importance of digital platforms for younger generations, who view online spaces as essential arenas for identity expression and civic participation (Banaji & Moreno-Almeida, 2021; Zubareva, 2020). Policies perceived as overly restrictive may lead to disengagement, reduced trust in institutions, or migration of discourse to less regulated channels, where misinformation may spread unchecked. Consequently, contemporary research increasingly advocates for balanced approaches that protect national interests while safeguarding freedom of expression, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and collaborative governance in digital information policy.

## 3 | METHODS

This study employed a normative legal research method based on an analysis of statutory regulations, legal doctrines, and other relevant academic literature (Disemadi, 2022; Negara, 2023). Normative legal research was utilized because the issues discussed pertain to state power over social media, specifically in the form of regulations and policies that influence press freedom in Indonesia. By combining precise data collection techniques with rigorous analysis, this study captures a more holistic and complex reality. In essence, this research describes and analyzes legal phenomena based on prevailing norms. The stages of this study began with the identification of legal problems, focusing on the relationship between state power and the media as a public sphere. Subsequently, legal materials were gathered through a literature review, encompassing primary legal documents such as statutory regulations and secondary legal materials, including scientific journals, legal textbooks, and expert opinions. The collected legal materials were classified, analyzed, and interpreted to address the core research questions.

## 4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 | Public Responses to the UGC Content Verification Policy by KPI

The discourse surrounding the expansion of the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission's (KPI) authority to verify User-Generated Content (UGC) has ignited a significant polemic across various sectors of Indonesian society (Nidhal et al., 2024). This policy is widely viewed as a critical juncture testing the resilience of digital democracy in the country, given that UGC represents the purest expression of public participation in cyberspace. Most segments of society, ranging from media practitioners to academics, argue that this move constitutes an overreach of authority that lacks a strong sociological or technical basis.

Fundamentally, the KPI's duties and functions (*Tupoksi*) are strictly limited by Law Number 32 of 2002 concerning Broadcasting. Within this regulation, the KPI is mandated to oversee conventional broadcasting that utilizes public radioelectric frequencies, such as television and radio. This oversight is limited because frequencies are considered a scarce natural resource belonging to the state, necessitating regulation in the public's interest. However, equating public frequencies with the internet infrastructure used by UGC is considered a fatal legal fallacy. This situation has become urgent, as it reveals a tendency for state institutions to unilaterally expand their functions without adequate public consultation. If this expansion of power is left unchecked, it will create a dangerous precedent for the governance of state institutions in Indonesia. State agencies can easily claim new oversight territories in the name of moral protection, even if they lack jurisdictional mandates. Therefore, the public, as the primary subject affected, holds a moral responsibility to respond significantly.

The most fundamental form of response is the delivery of open and constructive criticism of the draft revision of the law. Public criticism is not merely a groundless rejection but a collective effort to ensure that public policy remains within constitutional corridors. Civil society emphasizes that information sovereignty must remain in the hands of citizens rather than being under the strict control of a central censorship body. This critique serves as a corrective instrument to prevent the government from sliding toward digital authoritarianism (Roberts & Oosterom, 2025). Public participation in the digital policy formulation process is a vital element of civil rights sustainability. This participation ensures a balance between the state's need for regulation and society's need for freedom of expression. Without the active involvement of the community, digital policies tend to be restrictive and benefit only certain political elites. Thus, protest movements and social media discussions are tangible forms of popular sovereignty. Educational efforts are strategic steps that must be taken by civil communities and academics alike. Increasing public digital literacy is not limited to how to use technology but also includes an understanding of digital rights and the limits of state authority (Sengupta et al., 2020). Citizens must realize that every piece of content they produce is a human right protected by Article 28F of the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia. With this critical awareness, the public can collectively reject attempts at intimidation or censorship by state institutions.

Digital literacy and ethics in cyberspace are the primary pillars for building a society responsive to the dynamics of government policy. When society possesses a strong legal understanding, it is not easily manipulated by security narratives used to justify the restriction of freedom. This education also includes the introduction of more democratic self-monitoring mechanisms rather than formal verification by KPI. Consequently, literacy becomes the public's main weapon against systematic abuse of power. Legal action through judicial review mechanisms is the ultimate effort that can be pursued if this policy is officially enacted. Citizens have the constitutional right to challenge any legal product that is contrary to higher laws or the Constitution. Once the UGC verification regulation is issued, the Constitutional Court will become a battlefield for legal struggles to prove that the policy violates human rights (Banchik, 2019). This path demonstrates that Indonesian society possesses sufficient legal literacy to conduct elegant resistance.

Official reports to oversight bodies, such as the Indonesian Ombudsman, are also important steps to highlight potential maladministration in the expansion of KPI's authority. The Ombudsman has the authority to examine whether procedures are violated or functions are forced beyond the legislative mandate (Zhyvko et al., 2025). Furthermore, the involvement of the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) is essential to analyze whether the verification policy leads to violations of universal human rights principles. This is crucial because freedom of expression is a primary indicator of a nation's health. The restriction of freedom of expression can only be carried out through valid and proportionate legal procedures. The state must not arbitrarily restrict citizens' rights based solely on assumptions or fears of propaganda without concrete evidence. Every restriction must have a legitimate aim and be a necessary step in a democratic society. This principle of proportionality is often ignored in the discourse on the revision of the Broadcasting Law.

Public efforts are also reflected in the push to create healthy and transparent dialogue spaces with the KPI and other relevant government agencies. This dialogue is not merely a token forum; it must become an accountable public participation mechanism. The public demands that every decision regarding the digital space involves stakeholders from the technology sector and content creation. This aims to ensure that the resulting policies are responsive and do not hinder innovation in the creative economy.

In the context of digital democratic governance, formulating policies that involve the public's voice is an effective form of social control. Public participation also maintains the legitimacy of state institutions in the eyes of citizens. If the KPI insists on implementing a policy without public consent, the institution's credibility will be destroyed, and its function as a broadcast overseer will be questioned. Therefore, dialogue is an ethical and social corrective mechanism for all public institutions. Statistical data shows that Indonesia has a critical internet user base, where discussions on public policy often become trending topics that influence government decisions (Sukand, 2024). With a massive social media user population, policymakers cannot underestimate the power of digital public opinion. The public has demonstrated its ability to organize organic rejection movements without the need for a central command. This phenomenon proves that digital democracy in Indonesia still has a strong pulse, despite attempts at suppression.

Cooperation among communities, ranging from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to journalistic alliances, is also key to strengthening the public's bargaining position (Fawe, 2025). These alliances are tasked with conducting in-depth academic studies on the negative impacts of the UGC verification policy on the information ecosystem. These studies are then disseminated to the general public to foster a uniform understanding of the dangers. This synergy is a real form of checks and balances conducted directly by the civil society. The role of academics in providing expert testimony and theoretical perspectives also greatly assists in strengthening the scientific narratives of rejection. Academics can compare other countries that have failed to implement similar digital censorship systems. Explanations regarding the risk of over-regulation that could kill the creative industry are important points in academic discussions. With the support of data and theory, public criticism becomes more substantial and difficult for the government to dismiss.

The public must also encourage global social media platforms to uphold freedom of expression in the face of domestic regulatory pressure (Bashir et al., 2025). Technology companies have a responsibility to protect their users from politically motivated verification and censorship requests. Through public campaigns, society can demand that platforms remain neutral and safe spaces for exchanging ideas. International pressure through these platforms can also be a consideration for the government to review its policies. Every form of resistance against this UGC verification policy must be conducted ethically and non-anarchically. The public must show that they are intelligent citizens fighting for their rights through the channels provided by the democratic system. By adhering to legal principles and data, public movements will gain broader sympathy, both domestically and from the international community. This further narrows the space for the government to engage in repressive actions.

The role of society is to ensure that nationalism is not used as a shield to silence the freedom of expression. True nationalism should be born of responsible freedom, not tight oversight by state institutions. The public must continue to voice that freedom of opinion is the primary asset for advancing the nation amidst increasingly competitive global competition. Without freedom, nationalism becomes an empty shell, devoid of meaning for the progress of civilization. Table 1 presents a comparison between the KPI content verification model and global democratic standards, highlighting key differences in regulatory approach, freedom of expression safeguards, and governance principles.

**Table 1.** Comparison of KPI Verification Model vs. Global Democracy Standards

Analytical Dimension	KPI Verification Model (Centralized)	Platform Accountability Model (Democratic)	Implications for Nationalism & Democracy
Temporal (Timing of Oversight)	Ex-ante (Pre-Audit): Content must be audited/verified before or during massive distribution.	Ex-post (Post-Audit): Content flows freely, but legal action is taken if proven illegal after publication.	KPI: Hinders real-time creativity. Global: Ensures the speed of information vital for the digital economy.
Jurisdictional (Regulatory Object)	Micro-Management: Directly targets individual content and personal creators.	Macro-Systemic: Targets platform moderation systems (Big Tech) and algorithmic transparency.	KPI: Creates a "chilling effect" or fear. Global: Protects citizens from harmful content without invading individual privacy.
Philosophical (Judgment Standards)	Moral Subjectivity: Based on broadcasting ethics standards which are often open to multiple interpretations.	Strict Legality: Based on clear legal violations (defamation, terrorism, illegal content).	KPI: Vulnerable to being used as a tool for political censorship. Global: Provides fair legal certainty for all citizens.

The success of society in thwarting or revising this policy will be a major victory for 21st-century Indonesian democracy. This will prove that people have the power to control the direction of their country's policies, especially in the fields of technology and information. The draft revision of the Broadcasting Law must be monitored consistently until a regulation is created that truly sides with the interests of the general public. Society must not be complacent in monitoring every stage of legislation in the House of Representatives.

The logistical challenges of verifying the astronomical volume of content uploaded to UGC platforms every second make the KPI's proposed task appear almost impossible. Attempting to review every video or post would require massive resources that are likely to be unavailable (Du Chau, 2024). Such bureaucratic hurdles would not only hurt the digital creative economy but also render the policy practically unenforceable in a fair way. This impracticality bolsters the argument that the policy may be aimed more at political control than quality assurance. Furthermore, the legal ambiguity of Article 34F/2/2024 creates a sense of insecurity for thousands of digital entrepreneurs and influencers. Without clear definitions, the interpretation of "broadcast content" remains at the discretion of the regulator, inviting arbitrary enforcement. This lack of legal certainty is a significant deterrent to investment and innovation in Indonesia's digital market. Legal scholars argue that laws must be specific and foreseeable to uphold the rule of law.

International human rights organizations have also begun to observe the situation in Indonesia with concern. A shift toward more restrictive digital management could signal a regression in the democratic values that Indonesia has championed since the Reformasi era (Diprose et al., 2019). If a country sets a precedent for digital censorship, it might embolden neighboring nations to follow suit, potentially damaging the regional democratic landscape. Indonesia's standing as a leader in ASEAN depends heavily on its commitment to the democratic principles. Public awareness of the KPI's internal performance and objectivity also plays a role in the current skepticism (Thahar, 2024). If an institution is perceived to lack independence or is susceptible to political pressure, its role as a content arbiter becomes highly problematic. Trust is the currency of regulation, and without it, the KPI will struggle to achieve compliance without resorting to coercion. Rebuilding institutional trust should be a prerequisite before any expansion of authority is considered.

#### 4.2 | The Roles of Government, Media, and Society in Protecting Nationalism

The government, serving as the primary architect of national policy, holds a central and non-negotiable role in safeguarding the integrity of nationalism in the complex era of disinformation. In an effort to shield the national identity from the corrosive effects of "fake news" and digital agitation, the state has moved toward regulating User-Generated Content (UGC) through mandatory verification by the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) (Mbulumi, 2024). However, this regulatory ambition has sparked a constitutional paradox, as it appears to transform the state from a facilitator of information into a restrictive gatekeeper that limits the media's function as a bridge between the government and the people. Nationalism, in its most robust form, is a collective responsibility that requires delicate equilibrium between state security and civil liberty. The current dilemma arises when policies intended to defend the nation begin to contradict the foundational mandates of the Reformasi (Reformation) era, which explicitly sought to dismantle state-controlled information apparatus. In a democratic framework, the media is not merely an industry but the very essence of the social fabric, providing the narrative connective tissue that can impact community life either positively through enlightenment or negatively through manipulation.

The media's responsibility as an informational bridge necessitates the delivery of content that is accurate, truthful, and ethically sound (Olayinka & Odunayo, 2024). However, the pursuit of high-quality information cannot be achieved through state coercion alone; it must be supported by active public participation, where citizens act as both curators and consumers of UGC-based services. Safeguarding nationalism through a "top-down" restrictive approach is often seen as imprudent when it conflicts with the spirit of openness that defines modern Indonesia, threatening the public's constitutional right to obtain and manage information. Article 28F of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia explicitly guarantees every individual the right to communicate and obtain information for personal and social development (Hanafi, 2025). This constitutional pillar is significantly challenged by the proposed revision of the Broadcasting Law, which creates a legal mismatch between the KPI's traditional jurisdiction and the decentralized nature of individual content creators. Although the KPI was designed to oversee institutional broadcasters, the attempt to subject private individuals to the same bureaucratic scrutiny reveals a profound misunderstanding of the digital ecosystem.

The government's underlying intent to prevent the spread of disinformation and realize a healthy broadcasting environment deserves academic appreciation. The proliferation of digital hoaxes can destabilize national unity and incite social friction, making a hands-off approach equally dangerous. However, the policy must undergo deeper scrutiny to ensure that the fulfillment of national security does not come at the expense of the fundamental rights of every citizen. To keep nationalism aligned with the "wheels of nationhood," the direction of policy should focus on disciplining the malicious spread of disinformation rather than imposing a blanket restriction on the act of content creation itself. It is a logical fallacy to assume that all user-generated content is inherently propaganda or inappropriate material. By shifting the focus from "content verification" to "disinformation prosecution," the state could address the symptoms of digital chaos without stifling the creative pulse of the nation.

The implementation of a preemptive verification policy inevitably restricts the efficiency and dynamism of digital economies. In the digital age, information must be disseminated quickly to remain relevant and informative; a creator who is forced to wait for a state-issued "stamp of approval" may find their message obsolete by the time it reaches the audience. This delay contradicts the very nature of digitalization, which thrives on being massive, instantaneous and highly interactive. A responsive government must act as a listener and incorporate the criticisms and suggestions of the public into the legislative process. Democracy in Indonesia remains healthy only when the legal framework reflects the needs and will of the people rather than just the anxieties of the state (Ristyawati et al., 2025). By ignoring the concerns of creators and academics, the government risks fostering a climate of resentment that is ultimately more damaging to nationalism than disinformation it seeks to combat.

The balance between constitutional freedom and social responsibility is a two-way street that requires the public to take an active role in self-regulation. Freedom of expression is not an absolute license to spread harm; it must be balanced with a commitment to avoid hoaxes and content that could fracture national unity. This sense of responsibility is the hallmark of a mature digital society that understands that their voice has the power to build or destroy the national narrative. Thus, the realization of national stability is a shared role: the government acts as the formulator of fair laws, the media serves as the vehicle for public awareness, and society acts as the active subject in managing information. These three pillars must work synergistically to protect the nation. If one pillar attempts to dominate the others, as seen in the KPI's proposed expansion, the entire structure of democratic nationalism becomes unstable.

Statistical data indicate that the Indonesian digital market is dominated by youth demographics who view the Internet as their primary source of truth and social mobility. For these "digital natives," the imposition of a 20th-century broadcasting model onto 21st-century platforms is viewed as a generational overreach (Jones, 2025). To maintain their loyalty to national identity, the state must offer a digital policy that feels like a platform for growth rather than a cage for control. Moreover, the role of the media in this conflict is to maintain editorial independence while adhering to the highest standards of digital ethics. Traditional media outlets must innovate to remain competitive with UGC platforms, but they must also serve as the standard-bearers for accuracy. By providing a reliable alternative to unverified digital rumors, the media strengthens the public's ability to resist propaganda, thereby indirectly supporting the government's goals of national unity. Societal resilience against disinformation is built through years of investment in education and media literacy, not through the stroke of a legislative pen. A nation that is well educated in the art of critical thinking is naturally immune to foreign and domestic propaganda. Therefore, the government would be more effective if it reallocated the resources intended for the verification bureaucracy toward nationwide digital literacy programs that empower citizens.

The concept of "Digital Nationalism" should be defined by the pride of a nation that produces world-class content and innovative ideas, not by a nation that filters its own citizens' thoughts. When the government trusts its people, the people, in turn, feel a deeper sense of belonging and responsibility toward the state. This mutual trust is the most potent weapon against any form of information warfare. In the legal sphere, any revision of the Broadcasting Law must clearly define its scope to avoid "regulatory capture" or arbitrary enforcement of the law. Ambiguous terms such as "other broadcasting technology platforms" must be clarified to exclude individual social media accounts, thereby protecting citizens' personal space. Legal clarity is the only way to prevent the state from becoming an accidental oppressor in its quest for security.

The international community is also watching how Indonesia handles this transition, as the country is often seen as a beacon of democracy in Southeast Asia. A shift toward restrictive digital control could tarnish Indonesia's global reputation and deter international investment in its burgeoning tech sector. Therefore, maintaining nationalism must include maintaining a global image of a free, open, and progressive nation.

The government must also realize that technological advancements will always outpace legislation. A verification system designed today will likely be obsolete by next year as new platforms and decentralized technologies emerge. This reality makes a "content-based" regulation strategy inherently inefficient compared to a "behavior-based" strategy that punishes illegal acts such as defamation or incitement. Public sentiment analysis on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram shows a high level of resistance toward the KPI's proposed role. This resistance is a form of digital activism that demonstrates vibrant and engaged citizenry. The government should view this not as an attack but as a valuable feedback loop that can improve the quality of the final legislation. The proposed verification policy could also lead to a "brain drain" of digital talent, as creators might move to more liberal digital environments to avoid being hampered by Indonesian bureaucracy. To prevent this, the government must foster an environment that celebrates digital creativity as a national asset. Nationalism is strengthened when the nation's best minds choose to stay and build their futures at home.

### 4.3 | Implications of UGC Content Verification for Nationalism

The proposed mandatory verification of User-Generated Content (UGC) by the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) represents a fundamental shift in the state's approach to digital sovereignty. While the policy is framed as a protective measure to safeguard national identity, it introduces a complex dynamic between regulatory oversight and the fundamental right to freedom of expression in the media. This intersection is critical as the digital landscape has become the primary arena where modern nationalism is both constructed and contested by the citizenry.

The government's primary objective in initiating this policy was to cultivate a "healthy" broadcasting ecosystem that aligned with the established standards of traditional media (Jia et al., 2025). By subjecting UGC to the KPI's content guidelines, the state aims to synchronize digital discourse with the national ethical and moral frameworks. Proponents argue that this will create a more unified national narrative, effectively shielding the public from the fragmented and often volatile nature of unverified digital information that can lead to social polarization and violence. Consequently, this regulation is expected to compel content creators to exercise a higher degree of caution and self-regulation before disseminating information. In theory, this forces a shift toward the production of "positive" content that emphasizes educational values and national development (Sipinen et al., 2025). However, the involuntary nature of this shift raises profound academic questions regarding the authenticity of the resulting nationalism, as true national pride typically flourishes through voluntary civic participation rather than through bureaucratic enforcement.

This policy is incongruous with the spirit of the Reformasi (Reformation), which sought to decentralize information control. The absence of specific, transparent criteria regarding which types of content are subject to verification creates a "gray area" in the legal framework. Without precise definitions, the verification process becomes susceptible to institutional subjectivity, potentially allowing regulators to prioritize state-sanctioned narratives while marginalizing independent viewpoints. Many view the centralized verification mechanism as a hindrance to the creative diversity that defines Indonesia's digital economy. The rapid growth of the nation's creative sector has relied on low barriers to entry and the ability of creators to respond to social trends in real time. By imposing a preemptive filter, the state risks stifling the creative pulse of the nation, making it increasingly difficult for independent voices to remain relevant in the fast-paced global digital market.

Public perception often leans toward the suspicion that such regulations are a strategic attempt to suppress critical discourse. In the digital age, where social media functions as a vital platform for public accountability, mandatory verification could act as a "digital muffler" for dissenting voices. This suppression of critique does not only affect political activists but also limits the broader community's engagement with sensitive social issues that are essential for a mature and functional democracy. Ironically, the impact on nationalism may deviate from the government's intended goals, as the policy risks alienating the younger, "digital native" generation. For this demographic, digital freedom is a core component of their personal and national identity

(Boghosian, 2025). When the state restricts the digital "public square," it creates a sense of disillusionment among youth, potentially weakening their emotional connection to the state and its formal institutions.

The implementation of such a policy could also lead to a phenomenon known as "informational isolation." If international digital platforms find local verification laws too burdensome or incompatible with their global terms of service, they may limit their operations in Indonesia. This would diminish the quality and variety of information available to Indonesian citizens, putting the nation at a disadvantage compared to its regional neighbors. The psychological impact of self-censorship is another grave consequence of state-led censorship. When creators are aware that their work must pass through a governmental filter, they subconsciously avoid topics that could be deemed "problematic" (Bar-Tal, 2017; Verwiebe et al., 2024). This narrowing of public discourse limits the diversity of thought required for cultural and intellectual growth, potentially leading to a stagnant national culture that lacks innovation or challenges the status quo.

The lack of an independent and transparent appeals process for rejected content further exacerbates this concern. Without a clear mechanism to challenge the KPI's decisions in an impartial court, the commission effectively becomes both the prosecutor and judge of digital expression (Buckley et al., 2024). This lack of checks and balances is a departure from the principles of natural justice and the rule of law, which are fundamental to a democratic society. As a result, we may witness a rise in the use of technical workarounds, such as VPNs or encrypted "underground" media, as citizens attempt to bypass state restrictions on information. This migration away from formal digital spaces makes it even harder for the state to combat genuine threats such as hate speech or criminal incitement. This proves that restrictive legislation often pushes discourse into unregulated shadows rather than improving the quality of the public sphere.

## 5 | CONCLUSION

The Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) is an institution mandated to ensure a healthy broadcasting environment. However, the government's proposal in the draft revision of the Broadcasting Law—requiring digital platforms to report to and be verified by the KPI—represents a regression of freedom and a violation of citizens' rights as enshrined in Article 28F of the 1945 Constitution.

First, the public plays a central role in monitoring the government's policies. In this regard, any regulation initiated by the government is subject to public criticism, including the implementation of the content verification policy by the KPI, which has raised concerns regarding freedom of expression. This policy direction appears restrictive, particularly because no specific criteria or standards are defining the verification process itself. Furthermore, it is inconsistent with the spirit of the Reformasi (Reformation) and the nature of digitalization, which is characterized by speed and the massive reach of information. Consequently, the public must demand clarity from the government to ensure that this verification policy aligns with citizens' fundamental rights.

Second, the direction of the implemented policies must remain consistent with nationalistic values and the protection of citizens' rights. Although the draft revision of the law seems to restrict freedom, the government's efforts to regulate the digital space deserve some appreciation. Nevertheless, the sustainability of this regulation requires further deliberation regarding its compatibility with broadcasting standards, public needs, and the increasingly massive context of digitalization. Maintaining nationalism requires synergy between the government and the community to prevent the spread of disinformation and propaganda that threatens national unity. Third, freedom should not be constrained by shackling provisions. However, the freedom of expression mandated by the Constitution must also consider moral values and social responsibility regarding the dissemination of content and information consumed by the public. Therefore, the policy in the draft revision of the law concerning content verification must be scrutinized as thoroughly as possible, considering the potential consequences if these revisions are enacted into law.

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## Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

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