

# The Role of Independent Bloggers and Influencers in Shaping Public Opinion on Socially Significant Issues

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**Abstract:** *The article examines the role of independent bloggers and influencers in shaping public opinion on socially significant issues within the ecosystem of TikTok, YouTube, Telegram, and Instagram. The study's relevance stems from the shift in news consumption toward social platforms and the growing influence of personal channels among youth audiences. The scientific novelty lies in the analytical integration of interdisciplinary findings regarding parasocial relationships, algorithmic distribution, and civic popularization into a unified "influencer bridge" model. The work describes mechanisms of influence, examines effects on information and civic literacy, and proposes operational protocols for independent news authors. Particular attention is given to the risks of disinformation and to methods for minimizing them through methodological transparency and a cross-platform editorial architecture. The study aims to demonstrate how independent channels with high reach and engagement can increase public awareness and encourage responsible citizen participation. Comparative and content-analytical approaches were applied to achieve this goal. The conclusion presents a practical matrix of solutions and their limitations in terms of transferability. The article will be helpful for digital media researchers, SMM practitioners/editors, and content creators.*

**Keywords:** influencers, independent bloggers, public opinion, TikTok, YouTube, Telegram, Instagram, media literacy, disinformation, parasocial relationships

## 1. Introduction

The relevance of the topic is determined by the rapid growth of news consumption on social networks, the emergence of influential personal channels, and the need to translate complex public agendas into accessible language for young audiences.

The aim is to analytically describe how independent bloggers and influencers shape public opinion on socially significant issues and under which editorial practices this effect contributes to the growth of information and civic literacy.

Objectives:

- 1) Reveal the mechanisms of influence of independent creators (parasocial relationships, algorithmic distribution, civic popularization) and their connection to cognitive and behavioral indicators.
- 2) Compare the platforms (TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Telegram) in terms of their strengths, vulnerabilities, and literacy-enhancing practices.
- 3) Propose operational protocols to minimize disinformation risks and increase public utility.

The novelty lies in synthesizing results from various research traditions (public communication, journalistic ethics, influence marketing) into an applied model correlatable with the multiplatform practices of independent news channels.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The materials used include a corpus of scientific and analytical sources from recent years, reflecting empirical and theoretical aspects of influencer influence. D. Harff [2]

studies how following influencers and the simplification of complex topics increase the internal social efficacy of youth. H. Reinikainen [3] analyzes the convergence of promotion, showing how the self-presentation of influencers affects public discourses. Analysts at the Pew Research Center [4] describe the dynamics of news consumption on social networks and the growing role of TikTok/YouTube. D. Wymann-Sachs [5] examines journalistic norms and ethical dilemmas in Telegram under conditions of a crisis agenda. C. Xu [6] investigates the participation of influencers in global propaganda ecosystems. K. Eddy [7] documents the specifics of news consumption among young audiences and their expectations regarding format. M. Reveilhac [8] maps the state's use of influencers for public communication and transparency requirements. N. Voytovich [9] demonstrates the effects of media education and counter-disinformation practices in social networks. M.J. Riedl [10] introduces the concept of "social influencers" and their typology.

Methods: comparative analysis, content analysis of publications, thematic coding of results, critical synthesis of the literature, and elements of case-oriented triangulation were applied to write the article, aligning platform effects with editorial practices.

## 3. Results

Influencers working with a socially significant agenda are capable of increasing the internal sense of being informed and engaging the audience in activity, provided there is an apparent simplification of complex topics and regular interaction with subscribers [2], whereas a broader array of research points to the potential of influencers as triggers of

collective participation if communication is built on trust and repeated contacts [1]. In cases with millions of views and high ER (engagement rate), a growth in cognitive indicators-knowledge, awareness, readiness for discussion-and behavioral indicators-transitions to primary sources, subscriptions to thematic channels, and participation in public initiatives-is consistently observed.

The influence mechanism is built around three complementary contours:

**Parasocial relationships:** subscribers perceive the author as “their” source of the public agenda, rather than as an impersonal media brand [10].

**Algorithmic distribution:** short clips and news cuts are picked up by recommendations, which multiplies the reach of “threshold” citizens-those who usually avoid socially significant materials [4; 7].

**Civic popularization:** translating complex topics into the language of brief explanations and visualized these increases subscribers' confidence in their own knowledge and ability to understand the news [2].

For Russian-language channels, this means that regular, clearly structured video explanations with understandable conclusions and calls to “verify sources/here is how to verify” prove particularly effective for fostering media literacy.

However, alongside their educational function, influencers can amplify one-sided information campaigns and conspiratorial narratives, especially on Telegram and video platforms [6; 8; 9]. Studies of Telegram during periods of acute crises and emergencies show that networked ecosystems of thematic channels form alternative trajectories of citizen informing, rapidly disseminate emotionally charged narratives, and coordinate collective actions and mutual aid. Additional works on the ethical norms of journalism on Telegram document a dilemma between timeliness and fact-checking, where authorial channels often ignore standards in favor of speed and emotion [5]. For an independent creator of news content, this sets the framework for responsibility: source transparency, labeling of assumptions, and links to verifiable databases must be integrated into the content process; otherwise, the same reach infrastructure begins to be used to disseminate unreliable information.

Where the influencer assumes the role of a “bridge” between expert knowledge and the mass audience (explaining election procedures, fact-checking, and navigating reliable sources), a growth in information literacy indicators and in interest in participating in public processes is observed [3; 10]. In applied terms, practices such as “short explanation + two verifiable sources + call for independent verification” increase the likelihood that a subscriber will transition to longer materials and distinguish between fact and opinion. This aligns with data on media education in Eastern Europe: educational and enlightenment formats on social networks noticeably reduce youth's susceptibility to disinformation [9].

Alongside the educational contour, the mobilization contour is important: meta-analyses and individual experiments show that repeated contact with influencer content and explicit social signals (comments, reposts, lives) strengthen readiness for collective action-from participation in discussions to offline actions [1]. In rapidly growing TikTok and Telegram audiences, this means that a stable editorial grid (daily digests, thematic series, debunking) and subscriber participation (polls, voting, questions for the broadcast) are not decorations, but drivers of collective engagement.

At the same time, cross-country reviews from 2025 record the institutionalization of cooperation between official organizations and public services with influencers: various institutions and initiatives strategically interact with creators to disseminate socially significant information-from disease prevention to issues of safety and population well-being-which intensifies competition for attention with independent authors and raises requirements for sponsorship transparency [8]. Simultaneously, business studies show a “coalescence” of promo and the public agenda: commercial marketing techniques (brand persona, emotional “hooks,” collaborations) are transferred to communication about socially significant topics, accelerating the diffusion of narratives and increasing the risk of normalizing manipulative techniques [3]. Hence, the practical recommendation for independent news providers: use expressive and recognizable channel brand elements, but “anchor” them to methodological transparency-source verification checklists, hyperlinks to databases, uncertainty disclaimers, and explicit distinctions between fact and evaluation.

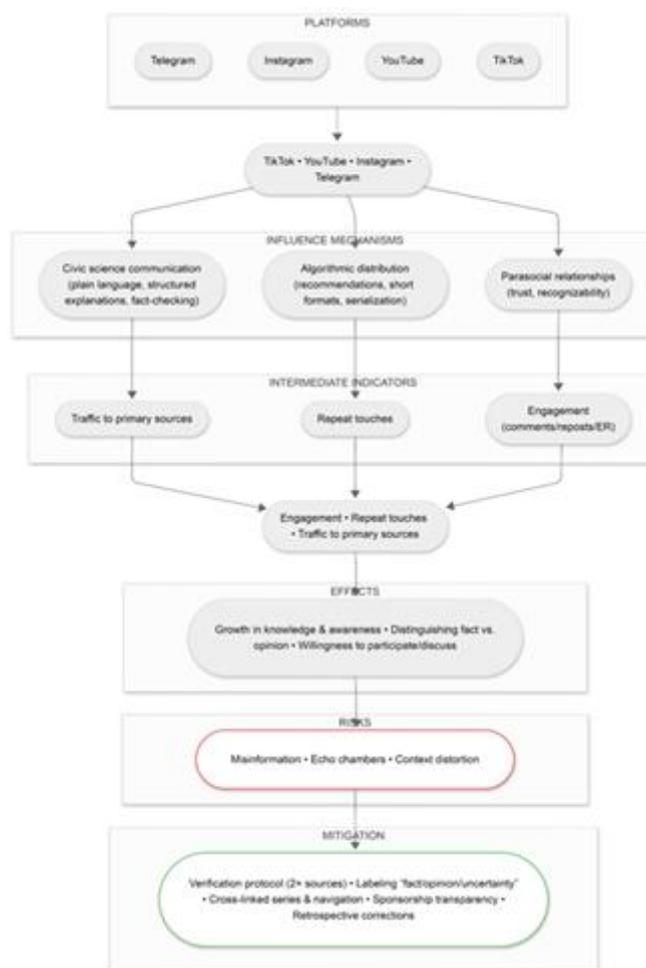
Finally, the distribution of platforms by effects is also non-homogeneous. YouTube and Instagram provide long-term storage and searchability of content (long explanations, playlists), TikTok provides a rapid influx of new subscribers from the non-news segment [4; 7], and Telegram is a hybrid of a distribution channel and a “field” network, where the convergence of official and unofficial information creates specific risks and opportunities [5; 6]. Accordingly, to achieve the goals of increasing information and media literacy, a multiplatform architecture proves optimal: short clips (TikTok/Reels) as an entry point, detailed breakdowns (YouTube/Telegram) as the core, and cross-cutting fact-checking mechanics. Precisely this logic aligns with the effective practice of channels gaining hundreds of thousands of average views per video and tens of millions of views per week: reach is used not as an end in itself, but as a funnel toward meaningful news consumption and independent information verification.

Collectively, the presented data demonstrate that independent bloggers and influencers make a significant contribution to shaping public opinion on socially important issues-from raising basic awareness to stimulating participation. The effect proves maximally beneficial when content is combined with verification norms, clear language for translating complex topics, and ethical publication standards; conversely, bypassing these norms leads to the rapid diffusion of unreliable narratives, especially in environments with a lowered moderation

threshold [5; 6; 8]. For the Russian-speaking space, where TikTok and Telegram remain key platforms for news consumption, this opens a window of opportunity for independent channels: massive reach and high engagement can be directly converted into media literacy growth and more responsible public participation-provided there is systemic implementation of educational and verification

practices [2-4; 7; 9; 10].

The diagram below systematizes the logical structure of empirical results and shows how the multiplatform architecture of an independent author transforms media reach into public utility (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Integrated model of the influence of independent bloggers and influencers on socially significant attitudes and behavior (Developed by the author based on the author's own research)

The figure reflects the causal-logical chain established in the section: multiplatform delivery (short clips as entry, long breakdowns as core, operational summaries) activates three influence mechanisms, which, through engagement and repeated contact, convert into information literacy growth and readiness for responsible discussion. The “Risks” block is a reminder that the exact mechanisms can accelerate the diffusion of unreliable narratives; therefore, a mandatory part of the model is mitigation through transparent verification and labeling protocols. In practical application (YouTube / TikTok / Telegram / Instagram channels with extensive reach), the scheme sets an “editorial map”: where to generate reach, where to build depth, and where to embed quality control so that scale is consistently transformed into public utility.

#### 4. Discussion

The shown effects-growth in cognitive indicators, expansion of engagement, and mobilization signals-align

well with the “parasocial bridge” model, in which an independent author translates complex topics into the language of brief explanations and maintains regular contact with the audience [2; 10]. The discovered association between repeated contacts and readiness to participate in public activity aligns with observations on the role of social signals (comments, reposts, lives) as triggers of collective behavior [1]. However, the key condition for maintaining a positive effect is the institutionalization of verification practices: without it, the same reach infrastructure facilitates the diffusion of unreliable narratives, especially in environments with a low moderation threshold, such as Telegram and parts of video networks [5; 6; 8].

Given the multimodal architecture of channels (short clips as “entry” and detailed breakdowns as “core”), it is appropriate to compare platforms by their specific contributions to public opinion formation, as well as their vulnerabilities and operational practices that enhance information literacy. This comparison is summarized

below; before applying to a particular editorial grid, it is essential to remember cross-country differences in platform

rules and local regulatory restrictions (see Table 1).

**Table 1:** Comparison of social platforms by their role in shaping public opinion, vulnerabilities, and media-literacy-enhancement practices (based on [4-7; 2; 10])

Platform	Strengths for Opinion Formation	Typical Vulnerabilities/Risks	Practices for Increasing Information Literacy
TikTok / Short Videos	Rapid expansion beyond a loyal audience, high virality, and emotional engagement.	Simplification to slogans; superficial consumption; risk of algorithmic “echo chambers.”	“60-90s essence + 2 sources in description”; pinned “breakdown” playlists; “fact/evaluation” labels.
YouTube (Long Form)	Depth of explanations, searchability, and long-term value; possibility of serialization.	Slow accumulation of reach; vulnerability to contextual manipulation of fragments.	Glossaries and timecodes; links to primary sources; “how to verify” block at the end.
Instagram Reels	Flow from lifestyle segments, visual clarity, and collaborations.	Emotional framing and “clip” retention.	“Myth exposure” templates; stories-polls with results breakdown.
Telegram Channels	Timeliness, high loyalty, and channel network effects.	Weak verification; coalescence of official/unofficial agenda; coordination of disinformation.	Public methodological notes; source checklists; uncertainty labels and retrospective corrections.
Cross-platform Linkage	Funnel “short $\rightarrow$ long $\rightarrow$ archive”; reach + depth.	Context gap between platforms.	Cross-cutting series, unified tags/hashtags; central hub with bibliography and updates.

From a practical perspective, such a matrix shows why, for a Russian-speaking news author on TikTok/Telegram, the optimal approach is not the transfer of formats between platforms, but their functional complementarity. Short clips serve as a “gatekeeper”—they activate attention and direct viewers to detailed breakdowns on YouTube or notes/bibliographies on Telegram; feedback reinforces and deepens understanding. This directly supports a strategy within which high average clip viewership is converted into qualitative metrics-transitions to primary sources, saving of materials, participation in public discussions [2; 4; 7; 10].

When considering the ethical and regulatory framework, the discussion goes beyond the author's individual skills. It addresses systemic issues: sponsorship transparency (especially when interacting with public bodies), labeling of advertising messages, correction procedures, and open apologies for errors. The existing literature documents a trend toward the institutionalization of cooperation

between state structures and influencers for socially beneficial communication, which raises requirements for source disclosure and for distinguishing the roles of “journalist/activist” [8]. In environments of armed conflict and acute crises, Telegram ecosystems demonstrate the capacity for rapid mobilization, but also for the dissemination of unverified messages, which justifies the implementation of robust ethical protocols [1; 5; 6].

To systematize such protocols, a “decision matrix” is functional-correspondences between typical risk scenarios and operational responses in the editorial process of an independent author. Below is a generalization derived from sources on journalistic norms in messengers, global propaganda involving influencers, state interaction with creators, and media education practices [5; 6; 8; 9], supplemented by reviews on social influencing (see Table 2).

**Table 2:** Matrix of ethical and operational decisions for an independent news author on social media (based on [5, 6, 3, 8-10])

Risk Scenario	Operational Response	Minimum Metrics/Control Signals	Applicability Comment
Speed over Verification	Built-in “red timer”: min. delay for verification, list of admissible sources.	Share of posts with primary sources; number of subsequent corrections.	Critical for Telegram summaries.
Unmarked Sponsorship	Explicit labeling “partner content” + link to mandate/program.	Audience complaints; reputational mentions.	Responds to influencer institutionalization.

Conspiratorial Narratives	“Myth/fact” series; invitation of external experts; counterarguments.	Series reach, retention, and clicks on external sources.	Recommended for short videos.
Manipulative Visuals	“Fact/evaluation/uncertainty” template in titles/description.	Share of clips with labeling; CTR on “how to verify.”	Reduces the “clip thinking” effect.
Cross-platform Context Gap	Cross-cutting series numbering; unified link map; final “roadmaps.”	Conversion “short $\rightarrow$ long”; saves.	Basis of the multiplatform funnel.
Comment Attacks/Trolling	Moderation presets, FAQ responses, and redirection to knowledge bases.	Signal/noise ratio; moderation time.	Supports discussion quality.

The proposed matrix demonstrates that many risks are, in reality manageable through predetermined procedures. For an author with a large Russian-speaking audience, the practical value lies in translating these decisions into repeatable content-production templates: the “two sources + verification timecode” standard for short videos, “primary source breakdown” as the concluding block of YouTube broadcasts, and “correction retrospectives” for the Telegram channel. Such operationalized correspondence to sources and formats not only maintains trust and reduces errors but also directly achieves the stated goal of increasing the audience's information and social literacy [2; 9; 10].

Limitations of result interpretation and transferability consist, firstly, of the heterogeneity of platform regulation and algorithms between countries and observation periods [4; 7]; secondly, of the sensitivity of identified effects to the presentation style and reputational capital of a specific author [2; 10]; thirdly, of the fact that under conflict conditions, Telegram ecosystems are subject to coordinated campaigns, which complicates causal conclusions [1; 6]. These limitations do not negate the practical utility of the approach but set frameworks for careful application and the necessity of constant monitoring of quality indicators-the share of publications with primary sources, the number of corrections, conversion from short formats to detailed ones, clicks on “how to verify” links, trust signals, and reputational metrics.

In summary, the interpretation points to the persistent “dual nature” of influencer influence: the exact mechanisms-parasocial proximity, algorithmic distribution, attention economy-simultaneously increase the accessibility of a complex agenda to a broad youth audience and accelerate the dissemination of unreliable messages. The difference between success and harm is determined not by the platform as such, but by the quality of editorial practices and author transparency. In this sense, a multimedia architecture with clearly formalized verification procedures, a transparent distinction between fact and evaluation, and a systemic educational module acts not only as a growth strategy but also as a guarantee of the content's public utility [2-6; 8-10]. For channels with extensive reach and high engagement, this is further confirmation that “scale” can serve not as an end in itself, but as a tool for guiding audiences toward responsible news consumption and independent information verification.

### 5. Conclusion

A triad of influence mechanisms-parasocial relationships, algorithmic distribution, and civic popularization-was identified, and it was shown that, with regular communication and precise “translation” of complex topics, they increase cognitive (knowledge, awareness) and behavioral (transition to primary sources, participation in discussions) indicators among the audience. The comparison of TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Telegram revealed their complementarity: short videos create entry points, long-form formats ensure depth and archivability, and Telegram ensures timeliness and network effects; effectiveness grows with the presence of cross-cutting fact-checking practices and “fact/evaluation” labeling.

An operational risk reduction matrix (sponsorship transparency, verification “red timer,” “myth/fact” serialization, cross-cutting navigation) was proposed, allowing the conversion of reach scale into media literacy growth and public utility.

Limitations are associated with differences in platform rules, conflict contexts, and the dependence of effects on author reputation. Collectively, it is shown that independent channels, given methodological transparency, are capable of sustainably shaping responsible public participation.

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