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Public Responsibility for Disclosure and Content Control in Paid Political Endorsements by Influencers

Huijun Yang¹, Mohd Haizra Hashim²

Faculty of Business and Communication, INTI International University, Nilai, Malaysia

Abstract: *Sincere belief and sponsorship labels are not enough to determine whether paid political endorsements are legitimate. Based on targeted literature retrieval and hypothetical comparison, this article disassembles remuneration, role presentation, content control, verification process, and factual results into five dimensions that can be evaluated separately, and examines the responsibilities of different communication arrangements. The core judgment of the article is that if the contract requires a supportive conclusion in advance, it is incompatible with the independent evaluation promised to the audience; there are only two ways out: cancel the restriction, or truthfully explain that this is commissioned advocacy. Public advocacy does not have to promise political neutrality, but the three responsibilities of truthfully explaining the relationship, reasonably verifying the facts, and correcting serious mistakes do not disappear. Disclosure is not enough to eliminate the misunderstanding in another situation: when multiple contents are presented together, the common organizational source may still be hidden. Responsibility is distributed among creators, sponsors, intermediaries, and platforms according to each party's knowledge, control, and participation. These analyses provide a normative justification for the conditional acceptance of paid advocacy, which is neither an empirical estimate of the effectiveness of communication nor a universally applicable permit.*

Keywords: *political influencers; paid political endorsement; sponsorship disclosure; conflict of interest; independent assessment.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Imagine that the two creators sincerely support the same candidate and also disclose the same endorsement compensation. The difference lies in the explanation of the formation process of the work: one person presents the content as his own independent evaluation, but the contract requires him to draw a supportive conclusion; the other bluntly says that the message was commissioned by the campaign team. The sentences written by both of them may be accurate, but the readers' understanding is not the same, and the ethical evaluation should also be different. What is really being compared is how much freedom of judgment is left in the evaluation process. A contract with a pre-locked conclusion, no matter how sincere the creator is, can no longer be described as an evaluation that will still change with the evidence. Sincerity explains what the creator believes; it does not explain what the contract leaves them free to decide. The relationship between political Internet celebrities and politics and the audience is diverse [1]; the conceptual study of separating remuneration, control, and formal political roles just provides a tool for examining these relationships one by one, and also avoids defining them only by whether they are paid or not [2].

Paid political communication falls at the junction of commercial promotion and political expression, and the boundary between the two is not clear [3]. Interview studies have described cooperation among creators, campaign teams, and intermediaries, as well as differences over compensation, transparency, and spontaneous support appearances [4]. How these relationships affect a specific message is the problem to be dealt with in ethical analysis. Remuneration cannot prove that the belief is false; conversely, sincere belief does not prevent content from being arranged to make the audience misunderstand. To make a judgment, you must first see what the communicator has promised and what the sponsor has the right to demand. Even if the label describes the investor, the audience may not know who ultimately decided the substantive conclusion of the message before it was released.

Under what conditions can paid political endorsement be ethically legitimate? This article disassembles this problem into three items:

- 1) RQ1 What are the responsibilities of different communication roles, and under what conditions does the remuneration or content control constitute a conflict of interest?
- 2) RQ2 What understanding problems can disclosure solve, and what limitations remain in presenting content control, fact statements, and coordinated support?

- 3) RQ3 How are responsibilities distributed among creators, sponsors, intermediaries, and platforms according to the degree of knowledge, control, and participation, while retaining reasonable political participation and labor compensation?

The position of this article is to accept paid political endorsement conditionally. The chapter summary of Riedl and Woolley lists authenticity, autonomy and acknowledgment of relationships as the three principles of political Internet celebrity ethics [5]: authenticity is about how the creator is loyal to his own position and the relationship with the audience, and whether the statement of facts is accurate is not the same; acknowledgment of relationships involves openly explaining the relevant sponsorship arrangements. This article follows the distinction between compensation and control between Dubois and Dommett [2], but takes the problem one step further - whether the role commitment is compatible with the contract authority. If the creator provides an independent evaluation, but the contract requires a supportive conclusion, then either cancel this restriction or truthfully explain that this is commissioned advocacy. In addition, this article also asks why individual disclosure may no longer be enough to explain the source of coordination after the content is edited and collected. Through this path, the existing ethical concerns are transformed into communication arrangements that can be checked item by item; the analysis takes the relationship between the individual and the client as the main line, and the coordinated communication is only a supplementary test.

II. ROLES AND THE FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL ANALYSIS

A. Political Endorsement as a Communicative Relationship

The object of analysis in this article is real-life creators who have obtained relevant benefits to support a political party, candidate, or political idea. Such benefits can be money or non-cash benefits linked to communication activities. The ordinary advertising revenue given by the platform itself is not a sponsorship of a certain position, and audience donations that have nothing to do with endorsement cannot be determined by this. Government information release, campaign advocacy and personal political commentary are established separately and cannot replace each other. The important thing is whether a certain interest is included in the production arrangement of the endorsement. Dubois and Dommett deal with compensation, control and formal political roles separately [2]. Through this distinction, the source of funds and the acceptance of instructions become two related but different issues.

Citizens express their political support and do not bear the responsibility of making independent evaluations for others. Once the creator says that the recommendation is the result of personal investigation, the promise will change. By contrast, someone openly entrusted to engage in position communication can frankly explain that they were hired by the campaign team and that their task is to explain the position. These are descriptions of the activity, not a fixed group classification; the same creator may play different roles in different messages.

The independence mentioned in this article refers to the actual freedom of the creator to draw and disclose unfavorable conclusions based on evidence within the scope of the promised evaluation; the neutral question is whether he holds or favors a certain political position. Those who clearly take the side may still make independent judgments, and the stable wording cannot prove that he is not bound by the contract. When judging the role, the purpose of the communication statement, the description of the production process, and the actual power of the sponsor must be put together.

There are many specific forms of control. Borchers and others interviewed 26 political party communication representatives from Finland, Germany, and Romania [6], and separated the cooperation activities according to pre-production, production, and post-production, covering task description, information exchange, review, and supervision. Agreeing to correct a factual error is obviously not the same as asking the creator to draw a certain conclusion. These interviews record the statements of the party representative, which is neither enough to summarize the behavior of all creators nor to illustrate the ethically valid arrangements described. Moreover, the research is taken from the perspective of management, and how creators and audiences experience these relationships is still hanging in the air.

The authenticity problem can help us see the tension in these experiences. Wellman et al. interviewed 20 participants in the field of tourism communication and talked about their sponsorship content practices [7]: the interviewees made ethical judgments about the dual loyalty to the individual brand and the audience, and also talked about selective omission. Grgurić Čop and others interviewed 10 Croatian-speaking Internet celebrities who felt conflicted about their responsibilities to the brand, fans, and society [8]. Both studies take place in business contexts. They can provide material for role conflicts and self-defense, but they are not representative evidence of the political audience. As for the response to the respondents' own reports, they have to go through an ethical evaluation before they can be recommended to others.

B. Responsibilities and Conflicts of Interest

The audience is the participant in political judgment, and the responsibility assessment starts from here. When the communicator gives a reason to support a position, he should let the audience see the source and basis of these reasons; deliberately misrepresenting the relevant relationship hinders this step. This misconduct does not depend on whether it can be proven that the label has changed whose vote. It is precisely because the presentation method itself invites the trust of the audience that the relevant information is reason to be disclosed. This supports honesty in the specific endorsement relationship, but it does not mean that the audience has the right to inquire about the private life of the creator indefinitely.

Once the statement of facts is used as a reason for political action, the responsibility is aggravated. Ward extended the discussion of media ethics from members of professional news organizations to a wider audience, but journalism has always been the main subject of his book [9]. This scope supports us in pursuing public communication outside journalism, but it is not enough to put all the responsibilities of journalists on each creator. The argument of this article is much narrower: the decision to actively issue verifiable statements brings obligations in itself. Since a statement has been adopted, there is reason to check its basis, mark the relevant uncertainties, and correct mistakes that may cause important consequences. How much caution is required depends on the content of the statement and the foreseeable consequences. It does not require the creator to have the resources of news agencies, nor does it require him to be impartial to all political positions.

To identify conflicts of interest, we must first clarify which responsibility the other interest may threaten. The American Institute of Medicine defines conflicts of interest as a set of risk-forming situations: professional judgments or actions about primary interests may be unduly affected by secondary interests [10]. The existence of risk is not based on the premise that deviation has occurred. This article extends this idea to the creator's voluntary commitment, which is a normative extension, not a claim that every fan already has a professional service or fiduciary relationship with the creator.

When the creator promises to provide an independent political evaluation, maintaining the integrity of this evaluation becomes a reasonable primary responsibility. The remuneration linked to the supporting conclusion may threaten it, even if the creator does agree with the conclusion at the moment. It is another matter for the campaign team to publicly entrust someone to explain their position. If the communicator has never assumed the role of independent evaluation, it cannot be determined that he has violated the promise of independent evaluation based on remuneration alone. He still has to explain the role and handle the facts carefully; contractual incentives may also interfere with specific verification or correction commitments. It can be seen that the judgment of conflicts of interest must be based on which responsibility is risked by compensation.

Audience expectations themselves must also be subjected to critical scrutiny. Fans may want creators to be consistent with their ideology, give exclusive contact opportunities, or simply not to accept paid work. These preferences will not automatically become obligations. Reasonable expectations should be in line with what the creator has done and his promises to the outside world. The promise can be stated clearly or conveyed through specific production instructions. For example, the creator did not use the word "independent", but said "I recommended it after checking the original materials", and at the same time concealed that the conclusion of the contract had been locked, which is enough for the audience to misunderstand his freedom of judgment. On the other hand, expressing support in a personal tone alone is not enough to prove the commitment to independent evaluation. The investigation statement, how the conclusion was formed, and whether the sponsorship control was explained should be combined; a general disclaimer cannot cancel the specific commitments made in the same information.

C. Method and Hypothetical Comparisons

This article uses normative analysis, and the literature is based on the directional search carried out on October 17, 2026, and supplemented on October 18. The retrieval is carried out through the public web page. The main entry points are the journal and publishing house page, the author's homepage, and the university's public repository. The bibliography information is checked with DOI and Crossref records. Representative search formulas include "political influencers" sponsorship compensation disclosure ethics, "political influencers" autonomy control paid endorsements, and influencer ethics authenticity role conflicts sponsored content. Supplementary searches covered disclosure experiments, conflicts of interest, and political astroturfing. Sources were selected according to their relevance to roles, control, disclosure mechanisms, and counterarguments. Discussions of freedom of expression and compensation for communication work were also retained.

The question of role and relationship is mainly taken from three types of materials: how political parties manage the cooperation of Internet celebrities [6], the ethical study of authenticity under the situation of commercial sponsorship [7], and interviews about the conflict of Internet celebrities [8]. Disclosure research is accessed separately according to the situation: for the disclosure evidence of the political situation, this article only uses the American audience survey [11]; for the commercial situation, it uses meta-analysis

and experimental evidence [12] [13]; and for professional advice contexts, it uses experiments and policy discussions of disclosure mechanisms [14]–[16]. There are three criteria for inclusion: whether it can directly respond to the research questions in this article, whether it provides the necessary counterexamples or restrictions, and whether the conclusion matches its original context. The last one means that the discovery of business and professional advice situations is only quoted within the corresponding scope and not extrapolated to political communication. The search is exploratory, not a systematic overview, and it is not used to infer the prevalence of industry practice.

Each comparison first fixes the role and corresponding responsibilities presented by the communicator, and then looks at the role of compensation, disclosure, control, verification process, and factual results. The main cases are listed in Table I. A and B compare whether there is remuneration related to endorsement, B and C compare whether the same remuneration is disclosed, and D and F1 compare the control relationship. The difference between groups E1 and F1, and E2 and F2, lies in the verification process, and the factual results remain the same; the two groups E1 and E2, and F1 and F2, are the opposite, and the verification conditions remain unchanged, but the actual results are different. All relevant conditions that are not otherwise explained shall remain the same in the comparison of each group. These cases are used to test whether the reasons underlying the judgments are consistent. They are neither observed events nor experimental findings. As for the presentation of coordinated support, the fourth section examines Case G separately.

TABLE I
HYPOTHETICAL COMPARISONS OF PAID POLITICAL ENDORSEMENT

Case	Compensation and role presentation	Content control and factual claims	Comparison
A	Sincere support; no endorsement-related compensation	Autonomous expression; accurate claim reasonably verified	Baseline for B
B	Same support as A; compensation clearly disclosed	Same autonomy, verification process, and claim as A	Presence of compensation
C	Same as B, but compensation concealed	Same autonomy, verification process, and claim as B	Presence of disclosure
D	Compensation disclosed; complete independence claimed	Favorable conclusion required; script and sponsor review; same claim and verification as F1	Role explanation compared with F1
E1	Compensation and commissioned role accurately explained	Favorable conclusion required; script and sponsor review; no reasonable verification, but claim accidentally accurate	Verification process compared with F1
F1	Compensation and commissioned role accurately explained	Favorable conclusion required; script and sponsor review; reasonable verification and accurate claim	Baseline for D and E1
E2	Compensation and commissioned role accurately explained	Favorable conclusion required; script and sponsor review; no reasonable verification and false claim	Verification process compared with F2
F2	Compensation and commissioned role accurately explained	Favorable conclusion required; script and sponsor review; reasonable verification without concealing known uncertainty, but claim remains false	Distinguishes care from outcome

Note Case G and other textual scenarios provide supplementary tests and are not included in this table.

III. DISCLOSURE AND ITS LIMITS

A. Why Disclosure Is Owed

Case A is the baseline: no endorsement-related remuneration, sincere support, and the statement has been reasonably verified. Case B introduces remuneration on this basis, and the autonomy, verification process, and factual statement remain unchanged, but it is only clearly disclosed, so the concealment of the problem temporarily withdraws from this group of comparison. What is tested by A and B is whether the remuneration itself is sufficient to constitute an ethical negation. According to the role analysis above, it is still necessary to point out which specific responsibility the remuneration threatens. It is not necessary to presume that the belief is false or the judgment is controlled based on the remuneration alone. Why the remuneration relationship should be explained and left to the next group of B and C to deal with.

Case B has the same sincere belief as Case C, and the statement of facts is the same. The only difference is whether the audience knows about the reward. This relationship will affect how the audience evaluates the creator's topic selection, information channels, and the reasons why he suggests action. When the audience raises questions, they do not need to prove that a certain belief is paid for before they are qualified to understand the endorsement arrangement; if they really need to show evidence of implicit influence before they are willing to disclose the relationship, the meaning of disclosure in practice will have little left. The situation grasped by creators and sponsors cannot be reliably restored by the audience based on the information content alone.

The most powerful reason for the audience to understand this relationship is honesty in the situation. Once the paid endorsement follows the expression recommended by the individual, the nature of the entrustment is easy to cover up. Whether the omission is misleading or not depends on the presentation method and what the audience can see clearly. A clear campaign advertisement makes it easier to identify the purpose of persuasion than information written as an independent personal evaluation. The degree of explanation required in the two situations can be different, but neither of them can represent the expectations of the whole audience. Disclosure needs to fill a specific gap in understanding: the sponsorship relationship is still vague without any explanation.

Sincere agreement can't fill this gap. Without payment, the creator may still support the same candidate, but the content being evaluated is made in a paid arrangement. Disclosure should not, in turn, imply that this fact is enough to overturn its beliefs or deny its reasons. A survey of 906 American social media users who follow Internet celebrities shows that respondents support the disclosure of financial and non-financial benefits [11]. This is about the attitude of the sample, which does not prove that a certain label will improve election decision-making. The ethical reason for disclosure, therefore, cannot be based on an ideal result that even the existing evidence has not established.

B. What Disclosure Research Can Establish

Identifying sponsorship, trusting creators, remembering information, accepting suggestions, and making political choices are distinct outcomes. Labels may improve the recognition of sponsorship, while lowering the audience's evaluation of the content - which is not necessarily an ethical failure, because it is reasonable for audiences to reassess content once they know who funded it. On the other hand, trust does not change, and it may coexist with the audience's misunderstanding of the production process. Any single indicator, including whether the creator's credibility is maintained, is not enough to determine whether the disclosure has achieved its ethical purpose.

The study of business situations mainly looks at the identification effect under specific disclosure conditions. The meta-analysis of Eisend et al. included 61 papers and 57 independent data sets, targeting sponsored content [12]. The results showed that the disclosure improved the level of advertising recognition and persuasion knowledge, but the differences between conditions and results were not small. Boerman's experiment, which sampled 192 participants, found that the use of Instagram standardized disclosure in business contexts can improve advertising recognition [13]. These conclusions are tied to the disclosure design and the specific situation, and cannot determine what will happen when the sponsor is replaced by a candidate or political party. The audience's existing political identity and the consequences of decision-making may be different from product evaluation.

Experiments on advice provision highlight the choices available to those giving advice. Cain, Loewenstein, and Moore designed a money valuation task in which participants were incentivized to exaggerate valuations [14]; after disclosing this incentive, the deviation in the proposal increased, and the adjustments recipients made were not enough to offset it. Sah and Loewenstein found that if the suggestion provider could choose whether to accept conflicting incentives, disclosure might prompt him to reject the incentive [15]. The two studies distinguish two pathways through which disclosure operates. Disclosing an existing conflict may leave incentives unchanged, while providing an opportunity to avoid the conflict enables behavior to change.

Sah's later discussion further examines the social and psychological burden of disclosure, including the pressure felt when accepting suggestions [16]. These situations cannot be directly transferred to the model of political Internet celebrity communication, nor can it prove that the sponsorship label will inevitably increase political bias or prompt creators to refuse to sign contracts. Considered alongside research on sponsorship recognition in commercial contexts, these findings raise separate questions about information, incentives, and opportunities to avoid conflicts. Disclosures in political communication may make it clear who paid, but they do not address the control of the sponsor. Evaluating such an arrangement depends not only on how the parties who produce the information act and what power they hold, but also on how the audience understands it.

C. Proportionate Disclosure Requirements

When the audience encounters the endorsement, they should see the disclosure and be able to understand the relevant relationship from it. Visibility, wording, and continuity should be adapted to the media form. If the video puts the tag after the persuasive

paragraph, the audience who left early will miss it; the clip will lose the original explanation when forwarded, and the audience will not get the same information later. These examples point to the purpose of disclosure, not a set of universally applicable legal provisions. The requirements still need to be tested in different forms and audiences.

The explanation should point out the sponsor, the relevant interests, and the relationship between this interest and this endorsement. If the control relationship changes the meaning of the so-called personal evaluation, it also needs to be explained. Listing only an intermediary may still obscure the political organization that commissioned the information; directly showing that a campaign team funded and reviewed the content often conveys more than a general cooperation label. How much detail should be given depends on what the audience is likely to misunderstand in the original presentation.

The principle of proportionality places an upper limit on disclosure requirements. A complete contract, exact remuneration, or irrelevant income may expose private information, but it may not help explain the endorsement. If there is a continuous dependence, or if the special payment conditions substantially change the judgment of the claimed role, there is reason to ask for more details. The goal is to make the relationship clear, not to make the financial situation public unconditionally. As for the responsibility for verifying the facts and correcting errors, it still lies with the parties who choose to produce and disseminate the information.

IV. CONTENT CONTROL AND PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY

A. *Control and Claims of Independence*

What the sponsor's involvement means ethically depends on how it affects the work and what role the communicator presents to the audience. Providing a source document is not the same as checking the date, suggesting topic selection, and requesting the final script. The findings of Borchers and others on task description, cooperation, audit and supervision provide just the basis for these distinctions [6]. A sponsor's involvement alone does not establish whether independence has been misrepresented; what needs to be asked is which decisions the creator still makes, and whether this arrangement leaves room to avoid or correct misleading communication.

The remuneration, supporting conclusion requirements, sponsor's review, and verified accurate statements of Case D and Case F1 are all the same. D said that the work was completely independent, while F1 truthfully explained that this was commissioned advocacy. The problem with D is not that the statement about the candidate is false, but that it presents a pre-restricted conclusion as an evaluation that can still be freely changed. Disclosure of remuneration can't fix this role description. F1 avoided this misdirection, but fact-checking is as responsible as correction.

Cooperation itself can serve a reasonable purpose. The campaign team may provide reliable policy documents, correct citations, or check whether their public positions are accurately expressed; pre-prepared texts can also reduce ambiguity. Treating all scripts as manipulation will cover up these differences. What really changes the nature of the problem are other clauses: requiring the issuance of unfounded assertions, the exclusion of necessary qualifications, or the prevention of correcting confirmed errors. Such terms directly determine whether the creator can publish the content responsibly.

The commitment to provide independent evaluation means that the creator can indeed draw and disclose conclusions that are not beneficial to the sponsor within the scope of this evaluation. Disclosing a clause that deprives such freedom does not maintain the commitment to independent evaluation; the way out is still to remove restrictions or to present the work as commissioned advocacy. The freedom of expression and the opportunity to initially refuse to sign the contract cannot replace the freedom of judgment after signing the contract. If the agreement allows the creator to withdraw after finding counter-evidence, the independence also depends on whether he can truthfully explain the reason for the withdrawal or publicly make the necessary corrections; it is still not enough to support the claim of independent evaluation. Public advocacy can include the party position agreed by both parties, but there should still be room for rejecting misleading factual materials and issuing necessary corrections.

B. *Factual Responsibility and Selective Presentation*

Table I compares the verification process with the factual results. Both E1 and F1 issued accurate statements. The difference is that E1 has not reasonably verified, and F1 has done reasonable verification. It can be seen that the content happens to be correct, but it cannot prove that it has done its duty alone. Both E2 and F2 issued wrong statements. The difference is that E2 did not do reasonable verification, while F2 still made mistakes under careful verification and did not conceal known uncertainty. It can be seen that the wrong results cannot be proved to be hasty or deceptive alone. All four cases truthfully illustrate the relationship between entrustment and audit, and the disclosure itself does not provide evidence for any factual assertions.

Reasonable verification is a practice that can still go wrong. The evaluation depends on whether the materials available at the time of publication support the statement, whether there are obvious doubts, and whether the relevant uncertainties are hidden. The results of E1 and E2 are different, but both show insufficient verification; if the results of F1 and F2 are different, it is suggested that the prudence before the release should be judged separately from the correction after the error is found. After the error in F2 is found, the creator should still make corrections commensurate with its importance. Verification responsibility does not require never making mistakes, nor does it disappear because of political support out of sincerity.

Authenticity can't solve these problems. Respondents to Wellman et al. once explained selective omission by audience needs or personal brand consistency [7], while Grgurić Čop and others examined the tension between authenticity and the expectations of other characters [8]. These narratives show how creators find reasons for their decisions, but they do not justify the hidden unfavorable information. An endorsement can fit the creator's consistent identity image, and at the same time give an incomplete explanation of a fact. Whether omission is reasonable depends on what aspects of it hinder the audience's understanding of the fact. Political advocacy is bound to make choices. Creators need not address every objection or abandon their political preferences. The dividing line lies in whether this choice misleads the facts of substantial significance. Only the favorable half of the policy conditions are cited, and the restrictions are omitted. Even if the quoted wording is reproduced exactly, selective quotation may distort what the policy actually promises. If the value judgment is explained as a personal preference and the uncertain prediction is qualified, the advocacy activity will not be unsustainable. Once a substantial error is found, the relevant arrangements should allow correction.

The materials provided by the sponsor also need to be reviewed. Statements involving public budgets can first check whether the original documents, the statistical period, and the figures refer to budget allocations or actual expenditures. These checks constitute part of the reasonable verification of specific propositions and do not require creators to resolve the whole policy debate. If the materials are contradictory, the data is unclear, or the statement involves major charges, it should be further verified, clearly qualified, or refused for publication; completing a small number of inspections is not enough to claim the duty is done.

C. Coordinated Communication and Public Support

Case G examines the situation in which multiple endorsements are put together. The supporters were sincere and disclosed their rewards, and the statements they made were verified, but the campaign team packaged these coordinated contents into a wave of support spontaneously gathered by independent supporters. The problem is that this set of content is described as how it arises. During collection, individual labels may disappear; the creator's sincere belief cannot prove that the timing of release or the production process is spontaneous. When the integrated material is delivered to another audience in another form, the original and accurate relationship description of each content may be lost together.

Goodwin and others described the coordination and tension between grassroots participation and organized political influence [4]. Keller and others investigated a Twitter action organized centrally during South Korea's 2012 presidential election, in which the participants disguised themselves as independent citizens [17]; the study did not establish the voting effect by analyzing the platform data to coordinate the model and its communication impact. The identity of the creator in the G case is recognizable and sincerely expresses support, which cannot be stated with this kind of covert action. There is only one connection between the two in this article: how the common organizational origin is explained. Multiple creators can sincerely support the same position, but the amount of content coordinated by the same arrangement cannot prove that the publishing process is independently formed.

Paid coordination will not naturally turn public support into false support. Creators can fully support a certain cause, jointly organize activities, and get paid for their own labor. The objection in case G depends on whether there is a misleading explanation of the coordination process. If the common arrangement is clear, or the collection is accurately presented as a commissioned campaign communication, this objection does not apply. Ethical responsibility also covers this presentation and the decisions made when gathering content. As for the extent to which public opinion has been distorted and whether the election results have changed, this comparison has neither measured nor provided evidence; answering these questions requires empirical materials beyond the scope of the hypothetical relationship in this article.

V. COUNTERARGUMENTS AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Limits of the Proposed Responsibilities

A strong objection is to deny that Internet celebrities must exercise judgment instead of fans. Party advocates may only provide justification to people who know their persuasion; having an audience does not mean obtaining a professional appointment, nor does it mean assuming the fiduciary duty.

This objection limits the scope of application of the conflict of interest judgment. If the creator does not assume the role of independent evaluation in a way that is explicit or sufficient to form a reasonable understanding, he cannot be deemed to have violated the commitment of independent evaluation based on remuneration alone. Public paid party communication can be legitimate; as for the responsibility for role description, fact-checking, and correction, it still needs to be argued separately according to its specific activities.

Political participation also includes communication labor that can be reasonably paid. Goodwin and others discussed the reasons for paying this kind of labor [4], while De Gregorio and Goanta examined the tension between the two categories of business and politics [3]. If the creator is required to work free of charge, he must explain why the entrusted dissemination should not be paid; this requirement may also ignore other forms of dependence. Money itself does not invalidate political beliefs. The relevant responsibility lies in how to explain the arrangement and how to produce the content, not whether the remuneration disqualifies the communicator from participating in politics.

After understanding the basis of the advocacy, the audience still has the freedom to accept it. Disclosure should not be evaluated on the basis of whether it prompts audiences to reject a particular candidate. A person can identify the relationship of entrustment, examine the reasons put forward, and then express agreement; respect for autonomy already includes allowing such judgment. The decline in trust is not necessarily the damage that the sponsor should avoid with ambiguous labels. Ethics aims to provide a fair basis for judgment, not to require the audience to make predetermined political decisions or to block all adverse comments for creators.

Once fact-checking is separated from specific statements, it may become an excessive burden. Small creators do not have the scale of professional institutions to investigate every policy debate, and partisan differences will also affect people's judgment of "full prudence". Value commitments, daily comments, numerical claims, and serious accusations against identifiable individuals should be treated differently: the more specific the statement and the greater the foreseeable damage, the higher the requirements. Checking available raw materials, requesting supporting documents from the sponsor, clearly marking qualifications, or refusing to publish are all feasible ways to address insufficient evidence. Comprehensive professional knowledge should not be a prerequisite for expressing political preferences. Free advocacy also needs to take into account the responsibility of fact-checking and correction.

The independence requirement also faces a result-oriented objection: the creator originally supported the candidate, the facts have been verified, and the supportive conclusion clause does not seem to change any results. The response falls on the possibility reserved by the evaluation. Audiences have reason to expect an independent assessment because the conclusion ultimately communicated may still change if relevant counterevidence emerges. Requiring supportive advocacy in advance removes this possibility, even if the parties have never actually disagreed. If the same message is spread as a position that truthfully explains the nature of entrustment, it may still be legitimate. Sincerity explains what the creator believes, whereas contractual powers determine whether freedom of judgment exists.

B. Allocating Responsibilities Across the Relationship

The responsibility depends on the information, control, and participation of all parties in the production of the content. The creator should explain the relevant interests and their own roles, review the factual statements they have adopted, and keep a set of corrective arrangements that can actually work. Sponsors and intermediaries often have information that creators cannot obtain themselves, so they should explain the entrustment relationship, provide supporting materials, and avoid requiring creators to simulate independence or spontaneity in the terms. As for the misleading collection, the subject of the design and dissemination of it is responsible for its presentation. The responsibility of the creator for subsequent reuse depends on his knowledge and participation; participating in the original endorsement does not automatically mean that he is responsible for all reuse.

These responsibilities can be handled in advance when agreeing on the entrustment arrangement. The work of independent evaluation should allow unfavorable conclusions, while the work of supportive advocacy should truthfully explain its purpose. The agreement also stipulates: how to deal with factual doubts, who has the right to issue necessary corrections, and who reserves the sponsorship statement when editing and collecting. Table II distinguishes the roles in Section II, the discussion on fact verification and coordinated dissemination in Section IV, and the allocation of responsibilities in this section, corresponding to several communication situations for use in checking the terms of entrustment and information descriptions. These arrangements do not guarantee that all parties must fulfill their responsibilities, but they can make the relevant powers clear before the release, reducing the situation where the audience will only find hidden restrictions after the fact.

TABLE II
EXAMINING ROLE COMMITMENTS AND COMMUNICATION ARRANGEMENTS

Communication setting	Limits of control	Relationship explanation and factual verification	Correction and redistribution arrangements
Independent assessment promised	Retain the right to reach and publish unfavorable conclusions; review must not predetermine support	Explain sponsorship and the scope of review; verify claims according to their risks	Retain authority to publish necessary corrections; withdrawal clauses must not conceal material errors
Openly commissioned advocacy	An advocacy position may be agreed; creators should be able to reject unsupported or misleading factual content	Identify the actual commissioning party, relevant benefits, and control; distinguish positions from factual claims	Agree who addresses challenges and publishes corrections; corrections should reach the original audience
Ambiguous role presentation	Examine actual powers and investigation claims first; personal voice alone does not establish independence	Avoid general labels that obscure specific investigation claims or implications of independence	Clarify the role before publication; correct misleading accounts of the assessment process where necessary
Coordinated editing or compilation	The compiler bears primary responsibility for the common arrangement and its subsequent presentation	Retain visible, understandable sponsorship explanations; do not present common commissioning as spontaneous support	Assign responsibility for preserving labels and issuing corrections; assess responsibility through knowledge and participation

Platform design affects whether the audience can continue to see the relationship information. Annabell and others' research on business cooperation policies and interfaces brings disclosure practices back into the platform environment for investigation [18]. This responsibility cannot be completely assigned to individual creators. When sponsored content is shared, it should remain visible and understandable, and reporting and correcting errors should also be easy to use. The feasibility and practical effects of these recommendations still need to be assessed. It cannot be assumed that a single interface is suitable for all services and audiences. Ethical legitimacy is not equal to platform licensing or legal compliance. As of October 18, 2026, the update time on TikTok's relevant policy page is July 2026, which prohibits paid political advertising and clearly includes situations where creators are paid to produce political sponsored content [19]. Disclosure will not make the prohibited content possible to be posted. The platform has additional conditions for some government public information and official election procedure information, but these cannot be equated with paid endorsements of candidates or political parties. Other platforms and jurisdictions need to be examined separately, and the normative judgment of this article does not replace the specific applicable rules.

VI. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

A. Conclusion

The ethical boundaries of paid political endorsements depend on the communicator's role and whether the arrangement is compatible with it. The creator claims to provide independent evaluation, but the contract requires a supportive conclusion in advance - even if the remuneration has been disclosed and the support is in good faith, the conflict between roles and authority still exists. This incompatibility can be resolved only by canceling the restriction or disclosing the work as commissioned advocacy. Conflicts of interest should indicate how specific commitments are threatened by secondary interests, and cannot be presumed only by receiving remuneration. Disclosure should be at the appropriate time and in a clear way to explain the relationship information required to understand this endorsement. But it cannot replace a proper role description, fact-checking commensurate with the statement's risk, or correction after important errors are found. Normal advocacy should be separated from omissions that distort substantive facts; a creator's sincere support for a position should also be separated from whether multiple pieces of content are created independently. Responsibilities are assigned to creators, sponsors, intermediaries, and platforms according to the degree of knowledge, control, and participation. This article supports paid advocacy that meets these requirements; it does not grant blanket approval to all disclosed endorsements.

B. Limitations

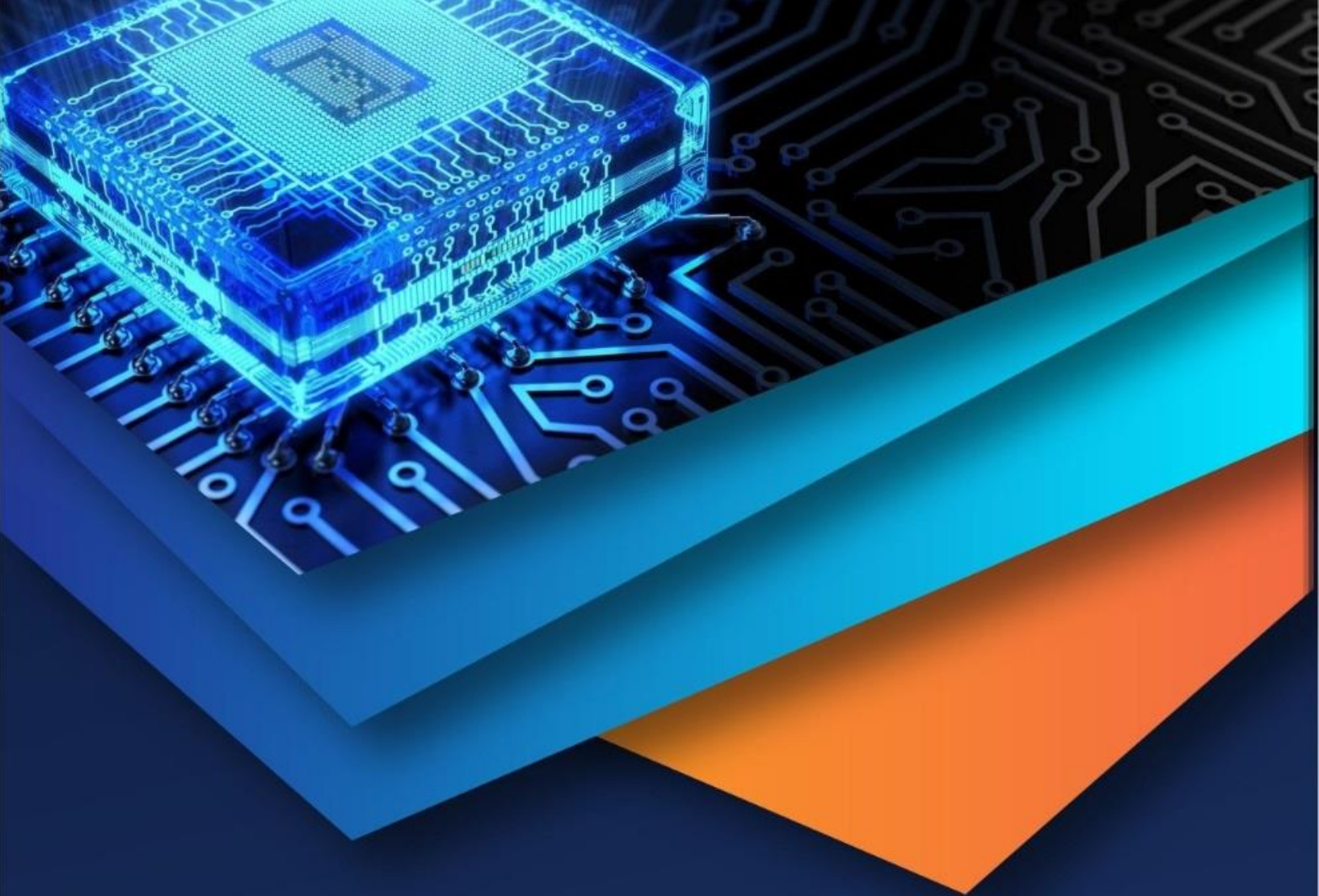
This article puts forward normative reasons for specific communication relationships, and does not measure how common the relevant practices are. Hypothetical comparison deals with compensation, disclosure, control, verification process, and factual results separately, which is used to test whether the judgment is consistent. As a result, it cannot determine how often creators misrepresent their independence, nor the extent to which sponsors block corrections. Table II is also not a verified classification tool or scoring tool. To use these judgments for realistic endorsement, it is necessary to verify the specific presentation of the work and what authority the agreement actually gives to all parties.

The reach of the source limits the depth of theoretical comparison. Business interviews and disclosure experiments help identify relevant distinctions, but they cannot directly establish political audiences' reactions. The representative's narrative describes cooperation only from one side of the relationship, and it still needs to be tested alongside research on creators and audiences.

The practical meaning of the disclosure design is still to be evaluated by empirical research. The study can compare how audiences understand the content of disclosed position communication and the content claimed to be independent evaluation under different actual control arrangements, and distinguish between identification, trust, acceptance of factual statements, and political choices. Regarding the study of redissemination, it can be examined whether the sponsorship description is still visible and understandable after the content is edited, shared, or collected. The correction practice also leads to a related question: whether the audience can find the revised content after being exposed to the original endorsement. This kind of research can not only test the actual scope of the responsibility raised but also avoid treating behavioral effects as the only ethical basis.

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