

# PRIVACY COMMODIFICATION VIA YOUTUBE SOCIAL MEDIA

(Study on dr. Richard Lee's YouTube Channel, MARS)

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## Abstract

*Various questions related to privacy intersect with norms of politeness. Privacy contains the value of controlling reputation and there is protection for it in the state constitution. This research is aimed at finding out or understanding privacy that is commodified on the YouTube channel dr. Richard Lee, MARS, the process of commodification of privacy based on the political economy perspective of Vincent Mosco's communication, and the reasons why privacy is commodified and its commonplace appearance in public spaces. This research is qualitative research with content analysis methods. In this research there are five pieces of content from the YouTube channel dr. Richard Lee, MARS which was analyzed through observation techniques and documentation. The research results show that there is a commodification of privacy regarding a person's personality, and a person's communication related to sexual orientation, personality, past, and disclosure of the contents of a person's conversations through long video formats or short videos by digging up in-depth information about the source or also digging up information about other people related to the source. Commodification on YouTube is related to the monetization of content, such as through advertising or selling certain products. On the YouTube channel dr. Richard Lee, MARS there is a shift in content content. The commodification of privacy and its commonplace appearance are related to the term hyperreality, and the public's misconceptions about the privacy of public figures.*

**Keywords:** *Commodification, Privacy, Social Media, YouTube*

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the role of technology, including information and communication technology, is important for human life. One part of the information and communication

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technology in question is social media such as YouTube. YouTube as a social media for sharing videos presents content that can provide information for its viewers. In addition, YouTube also presents various entertainment content such as music content, video games, podcasts and so on. Over time, the content on YouTube not only presents information or as entertainment, but is also used as a tool to generate profit. This shows that commodification has occurred on YouTube. Commodification in the perspective of Vincent Mosco's political economy of communication is defined as the process of transforming use value into exchange value. (Mosco, 2009: 129). This definition means that in commodification there are commodities that can generate profits. Commodities in commodification can vary, one of which is a certain content commodity that exists in a media. Content that is the result of the creativity of creators is distributed through the media to provide information or present entertainment for viewers. On the other hand, creators earn income from the distributed content. In various contents on YouTube such as podcast content, there are various discussion topics that are usually related to current issues that are being hotly discussed in society. Sometimes discussions are also found on podcasts that are related to other things including things that lead to a person's privacy. Privacy (Altman, 1975; Petronio, 2002; Westin, 2003 dalam Priwati dkk., 2020: 28) defined as the openness and closedness of controlled access to personal information from an individual or a group based on desired personal boundaries. The definition of privacy means that privacy is related to control over personal information whether a person or group of people opens personal information or closes personal information to others.

On several occasions, various questions related to a person's privacy are often encountered and this is in conflict with the norms of politeness. Even though questions related to privacy are answered by those who are asked the questions, this still cannot cover up the fact that curiosity about matters related to a person's privacy in our culture creates conflict with the norms of politeness (Dewi, 2020). In addition to being contrary to the norms of politeness, the issue of privacy has a value that makes it important. One of the values in question is that privacy is a tool to control the reputation of others (Taufik & Muzairi, 2016). The more other people know about us, the less our power to determine our own destiny will be. Reputation in this case can also be an important source of self-esteem as expressed by (Tunick, 2015: 32). The research will be conducted by researchers on a media which in this case is social media in the form of YouTube. More specifically, the YouTube channel that will be researched is the YouTube channel of Dr. Richard Lee, MARS. Based on the results of pre-research previously conducted by the researcher, it is known that on the YouTube channel of Dr. Richard Lee, MARS there is content that contains discussions related to privacy. The content was uploaded between May 19, 2023-May 11, 2024 with 5 selected contents from a total of 288 contents. The discussions related to privacy in question include, for example, the disclosure of embarrassing facts about someone or the disclosure of the contents of someone's electronic communications (Smedinghoff, 1996 in Mareta, 2022). The disclosure in question was made by someone else or obtained by digging directly from the person concerned. The researcher wants to conduct research on the commodification of privacy on the YouTube channel of Dr. Richard Lee, MARS also for the following reasons:

The social media YouTube was chosen by researchers as the media to be studied considering that the number of social media users in Indonesia based on Reportal Data (data.goodstats.id) reached 167 million users. YouTube in this case is the social media

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with the largest number of users, reaching 139 million users as of early 2023. The data shows that there is quite a lot of interest or attraction from social media users to YouTube social media. Researchers view this as an advantage that YouTube has when compared to other social media such as Facebook, which is in second place for social media with the largest number of users, namely 119.9 million users. Based on data obtained from the YouTube channel dr. Richard Lee, MARS, it is known that the number of subscribers has reached millions of subscribers. This is an extraordinary achievement considering the ability of the related YouTube channel to attract audience interest. The number of subscribers to the YouTube channel dr. Richard Lee, MARS reached 5.21 million subscribers (YouTube, 2024). The number of viewers of each video content that has been selected by researchers on the YouTube channel dr. Richard Lee, MARS based on the display on his YouTube channel account dashboard also reached millions of viewers. The number of viewers obtained by each video content is also an extraordinary achievement in terms of the ability of a video content to attract the interest of its audience. The details showing the number of viewers obtained on the selected video referred to on the YouTube channel of dr. Richard Lee, MARS are as follows.

Table 1  
Number of Viewers of Selected Content on Dr. Richard Lee's YouTube Channel, MARS

No.	Youtube content title	Number of Viewers
1.	"SUAMI KU SELINGKUHI DG BANYAK COW??! LANTAI KAMAR MANDI SAMPE BERDARAH2? AMBEIYEN PECAH?"	3,9 million
2.	"KLARIFIKASI RK ATOK!! BENAR SAYA PUNYA AMBEYEIN!!"	3,5 million
3.	"SAYA INARA YANG BARU, INI ALASANNYA!!"	2,2 million
4.	"KONTEN KELUARGA BAHAGIA? TERNYATA SERING SELINGKUHI!? ISTRI BONGKAR KELAKUAN ANDREW ANDIKA!"	2 million
5.	"SUAMI KU SELINGKUHI DENGAN MELLY GOESLOW?? PODCAST LAIN TIDAK TERIMA SAYA!!"	1,8 million

(Sumber: *Channel* YouTube @drRichardLeeMARS, 2024)

Apart from the reasons above, the YouTube channel of Dr. Richard Lee, MARS was chosen for research considering the fairly good achievements in terms of subscribers and video viewers during the period in which the selected videos were uploaded, namely May 2023-May 2024. Based on data from Social Blade ([socialblade.com](https://socialblade.com)), it is known that there was a 7-fold increase in the number of subscribers and video viewers of the YouTube channel of Dr. Richard Lee, MARS during that period from a total of 12 fluctuations in its statistical data. Research on the commodification of privacy was also conducted by Ristia Nurul Riyani, Yuhastina, and Yosafat Hermawan Trinugraha from Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta in 2022. The research was conducted on YouTube channels of homosexual couples such as the YouTube channel Lucas and Kibo, the YouTube channel Rose and Rosie vlogs, and the YouTube channel KaroJerman RagilFred. The research shows that there is a commodification of privacy in it which includes the commodification of data privacy, identity, finances, location, body, and territory. In addition to the two previous studies, another study was conducted by A. Manda Amalia from the Raden Mas Said State Islamic University of Surakarta in 2023 on Atta Halilintar's YouTube channel. The results of the study showed that there was a commodification of privacy on Atta Halilintar's YouTube channel in the form of a commodification of the miscarriage experienced by Aurel. However, the research that will be conducted by the researcher regarding the commodification of privacy will be different from previous studies. The differences in question are in the form of differences in the selection of YouTube channels to be studied, namely the YouTube channel of Dr. Richard Lee, MARS. In addition, the research that will be conducted is also different from previous studies in terms of what kind of privacy will be seen in the context of its commodification on the YouTube channel in question. How does the commodification of privacy on the YouTube channel of Dr. Richard Lee, MARS take place from the perspective of Vincent Mosco's political economy of communication?

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research according to Sugiyono (2022: 9) is a research approach based on the philosophy of postpositivism which is used to research the natural conditions of objects. Research in this qualitative category places the researcher as the main instrument (Sidiq & Choiri, 2019: 7). This research in terms of data collection is carried out in a combined manner, while in terms of data analysis it has an inductive nature. The emphasis in qualitative research is more on meaning than generalization. Another view from Mantra (2004) (in Siyoto & Sodik, 2015: 27) states that qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of words from people or observable behavior.

The research to be conducted uses the content analysis method. Content analysis can be interpreted as an analysis of documents or transcripts that have been written with recordings of verbal communication (Yusuf, 2014: 441). In the context of qualitative content analysis, there is a tendency to present media content seen from the context and process of various source documents so that the results obtained are more in-depth and detailed and are able to explain the relationship between media content and the context of social reality that occurs (Sumarno, 2020). This study will focus on the unit of analysis that the researcher chooses based on the reasons the researcher has conveyed in the background.

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The unit of analysis is a specific unit that is considered as the subject of the research being studied (Abdussamad, 2021: 138). The subject of the research is related to what or who is being studied. Based on the definition of the unit of analysis, in this study the unit of analysis is the YouTube channel of Dr. Richard Lee, MARS with selected videos in it. The various selected videos in question include:

1. Video dengan judul “SUAMI KU SELINGKUHI DG BANYAK COW??! LANTAI KAMAR MANDI SAMPE BERDAR4H2? AMBEIYEN PECAH?”.
2. Video dengan judul “KLARIFIKASI RK ATOK!! BENAR SAYA PUNYA AMBEYEIN!!”.
3. Video dengan judul “SAYA INARA YANG BARU, INI ALASANNYA!!”.
4. Video dengan judul “KONTEN KELUARGA BAHAGIA? TERNYATA SERING SELINGKUHI!? ISTRI BONGKAR KELAKUAN ANDREW ANDIKA!”.
5. Video dengan judul “SUAMI KU SELINGKUHI DENGAN MELLY GOESLOW?? PODCAST LAIN TIDAK TERIMA SAYA!!”.

As for the five videos referred to above, there are a total of 24 scenes that show things related to privacy that are used as content material on the YouTube channel of dr. Richard Lee, MARS. The content was uploaded between May 19, 2023-May 11, 2024. The analysis technique in this study is to observe the selected podcast videos, then the researcher analyzes them using the content analysis method.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Channel YouTube channel dr. Richard Lee, MARS contains several contents that contain matters related to the privacy of guest stars or the privacy of others that are discussed together with guest stars. In this study, the contents analyzed amounted to five contents with an upload period of May 19, 2023-May 11, 2024. The following are the contents in question. Based on the analysis that has been carried out on the contents of the YouTube channel dr. Richard Lee, MARS as in point 5.1 above, a total of 24 scenes were obtained that contain aspects of privacy with the following details.

Table 2.  
Results of Analysis of Each Content

No.	Content of tittle	Information
1.	“SUAMI KU SELINGKUHI DG BANYAK COW??! LANTAI KAMAR MANDI SAMPE BERDAR4H2?”	in this content, 4 scenes containing aspects of privacy were found. The aspects of privacy found were privacy regarding a person’s persona and privacy regarding a person’s communication. The privacy regarding a person’s persona in question is the disclosure of embarrassing personal facts. In this context, the embarrassing facts in question relate to the sexual orientation of R. K. Atok (Melisa’s partner) who has an unnatural

No.	Content of tittle	Information
	AMBEIYEN PECAH?"	<p>relationship with a friend of the same sex. Regarding the sexual orientation of a person as expressed by Alvin Day (in Taufik &amp; Muzairi, 2016) is a private matter.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the privacy of a person's communication referred to here relates to the disclosure of the contents of electronic communication carried out by other people. On several occasions there were moments that showed the disclosure of the contents of R. K. Atok's conversation with a friend of the same sex. Regarding the privacy of this communication, there is a view from Abu Bakar Munir (in Wulansari, 2020) who said that there is protection for a person's communication in any form. In addition, other sources state that communication privacy covers all types of communication, including WhatsApp (Alibeigi, Munir, and Karim, 2019).</p>
2.	"KLARIFIKASI RK ATOK!! BENAR SAYA PUNYA AMBEYEIN!!"	<p>There are 4 scenes in this content that are related to privacy. The privacy aspects in question are privacy of a person's communication and privacy of a person's persona. Not much different from the first content discussed earlier, this content contains privacy of a person's communication with the disclosure of the contents of R. K. Atok's conversation with his same-sex friend. Matters related to a person's communication have protection over them and the privacy of this communication covers all types of communication including WhatsApp. Meanwhile, privacy regarding a person's persona in this context is related to R. K. Atok's sexual orientation which is a private matter.</p>
3.	"SAYA INARA YANG BARU, INI ALASANNYA!!"	<p>The content with 4 scenes containing aspects of privacy includes aspects of privacy regarding a person's persona. This is shown by the disclosure of embarrassing personal facts from Virgoun regarding her personality including her affair and bad character. As for personality, it is included in the expressive privacy dimension as stated by Schofield (in Lubis, 2022)</p>

No.	Content of tittle	Information
4.	“KONTEN KELUARGA BAHAGIA? TERNYATA SERING SELINGKUH!? ISTRI BONGKAR KELAKUAN ANDREW ANDIKA!”	The privacy content in the 7 scenes of this content consists of the privacy aspect regarding a person’s persona. In more detail, the matter referred to relates to Andrew Andika’s personality including his affair. As with the previous content, the matter of personality is included in the expressive privacy dimension.
5.	“SUAMI KU SELINGKUH DENGAN MELLY GOESLOW?? PODCAST LAIN TIDAK TERIMA SAYA!!”	This content contains aspects of privacy regarding a person’s persona which are stated in 5 scenes. This aspect of privacy is related to the disclosure of embarrassing personal facts, in this case Melly Goeslaw’s past, who is suspected of having had a relationship with Masnawati’s ex-partner. This is related to what William L. Prosser stated regarding the disclosure of private facts. This is caused by the disclosure of information that makes someone feel embarrassed in public (Sari, 2011)

(Source: processed by researchers)

Various content containing privacy is commodified through long video formats and also short video formats. The short videos in question are for example in content entitled : “KONTEN KELUARGA BAHAGIA? TERNYATA SERING SELINGKUH!? ISTRI BONGKAR KELAKUAN ANDREW ANDIKA!” with a total of 54 thousand views. Privacy-related matters were explored from guest stars related to themselves, or related to other people related to them. The content analyzed contains aspects of privacy regarding a person’s persona and aspects of privacy regarding a person’s communication. The privacy aspect regarding a person’s persona in question is the disclosure of embarrassing personal facts such as a person’s sexual orientation, personality, and past. Meanwhile, the privacy aspect regarding a person’s communication is related to the disclosure of the contents of a person’s conversation including via WhatsApp.

In the process of commodification, the presence of the audience and workers with their roles is involved. YouTube in this case has something called content monetization for creators (youtube.com). Content monetization can be done in various ways including through advertising. Advertising is considered the main way for creators to earn income from YouTube. Earning income through advertising involves the role of the audience because income is obtained when people watch ads on related videos. In addition, there are also other alternatives in earning income, including through channel

subscriptions, super chat and super stickers, YouTube shopping. The channel subscription mechanism is done by paying regularly per month, on the other hand those who subscribe get access such as exclusive content. Monetization through super chat and super stickers is done by purchasing and sending text messages or digital stickers by those who want their messages to stand out more in live chat. Earning income through YouTube shopping is done simply by connecting the store. Creators in this case can also access the "store" tab on the channel and it becomes the creator's personal storefront.

Based on the analysis on the YouTube channel of dr. Richard Lee, MARS, it is known that dr. Richard has not opened a subscription to his YouTube channel. In addition, in the five contents created, there was no use of super chat and super stickers. Monetization of content on the YouTube channel of dr. Richard Lee, MARS, apart from advertisements that appear on related video content, is also obtained from other alternatives. The other alternatives referred to are not only content that contains privacy directly but also in the form of selling his beauty products which can be accessed via a link embedded in the content description. In addition, in one of his contents, namely content with the title "KLARIFIKASI RK ATOK!! BENAR SAYA PUNYA AMBEYEIN!!" There is a section that shows the creator's product promotions..

In commodification, workers, in this case content creators, are required to create content that can attract the attention of viewers as much as possible. This, when associated with what Dr. Richard did, shows the value of the privacy of people who are used as content material. If traced from the beginning of his YouTube content, Dr. Richard made more content related to the world of beauty, but over time various content emerged outside the context of the world of beauty, including content about other people's problems. This shows a shift in terms of content material.

Often a person's private realm appears in public spaces, even the transmission process is accelerated by the presence of media that plays a role in it. The involvement of media in the transmission of messages that can be in the form of content with a person's private realm cannot be denied to have an economic purpose, in this case as a media commodity including social media. Matters related to privacy become media commodities and appear in various public spaces related to what is called hyperreality. This hyperreality as expressed by Piliang (in Taufik & Muzairi, 2016) is included in the socio-cultural problems that arise due to the emergence of media hyperreality. Media hyperreality is an arena for dismantling various boundaries, both moral, cultural, sexual, and social in such a way that it produces a kind of blurred boundary. Then from this, a world of nudity is formed in the context of communication and information. In the nudity in question, there are no more secrets or hidden things in it, everything is exposed. In addition, related to personal matters, there has been a misunderstanding in our society as expressed by Taufik & Muzairi (2016) that for our society it has become a risk for public figures for them not to have privacy. However, this is not true considering that everyone has privacy as their right concerning personal matters including public figures. In relation to hegemony, it is known that the term refers to a relationship of agreement with the use of political and ideological leadership in it. Meanwhile, power relations are relationships between one group and another based on a particular ideology. In power relations, there is also a relationship between knowledge and power. Power in this case produces knowledge, while knowledge has power. If associated with the phenomenon in this study, then the hegemony and power relations that are formed can be seen from how Dr. Richard Lee, MARS is able to explore many things from his sources, even the privacy of the person concerned and the party being

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discussed. In one of his contents, Dr. Richard also stated his knowledge about a person's psychology.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results and previous discussions, it can be concluded that the privacy that is commodified on the YouTube channel of Dr. Richard Lee, MARS concerns the privacy aspect of a person's persona, and the privacy aspect of a person's communication. In more detail, matters related to privacy are related to sexual orientation, personality, past, and disclosure of the contents of a person's conversation. Matters related to privacy are commodified through long video formats or short videos by displaying information mining related to guest stars or related to other people related to guest stars. Commodification on the YouTube channel of Dr. Richard Lee, MARS is carried out through content monetization mechanisms such as advertising and selling his products. Regarding the content content, there is a shift from beauty content to content related to other people's problems. Privacy is commodified and commonly appears in public spaces, apart from economic motives, there is also a connection with hyperreality and misconceptions about the privacy of public figures.

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