Maintaining Boundaries Work of Journalism in Indonesia Media Online Newsroom

Farid Rusdi
Faculty of Communication, Universitas Padjadjaran
Email: farid18002@mail.unpad.ac.id

Dadang Rahmat Hidayat
aculty of Communication, Universitas Padjadjaran
Email: dadang.rahmat@unpad.ac.id

Nina Mutmainnah
Department of Communication, Universitas Indonesia
Email: n.mutmainah@ui.ac.id

iti Karlinah
Faculty of Communication, Universitas Padjadjaran
Email: siti.karlinah@unpad.ac.id

Abstract

In today's changing technology, newsrooms in online media are constantly looking for the ideal form of journalism routine. Almost all online media are addicted to using audience metric data in determining their media agenda. This is also the case in Indonesia, which is undergoing a period of press freedom after reformation. The mass media in Indonesia is no longer under the control of the government, but the control of the market due to the increasingly fierce competition in the media industry. This raises concerns about the autonomy of online media newsrooms in Indonesia, which are more in line with market demand by following audience traffic. Meanwhile, the professional role of journalists is needed by the public as a light in the post-truth era. Therefore, this article investigates how journalists in Indonesia online media newsrooms maintain the boundaries of work of journalism in the face of pressure due to media industry competition. This study uses the Boundaries Work of Journalism model from Carlson and uses a qualitative approach by interviewing informants from four online media in Indonesia, Okezone, Detik, Tribunnews and Brillio. This study also observes the news that has been presented by each online media. In conclusion, under pressure from management demands to get traffic, online media editors

try to make routines in the newsroom by prioritizing journalistic professionalism. Among them by prioritizing the discipline of verification in making news.

Keywords

journalism; online media; gatekeeper; newsroom

Introduction

Currently the mass media is undergoing a transition period during technological developments. The presence of new media followed by the development of social media makes conventional media lose its role in controlling information. As a result, many print media were forced to close due to the declining income from advertising and direct purchases from the public. While online media should be enjoying this situation, they must also struggle because of the increasingly fierce competition between online media. Online media must work hard to get the number of audiences in the form of traffic. Because traffic has an impact on advertising revenue. Therefore, online media follow what is trending in society to attract public attention to their site. To get a high amount of traffic, online media often do clickbait, namely creating news with sensational titles with the aim of attracting readers to vote and enter the news page. This clikbait practice is considered a violation of the code of ethics.

Each media is looking for a form of business model to maintain its sustainability. In a situation that continues to fluctuate, online media editors are under pressure from management to increase the amount of traffic on their media (Tandoc, 2015). Editorial policy is more determined by data on audience metric data (Hanusch, 2017). This pressure is experienced by online media in Indonesia who are trying to get as much traffic as possible. In Indonesia, the mass media is concentrated in several large groups which are also in a transitional stage due to technological developments and changes in people's consumption patterns of media. Online media that should be able to take advantage are struggling to reach a market that is getting tighter. (Ambardi et al., 2014)

This media behavior clashes with the journalistic code of ethics. There are times when media prefer speed and ignore verification and accuracy. This incomplete verification process makes the news inaccurate. Chairman of the Indonesian Cyber Media Association (AMSI) Wenseslaus Manggut said the huge crowds on social media also attracted the press industry to post and distribute news content products on social media. In order to be able to steal the attention of social media users and be able to compete with other content that comes across the timeline, media post content must be able to steal attention, including posts with a strong proximity from family or friend accounts (Ariyanti et al., 2019).

While the competition in the online media industry is getting tougher, there is a practice in online media editors called 'web analytics', which is software that can provide more detailed data on the number of visitors to online media sites, including the number of readers who share content through social media. Reuters

Institute states that most news organizations in Europe and the United States develop the practice of quantitative data analyses on audience behavior as a form of competition between organizations in attracting audience. Management of media organizations feel this practice has succeeded in bringing progress to the media industry and a sense of optimism about the future of the media industry. (Cherubini & Nielsen, 2016)

The use of reader metrics and analytic data has greatly influenced the routines of the newsroom (Zamith, 2018). As a result, online media gatekeepers no longer use journalistic instincts or news values, but interpret what audiences want based on data presented by analytics. The news value is still the basis in determining whether the news is worthy by the Gatekeeper. Matters related to the audience and which events are related to the audience are of course important news values. But lately what has happened to online journalism is that the gatekeepers are more responsive to what the audience clicks on. Web metrics provide newsrooms with data about these audience preferences, which online journalists are increasingly finding important, as audience preferences become a powerful influence in replacing or removing stories that audiences don't like or may reject (Tandoc, 2014). The audience becomes very dominant in influencing the content of the content that will be prepared by the gatekeeper. The news value or newsworthy which is the news judgment skill of journalists is shifted by values that focus on audience data and click culture (Anderson, 2013; Welbers et al., 2016)

The presence of social media has affected the gatekeepers in the online media newsroom. The media industry, which is under competitive pressure, requires audience engagement. As a result, newsrooms are market-oriented and cannot avoid responding to trends on social media. The faster they respond to what's happening on social media, the more likely they are to get audience engagement. Vice versa, if they are slow in responding to what is happening on social media, the audience will respond less (Vu, 2014; Welbers, 2016)

The impact of technology and economic pressures has melted into newsroom routines. Researchers since traditional media, then the emergence of the internet have reminded about the impact of technology that drives what is called market driven journalism (Cohen, 2002). Media companies are commercial companies that make a profit in one way or another by producing audience-oriented news. The practice of market driven journalism cannot be avoided by the online media newsroom. Technology has an impact not only on journalists as an individual but on journalism as whole, as media companies try to survive with the news, they deliver (Vos & Russell, 2019).

Journalists have a professional ideology that makes the journalist profession respected. Because by doing so, journalists become impartial and remain objective in writing news. This then has an impact on the existence of journalistic ethics and a code of ethics for the journalist profession that keeps journalists trusted by the public. In addition, with this professional ideology, journalists are aware of their important role in society and democracy (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018).

Reaction from audience is a consideration for journalists in creating their content. The influence of this audience is not all the same for journalists. The reaction of the audience becomes a journalist's consideration in creating their content. The influence of this audience is not all the same for journalists. Currently, almost all online media newsrooms are filled by young people. They are indeed more familiar with the use of digital technology which makes it easier to adapt to the development of online media content. But on the other hand, they are more responsive to the will of the audience. They prefer their work to be read by many people, and on the other hand, are worried about getting negative comments from the audience. These young journalists are still inexperienced and sometimes do not know what the professional ideology of journalists should be. Young journalists are more affected by audience reactions than senior journalists (Wu, 2016). Senior journalists better understand how the role of journalists in society and especially how journalistic ethics should remain trusted and expected by the public.

The concept of Boundaries work of journalism developed by Matt Carlson who cites Thomas Gieryn to characterize boundary work as a struggle for epistemic authority. The boundaries of the journalist's work area are a field that is contested by parties with an interest in epistemic authority, namely the power to define, describe, and explain reality. It is known, news is a reality that is constructed by news makers in this case for journalists. They try to keep the work of journalists from being entered by those who are not journalists. Carlson considers this as a form of journalists' efforts to protect their autonomy from the entry of non-journalists. Journalists do not want those who are not journalists to control and form journalists. Building on the concepts of Gieryn's boundary work: expansion, expulsion, and protection of autonomy, Carlson develops by adding to the field of journalism around where boundary work occurs – participants, practice, and professionalism. In facing the existing transition, journalists with boundaries of work expanded by entering the area of audience metric data technology (Carlson & Lewis, 2015). Up to this point, it is necessary for journalists to be aware of the role of journalists who should be in favor of the truth and the citizens. In their book The Elements of Journalism, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel identify the essential principles and practices of journalism. There are: 1) Journalism's first obligation is the truth; 2) Its first loyalty is to citizens; 3) Its essence is a discipline of verification; 4) Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover; 5) It must serve as an independent monitor of power; 6) It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise; 7) It must strive to keep the significant interesting and relevant; 8) It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional; 9). Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience; 10) Citizens, too, have rights and responsibilities when it comes to the news (Kovach & Rosentiel, 2021). This seem remind journalists how the role should be in society. Starting from the problem of media ownership that intervenes in the editorial room, to market pressure makes journalists lose their proper role. Especially in today's post-truth era, news in online media is consumed more by the

audience. Changes in people's habits in following more information that can be obtained from the internet. Content from online media is at the forefront of influencing the public. Therefore, quality journalism is still very much needed in online media to maintain democracy in this country.

Referring to the explanation above, it can be explained that this research is to find out how online media editors in Indonesia, in this case Okezone, Detik, Tribunnews and Brillio, maintain the professionalism of journalists and the boundaries of journalism work amidst the competitive pressures of the current media industry.

Method

This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Research with case studies is appropriate to answer questions that begin with how, who and why. In addition, case studies can investigate events that occur in contemporary contexts (Yin, 2018). Therefore, this study focuses on four online media newsrooms, namely Okezone, Detik, Tribunnews and Brillio. These four media are the leading online media in Indonesia according to the Alexa website rating agency. The situation of intense media competition and technological developments makes upholding professionalism not easy. This study uses a multi-case approach to understand the current state of professionalism of online media journalists. With multiple case studies being able to analyze data in every situation and in a variety of situations allows for broader discoveries of theoretical evolution and research questions (Gustafsson, 2017).

The data collection in this study was first carried out by semi-structured interviews with the head of the newsroom who is responsible for the day to day. There are four newsroom leaders representing each online media. In addition, there are two gatekeepers from each media, who are responsible for selecting news to be presented on their website pages. This study also collects data from news from every online media related to trending on social media.

Data analysis techniques in this study (Creswell, 2018), first, data from interviews with informants and reports in online media were processed and prepared for analysis. Then, all data is read and coded manually, and it is adjusted to the information you want to find, namely journalism professionalism, work routines, organization, and structuration. Fourth, coding is applied to clarify the categories and themes to be analyzed. Fifth, it shows how descriptions and themes are presented in qualitative narratives. Sixth, data interpretation. The validity of the data was tested by triangulating sources and triangulating data and making detailed research results.

Result and discussion

Measuring audience metric data has indeed become part of the newsroom routine. The data becomes a reference in determining the content to be presented

by the editor. This metric data is indeed not accessible to all editorial crews, but more so at the senior editor or leadership level. It is more of a strategic importance to set the agenda.

At Brillio, which targets the millennial audience, audience metric data is tracked whether the content they serve is on target. Including whether their content is disseminated by readers as well, because that is a measure of the success of their content. According to Brillio's informant, every day the editors hold a meeting to discuss what will be presented to readers. Each editorial crew submits their proposals on what deserves to be a topic to be developed. In the meeting also discussed what is trending on social media or what is the attention of readers as seen in the analytical data owned by the editor.

Tribunnews and Detik will follow up on content that has audience metric data that according to the editorial decision is successful, whether from the amount of traffic or other measures. Informants from Tribunnews, the editors monitor Google Trends to find out what readers are interested in. This will be the topic of the content presented on that day. But if the trend data decreases, the news will not be continued. This has become a routine for the newsroom that must be carried out in a short time, due to the high number of news coverage targets.

Informants from Tribunnews, the editors monitor Google Trends to find out what readers are interested in. This will be the topic of the content presented on that day. But if the trend data decreases, the news will not be continued. This has become a routine for the newsroom that must be carried out in a short time, due to the high number of news coverage targets.

In addition to getting high traffic, the editors also apply a Search Engine Optimization strategy. Every news that will be presented, must use a title with keywords that can attract traffic. The implementation of SEO in this newsroom is still in the stage of selecting keywords in the title, but at least it has influenced how the news is formed, especially in the title. It is undeniable that many online media implement SEO strategies, but it is necessary to have those who are experts on SEO so that they do not interfere with the professionalism of journalists (Giomelakis et al., 2019; Lopezosa et al., 2020).

While in Okezone, the titles are made, using key words embedded in the title. Among them are the words 'Viral!', 'Horror!' and 'Magic!' which are the prefix in a title. Informants from Okezone explained that the editors tried to make the words or language used in the articles readable clearly and strived for journalistic rules. According to the researcher's observations, although key words are often pinned, they can still be understood. Okezone also pays attention to audience metric data in planning the agenda and setting strategic issues.

However, in practice, there are still many online news that are more click-oriented. In addition, most online media editors still make what is viral become a topic presented by the media. This is because they are looking for a response from to enter in the content they make. Okezone editor admits that the language is simple and straightforward so that it is easily understood by readers. Tribunnews

utilizes the Search Engine Optimization strategy by using specific words so that they are easily caught when searched through search engines. While Brillio more often presents content in the form of a list so that it is more interesting for readers to follow it to the end.

Meanwhile, the newsroom in online media is currently mostly inhabited by the younger generation. According to Tribunnews and Brillio informants, the company's management recruited fresh graduates under the age of 25 to become editorial staff. For companies and editors, it has a positive impact, because they are younger in addition to lower salaries, as well as fast creativity in dealing with technological developments. Moreover, their target audience is young people, like Brillio. Thoughts and insights from those who are still young are certainly needed to create creative content. Meanwhile, the newsrooms are still managed by those who are more experienced in journalism. This is important to maintain journalistic professionalism, especially in terms of journalistic ethics which of course have not been absorbed and understood by those who are new to journalism.

Referring to the concept developed by Carlson on Boundaries Works of Journalists, to maintain the journalist professionalism, the Detik and Tribunnews editors involve non-journalist writers in filling out content such as about tourism. This is in addition to expanding the network with traveller bloggers, it also enriches the color of writing in the media. But still, both Detik and Tribunnews did editing and verification of the writing as a form of enforcing the boundaries of journalists' work. This is a form of expansion-participants and protection of autonomy-practices. Likewise, with Okezone, which enforces the discipline of verification of information that goes to the editor before it is reported, both in substance and language. This verification is done by a senior editor. This is a form of maintaining autonomy by maintaining correct journalistic practices. As a form of practice expansion in Boundaries work, journalists adopt the use of technology to monitor audience response. Various tools have become an important part of news creation. However, in some forms of expulsion and protection autonomy in practice, the editorial room keeps deviant practices away while still prioritizing journalistic ethics and verification discipline as a form of defense correct practices. Meanwhile, in terms of professionalism, in the expansion, journalists continue to develop themselves on various media platforms. In Expelling deviant forms and values, apart from understanding the journalistic code of ethics by young journalists, it also reminds them to be aware of the ideal role of journalists. Therefore, it is necessary for practices related to optimizing technology for content, such as SEO, to be carried out by those who are experts and not those who are in the editor.

Conclusion

Even though there are demands to get traffic, online media editors, Detik, Tribunnews, Okezone and Brillio are still negotiating in maintaining journalistic autonomy. It is done in a routine. In this transitional period, editors cannot avoid technology to become part of the new tools in their journalistic activities. As a form

of expansion, journalistic content is disseminated through social media. The work process of journalists is to collect, process and disseminate. Currently, the process of disseminating and ensuring the content is read by the audience has become an important part of the work of journalists. Young journalists who are digital natives who have characters that will shape future journalism. In the era of media convergence, what happens to newsrooms in online media also happens to newsrooms of other media. Senior journalism with more experience can synergize with young journalism in maintaining boundaries of work. If referring to Giddens' theory of structuration, journalists become agents in the existing structuration (Craib, 2011). Between the two of them, negotiations took place, resulting in a new form of journalism practice that adapts to technology, but still adheres to the ethics of journalistic professionalism.

Limitation and study forward

Due to the pandemic situation, this research could not be carried out optimally, especially in observing editorial room activities. This research is also limited to some online media. Further research is needed on other online media as a comparison. In addition, there is also a need for a thorough research on online media journalists quantitatively to find out journalists' attitudes about the disruption of online media newsrooms.

Acknowledgements

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