

The Development of Mobile Journalism in Indonesia during the Covid-19 Pandemic

*1st Filosa Gita Sukmono

Department of Communication Science
Universitas Muhammadiyah
Yogyakarta
 Yogyakarta, Indonesia
 filosa@umy.ac.id

2nd Fajar Junaedi

Department of Communication Science
Universitas Muhammadiyah
Yogyakarta
 Yogyakarta, Indonesia
 fajarjun@umy.ac.id

Abstract— The Corona Virus Disease-19 (Covid-19) pandemic has changed the practice of news coverage in journalism. The reason is that Covid-19 is easily spread and transmitted through the air. Journalists are faced with the dilemma of covering the news and the risk of contracting Covid. Mobile journalism, which refers to the practice of journalism based on reporters equipped with highly portable multimedia data collection equipment, has become an option in the preparation of journalism during a pandemic. This research was conducted on the practice of mobile journalism carried out by journalists in Indonesia. This study found a change in the practice of journalism in Indonesia during the pandemic. Mobile journalism, which in the pre-pandemic period had not been widely practiced, suddenly became a common phenomenon in the practice of journalism in Indonesia. For professional journalists in Indonesia, adaptation to mobile journalism and adherence to the journalistic code of ethics is a priority.

Keywords—*Mobile journalism, Covid-19, news production*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Corona Virus Disease-19 (Covid-19) pandemic has changed the practice of news coverage in journalism. The reason is that Covid-19 is easily spread and transmitted through the air. Droplets that come out of the mouths of Covid-19 patients can be a medium of transmission of this virus. The use of masks is one way to prevent the transmission of the virus. Even after wearing a mask, the risk of transmitting the virus from patients infected with Covid-19 remains high. Reducing interactions by staying at home is a way to break the chain of virus transmission.

For journalists who are required to obtain valid and verified information related to the Covid-19 pandemic, which is a serious problem in society, this is related to the digital era where information and data about the pandemic are very easy to obtain and access, both fake news or real news. That prioritizes the validity of information is the hope of the community in the midst of a pandemic. On the one hand, journalists have the task of seeking information about Covid-19 to be reported to the public in the form of news. On the other hand, journalists are required to maintain safety from the threat of Covid-19 transmission. Mobile journalism that utilizes the sophistication of smartphone technology with its various applications is possible to bridge these two dilemmas.

In Indonesia, mobile journalism is a new concept. Although in various countries, the practice of mobile journalism has been widely practiced. Research conducted by Riteka Dubay in India shows that Mobile journalism has introduced the Indian media to a new and trending era of reporting and engaging audiences. The organizations, as a result, are undergoing and experiencing cultural shifts, but not all of them have been exposed to the possibilities of employing this method. There is still a larger set of the audience consuming information on the television and through newspapers. Therefore, the organizations which are trying to play safe as long as possible are trying to avoid the circumstances faced when a new platform is adopted. Nevertheless, the media organizations would soon understand the end of being digital and mobile at all times[1].

Research in Ghana and Pakistan shows that the growing trend of fake news that seriously increases the weight of social responsibility on professional Pakistani and Ghanaian journalists in terms of ensuring that fake news does not affect the quality of journalism and the public's right to know. This study suggests that Pakistan's media severely lacks the practice of gate-keeping filtering news stories either gathered by mobile journalists (MoJos) or received by citizen journalists. What is apprehensive is the apathetic attitude of Pakistani journalists' unions and media owners both, of who are not putting efforts to make the journalistic codes of conduct effective in practice, to adopt the use of algorithms that can filter fake news, and to organize training programs for mobile journalists.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Technological development has heralded a new form of journalism: mobile journalism. Mobile devices have enhanced the possibilities for journalists to work and report from the field. They can be used for news reporting for mobile news platforms but also for the entire cross-media portfolio. Internet connectivity and advanced search functionality, along with a myriad of intelligent and easily accessible apps, have obviously provided journalists with new and powerful tools for reporting news. Google queries, facts from databases, as well as gateways to informants, are typically only a couple of clicks away [2].

There are plenty of definitions of mobile journalists. It is widely acknowledged that mobile journalists are journalists who work alone in the field using mobile phones for newsgathering. TV producer, journalist, and academic Ivo Burum summarised the definition of mobile journalism as follows: It is a holistic form of multimedia storytelling that combines journalism, videography, photography, writing, editing, and publishing, all done on a handheld smart device. The story is key in mojo production, and it defines the level and type of mojo that's required. For example, shooting sports or wildlife may require long lenses and a DSLR, or a video camera, in addition to your smartphone. The point is that technology is not the answer to everything, and a focus on the story can help determine the level of technology [2].

Mobile devices have given citizens even more strength since they have made it possible to improve the technological capabilities of content production with reduced investment in a device already used in their daily lives. The importance of this phenomenon in the scope of this work is not so much the role of citizens as producers of information, but as providers of information, that is, we are not interested in citizens' participation as playground spaces, but those in which the citizen works as a source, with the media themselves asking for the collaboration of users, sending complaints, as it happened on the Web, but now encouraging the submission of photos and videos. This participation allows the creation of a giant network of collaborators, which, due to its dispersion in the territory, enables access to any event more quickly, even though the quality of the information collected may be lower. Any sudden event that occurs can be reported with the use of amateur images captured by citizens who were on the spot at the time, a situation that can be seen as an approximation to objectivity in the ontological sense since the citizen is limited to trying to capture the moment with no other purpose than to register a momentary reality [3].

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this study, we conducted in-depth interviews with four journalists from four leading media in Indonesia, namely KompasTV, MetroTV, CNN Indonesia, and Assumption. co. There are several important aspects conveyed by the journalists we interviewed. The first is the aspect of speed and convenience in mobile journalism.

Hendrawan Setiawan from CNN Indonesia said about mobile journalism as follows: "Mobile journalism is easier because of its content, so it can be processed faster. Journalists can reach information quickly, but by using mobile and digital tools, information becomes faster. The content becomes king and increases television ratings and shares."

Lalita Gandaputri, the producer at MetroTV, said that the emergence of mobile journalism that anyone can do is not a threat to the journalism profession. Lalita said, "Journalists have a code of ethics, and the media is a liaison with various parties. Anyone can now create news content by utilizing digital technology. But the question is, are you sure that the news that is conveyed is true? Professional journalists are different from citizen journalists because professional journalists have the ability to verify information well and follow journalistic rules."

The emergence of digital technology has indeed allowed the public to participate in producing news content. The process of distributing information in the digital era is also easier. Through internet platforms, especially through social media, anyone can spread information. The aspect of news speed in the pre-internet era was dominated by print and broadcast media. In the digital era of the internet, this aspect of speed is no longer the dominance of print and broadcast media.

However, for journalists who work on internet media platforms, the emergence of mobile journalism is actually an opportunity to grow rapidly during the pandemic. Saptaji, a journalist at Assumption. Co stated, "Nowadays journalists can report independently without involving other teams in the process of taking and reporting news, by using this technology everything is easy. In the current era, a journalist must develop journalistic skills. For example, as a cameraman, he must also be able to write coverage scripts, create video content; as a journalist, he must also hone other skills. When reporting in the field, it can be done independently. Therefore, journalists need to be ready for these changes."

What Saptaji stated shows that mobile journalism puts forward the ability of journalists to have digital multi-tasking skills. There was a change in the newsroom in the news processing process. Online and mobile technologies play an increasing role in television newsrooms, particularly on the local level. At this level, reporters are responsible for all on-air and web content regarding their story, including a print-style web article. On the network level, journalists bring a new value to their website by adding materials beyond the on-air broadcasts [4]

Although the concept of mobile journalism has been known since 2000 in Indonesia, this model of journalism has not yet become mainstream in news production in newsrooms. Change happened quickly during the Covid-19 pandemic. Alvi Apriyadi from KompasTV said, "In my opinion, mobile journalism applied in the pandemic era has become a necessity, like it or not, so it becomes a must. Mobile journalism is very helpful even though there are still many shortcomings. The audience aspect needs to be considered with good quality, not just following the market and ratings, and in my opinion as a journalist, we must update the technology".

The equipment used in mobile journalism is considered to be very helpful for journalists' work during a pandemic. By using a smartphone, the camera person can take pictures of the events that are happening more easily. In fact, the job of taking pictures of the scene can be done by reporters without the help of a camera person. To verify data in news processing, journalists can take advantage of tools available on various platforms, such as by using Google.

Hendrawan Setiawan from CNN Indonesia said that "There is no certain level to achieve the ideal but in my opinion to be a journalist you have to be adaptive, changes using journalism tools, both old technology, have now changed. The first is adaptive to technological tools, and the second is adaptive to skills, focusing on a particular theme that is the main study or journalist's specification. In this time of the pandemic, this adaptation must take place more quickly."

Hendrawan added that it is important for policymakers in the newsroom to provide opportunities for journalists to develop mobile journalism. The social distancing restrictions imposed by the Indonesian government during the pandemic and the risk of contracting the Covid-19 virus further reinforce the importance of the editorial policy for running mobile journalism.

Adherence to the principles of the journalistic code of ethics needs to be prioritized in mobile journalism. Lalita Gandaputri from MetroTV said that during a pandemic, mobile journalism must pay attention to journalistic principles. Information and news sources must be actual and factual. Implementing mobile journalism must maintain the principles and code of ethics of journalism and do not neglect the ability of journalists to be adaptive. Being adaptive under certain conditions allows journalists to thrive in the face of media disruption, but when journalists are unable to do both, they must be prepared to be eliminated as well.

Mobile devices have enhanced the possibilities for journalists to work and report from the field. They can be used for news reporting for mobile news platforms but also for the entire cross-media portfolio. Internet connectivity and advanced search functionality, along with a myriad of intelligent and easily accessible apps, have obviously provided journalists with new and powerful tools for reporting news. Google queries, facts from databases, as well as gateways to informants, are typically only a couple of clicks away[5].

IV. USING THE TEMPLATE

This research shows that there has been an adaptation in the use of smartphone technology in Indonesia by journalists. They use smartphones to carry out the news production process. Not only news in the form of text and photos, but journalists in Indonesia also use smartphones to produce news in the form of videos. The ability of smartphone technology to record high-resolution images and supporting

tools to maintain stable image and sound capture pushes the development of mobile journalism to another level.

The Covid-19 pandemic, which requires journalists to be more careful in the news production process, has increasingly made mobile journalism a mainstream practice in journalism in Indonesia. Even though they have to compete with citizen journalism which is developing along with the development of social media, journalists in Indonesia are optimistic that the professional journalistic abilities, understanding of the journalism code of ethics, and the ability to conduct news gatherings are added values for professional journalists.

For professional journalists, adaptation to mobile journalism among journalists in the coverage area and newsroom policies that provide opportunities for journalists to develop mobile journalism practices are the two main things to develop mobile journalism in Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researchers thank LP3M Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta that funds and enables this research to be realized.

REFERENCES

- [1] R. Dubey, "Potential of Mobile Journalism in Indian Media Industry," vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 1–15, 2018.
- [2] P. Karhunen, "CLOSER TO THE STORY ? ACCESSIBILITY AND MOBILE JOURNALISM by Panu Karhunen List of Figures," no. July, 2017.
- [3] J. Canavilhas, "Epistemología del periodismo móvil. Artículo de revisión," pp. 1–21, 2021.
- [4] S. Umair, "Mobile Reporting and Journalism for Media Trends, News Transmission and its Authenticity," *J. Mass Commun. Journal.*, vol. 06, no. 09, 2016, doi: 10.4172/2165-7912.1000323.
- [5] O. Westlund, "Mobile news: A review and model of journalism in an age of mobile media," *Digit. Journal.*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 6–26, 2013, doi: 10.1080/21670811.2012.740273.