



Precision Journalism: Digitalization and Research Approaches in Journalism Practices in Indonesian Online Media

Ansar Suherman^{1(✉)}, Hasrullah², Hafied Cangara², and Sudirman Karnay²

¹Department of Communication, Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton, Buton, Indonesia
ansar.suherman@umbuton.ac.id

²Department of Communication, Universitas Hasanuddin, Makassar, Indonesia

Abstract. This study aims to look at the practice of precision journalism in online news content on online media in Indonesia. This study uses a qualitative research design with a case study approach to compare their news content in online media. The results show that the increasingly fierce competition in the media industry should keep the public's right to obtain complete and factual information. The phenomenon of news presentation in online media generally contains concise news, verified data and information, and fast publication time. In the last five years, online media have emerged that are different from most online media, such as Tempo.co, Kumparan, Detik.com, Tirto, and CNN.com. The existence of precision journalism, which is usually equated with data journalism, is an approach that the public needs in the world of journalism. News must be able to contain empirical statements based on verified data and information from reliable sources. Moreover, technological advances and access to digital technology are increasingly accessible, making hoax information that can be sent by anyone today.

Keywords: Precision Journalism, Research Method, Online Media.

1 Introduction

The emergence of the internet in the 1990s triggered the growth of digital mass media platforms that offer easy and fast access, up-to-date, low-cost, and broad audience coverage. The presence of the internet has also changed the practice of conventional journalism to the practice of digital journalism, and as a result, competition between media companies is getting tougher. For this study, the concept of digital is about more than just the technology to practice journalism. Still, the conceptualisation of new opportunities to collect and analyze big data, to inform comprehensively, to investigate power, to engage with the public, and to tell multi-sided stories" [1]. Through the lens of digital journalism studies [2], digital journalism "is not journalism transformed into digital; it is digitalisation as embodied in journalism" [3].

The existence of precision journalism at this time is also essential. The reason is that the public's need for empirical news based on specific data is increasingly urgent.

© The Author(s) 2024

Z. B. Pambuko et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 4th Borobudur International Symposium on Humanities and Social Science 2022 (BIS-HSS 2022)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 778,
https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-118-0_68

Especially with so many hoaxes news, news quality is more considered. According to Meyer (2002), precision journalism uses social and behavioral science research methods to collect and analyze data. This is part of computer-assisted reporting (CAR). CAR itself is a fairly broad term for electronic information gathering by journalists. This technique collects information in databases, analyses public records with statistical programs and spreadsheets, and studies political and demographic changes with geographic information system mapping, thereby enabling journalists to radically improve the quality and effectiveness of their work by using large amounts of data to frame the subject under consideration. These data analysis techniques, in particular, transform investigative journalism.

In the old journalism era, journalists' work methods were only focused on reporting activities by recording events based on facts and publishing reports in the mass media. This monotonous work rhythm has made new journalism pioneers start to innovate in presenting news so that it is not only real-time to the facts of events in a straight news writing style.

Journalists can develop various journalistic techniques regarding news coverage and report in this new journalism. The journalism style becomes more enthusiastic and provides additional knowledge with data that is not only about 5W+1H [5] but data from surveys, investigations, and so on. New journalism allows the reading public to take an active role in analyzing news and enables journalists to function to create public opinion and reduce conflicts that occur in society by presenting more precise and accurate communication. The application of precision journalism using scientific methods is expected to minimize erroneous information delivery, which occurs due to various factors—from excessive simplification, inappropriate generalizations, laziness or reluctance to pay attention to detailed information, and so on. Journalists and social scientists are increasingly similar to one another [6]. They rely heavily on observation and interpretation, gathering statements from public records, interviews, direct participation, and producing performances.

Precision Journalism is an essential concept in what we now call data journalism. Data journalism is still developing as a concept encompassing search, analysis, and reporting. Data journalism [7] can also refer to the use of data collected to test hypotheses worth investigating. Previously, journalism as a practitioner arose with the concept of objectivity. However, in previous decades, some have regarded objectivity as an impossible ideal and an unwelcome norm. Precision Journalism provides a solution in journalism by emphasizing accuracy and truth in news reporting. To produce a truly accurate report, the concept emphasizes the importance of using precise data and carefully checking the facts provided by sources [8]. Precision Journalism assists in overcoming the problem of information noise spread on social media and less reliable news sources in an increasingly complex digital information era.

Precision journalism also aids in the elimination of bias in news reporting. In practice, a journalist may unknowingly discriminate or view a situation from an overly narrow perspective. On the other hand, Precision Journalism can help find and correct bias in the news reporting by using the right data and analysis.

2 Method

As the purpose of this study is to describe the implementation of precision journalism in reporting on online mass media in Indonesia related to the method of searching/collecting, processing, and visualizing data and information in reporting, the researcher determines the most suitable approach to use, namely a qualitative interpretive approach [9], [10].

Through a qualitative-interpretivism approach, it allows researchers flexibility in collecting data because analytical actions related to precision journalism require very complex stages, and researchers can reflect on various findings during the research process. And the most important thing about this approach is its ability to use "insider understanding" [11], namely a situation received by informants/resources, which will be processed in analysis so that this research can identify how things work in precision journalism.

In this study, researchers will look at the reality formed from online media's editorial workflow, including data collection, processing, and visualization based on precision journalism. Later researchers will find a series of techniques and working methods for journalists and online media research teams to make news based on precision journalism. At the end of the research, researchers will construct the realities found so that it will prove the implementation of precision journalism on HR performance, in this case, journalists and research teams in online media.

3 Result and Discussion

In the old journalistic era, journalists' working methods only focused on reporting activities by recording events based on facts and publishing reports in the mass media. This monotonous work rhythm has made journalistic pioneers start to innovate in presenting news so that it is not only real-time with the facts of events with a straightforward news writing style.

Journalists can develop various journalistic techniques regarding news coverage and report in this new journalism. The journalistic style becomes more enthusiastic and provides additional knowledge with data that is not only about 5W+1H but data from surveys, investigations, and so on. New journalism enables reading communities to play an active role in analyzing news and allows journalists to function to create public opinion and reduce conflicts that occur in society by presenting more precise and accurate information. The application of precision journalism with the scientific method is expected to minimize misinformation due to various factors—an oversimplification, inaccurate generalizations, laziness or reluctance to pay attention to detailed information, and so on. Journalists and social scientists are increasingly similar to one another. Both rely heavily on observation and interpretation, gathering statements from public records, interviews, direct participation, and producing performances.

Journalists and scientists have similarities in several characteristics, especially in using the scientific method. Journalists put the results of their interpretation in journalistic language, while social scientists use jargon in their scientific fields. The simi-

larities in principles or characters include: First, Skepticism. Neither journalists nor scientists want to take popular opinions or claims from the authorities for granted as truth. Truth is always tentative and has room for sharpening and development. Second, openness. The key word is "copyable". An excellent investigative journalist will document his search for the truth of a case and create a paper trail that other investigators can follow to reach the same conclusion. The third is operational instinct. The process of finding things that can be observed and tested is called operationalization. Both scientists and investigative journalists rely on operationalization. Confirmation of theory (for scientists) or proof of suspicion (for investigative journalists) is the power to predict outcomes.

Fourth, a sense of doubt about a truth. In the old debate between absolutism and relativism, science has usually been more comfortable with relativism. Obtained facts are welcomed because they broaden our understanding, but with the recognition that more powerful truths may replace them in the future. And fifth, Parsimony. If we have to choose between competing theories, we usually prefer the simpler one. Example: to explain the case of a minor employee at the tax office who suddenly became rich after only working for six months, there are two assumptions: First, he does business in his spare time to become rich. Second, it is involved in corruption. Journalists tend to choose the second guess.

In Indonesia, several media, such as Kompas.com., Tempo.co, Kumparan, Detik.com, Tirto.id, and CNN, have often covered news or news analysis based on the results of surveys or opinion polls, to highlight specific social, political, and economic issues. For example, the Kompas Research and Development Agency uses telephone interviews with several city respondents to determine the public's views on specific issues. During the 2019 election and presidential campaign season, several print and TV media utilized the services of several polling agencies to inform the public about the comparative popularity of certain political parties or presidential candidates and what significant issues are of public concern.

Unlike alternative standards that center on personal moral values, objectivity understands journalism as a performance, referring to three interrelated dimensions: the essential understanding of the practice, concrete and universal evaluation criteria, and openness to criticism. This relates to the current phenomenon where citizens have a growing demand for correct information as knowledge becomes an inevitable resource for them to move consciously in a highly complex society.

4 Conclusion

Implementing precision journalism in several online mass media in Indonesia, although less extensive than that of the American press, is the first step to starting the practice of precision journalism in Indonesia. This means that the media has used social science methods to discover the development of public discourse. The media no longer relies solely on the "conventional wisdom" of its journalists to find what lesson is happening in society.

In Precision Journalism, a journalist needs to have more than just good writing; what is no less important is telling the truth. A journalist needs to filter, organize, and interpret the information in the data-filled fields. The next question is, do journalists

have to have skills in using information technology? Or at least know the process? Of course, the answer is Yes. The current generation of journalists, even more than previous generations, need to understand and appreciate the importance of hands-on computer experience. Of course, a computer is just a tool for completing one of the tasks of investigative journalism at journalistic speed. This study describes how online media should implement the values of the scientific method for fact-finding, data analysis, and presenting news.

Acknowledgement. Thank you to the Muhammadiyah University of Magelang for organising the 4th Borobudur International Symposium. Thanks also to co-authors from Hasanuddin University, Makassar, who have jointly created this article.

References

1. S. Waisbord, "The vulnerabilities of journalism," *Journalism*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 210–213, 2019, doi: 10.1177/1464884918809283.
2. G. P. Perreault and P. Ferrucci, "What is digital journalism? Defining the practice and role of the digital journalist," *Digital Journalism*, vol. 8, no. 10, pp. 1298–1316, 2020.
3. A. Duffy, "Out of the shadows: The editor as a defining characteristic of journalism," *Journalism*, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 634–649, 2021, doi: 10.1177/1464884919826818.
4. P. Meyer, *Precision journalism: A reporter's introduction to social science methods*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002.
5. S. Waisbord, "The 5Ws and 1H of digital journalism," *Digital Journalism*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 351–358, 2019.
6. S. Dunwoody, "Science journalism: Prospects in the digital age," in *Routledge handbook of public communication of science and technology*, Routledge, 2014, pp. 43–55.
7. J. Ausserhofer, R. Gutounig, M. Oppermann, S. Matiassek, and E. Goldgruber, "The datafication of data journalism scholarship: Focal points, methods, and research propositions for the investigation of data-intensive newswork," *Journalism*, vol. 21, no. 7, pp. 950–973, 2020, doi: 10.1177/1464884917700667.
8. J. L. Nelson, "The enduring popularity of legacy journalism: An analysis of online audience data," *Media Commun*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 40–50, 2020.
9. A. E. Clarke, "Situating grounded theory and situational analysis in qualitative interpretive inquiry," in *Situational Analysis in Practice*, Routledge, 2019, pp. 47–96.
10. R. Elliott and L. Timulak, *Essentials of descriptive-interpretive qualitative research: a generic approach*. American Psychological Association, 2021.
11. M. Easterby-Smith, R. Thorpe, and P. R. Jackson, *Management research*. Sage, 2012.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

