Measurable Journalism in Online Travel and News Sites in Indonesia and its Effect on Contents

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Abstract—**Online journalism in Indonesia in the past two decades has undergone drastic changes. At first, in the online media routine, the gatekeepers selected the news based solely on the value of the news. But now online media gatekeepers must also consider quantitative audience data. Technological developments have resulted in journalistic practices monitoring numbers about their audiences. This practice of online journalists is referred to as measurable journalism or journalism which relates to the results of an analytic web program about the numbers and behaviors of the reader. Shoemaker (2014) stated that the content of the media is influenced by individual journalists, media routines, organizations, power in the media, and ideology. This study will examine the role of the parties in the newsroom in online media in Indonesia who are currently practicing measurable journalism. The subject of this research is Detik Travel, Tribunews Travel, and n Brillio.**

Keywords— online journalism; measurable journalism; the hierarchy of influence

I. Introduction

Compared to two decades ago, online journalism in Indonesia has undergone drastic changes. When the advertising and circulation of the print media industry experienced a decline, online media figures slowly crept up in terms of readership and advertising. This coincides with the reach of content from online media on various social media applications on smartphones. Online media managers pay close attention to how many visitors there are to their sites every month because the amount of site traffic becomes an attraction for advertisers to enter the online media.

In a time of intense competition in the online media industry, this came to be called 'web analytics', through software programs that can provide more detailed data on the number of visitors to online media sites, including the number of readers who shared content through social media.

A Reuters Institute (Cherubini, 2016) found that most news organizations in Europe and the United States are developing the practice of quantitative data analysis about audience behavior as a form of competition among news organizations in attracting readers. The leaders of media organizations feel this practice is successful in giving progress to the media industry and a sense of optimism in the future of the media industry (Cherubini, 2016).

In Indonesia, online media which has also implemented the practice of editorial analytics include outlets such as Detik travel, Tribunnews Travel, and Brillio. In each iteration, Detik Travel always refers to the interests of the reader. To find out what is in demand by readers, editors can see readership figures from page views or the number of visitors to the content presented. Editors of Detik Travel will develop the issues in the article as long as it is still an item of interest from the reader. Editors of Detik Travel monitor Google Trends to find out what the public is looking for related to tourism information. In optimizing web traffic, the editors of Detik Travel strive for search engine optimization while Tribunnews Travel is very careful in choosing keywords in the news title. This is because this is intended to be more easily caught by search engines such as Google, which have an impact on increasing the number of visitors. Likewise, Brillio editors consistently monitor Google analytics to find out the interests of readers. Brillio targets millennial readers, in addition to knowing how many page-views their site has, want to know how many readers are disseminating their content as evidence that the content is in demand.

The existence of public measurement practices conducted by online media is considered a way to reduce the role of the gatekeeper which prioritizes the value of the news in choosing the news to be presented. Therefore, this study attempts to find out how far editorial analytics practices have influenced the role of the gatekeepers in online media.

Like editors in broadcast media, those in online media also have a level of influence on the content presented to readers. As Shoemaker (2014) explains, what he calls the hierarchy of influence on content starts from individual journalists, media routines, organizations, media extras, and ideology. All these things can influence the content presented.

Measurable journalism as a term encapsulates the cultural and material shift to digital platforms capable of providing real-time, individualizable, quantitative data about audience consumption practices.

Measured journalism has several dimensions (Carlson, 2018), such as material, organizational, practical, professional, economic, consumption, cultural and public policies. From here it can be seen, the dimensions of organization, professionalism, and culture are important concerns for the continuity of media routines. Because there are still nuances of resistance from professional journalists in the use of audience metrics in news assessments.

Some studies have found that a number of clicks influence the editor in determining the value of news. Based on an ethnographic newsroom study, Anderson (2011) concluded that data about audiences influences the process of determining the news. Likewise, research by Lee et al. (2014) found that audience clicks affect subsequent news placement, based on longitudinal secondary data analysis of three U.S. online newspapers, and using structural equation modeling.

Although they cannot escape from the pressure of audience clicks, the journalists still want their role as gatekeepers who have the power to determine whether or not to become news. Welbers (2015) found that the influence of audience clicks on news selection was denied or strongly nuanced by the gatekeeper. There is a discrepancy between what journalists say about the influence of audience clicks on news selection and the actual influence – they are either unaware of this influence or unwilling to admit it. However, media competition is getting tighter, so journalists must monitor audience numbers and respond to them. Moreover, this is easier and cheaper for journalists and effective in encouraging the number of readers who have an impact on the revenue from the advertiser.

There are three aspects in the application of editorial analytics that need to be considered. The first is the set of tools in the form of application technology that can monitor the behavior of readers through numbers. The second is the organization, namely the media as an entity with its interests. The third is the culture of the journalists' working environment. All three must be carried out in a balanced manner (Cherubini, 2016) so that the analytical editorial process can run effectively. A newsroom is a meeting place of ideas from journalists, editors and audiences in determining the news for readers. In a media environment, there are different levels of influence on media content before it is presented to the readers. Of the five levels of influence identified by Shoemaker (1996) above, editorial analytics can be found in the influence level of media routines.

As part of media routines, editors must be able to estimate what topics their readers want. In the last few decades, journalists who play the gatekeeper role have been guided by news values in determining the news. These news values include prominence and importance, conflict and controversy, a sense of unusual, human interest, timeliness, and proximity (Shoemaker, 2013: 171)

II. METHOD

This study uses qualitative methods incorporating case studies on three online media outlets in Indonesia: 1) Detik Travel 2) Tribunnews Travel and 3) Brillio. In this study there were three interviewees: 1) Fitraya Ramadhany as the Managing Editor of Detik Travel, 2) Agung Budi Nugroho as the Deputy Editor of Tribunnews Travel, and 3) Titis Widyatmoko as the Editor in Chief of Brillio. Researchers also observed the work processes undertaken by the editors of Detik Travel, Tribunnews Travel, and Brillio. This is to sharpen the findings in addition to the results of the interview. These three newsrooms have a few things in common, including making web analytics a reference point in determining content. Although Detik Travel and Tribunnews Travel have similar content, and Brillio has a different set of news values and content, all three share a second characteristic of not publishing straight hard news, and thirdly all three have a newsroom pace that is not as fast as online sites focused heavily on current issues, such as political stories and events.

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. Detik Travel

Detik Travel is one of the news sites under the Detik.com portal. As the name implies, Detik Travel presents news about tourism. The target audience is those who need tourism information. In presenting their content, Detik Travel considers various interests, whether that of readers, business operators, and the government. But among the three, a larger portion consideration is given to the reader or user. Fifty percent of the content in Detik Travel is about the interests of readers as users of the tourism industry. The news about tourism business operators and the government could attract the attention of the reader, but such content is often overlooked by the reader when it does not have a direct impact.

To find out what the reader wants, the editor can monitor the number of page views or visitors from the content presented. Editors of Detik Travel will develop an issue through articles for a while as long as readers still appear interested. In today's era

of social media, what goes viral or public conversations form consideration for the editor of Detik Travel in presenting content. In addition, the editor of Detik Travel also monitors Google Trends to find out what the public is looking for in relation to tourism information.

With the goal of optimizing web traffic, the editor of Detik Travel uses search engine optimization. But SEO is not used as part of a major effort by the organization. The editor of Detik Travel thinks SEO does not have a significant impact on increasing visitors because, in search engines, Detik Travel's competition lies not just with online news media sites with tourism news, but also with travel agency sites.

Aside from the reporters, the source of Detik Travel content is from contributors and freelance writers who are travelers and usually write blogs. All sources of content go to the editor and pass through the gatekeeper filter. The selection of content that is news-worthy for readers is made by the editor. The editor who is normally a former *journalist* selects the news with consideration of various factors, including news value considerations, and also the results of web analytics. In the editorial meetings which were conducted to prepare the content, the results of web analytics is an important consideration/part of the meeting. According to Managing Editor of Detik Travel, the results of analytics become a reference point for the meeting, but the chief editor ultimately decides what the editorial agenda is.

B. Tribunnews Travel

Tribunnews Travel is a tourism news site from the Tribun media group. Tribunnews Travel targets its readers as those who do tours independently or independent tourists, namely people who travel without using a travel agency or making use of premium tour packages. These independent tourists seek more information through the internet related to their travel plans. In addition, independent tourists tend to look for cheap accommodation.

In preparing the information or news, the editor of Tribunnews Travel also conducts research to find out what is needed by independent tourists. The editor believes the trick is to read Google Trends, which is one feature of Google that can provide data about keywords that people use when browsing in search of certain information.

These keywords will be included in the title that will be displayed in the news content. This is so that the news titles can be "captured" by search engines such as Google and Yahoo on the internet when independent travelers search for information needed for their travel plans.

On Tribunnews Travel, the writing which mostly comes from contributors is edited and mixed by the editor as the gatekeeper in accordance with Tribunnews Travel's style, in a way makes the title easily caught by search engines.

From here it can be seen that the Tribun Travel site focuses more on contributing keywords to the article for the purpose of capture by search engines. Unlike print media that aims for more interesting headlines or broadcast media which might prioritize captions or blurbs to entice the reader into listening or viewing content, online travel news site editor pays more attention to the keywords than interesting titles.

C. Brilio

As an online media site that declares that their target audience is the millennial generation, Brillio.com has a specific strategy in reaching its readers. This strategy has succeeded in making Brillio successfully compete in online media even though it has been active in the online media space for less than five years. The content presented on the site is more about things that matter to its target audience of the millennial generation. Before presenting content, Brillio editors conduct research by monitoring web data with various existing applications, from Google Analytics to Chartbeat. If a given topic gets good reader reaction figures, such as a high number of readers and visitors to the site or a high number of shares on social media, similar content will be followed up by Brilio's editors and journalists.

Every week journalists in the Brillio newsroom are asked to explain what topics will be presented to readers. Most of the journalists in the Brillio newsroom are under 25 years of age and have cultural proximity to the millennial generation. The writing ideas are discussed at an editorial meeting involving senior editors.

Senior editors with more experience play an important role in maintaining journalists' professionalism. At the same time, senior journalists also monitor editorial analytics so that what the newsroom runs with is in line with the organization's targets.

IV. CONCLUSION

The three newsrooms need creativity in preparing content. Therefore, these three outlets are still not far from the results of web analytics to determine content. Although the idea of content originates from the notion of individual journalists absorbing various ideas found in the community, media routines through the gatekeeper mechanism (including the editorial meeting process) have made the content more in line with each site's interests. Tribunnews Travel editors clearly practice digital journalism that prioritizes search engine optimization. At Detik Travel, media routines are more concerned with the preparation of the coverage and news selection is prioritized, although web analytics remain a reference point in considering

editorial decisions. The millennial-focused site Brillio consistently monitors the results of web analytics. Even though individual journalists are given the opportunity to pitch writing ideas, the editorial meeting determines the direction of coverage.

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