Online Journalist, Rapid Technology, and Partial Verifications In Reporting Diversity

by Eko Harry Susanto

Online journalist, rapid technology and partial verifications in reporting diversity

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Abstract. This article discusses the results of a research on how conventional media journalists who then shift to convergent media carry out news about diversity cases. This research is based on normative theoretical perspectives, particularly The Guidelines for Cyber Media Coverage from the Indonesian Press Council. The study was conducted with case study method, which combined a quantitative approach in the form of an electronic survey to 68 news portal crews from various cities in Indonesia, and a qualitative approach by conducting focused group discussions with 10 journalists from various news portals in Jakarta. The results showed that the pattern of coverage for diversity in news portals as partial verifications that was carried out in a line of immediate and brief reporting. This study concludes that in internet-based media, journalists must adjust their reporting patterns with such rapid reporting technology.

1. Introduction
Internet based technology enables conventional media to develop news portals that are capable of reporting events 24/7. This rapid technology allows the media crew to update the news within minutes, brings excitement in the news world. However, reporting reality in a short time is not an easy task, especially if the fact that being reported involves many parties. A single reality can be interpreted based on different point of view of the people involved in the case. Thus, reporting reality must be preceded by understanding facts from various perspectives and uniting them so that they can describe the "real" reality.

Just as integrating images of mosaic pieces, reporting a fact correctly requires extra effort to unite various perspectives on reality, so that the reality presented in the online news is a verified offer. This verification process takes a lot of time, while in the rapid media technology and demanding 24/7 news updates, time is a very limited resource. Rapid technology, thus has consequences for the working patterns of journalists in carrying out verification in the midst of time constraints.

This raises questions about the possibility of change in the work patterns of journalists, related to how they conduct information verification. This is the matter of journalist professionalism, which is still a problem in Indonesia's news reporting [1]. Online journalist today, empowered by the rapid technology in terms of the increasing the speed of work, access to various sources of information, etc. On the other hand, several studies show that they are also facing some problems related to rapid technology, including lack of verification and linear communication trap [2,3].

Verification is believed to be a central concept of professional reporting. How to convey facts as they are, through statements that have been verified. One way to check the truth is to involve a number of diverse and reliable sources of information [4,5].

One of online news media normative device in Indonesia is The Guidelines for Cyber Media Coverage by The Press Council focus on verification and news balance: (a) in principle every news must be verified; (b) news that can harm other parties requires verification on the same news to fulfill the principle of accuracy and balance; (c) the provisions in point (a) above are excluded, with specific conditions [6,7].

This shows the importance of news media research, to understand models of digital media coverage and threats [8].

The increasing number of cyber media becoming the concern of the Indonesian Press Council, through The Cyber Media Coverage Guidelines, as a normative tool to become a guide and behavior control media, as a rule that is used as a benchmark for assessing journalistic products in the internet-based reporting. Media behavior need to be examined carefully, especially in a reporting facts that involved different perspectives, such as reporting on diversity. Diversity is a concept that contains the nature of people's lives today. Defined by the presence of people from various backgrounds in a community whose presence is meaningful to the community [7].

Diversity is a critical issue. Especially in plural societies like Indonesia. The issue of diversity involves people who have different backgrounds in way of thinking, different values, and ways to perceive facts. Thus portrayal of reality from one side can cause inaccurate and low quality reporting. Therefore, a quality press is only possible if supported by qualified journalist resources [6].

The gap between time limitation and the complexity of diversity issues to be reported accurately, raises question about how journalists carry out their duties. This articles then are based on a research question on how do online carry journalists out of news verification, while they have to work immediately to the rapid technology in news portal?

The purpose of this research is to describe how do online journalists carry out news verification, particularly in reporting diversity issues, while they have to work immediately due to the rapid technology in news portal, to analyze the working pattern based on the normative device, and to draw a model related to the verification process based on the research findings.

2. Method
The study was conducted using a comparative descriptive case study method in 2 years, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches [9].

2.1. Quantitative approach
Quantitative approach conducted in the form of 200 content analysis on diversity issue in 2017. The number of 200 articles was purposively limiting to allow comparison between articles in different cyber media. 200 articles were selected from 4 Indonesian leading online news media according to alexa.com in 2017. 50 articles were taken from each news portal.

The quantitative approach was also applied through an electronic survey of 68 news portal journalists from 9 (nine) provinces in Indonesia (North Sumatra, West Java, Central Java, DKI Jakarta, East Kalimantan, West Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, East Nusa Tenggara, and Banten) [10].

2.2. Qualitative approach
While the qualitative approach was implemented through focused group discussion with 60 journalists from leading and non-leading online news media in Jakarta, Medan and Surabaya, which are the three major cities in Indonesia.

3. Results and discussion
There are four points of research result that will be discussed in this articles. (A) Categorization of Articles on Diversity Issues; (B) News balance in reporting diversity; (C) Verification process; and (D) Confirmation of partial verification process.

3.1. Categorization of articles on diversity issues
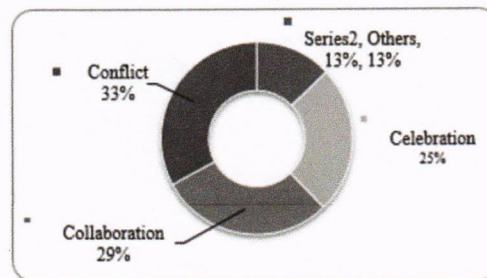

Figure 1. Categories of diversity report in 4 leading online news media in Indonesia.

From the content analysis we found the categorization of news content as follows: (a) Conflict among groups with different backgrounds 33%; (b) Collaboration between groups with different backgrounds of 29%; (c) Religious and cultural celebrations of 25%; and 13% of other categories.

The figure 1 shows that in reporting on diversity, the highest coverage is about conflict. Conflict on diversity is a sensitive issue, because, reporting on conflict is representing the point of view and conflicting interests. Therefore, reporting on conflict should be carried out with extra caution, and needs to be verified through various sources of information, in order to describe the reality of the fact as a whole. Therefore, reporting on conflict in diversity should focus on the balance of information from both parties in the conflict.

3.2. News balance in reporting diversity

The results of the content analysis on news balance are as follows: 45% of diversity reporting only contains a single perspective; 21% includes dual perspectives, 22% neutral in the sense that it does not contain specific statements from the parties involved in the issue; and 12% are unclear.

Figure 2 shows that the highest percentage of articles about diversity contains only contains one perspective from the parties related to the reality of diversity. Given that the highest percentage of content of news coverage is about conflict, a single perspective in these reports becomes more problematic. Therefore, this matter then became the priority topic for focused group discussion with the online news media journalists.
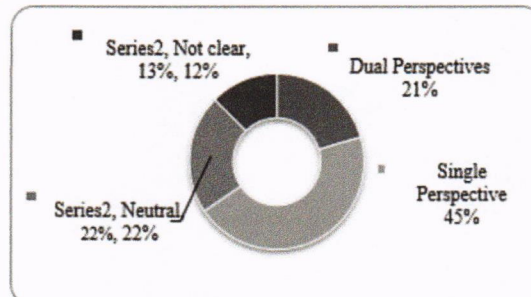

Figure 2. News balance in reporting diversity.

3.3. Verification process

Focused group discussion, revealed that due to the editorial policy --that was supported by rapid technology--, the online journalists should upload the news immediately, even though it was only verified by one the party involved in the diversity issue. After the news is published, the journalists will

do further verification by seeking information from other parties who can provide information from different perspectives.

Different perspective is conveyed in the form of follow-up news, as stated by the following online journalist:

"Technical issues of cyber and print media are different in handling both sides. Online (media) depends on the issue to cover both sides, the event even though the news is separate and balanced ...".

This statement was supported by other journalists by stating that the implementation of cover both sides was carried out by sequel news:

"So the next news is related, then there is a lot of news inserted. There are obligations to cover both sides."

So far the analysis was only focused on the news carried out by journalists in the leading or news media in Indonesia. Then, what about media journalists outside those four leading media. Are they also verifying news partially and gradually as well as journalists in leading online news media? To get further explanation, the research followed by an electronic survey of online news media that is registered at the Indonesian Press Council. The result tends to be similar.

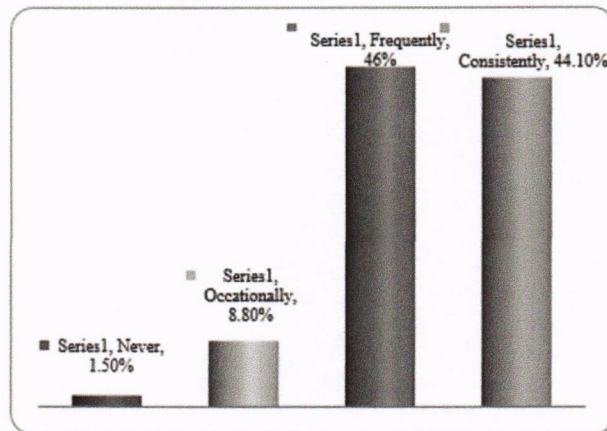### 3.4. Confirmation of partial verification process

Figure 3. Journalists' confirmation on partial verification in reporting diversity issue.

Figure 3 showed that based on electronic survey to 68 respondents, 46% of leading and non-leading online media journalists frequently do partial verification, 44.10% consistently, 8.8% occasionally and only 1.5% never did partial verification.

3.5. Discussion

The results of the research show that in reporting on the diversity issue, online news media journalists 46% frequently and 44.10% consistently will do the report immediately in single perspective. After that, the journalists will verify by finding information from other parties related to the issue. After getting further information, they will immediately report the results of the verification in the form of further articles. After that, the journalist will re-verify the information and then upload the results of the verification in the form of further articles, and so on until the it is no longer need to be reported. Thus, verification process carried out partially to the information resources, and to be delivered partially to the readers. As can be seen in figure 4.
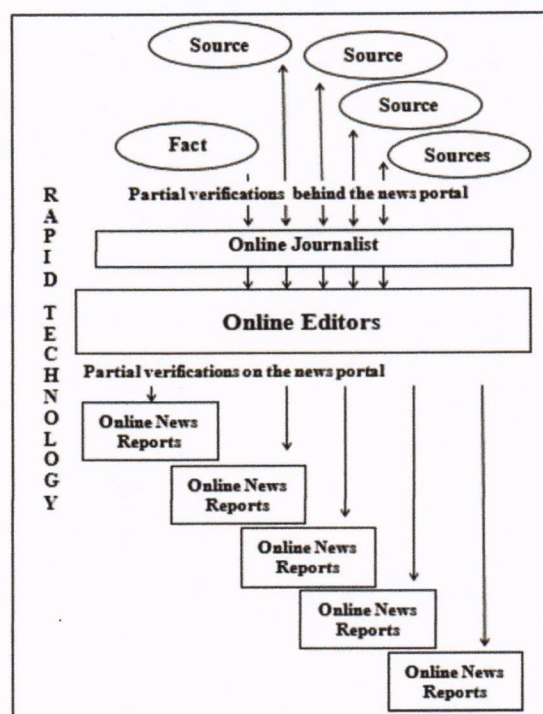
Figure 4. Model of partial verification.

The model represents partial verification process carried out by journalists, it appears that the pressures of the news industry that is supported by rapid technology, making the process of producing news as a short, instant and partial one. From this process, there is an indication that the media industry does not value thorough verification that contains cover both sides in a single report. As stated by Bill Kovach journalist work is no longer based on the values of quality news but on the margin profit that can be generated from journalistic work, which prone to prioritize rapidity as its technology [11].

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