The Paradigm Shift in News  
(A theoretical Perspective on Online News Concepts)  

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Abstract  

Perkembangan media baru di Indonesia belum diiringi dengan perubahan-perubahan fundamental terkait dengan praktek jurnalistik. Media massa masih cenderung menganggap kerja profesional menjadi suatu ranah suci yang tidak boleh tersentuh oleh mereka yang tidak memiliki kompetensi untuk membuat produk produk jurnalistik. Paradigma ini merupakan paradigm konvensional tentang bentuk dan sifat berita, media dan peran journalist. Tulisan ini menawarkan sebuah catatan terkait dengan pergeseran paradigm berita yang secara teoritis dapat menjadi bahan perdebatan terkait dengan praktek jurnalistik di media online. Mengambil teknik kajian pustaka, tulisan ini merupakan rangkuman dan refleksi peneliti atas berbagai konsep dan ide dasar dari jurnalistik online yang secara ideal digambarkan sebagai suatu praktek jurnalistik kontekstual. Sebagai suatu kesimpulan, perubahan paradigm tentang berita, media dan peran wartawan ini merupakan upaya menjawab tantangan praktek jurnalistik online, yang sama sekali berbeda dengan praktek jurnalistik konvensional pada umumnya.  

Keywords: Jurnalistik Online, Paradigma Berita, Media Baru  

Introduction  

Indonesian online news websites have been growth since curtains of Suharto’s Regimes, beginning with a dilemma faced the press in the days leading up to Suharto’s resignation. During that time, the calendar shown national holidays and print media did not publish their newspaper in holidays as Kompas and the Jakarta Post done.  

In order to maintaining the momentum, both finally decided to publish their newspaper, but unfortunately, it had become “a late decision”. The circulation was not increased significantly, due to the existence of internet news and activities of mailing list like “Apakabar” maintained by John MacDougall. In addition to radio and television, the presence of news sites and networks alternative community mailing list is become popular to get information about social and political conditions.  

After the falling of Suharto’s regime, the euphoria of reform—including in press freedom, encourage the presence of a variety of online media to become more
professional in content and organization. Detik.com, bidik.com, mandiri-online.com, berpolitik.com were noted as pioneer of online journalism in Indonesia and they offered new forms of journalistic practice, which soon became popular in Indonesia.

Actually, the development of online journalism in Indonesia has not going smoothly, indicated by many news sites that went bankrupt, including from the pioneering. Nowadays, just detik.com that can continue their news production while others have closed their business. In fact, online journalism history dominated by news websites from press industries e.g.: Kompas, Tempo, Jawa Pos, Republika and Media Indonesia, and broadcast station e.g.: liputan6 SCTV, metro TV and TV One.

The tendency of conventional mass media to penetrate on online journalism is a form to pull up from the crisis. Since 2000, the crises on mass media spread up from press/broadcast up to online, quality up to credibility of institution and financial problems up to reading-culture. They perceive and believe that technology and its usability have potential powers to bringing change in society and media, particularly in media that using technology as determinant of new constructions for organization and products.

The problem with media crises, however, is not that usability of technology in mass media, but that we should change news paradigm. Technology may not solely accomplish the crisis of media institutions, because that we needed to escape from crisis is changing “cheap and fast” from mindset of the media workers---primary tread is distinguish clearly between journalism and non journalism practices and re-attaching online journalism concepts with society and pulling up the audience preferences with new culture, “digital- reading societies”.
New Media Old Practices: Finding Form Field

Changing media contents to digital form not only means changing the media presentation, but it also changing the culture and perspective on news productions. Some of online media lacks this concept whilst they come from traditional mass media culture like television or newspaper. In my previous research conducted that Indonesian news websites, are still influenced by media mothership. Newspaper website just move the press version to digital form, broadcast website has concepts “to online the broadcast news” and the online website is merely newspaper websites---caused by background of their journalist.(Anshori, 2010).

This research finding enhanced the results of study by Zvi Reich, published on Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly Vol.82 no.3 entitled ” New Technologies, Old Practices; The Conservative Revolution in Communication Between Reporter an News Sources in Israeli Press”(2005). The study aim is to explore the role of information technology in way to acquire of information within Israeli journalists. Using reconstructive interviews, the journalist asked to explain the news that they produced how they get new sources and by what kind of the medium to reached them. Research suggests that the roles of technology information: internet, email, and cell phone has not significantly enhanced the way of journalist in getting news sources. The development of new technology for Israeli journalist tends to be slowly and has limited effect. Although, there is change in production processes, but not correlated with “methodology” of news gathering. Journalists seem use old pattern to gathers and organizer the news sources (Reich, 2005, p. 564).

Another researches shown same conclusion e.g. a) newspaper did not make fundamental change in production and distribution processes (Lasica, 1997) b) mass media had been little development in interactivity and multimedia and hypertext. (Dibean
& Garrison, 2004, hal. 259). c) New media—although the media convergence tends to be dominant—has potentially divergence in production of media contents. The divergence influenced editor for selecting and framing and presenting the news. (Boczkowski P. J., 2009, hal. 113).

These empirical evidences indicated unfavorable roles of technology in media developments. Peter Dahlgren (1996, pp. 59-72) noted certain weaknesses in the print media, broadcast and online media in contemporary journalism practices i.e.: a) the audience lacks their attention and interest in journalism because “information flooded” in daily lives, b) they become no sense between journalism and entertainment, c) journalism as professional working become blurred because the multitasking duties of journalist e.g. public relations, advertising and editing. d) Media self-preference increasingly solid and separate from daily live. e) Although audiences segmented on specific niche emerge from a sociological segmentation, but “the public” as the voice of inclusive citizenry turned into a weak version in media performances.

This paper suggests that disadvantage of contemporary journalism practices should be resolved by shifting the paradigm of news. Why paradigm? Should we be concerned about that? As well I noted above that we need to changing “cheap and fast” from mindset of the media workers, shifting news paradigms means concerning fundamental values journalism practices; news value, concepts of reality, journalist’s roles and so forth. A news paradigm was a representation the way to perceive the word and bonds us to understand our daily experiences.¹

Journalist is like a researcher. They finding a fact or phenomena and considering it with value and principles that they believed and then investigating and reporting to the

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¹ According to Guba and Lincoln; "A paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs … that deals with ultimate or first principles. It represents a worldview that defines for its holder, the nature of the “world”, the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts … The beliefs are basic in the sense that they must be accepted simply on faith (however well argued); there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness. If there were, the philosophical debates … would have been resolved millennia ago.” (1994, p. 107)
public. And the paradigm, as that in research tradition, gives guidance for journalist, a set of fundamental values to conclude their works. Consequently, news presentation or publication depends on what kinds of paradigm that they used to explain the facts.

Similar to scholarships traditions, news paradigm consist two major paradigm fellows, that namely positivist and constructionist. Both have different perspectives, as of nature of facts, relation between news and facts, media, roles journalist, and interactivity form/audience perspective.

Positivist believed that fact is given—taken for granted. Objectivity and universal law of nature bonded the fact, so journalist should treat fact as “external reality” that exists apart as journalist come to cover it. But for constructionist, fact is not given; it was produced by people to construct the world. Since we create our world, we choose and define fact as reality.2 Journalist’s act is to constructing reality and presenting in news form. News, therefore, does not reflect the reality; it just constructed reality that involves values, ideology and worldview of journalist. On contrary from positivist view that news is “mirror of reality”, constructionist stated that news built on social construction; a struggle between whom which correlated to the events.

Objectivity is media logic in positivist terminology and is not longer suitable as implemented in constructionist paradigm. Distinction in assessing the journalist works is caused by differences in understanding of news. Whilst assumed that there is an objective reality, then news should reflect it, followed by norm of journalism practices, attempt to standardization such: cover both sides, neutral and objective. Journalists are required to avoid biases and acts like a passive observer to covering news. But for constructionist, essentially, news is construction of journalist works and not derived from standardization of news production. Any construction—starting selecting the facts, new source, using the

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2. Carrey outlined that “Rather, reality is brought into existence, is produced, by communication—by in short, the construction, apprehension, and utilization of symbolic system—or by humans who produce such systems, that focus its existence in specific term” (Carrey, 1989, p. 25).
symbolic (written texts, image and graphics) up to editing process—reflects the journalist’s views and values and influence on how to present the reality.

Both paradigms, furthermore, have different view about media and role of journalist. Positivist seen that media as communication channel that messages disseminated upon the audiences. As a channel, media is free from interest, only channel that describes reality, presents events to audiences. Journalist has significant role for reporting the events, they is gatekeeper that hunting and selecting and editing and presenting the events. On contrary, constructionist believed that media acts as agent of construction, it was not exists in vacuum chamber and defined the reality using social construction. In selecting phase, for instance, media not only selected events and news source but they also defined both using language and others symbolic system.

So journalists are not gatekeeper, but they are agent of construction. While in gatekeeper roles define good journalists are who practices journalism as professional services and avoids the bias and personal tendency, then in agent’s roles, journalists not only reports the facts but they also defines the facts.

Last, positivist notices that audience should accept meaning of news equal to what is intended by journalist. Journalists and audiences understand to similar meaning of news, demonstration is demonstration; rape victim is rape victim and so forth. Audiences have no right to review news, because they are in a passive side. In contrast, only journalists have the right to create of news by standardization of journalist practices called media logic.

Contrary to passive audience’s concepts, constructionist notices that audiences are active. Audiences not only reading and accepting news as journalists do, but they also selecting, interpreting, and even rejecting particular news. There is no solitary meaning
for news, then meaning processes is not only message transmission but it is symbolization processes that contain sociable meaning.

Both of paradigms, in sum, provide different perspectives in news concepts and its relations with journalist role and media and audiences vividly in mass communication contexts. Those paradigms, however, is relevant to explain mass media phenomenon that journalist and media are as producers and audiences as receivers/consumers, but become decisive to employ in new media contexts.

Pablo Boczkowski indentified three potential conditions that influenced the changing form and construction in online news. (2004, p. 185). First, rather than journalist centered---be fond of mass media---online news media should be focus on user centered development. User---to replaced concepts of audience--- may directly connecting with reporters, giving statements, comments or even publish media content officially like what journalists did. It implies broaden the news concepts, audience concepts, and interactivity concepts in new media that poles apart from old paradigm.

Second, whilst news becomes a dialog not monolog or in other word—news is conversation; then gives broaden spectrum of news with comments, critique and even debates among users. Journalists should be responsive to the user’s comments early. This condition led media to be dynamic in contents and to be more interactive among users and journalists. Consequently news becomes fluid and rich and dynamic and more interactive.

Third, news online should be more give intention to localization, namely hyper-localization. News is presented for small groups of interests, communities and other social groups that exist as users.

Hyper localization is media presenting based on user distribution, not merely as national, international or regional rubrics like in news papers, it based to all of activity
and topic of interest of specific user, vice versa. It also refers to divergence of news source, that news source no longer dominated by official person or dominated voices, but in such way minority can expressed their opinion, communities voices has to be covered proportionally as officially of media contents.

**New Media, New Practices: The Foundation of New Media Journalism**

In order to enhance the developments of news in new media, there are some summarizing related to paradigm shift in news contents. It is seems to be more reflective rather than deductive, intended to offering more broaden issues related to news concept rather than specific issues. Thank to John Vernon Pavlik, who introduced concepts of contextualized journalism; I was summarizing several notion about fact and news and media and role of journalists and interactivity in new media environments.

Hence, I am starting to discussion about facts and news. In new media journalism, the conception of facts is similar to constructionist who stated that fact was a product of social construction. facts constructed journalist as socio processes then the legitimacy of news is subjective, depend on background of journalists.

Despite of that the fact is construction forms of journalist, the contextualized journalism distinguish that social construction is not shaped by journalist solely. It is interchangeable between journalist and their audience. News becomes idiosyncratic that means not only journalist can determine which ones should be headlines, but their audiences also contribute to verdict that ones is more suitable for them and not the others. Legitimacy of news, in short, becomes contextual that involved inter-subjectivity to attain it.
There are no headlines in new media. News would be presented by time order and audience has to choice the news by some subjective considerations. In news websites, we can found it in popular search term, news statistics or in numbers of news comments.

Second, in new media journalism, media is agent of social construction between journalist and their audience/user. Social constructions not only resulted by journalist itself but also their audience/user had an equal opportunity to construct what is news matters.

The interplay between journalist and user is so important in news development, from collecting the fact, writing the story, editing and presenting the news. User also can contribute to improve the quality of the news by adding or revising the story and journalist/editor should be realize this process as professional processes not only as” a second voices”.

Associated with the form of news---in the new media journalism-- news becomes a conversation. It is not merely the work of journalistic practice, but also a process of conversations that discuss and define reality. So the news is in inter-subjective nature, a social construction process of exchange between reporters with the user.

Third, in contrast to the positivist or constructionist approach, the contextual role of journalists in journalism as a gatekeeper or not the complainant, but the journalist serve as a guide to direct users to sources that are relevant news. The function and role of gatekeeper to switch to self-own users can fill out and complement the media messages.

As a guide, values and ethics and self-alignments of the journalist are not a single element in the assessment aspect of a news article. Values and ethics and the tendency of the users are also influence the quality aspects of a news article, because both are responsible for the formation of the news. It is merely reflect the concept of citizen journalism, where the user is the gate keeper who reported the events that occurred while
the reporter is giving directions to the key person or the main sources or direct news reported by its users.

The concept of citizen journalism basically by divided of responsibility for the values, ethics, opinions and moral choices. Distribution of this responsibility is distributed equally among the user and journalists, and they are complementary to each other. News production is an interactive process involving values, ethics, opinions and moral choices among journalists as a guide with user as a reporter or gatekeepers. It also means that the interpretation of reality occurs at the level user and no longer at the producer level as was done by mass media today.

Finally, the audience is the gate keeper and story teller. Interpretation occurs at the level of audience, not at the level of media content producers. Although, this does not eliminate completely the process of interpreting the facts at the producer level, but through the process of interactivity that occurs between producers and consumers of media cause that no single interpretation of reality. Journalists and users alike have different interpretations with each other and through the process of inter-textuality.

Conclusion

Paradigm shift in news implies on the practices of journalism. Journalist or media is not the only institutions or persons having a monopoly in interpreting the message, so that conventional journalistic practice is no longer suitable for the practice of journalism online.

Different environments will lead to different practical consequences. Different mediums will have a different impact, not only on media content but also on the practice of journalism.

Hence, I remember what Marshall Mc said that the media is the message.
Daftar Pustaka


