

Understanding The Role of Citizen Journalism in Social Media: A Phenomenological Approach to The 'Medan Talk' Instagram Account

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of information and communication technology (ICT) has had a significant impact on people's lifestyles, with the transition from the industrial era to the information society. This study highlights the role of social media, especially Instagram, as a major source of information in the digital era, which can surpass traditional media. The phenomenon of citizen journalism, defined as public participation in the gathering, reporting, analysis and dissemination of news, has empowered individuals to become active contributors to the dissemination of information. This research examines the application of citizen journalism through the Instagram account @MedanTalk, a leading social media platform in Medan, Indonesia. Using qualitative methods such as observation, interviews and documentation, this study analyses how @MedanTalk collects, verifies and disseminates information from the community. The results show that @MedanTalk successfully fills the gap in local news, especially regarding traffic conditions, public issues and social events, while encouraging community participation. Despite these benefits, challenges such as content validity and ethics in reporting remain a concern. Addressing these challenges through rigorous content management and promoting media literacy among users can increase the credibility and impact of these platforms. This research concludes that citizen journalism, as demonstrated by MedanTalk, plays an important role in creating an inclusive and participatory information ecosystem in the digital age.

keyword: Citizen Journalism, Social Media, Information Society, Media Literacy, Instagram, MedanTalk, Digital Transformation, Local News, Public Participation



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1. INTRODUCTION

Information technology is currently developing at a rapid pace, which has had a significant impact on changes in people's lifestyles. This is due to the advancement of communication technology, which allows people to communicate more easily. As a result, society is moving from the industrial age to the information age. New discoveries in technology and information have driven the development of electronic media. This process of change is now happening faster than in the past. For example, while it took a long time to move from radio to black-and-white television, the transition from colour television to Internet-based interactive communication technologies has taken much less time.

With the passage of time, social media has become one of the main sources for people to get news or information. Compared to traditional media, social media allows faster access to information. This makes social media an effective platform for delivering news and information to the public. Interestingly, in the era of social media, every individual has the ability to become a purveyor of accurate information. The characteristics of the media in gathering news have also changed. Unlike in the past, the media no longer relies on a long process to produce information. The emergence of citizen journalism has made it easier for the media to get news. In fact, the information produced by citizen journalism is often the main reference for people looking for reliable news.

Citizen journalism refers to the active participation of the public in the process of gathering, reporting, analysing and disseminating news or information. The practitioners, even if they do not have a professional journalism background, can use modern technologies such as computers, software and the Internet to communicate ideas, criticism or information to different media platforms. Citizen journalism also includes ordinary people who voluntarily report, record, collate and disseminate information online about events around them, driven by a passion to share with others.

One example of the application of Citizen Journalism on social media is the Instagram account @MedanTalk. This account, which had 1.7 million followers at the time of the research, shares information through re-uploading content from Medan residents who tag the account. The content shared by @MedanTalk includes entertainment, academic and non-academic information, culinary, and various other aspects related to life in Medan City. Since its establishment in 2007, @MedanTalk has been instrumental in expanding news distribution, especially regarding traffic in Medan City. In addition, the account also provides advertising and endorsement services.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The type of method used in this research is a qualitative method, where qualitative research is research that aims to know the phenomena experienced by the research subject by explaining in the form of words or language in a specific context and using various natural methods. The type of approach used in this research is descriptive by trying to solve existing problems based on data. The author will see and describe the existing conditions in order to know how to solve the problem.

The location of this research is in the city of Medan as the origin of the social media MedakTalk. The research was conducted based on the data of MedanTalk Instagram by observing the posts and choosing the right informants to interview. The research period was from November to the end. This research was conducted by obtaining informants from followers of the MedanTalk Instagram account.

The data collection techniques used in this research are observation, interview and documentation. The data collection techniques used by the author are observation, interview and documentation. Non-participant observation in obtaining data as research material on the concept applied by MedanTalk Instagram social media to promote citizen journalism. The author also observes the content of the loaded posts and looks at the various interactions that occur on MedanTalk Instagram account regarding news in Medan City in the period of 27 November.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

MedanTalk was established in 2007, and until now MedanTalk has not only an active website portal, but also social media since 2011 with the largest number of followers, the most active and influential in the city of Medan. The concept used by MedanTalk to get news from the main source and the community (citizen journalism), which is often referred to as KawanMedanTalk. The contribution of KawanMedanTalk and sharing of MedanTalk is also observed by other national media who quote information from MedanTalk. MedanTalk always accepts and helps to share news from everyone to increase the knowledge and awareness of Medan residents. However, MedanTalk is not careless in sharing content from the community because the content shared must meet the requirements of the media and Instagram. If you look at the posts on MedanTalk's Instagram account, you will find news that is often presented from community submissions.

Based on interviews with five citizen journalists, the difference between new media and traditional media is that new media, which has the concept of citizen journalism, can get information faster because people who are on the ground can directly record the conditions that are occurring. MedanTalk is an Instagram-based social media platform that has successfully used the concept of citizen journalism to provide fast and relevant local information. By utilising Instagram's features such as wide accessibility, visual sharing capabilities and real-time interaction, MedanTalk becomes a bridge between the community and issues often overlooked by mainstream media. Interviews and research show that the platform plays an important role in strengthening public participation in the news reporting process, especially in the city of Medan. MedanTalk's work process starts with gathering information from citizens, often through direct messages or tagging their accounts in community posts. Upon receipt of the report, the MedanTalk team conducts a verification process to ensure the authenticity of the information. This step includes verifying the location, time of the incident and source, as well as confirming with relevant parties if necessary. Once the verification stage is complete, the information is published with a clear narrative and relevant visuals, maintaining the accuracy and clarity of the content. This approach allows MedanTalk to deliver news in real time without compromising credibility.

As a citizen journalism platform, MedanTalk has successfully filled information gaps that are often ignored by conventional media. For example, MedanTalk regularly provides information on traffic conditions, accidents and damage to public facilities, which are highly relevant to the daily lives of Medan residents. It also focuses on social issues such as criticism of public institutions and the promotion of local tourism. The research also shows that MedanTalk provides space for underrepresented groups, making the platform inclusive and responsive to local needs.

However, both interviews and research revealed some challenges that MedanTalk faces. One of the main challenges is maintaining trust and credibility amidst the flood of information on social media. A rigorous verification process is essential to ensure that all content shared is accurate and free of hoaxes. Content governance is also a concern. Some users have complained about the layout of the feed, which is considered unorganised, and the presence of content that is considered unethical, such as politically sensitive news. This requires MedanTalk to be more careful in selecting and presenting appropriate content.

The hope for MedanTalk is that the platform will not only be a source of information, but also a media literacy tool for the community. By providing education on how to identify fake news and how to critically consume information, MedanTalk can help people become smarter about how they respond to news. In addition, by improving content governance, MedanTalk can strengthen its position as a credible and trusted local news platform. With the development of increasingly sophisticated technology, social media users can easily act as citizen journalists by publishing important information and events to a wide audience quickly, compared to

traditional media, which generally requires professional journalists to get news, which requires going to where the issue is happening, thus taking time to process the news.

The difference in language style and whether messages are conveyed clearly or not is now also an additional point in social media. From the results of the interviews conducted by the researchers, new media/social media now use more polite and straightforward language so that it is easy for us to understand. But there are some news that do not include clarity of information about the news source or what events are happening, so it makes people wonder what is happening, why and how. The news focus on MedanTalk's Instagram account also produces news that is in line with the narrative and images published, the content and focus of the news have the same title. By sticking to clear facts and themes, the media can reduce the risk of spreading false or inaccurate information so that readers are not confused when reading.

4. CONCLUSION

The development of information and communication technology has brought about major changes in many aspects of people's lives. The transition from the industrial age to the information age has been characterised by the acceleration of technological innovation, allowing people to access and share information more quickly and easily. One tangible form of this transformation is the increasing role of social media as a major source of information, replacing some of the functions of traditional media. The phenomenon of citizen journalism is one of the most significant impacts of technological progress. Through the use of modern technology, the general public can now play an active role in gathering, reporting and disseminating information in real time. Citizen journalism not only complements traditional media, but also provides local perspectives that are often ignored by mainstream media. The case study of the @MedanTalk Instagram account shows how citizen journalism can be effectively implemented in a local context. By leveraging social media features such as direct interaction, broad access and content visualisation, MedanTalk has managed to become a relevant and trusted information platform for the people of Medan City. MedanTalk not only provides up-to-date information, but also becomes an inclusive space for public participation. However, despite its many benefits, citizen journalism faces challenges related to information validity and content governance. The importance of the verification process is crucial to maintaining public trust in the platform. In addition, better content management will support the long-term sustainability and credibility of the platform. In addition, better content management will support the sustainability and credibility of the platform in the long run. By promoting media literacy among the public, platforms like MedanTalk can play a strategic role not only as a source of information, but also as an educational agent in the digital age. Collaboration between the community, media stakeholders and the government is needed to build a responsible, inclusive and sustainable digital journalism ecosystem.

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