

The Power of Clickbait: Questioning Indonesian Online News Media's Stand Point in the Digital Era

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Abstract

The digital era nowadays allows users to gain information easily and quickly. Many various kinds of search engines allow readers to find news in accordance with the information they need. However, in search engine usage, not all of the readers will look for the less popular news. According to Fintam, et al (2018) the readers only access the mainstream media sites with the reliability of a source of Uniform Resource Locator (URL). This has happened because those media has built a reputable image for the readers. However, the less popular media has limited entry-level in their search engines which results in their ways to change into clickbait strategy. Eye-catching headlines become the primary target in order to bring out the curiosity for the readers. This leads to change media's position to be partisan where they make headlines that tend to focus on clicks only. The relevance of the news has not become a major priority. According to Muttaqin (2008) in writing news journalists are not allowed to enter personal opinions in written news. It clearly shows that the media's position should be neutral. The news sites which only emphasize clicking need to be questioned. Therefore, this research is necessary to be conducted in order to analyze the standpoint of Indonesia's online media through a post-truth perspective. Library research and close-reading methods are employed in this analysis. The result of the analysis shows that the position of the media in the digital age is increasingly unclear because most media no longer uphold the principles of journalism that Indonesian journalists present the news equally and fairly, including prioritizing accuracy, and not giving confusing facts and opinions.

Keywords: clickbait; news media; position; standpoint; digital era.

INTRODUCTION

The quick development of information currently allows the readers to access the information anytime and anywhere from the news media. News media can be defined as an essential feature of the mass media for conveying information to the audience (definition.net, 2020). There are several categories of mass media that are printed media, broadcasting media, and internet-based media. Several categories of news media play a role as a means of informing the public. However, news media is not merely stating the information. The news media actually construct a news narration (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Pan & Kosicki, 1993); that is, readers are expected to make their own perception because the news media have restricted the context (Hallahan, 1999). These statements are in line with Arno

(2019), he stated that aside from conveying, constructing, and depicting the information, the news media also consider the consensus meaning within the frame of reference. News media, therefore, has an important role in order to make a new perception for the readers.

Nowadays, the news media make a new transition from conventional media or paper-based to contemporary media or internet-based (Ahlers, 2006). Certainly, this happens because of the development of technology which allows us to engage all over the world in unlimited areas. Various online news media are also growing rapidly including Indonesia. However, Rudiantara, a former Minister of Communication and Information, stated that in online news media, there are only 100 recognized media by the Press Council out of around 43.000

media. The ratio is really unequal which means that there are much more unverified online news media instead of verified ones. The unverified news media still exist as there's no one fixed regulation which takes over this case. As a result, their credibility must be questioned. Unverified news still exists because technology contributes to a major part of the news media. Oberlechner (2004) stated that spreading unreliable news rises from time to time as we face the advancement of technology. This is what we called as the challenge in technology development.

In looking for the news in online news media, the readers will take advantage of the search engine features in their devices. While using this feature, not all of the readers will look for the less popular news media. According to Fintham, et al (2018), the credible source of Uniform Resource Locator will preferably be accessed by the people. The URL which is reliable is more prominent as they get credibility from the readers and also the most important is that they got verified by the Press Council. How about the unverified one? Considering the less popular media, they have limited entry-level in the search engines resulting in their ways to change into clickbait strategy. Agrawal (2016) stated that in social use, click-baiting is a strong willingness from the readers to click headlines that contain overstatement headlines. Click baiting strategy is much effective instead of revealing the original story which summarizes what happened and this one is less effective. Potthast, et al (2016) revealed that news publishers usually use click-baiting to enhance readability and give easy detection on filtering the news flow. By using familiar key, ambiguity, and emotion, the readers will interpret the headlines based on what is literally stated and will give several perceptions. The combination of three elements leads to change media's position to be partisan where they make headlines that tend to focus on clicks only. The relevance of the

news has not become a major priority. Supposedly, in the news media, they should be an independent media. According to Muttaqin (2008), correspondents in news writing are prohibited to add their personal thoughts. The news media could not give certain allegations which lead to inaccurate news, in this term emphasizes headline usage. If this is applied, personal thoughts and opinion replace the facts and proof which mean that the origin of news, and how people interpret the news, is changing belief toward the emotion (Rochlin, 2017).

The news media which do not reveal the objective truth, thus, could be linked to the Post-truth phenomenon. The word 'post' in post-truth doesn't mean "after" the truth which leads to the time reference. It actually means that the truth is disguised by another reality, that it looks like a fact (Bufacchi, 2020). Another meaning of post-truth has also been described in the Oxford Dictionary that it becomes the word of the year in 2016. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) gives the following definition of Post-Truth: "an adjective defined as relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief". The OED gives an explanation of Post-truth about subjective truth which is contrary to the objective truth. As the post-truth is applied to the news media, post-truth thus has a significant role to blur between new facts and reality resulting to deceive the information.

This paper, then, tries to investigate the existence of Post-truth portrayed in the click-baiting especially in the headlines in the Indonesian online news media which leads to their flexible standpoint.

METHODOLOGY

In analyzing the headline news, library research and close-reading methods are employed. The data are gained from the Indonesian online news media and from supporting concepts which are revealed using descriptive qualitative method.

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Yilmaz (2013) defined qualitative descriptive research as one of the approaches in the scientific research method which investigates phenomena and their processes in a natural way to describe the context in a descriptive way. The existence of post-truth will be portrayed based on the analysis of click-baiting headline types using supporting theory and then the result will be connected to the Post-truth phenomenon revealed in a descriptive way.

DISCUSSION

Clickbaiting now becomes the strategy to increase the curiosity of the readers which resulting them to open the news. If there are many clicks on it, the news media will gain much profit and popularity. According to Pengnate (2019), clickbait has become of interest to businesses, as it has the potential to be an effective marketing strategy to generate revenue from advertising on their websites or to engage new website visitors. Click baiting so far becomes an effective way to get readers. Even though click-baiting has positive impacts for the news media, click-baiting often contains distortions that make irrelevance between news headlines and news content, and thus it gives a negative impact on the readers.

In news media, click-baiting has several types. There are 4 types of click-baiting classified by Chen, Conroy, and Rubin (2015). They are the traditional headlines, question-based headlines,

forward-referencing headlines, and fake news headlines.

Traditional headline

The traditional headline is the oldest type of headline which uses the secret sign in order to gain readers' interest to read the news. Similarly, Kuiken et al. (2017) stated summarizing the article text and highlighting the keyword of the story becomes an important part of the traditional news headline. An article published by kaltim.tribunnews.com entitled "Waspada! Jangan Beli Motor Bekas Berkode ST, Polisi Pernah Beri Peringatan, Pembeli Bisa Gigit Jari" (Figure 1) greatly enhances the readers' curiosity as it stated the important key, that is 'ST'. The readers will always keep in mind what is ST stands for. 'ST' here does not have a fixed interpretation. Khater et al. (2018) revealed that clickbait means that the readers are getting more curious to click a link because of the tricky content behind it.

Most of the readers think that 'Berkode ST' refers to a certain vehicle license plate number. However, this is ambiguous. 'ST' doesn't fulfill readers' expectations. Instead, ST refers to the STNK or in English known as motor vehicle license. In this context, it means that we should not buy a secondhand motorcycle that doesn't have motor vehicle license (STNK). Although the clickbait does not deceive readers, it is surprisingly ambiguous. The reality is much different from what the readers expected.



Figure 1 Example of traditional clickbaiting headline published by www.kaltim.tribunnews.com (retrieved: <https://kaltim.tribunnews.com/2020/07/06/waspada-jangan-beli-motor-bekas-berkode-st-polisi-pernah-beri-peringatan-pembeli-bisa-gigit-jari>)

Another type of click-baiting is a question-based headline. A question-based headline can be defined as a kind of headline which contains the question mark resulting from the ambiguity for the readers (Scacco, 2016). The question becomes an important role in shaping the clickbait as it

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becomes the main element to be clicked by the readers. Before clicking the headlines, the readers will make their perception towards the headlines. New perception made by the readers is possible as they will be served a confused headline which puts a question mark and a lack of the information leading them to click the headline for answering their curiosity. (Blom and Hansen, 2015; Woxenius, 2015; Chakraborty et al., 2016). In the question-based headline, it provides a lack of information as it doesn't summarize the news content. Instead, it uses the question model to make the readers feel hypnotized about it. An article published by pinterpolitik.com entitled "Bukan Indonesia, Tiongkok Bubar 2030?" is one of the samples of the question-based headlines (Figure 2). It is clearly shown by the question mark. However, according to Scacco (2016), question-based headline usually contains negativity because the reality is much different from the readers' expectations. Even though the headline questioned as if to the readers, this headline indirectly leads to the readers' perception that China will break up in 2030. Supposedly, the headlines do not make readers misperceive about the news which means that the objectivity of the news should not be doubtful.

Un-Clapp

Bukan Indonesia, Tiongkok Bubar 2030?

Seri pemikiran Fareed Zakaria #5

By J63 - Monday, July 6, 2020 22:00



Wenon Rantahanen @republikindonesia, Prabowo Subianto: (Praso: var: id)

Figure 2 Example of questioned-based headline published by pinterpolitik.com (Retrieved <https://www.pinterpolitik.com/bukan-indonesia-tiongkok-bubar-2030/>)

Forward-referencing headline

Another type of click-baiting headline is a forward-references headline. The characteristic of the forward-referencing headline is either by ambiguous pronouns or appealing context to create readers' attention (Campbell, 1981; Blom and Hansen, 2015; Orosa et al., 2017). Furthermore, Scacco (2016) To gain many readers by accessing the doubtful information on news articles is the purpose of clickbait. An article published by sipayo.com entitled "Wow! Gara-gara Pelayanannya Dianggap Buruk, Wali Kota ini Dihukum Pasung oleh Warganya Sendiri" gives the sample of the forward-referencing headline (Figure 3). The phrase "walikota ini" refers to a particular perpetrator. The mayor holds an important position in a certain region. However, the readers don't know whom mayor is referred to in this headline. The Forward-reference headline has two types inside of it. The first is through the discourse deixis and the second is through cataphora. According to Yang (2011:129), he defined forward-referencing discourse deixis as upcoming relevant discourse reference to the current position of certain discourse. E.g. 'This is the best thing that should be done in your life'. Meanwhile, cataphora (Halliday and Hasan, 1976) is putting a reference to a phrase or a word that will be fully revealed in the context, e.g. in this headline news the phrase "walikota ini" will be described later in the news which refers to a mayor in Bolivia. Surprisingly, if we only look at the headline, the readers mostly think that it's vicious, however, if we look at the content, it's happened in Bolivia where certain regulation such punishing officials who are incompetent to work is applied. Ecker et al. (2014) stated the readers' misinterpretation is often created by a forward-referencing headline.



Figure 3 Example of forward-referencing headline published by sipayo.com (Retrieved

<https://www.sipayo.com/2018/03/wow-gara-gara-pelayanannya-dianggap-buruk-wali-kota-ini-dihukum-pasung-oleh-warganya-sendiri.html>)

Fake news headline

In online news media, a fake news headline is defined a headline that serves as if the objective fact but consisting of instinctive, ambiguous, or fabricated context published



by promoters, correspondents, or the authority (Chen et al., 2015). Supposedly, scientific, nonpartisan, and valid information should be included in the news media (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001; Tandoc et al., 2017). Fake news headline actually gives the readers about subjective information as if it were objective information. An article published by wartaeconomy.co.id entitled “Jokowi Menang, China Berkuasa” is an example of a fake news headline which cannot be accounted for truthfully (Figure 4). If we read more to the news content, it is subjective as it’s based on the informant’s opinion and it couldn’t be fully trusted. Furthermore, another mistake on the headline is that an informant just gave the opinion using the future tense marker, however, the journalists changed it into present tense marker as if were fact or truth. As a result, the truth is uncertain but the readers are indirectly being hypnotized and they trust that headline news. Rochlin (2017) adds that either misrepresenting the messages, publishing ambiguous context, or falsifying actual news are comprised of fake news.

Figure 4 Example of fake news headline published by wartaekonomi.com. (Retrieved <https://www.wartaekonomi.co.id/read219703/jokowi-menang-china-berkuasa>)

MICHAEL M. PETERS'S VIEW ABOUT A Post-truth phenomenon is based on his theory of viral modernity which is the development of Wittgenstein and Foucault's theory. Viral modernity is comprised of the essence of viruses, their parts in transformation and behavior, and primary application to a part of the knowledge and shapes of bio-information in the social life. Information, therefore, holds an important role to communicate about a certain phenomenon. The viral age cannot be separated from viral information and viral media. The connection between the means on how the information operates in automated networks and the part which information presents as an information system becomes the progress of viral information and viral media (Peters et al., 2018). He added hype, hyperbole, falsehood, untruth, and gossip are the common type of post-truth era (Peters et al., 2018). How do they contribute as the post-truths characteristic?

Hype in media is known as media-hype. The phrase 'media-hype' means the exaggeration of media reporting leading to unscientific news as it contains certain prejudice inside of it (Vasterman, 2005). Headlines nowadays are no longer scientific as it's subjective and tends to reach the attention only. Caulfield (2004) added headlines may be specifically unreliable or "hyped". He also added more than Even though journalism ethics should be obeyed, sometimes the news can not be separated from the sensation.

The sensational headline causes great public interest and excitement as it's the aim of the news media to gain as many as readers. Sensation in the headline is important instead of the objective truth. This is what happens in the question-based headlines and fake news headlines. In wartaekonomi.com, the headline brings the trending about rumors in Indonesia which is really sensitive but interesting to be read. In pintarpolitik.com, the journalist also made a headline which is questioning but has implicit judgment leading to negative readers' opinions. Post-truth is actually distorting the truth and make it as it is true.

Both hype and exaggeration are actually similar. Exaggeration means the gap within the truth (Grant & Sinclair, 2003). In the news headlines, exaggeration is the overstatements regarding the news topic through language use. According to Stanko (2005), exaggeration can be reached in two forms; the first is through its font and the style of the headline and the second is through the recurrence of narration several times. In the news headline above, it used the language of the headline. Such as in traditional headline, forward-referencing headline, and fake news headline above. These kinds of headlines use exaggeration which can lead to the post-truth phenomenon. Post-truth is employed in the headlines as the journalists use overstatements through alerts in order to trigger the new reality which may be different from the actual truth. Kartika (2012) believed if the journalists portray more exaggeration through the language style, the readers will be more attracted as well.

Another ideal form in the nature of

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the post-truth era is falsehood. Falsehood is commonly connected to the lie. As in Frankfurt's (2005) statement, Inside of falsehood, there is a lie that shapes a particular concept leading to the distortion of the facts.

However, falsehood is actually different with lie. According to McIntyre (2018), The error of falsehood is unintended, meanwhile in lying is intended. What journalists write about headlines can include either lies or falsehood. Both lie and falsehood, therefore, omits certain parts or objectivities which here occurred in the headlines. In the fake news headline example above, the headline is derived from the informant's opinion and cannot be fully accounted for. Furthermore, the journalist turned it into a lie as he deliberately deployed the informant's statement into the present tense which leads to the fact or general truth. Both lie and falsehood included in the post-truth phenomenon as both replace the actual truth. McIntyre (2018) A post-truth era happens when expectation like feelings replaces reality.

Meanwhile, according to Fine & Rosnow (1978), gossip is such a talk about someone's act without considering the source of the people. In relation to the news, they added gossip is not always but sometimes has been told by the second people who is really risky to spread unproven information. Even though gossip is doubtful, gossip has been the main source in delivering news, exchanging the meaning, and serving its entertainment (Houmanfar&Johnson, 2008). In the types of the headline above, question-based headline and fake news headline are closely related to spreading gossip as both are unverified and based only on subjective assumptions. China has been a primary hot issue in Indonesian politics. As a result, the media try to bring it up into matters and connect it into the linkage. Fine & Rosnow (1978) added gossip

is usually delivered in accordance with society's needs which sometimes contradict individuals. What society need in this post-truth era is emotion, what they believe is according to their assumption instead of the actual truth.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis above, it is concluded that Indonesian online news media's standpoint, especially the less popular media tends either to follow the readers assumption or follow certain groups rather than becoming an independent news media. Dividing different Many kinds of click-baiting headlines in Indonesia's online news media such as traditional headline, question-based headline, forward-referencing headline, and fake news headline could be seen as a post-truth phenomenon. These news media are working on various ways to increase the number of clicks through click-baiting headlines, including negative ways to encourage readers' opinions. This phenomenon is currently familiar to be called the post-truth. What is inside of the post-truth is actually blurred by the opinions, emotions, and pretensions.

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