



Netizen Reception about Racial, Ethnic, Religious and Inter-Group Relations
Issues from Opinion Leader in New Media (Case Study: Tweet by Felix Siauw
about Terrorism in Surabaya)

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Abstract

Opinion leader is a concept that originally comes from traditional media. However, many researchers still does not sure if the opinion leader concept can be applied to new media environment. Twitter is interesting media to study about opinion leader, because shares and likes on Twitter shows in real-time and it can be used to measure opinion climate at that exact moment. In May 2018, Indonesia got attacked by several bombing cases. We want to know how netizen's reception on religious leader's tweet after terrorist attacked in Surabaya. We analyses the replies of Felix Siauw's tweet about terrorism in Surabaya on May 13th 2018 with reception concept from Stuart Hall. From 238 replies under his tweet, we found out that 122 tweets have opposed reception, 72 tweets have dominated reception, 31 negotiated tweets, and 13 tweets are irrelevant. Opposing tweet tend to use racial, ethnic, religious and inter-group relations issues. From this mini research, we know that opinion leaders in new media did not have the same power as the opinion leader in traditional media.

Keywords: Opinion Leader; Reception; New Media

Introduction

The number of social media user keep increasing, based on report by *We Are Social and Hootsuite* (2018) the number of active social media user in Indonesia is 130 million. The 130 million active users use social media not only to connect with their social networks, but also to gather information, to share stories, and to discuss (Westerman, Spence, & Haide, 2014). Social media user in Indonesia spent at least 23 minutes per day to access social media (*We Are Social; Hootsuite*, 2018). The fast growth of social media in Indonesia may change the traditional media concept that originally made for traditional media. One of the concepts that might change because of technology development is opinion leader, a concept that originally comes from traditional media (Hananto, 2014). Opinion leader is an individual who has a big role in disseminating information on two-step flow model. Two-step flow model shows that information from mass media received by opinion leader then opinion leader disseminates information to the public (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944). Public described as passive people who depend on information from the opinion leader.

The use of the internet as a source of information or platform for discussion arise some doubt about opinion leader position on the process of disseminating information (Choi, 2015). Public is not a passive individual, they can search or gather information by themselves with the help of technology. Public try to search alternative information source, so they do not rely on one information source. Social media is a platform that can help public to search for information because it is accessible and more community like platform (Choi, 2015). The process to influence, to leads opinion or to forming the public's perspective on a specific topic usually come as face-to-face concept between people who know each other (Winter & Neubaum, 2016). Now it is possible to influence people with social media application, not just from face-to-face conversation (Winter & Neubaum, 2016). Social media give us a chance to express our opinion about politics, public affairs, or to raise public awareness on specific topic, and it much easier to send link of media content to friend list (Winter & Neubaum, 2016). Compared to face-to-face conversation, social media have a larger audience and broader coverage (Winter & Neubaum, 2016).

There is an imbalance in the distribution of resources on social media, whether it is a matter of attention given by other social media users, received replies, or the number of posts in online public forums (Choi, 2015). On social media, sometimes people read the news that is "liked" or "recommended" by friends who might be an opinion leader or not (Choi, 2015). Research proved that opinion leader still exists in new media. There are several aspects that must be fulfilled by an opinion leader. Opinion leaders should have followers, should be an expert, knowledgeable, and have a position within their local community (Dubois & Gaffney, 2014). An opinion leader is a person who has the ability to influence people and shape others' people mind (Aleahmad, Karisani, Rahgozar, & Oroumchian, 2016). They shape how people's think by doing selective sharing. Selective sharing is where individuals can choose preferred issues to share with their followers (Liang, 2018). An opinion leader can direct the attention of others to specific issues and create signals how others should respond or act (Park & Kaye, 2017). However, the researcher still does not sure if the opinion leader concept can be applied to a new media environment or not (Park & Kaye, 2017). In the digital era, it is easier for people to share information, so people might not only depend on opinion leader as a source of information (Hananto, 2014).

Twitter is interesting media to study about opinion leader because shares and likes on Twitter are showed in real-time and it can be used to measure opinion climate at that exact moment (Liang, 2018). The number of shares is showed, so people who support the original message may perceive a more congenial opinion climate, and they tend to share that message too (Liang, 2018). Twitter's ability to disseminate information can make tweet spread everywhere. Users can share a specific topic with their friend-list on social media (Winter & Neubaum, 2016). Twitter is one of the popular social media in Indonesia. Data stated that Twitter active users in Indonesia are 27% of the total 130 million active users of social media (Global Media Report, 2018). From Twitter, we know that a person is an opinion leader based on the number of followers (Hananto, 2014). On Twitter, information flows can reach a large number of followers (Hwang, 2015). People can acquire information from people they do not follow because Twitter has "retweet" feature (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010). Tweet retweeted by many Twitter user can spread its information broadly, does not matter how many followers the twitter source has (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010). Regarding that information diffusion, having more followers surely an advantage for opinion leader (Hwang, 2015).

Indonesia is a country with a diversity of cultures and religions that are susceptible to horizontal conflicts. In May 2018, Indonesia was attacked by several bombing cases with the name of religion. Until the end of May 2018, there were already five cases of terrorism, where two of the cases occurred in Surabaya. In this case, opinions from the religious leaders have a huge impact because many terrorists said that they are Muslims who want to declare the Khalifah or Islamic State in Indonesia. Research about the role of opinion leader in sensitive issues, such as religion in new media is still lacking. Many research

about opinion leader in new media only focus on political issues, how is the position of opinion leader in new media in influencing one's political choices, (example Choi (2015)). Research on the role of opinion leaders on the religious issue was once conducted by Jaali, Cangara, & Hasrullah (2013) about "The Role of Opinion Leader in Nurturing The Peacefulness In The Mind Of Horizontal Conflict At Wayame Village, Ambon". The study showed that opinion leaders had an important role in maintaining peace in Wayame Village, Ambon. Jaali, Cangara & Hasrullah (2013) did research on face-to-face communication, not in new media. The role of opinion leader in new media related to issues such as religion has not yet been studied. That is the reason why we want to know how to respond to an on religious leader's tweet after attacking terrorists in Surabaya. We choose Felix Siauw, an Islamic religious leader who has 2,78 million followers on Twitter, as object of research. His tweet about bombing cases in Surabaya got a lot of engagements with total 638 replies, 5,115 retweets and 7,491 likes. That was the highest engagement among tweet from another Islamic religious leader.

Method

Object of Research

This research analyzing replies tweet under Felix Siauw's tweet that he posted on May, 13rd 2018. We conduct research on July, 29th 2018 and there were 638 replies tweets but we only examined the one which mention directly to Felix Siauw, which is only 238 tweets. Felix Siauw considered to be an opinion leader because he has social status as Islamic religious leader on society and on new media he has many followers in his account. One of opinion leaders' characteristic is that their messages are distributed more than the messages from an individual who are not opinion leaders (Choi, 2015). His tweet about terrorism that he posted on May, 13rd 2018 had been liked 7,491 times and retweeted 5.115 times by other Twitter user. Frequently retweeted messages were highly likely to be opinion leaders (Choi, 2015). Felix Siauw is a young religious leader who is brave in expressing his thoughts. He also a book author, with several best-selling books, such as "Udah Putusin Aja" (*Just Break Up*) and "Muhammad Al Fatih". As a young Islamic religious leader (34 years old), Felix Siauw optimized the use of social media to share his thought and opinion with his followers. He is relevant to his target audience because social media users are dominated by the age range of 19-34 years (Katadata.co.id, 2018).

We collected data on July 29th, 2018, when on that date he had 2.78 million followers on his Twitter account. A high number of his followers made the engagement with his tweet was high as well. We conducted a research on the reply tweet under Felix Siauw tweet about his response to terrorism in Surabaya. The following is an original tweet from Felix Siauw.

"Seperti sudah diduga, mulai ada oknum dan pihak yang mengaitkan aksi teror bom surabaya, dengan kaum Muslim, khususnya yang dianggap "radikal", seperti "pengusung khilafah" kata mereka. Teganya memanfaatkan tragedi bom untuk framing negatif, benar-benar tak punya perasaan :("
"As expected, some people associating terrorism in Surabaya with Muslims, especially the "radical" one, the one who supported the caliphate. How could they use this bombing as tools for negative framing (towards Muslim), really heart less".

Felix Siauw has three official social media accounts that he used, there are Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. He posted content about terrorism in Surabaya on all his social media accounts, but Facebook and Twitter had a higher engagement than Instagram. Engagement on Instagram was not as high as Facebook and Twitter because Instagram is basically a photo or video sharing platform. Between Facebook and Twitter, we choose Twitter as the object of research because Twitter is more open as a platform than Facebook. Twitter was chosen because it is an open platform, which is easy for the user to

follow/unfollow other accounts and to re-broadcast opinion leaders message (Hwang, 2015). In addition, "retweet" and "likes" feature on Twitter make it have a wider range of information dissemination.

Analytical Tools

Analysis conducted with reception concept by Stuart Hall. Readers might have a different reception for every post from opinion leader on social media. Stuart Hall, differentiate three kinds of reception from audiences, first is the dominant-hegemonic position when audiences decode the message as same as how creator encode the message. The second is the negotiated position when audiences know the meaning but combine the rejections elements and still recognize hegemonic legitimacy. The third is the opposite position when audiences have a different reception with the sender (Hall, Hobson, Lowe, & Willis, 1980).

On this research we are not focusing on followers of Felix Siau, instead, we focus on the replies under his tweet. Netizens who replied to Felix Siau's tweet did not have to become his followers. Twitter has a retweet and likes feature, that makes tweets from people we do not follow can appear on the timeline just because someone had retweeted or liked that tweet.

Literatur Review

Two-Step Flow Communication

Two-step flow communication model gained great attention when the strong media-effect theory was losing its explanatory power (Choi, 2015). Before this model existed, media was described as the only channel to get information and have direct impact on the audience (Choi, 2015). This model argued that mass media was not as strong as we thought nor directly affecting the public (Rogers, 2003). The hypothesis on this model gives the idea that information flow from the mass media to opinion leaders and then from the opinion leaders to less active public (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944). On the first step, the message is in the form of "information", but on the second step, the message is in the form of "influence" (Rogers, 2003). The hypothesis of this model discovered when Lazarfeld (1944) tried to observe how information and influence were distributed to the community. Early research was conducted by looking at cases of political election, how information from the media could influence political choice. It turned out that voters were more affected by their friends during the political campaign period than the information obtained from the mass media. Two-step flow model explain information's flow from traditional media to the public. It is easier to understand how information flows to the public with this two-step flow model.

Opinion Leader

Opinion leader is a term for individual who have a stronger power to influence people on the social network (Trepte & Scherer, 2010). Messages that come from opinion leaders will be more distributed than messages from individuals who do not have status as opinion leaders (Choi, 2015). Opinion leaders have new information, thought and opinion and then disseminate them to the public (Park, 2013). Opinion leaders exist in all groups, from occupational, social and community groups. Opinion leadership is a social construction based on relationships, not based on the demographic characteristics of certain types of people (Choi, 2015). Katz (1957) wrote that there are three aspects related to opinion leaders, (1) (who is one), to the personification of certain values; (2) (what one knows) to competence; and (3) (one knows) to strategic social location.

"Opinion leader" shows that it is not only a matter of information seeking, but there is a strong ability to influence (Black, 1982). Some research has validated opinion leaders do exist and influence others in various areas (Weimann, Tustin, Vuuren, & Joubert, 2007). There is two type of opinion leader,

monomorphism (opinion leaders who have influence on one topic) and polymorphism (opinion leaders who have influence on various topics) (Rogers, 2003). According to Weimann, et al (2007) opinion leaders tend to be monomorphous: they are experts in one area but rarely in various areas. Felix Siauw is an opinion leader who is an expert in one area, religion. He is an opinion leader for Muslims in Indonesia.

Twitter

Twitter is one of the most popular social media that fast in disseminating information (Maclean, Jones, & Carin-Levy, 2013) (Sharma, 2013). Twitter is a free social networking who allows people to share information by posting a brief comment – limited only 280 character per post - about their experiences or thought (Maclean, Jones, & Carin-Levy, 2013). Total active user on Twitter on second quartal of 2018 is 326 million users (Statista, 2018). Twitter is a versatile and accessible tool to share thoughts, ideas and visions of the future, not only locally but globally (Maclean, Jones, & Carin-Levy, 2013). Twitter is easy to use because a user free to follow any other user, and the one who got followed do not have to follow back. By following other users, that means you agree to receive all the messages – that called as tweets - from them (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010).

Twitter has so many features to simplify communication process, such as retweet (RT), likes, mention (@), and hashtag (#) (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010). User can “replies” or “mention” other users on their tweet by add “@” then followed by username (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010). RT feature is like “re-broadcast” message, it can help expand the coverage of an opinion just with one effort (Hwang, 2015). Re-broadcast feature makes Twitter different from other platforms, Twitter introduces themselves as the new medium of information dissemination (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010).

Findings

From 238 replies under his tweet, we found out that 122 tweets opposing Felix Siauw’s tweet. Tweet from Felix Siauw which has religious issues opposed by many users. The number of tweets that has the same reception as the original tweet are 72 tweets. Tweets that have negotiated reception are 31 tweets, and 13 tweets are irrelevant.

Table 1

Netizen’s Reception	Total Tweets
Dominated	72
Opposed	122
Negotiated	31
Irrelevant	13

Opposing tweet tends to use racial, ethnic, religious and inter-group relations issues. This is the example, replies that called Felix as Chinese and not belong to Indonesia.

“Cinaaaaaaa mulut mu diem.pulang aja ke cina gak malu apa tinggal di negara orang dan sok bener sendiri” - @Abduroh57621794

“Chinese, shut up and go back to China. You don’t have shame, live in our country and being a self-righteous person”

Some of the replies also said that that is the fact that terrorism is a Muslim. Replies also tends to use “radical” or “provocative” to label Felix Siauw.

“Wahai sampah radikal @felixsiauww . Tak ada yg menuduh islam sbg biang teroris. Yg dihujuat adalah para radikal dan penceramah tukang hasut buat cari makan sperti kau.” - @RezanHayon
“Such a radical trash @felixsiauww. No one framing Islam as the origin of terrorist. People were blaming radical and preacher who stir up the issue to foraging for food, like you” - @RezanHayon

Some of tweet that has dominant reception also stated that government plays a big role in framing Islam. This is one of their replies that has dominant reception.

“Iya, ada jg oknum dan pihak yang mengaitkan aksi teror bom surabaya, dgn pemerintah utk pengalihan isu, krn pemerintah slama ini di framing anti islam, yg ingin memfitnah islam melalui bom bunuh diri. Teganya memanfaatkan tragedi bom utk framing negatif, bnr2 tak punya perasaan :(“ - @ LuckyAlqodar
“Yes, there were some person and party who linked the terror bomb in Surabaya, the government uses that as distorting issue, because the government is known as anti-Islam who want to blamed Islam for suicide bombing. How could they use the bombing tragedy for negative framing, they don't have feeling”
- @ LuckyAlqodar.

From data above, we can conclude that netizen tends to write statement related to religion, ethnic group, or insult to replying Felix Siauww twitter.

Results

From the results of questionnaires distributed to 20 students of SMAN 34 Jakarta, it can be concluded that the percentage of 76.75% for overall value and can already be said to be good. As for the aspects of the appearance of percentage 77%, aspects of application quality of percentage of 73.6%, aspects of the presentation of the material obtained percentage of 76.2%, aspects of user interaction 78, 25%, 80% aspects of the interaction program, aspects of learning design and visual communication obtained 76.5% and the percentage of the sixth aspect of this application is said to be good. While the application of the test results performed on the mobile device android conclusion that of some smartphones in the test, the Samsung Galaxy SI, Samsung Galaxy Tab, Samsung S4, Galaxy Notem10.1 and Lenovo A390, successfully run applications due to their specifications which have already met specification of Unity 3D was ARmV 7. But for the Samsung Galaxy Gio S5660 cannot run applications because they used ARmV 6 and RAM is too little 278MB.

Discussion

The interesting thing from this article is that the amount of opposing replies dominating the replies. We should look at the number of retweet and likes from original tweets. The original tweet got 5,100 retweet and 7,478 likes. Retweet and likes to indicate the number of users who supports the message. RT feature can help expand the coverage of an opinion just with one effort (Hwang, 2015). The number of retweet and likes are not in line with the number of opposing replies. The role of opinion leader on Twitter to shape opinion in Twitter user is ineffective.

Research related to the role of opinion leaders was carried out by Jaali, Cangara, & Hasrullah (2013) to find out how important the role of opinion leaders in Wayame Village, Ambon, which was not affected by horizontal conflict. Opinion leaders did have an important role in influencing attitudes and individual behavior in Desa Wayame, so it can lessen inter-religious conflict. It can also show us that the opinion leader roles in the new media cannot be as effective as in traditional media. New media can

facilitate people to share or get information (Hananto, 2014). Public do not rely on information giving by opinion leader, they search alternative information for comparison. Besides, it shows that people tends to have a negative feedback when opinion leader brought racial, ethnic, religious and inter-group relations issues. The high number of opposing reception shows that on social media, there is a high chance for us to get cross-cutting information. Re-broadcast message to followers is easier with its features, like retweet feature. Cross-cutting information can be prevented if our friend-list is a like-minded friend network (Seong & Wohn, 2018). People were more likely to experience cross-cutting exposure on social media than in face-to-face settings (Barnidge, 2017).

Information on Twitter can spread everywhere because users can share specific topic to their friends' list on social media (Winter & Neubaum, 2016). There is a huge chance that it was not only Felix Siauw's followers that read the tweet but friends of Felix Siauw's followers. People who did not follow Felix Siauw might have a different opinion, yet they wanted to spoke up their opinion because they got cross-cutting information on their timeline. People who follow Felix Siauw and retweeted or/and liked the tweet might think that wrote a reply was not necessary because all they need was just an opinion leader who could speak on behalf of them. An opinion leader in new media, especially Twitter, do not have the same power as opinion leader in traditional media. It shows that the two-step flow model is not relevant in new media. Two-step flow model did not recognize the role of different communication sources or channels (Rogers, 2003). This model has lost its ability to explain information distribution in new media, technological development allows message to be sent directly to the target audience without any social intermediaries (Choi, 2015). Research conducted by Cha, et, al (2010) found that a large number of followers does not guarantee the power of information on Twitter. The number of retweets is driven by the content value of a tweet meanwhile, the number of mentions is driven by the name value of the user (Cha, Haddadi, Benevenuto, & Gummadi, 2010).

Conclusion

Opinion leaders in social media, especially in Twitter have the same responsibility as opinion leader in traditional media. Every tweet that they have written will reach millions of readers. From this mini research, we know that opinion leaders in new media did not give the same power as the opinion leader in traditional media. The possibility of followers to search for information by themselves also decreasing the power of opinion leader in new media. In new media, information can spread to anywhere with just "share" or "likes", it makes the dissemination information easier. That means, not all people who read the message have the same thought as the opinion leader. Concept two-step flow communication, especially opinion leader does not need to be discarded, there should be re-evaluation theory to adjust with the technology development.

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