Hoax as Political Influence Tool in Indonesia

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Abstract: Indonesia is facing emergency in managing hoax or fake news in online media. Hoax in this digital era has become an industry that produce fake news sold by agents, be it voluntarily or paid, to be consumed by online media users, being spread through 'like' and 'share' function. Hoaxes have become very dangerous problems because they are usually provocative, contain slanders, hate speech, and stir up issues. The issues they carry usually are in the sphere of politics as well as regarding ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group relations that can disturb the national stability. The aim of this research is to understand the Construction of Hoax News in the Online Media in Indonesia throughout 2017. The research is using the Content Analysis Method. Result Show that hoax in Indonesian news is mostly packaged in the form of news, infographics, and meme. It mainly spread through media that appear in social media. Currently many media sites were prohibited by the government because they are proven to be spreading hoax, false news and hate speech on race, ethnicity and religious issues. This kind of media usually uses satire-inclined statements and the titles are bombastic or draw curiosity. Often the content does not match the title and hoax is spread through social media like Facebook. Hoax is often in the form of propaganda, false information, partisan (loyal supporter), satire, sponsored content, and conspiration theory.

1 INTRODUCTION

Indonesia right now faces the emergency in overcoming hoax and fake news in online media. According to the Ministry of Communication and Information, as reported by CNN Indonesia, in December 2016, there are around 800,000 sites in Indonesia that are indicated to spread fake news and hate speech(CNN Indonesia 2016). The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines hoax as "to trick into believing or accepting as genuine something false and often preposterous" (Meriam Webster 2017). The Cambridge dictionary defines hoax as a plan to deceive someone, such as telling the police there is a bomb somewhere when there is not one, or a trick (Cambridge Dictionary 2017).

Hoax is usually written or produced to be shared and forwarded to as many people as possible. Some hoaxes make use of human fear or sense of sympathy for others. Although hoax has been known since the ancient time, hoax in the digital era poses momentous thread because of its faster and wider spread through online media, social media, and phone social applications to reach the record number of audiences. This is along the growth of public access to internet. The TIK Indicator data released by the Ministry of Communication and Information in 2016 shows that household access to internet grew around 15% within three years, from 19.6% in 2013 to around 36% in 2016(Kominfo 2016).

In 2016 - 2017 was unordinary because the duration was filled with the Jakarta governor election process as well as the capture of some corruptors by the Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK).The issues spread by hoaxes are mostly related to SARA that seem to aim to destabilize the country's stability as the information pitches one group against another. The phrases and sentences chosen are often provocative, slandering, and filled with hate.

Research conducted by Masyarakat Telematika Indonesia (Mastel), published on 13 February 2017, shows that around 91.8% respondents admitted to received hoaxes related to social political issues, such as related to the regional head election. They also received hoax that relates to SARA issues around 88.6% of the times. The hoaxes were received in the form of texts (62.1%), images

(37.5%), and videos (0.4%). They mostly received the information through social media (92.4%), namely Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Path; websites (34.9%), television (8.7%), print media (5%), email (3.1%) and radio (1.2%)(Mastel 2017).

Not only general public, even journalists sometimes fall into the trap of hoax because some hoaxes mix reports from credible media outlets with some lies added in. As such, reporters who do not follow stringent journalistic procedures may unknowingly participate in spreading of hoax. This leads to confusion among the general public on which information they can trust. This situation is exacerbated by the low digital literacy in Indonesia. The Jakarta Post newspaper reported a study by Central Connecticut State University in the US that in 2016, Indonesia's literacy level was still at the rank 61, which is the second place from the bottom, only better than Botswana. (Gunawan A, 2016) The level of information literacy contributes to the ease of the public to be provoked or trust the hoaxes.

The government has done various efforts to curb hoax in Indonesia, such as support anti-hoax forums such as turnbackhoax.id, discussing with the Press Council, industry players like Google, Facebook, and other stakeholders to find most effective solutions. It is reported that the government planned to form the National Cyber Committee and had recruited experts to serve there. (Fachrudin F, 2017). After understanding the background of the issues consequently the research is to find the Hoax Construction in Online Media in Indonesia during 2016 - 2017 Period, this research also trying to describe forms of the hoax as information to the public and curbing hoax.

2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this research is the qualitative research to explain the phenomena as clearly as possible through thorough data gathering. This research is subjective in nature and the results are more toward casuistic, and not to be generalized. In Kriyantono moreover explain that the descriptive research aim to make the description more systematic, factual, and accurate about the facts and nature of certain object or certain population. This research is to depict the reality that is happening without explaining the relation between the variables (Kriyantono R and Rakhmat S J, 2014).The research method used in this research is content analysis, which the research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the

manifest content of communication (Berelson&Kerlinger in (Kriyantono R and Rakhmat S J, 2014))

The systematic technique to analyze content of communication or a tool to observe and analyze the content of open communication behavior by chosen communicator (Budd R W, Thorp R K, Donohew L, 1967). The benefits of the Content Analysis include:

1. Describe communication content
2. Predict media description toward certain group
3. Compare media content
4. Compare media content with social reality (media content is reflection of social-culture values)
5. Understand the function and effect of media

The research also studied the online media trend through the lens of Mass Media Social Construction Substance research method, which assume that the reality constructed also form mass opinion, apriory-inclined mass and cynical-inclined mass. The position of Mass Media Social Construction is to correct the substantial weakness and complete the social construction on the reality by putting all strengths of the media and effect of media on the mass media construction on the social construction of reality. This simultaneous process does not work suddenly but go through some important stages. The researchers recognized and classified hoax that circulated throughout 2017 by recognizing the characteristic of hoax through the choosing of phrases and sentences by the makers, and to recognize its intended effects on the audience by the makers (Bungin MB, 2008).

Data gathering techniques employed by the researchers include:
1. Literary Study
   Data gathering done through literature study by gathering hoaxes spread in online media in Indonesia from January 2016 to February 2017. This period is chosen because during this period, the volume of hoax increased, and the government deemed hoax as the public enemy in Indonesia.
2. Critical Linguistics
   Data gathering is done by analyzing and classifying hoax texts gathered based on certain criteria.
3. Observation
   Data gathering through observation done by researchers to understand the receptiveness and response toward hoaxes by the audience.

The analysis techniques employed by this research is the mass media social construction process proposed by Burhan Bungin in its book, which go through the following phases:

1. Preparation of construction material

    Preparation of mass media social construction material is the duty of editors in the mass media offices, and the task is distributed to desk editors in the media organizations.

2. Construction distribution phase

    Mass media construction distribution is done through mass media strategy. The strategy can be different from one media organization to the other media organizations, but the main principle is still the real time (timeliness) principle.

3. Reality construction formation phase

    a. After the construction distribution phase, reality construction forms in the public through three stages generically. First, the reality construction justification; second, willingness to be reconstructed by mass media; third, as consumptive choice.

    b. Image construction formation wished to be established by the construction phase. This image construction by mass media formed in two models: 1) good news model and 2) bad news model.

4. Confirmation phase, which is the phase where the mass media and audience give their argumentation and accountability on their choices in this construction formation phase. For media, this phase is needed to explain why it is involved and willing to take part in the social construction process.

3   DISCUSSION

Media has the power to direct the mass and form public opinion, particularly the online news sites as they are accessible to wider public. This power has been growing in Indonesia.

Hoax is one type of rumours and gossips, which are not new in the world, although their spread through online media is much more speedy and far-reaching. The study on rumours has long history in the social science study.

According to Nicholas DiFonzon and Prashant Bordia, there are four criteria of rumours:

1. The statement of information, not opinion.
2. The statement spread, not kept privately.
3. The statement is not verified.
4. The statement is relevant, answering the questions which are deemed important by the people

Rumours (and hoaxes) have been the subjects of research for a long time, and the book Psychology of Rumours by Gordon Allport and Leo Postman published in 1947 has become one of the early references. Since then, many more researches have been performed. Allport and Postman in the book Basic Law of Rumor stated that the spread of rumours (and hoaxes) depended on the uncertainty of the situation and the importance of the rumours (AllportG W and Postman L, 1947). It was found that rumours spread faster when there was some uncertainties in the condition. People spread rumours because they are restless. Research found that "scaring" rumours spread faster than "hopeful" rumours, meaning rumours about something bad spread faster than the rumours about something good.

Based on the data published by Press Council (Dewan Pers) on its site dewanpers.co.id, there are 1,991 media companies registered as press company in Indonesia, as follows (Dewan Pers 2017):

    a) 714 media are Administration and Factual Verified, and 127 among them run online news site;

    b) 914 media Administration Verified, 300 among them run online news site;

    c) 757 media are unverified, and 441 among them run online news site.

The movement of media in Indonesia has positive impact as seen as the sheer number of media registered to Dewan Press. However, do these media uphold their responsibility as factual, educative fair and balance, particularly in delivering the news according to the context of event. Discussing online media in Indonesia also go beyond the registered media, as the social media now provide easy and flexible way used by individuals and groups to deliver news content. And among the popular social media, Facebook is the most widely used as news sites. It is understandable because Indonesia is the one of the largest Facebook users in world. According to the research by We Are Social in April 2017 (Kemp S 2017) Indonesia was placed as number four largest number of Facebook users with around 111 million users, followed by the popularity of Instagram with around 45 million users.

Indonesian public in the past decade has been experiencing digital technology enhancement that opens up the private space and public space, which has positive impact of opening ideas and information exchange. However, if not balanced by the necessary

digital literacy, it can be damaging as well. This allow the appearance of hoax, hate speech, cyber bullying and other negative impacts in digital space.

According to (Chabibie H, 2017) pustekkom.kemdikbud.go.id, in the idea context, Indonesian public do not have strong literacy foundation. The Program for International Student Assesment (PISA) research ranked Indonesia literacy tradition in 2012 at rank 64 out of 65 countries studied. The student reading index, Indonesia was placed on number 57 out of 65 countries research. While literacy level in the offline world maybe different than online world, however it could represent the literacy in the online world. (Davis C H, Shaw D, 2011) Digital literacy means the capabilities related to the hypertextual information, in the form of non-sequential reading based on computer or digital platform (Davis & Shaw, 2011). As such, the analytical capability becomes essential. According to Gilster Digital literacy – the ability to access networked computer resources and use them – is such a concept (CopeB and Kalantzis M, 2000)

Hoax and hate speech emergency have been warned by the government of Indonesia and the government is committed to curb it. Throughout 2017, Indonesia was plagued by false news and hate speech that aim at dividing the public. Comments on various media and on social media were filled by attacking statements directed to people who have different views than them and spread worries across the public. The social media has massive and active movement as it allows easier way to comment, easily accessible, less monitored than other forms of online news media.

The analysis of the media condition data and the news production of media can be seen on the table below:

Table 1: Media Overall Condition in Indonesia

Name	Administration and Factual Verified Media	Administration Verified Media	Unverified Media	Media on Social Media (Facebook)
Number of Media	714 media, 127 among them run online news site	914 media, 300 among them run online news site	757 media, 441 among them run online news site	No exact number known
Title	90% news titles match their content	76% news titles match their content	60% news titles match their content	35% news titles match their content

Organization	Official	Official	Unverified	Unclear
Content	Tend toward neutrality, not using bombastic wordings, not using personal wordings	Using flowery wording to make it more appealing	Content highlighted tend to be more bombastic and toward personal matter	Content created to give personal vibe on provocative content
Neutrality	Tend toward neutrality	Quite neutral while inserted a little the media's point of view	Highlight Hal yang disoroti yang dianggapakan popular di masyarakat	Show support for one side, which automatically affect the news content
Sources	Result of reportage by field journalists and results of collaboration with other media outlets	Results of reportage by journalist, partly obtain from other bigger sites	Mainly obtain from other bigger sites	Create own content that highly loaded with interests, gather and modify information
Content Update	Updated	Updated	Not Updated	Updated
Readers Participation	Not too active	Not too active	Not Active	Very active and interactive

Source: research data analysis 2017

The year 2017 was the political year for Indonesia because of the Jakarta governor election, which drew major public attention in Indonesia. The situation became "hot" after the spread of hoaxes and hate speech related to religion, race and ethnicity. In the mid-August, the public was shocked by the discovery of a professionally-managed organization that provides service to generate and spread hate speeches. The group, called Saracen, become the solid proof that the business in this area was profitable.

The existence of such organization as hate speech and hoax factory is not unfamiliar. In Macedonia, as reported by global.liputan6.com, there are many groups that purposely fabricated fake news regarding certain president or certain issues to target on the attentions of the Americans. They can earn as much as five times more than the average

Macedonian income, resulting in the income of reaching hundreds of millions rupiah a day. (Prastiwi A M, 2017) The spread of hoax was organized to purposely cause deep impact on the audience, to cause anxiety, conflict, arguments, hate that spread speedily. As such, the Indonesian government continues to encourage various ways to overcome hoax in Indonesia.

3.1 Preparation of Construction Material Phase

The issue trending that plagued Indonesia in 2017, starting from the end of 2016, was the accusation of religious blasphemy that drew anger and strong reactions from the religious believers. During this period, many media shared many false information and hoaxes that touch on the religion, race and ethnicity matter. However, many experts claimed that these are political attacks because of the Jakarta governor election. In preparing the construction materials, the news makers certainly understand the social condition at that time and what they should deliver to manoeuvre public opinion toward what the news makers wish to arrive.

There are three essential things in the preparation of social construction material, namely:

a. The partiality of mass media toward capitalism

It is common knowledge that almost all media companies in Indonesia are owned by business people or politicians, which have caused concern about whether the media will stir public opinion toward the interest of the owner. In reality, it can hardly be denied that even the official and verified media companies have the power to stir public opinion, although the monitoring and press ethics can reduce that. However, if the media company is not even verified, not subject to any monitoring or have no sense of responsibility toward the public, it will certainly affect the news production. This opens up huge opportunity to spread hoaxes and hate speech into the public domain.

b. Pseudo-partiality toward the public

This type of partiality is the form of empathy, sympathy, and various participation to the public. In 2017, there are many media that fabricated about inequality and unfairness toward certain person or group that were packaged as if pro-public, while on the other hand, it was found that these action could have been the ways to attract audience to the media and the contents it offers.

c. Partiality toward public interest

The media has the responsibility to the public, but on the other hand the media has to indirectly gain benefit from what it produces. This dilemma opens up the opportunities for political actors to offer benefits. Meanwhile the media that exist in social media (in the form of pages or group) can be owned by individuals or a group. After analyzed, in practice, the hoax spreader in the social, for example, could be owned by native who claimed to speak on behalf of public interest that drive him/her to share, however implicitly there was the wish to be known and popular, as such producing fabricated news to gain popularity.

3.2 Hoax Construction Spreading Phase

Mass media construction spreading is done through mass media strategy. The concrete concept for mass media spreading can be different for different media, however the underlying principle is real time. It is common that mass media social construction spreading uses one-directional model, whereby the media deliver the news and the audience has no other choice but to consume the information. The basic principle of mass media social construction spreading is that all information must reach the audience as fast as possible and as accurately as possible based on media agenda. What is deemed important by the media is to be seen as important as well by audience.

The social media spreading concept also follows the principle of delivering the information as fast as possible to the public. However, in practice, it was found that some of the news were already prepared beforehand and were set to be published at certain time. This tends toward propaganda that is tried to be legitimized in the packaging of news. The demand for speedily news on certain online media platform also tends to affect the accuracy of news, particularly if the news producers are not professional journalists. However, these news with questionable accuracy, even hoaxes, produced by unverified news media gain trust by the audience who assume that the news are accurate. This matter will be discussed in the next point.

3.3 Hoax Reality Construction Forming Phase

When the fake news arrives at the audience, there is forming of reality construction in the public through three phases that take place generically:

a. Construction justification as a form of mass media construction built in the public that tend to justify whatever information delivered by the mass media as a reality. In the other words, information by mass media is the authority of behaviour to justify certain event.

This is used by hoax makers. The justification construction is supported by constructing seemingly supporting stance by supporting groups. Even in the case of Saracen hoax-making group, they pushed fake news to become viral by faking the existence of supportive individuals in every posts. This psychologically will create the mass justification effect such that even the real audience will believe in the information.

b. The second phase in the willingness to be constructed by mass media, namely the generic behaviour in the first phase. The willingness of someone to become mass media reader is because of his/her choice to willingly let his/her mind being constructed by the mass media. The utilization of the second phase in the online media or social media is very possible, because fake news commonly use bombastic or click-bait title that increase their possibilities to be consumed.

c. The third phase is making the mass media consumption as the consumptive choice, whereby someone individually depends on the mass media. Mass media has become integral to his/her lifestyle. In the case of fake news spreading, it happens when the readers read and see many comments that fish reaction in the line of religion, ethnicity and race, which cause the fake news to be more popular.

3.4 Image Construction Forming Phase

Image construction by mass media is form in two models: 1) good news model and 2) bad news model. Good news model is the construction that tends to construct news as good news. In this model, news object is constructed as having good image,

which is better than what the object actually is. In the case of hoaxes in Indonesia during the Jakarta governor election, each supporting group has two options in delivering news. In the good news model, in 2017 some new mass media glorified one of the religious persons who were deemed to fight for the religious blasphemy case; they only mentioned the good thing about this person while ignoring the information that he himself also spoke of religious blasphemy toward other culture and beliefs. However the media only reported good and bombastic information about this person and whoever who have good relationship with this person also get the good news treatment.

On the contrary, the bad news model is the construction that tends to construct the weakness or give negative image toward the object of news such that the object seems worse, more evil than the object actually is. It was found that the hoax and fake news makers employ both models: using the good news model as defensive shield and bad news as attacking weapon.

3.5 Hoax Confirmation Phase

According to Burhan Bungin, there are several common reasons utilized in the confirmation phase, namely:

a) The modern lifestyle demands the individual to constantly adapt and become part of mass media production. As such, fake news that spread nowadays seem to utilize this demand for modern person to be up-to-date and in the know.

b) The proximity with mass media is the modern lifestyle, whereby modern person enjoys popularity particularly by being the subject of the news. The desire to be popular on social media, coupled with media illiteracy, become the suitable combination to be target of fake news and help fake news to spread faster and wider.

c) Mass media have the ability to construct reality based on the media subjectivity, but also has the presence in one's life as the unlimited source of knowledge that can be accessed anytime. The danger is that many hoax and fake news pretend to be by credible media or take part of legitimate news and edit it to be new news to be spread to their target audience. There are many illegitimate media that use name that are very close to the credible media companies. As more and more members of

the public access information from their social media than accessing directly to the official and credible news sites, the selection process drops.

4 CONCLUSION

Hoax in Indonesian news is mostly packaged in the form of news, infographics, and meme. It mainly spread through media that appear in social media. Currently many media sites were prohibited by the government because they are proven to be spreading hoax, false news and hate speech on race, ethnicity and religious issues. This kind of media usually uses satire-inclined statements and the titles are bombastic or draw curiosity. Often the content does not match the title and hoax is spread through social media like Facebook. Hoax is often in the form of propaganda, false information, partisan (loyal supporter), satire, sponsored content, and conspiration theory. During the hoax construction material preparation phase on Indonesian media, it is found that hoaxes are prepared by individuals or groups that have certain interest. In 2017, hoaxes were dominated with issues related to the Jakarta governor regional election (67%), followed by 22% regarding corruption cases, and 11% on other issues. In other words, political players used hoax as the tools to benefit certain parties.

The hoax construction spread massively in various media in Indonesia, and mostly are structurally spread in social media for the interest of certain groups to spread political issue. The use of social media, such as through Facebook pages or groups, allow faster, wider spread as well as less-stringent audience scrutiny compared to the spread using conventional news sites. The hoax reality construction in Indonesian media shows that news contents are directed toward good news and bad news approach, which drive issues related to race, ethnicity and religion or hate speech are reported implicitly, using data-data from big verified media, but modified and fabricated to include lies so that the audience often do not realize that the content contains hoax. Meanwhile, the confirmation phase in hoax news in Indonesia media shows that there is the audience is motivated by their desire to be most updated and popular, hence they are less careful and less selective in choosing news. Contents that are designed to be rhetorical and inviting, thus receiving lots of comments that win more public trust and become the choice by its audience.

Conversely in Indonesia there's the need for collaboration between different stakeholders including the platform providers, official and credible media, social organizations, academic world, and the active participation of the members of public to overcome hoax. Digital literacy is much needed so that the vocal-community can correctly understand during their idea-exchange process in the digital media without making some issues spread wide. The public will also need to be more selective in choosing which media they should consume their information from, and furthermore will keep our nation united.

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