Digital Literacy Competencies of Netizens Activities on Twitter

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Abstract: Hate speech is considered to be one of the problems in digital media, including Twitter. College students, as the active users or netizens, seem required to protect themselves from such a problem. Hate speech cases discovered on Twitter can be avoided by mastering digital literacy. Therefore, this research aims to find out the digital literacy competencies of netizens in terms of activity on Twitter amongst Communication Science students of Gadjah Mada University Yogyakarta. The method used in this research was qualitative by gathering data through in-depth interview then analysing it using Paul Gilster's theory about digital literacy. The result of this research stated that Communication Science students of Gadjah Mada University Yogyakarta have digital literacy competencies based on four competencies. They are internet searching and hypertext navigation, while they still need improvement on content evaluation and knowledge assembly competencies since they tend to be critical in terms of their interest and not assembling the knowledge yet from others media to find the new one.

1 INTRODUCTION

The 2017 survey of the Indonesian Internet Service Provider Associatio or *Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia* (henceforth APJII) shows the growth of internet users in 2017 to 143.26 million out of 262 million as the total population of Indonesia. 74.23% of internet users are college students aged 19 to 34 and 87.13% of all internet users access social media.

The emergence of social media has increased the intensity of internet usage. The shift of public interest to digital media as a communication tool is forced by its fast, easy, and practical way of disseminating information. On the other hand, the rapid dissemination of information over the internet is considered to cause problems such as the spread of hate speech. Internet users should have self-protection over such problems.

Kaplan (2010) defines social media as a set of internet-based applications built on ideology and the technology of Web 2.0 which allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. The rapid dissemination of information over social media should be useful to improve cognitive ability in maximising the usage of digital media. But what happens is a lot of improper cases such as hate speech, cyber violence, or hoaxes are spreading rapidly on social media, one of which is in Twitter.

By its characteristics, Twitter has become a place for people to express their opinions freely and that often triggers some opinion wars on social media. Although the rules in using social media seem to be missing, the state imposes legal restrictions on the violation of Constitution UU nomor 19 tahun 2016 about Information and Electronic Transaction, replacing UU nomor 11 tahun 2008. Online society (netizens) and social media can act as agents of political change (Gordon in Syahputra, 2017). Consequently, netizens need to verify each piece of information circulating on Twitter, especially for issues that make up two alignments.

Even so, verification is only one part of some competencies that social media users should have. Having digital literacy in terms of internet usage involves mastery of a set of core competencies (Gilster, 1997). There are 4 (four) competencies for digital literacy: internet searching, hypertext navigation, content evaluation, and knowledge assembly. These competencies become the primary key for self-protection of internet users, including

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Twitter, over vast content such as hate speeches. The term digital literacy has been used since 1990; it refers to the ability to read and understand hypertextual and multimedia text; Lanham in (Bawden, 2001) equates the term digital literacy with multimedia literacy, while, according to Deakin University's Graduate Learning Outcome 3 (DU GLO3), digital literacy is the use of technology to search, use, and disseminate information.

Furthermore, there is a Network of Digital Literacy Activists (Jaringan Pegiat Literasi Digital) who have conducted research to map the digital literacy movement in Indonesia. Their research shows the following result:

"Seen from agents of literacy movement at 9 cities in Indonesia, university (56,14%) emerge as the main actor, followed by government (14,34%); community (13,52%); non-profit organization (5,32%); school and corporate (3,68% each). Others are professional association and mass organization 2,86%); and media (0,4%)" (Kurnia, 2017).

Whereas "seen from the variety of activities: socialization or lecture (29,64%) is the most frequently performed digital literary activities, followed by workshop or research (20,9%); seminar or discussion (14,32%); research (11,33%); talk show (11,08%); publication (4,78%); campaign and advocacy (4,28%); others are competence, mentoring and formation of anti-hoax units (2,01%); and curriculum (1,51%)" (Kurnia, 2017). Curriculum has the lowest percentage in digital literacy activities because there are only a few universities that have digital literacy courses, one of which is the Communication Study Program of Gadjah Mada University. This encourages Researchers to examine the digital literacy competence of netizen activities on Twitter on Communication Science students of Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta.

2 METHODS

This research uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. The primary research data are gathered through in-depth interviews with 3 informants who are the Communication Science students of Gadjah Mada University that actively use Twitter. A documentation technique using photos or screenshots of netizen activity on Twitter will be used as secondary data in this research. These documentation data will be useful to evaluate the relevance between answers given by interviewees and their lives on Twitter.

The collected data is then analysed by doing data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This analysis method refers to the Milles and Huberman analysis model in Emzir (2010).

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to describe the digital literacy competence of Communication Science students of Gadjah Mada University reviewed from 4 competencies, that are internet searching, hypertext navigation, content evaluation, and knowledge assembly. The collected data are analysed using Paul Gilster's theory.

3.1 Internet Searching: Fulfilling Netizen Curiosity

As an informative form of social media, Twitter is used as a media for information searching for one's interests and needs. Twitter users have the control to manage from whom they want to receive information or to find out certain issues manually through the Twitter search features like the search and trending column. Informant 1 who follows movie updates described the movie information search in Twitter by "using hashtag of the movie title, reading replies and reviews from other users by clicking each links available on their blog". Informant 1 showed that, in order to get information on Twitter, besides having to follow the related interest accounts it is also necessary to search for information by entering the right keywords into the column search..

In addition to the ability to do information searches, Twitter usage activities are also an indicator of digital literacy competency mastery on the aspect of internet searching. It is related to the knowledge and utilisation of various features available on Twitter. Nevertheless, informants have a tendency to use only the features they feel they need in interacting on Twitter. As revealed by Informant 3, not all features are used when accessing Twitter. However, making use of features such as tweet; like; reply; bookmark dm; list; and moment has helped him in interacting on Twitter.

The Communication Science students of Gadjah Mada University already know that the needs for information as well as certain issues can be fulfilled by the ability to search via Twitter in accordance with netizens' interests and needs. Besides this, the ability to use and utilise features that support interaction on Twitter is important.

3.2 Hypertext Navigation: Finding Continous Information

Understanding the hypertext guide direction is not only related to the hypertext itself, but also the knowledge of information available on digital media (Gilster, 1997). Twitter allows the users to share links which can lead to other related pages on an issue or information.

This competency can be seen from some indicators, that are: knowledge of hypertext and hyperlink and how they work; knowledge of the difference between searching information via Twitter and print media; knowledge of how Twitter works; and the ability to understand the characteristics of Twitter page.

Using hypertext and hyperlink on Twitter showed netizens' ability to find attractive continuous information. Informant 2 stated that he finds hypertext on the timeline as well as on other users' bio profiles. Furthermore, he explained that he only goes to certain accounts. That's different from Informant 3 who uses hypertext to connect tweets that exceed the 280-character limit determined by Twitter.

The process of finding information is more often obtained through the internet. Informant 3 stated, "it is more often to get information through the internet because it is faster and more practical". This is in line with Informant 1 who prefers to access information from the internet, although they have to be careful with plenty of hoaxes compared to print media.

Furthermore, the characteristics of Twitter pages also need to be understood by its users such as: the availability of original content; interactivity; immediacy; and integration. Original content can be seen from original posts that are supported with auto-hypertext if tweets exceed the character limit. Besides this, users are also able to use embedded tweets and embedded timeline features if they want to link their Twitter page to another web page. Informant 1 links his Twitter page to his personal blog page although he doesn't use the embedded timeline feature provided by Twitter. Informant 3 often uses hypertext to know the original post of information gained via Twitter. Furthermore, the characteristic of interactivity that Twitter has is proven with some features that support netizen interaction such as: thread; reply; and follow. All 3 informants also often use these features. Immediacy can be easily obtained from Twitter due to the speed of information updates, while integration can be done from other platforms to Twitter but not the other way round.

3.3 Content Evaluation: Browsing the Information Content

The information gained from Twitter cannot be taken for granted. There are some processes for understanding certain information in order to obtain true information in social media. Browsing the information content requires some abilities such as: distinguishing the page display and information content; analysing the information background; evaluating the web pages; and understanding of Frequently Asked Questions in a social media newsgroup.

A Twitter user who has the ability to distinguish the web page display and information content can be said to have the competency of content evaluation. In a web page found via Twitter, users should be focused on the information content so the perception is not only affected by the display. But this doesn't mean that it is not important to note the web display.

The results of the interviews state that all informants pay more attention to the information contents, but often an attractive display makes them continue to read the information content.

In order to understand the information, Twitter users need to know its background. Based on interview data, informants often trace the information through search engine machines. Informant 2 explained that he uses Google to verify the information from Twitter. It can be said that he has filtered the information as he determines which account he wanted to follow by considering its credibility. As Informant 3 stated, the need to browse the information background is based on from whom the original post originated and the topic being read. It can be said that although netizens have trust in the information on Twitter, still they continue to identify the information background and its completeness by using search engines to know the main source of content dissemination.

Evaluating the related web page for the findings about information is achieved by looking at hypertext linked to the Twitter timeline. The evaluation is useful for knowing the web ownership origin which is seen from the domain used. Netizens need to have such knowledge in order to be effective in determining information about a particular information provider account that they want to follow in accordance with their needs and interest.

As one of the social media types that doesn't provide a forum or discussion group, Twitter only

has the feature of being able to gather netizens together around a single topic. Accordingly, there is no indicator for understanding Frequently Asked Questions in a forum or newsroom.

3.4 Knowledge Assembly: Enriches Netizen's Perspective

Gilster (1997) explained that, besides critical thinking, other competencies needed are assembling knowledge and building a collection of information obtained from some different sources. There are some supporting components for users in compiling knowledge from information. Re-checking the information is one of the ways to ensure the information's validity. Informant 2 prefers to be critical and skeptical, as he stated: "in my opinion, all informations are need to be verified, either it's from Twitter or not". From the statement, it can be concluded that Informant 2 verifies not only the information from Twitter but from other sources too. Although he explained earlier that he trusts information obtained from Twitter, still he needs to re-check that information through other media. As well as this, Informant 3 checks information validity by browsing the main source of information.

Use of various types of media proves the information validity. Regarding this, not all informants use all types of media as a reference to prove information's validity. Informant 1 claimed to believe with all information from Twitter was reliable because he followed trusted accounts. This is different from Informants 2 and 3 who verify information through other media like Google. Besides the internet, there are television and radio which can be used as reference media and are more credible.

Although all informants did not use all types of media as a reference in checking the information, all of them claimed that they need a discussion in the real world regarding information obtained from Twitter, as Informant 1 stated:

"I discuss about the same information or issue with friends who have references other than Twitter. Sometimes my understanding of certain information is limited, so I need space for discussion which is with my friends." This proves that the Informant who use Twitter to interact and seek information still needs a place for discussion. Besides, it can be assumed that knowledge formation around information relates to strengthening trust towards information validity, and gaining various perspectives as well as new findings from organised knowledge.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In doing their activities on Twitter, netizens have digital literacy competency which can be seen from their skill in searching for information on Twitter to fulfill the curiosity of their interests and they have also mastered the use of Twitter features which are useful to support their activity. Furthermore, the use of hypertext in finding continuous information shows that the students are capable of understanding how the hypertext guide works. Netizens are able to trace the information content. However, the assessment of information is only carried out on information that suits their interest. In enriching the perspective, although netizens have not used all types of media as a reference in verifying information's validity, they often have a discussion with people around them about information obtained from Twitter.

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