

Organization Culture, Online Journalism, and Media Independence: The Case of Tempo Newsroom

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Abstract: This article will describe the adoption process of digital technology and media in an Indonesian established media group. The tempo is one of the leading media in Indonesia which is known for its independence and strongly emphasize on balance reporting. When current media technology enables many parties to interact and response to each other in mass media, Tempo's independence is tested. We seek to explain how this independence that became the most precious cultural value for the media has nowadays been tested by online trends in journalism. We conducted qualitative research by participating in several activities in the newsroom and conducting in-depth interviews, and noticed that changes in organizational culture had occurred in Tempo media groups. It is found that while independency is there, the interactivity and interconnectedness between the press, journalists, and reporters in the newsroom and the readers, audience, and other consumers have shaped a new configuration of organizational culture. We examine that independence as an established value in Tempo becomes more dynamic. Some facilities that allow public interactivity, the speed at which news is broadcast, and the hope that a news post will be viral, make editorials increasingly difficult to limit themselves to external influences.

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper intends to describe changes in an organizational culture that occurred in Tempo, a media company in Indonesia. We chose Tempo as a case because it is one of the big press media and has been operating for a long time in Indonesia, crossing the turn of the political regimes with very different characters. As revealed by Carroll & Buchholtz (2008), organizational culture is located within society which serves as a macro-environment. According to them, the elements of macro-environment that needs to be considered because they greatly affect the corporate culture are social, political, economic, and technological environments.

As Tempo was established and grew in the decades of 1970-1990 while the socio-political environment was colored by the New Order under the authoritarian former President Suharto, the perceived climate was a hierarchical military atmosphere, full of state control, and no press freedom. Meanwhile the technology for broadcasting is limited to state-controlled TV and radio stations, and printed media such as newspapers

or news magazines that must meet the conditions set by the state. Tempo originated from a news magazine. In order to operate, it has to fulfill *Surat Izin Usaha Penerbitan Pers* (SIUPP), a license to start press and news media business. It is through the issuance and revocation of the SIUPP that the state supervises and controls the press for the sake of *pembangunan nasional* (national development programs), which becomes their ideology, and political stability.

Tempo founders and earlier journalists, unlike other media, however, refused to submit to a number of rules. Although they took care of SIUPP and fulfilled all administrative requirements, Tempo continued to develop a critical, free, and impartial attitude to the interests of the state. They developed the principle of independence and planted it in the mind of the journalists and workers. As explained by Schein (2010), the founders and leaders at the beginning of the organization were very instrumental in giving color to organizational culture. This paper will specifically examine Schein's classic examples of the importance of the role of founders and leaders in determining

organizational culture, especially in situations where technology increasingly enables various stakeholders from organizations to directly interact.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of organizational culture according to Schein (2010: 23-24) refers to values and beliefs of an organization consisting of three layers that show the level of culture. From the most concrete manifestations, the level begins with artifacts, then espoused beliefs, and basic underlying assumptions. Artifacts are a visible part of the culture and feelable structures and processes; espoused beliefs and values refer to ideas, goals, values, aspirations, ideologies, and rationalizations; while the basic underlying assumptions are unconscious, taken for granted beliefs and values. Practically, this organizational culture is an effort to corporate effectiveness, growth and success (Alvesson 2012: 1-2). Both Schein and Alvesson, see that organizational culture provides direction and orientation for organizational members to achieve goals. Experts nowadays see the organizational culture that is applied to companies as a corporate culture that function like secret sauce which causes a company to progress and is different from the others (Guiso, Sapienza & Zingales 2015).

Talking about organizational culture or corporate culture in the journalism, Hanitzsch (2007) came with journalism culture as a more specific concept. He mentioned about three essential constituents of journalism culture which are institutional roles, epistemologies, and ethical ideologies. Moreover, he continues to detail those dimensions to interventionism, power distance, market orientation, objectivism, empiricism, relativism, and idealism. With his approach he saw that the typical Indonesian journalists are men, came from a higher degree of education, and enjoy good earnings compare to other professions (Hanitzsch 2005, 2006). Those are some capitals for them to be professional and independence journalists. Unfortunately, he argues that they are not really perform well these days.

In the case of Tempo, we learned that independence is a value that is upheld by the company. Actually, Bannet argues independence is a central rhetorical means for the legitimacy of various types of media in different contexts (Karppinen and Moe, 2016). In the case of Tempo that grew during the authoritarian state, independence became an important keyword that distinguishes it from other media. Therefore, it is clear that media independence

a relational concept. According to Bannet, we must always ask for what purpose it is used for. Each media will always deal with many different types of constraints and external influences. Which is the most relevant or politically relevant, depending on the context. Independence becomes a concept that is basically contested and inherently experience endless revisions and interpretations (Gallie, 1956, in Karppinen and Moe, 2013, 2014, 2016).

While in the past, independence contested with state control and intimidation, in the present independence is experiencing different challenges. In the new economy, which is an economy of groups whose purpose is to satisfy a person's need for quality communication (Dolgin 2012: 6-7), the internet is the main technology that facilitates interactions among individuals and between individuals and the public. It has now been embedded in news gathering activities and has changed the relationship between journalists and information sources. Digital communication has the advantage of speed and efficiency in the newsroom but also has implications for the quality and independence of a mass media (Steensen, 2008: 358). Journalists, now sharing information space without intermediaries, especially in relation to government and other official publications that are likely to be published online, and can research and collect news on the internet more widely.

In online media, there are dominant features that we can observe, one of which is interactivity, a concept used to describe various processes related to communication and the practice of online journalism. Jensen describes interactivity as a measure of a media's potential ability to let users influence mediated communication content or forms. All types of interactivity can be found on online news (Stenseen, 2011: 315). Features that encourage interactivity include comment columns, sharing features to social media and messaging applications, as well as discussion forums. The concept of interactivity also makes the online media audience not just active readers, but also users or users in digital applications.

More and more online news agencies seem increasingly trying to be more interactive. Readers and media consumers are facilitated to contribute to the production of content by sending photos, videos, and text. But some previous studies stated that online news sites do not use all forms of available interactive features, especially features that actually function to facilitate human interactivity (Baczkowski, 2004; Chung, 2007; Deuze, 2003; Schultz, 1999). Deuze (2003) argues that

mainstream media not only take their content online but also transfers their culture and work practices to the online world. Similarly, the study of Boczkowski (2004) illustrates how a mass-based media, when adopting internet technology does not ignore or fully implement electronic publishing (2004: 20). Boczkowski said the media chose to adopt features that were in line with the corporate culture while building something new (2004: 20). This study specifically discusses the significance of the practice of digital media, especially interactivity features, towards Tempo's corporate culture.

3 METHODOLOGY

The data were collected through participant observation in the Tempo Newsroom. It started by attending a short course of journalism conducted by tempo for two weeks, then followed by three months of internship as a reporter. These activities took place from early September to December 2017, and then continued with observations from January to April 2018 while working as a reporter. Data was collected through participant observation in Tempo Newsroom. It starts by taking a brief journalism course that is conducted for two weeks, then followed by a three-month internship as a reporter. During the involvement in this organization, the researcher had the opportunity to learn about Tempo's version of journalism, to feel part of being a journalist, and of getting socialization on the corporate culture at Tempo. In addition, a thorough literature study was conducted. The data then qualitatively analyzed by using some anthropological concept mainly culture (Jordan 2012), and it specifically focuses on the dynamic of technology and value construction in the media corporate facilitated by internet and communication technology.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The rise and fall of Tempo

Started in 1971 as a national weekly magazine, Tempo, is well known for its critical and independence standing in Indonesian press throughout the authoritarian New Order regime. At those times, the state controlled the media and freedom of expression through mass media and only some media associated with state agencies could

freely operate (Hill 1994). It is believed that Tempo for three decades has successful in planting the value of being independence for the journalists and for the companies. Tempo has been known for its neutral and application cover-both-stories principles in reporting, both from state and market perspective.

The target of readers of Tempo magazine is the urban middle class who are also observers of political issues and do not have a strong loyalty to a particular party. In April 1982, Tempo magazine was banned from publishing temporarily because of the issue of the general election. On June 21, 1994, the government completely banned the publication of Tempo magazine by revoking the Press Issuance Business License 'Surat Izin Usaha Penerbitan Pers' (SIUPP) because of its coverage of the purchase of ex-German warships. In his speech, the President at that time Suharto said that there was a press that muddies the political and national stability and pits sheep the government actors. That was the reason why he then revoked Tempo's SIUPP.

After no longer having SIUPP, Tempo looked for loopholes on the internet to publish news articles. This was done because government regulations at that time had not touched the internet realm. The news site titled Tempo Interaktif finally arrived in 1996. The digital era was then flourishing when Tempo launched Koran Tempo, a daily newspaper, in 2001. This was followed by publishing English news versions, and Tempo Interactive online a few years later. In addition, Tempo also began to expand its business to radio and TV. The growth of Tempo as a media enterprise is facilitated by the establishment of Tempo News Room as a news agency to supply news for Tempo media groups. Internet and media technology is of course the most important factor to speed up Tempo's performance.

Unlike most mainstream mass media in Indonesia or prior research on the relationship between the internet and the independence of the media (Hill & Sen 2005), the internet actually became a Tempo strategy to continue to uphold independence. Tempo innovations in exploring news sites initially did not intend to pursue the market but instead hid from the government's iron hand over press freedom. At that time students and the wider community were able to print and distribute thousands of articles from Tempo Interaktif and Goenawan Mohamad, editor in chief of Tempo magazine, just laughing and saying, "They may read it for free," (see Steele, 2005).

4.2 Independence as the business core

Schein (2010:25) says, the learning process in a community or organization ultimately reflects the values of someone about how they should act and what should be avoided. When an organization first encounters a problem, the proposed solution will reflect some individual assumptions about what is right and wrong. If the solution successfully resolves the problem, the person or group that gives the idea can influence the community or organization to adopt the solution as a specific approach to solving the problem. We found that Schein's formulation mostly appears in Tempo newsroom. The idea of Tempo independence did not immediately become shared knowledge but was triggered by the leader and its founder, who was also written in the editorial introduction of the first edition of Tempo magazine. Previously, independence was only a kind of proposal to be questioned, debated and tested. Only when group members have taken several joint actions to apply the ideas of their leaders and if the solution is proven to be able to solve the problem, then the ideas brought by the leader will gradually change into values and espoused beliefs (Schein, 2010: 27).

Starting from the idea of the founders who were mostly young people and activists of the 1960s generation, independence became a solution for Tempo during President Soeharto's reign, when the Indonesian press found it difficult to be critical and impartial. The idea of independence continued to be tested in Tempo's journey. When independence was implemented, the idea turned out to be successful because Tempo received a lot of support from various community backgrounds. The idea of independence finally transformed as an important and espoused belief for Tempo to date. The actions taken as independent media continue to succeed so that the value becomes a shared belief and ultimately becomes a shared assumption.

The value of Tempo's independence grew, even more, when the magazine promoted investigative journalism. After the New Order ended, the challenge to independence came from within the company's own body. For example, in April 2002, Tempo magazine investigated the Pantai Indah Kapuk housing estate, which was blamed for causing flooding on some toll roads to Soekarno-Hatta Airport. The company belongs to a commissioner of PT Tempo Inti Media, who also played a role in the birth of Tempo magazine. The magazine also has rebuked Abdurahman Wahid, a freelance columnist of the magazine, who is later

becoming the fourth president of Indonesia. Tempo's close relationship with Wahid did not necessarily make the media soft in criticizing him while serving as president in the public interest. Tempo Magazine, among others, wrote the main report criticizing his leadership: "Never mind, Gus" (May 14-20, 2001), "Playing Fire with Decrees" (May 28-June 3, 2001), and "Sweep Recognition and Engagement of the Palace" (May 29-June 4, 2001).

Through a long journey, the value of independence has been meaningful to the Tempo editors. But how is the value of independence reflected in the daily life of later reporters and journalists when Tempo has adopted new technology such as internet?

In a journalistic training at Tempo Institute, September 2017 that we observed, the main material is given was entitled "Becoming a Tempo Journalist". The class was filled by Pak To, Tempo's senior editor. What he stressed was the attitude of independent Tempo journalists. "Professional and independent attitudes are characteristic of Tempo journalists, in addition to anti-bribery and anti-hoaxes," he said. Independence is explained to the new journalists by emphasizing Tempo's history of news coverage which he judged reflects independence. According to Pak To, the essence of independence is to focus on public rights in obtaining information. Thus he asked the new reporters to really pay attention and to try their best to apply principle of independence on their journalism works.

4.3 Dynamics of Independence and Online Media Journalists

The later development of online media has changed the editorial routine, one of which is in choosing news titles, topics, and points of view. If the selection of topics for print-based Tempo magazines could be more independent and investigative, the choice in online media would be more complex. The amount of advertising spending on online media becomes a way for online media to survive. The more internet users click on the site, the greater the income earned. To get more clicks, people turn themselves to implement Search Engine Optimization (SEO). SEO is a series of processes carried out systematically with the aim of increasing the volume and traffic of search engines to the site address. SEO works by utilizing the natural working mechanism of media algorithms such as Google and Yahoo. The specific purpose of SEO is to place a website address on the top position of search results based on

certain keywords that are entered by internet users. The logical consequence of the website address that occupies the top position of search results is that the site will have a greater chance of getting visitors because it immediately knows the place where he will get the information sought.

Keywords become important in search engines. To increase readability, editors need to consider the keywords that are being traced a lot by internet users as issues to be written or covered. Keywords that usually invite many readers are usually topics that are becoming a trend, especially on social media. This system indirectly broke the concept of Tempo's independence because ad-changing advertisements made editors unable to fully and firmly draw a line between news and traffic. "The purpose of writing is to be read. If you don't think about the traffic, it's also impossible," said Mas Jim, editor of Tempo.co.

The interactivity feature also changes the relationship of the journalist's mindset in choosing topics. Here is the case that we examine in the field:

In March 2018, I conducted participant observation and got a reporting assignment at the office of one of the major parties in Indonesia. After the coverage was finished, the next day one of Tempo.co's editors gave a news link from another online media. The news he asked contained the opinion of the party chairman about the situation in the DPR at that time. I don't think the opinion of the party leader is qualified news because I think that the speaker did not show data that support his opinion and he was not in the position of the parliament at that time. But my editor argues that the information has news value, especially in online media, because the character has many followers on social media and news about his opinion will be viral on social media. In fact, one of the main material that I got at Tempo Institute was the ability of journalists to sort out which opinions and facts. But in fact, opinions can also become news because it follows the tastes of online media readers.

Viral logic indirectly drives the editor in choosing news content to broadcast. We argue that traditional values in journalism experience changes and adjustments in online media. The readers (market) interest and attraction to be more active-commenting or sharing news has become an important factor in determining what content needs to be written. Mas Ri, the Tempo editor, said that ideas could also emerge from cyberspace. In this digital era, the latest

developments are easier to follow through social media. They will follow accounts that are popular in certain fields. For example, science reporters must follow several scientific accounts or research institutions on Twitter. Information from Twitter is a hook for journalists to dig deeper into the information as writing material. Unlike conventional journalism, when the independence of the editors from outside influences, especially the market and certain groups, becomes an important factor in choosing the content to be processed as news.

Active readers commented, according to Mas Jim, a reader of social media. "They clicked on the Tempo news from our social media (Tempo). Facebook, Twitter, and Line are the most," said Mas Jim. The relationship between online media and social media has an effect on news writing and sometimes content selection for editors. According to Mas Jim, "The majority of online media readers are a millennial generation, so they are also adjusted to their tastes". Bang Ron, editor of Tempo.co also believes that the editorial staff must intensively observe market tastes. He explains, "Being a journalist is like selling food. Not everyone likes food in restaurants, but there are also those who like roadside fried rice. Make the news too, what kind of reader do you follow, please."

We saw how new journalists were internalized with Tempo values which were actually difficult to apply in the online media environment. However, we find that independence remains important for new journalists who enter Tempo when they have adopted digital media. Tempo newsroom, which consists of magazine, newspaper, and online journalists, had respectively different values. Tempo magazine reporter tends to assume that online journalists have not yet fully become Tempo journalists. Mas Re, a journalist at Tempo magazine, said for him online media is a place to practice and sharpen writing abilities. Senior editor of Tempo magazine, Mas Rik, said, "The good Tempo values are not always in line with the current development of Tempo. Because convergence gave birth to online reporters who work typing reports in front of laptops."

5 CONCLUSION

Digital media significantly affects the dynamics of independence, that previously is considered to be a basic assumption, in the Tempo newsroom. The editors and senior journalists that served as the keeper of the corporate culture in Tempo Magazine,

that became the core culture in the Tempo media group, have tried their best to maintain independence as Tempo's main ideology. However, times have changed many things. The authoritarian political regime has replaced by a more democratic political system that allowed freedom of the press and public expression (Sen & Hill 2007). Indonesian people really enjoy a free the reformation era that allows more freedom, democratic, and economic acceleration after the 1997 economic turbulence (Warren & McCarthy 2009). Although there many argued on the positive effect of the post-Suharto era on the society, but the media and press are undeniably enjoy more favourable conditions (Ida 2010).

Those changes in the macro environment of Tempo has inevitably influenced the organizational culture of that media group. We described in this paper some data and analysis of how technological changes, particularly internet and communication, have shaded the corporate culture where independence has been the basic assumption. Online practices that blur the boundary between journalism and sponsored content have also been seen as threatening the values of media independence. The power of new gatekeepers, such as search engines and social media platforms, have influenced what the public sees and that is not seen online is a new algorithmic or computational dependency.

At the individual level, we noticed that independence is then a negotiated value rather than a basic assumption. Some magazine editors and journalists have persistently perceived independence as inarguable; technology like the internet in this case plays merely as facilitating the news broadcasting. It did not change the value of being independence. Meanwhile for the online journalists, who are mostly come from the younger generation, the need for news to be viral is one of the best reason for them to write. It sometimes makes them chase for sensational news, write a provocative news title, but in other cases they have to be careful and apply self censorship (Tapsell 2012, 2015). While Schein (2010) emphasizes a basic assumption as a taken-for-granted value, we conclude that in the current state when Tempo applying internet and communication technology, independence is at the individual or journalist's consideration. Therefore, it is now an espoused belief, a level when a particular value is being tested and questionable.

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