Convergence of Agenda Setting in Multimedia Era
(Case Study on Suara Merdeka Group)

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Abstract

Agenda setting is usually applied by one media such as newspaper, but in the multimedia era, there are many groups of media which have more than one kind of media. In general, each group have newspaper, television, radio, and online media. They also have accounts in social media. How do these groups of media arrange the agenda setting is the point of this research. This research used qualitative method on case study on Suara Merdeka Group of Media, the biggest group of media in Central Java, Indonesia. This research used agenda setting theory by Max Comb and shows that even though each media has its own agenda at the same time, those agenda can be synergised in the group.

Keywords: agenda setting; convergence; media

1. Introduction

The development of information technology has changed media constelation. In the past, one company usually has only one media. Now there are some group of companies which have many kinds of media, from printed media, television, radio, to online media. Each media usually has its own agenda that will lead editorial policy to publish or deliver news information to public. But group agenda could influence the agenda of those media under the group of companies. Those agenda settings could merge in a convergence of agenda setting or agendas that merge into one.

The term of media convergence actually refers to integration of many things that is accessible by one device. For instance, we could enjoy television and radio programs by a smartphone or tablet. However, in this paper the term of convergence of agenda setting to find out if agenda setting in one group of media companies is determined collectively or differently instead. If an agenda was determined by a group of companies

and was followed by all media in that group, then the power of the agenda would be bigger. One message will be published by all media in various forms of publication. The influence of news information by mass media such as newspaper was so strong in the past. The news information was often followed and believed by people who read it. News in mass media was strong enough to give undestanding and knowledge to people. But, how if the ageda that was determined by a media company was used by some other media companies in one group, including social media that belong to the group? News publication could be stronger then. This matter will be researched in this paper. Is there convergence of agenda setting in news reporting of Suara Merdeka Network in multimedia era, and how it be the case?

Agenda setting model introduced by Maxwell McComb and Donald L Shaw, explained that media not always succeed to tell what audience think, but media always succeed to tell audience to think about what. Griffin said that McComb and Shaw believe that the "mass media have the ability to transfer the salience of items on their agendas to

the public agenda." (Griffin, 2012: 379). Mass media have capability to influence its readers. So that's why media also need to arrange strategy to provide the news to its readers. Pamela J Shomaker said: "'Agenda setting occurs because the media must be selective in reporting the news. News outlets make choices about what to report and how to report it. ''(Littlejohn & Foss ,2011; 341).

Severin and Tankard explained in their book that Norton Long before McComb and Shaw who had similar idea. ''In some cases, newspaper is the main drive in determining local or regional agenda. Newspaper has a big role in determining what some people will discuss, what most people's opinion on existing fact is, and what most people think to solve problems. ''(Severin, 264). Probably, some media publish certain issue to attract public attention. For that intention, the media need to determine agenda setting. This setting is an important step. Zucker (1978) said that issue salience maybe becomes important factor to set agenda or not.(Severin & Tankard, 2005: 272)

Media will arrange reporting process, from determining theme of coverage, choosing sources, to strategy of presentation. The process could be different between one media to other media. Reporting policy in newsroom is guided by agenda setting which is technically drived by preparing news framing analysis. It is a classic theory in media newsroom to choose headline, lead, perspective, sources, data precision, and other verification standards that describe the orientation substance of media editorial policy. Orientation management is guided by newsroom attitude, from diction selection to news substance. Newsroom attitude is determined by who is behind the newsroom control. The question about "who" and "how is the direction of the attitude" formulate the cosmology of journalism benefit. (Amir Machmud NS, 2016). Posting news on the newspaper pages is not a simple work. It is an intelectual work. Editors have to select, edit, arrange, and then lay out news stories on the pages of newspaper. This process of arrangement is influenced by vision and mission of the media. There are many factors that influence the process of news hunting and presentation, sources selection, and news angle. So there is any presumption that media make its own reality. Language and diction selections are very important because they will influence the emerging meaning.

''Mass media have roles in reality construction and at last have influence to the construction of meaning or image of a reality. One of the roles is lexical or symbol preference (language). Although mass media merely report news, the selection of words, terms, or symbol that conventionally have certain meaning in community will inevitably attract public attention.'' (Sobur, 2001: 92).

Media company is extending along with techology development. There are some companies that run more than one media. They have social media accounts as well, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The existence of social media is important because it's been changing the pattern how people treat media. Richard Hunter (2002), quoted by Rulli Nasrullah (2016:1), said that the appearance of new media (cybermedia) had made information more accessible and open. In such condition, agenda that is set by media will be different from agenda that is built by social media users. Therefore, mass media also need to manage agenda setting through social media accounts. Each media has its own agenda, but if they are incorporated in one group of companies, their agendas could converge into one. Actually, convergence is derived from technical term. Through digital network, the convergence connects those industries that traditionally separated. The structure of traditional industry is not relevant anymore to apply. Industry and market are now integrated in one structure. (Hartley, 2010: 169).

In this research used the term of convergence to describe that media company becomes a meeting point for other media in one group of companies. Regarding agenda setting, the group probably has its own agenda that is extended to other media, or those media have similar interest and then gather their agenda in one group.

2. Method

This research will be using qualitative method of case studies and descriptive approach. This is a common method to give emphazise on specification of units or cases being researched (Pawito, 2007: 141). The research will be conducted on Suara Merdeka Group that has several media, among others are Suara Merdeka newspaper with six local community editions

(Semarang Metro, Solo Metro, Suara Kedu, Suara Muria, Suara Pantura, and Suara Banyumas), Wawasan newspaper, online media www.suaramerdeka,com, Trax FM radio, Suara Sakti radio, and Cempaka tabloid. There is also a division that manages social media accounts of Facebook and Twitter. This research will observe how those media with different managements under Suara Merdeka Group arrange and manage reporting process. There were some interviews with Director of News of SM Network, 2 newspaper editor-in-chief, and Editor-in-chief of online media in Suara Merdeka Group

3. Result and Discussion

Suara Merdeka Network is a group of media companies. Suara Merdeka newspaper itself was established on Februari 11, 1950, and one of the oldest existing newspapers in Indonesia. Then the owner introduced Wawasan newspaper that was published in the afternoon but now published in the morning and developed online edition www.suaramerdeka.com, Suara Sakti radio, and Trax FM radio. Each media has its own management, newsroom and agenda. They arrange their own news stories, but in the group of media companies, there is Director of News who coordinates group agendas.

According to Director of News of SM Network, Amir, agenda setting constitutes formulation of media attitudes on public issues. It is principally based on the vision of Suara Merdeka towards the public issues. Those media attitudes then will be observed through each media under the group. According to Setiawan (Editor-in-Chief of Suara Merdeka Cybernews), agenda setting in SM Cybernews is based on belief that media is not merely a device to deliver information but media should be able to spread big influence to public and motivate people to take part in overseeing media agenda. Media should broadcast the truth, therefore the board of editors should hold fast to the truth and pay attention to public need when determine the direction of reporting and media framing. Media ideology also influences the agenda setting because ideology is a base for media to make a step. Agenda setting shoud be based on media ideology. Vision and mission of media influence agenda setting as well. Vision which constitutes the big dream of media should be reflected in the strategies of reporting. In general, vision and

mission of those media in the group of companies (printed and online) should be in the same direction. However, there are emphasis on the strategy of each media as the manifestation of group mission. The strategy of online media is different from the strategy of printed media, indeed. Hendro (Editor-in-chief of Suara Merdeka newspaper) explained that agenda setting was strongly linked to media ideology. Media ideology is actually the spirit of media. Suara Merdeka is a part of problem solving in Central Java, and therefore it is more strategic for Suara Merdeka to take a position as moderator. Those condition and spirit give strong influence to the agenda setting. There is no hidden agenda of institution, owners, or editors. Agenda setting reflects media ideology in strategy of reporting. Hence, news content is always under control in accordance with media ideology.

According to Gunawan (Editor-in-chief of Wawasan newspaper), agenda of reporting policy should be based on code of ethics of journalism, in accordance with Wawasan tagline, and considering target of market. The second and third principles should not ignore the first principle. The opinions of editors-in-chief and director of news of SM Network showed that agenda setting is very important to direct the pattern of reporting arrangement. Despite in one group of companies, those media have their own policy to determine agenda setting. The agenda is influenced by their own media ideology . The agenda is formulated in editors meeting of each media, so that's way media agenda differs from other media agenda. Media agenda will give directions of newsroom policy includes reportage plan that will be conducted by journalists from each media. Gunawan said, each media has its own vision and mission. Each media in the group should have differentiation to avoid disturbance in the market. Hendro explained that group as business entity constitutes umbrella and synergy for media under it. In some cases, those media could have different agenda setting due to segmentation of each subscribers. Setiawan said that it doesn't matter when each media has its own agenda setting due to segmentation of its subscribers. Sometimes, each media in the group should make different agenda setting to enrich achievement. Nevertheless, sometimes those media discuss certain issue to determine group agenda.

Similar agenda setting is usually occures on strategic case or something that's linked to group activity. Hedro said that group agenda is only for some strategic issues while agenda setting of daily reporting is handled by the editors of each media. The agenda could be similar on strategic issues related to Central Java agenda and group agenda. Gunawan had same opinion. He said that agenda setting could be similiar in the group, especially those related to business cooperation as long as not contradictive to code of ethics. Setiawan added that those who determine agenda setting in SM Cybernews are editor-in-chief, managing editors, and senior editors. If an agenda becomes group agenda, SM Cybernews will involve Director of News of SM Network. Media agenda is also influenced by segmentation of media readers. Amir said that guideline of media agenda in the group is similar. The direction and orientation of reporting should not contradictive between Suara Merdeka, Wawasan, SM Cybernews, and Cempaka tabloid. Agenda setting as a tool to reach the orientation of certain reporting is guided by media agenda. In many cases, editors meeting will show mainstream cases that could be picked as priority to publish totally. This kind of agenda setting is determined in editors meeting. The meeting, including planning meeting and news budgeting meeting, will formulate media policy that appears from the policies of the editors-in-chief. They will contribute opinions and ideas to be formulated as reporting policy. However, sometimes the investors insert their interests of business. For the same agenda, there is a controller to unite media agenda, among others is director of news of SM Network, through meetings of general policy and special policy to coordinate all units.

The example of issue that is developed by the group, said Amir, is reporting of preparation of Cental Java team to PON Games 2016 in West Java. The substance of news is the same but the types of headline, lead, and info graphic are composed in different ways based on characteristic of each unit. Setiawan told that Suara Merdeka as the biggest newspaper in Central Java has a responsibility to promote news of PON Games as one of agendas to blow up, discuss, and debate, and is supported by all stakeholders, from common people to decision makers. The mission of this agenda is how to motivate all stakeholders to take care of PON Games. SM Group decided to introduce the theme "Sipirit PON Jateng" in order to motivate all athletes and stakeholders. All media under the group publish news stories of PON Games.

Is this group agenda effective? Amir said that effective or not, group agenda must be set. At least, it could control reporting policies among the media under the group to avoid extreme differences. Setiawan said that agenda setting appears from phenomenoms or events which are published by the media to motivate public. Agenda setting could appear from problems in public and after media publishing the problems in good frame of reporting, it could attract public attention. The media have to understand about the problem first before put it on agenda setting and then bring it to editors meeting to make strategy of reporting. That strategy should consider the segmentation of readers and involve public. For instance, reporting about improvement of public transportation service in several days massively.

Setiawan also explained that strategy of news arrangement in Cybernews is applied massively every day. One topic could be published in several news story every single day. The process has to fast hold on the main objective of agenda setting and keep the framing. Every news report is also shared through social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, to reach wider readers. Monitoring is conducted every day or even every time to observe the development of agenda setting and public response. The convergence of agenda could face some obstacles. Amir mentioned the time factor to coordinate but that problem could be solved by intesifying communication. There is common folder of news or one newsroom for all. Setiawan said, there is obstacle but not too serious and can be solved. The most important thing is coordination and elaboration to all units. Gunawan added that there could be technical obstacles, such as journalist competence, and non technical obstacles related to political interests. The editors-in chief said that they need to have social media accounts. Amir said that social media has a role to extend the messages. Setiawan emphasised that social media is a simple, and fast way to interact directly to the audience. Public will give fast response to the message. SM Cybernews also counts on social media to send the message directly to its readers and get fast response fro them.

4. Conclusion

From the interviews with the editors-in-chief of media in Suara Merdeka Network and the director of news of Suara Merdeka Network, this research concludes that despite under one group, each media has its own agenda. The agenda is based on media vision and segmentation of the readers. The agenda will subsequently influence and enrich the pattern of reporting arrangement as well. Agenda setting have usually been built though editors meeting presided by editor-in-chief. To some strategic issues or related to group cooperation, agenda setting will converge into one. With regard to group issue for example group bussiness interest, all media in group will publish the same issue. Coordination is directed by director of news of the group of companies. Common agenda setting also show up in social media accounts of the media.

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