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# *The Meaning of Sharing Information in Citizen Journalism*

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**Abstract**—The practice of citizen journalism in an era of freedom and ease of access of information makes citizens as active users of digital media technology. Various mainstream media in Indonesia (*pasangmata.detik.com* and *kompasiana.com*) provide websites and citizen journalistic applications to make space for audiences to talk, share information and stories. This study aims to found out how the meaning of sharing information from application media users as a citizen journalistic media. The paradigm of research uses interpretive with the phenomenology method. The data collection technique uses focus group discussion which focuses on the experiences of various actors as research subjects who were directly involved as contributors to information in citizen journalistic media.

The results of the study indicate that citizens are interested in sharing information. It usually gives an understanding of something. The information they send was useful for the public interest, such as information about the latest traffic conditions. Besides that, being a contributor helps others in their own way. They gather facts from what they saw themselves, according to the process of producing their own knowledge. Moreover, the interesting thing of being a contributor is being able to give a digital footprint for old age. They were proud to be witnesses of events that dissolve in the event itself. The implication of learning about journalism is that events reported from the perspective of citizens are a form of authentic journalism. Citizen involvement in the editorial space through a smartphone application creates an open and democratic society.

**Keywords**—*Citizen Journalism, Sharing Information, Pasangmata; Kompasiana.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the life of a democratic citizen, the practice of citizen journalism is a demand for citizens' freedom to access and disseminate information according to their needs and openness. Meanwhile, not all mainstream media can meet the information needs according to public tastes and public expectations. Urban residents are accustomed to finding alternative information channels in meeting information needs following their interests. Citizen journalism practices in any technology platform are always faced with challenges in

maintaining the accuracy and ethics of information. The existence of communication technology in the hands of citizens makes them contributors for information. Citizens involved in journalistic practices as news producers as well as gatekeepers. They assess the feasibility of news and information before being published. In contrast to the mainstream media that has a system and filter of a strict news production process in the newsroom.

The mainstream media in Indonesia also facilitates citizen journalism channels. You name it, Kompas newspaper with Kompasiana; Metro TV has a Metro Wide Shot program; Detik.com has Pasangmata. Residents can contribute in the news process. Rosen, Merritt and Austin (1997) mention the practice of citizen journalism is a community activity that plays an active role in the process of gathering, reporting, analyzing moreover disseminating information and news.

In line with the development of communication technology, citizen journalism practices are available in various platforms, such as application-based. The reason for conducting the pasangmata media research (<https://pasangmata.detik.com/>) and Kompasiana (*kompasiana.com*) is because these two citizen journalism media are quite popular in Indonesia. *Pasangmata.detik.com* is a citizen media conceptualized article writing based on facts in the form of news or information on events that occur in the community moreover delivered directly by the public through online platforms (web and mobile apps).

*Pasangmata.detik.com* accommodates and disseminates text, photos moreover videos from members who have access to *Pasangmata.detik.com*. Everyone can report situations that occur by writing articles that contain incident reports that can be uploaded by members who have been registered as "Spies" (designation for members of *Pasangmata.detik.com*).

Citizens are free to express, express, convey various ideas, opinions, comments, or responses. Moreover, *Pasangmata* claims as of March 2018 has had 16,000 registered accounts in the form of emails and phone numbers. The contributors from citizens who send news in text, photos or videos total between 300-400 per day. While, which successfully published about 150-200, the rest according to the editorial does not meet the requirements of news. All information published must be accountable and not violate the norms, journalistic ethics, and applicable law in Indonesia. Our tagline is "Be an Information Spy".

Meanwhile, Kompasiana is a Kompas journalist blog platform, developed by Kompas since October 22, 2008. The journalist's blog is then transformed into a citizen media. Everyone can proclaim events, express opinions and ideas, moreover channel aspirations in the form of writing, pictures or audio and video recordings. The name Kompasiana itself was taken from the column name filled by the Founder of Daily Kompas, PK Ojong. Kompasiana is a news channel and public opinion (Citizen News and Opinion Channel). Based on statistical data as of December 2016, its members are 327,000 people, 500 article submissions per day, 260 visitors per day and 7.7 million visitors per month.

Previous relevant research related to editorial policy in some media has been done. Such as research in print media conducted by Nurhasanah who examines Media Indonesia Editorial Policy[1]. Moreover, other research on application-based media by Benazir, titled Detikcom News Site Editorial Policy on Twitter social networking[2]. Meanwhile, research related to citizen journalism ever done by Yani with the title of Annida Online Editorial Policy In the channel Citizen Journalism[3].

Based on this background, this research focuses on how the meaning of sharing information among news contributors in citizen journalism media. The benefits of this research are expected to contribute to journalistic studies related to citizen participation in the process of producing moreover distributing news through smartphone technology. The real practice of citizen news contributors is interesting to explore based on their personal experiences.

## II. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

### A. Social Phenomenology

Humans as social beings have a social awareness of the world of their daily lives. Humans are required to understand each other, including their social actions. The main idea of phenomenology is that people will actively interpret their experiences by giving meaning to what they discern. However, interpretation is an active process of giving meaning to something that is observed, such as a text, an action, or a situation, all of which can be called experience. Consequently, a message or action can mean many things, meaning cannot be simply "discovered".

Phenomenology focuses on a general description of what participants have such as the participant's experience of the phenomenon. Neuman emphasized an interpretive approach such as phenomenology is the study of meaningful social action, not just the external or observable behavior of people[4]. Social actions are actions that people attach to subjective meanings. Social actions are related to goals or intentions. Researchers must consider the reasons of social actors and the context of social action. The researcher must take into account the social actor's reasons and the social context of action. The description consists of what their experience is moreover how they experienced it.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) published that phenomenology is a branch of philosophy. The philosophy of phenomenology then has implications for the thinking of the Social Sciences and Humanism, including Communication[5]. Alfred Schutz, then developed as a theory, as well as a more operational approach, moreover for

Social Sciences research including Communication research[6].

### B. Citizen Journalism and Accuracy

Citizen journalism is an informative production process that involves ordinary citizens, not from a professional journalist. This journalistic product contributes directly to the public, by way of publishing information owned through the existing media. Mark Glazer as quoted by Nugraha (2012) on his website at Media shift defines citizen journalism as, "everyone, without the special skills and training as well as professional journalists, with their simple communication technology, can do coverage, upload, moreover distribute news through online media"[7].

According to Rich, the concept of citizen journalism involves the reader and audience in covering and reporting the news, called *citizen journalism*, *participatory journalism*, or *user-generated content*[8]. This participation intends to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires.

News can be trusted if it has accuracy. Inaccurate reporting will lose their reputation and trust and neglect their audience. Stovall emphasized that accuracy can be seen from the completeness of the elements of *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why* and *how*[9]. In addition, another issue of citizen journalism is journalistic ethics and has not been professionally trained in data verification. Consequently, the truth is doubtful. To reduce this problem, everything reported must be factual, verification is actual significant to avoid inaccurate data.

On the other hand, citizen journalism is also a kind of effort from media organizations to increase their interaction with audiences. The contributors are commonly called citizen journalists, because they are not staff members of media organizations, even though they write blogs whose basis is a media site.

## III. RESEARCH METHOD

The tradition of phenomenological studies is an interpretive paradigm that seeks to explain the meaning of the life experiences of some people about a concept or phenomenon, including their own self-concept or outlook in life. Creswell states "*a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon*"[10]. Conversely, Littlejohn asserted, "*the phenomenology makes the actual lived experience the basic data of reality*" [11]. Meanwhile, Neuman stressed that interpretive researchers share the feelings and interpretations of the people he or she studies and sees things through their eyes[4]. That is how the principals construct their lives and the meaning they give to that life. Researchers seek to understand deeply the practice of citizen journalism from contributors or users of applications, especially in sharing information and publishing news.

The technique of collecting data conducted focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with ten contributors from various occupational professions. Among them, online drivers, content writers, social media managers, entrepreneurs, user-generated content coordinators, superintendent content, private employees, bloggers, managers of Pasangmata, and managers of Kompasiana. Discussion of contributors with researchers regarding their



daily meaningful social actions as contributors to citizen journalism

#### IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

##### A. Being a Contributor Helps Others in Their Own Way

The contributors to citizen journalism generally have reasons why they post information. They want to share information with others in their own way. They share their experiences about many things, so that they benefit others. As one of the active contributors said since 2015, Wahyudin Sofyan (47 years) an online driver based in Jakarta said, "*I want to be a part of the community, where I can help them in my way*".

Initially, he was interested in becoming a contributor because of the hobby of photographing while working as an online driver. He photographed interesting events on the highway. Like when he saw the bus drop off all of its passengers in the middle of the road, he took a picture, ordinarily sent it to the editor of *Pasangmata.detik.com*. He targeted that in one day there would be at least 10 news stories.

In 2018, he recounted one extraordinary case. His relatives in Medan, North Sumatra asked for help if, in his village, there was a broken wooden bridge. This wooden bridge has long been a means of connecting fluent fellow residents to other villages. At that time, Wahyudin was hesitant to bring up the news on *Pasangmata.detik.com*, then he contacted his relatives to send photos of the bridge and he would help send it to the editor of *Pasangmata.detik.com*. Unexpectedly, the approval editor received photos of the damaged wooden bridge for publication. That means it is definitely read by countless people. Consequently, the local government felt cheated, moreover it became viral discussed by various residents. One week after posting, finally the damaged wooden bridge repaired.

Another contributor is Deden Purwanto (29 years) who lives in East Jakarta. He is a private employee who has been a contributor to *Pasangmata.detik.com* from 2016 until now. He said that initially he involved as a contributor because of the hobby of photographing daily traffic jams. Unique and interesting events become smartphone camera shots.

Another confession from Agung Handoyo (45 years) who works as an entrepreneur, lives in South Tangerang, since 2014 he has been a Kompasianer (Kompasiana blog writer). He said that as a Kompasiana blog writer is different from journalists. He had been interested in writing family humanities, and enjoyed the results of his writing. As a blogger he writes more about family life, dealing with marriages, marital relationships, having children and child relationships with parents. So, he wrote practical tips on how to manage a family. Ordinarily, he wrote on a blog about his family's own life experiences.

Meanwhile, Nurhayati (46 years) living in Jakarta, was a full-time blogger and has been a writer at Kompasiana since October 9, 2009. In 2016 she received the title Kompasiana of the Year (2016). She recounted initially being a Kompasiana writer because she interested in trying to write. The longer, the more find your own happiness when writing in Kompasiana. Her hobby is watching MotoGP, both on TV and directly to locations in Sepang, Malaysia.

Nurhayati wrote in Kompasiana about her experience watching MotoGP. Topics such as how to watch MotoGP in

Sepang, how to buy tickets, how to get a hotel that is close to the circuit. Her experience watching MotoGP, she wrote in Kompasiana. Topics include how to watch MotoGP in Sepang, how to buy tickets, how to get a hotel that is close to the circuit. Following her explanation, "*I wrote about the cheapest hotel in Bukit Bintang, Sepang Malaysia. Means of transportation to the circuit*". Moreover, she also wrote on location using her smartphone about the uniqueness of the MotoGP audience in the Tribune, including how to enjoy watching MotoGP.

Nurhayati told the researchers, "*it's a pleasure that my writing really helped a lot of people*". When she was in the Sepang Circuit, the audience often poked her. The audience said, "*Is this Ms. Nurhayati? Then she answered, who are you?, I came here because I read your writing*". According to her, the implementation of MotoGP in Sepang Malaysia was in October. Moreover, in early October several people asked her about tickets, transportation or accommodation. So, she even wrote twice a day about MotoGP, consequently she has her own column in Kompasiana. In the end, Nurhayati has several MotoGP journalist acquaintances. In 2018, she obtained an ID Card to enter the back room of the paddock.

##### B. Becoming a Contributor Giving Digital Footprint to Old Age

One of the contributors Deden Purwanto (29 years) a private employee who lived in East Jakarta, stated that the motivation to write in Kompasiana because he likes traveling with the backpacker community. He wrote his experience of being a traveler, so that it became an inspiration for others. In 2014, he became a backpacker best writer. He said that "*I originally wrote to inspire others moreover give a digital footprint in old age*".

He tells not only writing about backpackers. But when he worked in the drug rehabilitation unit as a facility manager handling various things about health check-ups, he continued to write to provide informative information in Kompasiana to ward off hoax news about rehabilitation drug sufferer. Ordinarily, information about the number of rooms, rehabilitation programs carried out, and so on.

Some interesting sides based on each other's experiences, it turns out the writings of the contributors are extraordinary. They are accustomed to reporting events. In fact, the results of Deden's testimonials from his writings were included in the blog competition as a form of learning to improve writing skills. On the other hand, an obstacle to the recognition of citizen journalist contributors is that they do not have the legality (*ID Card Press*) for recognition. Because when they report and write events in the field, they often asked about their legality from what media. So for security, they write in a balanced and impartial manner so that no one is offended.

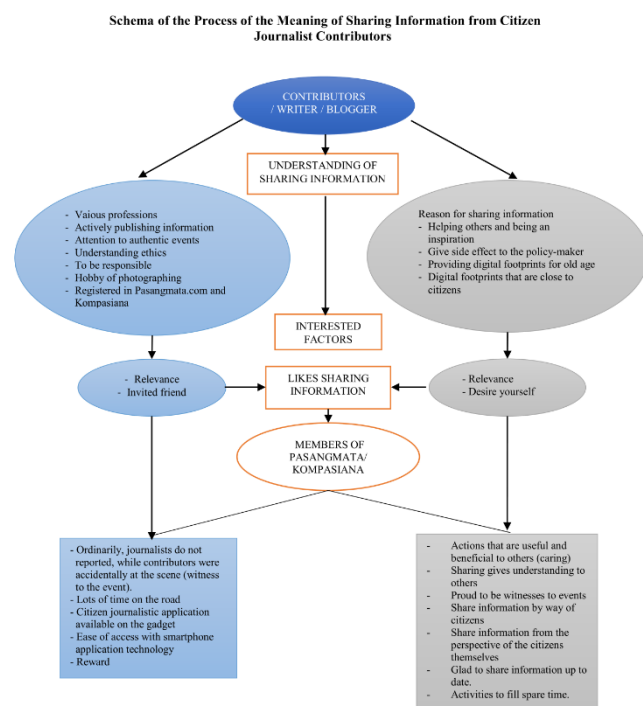
Wahyudin Sofyan (47 years) in 2018 had personal experience when reporting in the field. He saw, photographed and videotaped a policeman on Jalan Jendral Sudirman Jakarta who stopped and lifted a motorcycle selling coffee sellers on the sidewalk. So, when he was absorbed in videotaping the incident, he was approached by the police and then his smartphone was taken away. He was interrogated by the police, asked who, from what media, did he have a press card or not. As he said, "*that's the obstacle; when in the field want to cover a story where the news is interesting, consequently I*

cannot do anything, because I do not have legality as an identity".

Consequently, the interesting information that they have reported, moreover has news value is not dared to be published, rather than risky. Or they reported it secretly from the police. They need their identity as media contributors, even as ordinary citizens. On the other hand, mainstream media organizations do not issue identities to ordinary citizens who participate in the reporting process. Including the regulations of the press law, it has not yet established that ordinary citizens obtain a press card identity.

The contributors are generally from various occupational professions. But when they see an interesting event on the highway, they write, take photos and videos and then send them to [Pasangmata.detik.com](http://Pasangmata.detik.com). The important thing in citizen journalism is the act of citizens reporting events to be useful for others. To share information with the citizens themselves, to give understanding to others. Citizens are joyful, ordinarily proud to be witnesses to events, let alone share the latest information. Below is the process of sharing information based on research findings.

Fig.1: Schema of the Process of the Meaning of Sharing Information from Citizen Journalist Contributors



## V. DISCUSSION

Citizen journalism is a citizen activity that uses media channels to cover, write and report events for fellow citizens. Basically, citizen journalism very segmented because of the specific events that are published, ordinarily the intended audience is also specific. Everyone has the same opportunity, they can report events moreover write opinions. They are free to argue as long as they are in trustworthy order, ethics and morals without editor censorship. Democratically, citizens can write, others can judge, criticize and respond to the writing. A smart reader can immediately judge whether the writing is of quality and not.

Sharing information through citizens is a hallmark of citizen journalism. Moreover, the mainstream media does not necessarily meet the expectations of information that is essentially needed and is close to citizens. So, in the conception of citizen journalism, the involvement of citizens in the process of reporting news is precise valuable by mentioning which local residents are involved. So, when the news is made by residents from the same area, the level of public trust in the news will be greater.

[Pasangmata.detik.com](http://Pasangmata.detik.com) and [Kompasiana.com](http://Kompasiana.com) are examples in Indonesia that they have grown into alternative media besides the mainstream media. Information is not the monopoly of a professional reporter, ordinary citizens can make news according to their own version, determining what is important to them from their perceptions. The media landscape in Indonesia is becoming more participatory, consequently there has been a shift in the consumption patterns of news and information. Media companies also include participatory sites and applications in their business portfolios[12]. As Biocca stressed that active citizens can select media content, adjust their interests to the media, media selection, involvement in developing issues, moreover the resilience of media influence is in these five characteristics[13].

Essentially journalism records an event. But in the digital age, the recording can be a comparison trail for a new recording. That is the reality of journalism. As added Wael quoted by Mathari (2018) is the right of everyone to know more over the role to preach can be done by anyone. The mainstream media might be able to manipulate writing, but photos and video recordings can tell what really happened[14].

Citizen involvement in utilizing citizen media will provide critical learning, foster awareness moreover a high sense of belonging to the environment, so a group of citizens will be able to continue the sustainability of the group. True happiness as a journalist for citizen journalism is when their work is useful to others. It makes citizen journalism meaningful for contributors to fellow citizens. In the information age that continues to develop citizen journalism can be an important forum in maintaining the identity of citizens.

Freedom of speech in virtual space still demands good ethics and morals from every communication actor. Therefore, the demand for equality of rights and duties must be balanced. Citizens can write anything as facts for dissemination and sharing of information including opinion writing. On the other hand, democratic readers can also judge, criticize, and comment on the writing. Nevertheless, mainstream media collaboration that facilitates moreover channels citizen participation will determine how citizen journalism develops.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This phenomenology study found that the contributors to citizen journalism meant that sharing information helped others in their own way. They stated that they wanted to be a part of the community, which could directly contribute to inspiring others. Moreover, the contributors to citizen journalism from various occupational professions state that

being a contributor can give their digital footprint for old age. So, they feel recognized as useful citizens.

[14] R. Mathari, Karena Jurnalisme Bukan Monopoli Wartawan. Yogyakarta: Mojok, 2018.pp.64

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