

Article

The Commodification of Virtual Community Content in Increasing Media Traffic

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Abstract

Traffic is activity on a page of a site resulting from Internet visits and activity on that page. The more a site is visited, and the more activity Internet users engage in on the site's pages, the higher its traffic. Traffic is like an audience on a television station, listener to the radio station, or circulation on print media. Traffic is the overall activity of readers on online media sites. Data collection from cnnindonesia.com is the commodification of content in an online forum, as in Kaskus and Kompasiana. The media are certainly competing to present exciting news content so that their readers remain loyal to their online. Exciting content on news portals and other efforts are employed solely to increase traffic. One such effort is the use of referral traffic, that is traffic which comes from other websites other than the major search engines, sources such as forums, blogs, and minor search engines are categorized as referral traffic. Visitors come to the online media portal through other websites and blog intermediaries. Although the contribution of made by referral traffic is not as great as the other sources, this practice considered quite useful as it does increase traffic in the media, traffic which is essential—and a measure of success.

Keywords

commodification of content; media traffic; online forum; virtual community

Issue

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1. Introduction

Current technological developments have prompted change in various fields. Alongside technological developments, the mass media also develops (Jenkins, 2006). Electronic devices such as radio, television, and computers have led to a communication revolution requiring all information to be conveyed quickly (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Turow, Hennessy, & Draper, 2015). Moreover, with the emergence of Internet technology, the speed of information is critical. The Internet has overcome the spatial and temporal limitations of previous information dissemination processes (Benkler, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Kamary, 2018).

The presence of the Internet has increased the pace of technological development, almost all over the world today, the Internet can be accessed anywhere. Based

on the We Are Social report, there are some astonishing facts: Global Internet use has now reached more than 4,5 billion people, with more than 3,8 billion of those using social media (We are Social, 2020). Internet usage in Indonesia is also relatively high, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology recently revealed that 63 million people now have Internet access (Kominfo, 2020). Of these, 95% use the Internet to access social networks.

Internet users in Indonesia generally access web pages directly (Lim, 2011). Various forms of access to information and entertainment are now easily accessible from various parts of the world through the Internet. The ease of access to all types of information is also an advantage of the Internet as it has given rise to the evolution of many types of communication media, namely writing, images, symbols, and sounds. Everything is

integrated neatly because of the existence of communication and information technology.

One of them is the development of Internet-based media, which is now a new media choice for the public to communicate. Since the development of the Internet in the 1990s, new journalism has emerged to facilitate journalists' work processes (Lim, 2011). With several different features from traditional journalism, it provides unlimited possibilities for the processing and dissemination of news (Romli, 2012, p. 19). McQuail (2010, p. 43) states that "The new media's main characteristics are their interconnection, their access to individual audiences as message recipients and senders, their interactivity, their various uses as open characters, and their ubiquitous nature."

In contrast to print or electronic media, new media content reflects a combination of audio, audio-visual, and print simultaneously (Lim, 2011). Thus, online media is the 'third generation' mass media after print media (newspapers, tabloids, magazines, books) and electronic media (radio, television, and film/video). Online media is defined as mass media that is presented online via Internet websites.

Online media has two main principles of knowledge management. The first principle is that knowledge stored digitally, which has been uploaded and stored on an Internet network maintained, categorized, analyzed, updated, and disseminated more efficiently. The second principle is that access to data should be facilitated for. can be downloaded by individuals and organizations to disseminate the information for effective information exchange.

Currently, the number of online media in Indonesia is increasing. The 2018 Indonesian Press Freedom Index Survey data claims that there are 47,000 mass media throughout Indonesia. Of these, 2,000 are print media, 674 are radio, and 523 are television, local, and other online media sources. However, the Press Council (2018) reported that, of the 43,000 online media in Indonesia, only 168 were actually able to work professionally. The proliferation of online media has intensified competition between providers to become the best in providing information.

Previous studies have mostly raised the topic of online media management strategies carried out by mainstream media in Indonesia. Such as research on the use of online media between readers, profit, and ethics (Margianto & Syaefullah, 2011), democratization and corporation of media in Indonesia (Lim, 2011), the landscape of the media industry in contemporary Indonesia (Nugroho, Putri, & Laksmi, 2012), multimedia practice in online journalism in Indonesia (Adzkiya, 2015), and cultural commodification as a discourse of cultural tourism in Indonesian mass media (Sulistyorini, Sudardi, Wardo, & Wijaya, 2017). Global academic interest in economic practice in Indonesian media has attracted the attention of various studies on the impact of audiences on the media (Arsenault & Castells, 2008; Bolin,

2012, 2018; Fuchs, 2014; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Kamary, 2018; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Landay, 2008; Terranova, 2000).

In the media industry approach, it focuses on the role of the audience who is the victim of commodification in the mass media where the audience has become a commodity for advertisers. The more the audience, the more interested the advertisers will be to add to their advertisements in the media. Commodification in the mass media has become a popular concern today due to the large and rapidly developing information needs. In the media industry approach, it cannot be separated from the role of the audience who is the victim of commodification in the mass media. Audience has become a commodity for advertisers, meaning that the more the audience, the more interested the advertiser will be to reduce their advertising in the media. Commodification in the mass media has become a popular selling material today, this is due to the large and rapidly developing information needs. Vincent Mosco (2009, p. 134) defines "commodification as the process of converting goods and services that are valued for their usefulness into commodities that are valued because of what is provided for market needs. Commodification converts use value into exchange value for profit".

Kaskus and Kompasiana are basically online forums that fall into the category of social media. Both employ the user generated content model in which content is generated by previously registered users. Online forums are a part of social media where users can interact with each other, share information both individually and collaboratively on a certain scale, and simultaneously provide feedback on certain issues. As has been found from previous studies on economic practices in media, it is interesting to observe how mainstream media such as CNN Indonesia employ online forums such as those managed by kaskus.co.id and kompas.com. The purpose of this article is to explain how the practice of content commodification is to show that amid efforts to dominate the media, it continues to seek opportunities to take advantage of online forums for profit-oriented strategies and illustrates that the capitalists' control of everything has converted personal values into exchange values.

A media company can make sufficient revenue from advertisers' in the media (Arsenault & Castells, 2008). Online media itself can have a lot of incoming advertisers if their traffic is high. Simply put, traffic is the activity on one page of a site that results from visits and activity on that page. The more a site is visited, and the more activity Internet users perform on that site's pages, the higher their traffic. Traffic is like the audience on a television station, listeners on a radio station, or circulation in the print media. Traffic is the overall reader's activity on online media sites. The more people visit a news site and linger there and engage in 'click' activities, then that is a business advantage of the media. Traffic is what advertisers offer to place advertisements (Margianto & Syaefullah, 2011, p. 29).

In getting traffic, the media are competing to present exciting news content so that readers remain loyal to their online media. Apart from presenting interesting content on news portals, other efforts are made solely to increase the traffic itself. One of them is by using referral traffic. Referral traffic comes from websites other than the main search engines such as forums, blogs; even traffic coming from minor search engines is categorized as referral traffic. Visitors come to the online media portal through other websites and blog intermediaries.

McQuail (2010, p. 205) says that media products are commodities or services offered for sale to a particular group of potential consumers. Meanwhile, the codification of content refers to changing messages from a set of data by the media to media content or journalistic products that are marketable and prioritize profit-oriented (Burton, 2005; Fuchs, 2014; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Terranova, 2000). So, commodification refers to converting use value into exchange value and the various ways this process is extended into the social sphere of communication products, audience, and labour, which have received little attention. This commodification process illustrates how capitalism takes its capital through changes in use value to exchange value (Mosco, 2009).

2. Literature Review: The Commodification of Media Traffic Practices

According to Karl Marx, commodities occur from a wide range of needs, both physical and cultural, and their use can be described through various ways commodities can emerge from various kinds of social need, including physical satisfaction to the fulfillment of status in society. Thus, use-value is not only limited to meeting survival needs but extends to satisfaction based on social needs (Mosco, 2009, p. 141). So, commodification refers to converting use value into exchange value and the various ways this process is extended into the social sphere of communication products, audience, and labour, which have received little attention. This commodification process illustrates how capitalism takes its capital through changes in use-value to become an exchange value.

According to Adam Smith, use value and exchange rate are two values that can differentiate a product (Mosco, 2009, p. 140). Adam Smith and classical economics distinguish between products whose value comes from the satisfaction of specific human want and need, referred to as use-value, and products whose value comes from the product's ability to be increased, referred to as exchange value. Commodification is an attempt to convert anything into a commodity or merchandise as a means of getting profit. Media content is a commodity to increase audience size. Audience number is a commodity that can be sold to advertisers. Incoming advertisements are profit and can be used for media expansion. The expansion of the media generates even more power in controlling society through the sources of media production in the form of technology, networks and others.

There are two significant dimensions in the relationship between commodification and communication: communication processes and the technologies that contribute to the process of commodification in general. For example, due to the development of technology and communication channels, industrial production has been transformed, and distribution and sales systems improved. This can improve control and make producers more responsive to consumer tastes (Sulistyorini et al., 2017).

The forms of commodification in communication is the commodification of media content, audiences, and workers. The commodification of media content involves changing messages from data sources to thought systems and the creation of marketable products. The commodification of media content is influenced by the creation of surplus or profit value—media content made in such a way as to bring profit to the owner from the capital.

Mosco (2009) states that “mass media have two roles: a direct role of creating surpluses through the production and exchange of commodities” (p. 147). Smythe (as cited in Mosco, 2009, p. 148) mention that indirect commodification through advertising in the creation of surplus value through other sectors of commodity production. Advertisers also play a role in determining the content of the media, thus creating audiences as commodities; takes a different view of these ideas by emphasizing that the audience is in fact the primary commodity of mass media. In Smythe's view, mass media is formed from how media companies produce audiences and send them to advertisers. In his view, the process creates a respectful and binding relationship between the media, audiences, and advertisers. Media programs or content are used to form audiences, and advertisers pay media companies to gain access to such audiences, thereby bringing the audiences to the advertisers.

The characteristics of media production emphasize the dimensions of individual creativity (Kamary, 2018). This value is what distinguishes the media industry from other industrial sectors; it requires a relatively high level of conceptual thinking and so it requires both manual and skilled labour (Landay, 2008). This distinction occurs in the commodification of education, which ultimately results in a managerial class that form part of the capital owners or which represents their interests.

Bolin (2018, p. 247) states that the phenomenon of commodification has commercial purposes, which will directly eliminate idealism from the media (Bolin, 2018, p. 247). The media have been carried away in economic and political currents and become a contested business—one which has sacrificed its own audience. Audiences who should be seen as free and active have turned into mere tools for use by the media to generate as much profit as possible, and have become just ratings and share data. The development of the global market has made media companies surrender their audiences to advertising companies. So, in order to gain an advantage, broadcast-quality is no longer the priority.

Traffic is the activity on a page of a site resulting from Internet user visits and Internet user activity on that page (Margianto & Syaefullah, 2011, p. 29). Two things intersect about traffic with editors and journalists. First, of course, traffic is gained by the attractiveness of a news site to its readers. The allure of news site can be its credibility, which is likely to encourage users to visit. Second, traffic may also be generated from interaction in the spaces provided by the news site. For example, traffic can be generated from discussion in its comment pages. Many readers open a story many times because they are following the discussion on its comments page. Traffic is also generated from other interactive services outside of the news. For example, specific news sites provide forums, games, or the ability to buy products (Margianto & Syaefullah, 2011, pp. 30–32). In the newsroom, traffic is obtained as a result of news productions made by journalists. Readers click on the news which produces a pageview. The more news is clicked on, the bigger the pageview gets. The bigger the pageview, the greater the business potential that can be achieved.

Three types of traffic need to be known: organic traffic, direct traffic, and referral traffic (Evenbound, 2019). Organic traffic is the traffic which comes from an engine. Recommended search engines are trusted ones such as Google, Yahoo, and Bing, and image searches such as google images. Organic traffic indicates that a website or blog is popular in the eyes of search engines. Direct traffic is direct traffic or visitors coming to a website/blog directly without intermediaries. They enter directly by typing the name of the website in the browser. Websites that have direct traffic are likely already well-known because visitors stop by the website/blog directly without website intermediaries. Referral traffic comes from websites that do not use search engines such as forums, blogs, or even the more minor search engines which are also categorized as referral traffic. It means that visitors come through an intermediary for another website/blog. To get this referral traffic, visitors can take advantage of social media sites, social bookmarking, forums, and blogs.

Referral traffic is a google method from referral sources outside its search engine (Bashara, 2018). When someone clicks on a link to a new page on a different website, Google Analytics tracks the click as a referral visit to the second site. The originating site is called a 'referrer' because it refers to traffic from one place to the next. Referral traffic is one of the three statistics that Google Analytics tracks. The referral traffic will be routed through the user's browser, so this information is tracked and passed through the HTTP referrer. These referrals identify where the user is from and where they are located. When someone clicks on the link provided, the browser sends a request to the referral server. The request includes a field with data about the last site the user visited (Van Covering, 2008). Google Analytics then captures this data and reports it to the website owner as a referral domain, such as twitter.com or facebook.com.

3. Method

The paradigm used in this research is the critical paradigm considering the influence of the presence of interests and power networks in the process of production and reproduction of meaning. Critical analysis emphasizes the constellation of forces that occur in the process of thinking that sees discourse as a political meaning and represents the ideology of the group. The data were collected through interviews and document observation techniques. Interviews were conducted with an unspecified number of informants, but based on their urgency related to the research topic, mainly traffic manager cnnindonesia.com. The document observation includes traffic data and evidence that points to the benefits both of them have achieved. The data collected was categorized, analyzed, and then conclusions were drawn. Data collection was carried out from 2019 to mid-2020.

Kaskus is the largest buying and selling forum in Indonesia. Kaskus is a home for anyone to find everything they need. Millions of people use Kaskus to find information, knowledge, join new communities, to buy and sell all kinds of goods and services at the best prices. Kaskus is divided into two parts, namely Forum and Buy and Sell. Forums are places to discuss anything. Buying and selling is a place for buying and selling all kinds of products. Kaskus discussion forums often report information that is not found on other news portals. Kaskus Buy and Sell have also proven to be the most comprehensive place to find all kinds of products and services. Kaskus also created jargon and distinctive terms that eventually formed part of the culture of Internet users in Indonesia. Some of them are Juragan, Pertamina, Rakber, Cash on Delivery, and other terms.

Kompasiana is a blogging and online publishing platform developed by Kompas CyberMedia. Each content in the form of articles, photos, comments made, and is broadcast directly by Internet users who already have a Kompasiana account is commonly called Kompasianaser. Kompasiana's uniqueness lies in the simultaneous management of content. Although every article made by Kompasianer goes live, Kompasiana moderates its content at all times to ensure that no one violates their terms and conditions.

4. Findings

4.1. Content Modification in Online Forums

CNN is the first TV news channel in the United States owned by conglomerate Ted Turner. From its launch in 1980 until now, CNN has reached more audiences by working with national media in many countries. In 2013, CNN International entered into an agreement with Chairul Tanjung as the owner of CT Crop to establish CNN Indonesia. The media, the result of this franchise collaboration, is present as a television station and online

news portal, cnnindonesia.com. Even though it is under two significant media companies, CNN International and Transcorp, cnnindonesia.com still stands alone in that it formulates its own editorial policy. However, it is possible to help each other in large-scale coverage. SEO Specialists cnnindonesia.com gives a statement:

The cnnindonesia.com greeted readers for the first time on October 20, 2014. Even though it is only in its infancy, cnnindonesia.com has managed to rank in the top 10 of the Comscore version of Indonesia's digital media with 7,3 million Unique Visitors (UV) and 53,85 million Page Views on desktop and mobile web. In the Comscore December 2017 data, cnnindonesia.com is approximately 100 thousand UV away from Kompasiana in the ninth rank and 1,5 million UVs, and this is followed by the presence of CNN Indonesia TV on August 17, 2015.

In online media culture, traffic is the main aspect that becomes a commodity for profit. What CNN Indonesia has done with online forums such as kaskus.co.id or kompasiana.com is an illustration of social media trends based on the interests of capital accumulation. Activities in online forums are directed to increase traffic which is then directed to get sponsors that lead to capital. Online forums are one of the doors for the two media to increase traffic figures. For CNN Indonesia in managing the business, traffic is clearly directed to be sold to sponsors. Traffic data such as the number of visitors, how long it takes for visitors to access online forums and their interactions will be shown to sponsors to advertise on CNN Indonesia.

The staff charged with writing are asked to write six articles per day, four of them are to be uploaded to Kaskus; two to Kompasiana. Article material is obtained from previously broadcast news from CNN Indonesia. In the selection of article material, the author is released by the boss or user. However, based on the supervisor's direction, news that can be used as article material is light news that is not time-bound, such as news about health and exciting tips about lifestyle. The article material selected from the news on cnnindonesia.com, following an explanation from social media operators:

The operator is asked to rewrite the news into an interesting article in Kaskus and Kompasiana. Rewriting is done by first understanding the characteristics of each platform: Kaskus and Kompasiana. The Kaskus's articles are made lighter and more attractive. The trick is to add an image related to the article and to make an emoji visible on Kaskus. Meanwhile, in Kompasiana, articles are produced more seriously, as is the news in online media in general. Articles on Kompasiana must be based on facts and not copies of other writers' articles. If the article turns out to have an element of a hoax or to have been plagiarized, it can be deleted.

Besides Kaskus and Kompasiana's characteristics, the article also adds a news source link from cnnindonesia.com. With this link, readers at Kaskus and Kompasiana can directly visit news on cnnindonesia.com without bothering to look for themselves. If readers click on the link provided, they will be directly connected to cnnindonesia.com. This will increase the amount of traffic on cnnindonesia.com. If the six articles have been completed, then the author will report their work to the user. Job reports are in the form of a list of links in Kaskus and Kompasiana that were carried out that day. The list of links is entered into a document on Google Drive, to be seen and checked by the user.

Kaskus and Kompasiana are online forums that can be used by anyone, in both, people can write the articles they want to write. Various articles and discussions can be found in Kaskus and Kompasiana. Starting from the latest news to light tips about life and much more. Of course, these two forums are written in a different style to online media in general; news writers there must follow the rules enforced by press institutions such as the Indonesian Journalists Alliance, whereas no such rules exist in the Kaskus and Kompasiana forums.

Those working for Media in Kaskus and Kompasiana are free to upload any articles, even articles from materials whose sources are not yet transparent. Not infrequently, for example, in Kaskus, there are articles uploaded without confirmation from related parties that can cause hoaxes. Then at Kompasiana, the writers of articles in the forum also often label themselves as citizen journalists who are carrying out work like media journalists in general. However, the veracity of such articles often cannot be ascertained with certainty. Regardless of how the article content is made, the point is that people can write any type of article content for Kaskus and Kompasiana.

The mass media has a function to convey information, provide entertainment, persuade audiences to do certain things, such as transmit cultural values (Bolin, 2012; Castells, 2007; Schapals & Porlezza, 2020). The freedom to write articles in Kaskus and Kompasiana is used indirectly to increase economic income in a media, in this case, cnnindonesia.com. News content that has been published on cnnindonesia.com is intentionally rewritten to generate profits. The news chosen is usually light such as the Lifestyle channel news, where news about health or beauty tips are most frequently rewritten. This rewritten article will not be a matter of much concern to many parties, but it will still be an engaging read regardless of its publication date. An example of the news entitled "Increased Diabetes Risk Amid the Pros and Cons of the Keto Diet." This news was chosen because it is light and easy to reach by many groups rather than news from the National channel.

In Kaskus, the article content made with material obtained from news on cnnindonesia.com is rewritten in its own style of writing. In Kaskus, for example in Figure 1, the article is made more attractive, photos or images

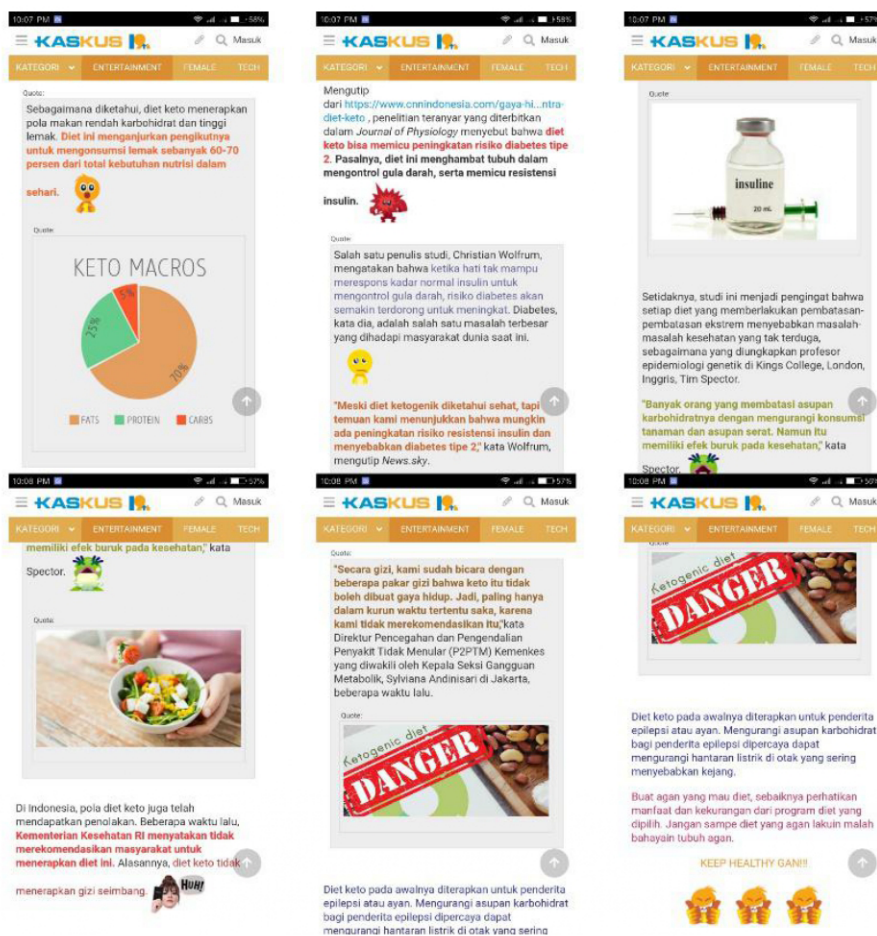


Figure 1. A modified article for kaskus.co.id. Source: CNN Indonesia. Source: Widiastuti (2019).

are usually added to better illustrate the content under discussion. Its articles are also usually embellished with emojis that are available on Kaskus, the goal is to make the articles exciting enough to be widely read.

Even though the articles made already have the functions of mass media in general, such as education, information, and entertainment, other things are contained in the article content so that the practice of commodification occurs. This medium is the addition of a news source links, namely news from cnnindonesia.com. The content of articles on Kaskus is modified to perform other functions besides education, information, and entertainment.

Similar practices also operate in Kompasiana, although they are written in a different style (Figure 2); Kompasiana’s articles are made more like news in online media in general and tend to include more writing with only a few photos or images. The source material for Kompasiana also came from news on cnnindonesia.com, which was rewritten. The article content in Kompasiana was also modified by adding news links from cnnindonesia.com.

Commodification is the process of converting use values into exchange rates. By media capitalists, content is commodified in such a way as to become a commodi-

ty that generates profits or surplus value. In the realm of online forums, where users are both consumers and producers of information, user data in the form of any information accessed, downloaded, uploaded, accessed on social networks that is including users interests and interactions with other users, etc. is sold to advertisers as a commodity. This phenomenon, like CNN Indonesia as mainstream media, utilizes detailed information on kaskus.co.id and kompas.com users as a form of refinement of the content commodification model from online forums. It can be interpreted that the media is a means of change to make a conversation in an online forum tradable. In this case, commercialization in the media industry occurs through the commodification of content to transform information exchange so that it can generate profit.

4.2. Online Forum for Referral Traffic in cnnindonesia.com

Typically, news sites use traffic counting engines such as Google Analytics, Comscore, or Effective Measure as a traffic indicator engine on their site. At least, there are two profit-seeking models employed by Kompasiana by utilizing existing traffic. First, programmatic buying

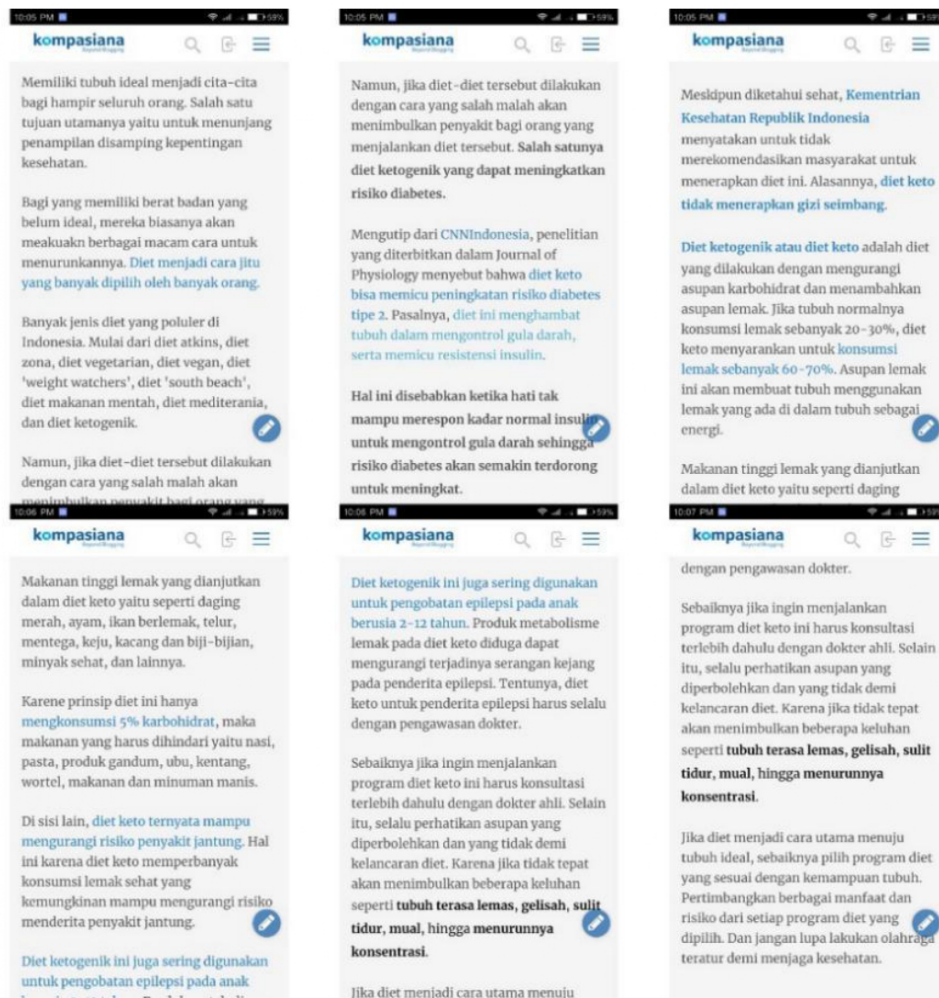


Figure 2. A modified article for Kompasiana.com. Source: Widiastuti (2019).

brings in passive income through a range of tools, one of which is Google AdSense. Under the agreement, an agency such as Google AdSense will place various ads on various audiences that he has previously touched on who google have determined are most likely to generate a click event. This model is passive because it does not require extra work from the marketing team, and ad placement is done automatically by the agency. Second, direct sales are made by the marketing team offering various programs to clients, such as sponsoring blog competitions, affiliate content, and Kompasiana Nangkring. The marketing team will come to clients with the Kompasiana portfolio containing the traffic achievements and programs that have been successfully implemented.

From the links that are placed in Kaskus and Kompasiana, it will indirectly increase the amount of traffic on cnnindonesia.com. Traffic can be obtained if readers of articles on Kaskus or Kompasiana click on the link. Later, the link provided will directly connect readers from Kaskus or Kompasiana to the news portal cnnindonesia.com. The total amount of cnnindonesia.com referral traffic is the number of cnnindonesia.com readers from online forums such as

Kaskus and Kompasiana. They come by clicking on the link on the forums created. This data is obtained directly from the results of interviews conducted with the Senior Executive Officer Specialist cnnindonesia.com. The data source is based on cnnindonesia.com's Google Analytics. Google Analytics is a service from Google that can display visitor statistics for a website.

Although some data related to Kaskus' and Kompasiana's referral traffic belonging to cnnindonesia.com is confidential, for Kaskus, there are two types of data listed in Google Analytics. In addition to the user or user data, Google Analytics also has session data. The session can mean that one user does not necessarily access one news, so this session is referred to as the user's number of news accessed. For Kaskus, it is a total of 8,051 sessions, meanwhile, in Kompasiana, there were 506 sessions. If based on the order of referral traffic contributors on cnnindonesia.com, m.kaskus.co.id is in 36th, kaskus.co.id is in 39th, Kompasiana.com is in 81st. This data is taken from Google Analytics belongs to cnnindonesia.com.

Traffic is the total activity of audiences in online media when accessing the media. The elements are visit,

unique visitor, page-view, and length of visit (Margianto & Syaefullah, 2011). The visit can be considered how many people visited a site in the first 30 minutes. A unique visitor visits a computer device with the same IP address and browser in a month. Meanwhile, a page-view is the number of pages viewed. Then, the visit's length shows how long people stay on their visit to the site. Traffic figures can be seen or obtained from subscribed traffic machines, one of which is Google Analytics.

4.3. Content Commodification and Referral Traffic as Increasing Media Traffic

Media companies, apart from spreading the word to the public, are of course businesses run to gain corporate profits (Schapals & Porlezza, 2020). The economic transformation which has occurred now means that a media company business can make a living from advertisers willing to place their product advertisements among their media (Arsenault & Castells, 2008). However, it is not an easy matter to get advertisers. The media, especially online media, must have data to prove that their offerings are in great demand by the public. In online media, the amount of traffic becomes a gateway for advertisers to advertise on their media. In short, traffic is a large number of visitors who enter the online media portal; the higher the amount of online media traffic, the more advertisers will enter the online media. So, to generate increased traffic, one of the means that the media employs is the commodification of content.

One of those who practice this is cnnindonesia.com. Although cnnindonesia.com does not use content commodification on the news published on its media portals, they use other platforms to increase its media traffic. From there, the commodification can increase their traffic indirectly. However, unfortunately, other functions were deliberately changed for the sake of profit. Commodification is an effort to convert anything into a commodity or merchandise as a means of getting profit (McQuail, 2010). Commodification relates to how changing goods and services and their use-value into a commodity that has an exchange rate in the market. Media products in the form of information and entertainment cannot be measured like goods in general economic measurements, such products are somewhat less tangible than other goods and services (Landay, 2008). Media products can, however, still become tradable goods that can be exchanged and have economic value.

The commodification in cnnindonesia.com occurs not on the news they make, but on the codification of article content in Kaskus and Kompasiana. The goal is to generate referral traffic for cnnindonesia.com. The use of Kaskus and Kompasiana is recognized by SEO Specialists cnnindonesia.com as below:

Because of the two forums are included in the list of 50 sites that are frequently accessed by alexa.com version. The forums use a natural thing to do in cal-

culating CNN Indonesia with Kaskus and Kompasiana both benefit from this practice. Thus, this practice is a legitimate activity to be implemented to increase traffic on cnnindonesia.com.

The material for making articles in Kaskus and Kompasiana is previously uploaded news from cnnindonesia.com which are rewritten. Although there is nothing wrong with writing articles in Kaskus and Kompasiana, other things are intentionally done for the media, namely placing a cnnindonesia.com link in every article rewritten in Kaskus and Kompasiana. The goal is, of course, to increase traffic to cnnindonesia.com. The content is also written as light news so that it is still safe in delivery even though it carries the name cnnindonesia.com. For online media, traffic is one of the most important elements—online media lives off traffic. From here, many online media are competing to catch this traffic, and they use a variety of ways to do so. According to SEO Specialist cnnindonesia.com:

Traffic is the most important because the success of a medium can be seen based on the amount of traffic available. Google Analytics is used by CNN Indonesia as a website analysis site to see the amount of existing traffic. In Google Analytics, existing data in the form of users, number of users, reading duration, and how many articles were read by the user when accessing the portal. Also, where the traffic sources come from can be seen through Google Analytics.

However, Google Analytics can only be accessed by people or companies that work directly with Google Analytics. Thus, the existing data is not for public consumption. However, several website analysis sites can be accessed freely by anyone, such as alexa.com and similarweb.com. In the cnnindonesia.com SEO Specialist's narrative, Google Analytics is the most precise in reading the data. Other website analysis sites have not been able to show the correct data. However, other sites can act as benchmarks that are close to the actual data.

Based on Alexa's data (2020), CNN Indonesia ranks 26th in the Alexa version of the most famous sites in Indonesia. Then, globally, cnnindonesia.com ranks 503 (Figure 3). This figure was considered quite good in the first six years of the establishment of cnnindonesia.com. When viewed in the existing graph, cnnindonesia.com has experienced a slow increase in traffic but continues to increase.

On the similarweb.com website analysis site (Figure 4), there is a substantial amount of data regarding the traffic on cnnindonesia.com. The largest traffic source (53.66%) came from 'search traffic,' also known as organic traffic, followed by introduces a sequence, a descending scale on direct traffic (31.38%), social media traffic (9.9%), and referral traffic (3.36%).

At similarweb.com, search traffic sources or organic traffic contributed 53.66% of the total traffic on

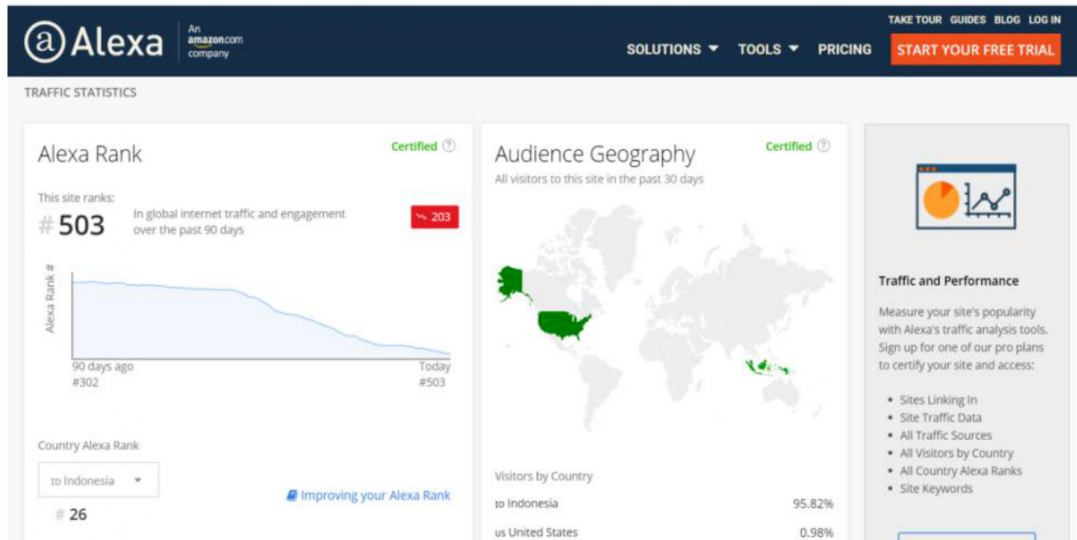


Figure 3. The rank of cnnindonesia.com. Source: Alexa (2020).

cnnindonesia.com. Organic traffic is the most considerable traffic contribution to cnnindonesia.com, which is obtained by typing keywords in the Internet search system. This data is obtained by clicking on the cnnindonesia.com portal to go directly to the cnnindonesia.com news portal. Then, the direct traffic shown on SimilarWeb.com contributed 31.38% to the total traffic on cnnindonesia.com. Direct traffic accounts for the second-largest traffic after organic traffic. Direct traffic is obtained by directly searching or clicking on the news portal cnnindonesia.com. Direct this by directly via WhatsApp and Line, by clicking the link directly to CNN Indonesia.

In this era of rapid technological development, social media also contributes to increasing traffic for online media. The success of social media in attracting the public is, of course, well utilized by cnnindonesia.com. As proven by Google Analytics, social media is the

third-largest contributor to traffic for cnnindonesia.com. At similarweb.com itself, social media traffic contributed as much as 9.9% of the total traffic. The next traffic contributor is referral traffic, where the traffic will be routed through the user's browser, so this information is tracked and passed through an HTTP referrer. This reference identifies where the user is from and where they are (Van Couvering, 2008). When someone clicks on the link provided, the browser will send a request to the referral server. The request includes a field with data about the last site visited. Google Analytics then captures this data and reports it to the website owner as of the referral domain. Based on Google Analytics, referral traffic is the fourth largest contributor to traffic, providing as much as 3.36% of the total traffic amount at cnnindonesia.com. Referral traffic is obtained from forums outside cnnindonesia.com, which are deliberately created to get this referral traffic.

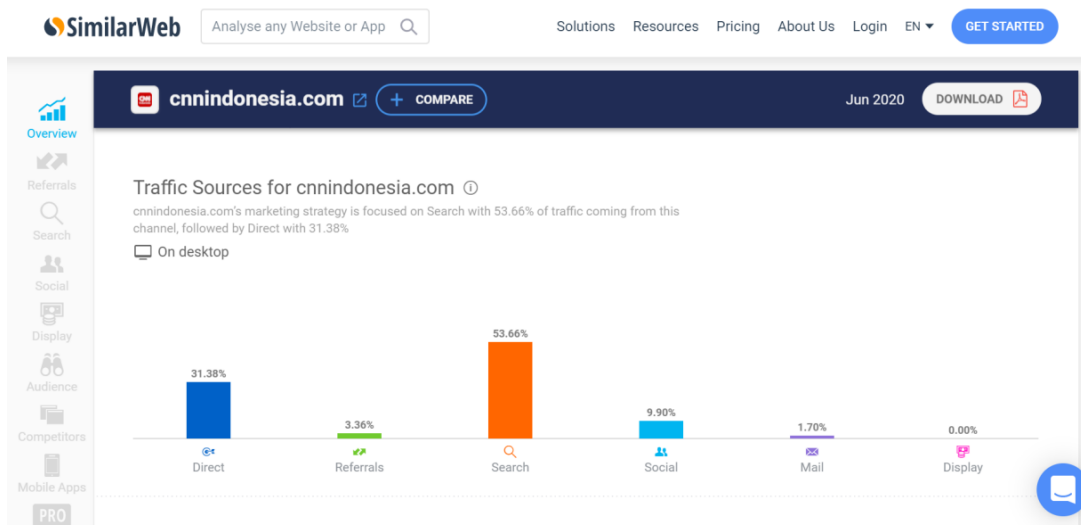


Figure 4. The traffic of cnnindonesia.com. Source: Similarweb (2020).

The media even specially prepared a channel that raises topics that are currently viral on social media. Channels are newsgroups based on issues or similar topics. Not only that, the term ‘fact-checking journalism’ has recently emerged because there is an opportunity for traffic to correct scattered hoax information, especially from social media (Bolin, 2012). This media seems to be afraid of not getting a portion of the traffic, so they collect information on social media and turn it into the news. In fact, certain topics taken from social media, developed or raised in mainstream media are actually able to increase traffic and, in some cases, they even beat news traffic from professional journalists’ reporting in the field. So, something that is being discussed on social media, if captured and reprocessed, can gain traffic.

Traffic is used in online culture to describe the extent to which a content’s productivity increases the number of readers, including their level of interaction: Such traffic leads to advertisements. Interestingly, based on discussions with several channel managers in online media, a channels’ sustainability depends on the traffic it generates. If they are unable to meet targets, discipline from management may be likely with poorly performing channels at risk of closure in order to meet the expected traffic targets.

5. Conclusion

Capitalism is a model of social-economic organization that focuses on profits; companies aim to generate capital, and so business practices are able to produce goods and services in return for monetary profit from such production. Capitalism requires individual ownership of various means of production, a market economy, and also a division of labour in order to encourage the production of media. Capitalism takes the form of a commodity production system, in which content produced can later be sold, such content is produced because of capitalist control. Commodities, in this sense, are interchangeable because they have a use value and an exchange value. The value contained in a commodity depends on how much social labour is required to produce it. The value of a commodity will depend on the cost of its production. Exchange value and use value become vulnerable when it comes to public information. The audience is potentially exploited by the commodification of content, but their efforts are not repaid even with minimal wages by the media. The media generates as much profit as possible on use value commodities and exchange value from conversations carried out by audiences through online forums.

The intersection between traffic-related to news-editorial and journalism that traffic is gained by the attractiveness of a news site to its readers. The allure could be the credibility of the news site. Because of the credibility of the information presented, many readers came to visit the site. The traffic is also generated from the interactivity space provided by a news site.

Regarding news, traffic is generated from discussions that take place on comment pages. Not a few readers open one-story many times because they follow the discussion on the comments page. Traffic from other interactivity services outside of news. For example, forums, games, or commerce provided by specific news sites.

The presence of forums in online media spaces is a must. The Internet, especially after the web 2.0 era, has made two-way communication possible, and online media that do not open spaces for participation will lose their online character. However, on the other hand, interactivity also has an essential role for a site to gain traffic. There is a traffic interest behind the initiative to present spaces for interactivity in spaces such as forums and blogs. The contribution of forums to traffic is very significant, so people do not come to these sites first because they want to see the news. So, it is no surprise that the dynamics of online forums is something the media are chasing after.

Concerning this page-view, online media generally practice a distinctive news writing style, namely news updates in fragments or fragmented news. Some call online news journalism with four paragraphs because, in one story, there are only four paragraphs. An argument that states fragmentary news is online because online news must be fast and a series of developments on an event. However, from a business perspective, shredded news is beneficial because it can double page-views. We will see later how the news of this model will conflict with the ethical principles of journalism. News is more seen in terms of interest in an exciting title, and if the title is not attractive, will not generate many clicks.

Although referral traffic is not as significant as the others, this practice is considered quite useful to help increase traffic in the media. Slowly but surely, media traffic has continued to experience growth since it was inaugurated six years ago. Traffic, for online media companies, is the most crucial thing; it is a measure of their success. Not surprisingly, all means are taken to increase it. With high traffic, advertising will come quickly, and media companies can benefit from it.

In the future, suggested that further research can find sources that discuss in-depth and detailed commodification content regarding the relationship between concepts in order to better understand the practice of giving value to social media to generate media profits. To be credible, online media is expected to provide educational, informative, and entertaining news content—as per the role of mass media. Regarding how to increase traffic, it should make news content even more enjoyable. Besides this, it could also conduct media campaigns so that people are more aware of the existence of online media.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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