Social Presence of Ruangguru in Social Media during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Covid-19 pandemic gives many social changes in society. One important policy made during covid-19 is related to students who are required to study at home. Covid-19 and this policy made Ruangguru, online learning company, to adapt in giving online communication message, especially in @ruangguru instagram. This research aims to see the social presence of Ruangguru in social media instagram during covid-19 pandemic through three dimensions social presence, which are: social context, online communication, and interactivity. Method used in this research is case study with qualitative approach. The result of this research depicts Ruangguru as showing good social presence based on three dimensions of social presence during covid-19 pandemic in social media instagram.

Keywords: Social Presence, Ruangguru, Social Media, Covid-19 Pandemic

Abstrak

Pandemi covid-19 memberikan banyak perubahan sosial dalam masyarakat. Salah satu kebijakan penting yang lahir adalah sehubungan dengan para siswa yang diwajibkan belajar di rumah. Pandemi covid-19 dan kebijakan ini membuat perusahaan belajar online Ruangguru turut beradaptasi dalam memberikan pesan komunikasi online khususnya di media instagram @ruangguru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat bagaimana kehadiran sosial Ruangguru di media sosial instagram pada masa pandemi covid-19 melalui tiga dimensi dari kehadiran sosial, yaitu: konteks sosial, komunikasi online, dan interaktvitas. Metode yang digunakan pada penilitian ini adalah studi kasus dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Hasil dari penelitian ini menggambarkan Ruangguru dengan baik memunculkan kehadiran sosialnya dilihat dari ketiga dimensi kehadiran sosial pada masa pandemi covid-19 di media sosial instagram.

Kata kunci: Kehadiran Sosial, Ruangguru, Media Sosial, Pandemi Covid-19

Introduction

President Joko Widodo on 2nd of March 2020 issued official statement about existence of covid-19 transmission that infected two Depok, West Java, citizens and since then Indonesia admitted officially that crisis was happening. Various policies serve as countermeasures were issued, such as Physical Distancing, Work from Home, Study at Home and Large Scale Social Restriction.

Those policies are conditions accelerated to force everyone to use digital network device (Kurniawan, 2020b). This acceleration is used to socialize, get information, fulfil primary needs, serve other people and perform various professional activities. This acceleration impacts education world with study at home policy. Incoming changes come so fast and are experienced by the society during covid-19 pandemic. Previously, learning was done directly in person, now it must be done at home with the help of digital media. This policy helps make formal education as well as many learning approved by using this digital media, but not for online learning companies. As one of the non-formal education, online learning companies that have applied learning through digital media is Ruangguru Application.

Quoted from Ruangguru official website, Ruangguru is a company founded on 2014 and operates in non-formal education which focuses on education based service. Currently, Ruangguru has various technology based learning services, including virtual class service, learning videos subscription, online exams platform, private courses marketplace, and other educational contents which can be accessed through website and Ruangguru application. The mission of Ruangguru is to provide and extend access to good quality education through technology for all students, anytime and anywhere.

Changes that happen in the society due to covid-19 surely affect online learning company, such as Ruangguru. In regard to learning at home, Ruangguru becomes one of the most popular applications with increment of daily active users (Masyrafina, 2020). It puts Ruangguru as top of mind in digital based learning company, especially during this pandemic. This achievement is due to communication role done by Ruangguru, especially through social media.

Unlike analogue media, where mass media dictate and also shape public's preference, which in the end also produces mass culture, in the era of digital technology the role is played by media, such as instagram, twitter, facebook, youtube and other various digital media (Kurniawan, 2020a). This is related to web 2.0 development.

This era of web 2.0 is a form of communication that comes from several factors, such as smartphone, mobile internet, and fused with social mobile application (Skinner, 2019). Social media plays a dynamic role in developing and maintaining consumer-brand relationship, which gives a marketing potential in brand management (Moro & Rita, 2018). Social media is used as a tool for organization to build relationship with public and provide various information and services to various public groups directly and indirectly (Joo & Teng, 2016).

Members of social network website can be friends with each other in the network and they can also be a fan of a brand in fan page or the brand account (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012). As one of the biggest online learning company, @ruangguru Instagram account has more than 900 thousand followers. Through social media, especially instagram as Ruangguru's social media with the most followers, Ruangguru is involved in delivering the company's program which is adjusted with covid-19 pandemic.

The content of communication strategy of a company is influenced by the process of how it is shaped by different individuals inside the organization (Man, Abdullah, Tamam, & Hasan, 2019). Ideally, content of the strategy starts with the evaluation in the entire organization about how the organization is seen by different stakeholders (reputation) according to vision and mission at a certain point of time. Large scale social restriction regulation, especially how it requires teaching and learning activities to be done online, becomes a good moment for an online learning company, such as Ruangguru, to deliver the company's message via interactive content in social media. The purpose of this research is to understand how the social presence of Ruangguru in social media is perceived based on the content given to the public during covid-19 pandemic.

Informative online social content enables the users to evaluate the content that they are interested in to be involved in social interaction where it can be shown with social presence theory (Chang & Hsu, 2016). Social presence theory highlights that the social presence of a media influences the receiver's (consumer) understanding of the content generated by the sender (media) (Chang & Hsu, 2016).

Social presence was developed as independent subject in social psychology in 1970s (Cui, Lockee, & Meng, 2013). Currently the social presence concept is discussed widely in mediated communication context, but is originally rooted in non-mediated interaction (Cui et al., 2013). In the beginning, it was developed by Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) to explain the effect of media telecommunication that can create communication (Lowenthal, 2009). They define social presence as level of interest between two communicators using communication media. Social presence shows relative significance of a relationship between two parties in interaction, and their argument also contributes to the development of media richness research and relational perspective in social presence field (Cui et al., 2013).

At first, social presence concept developed from the use of telecommunication and has been developing more with CMC adoption and online technology in education (Cui et al., 2013) which is also extended to social media research to explain the concept of social presence (Chang & Hsu, 2016). According to Tu, social presence is level of feeling, perception, and reaction connected with CMC to other intellectual entities (Tu, 2002). Social presence in social media is important, because when someone communicating through a medium feels having a distance with his/her communication pair and not feeling real, then the medium is considered as impersonal, cold and unfriendly (Hasanuddin, Pramudibyanto, & Hermawati, 2012).

In the end, social presence asses the quality of a medium in conveying social symptom. Therefore, the communicator can see its communication partner as real as multidimensional living creature (Hasanuddin et al., 2012).

According to Tu and MsIsaac, there are three dimension of social presence which can be used as theoretical framework in research, such as social context, online communication, and interactivity (Tu, 2002).

Social context is built based on characteristic of CMC user and their perception about CMC environment (Tu, 2002). It is also related to social impact of changes in society,

including large area of population impact, community and organization setting, community in transition, individual and family impact, and infrastructure need of community. In the aspect of social marketing, social context is a belief, attitude, value, and application, which related to 'reality' of targeted group where social structure is related to obstacles and changes that happen (Cowan, 2006).

Online communication is a language used online and online language application, CMC attribute, computer literacy ability, online proximity, and online language ability (Tu, 2002). Terminologically, communication refers to the process of conveying a communicator, either with direct communication or using signs as communication symbol or helping tools to deliver the message through online media. Therefore, if it is to be examined further, online communication dimension relates to definition of medium quality as basic standard in determining social presence degree which can be seen from how communicator presents the message to the communication partner.

Interactivity includes the active communication and learning activities, in which CMC users engage, and the communication styles that they use (Tu, 2002). In CMC, there are two kind of interactions, which are asynchronous (different time) and synchronous (real time). Response that happens in asynchronous CMC (different time) needs time to get response from other parties. In other words, interactivity is "design" and strategy to stimulate social presence.

Method

Approach used in the research is qualitative approach. Qualitative research intends to understand its object, not to generalize but to make extrapolation of meaning behind the object (David & Sutton, 2004). Qualitative research in short is a research whose purpose is to understand the phenomena that the research subject went through, such as behaviors, perceptions, and also motivations (Moleong, 2017).

Method used in this research is case study. Case study is a method that investigates specific unique attached system (Baxter & Babbie, 2004). In study case research, thorough investigation to a situation or occasion is done using systematic method to observe, gather data, analyze information, and report the result. The research uses descriptive approach that does not intend to look for relationship or to test a hypothesis. Descriptive research aims to give aspect or character description of a message or text (Eriyanto, 2011).

In this research, researcher uses primary data as @ruangguru instagram post which was uploaded related to covid-19 pandemic during February to April 2020. There are two observation methods, which are structured and non-structured. This research uses structured method, where structured method needs fewer data gathering since researcher only needs some data from the incident or interesting and relatable aspect that relates to the research subject being observed (Slack & Rowley, 2001).

To conclude, qualitative research is a research that aims to understand phenomena about what the research subject went through in terms of behaviors, perceptions, motivations, or holistic actions described by words and language (Moleong, 2017).

Results and Discussion

This research uses Ruangguru's instagram post as research object, in regards to this there are characteristics of message from post in social media. Lovejoy & Saxton in 2012 did a development of typology post through a research in United States. Type of post refers to content of the message has three categories called ICA (Information, Community and Action) (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012).

First category, information, involves the spread of information related to the activity or organization of a brand. This category is one way where no dialogue interaction is expected from public to the brand or organization. Second category, community, expects dialogue from public to brand that aims to create a relationship and network to build a community. Last category, action, aims to make the public to do something for the organization. Actions that can be done are purchasing the product, using the service, visiting the website or other social media.

Table 1. Typology Post I-C-A Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012

Typology	Description
Information	This category is one way. Informing activity, news, or facts about the organization related to the interest of the organization.
Community	This category is two way, the function is to build dialogic relationship and to create network with the public. There are two aspects in this category, which are dialogue and community building (Saxton & Waters, 2014). Dialogue aspect aims to make direct conversation between the organization and the public. Meanwhile, community building aspect aims to strengthen relationship with the public.
Action	Action category is a guidance for the public to do something for the organization via promotional message and mobilization. This category is one way. For example, invitation to come to an event, give donation, or to visit specific website.

After knowing kind of post in social media based on typology I-C-A Lovejoy and Saxton, researcher identifies several posts from @ruangguru instagram account according to the dimension of social presence from Tu and MsIsaac with structured method to show social presence of Ruangguru during covid-19 pandemic in social media instagram.

First, social context, as mentioned before that this is influenced by changes that happen in the society. As messenger, @ruangguru instagram account adjust the content corresponding to the condition during covid-19 pandemic. In picture 1, Ruangguru gives information to respond the covid-19 situation, they open free online school for students.

Picture 1. Instagram Post Ruangguru responding to covid-19 situation

Kind of post in picture 1 is information, it gives information about ruangguru's program corresponding to covid-19 which requires student to study at home. Ruangguru gives solution following the change that happens when learning method is accelerated from direct in person to indirect mediated by digital media. This program is accurately and quickly delivered through instagram.

Social presence of Ruangguru is strengthened in social context with information and action kind of post consist of invitation to use ruangguru application and Telkomsel, Indosat, and XL phone number users can get free quota to access ruangguru application to support the free class program.

Picture 2. Ruangguru Instagram Post giving information about free quota to access Ruangguru.

Second is online communication, as mentioned previously other than the use of language and online language ability, this dimension is related to the quality of the medium used. There are two elements in instagram post, which are photo or video and the caption used in the post.

Picture 3. Ruangguru Instagram Post with caption corresponding to covid-19 situation.

The above post consists of information that Ruangguru will hold an online seminar entitled "Brain Academy Mega Seminar Online". Caption used on this post corresponds to covid-19 situation where learning activity is done at home with caption: "It's been 24 days #studyingathome you must be bored? Even some people feel they are confused about what to do anymore" "Sudah 24 hari #belajardirumah pasti ada rasa bosan yang menghampiri kan? Bahkan ada beberapa yang merasakan kalau mereka sampai bingung mau ngelakuin aktivitas apalagi.".

This kind of post accommodates all kind of post mentioned previously where it consists of information related to online seminar and also action to invite people to participate in the seminar. When we discuss about online communication, caption used here is also community kind where ruangguru builds dialogic relationship by corresponding the message delivered to the public. Relationship with the public is strengthened with the information delivery corresponds to the condition where people staying at home for 24 days due to large scale social restriction regulation and learning at home policy issued by the government.

Through instagram, public response can be seen through comments given on comment column of the post, considering there are many cities that cannot join the seminar. Finally, online communication is built properly between Ruangguru and the public regarding the online seminar.

Third is interactivity, which is an active communication activity from communicator inviting the CMC public user to join in the communication being used.

Picture 4. Ruangguru instagram post giving mask as bonus and invitation to create a challenge using a mask.

Ruangguru utilizes social media to increase social presence during covid-19 pandemic by giving mask as a bonus after subscribing Ruangguru. Afterwards, the followers who have mask are invited to create a challenge to take picture with the mask. This kind of post is action, as oneway invitation to the public to do something following the communicator's wish. It is used to stimulate social presence of Ruangguru corresponding to covid-19.

Picture 5. Instagram post @anangmaulana_12 joining the challenge from Ruangguru.

Two way exchange and freedom in exchanging content gives brand and consumer an opportunity to connect to each other (Helal, Ozuem, & Lancaster, 2018). Through the challenge, Ruangguru succesfully created interactivity with positive invitation to use mask. Ruangguru's followers can share their enthusiasm towards the brand in their social media, united by their common interest related to covid-19 pandemic triggered by social presence of Ruangguru.

As depicted in previous explanations through 3 kind of post in social media, which are information, community, and action, social presence of Ruangguru can be seen through

3 dimensions of social presence. The three dimensions in the end depict how social presence of Ruangguru can be seen during covid-19 pandemic. The limitation of this research is on the dynamism of social presence of Ruangguru during the pandemic that is not over yet.

Conclusion

Social presence of Ruangguru in social media during covid-19 pandemic is elevated well through three dimensions, which are social context, social communication, and interactivity. Ruangguru can adapt to the change that happens in the society when it needs to accelerate learning online by adjusting the information and message that they give to the public through @ruangguru instagram account. In the end, social presence of Ruangguru is used competently to do program promotion that they have by adjusting the context during covid-19 pandemic.

This research depicts how social presence of Ruangguru in social media is related to context of covid-19 pandemic. Researcher hopes that research about social presence can be developed in other social context along with the advancement of technology and communication medium that will continue to innovate in the future.

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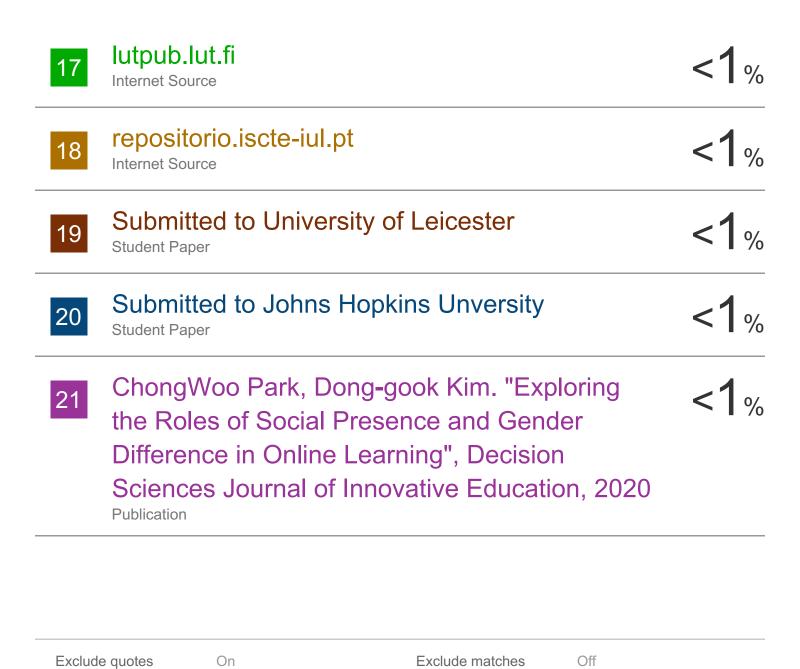Cui, G., Lockee, B., & Meng, C. (2013). Building modern online social presence: A review

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