The Use of Social Media and Its Influence on Young Voters' Knowledge about the Elections

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Abstract

Social media has become 'mandatory' media among young people. As a generation of 'Digital Natives', group has grown up in an internet-enabled reality and to whom the idea that anyone/ everyone can have a voice, it is not surprising that social media has become a medium to meet the needs of young people for information, socializing, and entertainment. Unfortunately, if linked to politics, young people are often categorized as a group apart from conventional politics and this disengagement contributed to the growing sense of apathy even alienation towards politics. Therefore, as popular media among young people, whether social media can be maximized to encourage the engagement of young poeple in politics.This study was conducted to determine students' level of knowledge of the election information submitted through social media. By using linear regression, hypothesis testing showed that the frequency of the use of social media affect the level of student knowledge about elections information as well as the duration of the use of social media affect the level of student knowledge about elections information.

Keywords: *Social media, effect cognitive, media exposure, political information, political knowledge, media use habits*

Introduction

Every day without realizing it, we are bombarded by the media with thousands of information. Information is being created all the time without us even noticing it. The amount of the information generated through the media like on the internet is staggering. The majority of the information is created by individual users via social media (Gwava, 2014)."We are in the era of social media, where people are directly engaged and become 'the media' themselves" (Thevenot, 2007). Based on data taken from Domo, 4.3 billion messages and 5.75 Facebook likes are posted every day, 500 million Tweets are sent and 40 million Tweets are shared as well as more than 4 million hours of content is uploaded to YouTube (James, 2015). The Internet really is all about information

exchange, such exchange of information has ushered in the information age and the information age has changed the way human live.

Unlike other types of mass media, social media are means of actively engaging others. Social media are means of connecting and interacting actively. Social media allows us to actively interact, collaborate, and participate in the community which is not rigid (Wood, 2009). Social media combine a variety of activities such as integrating the words, pictures, technology, and social interaction (Anvil Media, 2009). According to Solis and Breakenridge (2009) social media content are democratic led to a shift in the role of people in the process of reading, creating, and disseminate information. Social media represents a shift from a broadcast mechanism to a many-to-many model because it

is rooted in a conversation between author with peers in their social channels(p. 1). Social media is anything that uses the internet to facilitate conversations. People now have the opportunity to broadcast their thoughts, opinions, and expertise on a global scale. Social media is empowering people to become the new influencers.The advantages of social media has proven to be influential in the diverse aspects of life. Social media not only give effect on the cultural aspects and business; society to politics cannot be released from the influence of the new media.

Social media is a phenomenon that could dramatically change how and how many young people to participate in elections. Young people are often categorized as a group apart from conventional politics and this disengagement contributed to the growing sense of apathy even alienation towards politics. The biggest obstacle among young people to get involved in politics is their negative view against the politicians is perceived by many young people that they do not care and no attempt to address the issues that matter to them (Ward, 2007). Social media platform have paved the way for the reconceptualization of political engagement, especially among the youth. Internet reduces the barriers to participation and thus reduces social inequality that exists in public life.Increased media exposure of the candidates and greater personal contact with the voters can also increase the voters' knowledge of political information (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).Therefore, this research wants to know "the knowledge of students about the election information presented through social media" by focusing on two research purposes:

1. To determine the influence of frequency using social media toward knowledge of students about the election information delivered through social media.

2. To determine the influence of duration using social media toward knowledge of students about the election information delivered through social media.

Literature Review

Exposure to Political Information in Mass Media

From 'do not know' to 'know' after using media could be said to be one of the types of media effects. According to Graber (1980), people who are exposed to the mass media already possess a fund of knowledge and attitudes, which they bring to bear on new information. Exposure to media content on users will increase political knowledge that ultimately enhance turnout (Verba et al., 1995). Political knowledge makes people know where, how, and who they will choose.

The number of voters can be predicted from knowledge of the politics of the voters. In addition, exposure to political information will also motivate voters to participate in the elections. So, to increase turnout, high choice media environment is needed because voters will have broader news preferences and ultimately expect an increase in the number of voters. Those with a stronger interest in other media content vote less. "In a high-choice environment, people's content preferences become better predictors of political learning than even their level of education" (Prior, 2005). "Once exposed to television news, people learn about politics" (Zhao & Chaffee, 1995). While research on "passive learning suggests that even unmotivated exposure can produce learning" (Keeter & Wilson, 1986).

Many researches have investigated the political functions of the media, especially in connection with the impact that the media might have on voter turnout or the choice of candidate because the mass media represent sources of information about politics. During political campaigns, the public are generally more attuned to political messages, and the media are a key source of information about election issues and events, and about candidates themselves. Exposure to political information in the media can increase people's interest in the political campaign. Furthermore, experts say the media exposure will cause users to be aware and understand the

political information, which in turn will affect the political participation.

Political Information and Cognitive Effects

Today we have more sources of information. Voters' learning can be considered one type of media effects, and media effects have been a concern of many scholars, citizens, and politicians especially since the use of propaganda in World War I and the rise of huge advertising companies to help sell nearly everything, including political candidates (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995). Many of the earlier studies of media effects in elections were concerned mainly with short-term changes in opinions, attitudes, and behavior (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953).Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal (1981) found that prior knowledge, high interest, and frequent media exposure were all correlated with learning about the personality traits and campaign styles of the candidates. Campbell's (1960) hypothesis suggested that the short-term force of information that flows in the context of an election influences voter turnout.

The existence and level of issue voting in any particular election is dependent on the electorate that must be provided with the necessary information concerning important issues of the day and the candidate's position on those issues and voters must not only receive the information, they must be able to comprehend the message (Dalager, 1996). Therefore, "in order that the political message was received by voters, candidates most often reach the voters directly through the mass media" (Wattenberg, 1990). "Cognitions influence attitude formation and change" (Wegener & Carlston, 2005).

The media can help increase voter participation by not only providing citizens with information to make informed voting decision, but by stimulating interest in elections. Scholars who have studied the media over time generally concluded that the media reinforces political interest and voting intentions, because political interest, voting and learning from

the media reinforce each other (Weaver, 1996).

Research Context

This study will use the Jakarta Governor Election 2012 as the research context. Jakarta Governor Election 2012 was interesting to watch. Not because of the racial issues but the new model campaigning was creative and innovative with the help of communication technology such as social media. Jakarta Governor Election 2012 was the first election in Indonesia that utilize the social media in political campaigns. In previous years, the election campaign was done with banners, billboards or posters having images of the candidates everywhere or mobilization of the mass through convoys of motorcycles. However, in Jakarta Governor Election 2012, social media is used as the main medium of campaign.

More creative and unusual ways of campaigning was used by Jokowi-Ahok then their rivals, Foke-Nara. In the campaign, Jokowi-Ahok took vantages of the social media to reach out to the young voters. They employed social media such as Facebook and Twitter, which at that time was the most used social media in Indonesia (Kompas.com, 2012). Besides Facebook and Twitter, Jokowi-Ahok also used an online game called "Selamatkan Jakarta" (Save Jakarta).Campaign on the internet can also be seen from the visualization adaptation "What makes you beautiful", a song of the international fame, One Direction that are uploaded on YouTube by Jokowi sympathizers. Therefore, the social media types examined in this study is social media used by candidates in Jakarta Governor Election 2012 i.e. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and online games.

Research Method

Working Definitions-
Social Media

Social media is media that "content is created and distributed through social interaction" (Haynes & Pitts, 2009). Social media allows us to interact, collaborate, and participate actively in fluid

communities (Wood, 2009). In the context of electoral web sphere, "social media may facilitate engagement in the election process through three interrelated activities: provision of election-related information, opportunity for discussion and debate, and opportunity for undertaking election-related political action" (Foot & Schneider, 2006).

Political Knowledge as a Form of Cognitive Effects

The effects arising due to consumption of media content is called media effects. Potter stated, "media-influenced effects are those things that occur as a resultfrom media influence. The term is often used to denote changes in individuals that are caused by exposure to the media"(2012, p. 38). Political knowledge as the cognitive effects of media, is measured bythe following points:
1. Total time spent on social media
2. Number of times social media is accessed

Research Design

The purpose of this research is to determine cognitive effects caused by social media usage. Therefore, the research data will be collected from students with a survey method. Students in this study are limited to only those who registered as a student in the department accredited 'A'. Furthermore, by using Krejcie and Morgan's formula, researcher then determine the number of samples. The sample size needed is 385 students. Based on data from the Indonesian Education Ministry, the numbers of departments who have grade 'A' are 30 departments at 14 universities in Jakarta (Badan Akreditasi Nasional-Perguruan Tinggi, 2013). Furthermore, researchers determined that in each department, takes 12-13 respondents. Random technique used is lottery method. Then researcher will give a questionnaire to students who are respondents in this study to be filled.

The next step is data analysis to estimate the value of one variable based on the value of another variable. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient will be used to measure association between social media usage with the knowledge regarding election. There are two hypotheses to be tested in this study:

1. There is significant difference in the cognitive effects of university students who use social media number of time more often than others who do not.

2. There is significant difference in the cognitive effects of university students who use social media longer than others who do not.

Result

Among the respondents 116 (30.1%) were male and 269 (69.9%) were female. The majority of respondents were 20-22 years who were 233 students (60.5%). Three hundred and forty-five respondents (345 or 89%) had social media accounts for more than > 2 years, 34 respondents (9%) had accounts 1-2 years, and 3 respondents, each had a social media account for 1-6 months and 7-12 months.

There are eight media types, which can be used by respondents to get political information. Those are newspaper, magazine, book, radio, television, film, website, and social media. Social media was the media, which was most used by respondents to get political information stated by 385 or 100% respondents. The second most media which was used by respondents to get political information was television as stated by 361 or 93.8% respondents, websites used by 315 or 81.8% respondents, and newspaper used by 308 or 80% respondents to get political information. While most media which were not used by respondents to get political information were books only chosen by 115 or 29.9% respondents, film only used by 183 or 47.5% respondents, and magazine only used by 205 or 53.2% respondents.

Social Media Exposure

Related to the frequency in a day visiting social media, there are 385 or 100% respondents who used Facebook to get information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012. The detail of frequency in using this social media is 136 or 34.5% respondents used it four times a day and this answer is the highest compared to other social media. There are 173 or 44.94% respondents stated using Facebook more than 4 times in a day, 67 or 17.4% respondents used it for three times a day, and 9 or 2.3% used Facebook only twice a day. The comparison of the frequency of the use of social media in a day between Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and online game 'Save Jakarta' can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure1. Frequency in a Day Using Social Media for Political Information
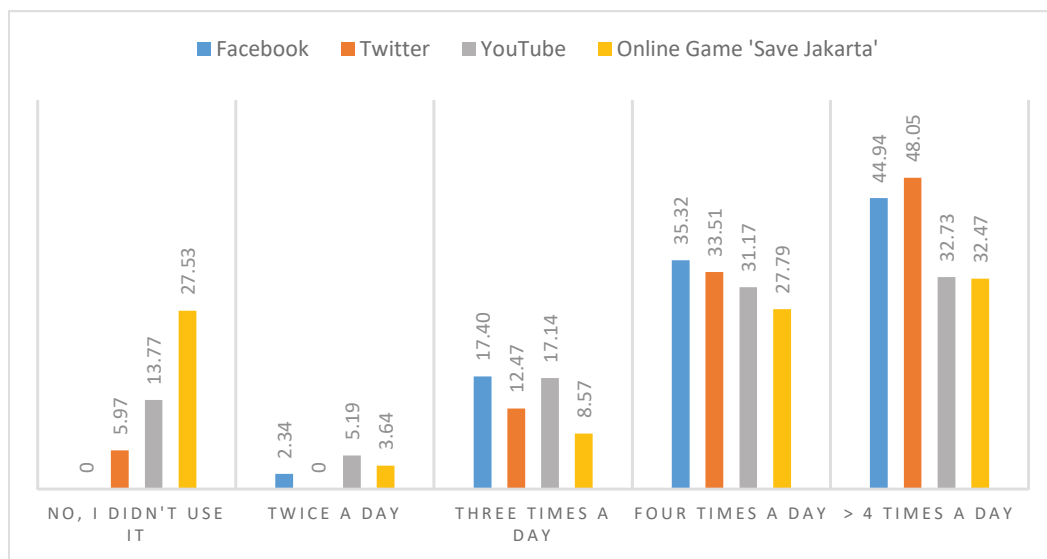
Twitter most visited by respondents > 4 times a day as stated by 185 or 48.05% respondents. Hundred and twenty-nine (129 or 33.51%) respondents used Twitter four times a day, and the lowest frequency when using Twitter to get information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012 is three times a day (48 or 12.47%). No respondents used Twitter twice a day (0%) and those who did not use Twitter to get information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012 is 23 or 5.97% respondents.

Just like on Facebook and Twitter, the number of visiting YouTube in a day mostly is > 4 times a day done by 126 or 32.73% respondents. Then the second is four times a day stated by 120 or 31.17% respondents and 66 or 17.14% respondents used YouTube three times a day. Only 20 (5.2%) respondents who used YouTube twice a day, while 53or 13.77% respondents said not using YouTube to get information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012. The frequency in visiting online game 'Save Jakarta' most is done for > 4 times a day (125 or 32.47%).Respondents who used online games 'Save Jakarta' four times a day is 107 or 27.79%. Using three times a day done by 33 or 8.57% respondents and 14 (3.64%) respondents used online game 'Save Jakarta' for twice a day.

As can be seen in Figure 2 about duration using social media, on Facebook, the length of time using this social media regarding Jakarta Governor Election 2012 the most is for > 600 minutes or >10 hours as done by 201 or 52.21% respondents.

Ninety-four (94 or 37.1%) respondents spent their times 480-< 600 minutes (8-< 10 hours) in a day. The respondents who used Facebook to get political information for more than 4-< 6 hours are 58 or 15.06% respondents, 1 or 0.26% respondents spent their time for 6-< 8 hours and 2 or 0.52%

respondents did it for < 2 hours (< 120 minutes). Twenty-nine (7.53%) respondents spent their time for 2-< 4 hours (120-< 240 minutes) in a day to get information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012.

Figure 2. The Length of Time in a Day Using Social Media (in Minutes)
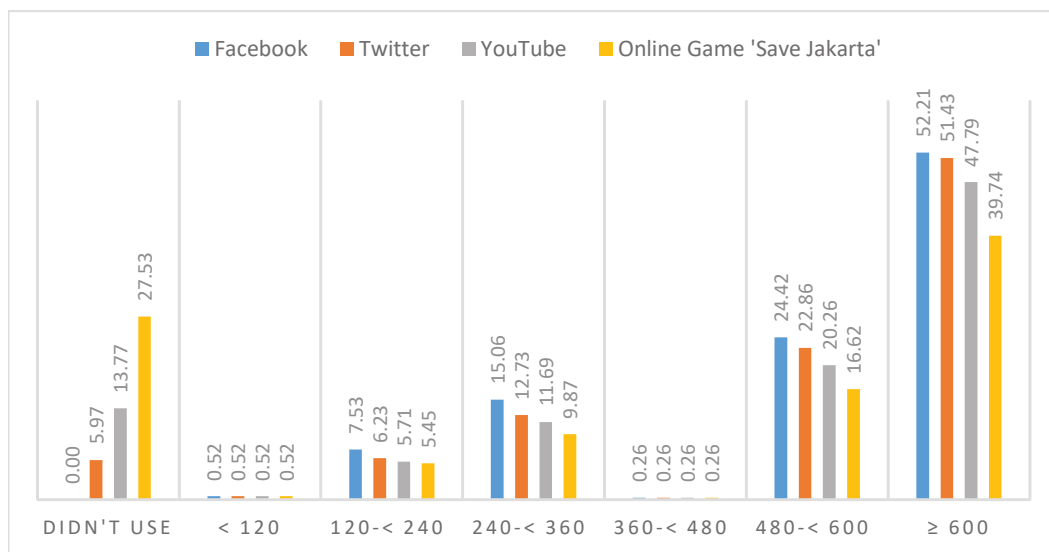
Twitter most used by respondents to get political information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012 for > 600 minutes or > 10 hours as stated by 198 or 51.43% respondents. Eighty-eight (88 or 22.86%) respondents used Twitter for 8-< 10 hours, and 49 (12.73%) respondents used Twitter for 4-< 6 hours (240-< 360 minutes) to get this information. While there are 24 or 6.23% respondents used Twitter for 120-< 240 minutes (2-< 4 hours). Two respondents (2 or 0.52%) used it for < 120 minutes or < 2 hours, and one (0.26%) respondent used Twitter for 6-< 8 hours.

Most respondents spent time for > 10 hours (> 600 minutes) when they used YouTube to get information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012. The next highest were respondents who used

YouTube for 8-< 10 hours (78 respondents). Forty-five (45 or 11.69%) respondents used YouTube for 240-< 360 minutes, 22 or 5.71% respondents used it for 2-< 4 hours and as Facebook and Twitter, only 2 (0.52%) respondents who used<120 minutes and 1 person (0.26%) who used YouTube to get political information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012 for 6-< 8 hours.Referring to Figure 2 can be seen that the majority of respondents used social media to get information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012 in a day, for > 10 hours. A similar case also happened in the online game 'Save Jakarta'. Most respondents used this type of social media for> 10 hours, as stated by 153 (39.74%) people. Respondents who used for 8-< 10 hours are 64 (16.62%) respondents, and 38 or 9.87% of respondents used it for 4-< 6 hours.

The Correlation between Media Exposure and Cognitive Effects-

Frequency of Media Exposure and Knowledge About the Elections

Exposure information conveyed through the media, is expected to have an impact as desired by the sender. Media effects are changes in cognition, attitudes, emotions, or behavior that result from exposure to the mass media (Straubhaar, LaRose, & Davenport, 2012, p. 404). The term is often used to denote changes in individuals that are caused by exposure to the media.

The next test will be conducted to determine correlation between the frequencies of cognitive effects. The hypothesis to be tested are:

H_0 There is no significant difference in the cognitive effects of university students who use social media number of time more often than others who do not (p = 0)

H_1 There is significant difference in the cognitive effects of university students who use social media number of time more often than others who do not (p $\neq$ 0)

Frequency in a day visiting Facebook were correlated with familiarity of political information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012, r = 0.95, which can be considered a large effect as well as frequency in a day visiting Twitter were correlated with familiarity of political information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012, r = 0.91, which can be considered a large effect. Frequency in a day viewing YouTube (r = 0.87) and playing online game 'Save Jakarta' (r = 0.84) were correlated with familiarity of political information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012, which can be considered a large effect. As can be seen in table 1, there is very strong evidence against null hypothesis because *p-value* < .05 then H_0 is rejected. Because H_0 is rejected, it means that H_1 is accepted therefore it can be concluded that there is significant difference in the cognitive effects of university students who use social media numbers of time more often than others who do not. Students who use Facebook number of time more often than others who do not, tend to have cognitive effects of political information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012.

Table 1. Summary Output of Correlation and Regression Test Results between Frequencies of Use Social Media with Cognitive Effects

Social Media	Frequency		
	Pearson's r	*P-Value*	Chances
Facebook	.944885694	8.1261E-188	99.9%
Twitter	.912860033	4.397E-152	99.9%
YouTube	.871475256	1.4577E-120	99.9%
Online Game 'Save Jakarta'	.837631159	1.2684E-102	99.9%

Note. $\alpha = 0.05$

Duration of Media Exposure and Knowledge of Political Information on Election

As described above, the media exposure in this study will be measured using two variables, namely the frequency and duration of the use of social media. After measuring the relationship between the frequency and political knowledge, next will be discussed about the amount of time spent using social media and their effect on knowledge. Statistical tests will be conducted to determine the correlation between the duration of the cognitive effects. The hypothesis to be tested are:

H_0 There is no significant difference in the cognitive effects of university students who

use social media longer than others who do not (p = 0)

H₁   There is significant difference in the cognitive effects of university students who use social media longer than others who do not (p≠ 0)

Results of the calculation of correlation and regression to answer whether the above hypothesis is accepted or rejected can be seen in Table 6.4. There is at least a 99.9% chance, a true relationship

between length of time spent (duration) on Facebook (r = .94) and Twitter (r = .91) to get information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012and cognitive effects. Furthermore, duration of use of YouTube (r = .92) and online game 'Save Jakarta' (r = .87) were highly correlated with knowledge of political information regarding Jakarta Governor Election 2012. The relationship between these variables can be considered a large effect.

Table 2.Summary Output of Correlation and Regression Test Results between Duration of Use Social Media with Cognitive Effects

Social Media	Duration		
	Pearson's r	*P-Value*	Chances
Facebook	.94458095	2.2677E-187	99.9%
Twitter	.906002455	4.4477E-145	99.9%
YouTube	.916023906	5.0527E-154	99.9%
Online Game 'Save Jakarta'	.871854264	4.2077E-176	99.9%

Note. α = 0.05

The results of hypothesis testing is there is very strong evidence against null hypothesis or reject H0 because p-value< .05.Because H0is rejected, it means that H1 is accepted so that it can be concluded thatthere is significant difference in the cognitive effects of university students who use social media longer than others who do not. Students who use social media, especially when using Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and online game, longer than others who do not, tend to have cognitive effects of political information about Jakarta Governor Election 2012.

Discussion

From the data analysis, it can be seen that respondents use social media every day and most respondents access social media for personal reasons more than 4 times per day. This can be understood as consistent with the statement O'Connor (2012), ages 18-29 included in the group

of 'Digital Natives'. This group has grown up in an internet-enabled reality and who take as a given this stunning democratization of media, and to whom the idea that anyone/everyone can have a voice. Indeed those aged 18-29 years are those who were active and used social media to communicate and connect with their 'friends'. Moreover, young people are quicker to embrace the advance in internet technologies than any other cohort and the overwhelming propensity (Delli Carpini, 2000). Wattenberg (2008) noted that, "young people are usually in the forefront of new types of activities, and are typically more adventurous and open to novel ways of doing things". If social media is indeed allowed them to engage in the practice of politics, then young people will become the first group involved in the political process.

Another finding in this study is that the longer students use social media; the more increase in knowledge of the political information. The length

of time a person uses the media can enhance the effects of media. Increased exposure of the media against candidates can raise voters' knowledge of important issues (Dalager, 1996). Besides the more often a person uses social media also makes a person more affected media content, or in other words, the more a person uses social media the more likely he/she will get the cognitive effects. Referring to Potter (2012), for how long and often someone consumes media content then the media gradually and continually add greater weight to individual's knowledge structures that are already existing in a person, thus making that something more fixed and harder to change.Statement delivered by earlier researchers reinforce the findings in this study that the more often and the longer a person uses social media the more likely to be affected by media content, in this study will mainly get the cognitive effects.

Conclusion

There is a relationship between social media content with the level of knowledge and the decision to vote in elections. Those who use social media more frequently and for longer are likely to get greater cognitive effects than those who rarely use it. Therefore, it can be said that the use of social media, can encourage young voters to participate in elections because these media make them more aware with political information. Based on data from the electoral commission of the Republic of Indonesia, in Jakarta Governor Election 2012 the number of those who did not vote down compared to the first round. The number of abstentions declined because the turnout in the second round rose 2.2% to 66.8%, while in the first round turnout is only 64.6%. Percentage of abstentions in second round is down about 3.1% to 33.2%. While in the first round and then, the percentage of non-voters reached 36.3%. Number of those eligible to vote in the second round was 6,996,951 and the participation rate is 66.8% or 4,667,991 people use their right to vote in 15,059 polling stations (Afifah, 2012).The advantages of social media can change the level of interest of young people to political information. Therefore, social media should be used as a tool to encourage the engagement of young people, because the media does have the ability to combine and integrate data, text, images, and sound so it can provide an actual and interesting as well as opportunities for them to participate actively.

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