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Analysis of The Filter Bubble Phenomenon in The Use of Online Media for Millennial Generation (An Ethnography Virtual Study about The Filter Bubble Phenomenon)

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ABSTRACT

This article describes about phenomenon of Filter Bubble for Millennial Generation in online media. Nowadays, we know that people in searching information are likely to be unaware that their search has been chosen. What is most interesting is how people which are aware on how a filter bubble works but seemed to forget when they search on some information. Researchers and critics are worried because these filters isolate people from getting the information on what they want not on what they need. People might not realize that they are led to partial information blindness. This research is acknowledge their awareness on the filter bubble phenomena especially on Y generation who are believed to be a group of people that adapt fast from the analogue era to the digital era. How they search information nowadays, how bubble filters add their self-value on things and how they prevent themselves from being in a bubble. The research was conducted using a qualitative method with an ethnography virtual approach through LINE group of millennial generation. This approach was to gain more information on the virtual culture, and this case the filter bubble phenomena. Results shows that most informants were not aware on the term of 'Filter Bubble', but have been assuming it for quite a while. When they were more informed of this term, they realized that they should be more critical on what they read, and being literated is a significant competence in this era. Whether or not this filter bubble could construct their identity, some denied that it didn't have any relevation while others think that it did give some additional values on it.

Keywords: *Filter Bubble, Computer-mediated Communication, ethnography virtual, millennials, and self value*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menjelaskan tentang fenomena *bubble filter* untuk Generasi Milenial di media *online*. Sekarang ini, orang-orang dalam mencari informasi cenderung tidak menyadari bahwa pencarian mereka telah dipilih. Hal paling menarik ialah bagaimana orang-orang yang menyadari cara kerja *bubble filter* tetapi menjadi lupa ketika mereka mencari informasi. Para peneliti dan kritikus khawatir *bubble filter* ini mengisolasi orang dari memperoleh informasi tentang apa yang mereka inginkan, bukan tentang apa yang mereka butuhkan. Orang mungkin tidak menyadari bahwa mereka dituntun pada kebutaan informasi parsial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kesadaran generasi Y terhadap fenomena bubble filter: cara mereka mencari informasi saat ini, bagaimana bubble filter menambahkan harga diri mereka pada sesuatu, dan bagaimana mereka mencegah diri mereka dari berada dalam *bubble*. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode etnografi virtual untuk mendapatkan lebih banyak informasi mengenai budaya virtual, khususnya fenomena *bubble filter*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan sebagian besar informan tak mengetahui istilah *Filter Bubble*, namun mereka sudah mengasumsikannya cukup lama. Ketika mereka menjadi lebih tahu mengenai istilah ini, mereka menyadari bahwa mereka harus lebih kritis terhadap apa yang mereka baca, dan menjadi *literated* adalah kompetensi yang signifikan di era sekarang ini. Selain apakah *bubble filter* dapat membentuk identitas mereka ataukah tidak, beberapa menyangkal bahwa *bubble filter* tidak memiliki relevansi apa pun, sementara yang lain tampaknya berpikir bahwa *bubble filter* memberikan beberapa nilai tambahan.

Kata Kunci: Filter Bubble, computer-mediated communication, etnografi virtual, generasi milenial, nilai diri

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, filter bubble would be one of trending topic in using of online media. As we know that research about filter bubble has becoming increasingly high, most research about this phenomenon is about how it works and how it effects people. But, as the fact is not many researches focused on whether or not people are aware on it. What is more interesting is when people that are aware on how a filter bubble works in gaining information, but they still search information without realizing that they are in a bubble. People sometimes explicitly choose their filters, but most hardly even notice that they do (Resnick et al., 2013).

Researchers and critics are worried because these filters isolate people from getting the information on what they want not on what they need. People might not realize that they are led to partial information blindness (Haim et al., 2018). People who are issolated with these filters may build their own believes and might stimulate frictions among other people.

Researches also suggest that when people express themselves online, there is a significant effect and also play a key role in creating polarized opinions (Abisheva et al., 2016; Sagiyanto & Ardiyanti, 2018). Another research found out that even though people were to see two different information, people would still preferentially select information that reinforced their existing attitudes (Liao & Fu, 2013). In ths case, bubbles may shrink further if they retreat into like-minded safety (Adee, 2016).

On the other hand, the Y generation is unique, because they are the one and only generation that actually grow in the process from analogue era into the digital era. They seem to be the group of people that need to adapt the life style rapidly, especially in gaining information. When the internet was not common, people were to seek information through newspaper, magazines or news in the television. Generation X is a new group of workers which were born between 1977 and 1988. They are likely labelled as Millennials or generation Y. They have unique characteristics, some of them are that they are comfortable with change, more open and tolerant (Jorgensen, 2003). This generation was introduced with computer in their early ages and alo used them in their young age. However, the burst of communication using the internet emerged in the end of the 1990-ies.

This research was intended to acknowledge about the awareness of informants which are millennials about the filter bubble phenomena, how they search information through the net, how this filter bubble phenomena construct their additional self-value and how they prevent themselves from this phenomena.

This research was using ethnography virtual approach emerged quite high in the beginning of the digital era. It is an approach in understanding virtual communities. This study is to understand on how aware informants on the filter bubble phenomena are. This phenom-

ena can also be described as how individuals are trapped in their own chosen information which were computer mediated.

Computer Mediated Communication

Human communicate, and the computer is one of the medium for people to communicate. Many researches about Computer-mediated communication have been conducted since the earliest stages in the 1970-ies when e-mails were the first to emerged in exchanging information (Herring, 2002). Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is a theory which involves sending messages through computer networks such as the Internet (Liang & Walther, 2015). It is a technological method for facilitating human communicative acts (Walther, 1996). From what Walther stated, these communication acts can be in verbal and nonverbal communication.

Nowadays when people find information or exchange information through the internet, people find it easier and easier to understand, not only do people use text messages but audio-video messages are possible also. CMC system is changing how people communicate, it provides a system of human and computers, absorbs and then extends the advantages of all former formats of communication, embracing the instant interaction of oral communication, the abstract logics of printing dissemination, and the vivid images of movie and television (Yu, 2011). Why is CMC relevant with this study? One of the reason is that Filter Bubble is one of the result in communicating through the internet.

Filter Bubble

Filter Bubble has also been an object of research many times, but most researches are more to how it works and how it. This study is to acknowledge people from the Y generation aware on the term of filter bubble and its consequences. Nadiya (2017) said that Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010) mentioned about the Y generation were people who were born in between 1977 to 1994 (Nadiya, 2017). Whether or not they know how to prevent themselves trapped in a bubble of contents. Bubble Filter has become a phenomenon from the earliest era when the new media emerged. However, not many people comprehend this term.

Filter Bubble can be illustrated as a potential online personalisation that effectively isolates the person from other various perspectives and content. This online recommendation system is built through algorithms that predict items on what users enjoy the most (Nguyen et al., 2014). It is an algorithm curation and personalised system in a bubble which can decrease a person to find other news content cross ideology (Spohr, 2017).

Finding information in the net can trap most users in a bubble which prevent them to see other various content. This bubble can create a constructed perspective. Personalized filters are sweeping the Web, creating individual universes of information for each of us (Pariser, 2011). This assumed that individual will have their own perspective about something and believe that it is right, which might be contradictive with other individuals.

However, most research about these polarizing phenomena stated that if people were to be literated and skilful in searching information in the net, it is unlikely to be trapped in a bubble. Information research about politics, for example, people who are interested in politics find social media as an outlet media to provide information. Those who are literate will not be cocooned in a political echo chamber (Dutton et al., 2019). Though, in some cases, people that are literated can also be unaware. People at first, are unaware that there is a mechanical system that happens on the internet, which changes in responding to the users. The negative effect of the filter is the strengthening of a person's pretension to be reductive which leads to a radical attitude. The bubble effect filter, on the other hand, it is a necessary logarithmic system (Zakaria et al., 2018).

METHOD

This research is to acknowledge on how aware is the Y generation with the Filter Bubble phenomenon. The Y generation who are believed to be a group of people that adapt fast from the analogue era to the digital era. The research questions cover how they search information nowadays, how bubble filters add their self-value on things and how they prevent themselves from being in a bubble.

The research was conducted using a qualitative method with an ethnography virtual approach. This approach was to gain more information on the virtual culture, and this case the filter bubble phenomena. Qualitative researchers seek to understand lived experiences in context and the meanings associated with these experiences, usually from the perspective of participants. Qualitative data collection typically involves interviews, observations, and documents studies (Maxwell & Reybold, 2015).

The ethnography approach was to gain a more comprehensive understanding on the phenomena in the virtual world, as the filter bubble phenomenon exsist more likely there. In the fact, researches has described data about virtual ethnography from Hine (2001) which consists of virtual ethnography questions assumptions, different with real-life and phenomena that arise from face-to-face interactions, and the internet changes the understanding of the 'location' of research (Prasanti & Indriani, 2019). Beside that, researchers also said the same method about from the oldest research before, that ethnography itself is a qualitative

research design in which a researcher describes and interprets patterns that are exchanged and learned from cultural groups about values, habits, beliefs, and language (Indriani & Prasanti, 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Using the ethnography virtual approach means that the research needs to begin in explaining how a filter bubble works in the online media. Approaches using ethnographic study of the internet are diverse and various. The methodological approach has broadened and reformulated through the years such as digital ethnography, ethnography on/of/through the Internet, connective ethnography, networked ethnography, and cyberethnography (Carter, 2018). Filter bubble for short is a bubble of information that are collected through an allogaritm system in the net. It creates personalized filters which can be positive and negative for the users. The Internet create a persistent virtual space that transforms earlier notions of the imagined society (Shumar & Madison, 2013). This space is assumed to have become a bubble or a personalized space on which users believe in.

There are some positive sides in this filter bubble phenomena. First, with this filter bubble, people are not lost in the amount of information. This situation can prevent people from excessive media exposure. Moreover, in this digital era, new information comes in seconds and it will be too much for someone to handle. Second, Filter bubbles facilitate our communal instincts. Especially on social media, we will be more likely to look for similarities from thousands of friend/follower accounts. Third, filter bubble can actually become an assistant for people in seeking information because it filters other information that are not needed (Lumakto, 2018).

On the other side, the negative sides of this filter bubble phenomenon on which why it has become a virtual problem is what Pariser (2011) wrote about in his book 'What the internet is hiding from you'. As mentioned before, filter bubbles are everywhere, especially on search engines and social media. This bubble shows information related to what we usually click on or search. Therefore, there are some negative sides. First, people can be stuck on what is called echo chamber effect. Where people seem to think they know everything. Second, people seem to see things in their own perspective, and the cause of the filter bubble strengthen their perspective. This reason can add more self-value which makes a person have a stronger attitude towards something. Third, in some cases it can benefit advertisements. When people click on an advertisement, then it will show again every time a person comes back to the internet and people tend to just click on what they see (Pariser, 2011).

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Information Research in Online Media

Most informants in accessing information through the net, they go to google and look up to the first 1 until 3 pages, and click the title which are relevant to what they seek. They see the online media as a gate way to find resources of information. Google has become their first application to access information. After google gives out its list of answers, most informants will choose the most reliable web address to seek information. Some said that they only stop in the first page of what Google offers without clicking the next page. Jerry said that he would go to google map to seek more detail information. Some others go to Facebook and Instagram, and just one informant who used another web address which is not quite familiar Duckduckgo.com.

Informants seemed to have bigger interest in searching information through Google and Facebook. Galloway stated that there are four which are Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google to be the most influential companies on the planet (Galloway, 2017). Google seemed to be the best choice for people to seek information.

Filter Bubble Phenomenon Awareness

Some people might not be aware that Google had been customizing its search results since December 2009. Google has been trying to predict what users most likely to click. These phenomena lessen people to get a broader popular result (Pariser, 2011).

Four out of seven informants were not aware of the term filter buble, they were quite surprised and unaware of it. Rita stated that she didn't even have any idea of what was happening. As she went through an article about the filter bubble, her first statement was that she was in shock and saw it as something cunning where a few people could get a lot of benefits from it which is unfair. Shirin was also unaware with the situation but she was questioning about it, like Rita, they were questioning why advertisements and news had almost the same traits. Shirin suspected it already and after she searched more about this 'filter bubble' term, her suspicious was right. *"At first, I did not know, but after searching, I finally found out. It is a logarithm that was "intentionally" created by a party to herd an opinion about a discourse" (Shirin, 2020).*

Yo, another informants admitted that he was not aware before but found it as something very normal and ordinary because he could understand the principleThe other three informants were aware of this term, but were more familiar with the term 'polarization'. After reading more information about the 'filter bubble', he assumed that individuals in social environments, especially when communicating with social media, will not be separated from the filter bubble. Yo stated that even though an application is free, there will still be

advertisements where it can gain profit. Advertising will be very personal when using a personal algorithm and algorithm can cross-platform. *'if you open lazada to look for particular items. Then open FB and IG, then there will be several sponsors related to the searches we did previously on lazada or google". (Yo, 2020).*

This statement is relevant to what Pariser (2011) mentioned that a personalized world, people will be shown only news that is convenient and confirms what the people believe in (Pariser, 2011) What people have clicked before will determine what the people will be exposed to in the future. Concerning the social environment in social media, at least people have filtered themselves when they feel uncomfortable with some posts sent.

Ian was one of the informants who was also unaware of this term, however he admitted to have a bit of knowledge on how the system worked. He seemed upset on the phenomena and sated that he felt that he was controlled by the system and disappointed that he wasn't free to choose due to the unlimited information.

The other three informants were aware on this term and were displore of it. Joko felt that in interacting on social media, he realized that it had a great potential to construct social media users into boxes. What he meant that, people had become persistant to what they believe which meant that what they believed was right. This was because they read what they saw in the media platform and unrealizing the alogaritm system in the net. This could be potential for conflicts.

Jerry stated that he felt bored on what the media offered him. The news, games and music were similar. *'yes I know, like what I experienced on the homepage of youtube, the algorithmic effect displays film, vlog, music, and games that I have played or downloaded before, so it is annoying too, what comes out does not come out of the box.'* (Jerry, 2020). Jerry also felt as he was a fool to read the same information all over again or listen to similar music.

Some informants say that this phenomenon can have both positive and negative impact on one's personalities. It can be harmful when people are not literate and critical in information exposure that they receive. They will believe in anything they read, without knowing whether the information could be fake news. This can increase the hoax spreading and cause wider negative effects.

Additional Self-Value from Online Media

Filter bubble can easily construct one's identity or an additional self-value. However, these informants that are Y generation have self-prevented this situation. Though they say

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that the information that they get are likely more for adding knowledge but do not seem to have a big effect on the way they think about things.

The filter bubble phenomena itself however add some self-values about the media itself. They are more sceptis on what the media provides and are more aware on things that they read. Though, they admitted that there has been a changing pattern on the way people choose and buys things.

Prevention from Filter Bubble

Yo determined that people must check every information so that they are not trapped in the polarization of ideas like frogs in a shell. Yo suggested that experts should use a new algorithm so that the polarization does not occur that could divide the community. A concrete example is during the last presidential election; the community was divided into 'shucks' and 'tadpoles'. Rita now is more aware on this phenomenon, she admitted that she should be more literated and also read a lot.

And when she does read something, she needs to read from other sources to compare whether or not the information is true. Other suggestion she mentioned that people shouldn't only read what are viral only but others which are not. So, results shows that there are 6 ways in preventing themselves from the bubble:

The first, researchers has seen that informants suggest to click things that are unrelated to what people like, and what people usually click on, or click to some information that people might not agree on. This can enrich other perspectives beyond their knowledge. People should try different things and get out of their safe zone.

The second, Informants suggest to filter themselves. They should develop a more critical way in thinking and not taking things for granted. They should find more resources that are credible and trustworthy. People can filter themselves by not clicking on to provocative titles or titles that can amused us.

Then, the third, researchers also has funded that some suggested to reset back their username, start everything from the beginning. It would be so hardful for informant, when they have to start from the first step. The fifth, people should lessen the use of social media and not depend on it. In this case Joko admitted to erase his Facebook account and rarely use his Instagram account. If he does use social media, he uses an anonym account which he believes to be untraceable. The last, based on data of observation through online media, researchers has seem that informant try not to be controlled by suggestions that the media offers.

CONCLUSIONS

That filter bubble creates a world that is convenient for us alone because it shows and inform us on what we agree on or what we like about; however, it makes our perspectives fragmented. The psychological language will emerge as a polarization of ideas among netizens.

Results shows that most informants were not aware on the term of 'Filter Bubble', but have been assuming it for quite a while. When they were more informed of this term, they realized that they should be more critical on what they read, and being literated is a significant competence in this era. Though, in addition whether or not this filter bubble could construct their identity, some denied that it didn't have any relevation while others seemed to think that it did give some additional values on it. The additional values stated on how people see informations nowadays, they might be in a filter bubble itself when they are discussing about the filter bubble phenomena.

Researchers suggests that this phenomenon should be address highly in the media or in the help from institutions. This awareness may prevent frictions and miscommunication. There are assumptions from the informants that when individuals are trapped in their filter bubble, they will only see things in one perspective.

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