



## CRIMINAL NEWS WRITING STRATEGY OF okemedan.com

Munajmi Ajri<sup>1</sup>, Erwan Effendi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: [munajmi0603223124@uinsu.ac.id](mailto:munajmi0603223124@uinsu.ac.id)

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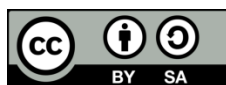
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### ABSTRACT

*The development of digital media encourages online media to present news quickly, up-to-date, and engagingly. However, this demand often faces the risk of violating journalistic ethics, particularly in crime reporting. Previous studies have focused more on the ethics of crime reporting in general, while discussions of crime news writing strategies in local digital media are still relatively limited. This study aims to analyze the crime news writing strategies on Okemedan.com and examine their compliance with journalistic principles and the reporting code of ethics. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, observations of reporting practices, and documentation of the crime news archives published by Okemedan.com. The key informant for this study is the managing editor of Okemedan.com, who has the authority in the selection, editing, and quality control processes of news. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. While data validity was strengthened through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. The results of this study indicate that the crime news writing strategy on Okemedan.com emphasizes information verification, the use of official sources, the application of the 5W+1H elements, the selection of informative titles, and the avoidance of sensational language. The uniqueness of this study lies in the finding that Okemedan.com builds the appeal of crime news through a human interest approach and editorial control, rather than through the exploitation of violence or the suffering of victims. Thus, this study enriches the study of digital journalistic ethics by showing how local media can balance publication speed, reader needs, and social responsibility in crime reporting.*

**Keywords:** writing strategy, crime news, online media, journalistic ethics, Okemedan.com

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital media has fundamentally transformed journalistic practices, including news production, distribution, and consumption. Online media are no longer simply required to deliver information quickly, but also to maintain accuracy, relevance, and public trust amidst the rapid flow of digital information. This shift is further exacerbated by the increasing demand for news consumption through digital platforms and social media, necessitating the demands of speed, readability, and engaging content. The Digital News Report 2024 shows that online news consumption has become a crucial part of the global information ecosystem, with a survey involving over 95,000 respondents in 47 countries (Newman et al., 2024). This situation emphasizes the need for digital media to develop news writing strategies that not only capture readers' attention but also adhere to the principles of journalistic professionalism.

One type of news that garners high public attention is crime news. Crime news has strong news value because it directly relates to security, social order, law enforcement, and the public's experience in understanding social risks in their environment. However, crime reporting also poses ethical vulnerabilities because it can create stigma, reinforce fear, harm victims, or prejudice individuals before a final and binding legal decision has been issued. Therefore, writing crime news cannot simply rely on speed of publication and the completeness of the 5W+1H elements. It also requires careful selection of titles, diction, perspective, sources of information, and how to present the chronology of events. In this context, crime news must be positioned as an informative and responsible journalistic product, not a sensational commodity solely seeking reader attention (Juditha, 2020; Sari & Pratama, 2022; Saragih, 2024).

In online media practice, the primary challenge of crime news writing lies in the tension between speed and accuracy. Digital media operates in a competitive climate that encourages journalists to publish news quickly to keep up with other media outlets. However, this speed can create problems if not balanced with verification, balance, and adherence to journalistic codes of ethics. The Journalistic Code of Ethics emphasizes that journalists must produce news that is accurate, balanced, free from malice, verify information, avoid mixing facts with judgmental opinions, and uphold the presumption of innocence (Press Council, 2017; Press Council, 2024). This principle is crucial in crime reporting, as writing errors can impact an individual's reputation, victim protection, the legal process, and public trust in the media.

Okemedan.com is a local digital media outlet in North Sumatra that actively publishes crime news. Operating amidst competition from local online media, Okemedan.com faces the challenge of presenting news quickly, engagingly, and easily accessible to readers. However, at the same time, the outlet is also required to maintain journalistic standards to prevent crime reporting from falling into sensationalism, exploiting violence, or using language that discriminates against certain parties. Okemedan.com's position is crucial to examine because local media is closely connected to events, sources of information, and readers in its region. This close relationship makes crime news writing strategies not only related to journalistic techniques but also to the social responsibility of media in shaping public understanding of regional crime events.

Several previous studies have discussed the ethics of crime reporting, news writing strategies in online media, and the tendency toward sensationalism in digital reporting. Juditha (2020) highlighted the importance of ethics in online crime reporting, while Sari and Pratama (2022) showed that sensationalism in crime news can displace the media's educational function. Nugraha (2023) explained that online media news writing strategies include title selection, news structure, perspective, sources, and language use. However, studies specifically examining how local digital media develop crime news writing strategies through a combination of verification, angle selection, editorial control, use of official sources, and a human interest approach are still relatively limited. Thus, this research gap lies in the lack of robust empirical discussion of crime news writing strategies in local digital media as a journalistic practice that balances publication speed, news appeal, and ethical compliance.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to analyze the crime news writing strategy on Okemedan.com and examine its compliance with journalistic principles and the code of ethics for reporting. This study focuses not only on how crime news is written, but also on how editors determine information sources, develop perspectives, avoid sensationalism, and maintain accuracy before publication. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the practice of crime news writing in local digital media, specifically how Okemedan.com builds news appeal through a human interest approach and editorial control without neglecting the principles of verification and the presumption of innocence. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the study of digital journalism and the ethics of crime reporting. Practically, this research can provide input for local online media in formulating strategies for writing informative, ethical, and public interest-oriented crime news.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the crime news writing strategies employed by Okemedan.com, a local digital media outlet. This qualitative approach was chosen because the study does not aim to test relationships between variables, but rather to interpret journalistic practices based on editorial experience, the news production process, and ethical considerations in crime news writing. Qualitative research allows researchers to understand phenomena in a natural, contextual, and holistic manner through direct interaction with research subjects and data related to specific social practices (Moleong, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, the crime news writing strategy in this study is understood as an editorial practice that encompasses the process of information search, source selection, news perspective determination, news structuring, editing, and adherence to journalistic ethics.

The research informants were determined purposively, based on their direct involvement in the production and quality control of crime news on Okemedan.com. The primary informant in this study was the managing editor of Okemedan.com, as he has authority over the selection, editing, verification, and publication of news. Supporting data was obtained through a search of published crime news documents, observations of news presentation characteristics, and information relevant to journalistic practices in the newsroom. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to elicit editorial perspectives on writing strategies, the use of official sources, the application of the 5Ws + 1H, ethical considerations, and

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efforts to avoid sensationalism. Observations included crime news writing patterns, title selection, diction, news structure, and the human interest approach. Documentation was conducted by reviewing Okemedan.com's crime news archives to compare informant statements with the reporting practices presented to the public. The use of multiple data collection techniques aimed to obtain a more comprehensive picture and increase the depth of research analysis (Patton, 2015; Sugiyono, 2020).

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, which consists of three main stages: data condensation, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles et al., 2014). In the data condensation stage, interview results, observation notes, and news documents were sorted according to the research focus, such as the flow of crime news writing, information sources, determining the perspective, the application of journalistic codes of ethics, the role of editors, and challenges in digital media. In the data presentation stage, the findings were arranged thematically so that the relationship between writing practices, editorial policies, and journalistic ethical principles could be analyzed systematically. Next, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the patterns of findings to explain how Okemedan.com developed a strategy for writing informative, ethical, and non-sensational crime news. Data validity was tested through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time, namely by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and news documentation to ensure the data obtained had consistency and credibility (Denzin, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017). Through this procedure, this study is expected to produce a valid analysis of crime news writing practices in local digital media.

### 3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

#### **Okemedan.com's Crime News Writing Strategy**

The crime news writing strategy on Okemedan.com demonstrates that journalistic practices in local digital media rely not only on speed of publication but also on the process of selecting, verifying, and editing information before it is delivered to the public. Based on research findings, the process of writing crime news begins with the receipt of initial information, either through public reports or official police releases. However, this initial information is not immediately published but is instead re-checked through a confirmation process. An informant emphasized, *"When criminal information comes in, we don't immediately publish it as news. Usually, we check its accuracy first, especially with the police or official sources handling the case."* This quote demonstrates that Okemedan.com's primary strategy is to prioritize verification as the foundation of news writing. From a journalistic perspective, verification is a key principle because news must be based on reliable facts, not simply unverified, quick information (Romli, 2018; Saragih, 2021). This finding also aligns with data in the manuscript, which indicates that the process of writing crime news on Okemedan.com begins with checking and confirmation before publication.

The next strategy is evident in the use of information sources with authority and competence in criminal cases. Okemedan.com uses the police as its primary source because they have the authority to investigate, prosecute, and process crime scenes. An informant stated, *"For crime news, the strongest source is still the police, because they handle cases and have official data. Information from citizens can be an initial clue, but it*

*must still be confirmed with the authorities.*" This statement demonstrates a hierarchy of sources in the crime news production process. Public information is still considered important, but it is not positioned as the sole basis for reporting. Theoretically, this strategy reflects the principles of accuracy and balance in journalism, as journalists must verify information before disseminating it to the public (Press Council, 2017). In the context of digital media, the use of official sources is crucial to avoid news that is erroneous, speculative, or potentially detrimental to certain parties (Saragih, 2020).

In addition to the source aspect, Okemedan.com also employs a strategy for determining the news' point of view, or angle. Determining the angle is not only aimed at distinguishing Okemedan.com's news from other media outlets but also at building more meaningful information for readers. An informant stated, *"If we only write about criminal events as they are, all media outlets will be the same. So, journalists need to find different perspectives, for example, regarding the impact on the victim, family, or surrounding community."* This quote demonstrates that angle is understood as a strategic tool for enhancing the depth of the news. In the theory of online media news writing strategies, selecting the point of view is a crucial part of news packaging because it determines the focus, meaning, and appeal of the information (Nugraha, 2023). Thus, Okemedan.com's strategy not only pursues topicality but also seeks to establish the social context of the criminal events reported.

Another important finding is the use of a human interest approach in writing crime news. Okemedan.com positions crime news not only as reports about the perpetrator, victim, and chronology of events, but also as social events with humanitarian impact. The informant explained, *"We often look at the human side, not just the case. For example, how the incident impacted the victim or family. This makes the news more engaging, but we still have to be careful not to exploit the victim."* Interpretatively, this approach demonstrates the editorial effort to maintain a balance between news appeal and ethical responsibility. Crime news does have high news value because it relates to conflict, security, and social order, but its presentation must avoid exploiting the victim's suffering (Juditha, 2020). By using a human interest approach, Okemedan.com strives to make crime news not just information about events but also a means of social education for readers.

Okemedan.com's crime news writing strategy is also evident in its effort to avoid sensationalism. In digital media practices, crime news is often prone to being packaged with provocative headlines, dramatic diction, or exaggerated details of violence to attract readers' clicks. However, the informant emphasized, *"Crime news must remain engaging, but that doesn't mean it has to be overly graphic. We avoid language that is overly sadistic, provocative, or that leads readers to judge."* This statement demonstrates editorial awareness that news appeal should not be built by exploiting readers' emotions. Analytically, this strategy relates to criticisms of digital media sensationalism, namely the media's tendency to emphasize dramatic aspects for traffic and public attention (Sari & Pratama, 2022; Saragih, 2024). By avoiding provocative language, Okemedan.com strives to maintain its journalistic function as a responsible information provider, not simply a content producer chasing clicks.

The editor's role is a central element in Okemedan.com's crime news writing strategy. The editor serves not only as a technical editor but also as a guardian of accuracy, ethics, and publication suitability. An informant stated, *"Every crime manuscript still has to go to the editor. There, the language, data, and title are checked, including whether they comply*

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*with the code of ethics.*" This quote demonstrates that editorial control is a crucial mechanism for preventing misreporting. In journalistic theory, editors have an institutional responsibility to ensure that published news meets standards of accuracy, balance, and public interest (Sumadiria, 2016; Saragih, 2021). The editor's role is increasingly important in crime reporting because errors in diction, identity, or a person's legal status can have serious social and legal consequences. Therefore, Okemedan.com's crime news writing strategy takes place not only at the journalist level but also at the editorial policy and oversight levels.

Adherence to the journalistic code of ethics is an integral part of Okemedan.com's crime reporting strategy. The editorial team emphasizes the use of non-judgmental terms, such as the word "alleged" in cases that have not yet received a final verdict. An informant explained, *"If the case is still being processed, we use the word 'alleged.' We don't want the news to make it seem as if someone is definitely guilty, even though there hasn't been a verdict yet."* This statement demonstrates the application of the presumption of innocence in news writing. The Journalistic Code of Ethics emphasizes that Indonesian journalists must present news accurately, fairly, without malice, and respect the presumption of innocence (Press Council, 2017). In crime reporting, this principle is crucial because the media has the power to shape public perceptions of perpetrators, victims, and law enforcement institutions. Therefore, careful use of language is not simply a matter of writing style, but part of the media's ethical responsibility.

Overall, Okemedan.com's crime news writing strategy can be interpreted as an effort to balance three main interests: the speed of digital media, readers' need for crime information, and journalistic ethical obligations. An informant summarized this practice by stating, *"Crime news must be fast, but it can't just be fast. It must still have clear sources, complete elements, and be ethically safe."* This quote shows that Okemedan.com's strategy does not reject the logic of online media speed, but places it within the boundaries of journalistic professionalism. Interpretatively, these findings show that local digital media can build a model for writing informative, engaging, and ethical crime news through verification, the use of official sources, the selection of angles, a human interest approach, the avoidance of sensationalism, and editorial control. Thus, Okemedan.com's crime news writing strategy functions not only as a news production technique, but also as a practice of social media responsibility in maintaining the quality of public information.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the crime news writing strategy on Okemedan.com is carried out through a journalistic process that emphasizes accuracy, verification, the use of official sources, the completeness of the 5W + 1H elements, and editorial oversight before the news is published. Okemedan.com is not only oriented towards the speed of information presentation as demanded by digital media, but also strives to maintain ethical reporting through careful choice of diction, application of the presumption of innocence, protection of the identity of certain parties, and avoidance of sensationalism. The uniqueness of the crime news writing strategy in this media is seen in the use of a human interest approach that makes the news not only convey the chronology of events, but also presents the human dimension and social impact of the

reported criminal cases. The role of the editor is very important as a quality control, maintainer of accuracy, and determiner of newsworthiness to ensure publication remains in accordance with journalistic principles. Thus, this study shows that Okemedan.com strives to build informative, ethical, and responsible crime reporting practices, so that it can serve as an example for local digital media in balancing the needs of speed, news appeal, and public interest.

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