

# **The Utilization of WhatsApp on Journalistic Practices of HarianSumutPos**

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**Abstract:** *The existence of mobile chat applications is one proof of technological and communication development. One popular chat application, WhatsApp, allows journalists to gain information and data needed to help the journalistic practices. The goal of this study is to examine the utilization of WhatsApp on journalistic practices implemented in HarianSumutPos. The results of the study show that WhatsApp has an important role in the news gathering process. The journalists stated that they use WhatsApp to get data like photos and videos from news sources.*

**Keywords :** *whatsapp, mobile chat, news gathering journalistic.*

## **Introduction**

There are four focuses on journalistic practices mentioned by Dutton: (a) editorial flow modification, (b) news gathering practices' alternate, (c) production's temporal patterns acceleration, and last is (d) print, electronic and online operation's convergence, in which the researchers explore new news gathering practice alternatives, like WhatsApp. Navy Journalist (2014) identified four most repeatedly used processes in newsgathering: scrutiny, telephone conversations, research and discussions; WhatsApp fulfills all these steps with few flaws. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dutton, W.H., 2013. *The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies*. OUP Oxford.

WhatsApp usage has increased among journalists as well as high authorities around the world. WhatsApp has been considered as one of the most reliable and usage friendly applications among journalists. It is shown by the research of Pruto that one billion users use WhatsApp every month. After the appearance of WhatsApp, journalists have realized its importance in the field of journalism.<sup>2</sup>

Nowadays, new journalists are more advanced and quicker. They use different mobile applications and the difficulties of news gathering practices has become clear. Journalists also receive some training in new technology for improving their news practices. "In the beginning of news reporting and news gathering, the journalists use or find different tools for checking their news' reliability and these tools are changing with the passage of time. WhatsApp is reliable for news practices. Most of the journalists, editors and reporters, said WhatsApp is frequently used for work. WhatsApp is the fastest and reliable platform for news sharing and reporting and they all use it very well because it gives them a safe environment to practice journalism. The foremost and basic benefit of WhatsApp is that the journalist can talk to their sources without needing to worry about external tapping.<sup>3</sup> By using WhatsApp, their privacy is guaranteed.

WhatsApp has a close connection with journalists, sources, the obtainability of information, and the reshaping in the temporalities of news making. WhatsApp offers the possibility to access larger amounts of information faster, but it is also changing the way some journalists engage in the process of news making and with their sources. Special attention should be placed on generational differences in these matters. WhatsApp is changing work rhythms because both journalists and sources seem to be more willing to

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<sup>2</sup>Pruto, R., 2016. *The Gospel Herald Technology*. WhatsApp Reaches One Billion Active Users One Day Faster Than Gmail Did: <http://www.gospelherald.com/articles/61931/2016-02-03/whatsapp-reaches-one-billion-active-users-one-day-faster-than-gmail-did>.

<sup>3</sup>Nusrat Azeema & Ayesha Nazuk. *Science, Technology and Development* 36 (4): 249-258, 2017 ISSN 0254-6418 / DOI: 10.3923/std.2017.249.258 © 2017 Pakistan Council for Science and Technology  
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engage frequently over WhatsApp. Scholars have also argued that WhatsApp can provide a sense of community engagement, in which users build long-term relationships.

The other effects of WhatsApp include the following changing patterns in information flow and even sometimes it is used as shortcut method for gathering news which contains little risk or threaten the journalist's future. Journalists were not only using WhatsApp for chatting purposes, they also gained benefit practically by using this texting application in professional practices. Secondly, current study revealed multi-dimensional themes (Work practices, Reliability, End-to-End Encryption, Citizen Journalism and Information Flow) influencing journalists towards adoption of WhatsApp in their news practices.<sup>4</sup> In spite of its limitations, this research study suggests that WhatsApp may become a new application for journalists, which helps them in instant news gathering process. With the invention of WhatsApp, journalists' news practices are changing as time goes on.

But the most worrying trend seems to be the inescapability that the journalists experience with this technology. WhatsApp has modified the state of affairs to a point where journalists depend heavily on these applications in order to do their job and face real consequences, both personal and professionally if they detach themselves from it.<sup>5</sup>

## Literature Review

### WhatsApp

Quoted from WhatsApp site (WhatsApp.com, 2019) that explains its mission:

“WhatsApp starts as an alternative of SMS. Our product provides service to send and receive various media: text, photo, video, document, location and voice call. Our messages

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<sup>4</sup>NusratAzeema,.... P.256

<sup>5</sup>Digital Journalism <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2019.1592693> Reporting with WhatsApp: Mobile Chat Applications' Impact on Journalistic Practices Routledge P.16

and calls are kept using end-to-end encryption which means as no third-party including WhatsApp able to read or hear your call. There is a purpose from each product decision, that is our hope so that the people can communicate everywhere without any limitation". In Indonesia, based on data from Hoot suite's survey (2018, p.52) regarding Most Active Social Media Platforms, it is stated that WhatsApp is the third rank as the most active social media in Indonesia with the percentage of 40%. This social media is used as a means of chat communication to send text messages, pictures, even telephone videos. This media can be used if the user's telephone card has an internet data package. A more detailed explanation about WhatsApp is stated by Hartanto: WhatsApp is a message application for smartphones with features like Black Berry Messenger. WhatsApp Messenger is a cross platform messaging application that allows people to communicate without SMS fees. This is because WhatsApp Messenger uses the same internet data package for email, web browsing, and others. By using WhatsApp, we can chat online, share files, exchanging photos, etc.<sup>6</sup>

### **Journalistic**

Journalistic consist of two words, Journal and Istic. The word journal comes from France, which means diary. In the third edition of the Large Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) in 2005, there were words of journalism. Journalism is the job of collecting, writing, editing, and publishing news in newspapers. While Journalism is something that involves journalism and press messages Together with that journalists are in line with the words of journalists, namely people whose jobs is to collect and write news in newspapers and so on.<sup>7</sup>

Journalistic has a function as a daily report processing that attracts the interest of the public, from coverage to its distribution to the community, as well as about what

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<sup>6</sup>AatHartanto. 2010. *PanduanAplikasi Smartphone*. Jakarta: GramediaPustakaUtama.P. 100.

<sup>7</sup>Azwar. *4 PilarJunalistikPengetahuanDasarBelajarJurnalistik*, (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2018), P. 1.

happens in the world, that is, whatever happens, both factual events, facts and opinions, to become news to the public. Journalism, according to Luwi Ishwara, has characteristics that are important for us to note, which are as follows:

- Sceptic: it is the attitude to always question everything, doubt what is received and be aware of all certainty so that it is not easily fooled. The essence of scepticism is doubt. The media should not be satisfied with the surface of an event and be reluctant to remind of deficiencies in society. Journalists must go into the field, struggle, and explore exclusive things.
- Acting: The reporter does not wait until the event appears, but will search and observe with the sharpness of a journalist's instincts
- Change: Change is the main law of journalism. The media is no longer a supplier of information, but a facilitator, filter and give meaning to information.
- Art and profession: Journalists see with fresh eyes at each event to capture unique aspects
- The role of the press: The role as a reporter, acting as the eyes and ears of the public, reporting events outside the public's knowledge with neutral and without prejudice. In addition, the press must also act as interpreters, public representatives, guard roles, policy makers and advocates.<sup>8</sup>

Advancements in science and technology have affected the field of journalism and consequently journalist's practices are changing. Journalism is such a profession, in which truth, equality and authentication are important elements of journalist's practices. It is the duty and responsibility of journalists to advocate societal news and modify them, present the facts, carried out non-adoptability behavior towards plagiarism, unveil the truth, keep the information source private and present the assumptions with facts. However, in order to

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<sup>8</sup>Luwi Ishwara. *Catatan-Catatan Jurnalisme Dasar*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2005), P. 5

bring the instant big breaking news on daily basis, journalists are using and utilizing new trends and advancements in their text message applications<sup>9</sup>

### **WhatsApp's Impact on Journalistic Practice**

WhatsApp is a medium of connection between reporters, journalists and news-channels'. Information Flow: For many interviewees, WhatsApp in many ways was more useful and quicker than any other news gathering tool. It unleashes its power when it reverses the newsroom-audience information flow – from newsgathering to broadcasting. According to the Director, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, based on their distinctive data from 10 countries they found that Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Google+, and WhatsApp are considerably significant set-ups for news. In these findings WhatsApp was being used for information sharing and discovering news.<sup>10</sup> 'Today, without WhatsApp you cannot do anything in electronic media. Within minutes, we can share any news in groups and every journalist is informed with this news'. Print and electronic media journalists both use WhatsApp at some level but the difference of reporting is just based on time. In electronic media, every second is important so WhatsApp helps them in quickly sharing and editing their reports for news channels.

However, print media have 12-hour time relaxation and they share their news coverage and images on WhatsApp. Now a new trend has risen which is called Visual Journalism in which every print or electronic media has its own webpages; on their web pages they update current audio-video news for which they appreciate WhatsApp because it gives them instant newsfeed. It's quick, easy and cheap, more personal than email and less likely to be overloaded. It is very simple to share photos and video that others could start to check out and verify. It's great for multiplications deployments or where team is spread over a wide area. Everyone can see what everyone else is doing so correspondents would

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<sup>9</sup>Edwards, V., 2016. *Research skills for journalists*. Routledge.

<sup>10</sup>Newman and Levy, 2014. *Reuters Institute Digital News Report, 2014*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

not be asked for 'lives' when they're out of action/busy". WhatsApp" gives ease in this field but some journalists rely on shortcuts and forget the field practices. Now official statements and regular news are updated on WhatsApp and when 'the places where access to camera is difficult or not allowed then we use our mobile-cameras and WhatsApp, to send our news to our channels. And it's excellent for team-building and mutual support. Many journalists mentioned that people are now more active in using WhatsApp and with the help of that tool they are more inclined to join journalism profession. Mobile Chat Applications in the Journalism Studies Literature with social media; scholars have identified ways for audiences and journalists to be connected to each other's needs and interests in co-creating and distributing news with "the people formerly known as audiences" (Rosen, 2006).

In theory, journalistic uses of WhatsApp can foster democratic ideals of participation and promote wider sharing of information. In practice, these ideals are also shaped by the cultural, politico-economic, and technological contexts in which journalistic interactions take place at the level of individual reporters, Canter (2015) identified new routines in newsgathering, live reporting and a resulting set of changes in gatekeeping and verification. In both an individual and institutional sense, the arrival of social media has brought not simply a transformation in practices but instead a complex mix of preexisting and emergent reporting interactions. As a result, WhatsApp further enmesh journalists within audiences, allowing for a series of private and semi-private interactions with sources and fellow reporters.

This new "reciprocity" (Lewis, Holton, & Coddington, 2014) often takes place in private spaces that are negotiated based on trust of each other and of the technology. By soliciting tips and updates on these apps (Barot & Oren, 2015; Cooper, 2007), reporters can "witness" events from multiple vantage points, follow stories at a distance, and integrate user-generated content into their coverage (Mabweazara, 2011). WhatsApp has allowed for

secure communication channels with sources who may be at risk of surveillance (Crandall et al., 2013).

The routinization of WhatsApp has brought more granular information to news narratives since it offers a constant stream of specific points in a larger context. But the greater availability of on-the-ground information did not preclude legacy media hewing to an established narrative that could have been disproven by facts on the ground. In addition to interactions among journalists, WhatsApp also opens possibilities for audience involvement in news production. WhatsApp is a complex and hybrid interactions of news production embedded in social practices. The interactions on these apps are limited by the social, digital, and physical world that reporters inhabit. The challenge of undertaking research on journalistic interactions on WhatsApp (private or public) is that while these interactions are becoming normalized as the technology becomes more pervasive for users, the spaces and nature of interactions continue to evolve. By analyzing interactions on WhatsApp, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of journalistic practices and norms and understand the significance of new journalistic interactions involving journalists and audiences. Looking ahead, it would be useful to explore the extent to which chat app interactions are produced and reproduced in other contexts of crisis and everyday reporting.

### **Research Methods**

The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative case study approach. This case study approach is focused on a case to be carefully observed and analyzed thoroughly. In other words, the researcher will describe, record, analyze and interpret the conditions that currently occur or exist in the Hariansumut Pos. Researchers make observations and interviews as a technique of collecting data by using participant observation, where the researcher will participate in the field to observe the object of research and actively interact in communication activities that occur within the Hariansumut Pos. By interviewing researchers will find out more in-depth things about

participants in interpreting situations and phenomena that occur, where this cannot be found through observation.

Qualitative data analysis is carried out interactively and continuously until complete, so the data is saturated. At the time of the interview, the researcher had analyzed the answers of the interviewees. If the answer after being analyzed feels unsatisfactory, the researcher will continue the question again, to some extent the data that is considered credible is obtained (Sugiyono, 2013). Activities in data analysis, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing / verification, where after the researcher has collected data, the researcher conducts anticipatory before making data reduction.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, it is validated to prove the observed results are in accordance with reality and indeed in accordance with the actual or the event using triangulation techniques, namely the validity of data verification techniques that use something else outside the data for checking or as a comparison to the data.<sup>12</sup>

### **Finding and Discussion**

It has been mentioned, journalistic activities include preparing, writing, processing / editing, and broadcasting news. People who carry out this journalistic function are called journalists. The level of reporters is to start from beginner journalists to editor in chief. In terms of function, journalists working in a media are grouped into two, namely those who are always involved in the field (reporters) and those who are mostly in the office with the task of writing late and editing (editors). This is not a rigid division. Often editors, even editor in chief, also do field work, namely reportage and interviews.

Work practices of journalism are related to previous methods used by the journalists for information gathering and news reporting to meet their journalistic demands.

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<sup>11</sup>*Metode Penelitian Kombinasi (Mixed Methods)*. Bandung (ID): Alfabeta.

<sup>12</sup>Agustinova, Danu Eko. 2015. *Memahami Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Yogyakarta (ID): Calpulis

The WhatsApp application is one form of social media that has a purpose as an alternative in communicating using SMS; WhatsApp can be used as a media communication with more than one party. This is due to use group facilities provided by WhatsApp, interactions can be established between more than two parties, so they can form a discussion that can be utilized by various parties.

The data findings show that the WhatsApp application has an important role as a communication media to coordinate about the instruction or sending and accepting reports in the form of photos or video when the employee is on field. This shows that the WhatsApp application has a lot of facilities that can support the activities.

WhatsApp (WA) has a very important role in helping journalist work. Since 2015 WA was used as a substitute for BlackBerry Messenger because it has limitations in the number of characters for writing and sending photos. Whereas e-mail is still used but WA is used more often because of its speed in uploading and downloading photos. All journalists from leaders to reporters use WA to convey formal and informal messages.

After analyzing the data, the use of WA in supporting journalistic work can be divided into two, namely:

#### A. WhatsApp Personal

WA is personally used by journalists, coverage coordinators, editors and leaders in fulfilling their duties in the field or in the office.

##### a. Giving order and accepting assignments (Term of Reference)

A coordinator will assign assignments (Tor) to reporters through WA about any news that must be covered every day. The contents of the WA message contain topics or issues that are developing that reporters must explore further, so that they can be used as material for preparing budgets.

b. Contacting news sources

The ease and speed of WA in conveying information is also used by journalists to contact and make appointments for face-to-face interviews with sources. Especially for resources who are difficult to contact by telephone, this is also done to not disrupt the activities of the resource persons.

c. Interviewing news sources

To obtain information about personal data, and other information related to journalists' sources also use WA to interview resource persons. This is due to limited time and distance between journalists and sources, or when the speaker is so busy that he cannot be reached.

d. Interviewing resource persons

To obtain information about personal data, and other information related to journalists' sources also use WA to interview resource persons. This is due to limited time and distance between journalists and resource persons. Or when the speaker is so busy that he cannot be found.

e. Helping in News Gathering Process

Submitting news data such as information, photos and videos is often done between journalists and sources. In addition, for example, if there is a fire or natural disaster that must be covered immediately. This is because WhatsApp does not reduce the quality of the photos and videos. Besides that, sending with WhatsApp is certainly easier, unlike e-mail which is more difficult to use. The other important news data is press release. Many government and private company want their work programs or activities to be covered by the media, so their public relations have strong relation with journalists. One of the tasks of the public relations is to prepare a press release or official statement about the

work program or activities of their institution or company records that need to be known by the public. Usually public relations send the press release to reporters via WhatsApp. But there are also those who provide directly or send via email.

f. As a tool for sending and receiving news script

After searching and covering the news, the reporter then writes the news script to the editor every day. The delivery of the manuscript is carried out through WhatsApp only if it was in an urgent situation such as it was approaching a deadline and there was also news that had risen as soon as a fire broke out which killed 30 people last month. Then sending news scripts via WA can also be done when reporters are in a remote area that cannot reach the signal properly. The rest of the script is made via email, because the Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) is to send via email.

B. Whatsapp Group

Based on the interview results, it can be classified that the WhatsApp of the SumutPos Daily Group is:

Table. 1. of WhatsApp Group

Name	Member	Position
Grup Redaksi Sumut Pos	62	General Manager, Pimpinan redaksi, koordinator liputan, editor, reporter, percetakan
Grup Reporter Sumut Pos	22	wartawan

The use of WA groups in supporting the performance of journalists is:

a. Sharing newsworthy information

All group members have the right to share information about various events that occur either information that they directly hear and see from the source of the news or information they get from other sources such as from other WhatsApp groups; they can then forward to WhatsApp of the North Sumatra editorial group post or even to their colleagues who send information via WhatsApp personally. They can also get this information through online social media which generally broadcasts news more quickly, especially events that occur outside of North Sumatra. In addition to data in the form of information, photos and videos are also often shared. Even the editor in chief is often the first to provide this important information. But specifically, for a group of reporters, they are obliged to share the information they get from various sources.

#### b. Discussion for News Gathering

In the group, the reporters also discussed data on news coverage, if there were coverage data that needed to be added or explored, the leader would ask to revise.

### **Conclusion**

WhatsApp has been used by all the Journalists in HarianSumutPos to help and support their work. Both personal and WhatsApp groups are important for giving, accepting term of reference, contacting news sources, interviewing sources, helping news gathering process, sharing newsworthy information, and discussion about new gatherings. They use email only for sending news script to the editor, but in urgent situations they prefer WhatsApp because of the speed, and it is easier; most of the reporters also conduct face to face interviews but when the sources are not available, they use WhatsApp.

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