Semarang Young People's Perception of News in Online Media Suaramerdeka.com

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Abstract
The aim of this study is to investigate the differences in perceptions among readers regarding news on the online media suaramerdeka.com, as well as how young people in Semarang perceive themselves after reading the news as a source of information. This research employs a qualitative research approach with an explanatory, descriptive nature within a phenomenological paradigm. The study utilizes descriptive qualitative research methods focused on answering research questions. The findings indicate that suaramerdeka.com is considered an easily understandable information source due to its straightforward news content. The perceptions of young people in Semarang regarding news on suaramerdeka.com show that they often read news through online portals and are aware of suaramerdeka.com's existence. The study includes interviews with five sources and 30 respondents who mentioned that suaramerdeka.com is one of the largest media outlets in Central Java. After reading news on suaramerdeka.com, respondents found it easier to understand due to its straightforward content. Thus, it can be concluded that their perceptions are influenced by their previous experiences.

Keyword: Perception, News, Online Media

Introduction
In the beginning, humans sought information starting from conventional media reports (Lukkarinen et al., 2022). This media disseminates information by one-way dissemination, so it has its own audience (Lukkarinen et al., 2022; Schreiber et al., 2023). Conventional media or print media itself, such as newspapers in the past, will be published every day continuously in the form of writing that has elements of 5W + 1H (What, When, Who, Where, Why, How) (Mangani, 2021). Newspapers are one of the oldest media outlets that, until now, can still be trusted by some of its audiences (Xiao et al., 2024). This is because newspapers are trusted to be able to present actual and reliable news (Mohan et al., 2024).

The development of the world of technology in the field of information and communication continues to experience rapid changes (H. Kim & Park, 2023; Yigitcanlar et al., 2024). The arrival of this technology slowly began to kill conventional media, such as newspapers. Every change that exists is always accompanied by innovation and follows the development of existing technology (B. Kim et al., 2024; Sepehrdoust et al., 2022).
This development can be proven by the existence of the Internet, which has been used by various circles. With the Internet, it shows that there has been a convergence of media (Agarwal et al., 2024; Hofhuis et al., 2024).

Convergence here is intended as a union of two media into one. News that used to occur in newspapers can be seen in a broader way, which initially only existed in print or conventional media and has now begun to penetrate also into digital media, such as the emergence of news portals (Boršoš & Koman, 2023; Macca et al., 2024). Starting from parents, teenagers, and even children can access news portals anytime and anywhere. However, this media convergence has a different influence and impact on society, especially on the mindset of news readers, who used to be only one-way (Hofhuis et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2023).

News portals present news online through websites that have been created by the company (Talha et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2023). This is also experienced by one of the news media outlets in Indonesia, Suara Merdeka. Suara Merdeka is a newspaper company published in the Central Java region, especially in the city of Semarang (Siregar et al., 2022). Not only are newspapers printed, but Suara Merdeka has also provided online newspapers, namely suaramerdeka.com. Suara Merdeka was one of the oldest newspapers in Indonesia during the independence era of the Republic of Indonesia (Hartatik et al., 2024).

First published, Suara Merdeka newspaper printed as many as 5000 copies (Mardikantoro et al., 2020). In addition to Semarang, this newspaper targets its readers in the Solo region as well. The choice of Solo was because it was the birthplace of Hetami, who was then the editor-in-chief of Suara Merdeka, and he also understood his target audience. Initially, the news portal addressed www.suaramerdeka.com, which only contained news from the print edition of Suara Merdeka. Gradually, Suara Merdeka began to reduce print publishing and switch more to digital media to make it easier for readers to access news.

In today's millennial era, information media continues to grow very rapidly. For the audience, information can be both positive and negative. However, sometimes, the information itself can create public opinion that can influence a person's thoughts, attitudes, and behavior. The development of technology itself provides a very big thing in the advancement of information, not only in print and electronic media but also in online media. Online media itself is included in the mass media that is very popular. Many of them turn to online media because they can directly present information and news as the event takes place. Besides being fast, online media can also be accessed anywhere and anytime while supported by internet technology.

News itself is an actual fact, idea, or opinion that can attract readers, listeners, and viewers. According to Prof. Mitchell V. Charnley, news is the fastest report of facts or opinions that contain things of interest or importance, or both, for a large number of residents (Hancock et al., 2020). Popular online media today does not guarantee the absence of hoax news spreading. Factual news is one of the important components of mass media, but over time, it is increasingly forgotten for the satisfaction of the media
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itself. In addition, the emergence of differences in perception from the audience makes a question about whether or not the news is factual.

According to Desiderato, Perception is an experience about an object, event, or relationship obtained by inferring information and interpreting messages. In communication science, perception can be said to be the core of communication (Lin & Lewis, 2022). If our perceptions are inaccurate, then the information we can and provide becomes ineffective. With differences in perception, the actuality and factuality of the news will be questioned.

In previous research, Suci Herajulia on "Journalistic Students' Perceptions of News Accuracy in Kapanlagi.com" had data that respondents strongly agreed that news is much better not to mix opinions and reality to be liked by readers (Safitri et al., 2023). The elements of news that must be met by a journalist in writing news in order to get accurate reporting is the concept of 5W + 1H. In writing news, a journalist refers to news values that are combined with news elements as a "general formula" in news writing in order to create a complete story. The news elements are known as 5W + 1H. In writing news, news elements such as 5W + 1H are also needed, as well as images or data as one of the supports for the accuracy of related news.

According to Nylander et al. (2022), there are aspects that make people like to read and increase the number of readers (readership). Namely, the habit of reading newspapers since childhood, both at home and at school, is the main factor that greatly influences the habit of reading newspapers in adulthood, and the habit of being invited to discussions makes children accustomed to the reading content in the newspaper. In addition, newspaper reading habits that are passed from one generation to the next affect reading habits in childhood, making people accustomed to reading in adulthood, and younger people read newspapers less often than older people because of high mobility, scarcity of time, and weak community ties. The researcher discussed the topic because he wanted to know the differences in students' perceptions of news in online media suaramerdeka.com.

This perception discusses the actuality and trustworthiness of news in suaramerdeka.com. Researchers chose the suaramerdeka.com news portal because it has a good history in the field of newspapers that dominate Central Java, making it easier to research. Researchers will research in the city of Semarang because young people in Semarang are closer to suaramerdeka.com news portals and environments that are easily accessible to researchers. The subject to be studied is young people in Semarang, apart from being very close to the media because it is easily accessible. According to some of these young people, there is still a lot of online news between titles and very different content (clickbait).

Based on the results of a pre-interview conducted by researchers on November 23, 2023. Researchers have several allegations that some companies implement a paid / view system. What is meant here is that if there is a decrease in ratings, it can affect the content of the news and the way it is written. Not only that, the results of previous research entitled "Perceptions of Journalism Students on the Accuracy of News in Kapanlagi.com"
showed that having research results on the perceptions of Journalism students achieving data above average. In other words, news in online media Kapanlagi.com caused many different thoughts from the number of respondents. With this previous research, researchers are interested in examining "Semarang Young People's Perception of News in Suaramerdeka.com." The problem in this study is the perception of Semarang young people after reading the news on the suaramerdeka.com site as a source of information. This aims to find out the perception of Semarang young people after reading the news on the suaramerdeka.com website as a source of information. This perception discusses the actuality and trustworthiness of news in suaramerdeka.com.

Research Methods
This research uses a qualitative research approach with an explanatory descriptive nature with a phenomenological paradigm. Qualitative research methods are methods that focus on in-depth observation. According to Bodgam and Taylor, a qualitative approach is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words of people and observed behavior (Lexy, 2000). This research uses a qualitative approach so that the perception of Semarang youth towards the actuality of news on suaramerdeka.com is clear and detailed.

The type of research used in this study is descriptive qualitative, which is a research method that is focused on answering research questions related to the question of who, what, where, and how an event or experience occurs until finally studied in depth to find patterns that appear in the event (Kim, 2016).

Results and discussion
In the previous chapter, the author wrote that he would take data in the form of interviews. The author has conducted interviews with five young people in Semarang, ranging in age from 17 to 25 years. Based on the results of the interview, the author obtained five speakers with the following backgrounds.

a. Grestia (21): Student at Soegijapranata Catholic University.
b. Halimah (20): Student at UIN Walisongo.
d. Aril (21): Student at UIN Walisongo.
e. Ivana (21): Student at Soegijapranata Catholic University.

The five speakers from various educational institutions, namely Grestia, Halimah, Dila, Aril, and Ivana, have been involved in the world of journalism with a focus on reading news and consuming digital media. All of them are still in the millennial age range, ranging from 18 to 25 years old. In the context of news consumption, Grestia and Halimah are among those who often read news on the online news portal Suara Merdeka. Meanwhile, Dila and Ivana are noted as rare news readers, but Aril is included in the category of frequent news readers. With their diverse educational backgrounds and
similarities in news consumption activities, these five speakers provide diverse perspectives on relevant issues in the world of journalism.

Based on interviews with five sources, two people said that it is rare to read news on the Suara Merdeka news portal because they have only read one or two news articles and only read them when passing by other social media.

Perception itself is part of the whole process that generates responses after stimuli are applied to humans. The process of understanding or giving meaning to an information to a stimulus is obtained from the process of sensing objects. Perception is also the process of inferring information and interpreting it automatically based on experiences or events that occur against an object. Perception, according to Deddy Mulyana, is divided into two parts: attribution error and prejudice. It can be concluded that perception can be obtained from our sensing of an object. So, the observation and experience possessed by the resource person can produce a perception. Own perception appears in everyone's mind after getting stimuli.

This happened to the interviewees. The author provided a stimulus in the form of Suara Merdeka so that perceptions arose from the experiences and observations of the interviewees. The result of the perception of Semarang young people or resource persons related to Suaramerdeka.com is one of the large and well-known media, especially in Central Java located in Semarang, besides that Suaramerdeka.com, is a media that has interesting news information and is easy to understand among young people.

In this study, we explore the five interviewees' perceptions of Suaramerdeka.com, an online news portal widely known in Indonesia. Data was collected through interviews with sources who had various levels of frequency in accessing news in the media. The results showed that the interviewees' perception of Suaramerdeka.com was influenced by their personal experiences and observations while accessing news in the media. Grestia, one of the speakers who often access Suaramerdeka.com, revealed that she is used to Suara Merdeka print media because of her parents' subscription but now prefers access through online media because it is more practical and attractive. Halimah, who accesses Suaramerdeka.com sporadically, stated that she tends to read the news there only when there is a current issue that is going viral because it is considered straight to the point. A similar opinion was also expressed by Dila, who often accesses online media Suaramerdeka.com because it is famous and easily accessible, especially after seeing print media sales at red lights.

Meanwhile, Aril admits that he is not familiar with Suaramerdeka.com because he doesn't like to read the news, but he knows it as the biggest and most well-known media in Semarang. Finally, Ivana, although she rarely accessed it before, now tends to visit Suaramerdeka.com often because of her connection to the world of lectures that require an understanding of news. Thus, interviewees' perceptions of Suaramerdeka.com reflect a mix of past experiences, ease of access, and actual information needs in various contexts of their lives.

From the above narrative, it can be concluded that before they conclude or re-perceive, they should see their experience. This is because there are factors that influence
the emergence of perception, namely functional factors, according to Jalaludin Rahmat, who explained that functional factors come from needs, experiences, and others.

Suara Merdeka is one of the major media in Semarang. From pioneering print media production until now, it has reached the point that it can be accessed anywhere and anytime, namely through online media with the address Suaramerdeka.com. There have been many changes in Suara Merdeka, such as updating the writing style and adding news channels that are not only national but the most visible at this time. They speed up the uploading of news articles so as to make them look more up-to-date. The following are the statements of sources related to the news on Suaramerdeka.com.

Media Suara Merdeka is one of the oldest newspapers in Indonesia. That was born in Semarang during the independence era of the Republic of Indonesia. Precisely on January 11, 1950, led by H. Hetami, the initial mission was to raise the voices of the people who had just become independent. The first time Suara Merdeka was published, 5000 copies were printed. In addition to Semarang, this newspaper targets readers in the Solo region. In the following period, he began to expand his market to other cities. At the beginning of online media addressed www.suaramerdeka.com, this began only by containing news from the print edition of Suara Merdeka. On February 11, 2000, suaramerdeka.com provided additional news and other channels.

On February 11, 2010, Suara Merdeka's e-paper service was launched. This is because the development of technology is accelerating very rapidly. The Suara Merdeka TV streaming video was launched on February 11, 2011. With so many launches, suaramerdeka.com is growing in the presentation of information, not only in the form of text and photos but also in videos or moving images. That is what makes readers and viewers connoisseurs of news, and it has become one of the attractions of online media, suaramerdeka.com.

From the interviews with the five speakers, various perceptions were revealed regarding the packaging of news articles on Suaramerdeka.com. Grestia, one of the interviewees, stated that although the articles were generally clear and quick, she felt limited in expressing her opinion due to the lack of places to interact with other readers. Halimah highlighted the possibility of bias in political news articles, where she noted the existence of opinion briefings that could influence readers' perceptions. Dila, on the other hand, feels that there is a tendency to create news based on sensation or popularity without regard to the depth of the news, which he thinks can damage the appeal of the media.

Aril admits that misperceptions sometimes occur due to his lack of involvement in understanding the news thoroughly, although overall, he considers the articles on Suaramerdeka.com easy to understand and varied. Ivana noted that there are errors in news packaging that sometimes make the title not aligned with the content of the article, especially in the context of articles about celebrities that are going viral. Nevertheless, he feels that the news on the portal is still well-trusted, especially because of the diversity of news channels that are not boring. Thus, the results of this interview provide comprehensive insight into the perception of sources on the packaging of news articles in
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Suaramerdeka.com, as well as identify areas that require further attention to improve the quality of their news.

As many as 30 young people in Semarang also have the assumption that when reading the news, there are still many who make mistakes in perceiving the news. There are also those who are quick and responsive, so they don't feel they have made a mistake. In addition to this study, the researchers added some data that will be tied to the theory of cognitive dissonance. This theory will also help researchers to facilitate solving misperceptions or prejudices in the news on suaramerdeka.com online portals.

Cognitive dissonance also explains how humans consistently seek and seek to reduce dissonance or discomfort in new situations. This condition was explained by Leon Festinger that the awareness of the elements of cognition is interrelated in three ways: irrelevant relationships between one another, dissonant/inconsistent relationships (not harmonious), and consonant/consistent relationships with each other (Sri Wahyuningsih, 2012).

![Figure 1. Reading Frequently Survey](image)

According to Survey, 76.9% of people often read news on online news portals, while 19.2% rarely read through online news portals. And 3.8% do not read news often. Since the online newspapers displayed on the reading boards of online news portals are updated daily starting at 5:00 WIB, online news portals can be a source of information for anyone looking for the latest information. Online news portals can also be used as a means of entertainment to fill spare time. This is possible because reading online news portals provides pleasure as well as education and information to readers. Readers can take advantage of the vast collection of online news portal content as entertainment.
Figure 2.
Knowledge of suaramerdeka.com Survey

Based on the survey, the majority of respondents also fall into the category of those who know the Suaramerdeka news portal, which is as many as 92.3% and 7.7% do not know it, so it can be concluded Many people are familiar with the Suaramerdeka news portal because people who come and read on the suaramerdeka reading board certainly have needs that encourage them to come and read newspapers at suaramerdeka instead of reading newspapers at home. Someone who has needs will certainly look for objects that are felt to be able to meet these needs. Even so, the way to meet everyone's needs is different.

Figure 3.
Have You Ever Read On The Portal Survey

Based on the survey, 76.9% of respondents have read news on the portal, 15.4% rarely read, and 7.7% have never read on the suaramerdeka.com news portal. So, it can be concluded that Suaramerdeka has a certain allure that attracts readers. The appeal of Suaramerdeka comes from the installation of newspapers with diverse materials, which makes readers more likely to visit and read carefully because of the variety of information.
Do you ever feel confused when reading a news story?

![Pie chart showing reader confusion survey results]

**Figure 4. Reader Confusion Survey**

Often, when we are reading news, it causes errors and their own prejudices in perceiving news. As many as 42.3% of respondents feel that they have been wrong when reading news, 34.6% rarely feel, and 23.1% do not feel wrong.

Have you ever had a preconceived notion when reading a news story?

![Pie chart showing reader prejudices survey results]

**Figure 5. Reader Prejudices Survey**

The survey found that as many as 73.1% of respondents have their own prejudices when reading news, 15.4% feel they may have had these prejudices, and as many as 11.5% do not have prejudices when reading news.
Figure 6.
The Realization of Prejudices Survey

To realize prejudice, the survey found that as many as 65.4% of respondents felt more quickly aware that there is prejudice when reading news, 15.4% realized it for a long time, and 19.2% quickly realized it.

Figure 7.
News Portal Comparing Survey

When someone is reading the news and does not conform to prejudice and realizes a mistake, based on the diagram above, it can be seen that as many as 80.8% of respondents have compared with other news portals, 11.5% sometimes, and 7.7% never compare with other news portals. After getting the results of the comparison, other results indicated that as many as 57.7% of respondents felt they had immediately gotten what they were looking for, and 15.4% felt that they did not feel they had received the comparison.

Other survey results also stated that as many as 88.5% of respondents had a different view after reading the news, and the remaining 3.8% did not feel and did not have a different view. The perception that arises from a person is not only influenced by
within the individual. The emergence of perceptions of one's self is also influenced from outside the individual. One of the factors that influence the emergence of a person's perception of an object is intensity/repetition. Often, someone seeing the same object will make the person able to perceive an object.

Furthermore, as many as 84.6% of respondents were also satisfied after getting news that matched their perception, but 11.5% felt that they might be satisfied, and 3.8% felt dissatisfied. Other results showed that as many as 50% of respondents felt that reading 1-time news could immediately conclude that the news was useful or interesting, 11.5% did not know, 38.5% could not immediately conclude by only reading one time, 53.8% of respondents thought that suaramerdeka.com was up to date and would continue to be accessed regularly by readers, while 42.34% felt that it was quite current.

Also, based on the results of data from Semarang young respondents, they have their own perceptions in interpreting news. When they notice errors and differences in perception, some respondents choose to find out more to find out whether their perception is correct or not. In addition, they are very selective in choosing news and perceiving news. Readers give a good perception of the reading board of Suara Merdeka Semarang City. Good perception from readers is given because, with the reading board, readers can channel the hobby of reading newspapers without having to spend money, readers can exchange information with other readers who are reading on the suaramerdeka.com reading board, and the platform can be used as a means of entertainment and fill free time for readers. The existence of these benefits can mean that readers pay great attention to the Voice Merdeka.com platform, resulting in complaints from readers about lack of maintenance.

Conclusion

The perception that arises in the minds of young people in Semarang regarding news on online news portals suaramerdeka.com is that in terms as the whole, they still often read news through online news portals, and the average respondent knows the existence of online news portals suaramerdeka.com. 5 interviewees and 30 respondents, and they said they knew suaramerdeka.com because it was one of the largest media in Central Java. Regarding perception, after they read one of the news on suaramerdeka.com, it is easier to understand because the content of the news is direct to the point, so it can be concluded before they conclude or perceive. They see from their experience first. Very few errors and misperceptions occur because the effects of the news made by suaramerdeka.com are straight to the point. So, readers are easier to understand, and what they are looking for is immediately answered. In addition, they believe that suaramerdeka.com can develop even more and become one of the increasingly famous information media of its time. One of the factors for more speakers reading on the suaramerdeka.com platform is that it guarantees the actuality of news writing and is easy to understand so that readers and sources immediately believe in the platform.

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Language Teaching, ICLLT 2019, 12 October, Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia, 319.


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First publication right:
Advances in Social Humanities Research