



Netnographic research in understanding social media as a new public sphere

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Keywords:</i> netnography internet social media public sphere digital culture</p>	<p>The development of information and communication technology and new media has brought a new dimension of public space to society. In the 19th century, the realization of a public space that really facilitated public communication was very limited due to the domination of public space by the state and industrial corporations. However, with the existence of the Internet, it is possible for a new public space or new public sphere called social media to emerge. The emergence of social media has succeeded in changing people's interaction and communication patterns from offline to online. This has implications for the emergence of social media phenomena, both positive and negative. In order to understand the facts of sociality in online spaces or social media, a new research method technique called netnography is needed. Netnography is present as a lens and mitigator for various forms of changes in interaction and communication patterns in online spaces, which ultimately give rise to a new online culture.</p>

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Introduction

The development of Information and Communication Technology as well as new media which initially appeared called Web 1.0 and was followed later by Web 2.0 have brought a new dimension of public space in society. This situation began when England began adding features for writing opinions, criticism and comments in its news as a means of debate between the bourgeoisie and educators (Cela, 2015). Since then, a public space with online mediation has finally begun to develop which is claimed to be a new public space. Yochai Bankler said that a network of public spaces has emerged that allows individuals to more easily communicate effectively, as well as re-orient themselves from being merely passive readers and listeners, to becoming potential participants and speakers (Benkler, 2006). This is the forerunner to the emergence of social media.

Social media has existed since the mid-2000s and has been the key precursor to the emergence of various social media platforms with various distinctive features, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Fuchs, 2015). Through social media, ideas from society can quickly spread, giving rise to social movements and ultimately becoming social change (Singh, 2013). The emergence of various social media phenomena has not only become a new trend, but also a culture that is followed by many people. This phenomenon influences many patterns of interaction, communication, and even people's behavior. In fact, the social media phenomenon which has become a culture in a group of people has encouraged the emergence of a new era called Post Truth. With the variety of phenomena and impacts caused by social media as a new public space, it provides opportunities for research

techniques. Research in the online or social media realm requires special methods and is slightly different from existing research methods.

This article will discuss new research methods in the online and social media realm, namely Netnography research methods and their implications for the current social media phenomenon.

Method

The research method used in writing this article uses qualitative research methods with library research data collection techniques. The qualitative method of library study is a research method where data is collected by understanding and studying various theories from various types of literature that are related to the research theme (Zed in Adlini, 2022). The literature used as a reference for collecting data in writing this article ranges from printed books, e-books, and national and international articles/journals. The various data that have been collected are then categorized and analyzed critically to support various ideas.

Results and Discussion

New public sphere: The results of social media disruption

Public space is a public communication space. According to Habermas, a philosopher and sociologist from Germany said that public space is like a theater stage arena where the actors are the people, and it is realized in a form of public communication (Fulya, 2012). Habermas also said that if something is public, then the public must also be involved in some form of interaction and communication so as to produce public criticism. Therefore, public space requires an information and communication media

that can be accessed by all levels of society (Fuchs, 2015).

Around the 19th century, the realization of a public space that truly facilitated public communication was very limited, this was due to the domination of public space by the State and industrial corporations (Habermas, 1991). At that time, there were only 3 types of media that were said to be public spaces, as stated by Graham Murdock in his *Media Typology*, including: 1) Capitalist Media, media that is privately owned by individuals, families or shareholders, where their culture is in the public space but at the same time they are also part of the capitalist economy because they not only produce public information, but also pursue profit oriented by selling news to users; 2) Public Media, is media funded by the State or with State assistance which is created and regulated by law. This public media is tasked with informing the public about political, educational and entertainment issues; 3) Civil Society Media, are media that are still economically connected to the State if they receive subsidies and often become alternative media to fight the capitalist economy (Fuchs, 2015). From the three types of media around the 19th century, it shows that a truly pure public space as a media for society did not yet exist, because the State and capitalists still controlled the media.

The development of information and communication technology which has given rise to new Web-based media has brought a new dimension to public space. This situation began when England added opinion, criticism and comment features to its news pages, so as to facilitate debate between the bourgeoisie and academics at that time (Cela, 2015). According to Yochai Benkler (2006), the emergence of Web-based information and communication technology has given rise to a network of public spaces

that make it easier for people to communicate effectively and re-orient themselves from previously being just passive readers and listeners, to becoming active participants and speakers. potential. This social network provides an opportunity for individuals to form connections that would otherwise be difficult to form in the offline world (Cela, 2015). The increase in the number of social networking users is marked by the decline in circulation of traditional newspapers/media, which shows that we have now entered a new ICT era.

The new public sphere theory or what is usually called the public sphere theory of deliberative democracy has become a popular study that discusses internet democracy (Fulya, 2012). This theory discusses the advantages and benefits of the internet for the formation of new public spaces, including: The internet is seen as a means to achieve expanded deliberation and the formation of more rational public opinion; The Internet is seen as an ideal tool for democratic power; The internet is able to help marginalized groups; able to help society criticize and change a regime; Alternative sources of information in order to educate and mobilize the public; As an alternative to the media and its propaganda; can encourage public discussion and participation; and as a solution to various practical problems that arise as a result of democracy so that people not only have the right to vote during elections, but also have the right to directly consider every public policy (Fulya, 2012; Singh, 2013). The existence of this internet network has given rise to a new media, called social media.

Social media is a medium on the internet that allows users to represent themselves and interact, collaborate, share, and communicate with other users virtually (Nasrullah, 2015). At first, this social media only had features for communicating via chat via messenger

and sharing personal status, but as time goes by, social media features become more numerous and complex, so they are able to facilitate almost all types of social interactions. These many social media features have caused a significant increase in social media users from all over the world. So people are now accustomed to communicating and interacting via social media. This is what causes social media disruption. Social media disruption is a form of massive and fundamental change in the form of social interaction and communication on social media due to the large number of social media users today (<https://www.ui.ac.id/strategi-media-dalam-menghadapi-distruk-digital-technology/>). This is what has caused social media to become a new public sphere or new public space in society.

Social media as a new public sphere has several benefits, including: 1) Making society able to escape from various vertical information flows and also top down politics where most political decisions are made without negotiation with the public; 2) Providing political information facilities; 3) Almost unlimited access to provide criticism and feedback on various government policies; 4) There is a new forum space for the development of public opinion, and 5) Enables dialogue between the government and society (Fulya, 2012)

Development of netnography research

Netnography was introduced 20 years ago when the number of online conversation participants began to grow, but its scope is still in the area of research in the fields

of business, management and consumers. (Kozinets, et al, 2014; Bart, M, et al, 2016). The word 'Netno' itself is a combination of the words 'internet' and 'ethnography'. (Belz, 2010; Kozinets, 2010). Netnography is a new research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study cultures and communities that emerge with computer mediation (Langer, Roy, & Beckman, Suzanne C, 2005; Belz, 2010). Netno was adapted from ethnography because it has a flexible approach that allows researchers to explore and explain the richness and diversity of the online world. Therefore, netnography can be used to analyze online communities systematically (Kozinets, et al, 2014).

Online social spaces supported by the internet are increasingly recognized as an important field for scientific research due to the richness and openness of online cultural sites (Kozinets, et al, 2014). The Internet offers new opportunities for research techniques and offers greater opportunities related to social group participation, such as people can form virtual communities to further assert their social power, to unite, and to claim certain symbols and ways of life (Langer, Roy, & Beckman, Suzanne C, 2005). Digital technology allows groups/samples that are difficult to access to be more easily accessed through a netnographic approach, for example certain Fandom communities, so that the netno method takes relatively less time, has the potential to be less 'intrusive', and the research costs can be cheaper. (Corciolani, M, 2014). Specific differences between netnographic and ethnographic research can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Specific Differences in Netnographic and Ethnographic Research

Characteristics	Ethnography	Netnography
Research focus	Society with all its groups	Online community
Communication focus	All forms of human communication, including body language, tone of voice, etc	Communication in online content, especially textual communication of several people in an online community
Method	Obtrusively, researchers participate in research groups	Non-obtrusive, can make observations anonymously
Data collection	Participant observation as the main data	Data access is supported by various computer-based information as primary and secondary data
Efficiency	The duration is long, the costs tend to be high, slow in speed	The duration is relatively short, the costs tend to be low, fast in speed
Retroactive	No	Yes

Sumber: (Bartl, M, et al, 2016)

Netnography researchers have several advantages when compared to other methods, including: 1.) Netno researchers have broad access to a number of data that can be archived via forums or search engines. These online resources can help provide various information about community members, as well as the values held by researchers when choosing an online community that will be the subject of research; 2.) Interviews can be conducted asynchronously using IT assistance such as email, chat, videocall/zoom; 3.) Netno researchers can utilize the power of the internet for accessibility and openness of information (Kozinetz, 2010).

Apart from the several advantages obtained, netnography researchers are also faced with several challenges from online data which is often unique because it is large in quantity, anonymous, and often difficult to categorize. Some of the challenges faced by netnography researchers are as follows (Kozinetz, 2014):

1. Ontological challenges between online and offline
 The online world and the real world are currently able to traverse complexity due to the existence of a limitless internet network. In the days before the internet came, our people socialized face to face or by telephone, but now people socialize in online forums. As a result, many social activities cross offline and online, for example: a prospective student wants to find information related to the destination of the university he will choose, then usually he will look for information via email, read blogs of the target student/university, read the web, participate in online communities, as well as joining social media. This shows that our activities have truly crossed space and time between offline and online, so it is necessary to truly understand online behavior and social media.

2. Netno data also raises a number of epistemological and pragmatic questions. The internet is able to provide access to a lot of data, so netno researchers have their own challenges regarding the excess data. Data identification and classification can be challenging in the presence of anonymous data. The flow of data that is so easy to search, is like opening a ‘Pandora’s box’, often raising ethical issues such as privacy, consent and appropriate representation. In netnographic research, there are 3 types of data, namely archival data, acquired

data, and field note data (Kozinet, 2014; Bartl, et al., 2016). Archival data is data collected by researchers from the web before conducting research; The data obtained is data collected by researchers during intensive observations of all forms of communication and interaction from the online community under study; and field note data is research recording data such as reflection and temporary analysis. Meanwhile, the procedures in netnographic research can be seen in the following table:

Table 2 Netnographic Research Procedures

No.	Procedure	Information
1.	Entree	Formulation of research questions and identification of online forums that will be research subjects
2.	Data collection	The process of collecting online data, usually by directly copying all forms of communication and interaction from the online community being studied
3.	Analysis and interpretation	Carry out classification, coding analysis and contextualization of Actions
4.	Research ethics	In certain conditions, researchers must fully disclose their presence to the online community who are research subjects, researchers must guarantee the confidentiality and anonymity of informants if requested, researchers must always be careful in sensitive issues.

Netnography research and its implications for social media phenomenon

Netnographic research can be said to be a part of the ongoing evolution of human knowledge. As time goes by, humans will always migrate, change, and continuously transform to take advantage of new environments with various new tools and techniques that continue to develop and adapt (Kozinetz & Rosella, 2021). Netnography is

unlimited, meaning that netnography not only simply categorizes various posts on social media, but also describes and explains the social facts of online life. Not just a description/portrayal, but also describing a social action from the point of view of the research subject. When something is posted on social media, netnography is present not only to tell us ‘What it said’, but also ‘What it meant’ (Kozinetz & Rosella, 2021).

As Lugosi & Quinton (2018) say, 'More than Human-Netnography', meaning that netnography analyzes the actions of other individuals related to their posts, expands the explanation and elaborates on the conversation. Smart netnography researchers will try to follow and hunt down what is allowed, what is omitted, what is scrambled, whose interests are highlighted, who is exploited, and what is excluded from the post (Kozinetz & Rosella, 2021). Netnography always focuses on social media and technoculture. The ever-new flow of social media data demands that netnography must be able to accommodate every research procedure by adapting to new devices, new rules, new platforms, and new data types (Kozinetz & Rosella, 2021).

Kozinetz (2021) expressed the term 'Technology brings out the best in us, Technology brings out the worst in us', meaning that with technology and social media we can live in a world full of progress, like a 'gift' for the development of creativity, public opinion, emotional support, and optimism. Social media can reach the whole world, turn strangers into friends and even partners, be able to overcome the challenges and obstacles of space, distance and time, and be able to bring people closer to us. However, on the other hand, technology and social media also create a chaotic dystopia, giving rise to various social media phenomena that have negative impacts.

The current social media phenomenon that plays on individual psychological feelings has emerged, such as the Bandwagon effect/FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) phenomenon, a bandwagon effect that motivates someone to consume or take actions that are popular with the general public (Afriyanti, 2019); Veblen effect, the effect of wanting to show off which can be experienced by all groups on the basis of wanting to stand out from other people

(Srigustini, 2021); and the Snob effect, namely the prestige effect where individuals tend to follow other people's styles (Srigustini, 2021). Several examples of the psychological phenomenon of social media have a social impact, especially for teenagers who are an age group vulnerable to being influenced by various factors around them (Zatrahadi, et al, 2023).

Apart from that, searching for various types of information in the digital world is becoming increasingly easier and more diverse, resulting in the phenomenon of an information flood (Suharyanto, 2019). The flood of information in the digital world containing negative content and news such as hoaxes, conspiracy theories that can easily be refuted, has given rise to a new era called the post truth era, namely the post-truth era or an era that values nonsense/hoaxes more than constructive information. (Sismondo, 2015).

Responding to all the imbalances in terms of technology and social media, as well as the lack of preventive measures taken by society to overcome this, is an urgent problem. Netnography can be a lens for us to start overcoming the negative symptoms of various social media phenomena (Kozinetz & Rosella, 2021). Netnographic research with its various procedures in order to seek a deeper understanding of various events and culture in the online realm can play an important role as mitigation in a process of social change in a more structured direction. Various technological and cultural developments are transformed along with various identities, practices, values, rituals, hierarchies and structures that influence each other, create and are expressed through technology or social media (Kozinetz 2019), netnographic research is a research method that is suitable for studying them (Kozinetz 2019; Kozinetz & Rosella, 2021).

Conclusion

The emergence of the internet finally brought about fundamental changes related to the formation of a new public space. The internet with all its social networks has encouraged the creation of new media called social media. Social media with its various features is able to provide unlimited access for individuals to express their opinions in the public space at large, without intervention from anyone. Social media has ultimately become a favorite public space for almost all levels of society. All forms of communication and social interaction have now moved from offline to online through social media. The increasing amount of public communication and interaction on social media has encouraged the emergence of various social media phenomena which not only have positive impacts, but also negative ones, such as the Bandwagon effect/FOMO, Veblen effect, Snob effect, and Post Truth era. These various negative symptoms of social media must begin to be analyzed as a form of prevention. Netnographic research is an alternative for scientists to better understand the symptoms of social media phenomena in online spaces. Netnography is like a lens for being able to see the meaning of various posts spread on social media as well as providing mitigation in the context of moving towards more focused and structured social change in society.

Declaration of Ownership

This article is my original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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