

Sign, Simulation, and Consumption on E-Hailing Application Brand

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ABSTRACT

This article outlines a perspective on the role of media in Go-Jek branding as the first e-hailing application in Indonesia. A new innovative technology using artificial intelligence certainly has a specific marketing strategy to attract consumers. Go-Jek creates a space of signs, images, and codes through the marketing media of advertisement targeting the consumer desires, namely, as simulacra concept in Baudrillard's perspective. Like other brands, Go-Jek creates a play of signs in its media to manipulate consumers' emotions, so they more likely gain interest in the offered products. Referring to Jean Baudrillard's post-structuralist media theory, we can observe how Go-Jek branding is a simulation, that is, a process of generating ideal models of an e-hailing service product. The consequences of simulacra-simulation are hyperreality, the loss of profound reality which is replaced by the reality resulting from model manipulations. This article also discusses Paul Virilio's critique of Baudrillard's simulation concept. On Virilio's perspective, a simulation is not an erasure of reality but a substitution, where technological reality has replaced the role of humans. Virilio believes that reality does not disappear, but is moved aside by another model of reality, which is virtual reality. Nevertheless, both Baudrillard and Virilio offer an inertia concept, where individuals are surrounded by signs in their daily life, including the Go-Jek advertisements as the scope of this study. Technology has compressed time and space to make communication between a brand and consumer possible anywhere and anytime, with advertisements, as a sign implosion.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, consumer society, e-hailing application, simulation*

1. INTRODUCTION

The high Indonesian market has made the mobile-based industry continue to develop its innovations. One of the technological innovation ideas that emerged from Indonesia is the e-hailing application Go-Jek which continues to compete with online transportation applications such as Grab and Uber. Go-Jek emerged as a solution for urban transportation, especially motorcycle taxis in early 2011. Then the new Android-based and iOS-based Go-Jek application was launched in early 2015. This application can be downloaded directly via a smartphone. Since its launch until October 2017, this continuous application can be downloaded by more than 10 million android users with more than 1 million registered and well-known drivers in 50 cities in Indonesia which continues to grow.

Go-Jek as a capitalist company also creates advertisements to attract public interest in its products. In industrial society, advertising is a means of distributing and

marketing goods or services to the public. Advertising is not just displaying the use-value, but rather the significant value and meaning value possessed by a product. Specifically, Go-Jek's advertising persuades the public to use its products and simultaneously constructs a new culture in an era of increasingly "smart" technology.

Baudrillard [1], a conservative view that has served a social life that is frightened by the multiplication of objects, services, and goods. For him, the idea of humans who have needs and must always be fulfilled is a myth. People are never actually satisfied, and with this, his needs are never satisfied. An object takes the meaning of a sign. As an object of consumption, it does not lead to the need function, first to what is called the logic of desire. Through Go-Jek's features, activities have become even easier. Ads and attractive offers from products that appear in this application can make someone consume something unnecessary. In the prevailing rules, social logic does not focus on the use of the value of goods or services by individuals but focuses on the production and manipulation of a number of social markers. The consumer community needs to always respect or show a

lifestyle in order to always adapt to the times. Therefore, this study wants to see the extent to which Go-Jek simulates sign simulations from advertisements in its environment that occur in society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Go-Jek as e-hailing application studies*

Since its appearance in 2015, many studies have examined Go-Jek as e-hailing application. But so far the researchers' observations, most of them are still within the framework of economic studies [2,3,4]. Research on Go-Jek is also still focused on technological ideas with a social frame [5], the accuracy of the technology, and social capital [6], and public policy [7]. There is no research related to Go-Jek that examines representation and lifestyle.

2.2. *Simulation*

Simulation is the process of achieving a real form through a model that has no reference to reality. So it is possible for a fantasy, image, and illusion to become something that looks real. Baudrillard [1] uses the term hyperreality to describe the collapse of the reality taken by the next model (simulation) which appears more real than reality itself, so that the gifts found are very thin and even blurry.

Through his work, 'Simulation', Baudrillard [8] introduced the distinctive character of Western society today as a simulation society. It is a society whose life is filled with games of code, signs, and models that are organized as productions and events in simulacra. Simulacra are the space where the simulation is simulated.

3. METHODS

This study uses content analysis to analyze signs, simulations, and consumption that appears in the Go-Jek e-hailing application. The phenomenon of the Go-Jek application is a cyber-culture artefact that places media reality not only describing what appears on the surface but uncovering the values contained in the media text itself. Researchers collected data through the media used for the promotion of Go-Jek brands such as websites, Instagram, and other social media. Furthermore, the data is analyzed through messages in advertisements constructed by Go-Jek as an e-hailing application company.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. *Go-Jek as an e-hailing application in Indonesia*

Go-Jek is a transportation technology company originating from Indonesia. At first, the company was founded in 2010 by NadiemMakarim in Jakarta. Unlike Uber or Grab, the emergence of Go-Jek originated from two-wheeled transportation services or what Indonesians usually call ojek. Meanwhile, Uber's experience starts with luxury car ordering services such as Lincoln Town Car, Cadillac Escalade, BMW 7 Series, and Mercedes-Benz S550 in America. Only then in 2012, UberX was launched for services that are more affordable to various levels of society. Even when entering Indonesia, Uber also developed two-wheeled transportation services considering the situation of service users in this country. Uber United States' international transportation network is based in San Francisco, California. This online application company was developed by Garret Camp and Travis Kalanick. The growing online transportation in San Francisco is not only Uber, but there are its biggest competitors, namely Lyft and Sidecar. Even in other countries, for example, India, EasyTaxi, and Ola have also appeared.

Online transportation has emerged and developed in various parts of the world. Uber was founded in 2009, followed by Go-Jek which appeared in 2010 (still via SMS, telephone, Whatsapp, BBM, there is no android / iOS based application). Furthermore, in 2012 the Grab online application was developed. Go-Jek is Indonesia's first android / iOS-based online transportation crisis. Previously, in 2014 Uber and Grab entered Indonesia, only then did Go-Jek stop the application in 2015.

Grab is a company originating from Singapore with coverage in the Southeast Asia region. It emerged from their vision to revolutionize the testimony industry in ASEAN. Then Grab in Indonesia also serves orders for two-wheeled vehicles. From a comparison of these three companies, it can be denied that Go-Jek is a pioneer in online two-wheeled vehicle (ojek) transportation ordering services.

"One app for All Your Needs" is a jargon that is featured in the Go-Jek application. Go-Jek promises its consumers to fulfill various kinds of daily needs, in just one application. Also, Go-Jek has a slogan, 'Karya Anak Bangsa', which this application comes from the innovative idea of Indonesians. The following is an explanation of the appearance of the Go-Jek application which can be downloaded from Google Play on an Android phone.

Since its appearance in January 2015 until December 2017, the Go-Jek application has 17 main service features and other additional features such as Go-Pay and Go-Points. Each feature offers services for daily needs ranging from shopping, massage, beauty salons, and so on.

The Go-Jek technology application is a form of artificial intelligence or often called artificial intelligence (AI). John McCarthy first investigated AI in 1955, which assumed that every aspect of learning and other intelligence

could be described so accurately that machines could simulate it. Although the terms artificial intelligence and intelligent human behavior cannot be clearly defined, AI describes the work process of an intelligent machine (computer) from the human performance so that it can do work as humans do. The term AI is defined as intelligence in solving problems (problem-solving) and this intelligence is in the computer system [9].

4.2. Simulations on the Simulacra e-hailing brand

Referring to Baudrillard's [8,9,10] thought, there are three levels of simulacra, namely: (1) Simulacra which lasted from the enlightenment century to the beginning of the industrial revolution. At this level, simulacra are in the form of representations of the natural relations of the various elements of life. (2) Simulacra which took place along with the development of the industrial revolution, where there is a shift in the representation mechanism as a negative impact of industrialization. (3) The simulacra were born as a consequence of the development of science and information technology. The simulacra at this time were a form of cross-cultural code, signs, and images that no longer refer to representations.

Through Go-Jek's advertising media, the simulation world seems to appear perfect. Go-Jek's simulacra no longer care about what is real, pseudo, reference, representation, fact, image, image, production, or reproduction. All of them merge into one in the play of signs. Go-Jek's simulated world is built from the arrangement of signs, images, and facts through intertwined production and reproduction. Go-Jek is not only a service medium for meeting daily needs. More than that, Go-Jek has created a new reality through artificial images and images, turning fantasy and illusions into reality and folding them into a small object in the hand called a smartphone. Go-Jek built a simulacra room through simulations on several types of social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube. Go-Jek has produced cultural symbols and signs through images, sounds, advertisements, etc. to shape the world of simulacra.

The reality produced by Go-Jek through these media is often exaggerated from real reality and has become a new reference model for some Indonesians. Go-Jek has created a new need with the lure of productivity and effectiveness where this kind of value has become a commodity for capitalists. This kind of media reality is what Baudrillard calls hyperreality.

If Go-jek's context is seen with Baudrillard's view, a simulation will appear through the simulacrum space that has eliminated the real reality, what appears is hyperreality, a reality formed through Go-Jek media. Borrowing Baudrillard's perspective, technological developments have enabled humans to create many signs, symbols, and codes that support simulation. For example, Go-Jek makes sign plays in its media (for example advertisements) to manipulate consumers' emotions to be interested in the products offered.

Virilio denies and disagrees with Baudrillard's thoughts. Virilio sees simulation not as an omission of reality, but a substitution. Where the reality of technology has replaced humans, Virilio believes that reality will not disappear, but is slightly shifted by virtual reality, not disappearing because the hyperreality that appears is a substitute or substitution reality. This criticism was also described in an interview with Paul Virilio by Louise Wilson of CTheory in 1994.

Virilio's writings are less concerned with Baudrillard's 'hyperreality' and irony, but more concerned with social realities. It is at this point that Virilio also criticizes Baudrillard's thinking that ignores social reality. World experiences are increasing as the effects of reality go beyond the perception of simulations that replace reality directly. Virilio's hypermodern world has consequences on the thought that it is time to face reality today; speed is war, the final war [10].

"...there is a nihilistic dimension in Baudrillard's writing that I cannot accept. It is quite clear to me that Baudrillard has totally lost faith in the social. To me, this is sheer nihilism. I have not at all lost faith in the social..." [11].

In an interview with John Armitage, Virilio also expressed his disagreement with the Baudrillard simulation concept. He likened it to photography, for example, the reality of technology does not eliminate the real reality but becomes real from real life. The film is also a substitute for true static with 'moving pictures', or in this day and age when virtual reality replaces itself for real life through virtual space. As a result, unlike Baudrillard, Virilio believes that reality is not just that, but is slightly displaced by another mode of reality, namely virtual reality.

Regardless of the debate between the two figures, the researcher gave different thoughts from the two. Both Virilio and Baudrillard have debates over the concept of a substituted or lost reality, Virilio with its subcritical reality and Baudrillard with its hyperreality. To a certain extent, simulations with hyperreality do appear, and then substitution, but also reality itself. When television displays a hyperreality, where many exaggerated realities (simulations) are present from the box screen. Then television was replaced (substitution) by smartphone, a mobile technology that allows all functions of television to be present on the small screen in the hand, which also replaced the previous communication patterns. And now Go-Jek appears, a remote control technology in smartphones that allows users to perform various activities without requiring physical movement.

In Go-jek's digital space, what appears is not the only hyperreality but becomes a new reality of the emergence of a sedentary society, an 'immovable' society. With internet media, Go-Jek technology connects consumers with services owned by their partners. Mitra Go-Jek is the name for partners in Go-Jek services such as drivers on Go-Ride, Go-Car, and Go-Send; therapist on Go-Massage; Resto Owner at Go-Food; Mechanic on Go-Auto; beautician on Go-Glam; cleaners on Go-Clean; pharmacy on Go-Med. So that what appears is not a hyper-reality but the real reality of the services provided by Go-Jek.

Go-jek as online transportation is also a substitute for transportation that is considered conventional. Go-Jek connects virtually with real life. Advertisements on Go-Jek's media still bring out hyperreality at a certain point. In the era of advanced capitalism [12], a business like Go-jek relies heavily on the power of signs by creating creative hyper signs to attract people to use their products. Then at another point, with the help of digital technology, what emerges is a real service to access fulfillment of daily needs. Although often the need is not something needed but is just what is desired.

4.3. Consumption Patterns in the Gojek application e-hailing

The features of the Go-Jek application can be divided into several categories: features of mobility services, fashion, food, fun, multi-payment, and care. Go-Jek controls the mobility of its users instead of overcoming congestion problems and parking difficulties, for example. Behind that, people are directed to depend on Go-Jek technology so that even walking habits have disappeared from their habit dictionary. The mobility of instant delivery of goods at one time is a new need created by Go-Jek through services such as Go-Box and Go-Send. This kind of service can reduce face-to-face interactions between humans and one another. A person can buy and receive the desired item without having to interact directly with the seller, even though they are still in one city.

Consumption of 3F (fashion, food, and fun) is also the target of Go-Jek's market, in line with the results of the survey we are social (2018) that the biggest e-commerce consumption of Indonesians is also covered by these three things. For example, the habit of being lazy to move which is formed from the presence of gadget technology, Go-Jek's technology has also created a new habit of eating without having to move. Online payments are also a trend among the public, including Go-Jek, which creates multi payments for online payments such as pulses, electricity, and others. The last Go-Jek service category is the type of care services, ranging from body health care and human beauty to home and car hygiene care. Go-Jek created a new need in the form of online care services amid the proliferation of various physical care clinics. Care services that usually require consumers to visit public service places, Go-Jek controls them to enter the private sphere of their consumers. For example, buying medicines without having to go to a pharmacy, hair care at home without having to go to a salon, car care without having to go to a garage, and so on.

5. CONCLUSION

Go-Jek's media is not value-free. The media was developed by Go-Jek's corporate vision and mission. Through the practice that has taken place in framing the discourse, it can be traced that the Go-Jek media has done an image by building strong branding so that Go-Jek media can grow and

develop rapidly with multiple capital or capital. Image is not only about appearing attractive in advertisements, creative graphics, maximum design, or stated as the best, but rather an effort to make public perception more positive.

The reality produced by Go-Jek through these media is often exaggerated from real reality and has become a new reference model for some Indonesians. Go-Jek has created a new need with the lure of productivity and effectiveness where this kind of value has become a commodity for capitalists. This kind of media reality is what Baudrillard calls hyperreality.

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