POLITICAL INTERNET MEMES IN INDONESIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE 2019 INDONESIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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POLITICAL INTERNET MEMES IN INDONESIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE 2019 INDONESIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

by

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May this thesis have its way to contribute to communication literature, society, and civilization.

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ATM   Automatic Teller Machine
BC   Before Christ
BNI   Bank Negara Indonesia / *State Bank of Indonesia*
DPR   Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat / *People's Representative Council*
E-KTP   Kartu Tanda Penduduk / *Indonesian Electrnonic ID Card*
ESDM   Energi Sumber Daya Mineral / *Indonesian Mineral and Energy Resources Ministry*
FPI   Front Pembela Islam /*Islamic Defenders Front*
Gerindra   Gerakan Indonesia Raya / *Great Indonesian Movement Party*
Golkar   Golongan Karya / *Golongan Karya Party*
HTI   Hizbu Tahrir Indonesia / *Hizb ut-Tahrir*
IPTN   Industri Pesawat Terbang Nusantara / *Nusantara Aircraft Industry*
ITE   Informasi dan Transaksi Elektronik / *Information and Transaction Electronics*
JKW   Jokowi
Jokowi   Joko Widodo
KH   Kiai Haji / Kiai Hajj
Kopassus   Komando Pasukan Khusus / *Special Forces Command*
Kostrad   Komando Cadangan Strategis / *Army Strategic Reserves Command*
LGBTQ   Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
MUI   Majelis Ulama Indonesia / *Indonesian Ulama Council*
NU   Nahdlatul Ulama
Orba   Orde Baru / *New Order*
Orla   Orde Lama / Old Order
PAN   Partai Amanat Nasional / *National Mandate Party*
PBB   Partai Bulan Bintang / *Crescent Star Party*
PDIP   Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan / *Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle's*
Pilpres   Pemilihan Presiden / *Presidential Election*
PKB   Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa / *National Awakening Party*
PKI   Partai Komunis Indonesia /*Indonesian Communist Party*
PKS   Partai Keadilan Sejahtera / *Prosperous Justice Party*
PNI   Partai Nasionalis Indonesia /*Indonesian Nationallist Party*
PPP   Partai Persatuan Pembangunan / *United Development Party*
PSI   Partai Sosialis Indonesia / *Indonesian Socialist Party*
SBY   Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
TNI   Tentara Nasional Indonesia / *Indonesian National Armed Forces*
TVRI   Televisi Republik Indonesia / *The Indonesian State Television Services*
UAE   *United Arab Emirates*
WWW   World Wide Web

MEME INTERNET POLITIK DI INDONESIA: SATU KAJIAN KES

PILIHAN RAYA PRESIDEN INDONESIA 2019

ABSTRAK

Meme internet telah menjadi istilah baharu untuk menyuarakan sikap politik masyarakat Indonesia. Tetapi penggunaannya dianggap berbahaya bagi pemerintah, ini disebabkan terdapat beberapa penyebar *meme* internet ditangkap polis kerana dituduh menghina presiden, menyebarkan hasutan, dan mencetuskan polarisasi masyarakat Indonesia. Menjadikan Pilihan Raya Presiden 2019 sebagai Pilihan Raya Presiden Indonesia yang paling hangat semasa era Reformasi. Penggunaan meme internet dalam wacana politik menjelang Pilihan Raya Presiden 2019 juga menjadi keras dan kasar kerana ia menggunakan humour politik yang diterima pakai daripada budaya barat bagi memperolok-olokkan dan mempersenda-sendakan calon-calon presiden. Penyelidikan ini mengkaji bagaimana masyarakat Indonesia menggunakan meme internet untuk membincangkan isu politik menjelang Pilihan Raya Presiden 2019, dengan menyiasat isu yang dibincangkan dan bagaimana isu tersebut dibahaskan menggunakan *meme* internet dalam konteks komunikasi humour yang digunakan oleh rakyat Indonesia menjelang Pilihan Raya Presiden 2019. Penyelidikan ini mengumpul 583 *meme* internet menggunakan enjin carian Google dengan kata kunci 'Meme Pilpres 2019'. Data tersebut kemudiannya dipilih berdasarkan kriteria khusus, iaitu menganung imej, teks, dan elemen yang mewakili calon preiden, dan mengandung jenaka dengan lebih daripada dua konteks yang bersekutu (*associative context*). Supaya menghasilkan 126 *meme* internet terpilih. Hasilnya, pengkaji mendapati tiga tema utama wacana, iaitu: agama, ideologi politik, dan ciri-ciri pemimpin negara.

Daripada tema dan sub tema yang dianalisis, tiga dapatan ditemui. Pertama, isu-isu tabu dan dilarang (seperti wacana tentang Islam) diletakkan sebagai cerita latar belakang bagi meme humour berkenaan, untuk kemudiannya diutarakan dengan konteks asosiatif yang lain bagi menghasilkan meme yang humour. Isu-isu tabu dan dilarang ini tidak digunakan sebagai kata-kata jenaka, atau objek yang berpotensi untuk ditertawakan supaya gurauan itu boleh diterima. Kedua, perbincangan mengenai wacana ideologi menyatakan kandungan *meme* yang dikaji adalah tidak koheren, tidak rasional dan diperlebih-lebihkan. Kandungannya bermutasi secara rawak, tetapi berkaitan dengan kandungan humour dalam budaya adun semula (*remix*). *Meme* humour ini digunakan untuk menafikan atau melawan isu yang menyerang seseorang calon dengan mengaburkan isunya dan bermain dengan analogi. Ketiga, pengenalpastian konteks asosiatif dalam humour yang digunakan dalam meme internet amat penting dalam mengenal pasti kesedaran kolektif masyarakat akar umbi tentang 'ideal' dan 'tidak ideal'. Ini dapat dikenalpasti sekiranya meme internet menggunakan konteks asosiatif dalam hubungan tentangan binari.

POLITICAL INTERNET MEMES IN INDONESIA: A CASE STUDY OF

THE 2019 INDONESIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

ABSTRACT

Internet meme has become a relatively new language of political expression in Indonesia. However, the Indonesian government considers internet memes a threat, and some citizen has been arrested for an accusation of insulting the president with the internet memes and escalating polarization in the society. The polarization made the 2019 Indonesian presidential election the most intense in the Reformation era. Using the political internet meme in the political discourse toward the Presidential Election becomes rough and harsh. This research examined how Indonesian society used internet memes to discuss political issues toward the 2019 Presidential Election. This study investigated the discourse and how it is discussed in the political discourse in the context of contemporary political humour toward the 2019 Presidential Election. Using the 'Meme Pilpres 2019' keywords on Google's search engine, the research collected 583 internet memes. Then, the researcher selected the internet meme based on specific criteria: it contains images, text, or any other element representing both presidential candidates, and it contains humour with more than a single associative context. The data resulted in 126 internet memes being categorized into themes. Three main themes of discourses were obtained: religion, political ideology, and national leader's characteristics. The research discovered three findings according to the depth analysis of the internet memes on each theme. First, taboo and the prohibited issue (such as an Islamic discourse) were articulated as the story background of the humourous internet memes. Then, the story background could be articulated with another associative context to build a humourous internet meme. The taboo and the

prohibited issue is not a pun or a laughable object, thus making humour acceptable. Second, the ideological discourse articulated the incoherent, irrational, and exaggerated contents. The contents mutate randomly, but still, it is related to other content in the humour mechanism of the remix culture. This humour mechanism on the internet memes is proper to denying and countering the issue that attacks a candidate by obscuring the case and through analogical games. Third, identifying the associative contexts in the humourous internet memes is helpful in examining grassroots society's collective consciousness regarding the 'ideal' and the 'not ideal'. It could be identified when the internet memes use the associative context in the binary opposition.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Study

In the digital era, people express their political views through the internet. People make and share internet memes as a form of their participation[1] (Shifman, 2014a; Tsakona & Popa, 2012). They have expressed their political views with internet memes, using digital content by imitating common characters, which spread throughout the internet. They could utilize digital content in the form of an image, audio, video, or even hyperlink to express their political views and send them to many people or even to the elite politicians at an affordable expense.

Internet memes are utilized to express the political views of society, regardless of whether it is in a democratic or a non-democratic country (Shifman, 2014a). In the monarchy of Oman, for instance, internet memes were used to disguise the political views of its society by using hashtags and certain codes to negotiate and mitigate political differences in their society (Al Zidjaly, 2017). In the communist country of China, internet memes become a means to express political views and social criticisms through creative and visual practices by wrapping internet memes with humour and simple messages in the midst of tight censorship of their government (Mina, 2014). In Mexico, internet memes were used to express criticisms through mockery with videos and images (Garcia, 2017). In Brazil, internet memes were used to discoursing their president. Integrated with other media, in the scope of Brazil's media, internet memes are used to discoursing political issues (Gambarato & Komesu, 2018). Meanwhile, in

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[1]a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance; that had created with awareness of each other; and had circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users (Shifman, 2014a)

the democratic State of America, internet memes contain political discourses to discoursing various political issues (Seiffert-Brockmann et al., 2018). Internet memes had even facilitated political humour, which is considered the most extensive tradition of American society (Fry, 2004a).

Indonesian society has been creating and spreading their internet memes since 2009 (Allifiansyah, 2016), lots of their internet memes were utilized as a means to express their political views before the Indonesian presidential election of 2014 (Anggraini et al., 2014; Mahadian, 2014; Wadipalapa, 2015). During the Indonesian presidential election of 2014, the Indonesian society has been utilizing internet memes to discoursing the presidential candidates, Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and Prabowo Subianto (Prabowo). Jokowi presented as a humble presidential candidate, while Prabowo presented as an elite presidential candidate in the internet memes. These internet memes grant Jokowi grassroots supporters and volunteers, resulting in Jokowi's victory over Prabowo with his oligarchic politicians (Hadiz & Robison, 2017; Mietzner, 2014, 2015). Jokowi's victory being considered had saved Indonesian democracy from Prabowo's authoritarian regime[2] (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2014). The use of internet memes during the 2014 presidential campaign get involved in the victory of Jokowi. With Jokowi's victory, Indonesia remains a democratic nation that allows its society freedom to express its views and critics toward its president.

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[2]Prabowo is an ex-son in law of Soeharto, a former Indonesian president who's considered to be autocratic for 32 years. Prabowo is also known as an ex-military officer who has been dismissed after being considered violating rules and involved in crimes against humanism.

1.2   Political Internet Memes in Indonesia

After its independence in 1945, Indonesia's democracy history can be divided into three eras: The Post-Independence Revolution Era (also known as *Orde Lama*/The Old Order) (1945-1966), The New Order Era (also known as *Orde Baru*) (1966-1998), and The Reformation Era (also known as *Era Reformasi*) (1998-the present). During the Old Order Era, Indonesia's democracy was still looking for its most suitable governmental system. It has had proceeded dynamically under Soekarno's regime. The New Order Era is an authoritarian government under Soeharto's regime for 32 years. During the New Order regime, the government applied strict controls and prohibited society from criticizing their government and president (Bunte & Ufen, 2009). Few activists criticized the government secretly through their humour and cartoons (Ajidarma, 2012; Badil et al., 2016). The year 1998, when the New Order regime had fallen and replaced the Reformation Era. Indonesian society had gained the freedom to speak, express, and criticize their government.

Democracy has thrived after the Reformation Era in Indonesia. Their government was also dealing with criticism in a more open manner. The Indonesian society was entering the digital and internet era (Bunte & Ufen, 2009; Hill & Sen, 2005). Digital technologies and the internet have facilitated society's freedom to express, criticize, and discoursing various issues. They have connected Indonesian society, which spread in the vast regions of Indonesia. Indonesia is the world's fifth-biggest internet user, with more than 147 million users. More than 80% of them are social media users, making Indonesia the fourth biggest social media user globally (APJII, 2017; Internet World Stats, 2018). Easy internet connectivity in Indonesian society has increased the potential of intensive and dynamic political discourses.

Indonesian society is discoursing political issues through the internet network in various ways and forms. Internet meme is a popular means among them (Akmal, 2017; Allifiansyah, 2016; Anggraini et al., 2014; Mahadian, 2014). Internet meme gained popularity around 2009 when the *yeahmahasiswa.com* website was introduced (Allifiansyah, 2016). Since gaining its popularity, internet memes were also used to discoursing political issues and criticism toward Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), the Indonesian president from 2004 to 2014. Memes were utilized freely by Indonesian society to criticize, satirize, even mock their president (Figure 1.1). It is a situation that occurs as a consequence of SBY as the first Indonesian president voted by the Indonesian society, where previously, the Indonesian president was elected by the parties through legislation.

Figure 1.1. Political Internet Memes which Represent the Indonesian President, SBY

President aside, Indonesian society utilises memes to discoursing the politicians or scandals involving politicians. One phenomenal scandal that ever occurred is the corruption scandal of Setya Novanto, the chairman of the Indonesian

People's Council. Setya Novanto is a national politician famous for his corruption scandal but often away from the law. His first hot topic scandal is the case of "*Papa Minta Saham*" (Papa Is Asking His Shares). It has widely discoursed since November 2015, until his tragic accident while attempting to escape from Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission arrest. Corresponding internet memes to the Setya Novanto corruption case issues have spread for several years, from November 2015 until December 2017 (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1. Political Internet Memes which Represent the Case of the Chairman of the Indonesian People's Council, Setya Novanto

Time& Discourse	Internet Meme Examples
Date: November 2015 Chairman of the Indonesian People's Council, Setya Novanto, reported that he is asking for shares to the Freeport's Director, Muhammad Chalid on behalf of Indonesia's President by the ESDM (Indonesian Mineral and Energy Resources) Minister, Sudirman Said. During the occasion, Novanto uses the word "papa.". This has led the public to refer to the case as "papa is asking his shares."	
Date: December 2016 After Chairman the Indonesian People's Council, Setya Novanto was reported to the Indonesian Board of Honor, the Indonesian Board of Honor held a hearing. As opposed to the public expectation, the hearing was held closed for the public.	

Date: September 2017 The Indonesian People's Council Chairman, Setya Novanto, was reported for his involvement in the E-KTP (Indonesian electronic ID card) case by Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission. Setya Novanto was told to be ill just before the investigation, and pictures of him lying on the hospital bed were spread out. However, as soon as his case was dropped, Novanto suddenly got healthy. Due to this rather strange circumstance, his pictures had since become jokes.	
Date: December 2017 After the E-KTP corruption case was dropped in September, Indonesia's Corruption Eradication reopened in December. Novanto was then re-summoned for the same case. But suddenly, he was reported for having an accident after his car hit an electrical pole. Novanto's lawyer had even said that he has serious injuries, which made his head lump as big as a "Bakpao[3]."	

Some political internet memes can even move a massive number of Indonesian societies. It was the "defamation of a religion" meme which Buni Yani shared. It criticized a Governor's speech. He altered the content of a video by modifying (cutting) it, which then he shared (and re-shared by others) to the internet and wrote:

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[3]A type of Chinese bun filled with meat, usually minced pork. Due to Indonesia's Muslim majority, the original pork filling has been replaced with minced beef, diced chicken, or even sweet mung bean paste and red bean paste.

> *"DEFAMATION OF A RELIGION?*
> *Ladies and gentlemen (Muslim voters) … had been lied by Al-Maidah 51…*
> *(and) went to hell (ladies and gentlemen had also) been fooled.*
> *It seems something terrible will happen after this video"* (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. Political Internet Memes which Represent the Event of the Defamation of a Religion

This internet meme had then been spread and became the Indonesian society's main topic (BBC, 2016; Fauzi, 2016; Malik, 2017). The issue heated up since the figure in the video is Basuki Tjahaya Purnama (addressed as Ahok), the current Governor of Jakarta during the period, who will soon run his next governor election campaign as a governor candidate. Ahok had been pushed to the corner since he is a minority in Indonesia, a Chinese who is also a Christian. This internet meme has led to three massive demonstrations, which first occurred on 4th November of 2016, second on 2nd December of 2016, and third on 11th February of 2017 (Fauzi, 2016). These three massive demonstrations involved thousands of people, and some had even claimed that the demonstrations on 2nd December 2016 had 7 million participants (Allard & Suroyo, 2017a; Franciska, 2016). Those three demonstrations had demanded that Ahok be imprisoned for the defamation of the Muslim religion. After being proven to be conducting hostility, manipulating, or defamation toward a religion, Ahok was found guilty of violating the laws, and he was then imprisoned. As for BuniYani was

imprisoned for committing hate speech and editing Ahok's speech video (Ramdhani, 2017).

During the Indonesian Presidential Election 2014, Indonesian society utilized internet memes to discoursing the candidates (Akmal, 2017; Allifiansyah, 2016; Anggraini et al., 2014; Wadipalapa, 2015). Few of them are exhibiting support, some other ridiculing, denouncing, or mocking the candidates in the context of humour (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3. Some Political Internet Memes Circulated Toward the Indonesian
Presidential Election of 2014 (Mahadian, 2014)

Some articles even reported that armed with internet memes during the campaign, a war of discourses between Jokowi's and Prabowo's supporters has been going on social media (Lestari, 2014; Syahputra, 2016). A war was fought by throwing discourse and arguing comments on the internet. The conflict occurred since the

Indonesian presidential election in 2014 and was crucial for Indonesia's future. Indonesian presidential election 2014 was almost turned Indonesia back into a non-democratic country under Prabowo's authoritarian rules (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2014; Mietzner, 2014). However, Prabowo returns as Jokowi, a contender in the Indonesian presidential election 2019. The rivalry between them is potentially fiercer as it was in 2014, and the war of discourses with internet memes is potentially escalated compared to the presidential election of 2014.

Political identity enters the political stage toward the presidential election of 2019 and mainly exploits religious issues (Burhani, 2019; Simandjuntak, 2018a). After the controversial case of Ahok's defamation of religion, which triggered the epic scale of demonstrations and the issues of overthrowing Jokowi by a radical Islamic group (Allard & Suroyo, 2017b) religious issues had gained more interest in political discourses. Previously, Jokowi collaborated with Ahok as Governor and Vice Governor of Jakarta in 2012-2014, and Jokowi was considered an anti-Muslim. Whereas Prabowo, as his contender, was automatically considered as a pro-Muslim. Prabowo's brand as a pro-Muslim president candidate has even been approved by 'Ijtima Ulama'[4] (CNN Indonesia, 2018a). Polarization between the pro-Muslim against anti-Muslim leaders was getting intense within the political discourses of Indonesian society. Internet memes became a popular means of discoursing those political issues. However, the government seems hesitant and does not fully comprehend political expressions in internet memes. There were some of the Indonesian society who freely created and spread memes, while some others got arrested after being accused have insulting the president and spreading hate speeches

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[4]A Decision based on the agreement made by few ulamas or Muslim figures.

(Aliansyah, 2017; Amelia & Widiastuti, 2017; Faisal, 2018; Hidayat, 2016; Ihsanuddin, 2017; Khafifah, 2015; Nuramdani, 2017; Perdana, 2017; Romadoni, 2014; Ryandi, 2017; Santoso, 2017; Subagja & Pradana, 2017). On the other hand, Indonesia needs more studies in examining the field of internet memes. Indonesian society is still adapting while looking for internet memes as a new global culture genre (Shifman, Levy, et al., 2014). Thus, political internet memes utilization in Indonesia's political dynamics and democracy become crucial to be studied especially during intense political discourses toward the presidential election of 2019, which is once again, Jokowi and Prabowo will be reunited as the contending parties in Indonesia's presidential election.

1.3   Problem Statement

Indonesia is a young democratic country. Even though they had their independence in 1945, democracy was only being adopted since The Reformation Era, following the fall of the authoritarian New Order Era in 1998 (Bunte & Ufen, 2009; Johansson, 2016; Ufen, 2014; Vickers, 2005). During the democratic Reformation Era, Indonesian society began to utilize their freedom to express their political views. Facilitated by the internet, Indonesian society uses internet memes as a popular means to express their political views (Anggraini et al., 2014; Mahadian, 2014; Wadipalapa, 2015). Indonesia had also become the best Southeast Asian country for its political rights index (M. Lim, 2018). However, the problem occurred with the use of internet memes in Indonesia, and few individuals reported had been arrested (Aliansyah, 2017; Amelia & Widiastuti, 2017; Faisal, 2018; Hidayat, 2016; Ihsanuddin, 2017; Khafifah, 2015; Nuramdani, 2017; Perdana, 2017; Romadoni, 2014; Ryandi, 2017; Santoso, 2017; Subagja & Pradana, 2017), while other did not. Even though political internet

memes are typically made with insignificant communication contexts, non-serious, and jokes (Seiffert-Brockmann et al., 2018). The government and society seem disorganized and do not comprehend internet memes matters. On the other hand, research that comprehends the utilization of internet memes, which considers Indonesian society's communicational views are rare.

In the past, Indonesian internet memes' study is limited to the contexts of studies in; internet memes representation of an event and internet meme representation in certain political events (Allifiansyah, 2016; Anggraini et al., 2014; Juditha, 2015; Pusanti, 2015; Triputra & Sugita, 2016; Wadipalapa, 2015). Some other researchers conducted studies in linguistics' perspective to interpret and comprehend internet memes utilization of forms, themes, usages, and other linguistics aspects (Bangun et al., 2017; Listiyorini, 2017; Lukman et al., 2016; Widiana, 2015; Wildan, 2016). However, this research has not yet examined how a political discourse was discussed using the internet meme on what form that discussion occurred in a particular political context. It does matter to study the internet memes' functions, roles, and message forms, regardless as a part of studies of communication in the digital era or part of global cultures. Then it needs research to examine the Indonesian internet memes as a part of the global culture since the internet meme is originally a Western cultural product which then adopted by the global society (Boxman-Shabtai & Shifman, 2016a; Shifman et al., 2014), and Indonesia is just another Eastern society (Fry, 2004a; Littlejohn & Foss, 2008).

Realizing the differences in perceiving communications between the Easterners and the Westerners is crucial in conducting a study on internet memes. Due to the political humour common in internet memes, it is a form of the Western (American) humour culture that allows everyone to laugh freely at their leaders (Fry,

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2004a). However, the way to convey critics and humour in the internet memes spread globally, breaking the boundaries of the Western culture into the Eastern culture through the internet network, where these other countries are imitating the internet memes, which might be perceived differently than in its cultural origin (Boxman-Shabtai & Shifman, 2016b; Shifman et al., 2014). Another study showed different perceptions of humour, critics, and other communications had led to controversy and even escalated into an international conflict. Humour context is not applicable in discoursing every; one, issue, or event. Wrapping a sentence with the potential to be laughing at cannot be delivered to every-one or occurrence. For example, a study conducted by Kuipers (2011) that examines the conflict as the result of the controversial Mohammad the Prophet cartoon published in the Jyllands-Posten newspaper in Denmark. Kuipers suggested that conflict occurs because of different perspectives between Islamic and Western societies in viewing mockeries, ridicules, and derisions as well as the satire tradition. Some other literature supports Kuiper's suggestion by the statement that the Islamic society's[5] perception of humour is different from the Westerner (Geybels & Herck, 2011; Palacios, 2008).

Muslims mainly dominate Indonesian society, they are potentially having a different perception of humour than the Westerners, and humour itself becomes the crucial element to comprehend the cultural difference. It is not appropriate to discoursing every discourse in-jokes and laughing manners. Their upper society, leaders, and the elites (politicians) are considered unfit for mocking, let alone laughing at (Sudarmo, 2004). On the other hand, toward their presidential election, humour adoption such as mockery, ridicule, derision, and satire by Indonesian society in the

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[5]Predominance religion in Indonesia society

form of internet memes are inevitable. Usage of internet memes that involve religious issues in fierce political discourses had even increased toward the presidential election of 2019 (Burhani, 2019; Herdiansah et al., 2018; Simandjuntak, 2018b; The Jakarta Post, 2018). On their political discourses, it appears that Indonesian society is adopting western humour in the form of an internet meme[6]. Based on arguments written in this section and considering limitations of the already established studies, it is essential to conduct research that considered Indonesian humour communications perspective to examine the internet memes utilization on contemporary political discourses in Indonesia, especially toward Indonesia's presidential candidate election 2019. To achieve them, this research will focus on two things: what (discourse[7] being discoursed) and how (the discourse being discoursed in the form of internet meme)?

1.4   Research Objectives

To be specific, the research objectives are stated as follows:

1. To investigates the discourses regarding presidential candidates, which are being discussed by internet memes toward Indonesia's presidential election in 2019.

2. To examine how the presidential candidate discourses were being discussed by utilizing internet memes in the context of Indonesian society's humour communications toward Indonesia's presidential election in 2019.

1.5   Research Question

To achieve the aims and objectives of this research, the research question is delineated as follows:

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[6]As globalization's secret agent (Shifman et al., 2014)
[7]"*socially constructed knowledges of some aspect of reality*" (Leeuwen, 2004, p. 94)

1. What discourses are being discussed with internet memes regarding presidential candidates toward Indonesia's presidential election in 2019?

   This research question's objective is to investigate the issues in discourses that Indonesian society discusses in the form of internet memes. These issues will be investigated by identifying its content elements. Thus, the humour mechanisms in an internet meme can be comprehended. The identified content elements will become the basis for further analysis and will be examined in the second research question..

2. How are the presidential candidate's discourses being discoursed by utilizing internet memes in the context of Indonesian society's humour toward Indonesia's presidential election?

   This research question's base is the investigation of the first research question. So that, after identifying the content elements, to be able to comprehend the message in a meme contextually, a study in meme's content, form, and stance utilization will be conducted, proceeding with the examination of a discourse's issue. Thus, it grants comprehension and knowledge regarding the issue discoursed in the context of Indonesian society's humour communications and memes.

1.6 Significance of the Study

To comprehend cultures and concepts inheritance through cultural transmission units, studies in social science in the field of the internet meme have to

evolve (Blackmore, 1999; Dawkins, 2016). Furthermore, due to the internet becoming a new trending field of study since 2011 (Shifman, 2014), new meme research had evolved into internet meme research due to internet studies. Studies in Political internet meme and social changes meme are the evolution of internet meme studies (Tsakona & Popa, 2012). As a new field of study, comprehending the political internet meme and social changes meme require lots and lots of research. This research is expected to contribute to both studies, the political internet meme and social changes meme, providing practical actions or being the basis of government policies.

Some researchers have been conducting studies on political internet memes as a new field of study. Some of these researches are conducting studies in internet meme utilization on a few political events in the context of political participation (Al Zidjaly, 2017; Avidar, 2012; Garcia, 2017; Hatab, 2016; Mina, 2014; K. Pearce & Hajizada, 2014; Seiffert-Brockmann et al., 2018). Few other researchers are researching internet memes utilization on a specific political event: the presidential election (Adegoju & Oyebode, 2015; Campbell et al., 2018; Ross & Rivers, 2017; Shifman et al., 2007). This research is expected to contribute to political internet meme study with Indonesian political contexts.

In Indonesia, the utilization of internet memes toward a presidential election is a relatively new phenomenon. Regardless, few researchers conducted studies on political internet memes utilization in Indonesia (Allifiansyah, 2016; Anggraini et al., 2014; Juditha, 2015; Pusanti, 2015; Triputra & Sugita, 2016; Wadipalapa, 2015). However, this research did not study the internet memes utilization through the Indonesian humour and communications perspective, representing Indonesia's uniqueness and differences. Since these differences in humour perception is an element that is important to understand, to comprehend the cultural differences in the internet

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era (Taecharungroj & Nueangjamnong, 2015) and its society's political views & social changes (Zlobin, 1996). The emphasis of Indonesian's humour and communications perspective become important in studying political internet memes due to the internet memes is a cultural transmitter and an agent of globalization (Shifman et al., 2014; Wang & Wang, 2015), which have brought American genre humour (Fry, 2004a). This research will depict how Indonesian society utilizes internet memes in the context of an event, is used to express their thoughts and ideas, a means of discussing issues, or it might be just a simple means of practicing a popular culture. This research will contribute to the internet memes studies, a new form of the discourse has spread out. It is a new message's form and means of discourse delivery in the digital era. The brand-new culture has a new unique mechanism due to its native humour mechanism that commonly sends the paradoxical and incoherent messages. Also, this research is expected to be able to contribute to studies on the meme, not limited only to the internet meme as a form of cultural inheritance and cultural transmission, but also in the studies in the internet meme as a form of globalization and Americanization in Indonesia.

1.7   Structure of the Thesis

This thesis encompasses six chapters. Chapter one is the introductory chapter that explains this study's overall idea and direction. The sub-topics presented in this chapter comprise the background of the study, political internet memes in Indonesia as a contextual background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research question, the significance of the study and structure of the thesis.

Chapter two constitutes two sub-chapter. This chapter provides a review of the relevant literature related to the political humour in Indonesia democracy which will assist the reader in comprehending the study's contexts. The first sub-chapter presents

literature regarding Indonesian politics and the presidential election in Indonesia. Issues also explained in this section are the politics and election dynamics in Indonesia's post-independence, New Order, and post-reformation eras. The second sub-chapter describes humour and comedy literature in Indonesia and the humour in Indonesia's political dynamics.

Chapter three contains a review of the relevant literature related to this research. It also presents theories and conceptual literature employed in the study's theoretical framework to help the reader to take place this study in the specific domain of internet meme studies. This chapter consists of nine sub-chapters containing relevant previous literature. This literature is the introduction to the studies of internet memes, the meme's definition, the internet meme object study, the internet memes as communication, the internet meme as a culture, the internet meme in cultural and political participation, the political internet memes in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, the political internet humour in political internet memes, and the humour theories. A sub-chapter of the theoretical framework as a theoretical foundation to perform data analysis concludes this third chapter.

Chapter four explains the research methodology, including the utilized research process. It contains three sub-chapters, the research design, the data collection and sampling method, and the data analysis method. Explained in its early part is the employed research design to answer the research questions. The sub-chapter of the data collection and sampling method describes the procedures for collecting, selecting, and determining an internet meme for a deeper analysis. The data analysis sub-chapter contains the analysis procedures and techniques using the analysis matrix previously explained at the end of chapter three.

Chapter five highlights the analysis results and research findings. It consists of three sub-chapters resulting from the analyzed internet memes' discourses categories: religion, political ideology, and national leader's characteristics. Each sub-theme is a depth-semiotic analysis of a selected internet meme. The placement of the analysis results inside tables is for the reader's convenience in comprehending the analytical results. The descriptive explanatory's intention is to describe each meme's potential and contextual meanings. A discussion section appears to conclude each sub-chapter, discuss analysis results, and put a research finding in a particular context.

Chapter six is the conclusion to this research. It contains four sub-chapters. These sub-chapters present the research findings to answer the research questions, contributions and study's limitations. The sub-chapter in this section also provides suggestions and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter reviews literature which is relevant in conjunction with this research. The literature which it focuses on are theories, concepts, and research studies on political internet memes. The review began by exploring the meme concept, studying political internet memes, and studying humour theories. Studying humour theories is required since political internet memes are typically in humour. Thus, it requires study in humour theories to comprehend humour discourses. Furthermore, humour theories will be utilized in supporting the analyzing process, which utilizes the social semiotics analysis method.

2.2 Introductory to The Studies in Internet Memes

Studies in internet memes are relatively new. Knoble & Lankshear (2007) published their research in internet memes in 2007. The field of research itself had only become popular since 2011s (Shifman, 2014a). Researchers have tried to comprehend and identify its essential elements and devising the concept and object of study in internet memes (Brideau & Berret, 2014; Dancygier & Vandelanotte, 2017; Shifman, 2011, 2014b), other researches have studied internet meme as participating cultures (Gal et al., 2016; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Silvestri, 2016; Wang & Wang, 2015; Zittrain, 2014), internet meme as a globalization agent (Boxman-Shabtai & Shifman, 2016b; Goriunova, 2012; Shifman, 2007; Taecharungroj & Nueangjamnong, 2015), and internet meme as a means to express political views and an agent of change (Adegoju & Oyebode, 2015; Al Zidjaly, 2017; Avidar, 2012; Becker, 2014; Gambarato &

Komesu, 2018; Garcia, 2017; Hatab, 2016; Mina, 2014; K. Pearce & Hajizada, 2014; Seiffert-Brockmann et al., 2018; Sorensen, 2014). Before reviewing literature related to studies in political internet memes, the introduction will explore the origin of meme studies.

The term "meme" used in studies of internet memes refers to a term being used by a biologist, Richard Dawkins (1976). It is originated from the Greek's *"mimema,"* which means something to be imitated. Dawkins introduces the term of a *meme* in his book, "The Selfish Gene." The book centres on the explanation of genes in Darwinism Evolution Theory. In one of its chapters, Dawkins explained that cultural heritance carried out by humankind is similar to gene inheritance. A gene is an analogue as a cultural unit (called meme) in cultural inheritance, inherited by the non-genetic evolution process. Cultural units are replicated, evolved, and spread like a virus (viral). In this context, cultural units or memes can be represented as ideas, thoughts, ideologies, texts, languages, artefacts, or other forms.

The idea of the meme as a replicator in cultural inheritance proposed by Dawkins was later expanded and applied by many researchers to gain insight into a greater variety of phenomena. For instance, Richard Brodie (1996) applied Dawkin's idea of meme virality in the form of mind and ideas, which later on is widely adopted by researchers to understand the virality of internet memes. Susan Blackmore (1999) has begun discussing memes in digital contexts, or the internet meme. However, it did not comprehensively discuss internet memes. So did Kate Distin (2005), who rather discuss cultural evolutions.

In 2014, Hebrew University's researcher Limor Shifman published a specific and comprehensive book to discuss the internet meme. In her book "Memes in Digital Culture" (2014a), Shifman began to devise the definition of internet memes and identify

the main element of internet memes. She is also trying to discuss the internet meme entity by discussing memes in the context of issues tightly integrated with internet memes, such as a meme's virality issues, globalization, political participation & participation politics. Those three issues become the focus of many researchers and potentially guide the flow of meme research in the future.

2.3   Meme Definition

The scholars who tried to define internet memes primarily refer to Dawkins's definition. While Shifman (2014a) proposed internet meme definition as: "(a) *a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance;* (b*) it was created with conscious of each other;* and (c) *was spread, imitated, and/or transformed through the Internet by many of its users*" (Shifman, 2014a, p. 41). Shifman's proposed definition has covered the basic elements of internet meme: content, form, and stance. By referring to Shifman's definition, an internet meme is not an individual product but a product of collectivities. A product created based on consciousness and common knowledge of the group of persons. Its presence is representing shared consciousness. Meme creation as a collective product occurred due to internet connectivity, which has enabled lots of people to be connected at the same time.

In 2018, in his book, The SAGE Encyclopedia of The Internet, Noam Gal (2018) has proposed internet meme definition as: *"digital text-verbal, visual, or audial-that share common attributes and undergo variations by multiple users. They are created with awareness of one another, and they require prior acquaintance for proper production and consumption, as the repetitive (or mimetic) element of the text often incorporates coded cultural information essential for proper interpretation"* (2018, p.

528). Few of the proposed definition by Gal are nearly identical to Shifman's. However, Gal added, "coded cultural" as an essential element to interpret internet memes. Gal himself was unable further to explain the concept of those mentioned above "coded cultural," however coded cultural can be interpreted as codes, symbols, signs, or semiotics symbols which sourced on a particular culture. Coded culture can be viewed as codes which can be interpreted in certain (cultural) context to understand an internet meme.

2.4   Internet Meme Objects of Study

As previously described, the term meme that is currently being applied to refer to the internet meme concepts originated on Richard Dawkins's idea (1976). The Earlier ideas of a meme that are being applied to refer to internet meme is a replicator made in digital forms and spread through internet networks. Shifman (2014a) and Gal (2018) have tried to devise internet meme definition and describe meme's elements and characteristics. According to Shifman (2014a), there are three main elements in an internet meme. They are *content, form, and stance.* While Gal uses a more specific term to refer to "*form,*" which was mentioned by Shifman (2014a, p. 40), which are: "*digital text-verbal, visual, or audial.*" Gal also added "*cultural coded,*" which interprets internet memes in particular cultural contexts. Knoble & Lankshear (2007) also supports cultural contexts to understand internet memes, who study memes as a form of social and cultural activities. It is essential to understand contexts, cultures, or coded cultural while interpreting internet memes due to the nature of a meme that was constructed on a frame of humour (Al Zidjaly, 2017; Boxman-Shabtai & Shifman, 2016b; Gal, 2018; Hatab, 2016; Seiffert-Brockmann et al., 2018; Shifman, 2014a; Shifman et al., 2007; Yang & Jiang, 2015). Humour can only be interpreted based on

specific contexts (Attardo, 1994; V. Raskin, 1984), and it became an essential part of interpreting internet memes. Elements aside, Shifman and Gal are also devising the characteristics of internet memes. Both of them concluded that the internet meme is a product of collectivity and not a product made by a single individual because internet memes are built and spread (prosumer[8]) by many people. Its existence reflects a group of people's consciousness and stance.

Few other research attempts to study internet meme elements in various digital modes. Research conducted by Shifman (2011) examines 30 popular mimetic videos on Youtube. Youtube is a website platform for videos sharing, which has become the symbol of the current participation cultures (Dijck, 2009). Shifman's research shows that generally, six videos featured on Youtube are uploaded as the result of mimetic action. The featured uploaded videos usually contain "general people" or typical general society, failed or masculine stupidities stuffs, humour contents, videos of the simplest things, and anything unusual or even bizarre. An Internet meme in the form of videos featured in the general category are reflections of reality that is considered worthy enough to be shared with the public. It also reflected personal issues that are considered quite essential to show off. As an alternative flow of mainstream contents, mass or popular cultures (Strinati, 1995).

Limor Shifman (2014b) writes another article in which she conducted a study in photo-based memes. Photos are used to create internet memes are in the form of Photoshop-ed reactions (a photo which modified by using certain computer software or application), stock character macros (a meme that employs a popular photo added with texts), and photo fads (a photo of strange, bizarre, funny, or mimetics occurrence). The

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[8] Producers and also consumers

study was carried out to investigate the photo-based internet meme's existence. Photo-based internet meme opens a new room to discuss the "truth" of the presented issue on the photograph. In photo-based internet memes comprehending the interpretation must be made by deconstruction. However, it cannot be guaranteed that it has been correctly done since it often ends up interpreting the photo itself rather than interpreting its meaning. On this part of Shifman's writing, there is so much more to explore in another research. In the same article, Shifman also discusses another essence of a photograph. Where photo-based internet memes took a photograph to become a future-oriented product, many people imitate our photograph. Photo-based internet memes became a new area for expressions, which took a more dynamic and interactive photograph.

Brideau and Berret (2014) studied photo-based internet memes by studying the "Impact" font style, which is typical on internet memes of stock character macros. Impact font style usage has contributed to the structural interpretation of internet memes. It is affecting the practice of typography in the making and meme interpretation. In their article, Brideau and Berret (2014) explain the history of Impact font style and its roles in building mimetic creativity based on the stock character macros. Impact font style was created by synchronizing the 60's fashion. It was created to gain attraction by accentuating its strength and heavy image. The impression of Impact font style as the font of the meme is getting more substantial due to the meme generator and image macros usage, which eventually pushes its usage and replicates this font style.

Dancygier and Vandelanotte (2017) study studies macro image internet meme as a multimodal object that creates a discourse. The discourse was created by using texts and images. Any viral macro image meme that gains popularity then creates iteration cycles (or replication) and gets remixed until it creates discourse. The discourse contains and constructs points of view, ideas, and stereotypes. Macro image memes build and