

Audience consumption motives on online celebrity gossip account's contents

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ABSTRACT

Background: The presence of the Internet has introduced a more complex way within the process of disseminating various images and information about celebrities, including private celebrity information such as scandals, conflicts, and various aspects of personal life that previously could only be enjoyed in classic infotainment formats in the mass media. **Purpose:** This study analyzes the motives of the audience's consumption process for the content produced by various celebrity gossip accounts in Indonesian cyberspace. This research aims to dig deeper into the audience's motives when consuming this particular information about celebrities. **Methods:** This research was conducted using in-depth interviews with ten sources who regularly consume the content of online celebrity gossip accounts on social media. **Results:** The results show that three motives encourage audiences to consume celebrity gossip online: informational motives, entertainment motives, and social motives. The information motive refers to the interviewee's perception that online celebrity gossip accounts provide a more detailed and exclusive source of information. The entertainment motive refers to the enjoyment of the audience when they are involved in 'imaginary drama' and heated debate between audiences in the comment section. Social motive refers to the value of celebrity gossip as a valuable resource to start conversations and maintain group cohesion among close friends. **Conclusions:** The public's interest in consuming celebrity information, whether for informational, entertainment, or social reasons, indicates an unrelenting demand for information about celebrities which in turn encourages the proliferation of gossip-providing accounts on social media. **Implications:** This study itself serves as an initial stepping stone to open a more serious study on celebrity culture in Indonesia.

Keywords: Celebrity study; celebrity culture; online celebrity gossip; audience motives; citizen paparazzi

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INTRODUCTION

The interest in celebrity culture study has dramatically increased over the past decade, especially in the role of celebrities as the main engine of consumerism which is the hallmark of the late-stage capitalism process (Bennet & Holmes, 2010; Cashmore, 2006; Fraser & Brown, 2010; Marshall, 2014; Rojek, 2015; Turner, 2006). The never-ending public's attention to celebrity image is shown by the increasing presence of celebrities in various aspects of life, especially within the economic and political sphere, where the image of celebrities is constantly disseminated through various media and channels (Katayama, 2021; Nygaard, 2022). Changes in the media landscape, especially the internet, also affect how the public consumes various information about celebrities (Abidin, 2018; McNamara, 2011). New media is considered an innovative and powerful channel that offers a broader and more robust connection between celebrities and the public, especially their fans (Boyle & Kelly, 2010; van den Bulck, 2017). New media also opens up wider opportunities for the production and dissemination process of various information about celebrities, which practically revolutionizes the practice of consuming news 'gossip and rumors' which was previously so popular in the mass media, especially television and tabloid (Nayar, 2009; Yulianto, 2008). The presence of new media also creates new conversational spaces that allow audiences to share and discuss information about celebrities which in turn will increase the circulation of celebrity images and information among the audience (Andò & Redmond, 2020; Feasey, 2008; Meyers, 2010; Nataraajan & Chawla, 1997). This research was conducted in response to the lack of studies on celebrity culture in Indonesia, especially about the motives that encourage audiences to enjoy various information about celebrities on social media. Preliminary observations show a significant change in how audiences enjoy celebrity information on social media. Now the audience can actively discuss with each other, interact, and even express opinions or criticisms of the celebrity news they consume.

Information about a celebrity's personal life is one of the most valuable commodities

in celebrity culture. This information cannot be called 'news' because the public prefers a specific form of information that tends to be speculative and convoluted about certain celebrities. (Brainbridge, 2020; Feasey, 2008; Nayar, 2009). Rumors and gossip about celebrities' private lives proved very popular. They prompted the emergence of a business ecosystem that relies on supplying complete information from celebrities' lives (McNamara, 2011). The media industry quickly seized this opportunity by opening up a broader segment of celebrity information in the mass media to satisfy the public's curiosity about the celebrity's private life (Biressi, 2020; Mitra, 2020; Mortensen & Kristensen, 2020). It should be remembered that the modern concept of 'celebrity' as it is understood today is not an inherent thing that emerged along with the development of the media. Daniel Boorstin's statement about the definition of a celebrity as a person who is famous because of his fame' actually refers to a human figure who gains public attention not because of a particular real achievement but because of continuous media coverage and visibility. (Boorstin, 1992). The essence of celebrity status is media attention, not achievement or merit (Boorstin, 1992; Cashmore, 2006; Rojek, 2015). Gossip and rumors surrounding celebrity life can be interpreted as a logical effect on the massive circulation of celebrity images which ultimately triggers a typical psychological response from the public in the form of curiosity, adoration, and hatred (Ando & Redmond, 2020).

The media industry has long viewed celebrity gossip as a potential commodity to attract more audiences and advertisers. The higher share of celebrity portion within mass media can be attributed to various practices such as the emergence of the paparazzi, yellow journalism, and infotainment program formats. The success of yellow journalism in England gave birth to various tabloids containing sensational news, the majority of which exploited rumors and gossip about celebrities. Tabloids such as *The Sun*, *National Enquirer*, *Star*, *The Globe*, and *National Examiner* in the UK have survived years without changing their format (Mott, 1950). This situation proves that public attention to celebrity gossip has remained

strong and has even increased with the spread of celebrity images in various media. The development of technology since its inception also created a significant influence in increasing public attention to personal celebrity issues, such as family problems, infidelity, sexual scandals, and criminal cases (Middlemost, 2023; Mortensen & Kristensen, 2020; Oliva & Latorre-Perez, 2020). The development of cameras with zoom lenses that can be used to shoot remotely played an essential role in the emergence of the *paparazzi* (Cashmore, 2006). *Paparazzi* is a term for professional photographers or journalists who are specifically looking for information or photos about celebrities and are often done in an intrusive way (McNamara, 2011). The affair between Hollywood actress Elizabeth Taylor and her co-star in the film “Cleopatra,” Richard Burton, was successfully revealed after a *paparazzi* photographed the two couples on a yacht from a remote location. The public’s attention to the Taylor-Burton scandal has made the media realize how celebrities’ private lives proved to be an invaluable commodity that can attract more audiences and advertisers (Aji, 2022).

The commodification process of gossip and rumors about celebrities peaked after the appearance of television shows in the form of infotainment format (Ruehlicke, 2020). Infotainment, which can be defined as a specific media format that seeks to combine news information with entertainment (Yulianto, 2008), has become very popular in Indonesia since the late 1990s along with the popularity of the *reality show* (Turner, 2014; Yulianto, 2008). Infotainment program formats in Indonesia have a distinctive style and are often imitated from one television station to another. It can appear as a talk show divided into several segments, with the central segment mainly discussing the latest celebrity gossip. The emergence of the infotainment program can be traced back to the success of “Kabar-kabari,” which was broadcast from 1997 – 2004 on RCTI. In the following years, various other infotainment programs appeared, such as KISS (*Kisah Seputar Selebriti*, Stories About Celebrities), Kabar-Kabari Sensasi, Betis (*Berita Selebritis*, Celebrity News), Obsesi (*Obrolan Seputar Selebriti*, Chats About Celebrities), Silet, Insert

(*Informasi Seputar Selebriti*, Information About Celebrities), Ceriwis, and various other similar programs. The format of the infotainment program also extends to the print media. Throughout the late ‘90s to early 2000s, various tabloids in Indonesia began to rely heavily on celebrity issues (Yulianto, 2008). These tabloids often market themselves as ‘women’s tabloids,’ such as Nova, Bintang, Star, Wanita Indonesia, Aura, Genie, and many others. These tabloids aggressively seek to get exclusive interviews with celebrities, mainly when public attention is focused on a particular celebrity scandal. The popularity of infotainment television shows in Indonesia reflects the increasing prevalence of similar programs in the United States. The success of celebrity talk shows such as Larry King Live (1985-2010) began to encourage the emergence of television shows that attempted to explore the private lives of celebrities, such as the Entertainment Tonight program on CBS, The Daily Show, and the Oprah Winfrey Show. Gossip and rumors about celebrities have become a highly lucrative global commodity for the media (Biressi, 2020; Moreira, 2022; Mortensen & Kristensen, 2020) and lyrics are performed with an aggressive, mocking tone, filled with sexual references. Poor women of colour in favela funk, also known as *funkeiras*, have been responsible for much of the celebrity media attention the movement enjoys, and with feminism’s recent renewed popularity, the women have been more frequently confronted with questions of feminism, considering most of them perform songs about gendered relationships. This essay investigates how and why once some *funkeiras* begin to call themselves feminists, they tend to engage in a more palatable (meaning, white and middle class).

The development of communication technology has once again influenced the way how public consumes celebrity gossip. Many celebrity culture researchers consider that the Internet democratizes how celebrities and the public connect (Abidin, 2018; Marshall, 2010; McNamara, 2011; Hou, 2018; Street, 2004; Turner, 2014; Usher, 2020). The Internet, especially social media, has created the impression of an authentic, direct, and unmediated connection between the public and

celebrities (van den Bulck et al., 2017). Social media removes distance and breaks down the wall between the public and celebrities, where the public can initiate an interaction with celebrities without having to go through intermediaries. This interaction is often criticized as only superficial. It keeps the distance between fans and celebrities. Still, one cannot deny that the interactions that are formed on social media have revolutionized the relationship between celebrities and the public.

The Internet also gradually changed the way people consume celebrity gossip. Celebrity gossip became a valuable commodity because it was considered difficult for journalists to obtain pictures, videos, or information about celebrities' private lives. Paparazzi emerged as an answer to the media industry's demand for exclusive and sensational information about celebrities, especially those embroiled in the latest scandal (McNamara, 2011). The famous photo of actress Anita Eckberg pulling a bow at Felice Quinto when he trespassed into her property to take pictures serves as an illustration of how the dynamics between celebrity, *paparazzi*, and audience is complex and, in some cases, dangerous (Cashmore, 2006). *Paparazzi's* willingness to perform illegal and intrusive actions to obtain 'secret' information about celebrities' private lives has long been one of the foundations of the commodification of celebrity gossip. *Paparazzi* monopolization in providing an exclusive supply of information about celebrity life is now being questioned with the presence of the Internet. At least three reasons caused the diminishing role of professional workers (such as paparazzi and infotainment programs editorial board) in gathering celebrities' information. The first reason is the shift in celebrity positions, who now have more freedom to control their social assets and fame. Social media presence means that celebrities are no longer dependent on the mass media to maintain their fame and public attention. Celebrities can freely share their personal information, gaining popularity and financial benefits from it. The second reason refers to the change within celebrity production with the presence of new celebrities, or what is commonly known as microcelebrity or DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Celebrity, due to the

development of the Internet (Abidin, 2018). These new kinds of celebrities complicate the work of conventional *paparazzi*, who now deal with an increasing number of public figures but with an increasingly fragmented audience. The last reason is directly related to the discussion in this paper, namely the emergence of citizen *paparazzi* or amateur photographers who start offering confidential or exclusive information about celebrities (McNamara, 2011). The term citizen *paparazzi* was first introduced in citizen journalism, emphasizing the need for more professionalism in searching and disseminating certain information. Citizen *paparazzi* refers to a specific audience who willingly share any confidential information or gossip about certain celebrities they have for various reasons, including material gain or personal satisfaction. These three reasons can explain the diminishing power of the *paparazzi* as the sole providers of exclusive celebrity information.

There are several hypotheses to explain why the public, especially adult women, has high attention to celebrity gossip. Pramodh Nayar stated that gossip attracts public attention because of its assumption and speculative nature (Nayar, 2009). Gossip is presented in unique uncertainty rhetoric and written in such a way as to tempt the audience's curiosity and stimulate the audience's wild imagination. Gossip is considered a commodity precisely because gossip does not offer any certainty or objective explanation, so when a celebrity attempts to clarify particular gossip, the public often secretly laments that decision because now the audience can no longer play with assumptions and imagination (Nayar, 2009). Ellis Cashmore explains that celebrity gossip was in high demand because audiences viewed scandals as an extension of celebrity appearances from the media screen (Cashmore, 2006). The image of celebrities has become so pervasive on the media screen that the public sees celebrity gossip as an extension of the usual celebrity publicity. There is no apparent difference between when the audience consumes gossip or watching movies because celebrities will be expected to experience problems and conflicts in both situations, and everything will be resolved in a happy ending. Gossip is exciting because it has a natural nuance compared to

fictional products such as movies. Cultural critic Joke Hermes offers a simplistic explanation of the public's fascination with celebrity gossip and scandal through a generic term in German *schadenfreude*: the happiness that comes from seeing the misfortune of others (Hermes, 1995). Celebrities' misfortunes and problems make the audience feel better about their mundane daily lives.

Celebrity gossip is widely considered as easily consumed information because it is relevant to domestic life, such as marriage, caring for children, love relationships, disputes with a close family member, and so on. Although 'gossip' generally refers to a series of information that is not verified and sensational, the public's interest in celebrity gossip should not always be seen as a form of vandalism that plagues contemporary society (Aji, 2022). Researchers like Graeme Turner say that celebrity gossip is an essential process in which relationships, identities, and sociocultural norms are debated, evaluated, changed, and shared (Turner, 2014). Turner also believes that discussions around celebrity gossip trigger deeper discussion and function as an essential factor in maintaining group cohesion, especially among young women (Feasey, 2008). The negative tone surrounding celebrity gossip comes from journalism tradition, which criticizes the increasingly strong position of celebrity gossip in the newsroom. This practice is detrimental to the news-production process and can undermine the principles of professional journalism. This view may be valid, although it often simplifies gossip's meaning and function in a broader social setting. Discussions that start with particular celebrity gossip, especially 'tragic and messy' celebrities like Britney Spears or Lindsey Lohan, often pave the way for discussion of deeper and contemplative social issues such as issues of class struggle, sexuality, addiction, and religion (Feasey, 2008). Celebrity gossip should not be analyzed in a vacuum and put into a specific social context in which gossip is discussed and shared. This study tries to consider the social aspects of celebrity gossip through a qualitative analysis of celebrity gossip audiences on social media.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses qualitative research methods with in-depth interviews for data collection techniques using Ruggiero's theory of Uses and Gratification (Ruggiero, 2000). The UGT theory introduced by Ruggiero in 2000 is appropriate to this study because it considers three factors in online communication. Previously, the Uses and Gratification theory only considered the need for information, entertainment, and social interaction as the main reasons audiences use media. Ruggiero deepens this theory by introducing the concepts of interactivity, demassification, and asynchrony to accommodate changes in the digital media landscape that introduce various new functions to audiences. Interactivity refers to the level of control participants have to control the communication process and exchange roles. This element is essential in analyzing user relationship patterns on social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Demassification refers to the degree of control a user has over the medium used, while asynchronous refers to a user's ability to store and access information at different times. These three elements are the primary considerations in analyzing users' motives in accessing celebrity gossip on social media. In this research, the UGT theory does not reference the leading theory but is a conceptual guide for analyzing qualitative data in the field.

Ten informants were selected by purposive sampling, chosen from those who had consumed information about celebrities on social media daily. Informants were determined based on age distribution according to WHO, namely late adolescents (17-25 years), early adulthood (26-35 years), and late adulthood (36-45 years). This age basis was chosen because it considers the segment of social media users widely used by the three age groups, as well as to obtain data variations based on those age groups. The research was carried out from March to April 2022 in three big cities in East Java province: Malang, Surabaya, and Tulungagung. All informants are coded N1 to N10 to facilitate the analysis process. The informants are between 20 and 30 years old, with the majority occupation being students (60%) and the rest being first-jobbers (40%). The majority of the

respondents (90%) were women. This gender disparity among informants is a logical effect of the character of the celebrity gossip audience, which has long been shown to be far more popular among young women (Feasey, 2008; Hermes, 1995).

The in-depth interview was conducted from December 2021 to the end of January 2021. The timing of this data collection was based on two primary considerations. The first consideration relates to developing strategies carried out by celebrity gossip accounts to overcome the risk of Instagram restriction policy due to reporting from various parties who feel offended by the information disseminated by celebrity gossip accounts by periodically replicating their account. This system makes the designation of specific gossip accounts as a fixed research object irrelevant. The second consideration relates to the latest developments in celebrity gossip in Indonesia. There were a series of celebrity scandals and conflicts at the end of 2021 considered extremely popular, ubiquitous, and prolonged throughout the month, mostly surrounding the death of singer Vanessa Angel and all the drama that followed her unfortunate demise. The popularity of the case is considered an appropriate moment to collect data because it coincides with great public attention on celebrity gossip and information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most informants (90%) stated that they follow online celebrity gossip accounts mainly for access to information. One of the most crucial findings in the study was that all the informants admitted that they did not only follow online celebrity gossip accounts just to consume information about celebrities. Most informants admitted that celebrity gossip accounts not only discussed personal celebrity issues such as scandal cases or exclusive private information but, in many cases, discussed other socio-political issues.

Lamtur (Lambe Turah, one of the most popular online celebrity gossip accounts) is my online source of information if I miss the latest news. Not just celebrities but also other important social issues or gossip that people are discussing a lot. (N1, Interview,

December 4th 2021).

I am not up to date. I also like following the gossip (account) that I want to follow. However, sometimes (by consuming its content), it adds to my knowledge, apart from knowledge of celebrity gossip. Sometimes before, I only knew a few cases like that existed, but then I finally found out (N3, Interview, December 8th 2021).

Online celebrity gossip accounts have two main advantages as news providers compared to conventional news providers such as news sites or mass media such as newspapers or radio. The first advantage is the accessibility offered by online celebrity gossip accounts. The informants admitted that they could consume various information, even apart from celebrities' gossip and news. Informants said they can access that information directly when using social media. The News hyperlinks can be easily obtained through various social media features, such as the Instagram *story* and *share* features obtained from friends on social media. The second advantage is the personal and often emotional information delivery style carried out by online gossip provider accounts. This unique style of information delivery emphasizes informal and often simplified language, which in turn ensures that any information provided by online celebrity gossip accounts is easier to understand by the public. Informant N7, for example, admitted that he claimed to be more aware of the latest socio-political information, such as the discourse regarding the Indonesian government's decision to move its capital to Borneo Island or public debate about the proposed idea of extending President Joko Widodo's term. These two issues appeared in one of the online celebrity gossips accounts that he read and admittedly attracted his attention. However, several informants (30%) stated that they were not interested in information outside the entertainment theme, such as political news to vaccine controversies, and preferred to consume information about the latest celebrity news.

I only follow people I know or hot or latest topics. When I say 'hot,' it means the topic is only an entertainment topic, not a

topic about covid or those people who do not want to be vaccinated. I do not follow things like that or politics (N4, interview, December 8th, 2021).

The second information motive is that online celebrity gossip accounts can provide a more exclusive and detailed perspective on a particular issue. This motif is related to the concept of citizen *paparazzi*, described previously (McNamara, 2011). Where online celebrity gossip accounts become a perfect location to disseminate confidential and private information about celebrities. All of these pieces of information will be discussed openly by all audiences who join the discussion without fear of repercussions. Most informants (70%) said they could get more detailed, private, and exciting information from online celebrity gossip accounts compared to other sources, especially mass media such as television shows, newspapers, and even gossip tabloids. The informants also add that they know discrepancies between the news presented in the mainstream media and the actual reality. Informant N8 stated that mainstream media does not show many sides of celebrity gossip. She said that by following content from online celebrity gossip accounts, she could get more exclusive or confidential information about celebrities.

Yes, because with that (following online celebrity gossip accounts), we know that what we see in television and what the artist feels are pretty different (N4, interview, December 8th, 2021).

One of the main appeals of online celebrity gossip accounts is their ability to provide discussion rooms where audiences can freely exchange information and discuss a related topic. Informant N1 admitted that he was more interested in the information provided in the comments section rather than the content raised by the online celebrity gossip accounts. The content raised by online celebrity gossip accounts acts as a 'radar' to determine which celebrity gossip is considered the most interesting and talked about. Informants N3 and N5 stated that they needed the mass media as a starting point to find out which celebrity gossip was exciting

and worth following before turning to online celebrity gossip accounts to get a detailed version. The informant will then look for more in-depth information in the comments column or even move to other social media platforms such as Twitter, where the flow of information is considered to flow more freely and without clear restrictions. These findings show that there are two distinctive characteristics of how audiences consume online celebrity gossip: participatory aspect and cross-media aspect. The participatory aspect refers to how the audience collectively exchanges and manages the circulation of information on social media. Each user has the same opportunity to convey and respond to information from one another. The information in these discussions is often considered richer, deeper, and more enjoyable by informants. The cross-media aspect refers to the finding that the consumption process of celebrity information is not limited to one specific account or social media platform but extends to other social media platforms. For example, many informants said they prefer using Twitter to dig deeper into gossip. However, many informants said that online celebrity gossip accounts on Instagram are more user-friendly and easy to follow. The informants showed high control over media use in seeking celebrity information.

Most informants (70%) stated that they consume celebrity information online for entertainment reasons. This finding was anticipated earlier, considering that several celebrity cultures researchers, such as Ellis Cashmore and Pramodh Nayar, have proposed several theories to explain why the public seems to put their undivided attention to scandals and personal conflicts experienced by celebrities (Cashmore, 2006; Nayar, 2009). David Marshall associated this phenomenon with the famous German term *schadenfreude*, which means happiness or pleasure after seeing another's misfortune. Informant N1 stated that he likes information and gossip about the latest celebrities that involve conflicts and scandals because it will arouse high curiosity about the development of the case. Celebrity gossip displayed by online celebrity gossip accounts appears as a series of melodramatic performances in which audiences often find it difficult to distinguish the boundaries between

celebrity appearances fabricated in publicity tactic and their real private lives. (Hermes, 1995).

Usually (celebrity conflicts) are long, so it arouses my curiosity. I want to find out how the case is progressing. (N2, interview, December 15th, 2021).

Informant N3 explained these findings in more detail. She admitted there is a sense of relief after she consumes celebrity gossip content on social media. She became more grateful because it turns out that celebrity popularity and wealth do not guarantee a perfect and happy life. This reasoning is similar to the hypothesis offered by Pramodh Nayar, which states that audiences get a psychological incentive by reading or watching celebrity scandals because then the public becomes more satisfied and grateful for all the economic problems they have compared to celebrities (Nayar, 2009).

I was suddenly aware that a celebrity's life was not as fun as I imagined. It looks like they have much money, and on the screen, their life looks peaceful, and there are no burdens, even though there are many burdens to bear behind it all. Even from a psychological point of view, they choose such a despicable path because they are not mentally strong (N6, interview, January 3rd, 2022).

Half of the informants specifically said they followed the online celebrity gossip accounts because they enjoyed the debates in the comment section between fellow users. The kind of debates that are most popular (and in some cases also avoided) involve fanatical fans of a particular celebrity and a group of audiences who do not like the celebrity for a particular reason (haters). Informant N1 stated that he liked it when there was such a debate and did not hesitate to express his reactions. Other informants stated that although they do not enjoy debate in the comment section, they admit that they often open the comments section because sometimes there are comments from the audience which are considered funny and entertaining.

Within account Pageant Lovers, it is considered a holiday. A holiday in the

world of pageants, you know. So it is just fun, like watching a debate or war between various Pageant Lovers from Indonesia, the Philippines, or Thailand. (N1, interview, January 3rd, 2022).

I sometimes read comments like that because, if you are lucky, another user leaves some funny comments. It is entertaining, mostly (N9, interview, January 24th, 2022).

However, several informants (N3, N5, N6, and N10) said they did not like users' debate in the comment section. These participants said that kind of debate is often rude, emotional, and full of insults to each other, making it rather uncomfortable for them. This heated discussion on social media has plagued Indonesian cyberspace for the last decade. Online discussion on Indonesian news sites is often rife with impoliteness, especially on a hot and controversial topic (Aji & Sapto, 2020).

Because debate in the comment section there usually very long and seems endless. Many people may not understand that everyone's knowledge about a specific topic is varied. Sometimes we know they do not know, and vice versa, and the debate continues for a ridiculous reason. I think I choose to be silent in that situation (N6, interview, January 3rd, 2022).

Social motives are also the main reason that drives people to follow online celebrity gossip accounts. Around 90% of respondents stated that they consume celebrity gossip to have something to discuss when meeting friends or understand when their friends raise a specific topic. Celebrity gossip is a ubiquitous topic of conversation, especially for young women. Mainly because it is easily accessible by anyone and relevant to daily life routines such as romance and conflicts with partners (Feasey, 2008). Celebrity gossip becomes a crucial tool that facilitates group cohesion because anyone can enter and discuss without significant difficulties.

Sometimes we became so busy and lost contact with our friends. When we meet again, we need some topic to discuss. A

topic that can be understood and familiar to everyone (N2, interview, Desember 15th 2021).

Informants also stated that gaining information about celebrity gossip first makes them feel a particular pride because those who know about the latest celebrity gossip will have the power to initiate the conversation first. Anyone with the latest information will be the primary reference source and generally become the main 'anchor' within a group. It also encourages participants to periodically look for the latest celebrity gossip through online celebrity gossip accounts.

It is usually when I wake up in the morning that I already got so many chats in my friend's PC group. "Didn't you know there was this news?" etc., I finally learned that particular news. If I already know, I, for example, call another friend of mine and I will say, "Hey, you know about this news, right?". It was very fitting and similar when there was news about Zara and Okin (two popular internet celebrities). I woke up, and suddenly there was this text in my group of friends, "Uh, you know this?". My friend and I keep sharing the info, the news. Then after that, I read it, looked at it, and that afternoon I called my friend, who had more updates about that topic. Then I asked, "Did you know yet? Here, and I am sending it like this" Apparently, they do not know yet. So it is just like sharing. I will talk to my friends if the gossip is hot and interesting (N5, interview, December 7th 2021).

The distinctive character shown in consuming celebrity gossip information online is the emergence of a specific type of celebrity gossip consumer, namely the game-player: gossip as described by Jonathan Gamson (Gamson, 1994). Gamson states that the celebrity information consumption process has four types of audiences. Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the majority of the informants are game-players: gossipers. This type of audience has two main characters that distinguish them from other audiences. The first characteristic refers to their core view that they do not care about the

celebrity's personal life and see celebrity gossip as a game tool (hence the so-called game-player) where celebrity information is treated as a resource that will be exchanged in social relations. The majority (60%) of respondents stated that they were not interested in certain celebrities. The second characteristic is how the informants view celebrity information as an unlimited source of material to expand their social power. These two characteristics from Gamson also have a close relationship with the analysis of Graeme Turner, who sees that one of the audience's motivations for consuming celebrities is related to the image of community, togetherness, and especially sisterhood among women (Turner, 2014). However, some informants initially seemed reluctant to express their interest in celebrity gossip. This reluctance results from a fear of being judged by their peers as consuming and sharing gossip news, often perceived as a superficial and shallow activity. On the other hand, gossip news plays an essential role in increasing the cohesion of bonds between close friends where more personal and open discussions can be easily carried out.

The process of consuming celebrity gossip on social media also fulfills three essential elements introduced by Ruggiero in 2000: interactivity, demassification, and asynchronicity (Ruggiero, 2000). Instagram's design allows all users to comment on each other and freely discuss the gossip that is raised. Although most informants said they rarely commented on gossip content, the majority (80%) said they enjoyed the interaction process that occurs on celebrity gossip provider accounts. This interaction gives freedom to anyone to provide comments or other information that can develop existing discussions. Users also have the freedom to access which gossip they want to read or even easily choose which gossip account they think suits their needs (demassification). The informants also admitted that the comment service from Instagram made it easy for them to access comments previously given by other users, according to their free time (asynchronous).

The analysis results carried out on interviews with informants are by Joke Hermes's views regarding female audiences who consume

gossip magazines (Hermes, 1995; Hermes & Stoete, 2019). The category of ‘gossiping’ audience that Gamson previously offered can be explained in more depth by Hermes’ argument, which explains that audiences who consume celebrity gossip are divided into two discourse repertoires. Hermes uses the term ‘repertoire’ because he sees a common thread between the process of consuming gossip and the process of planning stage performances. The first repertoire that Hermes describes is the extended family repertoire, in which gossip about celebrity figures can attract a vast circle of audience and revolve around a personal life that attracts joint attention. This process creates a private communication network among audiences where everyone can extend the range of moral and social standards of the created community (Hermes & Stoete, 2019). In other words, celebrity gossip creates a particular pleasure temptation for the audience where everyone can include famous figures in the intimate conversation of an imaginary extended family. According to Hermes, this repertoire can be seen from the audience’s sense of closeness and kinship when discussing celebrity scandals or gossip, as if these celebrities were part of our family circle (Hermes & Stoete, 2019). It can be seen in the explanations given by informants regarding the ‘preoccupation’ and ‘closeness’ they feel when consuming celebrity gossip on social media and then discussing it among their circle of friends. Most informants stated that they exchanged gossip about information with high trust in the information exchanged, as if the celebrity being discussed was part of a close friend or even the informant’s own family. This situation creates an illusion of closeness between the informant and the celebrity they are gossiping about.

Hermes’s second repertoire to explain the audience’s interest in celebrity gossip is the melodramatic repertoire. This repertoire creates a community in different and complex images (Hermes & Stoete, 2019). In this repertoire, the public sees that the life of a celebrity is part of a grand melodrama in which life becomes highly dramatized and exaggerated. Audiences who see life through the eyes of a melodrama repertoire are constantly looking for the effects of sentimentalism, sensationalism, drama, and

misery, which, in turn, can be found through celebrity gossip. Pramod Nayar and Graeme Turner’s previous analysis explained that celebrities are seen as the leading players on the stage, even in real life (Nayar, 2009; Turner, 2014). Joke Hermes further elaborates on this repertoire by stating that in the eyes of the public, all celebrity gossip is not much different from soap operas. In soap operas, all conflict and scandal, from divorce to infidelity and drug use, are integral to the plot. However, just like in soap operas, the audience always expects that no matter what situation occurs, everything will always end well, from repentance to reconciliation.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that audiences consume the content of online celebrity gossip account with various motives, ranging from information, entertainment, and social motives. These three motives were previously introduced in developing the classical Uses and Gratification theory to explain why audiences consume certain media. However, the findings from the interviews show that there are unique findings related to the research context as part of celebrity culture. This unique finding is most clearly seen in the entertainment motive, where the audience gets pleasure from consuming scandalous news about celebrities’ private lives, an extension of the celebrity’s dramatic appearance on the media, especially television. Likewise, for social motives, celebrity gossip obtained from online celebrity gossip accounts is treated as a valuable resource and even a commodity that can be used in the social setting. Combining these three motives can explain why celebrity gossip and scandals have long been a constant center of attention in Indonesia. The public’s interest in consuming celebrity information, whether for informational, entertainment, or social reasons, indicates an unrelenting demand for information about celebrities. This encourages the proliferation of gossip-providing accounts on social media.

One of the interesting conclusions that can be drawn from the results of this research is the change from the pattern of gossip and rumors that had previously been part of the life of the

Indonesian ethnic community to the realm of online media. Gossip has long been an essential part of efforts to build group cohesion as well as a source of conflict in society. Gossip is also an essential asset in the hierarchy of friendship groups among women. Consumption of celebrity gossip on social media is a form of adaptation to these gossip needs, where celebrity gossip not only acts as information but has a broader social dimension.

This study itself serves as an initial stepping stone to open a more serious study on celebrity culture in Indonesia. There are still many other research opportunities of celebrity culture in Indonesia, especially those related to the consumption of gossip and scandals that this research analysis has not touched. We hope there will be more research, especially in the form of content analysis on the content of celebrity gossip news and user comments, to get a clearer picture of the character of Indonesian celebrity culture.

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