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The Media Verification of Hoaxes about Human-Crocodile Conflicts

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Abstract
The human-crocodile conflict frequently happens in Indonesia. Based on the data from http://www.crocodile-attack.info/, it is claimed that Indonesia is a country with the most cases of crocodile attacks. Mostly the attacks involved the saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*). On the other hand, this conflict is worsened by the spread of inaccurate information among communities. From October 2019 to October 2021, there were 12 false stories about crocodile attacks. These hoaxes were distributed on social media, causing fear to those who consumed the information. It is crucial to be investigated, especially from the perspective of environmental journalism. This study describes how mainstream media outlets tried to clarify the hoaxes. The results show many materials contained by information disorder, which need to be clarified by the media to ensure clarity and truth for the public. This study finds that most mainstream media still have their conscience to protect the public from false information. It was done by practicing curation journalism that includes the discipline of verification. In conclusion, the media and information sources need to have a good comprehension of crocodile behavior. The research also catches the need for environmental journalism training for media practitioners in Indonesia. Thus, the media will be able to offer the best solution for reducing the attack while at the same time giving adequate education for the public to live in harmony with Indonesian flora and fauna.
Keywords: conservation; crocodile; environmental journalism; fact check; hoax.

Introduction

The conflict between humans and crocodile happens a lot in Indonesia (Mulyadi, Wahyu Trilaksono, 2019). It becomes one of major issues reported by the media since it has the sensational factor. Not only mainstream media, but the incident has also attracted unprofessional news outlets.

Referring to www.crocodile-attack.info (CrocodileAttackInfo, n.d.), Indonesia is claimed to be a country with the most crocodile attacks in the world. The attacks to humans mostly involved one kind of crocodile, so-called the Saltwater (*Crocodylus Porosus*). This crocodile is among protected animals under the law. According to the regulation of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, there are four protected species of crocodile that live in Indonesia as can be seen in Tabel 1.

Despite the existence of the law that protects these beasts, crocodiles are usually

hunted and killed in the incident when they attack humans. Mostly the action was taken to take the human's body out after swallowed by the animal. One example could be learned from a media coverage about a crocodile that attacked an 8-year-old child. On March 5, 2021, Kompas.com published an article entitled 8-Year-Old "Boy Pruned by Crocodile in Front of His Father, Body Found Whole in Crocodile's Stomach" (Kurniati, 2021).

Table 1. Protected crocodile species in Indonesia

No	Species' Name	Name in Latin
1	Buaya Irian/ New Guinea Crocodile	*Crocodylus novaeguiniae*
2	Buaya Muara/ Saltwater Crocodile	*Crocodylus porosus*
3	Buaya Siam/ Siamese Crocodile	*Crocodylus siamensis*
4	Buaya Senyulong/ Malayan Gharial	*Tomistoma schlegelii*

Source: Ministry Regulation
No. P.106/Men LHK/Setjen/Kum.1/12/2018.

The article explained that the crocodile pounced on the child while swimming in the river with his father and sister in the Tepakul River, Bengalon, East Kutai. The father tried to help but the crocodile could not be restrained and dragged the child into the water. The next day, residents and local officials found the crocodile not far from the scene and speared it to death. As soon as the crocodile died, the crocodile's stomach was dissected to take the child's body.

From the example article above, we could see that news about crocodile usually has a negative connotation. The depiction of a crocodile that is vicious and often attacks humans makes it difficult to convince people that these animals are actually a part of a harmonious life. This can be seen in the folklore about crocodiles in Indonesia, which are described as stupid and evil animals.

The crocodile gets an ugly idiom as one of the animals full of falsehood and hypocrisy (Syahriy Nurul Nisfu, 2020). The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms website explains that crocodile tears are meant to explain a hypocritical and insincere cry (Oxford Learners Dictionarie, n.d.).

In fairy tales that are widely circulated in Indonesia, the crocodile is almost always a character who accompanies the deer. In this fairy tale, the crocodile is always depicted as a wild and stupid creature in contrast to the deer who is described as a clever and resourceful creature (Wibowo et al., 2018).

Likewise in the story of the crocodile and the buffalo, the crocodile is described as a cunning but stupid creature who has been helped by the buffalo, but intends to eat it after surviving (Juanda, 2019).

This stigma or stereotype is also implied within the industry of mass media in Indonesia. For instance, we could find it on the following table of crocodile attack news on *Tribunnews.com* that collected based on videos published on *YouTube*.

Tabel 2. Video of Crocodile Attacks by
Tribunnews.com in 2020

No	Event	Amount
1	Attack	51
2	Sighting	13
3	Catching	9
4	Myths	5
Total		78

Tabel 3. Video of Crocodile Attacks by
Tribunnews.com in 2021

No	Event	Amount
1	Attack	73
2	Sighting	11
3	Catching	7
4	Myths	1
Total		92

From tables above, it can be seen that crocodile attacks on humans are the highest in the context of human-crocodile conflict. All of these attacks are fatal. 90 percent of crocodile attacks reported in the media, resulted in death while the rest caused disability for the victims. Unfortunately, in the news with the issue of catching, it was also stated that the event also resulted in the death of the captured crocodile. This fact is a matter of concern, since the crocodile is included as one of protected wild animals by the government.

Crocodiles, as well as other wildlife, have their function to balance the ecosystem. However, instead of gaining respect from humans, the stereotype about how mean and brutal they are, has spread worldwide. Even worse, the creature also become a part of fake news or hoaxes, which lead to a worse opinion about crocodile. These hoaxes can cause fear in the audience. It is assumed that this horror about crocodile will turn into paranoia and have an impact on large-scale crocodile hunting

whenever people encounter human-crocodile conflicts.

Theoretical Framework

In the time around the pandemic, there were 12 hoaxes about crocodile in Indonesia, selected from video news on *YouTube* and online media outlets, spreaded on social media and messaging applications. These news reports can be seen in the following table.

Table 4. Hoaxes about crocodile

No	Time	Topic	Source
1	Oct 2 019	Croc Eats Man in Serpong	Whatsapp group
2	Jan 2020	Croc's Appearance in Gresik	Whatsapp group
3	June 2020	Croc's crowd in Surabaya	Whatsapp group
4	July 2020	Croc entered salty pond in Nambakor	Facebook account
5	Oct 2020	Swimming croc found in Nongsa	Whatsapp group
6	Nov 2020	43 crocs escaped in Cisadane	Facebook Account
7	Dec 2020	Flood in Aceh caused people eaten by crocodiles	Whatsapp group, instagram account, facebook account
8	Feb 2021	Crocs consume people in Muara Gembong	Whatsapp group
9	Feb 2021	Crocs consume people in Bangkalan	Whatsapp group
10	Apr 2021	Big croc threatening on the flood of NTT	Facebook Account
11	Aug 2021	Croc attacks human in Sampit	Facebook account
12	Sep 2021	Croc atttack a woman in Palembang	Whatsapp group

Clarifications on fake news or hoaxes are always crucial in the field of journalism. The effort is not an easy task, since the influence of social communication networks on distributing information is keep increasing. Social media and messaging applications have become the public's source of primary information. These platforms are fast-becoming a birthplace of the manipulation of truth and the influencing of public opinion (Yatid, 2019).

Scholars prefer to use terms 'information disorder' in discussing this manipulation of truths. There are three types of information disorder according to *First Draft News*, the truth-seeking non-profit based at Harvard's Shorenstein Centre (Wardle, 2017). The first one is *misinformation*. It refers to information that is false, but not created with the intention of causing harm.

The second one is so-called *disinformation*, representing false information that is deliberately created to offend a person, social group, organisation, or country. This type is intentionally designed to cause harm. It is motivated by three distinct factors: to make money (financial); to gain influence, either foreign or domestic (political); or to cause anxiety (psychological or social).

The last type is named *mal information*. This kind of information is actually based on reality, but is partly taken and used to inflict harm on a person, organisation or country (Yatid, 2019).

The impact of false information is alarming. Many countries are taking actions against it by proposing new regulations, forming taskforces, and enhancing digital literacy. However, the existence of social media facilitates the proliferation of false information, thereby affecting how societies view the world (Yatid, 2019).

The spread of information disorder brings awareness to the importance of finding reliable sources. Professional news media, including journalists, must act as guardians of public interest.

These tasks may be summarized as the three Cs: chronicle (to inform about what has happened since the last instance of publication), criticism (to protect the audience and warn of dangers and inadequacies), and commentary (to explain and interpret what is happening). This is on the same track with the function of the press according to Indonesian Press Law no. 40/1999. It states that the national press has functions as a medium of information,

education, entertainment, and media for social control (Dewan Pers, 2012; Pers, 1999).

In digital era, the necessity of verifying information has become more crucial and been considered more delicately, especially after the movement of curation journalism was emerged. The term curation journalism represents "the process of gathering information from dispersed sources – in this case, sources spread across social media – and then packing the selected information into a structured story" (Knight, 2012; Thorson & Wells, 2015;Bruns, 2018).

By looking at the descriptions, it can be comprehended that curation journalism and gatewatching are both dealing with how to manage dispersed information in cyberworld, especially social media, to pack a reliable story. However, practicing curation journalism itself creates major challenge. The scaterred information in social media, the channel that was identified as the major source of the false information, could easily tempt journalists to make use of it without further verifications. The information is sometimes very convincing. Huge effort is needed to verify and clarify the truth behind many fascinating stories in the world of social media. This challenge is the core discussion in this study.

Subsequently, the issue about false information in reporting human-crocodile conflict as described above is important to be investigated in journalism studies, especially in the perspective of environmental journalism. Agus Sudibyo (2014) explains, environmental journalism is one of journalism genre that captures environmental issues from upstream to downstream. The challenge of environmental journalism is to make these phenomena visible, as well as to increase their coverage. Therefore, environmental journalists need sensitivity, special learning, and certain skills in reporting environmental issues in a professional manner (Sudibyo, 2014). This challenge shows that to protect environmental news from false information (or hoaxes) is very significant, because any simple error in publishing story will will mislead peeople and affect their views in treating the environment.

On the contrary, as the country with the most population of crocodile in the world, studies about human-crocodile conflict are rarely found. This situation emphasizes the importance of this research, especially in the field of envrionmental journalism.

Material and Methodology

As mentioned earlier, the main objective of this study is to describe the phenomenon of journalism effort in indonesia to clarify uncertain facts spread in social media networks in pandemic time, especially in terms of reports on human-crocodille conflicts. Using the technique of multiple case study, this research chose a few articles from some online media outlets as instruments to explain the phenomenon. This methodology is chosen as the closest approach to reach the objective of this study, because researchers are able to see the construction of each report and analyse how the media (in this case, known and major media outlets) clarify hoaxes and uncertain information that were already viral, and whether the media has been succeeded to function as a social gatekeeper to keep the resilience of the communities they serve.

Creswell, (2014, p 241 in Priya, 2021) defines case study strategy in a clear and thorough manner. A case study is a qualitative research method in which the researcher investigates a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals in depth. The cases are time and activity bound, and researchers collect detailed information over a long period of time utilizing a range of data collection approaches. A case study is a research strategy, not only a data collection method, technique, or procedure (Stake, 2015). A case study entails a thorough examination of the unit of analysis in its natural environment. In a case study study, a de-contextualized study is irrelevant.

Related to this research, the cases studied were hoaxes about crocodile and human conflicts that arose during the pandemic period between 2019 and 2021. As an animal that is described negatively, crocodiles do not have a good place in the heart of Indonesian people. It is assumed that hoaxes about crocodiles and humans are exaggerated by social media to cause fear and increase the sensation of horror.

The likelihood that we come to believe fake news stories (and our ability to correct false beliefs) is dependent upon everyday cognitive processes underlying knowledge and belief, and not upon unique, special processes or strategies (Greifeneder et al., 2020).

In psychological science, knowledge is often defined by what it is not: It is not thinking back to a specific event that occurred at a particular time and place in the past (Greifeneder et al., 2020).

This study looks at 10 Indonesian media outlets that has a specific news report to clarify hoaxes about human-crocodille conflicts during the pandemic time. They are *MetroTV*, *tvOne*, *pikiran-rakyat.com*, *rri.co.id*, *kumparan.com*, *Liputan6.com*, *detik.com*, *Tribunnews.com*, *Okezone.com* and TVRI. These outlets were chosen because they have specific reports about crocodile and have been trying to clarify viral incorrect news between October 2019 and October 2021. The data is collected by conducting observations toward the news and interviews with the journalists involved.

The media reported the verification of hoaxes about crocodiles from information broadcast by the Ministry of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia. However, not all conventional media become the sources in this research. Informants in this study were selected from *MetroTV*, *kumparan.com*, and the Press Council.

MetroTv was chosen because it was the only media that verified directly in the field. The *kumparan.com* was chosen to represent online media that contains a lot of crocodile myths sent by their readers and also the only media that verified the news to Nature Conservacy Agency Indonesia, while the Press Council became an informant to provide information about media responsibilities.

Result and Discussion

As mentioned in the initial section of this article, Indonesia is a place for various species of wild animals, including the crocodile family. One member of the family, so-called saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), is the most widespread distribution in Indonesia compared to other habitats that spread from India to Australia according to Grahame J.W. Webb (in Letnic & Connors, 2006). Even in Indonesia, this kind of crocodile dominates other family of the reptile. Almost all islands in Indonesia are habitation for the saltwater.

As a part of the ecosystem, saltwater and other families of crocodile have their specific role in keeping the circle of life. Their main function is as top predator and helping nature in cleaning all debris and corpses (Somaweera et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, general perception on the crocodile is usually negative. The misconception appeared when people consider their existence is threatening humans' lives. The crocodile is described as a mean and brutal animal that attacks human whenever it meets one. There is also an impression that crocodiles are human's predators that attack people as their prey (Agustin, Supriadi, and Budiman, 2021).

A study by Agustin, Supriadi, and Budiman (2021) shows that the misconception in some levels was promoted by mass media. However, based on the current study, the false perception is even enlarged by many false news or hoaxes, spread in social media. This fact needs significant concerns, since Yatid, (2019) already stated that social media facilitates the proliferation of false information, thereby affecting how societies view the world (Yatid, 2019).

As mentioned earlier in this article, there are 12 false issues between October 2019 and October 2021 about crocodile spread in social media (refer to Table 4), which were clarified by major media outlets (look at Table 5). This finding is intriguing, because nowadays social media and messaging applications have become the public's source of primary information according to Yatid (2019), who also indicates these platforms as birthplaces of the manipulation of truth and the influencing of public opinion.

Based on Wardle and Derakhshan's categorization (2017) in 'the three types of information disorder', the false information about crocodile in social media could be included as a kind of *disinformation*, hoaxes that are intentionally designed to cause harm. Based on the study of Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) dan Kandel (2020), disinformastion is motivated by three distinct factors: financial drive, political drive, psychological or social problems. Once it is shared, disinformation will be most likely turn into *misinformation* and keeps on circulating.

Table 5: False information about Human-Crocodile Conflict clarified by mainstream media

No	Issues	National Media that made clarifications
1	Croc Eats Man in Serpong	Liputan6.com, detik.com
2	Croc's Appearance in Gresik	Republika.com
3	Croc's crowd in Surabaya	Liputan6.com
4	Croc entered salty pond in Nambakor	Viva.co.id
5	Swimming croc found in Nongsa	Inikepri.com

6	43 crocs escaped in Cisadane	Metrotv.com, Tvone, Antaranews.com, viva.co.id, detik.com
7	Flood in Aceh caused people eaten by crocodiles	rri.co.id
8	Crocs consume people in Muara Gembong	Kompas.com, sindonews.com
9	Crocs consume people in Bangkalan	Viva.co.id Medcom.co.id. okezone.com
10	Big croc threatening on the flood of NTT	Pikiranrakyat.com
11	Croc attacks human in Sampit	Kumparan.com
12	Croc atttack a woman in Palembang	Jawapos.com

In this crocodile case, even though the clear motivation has not identified yet, the hoaxes that mainly distributed through groups on *WhatsApp* chat application have caused psychological and social effects. Citizens are surrounded by fear towards the possibility of crocodile attacks.

The source of these hoaxes might be having problems, psychological or social, related to the existence of crocodile in his or her neighborhood. As Kandel has mentioned, anyone who develops, shares or part or whole of the disinformation, misinformation or malinformation is suffering from the information disorder syndrome. The syndrome applies to all cases of false information and not limited to a specific topic (Kandel, 2020).

However, outside the possibilities of the disorder involvement in this case, the impact of false information is alarming. It is hard to antisipate hoaxes that has already dispersed into society. A study found that it took the truth about six times as long as falsehood to reach the same amount of people (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Laws, taskforces, and other actions are enacted in countries to overcome the serious impact of hoaxes. In Indonesia, distributing hoaxes through social media or other online application can be a subject of heavy sanction under Law no. 19/2016 about the Amendement of Law no. 11/2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions.

The focus of this article emphasizes that the spread of information disorder brings awareness to the importance of finding reliable sources. The news media with their verification discipline are back in the discussion on how to find these sources, because professional news media acts as a guardian of public interest (UNESCO, 2021).

This discipline of verification became an emphasis of Indonesian Press Council to anticipate the massive spread of hoaxes. It is an effort to place mass media as a reliable source in the middle of information maze within social media interactions. However, it does not mean that the use of social media as news source is forbidden.

The Press Council admits that approximatelly 85% mass media outlets in Indonesia have made use social media content as their sources. They took benefit from it as their writing materials, opinion ideas, and even as data checking resources. In relation to it, the Council continously reminds journalists to always be professional and obey the code of ethics.

> "Journalists are welcome to use any source from wherever, including social media. But we are keep saying: just do verification, verification, and verification,"
> (Interview with Jamalul Insan, Chair of Education, Training, and Profession Development, Indonesian Press Council, 27 October 2021)

In the case of anticipating the distribution of hoaxes about crocodile, some media have tried to verify the facts, as can be seen in Table 5. Among all, the case of Cisadane crocodile was seen as the hoax that has the most clarification through media's fact check.

Figure 1. The verification on site by *MetroTv*

Based on the illustrations above, it could be seen that the anticipation towards hoaxes taken from social media content were conducted through journalism activities. As mentioned by Quail (1992, in Muslim, 2013),

the media basically pays attention to and assembles pieces of facts from a very complex reality so as to form stories that are meaningful and accessible to listeners, viewers and readers. This relates to what Fjæstad (2007, in Giannoulis et al., 2010) says that journalists' mission is to serve their audiences, the citizens, by informing them about recent developments ("news"), also naming and warning of insufficiencies of various kinds. These tasks were summarized as the three Cs: Chronicle, Criticism, and Commentary.

Assembling facts as Quail describes is on the same track with the Curation Journalism concept. As mentioned earlier in the beginning of this article, this practice refers to the role of curator who collects, prefers, contextualizes, and displays objects to the public, as we can find in museums. Thorson and Wells, (2015) come with the term *journalistic curation* to "emphasise the involvement of news organisations in the process of selecting, using, and controlling the flow of information in digital formats".

Based on definitions above, curation journalism is an inevitable movement that was born as a consequence of the technological development. The concept is actually on the same track with media functions mentioned earlier, that is to protect audiences by selecting and publishing reliable information. Another concep with the same objective is *Gatewatching*. Bruns (2018) defines this term as the continuous observation of material that passes through the output gates of news outlets and other sources, in order to identify relevant such material for publication and discussion in the gatewatcher's own site.

The practice of Curation Journalism is not only taking people's voices from the network to be published in mainstream media's news stories. It is more that that. Curation Journalism is also a method for seeking trends in the communities, finding possible news leads, and opening the chance widely to conduct verification process (Javier Guallar, 2014; Guallar & Codina, 2018).

As explained by *kumparan.com*'s board of editors, the existence of social media and the instant content of the public has really contributed to their job as online journalists.

We have policy to not directly using social media content as our news material. The content is important and help us to get what event attracted the public the most. But we treat social media content as our initial information source. To create the news, we need to verify and send reporters to gather information on the field (Interview with Ikhwanul Habibi, Head of Synchron Content, *kumparan.com*, 12 November 2021).

This policy was the basis when *Kumparan*'s local reporter in Sampit receive viral video on social media about crocodile that attack a woman. They did not immediately create a story following the information. Instead, based on the viral information, they verify the fact by asking the authorities from Nature Conservacy Agency Indonesia. They also published the clarification that the video was taken in Mexico, not in Sampit Indonesia. On this stage, *Kumparan* has conducted the discipline of verification and practicing the right curation journalism by contextualizing the fact.

Another form of mass media verification to anticipate the scattered dissemination of information on social media is through quotations from relevant stakeholder's statements. The news from *kumparan.com* entitled "Crocodiles Appear at the Estuary of the Sampit River, BKSDA Asks Not to Be Underestimated" shows the *Kumparan* journalist quoted the statement from the Head of BKSDA of the Sampit Guard Post, Muriansyah. There is no statement confirming the truth of the information, but it is stated that the BKSDA calls on the public to be cautious because there have been incidents of animal conflicts in the area in 2013.

On the other hand, media outlets such as *kumparan.com* admit that social media is one of the sources of news in the media. Thus, in its development, social media information that is reported is always contrasted with the results of journalists' reports in the field.In this case, the journalist attached the information on the appearance of crocodiles at the firth of the Sampit river to the government that has the authority to protect endangered animals on a locality scale closest to the location of the news. The selection of sources is a form of consideration of proximity (in the context of authority and space) as an effort to raise the credibility of news sources. By conducting this effort, *kumparan.com* expected the public to trust the news content because it displays a

credible source with authority and is closest to the location of the news.

Even so, *kumparan.com* is not consistent in educating its audience about crocodile conservation. There are 14 netizens' writings about the myth of the white crocodile which is considered a stealth from a 'supernatural kingdom' that cannot be explained based on empirical logic. This condition makes education about wildlife conservation, not just crocodiles, more difficult for the public. However, this study found that concerns towards environmental issues still need to be improved. In this case of human-crocodile conflict, most mass media use resources from secondary informants, such as authorities, to clarify hoaxes about crocodiles. The study noted that only *Metro TV* conducted field reporting to the field and had some interviews with the relevant authorities in the process of searching for crocodiles.

M. Hafizni, Editor of Nusantara (national) Desk *MetroTV* stated that *MetroTV* does not have a special team to deal with existing hoaxes. In the case of the release of 43 crocodiles in the Cisadane River, it started with the information through the *WhatsApp* of one of the reporters. When presented in an editorial meeting, this issue is considered to be a danger to public safety, therefore a special report and confirmation must be made to the competent authority. In this case, the authority chosen by *MetroTV* is the Tangerang Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD). Other authorities contacted by *MetroTV* were the Mayor of Tangerang, and the authorities in the Bogor area.

The verification carried out by *MetroTV* was aimed at the authorities in Bogor because in the broadcast message, 43 crocodiles were released from the crocodile breeding in the Bogor area. However, after checking the truth, no crocodile breeding was found in Bogor. In fact, it was mentioned that there was a crocodile breeding in the Tangerang area, but no crocodiles were missing.

BPBD as the party contacted by *MetroTV* did not immediately consider the news a hoax, but BPBD continued to carry out further verification efforts by conducting patrols along the Cisadane River. BPBD has been patrolling along the river since early November, but none from 43 crocodiles were found. With this, *MetroTV* decided that the thread messages spread on *Whatsapp*, and *Facebook*

were not true. (Interview with M. Hafizni, Editor of Nusantara Desk, *MetroTV*, Dec 30th, 2021)

Other than that, today's global environmental problems are both severe and unpredictable because technology, combined with a rapidly expanding human population, is now having a global impact on the natural world (Betts & Gibson, 2012). Environmental journalism focused on reporting and producing news on environmental realities, such as environmental damage due to human activities (pollution, flooding, landslides, deforestation), local wisdom, conservation, waste, the use of natural resources (Abrar, 1993). Environmental journalism is also one genre of journalism that captures environmental issues from upstream to downstream (Sudibyo, 2014b). This journalism is not a popular journalism that writes on environmental issues when it is the concern of millions of people.

Environmental journalism is often thought to contribute vital resources to the process of gathering information, deliberating, and authorities (Giannoulis et al., 2010). The challenge is to make these phenomena visible, as well as to increase their coverage. Therefore, environmental journalists need sensitivity, special learning, and certain skills in reporting environmental issues in a professional manner (Sudibyo, 2014b). Based on these needs, it is clear that the job requires a high quality of journalism. However, the ultimate effort of journalism is to make verification and fight against inaccuracy.

As for the content, most of the media only focus on the incident. Some facts that become parts of environmental education to the public have been excluded or not mentioned. For example, the news were not explicitly mentioning that crocodile is infact an endangered species that are protected by the law. Therefore, it cannot be killed. This is an important information that the public needs to know.

Conclusion

In the midst of the confusion of information on social media, which is marked by the spread of hoaxes, the study shows that the public still able to rely on the mass media as a trusted source to do fact checks. The mass media's efforts to become a trusted source in overcoming hoaxes occurred in the news of hoaxes related to crocodiles that developed in

the October 2019-October 2021 period. There were 12 news that reporting the results of fact checking on crocodile hoaxes. This fact shows that the press has carried out its functions in accordance with the basic rules of journalism that stated in the Press Law, especially the information function.

However, the resulting news still has weaknesseses in reporting techniques and the education function. Most media do not carry out reporting activities directly to the field, which can be categorized as a weakness in the discipline of verification. They also seemed to have a lack of concern in educating people about the correct assumption within environmental issues. Most of them only focus on the incident or the conflict without mentioning conservation messages, such as the law not to kill crocodiles as protected animals. Therefore, the public did not have adequate information about how to treat wildlife, as well as the consequence to the environment if people conduct massive hunting and killing.

The study suggests the media need to pay more attention about environenmental journalism. Not only the knowledge about the practice, but also the sensitivity towards the existence of natural elements. By improving these consciences, the media can play its role to educate the audience and create resilience within communities.

This research is limited to hoax news about crocodiles in Indonesia. There was no further news regarding the arrest of the crocodile hoax propagator by the police. As a result, this research cannot be done completely on the distribution of crocodile hoaxes. In Indonesia, there are three species of wildlife that cause the most human casualties, namely crocodiles, snakes, and tigers. However, studies on these conflicts are very rare. Likewise, research on journalists' understanding of conservation and education on the preservation of protected animals that cause human casualties during conflict is also uncommon.

In the future, research on journalists' understanding of conservation and environmental preservation should be developed more to support environmental conservation for human safety.

We hope that in the future our journalists will pay more attention to the issue of conservation and education for the preservation of Indonesian wildlife.

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