

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND MCDONALDIZATION ON ONLINE SERVICE BASED PLATFORM: A STUDY OF GO-JEK USERS AND DRIVERS IN CENTRAL JAVA

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The presence of start-up companies in Indonesia caused many shifts in terms of human interaction. Go-jek, is one of the most influential, whom the applications being downloaded more than 155 million times with 100 million transactions and managed to cooperate with more than 2 million driver partners on early 2019. Go-jek became one of the startup companies that brought many changes in lifestyle, since every transaction can be done through the application. This kind of online services makes Go-jek as the technology products that utilize human services and tends to minimize communication between person to person. It relates to the McDonaldization concept promoted by George Ritzer regarding human work that is being replaced by machines, as well as the loss of communication between people due to the principles of predictability, calculability, efficiency, and control. This study aims to describe the process of interpersonal communication between users and Go-Jek drivers in Central Java using McDonalization theory from George Ritzer. This research used qualitative approach with interview as data collecting method. There were 6 informants interviewed in this study, 3 Go-Jek customers and 3 people from Go-Jek drivers who provide services on a daily basis. The results of this study are communication carried out between the customers and Go-jek drivers as the service provider still occurs. Through those interpersonal communications, they keep optimizing services and minimizing errors, although the four principles of McDonaldization have been applied. Small talks and light conversation also needed when it comes to human service. This also happens because Indonesian used to be friendly and open to have conversations with others in society. Then, the principle of predictability, calculability, efficiency, and control does not really affect interpersonal communication of Go-Jek customers and drivers in Central Java.

Keywords: *McDonaldization, Go-Jek, communication process, human service*

I. Introduction

The development of technology as a result of globalization, is an inevitable thing in the era of industrial revolution 4.0. This affects people's life patterns, both directly and indirectly in various aspects of life. Technology is able to shifts even changes the pattern of life in human's daily life, especially through the presence of the internet. In Indonesia, the movement of internet penetration is quite fast. According to data from APJII, internet penetration in Indonesia has increased from 2017 which recorded 54.86% to 64.8% or equivalent to 171.17 million people of Indonesia have been connected to the internet on 2019¹. Such a massive growth of internet users, presents a variety of opportunities and new challenges in the scope of the digital world. Therefore, the working system and impacts of various changes in this era of industrial revolution need to be studied in depth, especially in the world of social work.

The presence of startups in Indonesia has an impact on shifting patterns of human interaction from various aspects. Gojek is one of the most influential company in the terms of internet-based services in the country. As of 2018, Gojek services can be found in more than 160 cities and districts throughout Indonesia². With an application that was downloaded more than 155 million times, which resulted in more than 100 million

transactions, and became a livelihood for more than 2 million driver partners in 2019³, Gojek became one of the startups that brought many changes in people's lifestyles. Since all transactions of it can be done on personal smartphone, without needing to move from home, office, or place of activity at the time.

The existence of online services makes Gojek become a technology product that utilizes human services. On the other hand, the presence of this service provides different side effects. In application-based services, everything has been arranged in such a way by technology. Thus, this service pattern is often considered to rule out interaction and communication between people. Interpersonal communication in human service or human service is something that being questionable in this application-based service pattern.

This condition is related to the McDonaldization concept promoted by George Ritzer regarding human work which is being replaced by machines, as well as the loss of communication between people. The term McDonaldization is referred by Ritzer to the work system of McDonalds, one of fast food brands that has a service pattern with certain standards (Budiman, 2002: 39) which ultimately results in lifestyle shifts, cultural messages and interactions between people. Assumption that McDonaliation concept in a service will eliminate or minimize the communication process is due to the four principles such as efficiency, calculability, predictability and control. These four principles offer convenience as well as limitations for humans in certain spaces in the transaction process.

The characteristics of services with these four principles can also be seen in Gojek. As a successful startup, there are important aspects that are prioritized for the efficiency and effectiveness of the company as reflected in the principles of McDonaldization. On the other hand, Gojek is a technology platform based on human services, which should prioritize human touch or the human side, both in terms of partners and users, including in terms of interaction and communication. Therefore, researcher will observe at how interpersonal communication is carried out by Gojek users and partners in daily service activities in the city of Semarang, Central Java Province.

II. Methods

This study aims to search the patterns of communication that occur between users and Go-Jek partners who provide a number of services in the city of Semarang, Central Java. This type of research is descriptive with a qualitative research approach. Data collection techniques carried out by in-depth interviews to obtain primary data, as well as documentation to obtain secondary data. In this study, there were 6 informants interviewed, namely three Go-Jek customers, and three Go-Jek partners who carry out daily service activities. Supporting data such as articles, statistics, or other related literature will also be supporting documents in this study. From this interview the researcher will look at the interpersonal communication process that occurs, to be analyzed with McDonaldization theory from George Ritzer to see and identify the phenomenon through existing principles.

III. Results

a. Gojek and McDonaldization

It cannot be denied that the existence of Gojek has a massive impact on the economic order in Indonesia. As a large-scale startup, Gojek's service characteristics adapt the principles of McDonaldization. What is striking about the McDonaldization system is product standardization and masification, which currently Gojek as a brand dominates the human-based service sector in people's lives, especially in Indonesia. In addition, Gojek also expanded to several neighboring countries. Gojek in this case, is adapting Mc Donalds (the fast-food restaurant), which not only creates alternative products or services to the industrial community, but also introduces and offers a new lifestyle to a larger scale (Budiman, 2002: 39). Human desire to obtain facilities in carrying out activities becomes an important commodity in this McDonaldization work process. Instead of preparing food for themselves at home, people tend to go outside and be served at McDonalds outlets. Likewise, Gojek facilitates the community to be 'served' in matters such as mobility, delivery of goods, ordering food, and others. So, Gojek is no longer just a product or service, but also a feature and the way of life for most Indonesian people.

In the McDonaldization concept, there are four main principles that are also applied by Gojek. First is efficiency. Efficiency is the way offered from the service to optimize time and effort to accomplish something.

In practice, Gojek does offer a variety of services that prioritize efficiency for its users. For example, Go-Ride (driving by motorcycle), Go-Car (driving by car), Go-Send (delivery of goods), Go-Food (ordering foods), also lifestyle support features such as Go-Glam (body care) , Go-Massage (massage), Go-Shop (shopping), Go-Tix (cinema ticket purchase), Go-Clean (house cleaning services), as well as dozens of other types of services. The range of services is intended as a form of efficiency offered to customers to complete jobs or needs optimally without having to waste time and energy.

Next is the principle of calculability. This principle emphasizes quantitative aspects of the product (such as portion, size and cost) as well as the services offered (how long does it take for the product to reach the customer). In the McDonaldization system, quantity is almost valued as quality; the amount or portion, as well as the speed (to reach the product) is kind of eligibility measurement (whether it is good or bad) of a product. In the context of Mc Donalds as a fast food restaurant, an American observer once said that "The bigger is better", meaning that the bigger / more portions, means the better product (Ritzer, 2010: 16). For example in the portion of burger or french fries, which is certainly worth the price in consumers perspective. In the context of Gojek, calculations are judged from the farther distance (on a Go-ride or Go-car), the duration and variety of massages (on Go-Massage), or house cleaning (on a Go-clean) according to the price, the more feasible a product for use. The user also calculates how much time is needed if doing or completing the activity himself, and compares it with when he gives it to be done by Gojek. Whether we realize it or not, people will tend to calculate that using the services offered by Gojek will save more time. On the other hand, workers in the McDonaldization system also prioritize quantity, although they do not neglect quality. The more transactions that are successfully fulfilled, the more nominal they earn. As explained by Gojek driver's partner informant, where the points that are derived from the number of transactions per day, will be accumulated into bonus income outside the basic costs of the delivery service. Calculation is also offered through the system of the Gojek application. All product features are priced. So that neither partners nor users need to ask for prices or go through a bargaining process. Because each can see the amount to be paid for each service through the application, which has been calculated automatically by the system.

Third is the principle of predictability. In McDonaldization's working system, the company offers predictability. They guarantee that products and services will always be the same at all times and in all locations (Ritzer, 2010: 17). Thus, regardless of reservations are made in the morning, afternoon, evening, or night, whether done in the cities of Java or Bali or anywhere, the form of service with any features from Gojek obtained by the user will always be the same. Because the company already has standard operating procedures in running this work system, so it can be applied to areas that are covered by Gojek. Even in terms of workers, people who work under the McDonaldization system will tend to behave the same way, or say the same things. Thus, their movements have been patterned and predictable. For example, on the driver's partner who often asks the user, "Is this accordance to the application?", to ensure that requested service matches what is stated through the Gojek application, or by offering something to support services such as, "Do you want to top up Go-pay (Gojek digital wallet)? ", and so on.

Last but not least is control. This principle shows that company management regulates the limit and performance of anything on the services. For example, the farthest distance limits for Go-ride services (25km delivery), restaurant choices and food menus on Go-food services, the volume of goods for the Go-send feature, minimum delivery rates, and other aspects adjusted to the rules of company management. Other control systems are also facilitated by the presence of technology, because companies and users can track the position of the driver's partner through the map that powered by Google.

Thus, Gojek adapted the principles of McDonaldization which was considered to narrow human space to interact, because everything was available and running under control through the application. But in reality, there are certain contexts that open up the possibility to continue to interact and communicate between partners and users. In the next sub-chapter, the author will explain interpersonal communication in Gojek services whose system of work adapts McDonaliation principles.

b. Interpersonal Communication in Gojek Services

Interpersonal communication is interpreted as a process of sending and receiving messages between two or more people, both formally and informally. This communication requires human to meet face to face by bringing verbal and non verbal messages, so that they can understand each other and interact effectively (De Vito, 2009). In social life, we have to communicate. Especially if it is related to transaction activities involving two or more people, as in the services offered by Gojek.

The presence of McDonaldization principles in the Gojek service makes everything more easy and practical. Through this service, a person only needs to order the required service through the application and write special requests for the order if needed. Details such as destination address, price, and service options are available. So it is assumed that it is unlikely that users with service provider partners will communicate interpersonally in completing this task.

The facts on the ground are not entirely correct regarding the assumptions related to McDonald's in the Gojek work system. Interpersonal communication is a process that is transactional by bringing verbal and non verbal messages. Partners and users of Gojek in pthe city of Semarang, who were informants in this study, admitted that they both felt the need to communicate verbally and personally when making a transaction. For example when booking a Go-ride or Go-car that requires pickup process, the user feels the need to ensure many things before getting in to the trip. As stated by one informant.

"I usually chat, where is it (the position or pickup point), sir?' Or 'is the license plate matches the apps?' Or he tells me what kind of motorbike he rides. Even my mother, she needs to make a call to the person (Go-Jek's partner) to ensure. So we still have conversation between us," (Interview with Anisa on January 27th, 2020).

The same thing was said by informants from Gojek's partners that they confirmed and re-checked every order, such as pick-up points, food quantities or variants, and so on. Those behavior is carried out to minimize errors in service. In addition, to optimize it there are other efforts such as offering the desired route, providing alternative services for topping up Go-pay, and other stuffs. This is in accordance with one of the principles of interpersonal communication that prioritizes effectiveness between communicators and communicants (De Vito, 2009). So that it is expected that in transactions carried out, things will not be detrimental to one or both parties.

Outside the service procedures that set by company, both partners and Gojek users are equally open for interpersonal communication processes such as small talk, sharing tips, personal stories, or other conversations, especially when using Go-ride, Go-car and other features of lifestyle services like Go-massage or Go-clean. As stated by the informant who is a Gojek driver partner, that they often invite passengers to talk while on their way. Although not all conditions allow them to create a proper interpersonal communication process. One element in interpersonal communication is noise or interference. In the context of Gojek, this is also found in the process of interpersonal communication, as expressed by one Gojek user about the noise that occurs when driving, especially when they travel with motorbikes.

"When we are on a motorcycle (when using the Go-ride service) it's rather difficult (to chat). Because of the conditions on the streets, our voices are not clear. So sometimes what does the driver say, it's not very clear to us. Like, "Ha? What?". Sometimes it's too lazy to talk like that, so we're just talking occasionally", (Interview with Fira on January 28, 2020).

In interpersonal communication, there are aspects of 'ethics' which is also an important element of interaction between humans. An expert in communication ethics, Johannesen (Liliwari, 2017: 121) says that communication ethics occurs when someone creates a relationship of equality, when they are in a state of mindfulness with each other, when communication appears originally and authentically, and when empathy occurs one to each other. Because interpersonal communication affects our communication and has implications for others, ethical considerations have always been an important part of human interaction.

In daily practice, both users and Gojek driver partners also practice ethics in interpersonal communication. For example, with simple things such as saying an apology if there are things that are felt less or troublesome, also saying *thank you* every time they complete transaction. As acknowledged by the following informants. "My house is rather difficult to find. So sometimes they stray. And they always apologize if I wait for longer time because they were difficult to find my house," (Interview with Putri, Gojek user, on January 28th, 2020).

"Sometimes I like to ask them to stop by the gas station, or somewhere to buy small items (during the delivery process to the destination). They must be waiting for me. Then, I would like to say sorry and thank you for waiting for me. Because of that (waiting) doesn't include it (in the transaction) and it takes their time," (Interview with Anisa, Gojek user, on January 27, 2020).

Apology and gratitude are simple, but very important and meaningful ethics in interpersonal communication process. This indicates that the communicator and communicant (in this case are the drivers and Gojek users) have mindfulness in interacting. In a human-based service, it is important to respect and treat others equally, which means to humanize human beings and not put down others when communicating. In this case, Gojek drivers and users in the city of Semarang also show empathy for each other, that they actually have limited time to fulfill their respective interests.

Interpersonal communication activities developed by partners and Gojek users also have something to do with the culture of Indonesians who tend to enjoy socializing. Some informants acknowledged that hospitality or openness to communicate interpersonally is influenced by the habits and characteristics of the Indonesian people, especially those who live and grow up in the Javanese community. Culture of happy to socialize are values that are very attached to Indonesian society (Getol, 2013: 28). Informants also said that there are moments that they share personal stories about their daily lives or backgrounds. Rogers (in Rachmat, 2012) says that the better interpersonal communication is established, the more open a person in expressing himself and the more positive perception of others exceeds his own perception. So, even though in this context the work culture uses a McDonaldization system, Gojek users and partners who do transactions through this service still conduct interpersonal communication in a very good way.

IV. Conclusions

Although the application platform has offered such a sophisticated work system, interpersonal communication in human-based technology services run by Gojek, is still carried out by users and driver partners in daily interactions. The principles such as predictability, calculability, efficiency and control, support services to facilitate transactions and do not complicate the interpersonal communication process. Through interpersonal communication, they optimize services, minimize errors, and build good relationships between users and service providers. Small talk and sharing personal stories are also found in the transaction process, because it is related to human services. Ethics such as saying sorry and gratitude are also implied in everyday life. In addition, interpersonal communication is also supported by the nature and characteristics of Indonesians who tend to be friendly and open to socializing. The suggestions from researchers both to driver partners and customers to mutually maintain empathy, respect and maintain existing hospitality, so that a conducive atmosphere will be formed in human-based technology services. For companies, to prioritize training or providing insights about interpersonal communication of service to their partners/drivers as people who work directly in the field, to create effectiveness and satisfaction that are equally beneficial for all parties.

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