

# How Seo Influences Editorial Decisions In Detikcom's News Production

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## **Abstract**

*The shift in news production processes, which now places greater emphasis on audience interests, has compelled online news media to consider a strategic position in search engines. Consequently, the utilization of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) by online news media is crucial, with Detikcom being one prominent example. Detikcom has successfully leveraged digital platforms to capture audience attention, securing the top position as the most visited online mass media in Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to examine how Detikcom utilizes SEO in the news production process. The research will explore how SEO is integrated into Detikcom's editorial considerations during news production. This study employs a descriptive research method with a qualitative approach. The findings indicate several factors influencing the editorial team's consideration of SEO in the news production process. First, the extent to which SEO supports the editorial team in news production is evaluated. In practice, SEO is closely intertwined with the daily routines of Detikcom's editorial team when producing news. Second, SEO can be used as a strategy to reach a broader audience. The use of SEO is considered effective in attracting new audiences and increasing website traffic. Third, the implementation of SEO is done to compete with competitors. This involves analyzing the SEO strategies of competitors, as reflected in the content they produce. Fourth, the varying cultures within each channel result in different approaches to SEO implementation across channels. This correlates with the routines and policies applied within each channel and how each channel perceives the importance of SEO.*

**Keywords:** Search Engine Optimization, editorial policy, news production, qualitative descriptive studies

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the news production process has changed a lot. In the digital world, one of the changes in the news production process is the greater emphasis on audience interest (Ross, 2017). This is supported by the rapid growth of online news media, especially in Indonesia (Lim, et al, in Prawira & Rizkiansyah, 2018). Based on data from the Press Council, there are 1,778 news media companies that have been verified as of November 2023. Of these, online news media dominate as many as 953 companies (Press Council, 2023). Therefore, online news media companies compete with each other in attracting the attention of the audience.

*Detikcom* is one of the online news media that has successfully used digital platforms to attract the attention of the audience. *Detikcom* managed to rank first in the category of online mass media most visited by audiences in Indonesia, based on *Digital News Report* (2022). The second place is occupied by *Kompas.com*, and the third is with CNN Indonesia (Newman et al., 2022).

Nowadays, high visibility in search engines is needed by online news media. This is because internet users usually search for information through search engines (Spink & Xu, 2000 in Prawira & Rizkiansyah, 2018). The more often an online news media site is visited

by an audience, the higher the traffic received by the media website.

Based on a survey from iProspect (2006), 90 percent of search engine users never read past the third page of search engine results, and 62 percent of them click on the search results on the first page. Therefore, the competition for a spot on the first page of search engines is fierce.

In order for online news media to be easily found on the first page of search engines, the website page of an online news media must be well optimized. Therefore, the website page optimization method or known as Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is needed to manage traffic.

According to research by Giomelakis and Veglis (2015), SEO has an impact on news content and also journalistic workflows. SEO is considered to have an effect on how the process of creating a news "story" in which it will specifically affect the editing process and the use of language styles applied to a media.

Shoemaker and Reese explained that the news-making process is influenced by various factors, both internal journalists, internal media, and external factors (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Editorial considerations are one of the internal factors at the organizational level that can affect how news content is presented (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Discussion on the extent to which the implementation of SEO affects editorial considerations in the process of making news in Indonesian news media is rarely done. In fact, the application of SEO in newsrooms has been widely used today, an example is Giomelakis et al., (2019) who conducted in-depth interview research with SEO practitioners from four news media companies in Greece. One of these media companies is famous for its high traffic on its media.

The results of the interviews show that they are doing SEO practices that are common in their newsrooms. The practices used are keyword research, following the latest topic trends, and following the top topics that search engine users search for most often. Therefore, the researcher will examine how SEO is considered by news media editors in Indonesia, especially in *Detikcom media*.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study will analyze the application of SEO as a consideration for *Detikcom* editors in the news production process using a qualitative approach with a description study method. In this study, the right resource persons based on the researcher's considerations and objectives are editorial members who play an important role and are involved in making editorial policies regarding SEO at *Detikcom*.

Among them are the Managing Editor of *DetikEdu* and SEO Task Force, Erwin Daryanto; SEO Specialist Section Head, Andry Togarma; Section Head Content Specialist, Firdaus Anwar; *DetikHealth reporter*, Atta Kharisma; Detikcom reporter, NG.

In collecting data, the researcher will conduct observations, in-depth interviews in the period of February-March 2024, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2013). Then, this research will be analyzed using the data analysis method developed by Miles and Huberman, namely *data reduction*, *data display*, and *conclusion drawing/verification* (Sugiyono, 2013).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### RESEARCH RESULTS

Technological developments also affect how editors judge news (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017). From reporters, editors, to media owners, they know that the *output* of a news story competes for public attention, a crowded, noisy online environment that measures everything from *page views* to the seconds of a video that the audience clicks on. The decision to produce news today is exposed to an understanding that it is not only about how the audience will respond, but also the "expectation of algorithmic behavior" (Kristensen and Bro, 2023 in Harcup, 2023)

There are several factors considered by *the editors of Detikcom* in the news production process. This is because it will affect how the editor implements SEO on the news content produced. Among them are SEO to support editors in carrying out the news production process, SEO as a way to capture a wider audience, competition with competitors, and culture in each channel.

### **How SEO Enhances the Editorial Process in News Production**

*Detikcom* has a clear workflow between the SEO specialist team, the SEO content team, and the editor. This routine is carried out *by Detikcom* to support SEO in the news production process. Starting with a team of SEO specialists doing data analysis and researching trending keywords. Then, the keywords will be distributed to the SEO content team which is a division consisting of SEO writers. After receiving *the keyword*, the SEO writing team will produce content in the form of writing from keyword search results. The results of the writing are then distributed to channels that are in accordance with the keyword theme of each article.

Within a week, a team of SEO specialists will conduct research and collect various keywords based on how high the interest in a particular keyword is. Not only that, the team of SEO specialists also monitors the content that has been produced by the editor

as well as monitoring the performance of articles that have been published or from competitors. Keywords are search terms that user search/type into the Google search engine or other *search engines* when they are looking for something (Rossoshansky, 2023).

"We have a team called SEO *specialists*. SEO *specialists* are tasked with monitoring the content produced by the editorial team, as well as providing suggestions for themes or topics for editors that can be used as writing. So (the SEO specialist team) also monitors the performance of articles that have been published and from competitors." (Interview with SEO Specialist Section Head, Andry Togarma on February 26, 2024).

After researching and collecting trending keywords or topics, a team of SEO specialists will provide recommendations for these keywords to the SEO content team and editors. After receiving *the keyword* from the SEO specialist team, the SEO content team will work on *the keyword* into a *timeless* article, which is an article that remains relevant when read now or in the future. The articles that have been created will be distributed according to the channels on *Detikcom*. An example is the article "Benefits of Katuk Leaves for Health, Facilitating Breastfeeding to Prevent Anemia" which is worked on by the SEO content team

will be distributed to *the DetikHealth* channel for publication.

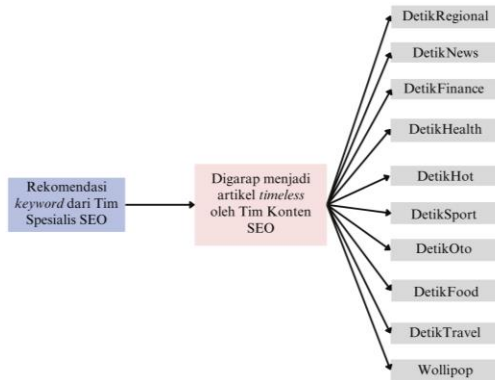


Figure 1. *Timeless* Article Distribution Chart by SEO Content

(Source: Researcher Document, 2024)



Figure 2. Examples of *Detikcom* SEO Articles

(Source: *Detikcom*, 2024)

### How SEO Helps Attract a Wider Audience

There are three traffic sources owned by *Detikcom*, namely *direct* (direct readers), *organic* (*search engines*), and social media. Managing Editor of *DetikEdu*, & SEO Task Force Editor, Erwin Daryanto, said the proportion of traffic sources from direct is around 40%, organic 40%, and social media

20%. Even though the number of direct visits is as large as organic (*search engines*), *Detikcom* still needs a wider audience reach, so optimization on search engines is a need for *Detikcom* to continue to meet new readers.

Detikcom's Composition of Traffic Sources

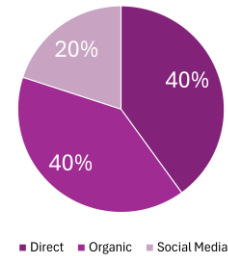


Figure 3. *Detikcom*'s Traffic Source Composition Diagram

(Source: Researcher Document, 2024)

"Search engine SEO is important for us because (we) want to find new readers, which is *direct* must be most loyal readers who are already familiar with *Detikcom* So they immediately open the site and application. However, we need new readers. If there are no new readers, the number of readers will decrease. Therefore, we still need new readers. So, where do new readers come from? Most of them are people who *search* directly on search engines. That's it, so yes we (need readers) to use SEO." (Interview with Section Head Content Specialist, Firdaus Anwar, on March 14, 2024)

In line with that, the Managing Editor of *DetikHealth*, AN Uyung, also argued that SEO brings opportunities for *Detikcom* to be visited by new audiences. SEO is considered effective in attracting new audiences who access *Detikcom* through *search engines*. However, the use of SEO must be done proportionately so as not to sacrifice the comfort of readers when reading SEO articles produced by *Detikcom*. For example, not using keywords that keep repeating in one paragraph so that the sentence is ineffective.

As a private media, *Detikcom* not only carries out journalistic activities, but also seeks other interests so that *the Detikcom* media remains alive. Fierce competition with other media makes *Detikcom* also have to take advantage of SEO as a way to attract new audiences. According to *DetikHealth Reporter*, Atta Kharisma, the use of SEO is also based on *trends* on Google so that it can bring traffic to the *Detikcom website*.

"We are private media company so we have business interests. In my opinion, the existence of SEO does not interfere with the editorial routine. Instead, it is one of way to reach audience. Because SEO based trending on search engine, so the system knows what will the readers looking for and it will make the readers click on the article. This will bring traffic so that people read when they open *Detikcom*. Furthermore, we

also have features such as 'also read..' which contains recommendations for other articles under the currently open article. This makes people may be reading and end up curious about other articles. Then, he explored one website instead of just one article." (Interview with Reporter *DetikHealth* Atta Kharisma, March 4, 2024).

Therefore, the use of proportional SEO is considered effective in attracting new audiences to click and read the news produced by *Detikcom*. Proper optimization on search engines can bring traffic to the *Detikcom website* so that it gets a strategic position on search engines and is easily accessible to users/audiences.

### **Facing Competition in the Market**

In 2016, *Detikcom* began to realize the importance of utilizing SEO to compete with competitors in search engines. Not only competing with fellow online news media, but *Detikcom* also has to compete with *websites* that provide certain information on certain keywords. An example is *DetikHealth* competing with *Halodoc* media to get the first rank in search engines when the audience searches for health-related keywords.

Therefore, it is important to utilize SEO to optimize so that articles created by *Detikcom* can get the top ranking on the first page of

search engines and compete with other sites. This can be done by conducting competitor analysis. For example, when competitors make news about "World Diabetes Day" which contains what diabetes is, how to treat it, history of diabetes, and others, *Detikcom* must be able to make the news more complete compared to competitors. By adding information that does not yet exist in the competitor's article.



Figure 4. Examples of *Detikcom* SEO Articles

(Source: *Detikcom*, 2024)

"We do competitor research from Google Ads. From Google Ads, we monitor competitors one by one, what topics are they had posted? Do we already have it or not?, If we already have the article, what do they have we don't have. Not only that, when they have not written a certain issue, and for this issue we have not either, so we are working on it to be faster than competitors." (Interview with SEO Specialist Section Head, Andry Togarma on February 26, 2024)

## Cultural Differences Across Various Channels

Each channel has its own culture and regulations in carrying out its news. The existence of a different work culture in each channel makes the implementation of the SEO SOP protocol not uniform. Although according to the Editor of *DetikEdu*, and the SEO Task Force, Erwin Daryanto, the SEO SOP protocol must be applied to all channels.

For some channels, the SEO SOP protocol is not always a reference for managing editors and channel editors in producing news. Section Head Content Specialist, Firdaus Anwar, revealed that channels that are concerned about speed in the news production process such as *DetikNews* and *DetikFinance* find it difficult to implement the SEO SOP protocol. This is also in accordance with the statement of one of *the Detikcom* journalists, NG, who said there are no specific instructions for the implementation of SEO.

"There are no specific instructions for the specific implementation of SEO. However, we are indeed asked not to get used to writing news that is too long. The important thing is to be short, concise, neat, and clear." (Interview with Reporter *Detikcom*, NG, on March 26, 2024).

This was also revealed by Paradisa Nunki Megasari in an interview conducted on March 26, 2024. Paradisa has worked as a reporter for *DetikNews* for 2-3 months. During his time as a reporter for *DetikNews*, he never received instructions to use the SEO SOP protocol in the news production process.

"Technically, no. It's more to an inverted triangle? Yes, it's an inverted pyramid if it's for breaking news." (Interview with SEO Writer Detik Jogja & Central Java, Paradisa Nunki Megasari, March 26, 2024).

DetikHealth's *Managing Editor*, AN Ujung Pramudiarja, said that *DetikHealth* uses SEO proportionally. If the use of SEO disrupts the culture and rules that have been embraced by the *DetikHealth* channel, SEO will not be applied. This is because Ujung considers that sometimes the use of SEO sacrifices things that can interfere with news writing. An example is the use of sentences that should be made simply, but with SEO, it is required to store the target *keyword* in the writing so that it can be read in the *search engine* system. This made the *DetikHealth* channel decide to use SEO proportionally. In the sense that it still accommodates the comfort of readers without damaging the news presented.

"It is still possible for us to adjust to the SEO protocol, but if for example we have other priorities and it has to

collide with SEO, yes we prioritize a bigger priority. So you don't have to force everything to be done with SEO protocols. For example, related to Ramadan, in SEO many people discuss the benefits of sundanese cucumber (*Cucurbitaceae*) for stomach acid. In fact, no one has proven that sundanese cucumbers is beneficial for stomach acid, so why do you force yourself to write useful for stomach acid? Another option, we could twist it like 'sundanese cucumbers is beneficial for stomach acid, is that true?' Well, it's like that, even if we want to force it to be combined with SEO because the trending thing is indeed the benefits of sundanese cucumber for stomach acid. We make it like that, it's in accordance with the protocol, but the content still doesn't have to be like that." Interview with *DetikHealth* Managing Editor, AN Ujung Pramudiarja, on March 15, 2024).

## DISCUSSION

### How SEO Enhances the Editorial Process in News Production

The distribution of *timeless* articles by the SEO content team to channels is a policy of *Detikcom's* editorial to support the application of SEO on each channel. With additional



articles supplied by the SEO content team, the channels will get higher traffic receipt .

Nelson (2021, in DRULĂ, G. 2023) argues that the large number of audiences who read an online news media from search engines makes the traffic of the media increase. Articles that have been created by the SEO content team will bring in an audience so *that* traffic and visits to channels will increase. This is what makes *Detikcom* utilize SEO to support editors in content distribution and manage traffic activities.

However, in the editorial of *Detikcom*, the managing editor still has authority over the use of SEO in the channel. This is as explained by Shoemaker and Reese (1996) in the hierarchy theory of mass media influence at the level of media organizations. Even though they get recommendations from the SEO specialist team and the SEO content team, editors can still sort and review the recommendations of the issues received and then filter them so that the issues worked on by journalists are in accordance with what the channel needs. The managing editor has the authority to determine which keywords to work on or not. When there are problematic matters, the decision is in the hands of the managing editor as the person in charge.

Overall, *Detikcom* considers SEO as a tool that can support editors in the news production process. The implementation of

SEO and the use of its strategies make the process of searching for keywords, projecting daily and weekly issues, and fulfilling traffic targets easier. SEO flexibly follows the needs of the editor in the news production process.

### **How SEO Helps Attract a Wider Audience**

According to Giomelakis & Veglis (2016), search is likened to a gateway for the audience in accessing online news and search engines are described as the gatekeepers of the audience. Online news media rack their brains trying to find new strategies to increase the visibility and superiority of their news in search engines. Therefore, if online news media can make optimal use of search engines, they will attract new audiences and receive fantastic traffic.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) explain that for most commercial media, audiences are an important concern because they can be "sold" to advertisers, which of course provides most of the media's revenue.

The large number of audiences who read *Detikcom* from search engines has increased *Detikcom's* traffic. This traffic is a commodity for online news media to make a profit. *Detikcom* utilizes SEO on its media for one of the reasons is to achieve economic goals. *Detikcom* is a private media that also needs traffic and audiences to run its media business. *Detikcom* also needs advertising so that its

media continues to live in the media business ecosystem.

This is in line with research conducted by Eddyono (2022) in *Kompas.com*, *Tirto.id*, *Tempo.co*, and *Liputan6.com media*. The result is that these media outlets compete to submit to SEO logic in order to compete in advertising queries. SEO is considered one of the effective ways to increase traffic in order to make a profit, namely advertising. Traffic is the benchmark for getting ads.

Therefore, it is necessary to make optimal use of traffic by utilizing search engine as a door that bring in a wide audience which ultimately becomes a commodity for advertisers.

### **Facing Competition in the Market**

Currently, online news media are required to adapt to new conditions, becoming more competitive in response to market needs (Giomelakis et al., 2019). Online news media companies compete fiercely for audiences (Lister et al., 2009), even more so competing on search engines. This is because online news media not only compete with fellow online news media, but also compete with *websites* that provide the same information about something. With the increasing *hyper-competition* between *websites* in search engines, online news media rely on SEO (Lopezosa et al., 2020)

In the hierarchical theory of the influence of mass media at the external level of the organization, the existence of competitors can stimulate or limit the diffusion of information according to their interests (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In 2016, *detikcom* began to realize the importance of utilizing SEO to compete with competitors in search engines. In addition to the urgency of technological advancements, stimuli from competitors make *detikcom* applying SEO to the news production process. Seeing competitors have a good performance on search engines makes *detikcom* also want to get the same performance in search engines.

Pushing competitors to compete in search engines manifests into a competitor analysis strategy. *detikcom* Conduct competitor analysis in two ways, first, monitor the performance of articles produced by competitors. From the articles aired by competitors, *detikcom* can see what has been published and what has not been discussed by them. Therefore, *detikcom* can work on articles that are more complete and superior to competitors' own.

Second, monitor trending keywords and then see if competitors have made news from those keywords or not. If competitors have not made news from these keywords, *Detikcom* has the exclusivity to be the first to write these keywords. Head Section SEO Specialist, Andry Togarma, stated that competitor analysis as a

strategy for implementing SEO in the editorial board is important, because the data from the analysis is used by the editor to determine the strategy for writing news.

"We do competitor research from Google Ads. From Google Ads, we just look at what their competitors are playing, whether we already have it or not. If they have content and we don't, or they don't have content and we don't have that content either, then we can upload it first." (Interview with SEO Specialist Section Head, Andry Togarma on February 26, 2024).

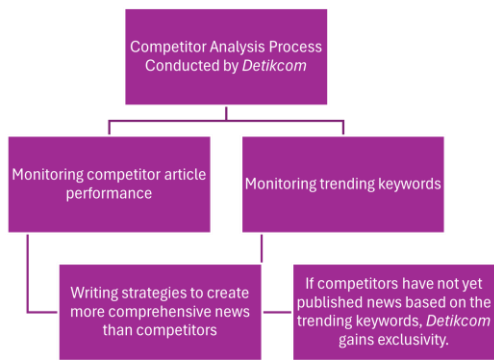


Figure 3. Competitor Analysis Process Chart by *Detikcom*

(Source: Researcher Document, 2024)

### Cultural Differences Across Various Channels

Kuncoro (2022) stated that media routines are a manifestation of efforts to maintain and implement editorial policies that have been set. The routine in the canal that is carried out

continuously will be internalized in the canal which eventually becomes a culture in the canal. Head of SEO Content Section, Firdaus Anwar, in an interview conducted on March 14, 2023, said that each channel has its own work culture in carrying out the news production process. SEO is not always a reference for managing editors and channel editors in producing news. For example, channels that attach importance to speed in the news production process such as *DetikNews* and *DetikFinance* which are considered difficult to implement SEO.

This is as conveyed by *DetikHealth* Reporter, Atta Kharisma, who stated that the editorial board has its own priority order in carrying out its editorial work. Editors can choose which issues to prioritize first over SEO.

"So, the team of SEO specialists suggested yes, but they are not in the editorial board like us. Sometimes we editors have issues that are more important than SEO, because SEO is on average *timeless*, on average it is not something that is urgent. If what the SEO team is suggesting happens to clash or interfere with what we are prioritizing, we will not attach importance to SEO and that is okay." (Interview with Reporter *DetikHealth*, Atta Kharisma, March 4, 2024)

As explained by Awolowo (2009) (in Gitau et al., 2022), editorial philosophy or culture has

a great influence on the quality of news produced by the media. The existence of a culture in each channel makes them have their own authority in implementing SEO on channel policies. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) in the hierarchy theory of media influence at the organizational level stated that even though they work in the same organization (media), sometimes the routines and requirements accepted are different. This is because each channel has its own routine that is manifested in the canal culture.

*Detikcom* channels consider SEO to be applied proportionally and flexibly. Editors do not always implement SEO, for example the use of repeated keywords in articles. However, they still use other strategies in the news production process. An example is research keywords using Google Trends, inserting backlinks in news articles that have already aired, and analyzing news traffic that has been aired and then evaluating it.

The results of this finding can be compared with a study conducted by Giomelakis et al (2019) conducted on four media in Greece. The results show that the use of SEO appears to vary across editorial boards, depending on the strategies used on factors, such as ownership model, editorial priorities, and organizational structure. These SEO practices may also have a major impact on the way journalists and media professionals choose

how to tell the news, as well as their publishing practices (Giomelakis et al., 2019).

## CONCLUSION

SEO is a consideration for *Detikcom* editors in the news production process is influenced by several factors, the first is the extent to which SEO supports editors in the news production process. In its implementation, SEO is very closely related to the editorial routine of *Detikcom* in producing news. The use of SEO in *Detikcom* editorial is highly determined by the level of media organizations. This is because its use is still supervised by the managing editor. Second, SEO can be used as a way to capture a wider audience. The use of SEO is considered effective in bringing in new audiences and increasing website traffic. With increased audience traffic, it can be sold to advertisers. Third, the implementation of SEO is carried out to compete with competitors. This concerns the level of external influence, namely by analyzing competitors' SEO strategies which are reflected in the content that has been produced by competitors. Fourth, the different cultures in each channel make the SEO applied by each channel also different. This correlates with the level of media routines reflected in the policies carried out on each channel.

Research on SEO can be continued by exploring other media and using different approaches. Research can be conducted by focusing on how journalists perceive using SEO. In addition, it can also focus on how the

process of commodifying traffic, SEO, and audiences by other online news media.

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