THE APPLICATION OF ISLAM IN "MENGAJAK NIKAH KE KUA" MEME

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Abstract

The participation of social media users in online communication also encourages the spread of the phenomenon of marriage in society including the appearing reasons that sound cliche. The satire and sarcasm meme of "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA" appeared and distributed through social media and became a reflection of the virtual world from the real world . Through virtual ethnographic research within the level technique of Cyber Media Analysis, this article tries to trace the cultural artifacts of satire and values contained in the meme.

Partisipasi pengguna dalam komunikasi online di media sosial juga merambah pada fenomena ajakan menikah di tengah masyarakat termasuk di dalamnya alasan-alasan yang terdengar klise yang muncul. Meme "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA" merupakan satire atau sindiran yang muncul dan terdistribusi melalui media sosial dan menjadi semacam cerminan dunia virtual yang berasal dari dunia nyata. Melalui riset etnografi virtual dengan teknik level Analisis Media Siber, artikel ini mencoba menelusuri artefak budaya tentang satire dan nilai-nilai yang terkandung dalam meme tersebut.

Keywords: *meme; social media; cyberculture; Islam; get married*

Introduction

Marriage proposals have become an intriguing topic in the virtual world. There is a phenomenon, especially in major cities and regions that still uphold traditional values, where marriage is no longer merely a religious ritual or a state administrative procedure but also involves responsibilities and readiness. Interestingly, this aspect of readiness, both physical and emotional, has become a reason to postpone marriage.

From a researcher's perspective, this phenomenon has become a form of social media text that indirectly criticizes those who are not ready for marriage. This text is the result of communication and interaction on the internet, amplified through memes. The phenomenon captures offline reality and is implemented in the online realm through text as a language in computer-mediated interaction (Thurlow, et al., 2004; Wood & Smith, 2005; Zaphiris & Ang, 2009).

The expressions of stories depicted in memes emphasize that social media enables users to create new content involving technology (Nasrullah, 2015a). These expressions can take the form of using a person's or animal's face, or even cartoons, combined with specific words or phrases as satire. Davison (2012) states that memes are a part of culture — sometimes a joke — that emerge on the internet and are transmitted online.

Picture 1: **Mengajak Nikah ke KUA meme example**

An image satirizing the phenomenon of marriage proposals, as described above, illustrates two seemingly opposing parties. The satire targets a cartoon character

of a man being dragged by a woman towards the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). The satire emerges with the man explaining he is not ready for marriage because he is still unemployed, while, on the contrary, the woman counters by saying she will help by working. This meme not only mocks the scenario by depicting it as if the woman is forcing the man or vice versa but also subtly transforms Islamic values.

This virtual reality is what the researcher aims to explore to understand how Islamic values are reflected in the "Marriage Proposal to the KUA" meme in its various versions and how social media users respond to its emergence.

Meme as Satire of Offline Reality on Social Media

One effect or consequence of interactions in cyberspace is the use of text — including photos — which becomes the sole medium of communication visually. Satire, mockery, and even bullying within memes are also part of the communication effects that appear to rely solely on text. This condition represents the ecology of the virtual world, where communication between entities in cyberspace is represented by text, which can take the form of words, symbols, icons, images, photos, and more (Bell, 2001; Hine, 2000; Shariff, 2011). Language (text) in cyberspace has changed, and from Crystal's perspective (2004), the "internet language" is considered the fourth medium, following written language, spoken language, and sign language.

In social media research literature, the term "meme" was introduced by Richard Dawkins in 1979. He noted that most human habits or behaviors are not due to genetic factors but rather the surrounding culture. These non-genetic habits can be seen as representations of an individual's mental processes in observing and learning from external reality (Blackmore, 1999; Davison, 2012; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). The manifestation of memes can take the form of fashion, language, sports, and daily behavior, both profane and ritualistic. The advancement of internet technology eventually associated this term with particular illustrations comprising images and text that circulate online. Davison (2012) asserts that bahwa *'an internet meme is a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission'. Memes as Part of Culture — Particularly*

jokes — Spread Online. Limor (2013: 41) provides a more straightforward explanation of the meaning of memes:

> (a) a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, which (b) were created with awareness of each other, and (c) were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users.

Limor's research (2013: 65-72) indicates that memes gain popularity for several reasons. First, there is a positive value in the satire conveyed in memes, and this value is often presented in humor that tends not to directly offend the reader. Second, visual memes sometimes provoke readers. This emotional provocation elicits both positive and negative responses. Third, memes become popular due to their straightforward and clear packaging of messages. Fourth, the involvement of credible public figures adds to the meme's popularity. Fifth, memes posted in connection with popular social issues gain traction as they represent topics widely discussed offline, thereby intensifying their spread online. Sixth, online users actively participate in sharing, discussing, and reproducing memes.

The emergence of memes is not only seen as a new form of audience expression but also as a new form of art, a cultural artifact, and, of course, a commodity of content that is produced and consumed. In this regard, Jenkins (2006) emphasizes that in the era of new digital culture, a "participatory culture" has emerged. This participatory culture involves an internet audience that actively participates in creating and circulating new content. This includes the "Marriage Proposal to the KUA" meme, where the dialogue within the meme expands to various values, a development that is undoubtedly contributed to by social media users.

Memes should be seen from two aspects: 1) the visual aspect, which uses images or illustrations to convey the emotion shown, and 2) the textual aspect. Memes are characterized by text between the visuals, typically appearing at the top and bottom or as contrasting dialogue. Memes reflect three components: manifestation, behavior, and ideality (Davison, 2012: 123). As a manifestation, a meme represents observable culture and an external phenomenon. The visual content in

a meme reflects or depicts what is happening, corresponding to offline reality. Visual memes can be interpreted as tangible elements associated with time and place connected to reality. Thus, memes are habitual practices by internet users to express their emotions, whether by using existing memes or creating their own with the help of technology and then posting them on social media. Finally, memes represent an idealized depiction of reality. For example, a unique or humorous Facebook status may be commented on with a meme image — featuring funny visuals and text — as a way of responding to that reality (Nasrullah, 2015a).

Values in Cyberculture

Culture is essentially the set of values that emerge from interactions between individuals. These values are recognized, both directly and indirectly, over time through such interactions. Sometimes, these values reside in the subconscious of individuals and are passed on to future generations (Nasrullah, 2012). From an ethnographic perspective, culture is a social and historical construct that transmits specific patterns through symbols, meanings, premises, and even written rules (Philipsen, 1992 in Martin & Nakayama, 2010).

Through the medium of the internet, the formation of cyberculture takes place globally and universally. Cyberculture can be viewed as both an object and a subject in anthropological, sociological, as well as media, and cultural studies. In this context, Hine (2007) views online reality as both a culture and cultural artifact. As a culture, the early model of Internet communication was initially very simple compared to direct communication models. This simplicity existed because the early generation of the internet was only used for text messages or symbols/codes that could be directly understood by both parties.

Unlike the internet's development today, communication in cyberspace now also involves text in a broader sense, such as emoticons, sound, and visuals. Computer-mediated communication has even integrated all these aspects. The internet also functions as an institutional and domestic context, using symbols that hold

their meanings and act as a "metaphorical" medium involving new concepts of technology and its relationship to social life. As a cultural artifact, the internet can be understood as more than just a network of computers interacting through computer language alone. The social forms of this internet object imply how technology becomes part of the negotiation of social processes, where each internet user has a different perspective. Redefining technology (the internet) based on social phenomena within it provides distinct meanings depending on the technology user: whether seen as merely a set of computer machines or a medium for far more complex social interactions (Hine, 2000: 33).

Hine's view above is reinforced by Liliweri (2014: 520), who asserts that the presence and operation of technology have a close relationship with society and culture. Technology contributes to social and cultural change in society and vice versa. The influence of technology affects the values within institutions or groups. For instance, 1) an increase in cooperation, both in frequency and quality, across time and space; 2) the emergence of commercialization in leisure activities, such as the use of technology for information and entertainment; and 3) the massive, simultaneous, and instantaneous dissemination of information from one space/time to another.

Value itself can be interpreted as ideas about what is good, right, and just (Liliweri, 2014: 55). Value is one of the basic elements in forming cultural orientation, involving cultural concepts that consider things as good or bad, right or wrong, fair or unjust. Although values do not always describe individual or group behavior within a culture, they help explain the purpose behind cultural realities. As explained in the concept of memes, as cultural products, memes are not merely illustrations or visualizations of humor but also carry values shaped by internet users. Factors such as history, socio-economic evolution, family messages, religious education, and others play a role in this process

Jimenez (2008), as cited by Liliweri (2014: 57), explains several types of values:

1. Personal Values serve as the foundation for ethical actions. These are usually related to physiological values.
2. Family Values emerge from the smallest social unit. Values such as economic, psychological, and social protection come from family and apply to all family members.
3. Material Values are related to views on materiality, which places commodities or products as basic needs for survival.
4. Spiritual Values are intangible and usually derived from sacred texts (religion). Spiritual values can also refer to truth, honesty, kindness, beauty, and so on.
5. Moral Values, serve as standards for what is good or evil. These standards then guide individual behavior, which can be called morality.

Although the realities and entities on the internet are virtual, the online world is essentially a reflection of offline reality. This reflection, according to Gotved (2006), is a reality that emerges based on internet space-time, stemming partly from the culture and interactions of the entities within it.

Research Methods

The "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA" meme is an artwork of cyberculture, which in this field is included in cultural studies. Cultural studies places reality in the media not only describes what appears on the surface, but there are values contained in the media (text) itself. Therefore, the reality of memes requires a multidisciplinary approach as well as new methods that can explore the cyber phenomenon (Foot, 2006: 88-96; Wakeford, 2000: 31-33). To answer this research question, researchers used virtual ethnography techniques through the levels of Cyber Media Analysis or AMS. Ethnography according to Harris (1968), as cited by Creswell (2007: 68): Ethnography is a qualitative research design in which a researcher describes and interprets the patterns that are exchanged and learned from cultural groups about values, habits, beliefs and language. However, ethnography is not simply a way to look at the cultural reality of a group. (Wolcott,

2008: 71) or work to describe culture alone (Spradley,1979).

Hine (2000, 2015) stated that virtual ethnography is a methodology used to investigate the internet and explore its user entities. This virtual ethnographic experience is also to reflect on the implications of mediated communication on the internet. While the level in AMS provides guidance in parsing reality both online and offline as well as how cyber media technology tools are used or influenced (December, 1996; Nasrullah, 2014: 203-209). There are four levels of analysis units in this method, namely media space, media documents (media archive), media objects, and experiential stories. Media space and media documents are levels that focus more on cyberspace or online research, while the level of media objects and media experience is a multi-level analysis that looks at how offline reality has a connection to online reality as explained in the following picture:
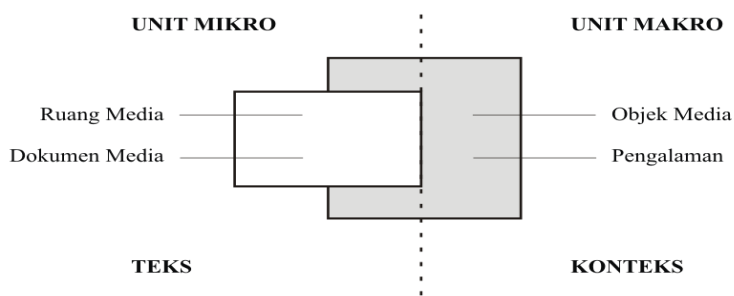
Picture 2: Cyber Media Level of Analysis

Media space and media documents are located in the micro unit or text while media objects and media experiences are located in the macro unit or context. However, both the object level and the experience level are not entirely in the macro space and it does not mean that each level is seen as an independent object of research. Each level is connected and what appears in the context basically comes from the text and the text is processed first through technological procedures. Therefore, the text level can be analyzed and made into a separate research report, but the context level of media objects and experiences must also involve data in the media space and media documents as well (Nasrullah, 2014, 2015a, 2015b).

Findings

The meme "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA" at the level of media space can be found in several popular social media accounts such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. Even some Facebook groups also publish the meme, not only groups specifically about memes but also in religious groups. The first version of the meme to appear is the female version (Muslimah). Semiotically, in this version, there is an illustration of a woman pulling a man's coat and there is a direction written "KUA".

It is unknown when the first version first appeared and what the dialog in the illustration was, but with the networked nature of social media the meme went viral. In terms of devices, memes go viral because social media devices allow users to directly share both through friendship networks and outside of friendship. Another reason is the involvement of social media users who can use photo processing applications both on devices and on personal computers. This meme image basically provides a space (balloon) for dialog that can be used by anyone on any topic.

These different topics are what, at the level of media documents (media archive), make the female version of memes thrive. In general, these topics still place the woman who "forces" the man to go to the KUA (see Picture 1). The next development, the meme gets a kind of answer or opponent by placing the position of men who attract women. Of course, also with different topics. In the researcher's observation, the topics for this male version have more versions.

Picture 3: "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA" male version meme

The document search conducted by the researcher found that at the media object level, the topics that develop from memes show a portrayal of offline social reality. This reality becomes a kind of street talk

or street talk that is satire of the "fear" of both men and women to get married.

Based on the categories of values that exist in society, the following is a description of the forms of memes that have developed online.

1. Material value, which is a value that shows an satire on men or women who consider too many material factors to get married.

Picture 4: "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA" meme of material value satire

2. Educational value, which is a satire that appears related to the education of the couple being invited to get married. There is a kind of reality emerging from the meme that shows that marriage must graduate from a certain educational level.

Picture 5: "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA" meme of material value satire

3. About religion, which is an insinuation that appears related to the belief and trust that getting married will also increase religious values.

Picture 6: "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA" meme of material value satire

4. Regarding physical perfection, this value is a satire of the physical requirements of personal values in offline reality that appear as obstacles to marriage. The meme that emerges also illustrates the couple's insecurity.

Picture 7: "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA" meme of material value satire

5. About time emerges because of the satire of personal values towards couples who always postpone or delay marriage.

Picture 8: "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA" meme of time value satire

6. About the readiness, which is a satire of personal value that emerges because of the lack of readiness between one of the partners.

picture 9: "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA" meme of readiness value satire

Some of the memes published in the Meme Comic Lovers Facebook group with the link https://www.facebook.com/MemeComicLovers.indonesia meme "Mengajak Menikah ke KUA" as many as 12 published on July 14, 2016 has received 4827 shares, liked more than 10 thousand accounts and received more than 500 comments.

Surprisingly, the cultural artifact of the meme is growing with the emergence of other meme models. Picture 12 below shows new figures ranging from fathers, KUA officials or penghulu and so on.

Picture 10: The new topical meme "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA"

This growing picture of memes shows that memes as a satire of offline social realities are thriving online. This is because apart from being a joke, memes show that there are certain conditions that are actually happening in society.

From the experiential stories level, it shows that many of the topics discussed in the memes represent offline realities that occur. Here are some of the comments that appear:

Picture 11: Comments toward the Meme "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA"

This meme is also spread on other social media besides Facebook, namely Twitter and Instagram. One of them is the Instagram account @anissa_fitria which published one version of the meme and gave an opinion (status) about the benefits of rushing to get married. The comments that appear also seem to represent the conditions in the meme.

Picture 12: Status on Instagram related to the meme "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA"

Conclusion

Not only does it stop at satire, memes also have values, which in this context are related to culture and also the amplification of Islamic values. The values that appear in these memes are then exchanged among members (account owners) on social media and under certain conditions there are various developments, both in terms of

text in dialog and context in character involvement, for example, which accompanied the main character of the meme "Mengajak Nikah ke KUA".

This online reality indicates that memes in their own visual way are a reflection of an ideal reality in society. They are also a medium for conveying messages online. The language of memes is different from the languages that appear on the internet. This shows that there is a visual language online, which according to Dawkins (1979), and can represent the wishes of the entity, which in this case is internet users.

The development of memes as described in this study shows the involvement of various entities in the internet network, especially social media. Although the meme "Inviting Nikah to KUA" requires skills in creating new images and is different from other memes that can use meme generator features (Nasrullah, 2015a), the satire shown in the meme involves various entities. The template of this meme can even be edited with an android-based photo processing application on the device.

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