

# THE ROLE OF VIRAL VIDEO IN INDONESIAN POLITICS

## PERAN VIDEO VIRAL DALAM POLITIK INDONESIA

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### Abstract

Social media offers the wide availability and facility to exchange information. It provides space for people to aggregate around common interests and narratives. At given situations, content can spread rapidly across networks and go viral. This paper attempts to reveal the meaning and the role of viral video in Indonesia's contemporary politics, using Al-Maida 51 viral video as the case study. To achieve that, this paper utilises an archival analysis of videos and documents to investigate what components constitute virality. Basing on the theory and the logic of "virality", this paper examines the key factors that allow a video to go viral generally and in the specific context of Indonesia. This article also provides a comparison between viral political video with documentary video and news video viewed from production, distribution, and consumption perspectives. The comparison suggests that viral video is not just a message or product, but a medium for other messages. Viral videos are platforms of ideas and they open the opportunities for new values and interpretations as well as different forms of political participation. The study concludes that user's intervention in media-making process is important; in the case of the Al-Maida 51 viral video, a user's specific intervention can lead a shift from a documentary work to a piece of video with political impact. Furthermore, users' contribution in spreading a video and adding their personal comment about it in their post is indicative to the role of the users as intermediaries who might not create the virality, but can stimulate it.

**Keywords:** Al-Maida 51, political communication, social media logic, virality, viral video

### Abstrak

Media sosial daring menawarkan fasilitas dan kemudahan dalam proses pertukaran informasi, orang-orang dengan kesamaan minat dan nilai dapat berkumpul dan berinteraksi. Dalam beberapa situasi, informasi dapat beredar dengan cepat dan lintas jejaring, sehingga menjadi viral. Tulisan ini ingin menelisik makna dan peran video viral dalam praktik politik kontemporer di Indonesia, dengan menggunakan kasus video viral "Al-Maidah 51" sebagai contoh kasus. Tulisan ini menggunakan teori dan logika "virality" milik Nahon dan Hemsley (2013) dan menganalisis video viral di internet untuk melihat faktor-faktor kunci yang menentukan sebuah video dapat menjadi viral, baik secara umum maupun dalam konteks spesifik di Indonesia. Tulisan ini juga menyajikan perbandingan antara video politik viral dengan video dokumenter dan video berita dari perspektif produksi, distribusi, dan konsumsi. Perbandingan tersebut menunjukkan bahwa video viral bukan sekadar pesan atau produk media sosial, tetapi juga merupakan medium itu sendiri. Ia merupakan platform gagasan yang membuka peluang atas hadirnya nilai-nilai dan interpretasi baru atas sebuah pesan, serta menunjukkan adanya partisipasi politik dalam wujud yang lain. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa intervensi pengguna media sosial dalam proses produksi, distribusi, dan konsumsi pesan dapat dipandang sebagai partisipasi politik dan karenanya menjadi penting. Dalam kasus video Al-Maidah 51, intervensi tertentu dari pengguna dapat mengubah peran sebuah video dari yang semata produk dokumentasi menjadi potongan video pendek yang memiliki dampak politis. Lebih lanjut, kontribusi pengguna dalam menyebarkan video sambil menambahkan komentar di akun pribadi media sosial mereka mengindikasikan adanya fungsi intermediasi yang dijalankan oleh para pengguna. Artinya, pengguna media sosial daring mungkin tidak selalu bisa menciptakan viralitas, tetapi bisa menstimulasi terjadinya konten yang beredar viral.

**Kata Kunci:** Al-Maidah 51, komunikasi politik, logika media sosial, viralitas, video viral

### Introduction

Social media has drastically shifted the structures and methods of contemporary political campaigns by influencing the way politicians interact with citizens and each other. It allows for political leaders and citizens to communicate

faster and be more targeted in that communication. The contemporary social media provides the capacity for people to share any kinds of information, resulting in the growing popularity of the spread of texts, images, and videos. Political campaigns are no longer only

conducted by handing out stickers and merchandise or via political ads on mass media but also by sharing contents on social media to tout the benefits of one candidate or disparage the other.

In Indonesia, social media demonstrated its significant role in politics during the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election. In early October 2016, prior to the election, a video capturing Basuki Tjahja Purnama (Ahok), the then Governor of Jakarta giving speech in *Kepulauan Seribu* (Thousand Islands), went viral. In the video, Ahok criticised his political rivals for using Islam as a campaign tool. He stated that voters have been being deceived using verse 51 of Sura Al-Maida (hereafter Al-Maida 51) from Muslim's holy book, Quran (BBC Indonesia 2016a, para. 5). Ahok, the first Chinese-Christian governor of Jakarta in nearly 50 years<sup>1</sup>, was appointed as the Governor of Jakarta when former Governor Joko Widodo (Jokowi) won the presidential election in 2014. Ahok bid for the next election in 2017 and spoke about the verse because in his opinion it is frequently used by his political opponents to disqualify non-Muslim candidates in the election (Fadhil 2016, para. 3).

This article discussed how the video had generated critical impact on Ahok's election candidacy after it was uploaded to social media. Initially, it was intended as a documentation of the activities of the Jakarta provincial government. The Agency of Public Communication and Information, a body under Jakarta's provincial government recorded Ahok's visit and speech in Kepulauan Seribu in late September 2016 and uploaded the video to the Jakarta Government's official website. The original video of 1 hour 44 minutes contains highlights of Ahok's activities during the visit. The agency uploaded the complete video to the government official website to provide public information about the government's recent activity. On 5 October 2017, an academician named BuniYani found an edited version of the video shared by a Facebook account called "Media NKRI". The video he saw was only 37 seconds, capturing the particular moment when Ahok mentioned Al-Maida 51 in his speech. BuniYani shared the edited version of the video via his personal

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<sup>1</sup>Before Ahok, Henk Ngantung, a Christian, governed Jakarta from 1964 to 1965. Ngantung was rumored to be Chinese, however he declined to specify his ethnicity (Lim, 2017, p. 412).

Facebook account, adding his version of the video transcript along with a post that signalled the potential for controversy from the video. Based on my observation, both versions of the video are similar. However, the cutting of the original one had caused the shorter version to lack context.

The short clip went viral on social media, along with comments that accused Ahok of being a slanderer to Islam. Ahok's opponents used Muslims' anger to mobilise demonstrators, and President Jokowi, a close associate of Ahok, had then come under pressure to act against Ahok (Singh et al. 2017, p. 5). The video also sparked hype in mass media. At least *Tempo*, *Kompas*, and *Republika*, three popular news outlets, covered the viral video in their reports. It also provoked outrage among conservative Indonesian Muslims. They considered Ahok has blasphemed Islam through his speech in the video and called for him to be jailed for violating article 156 of Indonesian Criminal Code which prohibits hostility, abuse, or defamation of a religion. Waves of protests appeared, and this case eventually cost Ahok his electability as he lost the election. Additionally, a subsequent trial found him to have 'legitimately and convincingly conducted a criminal act of blasphemy', and he was sentenced to two years in imprisonment (Lamb 2017, para. 2).

Previously, social media in Indonesia had shown its great potential as a tool of political campaigning during the 2014 presidential election. In the election season, the presidential candidates, political lobbyists and NGOs created innovative methods for using social media to promote their political interests and even tackle smear campaigns (O'Neill 2014, para. 3). The election has been dubbed the "social media election" (O'Neill 2014; Thornley 2014), and was characterised by Indonesian voters' massive use of social media (Haryanto, 2014). However, political messages circulating on social media were mostly in the form of text or images at that time. To this extent, the Al-Maida 51 viral video was a new component in social media use for politics in Indonesia.

Using the "Al-Maida 51" video as the case study, this study reveals the role of viral video in shaping the dynamics in a political campaign and influencing political communication in Indonesia. This case is important to discuss as for the first time in Indonesian history a viral

video created a critical dynamic in politics. Through an archival analysis of videos, the article first discusses the concept of virality and the history of viral video. In this part, the factors that operate to support viral video before and after the social media age are elaborated. The next part identifies a number of key factors affecting the spread of political viral video in the unique context of Indonesia. Finally, this chapter delves into a discussion on the comparison between viral political video with documentary video and news video viewed from production, distribution, and consumption perspectives. Comparing between the three different forms of political information video will help in finding out the meaning of viral video in Indonesia's contemporary politics.

### Understanding virality

“Viral” is ‘a metaphoric reference to a contagious virus which spreads quickly from one host to another’ (Khan & Vong 2014, p. 630). According to Nahon and Hemsley (2013), virality requires social interaction. Something can be called as viral when each of us simultaneously shares the same information in our social network and subsequently the information is distributed to other people in a short period of time and reaches a large number of individuals in different networks (Nahon & Hemsley, 2013, p. 28-34).

Nahon and Hemsley account for four key components that can be used to identify and measure virality as well as how it differs from other forms of information flow (pp. 28-34). The first component is *the social process*. Virality is a result of people sharing information from one to another. It is different to broadcast transmission that spreads information from a central point (producers) to many people (audiences). The second component is *the speed* of diffusion. Viral events occur when a message is quickly shared in a short period. Nahon and Hemsley find that although the sharing speed level could vary depending on the platform, the average rate of a message to be shared (and re-shared) through social media is within a day.

The next component is *the reach by numbers*, which refers to the number of people exposed to the content. This number means all of the people who received, read, and consumed media content but did not share it, as well as those who re-shared it. The last component is *the*

*reach by networks*; this is about the ‘distance’ a message has travelled. Viral messages jump across different clusters, from strong ties to weak ties or *vice versa*. They are supported by the decentralised network in social media; a person from one group shares the message to other clusters.

In the Indonesian context, a video becomes viral through the support of several factors. First, the vast number of internet users in the country. According to We Are Social (2017), in January 2017, the total population of Internet users in Indonesia was estimated at 132.7 million, including 92 million mobile social media and 106 million Facebook users. These numbers reflect not only a large number of connected users in Indonesia but also how social media has become embedded in various aspects of life, including its role as a tool to share information. Second, there is a high number of gadget ownership in Indonesia. Ericsson's Mobility Report for South East Asia and Oceania region in the first quarter of 2016 reported that the penetration of smartphone subscription in Indonesia during 2015 was 38% but continually increasing, and it was predicted to reach 98% by 2021 (Yusra 2016, para. 5). The report also showed that Indonesia has the highest smartphone subscription among Southeast Asia and Oceania countries, with 100 million subscriptions in 2015 and predicts that will grow to 250 million by the end of 2021 (Yusra 2016, para. 6). The readily available technology has helped Indonesian people to participate in political information exchange.

Third, there is a trend among Indonesia mass media to use social media's trending topics as news agenda. Damaris's research (2016) found that mass media has been using Twitter as one of the sources of information and Twitter trending topics can determine the mass media news agenda. Damaris mentioned that mass media perceived a trending topic on Twitter as one of the benchmarks to assess whether an issue is getting a great response in social media (2016, p. 84) and that the results of this benchmarking will have a major impact on setting up the media coverage agenda (Damaris, 2016).

The fourth factor, is that Indonesia had experienced 32 years of media restrictions under the New Order and Soeharto's leadership. After the regime ended, coincident with the rising

popularity of the internet, there was a euphoria regarding production, distribution, and consumption of information. As the internet began to emerge, it became a bridge for personal political expression, because at that time the mass media was still monopolised by the elite. When compared with other ASEAN countries, Indonesia is now relatively better with regards to freedom of speech and expression (Reang 2014). Although there is a debate that Indonesia's Law of Electronic Information and Transaction (UU ITE) has the potential to limit freedom of expression, it does not control (in terms of monitoring or censoring) web content like in Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, or Malaysia. Indonesia is in the top ranks of Asia's most supportive country to free expression, after the Philippines, South Korea and India (Pew Research Centre, 2015 via Gray, 2016, para. 9).

The historical context and contemporary take up of the internet facilitate information going viral in Indonesia. In the current condition, where a large number of social media users are actively disseminating information through social networking platforms supported by a climate of freedom of expression, a single video can achieve the components of sharing, speed, the reach by numbers and networks, as Nahon and Hemsley described.

Nahon and Hemsley also posit three primary factors that allow for a social media message to go viral. First is the *network gatekeeper*, an actor who has specific power within a network. A network gatekeeper 'exercises greater control over the flow of information than others and has disproportionate amounts of influence' (2013, p. 42). The power of network gatekeeper is not in the ability to curate information, but the capacity to link networks together, hence information can travel far, fast, and can connect people. As I discussed later in this article, in the case of Al-Maida 51 viral video, the role of network gatekeeper is recognisable through BuniYani, an academician and former journalist who has access to the video and the networks which then allowed him to contribute to the viral process of the video.

The second factor is the *remarkable content*. For something to go viral, it must be 'worth remarking on with the people we are connected to' (p. 62). This means the content is not only attracting attention but also able to overcome people's resistance to share it. Nahon

and Hemsley argue that contents considered interesting and able to connect people together are the ones that have emotional aspects, resonating context, and salient characteristics such as novelty, quality and humour (pp. 62-67). In the Al-Maida 51 case, Ahok's statement about the verse touched a sensitive topic SARA (refers to *Suku, Agama, Ras, dan Antargolongan* or ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations) in Indonesia.

The third factor is the *network structure* which influences how and the degree to which, information spreads. Nahon and Hemsley stipulate there are three aspects of network structures that influence virality. First is the unequal distribution of power, in the way that only a few people have many links while most people have comparatively fewer links. This unbalanced distribution of links causes a few individuals get most of the attention in the network and most of the Internet population only get significantly less (pp. 84-87). The second aspect is the proximity of few users to the core of the network. In this discussion about virality, we can think of the "core" as 'a set of people who are highly interconnected, but as a group they are also well-connected' (p. 88). Nahon and Hemsley assert that people near the core tend to be more influential in circulating messages than those farther from the core – although they have the same number of links (p. 88). The third aspect is the notions of bottom-up emergence and top-down control of virality. Nahon and Hemsley depict that virality can both happens because of many-to-many mass-self communications social process, but also can be directed by mass media and social media producers (pp. 94-95). Based on these aspects of network structure, virality can happen when a content is distributed by someone with many links and near to the core and when it is widely recirculated through interconnected links in the network by users and/or through various media and platforms.

On one hand, 'virality serves as a platform to spread ideas, innovations, communal information, or entertainment tidbits' (Nahon & Hemsley, 2013, p. 100). On the other hand, the word 'virus' as a metaphor signals negative connotation, suggesting a disease. Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013) are somewhat cynical toward virality. For them, virality suggests "irrational" behaviour and 'the public is described as "susceptible" to its "pull," and participants become unknowing "hosts" of the information

they carry across their social networks' (p. 17). They illustrate the defining trait of virality: 'ideas are transmitted, often without critical assessment, across a broad array of minds, and this uncoordinated flow of information is associated with "bad ideas" or "ruinous fads and foolish fashions"' (p. 307). Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013, pp. 17-18) also cite Rushkoff (1994) who argues that media material can spread without the user's informed consent. At this point, people are duped into passing a hidden agenda while circulating compelling content. For that reason, while virality has the potential to connect people together, Jenkins, Ford and Green suggest that this kind of information diffusion has some risks and the audiences need to develop critical skills to help them appraise whether the content is meaningful, valuable, and ethical to spread and when (pp. 224-227).

This research approaches virality from both sides: as an "antidote" to political information deficiency and as a platform for spreading "dis-ease" – that is, the "bad ideas" or "irrational" information. But before investigating both sides and discussing its influence on the dynamics of politics in Indonesia today, it is essential to scrutinise the viral video from historical perspective to understand the differences between the viral process of a video before and after social media age.

### History of viral video

The distribution of information in the form of a video is nothing new. Prior to the internet era, traditional mass media like television had introduced the embryo of viral videos by broadcasting short amusing clips taken by the amateurs, for example, the *America's Funniest Home Videos* (AFV) program. This program started airing in 1989 on American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), showcasing clips of home videos submitted to the show's organiser which later would be voted by a live filmed audience. The winning clip was awarded a monetary prize (Lindenbaum, 2015, para. 7).

Interestingly, when social media rises, AFV's popularity as a television show did not decline, it became more popular. AFV's producer created a Facebook page and used it as a new platform to showcase clips that would be voted on by the audience. The audience embraced it, helping AFV to reach a milestone

of 10 million Facebook subscribers in 2015 and establish itself as 'social media juggernaut' (Lindenbaum, 2015, para. 1). Through this example, we witness how the new and old media have a parallel relationship since the operation of AFV as a broadcast program can also work in social media. The online and broadcasting media work together to provoke virality since the forms of participatory engagement as an important driver of online viral media also exist in broadcast media. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the emergence of social media technology has changed the dynamics of information dissemination. Social media allows people to obtain information in the form of text, images, and video from sources outside of conventional mass media. Its further development makes sharing activity easier, hence it also provides a place for those who want to distribute their information content. At this point, social media's less professional and hierarchical mechanism allows for users' participatory engagement and so many kinds of information – including video – can find ways to become viral.

Broxton et al. (2013, p. 242) define viral video as the videos that become popular through sharing activities across social networking sites, blogs, e-mails, and instant messaging. Meanwhile, Jiang et al. (2014, n.p.) stipulate that viral videos 'are usually user-generated amateur videos and shared typically through sharing websites and social media'. According to Jiang et al. (2014), a video can be considered viral if it spreads rapidly through the internet population by being frequently shared from person to person. Furthermore, Nalts (2011, para. 1) adds that a video is said to be viral if it hits a million views.

In the early stage of the internet, there had been some videos that went viral, for example, Dancing Baby (1996), Star War Kids (2003) and Numa-Numa (2004) videos. These videos occurred before video hosting platforms like YouTube, and social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter were born. The Dancing Baby (also known as Oogachaka Baby) video was a 3D-rendered animation clip of a baby in a diaper dancing to a Swedish band song. The video was created by Michael Girard and Robert Luyre as a part of demo file included in Character Studio, a 3D character animation software, and that was released to the public. The original file was then tweaked and shared via email. The spread extended to other people outside their circle in chain e-mail messages.

The Dancing Baby video was the earliest example of internet viral sensation (Lefevre 1998; Buhr 2014; Moreau 2017). During 1996-1998, the video was featured on several local television stations (Buhr 2014, para. 3), profiled in CBS's "Public Eye with Bryant Gumbel" and being seized on as a plot device on the sitcom *Ally Macbeal* (Lefevre 1998, para. 3). Animation video was also not new at that time, yet the video was a breakthrough because Girard and Luyre created the animations using a standard home computer, 'making it possible for amateur animators to play with sophisticated motions' (Lefevre, 1998, para. 5).

If the Dancing Baby video was created by professional animators, both Star Wars Kid and Numa-Numa video were recorded by amateurs. Star Wars Kid video was a clip using 8mm recording camera capturing Ghyslain Raza, a Canadian teen impersonating an action scene from *Star Wars: Episode 1*. In the video, he used a golf stick as a "lightsaber" to fight imaginary antagonist Darth Maul (Dubs 1999, para. 1). On April 2003, the video was uploaded by Raza's friend (without him knowing) via Kaza, a popular peer-to-peer sharing network at that time. The video spread from there and less than two months it 'transformed into parodies and remixes created with different special effects added to it' (Moreau 2017, para. 6) by other internet users. On May 2003, the video had got coverage from major tech-related blogs and forums like Metafilter, BoingBoing and Wired News (Dubs 1999, para. 4).

The virality of the Star Wars Kid video cannot be separated from the influence of technology. Its spread coincided with the rising of internet broadband subscriptions in the United States, which jumped 23% between 2000 and 2003. This leap allowed the video to be circulated and therefore 'may be seen as one of the first instances of a massively consumed online video' (Dubs 1999, para. 6). In 2006, The Viral Factory estimated the video has been viewed over 900 million times (Dubs 1999).

The creator of the Numa-Numa video filmed himself dancing and lip-syncing to Romanian band O-ne's song, "*Dragostea din tei*". He uploaded it to the entertainment site, Newgrounds.com. More than two million people watched it on the site in the first three months – a staggering number at that time (Merrill 2015, para. 5), and thousand more shared it via email

and message boards. The video was covered on ABC, NBC, and featured in VH1's *Best Week Ever*. With copies of it spread across the internet, the video has possibly reached over a billion views to date (Moreau 2017, para. 11-12). Slightly different from the previous examples, Numa-Numa video went viral due to a combination of broadcasting work and online sharing. It is noticeable that in some ways broadcasting can be the factor affecting the virality of an online content.

The Dancing Baby, Star Wars Kid, and Numa-Numa videos exemplify the first stage of virality, long before the emergence of social media. When social media started rising in 2005, there is a visible shift in characteristics in viral video. Two prominent examples of viral sensation in the era of social media are Gangnam Style and Kony2012 videos. Gangnam Style was performed by Psy, a Korean popstar along with public figures in Korea. It had catchy tune and eye-catching video. It had 500,000 views on the first day it was released on YouTube, 15 July 2012 (Barr 2012, para. 23). Over the next month, Gangnam Style video became a world sensation. It was featured in *Gizmodo* (UK), *Telegraaf* (Holland), and *The Huffington Post* (USA) and awarded as Youtube Video of the Month. Britney Spears tweeted about it, 'creating a huge 1.3 million tweets containing the term "Gangnam Style" over those few days alone' (Barr 2012, para.46). The Gangnam Style viral phenomenon is a mix of attracting media content, the facilities by social media, the marketing plan from the creator, and the sharing activities by the users.

The Kony 2012 video is a 30-minute documentary video about a Ugandan rebel leader Joseph Kony uploaded on Vimeo, 5 March 2012. It described Kony's actions with his rebel militia group, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), including child kidnapping and forced recruitment of child soldiers. The campaign video was created by an American charity called Invisible Children, Inc. With its slick Hollywood production values, the video was 'dominating Twitter worldwide and having one of the fastest ever take-offs on You Tube' (Curtis & McCarthy 2012, para. 2). Its narration attracted public's attention; numerous celebrities, public figures, and statesmen endorsed the campaign. The hashtag #stopkony has had hundreds of thousands of tweets (Curtis & McCarthy 2012, para. 2), the video received 100 million views in

the first six days after being uploaded (Wasserman 2012, para. 1), and Time called it the most viral video ever (Nick 2012, para. 1-2).

The above examples signal a shift in characteristics of viral video over time. Virality is no longer appraised through the size of the audience, but also by how rapidly it is circulated. Another noticeable characteristic emerging from viral video in the era of social media is its ability to spark buzz or being discussed online and offline (O'Neill, 2011). Adding to these characteristics, Broxton et al. (2011, p. 241) analysed viral videos on a large-scale but confidential dataset in Google. One important observation they found is that viral videos are the type of video that gains traction in social media quickly but also fades quickly. West (2011) manually inspected the top 20 from Time magazine's popular video list and found that the length of title, time duration and the presence of irony are distinguishing characteristics of viral videos (p. 83). Similarly, Burgess concluded that the textual hooks and key signifiers are important elements in popular videos (2014, p. 91).

There are also differences in viral video packaging based on its purpose. Light-hearted and amateur viral videos usually have a purpose to entertain, as seen in the Dancing Baby, Star Wars Kid and Numa-Numa videos, even in the AFV as the earliest form of viral video. When video is addressed as a marketing tool of ideas or products, it has more professional packaging and the support of mass media, as in Gangnam Style video. A more distinctive characteristic is visible if viral video is used for political force. The Kony2012 demonstrates that a viral video that aims to achieve political impact is usually designed with a strong and resonating narrative.

In political videos, the factors that constitute virality are relatively similar in regards of strong and attracting messages and the support of mass media publication. What distinguishes them from viral entertainment or marketing videos is the variable of campaign statement/support that impacts the "virality" of the video. Wallsten (2010) analyses will.i.am's "Yes We Can" music video that circulated around USA's 2008 election campaign. He finds strong evidence that viral political videos are driven by a complex and multidirectional relationship between audience size, blog discussions, campaign statement, and mainstream

media coverage (p. 163). The Al-Maida 51 viral video demonstrated this evidence in the way that it was not only widely shared across online social networking platforms, but also gets coverage in major news outlet in Indonesia. Wallsten also argues that bloggers and members of the Obama campaign played crucial roles in convincing people to watch the "Yes We Can" video and in attracting media coverage (p. 163). According to Wallsten, 'if the so-called "viral videos" are frequently discussed in the blogosphere, supported by a candidate's campaign, and widely covered in the mainstream media, they can exert a strong influence on the dynamics of elections' (p. 164).

Up to this point, this paper has attempted to understand the principles of virality and the characteristics of viral video. The next section discusses the comparison between the viral political video with other information videos: documentary video and news video – viewed from production, distribution, and consumption perspectives.

#### **Viral Video, Documentary Video, and News Video**

Social media platform operates with a different logic than traditional mass media. Consequently, Klinger and Svensson (2015, p. 1241) argue, there are differences in ways of producing, distributing, and consuming information content. On social media, messages are selected and constructed based on personal preference or taste of the creator (Klinger & Svensson, 2015, p. 1247); hence the social media logic of production indicates more individualised and personalised forms of media content production compared to traditional mass media. Information circulates on social media without professional judgement of newsworthy values, hence it is hardly expected to be an objective product. In contrast, mass media tend to present themselves as a neutral and independent platform that fairly represent different public voices and opinions – although in fact the mass media select and frame the news through a gatekeeping process (van Dijck & Poell 2013, p. 4). To maintain their neutrality and independence, mass media differentiate news content from advertisements and opinion, assess whether a particular information can be shared as "news" based on a set of news values, and use experts or officials as the news sources and represent people's voices (van Dijck & Poell 2013, p. 4). In social media, this distinction is

blurred and at times purposeful information is disguised.

A viral video that operates within the social media network also has different logic compared to other kinds of video-formed information that also are widely spread to a mass

audience, like documentary video and news video. The comparison in the production, distribution, and consumption of viral political video, documentary video, and news video can be detailed in following table.

**Table 1**  
The production, distribution, and consumption of viral political video, documentary video, and news video

	Viral video	Documentary video	News video
Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information is selected based on individual preferences.</li> <li>Created to attract attention.</li> <li>The quality of the video is not a primary requirement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information is selected and created based on director's taste/ interpretation, script, and cinematographic work.</li> <li>Intentionally designed to educate and inform the audience about some real situation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information is selected by professional journalists according to news values and media framing.</li> <li>Intended to provide objective and neutral information, representing official and unofficial voices.</li> </ul>
Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Users act like intermediaries, distributing content in a chain-like circulation within networks of like-minded others.</li> <li>The popularity of the video among the like-minded people is the key to making it viral.</li> <li>Asymmetrical: only a few can go viral.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distributed through many platforms.</li> <li>Usually circulated as a commodity. The creators put on a marketing plan to sell the video.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Journalists play a primary role as the information messenger.</li> <li>News is broadcasted to a massive audience or subscribers.</li> </ul>
Media Usage (Consumption)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information is consumed within the networks of interest-bound and like-minded peers with highly selective exposure oriented towards interaction through practices of updating.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information can be used for specific objectives, like education. The video is screened to particular audiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information is consumed by the mass audience with limited selective exposure, the content/message have previously selected and constructed by professional.</li> </ul>

In the perspective of production, distribution, and consumption, viral video is described as 'mediators of ideas that are taken up in practice within social networks, not as discrete texts that are produced in one place and then are later consumed somewhere else by isolated individuals or unwitting masses' (Burgess, 2014, p. 95). Video can spread in the network because it has certain qualities that the creator or disseminator considers as worth-sharing. Klinger and Svensson define virality in a viral video as "network-enhanced word of mouth", when messages are disseminated from one person to another through a sharing process.

At this point, the distribution of viral video is indicative to the role of the users as intermediaries – they might not create the virality, but they can stimulate it (Klinger & Svensson, 2015, p. 1249).

Since it is a viral process, mutation and circulation of the viral video can far exceed the intentions of the original creator or disseminators (Burgess, 2014, p. 90). It is because viral video has textual hooks or key signifiers that the video becomes recognisable

through a process of alteration and repetition. The key signifiers 'are then available for plugging into other forms, texts, and inter-texts' (Burgess, 2014, p. 91). The Al-Maida 51 video represented the process of mutation and circulation. The video indicated a range of user's intervention in altering an existing content, particularly when the user cut the original video to a shorter clip. There was a selection of content by the user based on the personal preferences which assumed the piece they cut and spread to social media has the potential to attract people's attention. Likewise, when BuniYani shared the video through his personal account on Facebook, he added his personal comment and interpretation of the video. These interventions are crucial; the dissection of the video has removed the context of the speech while the commentary prompted new interpretations to that less-contextual shortened clip. It led the video to move from a documentation clip to a highly condensed piece of video that could go viral. The "re-production" allowed this video to be the vehicle for other messages, adding to its potential to go viral.

Through the process of mutation, sharing and repetition, viral video produces new possibilities and users as intermediaries can add layers of knowledge using their creativity. In contrast, the creators of documentary video and news video can somewhat expect how people will interpret video content. In the documentary video, this intention can be done through different technical cinematography, scene selection and storyboard, while in the news video the journalists 'direct' public's attention through framing.

Regarding the logic of social media use, messages in online networks are consumed by like-minded people – although not all social media users are like-minded. When connecting with like-minded people on social media, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, users tend to curate the information. For instance, users tailor information based on what they like and dislike. Social media algorithms supplement this tendency by filtering and curating messages on one's social media account based on his/her online behaviour. News feeds will then contain selected others' likes, dislikes and routines that 'enable users to anticipate their future needs and wants based on others', as well as their own, aggregated past choices' (Hands, 2011, p. 128).

Pariser calls this phenomenon a "filter bubble" (2011), a situation in which a person lives inside an information bubble that has been filtered based on personal taste. As the result, information tends to be homogenous and users tend to construct and organise their social realities through common networks. This is different from the mass media in which journalists and media institutions construct reality by 'framing' stories and utilising news agendas.

The Al-Maida 51 video was profoundly influenced by user-led distribution. However, it is important to note that virality requires a network gatekeeper, which in this case is played by BuniYani. As an active social media user, a lecturer and former journalist, also believed to be a supporter of Ahok's rival for election, BuniYani is a potential gatekeeper because he has the access to information and also the networks. His social media content will be picked up by his audience. Further, when the Al-Maida 51 video spread on social media, users added their comment and interpretation in their own posts. They sometimes included links to supporting or opposing responses to the video. These small contributions from a large number of participants collectively added up to a much more than the sum of their parts; the value of the video as an element in participatory culture cannot be attributed back to an original producer (Burgess, 2014, p. 93). Therefore, videos are not 'messages' nor 'products', they rather are the mediating mechanisms distributed via social networks (Burgess, 2014, p. 87). Through this mechanism, political practices are originated, adopted and (sometimes) retained within social networks, allowing a viral video to produce value as it serves as a hub for the participants in the network to do political activities.

## Conclusion

This paper attempts to reveal the meaning and the role of viral video in Indonesia's contemporary politics, using Al-Maida 51 viral video as the case study. To achieve that, this paper utilises an archival analysis of videos and documents to investigate what components constitute virality, of which the social process, the speed, the reach by numbers, and the reach by networks as stipulated by Nahon and Hemsley (2013). The elaboration of the history of viral video in this article further notices the shift in what constitutes viral video.

Virality is no longer seen from the size of the audience, but also by how rapidly it is circulated. In distinguishing viral political video from other types of viral video such as marketing and entertainment video, this article finds that viral political videos are usually designed with strong and resonating narrative in order to achieve political impact. This kind of video is different with marketing and entertainment videos that are usually light-hearted.

This article also compares viral video with other massively-spread information videos like documentary and news video viewed from production, consumption, and distribution process. The comparison suggests that viral video is not just a message or product, but a medium for other messages. Viral videos are platforms of ideas and they open the opportunities for new values and interpretations as well as different forms of political participation. Also, based on the analysis of Al-Maida 51 viral video, this paper acknowledges the importance of the user's specific intervention in re-producing content, from a one-hour long video to a half minute clip with less context. It is crucial because it leads a shift from a documentary work to a piece of video with political impact. Furthermore, users' contribution in spreading the shortened video with added personal comment is indicative to the role of the user as intermediaries who might not create the virality, but can stimulate it. This paper concludes that user intervention is important in understanding how content is produced and distributed on social media.

Compared to other massively-spread information videos like documentary and news video, it is noticeable that viral video has a different type of audience. Viral videos circulate amongst fragmented audience bound by collective interest. This networked audience contains familiar faces – though unidentified. It is different to broadcast audience who tend to be a massive faceless public. Thus, viral video audience can be both potentially public and personal (Marwick and boyd, 2010, p. 129). Political actors must consider this hybrid audience when delivering their message on social media. They must create their message in such a way that it can be relevant to that hybrid audience.

This study offers novelty in the way it discuss the most recent political event in

Indonesia. In addition, the event at the centre of the topic, the 2017 gubernatorial election, marks the first time a viral video has had such an important impact on public perceptions of politicians and politics. The study is limited to the contexts of local electoral politics in Indonesia and rules out the comparison between viral video and other kinds of non-political online information. However, it can be a starting point for further study, particularly in the area of social media and political communication studies. For example, next study can investigate the influence of viral video and social media narrative to voting decision.

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