The Role of Social Media as The Catalyst of ASEAN Community 2015 Integration¹

(Language, Communication and Social Media)

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Abstract

Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) Community 2015 is a roadmap agreed by ASEAN officials to be fully implemented in the year 2015. However, some crucial problems faced by the people of ASEAN to integrate with each other such as economic disparity and development, differences in political systems among member countries, as well as traditional and non-traditional security threats.But if we only refer to the successive issues, the dream to have ASEAN Community 2015 will be difficult to realize.The purpose of this study was to determine the pattern of ASEAN at the community level.The method used in this study was the observation of the pattern of user interaction in the ASEAN Community Facebook page. From this study revealed that social media has the potential to improve the sensitivity and awareness of ASEAN community to participate in responding the current issues in Southeast Asia.In addition, social media serves as a means of social and cultural socialization among ASEAN member countries.

Keywords: Social Media, Catalyst, Integration, Interaction, ASEAN Community 2015

Introduction

By the year 2015, the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) is expected to begin to make the transition to unite the people in the region who are members of this organization into a joint entity called the ASEAN Community. At the level of government at both the head of state and ministers, ASEAN is basically is an integral and understand each other. However, in the inter-state relations are constrained by a variety of problems that may be due to a lack of mutual understanding, knowledge abouth each other and a sense of the family of nations as the one acknowledged there are differences in the economic, social, political system and traditional security threats and non-traditionally faced. But of course all of that is no excuse to unite the community in the ASEAN region hand in hand to solve their common problems faced in the scope of ASEAN region as that of the European Union.

Strong willingness to build the ASEAN Community must of course be preceded by efforts to narrow the gap, does not mean to dismiss them because it is also true difference is the equity capital needed to build synergies, as is also done by the allied nations in other regions. If the differences can not be managed and utilized properly by all parties in all countries of ASEAN, the ASEAN Community still has a long way to realize. Although the plans of cooperation and regional regulations have been agreed for a long time, only worth it if the awareness and desire to integrate grown up from the community level.

For that reason, the real effort required from community initiatives to encourage the formation of the ASEAN Community. Surely as a society are separated by distance, it will be difficult to mobilize and rely on communication when conventional equipment alone. To overcome the constraints of distance, this paper tried to offer a solution that is expected to be a catalyst as well as an accelerator to promote the establishment of the ASEAN Community.

In this paper the authors try to offer ideas about the optimization role of social media to accelerate the integration of the ASEAN Community. As we know that social media is now present in

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many varieties and forms that are used by hundreds of millions of people in different parts of the world including in the ASEAN region to access information and develop relationships and other purposes is actually triggered by the existence of wireless network technology (internet) is quite remarkable. This technology has also been used widely among ASEAN countries which means that it is likely to build more productive community relations between ASEAN countries is not an impossible proposal to realized.

Actually many people in the ASEAN countries recently have taken advantage of social media as a means of communication, it is shown from the data globalwebindex (2011) on the global map for social media, indicated the position of Indonesia with 40.4 million users of social media, followed by the Philippines 26.7 million. While overall users in ASEAN amounted to 97 million users. (Cruz, 2011)

The above data shows that there is great potential to make social media as a means to move the ASEAN community's desire to integrate with social media one of which is Facebook. Since three years ago, precisely since August 13, 2011, a page on Facebook called "ASEAN Community" has created. The author use this page as a point of observation to see ASEAN community interaction patterns in response to a variety of content that has been organized by the page administrator, which contains information of each member state on certain days including information about ASEAN in general. This observation was performed in February 2013 to ensure that the data obtained is really up to date and verifiable truth.

Community Integration Through Social Media: Concept and Theory

Prior to further analyze about the role of the ASEAN Community Facebook page to build community awareness and concern for ASEAN in the various situations and conditions in the region. Firstly author will discuss the theories and concepts around the integration of the public through social media.

A New media theory states that there are two views on media era. Firstly, the view of social interaction: differentiating media according to how close the media as face to face interaction model.. Secondly, the view of social integrity: This approach describes the media is not in the form of information, interaction, or its spread, but in the form of ritual or how people use the media as a way of creating a community by bringing together the community in the form of a sense of belonging.

The above theory can analyze the strength of the information conveyed to the public through social media. The more credible and trusted the media in conveying information, it is certain that the stronger the spread of public opinion from the media.

Agenda setting theory introduced by McCombs and DL Shaw (1972) assumes that if the media put pressure on an event, then the media will influence the audience to consider it important. So what is considered to be an important medium, it is important also for society. In this case the medium is assumed to have a very powerful effect, especially since this assumption relates to the learning process rather than by changes in attitudes and opinions.

Based on this theory, the emphasis on the information in the specified time by the manager of social media shows that they convey the information is important. So that the effects resulting from the information has been disseminated into force.

The theory of mass society and integration stems from the view of Kornhauser (1968) states that in fact many members of the public who are not well organized and did not participate fully, requires the efforts of leaders to mobilize and organize them. As a solution, Enzensberger (1970) stated that the only possible way out is to take advantage of media-controlled emancipation from below, in this case the public. (McQuail, 1996:90-91)

Neo functionalism in integration theory emphasizes the dynamics of the agents. This theory states that the units established by agreement between the countries. However, the sustainability of this partnership will not last long without any element of agreement sought by its members. There must be a repressed ego to align interests to be achieved in order to produce a decision that could embrace all members. (Nuraeni et al, 2010:122)

The theory shows that the position of leader of the state without any encouragement from the community (members), will only lead to unilateral cooperation. With the involvement of the community is expected that a decision has been agreed to run smoothly, in this case the integration plan of ASEAN Community.

Walter S. Jones revealed seven conditions that encourage interaction. But one of them is very interesting that is, the fifth condition stating a view about the importance of the interaction itself. According to Jones, if from the beginning people thought that integration was not important, it is not useful, then obviously the integration will never realize. (Nuraeni, 2010:128).

In doing integration, usually economic, social, political, and security are subject sectors to be integrated. In this case, the interesting aspect tp be studied is the social sectors. According to Nuraeni (2010:129-130) in the implementation of social integration are technically defined by tolerance and equality with social values and political states involved. Social integration means shifting national idiosyncrasy towards loyalty to greater political unity. As a comparison, France, and Germany people today can easily tell others as 'European', contast to Indonesian, Malaysian and other ASEAN member which probably hard to call themselves as "Asean" in a daily conversation. Probably people in this region remain hard to find reasons to identify themselves as Asean since there is no certain icon that stick in mind such as Euro Train for transnation transportation in Europe or Euro as payment tool among European people. Developing sence of belonging to the Asean as a common place and identity of people in the region is not an easy task. Social integration can be seen by the growth of a common identity in particular supra-nationalism.

Explanation of concepts related to social integration is the basis for state officials to promote the integration that occurred in the community, rather than integration is done through agreement of elites.

From exposure of the theory and concepts above, it can be concluded that the integration of the public through social media is very possible, as we already know the power of emphasising affect the spread of information to the public. As a social media presence the benefit to mutually integrate people in the region depend highly to the people willingness which is, of course, can be engineered by government of each ASEAN member country.

ASEAN Community Identity in the Road Map of ASEAN Community 2015

Before going any further to discuss efforts should be made to promote ASEAN Community by 2015, of course, we need to refer to the rules that have been adopted by the 10 ASEAN member states in the Cha-am Hua Hin Declaration in Thailand regarding the Road Map of ASEAN Community 2009-2015.

Basically the Roadmap consists of three pillars that must be executed to realize the ASEAN Community 2015. Firstly is the ASEAN Political-Security Community; secondly is ASEAN Economic Community and thirdly is ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. Efforts to develop a sense of an ASEAN community stipulated in the blueprint of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASSC).

An important point in the opening of this ASSC blueprint state that the primary goal of the ASCC is to contribute to realizing an ASEAN Community that is people-centred and socially responsible with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the nations and people of ASEAN by forging a common identity and building a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and harmonious wehre the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced.

Then, based on the points in the opening ASCC blueprint there are 6 characteristics to be achieved namely: (a) Human Development; (b) Social Welfare and Protection; (c) Social Justice and Rights; (d) Ensuring Environmental Sustainability; (e) Building the ASEAN Identity; and (f) Narrowing the Development Gap. (ASEAN, 2011:87-88)

Furthermore, in this section the authors cite several important points contained in the characteristics (e), as follows:

- (a) Enhance the use of and the capability to utilize new media technologies such as digital broadcasting to promote ASEAN awareness and identity and facilitating ASEAN media industry collaborating to showcase Member States' culture, development, and talents. (ASSC E.1 43 xiv)
- (b) Disseminate ASEAN culture, social traditions, and values particularly among the young generation through the media. (ASSC E.1 43 xviii)
- (c) Mobilize the mass media and other cultural institutions to disseminate and share information on ASEAN culture, developments, accomplishments, benefits, and objectives to the people. (ASSC E.1 43 xx).

The three points above focuses on the suggestion to make use of the new media that is social media to drive awareness and identity of the ASEAN community. In the other sections also stressed the importance of the dissemination of information about the culture of ASEAN, the diverse traditions of the ASEAN member countries, and value creation especially in the young generation of ASEAN through the media.

Even on the third point emphasizes the mobilization of the mass media and cultural institutions to disseminate information more massive of ASEAN culture, achievements, benefits and purpose of the realization of the ASEAN Community to all ASEAN people.

The Utilization of Social Media Toward ASEAN Community 2015 Era

After learning the process of community integration through social media, in this discussion the author will show some opinion submitted by ASEAN officials and experts related to support for the use of social media to welcome the era of the ASEAN Community by 2015.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) during his speech at the founding of ASEAN Blogger Community in Nusa Dua, Bali in mid-July 2011 stated that ASEAN must maximise the use of Twitter, Facebook and other social media to engage the region's citizens. SBY added that ASEAN must "get into the act" and be creative and open-minded in harnessing the power of technology to promote people-to-people contact. (http://www.ttrweekly.com/site/2011/07/asean-call-to-use-social-media/, accessed on February, 3 2013)

In the 11th conference of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information (AMRI) chaired by the Minister of Information, Communications and Culture, Malaysia Dr. Rais Yatimin March 2012 stated during his opening speech that ASEAN should leverage on the popularity of social media that would keep it current and relevant as a disseminator of information. He expressed his view that the information ministers should re-look their engagement through new media and the social network, especially with the younger generation; otherwise they may not be able to play an effective role in promoting ASEAN awareness or building the ASEAN Community.

At the conference, the ministers agreed to adopt the theme "Media: Connecting Peoples and Bridging Cultures towards One ASEAN Community." The Ministers recognized that the theme was highly relevant as both the new and traditional media would continue to play a significant role in the dissemination of information to the peoples of ASEAN, subsequently connecting them beyond their borders and bridging the cultural gap. (http://www.pia.gov.ph/news/index.php?article=2101331018243, accessed on February, 3 2013)

In 3rd ASEAN Media Forum held in Singapore on 16-17 December 2011 organized by the Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC), Singapore in collaboration with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Germany, gathered senior journalists, media commentators and researchers from Southeast Asia, to explore the potential of social media in community building in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region. The speakers of the Forum reaffirmed the potential of social media in community building in the ASEAN region.

They agree with effective community networks seem to form in cyberspace, especially in times of physical emergences. Citing the case of recent floods in Thailand, Shinawatra University's Rodloytuk pointed out that social media surpassed mainstream media and official channels in effectively coping with the rapid pace of information to be communicated to the affected public. During the floods, the need of the hour was for a voice of 'authenticity' rather than mere 'authority'.

In the face of imminent floods, individuals rallied around each other on social media sites such as Facebook, Rodloytuk explained. They forged new connections with 'total strangers' and resultantly, built a community of trust that shared authentic information on the constantly-changing flood situation. Such information was not available elsewhere, either in the traditional media or via government channels. He shared the example of the popular Facebook page, Tell me quickly if there are floods that distributed minute-by-minute information on imminent flooding as the crisis progressed.

Social media sites, thus, not only served as trustworthy channels of information during the floods, but also as effective means of mobilising communities. However, the energy that sustains such online communities tends to dissipate after the crisis passes.

2011 was a year that bore witness to the revolutionary power of social media in organising for change in many countries. Although there are many powerful stories of its transformative potential, whether social media can truly be considered a sustainable agent for change in Southeast Asia remains to be answered. (http://culture360.org/magazine/social-media-trends-in-southeast-asia, accessed on February, 5 2013)

Here's a summary statement and support to meet the use of social media support ASEAN Community 2015 era. Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in his speech above reveals that ASEAN should take advantage of technology to make people-to-people contact. This is supported by the statement of Minister of Information, Communication, and Culture Malaysia Dr. Rais Yatim who stressed the importance of the role of traditional and new media to convey information to the people of ASEAN cross-border, and bridge the cultural gap.

Media practitioners who became a speaker in ASEAN Media Forum 2011 also recognizes that social media's role in inspiring the individual concerned can be considered effective. One is exemplified by the flood in Thailand, how the people helping each other on the basis of humanity, no longer merely the authority. This is the power of social media to drive users feeling.

Opinions shown above is basically a form of support, this can be seen as a potential for the development of social media as a catalyst for awareness with the community to make the process of ASEAN integration.

ASEAN CommunityFacebook Page: History and Outreach

ASEAN Community page in Facebook is a page that is driven by a dedicated young man who came from 10 ASEAN member countries. This page began operations on August 13, 2011, its presence is intended to be a tool to unite the peoples of ASEAN, especially the youth in various aspects, such as social and cultural. In general the purpose operating the following page:

- (a) To spread more information to all Southeast Asian Races about ASEAN
- (b) To make friends with our co-ASEAN citizens and to the non-ASEAN members
- (c) To make closer ties with other ASEAN countries and its citizens
- (d) To prepare for ASEAN Economic Integration by 2015
- (e) To support our governments and the ASEAN secretariat for the realization of an ASEAN Community by 2015.

Initially this page was managed by Jirapat from the Kingdom of Thailandas the first administrator and founder. The very first ideology of creating this page was simply to help the local Thai students to acquire more familiarity with English language, as that has been suggested by Jirapat's professor at his university.

However, the ideology has been changed. Their current ideology of managing this page is to create a community where ASEAN citizens from all 10 member nations can freely join and own this page. They do not proclaim the ownership of this page to any individual person or any specific country. We would like to ensure that this page will belong to every international youths from around ASEAN, no matter what are their nationalities.

In early February 2013, with observations starting, page has grown from a few fans to reach 130,000 like on page, and this effort will continue to add fans through a variety of efforts to encourage the developing economy of the ASEAN states'.

Currently, this page has more than 40 administrators representing all 10 ASEAN nations to ensure that this page belongs to every ASEAN countries under the concept of equality, liberty, and freedom. Therefore, they do not belong to any specific nation, but they belong to Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. (www.facebook.com/ASEANCommunity/info, accessed on February 1 2013)

Interaction Pattern Among ASEAN Community in the ASEAN Community Facebook Page

After briefly introducing the page ASEAN Community, in this section the authors analyze several issues related to interaction patterns among ASEAN community based on the sharing of information and feedback from users, categories of information shared, such as culture, traditions, and values, as well as strength and suppression of information delivered. The results of the analysis can be seen in table 1.

Based on the data that has been analyzed in table 1 of "Top 10 The Most Influencing Information in ASEAN Community Page", the following things can be concluded:

- (a) Information about 'values' is the most widely shared by members.
- (b) General information about ASEAN falls into the second most attractive information shared widely by members.
- (c) The opening of Myanmar to the outside world, one of which is represented by the administrator from Myanmar responded positively by members, as evidenced by occupying the first position in the information giving effect to Myanmar.
- (d) From these observations prove that the power and the suppression of information by the page manager has an impact on the dissemination of information to its members.
- (e) Some of the information displayed as pieces of the values of love and peace in Southeast Asia, the value of anti-discrimination, and the care of others occupy the third positions in the ranking. This suggests that members of this page is a representation of the ASEAN community values believed to be a commendable virtue.
- (f) Popularity of the fruit 'Ambarella / Hog Plum', the game of "Bamboo Paper-Pump Gun", and naming 'Starfruit' in various languages in ASEAN shows that the representation of

the ASEAN community has a common understanding about something, although in different member states have a different name.

(g) Tourism and Event originating from one of the ASEAN countries continue to give effect to the other members to share, though not from their own country.

Similarly, some of the findings observed in the ASEAN Community page, but there are also general findings are as follows:

- (a) Information published every day ranged between 30 to 40 posts.
- (b) The posting schedule for the administrator of the ASEAN states': Brunei and Cambodia (Monday), Indonesia and Laos (Tuesday), Malaysia and Myanmar (Wednesday), the Philippines and Singapore (Thursday), Thailand and Vietnam (Friday), and all ASEAN Member States (Saturday and Sunday).
- (c) An administrator who publish information via ASEAN Community page is not necessarily a representation of the country, for example, on Monday to be done by Admin Brunei and Cambodia. In this page does not, in essence, on the appointed day the information displayed around the country that have been scheduled.
- (d) The information shown on the ASEAN Community page 90% is graphical information (photos), 5% of the watchable information (videos), and 5% in the form of text information.
- (e) Topics about politics and government less attractive to the members of ASEAN Community page, it is evident from the very few response and the influence exerted.
- (f) In certain situations, such as the Day of Brunei Darussalam, ASEAN Community page on February 23 2013 is filled with facts about the relationship between Brunei Darussalam and other member countries, as well as congratulations from other Member States to Brunei Darussalam.
- (h) Categories of information displayed on the page ASEAN Community includes tourism, local wisdom, culinary, language learning, interesting facts about ASEAN member countries, the diversity of flora and fauna, as well as achievement / accomplishment.
- (i) On February 16, 2013, Facebook users who like this page based on the position that (1) Thailand, (2) Burma (3) Cambodia (4) Philippines (5) Indonesia (6) Malaysia, (7) Singapore, (8) Laos, (9) Vietnam, and (10) Brunei.

Conclusion

Based on the elaboration of the theories and concepts as well as an analysis of the social media activities of the ASEAN Community Facebook page, here are the things that can be summarized as follows:

- (a) Integration of the ASEAN community through social media assessed effectively and are very likely to occur and have an impact in the form of dissemination of information to the public quickly and authentic. This provides positive benefits for the acceleration of the integration of the ASEAN Community by 2015.
- (b) Based on the ASEAN Social-Cultural Community Blueprint, there are three main points which focused: firstly, advice to utilize new media to foster sensitivity and identity of the ASEAN community. Secondly, the dissemination of information about the culture of ASEAN. Thirdly, the diverse traditions of the ASEAN member countries, and values especially in the young generation of ASEAN through media.
- (c) On several occasions associated with the policy direction of ASEAN, both heads of state, ministers, and media practitioners recognize that the use of new media is very necessary for accelerating the process of ASEAN integration.
- (d) One of the main objectives in maintaining the existence of the ASEAN Community Facebook page that more comprehensive information dissemination to all races in the Southeast Asian region of ASEAN.
- (e) The values expressed by the ASEAN community interaction patterns in ASEAN Community Facebook page shows that social media has the potential to improve the sensitivity and awareness of the ASEAN Community to participate in responding the current issues in Southeast Asia. Beside that, social media serves as a means of social and cultural socialization among ASEAN member countries in order to create mutual understanding, mutual respect and recognize similarities among ASEAN countries.

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Table 1. Top 10 Influencing Information in ASEAN Community Page

No.	Type of Information	Category	Member States'	Influence (Share)	Respond (Like)	Link
÷	MYANMAR: the last frontier in the world	Culture	Myanmar	791	3597	http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.122824034483252.20961.1194993 11482391
2.	Thai Snack Time Style "Ambarella/Hog Plum"	Culinary/Social	Thailand	479	2907	http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=383736531725333&set=a.1211858 64647069.20403.119499311482391
3.	LOVE AND PEACE in ASEAN	Values	ASEAN	407	1354	http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=384617814970538&set=a.1211858 64647069.20403.119499311482391
4.	Ma Su Pone Chit-Disabilities from Myanmar get Scholarship in Australia	Values	Myanmar	296	1715	http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=385899248175728&set=a.1211858 64647069.20403.119499311482391
5.	Lao "Tall Tree House"	Tourism/Social	Laos	190	904	http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=384075621691424&set=a.1211858 64647069.20403.119499311482391
9.	Say No To Discrimination	Values	ASEAN	189	069	http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=384331061665880&set=a.1211858 64647069.20403.119499311482391
7.	Children Toy "Bamboo Paper-Pump Gun"	Games/Social	ASEAN	174	1105	http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=387744797991173&set=a.1211858 64647069.20403.119499311482391
8.	Meak Bochea day in Cambodia	Event/Social	Cambodia	166	1631	http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=388017597963893&set=a.1211858 64647069.20403.119499311482391
9.	The Kindness of Children Helping the Oldwoman across the Street	Values	ASEAN	86	1861	http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=384274768338176&set=a.1211858 64647069.20403.119499311482391
10.	How the ASEAN call the 'Starfhuit'?	Learn/Values	ASEAN	48	731	http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=387727791326207&set=a.1211858 64647069.20403.119499311482391