



THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROMOTING ASEAN COMMUNITY



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Introduction

- ASEAN community as a goal of ASEAN regionalism, needs mutual understanding of social, economic, and political reality from the government and its citizen. In today's digital age, the social media is replacing mass media as a platform for people to do communication discourse.
- According to Hacker and Dick (2000), information and communication technologies provide space for people to discuss economic, social and political issues that feel and create a common awareness and social movement.



- People can conduct public discussions indefinitely, where, and whoever the actors in talking about an issue and make it as a common concern (Habermas, 1989).
- There is great opportunity for ASEAN to use social media as a platform for promoting awareness among ASEAN people since ASEAN became the world's largest internet user. Data sourced from [https://aseanup.com/southeast-asia-digital-social-mobile 2017](https://aseanup.com/southeast-asia-digital-social-mobile-2017), shows that more than 338.79 million internet users and 305.47 million social media users in January 2017.



- The question in this paper is, how does ASEAN secretariat use social media to promote ASEAN Community and Identity among the people of ASEAN ? The author will use descriptive analysis to know about ASEAN's social media such as Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter for promoting ASEAN Community and Identity.



Regionalism and Regionalization.

- The concepts of Regionalism' represents the *policy and project*, whereby state and non-state actors cooperate and coordinate strategy within a particular region or as a type of world order (Söderbaum, 2007:479). It is usually associated with a formal programme, and often leads to institution building.



- Regionalization' refers to the *process* of cooperation, integration, cohesion and identity creating a regional space (issue-specific or general). At its most basic it means no more than a concentration of activity – of trade, peoples, ideas, even conflict – at the regional level. This interaction may give rise to the formation of regions, and in turn to the emergence of regional actors, networks, and organisations (Fawcett, 2005: 25, Söderbaum, 2007:479).



New regionalism

- New regionalism approach, which focuses on this regionalization, understands region as social construct that is built actively by various agencies rather than being a passive object. This means that NRA examines the role of not only states but also other varieties of non-state actors such as domestic firms, transnational corporations, NGOs, and other types of social networks and social movements in the process of regionalization. (Hettne and Soderbaum, 2000; Igarashi, 2011: 4).



Social Media Discourse

- Social media provide a platform for public to conduct public discussions indefinitely, where, and whoever the actors in talking about an issue and make it as a common concern.
- Gaining a shared understanding between actors is the main objective of this public discussion. When a common understanding is achieved, it will help the implementation of an organized social movement. (Habermas, 1989; Farid, 2013:33).



Promoting ASEAN Community Trough Social Media

- The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) aimed to contribute to realising an ASEAN Community that is people-oriented and socially responsible with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the peoples and Member States of ASEAN. It seeks to forge a common identity and build a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced (<http://asean.org/asean-socio-cultural/>, 2017).



- Under the ASCC Plan of Action, the goal of creating an ASEAN identity involves:
 - first*, mainstreaming the promotion of ASEAN awareness, regional identity and values in national communications plans, educational curricula, people-to-people contact .
 - second*, preserving and promoting ASEAN cultural heritage and living traditions,
 - Third*, fostering dialogues among civilisations, cultures.
 - Finally*, promoting ASEAN's standing in the international community. (The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Plan of Action, 2012).



- ASEAN secretariat is given the responsibility to develop strategies and social media utilization programs. ASEAN is pursuing to increase its online presence in various social media accounts such as Facebook and Twitter to create awareness within the region. Recorded ASEAN began to have an official account on facebook and twitter in the 2010s.



ASEAN on Facebook

- ASEAN uses www.facebook.com/aseansecretariat as the official fanpage
- This account is used to promote various ASEAN agendas and activities to the internet citizen. A large part of the contents of posts facebook account is the same as that in a post on the official website of ASEAN, namely www.asean.org
- Too formal and rigid makes not much interaction happened, least number of responses given by visitors either in the form of like, share or comment.



ASEAN on Facebook

Aspect	Score	Description
Front page	100%	Gives visitors a great first impression.
About	79%	Does a good job of providing visitors with context and information.
Activity	57%	Post per day: 2.5, with 76% photos, 18% notes, 5 % videos
Response	0%	The responsiveness of this page is not good at all. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No users can post, while Facebook is an amazing channel for fans to interact with their favorite brands. Allowing users to post to a page is the first step in increasing engagement
Engagement	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cannot score engagement based on public profiles• 18,417 People talking about this, which measures how many people have interacted with a page or its content, in any way, over the last seven days.• 646,262 total page likes• Engagement rate 3% which is calculated by dividing the Page's PTAT with the total number of Likes.

Sources: <https://likealyzer.com/>



- The results above show that ASEAN is still not able to make facebook fanpage as a means of building a two-way interaction with visitors. The potential of facebook as a medium of social discourse in promoting ASEAN Community is still not optimized. ASEAN facebook fanpage still serves more as a medium for conveying information about ASEAN institutions rather than engaging communities in social discourse.



ASEAN on Facebook

- By the end of year 2017 ASEAN facebook account has 646,000 followers, 647,036 likes and visited by 10,612 visitors. These numbers are certainly not comparable with the number of facebook users in ASEAN which reach more than 274.92 million (0,2%)



ASEAN on Twitter

- The official twitter account of ASEAN can be reached at <https://twitter.com/ASEAN>. This account was created in February 2010.
- From February 2010 to December 2017, it only has 6771 tweets, 80.745 followers or 0.0003% of total Twitter users in ASEAN. This statistic is not impressive at all. This shows that there has been no serious effort in utilizing twitter account in creating two-way discourse about ASEAN.



ASEAN on Twitter

- During December 2017 alone, ASEAN has tweeted 74 times with the average 27 people re-tweeting in every Tweet. ASEAN received a very high response when tweeting about the news of the death of Surin Pitsuwan with "ASEAN We are deeply saddened to know that. Surin Pitsuwan, former Secretary-General of #ASEAN passed away today. It is a big loss to #Thailand and the #ASEANCommunity. We convey our sincere condolences to his family ". This tweet has been retweeted 1,247 times, 498 Likes, and 16 comments.



ASEAN on Twitter

- What posted on this twitter account are mostly the same thing with what are posted on the official website of ASEAN or facebook ASEAN Secretariat. In this case there has been no attempt to create a different style of communication from various media used by ASEAN.



Conclusion

- The results of this study indicate that the use of Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter is not optimal yet for ringing ASEAN identity discourse. ASEAN has not optimally utilized the great potential of social media- in this case facebook, youtube, and twitter- to engage people in to ASEAN social discourse in order to promote ASEAN Community.