Audience interpretation of climate change documentary

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1. Introduction

The environmental crisis is not a fairy tale. It has been proven time and again by scientists that global warming especially is a legitimate cause of concern. Various adverse effects on the environment are directly affecting humans. As a result, to this, various parties have come forward in addressing these challenges in order to at least mitigate the adverse impacts that will occur in the future. This social change requires active social movements from various parties in the society so that this common goal can be achieved successfully in the near future.

Through the rapid development of technology, mediums such as documentary films include the stage of information delivery that is essential to the public (Kuo, 2012). However, interpretations of visual products such as documentary films in communicating environmental issues of global warming are open to various constructions of different meanings. Additionally, information dissemination has now resulted in the dumping of unstructured and multi-structured information which is now dubbed as dumping data or “Big Data” (Ates, 2008).

Thus, as a result of this observation, the discourse of ‘environmentalism’ needs to take into account the massive flow of information and has to fight in bringing their message to the audience. From the audience’s point of view, it is now apparent that the compilation of information is an easy feat and can create confusion in the belief system of a society. Selecting the source of content from the media has never been a more difficult thing to do. The phenomenon of losing this belief has been known to be ‘post-truth’ which can also be interpreted as an informational disorder. Here, many questions take place – How can credibility be sorted in a platform of diluted exchanges? What about all the other similar important messages that must be spread? How can people prioritize on messages, have time to process and interpret them when the space of information is too diverse? A deep understanding of this new phenomenon is needed to see the visual product interpretation in today’s challenge. It is important in order for the effectiveness of delivering...
visual content to be worked out well, especially in delivering important messages such as environmental descriptions.

2. Literature review

In order to have a holistic view of this topic, a literature review is needed to highlight the causes and concerns environmentalists generally fight for. World climate change that affects today's critical issues in the 21st century has been traced to its significant change over the past one thousand years. As reported in a study of climate change, there have been two strains of significant effects on climate change for the past 1000 years. The first was discovered a thousand years ago and somehow resulted in greenhouse gas emissions in the 20th century. Soon after, due to the industrial revolution, this change rapidly took place in the 21st century (Crowley, 2000). The industrial revolution thus impacts the economic system debate leading to the existence of a perennial system known as capitalism (Ates, 2008).

This profit-based system is a widespread structure and has been elevated by the world economic system. Today, this very system plays a big role in shaping globalization as discussed in Ates (2008). Along with economic development, technology is also growing. The use of technology such as the heavily reliant on petroleum also contributes to a large percentage of environmental degradation (Ahuti, 2015). Among other things, the use of materials such as plastics, the effects of greenhouse gases due to electricity use, unmanaged garbage disposal, poison usage and more can also be attributed to the activity of our economic system today as many do not take their tale to nature; Social changes are seen as necessary.

In the 20th century, the impact of the economic slowdown and technological innovation was evident in the environment, and subsequently demonstrated the movement's voice and environmental protection. Social movements among scholars are actively debating the importance of preserving the environment, known as 'environmentalism'; environmental awareness. The vibrancy of this debate can be seen through various mediums and among them is a documentary that is still alive today. ‘Media on media’; documentaries shared on the internet face millions of other information sources.

The current phenomenon is coupled with another phenomenon recently named as ‘post-truth’ which is defined as ‘objective facts having less influence in shaping public opinion than personal emotions and beliefs’ (Ahuti, 2015). The information compositions of today have spawned an informational disorder that scrambled on the minds of consumers to be trusted. Various platforms are used in conveying information including through the publication of documentary works. Documentary work is the result of the publishing of informal resources that can provide knowledge to the audience of the seal with the principle of visual literacy that advises the audience to be literate for any information disclosed to them.

Viewers want useful information at least in three situations-content, industry, and impact (Potter, 2004). According to Potter (2004), the content allowed viewers to understand that the work is constructed under a specific convention, and that convention does not overlook the reality of its presentation. At the industry level, the community must understand that media is a business with the support of certain parties. On the other hand, people need to understand that they have the ability to understand every message for each individual. It is clear that every piece of information conveyed to the audience has unequal potential depending on how they interpret the information (Potter, 2011).

Cohen (2012) related his experience of a localized event: the flooding of a neighborhood. But that event was critically emmeshed in at least two principal contexts: The natural, topographical, and administrative context that fashioned the arrival, rise, perseverance, and termination of the flood in the neighborhood; and his personal biography and previous experiences with floods (which, under the circumstances, were counterproductive), that channeled his perceptions and actions in a particular direction. His account thus draws attention to the complexities involved in the formation of a personal trajectory through a disaster. Thus, it contributes to the growing field of disaster studies by charting out the personal trajectory of the author through the prolonged flooding of his neighborhood. It indicates that, although people might be exposed to similar threats and circumstances in a disaster, as they were in the flood in our estate, their trajectories through the event, in terms of perceptions, experiences, and actions, will be to a significant extent influenced and diversified by their particular biographies and previous key life experiences. Notwithstanding the similar spatiotemporal context of the event, peoples’ varied reactions will thus result in a plethora of diverse personal trajectories. The foregrounding of the biographical dimension in human conduct in disasters is thus the specific contribution of this account to disaster studies.

Middleton (2012) described that Thailand is mainland South-East Asia’s largest energy consumer. Since the early 1990s, community and civil society opposition to new domestic large-scale power projects have strengthened within Thailand’s borders. Partly in response and facilitated by deepening regional economic integration, Thailand’s electricity utility, private sector energy, and construction companies have increasingly looked towards neighboring countries like Laos and Myanmar to supply Thailand’s energy markets. This paper assesses the political economy of Thailand’s power sector development through the lens of distributive and procedural environmental justice, including the role of social movements and civil society in Thailand to reform the country’s power planning process. The environmental and social costs of domestic power projects and power import
projects are discussed. The author concludes that Thailand’s existing energy imports from hydropower projects in Laos and a gas project in Myanmar have exported environmental injustice associated with energy production across borders, exploiting the comparatively weak rule of law, judicial systems, and civil and political freedoms in these neighboring countries.

Suparta et al. (2014) explained that Klang Valley is a focal area of Malaysian economic and business activities where the local weather condition is very important to maintain its reputation. Heavy rainfalls for more than an hour were reported up to 40 mm in September 2013 and 35 mm in October 2013. Both events are monitored as the first and second cases of a flash flood, respectively. Based on these cases, we investigate the water vapor, rainfall, surface meteorological data (surface pressure, relative humidity, and temperature) and river water level. The perceptible water vapor (PWV) derived from Global Positioning System (GPS) is used to indicate the impact of a flash flood on the rainfall. We found that PWV was dropped 4 mm in 2 hours before rainfall reached to 40 mm and dropped 3 mm in 3 hours before 35 mm of rainfall in respective cases. Variation of PWV was higher in September’s case compared to October’s case of about 2 mm. We suggest the rainfall phenomena can disturb the GPS propagation and therefore, the impact of PWV before, during and after the flash flood event at three selected GPS stations in Klang Valley are carefully investigated for possible mitigation in the future.

Mizraei et al. (2015) described that extreme flood events are a complex and inherently uncertain phenomenon. Consequently, forecasts of floods are inherently uncertain in nature due to various sources of uncertainty including model uncertainty, input uncertainty, and parameter uncertainty. This paper investigates two types of natural and model uncertainties in extreme rainfall-runoff events in a semi-arid region. Natural uncertainty is incorporated in the distribution function of the series of annual maximum daily rainfall, and model uncertainty is an epistemic uncertainty source. The kinematic runoff and erosion model was used for rainfall-runoff simulation. The model calibration scheme is carried out under the generalized likelihood uncertainty estimation framework to quantify uncertainty in the rainfall-runoff modeling process. Uncertainties of the rainfall depths-associated with depth duration frequency curves were estimated with the bootstrap sampling method and described by a normal probability density function. These uncertainties are presented in the rainfall-runoff modeling for investigation of uncertainty effects on extreme hydrological events discharge and can be embedded into guidelines for risk-based design and management of urban water infrastructure.

Saat et al. (2016) explained that flood in the year 2014 was the worst flood that occurred in Kelantan compared to the previous flood disasters. The effect of the flood brought chaos and insurmountable challenges to the residents because waste was in abundance and people had to clear the waste gradually according to the schedule by stakeholders. This study wants to assess the perception of the authorities involved in food waste management. The results of this study found that the main cause of issues in flood waste management is the ineffectiveness of stakeholder roles such as lacking facilities, transportation, manpower and financial aid. Besides, the severity of a flood with the thick mud also contributes to the ineffectiveness of management. The authorities need to take a long time to clean the mud, to deal with residents’ attitude and clean the waste according to the broadness of flood area. Thus, the stakeholder authorities need to have a procedure to handle waste for a disaster in the future. They need to upgrade the policies such as implement new Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), upgrade the facilities, transportation of waste materials and provide an adequate funding provision to change and improve the existing policies.

Ley (2016) argued that flood management upholds an ecological status quo—a socioecological system that perpetuates the potential of crisis and structures of vulnerability. While poor residents have developed coping mechanisms, such community efforts follow the logic of maintaining a precarious minimum of safety. Designed in 2009, Dutch-Indonesian anti-flood infrastructure (polder) was supposed to put an end to tidal flooding, locally called rob. As a short-term project, the polder promised to regulate water levels and improve the lives of local residents. While it wanted to make flood control transparent and accountable to Riverside communities, the project ultimately failed to escape the institutional logic of chronic crisis management. By investigating the temporality and politics of the polder project, this article aims at contributing empirical and theoretical insights to scholarship on socioecological conflicts and crises.

Roberts (2016) described that conflicts persist between forest-dwelling communities and advocates of forest conservation. In Thailand, a community forestry bill and national park expansion initiatives leave little space for communities. The article analyzes the case of the predominantly ethnic Black Lahu village of Huai Lu Luang in Chiang Rai province that has resisted the threats posed by a community forestry bill and a proposed national park. The villagers reside on a national forest reserve and have no de jure rights to the land. This article argues, however, that through its network rooted in place and connected to an assemblage of civil society, local government, and NGOs, Huai Lu Luang has been able to stall efforts by the Thai government that would detrimentally impact their use of and access to forest resources. Their resistance is best understood not in isolation—as one victimized community resisting threats to their livelihoods—but in connection to place, through dynamic assemblages. A ‘rooted’ networks approach follows the connections and nodes of Huai Lu Luang’s network that influence and
aid the village’s attempts to resist forest tenure reform. Haug (2017) described that the increasing penetration of global capitalism, ambitious development efforts, and related environmental change have significantly transformed Kalimantan and its indigenous population, commonly referred to as Dayak, during the last decades. This article analyzes these processes from a gendered perspective and explores how gender relations among the Dayak, who generally are characterized by well-balanced gender relations, have been influenced by what is commonly referred to as ‘development’. A review of the existing literature shows that new asymmetries between men and women are emerging mainly due to different ways of inclusion in new economic systems. Based on research among the Dayak Benuaq, the article shows that far-reaching gender equality has been so far upheld within the Benuaq society while gender gets intertwined with an increasing variety of inequalities. In order to capture this complexity, research on the gendered impacts of development should a) aim for a better understanding of the intertwining of gender with other aspects, such as ethnicity, class, age, or education, b) pay more attention to how these aspects play out in different contexts, and c) differentiate clearly between gender ideals, norms, and actual practice. Bhuiyan et al. (2018) explained that flash floods are the most common and disruptive hydro-meteorological phenomenon that Malaysian cities experience most often. The capital city of the country, especially, is experiencing more incidences of flash floods than the past. Although flash floods are not always confined to monsoon seasons, the city experiences flash floods more frequently in this period of time when compared to the past years. While several adaptive initiatives have been implemented, flash floods are still a major concern in the city. Therefore, it is important to revisit the matters for achieving the sustainability of Kuala Lumpur, bringing balance in urban development and flood management. Understanding the impact of flash floods is also important for proper set-up and implementation of land use regulations, implementing stricter laws about the socio-economic development of catchment areas. This paper quantitatively analyses the direct impact of flash floods based on loss and damage perspectives. It focuses on the direct tangible and intangible impact of flash floods in the city. That is to delineate what direct consequences are being actually experienced when flash floods take place in the city. Flash floods are handled by two separate departments in the city: Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) deals with drainage and street related flash flood while Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) deals with river-related flash floods. This paper focuses on both stakeholders at the same time. Results have shown that the roads, highways, houses and vehicles are directly affected, damaged and disrupted by flash floods.

Idris et al. (2018) described the flood as a common annual phenomenon in many parts of Malaysia. However, during the past decades, it has been occurring with increasing severity and impact. Objectives: This study aims to estimate the occurrence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among flood victims in affected districts (i.e., Pekan, Kuantan and Temerloh) in Pahang, Malaysia during the 2014 massive flood event. Methods: In this study Trauma Screening Questionnaire (TSQ) was used to assess PTSD among respondents. Questionnaires were given via face to face interviews. A total of 602 respondents were involved in this study. Results: 33 respondents (5.5%) were screened to have PTSD and was significantly associated with living in urban areas (p=0.024; OR=0.441, 95% CI: 0.213-0.915), having comorbidities (p=0.034; OR=2.652; 95% CI: 1.039-6.765) and experiencing four and more symptoms of PTSD (p<0.001; OR=3.767; 95% CI=1.831-7.749). Conclusions: The risk of PTSD among victims of the severe flooding in Pahang 2014 was low when compared to other studies. In view of these findings, it is suggested to early screening and intervention post-flood to detect symptoms of psychiatric disorder are needed with the aim of providing intervention to the flood victims.

3. Documentary of before the flood movie in 2016

The before the flood movie in 2016 documentary was published in 2016 by National Geographic. It was directed by Seven Fisher who won the ‘Academy Award’ for the best documentary film in 2010 through the documentary entitled ‘The Cove’. The documentary is currently being distributed free of charge for immediate access throughout the world to showcase the importance of climate change. Hosted by famous actor Leonardo Di Caprio who also happens to be a UN ambassador for peace, the documentary delivers explicitly the urgent need for action on global climate change. The contents of this documentary bring its audiences to locations all over the world to show the impact of climate change on the environment as well as debating critical issues involving consumerism. The documentary plot also fills the image of a host meeting with world leaders to get their opinion of the average joe who refuses to accept the occurrence of climate change. Graphics and visual facts are also included in this documentary to facilitate the digestion of messages to the audience.

The popular website, often referred to as a general reference in evaluating movie commentaries, ‘Rotten Tomatoes’ has categorized this documentary as ‘Fresh’ as an indicator of good criticism from various parties; The rate of ‘Tomatometer’ given was at 71% as a result of 28 internet revisions (Tomatoes, 2016). Similarly, in another website often used as a general reference for IMDb movie fans, the documentary gets a rating of 8.3/10 as a result of the votes of 18,629 members. Evidently, this documentary has gained the attention of the world.
and certainly has a widespread effect on many parties as well as the message that matters most.

The film's documentary features graphic images of the effects of global climate change and touches the 'fundamental ideas' that linger in modern society (Potter, 2011). In other comments, it states that the documentary is organizing the change of consumer behavior in general. The documentary also criticized the ongoing environmental issues and offered solutions to the world's consumers in controlling consumerism (Sapino and Hoenisch, 2011). This documentary has clearly outlined a reform that needs to be taken responsibly towards human actions. The documentary also brings a message that touches awareness that is easy to digest as the producers try to look at issues brought about by the public.

Obviously, the comments from many of the professional filmmakers themselves to this documentary conclude that the documentary message is about reversing the culture of consumerism that has had a significant impact on the environment around the world. Hence, it is concluded that the position before the flood movie in 2016 is a medium of message opposed to broad-based ideology. However, constructing the meaning of the audience on the message brought by this documentary is what focuses on the study. As already explained, the position of viewers in a society that assumes a variety of responsibilities and backgrounds must have their own perspective in interpreting the essential message.

4. Research methods

The study is aimed at research content analysis of information on the comments page of the YouTube site which has gathered various reactions from internet users to the visual display of the documentary before the flood movie in 2016. The dumping phenomenon of information that has sparked a collision of composite information has also resulted in a complex atmosphere for the construction of the meaning of the documentary. The analysis of this visual display is intended to answer the objectives and questions as explained.

The scope of the study is limited only within the comments space of the YouTube video documentary only. This is because the content of the comments on the site space is informational data as a result of the audience's interpretation and reaction to the content of the documentary messages, even coinciding with the phenomenon of information dumping. The selection of the documentary is in line with the importance of an important environmental issue message, as well as the documentary is distributed free of charge to convey the importance of the message to the audience. The documentary was also chosen because the message brought by the documentary opposed various dominant ideologies in society thus demonstrating the dynamics of the information obtained. In addition, the documentary also won the 'best documentary' category for the 'Evening Standard British Film Awards' and also won the 'Hollywood Film Award' for the 'Hollywood Documentary Award' category in 2016.

As a reference point in this study, the theory of cultural studies model developed by Hall (1980), "Encoding/Decoding" is used as the basis for exploring the question of audience interpretation of the message. This theoretical model is in line with the purpose of the study to look at the message interpretation process where this theory model has been recognized as a theory that works to explain a whole phenomenon and is able to test its components at the study stage (Kropp, 2015). Thus, the theoretical model developed by Hall (1980) covered three parts; producers, messages, and even audiences. This study focuses only on the audience's reception angle following the review of the audience's message interpretation process.

Discussion of this article focuses only on the viewer's element of knowledge (i.e., politics and religion). The knowledge horizon refers to; technical skills, institutional knowledge, ideology held, and their cultural background (Hall, 1973). Knowledge can also be gained based on individual experience; learning gained through the experience of consciously forming thought (Abdulla et al., 2002). Social media has become a moderator in the acquisition of knowledge, market orientation and new innovation of any media brand (Nguyen et al., 2015). The current news can be obtained from the ease of access through traditional media as well as online has formed a certain perception of the credibility of the message of each medium (Abdulla et al., 2002).

Thus, this knowledge framework encompasses a great possibility of space to shape one's thinking. However, its use in this study refers to any reference point of information within or outside the body that forms the framework of individual knowledge. Thus, the research is only focused on the themes as intended to be explored, analyzed according to the theoretical model. A total of 70 comments from 4,060 comments (July 2017) were analyzed for a period of six months from June until November 2017.

5. Findings and discussions

The 'Knowledge' element has examined its features throughout the analysis of the study, which is under the 'framework of knowledge' outlined by Stuart Hall's original theory model (Hall, 1980), is the scope of its meaning, hence the 'knowledge' factor may include the type of knowledge that different individuals. Thus, under this 'knowledge' element are those that are explored in this study to gain an understanding of the process of interpretation that is happening to the content of the documented message.

It is commonplace, for humans to have their own beliefs to live this life. However, the trust that every individual holds is certainly not the same and the variety that may be shaped by different backgrounds...
of life. Based on the experiences experienced by each individual, it is also capable of forming a belief that is believed to be a holding which is often used as a reference point in life. The findings of the study found that the arguments raised by the audience can also be categorized into the level of trust. This contrasts with the original clarification of the model framework that only touches the 'framework of knowledge' limits. These findings can be observed as discussed below.

6. First rating (Political) assessment

The existence of today's world that is adhering to nation-state and nationalism must not be separated from the political rivalry of each country. The internal politics of each country, in particular, should be a cause of concern too. Sometimes, the value of this political affiliation has resulted in various movements that could have a major impact on social change affecting many other factors in the management of the country. In Marxist understanding, this political framework is positioned as one of the 'superstructure' that plays an important role in a society of a nation (Sapino and Hoenisch, 2011). So, it is not surprising that some of the individuals who are so impressed with their political holdings and feel it is a sensitive value hold.

As in the findings of the study, the issue brought about by the documentary is that it can be categorized as in favor of 'environmentalism', especially on the issue of climate change as well as global warming has given rise to a negative reaction from the sarcastic user/audience.

If observed in their reaction, it is related to the current political developments of the world power of the United States. The mention of President Donald Trump’s name often brings a negative reaction. This is because, the date of the documentary (October 21, 2016) is near the date of the 58th United States Election (November 8, 2016). Additionally, the stand of the United States President is less credible and does not recognize the phenomenon of global warming as well as climate change. Based on this background, there is a conflict of values and points of view of the message that the documentary was trying to bring, which included the previous president of the United States; Barack Obama. In addition, Donald Trump’s triumphant Republican party was just a win over his opponent Hillary Clinton representing the Democratic party. This suggests that there is a breakdown of the ratios of two insignificant ideologies; causing the collision of both parties’ political stance and the dominant ideology is less obvious.

Reaction from the audience that responds to this situation demonstrates that political holding is one of the most important factors that can affect the interpretation of a message. At one point, this political stake is so obsessed and seems to have been a religion of inspiration in guiding the acceptance of a fact of the message that is present.

This also provides an indication that powerful powers such as the United States are capable of providing a widespread wave of impacts all over the world. It is clear that this YouTube site is accessible across the globe, hence, as a result of the diverse reaction in responding to the political situation of the United States provides an indication that their political situation is capable of giving a different perception of belief towards those who care about political developments in hopefully (Barnett and Sikkink, 2008).

7. Second rating analysis (Religion)

Religious holdings are a common denominator of people around the world. However, in today's world of disorder that now maintains its value holdings with various philosophical ideologies rooted in the debate has raised new questions; where is the religious position in today's society? As a result of the findings, it is clear that users are also responding to comment space by making religion a reference point in responding to documentary messages. All the references given by the audience are based on Christianity, and some of them have quoted from the Bible.

This refers to the documentary itself titled before the flood movie in 2016 which has been associated with flood disaster which is also mentioned in their Gospels. Also, the visual distraction featured in the documentary shows the famous painting entitled 'The Garden of Earthly Delights' by Hieronymus Bosch. The theme of this painting is based on Christianity and Biblical references. Of course, the visual stimulus from this documentary has touched the spirit of Christianity especially Christian (Joffe, 2008; Zadra and Clore, 2011). Viewers' reaction is an indication that the value of religion is a factor of a belief that affects the point of view of nature in interpreting information (Schupp et al., 2007). Interestingly to emphasize, there are also those who seem to give a reaction that insinuates the contrary to the value of religion itself. This can be attributed to the impact of the current issues brought about by the media.

Due to the ever-changing and developing world of today, values of secularism have been widespread in the realm of various other areas, especially science, which have also shown an increase in the atheist (Cimino and Smith, 2007). Hence, satire to religion and religious values can now be seen extensively; and this is exposed as noted above. The impact of secular new media is also seen facilitating germination on these atheists (Cimino and Smith, 2007; Idrus et al., 2014). For those who have not held on to this religious value, new values are theirs, and this is also one of the reactions of the user (Alattas, 2015).

Thus, religious factors are under the umbrella of the element of ‘Trust’ is a value that is often used as a reference for individuals in dealing with the message being carried. In fact, religious values are a life-altering point of reference for people who transcend...
the interpretation of the message. Religion is also a ‘superstructure’ described by Karl Marx as an influence on human society (Williams, 1973).

8. Conclusion

The ‘Knowledge’ component, the audience has shown a pattern of reference points that can be classified under a person’s knowledge framework. The point of reference for this knowledge on the interpretation of this message is politics and religion. Basically, this study shows that the documentary before the flood movie in 2016 highlighted how political beliefs can affect the acceptance of the viewing message in interpreting. Subsequently, the development of world politics has a great influence on the audience in interpreting the message.

Among other things, the results of the analysis show that religion is a value system that affects individual perspectives. At the same time, non-religious values are also held as trusteeship. In fact, religious elements in the documentary may arouse viewers’ emotions in interpreting information. In general, this point of reference is not merely a mere level of knowledge, since some of the results of a given reaction can be categorized as a trusted belief. In addition, shared knowledge also reflects the deeper viewership of the audience; this refers to a skepticism that signifies a loss of trust in some institutions in society as well as a stereotypical attitude that signals a negative attitude towards race and certain religions. The situation of the whole study can be summarized that the process of interpreting messages into becoming pieces of information is dynamic and composite; information clash is diverse. This finding has also confirmed that there exists a phenomenon of delirium and loss of trust in information sources (Edwards, 2011; Shahizan et al., 2011).

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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