



## THE RULE OF LAW FOR CRIMINAL DEFAMATION OF PRODUCT REVIEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Article Info	Abstract
<p><b>Article History</b> Received : 2024-08-26 Revised: 2024-08-29 Published: 2024-09-05</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Criminal Law, Product Reviews, Defamation</i></p>	<p>With the development of technological advances in economic activities and electronic commerce, it can create a loophole for criminal defamation of a product that is given a review or assessment by its consumers. The problem is whether the reviews are true based on the facts perceived by consumers of the product or deliberately to provide negative reviews in order to drop the selling value of the product. The Criminal Code regulates the criminal offence of defamation in Article 310 paragraph (1) and 310 paragraph (2). In its development, the criminal offence of defamation committed through electronic media is also regulated in Article 27 paragraph (3) of the Electronic Information and Transaction Law.</p> <p>The purpose of this research is to find out the legal regulation of criminal defamation of a product on social media based on positive law in Indonesia, and to find out how a review can be said to be a criminal defamation. This research is included in descriptive research with the type of normative juridical research, which uses data sources from secondary data, then the analysis method is qualitative analysis.</p> <p>The legal regulation of criminal defamation of a product review on social media based in Indonesia is regulated in Article 27 paragraph (3) Jo. Article 27 Paragraph (3) of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 19 of 2016 concerning amendments to Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions. Forms of actions that can be considered as defamation through product reviews on social media include if someone deliberately spreads false information or spreads slander about products or producers on social media.</p>

### I. INTRODUCTION

The presence of the internet is very helpful for humans in their daily activities. The most noticeable thing is that the internet helps all kinds of information barriers that were previously difficult to obtain become so easy to obtain. In addition, with the internet, everyone is increasingly easy to communicate with other people, even limited by great distances. Not only that, nowadays everyone can do buying and selling activities or other business activities via the internet. The development of information and communication technology that takes place in almost all areas of life is a characteristic of a world civilisation today. Through the internet world or what is often referred to as cyberspace, all forms of community creativity activities can be carried out in a borderless manner that can penetrate various national borders in the world (Yasmirah Mandasari et al, 2020).

Technological advances have changed the structure of society from a local one to a society with a global structure. This change is caused by

the presence of information technology. In the development of information technology combined with media and computers, a new tool called the internet was born. The presence of the internet has changed a new paradigm in human life. Life has changed from being only real (real) to a new reality which is virtual (virtual). This second reality can be said to be the internet and cyber space (Achmad Sodiki, 2013)

Reviewing a product or service is included in the right to be heard for a positive or negative opinion on the goods and / or services used, as regulated in Law Number 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection. Juridically, the activities of consumers who review a product are certainly permissible and do not conflict with the regulations considering that the consumer concerned is the consumer who buys the product and then reviews the product purchased. Living law cannot be separated from the consideration of authoritative parties (Fitrianto et al, 2021).

The internet can also be used as a place that can generate income opportunities to meet the

needs of life, namely by conducting an online business activity using an internet network. By only capitalising on an online site, everyone can do buying and selling activities online and this has become a trend in cyberspace or the world of information technology, especially in electronic media (using the internet network) (Muhammad Arif Sahlepi, 2023).

The formulation of the problem in this study is how the legal rules of criminal defamation of a product on social media based on positive law in Indonesia, and how to know a review can be categorised as a criminal defamation. Based on this, it is important to discuss the legal rules of criminal defamation of a product review on social media in order to provide understanding to the public in order to avoid criminal defamation. With the high level of online trading activities on social media, it is possible that criminal defamation can occur when reviewing a product on social media.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses normative juridical research, while what is meant by normative juridical research is library legal research because normative legal research is carried out by examining library materials or secondary data only (Dyah dan A'an Efendi, 2014).

The type of data in this research is secondary data. Secondary data is obtained through data sources obtained in research materials consisting of primary legal materials, namely binding legal materials such as the 1945 Constitution, the Criminal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, Law Number 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection, and Law Number 19 of 2016 concerning Amendments to Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions. Tertiary legal materials, namely materials that provide guidance and explanation of primary legal materials and secondary legal materials such as the Big Indonesian Dictionary and through internet searches. The data collection tool used in the research is library research which is carried out in two ways, namely Offline, collecting library study data directly by visiting bookstores, libraries, to collect secondary data needed in the research. Online, which is a literature study conducted by searching through internet media to collect secondary data needed in the research.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Criminal Code (KUHP)

Diversi merupakan suatu cara pengalihan penyelesaian perkara Anak dari proses peradilan pidana ke proses di luar peradilan pidana. Jenis-jenis diversi secara umum terdiri dari 3 jenis yaitu:

Defamation is one of the specific forms of tort. Under the Criminal Code, a person is deemed to have defamed another person when that person intentionally and with the aim that something relating to the honour, position, dignity of the good name of a person he knows becomes known to others. The term used regarding this form of unlawful act is some say defamation, but some say insult.

Criminal law policy that can be done in overcoming this is by warmaking criminology or harm creating on crime which is adversarialism as a repressive approach and combined with a preventive approach of mutualism or togetherness on the basis of peacemaking criminology. Defamation is literally defined as an act that harms a person's good name and honour. Based on this, several forms of defamation are described in the articles of the Criminal Code, including the following:

Article 310 of the Criminal Code, which reads:

- (1) Any person who with deliberate intent attacks someone's honour or good name by alleging something, with the obvious intent to give publicity thereto, shall, being guilty of libel, be punished by a maximum imprisonment of nine months or a maximum fine of three hundred Rupiahs.
- (2) If this is done by means of writings or portraits disseminated, exhibited or affixed in public, it shall, being guilty of libel, be punished by a maximum imprisonment of one year and four months or a maximum fine of three hundred Rupiahs.
- (3) It shall not constitute libel or slander in writing, if the act is clearly committed in the public interest or out of necessity of self-defence.

The provisions in Article 310 of the Criminal Code above fall into the category of blasphemy (smaad). In this case, defamation is divided into two qualifications, namely:

a) Oral defamation

Defamation pursuant to paragraph (1) or oral defamation, is an act of attacking honour by alleging an act. It does not need to be done openly or in public, it can be done in front of the addressee only, but there is a clear intention to make it known to the public (Adami Chazawi, 2015). If this formulation is broken down, defamation consists of the elements:

Objective elements

Act: attack

Object: the honour of the person, and the good name of the person

Manner : by accusing a certain act.

Subjective elements

Fault: intentionally, and the intent is obvious so that it is known to the public.

b) Defamation in writing

Writing (geschriften) is the result of writing either by hand or with any tool in the form of a series of words / sentences in any language whose content contains a certain meaning (in this case attacking the honour and good name of the person), on a paper or other object that can be written (Adami Chazawi, 2015).

The clause 'if it is done' in the formulation of Article 310 paragraph (2) of the Criminal Code, means the same as 'the act of attacking the honour or good name of a person by alleging an act' in paragraph (1). While the clause 'which is broadcast, shown or affixed in public' is a special element of defamation by writing or description, which is not contained in Article 310 paragraph (1) of the Criminal Code.

The provision of Article 310 paragraph (3) of the Criminal Code which states, 'It does not include blasphemy or defamation in writing, if it is evident that the perpetrator does so in the public interest or out of necessity in his own defence'. Meanwhile, two conditions are required for self-defence. First, there must first be an act in the form of an unlawful attack by

another person. The attack is very detrimental to his legal interests.

Therefore, the person concerned is forced to defend himself. The manifestation of this is that he alleges certain actions that humiliate others. Second, what is alleged must be true. The accuser must be able to prove these conditions. However, if the judge finds that the insult is not in the public interest or in self-defence, the perpetrator is punished under Article 310 paragraphs (1) and (2) of the Criminal Code, and if what the perpetrator alleges is not true, then the perpetrator is punished under Article 311 of the Criminal Code, namely defamation.

(1) If the person who commits the crime of libel or slander, having been allowed to prove that what is alleged is true, does not prove it, and the accusation is made contrary to what he knows, he shall be punished by a maximum imprisonment of four years.

(2) Deprivation of the rights under Article 35 No. 1-3 may be imposed."

The provisions in Article 311 of the Criminal Code above, refer more to the act of slander that has been committed by a person. The word 'slander' is commonly defined in the Indonesian Dictionary as: 'words that are intended to demonise another person'. In criminal law, slander is to defame or insult with a letter/writing but the person who commits the act is allowed to prove it and is unable to prove it.

Based on the formulation of Article 311 of the Criminal Code, three absolute requirements for defamation can be identified, namely:

- a. In slander there is (verbal) defamation or written defamation;
- b. An accusation of a particular act in defamation becomes slander if the content of the accusation is untrue;
- c. The untrue content of the accusation must be known to the maker.

All the elements mentioned are still in the framework of a strong relationship with the

form of action and the will that drives the action. Therefore, it guarantees and upholds legal certainty in the context of imposing criminal responsibility on the perpetrator.

The essence of defamation is to attack the honour and good name of a person, group, institution, religion, position, including a deceased person. Defamation is usually a case of complaint. Law as social engineering or social planning means that law is a tool used by agents of change or pioneers of change who are given trust by the community as leaders to change society as desired or planned.

The category of defamation was initially regulated in the Criminal Code, which is called "insult", found in Chapter XVI concerning insults contained in Articles 310 to 321 of the Criminal Code. In the content of the insult in question, there must be clarity about the identity of the person being insulted. The identity must refer to a natural person, the identity can be in the form of a picture (photo), username, a person's life history, or other information related to the particular person in question. As this must lead to limitations, namely:

1. In the case where the identity in question is not the original identity, it must be determined that the identity does refer to the victim, not to someone else.
2. The identity, although not the original identity, is known to the public that the identity refers to the person in question (the victim) and not someone else. This principle is important considering the essence of this crime is to attack the honor of others is known to the public (Josua Sitompul, 2014).

If someone feels that the sentence is intended for him, then unless the perpetrator admits so, great effort is needed to link the content and purpose of writing it and the victim. More objective criteria for assessing the relationship between the content of information or electronic documents that are considered insulting or defamatory of a person and the victim can be built based on the content and context of each case. The content in question can be assessed from a linguistic

perspective. While the context can be assessed from a social or psychological perspective.

Complaint offences are distinguished from offences that can be prosecuted by virtue of office. The prosecution of an offence of complaint can only be accepted if a complaint has been received from the sufferer or someone who has the right to complain. The deviation of the prosecution of a complaint offence is because the personal interest of the aggrieved/sufferer/which has the right to complain is deemed necessary to prioritise its protection. In other words, the reason for being a complaint offence is that in certain cases, the interests of a person who has the right to complain will be more harmed if the case is tried, compared to the loss of public interest, if the case is not prosecuted because of the office (Sirait et al, 2022).

Complaint offences are divided into actual complaint offences (absolute klachtdelict) and relative complaint offences (relative klachtdelict). Actual offences of complaint are those offences which are prosecuted by the court. determined can only be prosecuted if there is a complaint. Meanwhile, normalised complaints are complaints that can be prosecuted because of their position. A person whose good name is defamed can sue in a civil court, and if he wins, he can get compensation. Imprisonment can also be applied to those who commit defamation.

## **B. Law No. 19/2016 on Electronic Information and Transactions**

Along with the progress of the times, new types of crimes have emerged. Various methods and media for committing crimes are increasingly widespread, one of which is through social media on the internet. Article 27 paragraph (3) of Law Number 19 of 2016 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions regulates the prohibition of content containing insults or defamation. This provision aims to protect individual rights, where every use of a person's personal data through the media must be carried out with the consent of the person concerned. Not only in the Information and Electronic Transactions Law, the Criminal Code also regulates defamation.

Electronic Information and/or Electronic Documents. Initially, the verbs that are elements of the prohibited acts were not explained in detail.



The legislators have considered that this phrase is quite clearly understood. "Distribution" is a form of sharing or distributing activity, while "transmission" means the activity of broadcasting, both of which are active actions. Meanwhile, "making accessible" can be an active or passive activity, because it can occur in the form of allowing others to access electronic information and/or documents.

Whether a word or sentence can be considered defamatory of a person or legal entity in the Criminal Code and Law Number 19 of 2016 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions has never been clearly defined. This is because the meaning of defamation is relative. In order to understand the acts prohibited in the article holistically, it is necessary to discuss each element of the act:

#### 1. Intentional

Criminal liability in criminal law is a central concept known as the doctrine of error. Error in the narrow sense can be in the form of intentional (opzet) or negligent (culpa). In Latin, this doctrine of error is called "mens rea". The doctrine of mens rea is based on an act that does not result in someone being guilty unless the person's mind is evil. Criminal liability is an assessment of whether a suspect/defendant can be held responsible for a crime that occurs. (Ishaq, 2019).

Mistakes as an element of a crime are normative assessments by examining the characteristics of the perpetrator's behavior when the perpetrator commits an act. Mistakes are not a constitutive element in the formulation of a crime, except in certain crimes according to the law maker must include the element of mistake. Forms of mistakes, namely intention or negligence that are explicitly stated in the formulation of a crime must be proven by the public prosecutor. This proof does not have to look at the psychological condition of the perpetrator. Mistakes resulting from assessing the characteristics of the perpetrator's behavior are referred to as subjective elements, while acts that are unlawful and their consequences are objective elements of a crime. (Agus Rusianto, 2018).

The intention to commit a crime is basically in the mind of the perpetrator, but the intention must be measurable through indicators that are visible from his actions. In this context, intention is measured through

the perpetrator's awareness that his post will have a certain impact and the desire for the post to be read and responded to by netizens.

#### 2. Without rights

Unlawful nature is an absolute element in a criminal act, so that some say that "there is no crime without unlawful nature" and "there is no criminal responsibility without unlawful nature". In Dutch, against the law is *wederrechtelijk* (*weder*: contrary to, against; *recht*: law), which means contrary to the law. Acts that are prohibited in criminal law are acts that have an unlawful nature (Hanafi Amrani, 2019).

Hazewinkel-Suringa argues that the concept of "*wederrechtelijk*" in the formulation of the crime should be interpreted as "zonder eigen recht" or "without any rights attached to a person." The term 'right' is closely related to the civil aspect, which in Dutch is called *\*subjectief recht\**. In a public context, the more appropriate term is actually 'authority', although the concept of authority is usually closely related to position. However, in the context of Law Number 19 of 2016 concerning Amendments to Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions, which regulates the actions and management of information and electronic transactions, there is no specific discussion regarding the authority of the position.

According to the Explanatory Memorandum of the draft Criminal Code of the Netherlands, the term "against the law" needs to be used to avoid confusion. If this term is not used, it is feared that someone who carries out an action that is basically prohibited by law, even though the action is his right, could be subject to a prohibition in the relevant article of the law. In fact, if someone acts in accordance with his rights, it should not be considered "against the law." Therefore, to emphasize that only truly unlawful acts are subject to punishment, the phrase "unlawful" must be included as an element of prohibited acts.

The relationship between 'intentional' and 'without rights' is cumulative, so both must be met. If one element is not met, then this article cannot be applied. In this case, the legislators interpreted that 'negligent' and 'without rights' together are not enough to be considered a criminal act, and 'intentional' and 'legally based' are indeed not unlawful.

3. Distributing and/or transmitting and/or making accessible Electronic Information and/or Electronic Documents.

Electronic Information and/or Electronic Documents. Initially, the verbs that are elements of the prohibited acts were not explained in detail. The law makers considered that this phrase was clear enough to be understood. "Distribution" is the activity of sharing or distributing, while "transmission" means the activity of broadcasting, both of which are active actions. Meanwhile, the phrase "making accessible" can include both active and passive actions, because it can occur in the form of allowing others to access electronic information and/or documents.

For Electronic Information, it is explained in Article 1 number 1 of Law Number 19 of 2016 concerning Amendments to Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions "Electronic Information is one or a collection of electronic data, including but not limited to writing, sound, images, maps, designs, photos, electronic data interchange (EDI), electronic mail, telegrams, telex, telecopy or the like, letters, signs, numbers, Access Codes, languages, or perforations that have been processed that have meaning or can be understood by people who are able to understand them".

Electronic Documents are explained in Article 1 number 4 of Law Number 19 of 2016 concerning Amendments to Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions "Electronic Documents are any Electronic Information that is created, forwarded, sent, received, or stored in analog, digital, electromagnetic, optical, or similar forms, which can be viewed, displayed, and/or heard via a Computer or Electronic System, including but not limited to writing, sound, images, maps, designs, photos or the like, letters, signs, numbers, Access Codes, languages or perforations that have meaning or significance or can be understood by people who are able to understand them"

Electronic Information can be distinguished, but cannot be separated from Electronic Documents. Electronic Information refers to data or collections of data in various forms, while Electronic Documents function as containers or packages for such Electronic Information. For example, in an e-mail, all information contained therein is Electronic

Information, while the e-mail itself is a form of Electronic Document.

4. Contains insulting and/or defamatory content

The concept of criminal defamation regulated in Law Number 19 of 2016 concerning Amendments to Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions raises problems because the law does not specifically explain the proposition of 'insult and/or defamation' as stated in Article 27 paragraph 3. According to Hendrik, this proposition must refer to the same definition as that regulated in the articles of the Criminal Code. The Constitutional Court also interpreted that this article cannot be separated from the criminal law norms contained in Article 310 and Article 311 of the Criminal Code.

This was then confirmed by the legislators with the enactment of the Amendment to Law Number 19 of 2016, which added an explanation in Article 27 paragraph (3) that the provision refers to defamation and/or slander as regulated in the Criminal Code. Although the explanation of Article 27 paragraph (3) does not specifically mention the articles of the Criminal Code, defamation is regulated in Article 310, and slander is regulated in Article 311 of the Criminal Code. Given this relationship, further discussion of the articles of the Criminal Code will be carried out.

Considering the phrase "has a content" in Article 27 paragraph (3) of Law Number 19 of 2016, the author is of the opinion that the intention to insult does not need to be proven. Law enforcers only need to show that the perpetrator distributed and/or transmitted content containing insults or defamation. Therefore, actions such as reposting, regramming, forwarding, or similar actions that essentially transmit or redistribute the content can be subject to this article. This is different from the provisions in the Criminal Code, where there must be an intention to attack someone's honor in order to be considered defamation.

The regulation of defamation in social media is regulated in Law Number 19 Year 2016 on the Amendment to Law Number 11 Year 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions which has special features when compared to the regulation contained in the Criminal Code which is a *Lex Specialis* rule. In Law Number 19 Year

2016 on the Amendment to Law Number 11 Year 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions, every act that violates the law, the sanctions are not directly contained in the same article but are contained in different articles, this is certainly different from the Criminal Code where every act that violates the law must have sanctions attached to the same article.

The Law on Electronic Information and Transactions and its Amendments regulate the criminal offence of defamation or through the media of communication information technology in Article 27 paragraph (3) with criminal penalties regulated in Article 45 paragraph (3) of the Amendment to Law Number 19 of 2016 concerning Amendments to Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions. The following is the content of Article 27 paragraph (3):

Every Person intentionally and without the right to distribute and/or transmit and/or make accessible Electronic Information and/or Electronic Documents that contain insults and/or defamation.

Criminal sanctions in defamation based on Law Number 19 of 2016 concerning Amendments to Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions are contained in Chapter XI concerning criminal provisions in Article 45 Paragraph (3) which reads:

Deliberately and without the right to distribute and / or transmit and / or make accessible electronic information and / or electronic documents that have the content of insult and / or defamation, with a maximum imprisonment of 4 years and / or a maximum fine of IDR 750,000,000.

Legislation policy almost always uses criminal law to scare or secure various crimes that may arise from various fields. This phenomenon gives the impression as if it is felt imperfect or bland if a legislative product does not have criminal provisions. Criminal sanctions are suffering or pain imposed on people who commit acts that fulfil certain requirements. Sanctions in criminal law are much harsher than the consequences of other legal sanctions, but there are also experts who argue otherwise, that criminal law does not create new norms but reinforces sanctions as a criminal threat.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the legal rules of criminal

defamation of a product on social media based in Indonesia are regulated in Article 310 and Article 311 of the Criminal Code, as well as Article 27 paragraph (3) Jo. Article 27 Paragraph (3) of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 19 of 2016 concerning amendments to Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions, as well as Article 45 of Law Number 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection.

Then the forms of actions that can be considered as defamation through product reviews on social media are as follows including if someone deliberately spreads false information or spreads slander about products or producers on social media, which can damage their reputation, it can be considered as defamation. If a person intentionally uses expressions or statements that denigrate, insult, or harm the product or manufacturer on social media without a solid basis or without sufficient evidence, it may be considered as defamation. Any review that does not provide the reality and facts of the product can be indicated as an act of defamation.

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