

Adaptation and Existence of Community Radio in Yogyakarta Indonesia

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Abstract

This research explores the existence of community radio in Yogyakarta that still exists today. What is explored by the researcher is the adaptation and existence of three community radios namely BBM FM, Radio Swaka and Saka FM in the midst of a changing media environment including the presence of the internet. The researcher tried to get answers to two fundamental questions, namely how the adaptation carried out by them in a changing media environment and the concept of existence applied by the managers. This research is analyzed using media ecology theory which focuses on the function of media as an environment. The environment in this theory is not just a container but a process that can change its existence. Media ecology also talks about the interaction between media and humans and technology. This descriptive qualitative research shows that community radio tries to adapt in order to continue to exist either by using new media as a necessity to survive, or vice versa. This means maintaining the old concept of radio as part of the human strategy in subjugating technology. In addition, the unique situations of each radio station show that there is no specific recipe that can be used by all radio stations in general. This is interesting because community support is an important element of adaptation that aims to maintain the existence of community radio.

Keywords: radio, community, adaptation, existence, ecology.

1. Introduction

The presence of technology has had a tremendous impact on the media landscape of television, newspapers, magazines and radio in Indonesia (Mutiara and Priyonggo 2019; Noor li and Ernungtyas 2020; Sulisty and Salasah 2024; Picard 2011). There are at least three obvious impacts. First, the change in business model. Second, the change in the philosophy of information dissemination to be not only top-down but also bottom-up. Third, the use of multiple technologies simultaneously to disseminate information.

Amidst the changing media landscape, community radio has experienced quite an interesting development. It experienced a very high level of dynamism after the reformation. Now, community radio has experienced a significant decline in the number of community radio stations in Indonesia (Nugroho, Putri, and Laksmi 2013). The decline in the number of radio stations (both community and private) also supports the assumption that the number of radio listeners is also getting smaller (Maswar 2024).

Community radio also experiences intense competition. First, community radio has to be in the same media sphere as television and print media, which are more commercialized (Nugroho, Putri, and Laksmi 2013). This situation is important because community radio is not allowed to accept commercial advertisements like private and subscription television and print media are allowed (Undang-Undang Nomor 32 Tahun 2002 Tentang Penyiaran 2002). Secondly, community radio is also dealing with social media. Social media is now the center of information and reference for the community. The younger age of the audience has made social media massively adapted (Fitrianingrum, Reuvers, and Dragomir 2019; Das et al. 2016; Untari et al. 2020). This can be seen from Statista data which shows the number of social media users is increasing, followed by the growth of digital media (Nurhayati-Wolff 2024; Degenhard 2024). People's motivation to use social media is no longer limited to connecting one person with another but more than that (Susilo and Putranto 2018). For example, to conduct political activities (Lim 2011; Johansson 2016). Third, community radio also faces a different situation from its own community (Wilkinson 2015). With the changing media landscape and other conditions, the situation of society, especially communities, has also shifted. Community support remains important but difficult to achieve (Guo 2017; Rennie 2007). In some cases, community radio has ceased to operate due to lack of community support.

The presence of technology and its derivatives has caused the media environment to change. The researcher assumes that the changing media environment is consciously or unconsciously also responded to by community radio. Whether the response shows better dynamics or vice versa. It is at this point that the adaptation and existence of community radio becomes important to be studied further.

In general, research on the adaptation and existence of community radio in various countries has been conducted. Laura Maye and others see technology as an enabler of civic engagement (Maye et al. 2020), Thepparat Phimolsathien highlights the competencies of community radio and the impact of convergence in Thailand (Phimolsathien 2024). Meanwhile, Mwangi Susan focused on community radio in Kenya related to digital technology and journalistic routines in news programs in relation to community access and participation (Mwangi Susan 2021). In the UK context, it was Lawrie Hallet who highlighted the level of uptake of new media technologies by community radio in a competitive

broadcasting environment (Hallet 2012).

In Indonesia, several researchers with various contexts have examined the adaptation and existence of community radio. Aryo Subarkah Eddyono does not focus on a particular community radio but highlights the role of the Indonesian Community Radio Network in saving the existence of community radio (Eddyono 2012). Siti Hadiyati and colleagues highlighted aspects of radio utilization for social engineering in disaster-prone communities (Hafida, Sutama, and Joko P 2020). The existence of radio built through cooperation between community radio and the government is also widely practiced by Indonesian researchers (Sjuchro and Andung 2020). Dian Wardiana Sjuchro and friends examined the adaptation strategies carried out by community radio in the new media age era (Sjuchro et al. 2024). However, none of these studies have used a media ecology perspective. It is at this point that the novelty of this research is positioned.

Two problems were answered in the research, namely how the adaptation of BBM FM, Swaka FM and Saka FM in the changing media environment. Secondly, how the concept of existence is applied by the managers of the three community radios.

Media ecology theory is an important analytical tool in this research. One of the communication scientists who developed this theory is Marshall McLuhan who is famous for the phrase "the medium is the message". The meaning of this phrase is that the medium has a major impact on humans rather than the content. More than that, McLuhan wanted to show that the most important technology including the nature and structure of the medium is the message (Strate 2008). According to McLuhan, the medium is the message because content cannot exist without a medium. Words can exist as internalized speech in the mind and the result of impulses from the brain. But words must have a physical basis in the form of matter or energy. The different forms determine their meaning and impact (Strate 2008).

The medium is the true message that has deep meaning. The medium is the message because the medium precedes the message. Before a human encodes a message, he must have a code to compose it. For example, as happens to humans when learning to recognize sounds (Strate 2008).

The medium is the message as the user is the content. Audiences and readers must interpret the messages they receive processing the sensory data they absorb, seeking meaning from their environment, the artifacts in it, and the events that occur. In general, McLuhan asserted that if the message is largely constructed on the side of the receiver of communication, then its influence on us is limited. Therefore, it is the medium and not the message that has the greatest influence on users and audiences. It is the context that determines the content (Strate 2008).

In the context of media ecology, the term "medium" is defined as a substance that surrounds or spreads, which moves between two points not by drawing a straight line between them, but by drawing a circle around them. Thus, culture is formed in the medium, not the medium that is simply produced by culture (Strate 2008). That is, it is not a form of causality.

Media ecology assumes that environments are complex messages that impose certain ways of thinking, feeling and behaving on people. The environment structures what we can see and say and do. In general, the environment colours and even defines human roles including what we can and cannot do. In the context of media ecology, this theory sees the medium as the environment (Islas and Bernal 2016). Media ecology holds that technology not only affects society deeply but also controls all levels of society.

Marshall McLuhan argued that the medium acts as an extension of the human senses in every era, and communication technology is the main cause of social change. To understand how mediums affect structural change, McLuhan divided mediums into two classifications: cool media and hot media. Hot medium refers to communication that demands little audience involvement. While the cold medium is described as a medium that demands active engagement from the audience (Islas and Bernal 2016; McLuhan 2013).

Media ecology also draws on systemic thinking. One of these can be recognized in the use of the metaphor “galaxy” which is considered synonymous with systems thinking (Islas and Bernal 2016; McLuhan 2013). In accordance with the systems perspective, mediums do not cause certain effects in a linear fashion, but certain forms of communication, consciousness and culture emerge from specific media ecologies (Strate 2008). The systemic perspective is also seen in the Laws of Media (LOM) which consists of 4 laws. First, all technology extends human physical or mental capabilities. Extension implies the possibility to expand, replace, improve, perfect, accelerate and intensify. Second, it relates to absolescence, which represents the replacement of the old with the new. Technology expands but also amputates (Strate 2008; Islas and Bernal 2016). In amputation technological change is inevitable. This includes certain senses or abilities increasing while others will decrease (McLuhan 2013). The third is about retrieval. Social structures suffer the impact of new technologies and gradually regain their balance. Selection is often the result of adaptation. Fourth, about reversal. When technology reaches its limit (over-heating) the situation reverses itself and new artifacts emerge (Islas and Bernal 2016).

2. Method

This research uses qualitative methods with in-depth interviews and observations with the research objects of three community radios in Yogyakarta, namely BBM FM, Saka FM and Swaka FM. In-depth interviews were conducted with the managers of these community radios because they are considered to know and understand the internal conditions and external dynamics. The combination of in-depth interviews and qualitative observation is intended to achieve the natural setting that characterizes qualitative research (Creswell 2009).

Table 1. List of resource persons

Name	Name of community radio	Description
Source 1	BBM FM	On air since 1995 under the name Radio Suket Teki
Source 2	Saka FM	On air since 2012
Source 3	Swaka FM	On air since 2019. Swaka is an acronym for Suara Kebudayaan

Source: primary data

After all the data has been collected, the researcher conducts a series of data analysis. The data analysed included the results of interviews, and other data sources submitted by the sources, such as websites and social media owned by each community radio. In general, a series of data analysis activities carried out by researchers began with collecting all data generated from in-depth interviews and qualitative observations, then organizing them into data groups. After that, the researcher read

the entire data and conducted coding. The results of this coding are interpreted and divided into sub themes that lead to answers to the problem formulation.

The data validity used in this research is triangulation. Triangulation of multiple data sources is done by examining evidence from sources and using them to build a coherent justification for the theme (Creswell 2009). Adding to the validity of the study was done by adding and forming a convergence of several other data sources and perspectives from research sources. In this study, the presence of social media accounts and websites of each community radio is important data that is part of the observation process carried out.

3. Result and Discussion

Adaptation of Community Radio in a Changing Environment

The results show that in adapting BBM FM, Saka FM and Swaka FM try to stand on two axes. First, they still maintain some old concepts that they believe can continue to be used. But on the other hand, they see technology as something that needs to be subdued, especially because technology changes the character of audiences and messages. Second, the presence of technology including social media provides new insights for community radio in its management. Third, the success of the COVID-19 pandemic - which indirectly changed the media landscape - also provided a new formula for community radio to continue to exist.

Of the three radios that are the object of research in this study, BBM FM is the oldest community radio among Swaka FM and Saka FM. It has been on air since before the Reformation Era in 1995 under the name Radio Suket Teki. This shows that BBM FM lived in two different political regimes and crossed two eras of technological change: before the presence of social media in Indonesia and after.

Interviewee 1 said that the most fundamental change during the New Order and Reformation eras was that people had more choices of entertainment or information channels. This had an impact on the variety of broadcast content. For example, if BBM FM used to broadcast one of its programs, namely "Mbah Tromlur" (Namba Mitro Ketemu Sedulur/ add friends meet relatives) every day, now the program is only broadcast on Tuesdays from 20.00 - 24.00 WIB. Not only that, this program also targets the Javanese diaspora spread around the world. This cross-country interaction between broadcasters and listeners can be connected through radio.garden streaming and WhatsApp instant messaging services. Interviewee 1 recognized the use of radio.garden as a new opportunity to reach more listeners. Especially because BBM FM has cultural content (such as uyon-uyon) that other radios do not have and is not broadcast as often as BBM FM.

The highly visual nature of today's audiences is also something that needs to be considered. The three community radio stations that we interviewed utilize YouTube and Facebook to provide audio and visual facilities for their audiences. Swaka FM does Facebook live on every broadcast in an effort not only to expand its reach but also to provide visuals to the people who follow. Thus, they feel closer to the audience.

The presence of technology that expands reach and provides diversity in content (audio & visual) also has an impact on the performance of these radio managers in managing community media. BBM FM managers believe that they can no longer play games or be less serious in operating the radio.

For this reason, programs and broadcast content must be carefully considered. The manager of Saka FM believes that technology has made people stop listening to the radio. Therefore, they develop social media, live Youtube and live streaming through the Saka FM website. Program management and the radio as a whole must also be improved.

Radio is often regarded as a medium that prioritizes the sense of hearing while building the audience's image, but now it has become very audio-visual. The increasingly competitive media environment and the presence of technology have made radio not only a sound medium, but also a visual one. Media ecology theory believes that the medium is the message itself. This can be seen in the research findings that show the presence of technology as a medium is able to shape messages. When one medium becomes the content of another medium, it becomes a code, symbolic form or aesthetic style used to create a particular message (Strate 2008).

Not only that, the medium is not an actor but a stage on which human agents play their roles. As an environment, the medium does not determine our actions, but it does determine the range of possible actions we can take and facilitates certain actions while preventing others. Media functions as environment, ecology and system. Content is what happens within the system and content may affect the system. Technological innovation is a change that occurs in the system itself and the impact will be profound and broad (Strate 2008). In this context, community radio managers are agents who play their role. For example, they must decide what kind of management to do and vice versa. The advent of technology, including social media, has forced and facilitated certain evolutions that impact not only the managers but also the audience.

In a changing media environment, agents also play a role in the context of choosing what actions are possible. In this context, we see that radio managers try to maintain some old concepts. The emergence of technology as a new medium, we see, gives agents the freedom to choose and decide on actions. This is related to the third finding of this research.

The third finding is that radio stations both have "traditional" concepts they believe in despite the changing media environment. One old concept that Saka FM managers continue to hold on to is that good content will always bring audiences. That's why they focus on content development, programs must be good and even piloted first before continuing to be a regular program. BBM FM believes that radio is still needed. They continue to be consistent in traditional Javanese and Nusantara cultural content. Some programs even raise issues that are now rarely discussed, especially by millennials and Z generation. But the theme is still broadcast. News flash production is also still done to provide brief information to BBM FM's audience. Swaka FM believes that interactivity is important. That's why they not only live via Facebook but also accept audiences who want to sing karaoke together to come directly to their studio.

The culture is formed systemically. Media ecology theory believes that mediums do not cause certain effects in a linear fashion. If we imagine the systems perspective that underpins this thinking, then the environment is a complex message. One thing will colour other things systemically rather than partially. When technology becomes a necessity then everything goes hand in hand, one thing causes another. Technology is changing the way audiences consume information, a visual and audio way of thinking that is built together, captured by community radio as the demands of today. When content becomes audiovisual, the perspective of radio managers changes. There are at least two senses that must be served, namely the senses of hearing and sight. This has an impact on the

production and content. For example, the choice of content in the form of podcasts is a middle ground taken by BBM FM to satisfy audiences who see and hear. Saka FM's broadcast content with a softer Islamic spirit is also a way to be more flexible in promoting the program through social media.

On the one hand, these methods can be interpreted as a form of retrieval because the presence of new technology has upset the social structure. On the other hand, radio's ability as a space for imagination or often called the theater of the mind becomes amputated. Amputation is part of the consequence of technology making the old obsolete (absolescence) as it is replaced by the new.

Meanwhile, both Saka FM, BBM FM and Swaka FM feel the COVID-19 pandemic. For community radio, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis has had several impacts. First, community radio management must adapt to a situation that does not allow close contact between individuals. This means that all communication activities must be carried out remotely. Second, the community's concentration is not on entertainment but health recovery. Third, the community's material and non-material energy is very limited.

The Covid-19 pandemic has given Saka FM and BBM FM new insights into the use of technology. YouTube, online meeting apps and other live streaming tools are used to overcome limitations. Meanwhile, Swaka FM is the youngest community radio and came into existence because of the pandemic. According to informant 3, during the pandemic, the situation in their village was full of suffering and there was no entertainment. This condition made the residents of Kauman Pandak Bantul take the initiative to establish Swaka FM.

Concept of Community Radio Existence

We conclude that the concept of existence developed by these three community radios is based on content differentiation and the ability to regenerate ideas, perspectives and human resources.

The consistency of BBM FM and Swaka FM to continue broadcasting cultural programs that are often considered unsuitable for the age of today's audience is an important energy to continue to exist. On the one hand, cultural content is a differentiator from other radios, while at the same time it is also an energy to continue broadcasting. Meanwhile, Saka FM sticks to entertainment content with an Islamic flavour. Although they have made a shift from straight forward Islamic to softer, the Islamic nuances have never disappeared since the beginning of the air until now.

Furthermore, the regeneration of ideas, perspectives and human resources is another thing that can be concluded from the concept of the existence of these three community radios. The use of technology, including social media, is part of this regeneration effort. Community radio is no longer defined by its geographical aspect. Aside from the confusion of regulations, the use of technology is considered cheaper and provides a wider broadcast reach. By the researchers, this technological adaptation can not only be interpreted as a form of powerlessness over regulations that limit broadcasting distance but also part of the resistance in order to continue to exist.

The use of technology, including social media, does not only require mastery of the device but also more than that. Adoption of technology requires the regeneration of ideas and perspectives. This is because technology does not only have an impact on how to operate the tools but more broadly on the management aspects as well as the formulation of event formats and content. This includes the vision of the current audience. All the community radio stations in this study agree that today's audiences are not only listening but also visual. At the very least, radio managers realize that audiences

need to be given the freedom to choose the platform they want.

Furthermore, the regeneration of human resources is also very necessary and has become a concern of community radio managers. Although there is still a shortage of broadcasters, the three community radio stations show that they are concerned about human resource regeneration. Of the three, Swaka FM has not made much effort to regenerate managers. BBM FM and Saka FM have thought about it. BBM FM conducts a lot of training for young people and continues to involve many parties. BBM FM and Saka FM also open internship opportunities for students to join their radios. Interviewee 2 from Saka FM said that it is through these internships that some potential people can come in to replace old people.

Not only that, but he also added that community radio, especially Saka FM, is like a laboratory for anyone who does not know radio management and is given knowledge about broadcasting until they are proficient. The character of Saka FM that relies on kinship so that it is not too binding makes many students and students interested in joining the internship program.

At this point, the technology surrounding the media environment allows for expansion. Expansion in one phase does require a different response power. McLuhan mentions that expansion allows for other things to occur, namely alternation, improvement, refinement, acceleration and intensity. So, we can interpret regeneration in HR and non-HR as part of the response to the extends that occur.

4. Conclusion

The main conclusion of this research is that community radio is trying to adapt to continue to exist either by using new media as a necessity to survive, or vice versa. This means maintaining the old concept of radio as part of the human strategy of subjugating technology. In addition, the unique situations of each radio station show that there is no specific recipe or formalization that can be used by all radio stations in general. This is interesting because community support is an important element of adaptation that aims to sustain the existence of community radio.

However, this research does not go further than the issue of regulation. It is important to look at community radio regulation as an aspect that determines the life of community radio. This study recommends that future researchers develop an investigation of community radio from a regulatory perspective as a manifestation of state support for the diversity of information dissemination mediums.

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