

PRFM Radio: Challenges and Opportunities of Local Media in Facing Digital Era

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Abstract

This study aims to explore PRFM radio, a local media, in facing the digital era. This is based on the assumption that the existence of local media, in addition, have to deal with the challenges of digital technology, does not only change the consumption patterns of the public media but it must also respond to the changes of values in society that occur in the digital era. This study used a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews and observations of media content and the use of digital media by PRFM. This research found that there are opportunities in the digital era for PRFM to develop digital media-based citizen journalism and to gain an extended audience. The other digital era challenge is the emergence of new values related to the popularity and narcissistic character of the people where there are some people who send hoax or fake news through PRFM social media to be popular. In addition, PRFM Radio's collaboration with the local government to disseminate public services demands a competent resource that is mastering the knowledge of the production and the distribution process of digital media content. Finally, it can be concluded that in the digital era the emergence of new values related to hoaxes or fake news requires the existence of PRFM reporters to be very important to check the truth of news from digital media to the field. In addition, PRFM must be able to make social media users also become listeners of PRFM Radio, not only PRFM followers.

Keywords

Local Media; Social-Media, Digital Media; Digital Era; PRFM Radio

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Introduction

PRFM is a local radio developed by one of the biggest Indonesian media group called Pikiran Rakyat. Society in this region is well acquainted with the internet and social media and therefore PRFM is logically connected to digital media ever since its establishment in 2009. As a local media, PRFM focuses on news content and treats its audience as an important source of information. This leads to PRFM's slogan, which encourages "you are our reporter" ("*andalah reporter kami*"). With this slogan, PRFM motivates the society to actively and interactively act and share any kind of information they have with PRFM. Conceptually, PRFM radio depends on what is called as citizen journalism. As a media that almost entirely depend on active society, the existence of social media then acts as a crucial role for PRFM. It agrees with Kietzmann's view that states the existence of social media's seven functions, which are presence, relationship, identity, sharing, reputation, conversation, and group (Kietzmann et al., 2011). At the time this paper is written, PRFM is quite popular in social media, with the biggest number of followers among any other local media in West Java. On Facebook, PRFM has 70,300 followers, while there are 249,330 followers on Twitter and they have no less than 155,520 followers on Instagram.

What PRFM is doing has also been done in various places, just like Holcomb's research that takes up the issue of the ability of local media in America to digitally adapt and use it to increase their income (Holcomb, 2018; Tang, 2018). In addition, the choice of media type by the audience also significantly influences their view of news and journalistic practices (Lee et al., 2017). Referring to the existence of PRFM as local radio, it becomes a reality that supports the importance of local media development. From what PRFM has done, the relationship between media and the society where the media itself lives, grows, and develops, becomes incredibly close. Media and society become interchangeable and fill in each other's needs. The society supports the existence of its media, and the media fills the needs of the society (Baym & Byod 2012). Local media such as PRFM is unlike national media that tends to grow and develop only for its own sake, or for the sake of its owner, and tends to disregard the needs of its audience in various different areas. National media is a media that tries to cover a wide scope, thus creating a characteristically national content and disregards any kind of diversity in its content. Socially and culturally, Indonesia's economy and politic has great diversity in its society and areas. Indonesia has around 300 tribes with more than 700 local languages. There are more than 270 million people in Indonesia, living in areas so wide from the west to the east, along the equatorial line, with the length of 1,910,931 km². There are 17,504 islands in the archipelago of Indonesia.

Indonesia's diversity requires local media to maintain the differences as a cultural treasure while at the same time to support the unity in diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*), as the one and true Indonesia's identity. Meanwhile, in terms of national broadcasting business with the system of broadcasting network station and local broadcasting network station, it is also expected to reduce the dominancy of national entrepreneurs that do not give room for the development of media broadcasting at the local level. From the situation and condition of Indonesia, there are many who realize the need of a great change and transformation in Indonesia's media system that leads to national media system. When the 1998 reformation toppled the authoritarian regime in the media field, it became one of the most important moment to create transformation. Indonesian constitution of UU No. 32/2002, which regulates broadcasting, states that the Indonesian national broadcasting media system is the system of local and network broadcasting system. Both of the systems basically are forms of media that cater to the regional needs, which then lead to the creation of the media that is specifically oriented into local needs.

Local broadcasting station is supposed to be a media platform that is established and owned based on the initiative of local citizen to develop the broadcasting media in their own region. One of communication academicians, who also acted as the head of Indonesian Broadcasting Committee or KPI (*Komite Penyiaran Indonesia*), stated that in order to give a recommendation for local broadcasting media to get a broadcasting permission, the Local Indonesian Broadcasting Committee or KPID (*Komite Penyiaran Indonesia Daerah*) tries to pick the parties that possess loyalties and care for their own regional needs. Meanwhile, network broadcasting system is a system that demands national media to change their national broadcasting system into simply network broadcasting system. There will be no more live national broadcasting system because national media must have a network in each and every single broadcasting region. Through the network system, it is expected that the broadcasting station operates as a regional network media and can give attention while also negotiate the need of their own region with

national media as its head of network.

However, there are many setbacks and problems both in policy making and its implementation, with the addition of the competency of the management of local broadcasting media and the support of local stakeholders (Maryani et al., 2018). There are many local televisions that cannot develop due to the competition between them and the network media that gains supports from the head of network in the central division, plus also the advertisement industry that is characteristically extremely self or national centered. Related to advertisement gain, it is common for the national media tycoons to develop television network by adding a more diverse media outlet variations but not content variation diversity. Diverse media outlet variation is inherently different from content variation diversity (Larrazet & Rigoni, 2014) Souisa, 2020; Tapsell, 2018). The variations of media are not significantly beneficial to the local needs when the contents inside the media are still focusing on national issues. In another word, the existence of national television broadcasting media with a national network still does not go along with the establishment and development of regional oriented national broadcasting media.

Also, according to an observer, most local televisions in Bandung still cannot build their own unique and local selling point, different with a local television in Surabaya. "JTV is very local. It is so local that they have a Javanese language news and they dub foreign movies with Javanese. It is so very local". Related to local identity as the strength of local media is also found in Palembang (Maryani et al., 2018). Radios also have its distinct differences with televisions, because they have more opportunity technologically to build a relationship with their listener. Therefore, radio faces different competitions with television. Radios with national network must also contain local contents so that it can build a relationship with its listener. Up until now, while televisions face hardships to keep up with current issues and to compete with national channels, quite the contrary is happening in radios. It is stated by a radio practitioner in Bandung, quote; "*It is quite the contrary in radios, those that have national networks cannot live that long in local region, for example Pambors... Because they relay their broadcast from Jakarta, and they change their local broadcast*". The condition of radio broadcast, according to the practitioner, will make the relationship between the radio and local listener falter.

The inability for most national network radio to build a strong relationship with their listener, also lead to their inability to keep their own stance or to develop in a city. The practitioner emphasizes their view by stating, "*In my opinion, the basic of radio is extremely local*". Referring to this phenomenon, radios in Bandung as local media then basically have more opportunity in facing national and global challenges. These challenges are especially related to the socio-cultural, economy, and politic condition in West Java. Every single time a general election is held, West Java becomes an important standard for the winning candidate. Politically, West Java is considered as a strategic place to decide the leadership of Indonesia. The fact is also in line with the great numbers of university students in West Java. Overall, there are 177,498 registered university students in West Java based on 2017 data, the second greatest after East Java that is reported to have 283,125 registered university students in the same year (Kemenristekdikti, 2018). Even though West Java has many citizens and potentials, generally the local media in West Java also face many challenges. They still find it hard to fight for advertisement as the fund of their own existence amidst centralized capitals that works against them, when they are not protected by media policies that guarantees healthy competitions between national and local media (Armando, 2016; Nugroho et al., 2012).

During this condition mentioned, some of the local radio practitioners in Bandung are still optimistic that local media is immensely needed by the audience, however, how it is managed must always be developed. Therefore, they cannot always depend on the central capital. PRFM says that half of their advertisement comes from local sources, so they do not entirely depend on national advertisements. Challenges that they have now are keeping and developing audience that face changes amidst digital era. The development of digital media becomes one of the opportunities but also offers challenges for local media both in terms of technicalities and business (Wang, 2019). Related to the issue of media management, they are generally still struggling in facing the on-going digitalization of media content and how to create a strategic business opportunity that will survive in this digital era (Mansell, 2004; Oliver & Picard, 2020; Sjøvaag, 2016).

This situation must be responded as soon as possible because the adversity of local media means reducing or even erasing the room that can represent issues that is only present in local region. It means that the existence of local media is not only seen as a media institution, but also need to be seen as a social institution that can spread local information and an institution that can preserve local cultural values (Yamamoto, 2011).

Based on the technical development and the readiness of institutions, this article will therefore focus on the discourse of PRFM radio as local media in facing digital era and social transformation in West Java. The development of digital era in Indonesia is hard to be separated from the condition in West Java as the second most dense province in Indonesia. Internet users in Indonesia, based on APJII data, increases up to 10.12% in 2019. About 64.7% or 171.17 million out of 264 million citizens of Indonesia have been connected to the Internet. According to APJII General Secretary, this number will continuously increase (Pratomo, 2019). According to the survey result from We Are Social, it is revealed that until 2019, no less than 150 million Indonesian actively use social media. The social media platform most often used and accessed in Indonesia is YouTube, with 88% overall social media users in 2019 (Kemp, 2019). Referring to the development of social media use, the digital adaptation for local media including radio is a must (Alfani, 2020).. This is in line with the strength of social media as explained by Dijk and Poell, that social media platform focuses on the user existence and puts an effort in facilitating the activities and collaborations of their own users. On the other hand, social media can also be facilitators that strengthen the relationship between users and acts as a social relationship for them (Dijck & Poell, 2013). The challenge is how to make it happen? The many researches or literature reviews that have been done, concludes that there are only few researches that explain specifically the existence of local media in the digital era among transforming and transitioning society like Bandung in West Java. With the media phenomenon, this article focuses on the case of PRFM as a local media, addresses and explains the challenges and opportunities of PRFM in facing digital era and transformation of values in Indonesia, especially in West Java.

Method

The method used in this research is qualitative. This research aims to produce an input to map business model and local media management in facing digital era and transformation of values in the society. In terms of data collection, the technique used is documentation study, in-depth interview, and observation. In-depth interviews are conducted on related stakeholders that understand the history or implementation of media policy in Indonesia. Documentation is conducted to tract documents such as; regulations of broadcasting, documents of radio development in West Java that affects the continuity of radio as local media. In addition, this study is also conducted to see the digital media management in PRFM. Observation is done to study the digital media overview managed by PRFM. Observation is done on to contents or interactions, especially those happened on social media managed by PRFM. The data processing is done by reviewing main themes from the key informant's speech in the in-depth interviews, which later is organized in the effort to answer the research questions. After that, the keywords are organized in a data matrix based on categories and classifications of answers. Then the data analysis is done by a multilevel way from various data collected both in micro, meso, and macrolevel. Based on the analysis then an interpretation will be resulted, related to the findings to answer the research questions.

Result and Discussion

The development of digital technology, according to most of media practitioners, inevitably affects the continuity and role of local media. According to a finding, it is revealed that there are some good factors that serve as both challenges and opportunities for PRFM as a local media in facing digital era and transformation of values in the society. PRFM is established in 2009 in Bandung, West Java. At that time, people have been using digital media quite a lot. Said situation supports PRFM to develop citizen journalism as their basic journalistic broadcast. Through digital media, the interaction between PRFM and its audience can happen interactively. In addition, the audience can be pushed to contribute not only as a listener or receiver, but also as information source or producer. One of the PRFM broadcasting practitioners says that ever since PRFM's establishment, the existence of social media becomes the basic concept of citizen journalism developed by PRFM. "I cannot imagine the time when social media has not existed yet, and I asked someone to report some news through text or call. We have to pay for the texts and calls using credit, but for social media, even though we actually use Internet data, it feels free for most people. In Facebook, people send news, and they also use Twitter to send pictures and WA (WhatsApp), it is a tremendous support, in my opinion".

However, even though PRFM has been using social media ever since their establishment, they still face hurdles in their management to form a stand-alone division in managing social media. As a new institution in the media field, PRFM needs to prepare not only special budget but also efforts and human resources to expand said competency in digital field. It becomes a specific challenge for PRFM management. Finally, since 2016, PRFM has an online division specifically formed for managing PRFM's website and social media. Originally only one person managed the division, but now there are three persons within the management staff of online division. The staff of online division's roles are to take care of all PRFM's online attributes, such as writing website text content and also publishing them through PRFM social media. Procedurally, the news flow in PRFM starts by an on-air event hosted by an anchor and continued by an on-call interview which is also broadcasted. Besides, sometimes the comments circulated in PRFM's social media are made into a new information for the next news source. Overall division in the editorial team of PRFM radio can be seen through the diagram below.

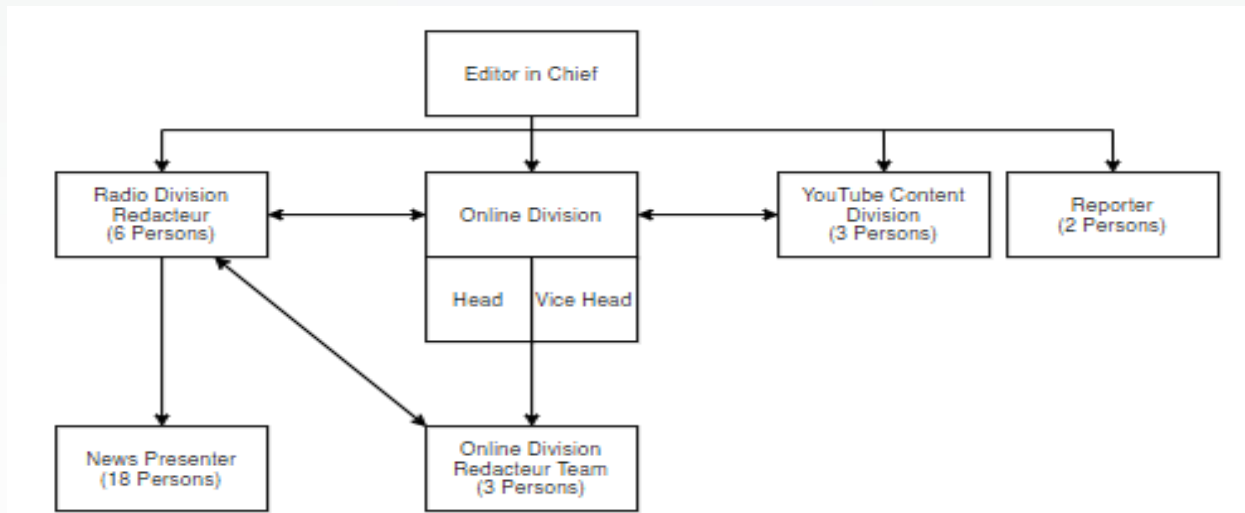


Diagram 1. PRFM Editorial Staff Structure

Source: Documentation of researcher

In other words, digital era demands broadcasting media including PRFM to be able to do a convergence with online media. PRFM has utilized the opportunity so that collaboration between radio division and online division is made. The existence of reporters is still an important aspect for PRFM to get data directly from the field and to verify facts out of news gained from social media. One of the challenges raised in digital era related to citizen journalism is the emergence of new values related to popularity and narcissistic character of the population. It refers to the cases where people send hoax or fake news through social media to PRFM. One of PRFM staff claims that they have received two fake news, which were about a robbery and a fire. However, no criminal-influenced fake news this far. Therefore, they assume that the people who send fake news just want themselves to be exposed by media or it is their need to talk to someone else. This can also be drawn from the great number of people that send a commonly known information as news, such as a usual traffic jam during rush hour without any special incident or accident. Those kinds of information do not give any value for news portals because nowadays there are a lot of applications that offer information about traffic.

The use of online media or social media by mainstream media such as radio can also have related challenge with the effort to raise the number of audiences. The use of social media must be able to maintain and gain audience for PRFM as a local radio. However, miscommunication and mistakes often happen from the handler of PRFM social media, because they focus only on the number of followers but do not check their contribution to the effort to maintain and gain new listeners. It means that there is a developing phenomenon where PRFM social media followers purely become followers, but not listeners of PRFM radio. For mainstream media such as PRFM, this condition is not beneficial nor does it bring prosperity because the opportunity to gain income from advertisement is relatively small. By far, as an example, the income gained by PRFM from advertisement in media online is marked at 5% out of overall PRFM income from advertisement. PRFM practitioners claim that "there are only 10% income from advertisement in website or Twitter". This also happens to other local radio stations in other towns, such as Surabaya.

Practitioners from Suara Surabaya radio state that the income gained from an advertisement in one-time talk show event can reach Rp. 25 million, but it is only 5% of that number gained from online advertisement, which accumulates to only Rp. 1.25 million. It means that media or local radio business still depends on their own conventional media and not online media. It is based on the fact that the source of advertisement for mainstream media are much more available. But according to PRFM ads they acquire, no less than 50% came from local advertisements. Even if they get advertisement from national ads, they tend to bring issues such as delayed payment. The use of digital media can provide opportunities to produce collaborations with various government institutions in the regions. Opportunities for collaboration exist when listeners or social media users through various social media report to PRFM regarding their disappointment with information or services from government agencies, for example regarding KTP (citizen ID card) management, and health services. When PRFM submits this complaint, the agency concerned often invites PRFM to carry out a campaign or socialize the issue to the public. Therefore, what must be developed regarding digital era is to maintain masses as listeners even though they listen to the radio using digital media. This is the challenge for the management of PRFM radio in facing the digital era. They must be able to pack their content so that it stays interesting for listeners and can be easily accessed through digital media. When this happens and there is a rise in PRFM radio listeners that come from both conventional media and digital media, it will have an implication to the raise of advertisement gained by PRFM.

Jenkin's trans-narrative concept must be considered in order to handle the challenges faced by media in doing technology convergence so it can significantly increase the income from radio listener and advertisement. In this concept, it is stated that the use of different platforms in media business also need a different narrative to complete each other among various existing platforms (Jenkins, 2006; Merkin, 2010). These narrative differences must be able to make social media users also access the radio with a different narrative format. The effort to increase advertisement income by widening the scope of listener through social media is immensely needed. This is due to overcrowded mainstream media business in Bandung, because the mere 2.5 million citizens must feed approximately 40 local radios in Bandung. This condition, in terms of business, the radio business in Bandung is not feasible anymore because of the overly competitive nature in gaining advertisements. Apart from broadening the number of listeners, this unhealthy competitive situation also needs government concern. According to one media observer, it seems that the government must be involved to improve a healthier climate for the radio industry. Officially, PRSSNI West Java notes there are 111 radios that are registered as members (PRSSNI, 2020). Meanwhile the number of media that have been verified in the West Java Press Council only amount to 24 media as shown in table 1.

Table 1.
Verified Media in West Java

No	Media	No	Media
1.	Inilah Koran	13.	PRRadio (PRFM)
2.	Pikiran Rakyat	14.	inilahkoran.com
3.	Pojoksatu.id	15.	Ayobandung.com
4.	Bandung TV	16.	Galamedia
5.	Galamedianews.com	17.	Tribun Jabar
6.	Harapan Rakyat	18.	Radar CirebonTV
7.	Radar Bekasi	19.	TribunJabar.id
8.	Kabar Priangan	20.	Radar Cirebon
9.	Info Bekasi	21.	Fajar Cirebon
10.	Kabar Cirebon	22.	Radar Bogor
11.	Bisnis Bandung	23.	Rakyat Crebon
12.	jabarnews.com		

Source: (Dewan Pers, 2020)

The data in table 1 shows that the radio stations operating in West Java far exceed the total number of media verified by the Council in West Java. This condition reinforces the view of radio practitioners in Bandung that the climate of the radio industry in Bandung or in general West Java

is unhealthy. Referring to the phenomena above, one way to improve the climate for the radio industry is through the evaluation of the results verified by the Press Council. The results of the verification can be used as a basis for considering radios that are eligible to continue their license and radios that must return their licenses to the state because they are deemed inappropriate. However, the verification process must also be more intensive and transparent so that it has a high degree of credibility as a basis for decision making. This will be very helpful for PRFM so that it can focus more on improving the quality of its content and services to local audiences if the industrial climate is healthier. So far there has never been a permit for local media or national network media in West Java that caused their license to be revoked because it was deemed inappropriate. Through better control, it is hoped that the industrial climate for radio can be better.

Conclusion

Referring to the case of the local PRFM Media, in this case radio has several opportunities as well as challenges in facing the digital era. In the digital era, PRFM gained the opportunity to facilitate citizen journalism concept promoted by PRFM as it encourages the public can be more active. Facilitating residents' complaints quickly through PRFM social media provides opportunities for PRFM to collaborate with the government. However, it is also a challenge for the online division to create socialization through interesting digital content. The other digital era challenge is the emergence of new values related to the popularity and narcissistic character of the people where there are some people who send hoax or fake news through PRFM social media to be popular. Therefore, the existence of a reporter for PRFM is very important to check the truth of the news in the field. The use of PRFM social media is a way to increase access to PRFM, but this creates challenges to trans-narrative content from radio to PRFM social media. This needs to be done so that social media users remain connected as PRFM listeners, not only as social media users. This research also recommends improving the quality of human resources in managing social media and making contact products in digital form. In addition, the Press Council's function to verify the legibility of the media is the basis for granting media licenses in West Java to support a healthier climate in the radio industry.

Limitation and Study Forward

This research should note the media's income data document studied was not obtained so that the analysis was only based on data of interviews with the media practitioners. This certainly reduces the accuracy associated with the analysis of the sustainability of local media from an economic perspective. Further research, it is hoped that elaboration can be carried out related to advertisements or cooperation obtained by the media being studied so as to strengthen the analysis carried out.

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