



Radio Mediamorphosis in the Digital Age: Case Study on Private Radios in East Java Joined in XSpace Radio

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ABSTRACT

The massive migration of analog television to digital by 2022 is a threat signal for other broadcast media, namely radio. It is also possible that the audio-based broadcasting media that uses public frequencies will also be injected with death and forced to switch to digital. However, switching from analog to digital is a challenging job. Many aspects need to be prepared, starting from adequate Natural Resources and Human Resources capable of adapting to technological developments. However, several private radio stations in East Java are trying to transform themselves into visual radio. This study aimed to discover why private radio in East Java joined XSpace Radio and transformed it into a visual radio. Then, this research is to find out its application and its advantages and disadvantages. This study uses the concept of convergence from Roger Fidler's theory of Mediamorphosis to direct the understanding of the transformation of forms of communication media. As a result, it was found that private radio stations in East Java carried out the radio visual transformation to respond to the needs of the public and clients. In its application, there is a change in perspective on the radio, which can be enjoyed both additively and visually. The advantages of visual radio are that it can reach a wider area and the information conveyed is more attractive. Indeed, the weakness is more in terms of technical and human resources. Although radio has been transformed, it does not eliminate the essence or characteristics of radio.

Keywords: *Mediamorphosis, convergence, radio visual, digital, xspace radio*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Government of the Republic of Indonesia, through the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, suspended analog television (TV) broadcasts in 2022. This is stated in the Regulation of the Minister of Communication and Information Number 11 of 2021 concerning amendments to the Minister of Communication and Information Technology Number 6 of 2021 concerning Implementation Broadcasting [1]. The regulation states that there are 3 stages of stopping analog TV broadcasts. The first stage was carried out on April 30, 2022, and continues until the last stage on November 2, 2022.

The cessation of analog TV broadcasts carried out on a large scale by the Government of Indonesia has become a threat signal for other broadcast media, such as radio. The discourse of switching to digital broadcasting began to surface in recent years. In mid-2020, for example, the Ministry of Communications and Informatics conducted a trial evaluation measurement and measurement of Digital Radio

Mondiale (DRM) technology in the Pelabuhan Ratu area, Sukabumi, West Java. DRM is a digital broadcast radio technology standard that has received a recommendation from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) [2].

Apart from DRM, the Government is also discussing digital radio migration using Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB)+ technology. DAB+ is also one of the ITU's recommended digital broadcast radio technology standards. In addition to technical readiness of equipment, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics will also provide webinars to radio managers in 2020. Most recently, in mid-2022, a similar webinar was also held to prepare for the implementation of digital broadcast radio. However, direct training is undoubtedly less practical than the webinar scheme. Bearing in mind, not all Human Resources involved in radio management understand theoretically or technically related to the transition of the new technology. Moreover, not a few radios whose management is still carried out conventionally.

But once again, the transition from conventional radio to digital is a necessity in this era of technological development as it is today. Just like analog TV which is also "forced" to migrate to digital. Even though the move to digital-only sometimes guarantees that radio can get back up and prosper like in its previous era when communication tools were limited. Radio competition is not limited to mass media such as TV, newspapers, or online. However, also with other alternative media, such as social media, are currently more favored by the people of Indonesia. In Indonesia, the penetration of social media users continues to increase to 59% of Indonesia's 272.1 million total population in 2020. Social media trends that are developing and widely used by the public released by Sensor Tower [3] are TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Likee.

Social media is considered more attractive and seems a complete package, so it can suck up people to spend their time watching content there. Compared to the radio, which is considered outdated, social media is managed in conventional ways. So to deal with this, media convergence can be one strategy during increasingly tough competition. Moreover, media convergence is considered cheaper than having to invest to keep up with changes in digital broadcast radio using DRM or DAB.

Building a more lively and attractive radio image is an effort that is presented in an application called XSpace Radio. The application, created in 2019, was initially developed as a digital-based media convergence. With a visual radio concept that can be accessed through applications and technically in broadcasting, it no longer uses transmitters like conventional radio. In its journey, the XSpace Radio application is not only a media exclusive as a broadcast radio entity. Nevertheless, it also developed into a radio grouping platform that broadcasts visually. 9 visual radio stations in East Java have collaborated on XSpace Radio. The nine radio stations are Suara Surabaya, Rasi FM, Bahana FM, Prameswara FM, Ronggohadi FM, She Radio, M Radio, SUPER V Radio, and K Radio Jember. These radios are also still broadcasting on the FM radio platform, so the broadcast concept has become a Hybrid Broadcast on FM and Visual Radio Applications [4].

What is carried and practiced in XSpace Radio is a manifestation of Roger Fidler's Mediamorphosis. The media must make changes to follow the environmental situation to maintain its existence. The birth of new forms of communication does not mean that the old forms die. However, it continues to evolve and adapt to the surrounding situation. So in this study, the author wants to know why private radio in East Java

joins XSpace Radio and transforms into visual radio. Then, to find out its application and its advantages and disadvantages. The study is based on Roger Fidler's theory of mediamorphosis with the concept of convergence.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Radio in the Digital Age*

The invention of the radio was initially considered standard because the radio was only centralized as a transmission technology. However, later, radio began to be widely used by the military and Government to convey information and news. In addition, radio is used mainly by the authorities for political and ideological purposes. It was only in 1909 that the role of radio in conveying messages began to be recognized by the public. This was motivated by the fact that at that time, there was information sent via radio, and it managed to save all the passengers on the ship who had an accident and drowned. Since then, radio has become a medium that has been tested to be fast and accurate in conveying information [5].

Radio dynamization goes hand in hand with the development of communication technology. The excellence of radio is also continuously striving to maintain its existence amid the emergence of newer communication media. Radio is more local, reaches certain areas (fragmented), its format and content are more specialized, and radio program packaging becomes more personal and can be enjoyed. Wherever and whenever while doing other activities (radio is mobile) [6].

Radio is an adaptive medium that also changes according to the times and changes in culture and technology. Along with computer-based technology, there are also various innovations that, in some ways, change aspects of communication. New cable, satellite, and radio broadcasting tools have greatly improved broadcasting capabilities. While not directly supporting mass communication, new possibilities for private media creation have expanded the media environment and bridged between public and private communication and between the professional and amateur realms [7].

The internet network has provided benefits for radio content channels to reach a wider audience. However, the internet has also triggered the emergence of other communication media capable of sending audio, visual, and text messages. This communication media allows anyone to be connected to the network. This medium became known as the

new media. One application that is very popular in the new media era is social networking sites or social networking sites. Its role as a medium of interpersonal communication allows anyone to build friendships, including sharing photos, links, and videos [6]. In Indonesia, according to data released by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, the four most popular social media that are widely accessed are Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, and Twitter.

The emergence of the phenomenon of media convergence does cause several consequences and tremendous social changes. In everyday life, the presence of media convergence enriches the information presented and provides an increasingly open choice for the audience to choose the information that suits their tastes and needs. With the internet, people with gadgets can easily access all the information they need and want. Combining the advantages of various media and information technology also changes the relationship between technology, industry, markets, lifestyles, and audiences. Media convergence has changed the communication pattern at a time when the presence of information technology and mass media are increasingly able to offer a broader range of new services. And ultimately changing the way of life and work, perceptions, beliefs, and institutions that exist in society[8].

Therefore, radio as a conventional media needs to converge with new media to continue to survive in the digital era. One of them is by maximizing social media in supporting broadcast programs and in the realm of business. Of course, without losing its characteristics and advantages as an auditive media. The advantages of radio as an auditive mass media that can be an important key for the future of radio amid intense competition with other communication media are as follows: personal relationship, intimate medium, more diverse content, and sticking with 2-way communication [6].

In addition, no less critical, radio, as a medium that has control over the production of content based on market needs and desires, has an "obligation" to provide benefits to its audience during an increasingly authoritarian "competition room." This means that apart from pursuing economic gain, radio must be a communication medium capable of carrying out its control function as a public mass media [6].

2.2. Convergence in Mediamorphosis Theory

In theory, expressed by Roger Fidler, mediamorphosis is a transformation of communication media that occurs due to the complicated interplay of

various things—from needs, competitive and political pressures, and social and technological innovations. Mediamorphosis aims to understand all forms as part of a related system and note the various similarities and relationships between forms that have appeared in the past, present, and future or are in the process of emergence. When newer forms of communication media emerge, the former usually do not die but continue to evolve and adapt. Each new form of communication is a further development of the earlier forms. Transformation is a complex process as a series of species evolve. New forms of successful media do not just appear without origin. The whole process requires a link with the past [9].

The birth of mediamorphosis comes from three concepts: coevolution, convergence, and complexity. Mediamorphosis has the essence that the media is an adaptive system. It is related to external pressure that causes the media to respond with a spontaneous reorganization process. In more detail, these three concepts are as follows [9]:

- *Coevolution*

The basic properties of media are realized and transmitted through communicator codes, commonly called language. Without having to be compared with each other, language has become the most influential agent of change in the continuum of human evolution.

- *Convergence*

A concept that broadly represents the unification of various technologies and forms of media that are present at the same time. This convergence will eventually lead to the forms known as multimedia communication.

- *Complexity*

This concept is a condition that 'forces' change. Understanding complexity can be traced from the emergence of chaos theory. Chaos is an essential component of change. New ideas were born from the chaos conditions, which transformed and revived various systems.

3. METHODS

The research method used by the researcher is a qualitative approach with the type of case study research. This qualitative research process involves essential efforts, such as asking questions and procedures, collecting specific data, analyzing data inductively from specific themes to general themes, and interpreting the meaning of the data [10].

Furthermore, the case study is a series of scientific activities carried out intensively, in detail, and in-depth about a program, event, and activity. Either it is at the individual level as a group of people-institutions, or organizations to gain in-depth knowledge of the event. Usually, the selected events from now on referred to as cases, are ongoing, real-life events, not something that has passed [11].

Regarding the scope of the study area, case studies are limited to a narrow (micro) area. In addition, the case is also limited to a specific type of case, at a particular place or locus, and at a certain time. However, substantively case study research is very in-depth [11].

If it is related to this research, the radio visuals presented on XSpace Radio are still contemporary. Because this phenomenon has the opportunity for other auditive, radio needs to be transformed into visual radio. Transitioning private radio in East Java into XSpace Radio is still ongoing.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Media Convergence Becomes a Necessity in the Digital Age for Conventional Radio

Amid increasingly rapid technological developments, conventional media cannot avoid media convergence. Especially the emergence of the internet brought a significant impact on the mass media industry. People who initially made conventional mass media the main or even the only source to get information now tend to access the internet to fulfill it. With digitalization, people's patterns of consuming media automatically change. This change then has an effect on the attractiveness of the audience to the media.

The time people consume media or other digital products is much longer than listening to the radio. This is influenced by the quality of its products which do not make people want or even be forced to listen. Digitization in all aspects of people's lives has been changing the radio business platform, radio program platform, and radio content platform, which in the end, also disrupted. People have started to listen less to the radio because the time is starting to be divided on new media. Those who previously had no choice but to radio can now open social media or surf the internet as they wish. So, in terms of time, people hardly have time to listen to the radio because they are exchanged for consuming digital media or digital products.

This phenomenon makes conventional mass media converge with new media so as not to be abandoned by the audience. This is also reflected in the 9 private

radio stations in East Java which are members of XSpace Radio. 9 The radio combines conventional radio, the internet, and forms of audio and visual media. Thus, the broadcasts on the 9 radios can not only be heard but also watched. In addition, the broadcast can be listened to on terrestrial channels (FM channels) but can also be accessed on the XSpace Radio website or online application. The decision is to carry out the convergence to face a threat or opportunity of a change. Including it is as attempts to prevent the abandoned by the audience.

One of the other reasons is the concern about the discourse of switching FM to digital radio broadcasts with DRM or DAB technology. The discourse, which has become increasingly popular in recent years, will allegedly be implemented in the distant future. Radio listeners will be recovered if the FM broadcast is completely closed. But they were invited to move to digital through the XSpace Radio application, which is manageable in terms of costs for radio operators. Radio, consumers can also access it for free, as long as it is connected to the internet.

4.2. The Right Mix of Platforms and Interesting Content is Key to Radio

Radio is a mass media that is sold in its influence on the public. This means how many audiences and how strong the influence is. Program content or product is the primary key to having maximum societal influence and role. Radio must proceed appropriately in order to influence the audience. Suppose the radio has limited capabilities or quality and does not have unique features. In that case, it will become the second choice of media for the community—moreover, the tendency of people today to choose what is popular and the easiest. The audience actually chooses which one is best for them according to their size. So radio content must create attraction and dependence on the audience according to its segmentation and format.

However, one thing that is still a problem in the radio industry is in terms of human resources. Radio people who have standard competence are still relatively minimal in Indonesia. The reason is that most of them are self-taught or because they happen to be radio people. So it is not because of a proper learning process, the process of working professionals so that there are limitations in terms of human resources. As a result of these limited human resources, the effect is on the quality of the radio broadcast itself. Sometimes, radio broadcasts cannot play a maximum role of 100 percent as mass media. In addition, some radio managers still feel safe running

their business in the conventional realm. The radio management's understanding of the importance of immediately moving to digital is quite low and they still feel very safe with FM. This is what was found in this study related to the lack of radio transformed into a visual radio.

Whereas through radio visualization, human resources can explore more ideas for content that is more attractive to audiences. Moreover, today's society prefers to see something attractive and dynamic, rather than just hearing it. In general, radio must continue to be creative, innovate, and find new ideas, whether it is in terms of content, product, or technology that is most suitable for the audience. When a radio has the power to create dependence, people will be with it. Devices or technology have an effect, but the content makes an impact more powerful. No matter how great the technology is, if the content is not or is not needed by the public, it must be seconded. Excellent content posted in the right places; it would be awesome. So it is the task of radio with visual radio innovation to mix it all into power and create influence. The limit of visual radio is creativity. So everything that happens at XSpace Radio is creativity.

Empowering content, making the audience brighter, and having broad insights and new inspiration can be presented through visual radio. So it is more valuable than people watching social media or other platforms. Through visual radio, managers can be more exploratory and work on new opportunities for radio development. Like several news radio members of XSpace Radio, they have broadcast a video version of their reporter's live reports. Including live talk shows that can be broadcast live from outside the studio in real-time. Also, visual ads are more expensive than audio. Visual radio was able to increase the size of its business, along with its digital division's prowess in creating content. This has become a new business opportunity with more excellent value than audio broadcasting alone. Moreover, radio is an industry, meaning that one measure of it is business. The radio that wants to continue to exist must learn about technological developments and keep up with changes.

Through space Radio, a forum for visual radio collections, radio operators also benefit because they are in the same room as radios in other areas. Because of limited area coverage, this can not be done by ordinary FM radio. However, radio can exchange audiences through online platforms because people gather on one platform.

4.3. Visual Radio Still Has Different Characteristics from TV

Another concern that some people have regarding visual radio is considered to be no different from television. However, from the results of this study, nine private radio stations in East Java that are members of XSpace Radio and broadcast visually still carry radio characteristics. Where elements such as simplicity and personal closeness are still present in visual radio. Product, content, and presentation are different from the TV, even though radio is transformed into visuals. Even the audience can still interact directly with the broadcaster face-to-face from the previous one via voice.

Regarding the production process, radio visual is also much more economical. In contrast to expensive TV, TV broadcasts are very complex and involve more people. At the same time, broadcasts on visual radio are broadcasting activities as usual that are visualized. Straightforward is the hallmark of visual radio. Moreover, again, the absolute limit of radio is only creativity. So, there needs to be a willingness from human resources to give more effort to enrich radio visuals.

5. CONCLUSION

Radio visual transformation is carried out by private radio in East Java to answer the needs of the public and clients. In its application, there is a change in perspective on the radio, which can be enjoyed both additively and visually. The advantages of visual radio are that it can reach a wider area and the information conveyed is more attractive. At the same time, the weakness is more in terms of technical and human resources. Although radio has been transformed, it does not eliminate the essence or characteristics of radio.

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