Exploring Media-Management Resilience in Pandemic Situation

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Abstract. Media management is a key element in the organization of mass media. Media management also maintains a balance between the dual functions of the media, as a news-business and as a social institution. The media is required to be able to become a source of livelihood for all its workers and bring profits to its investors. At the same time, the media is also required to be able to produce journalistic products that are informative and educative for the public. Of course, this becomes a unique obstacle, especially when the world enters the pandemic situation with economic recession as its characteristic. Media management policy makers are required to be able to bring the mass media to survive and compete in an increasingly challenging economic crisis. This study aims to gain understanding into the personal experiences of media industry managers about what they define as challenges and threats in the pandemic era and how resilient they are to these issues. There are two online media that are become the subject of research, namely ANTARA and Suara Muslim. Researchers conducted interviews with two decision makers in media management. Even though they are internet-based, both media have their own characteristics. ANTARA is a news agency whose funding is partially supported by the state through a public service obligation (PSO). Meanwhile, Suara Muslim is a private radio, which is fully funded by investors and advertisers. These differences make the understanding and perspective on the issue of information disruption, opportunities and challenges, and media resilience different between Suara Muslim and Antara News.

Keywords: mass media management · media resilience · online media

1 Introduction

Media management is a key element in the organization of a mass media. Media management is at the helm, who will determine the direction of the mass media. In addition, media management also maintains the balance of the dualism of media functions, as a business institution and as a social institution [1]. The media is required to be able to become a source of livelihood for all its workers and bring profits to its investors. At the same time, the media is also required to be able to produce journalistic products that are informative and educative for the public.

The function of social media, even making the media required to be able to become an extension of the public to exercise control over the rulers [2]. In the history of the

founding of mass media, in 1841, Thomas Carlyle had seen the great potential of the media in carrying out the watchdog function, he said that as the fourth pillar of democracy is a reliable editor, who is able to create issues, grow them, and disseminate them to the public irrevocably and irrevocably. calculated how big the reach and impact. Therefore, journalism becomes a significant instrument in realizing and maintaining democracy in a country. The adage "media as a watchdog" continues to this day [3].

The presence of digital technology forces the media industry to adapt to acceleration. The deadline for presenting information to the public is getting narrower. This is because the media is no longer the dominant source of information. At this time, people are flooded with information, without them having to struggle to get it. This condition is known as infoxication [4]. Media industry players no longer have to face other media organizations as competitors, but also other sources of information or news makers who are often faster in presenting information [5].

In this study, researchers took two cases of mass media that were both digitally based, namely Antara News (ANTARA) and Suara Muslim. Even though they are internet-based, both media have their own characteristics. ANTARA is a news agency whose funding is partially supported by the state through a public service obligation (PSO). Meanwhile, Suara Muslim is a private radio station, which is fully funded by investors and advertisers. These differences make the understanding and perspective on the issue of information disruption, opportunities and challenges, and media resilience different between Suara Muslim and Antara News.

A survey conducted by the Imogen Communication Institute (IGI) on 140 media in 10 cities in Indonesia, which was published in the online newspaper Tempo, resulted in the discovery of the impact felt by the media as a result of COVID-19, namely their income decreased by 40–80% due to a decline in supply. advertising and reduced sponsorship of activities so that media companies are forced to cut employee salaries and terminate employment contracts. The mass media industry also experienced a decline in income in the same range. As a result, most of the media have terminated their employment with employees or cut their salaries. In fact, some media finally declared bankruptcy in the midst of a pandemic.

Some of the reasons above are the basis of the research, in which this study wants to answer how media resilience is in dealing with information disruption in the pandemic era [6].

2 Method

This research uses constructivism paradigm, with case study research method [7]. To obtain research data, researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with informants and observations. This study focuses on two media with different characters. First, is ANTARA News.com which is a news portal owned by the Indonesian news agency, ANTARA. Second, Muslim voice radio, a private radio station in the city of Surabaya. There were two informants interviewed by the research team, both of whom were decision makers in their respective media.

3   Results and Discussions

3.1   The Challenge of Suara Muslim Radio: Market Segmentation and High Operating Costs

The respondent from Suara Muslim said that the religious identity attached to the name of the media makes it difficult for the management team to develop advertisers' market share. Several times they received input from advertisers to further disguise their identity. The informant also said that he had proposed a new name several times, namely "SAM Radio" which is an acronym for Suara Muslim Radio. However, requests for review of new names are always rejected by the investors, who really want Muslim voice radio to become a propaganda medium for the Islamic community. For informants, if Suara Muslim is too strongly segmented, then its flexibility as an industry will decrease. It will even lead to a misperception as a mere community radio.

The second challenge is the high cost of producing quality journalistic products, starting from collecting facts in the field, verifying data, and writing. Journalism is a long work of collecting facts, which is not in line with the characteristics of digital media which demands the speed of information presented in front of the public [8].

On the other hand, Suara Muslim also understands their value as a mass media, which cannot simply give up journalistic work. "We don't want to skip news production. Because the spirit of mass media, whatever the platform, is journalism. If the media does not carry out its journalistic function, then it has lost its dignity as a mass media. Well, that's why we still provide news slots on our radio. Although to achieve this condition, we have to make adjustments". (Fajar, SM) The adjustment, which Fajar mentioned in his statement, is Suara Muslim's policy of synergizing and making cooperation agreements with other news media to exchange news. With the exchange of news, it can reduce the number of news production expenditures.

Another thing that Suara Muslim has also done is quoting from other news portals. In the news program owned by Suara Muslim in the morning and evening, they sample news from other mass media. For Suara Muslim, this practice is common and acceptable in the era of information disruption. However, Suara Muslim distinguishes this from the news fabrication process. Quoting news or quoting news from other media can be done if the issues raised do have news value, are referred to from mass media that have good credibility, and include original news sources when read by the Suara Muslim broadcaster. This is interpreted as a different spirit from news fabrication, where commodification occurs in fabrication and there is also a manipulative element by not including the original source [9].

The third challenge faced by Suara Muslim is operating costs as the main radio station that oversees other radio stations under the Suara Muslim Group banner, namely Suara Muslim Tuban and Suara Muslim Pasuruan. Economically, the two radio stations no longer have a healthy cash flow. Fajar, as the Editor of Suara Muslim, considers that the logical choice is if both are closed, but there are humanitarian considerations that make the decision not easy to make. To cover both operational costs, including paying employees, the responsibility lies with Suara Muslim Surabaya. In one month, the operational costs for the three radios reach approximately two hundred million rupiah.

3.2   Philanthropy and Below the Line Marketing as Key to Resilience

Suara Muslim has an organizational culture that is built on religious values, so that religious and humanitarian approaches are widely used to build their resilience in the face of information disruption. In 2020, as the world enters the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation becomes even more difficult for Suara Muslim. Most of the companies that advertise to them are hajj and umrah travel agencies. During the pandemic, the tourism sector and the travel business were among the most affected businesses [10]. Lockdown policies taken by almost all countries in the world have made travel business suspended [11]. Of course this affects Suara Muslim as a media partner. No more ad budgets available to spend.

Addressing the situation, Suara Muslim made an unusual move. They believe that the difficult pandemic situation must be passed together. They know that their clients are having a hard time right now, but the pandemic is the right moment to always be by their side. So, Suara Muslim provides free talk show space for travel agents who have been the advertising partners of Suara Muslim. The talk show discussed many things, ranging from updates to the Hajj and Umrah policies from the Government, the certainty of when travel to Saudi Arabia was opened for Indonesia, how about the Umrah and Hajj funds that had entered travel, and others. For Suara Muslim, giving free space is a reasonable thing, because it fosters partner trust and loyalty to them. Suara Muslim believes that when the world situation is better and tourist trips can be carried out, there will be an explosion of tourists. Travel agents will have a great harvest, and Suara Muslim will also enjoy the advantage.

Another effort made by Suara Muslim is to provide space for study communities in the Urban area to be featured in one segment of Suara Muslim's program. They use a marketing strategy with a very specific and small target market to grow listeners' loyalty to Suara Muslim's broadcasts. This specific marketing strategy and small scope is called below the line (BTL) marketing [12].

Muslim voices see disruption as an unavoidable necessity. However, they also believe that with their current positioning, they will be able to compete with Suara Surabaya, a radio that has become a leader among the middle-upper-middle economic segment audience.

Suara Muslim's confidence was also built due to the company's good cashflow before the pandemic. While many other mass media, radio in particular, experienced twilight and declared themselves out of business, Suara Muslim showed an increase in the business graph. For Suara Muslim, a pandemic is an inevitable force majeure, and they are just trying to survive as best they can during this time. However, when the pandemic ends, they are optimistic that they will be able to surpass other radio stations.

3.3   Optimism of Antara News Heading the Disruption Era

As an official Indonesian state news agency, ANTARA News received funding from the Public Service Obligation (PSO) scheme, in which the funding greatly helped ANTARA's stability as a mass media. Economic issues did not appear as a significant problem in this study. An interesting finding from ANTARA is that they see that information disruption will eventually bring mass awareness to the importance of valid

and credible information. And, there will be a point where people will return to looking for quality journalism products in trusted mass media.

ANTARA sees the challenge faced by their mass media in this era of information disruption is how to make the best use of the moment to build public trust in their news sites and the journalistic products they produce. For that, they also created an "Anti Hoax" rubric. In this rubric, ANTARA will select false information (hoax) circulating in the community, then through journalistic work in the field they will verify the information. After that, ANTARA will make a clarification report which also explains where the error/lie in the misinformation lies.

The "Anti Hoax" rubric is considered a successful rubric because the number of reader visits is always high, that's why the rubric which initially appeared only once a week, then increased to three times a week. ANTARA wants to establish itself as a mass media with high credibility through this rubric.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, like a flood, information rushed through the citizens. Entropy or information void makes people actively seek out any information related to the virus.

Covid-19. This phenomenon is exploited by irresponsible parties by producing misleading information with various purposes. ANTARA sees the presence of the "Anti Hoax" rubric being increasingly needed, so that since 2020 they have changed the intensity of content updates to 3–4 times a day.

Regarding the economic issue, although it did not appear as a significant finding in the interview, in a news document regarding the speech of the President Director of ANTARA at the Media Summit in China, he stated that ANTARA also had demands to bring benefits to the state. And, there is a need for reformulation of the media business to suit the demands of the times.

Media Business Reformulation as A strategy to win the battle.

"Conventional media and professional journalists are at a disadvantage because the majority of media companies are not finding new business"

The above is an excerpt from a speech by Meidyatama Suryodiningrat, president director of ANTARA's LKBN, which was delivered at the World Media Summit in Xinhua, China. Still from the same source, Meidya said that ANTARA carried out reformulation and rebranding in order to adapt to such rapid technological changes.

One of the changes referred to by Meidyatama is the use of technology that supports journalistic work, from collecting data, interviewing sources to communicating with the editorial team. ANTARA also employs young stringers who are agile and adaptive to modern technology features. From a business perspective, the existence of these stringers is beneficial for the mass media because their status is not as permanent as ANTARA's journalists. The stringers will be paid according to the news they make for ANTARA.

ANTARA has also started to maximize social media to target a wider audience segment. The social media platforms that ANTARA chose to support their promotions were Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

ANTARA is also supported by other businesses it owns, although its main core business is news. One of the businesses owned, for example, there are 400 screen billboards in various locations that companies can use to place their advertisements. For ANTARA,

the resources they have, whether human, material, or immaterial, must have a selling point, which can bring in other incomes for their mass media.

4 Conclusions

Both, Antara News and Suara Muslim, acknowledged that disruption brought challenges to conventional media. They must be smart in managing strategies in order to survive in the face of new situations that facilitate the press's performance, but it can also become a trap if not handled wisely.

Another finding is that the pandemic situation faced by countries in the world, including Indonesia, makes the level of difficulty in maintaining their media existence increase. Between overcoming this by developing their business in other areas, while Muslim voices survive by opening a shop business unit or trading herbal and halal products. In addition, Suara Muslim also views that philanthropy is the key to building advertiser loyalty, and they did so during the pandemic.

Authors' Contributions. The author comprises one students and two supervisor who also contributed to writing the article. Article writing is separated into numerous stages of research and writing that are completed in 2 (two) months. The author investigates related themes based on observations made in the field over many months. The writer offers the ideas in this scientific article based on observable data.

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