

Media Transformation of Radio Romansa FM Ponorogo from Conventional to Digital Media to Maintain Listener Existence

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ABSTRAK

Radio sebagai media auditif mengalami tekanan signifikan akibat munculnya platform digital yang menawarkan fleksibilitas serta interaktivitas lebih tinggi. Radio Romansa FM Ponorogo sebagai salah satu stasiun radio lokal turut menghadapi tantangan ini, terutama dalam mempertahankan eksistensi pendengarnya. Urgensi penelitian ini terletak pada pentingnya memahami bagaimana media lokal di daerah non-metropolitan seperti Ponorogo merespons tekanan digitalisasi yang terus berkembang. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui dan menganalisis strategi konvergensi media yang diterapkan serta kegunaan strategi tersebut terhadap eksistensi pendengar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi lapangan, dan dokumentasi, dengan subjek penelitian yaitu pihak manajemen Romansa FM dan para pendengar aktif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Romansa FM mengadopsi strategi konvergensi media melalui pendekatan *multimedia*, *multichannel*, dan *multiplatform*. Upaya ini memungkinkan perluasan jangkauan *audiens* melalui media sosial dan aplikasi *streaming*. Namun, penerapan strategi tersebut belum maksimal karena keterbatasan sumber daya dan hambatan eksternal seperti penutupan gedung siaran. Dari sisi kegunaan strategi, ditemukan bahwa digitalisasi memberikan kemudahan akses dan meningkatkan keterikatan pendengar, terutama generasi muda. Meskipun demikian, transformasi ini belum mampu mempertahankan eksistensi Romansa FM sepenuhnya, yang akhirnya resmi berhenti bersiaran pada pertengahan tahun 2023.

Kata kunci: Konvergensi; Radio; Romansa FM; Eksistensi.

ABSTRACT

Radio as an auditive medium has experienced significant pressure due to the emergence of digital platforms that offer greater flexibility and interactivity. Radio Romansa FM Ponorogo as one of the local radio stations also faces this challenge, especially in maintaining the existence of its listeners. The urgency of this research lies in the importance of understanding how local media in non-metropolitan areas such as Ponorogo respond to the growing pressure of digitalization. The purpose of this study is to find out and analyze the media convergence strategies implemented as well as the usefulness of these strategies to the existence of listeners. This research used a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation, with the research subjects being the management of Romansa FM and active listeners. The results showed that Romansa FM adopted a media convergence strategy through a *multimedia*, *multichannel* and *multiplatform* approach. This effort allows the expansion of *audience* reach through social media and *streaming* applications. However, the implementation of the strategy has not been maximized due to limited resources and external obstacles such as the closure of the broadcast building. In terms of the usability of the strategy, it was found that digitalization provided easy access and increased listeners' engagement, especially the younger generation. Nonetheless, this transformation has not been able to fully sustain the existence of Romansa FM, which finally officially stopped broadcasting in mid2023.

Keywords: Convergence; Radio; Romansa FM; Existence.

PENDAHULUAN

Media transformation is a global phenomenon that cannot be avoided along with the massive digitalization process in the lives of modern people. The development of information and communication technology has radically changed the way humans produce, distribute and consume information. Media that were previously based on analog print or broadcast have now shifted to digital platforms that are flexible, interactive, and can be accessed at any time through various digital devices. This phenomenon creates great pressure on the sustainability of conventional media, which is required to transform in order to remain relevant and competitive in the evolving communication ecosystem.

One form of conventional media that is experiencing great challenges in the digital era is radio. As an auditive media with a long history, radio was once the main source of information and the most popular means of entertainment. However, the advent of digital technology and social media has changed people's information consumption patterns. Today, the public is more interested in media that offers interactive experiences, visual content and flexible access such as podcasts, music streaming platforms, YouTube and Instagram. The penetration rate of radio listeners in Indonesia has only reached 35%, with an average decline of 3% per year since 2014, while the penetration of digital audio media among 18-35 year olds has increased significantly (Nielsen, 2022).

The popularity of radio as a source of information and entertainment is not what it used to be. Before the digital era, radio only had a few heavy competitors, namely television and newspapers. These two media became the main competitors in presenting news and entertainment to the public. (Dominick, 2013). However, with the development of technology, many new media have emerged, offering various ways to get information, entertainment, and social interaction space. This has become one of the important problems for radio managers or broadcasters, in addition to having to compete with other media, a station must compete with other stations (Umy, 2010).

This situation indicates a fundamental shift in audience behavior that poses a direct threat to the existence of radio, especially at the local level. However, radio has not completely lost its relevance (GoodStats, 2024). Radio still has a number of advantages, such as wide broadcast coverage, emotional closeness to listeners, and its function as a community media that can respond more specifically to local needs. Therefore, digital transformation is a strategic choice for radio to maintain its existence. There are several factors that keep people listening to radio. The first is because of the presence of an announcer who indirectly becomes a friend while driving. Secondly, radio can be a reference to find out new songs that are trending. And finally, radio can be

enjoyed even while doing other activities, therefore radio can be described as a friend, informative, practical and entertaining (Miranda & Yuliati, 2020).

Radio is a temporary broadcasting media, in the sense that what has been delivered by the broadcaster cannot be repeated. So radio must innovate if it does not want to be marginalized, most radios today utilize online media to continue to be accepted by the public. To remain relevant, radio combines media, in combining media, radio must be able to package the information that will be delivered so that it can be seen, read, and heard by listeners. As long as radio is able to utilize the various uses of the internet and social media, radio will survive in today's digital era (Yahya, 2021). Local radios that are able to build collaborations with communities, develop social media-based content, and expand distribution through digital platforms tend to be more successful in maintaining listener loyalty. This transformation is not just about adopting new technologies, but also requires a complete change in organizational structure, content strategy, and business model (Apriyani, 2020). The concept of media convergence explains that in the digital era, old and new media interact and integrate with each other in a connected information ecosystem (Jenkins, 2006). Several other studies have also highlighted the complexity of media transformation challenges at the local level. Community radio is often constrained by limited human resources, the absence of a clear digital distribution strategy, and weak evaluation and monitoring systems in the transformation process (Widyastuti, 2020). On the other hand, studies on Radio Gajah Mada FM, Radio Maja Mojokerto, and Radio Sonora Jakarta reveal that the main success factors lie in a deep understanding of audience behavior and the courage to experiment and innovate digitally.

However, academic studies that specifically review the process of radio transformation in non-metropolitan areas are still relatively minimal. In fact, regions like Ponorogo have unique socio-cultural characteristics that differ from the context of big cities. This creates a gap in the literature that needs to be filled so that local media transformation can be studied more inclusively and contextually.

Radio Romansa FM Ponorogo is one of the community radio stations that is trying to transform from conventional media to digital media. This radio has a strategic role as a local information provider, entertainment provider, and preserver of Ponorogo culture. Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted by researchers in early 2023, it is known that Romansa FM has begun to develop live broadcasts on social media and upload visual content via YouTube. However, these digitization efforts are still sporadic and have not been integrated into a comprehensive media transformation framework. This lack of strategic integration is reinforced by internal and external constraints, such as limited digitally literate staff, the absence of a broadcast studio due to failure to extend the building rental contract, and the lack of sustainable institutional

support. As a result, in mid-2023, Romansa FM officially stopped all its broadcast activities, both conventional and digital.

This condition becomes very relevant to examine because it reflects the complexity and dynamics of local media transformation in the digital era. Therefore, this article offers scientific novelty by conducting an in-depth case study of the media transformation process of Romansa FM Ponorogo radio. The focus of this study lies on the media convergence strategy adopted, the challenges faced during the transformation process, and its impact on the existence of listeners as an important part of the media ecosystem.

Thus, the problem formulation in this article is focused on two main aspects: first, on how the media transformation strategy is carried out by Radio Romansa FM Ponorogo from conventional to digital media? And secondly, on how the impact of the media transformation on the existence of Romansa FM Ponorogo's listeners? The purpose of this article is to provide theoretical contributions in the field of media communication and digital transformation as well as practical recommendations for local media actors, local governments, and other stakeholders in an effort to encourage sustainable and community-based adaptation of local media. By examining the case of Romansa FM Ponorogo, it is hoped that the results of this research will not only fill the void of literature on media transformation in non-metropolitan areas, but also present a model or pattern of local media transformation that can be replicated by other community radios in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for understanding social phenomena, especially the behavior, perceptions, and actions of subjects holistically through narrative descriptions in a natural context. Descriptive research aims to describe and interpret phenomena systematically, factually, and accurately. The type of research used is *field* research, which is conducted directly at the location of Radio Romansa FM Ponorogo. This approach allows researchers to gain a contextual understanding of the dynamics of media transformation through direct interaction with research subjects (Manzilati, 2017).

The data used in this research is divided into primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from sources through interviews and observations. The main information includes Romansa FM's media convergence strategy and listeners' perceptions of its impact. The main sources include: M. Zahrul Azhari as the *station manager of* Radio Romansa FM Ponorogo. Data samples include: Syafiqul Andri and M. Kholis Hidayat, S.H.I as active listeners of Romansa FM Radio. Secondary data was

obtained from books, journals, articles, documents, archives, and social media related to Romansa FM's profile, history, and broadcast format. This data serves as support and reinforcement of field findings.

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques, namely: First, observation. The author directly observed activities at Romansa FM Radio on December 13, 2022, including the work environment, interactions between staff, and the broadcast production process. This observation aims to identify changes in media formats and the internal dynamics of radio organizations. Second, interviews. The author conducted in-depth interviews using a semistructured format. On February 16, 2023, the author interviewed *the station manager of Romansa FM*, and on March 8-13, 2023 conducted interviews with several listeners. The aim was to explore the convergence strategy as well as its perception and impact on listener loyalty. Finally, documentation. The author collected official documents from Romansa FM, such as vision and mission, program structure, and digital promotional materials. This documentation was used to complement and verify data from interviews and observations.

Data processing was done with descriptive and explanatory analysis. The collected data were systematically organized, selected, classified, and reviewed in accordance with the research focus. This process included an initial check of the completeness and suitability of the data, classification based on thematic categories such as convergence strategies, digitalization challenges, and their impact on listeners, verification and cross-validation between data to maintain consistency and credibility of findings. The author also conducted open coding by reading interview transcripts or documents line by line to find key themes or concepts.

Meanwhile, data analysis was carried out through the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three main stages: first, data reduction or filtering raw data into important parts, such as interview quotes, observation results, and relevant documentation notes. Second, data presentation or organizing the data that has been reduced in the form of narratives, tables, or matrices to facilitate understanding and further analysis. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification where the data that has been analyzed is then verified to avoid misinterpretation and draw conclusions according to the research focus.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are various kinds of information media available today such as television, radio and the internet. With the changing trends and patterns of media consumption and technological developments like now, the media are always competing to present interesting information programs so that many audiences consume the news and entertainment they present (Rachmawati, 2019). Radio is one of the important

inventions in the history of communication technology, which enables the wireless transmission of information through electromagnetic waves. Technically, radio is a technology used to transmit signals by modulating and radiating electromagnetic waves that can propagate through the air or vacuum, because it does not require a physical medium such as air or cable to deliver signals.

The development of radio technology began with basic discoveries in the late 19th century. One important milestone was the invention of the gramophone by Thomas Alva Edison in 1887, which made sound recording and playback possible. Around the same time, scientists like James Clerk Maxwell and Heinrich Hertz conducted experiments on electromagnetic waves that laid the scientific foundation for radio transmission. These studies paved the way for the birth of wireless communication known as radio (Mufid, 2025).

A major advance in radio technology was achieved in 1901 when Guglielmo Marconi successfully transmitted a wireless telegraph message across the Atlantic Ocean. This discovery marked the beginning of the era of long-distance radio communication. Four years later, Marconi invented the radio antenna, which further strengthened the ability to transmit and receive radio signals. In 1906, radio began to be used for broadcasting purposes, and since then, it has developed into one of the most widely used mass communication media. The next development occurred in 1935 with the birth of frequency modulation (FM) radio which offered clearer sound quality compared to amplitude modulation (AM) radio. This innovation encouraged the wider spread of radio as a medium of entertainment and information in various parts of the world.

Media convergence driven by the development of digital technology enables the integration of various *communication* channels, *computer* devices, *contents*, and *communities* into one interconnected service ecosystem. In the context of Romansa FM, media convergence is not just a migration from analog to digital broadcasting, but a complete transformation in the way radio produces, distributes and interacts with its audience. Romansa FM, as a local radio, is faced with the need to maintain relevance amidst intense competition from digital media, audio streaming, and podcasts (Budhijanto, 2013).

Media convergence strategy has 3 elements, namely first, *multimedia*. A media creates and provides information in various formats of text, photos, animation, audio, or video. With the strengthening of this multimedia, the audience will be more interested and their need for information will be fulfilled. Second, *multichannel*. Using various methods and channels of information distribution, both through physical and digital. For example, in addition to listening to radio broadcasts to get information, audiences can access the internet to get the same information. This is supported by the many media to

consume information. Third, *multiplatform*. Using a variety of devices to access information, such as smartphones, television, Youtube, Facebook, and so on. So that this multiplatform has the flexibility for the audience to choose the device they have to access information (Susilo, 2019).

Existence comes from the Latin *existere*, which means "to appear", "to exist", or "to have actual existence". The word *existere* is composed of two parts, namely *ex* which means "out" and *sistere* which means "appear" or "appear". In the philosophical sense, existence does not only indicate physical existence, but also implies the actualization and appreciation of existence itself. In the context of radio broadcasting, existence does not only refer to the physical existence of the radio station or the continuity of broadcasts, but rather to the existence of the audience as an essential element in the mass communication system. Listeners' existence reflects the extent to which they are present, active and engaged in the process of consuming radio broadcasts. This includes the act of listening regularly, providing feedback, as well as showing loyalty to the content presented (Salleh, Hassan & Adam, 2009).

Listener presence can be seen through various indicators, such as the number of regular listeners, level of participation in interactive programs, response to social media content, and involvement in community activities initiated by the radio station. In the modern broadcasting world, especially in the digital era, this presence is also characterized by *multiplatform* engagement, where listeners are not only present in live broadcasts via FM waves, but also through digital channels such as YouTube, Instagram, and other streaming applications. Listener existence is an important indicator for the sustainability of radio media because it is directly related to the acceptability and relevance of broadcast content. If the existence of listeners decreases, then the position of radio as a medium of information, education, and entertainment is also threatened. Conversely, an increase in listenership shows that radio still has appeal and functional value in people's lives.

Thus, in this study, the existence of Radio Romansa FM Ponorogo listeners will be examined as a reflection of the effectiveness of the media transformation carried out. Is the digitalization and convergence applied able to maintain and increase the presence of the audience in real terms? This question becomes important to measure the extent to which media transformation really has an impact on the dynamics of the relationship between the media and its listeners.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) explains technology adoption behavior based on two main variables: Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU). This model is relevant for analyzing how Romansa FM's management, broadcasters, technical staff, and listeners respond to digitalization efforts. By adopting

the TAM framework, digital transformation at Romansa FM Ponorogo can be analyzed from the angle of technology acceptance, both by internal organizations and audiences. The perceived usefulness and ease of use factors are key to the success of the media convergence strategy. Challenges such as limited human resources, internet access, and analog habits should be anticipated through education, training, and service adjustments. A TAM-based approach helps design more appropriate interventions so that digitalization is not just a formality, but is truly accepted and utilized by all parties. TAM departs from the previous theory, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) developed by Ajzen and Fishbein. Davis then adapted TRA by focusing on technology acceptance as the central variable. Until now, TAM is considered the most relevant and widely applied model in information technology research due to the simplicity of its structure, its strong empirical validity, and its ability to identify key factors that influence technology adoption (Diaprilia et al., 2022).

By using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory, it will be able to explain whether the technology updates made can be accepted or not by users. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides a basis for knowing the influence of external factors on the beliefs, attitudes, and goals of its users. Broadly speaking, TAM explains that technology acceptance is influenced by two main variables, namely Perceived Usefulness (perceived usefulness) and Perceived Ease of Use (perceived ease of use), which then form Attitude Toward Using (attitude towards use), Behavioral Intention to Use (behavioral intention to use), until finally reflected in Actual System Use (actual use of technology) (Fatmawati, 2015).

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU). Perceived Ease of Use refers to the extent to which a person believes that using a system will be free from difficult or complex effort. Technology that is designed with a simple interface, intuitive navigation, and minimal technical barriers, will be more easily accepted by users. In the context of digital media, features such as ease of streaming, quick access to content, or time flexibility in accessing media will largely determine the user's perception of the ease of use of the technology. Perceived Usefulness (PU). Perceived Usefulness is the level of user confidence that the use of a technology system will improve the performance, effectiveness, or quality of the results of their activities. The higher the perceived usefulness perceived by users, the more likely the technology will be accepted and used. In media studies, this includes how the new technology provides added value, such as time efficiency, availability of relevant content, or expansion of information access. Attitude Toward Using. Attitude towards use is the user's evaluation of the use of technology, whether they view it as beneficial, enjoyable, or otherwise. This attitude is shaped by personal experience, social environmental influences, and expectations of technology. A positive attitude towards technology will encourage users to be more open to continued exploration and use of . Behavioral Intention to Use. Behavioral

intention to use refers to an individual's intention to use technology in the future. This indicator is an important predictor of whether technology adoption will actually occur. The stronger a person's intention to use the system, the more likely the individual will adopt and integrate the technology into their daily activities. Actual System Use. Actual System Use is the real action of users in implementing the technology that is available. It reflects the extent to which technology actually becomes part of the user's habit or routine. Frequency, duration, and consistency of use are indicators that indicate that the technology has been fully adopted.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides an important analytical framework to understand the dynamics of technology acceptance at Radio Romansa FM Ponorogo. Local radios such as Romansa FM face great challenges in maintaining existence amidst audience shifts to digital platforms such as audio streaming, podcasts, and social media. Using TAM, Romansa FM can systematically map the factors that influence technology acceptance at two important levels: internal organization and audience. Applying TAM to Romansa FM's transformation is not just a matter of buying a device or creating a streaming app. The model helps analyze the psychological and social factors that influence staff and audiences to accept or reject technology. By understanding PU and PEOU contextually including cultural barriers, skills, and economic access Romansa FM can design a more inclusive, gradual, and sustainable digitalization strategy. The transformation of Radio Romansa FM Ponorogo from conventional media to digital media reflects the adaptive efforts made by local media in responding to the challenges of an increasingly digitalized communication ecosystem. The radio started its journey as a conventional broadcasting media with strong local strengths, but as technology develops and information consumption patterns change, Romansa FM faces pressure to transform. In the conventional era, Romansa FM became an integral part of the lives of the people of Ponorogo, broadcasting nostalgic music, classic dangdut, send greetings, and local news that were eagerly awaited by listeners of all ages. However, the analog, one-way communication pattern began to be abandoned when digital media began to offer new convenience in the form of interactivity, on-demand access, and visual content that appealed to the younger generation. When Nielsen data (2022) states that radio listener penetration is only 35%, while digital audio platforms continue to increase, this is a signal for local radio to update its strategy.

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Radio Romansa FM Ponorogo's Media Transformation Strategy. The transformation undertaken by Romansa FM Ponorogo shows a conscious effort to adapt to the new media environment. By implementing a media convergence strategy based on the 3M concept (Multimedia, Multichannel, Multiplatform), Romansa FM seeks to combine conventional and digital media to expand reach and increase listener engagement. Multimedia: Romansa FM presents information through audio (broadcast), text (social media captions), video (YouTube content), and photos documenting activities. This provides depth of information and strengthens the credibility of the broadcast. Multichannel: Romansa FM utilizes various channels such as analog radio (FM), social media (Facebook, Instagram), streaming apps (Svara Radio), and YouTube. This enables wider access and opens up opportunities for two-way communication. Multiplatform: The use of smartphones, computers, and other gadgets makes it easier for listeners to access broadcasts anytime and anywhere. This removes the time and space constraints that have hindered conventional radio.

Based on interviews with listeners and station managers, this convergence provides convenience and tangible benefits to listeners. Access to broadcasts becomes more flexible, not limited by time and space. Listeners can also interact directly with broadcasters via WhatsApp or social media in real-time, which was previously impossible in analog broadcasts. Usefulness of Convergence Strategy on Listener Existence. Analysis based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) shows that the convergence strategy has a real impact on listener existence: Perceived Ease of Use: Listeners feel that access to broadcasts has become more flexible and easier, especially with podcasts and rebroadcasts. Listeners from outside the broadcast area can also enjoy the content, expanding the audience to a national and even international level. Perceived Usefulness: Digitization increases efficiency and relevance. Listeners feel they can stay connected to local content while carrying out other activities. This increases the functional value of radio. Attitude Toward Using: A positive attitude is evident from the enthusiasm of listeners, especially the younger generation, in following Romansa FM's social media accounts and interacting directly during broadcasts. Behavioral Intention to Use: Although not every day, the tendency to access Romansa FM broadcasts remains high. This shows the loyalty of listeners and the success of the convergence strategy in maintaining their existence. Actual System Use: Actual use can be seen from increased interaction through social media, streaming and other digital platforms. Listeners are no

longer just listening, but are also actively involved as part of the Romansa FM community.

Convergence Barriers and Failures. Despite the strategy, Romansa FM's media convergence was not entirely successful due to two main factors: Internal: Limited human resources, lack of technology training, and the absence of a systematic digitization strategy. External: Nonrenewal of the broadcast building contract led to the loss of operational premises. As a result, since June 2023 Romansa FM is no longer actively broadcasting. This finding is in line with research stating that community radio often fails in digitization due to weak resource management and unclear distribution strategies (Widyastuti, 2020). Thus, Romansa FM is a clear example of how important internal and external readiness is in the media transformation process. Transformation is not merely a matter of digitizing tools and platforms, but involves organizational culture, human resource capacity, operational sustainability, and resilience to economic and technological disruption.

CONCLUSION

The media transformation carried out by Radio Romansa FM Ponorogo is a strategic response to changes in media consumption patterns in the digital era. The convergence approach through the 3M strategy-Multimedia, Multichannel, and Multiplatform-has succeeded in expanding listener reach, increasing interactivity, and strengthening the position of local radio as a relevant media. The integration of social media, streaming platforms, and visual content is proven to support audience acceptance according to the Technology Acceptance Model indicators (perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitude toward using, behavioral intention to use, and actual system use). However, the success of technological and content transformation does not guarantee institutional sustainability without institutional strengthening, as reflected in Romansa FM's operational closure in 2023.

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