



A BRIGHT SPOT FOR LOCAL TELEVISION STATION ON FACING OF BROADCASTING DIGITIZATION'S SHACKLES

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507

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ABSTRACT.

The digitalization of terrestrial broadcasting for Indonesian televisions is in its final stage. According to Law no. 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation, analog television broadcasts will end in November 2022. The discourse on digitalization or migration of the broadcast system from analog to digital was initiated in 2007 and implemented in 2020. However, the huge gap between initialization and implementation time questions the government's seriousness and make television station owners doubtful and pessimistic. Despite the pessimism regarding the success, Sumedang Televisi (SMTV) was one local television that embraced this change. With its limited resources, SMTV readily adopted the digitalization of broadcasting to create new and better opportunities in the future. The purpose of this study was to explain SMTV's optimism towards the transformation of digital broadcast technology using Vincent Mosco's media political economy approach. This methodology examined external and internal relations affecting production, distribution, and consumption in the mass media, especially television. The results showed that the digitalization of terrestrial television is a vital step in developing a country's mass media. Although it presents certain challenges, digitalization provides new opportunities to television companies. However, there is no difference between before and after digitalization in content production and distribution patterns.

KEYWORDS: local television; Indonesia; mass media; Sumedang; digital broadcast transformation

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INTRODUCTION

Digitalization is a frightening specter for most local televisions, creating new opportunities. The digital transformation can be detrimental to televisions due to the need to change broadcast equipment that may be costly. According to the Indonesian Network Television Association (ATVJSI), the transformation can cost IDR 858 billion. However, this figure assumes that all 143 local TV stations' members of ATVJSI can spend IDR 5-6 billion to construct a new transmitter (Aryadi, 2012). This means that the investment value would burden television stations and potentially run out of

business because of the inability to fulfill these needs.

(Alamsyah et al., 2021; Satriania & Alamsyah, 2020; Alamsyah et al., 2018) stated that increased competition and the rapidly growing social media push local TV stations to spend this amount for their benefits.

The advertisements originally absorbed by television stations are now divided into new social media platforms, reducing the television business profit (Mulyono, 2021; Al-Shalabi, 2016)

In Indonesia, television broadcasting is a profit-oriented business institution and a mass communication medium. Mass media has



informative, educative, social control, and entertainment functions. (Indonesia, 2002). Therefore, television mass media should not die and fail to adapt to policy changes.

Sumedang Televisi (SMTV) saw digitalization as an opportunity to improve operations with its present Director, Asep Anang Supriatna, stating that the local TV station has the resources that support switching from analog to a digital broadcasting system. Analog and digital technologies require the same budget size to run their operations. As a confirmation, Asep revealed that the monthly operational cost for analog technology is IDR 15-17 million, with a large sum covering electricity bills and human resources. Similarly, digital technology requires IDR 15-16 million for channel renting and catering for mux operators' needs. Therefore, technological changes do not financially affect the operations.

Technologically, SMTV is ready to meet the specifications required for effective and efficient digital broadcasting. Asep confirmed that the digital broadcasting equipment is already in place. This equipment has an aspect ratio of 16:9, while the standard broadcast receiver has an aspect ratio of 4:3, allowing SMTV to restore its mass media image.

SMTV has so far seen 16 managers who come with different technological ideas. Asep established that the current technology or equipment is simple and unique because the organization can customize its functionality. Asep's statements show that viewers look for quality and focus less on what it takes to satisfy their needs.

Although it faces a shortage of facilities, SMTV has maintained the creativity of its human resources, improving the quality and performance the viewers care about. In December 2020, it won an award from the Regional Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPID) of West Java as the best television in producing and broadcasting Public Service

Announcement (PSA) during the COVID - 19 pandemic. Therefore, digitalization will ensure this local station improves its services to people to scoop more awards. SMTV broadcasts in Sumedang and Majalengka with confidence unsuccessfully integrating digitalization before ASO in 2022 that takes six months.

It is interesting to examine the different attitudes of SMTV, whose optimistic attitude is a form of surviving the detrimental challenges of television broadcasting digitization.

This article explains SMTV's optimistic attitude and how it could survive and face broadcasting digitization. The explanation is expected to build optimism from other stations. A successfully transmitted optimistic attitude could save the right to information from the public, especially the community, as the main information source.

This topic is described through a political media economy from Vincent Mosco's approach. The approach examines how the mass media, as a branch of communication institutions, survives and adapts to social power relations affecting production, distribution, and resource exchange (Mosco, 2009)

In the television broadcasting business concept in a democratic country such as Indonesia, television stations are influenced by advertisements, government policies, and capital owners. Therefore, the political economy could explain the optimism and strategy for SMTV's existence.

METHOD

This qualitative research used data generated through exploring people's understanding of its reality. (Creswell, 2014). The subjects comprised local television stations, especially Sumedang TV, while the object was their optimism in responding to digitization policies in Indonesia. Data were collected through non-participant observation,



purposely selected informant interviews, and literature review.

The discussion description was obtained through data analysis techniques, including organizing, reducing, synthesizing, and finding patterns from the research reality (Bogdan & Biklen in Moleong, 2019)

The political economy focuses on regulation, advertising, ownership, and relating these three components to the power and the operations of mass media. This shows that media companies are part of the economic setup related to the political system. Political economy is a social critique approach focusing on the relationship between the dynamics of economic structure and the mass media ideologies (McQuail, 2014).

According to Mosco (Muslikhin et al., 2021), political economy studies social relations, especially power relations that affect production, distribution, and consumption. The political economy enhances the establishment and control of the mass media, improves financial management, and clarifies the relationship between content production and finance (Baran & Davis, 2015).

Mosco (Hasan & Satria, 2009) established that the following concepts of the political economy need to be understood. *Commodification*; This refers to the producers' efforts to turn anything into a valuable item or commodity that attracts profit. In mass media, three factors affecting profit include content (news or information), the number of viewers, and advertising. *Spatialization*; These are the steps or strategies media companies use to overcome challenges and obstacles, including distance and time barriers. *Structuration*; This refers to the uniformity of structured ideology in the interaction between members and the structural entity. This interaction involves exchanging ideas, social processes, and social practices in a structured manner that creates a character that

represents the media content. (Valdivia, 2007) stated that media content plays a key role when looking for financing authorities.

Golding and Murdock (Triyono, 2012) established that political economy is divided into two major dichotomies, including liberal political economy liberally and critical political economy.

The liberal political economy focuses on market exchange and the effects of market liberalization that give consumers the freedom to choose products or commodities according to their benefits and satisfaction. The liberal political economy sees mass media as a product that should be allowed to compete freely. However, media companies should create strategies that allow reaching viewers in the free market. In general, a greater number of producers increases the freedom of consumers to make their choices. (Triyono, 2012) stated that a "hidden hand" controls this market mechanism.

This is different from the critical political economy, which holds that capital owners have a large effect on mass media content; hence, its analysis pays attention to the dominance of the capital owners in content production. The state controls the critical political economy, resulting in limited diversity of mass media content. This limits viewers' freedom of choosing content according to satisfaction and benefits.

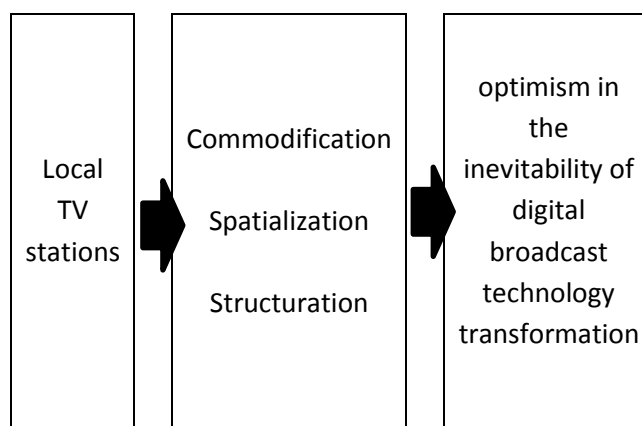


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: (Mosco, 2019)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Principally, commodification refers to the viewers' tastes, increased through attractive shows and media companies' efforts. Television broadcasting is divided into the commodification of information (content), human resources (HR), and technology.

The commodification of information (content) refers to strategies that change events, issues, and stories to news, soap operas, quizzes, and speech titles that attract viewers. SMTV has a radio broadcast system that improves interaction with viewers through programs with visual facilities. These programs are news and non-news shows, with the latter being more dominant. Non-news includes information changed to broadcast programs that are entertaining and boost viewers' interaction. Therefore, SMTV is broadcasting more live programs.

SMTV also pays great attention to viewers' tastes through direct interaction during broadcasting or communication on social media to improve shows quality. With specific segments and fanatical viewers, establishing two-way communication is easy. This allows tracking disliked shows and repairing or replacing them with more attractive ones. SMTV has not used the show survey and rating from AC Nielsen because the agency has not reached Sumedang and Majalengka.

The commodification of content fulfills the needs of advertisers or sponsors, especially those who buy slots, including paid coverage and program collaboration with formal and non-formal events, for a certain duration to make special programs. SMTV generates great profits that can reach 60 % of total income from this commodification of content. Most requests come from the government and local political figures, asking for live talk shows to socialize

and communicate with the community. Additionally, wedding celebrations, circumcision, and the anniversary of a region significantly contribute to the insane profits SMTV generates.

In the commodification of technology, producers strive to improve the supporting technology for broadcasting to produce more profit. The improvement of picture and audio quality based on the broadcasting standards, making the content worthy of being "sold" or monetized.

Supporting technology includes recording technology, processing technology that works on the recording, and transmitting technology that disseminates the recording. SMTV greatly optimizes its supporting technology for easy content production and live to broadcast.

SMTV has a few post-production computers, with its editing room containing three computers. One computer from the three available is mostly used for editing and creating graphic components and animations to complement the show and record the voice of the news narrator. The other two computers are used to make scripts on other occasions because it is usually already made in the field. Although this local TV has insufficient post-production equipment, it fulfills the broadcast needs, which do not need much editing.

SMTV adopted transmitting equipment in September 2021 to broadcast analog and digital channels. Analog broadcasting happens on channel 29 UHF by sending broadcast data from the television station to the transmitting station and then broadcasting directly to the viewers. Similarly, digital broadcasting happens on channel 47 UHF with the same system that further uses the connector to accommodate digital broadcasts. This is quite the opposite in analog broadcasting, where the material is sent from the television station to the transmitting



station that hosts the SMTV's mux from the viva group television station.

Migrating from analog to digital broadcast technology is also an aspect of the commodification of technology. Digital devices allow local TV stations to improve their local shows' picture and sound quality through sophisticated technology and generate more profits. Analog broadcasting suffered several setbacks, including poor quality broadcasts, mostly presented in "ants" images. Therefore, digitalization is expected to fix this to give viewers high-quality local broadcasts.

The commodification of Human Resources (HR) allows television stations to monetize human resources' skills, expertise, and creativity to make more profits. The correlation between HR expertise and profit is shown in programs that attract many viewers who positively affect the amount of income.

Each television station has a different culture that attracts profits, including SMTV that relies on cooperation to meet its financial objectives. The human resource of this local TV station cooperates with the small production team to improve the quality of presenters, editing, and news coverage to give viewers quality shows that generate more profits.

SMTV has an HR department with 16 well-educated and managed members who cooperate with freelance and non-permanent workers to create 18-hour content each day to meet the production needs. Furthermore, performers from external parties, including Dai of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), who runs the lecture program "*Layung Langit*," contribute to realizing quality broadcast material.

High school and college students also help SMTV as apprentices in Field Work Practices (PKL) program. This TV station collaborates with schools specializing in broadcasting and journalism to create more learning opportunities. Since this collaboration

is a symbiotic mutualism, the school gets a place to sharpen its students' skills and talents, while SMTV gets a new staff that enhances the efficient flow of work.

Spatialization is the steps or strategies media companies use to anticipate and overcome challenges or obstacles. In this case, it is horizontal spatialization, although there is a vertical one by creating a holding company or consortium.

Establishing a television station in an area with a vast population living in farming and trading (Statistik, 2021) makes it challenging to find quality human resources, making SMTV source freelancers majoring in wedding video documentation services. However, these freelancers are further enlightened on the production techniques before joining the human resources. Although training them is time-consuming, what matters are the skills they will bring to the table as qualified human resources.

SMTV also collaborates with senior high schools and universities, especially those with broadcasting majors in Sumedang and surrounding areas, to overcome human resource obstacles. This symbiotic mutualism cooperation gives students a place for professional studies while SMTV gets additional staff for free.

Obstacles and challenges negatively affect the creation of broadcast programs, increasing the need for more skilled human resources and financial backup. Although the director has experience in radio broadcasting, organizing programs faces setbacks, including uncertainties after creating programs at low cost.

This increases the need for SMTV to execute viable strategies and take advantage of opportunities in the Sumedang. The key strategies can include embracing collaborations, for example, with the Sumedang regional MUI in lecture program "*Layung Langit*" and Islamic



nuances to reduce the budget. This cooperation is beneficial to both parties with the MUI, getting a platform to fulfill the goals of Islamic propagation while SMTV enjoys a low budget of the programs created. Furthermore, SMTV can cooperate with local artists who are members of the Sumedang Cultural Council (DKS) under the same principle to uplift talents and spend less on creating programs.

SMTV has invested heavily to transform from analog to digital broadcasting technology, implying that this transformation is not a frightening specter. However, it will render useless important assets, including the transmitter unit. The transmitter unit required serious investment in forms of procurement and maintenance in analog broadcasting.

In digital broadcasting, local television stations with limited capital, including SMTV, rent channels to the mux operator such as the viva group to broadcast. This renders the transmitting station a dead asset, despite its great value. Fortunately, this asset will still be used to attract the interests of other mux organizing stations.

Vertically, SMTV collaborates with Jawa Pos Multimedia (JPM), one of the largest media consortiums in Indonesia, to improve its management. Although it acts as the parent company, JPM improves the flexibility of SMTV through quality management that builds its image in Sumedang.

IJPM asks for 2.5 hours each day to broadcast news from Jawa Pos, or SMTV can own 10 percent of the total broadcast duration depending on internal policies. In general, the parent company does not intervene in this local TV station's content creation and management. This collaboration only gives SMTV technical assistance if there are challenges that internal technicians cannot solve and more access to facilities that improve performance. Furthermore, JPM will manage cooperation

between SMTV and the mux organizer after successful integration of digitalization.

According to its vision, SMTV is a television station that aims to develop and maintain the Sundanese culture. Asep Anang Supriatna, the initiator with great experience in radio broadcasting, established that this vision is firm, showing a greater understanding of the demographics, segmentation, and tastes of the Sumedang people. Asep's intentions with SMTV became clear after accepting a partnership with Jawa Pos Multimedia (JPM), one of Indonesia's major mass media consortiums. After reaching the agreement, the television station started operating on a widely used program in radios.

When developing, SMTV used SKTV, an acronym for *Sunda Kiwari Televisi*. This collaboration was between four local television stations operating in West Java, including SMTV in Sumedang and Majalengka, Cirebon, and Cianjur. The four television stations agreed to work together because they had a common vision of preserving the Sundanese culture. However, the partnership did not last and resulted in SKTV changing its name to SMTV, implying that it pays more attention to the people of Sumedang and Majalengka.

After technical challenges, SMTV also faces difficulties communicating ideas or visions to HR. Implementing the vision on television broadcast content requires direct leadership involvement to enhance idea development, execution, and evaluation, which can be difficult to achieve. The workflow at SMTV boils down to a leadership decision, implying that the director should know all HR activities in broadcast production, from idea development to evaluation. Broadcast production recurs until human resources understand it and start producing independently according to the vision.

Several adjustments in broadcast programs are made after recruitment and training human resources to create a strong



character that meets the needs of the Sumedang and Majalengka people, the target viewers. This increases the attention and tastes of the target population, speeding up achievement of the vision as the local Tv station with Sundanese cultural characteristics. Consistency in meeting viewers' tastes and establishing sustainable communication can eventually make viewers loyal to the Tv station.

The same process is also applied in the adjustment of sponsors and advertisers. Sponsorships of SMTV support certain programs, attract partnerships, and create new programs from the partnerships; hence, there are no significant differences between advertisers and television stations. Adjustment of these parties has to emphasize the television character to give sponsors and advertisers the right assertiveness for achieving their expected goals. Television characters should generally show the viewer profile to direct potential sponsors and advertisers.

These adjustments eventually develop and incarnate with the current character. Despite its strong vision, SMTV still adapts and negotiates with the time; hence, the character is created from the collective agreement of various stakeholders, including viewers, advertisers, sponsors, and leadership-curated human resources.

According to structuration, moving from analog to digital broadcast systems has no big effects because it is only part of television stations' adaptation step or response to technological developments to improve broadcasting quality. Digitalization will improve efficiency in media companies' efficiency, allowing viewers to enjoy technical spectacle quality. Better broadcasting quality improves information understandability, making the role of local television more significant. This shows that the successful local TV station will become a cultural showcase and a medium of mass communication for the local community.

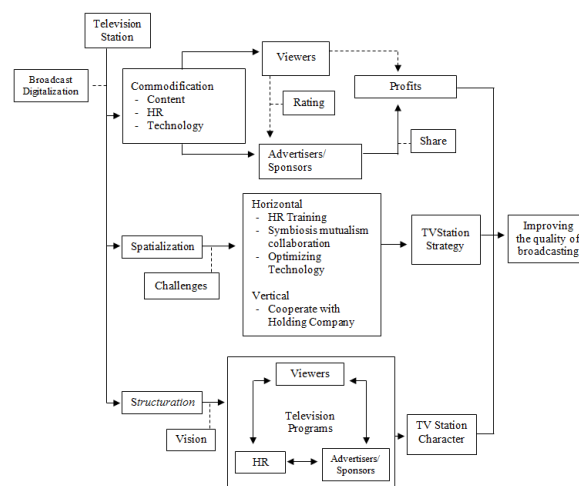


Figure 2. Television activity model in the digitalization era

Source: research findings, 2021

SMTV broadcasting refers to the needs of the community that craves local broadcasts.

In a democratic country such as Indonesia, the highest power is in the hands of the community, whose needs determine all policies (Indonesia, 2002; Undang-Undang No 11 Tahun 2020 Tentang Cipta Kerja, 2020). Therefore, as a communication bridge and information channel, mass media is a government effort in fulfilling the community's right to information.

The government regulates the mass media ecosystem in a better direction through the digitization policy (Nurizar, 2020). In this regard, television mass media must update the broadcast system from analog to digital. This policy arose because of the community's need to start using digital technology in all aspects, including broadcasting.

As a Private Broadcasting Institution (LPS), SMTV needs to economically make peace with the viewers. The program invites the community's interest to watch as the main product of television. In this case, television



stations could monetize when the number of viewers is ideal, and fanaticism grows.

Monetization is related to the interest of advertisers or sponsors that potentially bring in profits. The viewers' number and segmentation determine the advertisers or sponsors' interest to advertise on SMTV.

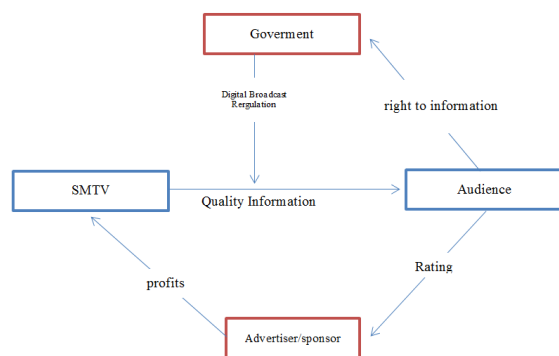


Figure 3. Model of power relations for SMTV Television activities during digitization
 Source: Research, 2021

CONCLUSION

The results showed that production and broadcasting at television stations will still take a relatively similar pattern before or after digitalization with slight differences on the technical side. Migrating from analog to digital broadcast systems presents certain challenges. However, television stations with viable plans and reliable management systems, including SMTV, can avoid these difficulties and successfully integrate digitalization to improve content quality.

Digitization dynamics depend on the television stations' response to the policy. Therefore, SMTV's digitization policy is a challenge that should be faced because it creates new opportunities.

Digitization is necessary because most viewers have a digital perspective, and analog technology would soon be abandoned.

In the broadcasting democracy, the viewers become the highest authority

controlling their activities ideally and economically. Therefore, SMTV needs to follow this for its existence.

The government's digitization policy provides legal certainty and promotes stakeholders to build awareness in digital broadcasting. As a result, this ensures the stability of the television broadcasting business climate.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The subject is too micro; hence results in this article cannot provide a general understanding.

This description is an overview of the readiness of the 1,027 television stations operating in Indonesia (Trihusodo, 2020). Therefore, it shows the optimism of television stations in accepting the broadcasting digitization policy.

This calls for the need to use macro subjects and quantitative methods to obtain more useful results in future research.

A quantitative approach examines the conclusions in this article and develops a global reality. The findings become the basis for subsequent research in collecting data, determining variables, as well as measuring and analyzing them statistically (Creswell, 2014). The population could be performed using a random sampling technique.

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