

Hyperlocal Journalism as a Strategy in Facing Digital Disruption: A Case Study of Jawa Pos Newspaper

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ABSTRACT: When the national mass media experiences a significant decline in circulation, this is not the case with *Jawa Pos* Newspaper, a regional newspaper in East Java. Circulation of newspaper sales both retail and subscription as well as advertising revenue declines, but the decline in *Jawa Pos* is not as deep as other newspapers. Losing to the speed of publication compared to online media, but choosing to concentrate on presenting local content, through what is referred to as hyperlocal journalism, which cannot be fulfilled by other online and newspaper media, as well as focusing on segments of readers who have worked and are economically established, making *Jawa Pos'* business performance, in general, remains excellent.

Keywords: Media, hyperlocal media, local content, newspaper, digital media, media strategy.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Independent Journalists Alliance report in 2018 demonstrated that the digital explosion was considered as a significant factor in the decline of the print media business in Indonesia (Manan, 2018: 56-57). Digital technology - in this context is the internet - has disrupted the print media business, changing not only people's behavior in consuming information but also the distribution of information and the sale of advertising space.

No exception, this "sunset" condition is also experienced by national newspapers under the management of the media conglomerate. The term "national newspaper" refers to the significance of market share in a particular region because there are no genuinely dominant newspapers in most regions in Indonesia. Each province generally has a newspaper that is the market leader in their respective regions. For example, *Kompas* Newspaper in Greater Jakarta (Jabodetabek), *Jawa Pos* Newspaper in East Java, *Pikiran Rakyat* Newspaper in West Java, *Kedaulatan Rakyat* Newspaper in Yogyakarta, and *Suara Merdeka* Newspaper in Central Java.

AC Nielsen's survey report for Jawa Pos Newspaper internal management in the fourth quarter/2018 showed the *Jawa Pos* readership was the highest

with 853,000, followed by *Kompas* (268,000), *Kedaulatan Rakyat*(157,000), *Pikiran Rakyat*(129,000), and *Suara Merdeka*(112,000). These five newspapers are the top five with the highest circulation in surveys conducted in 11 major cities of Greater Jakarta, Greater Bandung, Greater Semarang, Greater Surabaya, Greater Jakarta, Surakarta, Greater Denpasar, Medan, Palembang, Banjarmasin, and Makassar (Nielsen, 2018).

It is interesting to see the fact that as a newspaper based in a region, *Jawa Pos* is able to overwhelm *Kompas'* circulation as a newspaper in the center of the government and business capital. With the largest share of *Jawa Pos* readers in Greater Surabaya (Surabaya, Sidoarjo, and Gresik) whose total population is still below 10 million inhabitants, Jawa Pos is superior to *Kompas* with a Greater Jakarta reader base (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi) whose total population is around 30 million people. This does not take into account that Greater Jakarta is far superior in terms of economic potential compared to Greater Surabaya.

Media economist, Robert Picard said that newspapers are already in a mature industry and therefore experiencing a decline in business. The newspaper industry is seen to have gone through a phase of revival and growth and is in a phase where revenue

and sales growth is slower than economic growth. The industry is even experiencing shrinkage (Van Kerkhoven, M. & Bakker, P. 2014).

The study of community-based local media, also known as, hyperlocal media that is able to find specific reader segments or niche markets in the United States has been carried out by Curpius, D. D., Metzgar, E. T., & Rowley, K. M. (2010). Most of these hyperlocal media rely on private angel investors, non-profit through foundations or membership, as well as advertising. However, the existence of advertisements in hyperlocal media competes with local advertising media such as billboards and banners that equally reach local geographical areas.

The number of articles estimates that online local media is expected to replace traditional local media. Online local media is considered more flexible and more economical to operate, particularly in terms of production and distribution.

Online local media audiences more easily participate, because the media can utilize non-professional journalists to participate in writing news content as contributors. In theory, news gaps, as a result of smaller traditional local media, can be bridged (Van Kerkhoven, M., & Bakker, P., 2014).

While the traditional value creation process in the news industry is "firm-centric" and independent as there is little social interaction with consumers. The emergence of consumer value creation in the social era is part of a shift in media and society. (Hernandez Serrano, M. J., Greenhill, A., & Graham, G., 2015).

Technology is becoming more easily accessible, making media personalization more and more available. In the newspaper industry, the trend towards consumer creation (co-creation) is associated with the emergence of the phenomenon of citizen journalism and weblogs (blogs) on the Internet.

A study by Hernandez Serrano's research, M. J., Greenhill, A., & Graham, G. (2015) showed consumers still perceive traditional media news sources as being more credible and, therefore, more widely used by the public.

In fact, for older people over the age of 65, television and print newspapers are media that tend to be used to consume news. The use of news sources from online media is usually lower in this group, except for the use of search engines. While young people dominate the use of social media and online news sources regardless of the type of community.

One of the media that began trying to develop free hyper-local newspapers is "The News Chronicle". This newspaper from the United Kingdom divides the city area into six zones with residents becoming reporters and supplying content to this weekly me-

dia. (Hernandez Serrano, M. J., Greenhill, A., & Graham, G., 2015).

2 RESEARCH METHODS

The study used a descriptive qualitative method that describes how *Jawa Pos* Newspaper utilizes local content strategies to maintain circulation and advertising revenue in detail, accurate, and factual manner.

The author conducted an interview with Chief Editor of *Jawa Pos* Newspaper, observed the editorial and analysis of the *Jawa Pos* content, and compared it with the main benchmarking of the national newspaper industry, *Kompas* and *Seputar Indonesia*. Unwittingly, the two authors have worked in several media under the *Jawa Pos* Group in Surabaya city as well as other national media groups based in Jakarta.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As one of the biggest newspapers in Indonesia, *Jawa Pos* newspaper has long been known to have an advantage in its local content. When viewed from the *Jawa Pos* section which now has 28 pages in average, the City section (in *Jawa Pos* is called Metropolis) is one of the main sections, in addition to other main sections of National News in which economic and business sections are included, and the Sports section.

In comparison, two other national newspapers based in Jakarta, namely *Kompas* and *Seputar Indonesia* (*Sindo*), have shorter City sections. The section in *Kompas* newspaper is divided into the National main section and the Business Economy section with the City news is under the Business Economy section. Whereas, *Sindo* Newspaper divides its sections into National, Lifestyle, and Sports with the City news is under the National section.

Unlike *Kompas* and *Seputar Indonesia*, where the City news contains general developments in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi (Greater Jakarta) in the Metropolitan section, *Jawa Pos* further divides its Metropolitan section. In addition to the Metropolis cover section, City news is divided into East Surabaya, West Surabaya, North Surabaya, South Surabaya, Gresik, and Sidoarjo (Greater Surabaya).

What *Jawa Pos* does is similar to the hyperlocal newspaper "The News Chronicle" from the United Kingdom which divides the reportage of the city area into six zones (Hernandez Serrano, M. J., Greenhill, A., & Graham, G., 2015). The difference is that *Jawa Pos* does not entrust the coverage to citizen

participation, but prefers to pay professional reporters on the grounds considering the ability to explore the facts and the flexibility to move journalists wherever they are needed.

Abdul Rokhim as Chief Editor and Responsible Person of *Jawa Pos* in an interview on February 2, 2019 that took place in the *Jawa Pos* editorial room, 4th floor of Graha Pena building, Surabaya, said that *Jawa Pos* does not only rely on local content, but the local content must be sought to have differentiation or exclusivity compared to local media competitor:

"Jawa Pos is trying to find exclusive content. Journalists must not only take material from the same press conference with other media. We have to feel. We have to enter the tunnel. We are like drones. We need to know what the underpass infrastructure from above looks like."

To further deepen the news as well as increase engagement with its readers, *Jawa Pos* is also diligent in organizing various discussions related to current issues based on proximity. They call it an off-print event.

"The off-print program is carried out almost every week. The Regent wants to build a road to access the toll road. If he speaks from his area, no one listens, but when he comes to Jawa Pos, we invite the Governor and the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing in one forum. Immediately there is a solution when the road will be done. As the Regency is part of his province, the Governor puts advertisements."

In the eyes of *Jawa Pos*, the exclusivity of the news content includes not allowing its content to circulate generally on search engine news aggregators:

"We create content and cannot be directly aggregated, just like that by Google."

In addition, the depth of the news rather than speed becomes a matter that is prioritized by *Jawa Pos*:

"Compared to online, newspapers cannot be fast. But it must be deeper. My friends remind you don't need to be the first to come to the party. But you should come with your best appearance, so everyone will see you. Being the first is the job for Detik."

"Talking about match scores, don't just elaborate the score. But what is next? The review is reduced, a preview is added — especially new journalists whose style is like an online journalist. The news is

too brief. All newsrooms experience this. Pak Dahlan (Iskan) used to sit reporters beside him if the data is incomplete, he asked the reporters to return to the field."

"Although we are often invited by Google, for us, that medium is later. The important thing is content. As for content, the spirit of journalism runs, it doesn't matter with the platform. "

As print newspapers focus more on the depth and exclusivity of the news, reporters of a print newspaper are not required to look for as much news as possible like on online media. If online media can add up to ten news stories per reporter per day, for print media, two or three news a day is enough.

At a particular moment, this aspect of locality does not only appear in the City section, the Economic and Business section, the Sports section or other sections of *Jawa Pos* Newspaper but the aspect can be placed on the front page of page 1 of *Jawa Pos*.

Like on the front page of *Jawa Pos* edition: Monday, February 11, 2019, to Thursday, February 14, 2019, the inauguration of Khofifah Indar Parawansa and Emil Dardak as Governor and Vice Governor of East Java 2019-2024 period was blown up on page 1 complete with various supporting news angles.

In the end, strong content in the aspect of locality and with the exclusive news proved to be able to attract *Jawa Pos* readers in East Java, especially the Greater Surabaya area.

All newspapers did experience a decline in circulation and advertising revenue due to digital media disruption. However, compared to other rival newspapers in the Greater Surabaya region, the circulation and advertising revenue of the *Jawa Pos* Newspaper consistently remain much higher than other newspapers targeting the same market area in Greater Surabaya.

In fact, as the newspaper market leader in Greater Surabaya, *Jawa Pos* Newspaper has a stronger market dominance than the newspaper market leaders in Greater Jakarta, which is the center of Indonesian business.

4 CONCLUSION

Through a combination of locality, news exclusivity, trusted news, and diligently organizing off-print events, and focusing on a reader market that has strong purchasing power, *Jawa Pos* is still able to survive the attack of online media. A decline in cir-

ulation and advertising revenue still occurs. However, not as fast as other newspapers.

In fact, when this research was conducted, Jawa Pos was able to sell its printed newspaper at the cost of Rp120,000 per month. Jawa Pos monthly subscription is even more expensive compared to Kompas, which is only Rp. 98,000 per month.

Nielsen Indonesia's data from 2014 to the first semester of 2019 quoted on Monday (9/9/2019) grouped 10 categories of goods with the highest advertising value. Of the 10 categories of goods in the period, the newspaper contributed a share of around 31 percent or Rp30.12 trillion (Kompas, 2019).

This figure is still relatively stable despite the tendency to decrease from year to year. Government agencies and organizations dominate newspaper advertisements because newspapers have the characteristic of being able to convey information in more detail (Kompas, 2019).

With the right content, reader segments, distribution channels, strategies, and appropriate business models, selectively, newspapers still have the opportunity to exist in the digital era as is the case with radio media in the golden era of television.

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