Strategies Of Radio Sonora 98.9 Fm To Retain Listeners Amid The Rise Of Music Streaming Applications Spotify

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to identify and analyze the strategies of Radio Sonora 98.9 FM Semarang in retaining listeners amid the challenges of the digital era, especially the development of the Spotify music streaming application. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with in-depth interview and observation methods to collect data. The results showed that Sonora Radio implemented four main strategies: program suitability, habit formation, listener flow control, and program resource storage. These strategies include scheduling programs according to audience needs, creating advertisements and rundowns to build listening habits, and regular evaluations to improve broadcast quality. In addition, content diversification and innovation, such as collaboration with local influencers and social media optimization, are implemented to attract the younger generation. This research concludes that the success of Radio Sonora's strategy lies in its ability to adapt to the development of digital technology while still maintaining the characteristics of traditional broadcasts that are familiar to listeners.

Keywords: Radio Sonora, broadcasting strategy, digital era, Spotify, listener engagement.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, the development of communication and information technology is very rapid, so that the flow of information can be spread quickly throughout the world. This phenomenon causes people's need for information to increase and makes mass media, both electronic and print, an inseparable part of everyday life. Radio is one of the electronic media that is still well received by the public. Apart from functioning as a communication medium, radio also acts as a source of entertainment and information. Radio's emotionally intimate characteristics make it a medium that feels more personal to its listeners(Adnan & Giswandhani, n.d.).

Digital transformation has changed people's music consumption patterns. Paid music streaming platforms, such as Spotify, provide easy access to songs while offering a more personalized listening experience. This change has triggered a major shift from physical music consumption, such as CDs and cassettes, to digital. The impact of this phenomenon is felt on conventional radio, which is now facing increasing competitive pressures. Radio not only has to compete with the increasing number of new radio stations, but also has to compete with other media such as television, print media, and other digital music applications, so that radio's position in capturing listeners' attention and the advertising market is becoming increasingly pressured (Prayuda, 2004).

Radio itself is one of the oldest broadcast communication media with a long history. In 1887,

J.C. Maxwell and Helmholtz Hertz succeeded in creating radio waves for the first time, which then developed into a mass media that is trusted by the public until now (Morissan, 2009). In Indonesia, radio is one of the most popular mass media for entertainment and information due to its personal and emotional nature. Although

increasingly marginalized by the times, radio is still in demand by some people, especially with easy access through smartphones. Radio was once the main media of its time and has great potential to convey information to various parts of the region, even between countries via satellite. Compared to television, which tends to be consumed collectively, radio is more personal (Nasir, 2023).

Although the number of radio listeners has decreased, data shows that radio still has a loyal audience. Based on wearesocial.com research, 51.1% of the world's people still listen to radio, while BPS RI data in 2021 recorded that around 10.3% of Indonesians are still radio listeners. A GoodStats survey in October 2024 involving 500 respondents aged 18-25 years showed that 52% of young people still listen to radio at least in the past month, with frequencies ranging from every day to once a month. Radio remains a top choice to get rid of boredom and get information, especially among the younger generation.

Furthermore, according to data from Radio Indonesia in 2020, the average radio listener in ten urban areas in Indonesia listens to radio for two hours per day with the number of listeners reaching 22.759 million people. However, there has been a decline in the number of radio listeners nationwide, where in 2017 there were 62.3 million individuals with an average listening time of 2.5 hours per day (Indonesia, 2022). This decline indicates a big challenge for the radio industry to maintain its existence in the midst of changes in people's media consumption behavior.

The level of competition between radio stations in big cities and regions is also getting tighter, so radio programs need to be presented in an interesting way in order to maintain and attract listeners' attention. With more and more radio stations emerging, managers are required to be more careful in recognizing and targeting their audience. One of the radio stations that is still in demand in the midst of the times is Sonora FM Radio. Based on Databoks 2024 data, Sonora FM 98.9 FM experienced an increase in the number of listeners via streaming of 38.3% in the period October 2023 to September 2024. Sonora FM itself is part of the KG Radio Network that broadcasts news, information and music around the clock and has been operating in various major cities in Indonesia.

Radio broadcasting continues to transform following technological developments. The broadcasting process now involves production, shooting, and preparation of broadcast materials which are then channeled to the public through various platforms. With easy access to broadcast media in the digital era, information can be delivered quickly and simultaneously to a wide audience. Broadcast media is now the fastest means of disseminating news or information, both through conventional and digital broadcasts.

The decline in the number of radio listeners is inseparable from advances in communication technology and media innovation. To survive, radio must be able to adapt and digitize, so that it remains relevant amidst the onslaught of new media innovations. One form of innovation that is now growing rapidly is music streaming applications such as Spotify. This service provides access to millions of songs, podcasts, and other audio content with highly personalized features. Based on the first quarter report of 2024, Spotify has 602 million monthly active users globally, with 239 million of them being premium subscribers. This figure shows significant growth and poses a challenge to the existence of radio as an audio medium in the digital era.

Figure 1. Global Spotify Premium Subscriber Growth
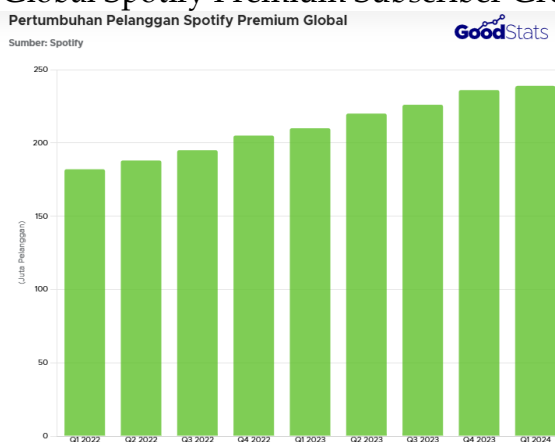
Source: datagoodstats.id (2024)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategies and Practicies (Broadcasting Strategy) Theory

Strategy in broadcasting is a comprehensive and systematic planning process to achieve broadcast goals, as explained by Budi Sayoga and Effendy. It includes steps such as designing goals, developing methods, and allocating relevant resources, as described by Alfred Chandler and Kenneth Andrews. Strategy is not only a tool to achieve organizational goals, but also an important foundation for the survival and success of a broadcaster in responding to environmental changes and audience demands. In the context of broadcasting, strategy must be fast, dynamic and based on audience research and analysis, so that there is integration between management and broadcasting operations.

Broadcasting itself is defined as a mass communication process that uses certain frequencies and can be received by the public through listening devices or viewers (Chese, Garrison, Wills). Wahyudi and Husein Umar said broadcasting includes ideal, hardware, and software aspects, with electromagnetic wave media as the means of transmission. In general, broadcasting aims to convey messages to a wide audience in order to be understood, attract attention, and influence action, through the process of planning, producing, and presenting broadcasts.

Susan Tyler Eastman describes four main strategies in radio broadcasting used to attract and retain listeners:

A. Compatibility Strategy

This strategy emphasizes the importance of adapting program content and schedules to the audience's routines. Radio stations should understand their target communities and conduct audience research to ensure that broadcast times and topics match listeners' needs and habits. This strategy is used, for example, by Radio Sonora 98.9 FM Semarang in developing programs that are relevant to the audience's desires.

B. Habit Formation Strategy

Aims to establish a regular listening pattern by scheduling broadcasts consistently and at fixed times. The use of adlibs (short promotional messages) and rundowns (broadcast flow) help listeners recognize and get used to the programs offered. Radio Sonora utilizes this strategy to strengthen listener loyalty.

C. Control of Audience Flow Strategy

This strategy aims to keep listeners listening from one program to the next, preventing them from moving to other stations. This is done through superior content, either by presenting something different (countering) or similar to competitors (blunting). Quality control, evaluation, and broadcast standards are important elements in this strategy.

D. Conservation of Program Resources Strategy

Focus on efficiency by saving and recycling content for creative reuse. The same program can be repackaged with a new format or angle to keep it interesting for listeners. This strategy also considers the diversity of the audience and the importance of the producer's role in creating programs that are interesting and meet the needs of the public.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is descriptive research with a qualitative approach, it can be said to be descriptive because it aims to describe information and data according to reality in the field. Qualitative research is an approach method in research with an orientation based on phenomena or symptoms, qualitative in nature (Abdussamad, 2021). Qualitative research methodology means a process that aims to analyze and explain the description of the phenomenon or object under study through attitudes, perceptions, perspectives and also social activities.

Qualitative research aims to explain, describe, and analyze various phenomena, such as events, social activities, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and thoughts of individuals and groups. The resulting description is used to understand the principles and explain a matter in depth, with an orientation to conclusions (Triyono, 2021).

This study uses two data sources, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data is a data source that provides information directly to the author. The data collection technique that the author used was to conduct interviews and observations with two main parties at Radio Sonora 98.9 FM Semarang, namely the station manager, creative staff and broadcasters as the subject of research, because all the data needed was related and pertinent to the topic raised.

The secondary data used are the program, mission, profile, and vision of Radio Sonora 98.9 FM Semarang, and other data that are considered necessary in conducting research. Not only that, secondary data can also be supported by reading literature such as books, theses, or scientific journals.

Data collection began with the observation process by determining the research location, namely Radio Sonora 98.9 FM in Kompas Building, Semarang. After that, the researcher made a map of the location to understand the object of research initially, then selected the subjects to be observed and arranged the method of recording during the

interview.

Interviews are used to collect data by asking respondents directly using an interview guide that is flexible and not necessarily sequential (Sugiyono, 2013). Researchers can develop questions and explore important issues as needed (Swasti Arini, 2019). This guide ensures all important points are covered thoroughly. In this study, interviews were conducted with station managers, creative staff, and broadcasters to understand the strategy of aligning broadcast programs with listener preferences, including the formation of listener habits, managing listener flows, managing program resources, and increasing mass appeal.

The process of data analysis was conducted simultaneously with data collection until the final conclusion was reached. This stage involved selecting, simplifying and abstracting data from field notes and interview transcripts. Throughout the research, this process continued through topic grouping, problem definition and memo recording. Data reduction is an important step in analysis that aims to highlight, condense, focus, eliminate, and organize irrelevant information so that valid conclusions can be drawn.

After obtaining the recorded interview data in MP3 format, field notes, and observation results, the researcher transcribed them systematically to facilitate data management and reduce the risk of losing information due to storage limitations. Furthermore, the data was categorized according to research needs to facilitate the analysis and writing process in the discussion section. This approach ensures that the data is neatly organized and ready to be used to comprehensively support the research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher analyzes and discusses the results of research findings through direct interviews conducted with main informant and supporting informant . The interview was conducted face-to-face by the researcher with the research informant.

A. Compability Strategy

According to Susan Tyler Eastman, the compatibility strategy is based on listener characteristics, the selection of program types, and broadcast schedules. The radio needs to understand the profile of the target audience, including aspects such as gender, age, hobbies, and education level. With this understanding, radio management can design the right strategy to ensure that the programs presented match the needs and preferences of listeners.

The first suitability strategy carried out by Radio Sonora 98.9 Fm Semarang is program scheduling. The program scheduling that is applied is appropriate, because when broadcasting the program it is in accordance with the needs of listeners and the routine activities of listeners, such as in the morning there is a Sonora Pagi broadcast program at 06.00- 10.00 as an activity escort that plays songs of encouragement to start the day and Sonora Afternoon at 15.00 17.00 filled with relaxing broadcasts to accompany activities on the way home and work and songs that fit the atmosphere of the afternoon. So as to adjust the situation and the needs of listeners.

B. Habits Formation Strategy

The strategy of habit formation is that the habits of the audience are formed through the aired program. Not infrequently from the formation of this habit arises a fanatical attitude of the audience to an event program, so that the audience is reluctant to leave the program broadcast (Eastman, 1996) . The habit formation strategy implemented by Radio Sonora 98.9 FM Semarang includes the creation of adlibs, advertising spots, and the preparation of program rundowns. First, the creation of adlibs and ad spots by the management of Sonora Radio is appropriate due to the characteristics of local public radio, where advertisements broadcast are selective and not all advertisements are accepted. In addition, the adlibs used are not delivered directly by the broadcaster, but by the ad maker, thus maintaining consistency in the delivery of messages in the broadcast.

The second is the creation of the rundown. Radio Sonora 98.9 Fm Semarang has already done a good job when broadcasting. As the performers of the program have been briefed and have been provided with a written rundown, but if there is an obstacle, the rundown will undergo a slight change and will flow following the topic of discussion that will be delivered by the fund, which is the advantage of a radio broadcaster.

C. Control of Audience Flow Strategy

Audience Flow Control Strategy is when a program is finished airing, then the next program is presented. Between one program and another, the number of audiences must also be maintained by presenting programs that can still maintain the flow of viewers so as not to switch to another channel or even attract other channel listeners. (Eastman, 1996).

The first strategy to control the flow of listeners in broadcast programs is done by applying quality standards that have been proven effective. This is reflected in the program's compliance with the applicable broadcasting code of conduct, as well as the announcer's delivery style that is easy to understand and uses friendly language, so as to attract and maintain listeners' interest.

Second, the strategy of controlling listener flow is evaluation. The evaluation carried out by the management of Radio Sonora 98.9 FM Semarang is appropriate, because the program evaluation is carried out once a month, carried out as a material improvement if there is something that needs to be evaluated in the next program.

D. Conservation of Program Resources Strategy

The strategy of saving program resources (Conservation Of Program Resources) is that it is not uncommon for a program that is very famous and popular with many audiences to become very old-fashioned when broadcast for the umpteenth time. Therefore, radio stations are required to be creative in presenting the program material broadcasted (Eastman, 1996)

Radio Sonora 98.9 Fm Semarang's storage strategy includes the storage of human resources, broadcast equipment, and program materials. According to the author, Sonora Radio's human resources storage is in accordance with Susan Tyler Eastman's theory

because the quality of broadcasters is good in conducting broadcasting activities, delivering material according to the needs of listeners.

Secondly, the storage of broadcast equipment is appropriate, because it is always monitored by the organizational body of the internal equipment section so that the condition of broadcast equipment can be monitored properly. However, for other internet-related devices, there are still problems, due to the lack of competent experts, especially in the field of radio streaming and web management.

Third, the storage of broadcast material sources in Sonora Radio is quite good in taking clear material and topics and using media that has been tested, recorded and neatly arranged. So that the hat and the source of the program discussion can be searched for the truth .

CONCLUSION

This research shows that Radio Sonora 98.9 FM Semarang successfully retains listeners through the implementation of four main strategies: program suitability, habit formation, listener flow control, and program resource storage. The suitability strategy is based on program scheduling that is tailored to the needs of the audience, especially the 22- 35 years age segment. The habit formation strategy is implemented through consistency of broadcast time and management of adlibs that encourage listeners to stay loyal to the program. Audience flow control is done by maintaining broadcast quality through regular evaluation and coordination between broadcasters to ensure smooth program transitions. In addition, the program's resource retention strategy supports content innovation to be relevant to trends and audience needs.

However, while these strategies are effective, major challenges remain, including competition with music streaming apps such as Spotify. Radio Sonora has attempted to take advantage of digitalization through streaming platforms and social media, but optimization in the utilization of these technologies still needs to be improved.n the results of the research conducted, conclusions can be drawn. If necessary, it contains practical and academic recommendations, if the research results are followed up in real terms by policy makers.

Radio Sonora 98.9 Fm Semarang can improve its competitiveness in the digital era through content diversification and attractive program innovation. One strategic step is to enrich broadcast content by adapting global and local trends that are relevant to young audiences, such as presenting current topics, producing podcasts, and collaborating with local influencers who have significant influence on the young listener segment. Such innovations not only aim to attract new audiences but also maintain loyalty of loyal listeners by providing a variety of relevant and interesting content. In addition, strengthening digitalization and social media utilization is also a priority. Radio Sonora needs to increase the optimization of social media as a program promotion tool as well as a platform for direct interaction with audiences. This utilization will create a closer relationship between the radio and its listeners, especially the younger generation who have a high propensity towards using digital platforms.

In order to maintain relevance in the midst of increasingly fierce competition, continuous evaluation is an important element. Regular evaluations can be upgraded to a process that actively involves the audience, for example through surveys or direct feedback collection. In this way, Sonora Radio can understand the specific preferences and needs of listeners and better tailor its programs accordingly. Equally important, human resource capacity building should be a key focus to support this strategy. Training for staff, especially those related to digital management and innovative content production, should be prioritized. By improving the competence of the creative team, Radio Sonora can add significant value to the quality of its broadcasts and digital content.

Furthermore, strategic partnerships with digital platforms or music streaming service providers such as Spotify can be an effective measure to expand audience reach. These collaborations not only allow for an increase in the number of listeners but also provide a more engaging and innovative listening experience. By implementing these strategic measures, Radio Sonora is expected to retain its listeners as well as expand its appeal amidst the increasingly competitive media competition in the digital era.

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