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The Influence of Knowledge about Korean Culture on Decision of Purchasing
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Arbaiyah Satriani, Rini Rinawati

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Dedi Mulyadi Political Branding in Identifying Sundanese Purwakarta Characters

Nila Nurlimah, Aziz Taufik Hirzi, Leti Kamila, Nur Fitriastuti

Successful Social Media Advertising Activities For Micro, Small And Medium
Enterprises

Joko Suryono, Nuryani Tri Rahayu, Purwani Indri Astuti, Nunun Tri Widarwati

The Influence of President Joko Widodo's Instagram Content on Beginner Voters
Participation in the 2019 General Elections

Marsha Ruth Handoko, Yolanda Stellarosa

Changes in Organic Composition of Capital Behind Pikiran Rakyat Strategy of
Convergence

Muhammad Ashari

Local Newspaper Strategy to Survive in the Digital Era

Hendra Alfani

Organization Communication: Internal Conflict in Hospitality Industri

Putri Ekaresty Haes, I Wayan Joniarta

Media Literacy in Information Chaos Era: Qualitative Study Bandung Literacy Activist

Cevi Mochamad Taufik, Suhaeni

Voter Attitudes toward Hoax Information Sources At the 2019 Presidential Election
in West Sumatra

Mohammad Isa Gautama

Building Social Message in the "Cerdas Melanggar" Short Film by Story Telling
on the Cameo Project Youtube Channel

Ricky Wattimena, Mariska Eunike

Samarinda City Branding through Tourism Communication of Dayak Village
in Pampang

Tuti Widiastuti, Eli Jamilah Mihardja, Prima Mulyasari Agustini

Sadfishing Phenomenon of #Justiceforaudrey (Hashtag) on Twitter

Citra Eka Putri, Novita Damayanti, Radja Erland Hamzah

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Home > Archives > Vol 13, No 1 (2020)

Vol 13, No 1 (2020)

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29313/mediator.v13i1>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Volume 13 • Nomor 1 • Juni 2020 ISSN 1411-5883 / EISSN: 2581-0758

MEDIATOR

Jurnal Komunikasi

The Influence of Knowledge about Korean Culture on Decision of Purchasing Korean Mobile phones
Arbalyah Sabriani, Rini Rinawati

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Safitratul Zakiyah, Yulianti

Dedi Mulyadi Political Branding in Identifying Sundanese Purwakarta Character
Nila Nurliyah, Aziz Taufik Hirzi, Leli Kamila, Nur Fitriastuti

Successful Social Media Advertising Activities For Micro, Small And Medium Enterprises
Joko Suryono, Nuryani Tri Rahayu, Purwani Indri Astuti, Nunun Tri Widarwan

The Influence of President Joko Widodo's Instagram Content on Beginner Voter Participation in the 2019 General Elections
Marsha Ruth Handoko, Yolanda Siellarosa

Changes in Organic Composition of Capital Behind Pikiran Rakyat Strategy Convergence
Muhammad Ashari

Local Newspaper Strategy to Survive in the Digital Era
Hendra Alfani

Organization Communication: Internal Conflict in Hospitality Industri
Putri Ekaresty Haes, I Weyan Janarta

Media Literacy in Information Chaos Era: Qualitative Study Bandung Literacy Area
Cevi Mochamad Taufik, Suhaeni

Voter Attitudes toward Hoax Information Sources At the 2019 Presidential Election in West Sumatra
Mohammad Isa Gautama

Building Social Message in the "Cerdas Melanggar" Short Film by Story Telling on the Cameo Project Youtube Channel
Ricky Wattimena, Mariska Eunike

Samarinda City Branding through Tourism Communication of Dayak Village in Pampang
Tuti Widastuti, Eli Jamilah Miharja, Prima Mulyasari Agustini

Sadvertising Phenomenon of #Justiceforaudrey (Hashtag) on Twitter
Citra Eka Putri, Novita Damayanti, Radja Erlend Hamzah

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- HOME
- EDITORIAL TEAM
- FOCUS AND SCOPE
- AUTHOR GUIDELINES
- REVIEWER GUIDELINES
- PUBLICATION ETHICS
- LETTER OF ORIGINALITY
- EDITORIAL POLICIES
- ONLINE SUBMISSION

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FONT SIZE

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- For Readers
- For Authors
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- [LETTER OF ORIGINALITY](#)
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Home > Vol 13, No 1 (2020) > Alfani

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Local Newspaper Strategy to Survive in the Digital Era

Hendra Alfani

Abstract

The development of communication and information technology that gave birth to the digital era has made the competition for the mass media industry increasingly competitive. This condition requires conventional mass media, especially local newspapers to carry out special strategies focused on efforts to transform their activities in accordance with the demands of the times, so as not to get further behind with new media that use the internet and digital technology. The Daily OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos, as conventional local newspapers, are confronted with this reality. Surrender or immediately develop a strategy for transformation and change, in order to remain able to compete in the media industry. This study uses a qualitative method, where data analysis is displayed descriptively. The results showed that the two newspapers systematically implemented four strategies to face competition with online media, namely; strengthen local content with investigative reports, media convergence, penetration in social media networks and carry out regular and incidental off-air activities. In the context of this strategy choice, the two newspapers are able to capitalize on the vulnerability of online media to strengthen their existence.

Keywords

Newspaper, digital era, online media, media convergence

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Local Newspaper Strategy to Survive in the Digital Era

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Abstract: *The development of communication and information technology that gave birth to the digital era has made the competition for the mass media industry increasingly competitive. This condition requires conventional mass media, especially local newspapers to carry out special strategies focused on efforts to transform their activities in accordance with the demands of the times, so as not to get further behind with new media that use the internet and digital technology. The Daily OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos, as conventional local newspapers, are confronted with this reality. Surrender or immediately develop a strategy for transformation and change, in order to remain able to compete in the media industry. This study uses a qualitative method, where data analysis is displayed descriptively. The results showed that the two newspapers systematically implemented four strategies to face competition with online media, namely; strengthen local content with investigative reports, media convergence, penetration in social media networks and carry out regular and incidental off-air activities. In the context of this strategy choice, the two newspapers are able to capitalize on the vulnerability of online media to strengthen their existence.*

Keywords: *Newspaper, digital era, online media, media convergence*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology advancements since the 2000s, on the one hand, presents convenience in supporting the activities and governance of print mass media, in this case, newspapers. But on the other hand, this condition gave birth to challenges for the editor and the press company that owns the newspaper.

One of the tough challenges is the presence of internet-based digital “newspapers” (*online media*) as real competitors. As mentioned by Sholahuddin (2013), for hundreds of years, print media became the dominant media for information dissemination. The print press has also become the

mainstream media in the information business world. However, in the internet-based digital era, the dominance of the print media industry in the mass media industry has begun to be displaced. The proliferation of digital newspapers is not only difficult to compare from various technical operational aspects of conventional newspapers such as OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos, but also causes stuttering to be on the map of the current competitive reality. Perhaps, stuttering is caused by the romanticism of the past. After so long dominating the information market, now its existence must be threatened in the internet-based digital era.

Waluyo (2018), states that the intensity of internet use in the community

is getting higher, which can easily access online news portals anytime, and then conduct information exchange activities through social media accounts. The speed of news broadcast by online media causes OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos to compile various strategies so that they are not increasingly left behind.

Asyir and Nurbaya (2019), explained that the evolution of media from print to digital was the impact of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 as an unavoidable global phenomenon like the three volumes of the previous industrial revolution. In this context, the OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos must start to get used to the evolutionary context from the print era to the digital era.

Whereas Leksono and Elmada (2017), emphasized the necessity for print media to also play in the digital world, considering that more and more people have now switched to digital media. This condition is a challenge for OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos because the transition to digital will certainly erode the quantity audience of readers and their advertisers.

This phenomenon is reinforced by Kristanto's notes (2019), in 2018, the Press Council recorded no less than 43,000 online news portals in Indonesia, although some of them did not meet the requirements as a mass media. This situation could actually be an opportunity for OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos because the legality and technical operations of its management have met the requirements as a media institution.

Therefore, with all the advantages and disadvantages as a conventional local newspaper, the OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos must deal with the consequences of the fact of readers' decline, ad revenue, and rational decline (circulation) rationally. As Nurkinan noted (2017), referring to the Press Council data, that until 2014 there were

567 print media in Indonesia, consisting of 312 daily, 173 weekly, and 82 monthly. This sluggishness is not only affecting the national media. According to SPS data, regional newspapers reduce circulation by 20-30%, whereas in 2014 national media circulation growth was only 0.25%. There are even 5 print media stopped publishing: Sinar Harapan (published since 27 April 1961, officially closed as of 1 January 2016), Trax (music and lifestyle magazine, published since 2002, closed February 2017), Harian Bola (stopped on 31 October 2015 edition), Jakarta Globe (English language newspaper, published since 12 November 2008, closed 15 December 2015) and Jurnal Nasional (closed as of 1 November 2014). These five print media claimed to be closed because production costs continued to rise, the number of readers declined, and competition with the internet media.

The progress of internet-based information technology has become a fertile "growing media" for the growth of digital media, and slowly but surely has shifted the *habits* of conventional newspaper audiences such as OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos. Previously, the consumption of public information manually by reading print media, but now, began to switch to digital media that can be accessed easily through smartphone technology. This is according to Nurliah (2018) because people use the internet to get information, connect with their social networks, to produce their own information, making the role of the internet increasingly important.

The condition of behavior change due to the internet, also mentioned in Putri, Hamdan, and Yulianti (2017) research, that behavior change is its fairness, considering that humans also cannot be separated from communication and advancement of information

technology into a new chapter in the world order and the development of human communication. However, “fairness”, for OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos is a real threat as well as challenges that must be answered to maintain its existence in the digital era.

Related to this, in an interview with Jurnal Prisma (Volume 35, 2015:62), Jakob Oetama said that the times had changed and that changes also changed the face of the mass media. New types of media have emerged that have increased competition in the media industry. The mainstream media is required to be careful in making adjustments. The print press, especially local newspapers such as OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos are faced with fierce competition (from the business side and the ideal side) with the presence of digital media or social media which continues to develop very rapidly.

Therefore, looking at the presence of digital media in the era of the press industry, which gave rise to the reality of fierce competition nationally and globally, then what about the local newspapers “in the same class” OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos survive? What strategies should be designed by the two local newspapers in addressing the changing behavior of the audience consuming information due to the proliferation of digital media to survive? Because, about this existence, McQuail (2011:34), has warned that the most important newspapers are local and regional newspapers, which to maintain their existence, must present news values that are relevant to local readers. Because, OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos based on preliminary data of this study, have experienced “illness” due to the impact of the digital era as mentioned Nurkinan (2017), circulation, advertising revenue and the number of readers continues to decline sharply.

OKU Ekspres has been published since 2007 in Ogan Komering Ulu Regency (OKU), South Sumatra, with 13 districts and 157 villages. In 2017 the population was 357,502 people. Whereas OKU Timur Pos has been published since 2009, in Ogan Komering Ulu Timur Regency (OKUT), has 20 districts and 339 villages. With a population of 670,272 people recorded in 2018. Based on these data, the actual market share of OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos is very potential. However, online media, which are competitors, are also quite significant in number. Based on data recorded at the Indonesian Journalists Association (PWI) OKU, there are 41 online media or online news portals. It means, OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos are faced with the reality of very competitive competition when viewed from the data on the number of online media.

Based on the description above, by looking at previous research, the context of the literature that is considered relevant and the initial search results of this study, that the Daily OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos as the only local newspapers that still survive in Ogan Komering Ulu and Ogan Komering Ulu Timur, South Sumatra, is also affected by the rapid development of digital media that reaches into the regions. Both newspapers experienced shocks in maintaining their existence as (conventional) newspapers which were first present in the region.

Based on that situation, two problem contexts will be discussed in this study. First, how are the business management efforts of OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos in the face of competition to maintain their existence in the digital era at the local level? Second, how is the editor in chief's efforts to increase the capacity of journalists to be able to present quality

information or news according to the characteristics of the local community in their operational areas?

METHOD

This research is a qualitative approach, with the claim that knowledge (paradigm) is social constructivist (transformative) which is inductive. Qualitative research is associated with a social constructivist paradigm that emphasizes the nature of socially constructed reality. Creswell (2014:59), explains that qualitative research begins with assumptions and uses a theoretical interpretation framework that shapes or influences the study of research problems related to the meaning imposed by individuals or groups on a social or human problem. Furthermore Creswell (2014:61), also confirms that qualitative researchers collect various forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, not relying on a single data source. Then review all the data and provide meaning, organize it into several categories or themes that cross all the data sources. Then build various patterns, categories, and themes in a “bottom-up” manner, by organizing data inductively into increasingly abstract units of information.

Moeleong, (2004:6), mentioned that qualitative research is research that intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by research subjects, by way of description in the form of words and language in a special natural context and by utilizing various scientific methods.

The primary data source of this study was obtained through in-depth interviews (in-depth interviews) with participants (informants) who were chosen deliberately (purposive sampling). The resource persons in this study are the General Leader/Editor in Chief and the Daily Executing Editor of the

OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos who are considered to know, understand and, have the information needed by researchers. The instrument used was an interview guide and the material used included tape recorders, photo cameras, and notebooks. While secondary data obtained through observation, reference/library, and documentation data such as photographs, archival records, images, website links, and others in the editors of both newspapers. The research procedure begins with the stages of identifying and formulating problems, conducting preliminary studies related to research, collecting data, and analyzing data (starting from the process of reduction, presentation and concluding) and writing qualitative descriptive research reports. Descriptive qualitative perspective on the presentation of research data can reinforce the fact that the choice of the editorial staff of OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos in formulating strategies to face competition in the media industry in the digital era is not only a necessity but a necessity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The development and advancement of internet-based communication and information technology have given rise to logical consequences for the management of the media industry. The existence of conventional print media such as OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos became the most affected by the change. The logical consequence of this rapid change, as mentioned by Ishadi SK (2010: 130-131), causes the media to position itself to survive. There is a significant migration of young people to switch to the internet. The system accesses information, changing from push media (one to all) to pull media (taking from anywhere by anyone, anytime).

Nevertheless, Garini and Besman (2018), give a gap that the news circulating

in the *online* mass media today tend to be similar and *homogeneous*. Therefore, based on the results of in-depth interviews with the General Leader/Chief Editor and Managing Editor, both in the OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos, as objects of this study, four strategies were undertaken to face the challenges of media industry competition in the digital era, which is adjusted to the conditions and characteristics of the two local-conventional newspapers. The following description and analysis.

Strengthening “Locality” with Investigation Reports

Based on interviews with research sources, two key pointers should be carried out by the editors of OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos, to face competition with online media. Namely, technically and non-technically in the operational context of management and the journalistic context. Because, if it is connected with the opinion of Tabroni (2018), print media (newspapers, magazines, tabloids) and online media, actually not present in a vacuum, the press system of the mass media is strongly influenced by the political system in a country or region. So, if examined closely, that view is related to the social system and culture of the community influencing the activities of the mass media. Likewise, the efforts of OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos show the characteristics of their locality in facing competition with online media.

Alva Setiawan, Managing Editor of OKU Ekspres in the interview said that the context of local information is the “trademark” which has always been prioritized. The following explanation:

“We understand very well the conditions that are happening. Since it was first published in March 2007, we have been consistent and focused on local information that is happening at OKU. The OKU

Ekspres localization label cannot be changed, it is a “trademark”. Local news information must be primary, through in-depth investigation, to maintain close contact with readers. That is our artery. The keyword, of course, is increasing the capacity of journalists.” (Alva Setiawan, Interview January 2020).

What Alva said, was an effort to strengthen the character of the locality by conducting an investigation (depth reporting) on the facts of events. Although, if you borrow Imam Wahyudi’s notes (in Arief and Utomo, 2015:53), that investigative reporting is not mediocre coverage that can be carried out by speeding or chasing broadcasts. However, for OKU Ekspres it is the first strategic step taken to strengthen its position in facing competition with online media. The focus on increasing the competence of journalists, to understand the socio-political-cultural conditions of the region and current issues, is a major prerequisite for creating local strengths in the news to attract the attention of local communities.

Alva also emphasized that if the news is national-international in nature, the public can access it from various sources (media). However, for example, cases of drug trafficking in villages, robberies orchestrated by unscrupulous village chiefs, sadistic killings by students, sadistic robberies that disturb society, child abduction manipulation, local government policies on concessions for plantation and mining land, or the flood disaster that occurred at OKU or OKU Timur, became the main focus of the news which was supported by facts, complete data, reliable sources and in-depth coverage (investigation) carried out to maintain the trust of readers.

The same thing was also mentioned by Purwadi, General Leader/Editor in Chief of OKU Timur Pos. He said that the focus and steeped in local issues is

growing, becoming a grain headline in OKU Timur Pos. According to Purwadi:

“The closeness of the context of events according to the facts with the reader in our opinion is very important for the reader. Here the editorial policy clearly rules. Journalists must not play games, we continue to boost technical competence in journalism. OKU Timur Pos is concerned with local issues that have socio-psychological-geographical proximity to the community. The public not only wants to quickly access information but also requires certainty and completeness of the information. In that context, we are always there and present.” (Purwadi, Interview January 2020).

Alva and Purwadi, also confirmed that the proximity event along with the facts with readers, both geographically and socio-psychological, the key to strengthening the reader's choice on “selling” locality information or news published OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos. So, in practice, the company editor-in-chief, or editor-in-chief continues to make technical efforts to increase the capacity and competence of journalists in terms of journalism, both in the context of coverage, disclosure of facts, and in writing news. In order to stay ahead of online media in OKU and OKU Timur.

The maximization of the editors of these two local newspapers increases the capacity of journalists in line with what Abrar (2011:43) says, that the weight of the task carried by the press is to be able to present useful information for improving the quality of life of the people, so the press needs to pay attention to tips to fill the contents of the press, related to the technical aspects of news presentation. Journalists need to prepare the contents of the press with an awareness of the picture of the problems being faced by the community.

Indeed, if observed from the technical side of journalism, according to Alva and Purwadi, online media in OKU and OKU Timur tend to convey the facts of the news on the surface, not yet in-depth. Not yet seen the efforts of journalists to explore the problems being covered. The advantage, the important thing is fast; publish and share on the portal/online link. The second weakness of online media, which is still reporting on ceremonial events, local issues that are viral, or events that are easily reached.

This is influenced by various operational limitations that still surround local online media management. The limited number of human resources and journalistic competence of journalists. In fact, there are online media that are only managed individually such as managing social media accounts. Only because the individual can use information technology. In fact, according to Alva and Purwadi, managing the management of mass media institutions is not as easy as imagined, because the media management function is related to many aspects such as research, planning, organizing, movement, supervision, and evaluation by the management of the Sumatera Ekspres Jawa Pos Group.

This gap is exploited by OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos, as confirmed by Alva Setiawan and Purwadi, in order to continue to exist and be competitive by displaying different content when dealing with online media. Their assertion is in line with what Santana said (2017:6), that people need unusual glasses, whether they are “minor plus” glasses, to see events that occur. The media provides these “read” glasses, by showing what is happening behind the event: showing the news as deep and as detailed as possible.

The editors of OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos process local issues with in-depth reports, as a side of excellence, so they cannot be “rivalled”

by local online media which prioritizes speed rather than accuracy and depth of the news. However, despite the internal problems of the local online media, both newspapers still consider it a competitor that must be taken into account. The key is that journalists' understanding of the problem is the main thing that must be considered. Sensitivity and carefulness in seeing the core of the issue or event covered is the principle of coverage that is put forward. Complete data support, competent or relevant news sources, transparency, fairness, balance, cross-confirmation, responsibility, and in favor of the public interest are also mandatory guidelines for journalists in OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos.

Self-Transforming Options:

Convergence

The development of communication and information technology today has positioned the print newspaper as a conventional media that carry out journalism activities for a long time, meticulously addressing the changing situation. Transforming by applying convergence steps is a must. Because, according to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2003:212-213), journalism is modern cartography. Produce a map for citizens to make decisions about their lives. This cartographic concept helps explain what is the responsibility of journalistic coverage. Like maps, the value of journalism depends on completeness and proportion.

Based on this concept, the second step taken by the editor in chief of OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos is to make a convergence in order to continue to be connected with changes in reader habits. OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos transformed themselves into multimedia, multichannel and multiplatform channels. It was explained in the interview, that it is obligatory

to carry out self-transformation by implementing media convergence practices as mentioned by McQuail (2011:150), convergence is a combination of all forms of media relating to their regulation, distribution, acceptance, and regulation based on the consequences of digitalization facts.

In an interview Purwadi said:

“We have to make changes. At present, convergence is a necessity. Times change, habits, and culture of people are increasingly familiar with multimedia and multiplatform. News online version does not always have to be displayed narratively but also supported by images, infographics, and even videos. It's funny if we don't do convergence as a whole. OKU Timur Pos moves quickly through okutimurpos.com and midor.com. The news was updated during the day after the printed circulated version. We still make a printed version for reference. But if there are events in the afternoon or evening, the news is directly uploaded in the online version. The printed version is the next day, more complete and in-depth news.” (Purwadi, Interview January 2020).

While Alva Setiawan emphasized that:

“The convergence strategy is chosen by considering the actual conditions. Because the reader's habit begins to shift and change. The habit of readers over the age of 60, certainly very different segments of the reader 50 years and under, especially the millennial generation, who are very familiar with digital information technology with multimedia and multichannel types, as active users of digital technology through smartphones and android. Then the choice of convergence, through okes.co.id, becomes a road map as well as tools to “serve the market” the

majority-majority reader “. (Alva Setiawan, Interview January 2020).

Even though convergence is a must, the printed version still works. Online news is published on the website with the same or different names. There is an online version at okes.co.id and nakar.com (FIGURE 1) which is updated during the day. Alva said that the printed version of the news must be more than those presented online. According to him, the step was aimed at making the online version of the program not “kill” the presentation in printed form. Similar policies were also carried out by the editor of OKU Timur Pos, the online version on the website is okutimurpos.com and midor.co, also published daily which is managed specifically, but still with the quantity of news below the printed version.

The choice of media convergence is carried out, able to offset the “onslaught” of online media. The readers ‘and especially advertisers’ trust in both newspapers is slowly but surely beginning to stabilize. Because the principle of depth and localization are consistently applied in the news presented, it can attract readers because it also keeps the advertiser moving to online media. In Figure 1. below is the online version of OKU Eskpres’s display with the okes.co.id and OKU Timur Pos with the link/ website and midor.co.

If we look at the efforts of OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos, then the logic to maintain existence starts with mapping rationally without losing the print roots. Of course taking into account various factors that exist in publishing an online (digital) version, such as accuracy, topicality, and completeness-depth of the news presented. So that the “weakness” of publishing in the printed version can be closed at the same time to preserve the choice and trust of the audience.

Furthermore, to bring OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos into local, multimedia, multichannel and multiplatform mass media, the management and editor in chief continue to strengthen the carrying capacity of information technology (computers, photo cameras, smartphones) and adequate internet network capacity. The capacity of journalists, as “man behind the gun”, is also being encouraged. To accelerate convergence, journalists are not only required to have the ability to use technology but also to sharpen sensitivity, journalistic ability, artistic ability, and point of view in covering, recording, writing, and reporting multiplatform journalistic events in-depth and with quality. Therefore, in maximizing the choice of convergence, OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos editors position the two local newspapers as multimedia, multichannel and multiplatform mass communication channels. Transformation and synchronization between the printed version and the online version through



FIGURE 1. Display of Online Version of OKU Ekspres (left) and OKU Timur Pos (right)

the three properties, it is expected that OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos will perform convergence on various sides as a whole.

Penetration in Social Media Networks

Human efforts to develop communication with each other to develop their identity and build their society, carried out endlessly from time to time, according to the condition mentioned by Saefudin (2008). There is an unwritten agreement, stating that the presence of social media networks is the result of human efforts to develop communication with others. Social media is not only transformed into a new channel in mass communication, but a new civilization in forming channels and fields of communication between each other.

Social media networks such as; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, You Tube Channels, and so on, the more here, the more multifunctional and their use continues to increase, almost every individual has a social media network account, even can have more than one type of account and different. Simultaneously, an individual can have a Facebook, Instagram, Twitter account and even has a You Tube channel. Therefore, according to Alva Setiawan,

OKU Ekspres utilizes trends in the use of social media by the community as a potential market for cultivation. Related to that Alva explained:

“If we look closely, previously the focus of social media account owners is more likely to make the account as a window or “showroom” personal activity. But now social media also “functions” as an information channel; political campaigns, debates, and even become media spread hoaks. But we are just positive, that social media is also a market that we must work on. We decided to go in and make the most of it with an official account through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and even the You Tube channel.” (Alva Setiawan, Interview January 2020).

Alva also emphasized that the decision to enter social media was also based on the latest facts. Previously, social media accounts were more individual, but now official institutions with various activities (state and government institutions, private companies, political parties, mass organizations, associations and so on) also has an account on social media, as a bridge to communicate with the public. This potential, according to Alva, is also used as a penetration opportunity for *OKU Ekspres* to introduce their products. Public space on social media is



FIGURE 2. Display of OKU Ekspres Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

increasingly very open, heterogeneous, abundant, even frenzy.

In FIGURE 2 below is the display of OKU Ekspres social media accounts with the same name, OKU EXPRESS (written in capital letters), from left to right Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The next, in FIGURE 3 below is a channel display of YouTube OKU Ekspres, also with the same name that is OKU EKSPRES which is also written in capital letters.

This is also the case with the editor of OKU Timur Pos. In his explanation, Purwadi said that they were well aware that the current condition of public spaces was so open on social media networks. People with various social statuses, educational levels, age levels, professional backgrounds, and ethnic and cultural backgrounds, are massively exposed and become hyperactive users of social media with a very high duration of use. Purwadi said:

“That fact makes us think that OKU Timur Pos must also enter social media networks, maybe our media can interact more *intensely* with readers. So, penetration is “intact” to include ourselves in various social media networks, we do. We make *Facebook* and *Instagram* a bridge to keep in touch with readers in unlimited space and time”. (Purwadi, Interview January 2020).

The context of OKU Timur Pos

entering into the world of social media, according to Purwadi is very important. Why? Because OKU Timur Pos is well aware and has a belief that the current habit of media society is preceded by his daily activities on social media. In Figure 4 below is the display of OKU Timur Pos social media accounts, Facebook (left), and Instagram (right) OKU Timur Pos.

Penetration of OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos entered social media networks, illustrating that social media has significant potential to strengthen both positions. Through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube channels, both newspapers actively share various information both news and other information related to the internal activities of their media institutions as well as social, cultural, artistic, sports activities planned in the future will come.

Periodic and Incidental Off-Air Activities

For an institution or company, building a positive image in front of the public is one of the basic needs. Image is a bridge to build sustainable relationships with the public, both with various institutions and with various communities. OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos also use this public relations channel by holding various activities that touch or deal directly with daily activities in the community.

Why has public media relations become so important? If you look at



FIGURE 3. Display of OKU Ekspres YouTube Channel



FIGURE 4. Display of OKU Timur Pos Facebook and Instagram Accounts

what McQuail says (2008:10), that the influence of the community is present everywhere and is sustainable, and appears in all external relations of the media. Therefore, it is a logical action if the editor of OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos actively and sustainably establish good external relations with the community with various social dynamics.

In connection with this effort, both Alva Setiawan and Purwadi in a research interview stated that the management of both newspapers had a specific focus on managing this strategy. The focus is realized by forming a team to manage activities (events) that involve the community or parties who are the closest business partners. As Alva explained:

“We are serious about this effort, taking advantage of the existing momentum. Both periodically and incidentally. For example, at the anniversary of OKU Ekspres in 2019, we held a healthy walk. Wow ... thousands of participants, many sponsors involved. That enthusiasm certainly strengthens our conviction, that this newspaper is still preferred by the community, business partners, government, and social organizations in Ogan Komering Ulu Regency.”

(Alva Setiawan, Interview January 2020).

Meanwhile, Purwadi said:

“We are very confident, our relationship with readers or the audience is not finished only in the newsroom, through the print newspaper or digital space that we present. But the relationship must also be built in an open space, off the air by involving the participation of many people, various parties, and even institutions with various joint activities. The concept is mutualism and benefits. We are aware, as local media, we cannot “hide” in the newsroom. But it also creates various spaces and stages to build closeness with all groups.” (Purwadi, Interview January 2020).

Activities that are held are grouped according to their fields, such as arts and culture, social, religious, sports, education, hobbies, tourism, environment, and so on. Such as shadow puppet shows, tambourine competitions (Islamic art), music festivals/bands, singing competitions, Muslim women’s princess selection contests, and modeling competitions. Istiqosah, distributing food

during Ramadan, donations for orphans, caring assistance for disaster victims, zakat and alms movements, caring for people with disabilities, distributing masks during the dry season, and blood donations. Election of outstanding teachers, coloring competitions for kindergarten and elementary school students, writing letters to regional heads, student journalistic internships, public discussions, and local election polls. Twitter birds, fun bikes, classic bicycles, fishing, dirt bike, healthy walking, soccer, volleyball, nature tourism, tree planting, river clean, and so on.

Both informants were well aware that in this era of media the media must not be hypocritical. The influence of capitalism has indeed become the root of the survival of the media, especially local media such as the OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos. Obtaining profits is certainly the focus of attention and the main target for maintaining the existence and living operations as a media institution that has an economic orientation. Therefore, the economic benefits need to be achieved maximally.

But on the other side, according to the two informants, the involvement and presence of OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos in the social spaces that were held were also based on the awareness that the media also had responsibilities that did not necessarily have to relate to financial benefits from journalistic activities. This means that the presence of *OKU Ekspres* and *OKU Timur Pos* in the social-community sphere can be a “tool” to maintain a balance with economic interests.

Therefore, various activities that are held in public (social) spaces are managed systematically to establish close relations with the community and with various institutions, so that both newspapers remain the main reference as local media that produce information

needed by the community. Strictly speaking, *OKU Ekspres* and *OKU Timur Pos*, continue to try to maintain their audience both “from within and from outside” so that “remains loyal and does not turn to another heart”. However, through psychological and emotional relations, the two newspapers feel the need to remain consistent in maintaining their image and responsibility as “eyes” and ears “for the public who need reliable and quality information, in addition to their interests or business orientation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, which examines the existence of local newspapers that have been conventionally active; how to formulate a strategy, with the focus of problems on the editorial strategy of *OKU Ekspres* and *OKU Timur Pos* in facing the competition of the media industry in the digital era, it can be concluded that *OKU Ekspres* and *OKU Timur Pos* chose to implement a strategy of strengthening localization with an investigative report. This strategy was chosen because the news coverage carried out in-depth by prioritizing local issues that have proximity with the audience is a strength that can strengthen the existence of the two newspapers, compared with online media operating in both regions.

Addressing the digital media era, *OKU Ekspres* and *OKU Timur Pos* implemented a media convergence strategy. This strategy follows the rapid development of the digital era which is the mainstay of online media. In addition to publishing the printed version, both newspapers also published an online version that can be accessed online by readers through the official website. In the context of the implementation of this convergence, including the next two strategies, the two dailies seek to transform themselves into multimedia, multichannel and multiplatform media as

alternative strategies in transforming to maximize media convergence choices in the digital era.

OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos implement penetration strategies to social media networks (including multimedia, multichannel and multiplatform) to establish relationships with readers, various information related to journalistic and non-journalistic activities uploaded to official social media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Finally, carry out the strategy of carrying out various activities directly related to community activities or with government agencies, social and private institutions. Arts and cultural events, religious social, sports, education, hobbies, tourism, the environment, and so on, serve as a glue of sustainable relations with the audience. Besides, the involvement of OKU Ekspres and OKU Timur Pos in social space is an effort to create a balance between social responsibility as a public information channel and economic interests as an institution or company that has a business orientation.

Based on this conclusion, it can be emphasized that for conventional newspapers such as the OKU Ekspres Daily and OKU Timur Pos, the digital era does not only create challenges and threats. But in various contexts, it also creates a gap to create unforeseen opportunities. Transformation into a channel that is multimedia, multichannel, and multiplatform is a key step undertaken consciously and systematically to make changes following the times that are marked by the era of advances in communication and information technology.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank the General Leader, Editor in Chief, Editor, Journalist of OKU Ekspres, and OKU Timur Pos, who have been willing to become research sources and help and provide data support for the complete analysis of this research.