



## NEW MEDIA AND MODEL OF NEWS REPORTING IN NORTH SUMATERA, INDONESIA

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### Abstract

Studies in the presence of new media and its relationship with conventional media recently could be mapped into three trends. Firstly, studies in media competition between traditional and online media. These studies, generally put online media both in a position that is superior to traditional media, and also as a complement to the existence of traditional media. Second, studies that explore patterns of online and print media consumption that show dualism in the use of media by the public. These study highlight how consumers use online and print media together and are complementary (complementary models). Third, studies that look at the impact of social media on journalism practices that give a new character to the system and mechanism of media work. This article will explain the relationship between the growth of new media, media competition and its impacts on the mode of news reporting in North Sumatra, Indonesia. This article starts with the assumption that the massive expansion of new media can also have a positive impact on the industry and media organizations.

**Keywords:** *New Media, News Reporting, Traditional media, Modern media*

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## INTRODUCTION

Massive expansion of online media has become an important factor for the decline in circulation, changes in format, to the death of print media. The development of online media in Indonesia began to emerge since the era of the 2000s. In 2017, the existence of online media grew rapidly into 43,200 media (Pers, 2018), and is suspected to have caused for the close down some of big newspaper/Tabloid such as Bola, Bernas and Tempo. Experts saw the popularity and acceptance of new media is driven by the need for more recent and fast information (Salman, Ibrahim, Abdullah, Mustafa, & Mahbob, 2011). Bird also confirmed that now digital technology has transformed "printed information" and one-way journalistic perspectives. Much research has proven that fewer young people read newspapers. This generation may still need news, but their "news habits" have changed (Bird, 2009).

Studies in the presence of new media and its relationship with conventional media recently could be mapped into three trends. Firstly, studies in media competition between traditional and online media. These studies, generally put online media both in a position that is superior to traditional media, and also as a complement to the existence of traditional media (Dimmick, Chen, & Li, 2004) (Chyi & Lasorsa, 2002). Second, studies that explore patterns of online and print media consumption that show dualism in the use of media by the public (Dutta-Bergman, 2004) (Peng & Zhu, 2011). These study highlight how consumers use online and print media together and were complementary. Third, studies that look at the impact of social media on journalism practices that give a new character to the system and mechanism of media work (Chyi, Yang, Lewis, & Zheng, 2010) (Hayes, Singer, & Ceppos, 2007). Media convergence studies were used as study topics and are considered to have the principle of "same values and new tools". The recently use of different platform by the media, however, still communicates the same values.

This paper explained the development of online media and its impact to print media North Sumatra. Two questions can be asked: (1)

What is the reality of the impact of the development of online media for print media? and (2) What was the consequences in ideological orientation, values and colors of media coverage? These two questions will explain the relationship of the growth of new media, media competition and its impacts on the model of news reporting.

Before the invention of the internet, studies of mass communication mainly analyzed the competition between print media (newspapers and magazines) and electronic media (radio and television). As the internet grows and develops and becomes the most important thing in the process of producing and consuming information, communication studies begin to shift to competition between traditional media and online media (Cai, 2004) (Dimmick et al., 2004) (Dutta-Bergman, 2004) (Peng & Zhu, 2011).

The newspaper industry around the world began experimenting with online media in the mid-1990s when newspapers launched their electronic news editions on the Web. Newspaper companies hope that their dual product offerings will go hand in hand with rising revenues. In reality, the online edition has failed to generate enough revenue to cover the print flaws, as evidenced in the 2009 US newspaper crisis. Online media news serves more to replace than as traditional media supplements, especially when more and more people use the internet. Changing of media platform from newspapers to online media, however, is only related to the context of time, but not to function. Practically, the audience may turn to online media, however, they may turn back to newspapers when they want to meet specific needs.

Media convergence has been widely studied in media studies. Foust, for example, sees the nature of the convergence of new media as having an important effect in value construction because the media involves online text, graphic/photo, sound and video elements that distinguish them from conventional communication patterns. The presence of this new media has made communication cheap, easy, expanding, unlimited space, and open (Abdullah, 2017). Pratt also asserts that what causes new media is also called multimedia which is literally a convergence of text, sound and images in the same media (Pratt,

2000).

Online media can facilitate its users in accessing and contributing ideas and opinions without limits and this is evident in the decline in access to current American print media (Cacciatore et al., 2012). Mass media such as television, radio and newspapers function as the main information media in disseminating information. The emergence of online media today, however, has made drastic changes in the world's media landscape. This evolution has expanded access to information for the public without being limited by space and time (Ho, Leong, Looi, & Chuah, 2019). Pawito (Pawito, 2014) in his article explained the concept of media ideology was closely related to believe systems, basic ways of thinking, worldviews, and values carried by the media. Media ideology in a general context refers to the entire channel used such as television, print media and so on. In another article, the media industry cannot be separated from economic aspects that have an association with the phenomenon of disruption that gives birth to the adoption of technology in its activities to survive in its business model (Karimi & Walter, 2016). So that an important aspect that needs attention in the study of print media ideology is the system and values carried by print media entities in order to maintain sustainability amid technological dynamics and increasingly adoption of technology in public spaces. The presence of online media receives special attention, which can be seen from several studies that associate new media with conventional media (Rianto, 2016) research that compares online media with print or newspaper, for instance (De Waal, Schönbach, & Lauf, 2005) to research on the influence of online media in social aspects (Griffith et al., 2013). The process of digitalization and internet penetration that leads to accelerating the development of online media in turn leads to technological disruption that challenges the conventional print media business model. Christensen (Karimi & Walter, 2016) show that in this case the problem lies in the business model not the technology problem. The changes in ideology in

print media must look at aspects of the business, profit and loss of the company when adopting new technologies in its products and services.

## METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on the development of online media and its impact on the survival of print media and the shift in journalistic practices in North Sumatra, Indonesia. Within this province, online media expansion is quite high in Indonesia. This study uses a qualitative approach. Data collected through deep interviews with informants who came from journalists/editors and or owners of print and online media in two cities in North Sumatra Province. Data on online media expansion was obtained from Indonesian Press Council, and Public Relations Bureau from five local/district government cities in North Sumatra. Focus Group Discussion also implemented to the media manager, the public relations officer of local government. The FGD was conducted to obtain comprehensive information on expansion, the impact of online media on the media and the strategy of the sustainability of print media in the era of media convergence.

## DISCUSSION

### The Existence of Print and Online Media on Local City in North Sumatera Province

North Sumatra Province was one of 34 provinces in Indonesia. Population of this province in 2018 was around 13 million people, and became fifth largest province in Indonesia. Based on Indonesian Press Council Report, in 2016 North Sumatra had the lowest press freedom index of 34 provinces in Indonesia. This province consists of 33 local cities, most of which have similarities with Indonesia in increasing number of media, from only 2011 in year of 2014 to 43200 in 2017 (Pers, 2018).

**Table 1. Number of Print and Online Media in several cities in North Sumatra Province (2018)**

City/Regency in North Sumatra Province	Number of online media
Pematang Siantar	40
Simalungun	30
Serdang Bedagai	175
Medan	430
Langkat	60

This online media, however, is not up to 5% registered/verified by the Indonesian Press Council. The presence of online media is due to several factors, namely: 1) The cost of using the internet and smartphone is increasingly affordable; 2) In 2012, many online media were born, both nationally and centrally in Jakarta to districts/cities in North Sumatra; 3) Increased operational costs of print media such as paper, ink each year; 4) Getting information through online media and social media was easier and cheaper. This was also accompanied by cheap prices of smart phone devices and the internet as a tool to get information; 5) Practical interests, for example as a media campaign in the general election or regional head elections, or as a means of cooperation with local government in dissemination of information and policy.

The number of death mainstream media, in line with the expansion of online media, has increased sharply since 2012. Number of print media in Pematang Siantar –one of local city in North Sumatera Province- declined sharply from 18 to 6 medium. While in Medan as a biggest city, for 2019 there were 15 print newspapers which no longer published. This data was in line with the development trend of print media in Indonesia from 2014 to 2019 which shows that for six years there were 644 print media –mostly in 2018- that were no longer operating in Indonesia.

**Table 2. Number of Print Media (all type) in Indonesia (2014-2019)**

Years	Number of Print Media
2014	1321
2015	1218
2016	810
2017	793
2018	744
2019	644

Source: Indonesian Newspaper Publishers Union, 2019

The circulation of print media was also declined sharply from 2014 to 2019 (around 10.467164 copies). Newspaper publishers say, in addition to the impact of technological change (the emergence of online media, social media, drastic changes in the pattern of use of the medium among the audience), this condition is

also caused by the high price of printing (paper, ink and others). One newspaper owner in Medan, Andika Sania, stated:

*"In North Sumatra paper prices have fallen three times. We have conveyed to President Jokowi to abolish the 10 percent paper tax. We have always participated in the struggle for independence and helped educate the nation".*

**Table 3. Number of Print Media circulation (all type) in Indonesia (2014-2019)**

Years	Circulation (in ,000)
2014	23,336
2015	21,545
2016	19,079
2017	17,175
2018	14,299
2019	12,869

Source: Indonesian Newspaper Publishers Union, 2019

Another impact on the presence of online media was the high dependence on advertising revenue. Advertising and forms of collaboration between the media and local government were the main sources of media revenue. The largest newspaper customers since 2014 were local government agencies, State Owned Enterprise (BUMN), Local State Owned Enterprise (BUMD), private companies, while the number of individual customers has decreased. Riduan Saragih, newspaper owner in Pematang Siantar, said:

*"Before the presence of online media, the condition of the existing print media was not good either. News value was low and no sale value. Content of the media mostly were advertorial pages, especially from government and private institutions. Before 2015, there was an advertising monopoly from these institutions by one or two print media. This monopoly, however, recently is no longer valid. The number of mediums is increasing and these institutions have also shared advertising of their products into various medium".*

### Print Media Strategy

The expansion of online media has an impact on print media strategy to survive. The main strategy which used was collaborative advertising and reporting, especially with Local Government, and Local State Owned Enterprise (BUMD). The

increasing number of print and online media in both study areas strengthens the assumption that this phenomenon purely related to the flourishing of the cooperation model through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between local media and local government. An interesting example was local government in Medan City, when in 2017 interacted with 339 media consisting of 33 daily newspapers, 118 weekly/tabloid newspapers, 165 online media, 4 radios, 10 magazines and 9 television (Data Bureau of Public Relations, Medan City Government, 2017). Informant Amril (38 years old) a journalist from a daily newspaper in Medan described this phenomenon.

*"The newspaper business competition is getting tougher because advertisements from local partners such as property businesses and others have been much reduced since 2015. The target of advertising which is still stable is in government agencies, where they still allocate advertising spending for the policy socialization program and its activities. This is the reason why many newspaper companies are starting to rush to target cooperation with the government".*

The strategy through the MoU with local governments in the city districts was suspected to cause in weakness of media independence. Journalists mention the existence of "unwritten requirements" - called the term "firewall" - which makes the media unable to report negative facts from the local government in the City District that has a MoU with them. Violation of this firewall will cause termination of the MoU for the next fiscal year. As a result, the contents of print media will be dominated by advertorial activities as a form of compensation in the form of selling pages to local governments and other institutions. In some media, however, this firewall still could not apply. In the City of Pematang Siantar and Simalungun, for example, some media still maintain their independence by reporting positive or negative information on the local government that carries out a MoU with them. A newspaper owner, Hendy (58 years), confirmed that:

*"We also understand the journalistic code of ethics and in presenting news always apply the ethics of objectivity and independence. News in our newspaper still holds the 5W 1H principle, always confirm and consider the selling points of the news. For marketing, we make cooperation with the district and city governments. However, if they have committed violations, they will still be reported".*

The reduced circulation of print media was not only affect the operating costs of print media but also journalistic products. This study shows that the investigative journalism model is not widely used in their journalistic activities. The main reason was the reduced cost of reporting to produce investigative journalism works and also the differences in reporting style between print and online media. Online media reporters would prioritize the speed of news, while print media was more on the depth of news. In addition, many journalists began to analyze deeply about a phenomenon or what was behind the news.

The expansion of online media, in turn, also had an impact on "the concept of news values which were not only worth selling but also in favor of the public interest. The results of the study showed that there were two models which imply in area of study. First, a news model that promotes local content, as found in the weekly newspaper in the Simalungun district. In each editions, 97% of its information contained local content and news sourcers was also from Simalungun ethnic. Second, imply multi-platform model which deals with changes in reader segmentation, especially in online media. One of the online media in Pematang Siantar, for example, is taking the segmentation of readers aged 18 to 35 years based on the consideration that: (1) This segmentation of readers was able to follow technological developments that are indeed needed to search and read digital/online media; (2) Based on the locality of experience, readers with the age group of 18 to 25 years had an interest in criminal information which was the focus of this media news.

The findings of this study provide important

evidence to understand the impact of online media expansion on print media in North Sumatra. On the one hand, these findings had similarities with results of studies which state that online media expansion has a massive impact on decreasing circulation and the non-operation of print media that previously had a strategic position in society (Bird, 2009) (Dimmick et al., 2004). The reduced circulation or even non-operation of print media is mainly due to the increasingly practical, easy and freedom of the users to get information through online media and social media.

These findings, however, also signal that the existence hundreds of media with various platforms in North Sumatra province could be considered a "warning" in the emerge of dark portrait of media life in Indonesia. Negative constructions of the media would emerge in society given that most of these media exist from "interactions" with the government at the local level, had weakness independence and were generally not supported by journalists with professionalism and ethical codes. This model of media survival does not rely on the general logic of supply-demand elasticity but rather simply utilizes the budget niche available in local government.

The findings on news model which prioritized speed versus depth, and straight versus investigative news were interesting evidence. The two models of journalistic practice were always considered dichotomy in the sense that speed and straight news were the domain of online media while depth and investigative work procedures were mainstream media. In practice, multi-platform made it possible for both principles to be used simultaneously and complementary. Print media that carry multi-platform need not worry about the effects of the upcoming cannibalization. The use of print and online media which complement each other, however, was very unlikely to be built in a news climate that relies on "relationships and interactions" with local government. The findings of this study of this phenomenon (again) confirm the function of the media as an extension of the

state- which functions itself not only as a media regulator but also as a bad advertiser in shaping the life of an enlightening media.

The findings which focusing in local content issues, further, were significant to be developed by print media in North Sumatra province. Local content issues becomes important to realize the diversity of information sources, perspectives and types of exposure in the media industry. Local content policies if applied in print media make it possible to distribute power among local communities which further could serve to promote healthy democracy.

## CONCLUSION

Studies which used concepts and theories on media impact, and ethical concepts in media reporting were sufficient in exploring the phenomenon of online media expansion in North Sumatra. The concepts and theories proposed, however, need to be developed further and given the broader scope on the impact of online media which includes online consumption, consumption patterns of online and print media simultaneously.

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