

The Political Economy of Alternative Digital Media: Music Platforms and Home Casting

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ABSTRACT. The existence of digital media presents a new atmosphere for community members. Digital media encourages alternative media to come in various forms and variations. Although initially alternative media emerged with idealism, because more and more people use alternative digital media, as well as the demands of production costs, alternative digital media cannot be separated from the political economy. This paper is made to see how the political economy in alternative media, especially on music platforms and home casting. The method used in writing this article is literature review. Data sources were searched through Google Scholar and Jstor. The keywords used to search for articles are "political economy of digital alternative media", "political economy of media", and "alternative media". The author sharpens the analysis by using Vincent Moscow's political economy theory. The results of the research found the characteristics and political economy models carried out by alternative digital media, especially in the music and home casting industries.

Keyword: Political Economy; Alternative Digital Media; Music: Home Casting

ABSTRAK. Keberadaan media digital menghadirkan suasana baru bagi anggota masyarakat. Media digital mendorong media alternatif hadir dalam berbagai bentuk dan variasi. Meski pada awalnya media alternatif muncul dengan idealismenya, akan tetapi karena semakin banyak yang menggunakan media digital alternatif, serta tuntutan biaya produksi, maka media digital alternatif tidak lepas dari sisi ekonomi politik. Tulisan ini dibuat untuk melihat bagaimana ekonomi politik pada media alternatif khususnya pada platform musik dan homecasting. Metode yang dipakai dalam penulisan artikel ini adalah literature review. Pencarian sumber data dilakukan melalui Google Scholar dan Jstor. Kata kunci yang digunakan untuk pencarian artikel adalah "ekonomi politik media alternatif digital", "ekonomi politik media", dan "media alternatif". Penulis mempertajam analisis dengan menggunakan teori ekonomi politik Vinsent Moscow. Hasil penelitian mendapati karakteristik dan model ekonomi politik yang dijalankan oleh media digital alternatif khususnya pada industri musik dan home casting.

Kata Kunci: Ekonomi Politik, Media Digital Alternatif, Musik. Home castin

INTRODUCTION

Digital media is an alternative media that is outside the mainstream media frame. The existence of digital media presents a new atmosphere for community members to proclaim identity diversity, convey ideas and create artifacts, and build deliberative public spaces (Haas, 2004). Digital media has the ability to support social networking and access to information to anyone, allowing individuals to express their ideas freely. Thus, digital media can build a more egalitarian climate to address social issues.

Social media can encourage everyone to become a media participant, that is, to participate in discussions and campaigns on social issues, especially those related to their

areas of experience and conscience (Kaun & Uldam, 2018). Social media as alternative digital media is a medium that channels the struggles of marginalized groups and activists who voice their concerns over social issues.

Alternative digital media comes in many forms and variations. Starting from social media, to new forms of platforms that distribute new ways that are different from the pre-existing media. Differences can be seen both from the content presented, production and distribution techniques that produce their own variations.

Alternative digital media cannot be separated from the political economy of digital media. Although initially, alternative media emerged to voice things that could not be voiced through mainstream media, the existence of

alternative media which has more and more users has made capital owners come in to play their role. Based on this, this author looks at how the political economy of alternative media, especially on music and home casting platforms, is affected by the political economy of alternative media.

METHOD

The method used in writing this article is literature review. Literature review is a literature search and research conducted by reading various books, journals, and other publications related to a particular topic or issue. Data sources were searched through Google Scholar and Jstor. The keywords used to search for articles were "political economy of digital alternative media", "political economy of media", and "alternative media". The author sharpens the analysis by using Vincent Moscow's political economy theory.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Alternative Digital Media and Characteristics of Alternative Digital Media

Alternative media are mass media that oppose the dominant capitalist form in terms of media production, media structure, media content, and media reception (Fuchs, 2010). In elite journalism, one finds journalists as a professional wage-earning class faced with corporate and political pressures, journalistic production conditioned by power processes, and capital accumulation of journalistic status. In alternative media, the term citizen journalist emerged. Where people find independence of writers from corporate and political influence and pressure, challenging this model of production. Anyone can be a writer without special training or expertise (Fuchs, 2010).

Alternative media allows media consumers to become media producers. Viewers who were initially passive become active. Alternative digital media can be a space for protest for certain groups that cannot be done by mainstream media. In mainstream media, content becomes an ideological thing. Content selection is done based on the market, on what is considered popular and worth selling. The drive for high profits reduces the quality and complexity of content in mainstream media.

In alternative or critical media, content provides an alternative to dominant heteronomous repressive perspectives that reflect the rule of capital, patriarchy, racism,

sexism, and nationalism (Fuchs, 2010). Such content expresses oppositional viewpoints that question all forms of heteronomy and domination. So there is counter-information and counter-hegemony that includes the voices of the excluded, the oppressed, the dominated, the enslaved, the alienated, the exploited, and the dominated. One of its goals is to give voice to the voiceless media forces for the powerless and to transcend the filtering and censorship of information by corporate information monopolies, state monopolies, or cultural monopolies in public information and communication (Fuchs, 2010).

In the mainstream media, there are hierarchical capitalist media companies that aim to make a profit. They are financed by selling content to audiences and/or by advertising. There is private ownership of media companies and there is a hierarchical structure with clear power differentials that create influential decision-making actors and less influential roles and division of labor in media organizations.

Alternative Media is a grassroots media organization. In such a system, there is collective ownership and consensus decision-making by those working in the organization. There is no hierarchy and authority, symmetrical distribution of power, no external private ownership, but self-management of the economy. There is a focus on non-commercial media that is not financed by advertising or commodity sales, but by donations, public funds, private resources, or no cost strategies. The division of labor is simplified: the roles of writer, designer, publisher, printer and distributor overlap (Fuchs, 2010).

In the traditional media model, distribution is a form of marketing that utilizes high-tech distribution, marketing and public relations departments, specialists and strategies, sales departments, advertising, and distribution contracts. In alternative media, also technologies that allow easy and cheap reproduction are used. Strategies such as anti-copyright, free access, or open content allow content to be shared, copied, distributed, or changed openly. In addition, we also find alternative distributors or changing original institutions (e.g. alternative bookstores or libraries) that focus on the distribution of alternative titles.

Prefigurative politics in media practice means idealizing the limited possibilities and constraints faced by alternative media

production in contemporary society. Furthermore, in practice self-managed media is not easy to achieve all alternative visions and practices. To completely focus on self-managed processes, anti-commercialism, etc. is to ignore the problems of alternative media production and to naively argue that alternative societies can already be created within a repressive totality. In the existing framework, citizen journalism, self-managed ownerships, alternative distribution, and critical reception are alternative qualities that the media wants, but not necessary conditions.

A major obstacle for alternative media is the capital factor. The principle of alternative media that opposes the way capitalist media survives is actually a counterattack. Without capital, alternative media will only exploit its workers. Nevertheless, the existence of the internet helps in saving production costs. The internet helps audiences to produce their content and distribute it widely. Then, social media attracts the attention of capitalists to exploit profits in the new media market (Gehl, 2015).

Public participation that voluntarily uploads personal data to create content in various forms such as photos, videos is utilized by capital (Allmer, 2015). This has led to the exploitation of capitalist media workers' commodification. Social media users, spend resources in the form of energy and thoughts in creating content without pay. In addition, social media monitors the activities of its users. User behavior data is used as targeted ads by marketers who pay CSM handsomely. This is called surveillance capitalism.

Homecasting as an Alternative Digital Media

Homecasting is one of the widely used alternative media. Homepodcast allows one to conduct broadcasting activities using online video to distribute various content. Videos are uploaded either live or streaming or recorded first and then broadcasted. The production cost of homecasting is much cheaper, there is no need to involve many people in the process, it is more flexible in its creation. One of the platforms used to upload homecasting activities is YouTube.

YouTube is ranked as the most widely used social media in Indonesia in 2020. Based on 272.1 million total Indonesian population, 175.4 million internet users, and 160 million active users of social media users. YouTube managed to penetrate the market by 88% of the

total population (Hootsuite, 2020). According to Kellner and Kim, YouTube is a new media platform to enhance dialogical learning for communities or societies, enlarging the informative space for transformative critical pedagogy, thus optimizing the potential of the internet for democratization (Kellner & Kim, 2010).

Anyone is free to report and discuss anything through the Youtube platform without any censorship or rules about what ideologies can be displayed. One can tell freely about politics and behind-the-scenes stories that cannot be told through mainstream media. Many environmental activists also use YouTube as a place to campaign about the environment. In addition, there are also many religious debates that are shown warmly with various purposes on Youtube. So that YouTube alternative digital media provides space for someone to speak widely.

Thorson sees that videos on Youtube can be grouped into three categories, namely, (1) Video as a persuasive and awareness-raising political advertisement encouraging members of the public to participate politically. If a political institution releases a video, the political movement is categorized as a top-down approach, whereas if released by civil society, the video is generally considered a grassroots campaign (2) Video as a place to testify. It is seen that video viewers are not limited to capturing the content of the video but rather conveying ideas or thoughts. In reality, activists or human rights-based organizations create videos and write scripts to document and show the world about certain injustices and human rights violations. c) Video as self-expression. When certain individuals or groups want to communicate their thoughts to the public in the form of videos, when viewed from a democratic perspective, it is a concrete manifestation of the principle of freedom of expression of citizens who care about socio-political issues (Thorson et al., 2010).

Alternative Music Media Platform

Internet-connected mobile phone users can listen to music through online streaming services. This model replaces the old way where we used to listen to music through radio channels. In addition, listening to music through DVDs and cassettes has long been abandoned. Listening to music through digital media platforms is a new form of alternative

media in addition to the mainstream media that we used to use before.

Sportify is one of the pioneers in the history of the online music streaming industry (Saputri, 2021). Sportify launched for the first time on April 1, 2016 in Sweden. In addition, similar platforms such as Joox and Apple Music have also entered Indonesia. The presence of music streaming platforms is an alternative solution to reduce music piracy. Before this service was present, music piracy was so massive and detrimental to many parties.

Each digital music platform has different features related to the service. Sportify provides the Fremium feature. This feature provides an opportunity for users to listen to music for free but users must listen first. The Sportify feature allows users to listen to music without ads if they subscribe for one month (Saputri, 2021). Users can listen to music on Sportify without ads if they pay for subscription access.

The Political Economy of Alternative Digital Media

Political economy is the study of the interrelated social relations, particularly power relations, of the production, distribution and consumption of resources, including communication resources. Political economy also discusses the exchange rate between function and utility. The political economy of communication is used as a media business (Subandi & Sadono, 2018). Vincent Mosco offers three important concepts to approach the political economy of digital media, namely commodification, spatialization, and structuration (Mosco, 1996). Thus, the political economy of alternative digital media is matters related to the process of production, distribution, and consumption of resources, including communication resources in alternative digital media.

Commodification relates to how the process of transforming goods and services and their use value into a commodity that has an exchange value in the market. In the institutional sphere, media crews are involved to produce and distribute them to diverse consumers. Its added value will be largely determined by the extent to which media products fulfill individual and social needs (Mosco, 1996). Media content becomes a market for sale because it contains symbols,

meanings, images, information, and others that match market interests.

According to Vincent Mosco, content commodification is related to the content of a communication medium (Subandi & Sadono, 2018). In digital alternative media, media content offers freedom that cannot be sold through mainstream media. In homecasting, video quality is not always as important as in mainstream media. Many amateur videos also find a place on these platforms. This is because the audience prefers the things behind the layers. As for the music platform, the music genres presented fulfill the market's desire. In addition, the features offered also try to satisfy the desires of its users.

Spatialization relates to the extent to which the media is able to present its products in front of readers within the limits of space and time. The institutional structure of the media determines its role in fulfilling the network and speed of delivery of media products in front of the audience. The discussion on spatialization relates to the form of media institutions, whether they are large-scale corporations or otherwise, whether they are networked or not, whether they are monopolistic or oligopolistic, conglomerate or not (Mosco, 1996). Spatialization discusses the distribution of products by the media to audiences or audiences without being hindered by space and time by utilizing advances in communication technology, making it easier for readers to access alternative digital media anywhere and anytime. In alternative digital media, distance and time are not a problem. Digital media can be accessed by anyone and anytime with the internet.

The idea of structuration was originally developed by Anthony Giddens. Structuration is concerned with the relation of ideas between agents of society, social processes and social practices in structural analysis. Structuration can be described as the process by which social structures are mutually enforced by social agents, and even each part of the structure is able to act to serve the other parts. The end result of structuration is a series of social relations and power processes organized among class, gender, race and social movements that are each related to each other (Subandi & Sadono, 2018). The structuration of the political economy of communication is related to social movements in society. Social movements today are no longer limited to real movements, but can also be supported or

participated in online through internet networked media. Structuration in alternative digital media is clearly visible, especially on the Youtube platform, because activists use it to voice and use various social issues based on gender, race, environment, religion, and others.

The Political Economy of Music Platforms and Homecasting

Alternative digital media on music and homecasting platforms cannot be separated from the touch of political economy. Seeing the large number of users of this media makes this platform a target market for financiers to launch their actions, namely to get the biggest profit. Although some still maintain their idealism, creators who are too idealistic will lose their strength, and fall. So many platforms began to tolerate their idealism and began to follow the way the media worked to maintain their position.

McKinsey & Company, a multinational management consulting firm, explains that Indonesia is part of the four most potential countries for the digital music industry besides Thailand, Hong Kong and Malaysia. This has prompted telecommunications service providers to compete with music streaming service companies. Many cellular companies have developed special data packages for music streaming services (Saputri, 2021). This form of cooperation allows cellular companies to benefit from the media usage behavior of their consumers. Meanwhile, the music service benefits in the form of increased awareness of their brand and quality.

Digital media platforms have successfully built a music ecosystem. The most important thing is how the formation of standardization and homogeneity of music is intentionally or unintentionally created by music actors. The practice of industrialization allows homogenization as a market strategy. This homogenization concept refers to standardization that determines the quality of the market and so that there is equality in products (Saputri, 2021).

Digital music industry actors can be classified into three groups, producers, distributors, and consumers (Saputri, 2021). The role of producers is played by musicians, creators, and music record labels. Then media such as Sportify, Joox, Apple Music become music distributors. The role of consumers is taken by users and listeners of these digital

media platforms. Each actor shows the relationship and the results of their interaction with digital technology.

Alternative digital media gave rise to a form of soloist practice also known as music by do it your self (Saputri, 2021). Technology changes the flow of music production. In the mainstream mass media model, musicians have to go to recording studios, which are usually owned by other parties. The business capital of a recording studio is very large and the price of equipment is also expensive. Musicians and creators who want to produce their own music will find it difficult. In addition, there is also the process of distribution and promotion of music that must be done.

The presence of digital technology makes it easy for musicians and creators. In terms of music production, they don't need to use expensive tools. Digital musical instrument applications make it easy to create sounds, beats, or digital musical instruments only on a computer. The distribution process can also be done using social media and other new media platforms. So many soloists have sprung up, and many musicians have decided to go solo. This model also allows one person to double as a singer-songwriter. Alternative digital media also allows musicians to have power in music. Musicians have the power to negotiate between musicians and music labels. Unlike the old model, where the music label can only provide offers.

On YouTube's homecasting platform, algorithm development is growing rapidly. This happened when Google acquired YouTube from PayPal for an estimated USD 1.65 billion. The presence of YouTube has offered privileges compared to mainstream media, especially television. User-generated content (UGC) as a key feature on YouTube, part of the distinctive features of Web 2.0, has turned YouTube into a specialist video platform, which opens the gates of access to every layer of professionals, both amateurs and content professionals. The fundamental difference lies in the video uploading capabilities that consumers and YouTube users have. They can produce any content and provide commentary from their internal perspectives without worrying about gatekeeping processes or intervention from editorial circulation at a global level (Rospitasari, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Alternative media is mass media that opposes the dominant capitalist form in terms of media production, media structure, media content, and media reception. In alternative media or critical media, content provides an alternative to the dominant repressive heteronomous perspective that reflects the rule of capital, patriarchy, racism, sexism, and nationalism. Homecasting is one of the widely used alternative media. Homepodcast allows one to conduct broadcasting activities using online video to distribute various content. In addition, mobile phone users connected to the internet can listen to music through online streaming services. This model replaces the old way where we used to listen to music through radio channels. In addition, listening to music through DVDs and cassettes has long been abandoned. Listening to music through digital media platforms is a new form of alternative media in addition to the mainstream media that we are used to.

The political economy of alternative digital media is matters relating to the process of production, distribution and consumption of resources, including communication resources on alternative digital media. The political economy of digital media can be seen with Vincent Mosco's approach of commodification, spatialization, and structuration. Commodification of digital alternative media can be seen from the content of the media offering freedoms that cannot be sold through mainstream media. In homecasting, video quality is not always as important as in mainstream media. Many amateur videos also find a place on this platform. This is because the audience prefers the things behind the layers. As for the music platform, the music genres presented fulfill the market's desire. In addition, the features offered also try to satisfy the desires of its users. Spatialization In alternative digital media, distance and time are not a problem. Digital media can be accessed by anyone and anytime with the internet. The structuration of the political economy of communication is related to social movements in society. Social movements today are no longer limited to real movements, but can also be supported or participated in online through internet networked media. Structuration in alternative digital media is clearly visible, especially on the Youtube platform, this is not because

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