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LESSON LEARNED FROM THE PANDEMIC, REMEDIATION OF RADIO

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Abstract:

Radio research is not a new thing, and in fact, it was portrayed as an under-researched field. There is a long debate about radio acceptance, conventional radio migration to digital and will podcast kills conventional radio before the pandemic. However, pandemic Covid-19 affects the listenership of radio. At times of pandemics, radio has played a leading role, and throughout history, radio has been vital during major natural disasters and health emergencies. This research aims to recognise and address radio research's opportunities and challenges. A qualitative research approach is adopted through document analysis and observation. Findings show an increase in radio listening during the pandemic, the most flexible and accessible medium. Radio is the most versatile and experienced remediation at all times.

Keywords:

Pandemic, Challenges, Radio, Remediation, Research

Introduction

In December 2019, the first cases of SARS-CoV-2 infection were reported in Wuhan, China, termed COVID-19. COVID-19 had been recorded on all continents, 523 million cases and 6.27

million deaths had been reported worldwide as of May 19, 2022. How can this fatal pneumonia affect radio research?

Radio globally has been mostly ignored by academicians and researchers in communication disciplines for decades and is often labelled as under-researched field. There are a variety of causes for this, as Tacchi (2000) points out in her PhD thesis. The radio becomes naturalized that she describes until it is difficult to determine its value. At the same time, she relates it to radio consumption, which she sees as inextricably linked to daily life. While, Ibrahim (2020) discovered a vast gap in radio studies in Malaysia. It started with Adhikarya (1977), who unearthed the beginning of radio in Malaya Land. Then Asiah (1996) examines radio in Malaya Land in the war era. She exposed the imperative of radio in political use and the nation's development. In 2005, Darussalam focused on radio and television development until the early digital era. Afterwards, study on the radio is unheeded by academicians and researchers. In 2020, Ibrahim filled the digital age gap through her doctoral thesis. She analysed the implication of digitalisation towards conventional radio industry. Still, radio is underrated research.

Therefore, the spirit is changing during the pandemic. Rodero (2020) states that radio once again emerged as a crucial medium for staying to informed in the current crisis produced by COVID-19. The results show that radio is the most effective channel for disseminating information about the pandemic. The global COVID-19 pandemic has prompted an extraordinary study.

As the researcher navigates through and beyond this pandemic, which will have a long-lasting impact on our world, including research and specifically radio research, it is vital to recognize and address radio research's opportunities and challenges. Therefore, this study is set out to understand the listening trend and how radio changed during the pandemic. This will be done by exploring the facets of remediation theory – which predict that in crises, people listen to the radio because of immediacy (motives/experiences) and hypermediacy (medium diversity).

Literature Review

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak has triggered a global health crisis that has changed our perspectives of the world and our daily lives. However, it gives a new leaf to radio research. The impact on radio research prior to COVID-19 portrayed as rapid, dramatic, and no doubt will be long term. Most academics and industries were affected by the pandemic. Despite the hardships, upheaval, and uncertainty caused by the pandemic, researchers continue to undertake radio by approaching it from various epistemological perspectives, including health, media, education and psychology.

Levinger and Hill (2020) conducted a research about physical activity and the use of mass media campaign in creating awareness about that activity. They stated that countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom, have invested in national programmes to promote the significance of physical activity in maintaining people's health during the epidemic on prime-time television, radio stations, and social media. The same research was done by Sport England (in Savanta: Com Res, 2020), whereas, in England, two-thirds of Britons believe exercise is more important than ever amid the current COVID-19 crisis, demonstrating the positive influence of such campaigns. The researcher concluded from these two research, that mass media campaigns are relatively significant in promoting health messages. This is a concerted

effort to include physical activity, or any messages related to health and Covid-19 in government messages through mass media.

Subsequently, Cunha, et al. (2021) suggested two alternative solutions as a response to the school closure as one of the measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to reach elementary students without digital resources and digital poverty, they recommended radio as a tool to deliver learning in which story chapters are read on the radio, and students receive a printed script, prompting reflection and suggesting related activities. The second alternative is the distribution of story-tool for students to read independently and letters from the story's main characters, which offered activities and reflection suggestions. The researcher discovered that these two interventions emphasised a key educational message: "no one should be left behind". Radio as part of the intervention strategy and acting in accordance with the revised plans is an excellent strategy to tackle the issue of digital poverty and lack of digital resources.

While Rogers et al.(2020) focus on the podcast as a new digital tool for delivering messages. In that research, they uncover that podcasts can increase the speeds, formats, and breadth of the research and communication mediums available to researchers, specifically to disseminate information about COVID-19. This exploratory research involved 25 urban scholars around the world. According to them, researchers can interact in innovative ways by using podcasts to disseminate information about COVID-19, and this podcast initiative stretched the boundaries of what can be considered a research method and a community.

In India, radio plays a notable role in disseminating information about COVID-19. Laskar and Bhattacharyya (2021), investigated the type of programming used by selected community radio stations in India throughout the pandemic, as well as how they combated fake news. By using case studies and interviews, they identified more devoted programming services concerning COVID-19, fake news, and mental health using two-way communication by CR stations. During the nationwide lockdown, CR radio in India also addressed issues such as escalating domestic violence and mental health.

However, the situation in Malaysia during the pandemic is different from India and the aforementioned countries. Mohamad et al. (2020) investigate where Malaysians get their COVID-19 information and who they turn to for credible information. They are using a cross-sectional study with 4850 respondents. According to their findings, Malaysians primarily relied on television for updated information about COVID-19 during the MCO, followed by internet news portals. Apart from those, they discovered that 854 respondents listened to the radio for COVID-19 information. While Dawi et al. (2021) investigated the impact of e-government and social media on the public's attitude to engage in screening behaviour. They adopt a Web survey involving 404 Malaysian respondents during the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) period. Their findings show that social media was identified by most of the respondents (81.9%) as the source to get information connected to COVID-19. It shows that radio is not popular as television and social media regarding information. The researcher can say that the role of radio is changing.

Nevertheless, during the pandemic, there are researchers in Malaysia such as Alan et al. 2020; Aripin and Daud, 2020; Ibrahim, 2020; Ibrahim et al. 2021; Islam et al. 2021; Sabran et al. 2020; Zainal Abidin and Ibrahim, 2021;focus on radio research from multidisciplinary

approach and issues. From the reading, the researcher acknowledges that during a pandemic, numerous researchers examine the listenership of radio, radio content, radio production, radio distribution, radio frequency, community radio, radio and women, radio and children, podcasting, Internet radio, law and regulation and radio development in the digital age. It shows that issue on the radio is not lethargic, however, radio is reputable convalesce in its.

In terms of listenership during the pandemic, Karam (2020) unearths that COVID-19 raises the media's value – "Television and FM (radio) the primary source of critical information to the public in the event of disasters and emergencies". The same pattern was reported across the world by Statista (2020), and Media Mark (2020). The average global growth for radio is 19 percent and radio for education is 58 percent. The importance of radio and television in offering educations program is escalated around the world (Karam, 2020) when lockdown is imposed in many countries. It shows that broadcasting is the quick solution needed to overcome the digital gap, digital poverty, and access issues specifically in third-world countries.

Rodero (2020) claims that, people generally listened to the radio during the lockdown in Spain while cleaning or cooking in their living rooms, bedrooms, and kitchens. She discovered that during the pandemic, there is a general increase in media audience, whereas increased demand for information leads to increased news consumption. She associates the rise in listenership with the credibility of radio. Before the pandemic, the media's credibility has declined over the years, however, during the pandemic people rely more on the media to get information. She identifies the psychological impact of radio.

Thus, it is vital to recognize and address radio research's opportunities and challenges during the pandemic and what can we learn from it.

Methodology

This research used a qualitative approach through document review. Document review is a method of gathering information by going over existing documents such as annual reports, internal and external reports, meeting minutes, articles from journals, personal diaries, newsletters, program logs, listenership, and any related documents (Creswell, 2013; World Bank, 2022; Bretschneider, Cirilli, Jones, Lynch, & Wilson, 2017). Therefore, in this research, the researcher will review 10 related journal articles; three (3) reports from United Nations, Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, Edison Research; and four (4) sources of listenership statistics from Media Tracks Communication, Statista, GfK, and Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission.

This technique was selected by the researcher to gather background information that can help the researcher to understand the trend of radio research before and during the pandemic. By reviewing related documentation, the researcher believes that it may reveal a different trend. It is critical to determine if such a difference exists and it will aid future researchers to formulate the questions. However, it is crucial for the researcher to verify the accuracy of the documents. It entails a procedure of comparing documents that contain similar information, checking the documents against other data that have been collected.

Bowen (2009) recommends using thematic analysis to analyse this type of data collection. However, the researcher does not dispute that this technique has limitations, such as

obtrusiveness, reactivity, and insufficient details. Finally, the researcher will interpret and display data appropriately and be transparent when reporting the findings.

Remediation Of Radio

From 10 journal articles, three (3) reports and four (4) sources of listenership statistics from Media Tracks Communication, Statista, GfK and Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, the findings show that there were significant changes in radio acceptance and ecosystem before and during the pandemic. Based on the findings, radio is relatively gradual when it comes to the issues of migration from conventional radio to digital radio (Ibrahim, 2020). Therefore, radio remediates in new environments rapidly. It shows that radio research has possible opportunities to expand in the future. The researcher optimistic that digital technology does not radically change the media landscape, however, the policy, economics, politics, culture and end-user will determine the changes in radio.

The term remediation was introduced by Bolter and Grusin (1999). Remediation is a constantly dynamic process in which media can reform, change, absorb, replace, and adapt to different media forms (Bolter & Grusin, 1999). The gist of remediation is about the mixing of old and new media. Other remediation perspective is old media can remediate new media as well, as an attempt to reassert themselves in a world where digital technology disrupts their ecosystem.

However, from the researcher's viewpoint, remediation should not begin with the emergence of new media technology or digital technology. The nature of technology whether it is analogue or digital is constantly bourgeoning from time to time (Ibrahim, 2020). The traditional radio ecosystem has three types of standards which are Amplitude Modulation, Frequency Modulation and Short Wave (Ibrahim, 2020). These three standard emerged after scientists invented one standard and discovered weaknesses in those standard. Traditional radio, for example, does not begin with Frequency Modulation, instead, it started with Amplitude Modulation. Frequency Modulation is invented after scientists detected weakness in Amplitude Modulation signals before the technology itself is discontinued in the 1990s (Ibrahim, 2020). In other words, remediation does not happen because of new technology, however, how old technology is evolved, integrates, and refashion.

There are two ideas behind remediation which are immediacy and hypermediacy (Bolter & Grusin, 1999). The idea of immediacy refers to the experience of using media that is underpinned by the goal of use. In contrast, hypermediacy refers to media diversity. In this research context, the media is referred to as radio. Immediacy is the experience and motive people to use the radio during the pandemic and hypermediacy is refer to the mediums that can associate with the traditional radio. Somehow this immediacy and hypermediacy is intertwine.

For example, the goal of the national radio industry, whether government or private, is to use digital platforms in transmitting radio broadcasts. However, the goal is based on experience from other countries or from pilot projects. This goal and experience is immediacy. While the advantages or relative advantages brought by the new communication technology can be translated as hypermediacy. In the end, the decision to adopt this new communication technology hinges on the experience, motive and diversity elements. Regrettably, this scenario is not attractive enough to hook researchers to study radio since they can not see how this medium significantly affects the listeners in the future and researchers can use post-disciplinary (using theory from any epistemology) to test or examine radio. This is the real challenge for

radio study in Malaysia compared to other countries as discussed in the literature review – as if radio will perish someday. The ugly truth, radio survive until today and it is impossible for podcasting to replace the radio (Ibrahim, 2022).

In the radio ecosystem, traditional radio can be transmitted through three types of analogue standards, which are, Amplitude Modulation, Frequency Modulation and Short Wave (Ibrahim, 2020; Ibrahim, 2022). Because of globalisation and convergence, traditional radio can be integrated with the internet to produce online radio; integrated with smartphones to produce mobile radio, and integrated with satellite to produce digital radio satellite – this is a great example of 'retrograde' remediation, in which a modern medium is imitated and even absorbed by an earlier one.

Table 1: Radio Standard

Radio	Standard
Analogue	Frequency Modulation Amplitude Modulation Short Wave
Digital	Digital Audio Broadcasting High-Definition Radio Digital Radio Mondiale Satellite

(Source: Ibrahim, 2020; Ibrahim 2022)

It shows that radio has the ability to integrate and refashion older established media forms. Because radio is constantly interacting with other media, it follows that no media form is fixed in nature and that media is a developing organism that is constantly evolving. Prior to the lockdown and movement control order, people listened less from radio in-car (GfK, 2022; Media Mark, 2020; Statista, 2020). However, listeners prefer online radio or satellite radio to listen to the radio. The ability of radio to adapt with different mediums-gives great influence on the listeners and the way they consumed radio.

As radio transforms itself from traditional to new, it is imperative to understand the change during the pandemic and its challenges. In this paper, the researcher identifies three (3) themes that can correlate with the research objective; (1) the resilient of radio; (2) more people tuning in; and (3) breaking up the silence.

The Resilient of Radio

As the pandemic has evolved, so too have radio industry responses. Radio broadcasts into homes, offices, and hospitals have offered vital health updates and comfort to thousands of people who have been cut off from their loved ones. From the document review, United Nations (2022) reported that radio has changed many changes over the past 110 years and has demonstrated its endurance. The report, links these changes to the health crisis as the main factors people listening to radio;

“The health crisis has also led to changes in listening patterns. Whilst the collection of official audience figures has been made more complicated by the pandemic, radio stations have witnessed greater numbers listening in to their online platforms”.

(United Nations, 2022)

Although it sounds trivial, the same vibes reported by GfK (2022), with the country in various states of lockdown and movement control order since 2020, study reveals that radio has once again emerged as a crucial medium that easily adapts to crisis situations. In this context, the researcher interprets a crisis situation as a health crisis triggered by the Coronavirus. In fact, Media Tracks Communication (2022) reported that media consumption may rise by 60 percent. People will intuitively monitor COVID-19 news on TV, listen to the radio, or read late-breaking news online while at work.

Before the pandemic, the immediacy (the reason for people to listen to the radio) is entertainment. Dawi et al. (2021), Fleming (2010), Ibrahim (2020), and Krause (2020) agree that “The main source of entertainment in radio is music”.

The function of radio is changed according to politic, economic, social, health crisis, and culture in many countries. Radio in Malaysia, for example have different stage of function. In the early radio era, radio plays a great tool to share information and interest. The game is change when radio in Malaysia enter war era, whereby dissemination of information and to propagate is critical to create awareness. Later, radio in Malaysia moved from war era to independent era where the information and education is imperative to build nation. After digitalisation, the function of radio is changed drastically to entertainment. This immediacy changed due to the changes in listeners consumption and needs. (Adhikarya, 1977; Asiah, 2016; Darussalam, 2005; Ibrahim, 2020)

Thus, it shows that during the pandemic, people trust radio as a trusted source in times of crisis. This is because the nature of radio in delivering local coverage that helps them connected to the society. In fact, during the pandemic, local radio coverage will update on how local market is being affected and how radio can help them to boost their income and stay less anxiety through music. Radio provides music and this music is a powerful medium to keep the listeners engaged and to comfort the listeners, undeniable. This is how radio remediates during the pandemic and become a resilient medium.

More People Tuning In

Despite an increasingly congested media landscape and the rise of digital communications, radio remains the world's most commonly consumed medium as researchers reviewed reports from Media Tracks Communication, Statista, GfK, and Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission. Conversely during the pandemic, everyone is stressed and concerned as continue to work from home, staying close to their children and spouses during the pandemic. However, document review shows that as more individuals stay put, their media consumption increases more than before the pandemic.

Prior to the epidemic, GfK (2020) claimed that radio is one of the most popular forms of engagement among Malaysians in Peninsular Malaysia, with 94 percent of the population listening on a weekly basis. Their findings suggest that more listeners are listening to the radio at home, up four percent over the previous poll, which reached a total of 14.3 million listeners. Surprisingly, the number of persons listening to radio via digital and TV sets/decoders have increased by 25 percent and 12 percent, respectively, since the previous study in 2019.

However, GfK (2022) indicated a new high for Malaysian radio in 2021, with nearly 96 percent of Peninsular Malaysians listening to the radio, equivalent to 21.1 million weekly radio listeners, a rise of 469,000. These changes can relate to the series of movement control orders and Work From Home (WFH).

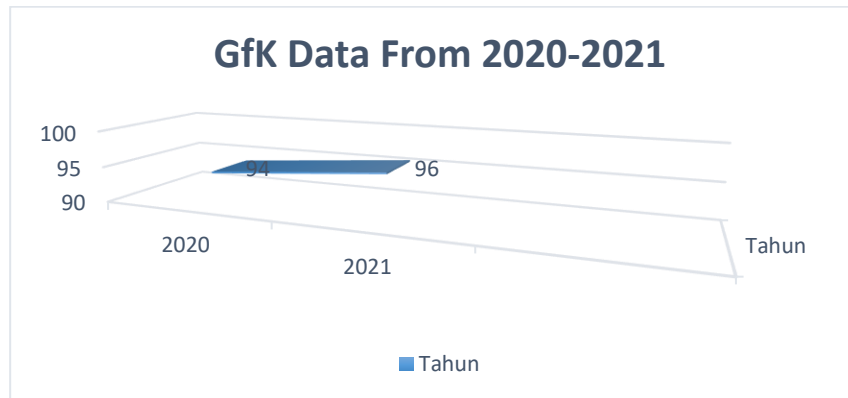


Figure 1:GfK Listener Statistic

(Source: Gfk, 2020; 2021)

Before the pandemic, in Malaysia, radio remains one of the primary information media, reaching 20 million listeners in 2018 compared with 19.7 million in 2017. According to a Jacobs Media survey, 70 percent of radio listeners still get their radio through traditional sources, such as radio in the car (46%) and radio at home or at work (24%). Around 27 percent, on the other hand, listen via digital methods, like mobile apps, podcasts, desktops, and other linked devices. According to GfK (2022), news, current events, and politics are the most popular topics on the radio during the MCO (65%), with music playlists/song dedication sessions coming in second at 64 percent. These figures demonstrate that radio listeners rely on it for timely and reliable information.

The same situation is portrayed in the United States of America. According to the Edison Research "Share of Ear" survey, the pandemic in-car radio listening fell by 37 percent during the first and second quarters of 2020 (Media Tracks Communication, 2022). In the third quarter of 2020, limits were lifted, and in-car radio listening rose once more. It demonstrates that radio has its own audience. Even if people do not go to the office and do not listen to the radio in the car, the number of radio listeners in the hypermediacy context is rising due to the diversity of the medium. People can access radio from many sources and are not limited to radio set-box or in-car radio. (Media Tracks Communication, 2022)

Commercial radio listeners who work from home full-time in the United Kingdom are listening for longer periods of time than they were before the epidemic, up from 45 percent before the first lockdown in March 2020, indicating that new listening habits were formed early in the pandemic and have become entrenched (Media Tracks Communication, 2022). Radio is relied upon by this audience to lift their spirits, keep them informed, and keep them company while they work. The findings suggest that commercial radio is providing advertisers with access to this high-value audience during the working day at times when they may not have listened before the pandemic, with nine out of ten (89%) of the working from home commercial radio audience stating that they listen to more now that they can listen to the radio while they work (Media Tracks Communication, 2022). This population of people who work from home is

responsive to advertisements, with 52 percent admitting to looking for something after hearing it advertised on the radio.

It shows that with many people tuning radio through many mediums such as mobile phones, tablets, computers, laptops, and televisions – radio is remediated and accessible friendly. Another reason people continue to listen to the radio is that there are no subscriptions necessary or encouraged when listening to the radio, which may be one of the draws that Malaysians are contemplating when compared to other sources such as Spotify and the like. Unlike most other music or news providers that required subscriptions to get access. Radio advertising profits will grow again as radio listening returns and more businesses and outlets reopen.

Breaking Up the Silence

Radio provides both solace and a voice for those who are cut off from friends and family due to COVID-19 limitations.

“Radio breaks the solitude that many people are finding themselves in right now. It is essential to have someone speaking to you, to explain what is happening in the world and near you,”

(United Nations, 2022)

Now, more than ever, radio remains an essential medium to keep society connected. The ability to connect with radio hosts on a personal level provides listeners with a sense of belonging and community. Radio has offered listeners a support system and camaraderie, as reported by GfK (2022);

“...78 percent of respondents agreed that radio makes them feel less alone. Another 72 percent believe radio makes them less anxious and worried when dealing with the current pandemic. About 67 percent of respondents also agreed that listening to radio makes them feel more connected to the community”.

According to the GfK (2022), a range of lifestyle content on the radio has provided respite and lifted the mood of listeners, in addition to information on Covid-19. It is the main lure for listeners, with 65 percent of respondents listening in for news, current events, and politics during the Movement Control Order. Another important factor is the presence of comedic aspects in radio shows, which account for about half of all listeners (46 %). It shows that the role of an on-air personality is vital in radio presentation.

Radio and on-air personalities, according to Nielsen (2022), establish a connection to the actual world that listeners gravitate toward and trust;

“...60 percent of Americans of adults 18 and older hold radio in high regard and trust it to deliver timely information about the current COVID-19 outbreak”.

Consumers are turning to radio as a trusted source of information and community connection in a time of increased uncertainty and disturbed routines, mirroring patterns seen during

previous regional and national crises. It demonstrates that radio can improve one's mood and provide company at a time when social isolation is high.

So, what are the lessons learned?

- Radio is imperative for people to seek information based on trust, reliability and relevance.
- The role of the radio announcer and on-air personality is critical to building connections and relationships between listeners and the radio stations. The participation of listeners during on-air or engagement in media social will boost the relevance of radio. The future researcher can study the relationship or interaction between radio announcers, on-air personalities, and listeners.
- Radio as a content creator and content provider need to localise the knowledge or information and suit it with the interests of their targeted audience.
- The researcher believes that the availability of radio technology to adapt to a new environment is a necessary but not sufficient condition for distribution thru digital terrestrial and satellite. Radio needs to leverage a dynamic ecosystem of collaboration. Ministries of communication need to work in close coordination with other entities working in radio (private and institutional) to effectively orchestrate different players and secure the quality of the overall radio production.

The only challenges in radio research are getting researchers' attention and trust that radio is not dying or will replace by any medium. However, in Malaysia to get researchers to do research in radio is tough, since the academic world prefers citation and ranking. The research on the radio in Malaysia is not conducted as much as compared to television and social media studies. The current researcher who has an interest in radio needs to work hard to highlight the significance and uniqueness of radio.

Conclusion

The pandemic has given us time to reflect on life priorities. Listening has increased, as it has in previous crises, and radio is assisting in the psychological impacts of the pandemic, undoubtedly. This study concludes that the ability of radio to adapt to television, mobile, and the Internet has been an ally in allowing the stations to continue broadcasting. Radio stations all across the world have responded with a variety of approaches to their radio content. The researcher positively deems that radio is the source of information, entertainment, and education to increase survival chances during the pandemic. Radio unequivocally remains one of the strongest mediums during the pandemic undeniably. Radio announcers and on-air personalities play a vital role in connecting the listeners with the radio station. Radio is now actively remediating in many aspects such as distribution, content, presentation and production. Radio, for example, can be listened to not only on a radio box or in a car, but also on mobile radio, tablet, television, and Internet radio. This evolution (integrating with other mediums) is remediation.

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