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Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	‘
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	’
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
اَ	a		اَ، اِيَّ	an
اُ	u		اُو	un
اِ	i		اِي	in
اَ، اِ، اِيَّ	ā		اَو	aw
اُو	ū		اَي	ay
اِي	ī		اُو	uww, ū (in final position)
			اَي	iyy, ī (in final position)

Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: <http://rotas.iium.edu.my>

Management Strategy and Challenges for Religious Radio Stations in Malaysia

Intan Soliha Ibrahim*

Azlan Abbas**

Juliana Abdul Wahab***

Abstract: The landscape of radio transmission has changed as a result of the advent of digital technologies. It has indirectly affected how people listen to the radio. This study seeks to understand how religious radio stations stay relevant in radio industry when commercial radio rules. Hence, this research aims to determine the factors contributing to religious radio sustainability and its challenges in the digital age. This research used a qualitative approach by interviewing religious radio station managers. The findings reveal that management strategy is the core factor influencing community response to religious radio. Even though commercial radio dominates the radio business in the country, there is no competition between religious and commercial radio. Nevertheless, the commercial radio seeks to emulate religious radio strategy, unexpectedly. By defining the target listeners and using a good scheduling structure, management has proven to be the cornerstone of religious radio stations' success.

Keywords: sustainability, radio, religious, Malaysia

Abstrak: Lanskap transmisi radio telah berubah hasil daripada kemunculan teknologi digital. Ia secara tidak langsung telah menjejaskan cara radio di dengar. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana stesen radio bersifat

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keagamaan kekal relevan dalam industri radio apabila radio komersial yang mendominasi industri. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada kelestarian radio bersifat keagamaan dan cabarannya dalam era digital. Penyelidikan ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan menemu bual pengurus stesen radio bersifat keagamaan. Penemuan mendedahkan bahawa strategi pengurusan adalah faktor teras yang mempengaruhi respons masyarakat terhadap radio bersifat keagamaan. Walaupun radio komersial mendominasi industri radio di negara ini, sebenarnya tidak ada persaingan antara radio bersifat keagamaan dan komersial. Namun begitu, radio komersial berusaha untuk mencontohi strategi radio bersifat keagamaan. Dengan menentukan sasaran pendengar dan menggunakan struktur penjadualan yang baik, pengurusan telah terbukti menjadi asas kejayaan stesen radio bersifat keagamaan.

Kunci Kata: kelestarian, radio, agama, Malaysia

Introduction

Before television, the first electronic communication medium was radio. It is undeniable that radio serves as a conduit between the public and the government and that it has a big impact on how people think and how societies are shaped globally. Radio has changed from being a commodity product for exchanging information to one that is now more entertainment focused. Radio stations today are commercial in nature and target communities or audience segments. Based on who owns it, radio may somehow fall under commercial, national, or community radio stations.

Based on the literature review done, it indicates a scarcity of global research that specifically addresses religious radio. Dick (1966) compiled a bibliography on religious broadcasting spanning from 1920 to 1965, encompassing books, pamphlets, theses, dissertations, and articles from “K” through “Z.” This extensive coverage included the inception of American radio broadcasting up to 1965, and, in some instances, part of 1966. Griffen-Foley (2008) undertook a similar study within the realm of Australian commercial radio, examining the period from the 1920s to the 1960s. She observed the diverse landscape of religious broadcasting on Australian commercial radio, influenced significantly by American broadcasting, facing challenges, particularly in the transitional decade

between television and talkback radio (Griffen-Foley, 2008). In a more recent context, McDonnell (2023) wrote a chronology of religious radio broadcasting from 2000 to 2021, covering regions such as Latin America, the United Kingdom, and Brazil. Notably, such research remains inadequate in the Malaysian context.

From 1921 until 2000, most radio stations in Malaysia were commercial and non-commercial stations that broadcast information, education, and entertainment rather than promoting any one religion. Religious programming, on the other hand, was broadcast in slots or portions with broadcast times ranging from 30 to 90 minutes to inform the audience. The first religious radio station was established in 2001 through the initiative of Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (The Institute of Islamic Understanding) (IKIM). The goal is to improve Muslims' and non-Muslims' understanding of Islam. Eight years later, the national broadcasting department broke the status-quo by launching Salam FM in 2009. It is a joint venture between Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Development Department) (JAKIM) and Radio Television Malaysia (RTM). In 2017, Astro Radio debuted the first religious radio station in the organisation by introducing Zayan FM.

According to our observations, the only radio stations that are now in service are Islamic ones. While some religions use the FM platform for transmission, others rely on the digital platform. Ibrahim et al. (2019) carried out a preliminary study on Christian-themed religious radio in Sabah. The study concentrated on the Cahaya Kinabalu radio station administered by Father Nick, a parish priest at St. Peter Claver. Ibrahim et al. (2019) highlighted the difficulties or hurdles the radio station faced in this particular investigation. They identified management as a challenge because radio stations are often managed by religious figures, typically a priest. In essence, effective management of a radio station demands knowledge, skills, and wisdom specific to radio operations. The crucial findings underscored that possessing managerial abilities and experience in radio broadcasting is vital to ensuring timely and effective radio operations.

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that affect religious radio stations long-term survival as well as their challenges in the current digital era. This is because radio in this country has transitioned to a digital era, which puts the conventional radio industry

under pressure (Ibrahim, 2020). The introduction of digital technology has revolutionised the technological landscape of radio transmission and has also had an impact on the traditional ways on how radio operates and affected the status quo on the employment of radio producers and presenters.

Literature Review

While radio stations did broadcast religious programming, we discovered that there were no radio stations that initially only broadcast religious (as a niche) programming. Numerous other stations across the nation decided to copy these programmes as a result of their popularity. For instance, WJBT (“Where Jesus Blesses Thousands”) in Chicago carried the first regularly scheduled religious programming in 1922. When the mayor of Chicago asked for help in generating programme material for the city, Evangelist Paul Rader responded to the mayor of Chicago’s request for volunteers to assist in creating programme material for the city (Neuendorf, Kalis, & Abelman, 1987). From these rocky beginnings, religious radio quickly developed into a minor but crucial component of the early broadcast industry.

According to Barna Research Group (2002), religious radio in the United States played an essential role for Christians. This is evident when more than 141 million Christians utilised the platform to listen to sermons rather than attending masses organised by the church or other denominations (Barna Research Group, 2002). However, the positive feedback captured by Barna is not enough to convince Johnstone (2009) about the acceptance of religious radio among listeners. Our investigation of prior research revealed that there have been few studies on religious radio stations. This limitation might have led Johnstone (2009) to question religious radio listening. Additionally, studies conducted by the Barna Research Group (2002), Lipka (2015), and Pohlman (2021) examined religious radio stations in the US between 1920 and 1950. Stiernstedt (2021) then examined the development of religious radio in Sweden from 1979 to 1990. There appeared to be a gap in the aforementioned research years. As a result, radio research must be cultivated and re-documented for future expansion of this field.

As per Lee’s findings in 2016, the primary determinant of radio program quality is operational effectiveness, with standard procedures and organizational design outweighing the significance of enhancements.

In the same year, Hur and Lee introduced a group key management scheme aimed at enhancing scalability and efficiency in broadcast encryption. This scheme allows legitimate receivers to recover the current group key even in the absence of key update messages. This highlights the pivotal role of management functions in ensuring smooth and systematic business operations. In contrast, Greer and Phipps (2003) propose that non-commercial religious radio stations leverage websites to improve communication with their audiences. However, only a few concentrated on boosting donations or streaming programming online. According to Lambert (1948) and Greer and Phipps (2003), the management of religious radio stations entails addressing distinct challenges such as financial sustainability, content regulation, and community representation.

In the Malaysian context, we used Google Scholar and Dimensions AI as search engines to locate research on religious radio. Using keywords such as radio, management, religious, *agama* (religious) Islam and Malaysia, we obtained 4710 results in 0.14 sec. We opted for the exact keywords in Dimensions AI and detected 1812 publications. However, after using scanning and skimming techniques, not all publications listed by Google Scholar and Dimensions AI met our requirements. We found that more research on religious radio can be done in Malaysia. This research thus looks at determining factors contributing to religious radio sustainability and its obstacles in the digital age.

Methodology

We adopted a qualitative strategy to collect data for this study. This approach was used to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives of this research. There were three aspects to consider (1) the method and process of data collection of the study; (2) the data analysis process; and (3) a qualitative approach to addressing validity and credibility issues.

The descriptive qualitative approach was used. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2003), a qualitative approach is a method of analysing a problem that does not rely on statistics and flexible questioning to understand the issue at hand. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) interpret the qualitative approach as a situation in which researchers use observational methods for data collection. A qualitative approach can also be defined as a way or method of obtaining data in an open-

ended manner (Campbell, 2014). According to these researchers, the qualitative data was gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis. However, it could also be supported by field notes and the researcher's notebook. For this study, the researchers used qualitative approach for data collection in answering the research questions through interviews with industry professionals.

This research identified the sustainability factor of religious radio and the challenges it faced in the digital age. This study used interviews to gather data on factors and challenges to better understand the issue at hand. According to Syed Arabi Idid (2002), interviews could be performed based on three principles: (1) the ability to gather information; (2) the respondents' knowledge of the interview process; and (3) the respondents' motivation to answer accurately.

Respondents possessing the authority to elucidate complex matters and guide the religious radio industry were identified as individuals capable of sharing valuable information. Consequently, this study will engage three informants affiliated with the religious radio station – two serving as radio station managers, and one with past experience as a radio presenter in the religious radio domain. This approach is essential to mitigate the risk of data falsifications and discrepancies. Leveraging the expertise of these informants in comprehending the topics discussed during the interviews enabled the researchers to obtain the necessary insights and responses. All informants agreed to the interview being recorded. As this research was done during the Movement Control Order because of the Covid-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted utilising Google Meet software. The objective of the recording was to ensure that all information collected by the researchers gathered from informants were clear and would allow researchers to focus on the interview. The recorded interviews were subsequently replicated in the form of transcripts using MAXQDA software for data analysis. The researchers transcribed three interviews in all.

Purposive sampling was used in this study, with informants chosen for interviews based on their direct and indirect engagement in religious radio industry and as key players. This purposeful selection is important in assisting researchers in understanding the research phenomenon through the experience and field of work of informants. The number of informants in this study was neither too large nor too small. According

to Bryman (2012) and Creswell (2013), there is no definitive answer for the number of informants that should be interviewed. However, the number of informants depends on the suitability of the research objectives, research questions, researchers' time, and financial resources. Therefore, this study used only three (3) informants. The interview data acquired from informants 1-3 indicated the presence of new information, according to our researchers. This indicated that the data or information obtained had reached saturation level and that additional informants were not needed.

Data analysis is the most important process and the findings of a research. Qualitative research data analysis differs due to differing philosophical background and paradigm (Othman, 2014). It was labelled as a complex process by Othman (2014). It is dependent on the researchers' interpretive, subjective, and intuitive process in understanding the issues studied (Othman, 2014). The researchers used MAXQDA 2020 software as one of the approaches for analysing the data. The software was used for the purpose of transcribing of interview results.

Findings and Discussion

IKIM, Zayan and Salamfm are the only three (3) religious radio stations in the country that broadcast using frequency modulation (FM) license. Only two out of the three radio stations, nevertheless, consented to cooperate. Consequently, the interview incorporated two informants from separate radio stations, with one being a former producer and presenter in Islamic radio who currently serves as a lecturer. The following are codes for the informants involved:

Table 1: Informants Code

Informant Code	Informant Institution	Informant Status
Informant 1	Zayan Radio	Manager
Informant 2	Kolej Universiti Islam Selangor (Selangor Islamic University College)	Former producer and presenter of Islamaic Radio Station/Lecturer
Informant 3	IKIM Radio	Manager

From the interviews, the researchers found that management is a common theme cited by informants while addressing the broadcast environment, as shown in the table below.

Table 2: Theme Classification

Colour	Parent code	Code	Segment Code
●	Broadcast environment	Management	15
●		Direction	6
●		Technology	5
●		Competition	4
●		Environment	2
●		Segment/Content	9
●		Presenter/on-air personality	6

Researchers found that under the management theme, there was a reciprocal relationship in scheduling, direction, audience tastes, branding, career development, segmentation/content and mentoring and monitoring as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Elements in Management

Colour	Parent code	Code	Segment Code
●	Management	Scheduling	1
●		Direction	2
●		Listener's taste	3
●		Branding	1
●		Career Development	3
●		Segment/Content	2
●		Mentoring & Monitoring	2

The researchers discovered that management is a major factor in the religious radio industry's sustainability based on the interviews coded in MAXQDA 2020 (see Tables 2 & 3). This is because management cannot organise and control the daily and annual operations of religious radio stations without a defined direction. Even the type of segments and content created by the radio stations' programme production unit showed the stance and identity of religious stations. Religious-oriented radio is distinct from commercial radio primarily in terms of its content and segmentation. As such, the data from this study were grouped by theme.

Management & Target Audience Identification

The key aspect of radio station management is to recognise and understand our target audience. Compiling segments and schedules without a target audience is pointless and has no financial implications. In this context, financial implication is revenue generated from advertisements resulting from the selling of airtime.

“The most critical thing is how to ensure that the content of the programme can have an impact on the listeners.”

(Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

“We segmentised our programmes, contents, programmes that would be accepted by all ages. Because this is different from commercial radio stations”.

(Informant 3, IKIM Radio, 25 November 2020)

Thus, identifying our target audience is critical in producing broadcast contents that can have an impact on the listeners and not produced sloppily. Past studies by Gogalid & Muhammad, 2021; Paudel, Bastola, & Lopchan, 2020; and Intan, 2020 had underlined the importance of recognising the target audience. In Malaysia for example, most commercial radio stations have a target audience – Era radio caters to listeners aged 16 to 23.

Therefore, radio stations’ programming is based on the preferences of listeners in the specified age groups. This is to ensure that the radio stations are always accepted by their target audiences. According to Informant 3, religious-oriented radio had a unique composition of target listeners;

“...we (religious radio/IKIM) are unique in that we (religious radio/IKIM) have to face the challenge of having listeners of all ages”

(Informant 3, IKIM Radio, 25 November 2020)

This contrasts with Informant 1’s claim that the radio station’s target audience only focused on the 18–34 years old group.

“If we target... 18-34 years old, which is a young age group. It is a challenge to deliver positive, inspirational, and religious message. We need... really need to know these 18-34 years old audience.”

(Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

The disparity in target listeners for the two radio stations indicates that they are not in competition. This is the distinctive and uniqueness of radio with a religious concept. Although both offer airtime for income generation purposes, the term competition does not exist. Even Informant 1 (Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020) used an analogy to explain the dissimilarities between IKIM and Zayan.

“But Zayan is like a kindergarten for religious approach. So, IKIM can teach Jawi but IKIM probably at a detailed degree or PhD or Master’s level, equivalent to writing a thesis”

The preceding statement demonstrates the diversity and uniqueness of religious radio stations based on the target listeners. Instead, both religious radio stations focus on religious matters and societal goodwill. Furthermore, Informant 1 was highly positive when he indicated that research and consultancy were important for enhancing the content and format of radio;

“I see that the business culture or practice carried out is usually based on research. Astro Radio does have its own researchers, its own consultant. Every direction, every content uploaded were based on the advises given. Of course, by international advisors and local researchers. They were never done by ear or by heart according to their whims and fancies. It is always based on reference.” (Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

The findings on the study of the listening patterns were dissimilar to the block programming strategy used by most broadcasting stations worldwide prior to globalisation and privatisation. In Malaysia for example, following privatisation, the importance of understanding listeners was critical to increasing radio stations’ profitability. Hence, Astro Radio utilised that formula when developing their broadcast content. Finally, it has become a global trend for most broadcast stations to understand their target audience.

Thus, radio station management must identify and understand their target listeners in accordance with the radio stations’ mission and vision. This is critical to avoid conflicts of interest between the radio stations’ management and staff.

Management & Control (Monitoring & Mentoring)

As a progression to identifying the target listeners as mentioned earlier, Informant 1 (Radio Zayan, 25 November 2020) emphasised on the importance of acting in response to listeners' changes and requests.

“...for broadcast content, errr...of course content is the key thing. As content managers, we are aware that there are requests for various contents. At times, people crave for something funny. Then, as an example, during this Covid-19 pandemic they will look for something that can fulfil their spiritual nourishment. So, you have to be aware, we must immediately react to that change”.

(Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

In other words, Informant 1 recommended that the radio industry follows any shifting trend. The radio industry must be sensitive to these changes. Issues related to religion involves all walks of life. So, radio is responsible for all religious contents. However, providing such content is a challenge for religious radio stations. To meet the challenges, both informants emphasised on the importance of Nielsen and GfK ranking and rating studies. This is because the consulting firm's study can assist the radio station in determining the demographics of its target listeners. Thus, the relationship between management, target listeners, and radio content is reciprocal.

Informant 1 mentioned about control. While the programmes were created according to listeners' preferences, radio stations must adhere to rules and regulations outlined by the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia and the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). From the aspect of content control, religious radio stations need to adopt the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM) as their primary source of reference when it comes to content control.

“...but we must adhere to the legal guidelines outlined by the ministry of communications and, of course MCMC. Even if we want to forge ahead, we must still be alert with the on-air guidelines set, in terms of law. And of course, as a religious radio station, we must immediately get in touch with JAKIM for all religious laws”.

(Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

Above and beyond, to ensure its broadcast quality, Zayan Radio took into consideration and viewpoints of their listeners via phone calls and comments on social media. According to our researchers, this approach had brought Zayan Radio closer to their listeners owing to the open attitude practiced by their management.

“Through observation via phone calls or comments on Instagram, YouTube and others. This group feels a sense of belonging...that Zayan is part of the family, their friend..the only challenge is whether we are able to accept their view, or are we offended? Is our ego hurt? Or do we feel insulted, or open? For Zayan to grow positively and sincerely; every comment, every criticism must first be accepted. Take it in a non-emotional manner. There will exist words that are random, emotional words, for sure. Randomly, during fasting month or whatever situation they feel like commenting, or posts that they feel responsible to correct, for sure. So, at the end of the day, I take the approach of establishing friendship with them because if they are not sincere, they will remain silent and stop commenting. They will ignore.”

(Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

Informant 1 (Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020) also elucidated by giving examples of the form of comments and intervention that had been taken by the radio station in monitoring and controlling the quality of their broadcasts. Even the practice of being open (providing their personal telephone number to those commenting) in maturing Zayan by the radio station’s management can be a successful method when the radio station succeeded in converting those who commented into friends.

“If there are comments...presentation, contents are being commented. In the Facebook I will share my personal phone number for them to contact me directly. For example, an *ustazah* who commented on our Mawi Jawi segment. She is an *ustazah*, but on social media we do not know if they’re hackers or trollers, but she insisted on making corrections of Mawi Jawi. I requested that she contact me. She did call me. She introduced herself, she was from Pahang and teaching in a religious school. She liked our Mawi Jawi segment but there were some incorrect and inaccurate parts”.

“I explained to her. I said that at university you are lecturing with a PhD or degree. However, at Zayan we employ

celebrities. And celebrities are bound to make mistakes. When someone commits an error, they are not afraid of getting brickbats. I expressed my gratitude to her for her kind advice. We got her to make a video and uploaded it, utilising her knowledge. Finally, we became friends. She commented on Zayan for its actions”.

Our researchers concluded from the interviews that challenges in management are not only in understanding the listeners, producing quality programmes, but also in having a clear vision, mission, and direction for the radio station. It is difficult for any religious radio station to progress without a clear vision, mission, and direction. Hence, planning, monitoring, and mentoring are crucial.

“The challenge in management is to pursue the same target or direction. We need to have a weekly or monthly meeting. We constantly reset and never lose our direction. When we go on-air and do our own thing, we get carried away, and forget. Zayan was established with the intention of promoting contemporary Muslim style and targeting on the 18-34. So, when you are focused, you will walk towards the same direction. Only when there are many, numerous departments, sometimes we tend to forget. That’s why meticulous and well-organised planning is compulsory. And of course, when we progressed and created a variety of titles, we are well-known, it can get into our hearts. But with the reset we stay focused and regrouped, if there are any unusual or questions that are not within our field of expertise, we will refer them to the respective experts”.

(Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

Informant 1 even gave examples on the importance of control and to develop it as an engagement or networking;

“If it’s COVID-19, you should consult the experts on COVID-19. Of course, in religion, we refer to JAKIM. Federal, KL Jawi. We are in the process of expanding to JAIS if religious perspectives on religious issues varies by state. We are the platform through which messages are delivered. The primary key is to be open. When Intan (researcher) called me, I am open. Zayan is a new baby with a new dream to be known. So, every day is a learning process. You have your opinion, let me know and I will discuss them with my superiors. For your info, I have conveyed your proposal to

my supervisor at the communication department. This is how we react to these challenges”.

(Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

Thus, religious radio stations must exercise control over their content to ensure that it does not contradict the Quran and Sunnah.

Management & Content Segmentation/Scheduling

Both informants agreed that scheduling and segment formation had a significant influence on the target audience’s reception and listening to overcome the challenge of listener-based wishes. According to Informant 3 (IKIM Radio, 25 November 2020);

“We begin by segmenting; we have segments and programmes...errr...we have some targeted segments, we schedule our two segments for prime time, driving time in the morning and evening, just like other radio stations’ strategies. We target listeners who are on their way to work or in their vehicles”.

Theoretically, radio slots are divided according to clock or hot clock (McLeish, 2005). However, the slot division of the show is determined by the duration of the broadcast; i.e. 24 hours, 12 hours, or 7 hours. It is contingent upon the workforce’s capacity and the broadcasting licence.



Figure 1: Hot Clock

Based on Figure 1, Informant 3 (IKIM Radio, 25 November 2020) has identified two (2) prime time radio slots, namely the breakfast show and the drive-time show. This demonstrates that the morning and evening listener demographics in Malaysia are quite high. For both, on the way to, and from work. Slot division and segmentation were made in response to a study conducted by Nielsen and GfK that showed the hearing patterns in the country. However, this study is limited to Peninsular Malaysia. It excludes Labuan, Sabah, and Sarawak.

According to Informant 3 (IKIM Radio, 25 November 2020);

“...we target listeners who are on their way to work or in a vehicle. Apart from that, we segmentised our next following programmes which begins at 10.00 a.m. and geared towards housewives and those who listen to the radio while working”.

“Errr...we divided the night programmes into 2 segments. Knowledge and entertainment segments. The segment on knowledge starts at 9-10 p.m. We target listeners who are keen and who have a penchant for scholarly content. And then after 10.00 p.m. we adjust our programme to suit the youngsters, who stay in dormitories and who are studying etc., and a rather relaxed content. That is how we respond to our listeners’ challenge”.

In fact, Informant 1 referred to the use of a sandwich-shaped scheduling. This indicates that the type of scheduling arrangement is important and should not be made haphazardly. So, it is not surprising why Informant 1 (25 November 2020) emphasised on the importance of scrutinising comments from listeners on Facebook, Instagram or via phone calls as discussed in the management and control section.

“So, you have to sandwich everything. You cannot be directly educating them, insulting them. Meaning, you need to be arty. With the help of the announcers, personalities, or even the invited ustaz or invited artistes, we must combine our creativity to ensure that each content provides inspiration and accurate information while remaining compliant with Islamic laws and guidelines. Because you need to adapt to those 18 – 34, you need to discover young ustaz; that’s why you have PU, and JAKIM also has young experts. That sort of thing. We need to sandwich it. We cannot be dictatorial or too direct, nor can you lecture or preach excessively. You

have to be subtle in your preaching. This entails taking the approach that everyone is sinful. We pique their interest first. We cannot immediately go and read the Quran nor the hadith...so that's the challenge. We have to be very, very subtle”.

In summary, it is critical for religious radio stations to develop scheduling strategies that engage listeners. The use of on-air personalities is desirable to entice the target listeners' interests.

Management & Rebranding

Informant 3 emphasised that rebranding is a strategy to strengthen the content and format of radio;

“...we did our rebranding in 2019...2018..errr.in 2018 we rebranded the station, changed the way it's pronounced – previously it was known as IKIM FM, we changed it to IKIM or IKIM radio. Second, we changed our tagline. Previously, it was known as Your First Choice. We introduced the new tagline, ‘Inspirasi Info Ria Islami’ following the rebranding. We even updated our logo with new features and colours. Apart from that, for content, we use a new format in our talk-show programmes. Prior to this, our talk-shows did not have any break, it was completely just talk. Now, we alternate with commercial break and zikir as well as songs during the talk-show. That is the format we use following the rebranding of our station and content”.

(Informant 3, IKIM Radio, 25 November 2020)

Based on the interview above, this is the first time in IKIM radio's more than 19-year history that the station has undergone a massive rebranding that includes changing the station's name, tagline, logo, and radio format. These changes were made in accordance with the consultants' recommendations, as stated by Informant 2, in order to maintain an ‘invigorating’ broadcast content;

“...previously, IKIM uses the tagline, IKIM FM Your First Choice, we switched to IKIM ‘Inspirasi Info Ria Islami’ in early January 2019 with a new logo after hiring external consultants who suggested we rebrand after a few years...18 years”.

(Informant 2, Lecturer, 25 November 2020)

The inference made by our researchers is that after the status-quo as Malaysia's only religious radio station; after Zayan was established, it served as a wake-up call for IKIM radio to rebrand. Rebranding is critical to ensuring that the broadcast's quality and format remain consistent over time.

Career Development & Management

Employee career development is important in the management chain. It not only add value to the employees, but it can also help elevate the radio stations' image. All three informants agreed that career development for radio staff over enhancement of skills through courses is critical. This is because the radio industry has evolved technologically. The evolution of technology eventually altered the way radio conties operate, control, and broadcast. Thus, both technical and non-technical skills are relevant and necessary for radio operators.

According to Informant 3, e-courses for staff are important for strengthening skills and preparing staff to be influencers.

“It has surely developed into a requirement and is now included in the annual work target. Each staff of IKIM radio must attend courses at least 5 times a year, 3 of those are directly related to the field of work and 2 general courses. These courses are implemented internally by IKIM, while others are sent or selected for external courses. Most of these courses are related to the field of work such as among others a course on improving announcers' presentation and so on. Other courses that we implement internally are technology related. Now is the time for us to establish our presence on social media. That is one of our new methods, and for that purpose, through our presenters we provide influencers, video editing, and social media content creator. That is why we implement courses for our presenters”.

(Informant 3, IKIM Radio, 25 November 2020)

Career growth, according to Informant 2, is a must for all radio employees. It is not restricted to normal radio broadcasters, but also includes scholarly guest lecturers. Even efforts in professional development are made by inviting renowned figures in the hosting industry to help radio presenters improve their existing talents;

“Certainly, courses are available. That is a necessity and important. Every year, IKIM requires all permanent staff, announcers to attend development courses. We recommend inviting popular figures in addition to those arranged by IPPTAR. Aznil Haji Nawawi, Rizal Rashid, Nazri Kahar... are some of the figures or facilitators whom we have invited to give courses on aspects of hosting, handling, and delivery. At IKIM, we not only bring in announcers, but also academicians who are guests to the shows, and these academicians are included as one of the participants so that they can gain confidence and be prepared to be on radio. Because IKIM radio slots aren’t solely for outside guests, IKIM academic officers must fill the slots as well. It’s their SKT”.

(Informant 2, Lecturer, 25 November 2020).

Even Informant 1 (Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020) emphasised the necessity of career development courses to avoid violating ministry, commission, and Astro regulations. It is referred to or repeated twice in several literature. This shows that each radio station is extremely concerned about the legal aspects to ensure that there are no violations of the law that could harm the reputation of radio.

“We have in-house compliance training. The important point for us is that when these individuals are involved in the broadcasting world or become ambassadors for Astro, or become the face of Astro, they must know how to comply with laws governing the protection of our licence”.

(Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

“If we trained them to be someone, we might recruit those who are from the said field or from reality shows and of course by top hosts from top shows so that you become like them. But if we hire you as a comedian or ustaz, we want your personality, we want your originality. However, you need to attend our compliance training so that you understand the rules for working in the broadcasting world that are governed by rules, and Astro”.

(Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

Informant 1 also clarified that Astro selected presenters, celebrity or comedians based on their appealing personalities and those who can captivate the listeners.

“So, compliance training is a must. All announcers, presenters, and celebrities who appear in public should attend this compliance training. That is the main key. However, in terms of personality and public speaking, the reason we hired them is because of their originality”.

(Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

The preceding interviews highlight the importance of courses as a career development tool. Without planning for courses, radio management effectively plans to fail by failing to strengthen their assets. Radio staff are creative workers. To ensure a radio station’s effectiveness and success, creativity must constantly be polished.

Informant 1 was very optimistic about change and felt it was normal. It is important for radio stations to maintain effective communication with their stakeholders. Especially when it involves approval and verification matters.

“...in the changes that have taken place, of course, in terms of administration, employees, so to improve the management aspect of radio, we need to communicate because Astro is a large company. Top-level directives, directives from all bosses, directives from stakeholders. As a radio station operating under a big organisation, we are unable to make decisions even though I am the content manager for Zayan, I cannot simply do as I like. We must maintain order, and everything need confirmation. Appropriate approvals, recommendations, and so forth are required. It is all in the administration, change of bosses or staff, etc. However, as a content manager for a radio station, you must follow the SOPs, adhere to the arrangement made”.

(Informant 1, Zayan Radio, 25 November 2020)

The previous statement demonstrates unequivocally the importance of a positive relationship between radio employees and the management. Radio staff must be disciplined, trustworthy, and responsible in their given tasks. It is normal to receive instructions and act accordingly as directed.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the culture of knowing one’s target listeners is the primary point that most broadcasters should emphasise on. Without

getting to know the listeners and adhere to the block programming approach, it might be difficult for radio broadcasts to be widely accepted. It is common knowledge that the way radio is listened to today is different than it was 10 years ago. Hence, research on radio listening is important to ensuring radio's continued relevance in the future.

Additionally, control through monitoring and mentoring are crucial, as the content broadcast by religious radio stations are governed by religious laws and principles. Thus, any comment, criticism, or suggestion made by listeners should be openly accepted without reservation. Here, management faces a significant issue in taking in comments, and criticism as the community will always observe and listen.

Rebranding is viewed as a strategy for revitalising the radio stations' tagline, logo, and format. It can turn out to be its uniqueness and strength for that radio station apart from adding variation to an existing programme. The rebranding is not viewed as a threat; rather, it is viewed as a period of refreshing the format and radio broadcasts to maintain a high level of quality for listeners.

Scheduling and broadcast content must be relevant and adhere to the demographics of the intended listeners. In addition, the use of on-air personalities such as celebrities serves as a significant draw to listeners. As such, it becomes a component of the management strategy for engaging listeners.

The findings imply that courses and training development are critical for the announcers and producers in developing their skills. As a result, religious radio stations are eager to invest in the career development of their employees. Based on the research findings, managerial strategy is the main factor influencing how religious radio operates. Despite the fact that commercial radio predominates the country's radio business, it was also discovered that religious and commercial radio do not compete. Management has proven to be the key to the success of religious radio stations through the identification of the target listeners and the use of an effective scheduling system.

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The Qur'ān

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(i) direct quotation, write as 30:36

(ii) indirect quotation, write as Qur'ān, 30:36

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The glorious Qur'ān. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (1977). US: American Trust Publications.

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(i) Al-Bukhārī, 88:204 (where 88 is the book number, 204 is the ḥadīth number)

(ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

Reference:

(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.

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The Bible

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