

The Risk in Implementing Newsroom Convergence in Multiplatform Media

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Abstract. The advance in information and communication technology has encouraged media companies to optimize the potential of technology to develop their products and businesses. They also implement newsroom convergence as part of the optimization effort. This study is aimed to find out the problem and risk of implementing newsroom convergence in multiplatform media outlets, using digital risk and convergent culture concepts. The research uses qualitative methods with a case study of *Tempo*, Indonesia's leading media group. *Tempo* implements a 3.0 model of convergence newsroom to provide news for its multiplatform outlets. However, this research found that the application of newsroom convergence faces multitasking problems due to the different characteristics and working processes of different media platforms. Finally, *Tempo* stops the application of the 3.0 newsroom model and turns back to the 1.0 newsroom model. *Tempo* emphasized the potential of newsroom convergence but failed to take account of the risk in implementing it. Based on this finding, this research suggests the need for other research related to the application of newsroom convergence to find best practices in newsroom management in the current era of convergence.

Keywords: digital risk, newsroom, convergence, multiplatform, *Tempo*

1 Introduction

Information and communication technology, especially the Internet, has a significant impact on various sectors. The Internet has become a social force that influences how, when, and why humans communicate. The Internet is an economic force that is changing the way companies operate and interact with their customers.

The advance in information and communication technology gives opportunities and challenges for media industries in developing and managing their businesses. Media organizations try to optimize the potential of technology for their activities in production processes, newsroom management, news delivery, marketing, and promotion.

Media companies and practitioners take adaptation steps according to the development of new technologies. Newspapers and magazines build websites and develop digital formats. Radio and television are also present in the online realm by opening their respective websites.

The media also apply various information and communication technology applications to support the collection, processing, broadcasting, and delivery of news. Digital technology and

the Internet not only allow the birth of media convergence, but also editorial convergence. Journalists are required to seek and report information to meet the needs of various media platforms. Journalists must be able to work closely with their colleagues from different media platforms. Journalists must be able to find and convey information quickly in real-time in order to compete with other media.

A number of studies show that the application of media convergence and editorial convergence occurs in various media in different ways. The application of this convergence depends on the media organization, the policy of the media concerned, the convergence model applied, and the application of information and communication technology used.

Aviles and Carvajal [1] examined media convergence by looking at two multimedia news production models with the cases of Novotecnica and La Verdad Multimedia in Spain. The research focuses on the work of journalists in newsrooms producing content for multimedia: print, radio, television, and online media. Based on observations and interviews with reporters and news directors, the study concludes that there are two models of newsroom convergence: the integrated model and the cross-media model, each of which has different production systems, newsroom organizations, journalists multi-skill levels, and business strategy.

Verweij found media convergence in South Africa had a significant effect on changing the work culture of journalists [2]. According to his study, convergence changed journalists from individual work to teamwork. The success of the transformation of the application of convergence in the media environment is more influenced by the social structure and organization of the newsroom than the technological aspect.

Fernandez and Jorge analyze how multitasking enhances time pressure in the production routines of web journalism [3]. Based on a collection of in-depth interviews conducted with web journalists from two websites in Brasília, the study shows that online producers tend to compare themselves with other media professionals. They also believe that they multitask more than other journalists do. Multitasking is seen as one of the aggravating factors leading to time pressure in production routines. It also raises other questions about web journalism.

Research on editorial convergence at Tempo reveals the media groups apply newsroom convergence with the Newsroom 3.0 model, which is an editorial system that combines the process of gathering and processing news to supply the needs of several media platforms, namely *tempo.co*, *Koran Tempo*, and *Tempo Magazine* [4].

Media convergence and editorial convergence cannot be separated from the support of new media technology that is developing today. New media technologies show developments that are more exciting than ever. More than just improving the existing forms of communication, new media technologies also create new mediums of virtual public communication. Powered by the convergence of telecommunications, computing, and media, the media landscape offers interactivity, complete user control, and multimedia communications [5].

In contrast to the development of conventional media which only undergoes a change in form, the development of the latest media supported by digital technology allows access to download music, movies, and television programs from the Internet. Media undergoes changes in form, distribution, and storage tools, to business models. Digital media goes beyond conventional forms of media content because it is able to combine and integrate data, text, sound, and images

in various types; saved in digital format; and distributed through networks based on broadband fiber optic cables, satellites, and microwave transmission systems.

The ecosystem of media organizations consists of a combination of public service for-profit companies engaged in industrial and creative production and cultural circulation. In media work, culture refers not only to written or spoken words, audio, still, or moving images but also to the platforms available to people to produce and exchange their own content. The work environment in the contemporary media industry involves four elements that tend to combine, namely content, connectivity, creativity, and commercialism – all translated into cultural production. Within the media framework, convergence is concerned with: a) an inclusive range of stakeholders – professional producers, audiences, resource persons, and sponsors – in the co-creation of media content and experiences; b) integration of various media industries in a global production network; and c) complex coordination between different goals – creativity, commercial, content, and connectivity – in the media production process [6].

The editorial transformation into operational convergence raises new challenges in training, organizational culture, and management style. The editorial staff had to adjust to a new job, a new production process, and a new way of thinking about spreading the word. To achieve effective cohesiveness among people in a dynamic editorial environment, organizational members must relate to each other, must build trust and confidence, and must have the ability to reach group decisions, while each working independently and making crucial decisions about his job [7].

Technological convergence occurs by, among other things, involving different equipment and tools for producing and distributing news. Grant and Wilkinson argue industrial convergence involves the consolidation of companies and businesses in producing and distributing news [8]. Convergence in journalistic content involves journalists coming from different platforms working together to provide different content to different audiences. In short, companies that run media convergence will supply news for newspapers, magazines, radio, television, online media, even for social media such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

Convergence is known broadly as the coming together of computing, telecommunications, and media in a digital environment. It is important to study and understand convergence because what would seem like technology or media issues have had profound influences on our economic, social, and cultural lives. Pavlik and McIntosh offer three main categories of convergence as ways to frame our understanding of the changes taking place today in the media industries: technological convergence, economic convergence, and cultural convergence [9].

Technological convergence refers to specific types of media, such as print, audio, and video, all converging into digital media forms. Such types of convergence are becoming increasingly apparent in news organizations, where today's journalists often need to be able to tell stories in text, audio, video, and even interactive media.

Economic convergence refers to the merging of Internet or telecommunications companies with traditional media companies, such as AOL with Time Warner. Economic convergence also has important repercussions for the nature of the media, telecommunications, and computing industries. A telecommunications company that also owns a media company can bolster the user experience for its own content at the expense of content from other companies by doing

something as simple as speeding up the transmission of its content and slowing that of other content.

The term culture is often a loaded word. The notion of culture can refer to anything from a long-standing tradition or heritage shared by a group of people to a specific professional group's particular way of seeing the world or behaving, such as newsroom culture. In the term cultural convergence, we refer to culture as something that characterizes the practices, beliefs, and values that interact with and influence each other in creating a shared worldview.

Fisher suggests using management theory and practice to understand media convergence [10]. It is critical for managers to retrain themselves and adjust their management styles to foster convergence and help reporters through this process of change. In a converged newsroom, there are three elements that can be examined, including physical structure, management structure, and developing newsroom roles. Many news organizations have created multimedia or convergence desks to oversee the convergence process. The editorial teams under a converged newsroom also work in the same building and their convergence efforts are made better with a centralized news desk.

Organizational structure and management techniques are also critical in the development of a successfully converged newsroom. Gracie Lawson-Borders offers seven elements of the best practices guide for media outlets embarking on convergence. They are communication, commitment, cooperation, compensation, culture, competition, and customer.

Another aspect of structuring a converged newsroom is determining who does what, and that can result in entire roles. Ifra Newsplex created four roles that can work in a converged newsroom, namely newsflow editor, story builder, news resourcer, and multiskilled journalist. The newsflow editor is at the center of helping newsroom convergence and tells stories across multiple platforms. The newsflow editor looks at the newsroom from a different perspective and decides how all the pieces fit together. Story builder takes assigning editors from the newspaper side and mixes them with producers from the broadcast side to create a new, converged manager. A news resourcer is a super librarian who thinks like a journalist. This role combines the best journalism -writing, editing, and news judgment- with the best of librarianship and information manager -super searching, technology, training, and content/knowledge organization and infrastructure. Multiskilled journalists are adept at collecting interviews, photographs, audio, and video footage for dissemination in print, broadcast, and online formats.

The adoption of convergence is a drastic change for media organizations and their journalists. Convergence flies ahead of traditional journalism; abandoning the principles of the profession that most reporters have followed for decades. Convergence essentially removes the focus on print or broadcast; breaks down the walls of competition and puts print, broadcast, and online journalists in one team. Different cultures and backgrounds are brought together, sometimes under one roof. Editorial staff must learn about the habits, techniques, and jargon of other organizations that were previously competitors. These changes were not always welcome, and many reporters started with the idea of delivering news and information across platforms. Such conditions pose a challenge for media leaders and executives to play a role in making a smooth transition to convergence.

Some media are able to implement newsroom convergence well, but some media are not able to run newsroom convergence smoothly. Tempo is one of the media groups that cannot carry

out newsroom convergence properly. Due to a number of problems, Tempo finally stopped the application of newsroom convergence.

Based on this description, this study explains the problems and risks that occur in the application of newsroom convergence in multi-platform media with the case study of *Tempo*. How does *Tempo* implement newsroom convergence? Why did *Tempo* stop the application of newsroom convergence? What are the problems that arise in the implementation of newsroom convergence?

2 Methods

To reveal the issues in the application of newsroom convergence in the Tempo Group, this research uses a qualitative approach with the case study method. The researcher studies things in natural situations, trying to make interpreted phenomena understandable in terms of the meanings that people give them. Qualitative research is a research activity that places researchers in the real world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive material practices that make the world observable [11].

In this study, the researcher conducted observation at the *Tempo* newsroom and in-depth interviewed eight Tempo journalists and a personnel manager. The eight journalists consist of an editor in chief, two executive editors, three managing editors, a copy editor, and a reporter. The eight journalists were chosen to represent various levels of newsroom structure, from reporter to chief editor, while the personnel manager was chosen to explain human resources management in implementing newsroom convergence.

As a case study, the researcher tried to investigate newsroom convergence at *Tempo* as a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context. As suggested by Yin [12], this case study focuses on studies to answer how and why questions. The researcher cannot manipulate the behavior developed in the study. The researcher wants to incorporate contextual conditions into research because context is relevant to the phenomenon under study.

Data analysis was carried out during data collection until the completion using the Miles and Huberman model, which included data reduction activities, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification [13].

3 Results and discussion

Tempo has taken various steps to respond to the developments in technology and the media industry, including by implementing newsroom convergence. The journey of the *Tempo* convergence efforts can be traced back to 2001 when this media company founded *Koran Tempo* daily. At that time, along with the formation of the editorial ranks of *Koran Tempo*, an institution called *Tempo Newsroom* was formed. The aspiration of this institution is to become a news center or Tempo news agency.

Tempo Newsroom (TNR) supervises all reporters in the field, both in Jakarta and outside Jakarta. *TNR* has an editorial team that conducts daily meetings just like a newspaper. If the editorial team of *Koran Tempo* is in charge of filling out the newspaper pages, the editorial team of *TNR*

is in charge of uploading news to *tempo.co*. Coincidentally *Koran Tempo* and *TNR* occupy the same building in Kebayoran Baru, South Jakarta.

The seeds of convergence have occurred between *Koran Tempo* and *Tempo* magazine. At that time there was a cooperation in filling the pages of *Tempo* magazine which was carried out by the editorial team of *Koran Tempo*. The initial stage was carried out by the editorial staff of *Koran Tempo* who handle the business economics rubric of *Tempo* magazine. This collaboration only runs a few times, then it's over. The high busyness of each team and separate office between *Koran Tempo* and *Tempo* magazine make their communication is not intensive. At that time, the *Koran Tempo* office was in South Jakarta, while *Tempo* magazine was in Central Jakarta.

The initial convergence also began with the transfer of a number of journalists of *TNR* and *Koran Tempo* to *Tempo* magazine, as well as journalists of *Tempo* magazine to *TNR*. The aim is, among others, to eliminate the "selfish barriers" of each platform. At that time, there were many voices of discontent from *Tempo* magazine journalists against the birth of *Koran Tempo* because it was considered only to erode the *Tempo*'s finances, which in the end reduced their welfare.

Tempo management considers *TNR* as a place for *Tempo* journalists to be prepared. All new reporters must pass an internship period as a *Tempo* reporter at *TNR* for nine months. If they passed, they would become a *Tempo* reporter, remaining at *TNR*. After one year and being deemed worthy, reporters can become editorial staff. At this editorial staff level, a person can be placed in *Koran Tempo* or *Tempo* magazine if needed and deemed appropriate.

In 2010 *Tempo* management intensified its efforts to realize the so-called newsroom convergence. The assignment of journalists -from the reporter level to the senior editors- was not only concerned with their original media but also with other media within the group. Newspaper journalists should also help magazines and online media, magazine journalists should help newspapers and online media, and online media journalists have to help newspapers and magazines. In 2010 the convergence system was already widely applied in media companies. The form or model has been widely discussed, so the idea emerged to operate *Tempo Newsroom* with the convergence concept.

Convergence is based on efficiency reason because a story can be used for several media, and a journalist works for several media. According to Toriq Hadad, who at that time served as Production Director of *Tempo*, there were a number of reasons for choosing the editorial convergence system. First, the *Tempo* Group must follow trends in the media business. Second, the convergence system will create synergy and efficiency. Third, changes to the editorial system are a must in the media industry and *Tempo* is no exception.

Discussions about convergence and meetings to discuss convergence intensified when all editorial staff moved to the same office in South Jakarta. *Tempo* group decided to implement newsroom convergence with the Newsroom 3.0 model to create efficiency and increase productivity. In Newsroom 3.0 model, the process of news gathering and news writing is carried out in a convergent manner and produced for all platforms. Reporters will work to find and submit news material to the newsroom that functioned as news hub, which will process it into the news. The news produced by the newsroom will be used by all business units or outlets (multiplatform).

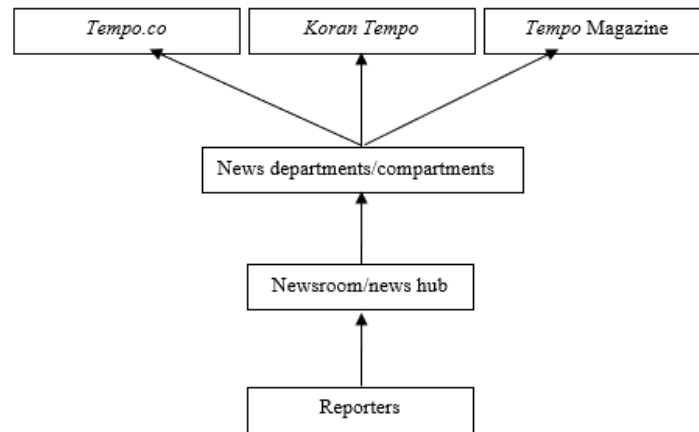


Fig. 1. News production process in newsroom convergence of *Tempo*

According to Tempo Convergence Project Manager, the implementation of the Newsroom 3.0 system is not directly implemented in all editorial departments, but with a series of experiments. The first experiment was conducted in the art compartment started in February 2010. The art compartment was chosen because the news on the art desk is feature style, so the speed of updating news is relatively low. The movement of the art desk reporter in the field and the news it produces is not as fast as the news compartment, such as the politics, economy, and business compartment. The next compartments that run experiments are the economy and business compartments. This compartment was chosen because there had been a long-standing synergy between the journalists of the business and economy compartment of *Koran Tempo* and *Tempo* magazine.

After experiments in the two compartments, the newsroom convergence of Tempo Group was fully implemented in all compartments. This editorial convergence involves *Tempo* magazine, *Koran Tempo*, and *Tempo.co*, by jointly producing news for the three outlets. *Tempo TV* is managed by a separate team because it is a joint venture with another company, namely PT Media Lintas Inti Nusantara.

With this convergence system, production activities are changed from being in each business outlet to being unified in one newsroom. News production for all platforms is assigned to each desk or compartment, no longer to business units. The desk or compartment is responsible for news-gathering, writing, and editing for all outlets or platforms. Each business unit or platform maintains the uniqueness of each product and carries out the final quality control function.

Even though newsroom convergence has been implemented, each product or media platform still has its own chief editor and executive editor. In this converged model, the editor-in-chief and executive editors mostly handle planning and quality control. Meanwhile, news production is in the hands of the managing editors who head the compartments or desks.

The newsroom convergence of *Tempo* entered a new phase with the formation of a super desk after all units occupied a new building on Jalan Palmerah, Central Jakarta in 2015. The super

desk is a compartment intended as a center for news coverage and coordination to support newsroom convergence. The super desk is led by a managing editor and has a number of editorial staff who function as reporting coordinators. They supervise all Tempo reporters and regional/foreign correspondents.

Due to its function as a news supervision center, the super desk is responsible for monitoring events for breaking news at *Tempo.co*. The Super desk must also serve news stories for *Tempo* magazine, *Koran Tempo*, and *Tempo.co*. The super desk functions as a news hub, which is the center of news traffic.

The super desk occupies a large and long table in the center of the newsroom, as a place for editorial coordination. Other compartments can come to the big table to coordinate with super desk personnel on news-gathering. The super desk was equipped with a number of television screens that are used to monitor news, stock price indexes, and reports from reporters from the field. The managing editor of the super desk said that the main areas of the super desk's coverage were city news, business news, and national news which became the main material for breaking news.

While the super desk is in charge and responsible for searching and gathering news, other compartments are in charge and responsible for processing and delivering news to various outlets. Each compartment must provide news stories for *Tempo* magazine, *Koran Tempo*, and *tempo.co*, so that a division of personnel is made to handle these outlets. Each compartment member is plotted on one print media product plus assignments on an online product. The working principle is that everyone has two tasks: *Koran Tempo* + *Tempo.co* or *Tempo* Magazine + *Tempo.co*. The ratio is 80% working on tasks at core outlets and 20% for other outlet tasks.

In reality, the convergence of the *Tempo* newsroom did not run smoothly. A number of obstacles or problems arise in the course of newsroom convergence. First, there is the problem of a heavy workload to carry out tasks at two outlets. Those whose core outlet is *Koran Tempo* must upload news for *Tempo.co* after finishing their tasks for *Koran Tempo*. Those whose core outlet is *Tempo* magazine must upload news for *tempo.co* on Monday and Tuesday when the workload for the magazine is not yet full and the magazine deadline is still long. The voices of dissatisfaction that emerged stated that they were not working 80% for core outlets and 20% for additional outlets, but working 100% for core outlets and 20% for additional outlets, so that it became 120%.

The second problem that arises in the implementation of dual tasks is the need for multiple abilities or skills. News writing and editing for magazines, newspapers, and online media are different jobs and require different skills. Not all journalists have the dual abilities and skills to carry out all these jobs well. In fact, there are journalists who are considered good at writing news for the magazine but facing difficulties to write news for online media which requires speed. On the other hand, there are journalists who are able to write stories for online media quickly and well but have difficulty writing in-depth reports for magazines.

The third problem is related to the different work rhythms between daily newspapers and weekly magazines and online media. At *Koran Tempo* and *Tempo.co*, editors usually wait for news supplies from reporters, while editors at magazines not only wait for reports but also have to find their own news material to write in-depth news or investigative reports. The magazine team feels bad about not working when they wait for an interview or an appointment with news

sources, while the editors at the newspaper and *Tempo.co* work from the morning: coordinating reporters and then writing news stories for online breaking news media, as well as for newspapers. in the afternoon until the evening.

The fourth problem is related to the effectiveness of the super desk. Actually, magazines don't need a super desk because the magazine's editorial staff will find the news and write it themselves. Magazines only need the super desk for light reports, such as confirmation of sources that are not difficult, those in the super desk reporter's coverage post, or the need for descriptive reports. What really needs journalists' reports under the coordination of the super desk are newspapers.

The convergence system that requires journalists to make reports in various formats – writing, photos, and videos – is another problem, especially for journalists who are not trained for such multitasking. To be able to master writing, photography, and videography skills at the same time of course requires training. Therefore, Tempo Group provides multimedia-based training to its journalists to support editorial convergence. Even though they have been given training, there is still a gap in multimedia skills between senior journalists and their juniors. Reporters who are younger generations can carry out multimedia-based dual tasks better than senior editors.

Multitasking problems also occur because of the limited editorial staff at each platform, the constant demands on the quality of magazines and newspapers, and the different writing styles on each platform. *Tempo* management does not want to sacrifice the quality of the magazines and newspapers it manages in the midst of implementing newsroom convergence. In addition, the uploading of news on *tempo.co* by the editorial crew of magazines and newspapers is considered ineffective because it is often slow. They often upload news on *tempo.co* in the afternoon or evening, even though the news report is already there during the day and can be uploaded immediately.

Seeing these problems and considering the need to take *tempo.co* more seriously in the midst of increasingly fierce online media competition, Tempo management liquidated the super desk in 2017. Since then *tempo.co* has become an independent platform entity and has its own editorial team. Koran Tempo and Tempo magazine also have their own editorial team. However, Koran Tempo and Tempo magazine are still allowed to use news materials supplied by Tempo Newsroom with permission.

With the disbandment of the super desk, it can be said that the newsroom convergence of the Tempo Group has stopped. Each platform has its own independent editorial organizational structure. The application of the Newsroom 3.0 model has finished. Now the Tempo Group is implementing a conventional editorial system, namely Newsroom 1.0 which separates the editorial team of each platform. An informant acknowledged that the newsroom convergence of the Tempo Group has failed.

Currently, what remains is convergence in the design field of Koran Tempo and Tempo magazine. The design and production teams are still grouped according to compartments. The design and production team that worked on the national page of Koran Tempo also worked on the national page of Tempo magazine. They worked on the design and production of the business economics page of Koran Tempo, they also worked on the business economics page of Tempo magazine, and so on.

From the findings, it can be seen that the problem of editorial convergence that arose in the Tempo Group was more a matter of organization and human resources than a matter of technology. From the convergence problems above, the organizational factors include the problem of a heavy workload to carry out tasks at two outlets; differences in work rhythms between magazines, daily newspapers, and online media which are difficult for the same person to work with; the effectiveness of the super desk to supply news material for magazines; demands for the quality of magazines and newspapers that cannot be reduced; and different writing styles on each platform. Meanwhile, problems related to human resources are the need for multiple abilities or skills to perform multiple tasks; the disparity of multimedia skills between senior and junior journalists in carrying out the obligation to make reports in various formats; editorial limitations of each platform.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

The Tempo group pioneered the newsroom convergence in 2001 when they published Koran Tempo and formed the Tempo Newsroom. However, the full implementation of newsroom convergence began in 2012 after going through a series of experiments. This newsroom convergence involves all compartments in Tempo magazine, Koran Tempo, and tempo.co by modifying the Newsroom 3.0 model. With this system, the process of news gathering and processing in the three outlets is combined into one with coordination under the compartments. The convergence of the Tempo newsroom entered a new phase with the formation of a super desk that became the center for news coordination.

In its implementation, the newsroom convergence of Tempo faced various problems because journalists had to do multiple tasks (multitasking). Among the multitasking problems include heavy workload to do tasks at two outlets; the need for multiple abilities or skills to perform multiple tasks; differences in work rhythms between magazines, daily newspapers, and online media which are difficult for the same person to work with; the effectiveness of the super desk to supply news material for magazines that are lacking; the disparity of multimedia skills between elder and younger journalists in carrying out the obligation to make reports in various formats - writing, photos, videos; the editorial limitations of each platform; demands for the quality of magazines and newspapers that cannot be reduced; and different writing styles on each platform. The newsroom convergence problem is more an organizational and human resource problem than a technology issue.

Due to the emergence of various problems in the newsroom convergence, the Tempo Group finally liquidated the super desk and returned the editorial team to each media platform. By separating the editorial team for each media platform, it means that the newsroom convergence of the Tempo Group has ended or has failed.

Based on this finding, this research suggests the need for other research related to the application of newsroom convergence to find best practices in newsroom management in the current era of convergence. The experience of the Tempo Group can be a reference for other media that will implement convergence in the newsroom. The results of this study can be used as material in developing the next research on newsroom convergence.

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