

Institutional Transformation and Digital Adaptation of Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) Medan as a Public Broadcasting Institution (1998-2014)

Isra' Pasu Mutiara¹, Budi Agustono², Pujiati³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received 2025-12-03

Revised 2025-12-30

Accepted 2025-12-30

Keywords:

History of Broadcasting
Media Reform
Radio Digitization
Radio Republik Indonesia
RRI Medan

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the institutional transformation of Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) Medan, a public broadcasting institution, during the post-Reformasi period, focusing on how the organization responded to declining relevance and competitiveness amid media liberalization and accelerating digitalization. The main objective of this research is to examine the processes of institutional repositioning, changes in broadcasting practices, and strategic adaptations undertaken by RRI Medan in response to increasing competition from private radio and digital media between 1998 and 2014. Employing an institutional history approach, this study uses historical methods encompassing heuristic exploration, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography, supported by archival records, broadcasting policy documents, academic literature, and selected oral sources from RRI practitioners. The findings demonstrate that RRI Medan faced significant external pressures following its transition from a state-controlled radio to a public broadcasting institution. These pressures stimulated institutional restructuring, redefinition of public service functions, adjustments in broadcast content and listener segmentation, and the initial adoption of digital strategies through streaming and online platforms. However, these adaptive efforts were constrained by bureaucratic inertia, limited technological infrastructure, and human resource capacity. This study argues that the period 1998–2014 constitutes a critical transitional phase that laid the institutional foundation for RRI Medan's shift toward a multi-channel public broadcasting model in the digital era. Scientifically, this research contributes to the historiography of Indonesian media by providing an empirical analysis of the transformation of public broadcasting at the local level, highlighting the interaction among institutional change, media policy, and digital disruption in post-authoritarian Indonesia.

This is an open-access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Isra' Pasu Mutiara
Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia
Email: israhasibuan@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Radio has historically played a central role in the development of mass communication in Indonesia, particularly as an accessible medium that reaches diverse social groups across geographic and educational boundaries [1]. Within this landscape, Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) occupies a distinctive position as a state-initiated broadcaster that later transformed into a public broadcasting institution. While national-level studies have extensively examined the role of RRI in the early independence period and during the New Order, scholarly attention to the post-Reformasi institutional transformation of RRI at the local level remains limited.

Existing studies on Indonesian media history and broadcasting largely focus on press freedom, television dominance, or national media policy changes following the 1998 Reformasi. Research on radio tends to emphasize technological decline or audience shifts without sufficiently addressing how public radio institutions adapt structurally and institutionally to political liberalization and digital disruption [2] and [3]. As a result, the historical experience of local public broadcasters such as RRI Medan after Reformasi has not been systematically analyzed as part of Indonesia's broader media transformation. This gap is significant, given that local public broadcasters operate at the intersection of national policy, regional dynamics, and changing audience practices.

The forerunner of radio in Medan began with the broadcast of Meyers Omroep Voor Allen (MOVA) around 1930, with the broadcast language mainly Dutch. This broadcast stopped after the Japanese occupation in 1942 [4]. During the Japanese period, the Hoso Kyoku Field Station appeared under Japanese command. At that time, the number of radio aircraft in Medan was only about 25. The Dutch-owned radio in Medan was burned by the Dutch when the Japanese entered, so the broadcasting infrastructure was damaged before it was taken over and used by the Indonesian side after the proclamation, by moving the new transmitter to Siantar. This is the beginning of the reverberation of RRI Medan. This period was dominated by the media, especially radio, especially RRI and government media, due to limited information and the underdeveloped press [5] and [6].

The forerunner of radio in Medan began with the broadcast of Meyers Omroep Voor Allen (MOVA) around 1930, with the broadcast language mainly Dutch. This broadcast stopped after the Japanese occupation in 1942 [4]. During the Japanese period, the Hoso Kyoku Field Station appeared under Japanese command. At that time, the number of radio aircraft in Medan was only about 25. The Dutch-owned radio in Medan was burned by the Dutch when the Japanese entered, so the broadcasting infrastructure was damaged before it was taken over and used by the Indonesian side after the proclamation, with the new transmitter moved to Siantar. This is the beginning of the reverberation of RRI Medan. This period was dominated by the media, especially radio, especially RRI and government media, due to limited information and the underdeveloped press [5] and [6].

The Reformasi period marked a fundamental institutional turning point for RRI. The abolition of authoritarian media control and the enactment of Broadcasting Law No. 32 of 2002 formally redefined RRI from a government radio into a public broadcasting institution with mandates of independence, neutrality, and public service. At the same time, media

liberalization encouraged the rapid growth of private radio stations, while the acceleration of digital technology after the mid-2000s reshaped patterns of information consumption. These developments placed RRI Medan under dual pressure: competition within an increasingly commercialized radio market and the challenge of maintaining relevance amid the rise of digital and on-demand media platforms [7].

North Sumatra is known as a region with a high media intensity, including the Islamic press, but the dynamics remain constrained by the authoritarian structure of the New Order [8]. The government used the Ministry of Information as the main tool of supervision: publication permits (SIUPP) could be revoked at any time, and dozens of media outlets were banned between 1965 and 1994 if deemed "*disruptive*" to the government. Press freedom, which had been restricted during the New Order period, began to open up, giving rise to new dynamics in the world of broadcasting [9]. The 1998 Reform Act opened up the space for press freedom and introduced a looser broadcasting law (Law No. 32/2002 on Broadcasting) [10] and [11].

The period 1998-2014 marked a critical phase for the radio industry in Indonesia, especially with the emergence of digital technology that changed media consumption patterns. The decline in traditional FM listeners is occurring in many countries, fueled by music streaming and digital platforms. Many listeners are turning to streaming, mobile apps, and on-demand content, with high levels of daily usage. Based on research in 2021, a significant decrease in radio listenership: from 50.29% (2003) to 18.57% (2012), driven by competition from platforms such as Spotify and YouTube. This suggests that today's audience is more likely to use on-demand-based media. In 2014, there was also political tension that was able to gather many masses. The Jokowi-JK vs Prabowo-Hatta campaign study shows that television remains the most dominant campaign medium, followed by social media; radio is rarely mentioned as a main channel. Facebook and social media are used for political advertising, image building, and attracting young voters [12] and [13].

From a theoretical perspective, this study draws on public media theory, which emphasizes the role of public broadcasting in serving democratic interests, cultural diversity, and social integration; institutional transformation theory, which views organizations as adapting to changing regulatory and technological environments; and media studies on post-Reformasi democracy, which highlight the reconfiguration of media institutions in post-authoritarian contexts. These frameworks enable an analysis of RRI Medan not merely as a declining conventional radio station, but as an institution negotiating structural change, public mandates, and technological adaptation. Against this background, this research examines the period 1998–2014 as a critical transition phase in the history of RRI Medan. The year 1998 marks the beginning of institutional redefinition following political reform, while 2014 represents a stage when digital media dominance increasingly marginalized conventional radio, particularly during major political events such as national elections.

The period of 1998 was chosen because it marks an important transition after the New Order, during which significant changes in the political, social, and cultural systems also influenced the dynamics of mass media in Indonesia. Meanwhile, 2014 was chosen because it was a period of broader internet development, marked by the launch of 4G, which shifted people's information consumption from conventional media such as radio and

newspapers to digital media, including social media, which has a broader reach. Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research questions. This research also aims to examine how the position of RRI Medan, a government media outlet reporting on the Democratic Party, in 2014, which used technology as campaign media. By addressing these questions, this study aims to contribute to Indonesian media historiography by providing an analytical account of the transformation of local public broadcasting, thereby enriching discussions on institutional change, public media sustainability, and democratic communication in the digital era.

2. METHOD

This study employs a historical research method with an institutional history approach to analyze the transformation of Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) Medan as a public broadcasting institution during the post-Reformasi period (1998–2014). The emphasis on temporal (1998–2014), spatial (RRI Medan, North Sumatra), and human dimensions (institutional actors) positions this research within the field of contemporary institutional history, focusing on organizational change in response to political liberalization and digital media disruption. [14].

The historical method in this study is applied through four interrelated stages: heuristic (*source collection*), source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. These stages are not treated as merely procedural, but as analytical tools to ensure the credibility and coherence of the historical reconstruction [15].

Heuristic (*Source Collection*)

Primary sources were obtained from institutional archives and digital collections of RRI Medan, including. Organizational structure documents of LPP RRI Medan (post-2002), Internal policy documents such as *Tri Prasetya RRI*, Broadcast scripts and news manuscripts of PRO 1 (1998–2014), Audio recordings of news and public service programs, Institutional photographs, and documentation related to facilities, infrastructure, and broadcasting activities. In addition, oral sources were collected through semi-structured interviews with key informants, including. Former and active RRI Medan broadcasters and journalists, Structural officials and program managers of RRI Medan, and technical staff involved in early digital initiatives (streaming and online broadcasting). Secondary sources consist of academic books, peer-reviewed journals, theses, and dissertations relevant to Indonesian media history, public broadcasting, and institutional transformation.

Source Criticism

To ensure source validity, both external and internal source criticism were conducted. External criticism focused on verifying the authenticity, origin, authorship, and temporal relevance of archival documents and recordings. Internal criticism examined the credibility, bias, and institutional perspective embedded in the sources, particularly official RRI documents that tend to reflect normative organizational narratives. Interview data were cross-checked against archival records to minimize subjectivity and retrospective bias.

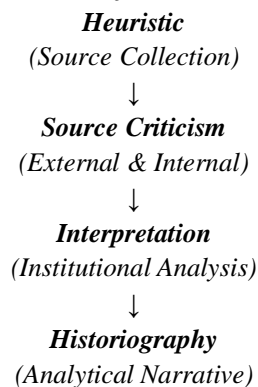
Interpretation

At this stage, the verified sources were interpreted using a qualitative analytical framework informed by public media theory and institutional transformation theory. The analysis focused on identifying patterns of institutional repositioning, changes in broadcasting practices, and strategic responses to competition from private radio and digital media.

Historiography

The final stage involves synthesizing the interpreted data into an analytical historical narrative. Rather than producing a purely chronological description, this study constructs a problem-oriented historiography that explains institutional change within broader political, regulatory, and technological contexts.

Visual Framework of the Historical Method



3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

The Emergence of Private Radio as a Competitor to RRI

Archival records and institutional documents indicate that until the early post-independence period, Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) occupied a dominant position as the primary national broadcaster and a key medium of state communication. The presence of private radio remained limited and tightly controlled, particularly during the Old Order and early New Order periods. Although private radio stations began to emerge during the New Order, their development remained constrained by strict regulatory oversight. Following the Reformasi period, the Medan broadcasting landscape changed significantly. Frequency allocation data and broadcasting records show a rapid increase in the number of private radio stations operating in Medan, each with distinct audience segmentation, such as youth, music, lifestyle, or community-based programming.

By contrast, RRI Medan continued to operate a multi-channel public broadcasting system (Pro 1–Pro 4), emphasizing news, education, culture, and public service content. This created a structurally competitive environment in which RRI Medan no longer functioned as the sole or dominant audio medium. Institutional archives from RRI Medan reveal that competition with private radio was recognized internally as a major external challenge. Program schedules and internal reports from 1998–2014 document efforts to differentiate each RRI channel by specific functions and audiences, including strengthening Pro 2 as a

youth-oriented channel while maintaining Pro 1 as the main provider of public information and news. The city of Medan, as one of the metropolitan cities in Indonesia, is one of the centers for the development of private radio in North Sumatra. Frequency mapping data show that in Medan, FM channels are filled with a combination of RRI programs and dozens of private radios with diverse target segments, such as FeMale Radio, Radio Sonora (Medan), Visi Radio, Most FM, Medan FM, Kiss FM, City Radio, and others [16].



Figure 1. Image Documentation

Source: RRI Medan Institutional Archive [17]

From the perspective of institutional adaptation, the rise of private radio exerted external pressure, compelling RRI Medan to redefine its organizational position in a liberalized media environment. Unlike private stations that relied on commercial logic and advertising revenue, RRI Medan operated under the principles of public service broadcasting, which limited commercial activities while emphasizing neutrality, education, and social responsibility. This institutional distinction shaped RRI Medan's adaptive strategies. Rather than directly competing with private radio through entertainment-driven programming, RRI Medan pursued selective adaptation by reorganizing program segmentation and broadcast formats.

The differentiation of Pro 1, Pro 2, Pro 3, and Pro 4 illustrates an institutional strategy to maintain public relevance while responding to audience fragmentation. This strategy reflects adaptive resilience, in which institutional identity was preserved while operational practices were adjusted. In economic terms, archival documents show that RRI Medan faced structural limitations in competing with private radio stations that aggressively pursued advertising and sponsorship. As a result, competition was not primarily waged through market dominance but through the reinforcement of RRI Medan's social legitimacy as a public broadcaster. This finding underscores the tension between public service mandates and market-driven broadcasting in post-Reformasi Indonesia.

Technological developments further intensified this competition. While private radio stations in Medan rapidly adopted internet streaming and social media to expand their audience reach, RRI Medan's digital initiatives progressed more gradually. Technical reports and interview data indicate that bureaucratic procedures, resource constraints, and uneven digital literacy among staff slowed the pace of transformation. Nevertheless, the initiation of streaming services and digital platforms marks an early phase of media convergence, signaling institutional awareness of the changing media ecosystem.



Figure 2. Image Documentation
Source: RRI Medan Digital Archive.

The results of this study are consistent with, while also extending, previous research on the strategic responses of RRI to competition from private radio in the post-Reformasi era. Similar to earlier studies, the expansion of private radio in Medan created intense competitive pressure through audience segmentation, commercialized content, and rapid technological adoption. As noted in prior research, private radio stations in Medan primarily targeted specific market niches, particularly young audiences, by offering entertainment-oriented programming and flexible broadcast styles. In contrast, RRI Medan maintained its normative obligation as a public service broadcasting institution (LPP), prioritizing informational, educational, and socially responsible content [18].

The empirical evidence from RRI Medan corroborates Imron Ariadi's findings on RRI Pro 2 in Pekanbaru, which show that youth-oriented programming became a key adaptive strategy within RRI's institutional framework. In Medan, the strengthening of Pro 2 similarly reflects a selective form of institutional adaptation: adopting more dynamic formats and lifestyle-oriented content without abandoning the educational mission central to public broadcasting. This pattern suggests that RRI's response to competition was not uniform commercialization, but a controlled adjustment aligned with its public service mandate [19].

Furthermore, this study reinforces Christina Sitorus' argument regarding RRI's post-LPP identity transformation. The reorganization of RRI Medan's programs into Pro 1, Pro 2, Pro 3, and Pro 4 demonstrates a deliberate effort to move away from the image of a "government mouthpiece" toward a more pluralistic and audience-responsive public radio. However, by grounding this analysis in local archival data and institutional practices, this research adds a localized historical dimension that has been largely absent in previous studies, which tend to focus on national-level institutional change. In economic and technological terms, the findings also align with earlier critiques of RRI's structural limitations.

While private radio leveraged advertising and sponsorship to rapidly expand and adopt digital platforms, RRI Medan faced bureaucratic and resource constraints that slowed its digital transformation. Nevertheless, the gradual adoption of streaming and online platforms during 1998–2014 indicates an early phase of media convergence, supporting the argument that this period should be understood as a transitional stage rather than institutional stagnation [20]. Taken together, this study confirms that competition with private radio functioned as a critical external driver of institutional change at RRI Medan. At the same time, it advances existing scholarship by demonstrating how these pressures were negotiated at the local level through program segmentation, identity repositioning, and incremental digital adaptation. Thus, the period 1998–2014 emerges not merely as a phase of decline for conventional radio, but as a formative stage in the transformation of RRI Medan toward a multi-channel public broadcasting model in the digital era [21].

Changes in Audience Behavior and Its Impact on Radio

Institutional audience reports, internal evaluations, and interview data from RRI Medan indicate a significant shift in media consumption patterns during the period 1998–2014. The increasing penetration of mobile phones and internet access in Medan, particularly among students and young adults, corresponded with a decline in conventional radio listenership. Archival audience data from the late 2000s show that radio listening gradually shifted from a primary information source to a secondary or background medium. Broadcast schedules and program logs reveal that younger audiences increasingly favored digital platforms such as social media, online news portals, and music streaming services, which offered interactive, personalized, and on-demand content. As a result, RRI Medan saw a decline in youth engagement with traditional FM-based broadcasts, particularly news and talk programs.

From the perspective of media convergence, the shift in audience behavior reflects a broader transformation in the media ecosystem, characterized by a transition from scheduled, one-way audio broadcasting to interactive, multi-platform communication. For RRI Medan, this shift challenged its traditional role as a public information provider and required institutional adaptation to remain relevant in a digitally mediated public sphere. Applying public service broadcasting theory, the decline in conventional radio listenership did not eliminate the normative importance of RRI Medan's public mandate. Instead, it necessitated a reconfiguration of how public service values—such as accessibility, education, and social cohesion were delivered to audiences increasingly accustomed to digital media. RRI Medan's initial steps toward online streaming and digital content distribution can be interpreted as an attempt to extend public service functions beyond the limits of FM broadcasting. From an institutional adaptation perspective, these changes illustrate a gradual, constrained response rather than a rapid transformation. Bureaucratic structures, limited technological infrastructure, and uneven digital competencies among staff slowed RRI Medan's capacity to engage younger audiences in digital spaces fully. Nevertheless, the recognition of changing audience behavior marked a critical institutional learning process that informed later strategies toward a multi-channel broadcasting model.



Figure 3. Image Documentation
Source: RRI Medan Digital Archive.

The results of this study are closely aligned with broader media studies that identify digital technology as a key driver of changing audience behavior. As observed by Flew, the proliferation of the internet and mobile technologies has shifted media consumption from audio-only and scheduled formats toward multimedia, interactive, and on-demand platforms. This transformation is empirically evident in Medan, where high levels of mobile phone penetration and rapidly increasing internet use, particularly among students and young adults, corresponded with a decline in conventional radio listenership [22]. However, this study extends existing scholarship by demonstrating how these macro-level technological changes translated into institutional consequences at the local level of public broadcasting. While previous research emphasizes audience migration to digital media, the case of RRI Medan shows that declining youth listenership did not necessarily lead to institutional marginalization. Instead, it acted as a catalyst for institutional adaptation within a public service broadcasting framework.

RRI Medan's gradual adoption of streaming services and digital platforms reflects an early response to the shift toward flexible, mobile, and personalized media consumption identified by Flew. Within the perspective of media convergence, the period 1998–2014 can therefore be understood as a transitional phase in which RRI Medan began to renegotiate its relationship with audiences whose expectations had been reshaped by digital media. Although these adaptive efforts were limited in scope and constrained by bureaucratic and infrastructural factors, they indicate an institutional awareness of changing audience practices and a willingness to extend public service functions beyond traditional FM broadcasting. Taken together, this synthesis confirms that changes in audience behavior driven by internet and mobile media adoption did not merely weaken conventional radio but also reshaped RRI Medan's strategic orientation. The post-Reformasi period thus represents a formative stage in the evolution of RRI Medan toward a multi-platform public broadcasting institution operating within the dynamics of the digital era.

Challenges of Conventional Radio and RRI Medan

Institutional reports, broadcast logs, and interview data from RRI Medan indicate that during the period 1998–2014, conventional FM-based radio broadcasting faced increasing challenges as audiences migrated toward digital media. Internal program evaluations show a gradual decline in listener engagement, particularly among younger audiences, who increasingly accessed music, news, and entertainment through online platforms rather than scheduled radio broadcasts. Archival records reveal that digital platforms such as social media, video-sharing sites, and local online news portals emerged as significant competitors to radio in Medan. Unlike conventional radio, these platforms allowed instant access to information, multimedia content, and interactive participation. As a result, RRI Medan’s role as a primary source of timely information weakened, especially in urban settings where smartphone use became widespread. Interviews with broadcasters and program managers confirm that audience expectations shifted from passive listening to active engagement. Listeners increasingly demanded opportunities to respond, comment, and participate in public discussions, features structurally limited in traditional one-way radio broadcasting.

Evaluation Report	
Report should be...	
Executive Summary	
Evaluation Questions	
Methods	
Findings	
Recommendations	
Annexes	

Figure 4. Image Documentation
RRI Medan Institutional Archive

From the standpoint of media convergence, the challenges faced by RRI Medan reflect a broader transformation in the media environment, in which the boundaries between broadcasting, online media, and social interaction have become increasingly blurred. The rise of digital platforms did not merely introduce new competitors but fundamentally altered audience expectations regarding immediacy, interactivity, and participation. Applying institutional adaptation theory, RRI Medan’s response to these challenges can be understood as a gradual process of organizational learning rather than an abrupt transformation. Structural constraints, such as bureaucratic procedures, limited technological infrastructure, and regulatory obligations as a public service broadcaster, restricted RRI Medan’s ability to rapidly adopt interactive digital formats comparable to those of private media platforms.

Nevertheless, archival evidence shows that awareness of these limitations encouraged early experiments with online engagement, including the integration of listener feedback through digital channels and the initial use of online streaming. Within the framework of public service broadcasting, these challenges also raised normative questions regarding the role of RRI Medan in a digital public sphere. While digital platforms prioritized speed and audience interaction, RRI Medan continued to emphasize credibility, neutrality, and public accountability. This tension underscores the distinctive challenge public broadcasters face: adapting to digital interactivity without compromising public service values.



Figure 5. Image Documentation
Source: RRI Medan Digital Archive

The results of this study are consistent with previous research showing that conventional radio has experienced a significant decline in audience share due to migration toward faster, more interactive digital media. As highlighted in earlier studies, the increasing use of social media, streaming services, and online news platforms has reduced radio's role as a primary source of information, particularly among younger audiences. The case of RRI Medan confirms this broader trend, as FM-based broadcasting gradually lost its dominance to digital competitors such as social media platforms, video-sharing services, and local online news portals. However, this study advances existing research by demonstrating that audience migration and declining interactivity did not simply result in institutional marginalization. Instead, these challenges functioned as drivers of institutional adaptation within a public service broadcasting framework. While previous studies emphasize the limitations of one-way communication in conventional radio, the experience of RRI Medan illustrates how these structural constraints prompted early efforts to renegotiate audience relationships through incremental digital engagement and media convergence initiatives.

Within the context of media convergence, the weakening of FM-based broadcasting reflects a broader transformation of the media environment in which immediacy, interactivity, and participation became central audience expectations. RRI Medan's

response, although constrained by bureaucratic and infrastructural limitations, signals an emerging institutional awareness of the need to align public service values with interactive media practices [23]. Consequently, the period 1998–2014 should be understood not as a phase of institutional decline, but as a transitional stage in which RRI Medan began to reposition itself within an increasingly convergent and participatory media landscape [24].

3.2. Discussion

RRI Government Media Becomes Public Media

From the perspective of public service broadcasting theory, the legal redefinition of RRI signified more than a formal administrative change; it represented a normative shift in the role of broadcasting within Indonesia's post-authoritarian democratic framework. Public broadcasters are expected to function as neutral platforms for information, education, and cultural expression, supporting democratic participation and social integration. In this context, RRI Medan's transformation reflects an effort to realign institutional practices with these public service values. However, applying institutional adaptation theory, the findings demonstrate that legal change did not automatically translate into full institutional consolidation.

The transition period between 2002 and 2014 was characterized by structural tensions between reform-oriented mandates and inherited bureaucratic practices. As a network station under the centralized structure of LPP RRI, RRI Medan remained constrained by hierarchical decision-making, funding limitations, and residual perceptions of RRI as a state mouthpiece. These constraints shaped the pace and scope of institutional change at the local level. Nevertheless, empirical evidence shows that RRI Medan gradually adapted by redefining its editorial orientation and expanding public-oriented programming. The diversification of broadcast content across Pro 1 to Pro 4 illustrates a strategic effort to operationalize public service principles while accommodating regional socio-cultural diversity in North Sumatra. This adaptive process reflects a form of selective institutional transformation, in which normative commitments to public service were negotiated within existing structural constraints.

Law No. 32 of 2002 concerning Broadcasting changed the status of RRI from "*government radio*" to a Public Broadcasting Institution that is independent, neutral, and non-commercial. KPI+1 This provision was then further detailed in Government Regulation No. 11 of 2005 concerning the Implementation of Broadcasting by Public Broadcasting Institutions. This PP emphasizes that LPP must be independent, independent and not influenced by other parties. Neutrality does not take sides in the interests of one party. Not purely commercial: prioritizing services to the community. Government Regulation No. 11 of 2005 also regulates the network station system, the obligation to report branch data, and provisions regarding broadcast content that must be neutral, protect vulnerable groups, and must not contain defamatory, inciting, or contradictory content. In the context of RRI Medan, this regulation serves as a normative basis for reorganizing organizations, program structures, and editorial policies in accordance with the principles of LPP.

Sacco [25], in his article on strengthening the institutional status of LPP, emphasized that changes in the legal status of RRI and TVRI do not automatically lead to institutional

strengthening; there remain issues of funding, independence, and political interference that need to be addressed. This means that, nationally, the 2002–2014 phase was a transition period marked by a tug-of-war between the spirit of reform and the legacy of old practices. This is also reflected at the regional level, including at RRI Medan, one of RRI's network stations. RRI Medan is structurally under the LPP RRI Pusat in Jakarta. [26] explained that after RRI became LPP, financing patterns and structural relationships changed: the head office was financed through the state budget, while regional stations such as RRI Medan also utilized the support of the APBD and other legitimate sources to support broadcast operations and network development. Sahara also emphasized that RRI Medan is positioned as a station that prioritizes the public interest, with three main orientations of broadcasting: news/information, education and culture, and entertainment. In its new status as LPP, RRI Medan can no longer just be a mouthpiece for the government, but must provide a wider space for public aspirations and socio-cultural diversity in North Sumatra [27].

The findings suggest that the transformation of RRI Medan from government to public media should be understood as a gradual, contested process rather than a linear or fully realized reform. At the same time, regulatory frameworks provided the foundation for institutional change; their implementation at the regional level required continuous negotiation between public service ideals, bureaucratic structures, and practical broadcasting realities. This study contributes to media historiography by demonstrating that the post-Reformasi transformation of public broadcasting in Indonesia unfolded unevenly across institutional levels. In the case of RRI Medan, the period 2002–2014 represents a critical phase of institutional adaptation, during which public service broadcasting principles were incrementally embedded into organizational practices. This process laid the groundwork for subsequent digital adaptation and media convergence, positioning RRI Medan to evolve toward a multi-channel public broadcasting model in the digital era.

Development of RRI Medan Broadcast and Content Program 1998–2014

One of the most significant changes after the reform was the reorientation of broadcast content from "government-oriented" to "public-oriented". Before the reform, the logic of RRI broadcasting was largely determined by the Ministry of Information's agenda; after becoming an LPP, RRI's broadcasts are expected to highlight public interests, diversity, and social control. Lia Sahara emphasized that RRI Medan, as a station under the guidance of RRI Jakarta, carries out the functions of news/information broadcasting, education and culture, and entertainment, with an emphasis on public services. News programs are intended to provide fast and accurate information, while talk shows and public dialogue serve as arenas to reflect the community's aspirations, discuss local government policies, and build citizens' political literacy [4]. In general, the separation of programs in the RRI environment (Pro 1 to Pro 4) follows the segmentation pattern described in the broadcast media management literature, for example, Morissan, which emphasizes the importance of audience segmentation, format differentiation, and the clarity of each channel's positioning in capturing the public's attention.

RRI Medan adopts this pattern: Programa 1, oriented towards information and public services; Programa 2, with more entertainment and music; Programa 3, connected to the

national news network; and Programa 4, highlighting cultural, educational, and local programming. Although detailed data per program from 1998–2014 are not always documented in a single source, this segmentation pattern reflects RRI Medan's consistency in fulfilling its role as a public broadcasting institution that seeks to balance information, education, and entertainment. Sahara noted that in the 2000s, the position of radio, including RRI, began to erode as television and the internet rapidly developed. Television is a medium with a high degree of "*compactness*", while online news portals and social media allow the public to access information audio-visually, anytime and anywhere. In this situation, RRI Medan faces two challenges at the same time Competition with private radio that is more aggressive in entertainment and advertising.

Competition with television and online media in terms of speed and visual appeal. According to Sahara, RRI Medan seeks to maintain its excellence as a media with a wide reach, relatively low production costs, and rapid information delivery. At the program level, RRI Medan produces live news broadcasts, interactive programs via phone and SMS, and strengthens educational and cultural content that often receives limited coverage in commercial media. After the Reform, RRI, including RRI Medan, was encouraged to play a neutral role as a political education media. PP 11 of 2005 emphasizes that the content of LPP broadcasts must be maintained in a neutral manner, must not prioritize the interests of certain groups, and must not broadcast content that is defamatory, incites, or contradicts SARA. In this framework, in the period 1998–2014, RRI Medan can be read as one of the important media in overseeing the democratic process in North Sumatra: from the 1999 elections, the 2004 elections, the 2009 elections, to the 2014 elections, as well as the direct election of regional heads. Through election news broadcasts, candidate dialogues, and regional public policy coverage, RRI Medan provides political information that is relatively more balanced than that of many commercial media, which rely heavily on advertising interests.

Development of Organizational and Human Resources of RRI Medan (1998–2014)

Lia Sahara's research noted that one important consequence of the change in RRI status to LPP is a shift in staffing patterns. Old employees recruited when RRI was still under the Ministry of Information were Civil Servants (PNS), while those recruited afterwards were Non-Civil Servants (PBPNS). The combination of these two employment statuses requires adaptation to a new work culture and to human resource management, especially regarding career systems, discipline, and reward-punishment patterns [10]. Through her research on the role of interpersonal communication between leaders and subordinates in increasing employee work motivation at LPP RRI Medan, she shows that intensive internal interpersonal communication patterns between leaders and staff positively contribute to employee work motivation. These findings show that internally, in the early 2000s, RRI Medan sought to build a more participatory organizational climate, in line with the spirit of bureaucratic reform and the professionalism of public broadcasting institutions [28].

Sahara explained that nationally, RRI has around 250 stations operating on a combination of AM, FM, and SW (shortwave) frequencies that reach domestic and foreign regions. RRI utilizes the Palapa C2 satellite to expand broadcast coverage. RRI Medan is

one of the important nodes of public radio networks in the western region of Indonesia, considering its position in big cities and its proximity to strategic areas such as Aceh, West Sumatra, and Riau. In a technical context, RRI Medan uses FM for coverage of the city and its surroundings, while the national network utilizes AM and SW to reach a wider area. This puts RRI Medan in a strategic position as a "hub" for national information distribution to the North Sumatra region and vice versa, and as a local information collector, channeling it to RRI's national network.

The RRI Medan website notes that the RRI Medan office, which was originally located on Jalan Martinus Lubis, was moved to Jalan Gatot Subroto No. 214, Medan, at the end of 1996. This move was motivated by the condition of the office environment in the old location, which was no longer conducive. Thus, upon entering the Reform era (1998), RRI Medan occupied a new location with a more representative infrastructure. In the period 1998–2014, this infrastructure continued to be repaired and developed. RRI Medan then has several broadcast programs (Pro 1, Pro 2, Pro 3, and Pro 4) with different segments for news, entertainment, education, and culture, which describe the institution's efforts to reorganize content according to LPP principles and the needs of the local public [18].

Adaptation Challenges and Limitations of RRI Medan

Although various adaptation steps have been taken, the digitalization process of RRI Medan cannot be separated from various obstacles. According to Ismandianto et al., the main obstacles to the digital transformation of radio in Indonesia include limited organizational capacity to adapt to technology, a shortage of digital-skilled human resources, cybersecurity issues, and insufficient government support for optimal information technology policy and infrastructure. This condition can be applied to the context of RRI Medan, which operates in areas with ICT infrastructure gaps between urban centers and suburban areas.

Lestari and Syarvina added that RRI Medan is also facing low interest among some younger generations in radio as the main medium, as they are more tied to social media timelines, short video platforms, and music streaming services. This means that even though RRI Medan has entered the digital realm through streaming, applications, and social media, algorithms still test its competitiveness and a highly competitive platform ecosystem. On the other hand, as a public broadcasting institution, RRI Medan is bound by regulations and broadcast content standards that are relatively stricter than those of private radio, so the room for manoeuvre to use clickbait, sensationalism, or extreme entertainment techniques often used by other digital media to pursue engagement is limited. When viewed over 1998–2014, the adaptation of RRI Medan in the digital era can be mapped as a transition from conventional analog radio to multi-platform public radio.

At the beginning of the post-reform period, RRI Medan's main focus was still on restoring the functions of public broadcasting institutions amid media liberalization and the emergence of private radio. However, entering the 2000s and, even more so, towards 2014, the forerunner of digital strategies began to emerge: the use of websites and streaming to expand reach, the interactivity of SMS-based programs and social media, and the adaptation of content to the dynamics of discourse in the digital space. The major transformation in the form of the launch and maturation of the RRI Play Go/RRI Digital application, the

development of podcasts, and international recognition in the form of the 2015 Green Broadcasting Engineering Award received by RRI Play Go at the ABU forum became a logical continuation of the adaptation phase of 1998–2014. In the historical perspective of RRI Medan's development, this research period can be referred to as the "digital pre-transition" phase, during which various technical, institutional, and cultural foundations were being built to fully enter the digital broadcasting ecosystem in the next decade. Thus, this chapter emphasizes that the adaptation of RRI Medan in the digital era is not an instant process but a series of gradual efforts closely related to the national dynamics of RRI as a public broadcasting institution, the development of global communication technology, and changes in listener behavior. Radio, which from the beginning was "very flexible" in dealing with new media. It has proven adaptable again: from a mouthpiece of struggle in the analog era to a provider of audio-digital content striving to remain relevant amid the onslaught of digital platforms.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the period 1998–2014 represents a critical phase of institutional transformation and adaptation for Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) Medan in the post-Reformasi broadcasting landscape. The shift of RRI from government-controlled media to a public broadcasting institution did not occur instantaneously but unfolded gradually through a process of organizational reorientation, program restructuring, and selective technological adaptation at the local level. Faced with increasing competition from private radio and the rise of digital media, RRI Medan repositioned itself by reinforcing its public service mandate, reorganizing audience segmentation, and initiating early forms of media convergence through digital production systems and online platforms. These findings demonstrate that the challenges of liberalization and digital disruption functioned not as indicators of institutional decline, but as catalysts for adaptive change within the framework of public service broadcasting. From a scholarly perspective, this research contributes to Indonesian media history by providing an analytical account of the transformation of public broadcasting at the regional level, an area that has received limited attention compared to national media studies. By combining institutional archives and oral sources, this study highlights how regulatory change, market competition, and technological shifts were negotiated within local broadcasting practices. However, this research is limited to a single regional station and focuses primarily on institutional dynamics rather than audience reception. Future research could expand comparative studies across different RRI regional stations or examine audience perspectives to understand further the sustainability and democratic role of public broadcasting in Indonesia's digital era.

REFERENCES

- [1] P. Heuristik, M. Pro, and M. Alih, "A Comparative Heuristic Assessment Of Muslim Pro And Sajda : Evaluating User- Centered Islamic Mobile Applications," vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 181–195, 2025.
- [2] D. M. S. Dr. Harliantara and A. Rustam, *Radio Is Sound Only: Pengantar Dan Prinsip Penyiaran Radio Di Era Digital*. Broadcastmagz Publisher, 2021. [Online]. Available: <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=ojRPEAAAQBAJ>
- [3] I. O. Ajisafe, "Radio as a Tool for National Development," *Asian J. Educ. Soc. Stud.*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 1–9, 2021, doi: 10.9734/ajess/2021/v14i330354.

-
- [4] A. Indonesian, C. Study, A. A. Yani, and S. Ahmad, "Public Service Performance and Public Trust in Government," vol. 43, no. Icas, pp. 86–89, 2017.
- [5] Winda Kustiawan, Alphy Shahri Maulana, Arif Indra Hasan Harahap, Mahadir Muhammad, and Zulhafiz Zulhafiz, "Evolusi Radio Republik Indonesia (Rri) Sebagai Situs Media Informasi Tertua Dan Eksistensinya Di Masa Modern," *J. Ilm. Tek. Inform. dan Komun.*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 65–71, 2022, doi: 10.55606/juitik.v2i3.347.
- [6] C. Nasution and E. Madya, "Communication Management of Republic of Indonesia Radio Broadcasters (Rri) Medan in Maintaining Its Existence in the Digitalization Era," *J. Pamator J. Ilm. Univ. Trunojoyo*, vol. 16, pp. 247–258, May 2023, doi: 10.21107/pamator.v16i2.19785.
- [7] T. Piñeiro-Otero and L. Pedrero Esteban, "Audio communication in the face of the renaissance of digital audio," *El Prof. la Inf.*, vol. 31, Sep. 2022, doi: 10.3145/epi.2022.sep.07.
- [8] D. Hill, *The Press in New Order Indonesia*. 1994.
- [9] Sofwan, "Partisipasi Publik Dalam Pembentukan Peraturan Daerah," *Lex Adm.*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 114–123, 2013.
- [10] I. Sakina and D. Hendrik, "The development of Indonesian mass media: An analysis of political power and its influence on democracy," *J. Polit. Indones. (Indonesian J. Polit.)*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 96–106, 2025, doi: 10.20473/jpi.v11i1.66957.
- [11] J. Poti and M. K. Ahmad, "Mass Media Reform and Democratization in the Indonesian Context," *Soc. Sci.*, vol. 10, p. 28, 2021, [Online]. Available: <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:233251148>
- [12] N. Kholis, G. A. Savitri, and N. Husna, "The Use of Social Media (Instagram) for the Radio Industry (Content and Marketing Strategies to Increase Audience Loyalty)," *E3S Web Conf.*, 2023, [Online]. Available: <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:261989782>
- [13] A. C. Prasatya, "The Role of Social Media in Indonesia's 2014 Presidential Election Campaign," *J. Ilm. Univ. Bakrie*, vol. 3, no. 03, 2015.
- [14] I. Abbas, "Memahami Metodologi Sejarah antara Teori dan Praktek *)," vol. 1, no. 1, 2014.
- [15] H. Sjamsuddin and P. Ombak, *Metodologi sejarah*. Penerbit Ombak, 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=ZLYSywAACAAJ>
- [16] Y. Yulius and H. P. Widodo, "Strategi Komunikasi Pemasaran RRI Malang dalam Upaya Pencapaian PNBPN dan Meningkatkan Jumlah Pengiklan," *J. Komun. Nusant.*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 64–75, 2019, doi: 10.33366/jkn.v1i2.19.
- [17] R. Surbakti, "Меманами Ilmu Politik," p. 37, 2007.
- [18] I. Buying, I. In, and M. City, "Simangunsong : Journal Of Business Administration , Management , Economic And Accounting," vol. 01, no. 01, pp. 17–29, 2023.
- [19] S. Afria *et al.*, "Marketing Communication Strategy in Increasing the Number of Advertisements : A Case Study of RRI Medan," vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 1050–1063, 2024.
- [20] B. Budisatrio, N. Rakhmawati, and K. Sitorus, "Analyzing Ethical Challenges of Deepfake Technology in Media and Communication Using Bibliometric Research and VOSviewer Visualization." 2025. doi: 10.13140/RG.2.2.27235.46881.
- [21] C. Sinaga and R. Rizky, *The Role of Commercial Advertising on Social Media to Develop Small Business in the Muslimah Entrepreneur Community*. 2022. doi: 10.2991/978-2-494069-07-7_36.
- [22] T. Laor, "Radio on demand: New habits of consuming radio content," *Glob. Media Commun.*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 25–48, 2022, doi: 10.1177/17427665211073868.
- [23] A. A. Parkha and T. Walisyah, "Tantangan Komunikasi Penyiar Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) Medan Dalam Adaptasi Teknologi Siaran Digital," vol. 10, no. 2, 2025.
- [24] Y. Saragih and A. S. Manurung, "The Role of Media Journalism in Influencing Public Perceptions of Religious Issues in the Digital Age," vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 137–158.
- [25] D. Sacco, *Film Regulation in A Cultural Context*. Edinburgh University Press, 2023. [Online]. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/jj.5864730>
- [26] G. Ferri, M. Ambrosetti, A. Beretta, G. Groppi, and E. Tronconi, "Experimental investigation and 2D mathematical modelling of copper foams packed with Rh-Al₂O₃ catalysts for the intensification of methane steam reforming," *Catal. Today*, vol. 426, p. 114386, 2024, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cattod.2023.114386>.
- [27] A. D. Andriani, S. A. Fitri, and K. Muchtar, "Model Komunikasi Literasi Digital Dalam Mengatasi Ujaran Kebencian Di Media Sosial," *Interak. J. Ilmu Komun.*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 439–464, 2024, doi: 10.14710/interaksi.13.2.439-464.
- [28] C. Wittrock, E. Forsberg, A. Pols, P. Macnaghten, and D. Ludwig, "Introduction to RRI and the Organisational Study," 2021, pp. 7–22. doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-54286-3_2.
-

