

Media Capitalism on Religious Radio in West Java

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ABSTRACT

Background: The development of the internet has now shifted the function of radio as a mass media. However, radio still has loyal listeners, especially for content with more specific segmentation. This condition has encouraged radio stations to create new strategies by changing their names and broadcast formats to better suit their target audiences. One example is religious-themed broadcasts or religious radio. In a case study in West Java, the West Java Regional Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPID) found that, as of January 2025, there were 33 religious radio stations in the region. **Purpose:** This study aims to reveal the dynamics of religious radio in West Java from a political economy perspective. **Methods:** The researchers used qualitative methods to gather information through open discussions and direct interviews. **Results:** The findings show that there is a process of commodification in the form of commercialization of broadcasts and audiences, followed by a process of structuration marked by the restriction of women's voices in radio broadcasts, exclusivity of content, and violations of formal regulations (the obligation to play the Indonesian national anthem, Indonesia Raya), to a process of spatialization as evidenced by the diversification of religious-themed products for media expansion. **Conclusion:** The above case study shows that religious radio exists not only as a community medium but also as a form of business, political, and social competition among capitalists. **Implications:** The results of this study provide a new comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of religious radio, from its presence as an information medium to its role as a vehicle for capitalist business.

Keywords: radio; religious; west java; broadcasting; political economy of media

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INTRODUCTION

Technological disruption has been an economic setback for some radio stations. This has encouraged all the radio institutions to fight to survive. This has created many difficulties for traditional broadcast media, such as radio drama, due to the changing media environment. Gushevinalti et al. (2020) affirm that the use of communication technology has facilitated the transformation of traditional to digital characteristics of mass media. This shift in the pattern of information consumption has been driven by the rise of audio content on the basis of the internet, such as podcasts and streaming services. Geoghegan and Klass (2007) argue that due to convenience, podcasts have supplanted radio's position as a medium, becoming geographically viable for reaching different audiences, unlike radio stations, which rely on AM/FM transmitters. However, it is undeniable that radio is still popular among listeners who use it as a source of information in audio form. Furthermore, the radio has evolved to become a form of entertainment today. Radio has the ability to attract people of various ages and geographic locations and plays an important role in broadcasting information, entertainment, and cultural beliefs (Nasution & Madya, 2023). Not only that, but there is also radio participation in the performance of control functions of the socio-economic and political broadcasts, such as newspapers (Ismandianto et al., 2022).

The current model used by radio stations in their attempts to retain their audience is to produce content that reflects the interests of specific groups. Laor (2022) aims that listeners prefer such portions of radio shows because they possess greater control and because they can save time. Based on this, in some cases, some radio stations have even decided to revise the names and formats of their broadcasts to be more specific and targeted to their audience. An example is religious-themed broadcasts, more commonly referred to as religious radio. According to the West Java Regional Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPID), there are 33 religious radio stations in West Java as of January 2025 (KPID Jabar, 2025). The content of this type of religious broadcasting is information-based, educational, and religious music that caters to the audience's interests.

International studies have discovered that, despite ongoing technological turbulence that has been happening, religious radio stations are actually winning through numerous innovations. They include interactive features that integrate with the digital world, more interactive communication, and more personalized content in order to draw as many people as possible. In fact, in other countries, the role of religious radio has expanded to virtual communities where listeners are motivated and connected.

Malaysia is one of the states in Southeast Asia that has a thriving radio industry. After launching the Astro in 1996, the country launched its first digital pay-per-view radio and TV channel. Astro used digital technology to offer a wide range of radio and television services to its subscribers in Malaysia. The radio industry has since been experiencing growth and expansion into other regions. Radio remains important as an information, entertainment, and educational source to the Malaysians. The radio business has flourished and remains relevant to listeners to date (Ibrahim & Wahab, 2020). Similar to the case in Indonesia, Malaysia has some religious radio stations that are used in facilitating the Islamic preaching. This aligns with Meyer's (2020) view that the media is a means of spreading religious ideas.

Other Southeast Asian states that have developed religious radio broadcasting formats include Brunei Darussalam, not just Malaysia. Radio is a vital media in this nation; it is among the significant media through which Islamic missionary organizations can pass the Islamic teachings (Tarif & Kurniawan, 2022). Radio Brunei Darussalam has always emphasized Islamic doctrines in its radio programs, such as Qur'an recitations, hadiths, and Islamic lectures or

sermons (e.g., on prayers). The program is geared towards spiritualizing the community. Another country known for its religious passion is Turkey. Didem Şekerel Erdoğan, General Manager of Nielsen Turkey, revealed that radio channels in Turkey reach 60% of the population and play a crucial role in their lives. According to radio listener data for December, approximately 27 million people listen to the radio daily, which means a total of 37 million each week.

Countries that are even more related to Indonesia in terms of spirituality would be more likely to use the radio as a source of information. Interim Supervision Radio broadcasting in Indonesia is struggling with its own issues. The Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS) reports that the percentage of radio listeners among the Indonesian population has dropped to 10.3%, and the average time spent listening is about 32 minutes per day (GoodStats, 2024). There is a transformation in the broadcasting industry in West Java. Several radio stations are reporting declines in listener ratings and in business conditions. However, as an exception, religious radio stations are reported differently. The number of radios with a religious format is increasing in both business and count. Although the religious radio stations never call it pure business, the increasing number of broadcasting equipment, an expanding network, and a staggering workforce are sufficient evidence that they are on a rapid expansion, despite the media mayhem.

The fact that the changing media landscape is explained by technological developments and shifts in the consumption trends of people is not enough. The economic, political, and regulatory interests cannot be separated from the strategy of making programs, selecting broadcast formats, market segmentation, and business continuity. This makes the political economy of media theory practical, as it helps explain phenomena such as commodification, ownership systems, and broadcasting policies. Political economy refers to the study of social relations, particularly power relation that coexists in the production, distribution, and consumption of resources (Mosco, 2009). Meanwhile, the political economy of media theory concerns the capital or financing provided to the media industry by investors. These investors view media as a business to make profits, which they reinvest to ensure the growth of their media houses (Sucahya, 2013). In this way, media power can be understood, to a large extent, as a form of supremacy or a market monopoly. Such bias permits this news to be reported by the private media of democratic nations that enjoy freedom of the press. Media on the demand side is more likely to be organized to maximize profits, as a regulatory measure, by amending news content to align with the audience, as well as the interests of the advertiser. Meanwhile, on the supply side, the media can be influenced to uncover the interests of journalists, editors, and media owners (Schweizer et al., 2025).

Political economy theory encompasses a range of issues, including media markets, media ownership, and funding (Nwaoboli, 2023). This theory can be used to uncover the restrictions imposed by investors and power structures, identify those that may be imposed on media workers, and challenge the dominant status quo. These limitations can include media content that reinforces the status quo rather than provoking positive social change. This goes against what the political economy theorists perceived that the media should be a formidable tool of social change. Mosco (2009) has outlined three concepts in his writing and has been able to further elaborate on how media produce and sell content to be objectified as something of economic value through commodification, spatialization, and structuration. The modes of communication in political economy and media studies raise issues that concern the necessity of media democratization within the capitalist system, where the media is controlled by a few parties (Nabi, 2024). This study aims to examine the dynamics of religious radio in West Java, including media commercialization, gender restrictions, violations of regulations prohibiting

the playing of the Indonesian national anthem, and product diversification. These dynamics are then linked to media political economy theory. This paper offers a new perspective on the dynamics of West Java religious radio broadcasting and merits attention to programming, business, regulation, and typology, which may be considered through the strategic business of media politics theory.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was carried out on 18 religious radio stations, located in West Java, between 2022 and 2024. The study employed a qualitative case study approach to reveal information regarding the business models and *da'wah* (preaching) radio programs in West Java. The researchers analyzed the data based on the observations, and interviews with some informants who represented broadcasting institutions, including religious radio stations spread across 6 regions in West Java, namely (1) West Bandung Regency (i.e., Radio MQ FM Bandung, Radio Maestro FM Bandung, Radio Kharisma Bandung, Radio Fajri FM Bandung), (2) Priangan Timur region (i.e., Radio Riyadul Jannah Tasikmalaya), (3) Ciayumajakuning region (i.e., RadioQU Kuningan, RadioQU Majalengka, RadioQU Cirebon, Radio Simpati FM Cirebon, Radio Rodja Majalengka), (4) Priangan Barat region (i.e., Radio Latanza Sukabumi, Radio Salam FM Sukabumi, Radio SKN Al-Bayaan Cianjur), (5) Megapolitan region (i.e., Radio Rodja Bogor), and (6) Purwasuka region (i.e., Radio Tren Dakwah Purwakarta, Radio Ashidiq Purwakarta, Radio Wadi FM Purwakarta, Radio Elshifa Subang). Next, the study included broadcasting regulators such as the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) and the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Komdigi). Broadcasting associations, namely the Indonesian National Private Radio Broadcasting Association (PRSSNI) and academics/radio broadcasting experts, were also included.

The researchers used semi-structured interviews to identify problems more openly, asking interviewees for their opinions and ideas. Data collection was conducted in a natural environment, allowing researchers to collect field data directly at the location where participants encountered the issues under study. In addition, the researchers used observations to help analyze actual behavior and events. The credibility of the collected data was then tested through source triangulation. The researchers compared what the informants did with the information they provided in the interviews, supported by documentary data in the form of photographs and data from other literature studies. The findings of this research were then discussed critically, employing a political economy media theory framework. This study also integrated the features of commodification, structuration, and spatialization to gain a more comprehensive understanding of religious radio in West Java.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Market Logic Behind Religious Radio Programs

One of the mass media that is used to disseminate religious values in society is religious radio broadcast programs. Based on the information collected, most religious radio stations in West Java offer talk show programs, as indicated in Table 1.

The information available on the religious radio program is diverse, with religious discourses, interactive meetings with professional informants, and readings of the holy book. There were also radios whose intent of their talk shows, in their radio broadcast format, aimed to ensure that the public easily learned and acquired information in a light manner (Informant 1, personal communication, November 6, 2024).

Table 1. The results of analysis of religious radio broadcasting programs in West Java

Name of Radio	Religious Broadcasting Programs
RadioQU Kuningan	Talk show, inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations
Radio Latanza FM Sukabumi	Talk show, inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations
Radio Simpati FM Cirebon	Talk show, inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations
Radio SKN Al-Bayaan Cianjur	Talk show, inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations
Radio Tren FM Purwakarta	Talk show, inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations, interactive live
Radio Salam FM Sukabumi	Inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations, question & answer (Q&A) session
Radio MQ FM Bandung	Talk show, inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations, interactive live, Q&A session, off air study sessions (kajian)
Radio Ashidiq FM Purwakarta	Inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations
Radio Kharisma Bandung	Live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations, religious songs entertainment
Radio Rodja 104.3 FM Bandung	Talk show, inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations
Radio Riyadhul Jannah Tasikmalaya	Talk show, inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitation, off air study sessions
Radio Maestro FM Bandung	Talk show, inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations
RadioQU Majalengka	Talk show, inserts, live study/worship
RadioQU Cirebon	Talkshow, inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations
Radio Wadi FM Bogor	Talk show, inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations
Radio Rodja Majalengka	Talk show, inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations
Radio Fajri FM Bandung	Talk show, inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations
Radio Elshifa Subang	Talk show, inserts, live study/worship, audio of Qur'an recitations

Source: Interview results, 2022–2024

One strategy radio stations use to appeal to a particular audience is to offer religious programming. According to the theory of media political economy, the concept of commodification is associated with market segmentation and program choice. Commodification is a concept proposed by Karl Marx, who argued that the economic and political realities of the bourgeoisie in the capitalist period drove commodification. In simple terms, commodification can be explained as the process that involves the conversion of objects or services into commodities and transferring them.

This form of commodification is present in most religious radio stations in West Java. MQFM radio was one of the case studies discovered. This radio station openly offers e-commerce opportunities, including product purchase and sale services, by visiting its website at www.mqfmnetwork.com. The website displays several storefronts, such as “Etalase 1027,” which contains books by KH. Abdullah Gymnastiar (AA Gym) entitled “Asmaul Husna”. There are also AA Gym pocketbooks with various titles, as well as merchandise such as t-shirts, socks, hijabs, and the Qur'an *mushaf* (a physical manuscript), specially produced by Emqies Publishing, one of the business units of the MQ network. These products can be purchased online by the visitors of the websites. The strategy is, in fact, employed such that the radio station can survive during the age of disruption. But from a different perspective, this plan is a commodification strategy, since the audience is perceived as a market commodity for the commodities they are selling. This form of advertising uses the image of a religious audience

in a strategic location to market *halal* and religious products. This is what may be referred to as the commodification of Islam. According to Anggraeni and Wuryanta (2020) commodification of the Islamic faith causes Islam to be commercialized or its symbols are commodified to be bought or sold. Under the model of industrial capitalism, the huge potential of the Muslim market leads to market laws on both the supply and demand sides. Throughout the section supply, the industry is not only addressing needs in response to demand but also actively influencing the tastes, imagination, mindset, and lifestyle of modern Muslim society.

Commodification is a notion that is closely connected with the business approach that is adopted by most religious radio stations in West Java. The variety of radio institutions makes competition in the field increasingly challenging, and radio institutions must develop their own strategies to achieve their stated objectives. Thus, the business aspect is important and cannot be overlooked. According to a Nielsen press release, radio advertising expenditure amounted to IDR 1.7 trillion in 2019.

Based on the analysis conducted by the researchers, the source of the income of religious radio in West Java largely depends on advertising, sponsorships, donations, and the sale of religious products. The details are shown in Table 2.

The religious radio in West Java operates under a business model that largely follows market logic, with commercial nature as the key factor determining broadcast sustainability. The radio broadcasting West Java KPID has done monitoring and evaluation and found a business model that supports radio stations, with most of them dependent on advertising revenue. Moreover, it happens that these radio owners have other businesses to live on (business

Table 2. The results of the analysis of income sources for religious radio in West Java

Name of Radio	Source of Income
RadioQU Kuningan	Advertisements, events, listener donations, selling products
Radio Latanza FM Sukabumi	Advertisements, listener donations, selling products
Radio Simpati FM Cirebon	Advertisements, listener donations, selling products
Radio SKN Al-Bayaan Cianjur	Foundation
Radio Tren FM Purwakarta	Advertisements, listener donations, selling products
Radio Salam FM Sukabumi	Advertisements, events, selling products, listener donations (to cover the operational needs from the shortfall of ads)
Radio MQ FM Bandung	Advertisements, events, digital, selling products
Radio Ashidiq FM Purwakarta	Advertisements, listener donations, selling products
Radio Kharisma Bandung	Advertisements
Radio Rodja 104.3 FM Bandung	Advertisements, listener donations, selling products
Radio Riyadhul Jannah Tasikmalaya	Advertisements, events, digital, listener donations, selling products
Radio Maestro FM Bandung	Advertisements, events, digital, listener donations
RadioQU Majalengka	Advertisements, listener donations, selling products
RadioQU Cirebon	Advertisements, events, digital, listener donations, selling products
Radio Wadi FM Bogor	Advertisements
Radio Rodja Majalengka	Advertisements, events, listener donations, selling products
Radio Fajri FM Bandung	Advertisements, listener donations, selling products
Radio Elshifa Subang	Advertisements

Source: Interview results, 2022–2024

diversification). Radio business management is also concerned with maximizing revenue. The revenue these sources produce is likely to be spent not only on sustaining operations but also on profits and on strengthening ties with listeners as a militant community.

The kind of diversification of business taken by religious radio stations in West Java is very diversified, as the radio stations sell health products like dates, health supplements like *habatussaudah* (black seed), honey, fashion products based on the religious segment, like *gamis* (Muslim dress), *mukena* (prayer robe), headscarves, *sarung*, *peci* (traditional Islamic headdress), etc. The case in point is that one of the religious radio stations in West Java also sells books by its Islamic boarding school leader. In their view, this is linked to their process of disseminating religious doctrines based on the teachings of their instructors. There is also radio advertising for Islamic boarding school products, such as books. Moreover, certain radio stations make money by selling recordings of Islamic sermons delivered by clerics. These videos were sold on VCDs, but that format is no longer used. Perhaps now other mechanisms, such as downloading via digital platforms, are present.

The media is now more than ever commercialized, to the point that its significance as a social institution is being neglected. One factor contributing to media homogeneity is media commercialization (Erlita et al., 2025), which reinforces bias and polarization among audiences (Hlomani-Nyawasha et al., 2020) especially those in younger age groups, is a worldwide concern. An in-depth understanding of this phenomenon is, however, limited. This study aimed to explore the factors influencing alcohol use among female adolescent students as guided by the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner. Data were collected from 25 female high school students in Grade 9 in the Western Cape, South Africa, using five individual semi-structured interviews and two focus group discussions with each group comprising 10 students. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings of the study indicated that participants begin drinking at an early age and due to low self-esteem, which makes them prone to peer influence. Female adolescents are also influenced by various factors residing within the microsystem (family members and peers. The media, though they are products of social and cultural needs, are usually operated as business ventures. Then, the regulation of mass media, such as radio, needs capital because equipment and production facilities impose high operating expenses. This scenario leads to mass media operating on a capitalist platform, where, with a few exceptions, they work toward achieving substantial monetary gain.

The findings of the research indicate that the primary revenue of religious radio in West Java relies on the consumer and advertising markets, which is expected to have implications for the freedom of radio in reporting the news. The more earnings from advertising, the less freedom there will be to relay information. For example, when an advertiser places an ad on a specific radio station for a product, news about the product relayed on that station will be presented favorably. This state of affairs demonstrates how the concept of commodification turns the audience into a commodity for the advertising target market. Girija (2020) asserts that advertisers buy audience attention through the media; hence, the media focus on expanding their audience and charging higher rates. The size of the audience will be used to assess advertising costs and the frequency of placing ads on the radio. Radio advertising can affect organic information broadcasts due to its intensity. The researchers can write that there is an element of religious exploitation/commodification in the collection of donations, because the researchers saw the narrative shared by Rodja on one occasion, as follows:

“Join us in bringing Radio Rodja FM to life through cooperation and donations via the following account: Bank Syariah Mandiri 756 3939 006 in the name of Yayasan Cahaya Sunnah (Rodja FM). Bank code 451. Information and confirmation (WA) at: 081-823-6543

*Confirmation is not required as the account is specifically designated for Rodja FM.

Ensure you play a role in establishing Radio Rodja FM, and may it become a continuous

act of charity. May Allah reward you with the best among the most excellent types of charity. When the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, was asked about the most excellent form of charity, he replied:

تَعْلَبُ إِذِي تَحُلُّهُمُتْ أَلَوْ ، يَنْعَلُ الْمُتَوَرَّقُفَلَا يَشْخُتْ ، حِي حَشُّ حِي حَصُّ تَنْ أَوْ قَدَّصَتْ نَأْ
مَوْقُؤُحُلَا

“You give charity when you are healthy, and it is difficult for you to part with it, when you are worried about poverty and hope for wealth. So do not delay, lest your soul reaches your throat.” (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim).”

This phenomenon demonstrates that, although religious radio is a body that upholds important values of *da'wah*, it does not, in reality, provide a basis for distinguishing it from the theory of the commodification of media political economy. According to Croteau and Hoynes (2006), four signs of media that focus on profit over providing a space for people include homogeneous, copycat programming, sensationalist broadcasts, blurred boundaries between journalism and business, and self-censorship.

Marginalization and the Reality of Regulation Implementation on Religious Radio in West Java

The purpose of introducing regulations for religious radio in Indonesia is to ensure the quality of broadcasts and to ensure that content aligns with the moral and cultural values of the people. Broadcasting regulations are based on Law Number 32 of 2002, which treats broadcasting as a source of information, education, entertainment, and healthy social control. Another stakeholder in enforcing these laws is KPI and KPID, which also use the Broadcasting Ethics and Broadcast Program Standards (P3SPS). Based on the findings of the case study conducted by the researchers, various factors are outlined, one of which concerns the role of women in broadcasting. The broadcasting policies have sought to create a level playing field for women to participate in and engage with radio. Hopefully, women are accorded equal treatment as listeners and actors in the broadcasting industry. The regulation under Chapter XVIII, which falls within Chapter VIII of Article 13, paragraph 1, states that broadcast programs should be sensitive to women's interests and avoid any degradation of women's dignity. But there are religious radio channels, particularly the Islamic stations, which consider the voice of women as a part of the *awrah* (private part of the body). Indeed, according to interviews, all religious radio stations in West Java confirmed that they welcomed the voices of women to be heard on the air. Some radio stations undertook some restrictions, such as not violating the *Sharia* provisions, special programs accommodating female voice actors, or simply broadcasting a female voice to deliver *da'wah* information without playing music/songs that are performed by females, because it is believed to bring slander/seduction.

In the interviews, all the radio stations in West Java accept women as voice actors. However, the researchers found that broadcasters in West Java had been warned following complaints about their unwillingness to invite women as guests on their programs. Ganang Partho, Editor-in-Chief of Jabar Now, which is managed by the Indonesian National Private Radio Association (PRSSNI) in West Java, said that a PRSSNI member radio station with a religious format had made a special request for Jabar Now news products not to use female newsreaders.

One of our members, a religious radio station, made a special request for Jabar Now to be broadcast on their radio station, not to use female voices. It had to be replaced with a male voice. Because it was troublesome and required re-production, the management did not grant the request. Jabar Now is a news product created by PRSSNI for its 100 members in West Java. So, it is produced for everyone. It cannot be produced for just

one radio station (Informat 2, personal communication, 2024).

In addition, Radio Rodja believes that male presenters should still be prioritized, even though it also uses female announcers.

For example, if there is information about West Java and so on, there are also many women. That's fine. But for presenters, yes, all presenters are male or *ustaz*. Why? Initially, we were selective in the sense that we were looking for competent people. Once we had enough male presenters, we tried it. Moreover, we are not playing around with the material. The presenters are really those who are truly, um, focused in their fields. There are many factors (Informat 3, personal communication, 2023).

The regulation on religious broadcasting is yet to be elaborated. Current laws are limited to general rules on tolerance and diversity. In practice, there should be an explicit technical regulation that guides religious radio stations in their broadcasting. The P3SPS, developed by KPI, is reportedly incomplete. It is also time to update, since the preceding P3SPS was approved in 2012. There is a change in the dynamics of broadcasting, especially religious broadcasting. Religious programs that were formerly radio programs are now dominated and even become a part of the radio broadcasting format. Attempts to amend the parent regulation, the Broadcasting Law, have not yet been completed. The Broadcasting Law, enacted in 2002, is another piece of legislation that needs to be amended because how broadcasting is conducted now is far different from the way it was 24 years ago.

Several issues have been highlighted by political economy theory, including class power, ownership, digitalization, and gender (Ishaku & Asicus, 2022) are beginning to be seen as industries that are into production, distribution and consumption of products just like any standard industrial organisation. However, the Nigerian mass media organisations are not an exception to this emerging or rather emerged trend in the field of communication. This paper aims to examine the political economy of the media, its relevance or applicability to the Nigerian media landscape as well as its implications on media practice. The study which was accomplished by a thorough literature evaluation that incorporates elements of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). Drawing on the political economy of media theory, the issue of restricting women's voices illustrates how the notion of structuration functions. Suchya (2013), also argues that structuration is a process in which social agents shape social structures alongside other mutually enhancing factors. The final outcome of the process of structuration is the realization of a structured social relation and processes of power. Restricting the dynamics of women's voices will give birth to structuration or ideological alignment, where women's voices should not be aired for fear of being slandered. The effects may be gender inequality and even discredit the presence of women. Radio policies that disqualify women from voice-acting roles at radio stations are feared to marginalize women. In fact, the broadcasting industry has long been one of the areas where women were marginalized (Perrotta, 2023). The few female presenters do not mean that women are not interested in it, but it is a purposeful choice not to hire women because people do not want the voices of men to be silenced (Rimmer, 2021). All human beings, be they men or women, are expected to have equal rights to exercise their skills, such as providing voice-overs for radio stations.

Besides the limitation of the voice of women on religious radio stations, the researchers also discovered, from KPID in West Java, that some religious radio stations refused to play the national anthem, Indonesia Raya, because they believed the music was *haram* (forbidden). This is despite the P3SPS having put in place regulations requiring the national anthem, Indonesia Raya, to be played at 6 AM local time and compulsory national songs at 12 PM at institutions

that have 24-hour broadcasts.

The problem was at several religious radio stations in West Java, so the KPID in West Java stepped in by inviting all such stations and clarifying the applicable regulations. The religious radio stations in West Java then obeyed the order and played Indonesia Raya on schedule, but without music. An a cappella performance of the anthem was performed. They felt this was enough and did not contravene the rules. The national anthem is compulsory in itself, but the version is not regulated under the P3SPS set by the KPI.

Regrettably, the rules governing the playing of the Indonesian national anthem are not elaborate. They fail to clarify whether it is enough to play the anthem without music, or whether it must be performed in its original form, with lyrics and music. Thus, as of today, religious radio stations in West Java play the Indonesian national anthem without music. This is seen as a compromise between the need to comply with KPI regulations and broadcasts guided by Islamic *Sharia*.

This effect demonstrates the conflict between the regulations of a symbolic state and the logic of media capitalism. Purwati and Rusadi (2025), also note that unhealthy market dominance can be countered through strong regulations and international collaboration. Politically, structuration, which refers to state-imposed regulations, has been undermined by this phenomenon. Regarding the violation of not playing Indonesia Raya, Mukhadasin explained that Radio Rodja is now committed to complying with all regulations, including the Broadcasting Law and P3SPS, particularly regarding the obligation to play the anthem at 6 AM WIB.

The Indonesia Raya anthem is not played with music or instruments on this radio station; it is included in the playlist as an a cappella version. We also educate listeners that this frequency belongs to the public and must be utilized for the public. Everyone working at Rodja is committed to this (Informat 4, personal communication, 2024).

Nevertheless, the religious Rodja radio has pledged to play the song as required by law, but without music or instruments; it is performed a cappella.

Moreover, the concept of the structuration of religious radio in West Java also revealed another case study by the researchers. In accordance with the classification of broadcast programs, two typologies of religious radio were identified in West Java: inclusive and exclusive. Because of the diversity of broadcasts, a radio with an exclusive typology tends to be monotonous, due to some restrictions, such as not playing music since it is regarded as breaking the *Sharia*. On the other hand, religious radio broadcasts with this monopoly typology are actually deemed more intriguing since their material is actually geared towards the struggle of *da'wah*. Structuration is achieved through the restriction of diversity by religious radio, which has an exclusive role in the political economy of media. In the case of broadcast contents being restricted by the ideological interests of some groups or donors. Religious radio, with its exclusive typology, ends up being not only a medium of *da'wah*, but may even be a reproduction medium of an ideology of the on-top group. Laksono (2019) suggest that if an individual/group can dictate access to the mass media, it will also dictate the arena of power, both politically and culturally. Such conditions in the mass media are more likely to serve the interests of a group than to offer an inclusive public space.

Diversification and Alliances in Religious Radio Practices in West Java

The history of radio evolution is relatively long, and it has influenced the lives of people to a great extent (Song & Cai, 2024). Radio stations are now being compelled to re-strategize to survive amid declining listenership. Among the other business models used by religious radio

stations in West Java, the researchers mention a peculiar strategy for diversifying products and services. In media political economy, this phenomenon is part of the notion of spatialization. Spatialization is the process in society that transcends space-time limitations. Spatialization is incorporated into two: vertical and horizontal. In the case study of West Java religious radio stations, spatialization was achieved by diversifying the functions of the media by offering products and holding procurement events for religious radio.

According to case studies the researchers located, 13 of the 18 religious radio stations in West Java consider product sales one of their sources of income. Radio Fajri Bandung is one of them, and it stated that, in order to sustain itself, the radio sells non-medical drugs, milk in collaboration with distributors under a profit-sharing model, and honey products under the Fajri brand. According to them, sales of these products contribute significantly to operations and profits. Moreover, it is a unique business model in this radio: selling *rukayah* (incantation) olive oil. This product is undoubtedly associated with religious undertones and is likely to be sought after by most people.

Another strategy that is also employed by nearly 50% of religious radio stations in West Java is using events as a revenue source as well. It happens that radio listeners not only express their loyalty to broadcasts, but also attend events that are arranged by their favorite radio station. This makes it a strong selling point in adverts. Another example of radio stations diversifying their revenue streams is that some stations focus on accepting advertisements from products or services relevant to their audience, while others rely on donations from loyal listeners. In addition, the sale of religious products, such as books and merchandise, as well as the organization of community-based events, also contribute significantly to financial sustainability. Moreover, another concept of spatialization was also identified by the researchers, including an alternative strategy, the optimization of cooperation between the radio and the government through advertorials.

The above practices demonstrate how the political economy of media has been conceptualized as spatialization. The use of spatialization is common among media firms seeking to grow their businesses. The use of this concept of spatialization enables them to have various sources of revenue, from advertising, product sales, and event hosting. It is evident that such a strategy is a type of commercial media. The tendency towards diversification of products and services, and the audience status as a commercial commodity, show that religious radio is not only a broadcasting vehicle, but also a business enterprise and a social institution that extends into other spheres of listeners' lives.

CONCLUSION

The situation of religious radio in West Java is complicated. There are different phenomena that have been pointed out by the researchers through the lens of media political economy theory. The limitations imposed on investors and power structures can be found by applying this theory to discover the freedom of media workers to resist existing dominance. Radio that is religiously pre-selected in its broadcast format is now regarded as one that employs a capitalist system. The elements of commodification, structuration, and spatialization are present in religious radio in West Java. The presence of audiences as commodities to market interests could be termed the commodification process. The restriction of female voices and the breach of formal regulations for playing the Indonesian national anthem could be termed the structuration of the process. Also, the attempt to diversify products and services could be considered a form of spatialization.

Stricter laws should be enacted to ensure that religious broadcasting in West Java is more

moderate and respectful. As such, KPI should immediately draft a clear regulation for religious broadcasting and be strict in its supervision. This will ensure that violations that are against the values of Pancasila are not evident in Indonesia. Indonesia needs the assistance of broadcasting policymakers, namely Komdigi, the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR-RI), and the Indonesian broadcasting community, both practitioners and academics.

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