

Conference Paper

N-Gen, the Small Share That Continues to Listen: Reports from Media-Use Online Diaries of Teenage Radio Listeners

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Abstract

The rise of television and new media have caused decline in the number of radio listeners. In Indonesia, the number of studies that focus on radio also has plummeted. The nature of radio broadcasting reach, as well as the decline in the number of listeners, has made audience research difficult and expensive. This paper attempts to fill this gap. This paper examines young radio listeners' media habits in Solo – a city in Java Island Indonesia – in detail. Employing daily journals, 30 teenagers who admitted still listening to the radio agreed to participate in the research. Among the small share of teenage radio listeners aged 14-19 in the city, only about 56% reported listening to the radio during one week that represented the data collection period. Herein, we provide details on the stations and on the talk and music formats that the subjects listened to as well as places and listening motivation and listening behaviors. Suggestions for further research are also discussed.

Keywords: Indonesia, media use, radio, teenagers

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1. Background

Media use is inseparable from today's rapid technology development, which can turn people into technology addicts. Modern lifestyles seem to require technology determination [2]. This leads to changes in media use that are more drastic than ever before where people are inseparable from their gadgets, and parents feel more secure when their children carry their cell phones everywhere so that they can be easily reached

This research shows that radio was forced to shift its content by the presence of television in the 50's [1, 7] from word-content to music-oriented formats [7, 14] to survive the media competition. The survival of radio in fact has attracted scholars to study more about the phenomenon, and the present research follows the same reasoning. Media users vary in terms of ages. Teenage users, who are now referred to as Gen N, are familiar and adaptable to multimedia and technology and easily become technology addicts (Rideout et al, 2005), [18]. In fact, the use of VoIP technologies such as Skype or Facetime accommodates their timeless and borderless friendship [3].

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A survey of 30 teenage respondents aged 14-19 years old showed that they stopped listening to the radio and reading newspapers and magazines [14]. Other research has reported that young audiences occupy the biggest share in relation to television, video consoles, and Internet daily consumption [4]. The limited radio frequencies make it important to note that radio listeners are very likely to be unique between regions and dependent on the nature and the culture of their society. Consequently, research on listeners' habits can only be conducted in specific regions. This research presents a study that used daily journals to report on how teenage radio listeners used media during one week.

1.1. Media Use and Technological Determinism

The changes in radio programming, technology, and audience composition have created a radio system quite different from the one that existed in the 40s [5]. Thus, understanding how the uses of radio have changed reveals the changes in society. This research combines two theories: The media use model of Rubin & Windahl, and McLuhan's technological determinism theory. Media use as assumed by [16] includes the activities of selecting, consuming, processing, and interpreting media. These activities when repeatedly carried out may then form a media habit, which equates to a habitual repeated behavior of media consumption that is suitable to meet various needs [13]. Long time ago until today's new media era where information overload is available and connections become borderless, young people have become the dominant users. Now, we call them Generation N or the Net generation, which is a generation born after 1980 with a majority that is adept at the use of computer applications.

New media seems to successfully fulfill teenage needs both in providing them with leisure activities that can make them become more dependent on technology; this is called technology determinism, where people can no longer be far from technology and its contents [11]. This confirms how technological determinism is applicable to communication technology advancements. This study has examined the evidence on not only how teenage – the N Gen - radio listeners now listen to the radio but also how new media dominates their media consumption. The evidence helps to explain how technological determinism has occurred.

2. Methods

These research results describe how radio listeners aged 14-19 in Solo City use the media. Snowball sampling was used, and 30 participants agreed to participate over seven days of data collection by employing daily journals modified from a process

No	Media	Variables/ data input format
1	Television	<u>TV_Station</u> <u>Program Title</u>
2	New Media	<u>Internet_device used_website_content seeked_place sites and blogs</u>
3	New Media Social Media	<u>Socmed_DeviceUsed_Twitter/Facebook/Instagram/Line/WhatsApp/BBM/others</u> <u>Intention(Chat/stalk/post timeline/others)</u>
4	Radio	<u>Radio_Radio station frequency_Device used_ProgramTitle</u> <u>Do/Do not interact with the program</u> <u>Companion activities while listening to the radio.</u>
5	Printed Media	<u>Magazines/Tabloid/Newspaper/others</u> <u>Magazine Title</u> <u>Place</u>

TABLE 1: Teenage radio listeners’ media consumption measurement and report format.

established by [12]. This technique of data collection has been widely used to accurately assess media consumption [10] in one-week. Even in the recent digital era, diaries are still employed in numerous research studies to investigate the habits or behaviors of certain groups of people (please see [19] or [15]). Further, such techniques are arguably the most efficient way to administer real-time media consumption and behavior (such as places, and other companion activities during media consumption).

In order to match up with N-Generation technological trends, mobile social applications (BBM, Line, Whatsapp, etc.) that are convenient to the participants were used to report teenage real-time media use in certain formats. Table 1 measures the media consumption of teenage radio listeners. To analyze the data, this study employed basic and multiple response analysis and cross tabulation with the SPSS software package (Landau & Everitt, 2000).

3. Finding and Discussion

3.1. Phase One, Teenage Media Use: What matters?

Previous survey research had suggested that teenage radio listeners in Solo had stopped listening to the radio [14]. The present survey revealed that respondents confessed that they still listen to the radio, but watching television and use of the Internet had begun to dominate their media consumption by a factor of 47%. The remaining number of respondents reported listening to the radio and reading newspapers and magazines by 5%, 13%, and 4%, respectively [14].

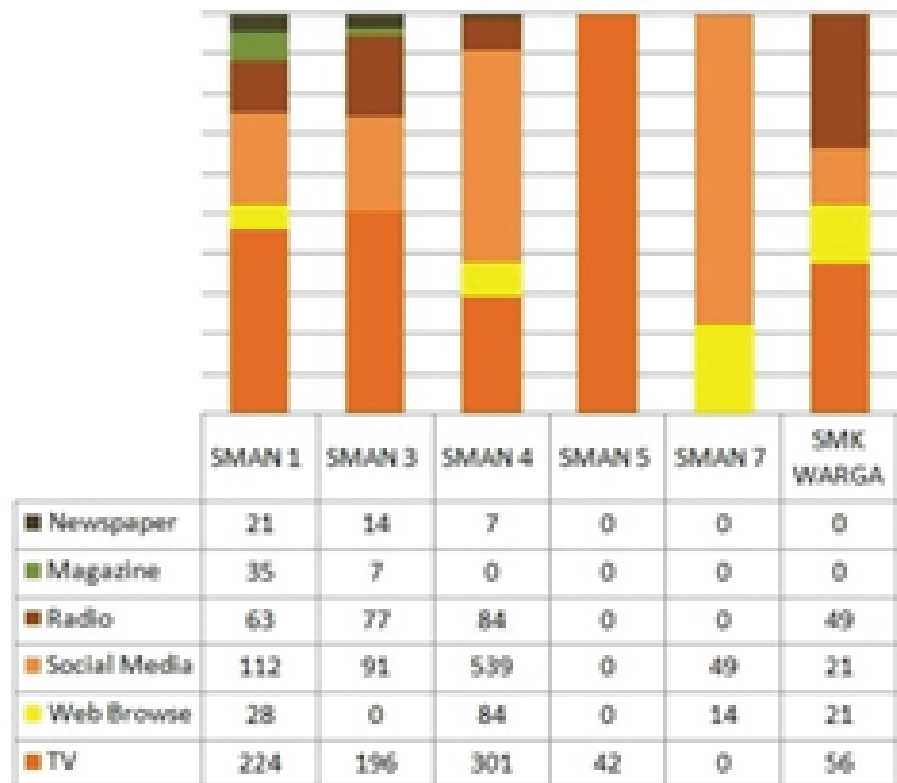


Figure 1: Media use among high school teenagers in Solo using multiple response = 2135.

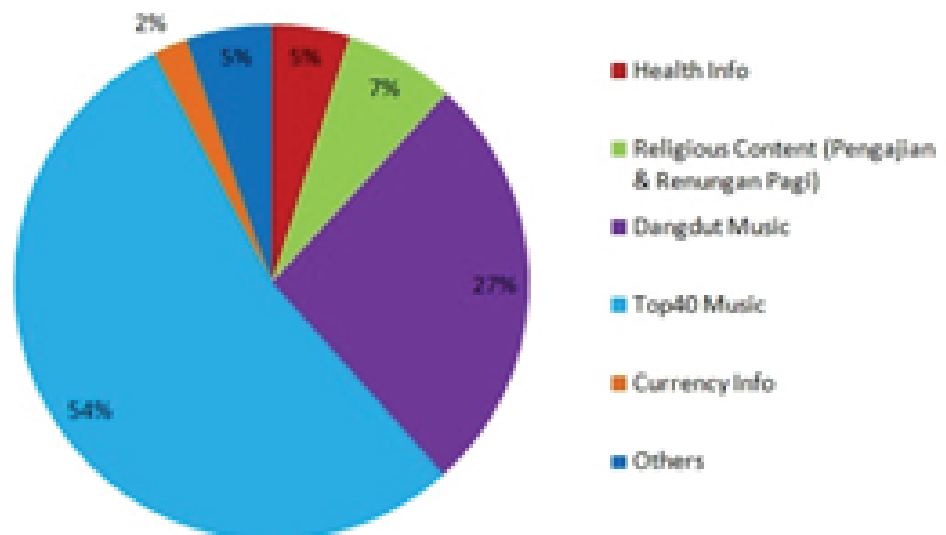


Figure 2: Radio content preferences.

During a one-week period of data collection, the diary journal shows television and social media took the biggest share of media consumption at 38% compared with radio at 12%, web browsers at 7%, and magazines and newspapers at 6%. These findings reflect previous survey research findings.

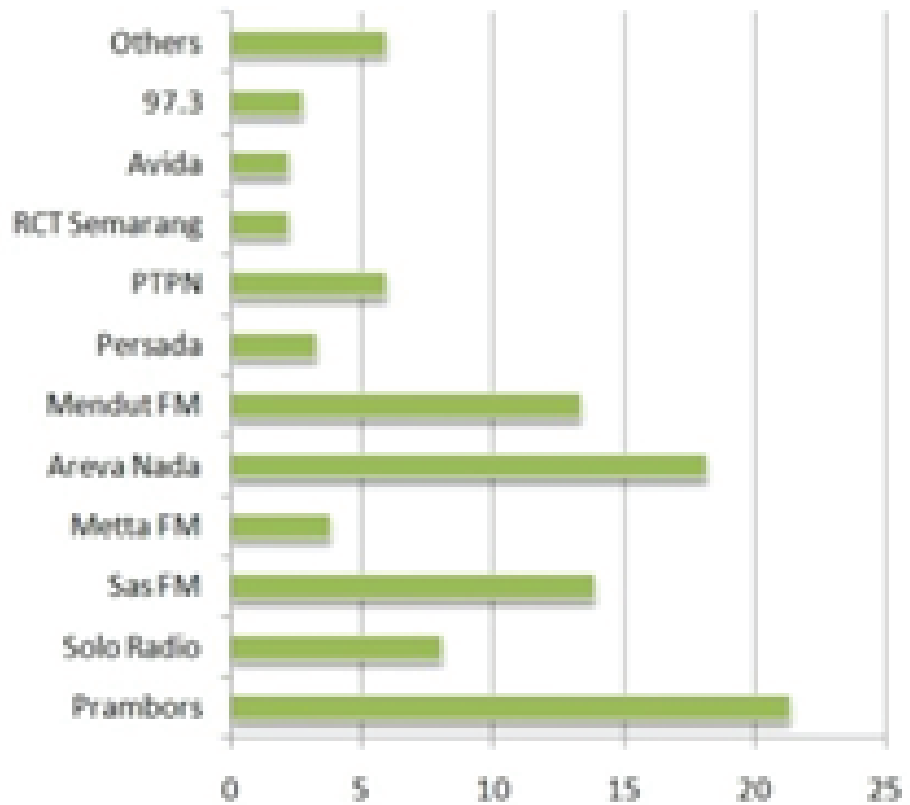


Figure 3: Most listened radio station by teenagers in Solo City.

3.2. Phase Two, Traditional vs. New Media Use in Teenage N-Gen’s Lives in Solo-Indonesia

This research reported that within the 47% portion of media consumption, 80% of the time was used to access social media, 10% for blogging and web surfing, 8% for private blogging, and only 2% for video browsing. This explains not only the habits of teenage radio listeners in Solo who are now categorized as the N-Gen, but also shows that the shift to social media represents a new form of social expansion (Hendry, 1989), [2].

Many believe that young people in any corner of the world are very much community-driven [11]. For N-Gen teenagers, it has been argued that those with more advanced communications technology ownership and mastery are very likely to position themselves in a higher status within their community. Based on the findings in Figure 1 below, teenage media use may vary between school origins. This confirms that teenage social life is determined by each community’s media use, and *vice versa*.

As the figures show, although the sample respondents were at the same age level media consumption varied between groups/schools. SMAN 1 and SMAN 3 for example, are famous for bright students, and the numbers for newspaper reading were higher than for any of the other groups. By contrast, the teenagers from SMAN 4 - well known

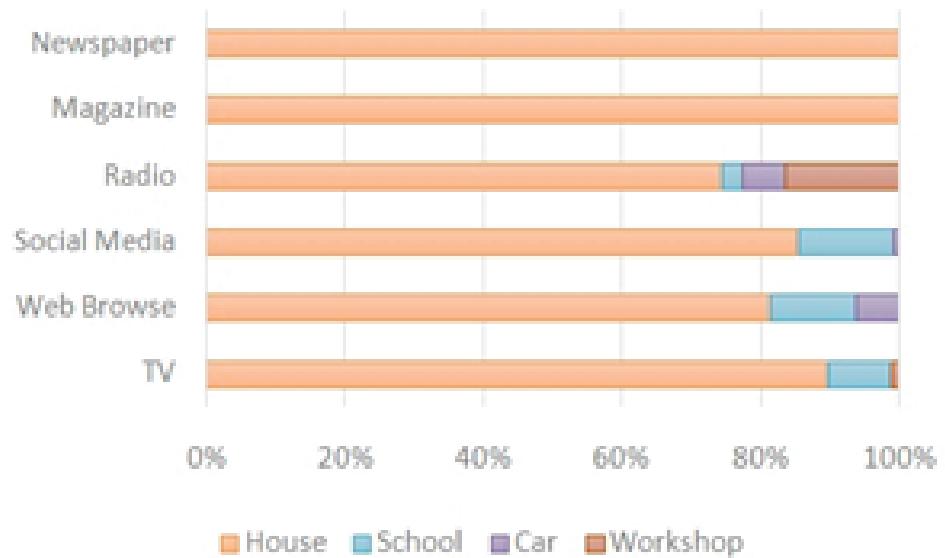


Figure 4: Favorite place teenagers listen to the radio.

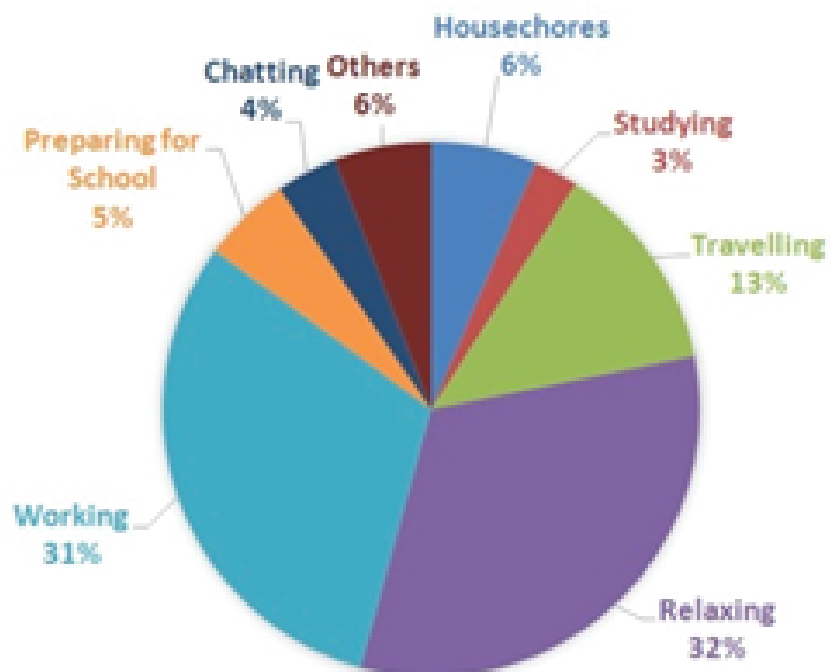


Figure 5: Activities accompanied by radio listening.

for socialite students – engaged in social media five times more frequently than any of the other groups, followed by the use of web browsers, TV, then radio. This firmly confirms that the social situation indeed contributes to teenage media consumption.

Concluding N-Gen’s media use, the data show that teenager samples show shifting habits in their media consumption compared with the previous generation. The birth of the Internet seemed to contribute significantly to this change. However, teenagers

evidently still use conventional media, albeit in smaller portions, as part of their daily media consumption. Radio receives a particularly small share.

3.3. Phase Three, N-Gen's Radio Listening Habits

As depicted in the previous figure (please see Figure 1), the small part of listeners is still an audience. In any sense of media industry, eliciting audience behavior is vital to ensuring its survival. Thus, this study attempted to depict how teenagers today consume radio as part of their daily media consumption. Their radio listening behavior during the seven days of data collections using an online daily journalist described in Figures 2-5. Among the respondents who agreed to participate in this research and who confessed to still actively listen to the radio, only 56% actually listened to the radio during the seven days of data collection. This percentage will then be examined in relation to their radio listening habits.

3.4. N-Gen's Radio Content Preferences

First, Figure 2 depicts the radio formats preferred by the teenage respondents. In [16] deemed that media use is the process of selecting and consuming media. This research found that radio stations offering Top-40 music were preferred by 54%, followed by *dangdut* music, religious teachings, and health by 27, 7, and 5%, respectively.

Top-40 (easy-listening music) is known as the genre for recent frequently played music. Current easy-listening music is the musical preference while listening to the radio, which explains why listening to the radio, remains one of the media preferences for teens. This is supported by Kaplan's research [7], which found that people now seek easy-listening music from radio rather than verbal content. This is understandable since the birth of the Internet has provided an overload of verbal content in the form of information.

3.5. N-Gen's Favorite Radio Programs

In Indonesia, almost all media, is increasingly influenced by the capital city, Jakarta, including the radio stations that adopt language styles, content, and music formats from those in the capital city. The intention is to position a particular radio station as cool, young, and updated [9, 14]. Figure 3 shows that most teenagers in Solo (approximately 40%) listened to the radio programming networked to a central station in Jakarta: Prambors Radio that hosted by national celebrities with a fast-paced style and very common use of slang words such as '*lo*' and '*gue*' which is dissimilar to the dominant characters of Solonese language and manner. The penetration of such

'big-city' slang words seemed to ignore the need for local character. Instead, these adoptions seem to be an effort made by Soloneses teenagers to identify with 'gaul' or an up-to-date image of cool youngsters, as mentioned [2], as one of the missions to be accomplished as a teenager.

3.6. N-Gen's Favorite Places, Times, and Devices Used to Listen to the Radio

Technological determinism assumes that youngsters can listen to any radio they prefer without hassle anytime or anywhere, but with new media's help. However, the opposite is in fact the case. As shown in Figure 4, N-Gen teenagers in Solo preferred listening to the radio while they were at home by 56%. Others used smart phones, car radios, and tablets by 25, 16, and 3%, respectively. This is understandable because when they are at school, they have very limited access to smart phones and other media, and some schools even restrict the use of media and communication devices.

Each media has its own consumption peak time. Particularly radio, the results of present study showed that our respondents reported listening to the radio at 2 and 6 pm or they have just arrived home from school, and at 6 p.m. they are just about to start studying at home. This means that to teenagers in Solo the radio is media that accompanies them doing something in a more relaxed, leisurely way.

Figure 5 show radio accompanies teenage daily activities. This figure shows that radio is mostly used when its listeners are engaged in other activities and never becomes the sole form of media consumption. In this sense, radio is now understood as a media that is consumed not because of its heavy content or information, but because radio itself is an entertainment device, a friend with no conditions, a companion. Therefore, people these days seek a more music-contented form of radio rather than one that is information-packed.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion for Further Studies

This study focused on describing the general use of media by teenagers aged 14-19, and the radio listening behavior in Solo Indonesia which used questionnaires to gather data may have resulted in more superficial and limited responses in the sense that respondents may have had problems recalling their actual media habits. This study employed online daily journals, which could help refine the results of previous research so that the data could be presented in more detail and in a more accurate fashion, and could represent how teenagers actually use media in their daily lives.

We concluded that the 30 participants who admitted to being radio listeners showed there has been a significant (44%) decrease in the number of actual radio listeners.

This means that when a survey reports 100 radio listeners, the actual listener count may be less. To the radio industry, this decrease implies a need for innovation in order to increase the number of actual listeners. This research shows the success of radio stations that penetrate local markets through network radio that contains updated lifestyles and information from big cities such as Prambors Radio has done.

Teenagers no longer use conventional media for its content. Instead, they consume it because they want to. Now trend, more people listen to the radio for its musical and entertainment content. Consequently, local radio managers should now pay more attention to its entertainment content if they want to survive the competition from network radio, which has a central base and on-air celebrity announcers in big cities such as Jakarta.

Solo is demographically different from other big cities like Jakarta in terms of its traffic that can be an advantage for radio survival because people are more willing to listen to radio for entertainment and information while they are negotiating traffic congestion. For local radio, survival becomes even more challenging because traffic is not such a problem. Consequently, program innovation is a must for local radio if they want to survive the penetration of network radio as well as the arrival of new media.

This research focused on actual media use by employing daily journals, but the use was limited to explaining radio listening behaviors only among N-Gen Teenagers aged 14-19 years old. The trends may vary for older groups of radio listeners. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct research using the same method of data collection on younger or even older groups of people.

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