



The Strategy of News Theme Consistency of Harian Bhirawa Mass Media in the Era of Popular Culture

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Abstract: The emergence of popular culture has significantly transformed the landscape of mass media, including local outlets like Harian Bhirawa. Amid the rise of media outlets that follow popular culture trends to attract readers' attention, Harian Bhirawa remains consistent in delivering news focused on governmental issues, prioritizing depth and balanced reporting. This study aims to explore how Harian Bhirawa adjusts its news strategies to remain relevant and effective amidst these changes. A qualitative approach was employed through in-depth interviews and content analysis of digital platforms, specifically Instagram and the official website of Harian Bhirawa. The findings reveal that although Harian Bhirawa maintains its primary focus on governmental issues, it has begun optimizing digital platforms to reach younger audiences who are more active on social media. This study underscores the importance of flexibility and innovation for local media to sustain their presence in the competitive and dynamic era of popular culture.

Keywords: Local Media, Popular Culture, News Strategy, Harian Bhirawa, Media Adaptation

Introduction

The advancement of communication technology and the widespread use of social media have ushered in an era of popular culture, where viral phenomena, trends, and lifestyles become the focal point of public attention. In the context of news reporting today, popular culture not only influences information consumption patterns but also dictates how news is packaged and delivered to the public. The rapid spread of information supported by social media causes news to disseminate quickly and go viral in a short period. This compels media outlets to adapt by delivering information concisely, visually, and accessibly.

The concept of pop culture in media reporting encompasses how popular trends, whether in music, film, fashion, or even politics, are integrated into news content to attract the interest of younger audiences. According to Storey (2009), popular culture is not merely a form of societal expression but also a tool to influence public views on social and political issues. In this digital age, platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter serve as

primary tools for disseminating information related to popular culture, including political and governmental news.

Through such an approach, *Harian Bhirawa* strives to be not only an information provider but also a part of broader public conversations on social media. This strategy allows *Harian Bhirawa* to reach a wider audience without losing its primary identity as a credible and informative local media. Popular culture not only creates new social dynamics but also shapes the direction of media reporting, particularly through the need for speed, appealing visualization, and connection to people's daily lives. This presents a particular challenge for local media that were previously more oriented towards delivering in-depth and formal information.

Local media outlets like *Harian Bhirawa*, which have long been known for their consistent reporting on government policies and regional politics, now face significant challenges to remain relevant amidst rapid changes in the media landscape. The development of technology and changes in public habits, especially among the younger generation who are now more accustomed to using digital media and prefer light and easily digestible content, demand that media like *Harian Bhirawa* continuously innovate. However, this innovation must be carried out without sacrificing fundamental journalistic values such as accuracy, objectivity, and information integrity. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how *Harian Bhirawa* adapts to the era of popular culture without losing its journalistic characteristics. (Hall, 1980) explains that media play a role in shaping social meaning. (McQuail, 2010) emphasizes the importance of media's ability to adapt to audience needs and tastes to survive.

In the context of *Harian Bhirawa*, the integration of popular culture into news reporting is carried out through various digital platforms, including Instagram and its official website. Although maintaining a focus on governmental issues, *Harian Bhirawa* has progressively begun packaging news with a fresher and more interactive visual approach, following the consumption patterns of the younger generation. Collaboration with intern students in creating Reels videos, for instance, is a concrete step to present governmental information in a lighter and more easily understandable format.

Research by (Haryanto, 2018) reveals a dilemma for local media between maintaining journalistic values and meeting market demands. Meanwhile, (Amelia, 2021) shows that media adaptation to popular culture includes adjusting language style and content visualization. However, specific research on local media like *Harian Bhirawa* that continues to report on political and governmental issues in the face of the popular culture era is still rare. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how *Harian Bhirawa* formulates its news strategy in facing the popular culture era and its impact on the media's position in society.

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. Qualitative research is an endeavor to explore and interpret the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human issue. This approach emphasizes data collection through interviews, observation, and document analysis, with the primary goal of uncovering essential themes emerging from the data (Creswell, 1994).

The primary data for this study were obtained through direct interviews with the Chief Editor, journalists, and editorial staff of Harian Bhirawa to understand the strategic steps taken in adapting news content to popular culture trends. Interviews were conducted semi-structurally to gather in-depth information regarding the editorial process, topic selection, and content distribution strategies on social media and the official website.

In addition to interviews, this study also utilized a participatory observation technique of Harian Bhirawa's digital activities, including their interactions with audiences on Instagram and their website. The descriptive research method involves a series of fact-finding with precise analysis and interpretation. Thus, the study aims to describe a social phenomenon and event occurring in the present or an actual issue (Whitney, 1960). This research highlights Harian Bhirawa's digital activities, including how the media interacts with its audience through Instagram and its website, to understand the strategies employed in maintaining its existence amidst the developments of the digital era.

The validity and accuracy of the data were maintained through source triangulation, where the results of interviews, field observations, and content analysis were systematically compared. This triangulation process ensures that the research findings have high credibility and reflect real practices in the field (Irawan et al., 2023).

Results and Discussion

The research findings indicate that Harian Bhirawa has successfully maintained its identity as a local media outlet focused on governmental issues, while simultaneously adapting to popular culture trends through the optimization of digital platforms. The integration of social media like Instagram and the official website has proven to be a strategic step in expanding audience reach, particularly among the younger generation who tend to be more active in consuming information via digital platforms.



Figure 1. Website Platform of Harian Bhirawa

"Harian Bhirawa's focus is to report information related to the government (executive) and legislative bodies (DPRD) to the community or readers. In the past, or at its inception, Harian Bhirawa predominantly reported on ABRI or TNI-POLRI activities, but around 2000, Harian Bhirawa expanded its reporting to include executive and legislative matters," (Wawan Triyanto, Editor). This aligns with (Haryanto, 2018) view that local media in the digital era need to adapt to modern communication technology to reach a wider and more diverse audience.

Based on the displayed official Instagram account image of Harian Bhirawa, this local media outlet has 6,646 followers with 1,206 posts. This reflects that Harian Bhirawa has successfully utilized social media as a means to expand its information reach to the community, especially the younger generation who are active on digital platforms.

"We started seriously developing and presenting news online through our website and Instagram platforms. Even so, we remain primarily focused on reporting governmental issues. Even when there is news outside our main topics, such as sports news, we always try to carefully observe whether it has a connection to the government or is relevant to the East Java region. We adopt this approach so that the content we present remains relevant and aligned with our media's vision," (Wawan Triyanto, Editor).

The optimization of social media like Instagram demonstrates a concrete strategy in responding to popular culture trends. Popular culture, which is strongly associated with the consumption of visual content and quick access through social media, encourages Harian Bhirawa to adjust its news presentation style to be more interactive and appealing. The visual content presented covers governmental topics, public policies, and local events still related to the people of East Java. This also includes information regarding sports, especially football.

"Although we have started to be active on digital platforms like Instagram and the website, we are committed to always using formal language that adheres to the standards agreed upon with our partners. We realize the importance of our role in reminding readers, especially Generation Z, who may not fully understand the correct way to use proper language. Therefore, we strive to be a reminder and a supporter in maintaining language quality, so that the information conveyed remains clear, accurate, and easily understood by all audiences," (Wawan Triyanto, Editor).

The visual approach adopted by Harian Bhirawa aligns with (Jenkins, 2006) view of convergence culture, where the integration of various digital platforms allows information to be conveyed more interactively and participatively. With 6,646 followers, it can be concluded that this strategy has been quite successful in increasing audience engagement and strengthening Harian Bhirawa's position as a local media outlet adaptive to changing times.

Furthermore, collaborations with local communities and government agencies, highlighted in the Instagram account's "Highlights," demonstrate a close connection between the media and the community. This is not merely about information dissemination but also represents Harian Bhirawa as the "eyes of the people" and a partner to bureaucrats in conveying public aspirations directly and transparently.

Harian Bhirawa utilizes Instagram as a fast, interactive, and visual channel for information distribution, following the information consumption patterns of the younger generation who prefer visual-based content (Amelia, 2021). This more interactive and informative visual approach on digital platforms allows Harian Bhirawa to attract new readers without altering the substance of its news. This strategy not only increases visibility but also strengthens brand awareness as a media adaptive to contemporary developments.

"We are consistently committed to using standard and correct language in every news piece we present, and we are confident that we will continue to uphold this commitment in the future. We believe that the use of proper and rule-abiding language can attract more new readers, especially from Generation Z, who are increasingly active in accessing information through our website and Instagram. This approach is not only a communication strategy but also our unique identity in delivering news in a distinct and high-quality manner," (Wawan Triyanto, Editor).

In addition to actively presenting information through print and digital media, Harian Bhirawa has also begun to pay attention to how their audience responds to their content on social media, particularly Instagram. Through the available "insight" feature, the editorial team can see a significant increase in visits to their profile account. This reflects a considerable public interest in the content presented, even though most of it consists of topics related to government and public policy. Many users access Harian Bhirawa's profile to view the latest posts, Reels videos, and various information packaged with a more appealing visual approach.

"Keeping our market consistent amid the surge of popular culture is a real challenge, but here at Harian Bhirawa, we stand firm in our focus on executive and legislative government information. Our strategy is to continuously deliver in-depth and exclusive news and analysis, becoming a trusted source that popular media simply can't match. We believe readers seeking serious, accurate information on government policies and performance will always return to us. We're more than just news deliverers; we're curators of vital information that directly impacts their lives. We're also constantly innovating our digital delivery to ensure accessibility, all while educating and strengthening our core reader community who truly value depth and credibility". (Wawan Triyanto, Editor).

Harian Bhirawa doesn't try to compete with popular media on entertainment or viral trends. Instead, it leverages its strength in a specific and crucial information segment: government. This demonstrates an effective "niche marketing" strategy, serving a specific market exceptionally well. It means that instead of trying to be everything to everyone and competing in a broad market, Harian Bhirawa opts to serve a very specific market (those interested in government news) exceptionally well. By doing so, they can become the primary and trusted source of information in that field, building loyalty from an audience that specifically seeks that type of content.

"Yes, Harian Bhirawa's niche marketing strategy focusing on government information is a long-term foundation. We plan to become the primary authority and knowledge hub through comprehensive data archives, expanding into premium analysis services and reports, and building an active and engaged reader community. All of this is supported by continuous investment in advanced technology to process and present complex information. Our goal is to grow into a stronger and more influential entity, far beyond just a daily newspaper."

Interestingly, data also show that the majority of Harian Bhirawa's Instagram followers are from the younger age group, especially Generation Z. This group is known to be very active on social media and has a habit of consuming information quickly through visual content such as short videos and infographics. This fact proves that Harian Bhirawa's efforts to deliver news with a fresh and interactive visual approach have successfully reached an audience group that might not have been particularly interested in governmental issues before. By packaging news in a more communicative format, Harian Bhirawa is able to make serious content feel more relevant and easily accepted.

This success serves as evidence that local media like Harian Bhirawa can leverage popular culture to expand their reach without having to alter their news content, which primarily focuses on governmental and political issues. Instead of merely following entertainment-driven trends, Harian Bhirawa opts to remain focused on its informative mission, albeit by adapting its delivery methods to suit the consumption habits of the digital generation. This strategy has proven not only to increase user engagement but also to

strengthen Harian Bhirawa's image as an adaptable media outlet that adheres to strong journalistic values.

Interestingly, data from Harian Bhirawa's Instagram Account Insights reveal that the media is able to maintain consistency in its news content despite adapting to a communication style aligned with popular culture. Evidently, 86.1% of views originate from Reels content, a short video format currently highly favored by social media users. This indicates that Harian Bhirawa actively utilizes features that align with contemporary society's information consumption patterns: fast, visually appealing, and easily accessible via digital devices.

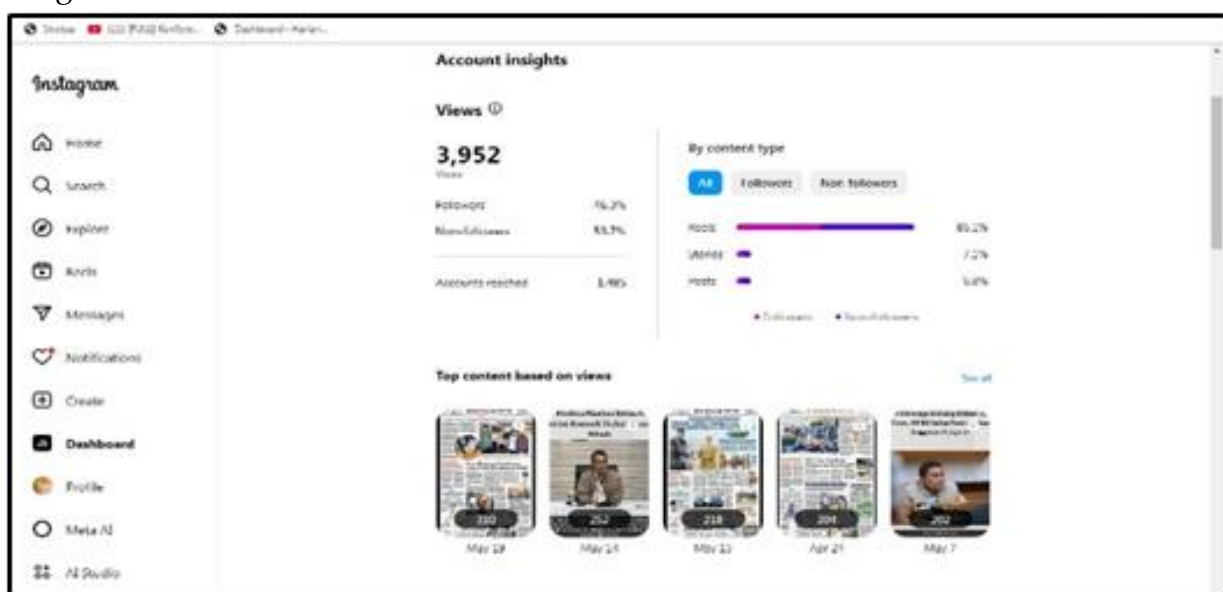


Figure 2. Instagram Insight of @harianbhirawa

Based on this data, it can be concluded that the use of formal and grammatically correct language is not only a characteristic feature of Harian Bhirawa's news presentation but also plays a crucial role in attracting new audiences beyond their official account followers. With 53.7% of viewers coming from non-followers, this indicates that well-structured and high-quality news delivery can expand content reach and build reader trust, especially among Generation Z, who are the primary target audience for this media.

The presence of such content in a popular format demonstrates that Harian Bhirawa does not sacrifice content quality to keep up with digital trends. On the contrary, they are able to convey in-depth information in a package more suited to the tastes and habits of the digital society. Thus, Harian Bhirawa successfully adapted its news delivery methods without abandoning the principles of in-depth and factual journalism. This finding reinforces the argument that media outlets wishing to remain relevant in the era of popular culture need to be flexible in their presentation forms, while remaining steadfast in maintaining content consistency and journalistic values.

These innovative steps show that Harian Bhirawa understands the importance of visual content in attracting audience attention in the popular culture era. Instagram, as a visual platform, is used to present political and governmental news in short video formats, infographics, and interactive live broadcasts. By utilizing Instagram Reels, Harian Bhirawa can package governmental information concisely and densely, making it more accessible to young people familiar with digital formats. This also aligns with (Jenkins, 2006) view, which explains that media convergence allows for more interactive and participatory information delivery.

Local media like Harian Bhirawa have successfully adapted to the dynamics of popular culture without losing their primary focus on political and governmental news. By utilizing digital platforms such as Instagram and their website, Harian Bhirawa has managed to reach a younger audience, who generally consume information in a faster and more visual manner.

This strategy not only expands the reach of information but also strengthens Harian Bhirawa's identity as a media outlet capable of adapting to the times. Modernization in information distribution has not eliminated fundamental journalistic values like accuracy and credibility; rather, it has enriched the way information is delivered, making it easier for the wider public to understand. In the era of popular culture, information flows very rapidly, and content visualization becomes a crucial element in attracting audience attention. Harian Bhirawa has effectively leveraged this trend. Through Instagram, a social media platform known for its visual content, Harian Bhirawa presents news not only in text form but also through more interactive Reels videos.

This activity is supported by collaboration with creative intern students who package news into short, informative, and easily understandable videos. This strategy makes it easier for the younger generation to access governmental and political information, which is typically considered 'heavy,' by making it lighter and more engaging. Government agencies also play an important role in expanding news exposure. This aligns with the nature of popular culture, which tends to emphasize connectivity and collaboration. Thus, Harian Bhirawa is able to combine in-depth information with a popular visual approach, making it more relevant in the digital era. This adaptation demonstrates that popular culture is not a threat to the existence of local media but rather a significant opportunity to develop distribution reach and increase reader appeal. This transformation shows that media modernization is not just about digitalization but also about understanding how audiences consume information in this fast-paced era.

Conclusion

The research findings indicate that Harian Bhirawa has successfully adapted to the developments of popular culture through the optimization of digital platforms, such as Instagram and its official website. Although maintaining its focus on governmental issues, the modernization of its information distribution has successfully reached a wider audience, especially the younger demographic who are active on social media. This integration of digital technology has not only increased the visibility of its news but also strengthened Harian Bhirawa's relevance amidst local media competition.

This study demonstrates that local media possess significant potential for growth in the era of popular culture by optimally utilizing digital technology. Moving forward, Harian Bhirawa is recommended to continue developing interactive formats, such as Reels videos and more visual infographics on digital platforms. From a practical standpoint, collaboration with local communities and government agencies should also be expanded to strengthen relationships with the public and enhance access to more in-depth and accurate information.

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