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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Navigating Opportunities and Challenges in Cebu's Radio Broadcasting Industry in the Digital Age

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Radio remains a vital medium that fosters community and identity across diverse audiences (Hirschmeier et al.) This study investigates the state of Cebu's radio broadcasting industry in the digital age, with a focus on identifying emerging opportunities, prevailing challenges, and proposing strategic responses for sustainability. The study employs a descriptive research method, utilizing face-to-face interviews as the primary data collection tool. This approach is appropriate for examining the current conditions and advancements in the radio industry amidst digital transformation. The respondents consist of 20 male and female radio workers from Metro Cebu with 5 to 30 years of experience, representing various divisions within their stations. The interviews, divided into two parts, explore the opportunities and challenges encountered in the digital age. Discourse analysis was employed to interpret findings and formulate a relevant course of action. Results indicate that digital technology presents significant opportunities: expanded audience reach, enhanced communication channels, improved public service delivery, and multiplatform content dissemination. However, challenges persist, including inadequate funding for equipment, limited interest among emerging journalists, low compensation, and inconsistent employee performance. In response, the study proposes monetization through branded content and digital ads. Finally, the study concludes that Cebu radio industry in the digital age faces both growth opportunities and operational challenges, as digital platforms expand audience reach and enhance content delivery, while financial constraints, the lack of skilled journalists, low wages, and performance issues restrict progress. These insights align with Sustainable Development Goal 9 (SDG 9): Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, which advocates for resilient infrastructure and inclusive innovation, especially in traditional media sectors navigating digital disruption.

INTRODUCTION

Radio is a medium that reaches almost everyone. It allows people to engage in other activities while listening, which makes illiteracy and busy schedules less of a barrier. Radio's wide reach serves as a tool for social unity, connecting individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and establishing a shared national experience. According to Jonathan Santos, news editor of The Philippine Star, radio remains the most far-reaching medium due to its low-entry costs and accessibility, even in remote areas. Community radio stations, now with the access of Internet, are expanding their coverage and engaging with wider audiences. However, financial limitations, lack of infrastructure, poor connectivity, and competition from dominant language media material continue to pose challenges. With the rise of new media platforms and shifting consumer expectations, radio broadcasting is facing increasing difficulties. In response, many broadcasters are experimenting with potential fixes and changing how they produce their content (Hirschmeier et al.).

A development came wherein radio stations have started to broadcast their shows live via the internet in order to showcase particular segments of their programming, as well as to retain a link and engage in conversation with their audience. In addition, traditional radio stations have established a presence on social media, with a growing number of them having a presence on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube, as well as spreading out to a variety of mobile apps in order to engage with their audience (Laor et al.). Thus, this trend is expected to continue.

According to Inson and Rivera, rural radio transmission has a considerable effect on the surrounding community, particularly on the socio-cultural, political, and economic aspects of listeners' lives. A great number of radio stations now make use of mobile applications, which give listeners the ability to access and engage with their content and bring them many benefits.

Members of the community who have relocated to other cities or countries and who prefer to remain informed about issues affecting their hometown as well as maintain connections with former neighbors will benefit enormously from this opportunity. As was discussed in the article titled "The Importance of Community Radio in the Digital Era," many radio shows are now being transferred to various digital platforms. This results in data being kept that may be seen at any time.

From these perspectives, this study investigates the circumstances of Cebu's Radio Broadcasting Industry in the Digital Age. Specifically, it looks into the opportunities of the radio broadcasting industry in the digital age, the challenges encountered, and course of action based on the study's findings.

Further, Align with Sustainable Development Goal 9 (SDG 9): Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, which advocates for resilient infrastructure and inclusive innovation, especially in traditional media sectors navigating digital disruption.

Theoretical Background

This study is grounded in Media Convergence Theory developed by Henry Jenkins, which suggests that traditional and digital media are merging and transforms how audiences consume content (Jenkins). In Cebu's radio broadcasting industry, this convergence is evident in how radio stations are expanding beyond what is deemed traditional to digital platforms which allows broader reach and multiplatform content delivery. The ability to livestream programs, engage listeners through social media, and integrate interactive features solidifies this shift. However, this transition also presents challenges, such as the financial strain of acquiring new technology and the need for skilled personnel to use digital platforms effectively.

Additionally, the Uses and Gratifications Theory by explains how audiences actively select media based on their needs and motivations (Wentao). In the context of Cebu's radio industry, listeners are no longer passive consumers but active participants who seek information, entertainment, and social interaction across various channels. This shift forces radio stations to innovate and offer more engaging and personalized content to retain audiences. However, the industry's struggle with low wages and a shortage of skilled broadcasters may impact its ability to meet these evolving audience expectations.

The aforementioned theories of Media Convergence Theory by Henry Jenkins, and Uses and Gratifications Theory by Elihu Katz and Jay Blumler serve as the foundation of this study and provide a framework for understanding and interpreting the research findings.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodology

This study utilizes a descriptive mixed-method employing face-to-face interviews as the data collection tool. The descriptive approach has been deemed appropriate for examining the current state, conditions, characteristics, and advancements in the radio industry in the Internet age.

Furthermore, the respondents comprised 20 male and female radio station workers from Metro Cebu. Their years of experience range from 5 to 30, and they all work in different divisions in the radio station. The respondents are interviewed face-to-face. The interview is composed of two parts focusing on the opportunities and the challenges encountered by the respondents while working in radio stations in the digital age. Lastly, the discourse analysis is used in this study in crafting the course of action based on the findings.

Ethical Considerations. This study is conducted solely for academic purposes and aims to aid future researchers. Ethical considerations include honesty, legality, integrity, intellectual property, vulnerability, and participant's compensation. Firstly, this study is reviewed and approved by the CNU Research Ethics Committee. It upholds truthfulness, ensuring all data, methods, and findings are accurately interpreted and documented. Secondly, this study acknowledges and attributes the contributions of various researchers and writers. The feasibility of this work depends on the incorporation of professional concepts, so all contributions are appropriately cited. This study does not include any vulnerable groups such as children, ethnic minorities, displaced individuals, or those with physical disabilities. Lastly, participants receive a token of appreciation for their time and contribution to the study.

For further questions, researcher Joseph Elvir C. Tubilan can be contacted at josephtubilan@cnu.edu.ph. For respondent rights and grievances, the Ethics ReviewCommittee can be reached at cnuerc@cnu.edu.ph.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents an analysis of the study's results, supported by two tables ranking opportunities and challenges in the radio industry based on interview responses. The first table highlights opportunities in the radio industry in the digital age, while the second outlines its challenges. Additionally, the discussion includes recommended course of action explained in paragraphs.

Table 1. The Opportunities of the Radio Industry in the Digital Age

Opportunities	Frequency *n=20*	Percentage	Ranking
broader reach	8	40%	1st
more communication channels	5	25%	2nd
improved public service initiatives	4	20%	3rd
multiplatform content delivery	3	15%	4th

Based on the data collected, 40% of the participants identified broader reach as one of the key opportunities for radio in Cebu in the digital age. The radio stations' websites are accessed by thousands of listeners throughout the Visayas and Mindanao regions, as well as in Canada, Australia, the United States of America (USA), and Middle Eastern countries including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar. While Facebook users of the same radio stations have a greater reach, such as millions of listeners across the country, it also reaches Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, the United Arab Emirates, and other places where the majority of the listeners are Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW). It is easier for viewers to watch different radio station programs while they are in Cavite but used to listen to them while they were in the Visayas over transistor radio. Radio, unlike many other traditional media formats, has managed to adapt to the significant changes brought about by the emergence of the mobile internet, according to statista.com. While traditional radio may be in decline from its prime, people in the United States have demonstrated that they value what it provides as a source of news and entertainment. New internet-based or online radio platforms currently account for more than $585 million in streaming music revenue, and the format is growing with each passing year.

According to Statista.com, the decline of over-the-air radio is being compensated in many ways by the expansion of its online counterpart. Over-the-air radio station advertising sales have declined by more than four billion dollars since 2010, while online ad revenue has climbed by a similar amount.

According to Bonneevillebayarea.com, radio is a companion medium that touches listeners while they are at work, at home, or in any place with the use of their mobile devices.

The second opportunity, recognized by 25% of the respondents in Table 1, is the availability of more communication channels for radio in Cebu in the Internet age. For the longest time, radio served as a communication channel via a physical transmission means such as a wire or a logical connection via a multiplexed medium. Those who have an electrical connection can easily listen to the radio for as long as the signal can reach them, while those who live in remote areas without an electrical connection listen through a transistor radio powered by batteries. With the growth of technology, additional communication channels, such as social media sites like Facebook; personal computers, and mobile phones; and the website that they have created, radio programs have become available to everyone. The majority of Cebu's community radio stations broadcast their programming live on Facebook. Facebook has allowed radio stations to stay relevant and engaged with their current listeners while also gaining new listeners. It also includes components like text, graphics, and video to encourage user interaction. Social networking websites like Facebook may make this type of internet-based radio broadcasting possible (Harliantara). As a result of the extensive usage of social media and the enhanced opportunities for connection that it gives, many people utilize Facebook. Because Facebook has effectively eliminated the previously existing geographical and temporal limits and has established itself as a more convenient marketing weapon in comparison to traditional radio, Facebook has transformed the structure of the station's content and programming (Jackie).

Jackie went on to say that radio broadcasts can now be received not only locally, but also via a computer or a mobile phone connected to the internet. Radio broadcasts can be accessed by listeners from all over the world over the Internet using a personal computer or mobile phone, regardless of location or time constraints, with an internet connection.

The third opportunity, determined by 20% of the respondents, is the improvement of public service initiatives for radio in Cebu in the Internet age. As part of radio's improved public service programs, the advancement of technology allows the listeners and the community to convey their concerns to powerful authorities. Unlike in the past, listeners have to physically attend the radio station to discuss their pressing concerns. In addition to visiting the radio station in person, listeners can contact the stations via the telephone as they vent their worries and grievances about their community. Listeners can discuss their issues and difficulties in the community in real time. Today, people are grateful to the most recent social networks that broadcast, share, comment on, query, and dispute news reports in minutes as well as other platforms that permit quick and efficient ad hoc collaboration between users quickly, and virtually in real-time (Bruns). When there is a problem in the community that has not been addressed by the leaders, people directly contact any radio show via their Facebook account and want a solution. Social networking sites have grown commonplace in many regions of the world. According to Moe, public service broadcasters have begun offering such services to reach new audiences. As radio continues to adapt to online spaces, radio stations are becoming more active on social networks. In addition, Laor mentions that user interaction with posted content and comments is a key indicator of social network success. According to McMahon, radio station management sees Facebook as an important promotional tool that can be easily integrated into radio programming and gives radio a digital online presence that reaches far more people than broadcasting.

In the digital era, multiplatform content dissemination ranks fourth among the opportunities identified by respondents for radio in the Cebu metropolitan area. Radio currently transmits content via multiple platforms, providing listeners a variety of options. In addition to traditional broadcasting via transistor radio, radio stations in Metro Cebu use Facebook, YouTube, and Zoom in addition to traditional radio broadcasting. Facebook, the social network with the most users worldwide, is presented by Liga et al., as a tool of great interaction and reach at the service of thousands of corporations, industries, and media of all sizes and characteristics. He claims that these organizations   find this Facebook platform an ideal way to get closer to their users, clients, and/or audiences. The majority of radio stations transmit news and talk programs through Facebook live streaming; however, some radio stations use Facebook Messenger to communicate breaking news. Broadcast channels, powered by Messenger, are a public, one-to-many messaging service that

enables artists to communicate directly and at scale with their audience. Using text, photos, video, voice notes, and polls, broadcast channels allow creators to keep followers informed of the latest updates and behind- the-scene moments (Introducing Broadcast Channels, a New Way for Creators to Deepen Connections with Followers). On conventional radio, listeners only hear how field reporters characterize their coverage, which may include a fire, an accident, or any other incident in the neighborhood. While the reporters are now communicating via Facebook Messenger, they can be seen live in the report and are supplying audience members with real-time footage of the situation. After newscasts and chat programs have concluded for the day, radio stations will upload the videos to YouTube so that other listeners can view them. According to Glaesener, although YouTube is commonly perceived as a platform for user-generated content, mainstream media has been available on the network for years.

Viewers of the participating news channels are more interested in expressing their ideas or opinions through comments on crimes, politics, protests, and health-related news videos, or in the fact that these videos generate discourse on YouTube (Deori et al.). In addition to Facebook Messenger and YouTube, radio announcers also utilize Zoom to disseminate the news. While the breaking news is being disseminated, the anchors could also interview the authorities involved in the crisis via Zoom in order to get their reaction or more details of the news story.

Table 2. The Challenges of the Radio Industry in the Digital Age

Challenges	Frequency n=20	Percentage	Ranking
lack of funds to purchase the equipment	10	50%	1st
lack of broadcast journalists interested in working in the radio industry	6	30%	2nd
the low pay of radio industry employees	3	15%	3rd
mediocre performance	1	5%	4th

Table 2 shows that 50% of the respondents identified the lack of funding to purchase necessary equipment as one of the major challenges facing radio in Metro Cebu in the Internet era. The participants stated that the radio stations where they work lacked the resources to buy the necessary hardware and software, particularly for production. Many of them believed that the management was more concerned with the workers' pay than with spending more money on equipment that would get to be destroyed after a period of time.

According to Gandhiraj and Soman, the communication technologies used in modern civilization are very intricate and intertwined. Hardware upgrades for modern communication devices are difficult to acquire, but it is necessary for new hardware to work with older equipment.

Another major issue faced by respondents, with 30% in total, is the lack of broadcast journalists interested in working in the radio industry. Each academic year, journalism programs graduate hundreds of students, yet only few of them work in radio. Cottle and Ashton raise concerns about the multi-skilled, multi-media news production's hustling and superficiality, as well as regarding its effects on news output and the evolution of television news production. Further, the participants also admitted that because they are not all journalism graduates and the modifications to their daily radio operations are too complicated, many of them do not appreciate them. This situation is reinforced by Vasilendiuc and Sutu who claim that very few   entered the radio industry as a result of a communication gap between media organizations and journalism schools. It notes that there is a significant discrepancy between what managers and editors expect from job applicants and what students expect.

Another difficulty is that few individuals are willing to work in and remain in the radio industry due to low salaries. Fifteen percent of the participants admitted that while they received minimum wage, the demands of using technology, the risks of the job, and the complexity of news coverage were not adequately compensated. Cabico claims that many Filipino media employees, whether employed by large news organizations or tiny community media outlets, have relatively low salaries and endure

difficult working conditions. Cabico noted that small neighborhood businesses in the provinces are also struggling, with many of them unable to pay their staff even the minimum wage.

Moreover, an additional challenge raised by one participant is the mediocre performance. A particular instance of this is that the radio reporters have no idea how to use the equipment that was handed to them, resulting in mediocre performance. According to Social Media Usage in News Gathering and Transmission Among Broadcast Journalists in South-East Nigeria, some reporters have not fully embraced social media in news gathering and transmission. Most of them never receive rigorous training because some of them do not graduate from journalism school, resulting in subpar output every time they are in the field for coverage.

Monetization through Branded Content and Digital Ads

Radio stations may generate revenue through branded content and digital ads by incorporating sponsored messages, strategic partnerships, and targeted advertisements into digital platforms. This approach involves collaborating with brands to create engaging, value-driven content that aligns with audience interests while integrating promotional elements. Additionally, effective implementation may include data-driven targeting, strategic content placement, and a balanced approach to monetization that maintains audience trust.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Cebu radio industry in the digital age faces both growth opportunities and operational challenges, as digital platforms expand audience reach and enhance content delivery, while financial constraints, the lack of skilled journalists, low wages, and performance issues restrict progress.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and insights of the study, the following recommendations are proposed for future research. First, radio stations may enhance their online presence by actively using social media and free streaming platforms to reach a wider audience without requiring major financial investments. Second, institutions may offer training for aspiring broadcasters by conducting free or low-cost workshops for students and young professionals that develops interest in broadcast journalism. Lastly, radio stations may implement monetization through branded content and digital ads.

Authors' Contributions

The study was conceptualized and designed by Dr. Joseph Elvir C. Tubilan. Data collection through interviews, transcription, coding, and discourse analysis were conducted by the author. All sections of the manuscript were written, and revised, by him for publication.

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Bio Note

Dr. Joseph Elvir Culpa Tubilan began his career at Cebu Normal University CNU in 2010 as a guest lecturer in the English Studies and Other Languages Department, teaching major subjects in the Bachelor of Arts in Communication program. He became a regular faculty member as Instructor I, was promoted to Assistant Professor II in 2017, and later to Associate Professor I in 2019. He was appointed as the first chair of the Department of Communication and Media Studies in 2017. He earned his Ph.D. in Communication from the University of San Jose-Recoletos in 2016, his Master of Media Studies major in Print Media in 2008, and his Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication in 1997. He worked as a reporter for dyRC and Sun.Star Superbalita (Cebu), becoming its Feature and Page Editor in 2012.