

Hybrid Communication and Community Resilience: The Adaptation of the Indonesian Citizens' Radio Community in Jepara

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has altered people's media consumption patterns, making traditional radio often seem less relevant. However, the sustainability of the amateur radio community demonstrates that conventional media can adapt and still play an important role. This study examines how Radio Antar Penduduk Indonesia (RAPI) Jepara maintains its relevance through a hybrid communication model that combines amateur radio with digital platforms, including WhatsApp, Telegram, and live *streaming*. The research focus is on how RAPI adapts to media convergence while maintaining its community-based identity. This research uses a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, then thematically analyzed using the Braun & Clarke framework to uncover patterns of meaning that reflect sociocultural dynamics within the community. The analysis was enriched by Everett Rogers' theory of innovation diffusion, which explains the process of technology adoption among RAPI members. The study's results show that amateur radio remains the primary communication medium, especially in emergencies, while digital media serve to enhance efficiency, coordination, and documentation. Innovation at RAPI Jepara takes place through hands-on experience, mentoring, and trust-based interactions. This study contributes to a broader understanding of media convergence and community resilience by affirming that technological adaptation does not necessarily eliminate the collective values or social identities of communities.

Keywords

Amateur Radio; RAPI Jepara; Conventional Media; Diffusion of Innovation; Digital Age

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought about significant changes in the patterns of human interaction and the social dynamics of society. The internet, social media, and digital devices characterize the current era as a digital society, where human activities are highly dependent on the access and distribution of information. These changes have a direct impact on media consumption patterns: conventional media, such as television, newspapers, and radio, are being replaced by internet-based media, which is increasingly dominating. (Fajriah & Ningsih, 2024) (Hasan et al., 2023)

Advances in communication technology have enabled the convergence of media, which is the merging of old and new technologies (Takarani, 2013). The radio industry, as a traditional form of media, now faces a significant challenge in maintaining its relevance amid the increasing penetration of



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digital media. Radio, as a media based on electromagnetic waves, is often considered to be lagging compared to online media, which is more interactive and *on-demand* (Ahda et al., 2025) (Morissan, 2018) (Jenkins, 2006). Changing tastes of young audiences and increasing access to the internet and smartphones have made the position of radio even more pressing. (Monument et al., 2025)

Nonetheless, not all radio has lost its appeal. Some radio communities continue to operate while adjusting to new technologies (Maharani et al., 2022). One of them is Radio Inter Population Indonesia (RAPI), an amateur radio community that combines conventional communication systems (VHF/UHF) with digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and *live streaming*. RAPI remains relevant in modern society, particularly in emergencies where the internet or mobile network is unavailable. Direct communication between users also reduces the risk of spreading hoaxes.

Everett Rogers' theory of the Diffusion of Innovation (1983) is an appropriate theoretical framework for this context. Rogers explained that the success of innovation is determined by five main characteristics, namely (1) *relative advantage*, (2) *compatibility*, (3) *complexity*, (4) *trialability*, and (5) *observability*. This theory will help study how RAPI Jepara survives in the new media era by combining digital and conventional technologies. (Rogers, 1983)

Previous studies have shown that conventional media are still relevant as long as they can adapt to digital technology. Migrating to streaming platforms could sustain campus community radio, according to Arif, Zuhri, and Suwatah. Although conventional media still serves as a complement, Hasan, Utami, Eni, Izzah, & Ramadhan show that the younger generation prefers digital media because it is fast and interactive. Agustin and Saidah emphasized Radio Baladeka's approach, which combines digital broadcasting with the preservation of local values. (Arif et al., 2022) (Hasan et al., 2023) (Agustin & Saidah, 2024)

However, this study focuses more on the relevance of conventional communication media in the digital era through a case study of RAPI Jepara, although previous research has discussed campus or professional community radio more than amateur communities such as RAPI. This is where this research differs: how non-commercial radio communities, such as RAPI, can survive by employing a hybrid approach in the midst of digital media's dominance.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative ethnographic approach, involving direct observation of members of the RAPI community in Jepara, both in their activities and interactions. The ethnographic approach is a process that has distinct stages and characteristics, including explaining culture and social events to gain an understanding of life from different perspectives. (Mahendra et al., 2024)

The main location of the research is the RAPI Jepara secretariat, located on Jl. Shima No.38, Pengkol III, Jepara Regency, Central Java. To obtain the main data, the researcher conducted observations and interviews with 15 informants, comprising core management, former members, and new members. Secondary data were collected through literature studies relevant to the topics of community communication and innovation diffusion. Informants were selected using snowball sampling techniques based on their experience, active role, and participation in community activities. (Saldana et al., 2014)

Three main methods were employed to collect data: activity documentation, in-depth interviews on communication practices and technology adaptation, and participatory observation of community activities. The Braun & Clarke framework, which encompasses the processes of familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, and interpretation, serves as the basis for the thematic analysis techniques

used to analyze data. The encoding is performed manually by comparing the interview transcript for similarities. The main themes are then categorized according to the topics discussed. (Iryana et al., 2021) (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Triangulation of sources and methods, extension of observation time, and re-checking of data with informants are carried out to ensure the validity of the research results (Nurfajriani et al., 2024). The researcher also reviewed the analysis results and reflected on the possibility of subjective interpretations to ensure the research remained reliable and consistent (Winaryati, 2019). Thus, this method not only explains how research is conducted but also emphasizes the importance of direct involvement of researchers in understanding the communication culture and the right strategy for the RAPI Jepara community.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Research Results

The field results show that the RAPI Jepara community has a unique communication adaptation pattern. Although different types of digital media are widely available, radio frequency technology remains the primary medium. Interviews with senior and new members reveal that HT radios and frequency-based communication devices continue to be used because they have proven to have relative advantages in emergencies, especially when the internet is unavailable. This was confirmed by Mr. Yesus (a member since 2007), who said that although the internet network did not work during the floods in Jepara, communication through HT still worked. This experience reinforces my conviction that RAPI is crucial for emergency response communication systems at the local level.

In addition to technical factors, social cohesion and organizational discipline are crucial for sustaining communities. Information, as emphasized by Pak Edy and Pak Kipli, highlights that RAPI focuses on communication and collaboration tools among its members. The unique social bonds in this community are strengthened through daily activities, such as frequency monitoring, antenna discussions, and helping one another with technical issues. The conformity of innovation with existing norms and principles in society is an aspect of compatibility in Rogers' theory.

Digital media is positioned as a tool to help with documentation and coordination. Social media helps some members, such as Pak Kanip and Pak Aris, but it cannot replace the main function of radio communication. Pak Aris, a member of the SAR team, said that in disaster situations, radio remains the most reliable medium because signals are often prone to hoaxes, which can limit the effectiveness of social media. This perspective shows that the acceptance of digital innovation is selective; changes are made based on functional relevance rather than technological trends.

On the contrary, technical learning and regeneration processes are also critical to the sustainability of the community. In the diffusion of innovation, informants such as Pak Edy and new members, including Pak Joko and Pak Irkam, described how antenna assembly training, the use of HT, and SAR simulations were employed to test the approach. This activity enables new members to experience firsthand how radio technology works and reap its benefits. Ultimately, this will improve the diffusion process and expand the membership base. Technical training efforts also make technology more accessible to new members. This makes radio innovation interesting and easy to apply in everyday life. (Tripambudi, 2011)

New generations, such as Pak Jingking, Pak Seno, and Pak Bondan, are interested in RAPI because they have experienced it firsthand through field activities, including training and disaster response. They realized that radio communication had unparalleled social and pragmatic benefits.

However, the younger generation is also more prepared to use digital media for documentation, promotion, and coordination. It demonstrates how intergenerational adaptation occurs, where digital innovation is incorporated without eliminating the traditional values of the community. (R. I. (Saputra et al., 2025)

The leader of RAPI Jepara is organizationally aware of the importance of maintaining a balance between analog and digital communication. The Chairman of RAPI stated that increasing real activities, such as training, event guarding, and SAR operations, as well as optimizing digital media for education and publication, are integral to the organization's sustainability strategy. The vice chairman and secretary stated that although the main identity of RAPI must be maintained through radio communication practices, social media can be an effective tool to attract the interest of the younger generation.

The communication model of RAPI Jepara exhibits a selective and contextual diffusion process when examined through the framework of Rogers' Innovation Diffusion theory. Adaptation to digital media is not full adoption but rather a convergent innovation that combines the technical power of radio with the reach and efficiency of digital media (Pangestu et al., 2024). This process is successful because the innovations adopted meet several key characteristics: (1) they have a relative advantage in emergency conditions, (2) they correspond to community values, (3) they are not difficult because they are based on technical experience, and (4) new members can see the benefits firsthand through practical activities.

Therefore, RAPI Jepara is a great example of how the local community can maintain its technological identity and remain flexible to keep pace with the times. The combination of analog and digital media demonstrates the community's ability to adapt, showcasing a relevant form of technological resilience and social cohesion amid the communication challenges of the digital age. (Ichsan et al., 2023)

3.2 Thematic Analysis of Research Results

This study found that the Indonesian Inter-Population Radio Community (RAPI) in the Jepara Region employs functional, social, and adaptive strategies to maintain the relevance of conventional communication media amid the development of digital technology. The thematic analysis revealed eight key findings that demonstrate how these communities are driving innovation.

First, amateur radio has a relative advantage over digital media that relies on network infrastructure in emergencies, such as when the internet is cut off during a disaster. Radio became the primary choice due to its resilience in crises, demonstrating that the technology was not only modern but also durable and reliable for communication. (Stuttgart, 2011)

Second, the bond of solidarity and respect among members is a very important component of compatibility. The social culture of the Jepara community aligns with the values of togetherness, cooperation, and loyalty instilled by RAPI members. It is this commonality of values that makes advances in radio communication acceptable and persistently maintained. This advancement is not only due to technology, but also because it is integrated with the social identity of the people.

Third, the aspects of *observability* and *trialability* are evident in the practice of technical guidance from senior members to new members, such as training in antenna construction or the use of HT. New members can try radio technology firsthand and discover its benefits, fostering a sense of ownership towards innovation. Additionally, this process facilitates the adoption of radio devices for new generations, who may have previously found them difficult to operate.

Fifth, the fact that members are drawn through social activities and training demonstrates that communication lines based on social proximity facilitate the spread of innovation. This intensive yet informal recruitment process fosters social solidarity and ensures continuous renewal. However, internal dynamics suggest the presence of intergenerational conflict. Due to their limitations and their preference for conventional methods, some senior members show resistance to the use of digital media. On the other hand, younger members are more likely to welcome the use of new media. These tensions highlight an important aspect of diffusion, where conflict and generational differences are a normal part of adapting community innovation. (Badri, 2022) (Saputra, 2025)

In addition, RAPI's strategic role as a liaison between the official disaster management system and citizen communication is demonstrated by its collaboration with BPBD, SAR, and various public institutions. By working together, the community can witness firsthand the success of RAPI through real-life activities, such as SAR operations, aid distribution, or large-scale event security. This increases the oversight dimension of community innovation.

Finally, the *grassroots innovation* that is critical to the organization's sustainability is demonstrated by the creativity of its members in creating DIY antennas, building *local repeaters*, and conducting technical training. This activity is not only technical but also demonstrates that communities remain self-sufficient and resilient in the face of change.

Overall, these results suggest that the sustainability of conventional media depends on the strength of social values, collective identity, and selective adaptation to new technologies. RAPI Jepara demonstrates how community communication can evolve into a hybrid without compromising its core characteristics. These results enhance research on the resilience of community-based communication, demonstrating that a balance between modernity and tradition can facilitate social and technological growth (Rahmah et al., 2024).

3.3 The Diffusion and Adoption Process

Based on the research results, the recruitment and learning process of new RAPI Jepara members can be explained through the five stages of innovation diffusion, as outlined by Rogers (1983). Each stage, from awareness to confirmation, is reflected in community activities.

Table 1. The Process of Innovation Diffusion at RAPI Jepara

Diffusion Stage (Rogers)	Findings at RAPI Jepara
Knowledge	Technical guidance on amateur radio during village activities/public training sessions, where prospective members are introduced directly to the equipment and community.
Persuasion	Prospective members see tangible benefits, such as coordination during disasters or community events, which motivates them to join.
Decision	Prospective members are allowed to try out the device (trialability) under the guidance of a mentor.
Implementation	New members participate in formal communication sessions, training, and active use of radio equipment.
Confirmation	Positive feedback and member testimonials reinforce legitimacy and encourage continued participation.

The table indicates that mentoring systems and hands-on experience are crucial in accelerating the adoption of innovation. In addition to gaining technical knowledge, prospective members experience social integration in the community. This experience-based method is very effective because it is rooted in a local culture that emphasizes togetherness and cooperation. Additionally, this approach aligns more closely with the community's values compared to the formal training process. This shows that the adoption of innovation is not only the result of knowledge exchange but also the internalization of collective value.

In addition, the characteristics of innovation as described by Rogers (1983) can be used to understand the effectiveness of innovation diffusion in RAPI Jepara. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Characteristics of Innovation at RAPI Jepara

Characteristics of Innovation (Rogers)	Findings at RAPI Jepara
Relative Advantage	Amateur radio can still be used without credit or data allowance and is the most reliable means of communication during disasters or internet outages.
Compatibility	In line with the culture of mutual cooperation and local solidarity, it also strengthens the social identity of community members.
Complexity	The use of radio equipment is initially technical, but it becomes easy to learn through mentoring and hands-on technical guidance from experienced members.
Trialability	Prospective members can try out the radio equipment during public training sessions or community meetings before deciding to join.
Observability	The benefits are immediately apparent, for example, the successful coordination during disasters, public events, or SAR exercises, which provide clear evidence of the effectiveness of radio communication.

Relative superiority and conformity emerged as the most dominant factors accelerating the acceptance of innovation. However, the complexity aspect shows an interesting aspect, namely that although amateur radio technology is considered technical, the mentoring-based learning process actually reduces the perception of complexity. Mentoring from senior members provides technical training and social bonding. This explains why experiential learning is very effective in the context of local communities such as RAPI Jepara.

The *trialability* and *observability* aspects also facilitate collective learning, as new members can try out the device and assess its effectiveness in disaster response. This Jepara cultural practice, which emphasizes social activity, confirms that the diffusion of innovation does not occur as linearly as Rogers suggests. Instead, it happens repetitively and interpersonally through the process of sharing experiences. Furthermore, the pattern of innovation adoption in RAPI Jepara can be categorized into five types of adopters, as outlined by Rogers (1983).

Table 3. RAPI Jepara Member Adopters Category

Adopter Category	General Characteristics	Findings at RAPI Jepara
Innovators	Quick to try new things, bold in experimentation, a conduit for new ideas	Relatively rare, usually members who have their own equipment or actively experiment with homemade antennas.
Early Adopters	Respected, a role model, a source of recommendations	Respected senior members provide technical guidance to new members.
Early Majority	Cautious but quicker to accept new technology, a bridge for innovation	New members are adaptable and quickly integrate digital media (WhatsApp, Telegram) to support communication.
Late Majority	Skeptical, only joining after the majority has accepted the innovation	The majority of long-time members, who are more comfortable with conventional radio communication, are reluctant to adopt digital platforms unless necessary.
Laggards	Traditional, bound by old values, very slow to adopt	Found in a small number of older members who only rely on HT/rigs and are reluctant to use digital applications.

The mapping results indicate that the majority of old members belong to the Late Majority category, whereas new members who prefer digital media are classified in the Early Majority category. To accelerate the diffusion of innovation, interpersonal trust-based adoption and hands-on technical experience are essential. However, this process also reveals an element of symbolic power within the community, specifically that senior members maintain technical standards and authority, thereby governing how innovation is implemented (Scott, 2018). This suggests that the Rogers model is limited by the assumption that the adoption process occurs in a neutral and individualistic manner. However, in a community like RAPI Jepara, social relationships and internal hierarchy are the main factors that determine the direction of diffusion (Rusmiarti, 2015).

Overall, this section shows how Rogers' theory can be applied in the local environment. This not only explains how innovation is received but also uncovers the social and cultural values that underpin it. Collective learning, mentoring, and cooperation form a hybridization between technical innovation and social solidarity. This makes RAPI Jepara not only a technology user but also a diffusion agent that instills the value of togetherness in community innovation.

3.4 Discussion

The results of this study confirm the theory that conventional media can survive through transformation into digital media, thanks to innovation and adaptation (Suryadi et al., 2025). RAPI Jepara does not replace amateur radio with digital technology; rather, it utilizes it as a complement for coordination, documentation, and promotion, while radio remains the primary channel for emergency communication. This pattern aligns with the finding that the existence of conventional media in the digital era is highly dependent on innovation, technological integration, and external collaboration. (Lathifah & Istanbul, 2021)

3.4.1 Innovation Diffusion and Adoption Process

RAPI Jepara demonstrates how the process of diffusion of innovation unfolds through direct experience and mentoring among members. The diffusion stages of Rogers (1983), which progress from knowledge to persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation, are reflected in the practice of recruiting and learning new members. For example, prospective members are allowed to try out radio equipment before deciding to join. This differs from the findings on the Surabaya campus community radio, where the diffusion of innovation occurs more through streaming technology and broadcast laboratories. Thus, the adoption model of RAPI Jepara is more based on interpersonal trust and direct technical practice, while campus radio is more on digital experimentation. (Arif et al., 2022)

In addition, the results of this study also found that the adoption pattern of RAPI Jepara members followed five categories of adopters by Rogers (1983). The majority of the old members comprise the Late Majority, who tend to stick to conventional media. In contrast, the new members are closer to the Early Majority, as they quickly integrate digital media, such as WhatsApp and Telegram. This pattern is similar to the finding that young people are more likely to accept digital media, while older generations tend to retain conventional media, even at low intensity. (Hasan et al., 2023)

3.4.2 The Relevance of Conventional Media in the Digital Age

The relative superiority of amateur radio in emergency conditions proves that conventional media is not completely replaced by new media (Maryati et al., 2025). The authenticity of the sound and the speed of communication at RAPI Jepara underscore the technical superiority of radio over digital information, which is often distorted or delayed. This reinforces the view that Baladeka community radio remains in demand because it preserves local wisdom and leverages digital technology as an additional channel. The difference is that RAPI Jepara emphasizes the function of public safety (SAR, disaster, emergency communication), while Baladeka emphasizes local cultural and entertainment identity. (Agustin & Saidah, 2024)

3.4.3 Social Implications and Collective Identity

The results of the study also confirm that the existence of RAPI Jepara is not solely due to technical factors, but also to social values and community identity. Members take pride in being part of a community that plays a crucial role in disaster and public communication. This aligns with Rogers' theory of compatibility, which posits that innovation is more readily accepted when it aligns with local values and culture. These findings also confirm the difference with the study, which states that conventional media only serves as a complement. In the case of RAPI Jepara, radio remains the center of social identity, while digital media serves as a supporting role. (Hasan et al., 2023)

3.4.5 Challenges and Opportunities

The main challenge of RAPI Jepara is the limited digital skills among older members, as well as their resistance to digital platforms. This aligns with the complexity characteristic of Rogers (1983), where innovation is considered difficult for some users. However, regeneration through technical training and mentoring proves that there is an opportunity to expand the member base. These findings reinforce the study that innovative changes in radio affect audience loyalty. The difference is that RAPI Jepara's innovation is not in the form of full digitalization, but rather hybridization, which combines the advantages of radio with the flexibility of digital media. (Monument et al., 2025)

This transformation is unique in that it combines the art of amateur radio engineering with modern

digital capabilities, not just one, and is a concrete example of media convergence on a micro-community scale that has not been widely researched.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the RAPI Jepara community can maintain the relevance of conventional media by integrating digital platforms and amateur radio as a hybrid approach. Digital media is used to organize and disseminate activities, but radio remains the primary medium for communication (Vidiadari et al., 2023). This suggests that technological advances do not necessarily replace traditional media, but rather, they enhance media by adapting it to the principles and nature of the community (Purwanto et al., 2025). These results show that Rogers' Innovation Diffusion Theory is of great importance; at RAPI Jepara, technology adoption is driven by members' hands-on experience, assistance, and trust. Adaptation depends on factors such as cultural suitability, relative superiority, and the ability to observe the results of innovation (Ibrahim et al., 2025). Therefore, the sustainability of community media depends on a balance of technology, social value, and culture (Hervansyah et al., 2025).

This research contributes to the development of community communication studies and media resilience in the digital era. In practical terms, these findings can serve as a reference for other communities in building resilient and participatory communication systems. Further research is recommended to study similar communities or conduct long-term studies better to understand the dynamics of community media transformation over time.

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