

The Challenge of Covering the World Superbike: The Experience of Journalists in Lombok, Indonesia, in Covering the Mandalika World Superbike Motor Racing

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Abstract

This study aims to discuss and explain the challenges of the journalists in Lombok, Indonesia, in covering the international motorcycle racing World Superbike (WSBK). This study uses the case study method to find out what are the challenges that journalists have in covering WSBK. This study also explores how journalists deal with the challenges they face. The researchers conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to collect the data. The participants of this research consisted of journalists of Suara NTB, Lombok Post, IDN Times, and Kompas.id who focused on covering WSBK. This study found that the challenges faced by journalists were the lack of language skills for coverage of international activities, lack of legal insight, environmental insight, and the changes in routine coverage. In addition, journalists face this challenge by taking the initiative to create language course classes, collaborate with legal experts and legal aid agencies, and collaborate with environmental experts; while routine problems are handled by expanding access to information and office transportation operations.

Keywords: challenges, journalists, covering, WSBK.

Introduction

One of the challenges of today's media is the rapid change in the environment (Nielsen et al., 2016). Environmental and social changes are also challenges that have an impact on journalists. This impact can be in the form of journalists' awareness that they play a role in social change and redefining what journalism is in the midst of social change (Wagemans et al., 2019). Currently, social, economic, and cultural changes are occurring in Mandalika, Lombok, Indonesia, due to the impact of tourism. These changes cover the economic to socio-cultural fields (Haris et al., 2020). In 2021, the Mandalika Pertamina International Circuit, Lombok, Indonesia will officially become one of the hosts for an international motor racing event of the World Superbike (WSBK).

Journalists always face challenges in various places. In general, the challenges of journalists in different countries are different. In the US, Japan, and Finland the challenge for journalists is to cover the topic of innovation (Merisalo, 2011). In Saudi Arabia, the challenge for journalists is in the relation to gender; women get challenged as journalists because of the lack of privacy provided by their families. Besides that, there is an assumption that if female journalists are successful, they usually flirt with their superiors (Aljuaid, 2020). Journalists in Europe also face challenges when covering news during pandemics. They are required to adapt and force them to work in a hybrid way (López, 2020).

Various studies show that the challenges of journalists covering sporting events are no less complex. Sports journalists may not go through the same reporting process as journalists in other fields (Wanta, 2013). In India, the trend of female journalists covering sports such as cricket is increasing, but they still face challenges because there are still few who fill managerial positions (Shivakumar, 2017). Female journalists experienced sexual harassment while covering the world cup soccer in Russia (Westcott, 2018). Sports Editors usually experience more emotional exhaustion than other staff. Meanwhile, younger and less experienced journalists experience higher stress levels than more experienced journalists (Reinardy, 2006). In the UK, journalists' access to the information about football is limited because football clubs prefer to control information about their clubs due to awareness of their brand image on a global scale (Coombs, 2012). In the Balkans, journalists find it challenging to cover topics related to sports corruption (Manoli et al., 2021).

In Lombok, this year is the first experience for journalists to cover international motor racing events such as WSBK. Motorcycle racing is a very complex event or activity, due to the potential stress for athletes and the high risk of death (Jamson et al., 2009; Talib et al., 2015). This is certainly a

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challenge for journalists in Lombok in covering all matters related to WSBK. The ability of journalists to adapt to changing times is being tested today.

This paper aims to explore the challenges faced by journalists in Lombok in covering all things about WSBK. In addition, the researchers also want to find how these journalists face the challenges based on their experiences so far. Although until this research was conducted, the WSBK racing activity had not been carried out; yet, there were many preparations that have been done for the race, such as circuit construction, logistics, regulation, economic, social, political, and cultural impacts because of the WSBK. Thus, it is interesting to see what challenges are faced by journalists who cover WSBK and how journalists face the challenges they have so far. On the one hand, journalists in Lombok are getting their first experience covering a racing event of this size; on the other hand, the public needs accurate information related to WSBK. The experience of journalists in covering all things about WSBK deserves attention because it will open opportunities for the public to know how the information about WSBK is actually processed.

Method

The method used in this research is a case study. Case studies are used to conduct a research that does not intend to change the attitudes and actions of the research subjects. This method can also be used to see certain contexts that are relevant to the phenomenon under study. (Yin in Bexter et al., 2008). Case studies can also be an entry point for researchers to conduct research from what was previously unknown to well known (Starman, 2013).

The data in this study were collected by conducting a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with four journalists in Lombok. Researchers initially chose journalists who could represent major media in Lombok and online media contributors headquartered in Jakarta. In addition, the researcher also determined the FGD participants by considering whether the journalists were covering the WSBK or not. Researchers collected four journalists who met the criteria that had been mentioned, including the journalist of Suara NTB (AH), the journalist of Lombok Post (HW), the journalist of Kompas.id (ID), and the journalist of IDN Times (VW). This research provides opportunities for the journalists to share their views and experiences during coverage and focus on the challenges they face and how they overcome those challenges. The researchers then recorded the important points from the results of the discussion and save the data for display and description.

The Challenge of Covering WSBK

In general, journalists agreed that each coverage topic had its own challenges, such as covering economic, political, and cultural topics. However, covering on WSBK, journalists feel that they are required to have higher quality because there are so many angles that can be covered from this international sporting event. Because this topic is very large, cross-disciplinary competence is needed. The journalists realize that this WSBK will have a domino effect on various sectors, not only the tourism sector but also various other sectors, such as labor and people's income in the economic sector, policies and regulations in the political field, and socio-cultural changes of society. There are several challenges that they can explain based on their experience covering WSBK;

The first challenge is the language skills of the journalist. All journalists agreed that they experienced language difficulties when covering WSBK. It is because WSBK is an international event where the people and teams involved come from various countries. All of the participants of this research have Sasak as their first language and Indonesian as their second language, but all of them do not have good English skills. Thus, conducting interviews with racing teams and racers is very difficult for them. *"The ability to speak English is the problem. We can't speak English, it will be difficult to interview bikers in a language other than English,"* (HW). The difficulty increase when journalists are faced with technical terms in races that use English. This language difficulty situation is similar to that experienced by journalists in Europe who speak minority languages. This condition affects the production process and the quality of the stories that journalists write (Zabaleta, 2013). This condition is made worse because the media companies they work for do not have the resources to train their journalists in English. A similar phenomenon also occurs in Africa. The lack of journalistic skills is influenced by individual factors and the lack of evaluation from editors and media institutions (Steyn

et al.,2004). *“Until now there has never been any training in writing in English. In general, the training is only about covering and writing skills in the Indonesian,”* (ID). In Lombok, none of the media companies they work for provide English writing courses or training. English writing training is the responsibility of media companies. However, despite all that, journalists realize that they need language skills to be able to present accurate information to their audience.

The second challenge is legal insight. Journalists have a hard time covering the circuit-building land conflicts. It is because land conflicts are often related to legal cases. Until now, land conflicts in the circuit area and its surroundings still occur but journalists are not able to reveal this kind of case more comprehensively because of limited legal knowledge. *“It is very difficult to uncover land conflicts here. Besides we don't have adequate legal insight, the situation on the ground is indeed very complex,”* (VW). The difficulty in covering topics related to law are not only experienced by journalists in Lombok. The same thing happened in Australia. Journalists do not have a thorough understanding of Shield Law. A quarter of 154 respondents did not know whether the law would have an impact or not in their area (Fernandez, 2015). The media where they work also never provide training on laws related to land. *“So far the training has only been writing news, while we have encountered many legal terms and cases in the field. We find it is difficult to understand the main legal issues in the field when covering Mandalika,”* (ID). The media where they work only provide training on ethics in reporting and how to cover according to the press law in force in Indonesia.

The other challenge is environmental insight. Journalists find it difficult when covering environmental issues. This is due to the limitations of journalists that participate in understanding environmental issues. This is not only an insight into the natural damage that may be caused but also about the sustainability of the development of the circuit from a social and cultural perspective. *“It is difficult for us to cover environmental issues because we do not understand environmental journalism. However, when it comes to the social and natural impact of the construction of a race circuit, of course, we are aware of that. The problem in the field is that it is very difficult to investigate this problem,”* (AH). Difficulties regarding environmental issues were not only experienced by the participants of this research. Detik.com journalists also experience difficulties in covering environmental issues from a technical point of view when covering whales in Wakatobi (Iqbal, 2020). Apart from that, all of the participants realized that it was important to highlight environmental issues in this event. Issues such as circuit safety, waste management, potential flooding, and the involvement of local residents are recognized as important.

Finally, journalists also face challenges from changing of their routines coverage. The distance from the office to the location of the race is about an hour's drive. This resulted in journalists that participate in the FGD starting to work earlier because the covering and writing process tended to take longer than covering other topics. *“Usually I start reporting at 9 am, but now I have to leave at 7 or even earlier than that. Because the location of coverage is far. Automatically, coverage routines also change. We have to work harder,”* (HW). The experience of changing reporting routines due to changes in social and environmental contexts was not only felt by the participants of this research. Technological developments and digitalization have also greatly influenced the routines of journalists in other places. Ashari's research (2019) shows that changes in journalists' routines are not only about publishing through online media but also the changes from the way journalists get data to processing them into news. The researcher saw that this change in routine was a challenge because all the participants in this research did not live in Mandalika but in Mataram, Lombok, (Provincial Capital of West Nusa Tenggara).

Facing the Challenges

Based on the results of the FGD, there were several efforts made by journalists to face the perceived challenges in covering the WSBK. First, language skills are circumvented by making English learning classes. Because the media companies they work for do not facilitate this, then it is the journalist's own initiative. This initiative is also supported by journalists' associations. Two journalists affiliated with the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) created English class and were supported by their association. Meanwhile, despite recognizing the importance of English language skills, the other two journalists did not take the initiative or were facilitated by their associations to take English classes. The researchers found that through the discussion it was seen that the curriculum used for this

English class was also not clear. Thus, the English class is also not necessarily in accordance with the goals of journalists to learn English. However, the awareness and initiative of the Lombok journalists in covering the WSBK deserves appreciation.

Second, the lack of legal insight is usually circumvented by collaborating with legal aid institutions (LBH) around the Mandalika circuit, where the WSBK is being held. Journalists agree on the importance of collaboration with legal aid agencies. Apart from facilitating their access to legal knowledge, legal aid agencies are also more cooperative when journalists need explanations in legal cases. Legal cases that are usually covered by these journalists are land disputes. Land dispute cases are often found to be very complex by journalists even beyond their knowledge of the law. So far, collaborating with legal aid agencies has helped them to cover at least this according to their experience. Not only collaborated with legal aid agencies, one of the journalists suggested to other journalists collaborated with legal academics. Journalists who work at Kompas.com (ID) often seek legal academics to ask questions about cases of land conflicts that occurred in the construction of the WSBK and MotoGP circuits in Mandalika, Lombok, Indonesia.

Furthermore, journalists agree that environmental and social insights are the most complex insights. There was a lot that they didn't know about this topic. Moreover, this topic does not only talk about environmental damage but also about security and even concerns the social culture of local residents. Usually, they conduct interviews with residents living around the circuit to investigate the environmental impact. If there is something that journalists feel is potentially problematic, then they usually consult with competent academics. Academics and environmental practitioners tend to make their work easier during this time. So far, it is journalists who have made efforts on their own to gain environmental insight through collaboration, seminars and reading from various sources. This is how they overcome this challenge. This challenge must be able to be answered by journalists in the future because the dimension of the social environment is an important thing in organizing major sporting events (Solberg, 2016).

Another challenge that must be answered is the changing journalists' routines coverage. This situation is usually overcome by starting to work early. In addition, journalists also get facilities from their offices for operational coverage. *"The office has prepared a special operational car for operational coverage to Mandalika. My office seriously oversees this motor racing sport. This can be a solution for friends to travel long distances when using more comfortable transportation,"* (HW). For journalists who are not facilitated by their offices, this change in routine due to the distance from the reporting location is tricked by entering various WhatsApp groups of journalists who live around Mandalika. This strategy has been quite helpful for the journalists who participated in this research to access information without having to go to Mandalika. *"Usually joining the WA group makes it easier to access information about WSBK in Mandalika. Usually a lot of information that can facilitate the routine coverage we get,"* (VW).

Conclusion

In general, the challenges faced by journalists in different countries are different. However, the journalists covering sports topics also have their own problems, including the journalists that cover a sporting event as big as WSBK. With all the limitations, this research concludes that journalists in Lombok experience challenges in language skills, legal insight, environmental insight, and the changes in routine coverage. To face these challenges, the journalists took the initiative to create English learning course, collaborated with the Legal Aid Institute, and collaborated with environmental practitioners and academics. In addition, the changes in routine coverage are also circumvented by expanding access to information about WSBK which can be processed into news.

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