



The Transformation of Communication Medium among Sulinggih in the Development of Technology

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ABSTRACT

In its history, religious education was delivered by Sulinggih as religious leaders through oral traditions. However, the development of technology and communication has brought significant changes to various aspects of life, including how religious material is conveyed. This transformation presents both opportunities and challenges in ensuring that religious teachings remain relevant, engaging, and accessible to the modern generation. This article discusses how technological advancements have altered the communication approach of Hindu religious leaders in spreading religious knowledge to society. Using qualitative research, data is presented in the form of narrative descriptions based on the Shannon-Weaver Communication model. Data collection techniques include observation and literature study. The author conducted an observation of a video upload on the Wira.ID Channel YouTube channel, which featured dharma wacana (discourse) by a sulinggih. Meanwhile, the literature study was drawn from books and scientific journals with similar themes. Based on data analysis, it was found that Sulinggih can now utilize social media to expand the reach of their messages and create more inclusive communication. Digital platforms allow the spread of Hindu religious knowledge not only in physical spaces but also to a broader audience, including the younger generation. Despite challenges such as video quality issues and internet connection disruptions, the use of YouTube offers significant advantages in disseminating religious information. Hindu religious leaders' adaptation to this technology is also reflected in the application of interpersonal communication principles, creating a familiar and comfortable atmosphere between the communicator and the audience. By using YouTube, sulinggih can reduce potential redundancy and entropy in communication, ensuring the message remains clear. The large capacity of YouTube channels enables broadcasting to a large number of viewers, supporting the use of this media in spreading Hindu teachings in a more dynamic and relevant way to meet the needs of the times..

Keywords: Transformation, Religious Leaders, Technology, Interpersonal Communication.

Cite This Article: Dewi, I.A.M.R.P. 2024. The Transformation of Communication Medium among Sulinggih in the Development of Technology. *Bali Tourism Journal* 8(3): 51-55. DOI: 10.36675/btj.v8i3.115

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Received: 2024-12-7
Accepted: 2024-12-4
Published: 2024-12-9

INTRODUCTION

Historical manuscripts record that humans have a great curiosity about knowledge. Humans are classified as homo sapiens, beings who always think. They are born as educable beings (*animal educandum*), which means humans are constantly learning about everything. The course of history also proves that humans are philosophical beings (*ens metaphysicum*), which makes them not simply accept knowledge but critically examine it. Thales (624 – 565 BC) serves as evidence that civilization began with the discovery of knowledge related to nature.¹ As the first known Greek philosopher, scientist, and mathematician, he significantly influenced other philosophers like Anaximander and Anaximenes. This moment marks the beginning of the development of rational

thinking and the transformation of human life.

The development of science and knowledge has supported the development of human resources throughout the ages. This was marked by the birth of the Industrial Revolution 1.0 in the 18th century. This transformation impacted sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, mining, transportation, and technology. This transformation continues today, marked by the ongoing advancements in the Industrial Revolutions 4.0 and 5.0, which continually improve automation and digitalization. These shifts bring about major disruptions in social, legal, economic, behavioral, and societal life (Prasetyo & Trisyanti, 2019).²

Unconsciously, humans have collaborated with technology to meet the

basic needs of religious education. The Industrial Revolution 5.0 emphasizes the integration of advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and robotics, with human abilities and innovations, aiming to foster more efficient, flexible, sustainable education, and enhance well-being.

In religious education, a crucial foundation in the formation of moral, ethical, and spiritual values in society, traditional methods of teaching are no longer sufficient. New methods are needed. Historically, religious education has been delivered by religious leaders (*Sulinggih*) through oral traditions, sacred texts such as the Vedas and Bhagavad Gita, as well as direct guidance from teachers or panditas. However, the development of technology and communication has brought

significant changes to various aspects of life, including the way religious teachings are delivered. This transformation presents both opportunities and challenges in ensuring that religious teachings remain relevant, engaging, and accessible to modern generations.

The focus of this article will explore how technological advancements have changed the communication approach of Hindu religious leaders in disseminating religious knowledge to the public. This article employs qualitative research. This type of research prioritizes the process and meaning, measured precisely. It is characterized by natural settings or phenomena occurring in the field, emphasizing quality (Strauss, 2003:156).³ The process and interpretation/perspective of the informants are the main focus of qualitative research. Theoretical foundations and models guide researchers to ensure the research focus aligns with the field (Pujileksono, 2015:19).⁴ The data will be presented in the form of narrative descriptions based on the Shannon-Weaver communication model.

The data collection technique refers to methods that researchers can use to gather data (Kriyantono, 2020:93).⁵ The data collection techniques in this scientific article involve observation and literature study. The author observed a video post on the Wira.ID Channel's YouTube channel features a dharma discourse by a sulinggih (religious leader). Kriyantono (2020:291) explains that in observation, researchers use data collection methods to describe and explain the research phenomena, including interactions (behavior) among the subjects under study. Meanwhile, the literature study is conducted by enriching the data from books, journals, and articles related to Hindu religious leaders' communication in the context of technological development.

DISCUSSION

Technology's Impact on Human Communication

Humans are thinking beings and always adapt to their surrounding environment (Koentjaraningrat, 2007:32).⁶ In this process of adaptation, humans continuously communicate as a means of interacting with one another to reach a

consensus in society (Judita, in Suhardi, 2023).⁷ According to Suwardi (1986:13) in Rohim (2009:8).⁸ communication, or communication, comes from the Latin word *communis* or *commun*, which means "the same." This is in line with Cherry's statement in Stuart, 1983, cited in Cangara (2009:18)⁹, which explains that the term communication originates from the Latin word *communis*, meaning to create or build togetherness between two or more people. Hovland, Janis, and Kelly define communication as follows:

"Communication is the process by which an individual (the communicator) transmits stimuli (usually verbal symbols) to modify the behavior of individuals (the audiences)" (Tamburaka, 2012:7)¹⁰.

Meaning: Communication is the process by which an individual, as the communicator, sends a stimulus, usually in the form of verbal symbols, to influence the behavior of others, in this case, the audience.

Technology has developed at a significant pace. Numerous technological innovations have been produced in recent years, ranging from nanotechnology, biotechnology, and blockchain to artificial intelligence.¹¹ The possibility of new technologies emerging is also very

high as innovators continue to develop new technologies with new goals and mindsets. Digital transformation is not just the adoption of technology but a process aimed at improving an institution by triggering significant changes in its core components through the combination of information technology, computing, communication, and connectivity (Vial, in Akbari, 2022).¹²

Some of the impacts of technological development show the emergence of the Internet, which is used in various new communication tools such as mobile phones, social media networks, and various instant messaging applications. This has made access to information faster and easier. The development of technology has also contributed to the development of human thinking (Anggraeni, 2022).¹⁴

Daryanto, in Husnita (2019)¹⁵, states that one of the most frequently used types of communication is interpersonal communication. In everyday life, interpersonal communication is practiced by two or more people, either verbally or non-verbally, to align their perceptions. In principle, interpersonal communication is a transactional process because it is ongoing. The communicator and the communicant engage in interdependent

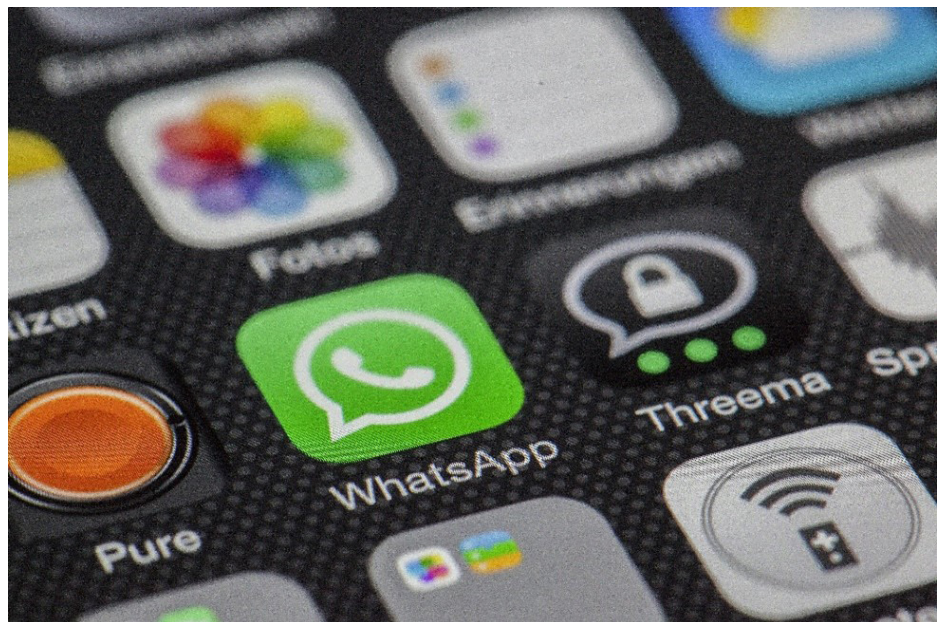


Figure 1. ¹³ The possibility of new technologies emerging is also very high as innovators continue to develop new technologies with new goals and mindsets.

communication until the effectiveness of information transfer is achieved and the communication objectives are fulfilled (De Vito, in Husnita 2019).

The Shannon-Weaver communication model highlights the process of delivering a message based on the creation of the message and its transmission through a channel to a receiver. The concepts of the Shannon-Weaver communication model are Entropy (uncertainty), Redundancy (part of the message that can be eliminated), Noise (interference), and Channel Capacity (the maximum amount of information that can be transmitted). The diverse communication devices make it easier for humans to connect and exchange information. However, in practice, interference (noise) often occurs, and the message receiver may not be able to provide feedback (Husnita, 2019).

Meanwhile, digital transformation is an ongoing holistic change effort, starting from culture to policy. The focus of digital transformation is user-oriented, aimed at offering new service models (Mergel et al., in Akbari 2022). Therefore, digital transformation involves comprehensive changes to an entire system within a group or organization. Digital transformation leads to profound cultural changes, enabling new educational models and communication strategies in the dissemination of Hindu religious knowledge.

Transformation of Communication Among Hindu Religious Leaders in Enhancing Public Knowledge

A variety of human activities have largely shifted to the digital realm. Communication occurs in various contexts, including education and religion. The communication channels in religious matters require a series of transitions to deliver effective messages to society. Today, technology is developing rapidly, prompting the adaptation process of governments, educators, and religious leaders to create a dynamic Hindu religious education system. Mihardjo et al., in Akbari (2022), state that optimizing digital technology is an opportunity to increase income and reduce threats.

Hindu religious education is a crucial foundation in shaping the moral, ethical,

and spiritual aspects of Hindu society. Religious leaders play an essential role in shaping well-rounded Hindu individuals. Titib, in Sukadana (2022)¹⁶, explains that Hinduism is a religion that must be spread. The Sloka from Yayurveda XXVI.2 states: “*Yathemam vacam kalyanim a vadani janebhyah Brahma rajanyabhyam sudraya caryaya ca Svaya caranaya ca*”.

Meaning: This sacred word should be delivered to all of humanity—scholars, spiritual leaders, community leaders, merchants, farmers, fishermen, and workers, whether they are my people or foreigners.

The position of priests in society holds an important place, honored with titles like Siwa or Surya, which specifically mean spiritual teacher. Below Siwa are the Hindu community members, positioned as sisya or spiritual students. Swarsi et al., in Sukadana (2022), emphasize that the significant role of Hindu priests in Balinese society should be taken seriously. This concerns the readiness of a walaka to undergo initiation and then become a qualified priest/Sulinggih. Ultimately, this will enable them to guide the community toward achieving the four goals of life known as Catur Purusa Artha. This aligns with the swadharma (duty) of a priest, where the religious leader or sulinggih should formulate new methods, including

diversifying communication channels with the community. The sulinggih has a function as the leader of religious ceremonies, known as Loka Pala Sraya. They can easily disseminate knowledge and provide positive vibrations related to Hinduism.

Currently, Hindu religious leaders can fulfil their role as Guru Loka or spiritual mentors by utilizing advancements in communication technology. By incorporating technology, adapting to the needs of the community, and taking a more inclusive approach to spreading religious teachings, they can effectively reach their audience. Sulinggih, as a spiritual leader, plays a critical role in introducing Hindu teachings, whether in religious rituals, religious organizations, education, or the everyday life of the Hindu community.

The sulinggih works to strengthen the faith (*sraddha*) and devotion (*bhakti*) of the community towards God and to overcome problems together based on fraternity. To increase public knowledge, sulinggih can provide explanations like teachings from sacred texts, giving *dharma tula* and *dharma wacana*. This medium can be further enhanced by expanding communication reach and enriching access to religious knowledge online and through social media platforms. Video lectures or discussions by sulinggih can be adapted to meet the needs of modern society. This approach is supported by the fact that, in 2024, Indonesia has 164 million active social media users, or 64.3% of the population (RRI, 2024).¹⁸

Not limited to physical spaces, this method makes it easier to disseminate information more widely. The emergence of religious figures in the digital space will increase the frequency of publications by religious leaders. The public, as online viewers, will recognize that the sulinggih is not only present in religious rituals but is also capable of guiding the spiritual life of the community. Explanations of the meaning behind Hinduism, both theoretically and practically, can change the “dogma” or perception of the term *anak mule keto* (Wiana, in Sukadana 2022).

The communication that sulinggih can foster to enhance public knowledge involves applying interpersonal principles.



Figure 2. ¹⁷ The sulinggih has a function as the leader of religious ceremonies, known as Loka Pala Sraya. They can easily disseminate knowledge and provide positive vibrations related to Hinduism.

The communicator's perspective, in this case, the *sulinggih*, should align as much as possible with their self-concept when delivering information and knowledge. The *sulinggih* must be open and confident in themselves. According to interpersonal communication principles, a positive attitude involves keeping communication open, ensuring a two-way dialogue, and creating a warm and comfortable communication environment. These principles can be applied in presenting Hindu religious material using various communication devices.

Based on the data analysis from the YouTube video on the Wira.ID Channel titled "*Dunia Sulinggih Sedang Tidak Baik*" with the speaker Ida Pandita Mpu Nabe Jaya Acharya Nanda, it was found that the speaker, as the communicator, delivers information in both Indonesian and Balinese, using some specific terms. The religious leader did this because the location of the *dharma wacana* was in Lampung Province, with an audience of Hindu community members settled in that area.

The *sulinggih* expresses a greeting to the audience, not only within Hinduism but also within Islam. This demonstrates redundancy. Redundancy is a part of the message that can be eliminated without losing important information. In communication, redundancy refers to the use of additional elements in a message that reduce the chances of error.

At minute 04:20, the *sulinggih* says, "Let us relax so it flows smoothly." This can be interpreted as the religious leader, as the communicator, is trying to create an intimate atmosphere. However, this situation could be seen as entropy, both for the audience present and those watching the YouTube video. It appears that the speaker is adjusting to the situation to convey the message or rhetorical content accurately.

Furthermore, the role of YouTube media in Hindu religious communication is crucial. This new method can break through space and time limitations quickly, with affordable costs and energy. The dissemination of Hindu religious knowledge to the community will be more effective when conveyed informally. The use of technology will



Figure 3. ¹⁹ Ida Pandita Mpu Nabe Jaya Acharya Nanda, as a priest, delivers information in both Indonesian and Balinese, using some specific terms.

reach various generations (Husnita, 2019). Communication channels via YouTube have potential noise, such as poor video and audio quality from the sender. Additionally, noise can occur due to poor internet connectivity, affecting the quality of the video or audio received by the audience. This condition can reduce the effectiveness of the message conveyed by the communicator.

Lastly, the channel capacity of YouTube refers to the maximum amount of information that can be transmitted through a communication channel in a given time frame, with a very low or no error rate. According to information from the YouTube platform, it has the advantage of facilitating videos with a maximum duration of up to 12 hours. Moreover, there is no specific limitation on the number of viewers. Thus, the video can be watched by an unlimited number of viewers at the same time. This indicates that the channel capacity of YouTube is highly supportive for use as a medium for spreading Hindu religious knowledge by religious leaders in the context of the transformation of communication in the development of technology.

CONCLUSION

Currently, digital technology plays a crucial role in the transformation of communication across various sectors, including Hindu religious education. Hindu religious leaders, such as *sulinggih*, play a central role in delivering religious teachings and guiding the community through rituals and spiritual teachings. With the advancement of technology, *sulinggih* can utilize digital platforms

like YouTube to expand the reach of their messages, connect with a broader audience, and create more inclusive communication. This approach allows for the wider dissemination of Hindu religious knowledge, not only in physical spaces but also through social media, reaching various segments of society, including younger generations. Despite challenges such as noise in video quality and internet connectivity, the use of digital platforms still offers significant benefits in the dissemination of religious information.

The importance of Hindu religious leaders' adaptation to technology is also reflected in the application of interpersonal communication principles, which can create a warm and comfortable atmosphere between the communicator and the audience. By utilizing media such as YouTube, *sulinggih* can minimize redundancy and entropy in communication, ensuring that the message conveyed remains clear and effective. The large channel capacity of YouTube, which allows for live broadcasts with a very large number of viewers, further supports the use of this media as a tool for spreading Hindu religious teachings. Therefore, technology not only assists religious leaders in performing their roles but also opens up new opportunities to introduce Hinduism to the broader public in a more dynamic and relevant manner, in line with the needs of the times.

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