

## **Worker Commodification and Human Resource Strategies in GIG Economy Era (Case Study in AMEG.TV, Malang, East Java, Indonesia)**



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**ABSTRACT:** Human resources are company assets that must be managed and developed, because indirectly workers can affect the quality of company performance. The process of worker commodification is a form of company in utilizing the skills and abilities of workers to get the maximum benefit. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. This research reveals that the concept of media convergence adopted by Arema Media Group has an impact on the management of the company under its coverage. In one of the Arema Media group companies, Ameg.tv, there is a practice of commodification of workers in the form of additional working hours, double duty, chasing targets, and adaptation. Ameg.tv in human resource management in the GIG Economy era must understand the characteristics of employees in order to map the positions, duties, and responsibilities of employees to achieve Ameg.tv targets in facing the challenges of media convergence.

**KEYWORDS:** Worker Commodification, GIG Economy, Media Convergence, Creative Industry

### **BACKGROUND**

Professionalism of a worker is shown through a mental attitude in the form of commitment in increasing skills, and knowledge according to their expertise. Professional workers are valuable company assets, because all assets except human resources can be purchased by companies with sufficient capital (Amanudin, 2017), but it is not easy to find workers who match the company's qualifications.

Prospective workers take into account the benefits they will get from the company they are applying for. Often fresh graduates look for work that can support the interests of the level of position. Reputation of the workplace is also as a consideration for prospective workers to accept a job. When they get a job, they will try to pass the position level to the highest possible as a form of career journey. Workers can work for years to pursue a career in a company or agency with a routine morning to evening work pattern, sometimes even exceeding the normal working hours. Loyalty to the company is a must, while promotion is an element that is sought after (Perdana, 2019).

Perspectives and trends in working patterns like this are a challenge for companies and job seekers today, where one of the changes in the economic and technological sectors has an impact on the need for relevant workers which is very difficult to find and at the same time many people have difficulty to find job. Companies prefer workers who are ready to work in accordance with their fields (on-demand workers) to save labor costs, time and place of work (Silitonga, 2018). This condition gave rise to the term GIG Economy, which is an economic sector where individuals market their skills both in the unskilled labor market or professionals who work individually (Walker et al., 2018).

Young professionals are entering the world of the GIG Economy, they are giving up their employee status and choosing to become independent workers (gig employment / contract workers). A Public Relations person becomes an independent consultant, a journalist becomes a travel vlogger, a TV presenter becomes an MC (master ceremony), and online drivers (Grab and Gojek), celebrities, and YouTubers are part of the characteristics of GIG Economy (Wiratmaja, 2018). GIG Economy appears with the characteristics of contract workers based on work contracts by doing specific tasks within a predetermined period of time, besides that they can get income from more than one source, not relying on a monthly salary.

The use of contract workers will be more efficient and effective in several creative industry companies (Lingga, 2018). The development of the creative industry is one of the government's efforts to advance the economy that comes from the creativity and wealth of human resources in Indonesia. This industry will focus on empowering individual creativity. The creative industry is closely related to other industrial activities. There are three groups of supporting industries for the creative industry, namely the Craft and Art Goods Industry, the Information and Communication Technology Creative Industry, and the Software and Multimedia Content industry.

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Creative industry is very possible in facing the GIG Economy with worker contracts. It is very suitable with the required projects, flexible time, and work is not always in the office. For example, the NET TV, television station broadcasts news from all regions in Indonesia by sending news from Citizen Journalists or journalists who come from the public who conduct information searches which are then managed by editors to become news worthy of being broadcast. The speed of information and technological advances makes it possible to make changes to current work patterns, but television stations as companies not only get products in the form of up to date news content but must carry out strategies in managing human resources with the status of contract workers or gig employment so that the workers they have can increase skills and talents and creativity. The capacity or ability that is created to generate new ideas or thinking out of the box, workers who have that creativity and ability can create something useful for themselves and others (Purnomo, 2016). In other words, the company will manage human resource as a company asset that has a selling value.

In the television station, human resources with professional workers will produce programs as work products. They must pay attention to quality television shows, it is hoped that human resources through creative workers can design quality programs. Quality of programs cannot be separated from ratings as an indicator of the success of television programs (Wulandari, 2015). The institution that measures the success of a program through rating is AC Nielson. Programs with high ratings are measured by the number of viewers who watch the program, the more viewers, the higher the rating will be obtained so that there will be more opportunities for advertisers and the company will benefit materially from incoming advertisements.

Seeing the existing phenomenon, namely television workers also determine the rating acquisition of a television program. Producers, presenters, cameramen, video editors, hosts, and so on are human resources as company assets that are used as objects of worker commodification, because their abilities can bring benefits to the company, namely increased performance productivity and indirectly also saves company finances. Commodification workers can be interpreted as a company effort to gain as much profit as possible by utilizing the abilities and skills of workers. Although it is not directly related to company income, workers can indirectly affect the quality of company performance (Sulistiyawati & Indrayani, 2012). Based on the phenomenon, this study aims to reveal the practice of commodification of workers by media companies, especially television, which is part of the creative industry sub-sector with challenges in the GIG Economy era.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Commodification of the Political Economy Concept of Media**

Study about political economy of media emerged during the evolution of mass media in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the roots of classical political economy in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in media studies that adopted a Marxist theological framework which is a critical view (Wasko, 2014). Political economy tends to pay great attention to analyzing and describing capitalism, transforming resources such as labor, land and information into valuable commodities to benefit those who invest into the system (Mosco, 2008).

Political economy as a study recognizes social relations, power relations in the form of production, distribution, and consumption from sources (Mosco, 2009). Mosco (2009) is considered providing the most comprehensive and well-classified conceptual to explain the political economy of media. One of them is through the concept of understanding the political economy of the media, namely Commodification. The development of the basic ideas of the commodification is Karl Marx which is a modified commodity (Fuchs, 2016). The political economy of communication focuses on the media, information and audiences being marketable commodities. Commodification is a concept that refers to the use of goods and services and their value as a commodity from media that has an exchange value in the market. There are three types of commodification in communication, namely content commodification, audiences commodification, and labor commodification.

Content commodification can be defined as changing messages and data into a meaning system so that it becomes a marketable message product. For example, the Indonesian Idol program aired by RCTI, the commodification of content was shown to audition participants with the quality of vocals, appearance, and profiles of each participant. Audience commodification is the process of media seeking audiences which are then sold to advertisers. The media creates attractive programs to create their own audience so that advertisers will be attracted. The media sells the audience in the form of rating and share value to advertisers. Currently, the form of public commodification is also developing, such as the use of short message service polling, where the audience participates in determining the voting for participants. Commodification of labor can be defined using employees as a driver of production activities and producing goods and services.

There are several dimensions in which a media worker experiences commodification, namely exploitation, reification, alienation, mystification, and naturalization (Pratopo, 2017). Exploitation means media workers make them only focus on work deadlines that must be completed immediately. Often working hours that exceed normal working hours are due to high workloads. Reification can be defined as media workers or journalists as a special profession that are different from other workers are often proud of their profession as intellectual and creative workers. This predicate makes journalists forget their position as workers or laborers. Alienation is the deep busyness of being too focused on work makes media workers do not have time to pay attention and

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take care of themselves, their families and their social environment. It can be said that media workers do not have a good work life balance. Mystification is a development of meanings that are identified with the status of media workers. Like a journalist, he is proud of his profession because he is considered the person with the most accurate and reliable source of information, and a profession that can be close to anyone from the lowest class to the highest officials. Naturalization is the obligation of media workers to adapt to developments in information and communication technology and the media industry environment. Adaptation is carried out through education and training or work processes.

### GIG ECONOMY IN INDONESIA

The emergence of the GIG Economy trend is a change in working patterns that are more flexible and workers are looking for jobs that are considered according to their abilities / preferences because their flexible time and work place makes the opportunity for them to earn income from various projects they undertake not only from their monthly salary. GIG Economy is influenced by several factors such as the reduction of traditional manufacturing jobs where heavy industry with factories requires full time workers to pursue production targets, while service products are more flexible for freelancers or contract workers. The technology sector is also one of the factors in the growth of the GIG Economy; the presence of the internet makes it easier for someone to work either at home or anywhere without having to come to the office as long as they are connected to the internet network.

Based on data from the Deloitte Millennial Survey in 2018 which involved 10,000 Millennial generation respondents in 36 countries including Indonesia, as many as 14% of the millennial generation has conducted GIG Economy as a source of income both Full Time and Part Time. 43% of millennial consider plunging into the full-time GIG Economy, while a higher proportion of 64% of millennial consider GIG Economy as a side job. Meanwhile, 38% of millennial refuse to work in the GIG Economy full time, while only 17% of them refuse to work side-by-side in the GIG Economy. Meanwhile, 5% of millennial do not know about working in the GIG Economy full time and around 4% of millennial do not know GIG Economy on a side job. From this data, it can be concluded that there are still few millennial who have worked in the GIG Economy, and they think that GIG Economy is more suitable for working on the side.

### RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Private television companies now is facing technological developments and changes in the economic sector as a business, one of the factors is the human resources they have. Private Television Company with permanent and freelance employees has creativity in producing superior programs to increase company productivity. The flow scheme of the framework in this study can be seen in the figure 1 below.

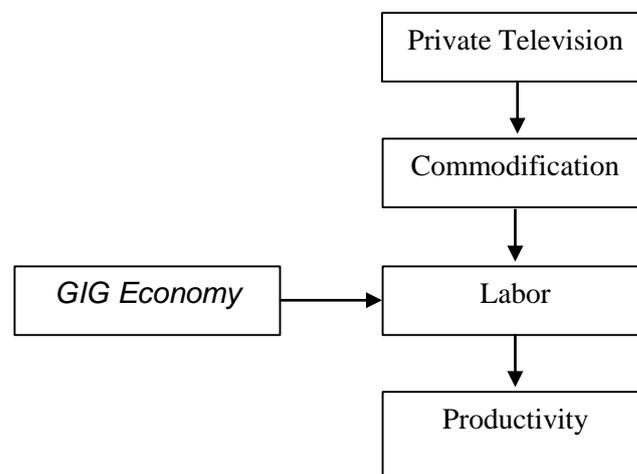


Figure 1. Research Framework

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach, which is everything is holistic, such as social events related to humans that cannot be limited to just a few variables, there are bonds with one another and are dynamic and not static (Soeherman, 2019). The method or approach used in this research is case study. Case studies are used to get the depth of the data, not the quantity of the data, especially to reveal the commodification of workers and human resource management strategies in the creative industry, namely Ameg.tv. The focus of this research is employees at Ameg.tv. The informants of this study are Ameg.tv managers, Ameg.tv employees, and part time labor of Ameg.tv.

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This study used three steps for analyzing data. First step is data reduction. Data reduction is the grouping of data into several parts, and storing the interview data using a theory related to the Political Economy of Media, namely the Commodification of Workers. Then, compile a draft concept and explanation according to the theme of the data in question. The second step is presentation of all data in the form of observations, interviews and documentation will be analyzed in accordance with the worker commodification theory described in the literature review. The third step is drawing conclusions in a complete depiction of the object under study based on a combination of information that has been compiled. The confirmation of the research findings that have been analyzed is the conclusion of the study. This study used 4 informants. Table 1 below describes those informants.

**Table 1: Informants**

No	Name	Gender	Position	Length of work
1	Indra Fitriansyah	Male	<i>Station Manager Ameg.tv</i>	10 years
2	Putri Ayu Sekar Melati	Female	<i>Video Editor</i>	5 years
3	Willy Aditya Nugraha	Male	<i>Operator Video Switcher</i>	5 years
4	Syahrul Aldrian Pratama	Male	<i>Cameraman</i>	5 years

### RESULTS AND DATA ANALYZING

There are three discussions in this research, first is how the commodification of workers is carried out by Ameg.tv. The second is the management of human resources carried out by Ameg.tv in the GIG Economy era, and the last one is to determine the characteristics of workers at Ameg.tv. The research begins with understanding the situation in the field through the human resources involved in activities at Ameg.tv.

This study used the triangulation process. Triangulation proses are done by comparing information and data in different ways to get the accurate data. The triangulation technique is used in data collection through interviews. This process is carried out to produce information that has a high level of credibility and can describe the information that actually happened. Technique triangulation consists of observation, interview and documentation. The process carried out by researchers was to visit the research site, the Ameg.tv office.

### COMMODIFICATION OF WORKERS CONDUCTED BY AMEG.TV

To reveal the practice of commodification of workers, researchers observe through company orientation, employee duties and responsibilities, and production activities. Arema Media Group has carried out media convergence with its strategy of establishing a private television station in Malang City called Arema TV and also developing electronic media, namely radio by buying Andalus FM radio which later changed its broadcast name to City Guide 911 FM, as well as joining the Malang Post print media. This amalgamation of several different media platforms also involves human resource in it to collaborate in producing news content that can be presented on several platforms, be it audio, audio-visual and print.

The management at Malang Post (before changing name) is changed. Malang Post is divided into two managements by creating a new name, namely New Malang Post and DI's Way Daily. The Daily DI's Way Malang Post prioritizes depth of information rather than "warmth" or the latest information. Management changes in Malang Post had an impact on DI's Way Malang Post Daily which lacked human resources in its management. Several human resources from Ameg.tv were also assisted in management coordination and the production process. Indra Fitriansyah as Station Manager of Ameg.tv, his position is concurrently as the Technology and Information Division at DI's Way Malang Post Daily since June 2020. The interview result with Indra Fitriansyah related with his job is as follow.

"Since the Covid 19 pandemic, broadcasts on Ameg.tv have only focused on streaming broadcasts with TV programs that previously stopped broadcasting because of efficiency and several contracts covering advertorial programs with sponsors and agencies were canceled. Currently Ameg.tv employees are helping in Di's Way (Malang Post Daily), including the Video Editor section helping with print layouts, several Cameraman who previously served on the program of the event also helped cover news in video and photo formats as well as new additions to write news scripts, although still assisted by the reporter and checked again by the editor".

Ameg.tv and DI's Way Malang Post daily have conducted media convergence by utilizing the skills of today's youth that following technological developments. The faster employees adapt to task changes and software support, the more beneficial it will be for the company, especially DI's Way Daily, which has the skills of Ameg.tv employees in making layout designs. The more employees master in various multimedia software, the easier it is for them to adapt to new tasks related to multimedia. Even though Ameg.tv employees have to do concurrent work, they are also being chased by broadcast assignment deadlines that must be uploaded on YouTube, is an example of the creativity of a Video Editor, Putri Ayu Sekar. Willy Aditya Nugraha also added that if most of

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the employees at DI's Way Malang Post daily are employees of Ameg.tv, they also work optimally according to their assigned responsibilities.

### **HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AMEG.TV IN THE GIG ECONOMY ERA**

Ameg.tv is a private television station where broadcast content prioritizes news and entertainment programs that elevate the existence City of Malang, East Java, Indonesia. The broadcast program raises more issues City of Malang, so it requires creative ideas which can be accepted by the people in Malang. Therefore, the recruitment of Ameg.tv employees is prioritized from Malang residents, because the natives will find it easier to explore creative ideas for program broadcasts with the audience segment of the Malang community. In addition, it is easier to recognize and explore the potential that exists in Malang.

The majority of Ameg.tv production team is young people, full of creativity and enthusiasm to try something new. Included in the management system at Ameg.tv are some of the employees who have graduated from high school or vocational school and equivalent. Ameg.tv management sees more potential employees from the skills and experience in the required fields. Assessment of employee productivity at Ameg.tv is prioritized on the work that is produced. Employees are said to be productive if they can meet company targets, such as journalists who are able to produce 3 to 4 news stories a day, video editors are able to complete the post-production process according to the deadline. In addition, employees must also work in teams and help each other achieve predetermined targets and even exceed predetermined working hours. Ryan Aldrian, as one of Ameg.tv employees said that:

"Like my colleague Putri, at first she had to divide her time and assignments for Ameg.tv and DI's Way Daily, because no one else had control of the layout apart from Putri, everything was done by Putri, everything from layout design, editing video content to news, uploading content to youtube and social media. In the morning you have to edit the program video or news content, in the evening prepare the layout of the newspaper before printing in the early morning. Because there is a colleague, Bima who is still studying and does not master the design program, then immediately transferred the assignment to the advertisement section of DI's Way Daily "

Due to the incorporation of media convergence, employees at Ameg.tv have to get additional assignments and sometimes make them question the status of their employees as employees of Ameg.tv or DI's Way Daily, below is a statement from Putri Ayu Sekar: "The status of Ameg.tv employees but sometimes also in DI's Way, so it is more to Ameg.id employees, because media convergence as well as work is also convergence (concurrently two different companies)"

The condition of employees who are concurrently assigned is one of the strategies implemented by the management of Arema Media Group in dealing with management changes at DI's Way Daily where there is a shortage of the production team and must adapt to the concept of media convergence with different design views, news distribution using both print and uploaded on social media. The following is a statement from the Station Manager Ameg.tv., Indra Fitriansyah.

"To keep up with technological developments, especially in the media, with the convergence of media, not all employees are able to keep up with and adapt to changes. Senior employees often experience difficulties in adjusting to the use of new software or difficulty coordinating using social media, including being idealistic and not wanting to think oddly. As part of the management, they prefer or prioritize existing employees at Ameg.tv are not to use contract workers or freelancers, because Ameg.tv employees are still capable and willing to develop, especially young employees who have great curiosity. With the convergence of media in the body of Arema Media Group, it changes the work environment, organizational culture, and employee habits. Daily DI's Way human resources composition is 50:50 for seniors and young people. The seniors are mostly in the editorial team because they are related to journalism certification, while the senior Artistic Team focuses more on quality control and character building designs according to the platform".

Human resource management at Ameg.tv is divided into senior employees and young employees. The management must be able to understand the characteristics of employees and have the right decisions in placing employees in positions that are in accordance with the ability of the employees themselves (The Right Man on The Right Place). The dynamic development of media requires management to continue to innovate, such as the presence of the Internet which is often referred to as a substitute for television media and is the toughest competitor. Media management must be able to make a strategy in dealing with what is a threat and which is an opportunity. The existence of technological developments must be seen from a different point of view as well as the internet is not always a threat when viewed from a different point of view. The internet can be used as an opportunity for companies such as media convergence. Media companies actually only produce content while their distribution currently has a wide choice of platforms on the internet.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF EMPLOYEES IN AMEG.TV IN GIG ECONOMY ERA**

Work is no longer limited to going to the office in the morning and coming home late in the evening, but now work can be done from anywhere and anytime that is the picture of the GIG Economy era. In media companies, it is very possible to work like that with the internet supporting communication and interaction processes from different places using applications such as Whatsapp,

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Zoom, Line, and so on. Ameg.tv has supported all of these processes and even has its own server as a centralized data storage using a cloud data server. This kind of work pattern is very efficient according to Ameg.tv management because workers can still coordinate without having to meet at the office, or even reporters don't need to come to the office to just submit material and news scripts, along with an explanation from Indra Fitriansyah as Station Manager of Ameg.tv :

"The work system wherever and whenever has been implemented in Ameg.tv through journalists. Those who are currently covering news sometimes do not have time to come to the office because they are still chasing news targets or are covering an important event. Because the situation in the field is unpredictable, the work system of Ameg.tv journalists works flexibly. In early 2020 conditions in Indonesia experienced a pandemic which required the central and regional governments to issue a work from home policy, making some employees besides journalists also work from home such as the Video Editor. All coordination was done through chatting or using video conferencing. It is different with the management at DI's Way Daily, the initial delivery of the concept of time efficiency and working from home is still difficult, while data has been integrated through the data server in the cloud, everything is done from anywhere and anytime it can be done for coordination using the Whatsapp or Zoom application if needed, it is still constrained".

In order to get a job or project from outside the office, some employees admit that they got a recommendation from their friend or client, the portfolio becomes a benchmark in finding a side job, not by looking at the latest education or diploma as a guarantee. Currently, a diploma is not a guarantee in getting a job in the GIG Economy era, but someone's skills and competencies are considered when accepting projects from clients. Like Aditya Nugraha, although he is working as a Video Switcher and Artistic Team, his skills are become his selling points. Below is his statement.

"Apart from the office, I have a side job as a Cameraman. I often get orders such as weddings and event documentation, my shooting is more cinematic as well as I edit myself so it's easy to make the story and it's faster without having to coordinate with many people. There are several software that I master such as Adobe Premiere, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Audition, Adobe After Effects, CorelDraw, Vmix, Adobe InDesign. The desired work, namely freedom of creativity, does not have to follow the limits given because working like that will be boring".

In addition to benefiting the company, the skills possessed by employees will also increase their competencies, therefore it will give more value in facing today's competition. The digital era and the presence of the internet have erased the boundaries of distance, time, and even professionalism. Now that distance is no longer an obstacle for someone to find work or do work, time that can be managed by yourself is a measure of the ability of young employees at Ameg.tv when their schedules are busy in the office they will not accept job offers or orders from outside as a side job . With the presence of the internet, they are free to be creative in their work because there are no longer standards in multimedia work in particular, the public or clients see more of the work, not the process that is done. That's why they have mastered several skills both strategically and in mastering multimedia and digital supporting software as their capital.

### **CONCLUSION**

Technological developments have an impact on people's lives, such as information and communication technology. Initially, the public got information through the mainstream media (newspapers, radio, and television). Now they can access information more quickly and up to date with the internet. This condition makes Arema Media Group (Ameg.id) perform media convergence, including Ameg.tv. Along with the application of new media technology at Ameg.id it also requires new skills. In addition, changes also have an impact on editorial organizations, work culture, work patterns, and management demands.

The competition in the media industry is getting tighter and the fast-paced technology support is making greater demands on Ameg.tv employees in carrying out their duties. These demands boil down to the interests of the owners of capital to pursue profits. In this condition, there is a process of commodification of media workers by placing Ameg.tv employees as production tools in order to maximize profits from the Arema Media Group. The media convergence system requires employees to be able to create reports in various formats such as text, photos, audio and video. The convergence system prioritizes digital content and online media. Editorial convergence requires employees to work double and they are required to be able to carry out multitasking tasks. Employees in the Video Editor and Video Switcher positions must be able to create visual designs and learn the layout and rules of writing news in newspapers, meanwhile cameraman is in charge of taking videos for coverage as well as taking photos and making a script for news. Not only that, the Station Manager of Ameg.tv is also required to improve performance for Ameg.id's facility needs in media convergence so that news content in digital products is increasingly diverse and of course more advertisements are entered so that company revenue increases.

Based on the description above, the researcher draws the following conclusions. First, this study found a process of commodification of media workers in the application of media convergence. Commodification of employees in the form of economic exploitation consist of exploitation of time and exploitation of skills. Exploitation is carried out with additional assignments for employees, both editorial and non-editorial.

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Second, human resource management is carried out by the management of Arema Media Group (Ameg.id) by merging human resource in two companies, namely Ameg.tv to support the editorial and production team at DI's Way Daily. Senior employees with various obstacles in facing technological changes and idealism, they are placed in managerial positions to carry out quality control according to company standards in news writing rules because some employees have journalist certification. Meanwhile, Ameg.tv employees who are mostly young people with great curiosity and speed to adapt are given the task of studying and following technological developments, both hardware and software, and working to pay attention to the concept of time and work efficiency from anywhere in coordination via chat and video conference.

Third, the characteristics of Ameg.tv employees in the GIG Economy era are divided into two categories, namely senior employees and young employees. Senior employees prioritize accuracy in work, focus only on one company because they feel the task is already heavy, have idealism in working to achieve the highest possible career in the company even though they have to go through it for years. It is different with young employees who show work attitudes that are quick to adapt to change, have many skills, can learn independently. They are also good at managing their time to share tasks and accept other jobs outside the office by coordinating online and mastering strategies in promoting their skills and portfolios through digital marketing on social media.

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