Music for the Generation-Z, Quo Vadis?

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Abstract — Back in the 1990’s, kids aged one to five years old have experienced the merry, cheerful, graspable music which were extensively created by music composers and producers. The lyrics and melody were very much suitable to be heard and sang by kids in the period of ages. The song themes ranging from going to sleep, having meals, and gratitude to the parents were produced and broadcasted through the national media, local TV stations, movie, CD and cassette in the respective era. In 2000’s to 2010’s, these types of music appear to be vanishing. Generation-Z had been inoculated to sing incongruous music to their age, compared to its predecessors. This study is expected to give preliminary insights of where music-for-Indonesian-children had been going which also denotes future research agenda.

Keywords — world music; cultural; preservation; Indonesia

I. INTRODUCTION

The 1990’s were the period of renaissances of kids’ music. Numerous artists that were popular on this era can be mentioned such as Trio Kwek-Kwek, Bondan Prakoso, Maisy, Joshua Suherman, Tasya, Chiquita Meidy, Cindy Cenora, Enno Lerian, Sherina, Harriman Samuel Saragih, Dian HP as a composer [1,2,3]. The songs were created, composed, and arranged by prominent Indonesian composers for example Ibu Kasur, A.T. Mahmud, Papa T. Bob and Elfa Secioria [4,5]. The songs were created by mature person, which were sang by children aged five to eight years old with lyrics that contain understandable moral messages, polite etiquettes, even profound meaning such as kind friendship, admiration, honor and thankfulness to the parents. Long lasting popular songs are still known to the present-day such as “Pelangii”, “Bintang Kecil”, “Naik Delman”, “Kebunku”, “Naik Kereta Api” [5].

Other popular songs that were recorded in the Internet are “Du Di Dami”, “Si Lumba-Lumba”, “Jangan Marah”, “Si Komo Lewat Tol”, “Jumpa Lagi”, “Aku Cinta Rupiah”, “Citi Cit Cuit”, and “Bolo-Bolo” [6]. It is almost certain that most of Generation-Y and Millennials in Indonesia – that were born between the mid-1970s and mid-2000s [7] – must have known these prominent names of artists and composers.

Eloquent lyrics carried by Sherina in her album – which was composed by Elfa Secioria is presented as follows [8]: Andai aku t’lah dewasa, apa yang ‘kan kukatakan untukmu idolaku tersayang, ayah / Andai aku t’lah dewasa, kubalas cintamu bunda, pelitaku, penerang jiwaku dalam setiap waktu (When I grow up, what could I tell, my father / When I grow up, I will return the love you have given to me, mother, my torch, light of my soul in every time). Other different type of song which is “Kebunku” possesses unique as well as amusing message that is apt to be heard by kids [9]: Lihat kebunku penuh dengan bunga, ada yang putih dan ada yang merah / Setiap hari kusiram semua, mawar melati semuaanya indah! (Take a look at my garden, full of red and white flowers / Every day I water the plants, roses and jasmine, oh so beautiful!). Another matchless and everlasting jingle is “Pelangii” with the lyrics [10]: Pelangii, pelangii, alangkah indahmu, merah kuning hijau di langit yang biru / Pelikusmu agung, siapa gerangan / pelangii, pelangii, ciptaan Tuhan (Rainbow, oh rainbow, you are so wonderful, painted red, yellow, green, in the blue sky / your Creator is splendid, who might Thy be / rainbow, oh rainbow, you are truly made by God).

Naming few of the popular TV shows in that period: Cilukbaa in SCTV, Tralala Trilili in RCTI, Kring-Kring Olala in TPI, it is clear that music for child in the early 90’s era was fully supported by the media. However, after the early 2000’s, it seemed that music for children had been vanishing, and is taken into account as the key question mark for this study. This issue has become a major concern amongst parents, musicians, even young-adults. Children nowadays listen to young adults’ music that correlates with romanticism, broken-hearted, love, that tends to incongruent with what children needs and should be hearing. Several arguments were gathered to support this opinion. Yuli Irmayah [11], Dian HP as a composer [12], Antok Nogho [13], Listya Ningrum [14], Muhammad Mustaqim [15]. Stefanus Hamonangan argues that music for children is not financially attractive in the point view of business, which makes composers and arrangers tend to make only popular music that is more profitable [16]. Hence, the research problem in this study encompasses the issue of the succinct historical review of why music for children was remarkably popular in the early 1990’s, why music for children had been vanishing slowly in the early 2000’s and initial idea of how to craft strategic plan thus reestablish music for children. It can be seen from these three songs that on the particular era, music and lyrics for children was properly composed, distributed and broadcasted by the entertainment industry.

Previous literatures have been lacking of comprehensive discussions regarding this phenomenon, not just discussing about the music, but also the management aspects and business rudiments. We ponder that several aspects must be taken into consideration such as culture, industry, and the technological revolution. This study hence, will focus and take a look on the shifts of Indonesian culture – the Western injection to Indonesia in music industry – trends amongst TV, films and radio in music business, including the effect of technological change to scrutinize of why such erosion on music for children happened. Later, this study would propose whether music for the current children can still be marketed and produced in the
saturated music business. Extensive literature review ranging from news, blogs, opinions, and journals would be the basis of the analysis to examine this historical changes in music business. This paper will focus to study the historic events, present circumstances, and catering strategic plan, if feasible, to reproduce music for the existing Z-Generation, just as it had formerly happened for the Y-Generation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

On this section there is not much academic literatures that discussed regarding the cultural shifts of Indonesian children in the early 1990’s. However, this study would like to present some previous discussions of why music for children in Indonesia vanished rapidly which is because the combination of Indonesian’s youth popular trend called ‘anak gaul’ through Western (and Eastern) popular culture trend that was vigorously injected in Indonesian children through the television, and the technological revolution which changed the whole landscape of music industry.

Gaul culture represented as a funky, hip lifestyle amongst Indonesian young-adults, [17] back in the early 2000’s until present. This concept was originated by Debbi Sahertian in 1999, known as Bahasa gaul [18,19]. It had evolved from just a ‘modern’ verbal communication style or ‘Bahasa gaul’, to a whole new lifestyle. The prime difference of Bahasa gaul with Bahasa Indonesia is that Bahasa gaul dominantly used in an informal situation [20], rather than formal circumstances. Hence, this language style popular amongst young adults, and used broadly in television shows which were dedicated for young adult audiences. One of the most famous TV show in the particular period of time that signified Bahasa gaul was MTV. This trend was also supported by several magazines that represented gaul lifestyle for example Gaul, Gadi, Aneka Yess!, Hai magazine [21]. This paper argues that as time passed by, the gaul culture that was first targeted to the young adult market, in the latter phase also affected the children in that era; which latterly the childlike-culture for children slowly succumbed and replaced by gaul culture. The major changes were substantial, from verbal communication, to the way Indonesians dressed, listened to music, chose TV programs.

This study firmly argues that children was critically impacted by the new wave of gaul culture. Previous researches that support this argument that claimed culture definitely affects early childhood development are gathered. Cole, Hakkarainen, Bredikyte [22] stated that from birth or from then on, children are tremendously sensitive to contingencies among all kinds of events in their environment; culture does play substantial role in how children make sense of the world. These ranges from learning characteristic, patterns of activity, to the various responses of people in their surroundings, to the contingencies among the verbal styles in the language they hear that will form the basis of the grammar of their language; Children are born already knowing the characteristic “tune” of their indigenous language [22]. Nevertheless, the culture in the society also produces and contributes to policy. Harkness and Super [23] argued that policy – as a product of culture – also influence early childhood development. Berger [24] mentioned that children aged three to six years old want to undertake many adult-like doings, sometimes surpassing the limits set by parents. UNICEF mentioned that children aged five to eight years gain curiosity about people and how the world works [25].

Generally, the music industry revenue was first traditionally divided into several stages: physical album, live music, and digital music download [26]. To produce physical album, the costs borne for recording songs and compositions to be a final product as CD, cassette, was relatively high. Distribution and promotion as marketing effort also required plenty of money as it was also quite costly. Music listeners needed to buy physical albums that were sold in music stores worldwide. In live music setting, revenues are distributed commonly for the performer and their manager, talent agent, promoter, and venue operator [26]. Finally, we are now in the era of digital music that can be purchased per song rather than per album. At the particular period of time, 1960 to the early 1990’s, music was out of range from digital piracy, just before MP3 technology was initially found in between 1995 and 1996 [27,28]. After the birth of MP3 technology, it is seen that sales of physical albums, such as cassette, CD – primarily – decreased significantly [29,30]. This has indeed affected the revenue of music artists, due to decline in album sales [31]. MP3 has greatly affected the technology in the 1995s to the 2000s. Consumers were able to download music online without having to buy the physical album through file sharing medias such as Napster, Kazaa, and LimeWire [26,32]. The shifts in music industry have altered music artists’ revenues in all genres. Piracy is the key factor that dramatically shrink the sales of physical albums [33]. As the business models changed in the music industry – due to artists cannot rely mainly only on physical album sales – several alternatives were studied and mapped, particularly in Indonesian market in the present days [34]. In Indonesia, those alternatives include ringtone, ring back tone, true tone, full track download; while also physical products have been distributed to not only music stores but other retailers such as fuel stations of Pertamina, fast food retailer KFC, mini markets such as Alfamart, Gramedia bookstore, clothing distros and radio stations [34]. Some method works effectively and contribute well to enhance revenues, while some others not. These new distributions channel do not mainly for revenue making but also for marketing purposes [34]. Based on the previous section it can be determined that culture undeniably influences childhood development. Nonetheless, technological alteration had impacted the entertainment industry tremendously. This will ultimately affect the existence of music for children.

III. DISCUSSION

A. Cultural Shifts

Amongst several types of media, we would like to focus on MTV as the most prominent young-adult TV station at the early 2000’s. Some of the shows are [35] MTV Insomnia, MTV Ampuh or Ajang Musik Pribumi Daupaluh (Twenty Video Clips of Local Music), MTV Tamu Istimewa, MTV Global Room – which used mostly mixed languages of English and Indonesian – bringing local and foreign music, MTV Gokil (which at that time it was similar with PUNK’d TV show with Ashton Kutcher as the presenter). MTV targeted young adult audiences, bringing gaul culture to the society through the media which it’s famous VJ’s (video jockeys). Students ranging
from junior high, senior high, university students and early adults were the primary targets. MTV had greatly affect the way of living of Indonesian society in the early 2000’s. Those include several changes such as the way Indonesians communicated through Bahasa Gaul, how Indonesians showed preferences towards music that were considered Gaul, how Indonesians dressed properly, and Gaul programs watched in the television. As the Gaul culture had significantly transformed the Indonesians lifestyle, it did influence not just young adults – but children. Not also Indonesian music, but also western music – dominantly and eastern music were produced vastly through MTV, showing proactive determination from MTV to distribute music through Gaul lifestyle. Amongst these musical characteristics, western pop cultures were the most ultimate icon of Gaul-ness, shown by MTV VJ’s that often combines their speech with Bahasa Gaul and English. Children listening to western music in that era such as Westlife, Boyzone, N’Sync, Hanson, Backstreet Boys, was considered as modern, Gaul person, compared to listening children music by Sherina, Tasya, or Enno Lerian. The way children dressed, also inevitably affected by the foreign culture.

It is implied from the literature and observations that as the Gaul culture became a nation-scale epidemic, a major shift in the entertainment industry – primarily in the television – spread inevitably; an autonomous occurrence that indeed drove the industry due to significant cultural and behavioral alterations. Specifically focusing on the music entertainment for children in the television, it was deliberately starting to disperse: as children also have been affected by the modern culture in their daily lives. Major TV stations were restructuring their programs to boost rating and revenues – following the Gaul trend. Gradually, TV programs that presents music for children were decreasing. Children artists were not backed up by the industry, as demand had declined. This also affected the revenue for composers and arrangers that predominantly focused on arranging music for children. Subsequently, as demand was progressively deteriorating, supply did either. Entertainment industry stopped producing TV programs for children; composers discontinued making music for children; children artists withdrew as it had become out of favor. Music for children was not favored as a Gaul, therefore from the above analysis conclusion can be drawn that there has been a major change in culture, which also changed the whole landscape of the industry and society. Music for children was vanishing as it had become unpopular, no demand, and no supply. Eventually, this momentous cultural change was also being exacerbated by the situation of the technological revolution in the music business, the magnification of music piracy. The Gaul culture, combined with the television effort to gain revenues, had successfully changed the market landscape – which impacted music for children.

B. Technological Revolution and Business Model Shifts

Piracy, on the other hand, had immensely aggravated the music business globally. The market situation was intensively changing, from physical album, to file sharing, free-for-downloads music. This phenomenon had disrupted sources of musicians’ earnings vastly, as the production costs for album had drained considerable investment, unfortunately the market responded to the newly free-of-charges method, music download. Henceforth, the landscape of the music industry significantly had changed – destructed if I may say – in the point of view of artists, since artists will need to find ways to respond to this piracy-driven market.

It can also be resolved that as music had been widely available in the internet in the MP3 format – readily downloadable in anytime and anywhere – TV programs that ‘sells’ music videos for music listeners slowly lose its market, particularly in Indonesia. As previous studies that observed regarding why MTV stopped broadcasting in Indonesia [36] still lacking, it can be evaluated that this business decline occurred mostly because music listeners can consume music in other forms of media, rather than a commercial TV stations which give limited choices to its audiences. What we mean by ‘choices’ is that MTV focuses on ‘selling’ music videos, with advertisements as the primary backbone for generating revenues. Though, as free music has been freely widespread – pirated – in the form of MP3s, the birth of YouTube which also give more flexibilities to audiences, video clips from various artists, epidemic illegal file sharing, MTV eventually stopped its business in Indonesia, and might need to restructure its business model.

C. Quo Vadis?

The expression of ‘quo vadis’ originated from Latin phrase – meaning ‘where are you going?’ – is used to address, firstly, where the music for Z-generation in Indonesia had been and will be going. On the previous section, we have extensively discussed the historical background of why the music for children in the 1990’s to the early 2000’s was vanishing. The main reasons deliberated in this study are particularly due to cultural shifts and technological revolution that affect not only music for children, but music industries landscape in general. There may be other factors that contribute to the vanishing of music for children in Indonesia, however these two contributors are expected to provide preliminary insights on the subject of evaporating music for children. Studies have exposed that music have positive influences on childhood development [37,38,39]. Though, in the present day music for children is not that popular since the vigorous Western and Eastern cultures injected, preferred and consumed in Indonesia due to its modern, hip, up-to-date lifestyle. Within this particular condition, the music business that undergone primarily by multimedia industry – television and radio – it will be a challenging homework for current scholar to craft effective strategy to rebuild and reproduce music for Indonesian children.

To reestablish music for Indonesian children, triple helix strategy which combines the role of University-Industry-Government [40] is proposed in this study and become an agenda for future research. We strongly believe that the collaboration between these three parties can induce innovation system in regenerating music for children in the future, if conducted properly with continuous coordination. Scholars can contribute to scrutinize efficacious techniques in marketing music from other countries, observe how do Indonesian consumers appreciate music, examine the present day behavior of children in listening music, while also see the possibility to generate revenue for music artists implemented in strategic business model. Government on the other hand can contribute
to assist industry to implement strategic moves in order to reestablish music for children. In the end, we still have faith that music for children can still be exist in Indonesian society.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the previous discussions, conclusion can be drawn into three parts. First, historically, our analysis show that music for children had gradually been declining in the early 2000’s due to cultural and technological shifts. Second, cultural shift was started by the culture of gua that changed the landscape of the Indonesian young adult socio-culture condition, and inevitably affected the children in that era. Third, technological shifts that modified the landscape of the music industry – also the cultural trend that induce the media in providing trending TV shows with the emerging culture at that era – had deteriorated the revenue for musicians, particularly on composers and artists that make music for children. Needless to say, music for children are still needed in this globalized era, as our analysis demonstrate that music is very crucial to the early childhood development. Efforts shall be taken not only by musicians, but also the government, scholars, and entertainment industry as the backbone. Future research agenda to improve this study is suggested, regarding the appropriate strategy to craft strategic planning to reproduce and reestablish music for children. Since if we touch the kids, we touch the future.

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