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Abstract. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the condition of the media industry both in terms of economy and existence. This research aims to determine the state of the social media communication strategy KapanLagi Youniverse as a media group in Indonesia to strengthen brand equity. The theoretical foundation of this research is using the Circular Model of SoMe for Social Communications and Brand Equity’s dimension Theory. The research method used in this research is qualitative research with the design of a study case, in which the data is collected by interview and observation. This research shows that in the pandemic situation KapanLagi Youniverse (KLY) could rise by strengthening its existence as a media group in Indonesia. The social media communication strategy of KapanLagi Youniverse uses the aspect of sharing (cross-platform social media and type of content), optimize (PESO model), manage (media monitoring and user experience), and engage (interactivity and media community approach) in strengthening brand equity.

1 Introduction

Digitalization and the COVID-19 pandemic have created a crucial challenge for the media industry to meet public information needs and sustain business development. According to Dable’s report 2020, the amount of content media consumed increased by 28% from February. Meanwhile, the first COVID-19 case was founded in Indonesia in early March. However, the increasing amount of digital media content is not directly proportional to the income of the media industry itself. This is a challenge for the media industry in overcoming the impact of the pandemic on the economic sector. The AJI’s report 2020 showed that ad spending in Indonesia decreased dramatically in April 2020 amid the COVID-19 virus outbreak. According to data from Nielsen Indonesia, total ad spending fell by 25% month-on-month in the third week of April, after increasing before the outbreak came (Abdul Manan, 2020). Most advertisers have reduced their marketing activities in the middle of the pandemic. The chairman of AMSI (Asosiasi Media Siber Indonesia), Wenseslaus Manggut explains his research in the discussion of MarkPlus Industry RoundTable: Surviving the COVID-19, Preparing the Post: Broadcast, PayTV, Media Industry Perspective, 5 June 2020, that based on the survey of 300 media members from 25 April to 5 May 2020, the number of online media readers increased until 200%. But the average revenue decreased by around 30%-40% (Abdul Manan, 2020).

KapanLagi Youniverse is one of the digital media groups in Indonesia, also struggling to survive the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the Indonesia Digital Conference 2020 held by AMSI (Asosiasi Media Siber Indonesia) on 16 December 2020, Steve Cristian, CEO of KapanLagi Youniverse, revealed that at the beginning of the pandemic, the revenue of KapanLagi Youniverse had decreased by 40%. The decreasing revenue is caused by many events and coverage being delayed. Steve Cristian believes that the main point to recovering business from the impact of the pandemic is adaptation. The media industry should be able to adapt to the changing situation. Steve Cristian also revealed that the current competitor is not only about another brand media but also the new content creator with thousands of events million followers on social media (Liputan6.com, 2020). The following is the "Digital Media Landscape Indonesia 2020" published by Dable Indonesia in January 2020, describing the existence of KapanLagi Youniverse and the ranking of its sub-media. Dable Indonesia also published in March 2021 regarding the latest Indonesian Digital Media Landscape as follows:

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Based on Figure 1 and Figure 2, KapanLagi Youniverse is one of the ten largest media groups in Indonesia and, at the same time, the three media groups with the most sub-media in the top 30 positions. The three media groups include Kompas Gramedia, KapanLagi Youniverse, and Detik Network. The following table compares the position of the three media groups in Indonesia in 2020 and 2021 according to Dable Indonesia data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Media Group</th>
<th>January 2020</th>
<th>March 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total of Sub Media</td>
<td>Number of Sub Media in Top 30</td>
<td>Total of Sub Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>KapanLagi Youniverse</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5 (Liputan6, Merdeka, Brilio, KapanLagi, Bola.net)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Kompas Gramedia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3 (Tribun, Kompas.com, Bolasport)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Detik Network</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3 (Detik, CNBC, CNN)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 1, it can be seen that at the beginning of 2020, before the COVID-19 case was discovered in Indonesia, KapanLagi Youniverse became the media group with the highest number of sub-media occupying the top 30. However, in 2021 KapanLagi Youniverse decreased from 5 to 4 sub-media. Kompas Gramedia occupies the top 30. Thus, the highest number of sub-media in the top 30 is occupied by Kompas Gramedia. It has increased from 3 to 7 sub-media in early 2021. From this data, it can be seen that during the COVID-19
pandemic, KapanLagi Youniverse as the top media group in Indonesia decreased. On the other hand, a survey of followers of social media Instagram Liputan6.com and KapanLagi.com show that 6 out of 10 of them do not know that the two media are in the same group. They consider that Liputan6.com and Kapanlagi.com are the two media subsidiaries of KapanLagi Youniverse, with the highest number of followers from other media outlets. Thus, this indicates that the brand awareness of KapanLagi Youniverse as a large media group is still low in the eyes of its media followers.

From the explanation above, it can interpret that the problem faced by KapanLagi Youniverse during the COVID-19 pandemic is a decrease in revenue and low brand awareness in the public eye, and a decline in existence among competitors as the most extensive media group in Indonesia. Given the current competition in the media industry, it is increasingly competitive in a critical situation. Therefore, KapanLagi Youniverse works hard to adapt and innovate to strengthen its existence. Maintaining business existence both among competitors and consumers is essential to rise from the impact of the pandemic. The presence of a business is influenced by public perception, encouraging positive recognition. This positive public recognition results from the brand equity process (Henriksen & Eirkksson, 2021). Marketing research has also repeatedly revealed that brand equity is a solution to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of marketing communications (Ots, 2008). Same with the thoughts of Sanne Ichelle, Carolina Herrando, and Efthymios Constantinides (2021) in their journal entitled “Social Media Marketing as a Branding Strategy in Extraordinary Times: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic. They explained that to survive in a competitive online market; business people must work effectively to create positive brand equity. Seeing the importance of maintaining the existence of the media in the eyes of the public, strengthening brand equity is a solution to rise from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The stronger the brand equity of a company, the stronger the company's stability, revenue, and competitive advantage.

1.1 Objectives
The research objective is to determine the social media communication strategy of KapanLagi Youniverse as a media group in Indonesia to strengthen brand equity in the era of the pandemic COVID-19. This research is expected to contribute ideas, information, solutions, and insight materials of communication science. The current research found that strengthening brand equity is becoming a solution in facing pandemic situations. The previous research revealed that social media has an important role in strengthening the business and creating familiarity. Social media is becoming a powerful tool for spreading messages and brand value. But now the question is rising up, what kind of social media activities contribute to strengthening brand equity? This study contributes to the COVID-19 literature on brand equity by showing the importance of social media strategy and the types of communication activities that contributes to brand equity. The result is also expected to be a reference for organizations or companies in strengthening brand equity during the pandemic COVID-19.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Social Media as Communication Strategy
Regina Luttrell revealed the definition of social media in her book “Social Media How to Engage, Share, and Connect,” 2018, which refers to the activities, practices, and behavior among people who gather online to exchange opinions, knowledge, or maybe share information. Social media generates a possibility for brands that allow them to build relationships, overview trends, and capture insights to improve their business. Regina Luttrell built the theory for social media communication strategy, namely The Circular Model of SoMe (Share, Optimize, Manage, Engage). In the Share stage, it is a crucial phase for social media practitioners to understand how and where their consumers interact. This phase is concerned with the company’s opportunity to connect, build trust, and identify channels for online interactions. Then in the Optimize phase, social media content is optimized to reach maximum impact of messaging, brand, and value. Reginal explained that using PESO (Paid media, Earned media, Shared Owned media) strategies will help the business achieve its goals. In the Manage phase, an organization needs to know and listen to what is being concerned about and learn from the audiences. Social media practitioners can use appropriate social media monitoring tools to track and measure the conversation that is being had about the company, product, and the newest trend. Last in the stage of Engage, engaging with consumers or the public is the most critical point of a social media strategy. Social media practitioners should cultivate a program that allows the audience to give opinions and communicate directly with the company.

2.2 Brand Equity
David A.Aaker (1991), in his book with the title of "Managing Brand Equity," defines brand equity as: “a set of brand assets, values, and liabilities related to a brand, its name, and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service.” Brand equity is becoming a source of strengthening the brand. A strong brand will encourage companies to increase revenue, manage assets, reduce promotional costs, maintain stability, and increase competitive advantage (Firmansyah, 2019). The brand equity model by Aaker (1991) consists of five elements such as brand assets, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, and brand loyalty. Brand awareness is the ability of the audience or customers to recognize a brand that is part of a particular product or service (A.Aker, 1991). Perceived quality of the brand describes the overall response from the audiences or customers to the brand’s
quality and advantages (Aaker, 1991). Brand association is related to the memory or perceptions of the audiences toward the existence of the brand itself (Aaker, 1991). Then, brand loyalty is a measure of audience loyalty to a brand. Brand loyalty remains consumer’s interest in the brand, even purchase retention. Last, brand assets are always related to patents, trademarks, and other companies’ assets.

2.3 The Effect of Pandemic on Media Industry and Business

The economic situation in Indonesia is becoming worst due to the pandemic. It impacts the media’s economic sector. According to the senior journalist Endy Bayuni revealed that currently, media revenue has decreased dramatically due to the pandemic. The pandemic that paralyzed the economy had an impact on reducing the company’s advertising spending or costs in the media (Abdul Manan, 2020). In contrast to revenue, the number of readers or page views, or media traffic increased during the pandemic. According to AJI’s report 2020, The Chairman of Press Council, M. Nuh explained that now everyone knows that the world of media is changing. It can be seen from the data of page view and revenue, thus demanding the media to transform in a modern way to strengthen their existence.

3 Methods

This study uses a qualitative research approach with a case study method design. The primary data were collected from interviews with an expert from KapanLagi Youniverse and observation. Two main informants from KapanLagi Youniverse were interviewed, the Social Media Coordinator and social media Creative and Sales Support. Interview and participant observation were used to gather complete information about the strategy of KapanLagi Youniverse through social media communication, especially for strengthening brand equity in the pandemic era. Meanwhile, the secondary data were collected by literature review and interviews with external followers of social media KapanLagi Youniverse. Three external informants completely fit the criteria as secondary sources from the audience’s point of view. This secondary data was collected to make sure the strategy of social media communication KLY was implemented to their audiences.

4 Data Collection

The data of this study was analyzed based on the Miles and Huberman (1984) interactive model that consists of three steps. First, data reduction will resume the main point of the topic. Second, data display can serve the data into a table, graphs, charts, or narrative text. The last step is conclusion drawing or verification. If the data display has been supported by appropriate evidence, this can be used as a credible conclusion.

5 Results and Discussion

The pandemic crisis has an impact on the economic sector of business. Likewise, KapanLagi Youniverse, an online media company, experienced a decline in revenue at the beginning of the pandemic. Even though in terms of media traffic, KLY has increased significantly. The main key to rising from this situation is how the company can strengthen its brand equity. According to the result of Josefine Henriksson and Ola Karlsson Eriksson’s research 2021 with the title of “Managing Brand Equity During an Ongoing Pandemic: A Qualitative Study in the Tourism and Hospitality during COVID-19,” already found out the fact from a brand that has been analyzed, the solution of the business crisis during the pandemic is strengthening brand equity. Sanne Ichele Dubelink, Carolina Herrando, and Etqhympios Constantinides (2021), non their research also confirmed the same perception that creating brand value is becoming a crucial thing during the pandemic. Because currently, brand value has a function as a predictor of future business income.

Meanwhile, according to David A. Aaker (1991), brand equity is a set of brand value assets that can increase or decrease the value of goods or services to companies and customers. Brand equity is formed by several elements such as brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, brand loyalty, and brand assets (A.Aaker, 1991). Therefore, brand equity is the main supporter of the company’s success in rising from the impact of the pandemic. KapanLagi Youniverse, as a media brand, is required to adapt to new consumption and general trends during the pandemic. The informant reveals that the movement of public media consumption is no longer based on search engines or websites but through social media. Josefine Henriksson and Ola Karlsson Eriksson 2021 explained that social media has an important role in strengthening the product and creating familiarity. Social media is becoming a powerful tool for spreading messages and brand value. Informant explains that social media has a crucial role in KapanLagi Youniverse as the frontline of presenting the fastest and latest media. KLY’s social media has four main pillars: traffic, revenue, partnership, and brand reputation. This important role of social media has finally promoted KLY to formulate a communication strategy to strengthen brand equity. Based on Mart Ots, in his book "Media Brands and Branding," explains that media brands offer value propositions to the audiences in the form of variant content, interactivity, and user experience.
messages or content as well as media assets in reaching a wider audience.

Regarding optimization strategy, KLY also utilizes paid, earned, and shared media to increase brand awareness. As for the management strategy to build perceived quality and public trust, KLY conducts media monitoring, acts responsively, and takes advantage of the momentum. An equally important plan for KLY is to increase audience loyalty through a community approach, interactivity program, and giveaway. The elements of brand awareness, brand associations, brand assets, perceived quality, and strong brand loyalty will form the strength of KapanLagi Youniverse's brand equity as the most extensive media group in Indonesia. According to Firmansyah (2019), substantial brand equity will provide superior value for the brand to compete among competitors. Meanwhile, according to Alan Aker (1991), substantial brand equity will undoubtedly increase the company's revenue. From the benefits of brand equity, it purposed that it can be a solution to the problems faced by KapanLagi Youniverse during the COVID-19 pandemic. The following table shows the relationship between the pain and Youniverse's KapanLagi solution strategy through social media communication strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Low brand awareness in the eyes of the public and a decrease in media presence among competitors</td>
<td>Strengthening brand awareness and establishing brand associations as “The Biggest Online Media in Indonesia” through a share, optimization, and management strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Decrease in revenue caused by canceled events and coverage.</td>
<td>Changing the concept of coverage and events based on live streaming and increasing brand loyalty through an engagement strategy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.1 Social Media Communications Strategies of KapanLagi Youniverse for Strengthening Brand Equity in the Pandemic Era

#### 5.1.1 Social Media Share Strategy

Fig. 3. Share Strategy

To connect each other between media and followers, KLY has different content to meet the needs of trends and public information. KLY content types include regular content (news), interactive content, branding content, and partnership and advertorial content. KLY has new social media communications programs during the pandemic, including live streaming breaking news and talk show and user-generated content such as monthly campaigns or giveaways, #BTS (Boleh Tanya Sob as a viral content profiling), and #PNS (Pertanyaan Nyantai Sore as an engagement content). KLY also collaborates with the brands and KOL (Key Opinion Leader). On the other side, in creating useful content, KLY adopts new technology through live streaming (event online) and short video trendy on Tik Tok and Instagram Reels. The variety of content and communications media platform has been proven KLY as “The Biggest Media Online” in Indonesia. This is an important asset for media brands to associate with leading online media. Based on the strategy above, KLY has formed the element of brand equity, namely brand assets and brand associations.

#### 5.1.2 Social Media Optimize Strategy

Fig. 4. Optimize Strategy

A solid social media communication strategy that optimizes content results in the maximum impact of brand value. In trifecta success Regina Luttrell, content optimization can be reached through the PESO model (paid media, earned media, shared media, dan owned media). KapanLagi Youniverse uses a boost ads strategy as paid media and gets ads/media placements from brand or client collaborations and KOL (Key Opinion Leader) in its earned media strategy. As for shared media, KapanLagi Youniverse gets a shared partnership from the Tik Tok platform company. Finally, the owned media strategy, KapanLagi Youniverse, maximizes organically owned social media platforms. Regina Luttrell revealed that using the PESO model in optimization will help the company achieve its goals and position the organization as a leader in the industry. The purpose of the social media optimization strategy is to help KLY spread the media brand message widely to increase user awareness of media products. KLY’s
Brand equity strength will be the leading online media in Indonesia will give user awareness.

5.1.3 Social Media Manage Strategy

Regina Luttrell explained three essential activities in managing strategies: media monitoring, quick response, and real-time interaction. KLY conducts media monitoring by utilizing social media features and social listening tools such as Social Bakers, Creator Studio, and Google Analytics. Regina Luttrell explained that social listening tools allow companies to track information, measure success, and find out real-time audience discussions or interactions related to companies, brands, and issues and trends. KLY always provides responsive feedback regarding complaints or questions through social media like direct messages on Instagram. On the other side, KLY also emphasizes momentum so that the content will be relevant to society. KLY collaborates with one of EMTEK Digital OTT, Vidio.com, in achieving quality content live video. KLY pays attention to the detail in every social media fitur, such as tab stickers on Instagram, to create a user-friendly experience in consuming the content. From the social media management strategies above, KLY has made quality content for user convenience. This persistent effort will strengthen KLY’s brand equity by perceived quality.

5.1.4 Social Media Engage Strategy

The KLY team applies direct communications on social media to enter conversations, such as replying to simple comments using emoticons and GIFs. According to the KLY team, responding to simple comments affects the closeness between the media and followers. Building brand engagement through social media is essential to building brand equity. To treat followers, KLY creates a strategic program in increasing audiences’ attention, such as a giveaway, campaigns, trivia content, and many things. As explained by Regina Luttrell, KLY also uses a community approach strategy (add value to communities). Based on interviews and observations, KLY has several media communities, including FimelaHood (Fimela.com), Korean KapanLagi community, KapanLagi Dangdut community, and soon. The KLY team takes a community approach to build audience loyalty towards media content or programs and events. To increase audience involvement in social media communication programs such as monthly campaigns and live streaming, KLY invites members of the community. Not only information, but the KLY team also maintains audience involvement by providing gifts/rewards. Engage strategy aims to build the loyalty of audiences toward both communication programs and company activities.

6 Conclusion

Based on the research results, the social media communication strategy of KapanLagi Youniverse (KLY) in strengthening brand equity during the COVID-19 pandemic is to share, optimize, manage, and engage systems. In the share strategy, KLY uses various social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tik Tok and synergizes with KLY and EMTEK DIGITAL media such as Vidio. KLY also has new programs based on user-generated content such as monthly momentum campaigns, #PNS (#PertanyaanNyantaiSore) engagement content, and #BTS interactive content (#BolehTanyaSob). In addition, KLY also emphasizes changing the concept of coverage and creative content based on live streaming, both talk shows such as Fame Talks and live news coverage (breaking news). As for the optimization strategy, KLY applies boost ads (paid media), client placement (earned media), Tik Tok shared partnership (shared media), and organic (owned media). Manage strategy by monitoring media, being responsive, interactive, and focusing on relevant content. The last is the engagement strategy through a community approach, creating trivia content and giveaways. From the conclusion above, it shows that KapanLagi Youniverse social media communication strategy seeks to pay attention to the aspects of sharing, optimizing, managing, and engaging so that social media activities can be used optimally to strengthen the brand equity. The evidence of social media strategy will contribute to supporting the theory of Regina Luttrell namely The Circular Model of SoMe (Share, Optimize, Manage, Engage) that social media generates a possibility for brands allow them to build relationships, overview trends, and capture insights to improve their business specifically in strengthening brand equity.

Although this study provides explanation and analysis results, we need to be careful in interpreting the findings.
As this study did not measure or evaluate the social media communication effects on brand equity. On the other hand, this is a qualitative study and the findings cannot be generalized to different environments and contexts. This study only focused on how a social media communication strategy may strengthen brand equity specifically on the basis of the COVID-19 pandemic. The suggestion that can be given for further research is to use a quantitative method to measure the effectiveness of social media communication in strengthening brand equity during the pandemic COVID-19.

References