Facing Public Resistance on Covid-19 Information: The Importance of Attractive Content Creation in Digital Media

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ABSTRACT. Corona Virus Disease 19 (Covid-19) is considered the worst global pandemic in history. Like other countries worldwide, Indonesia has been dealing with the pandemic for approximately three years. However, the public's understanding of the Covid-19 consequences and impacts, i.e., the symptoms, variants, the procedure for handling the disease, the prevention, and the vaccination, remains an issue. Furthermore, people started to feel overloaded with too much information about the Covid-19 pandemic. This could lead to a higher risk of transmission because adherence to protocols is undermined. This article aims to provide an overview of the importance of creativity and strategic content in disseminating information about the Covid-19 pandemic, which includes targeting the right audience, and using the right words, visuals, references, and media channels. Based on observations made through four media platforms, i.e., YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, this article aims to provide an overview of the use of media in conveying information during the pandemic. Leveraging creativity in content creation can make public education more effective. This article was prepared to fight public resistance to information about the Covid-19 pandemic and future similar critical situations.

KEYWORDS: Covid-19, media platform, social media, content creation

1 INTRODUCTION

Handling Covid-19 outbreaks in Indonesia was hindered by various obstacles, including the resistance to Covid-19-related education. People were likely tired of the information overload because they were psychologically saturated from working from home for too long, dealing with the uncertainty, the economic recession, and even job termination (Yuniarto T, 2020). Since 2020, Covid-19-related information has been circulated in public media. The number of impressions of Covid-19 content reached 37,600,765 on the Internet and social media in the early two weeks (2-14 March 2020) after the Covid-19 emergency was declared by the President of Indonesia (Nurhajati et al., 2020).

Second, the resistance occurs because of government policy in handling the pandemic. Charta Politika surveyed the level of public trust in the data released by the government regarding Covid-19. Slightly more than half, 53.1 percent, strongly believed in government data, but the remaining 43.3 percent did not trust it (Bayhaqi A, 2021). People tried to find alternatives to feel safe, usually by denying the pandemic and avoiding seeing, reading, watching, and hearing information relating to the pandemic. The information resistance emerged because people did not want to feel fear and depression. This, of course, became a risk because citizens have to be aware of the information about Covid-19 to minimize the transmission.

Information technology can be seen from three perspectives. The first is the utopian perspective, seeing that technology, including communication and media, is a toll road to human problems' solutions. This view overlooks the adverse effects of the development, such as hoaxes and propaganda. Second, the dystopian perspective considers that the development of communication technology brings more negative impacts than benefits. This view overlooks the convenience and effectiveness provided by technology. The third is the double-edged sword perspective, assuming that the development of communication technology brings both positive and negative impacts. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, technology may have bombarded us with hoaxes and disinformation, but it also played an important role in the education about the virus.

Ideally, communication technology such as digital and social media could be leveraged for campaigns so that the public can remain calm and adhere to the health protocols. Campaigns through social media are important because, firstly, the reach is wide. The crowds on social media reach millions or billions of people when viewed by the number of users. Second, social media have its networking characteristics. These characteristics allow communication between individuals, individuals with

groups, and individuals with a wider community. One message from a social media user can be consumed by thousands or millions of people. This is strategic for the Covid-19 information campaigns. The media can reach the right audience and provide people with correct information in suitable formats. Social media nowadays support the creation of appealing audiovisual formats.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF COVID-19 INFORMATION

During the critical times of the virus outbreak, relevant information was disseminated as quickly as possible, which was often followed by disinformation (hoax). In fact, hoaxes tend to spread more quickly than accurate information and news (Mingxi Chang, 2021). For example, there were political endorsements for scientifically unproven treatments, such as hydroxychloroquine and oral ingestion of disinfectants. Additionally, there was also Covid-19 denial and blame-shifting, including stigmatization of those who tested positive and the emergence of the anti-mask and anti-vaccination movement (Lee, 2020). It could be argued that public literacy on health subjects was low. This was a challenge to contain the transmission and mitigate the pandemic impacts.

Health literacy could be improved by creating a culture (through behavioral patterns) and providing training about the pandemic and disease-preventing methods. Behavioral patterns are fundamental in preventing the spread of Covid-19, which include wearing masks, maintaining social distance (at least 1.5-2 meters), washing hands with soap and clean running water, avoiding crowds, and reducing mobility. This behavior adoption has been scientifically proven to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission (Peyvand, 2020). For example, wearing a mask properly—covering the nose and chin tightly and perfectly—can reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission (CDC, 2021). Masks are used when leaving the house, especially when interacting with people not in the same household. The type of mask used should also follow the guidelines, which include using cloth material that can effectively dispel droplets (Konda A et al. 2020). This behavior of wearing masks is classified as a 'new behavior' that must be adopted immediately by the community during the pandemic.

There were several changes in information related to the use of masks based on new evidence-based findings. In the early days of the 2020 pandemic, the recommendation was to use masks only if someone was infected. As new evidence was found around December 2020, WHO recommended using masks for everyone, not only those infected. This significant change in information had to be disseminated to the public in a short time.

Another new behavior that must be adopted in daily life is social distancing. A minimum distance of 1.5-2 meters was proven to reduce the risk of transmission. Avoiding crowds and reducing mobility were considered supportive of the social distancing behaviors. The purpose was to reduce direct interaction with other people. Meanwhile, 'old behavior' includes washing hands with soap and clean running water (as it can even dispel other types of infectious germs). Since decades ago, this behavior has been recommended by WHO and other institutions, especially the health sector, to reduce the risk of various infectious diseases.

The above behaviors had to be adopted by the community, which involved the process of behavioral change. This could be accelerated by a change in attitudes, which will not occur unless information based on data is available to the public. Therefore, increasing public knowledge about all relevant issues related to the virus was necessary (Peyvand, 2020) (Romano, 2020). Awareness of this could improve the effectiveness of preventive measures such as screening (tracing), early identification (testing), and treatments such as isolation, quarantine, and infection control.

In addition, public information should also address the risk of stigmatization among populations (Bruns, 2020). Education about the disease, quarantine rationale, and public health information can reduce stigmatization (Bruns, 2020). A study by Keke Hou (2021) analyzes the correlation between public attention and Covid-19 cases using topic analysis and sentiment analysis, and found a significant positive correlation between public attention level and Covid-19 infections.

In sum, information dissemination through media and communication channels should be designed effectively to attract public attention on how to prevent the transmission. The number of cases in the pandemic was high and the lessons learned could be used to prevent undesirable outcomes in future crises. Timely and appropriate public health interventions addressing sociocultural impact and risk for stigmatization along with proper screening, treatment, and follow-up for affected individuals and close contacts can reduce the number of infections, serious illnesses, and deaths (Peyvand, 2020).

The most immediate public health intervention is by conveying truthful information quickly, massively, consistently, and continuously.

3 SOCIAL MEDIA AND COVID-19 INFORMATION

A study by Kim (2021) found the benefits of strategic social media communication by public health agencies lie not only in how agencies use social media but also in their formation of network positions to amplify their visibility. As official health and risk information sources, public health agencies should coordinate their social media communication efforts to strategically position themselves in advantageous network positions to augment public engagement outcomes.

3.1. YouTube

As one of the most popular social media, YouTube has become a platform that has provided substantial information about Covid-19. By performing a YouTube search using the keywords ‘coronavirus in Indonesia’ and ‘coronavirus Indonesia,’ there were more than 30 million videos with Covid-19 information. These can describe how people try to compete to give information about Covid-19, and other people become the audiences that consume the information, whether it is legitimate or not.

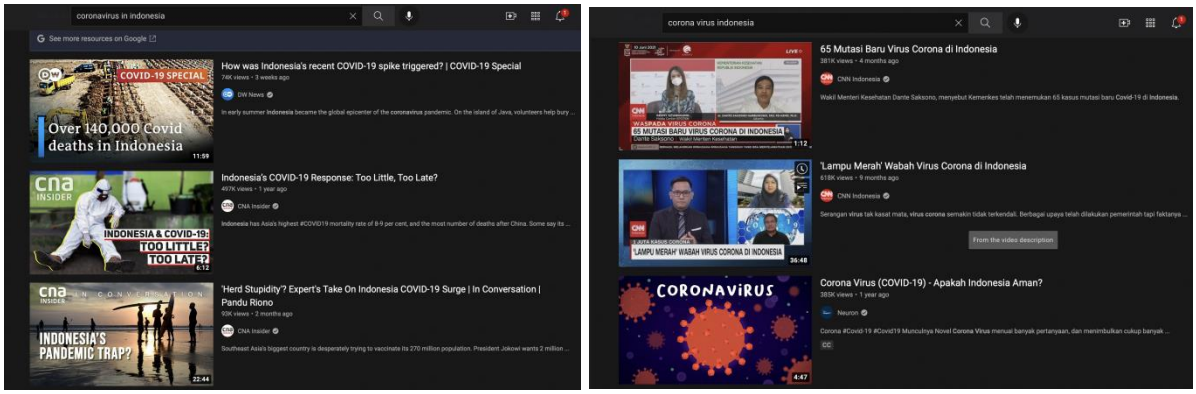

Figure 1. Display of keyword Search Results

3.2. Facebook

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Facebook has been proactive in fighting Covid-19 misinformation and has removed more than 18 million malicious misinformation about Covid-19 across Facebook's platforms. In Indonesia, Facebook launched the #Tahandulu campaign to reduce the circulation of misinformation content while removing false claims about Covid-19 across all platforms under Facebook. Facebook made this kind of innovation because the public needed legitimate Covid-19 information. Amid confusion about the rush of information on various social media platforms, people can easily access the information through this link: https://indonesia.fb.com.

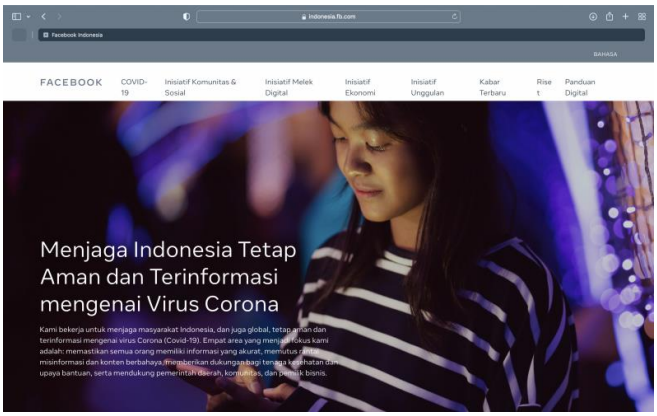

Figure 2. Display of Facebook Indonesia Website

3.3. Instagram

By performing an Instagram search using hashtags ‘coronavirus Indonesia’, there were 22,2 thousand articles posted by official accounts of Covid-19 information (government, institutions) or by personal accounts. Most posts were related to Covid-19 information, but the remaining was unrelated. Meanwhile, using a search by hashtags ‘coronavirus in Indonesia’, there were only less than 100 posts. On Instagram, both institutional and personal accounts can create more engaging content through pictures or videos.

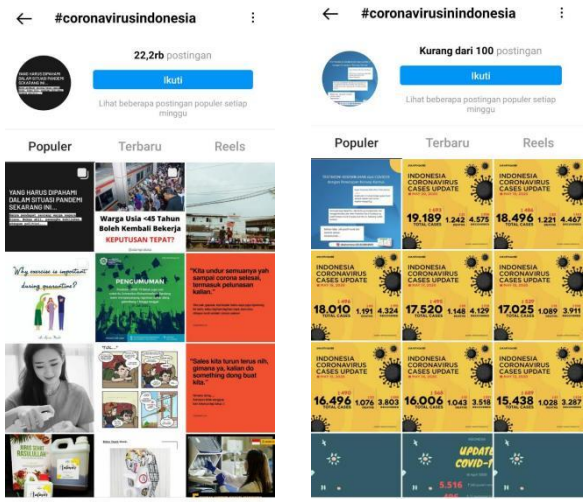

Figure 3. Instagram Hashtag Search

3.4 Twitter

Twitter is a social media with the latest information updates. By using Twitter, people globally can see what the trend is around. As one of the sources on Covid-19 information, Twitter has at least four official accounts providing Covid-19 content, namely KawalCOVID19, BNPB Indonesia, Kemenkes RI dan WHO Indonesia.

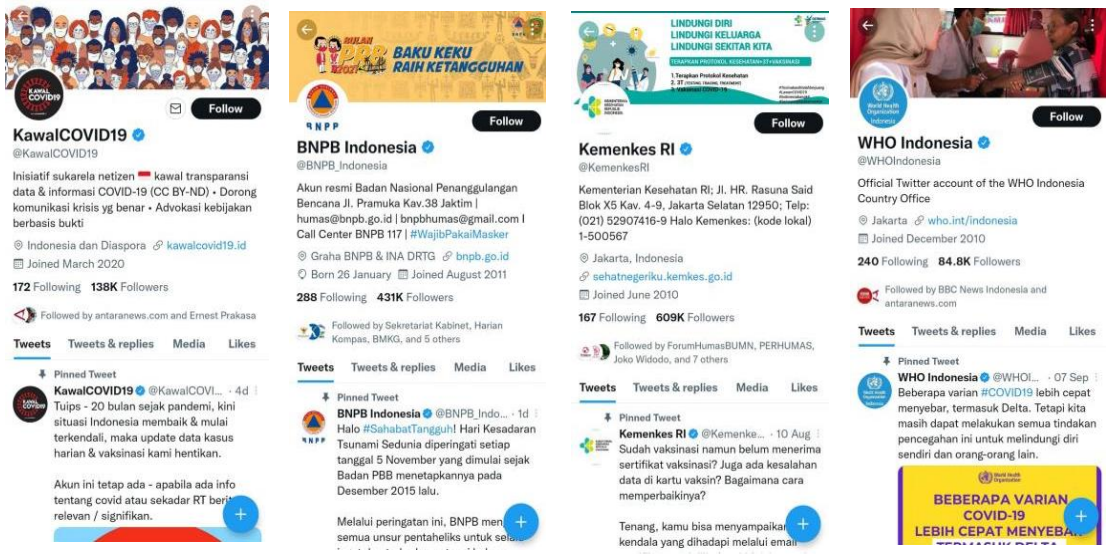

Figure 4. Displays of Four Top Accounts on Covid-19 Information

3.5 The Decrease in Covid-19 Information in Four Social Media Platforms

From the observations, the development of Covid-19-related content on the four platforms (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) decreased over time. In general, the timeline can be divided into two parts.

First, at the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak in Indonesia, the four social media platforms provided much information about Covid-19. The available information was related to conspiracies and fake news. Based on data from the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, there were 1,819 issues with the distribution on social media, reaching 4.161 uploads. The data shows that, as of 30 July 2021, 4.161 hoax uploads about Covid-19 on Facebook reached 3.523, Twitter 554, YouTube 49, and Instagram 35 (Rizkinaswara L, 2021). This was because people posted content about covid-19 regardless of whether it was true. Users with no authority talked about Covid-19 without considering the impact on society. These content producers come from various backgrounds, such as ordinary citizens, academics, politicians, artists, and religious figures. This situation is worsened by the inability to rectify content containing fake news that has been spread and trusted by the public.

Second, the spread of information about the Covid-19 pandemic diminished over time. The audience seemed to become less interested in information about the virus, so social media trends declined. There had never been such a commotion before. Then, public criticism shifted from the government's inability to deal with the pandemic to political matters, such as the backlash against politicians who campaigned during the pandemic. This criticism flooded social media. People seem to forget that the current Covid-19 condition in Indonesia has not ended. People's attention quickly diverts because of pandemic fatigue and information overload.

4 ATTRACTING PUBLIC ATTENTION TO COVID-19 INFORMATION

Before disseminating information about the development of Covid-19, attention should be paid to several indicators of successful social media interactions to improve the community's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. It is important that professionals from diverse specialties such as psychology, public health, medicine, social work, public policy, and economics work in synergies to contain the spread of Covid-19 through preventive measures (Romano, 2020). Meanwhile, the public can focus more on individual skills to control their behaviors and consume content with criticality. The methods and techniques to raise awareness on Covid-19 prevention must be tailored based on the target audience. This should also be supported by an enabling environment that supports behavioral change (Febriani, 2021).

Based on the observations on four social media platforms, there were six indicators of strategic content: a) *Perspective on point to share*, people want information that has a frame of reference so that they can trust the information directly; b) *Engagement*, interaction with the public through social media platform is necessary; c) *Research-based information*, this is important to ensure the reliability of the content; c) *Trusted sources,* the institutions or public figures with capacities to disseminate the information need to be ensured as well; d) *Software tools*, these tools can help schedule and organize posting on social media to keep information sustainable and updated for the public; e) *Interesting content*, information to be shared could be in the format of visual or audiovisual, with the correct word choices and references; f) *Monitoring,* the information sharing should be monitored to know the engagement and reach so that future content can make higher impressions.

6. CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic is an issue that requires special attention to prevent the broader spread of the virus. Social media can be leveraged to disseminate information about Covid-19. Implementing the right strategies and choosing the right media channel to share information about COVID-19 is necessary. These include setting the objectives of the information dissemination, understanding the different audiences on social media platforms, and creating templates for the right target audience to achieve high impressions and attract public attraction.

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